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The Canada Presbyterian.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, MANAGER.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28TH, 1894.

THE good people of Zion Church, Brantford, have offered their pastor a trip around the world. No doubt it was their intention to give him a long holiday. They forgot that a man of Dr. Cochrane's activity can go round the world in a very short time. If they want to give their pastor a long rest, they should send him to Mars or some other planet. There is no trip on this planet long enough to occupy the Doctor's time more than a few weeks.

THE man who called upon the Democrats the other day to "govern or get out," had patriotism and good sense as well as a good turn for condensation. Every one knows that the business of sixty millions of people is kept in a state of uncertainty and depression by the wrangling over the tariff bill, and yet the Democrats do not pass it though they have a sufficient majority. This prolonged faction fight at Washington, and the months of senseless opposition to the Home Rule Bill in the English House of Commons, have done much to discredit parliamentary government.

IN the present state of public opinion in Ontario it is the easiest thing imaginable for a Christian man to drift unconsciously into a most unchristian attitude towards the public men of the country. "The powers that be are ordained of God," is a verse that the Higher Critics might strike out of the New Testament without any considerable protest from many people who call themselves Christians. The Israelites were commanded not to curse the ruler of the people, but it might be argued by some that the command was a part of the Mosaic law, and therefore does not apply to Ontario. Judging from some of the speeches that we hear about, and occasionally see reported, cursing men who have given their lives to the public service has become the first duty of a patriotic citizen. Fifty years ago the leaders of the Family Compact contended that the people of this Province were not capable of governing themselves, and when one reads the tirades of blasphemy and vulgar abuse that some of the people have been listening to lately, one cannot help asking whether the Family Compact Tories may not have been about half right. Fair discussion is a good thing, even criticism from a party standpoint may be a good thing, but indiscriminate, filthy abuse heaped upon decent, clean men, by foul-mouthed designing demagogues, is a bad thing, and men who like to listen to it, and laugh at it, and applaud it, show they are unfit for free government.

THE third annual conference of the Theological Alumni of Queen's was well attended and the interest surpassed that of any previous meeting. The programme of study was so comprehensive that the greatest stickler for variety must have been satisfied. It began with Genesis and came down to the economical development of Canada. Dante, the

English constitution, the development of Greek thought from Æschylus to Plato, the Book of Job, English literature, elocution and we know not how many other interesting and important subjects were attended to. Bruce's Apologetics and Fairbairn's Place of Christ in Modern Theology were discussed in the evenings. The study of these two books alone would make a good post-graduate course. These post-graduate sessions will do much good. The social element is desirable and it is even still more desirable that pastors should at least once a year take their bearings in the matter of study. An almost invincible will is needed to keep up generous, systematic study amidst the incessant calls and worry of pastoral work. Few men have wills bordering on the invincible. The most studious pastor needs all the help he can get from environment and the best environment is the college. There is no use in scolding at the demand of high class preaching. It is often unreasonable and sometimes cruel, but the only way to meet it is with the old gospel preached in a style that will knock the conceit out of every snarling critic in the church in the first five minutes.

CANDIDLY now, is there any good and sufficient reason why there should be a serious deficit in any of the schemes of the church when Dr. Reid closes his books on the 30th day of April? It is true that in some localities there has been more or less depression in business, but in others business has been fairly good. It is a fact that wheat has been lower in price than for many years, but it is also a fact that almost all other articles of farm produce have brought fairly good prices. The McKinley tariff, and the crisis in the United States and the uncertainty about the American tariff and about our own have done something in the way of making business slow, but there is no crisis in this country and not the slightest probability that there will be one. The business of the country is on a sound basis and if some places are suffering from the inevitable reaction after a boom, the suffering is caused by a healthy community trying to throw off the malign effects of the boom. There has been world-wide depression and Canada is coming through more easily than most other countries. But if the depression were a hundred-fold greater than it is, is the cure to be found in lessening our gifts to God. Can we remedy matters by allowing God's cause to suffer? Should economy begin and very likely end with the house of God and the work of God? Nay, verily. If we are suffering financially—if God is punishing us for our national sins—there is all the more reason why we should humble ourselves and deny ourselves for His cause. Very little self-denial on the part of all our people would give a surplus to every scheme in the church. We need more grace quite as much as we need more money.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS.

WHAT is interesting reading is a matter purely of taste or of necessity. The reports of the stock market are of no interest whatever to very many, are severely let alone; to others they are the most interesting of all reading. Judging from the amount of space given to sporting news in our secular press, they must be eagerly sought for by many, and by many they are never looked at. Congregational news to great numbers are as dry reading as a dictionary of dates would be, to a very large number of our readers these will be of more or less interest; some will scan them over, and some will read them closely. To ourselves we confess they have proved to be of no slight interest and in many respects may be found instructive.

A very pleasing feature of nearly every one of them, is the encouraging and hopeful spirit and tone pervading them. However great and real the causes of anxiety to business men have been in 1893, these do not appear in the majority of cases to have operated injuriously to individual churches. "Largely attended," "pleasant," "reports encouraging," "harmonious," "healthy condition," "much activity," "gratifying success," are the terms continually recurring respecting congregational meetings and congregational affairs. We have no reason to doubt that these terms, used with regard to congregations reporting through the press, will apply equally well to the hundreds which have not so reported. If this be so, they give a very bright picture of the state of our church as a whole. Surely this is a matter for gratitude and thanksgiving to God, and should find expression in more earnest and devoted service and consecration to Him to whom we owe this genera-

ly happy, peaceful and prosperous state of the congregations of our church. An increase of salary here and there, or voting an annual holiday in other cases, is the way in which individual congregations are showing appreciation of the faithful labors of their pastors and their gratification at their prosperity.

A somewhat new departure in the case of a few congregations reporting, and no doubt in the case also of some not reporting, is that of making all sittings absolutely free to all. First come, first served. While this method is not in accordance with the traditions of our church, and will run directly counter to the personal preferences of many, it is a plan which for many reasons has much to recommend it, and which we believe will yet largely prevail in our church. The seating according to their different tastes and desires of the various applicants for pews, downstairs, or up in the gallery, in the front where it is supposed is a socially higher grade of worshippers, or at the back, at the right-hand or the left of the pulpit, is a delicate and difficult task, and anything more unchristian than the dog-in-the-manger conduct of many so-called pew owners, who do not occupy them themselves, and look as black as a thunder cloud if anyone else dares to do so, one would not wish to see in the house of God, or anywhere else. This at least, and a good many other difficulties, would at once be overcome, if the rule applied to all, high or low, rich or poor, saint or sinner, were seats absolutely free and open to all, and that the first comers should get the first choice.

Comparing the conditions of church life now with what it was in the time of our fathers, or even in the earlier days of those who are past middle life, one cannot but be struck with the amount of machinery and the number of organizations now existing. A board or committee of management and the session comprised then the whole church machinery. Now, to use the words of the Rev. Dr. MacKay, older people at least are "bewildered" and can hardly keep track of their number or names, or tell very precisely the object of each different society. If the gospel is not spread, if souls are not saved, if Christians, young and old alike, are not edified, it cannot be said to be for want of societies. It is reasonable to suppose that a need has been felt for them else they would not have sprung into existence, and that much good is being done by them, especially in the way of leading young people earlier to an open profession of faith than was once the case, and of training them for usefulness in the church. That this phase of modern church or Christian life is not without its dangers, is felt and very generally admitted and certainly calls for the wise guidance of pastors and sessions. If it could be done, it is not desirable to attempt to repress this youthful activity and forwardness, and the wise and only course left, therefore, is to seek to guide it. Though youth is very often full of self-sufficiency and not very willing to be guided, yet in the case of professedly Christian young people, communicants in the church, we look for a better spirit and a desire to work in harmony with the office-bearers in the church constituted according to the Scriptures. If this is not done, there certainly is great danger of supposing that belonging to Christian organizations and being busied about what is called Christian work is to be a Christian, of the young being puffed up with conceit, and of the creation of an organization within the church not always in accord with its spirit and work and not amenable to its authority or discipline. Perhaps the greatest danger of all, one which cannot now be dwelt upon, is, through the multiplication of societies and meetings, the almost complete breaking up of family life, the one thing which God in His providence has constituted as the very basis of a well ordered society whether of church or state.

THE FINANCIAL SITUATION.

LAST week we published communications from the two chief authorities of our church on all financial questions affecting it, the Revs. Dr. Reid and Cochrane. Although Dr. Cochrane says that "He does not wish to be an alarmist, or unduly to exaggerate the condition of our funds at this date," it is yet evident that he considers the position serious. Dr. Reid's comparative statement accentuates the warning of Dr. Cochrane, and should awaken the immediate activity of our whole church from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The total shortage at February 17th of this year as compared with last amounted to close upon \$11,500.00, not including that of the French Evangelization Fund which a few weeks ago was such that the committee felt itself compelled to notify some of its agents that, in all probability, they would not be able to