

IMPURITY IN ELECTIONS.

At this time, when both political parties are preparing for a general election, the following well-considered suggestions by Rev. J. W. Shearer are particularly timely, and we place them before our readers in the hope they may have some good influence in the impending contest. Dr. Shearer says:

A very few years ago I was one of the innocent preachers who did not believe that bribery and other irregularities were at all common in our political life. I do now. I have my information from sources that cannot be doubted, where party bias or self-interest were on the side of withholding the information.

The politicians are no worse than the electors. Votes are never bought except when votes are for sale. And while it is as a rule worthless loafers such as hang about the barroom who are for sale, yet there are others. Men out of work or in hard circumstances though otherwise good men may and do yield to the temptation to get a five or a ten, or even a two or a one dollar bill. There are others again who look upon it as a sort of "indemnity" for the time given to an indebted country in going to vote. "The member of Parliament gets his indemnity, why not the elector," they say. I have been informed of a county where this was for years the generally accepted view and each man, poor or not, in general, got his ten dollars at each election. Others again think it no harm to accept all the money they can get, but would scorn to sell their vote. I have heard on unquestioned authority of a church official (not a Presbyterian) who, when his two sons became qualified to vote, gave them this paternal advice: "Boys, take all the money Grits'll give you and all the Tories'll give you, but vote your conscience!" Of course all he meant by "conscience" was party loyalty. Is he alone in his understanding of what conscience means in politics? Again, I know of a Presbyterian elder (a Presbyterian elder) who shared in the distribution of liquor intended to inspire the electors to vote for his party in a recent election. If a member of Parliament has had the support of men like the above specimens he will need to be exceptionally upright if he considers it a crime to accept \$100,000 for his vote and influence in securing a million dollar contract for a certain firm, will he not? There are, no doubt, constituencies where there are few, if any, such execrable practices, and in the other constituencies it is doubtless only the minority who will share in buying or selling votes, perhaps only a small percentage. But there are enough such traitors in a sufficient number of constituencies to subvert the will of the people and temporarily make a laughing stock of Twentieth Century democracy.

There is no reform more necessary or more worthy the attention of the wisest and best Canadians in church and state than the promotion of purity in political life.

What can be done?

I have no sure cure to offer, but the following suggestions are worthy of careful consideration:

1. A word to Ministers. There is need most urgent of the teaching of the very elements of ethics as applied to politics. The pew knows something of what business, honor and fair dealing mean. It looks upon politics as war in which anything is fair and permissible in order to win. The minister should get into confidential relation with his best men in both parties. He will get food for reflection and material for sermons. Then let him speak strongly, wisely, courageously and from knowledge. But let him speak!

2. Christian men must have done with the childish simplicity of supposing that all the bribery and crookedness is on the other side. The Pharisees in Parliament or press, or on the platform, who make this charge or give this impression should be given short-shrift. If you let the light into such "whited sepulchres" you will find the dead men's bones and all "uncleanliness" of the accused science of bad politics.

3. Much can be done by disseminating information about the crime of bribery and the penalties the law imposes. The rank and file of the electorate in many constituencies would seem not even to know that bribery is a crime and punishable with severe penalties. The gist of the law should be published in the press everywhere before every election and extensively scattered also in leaflet form.

4. This educational campaign will be greatly enhanced in value if means are taken to have the law systematically enforced or offenders visited with its penalties without regard to person or party. If a way can be found to secure a non-partisan public prosecutor, then such an office ought to be created and filled.

It may be, too, that the Moral and Social Reform Council, with its branch leagues springing up in the various centres of electoral ridings, has come to the kingdom for such a time as this. It will justify its existence a hundred-fold if it contributes to the solving of this pressing and perplexing problem.

5. Excellent results have been obtained in several New Brunswick and Ontario constituencies by local moral reform leagues, or by a united clergy appealing to the executives of both parties for the riding, requesting a public promise to do all in their power to prevent impurity in their own ranks and among their own party followers. Why not try this plan throughout the country? Why should not Provincial or Dominion leaders be similarly put on record publicly? If they refuse to make the promise they ipso facto put themselves on record as intending to use or encourage the use of unlawful methods. If, on the other hand, they publicly promise to do all within their power to discourage impurity, it will have much weight with their followers and will lead to all concerned being the more closely watched.

6. Another plan that has been put in practice with effect is for a number of earnest, conscientious members of the same party in a constituency to sign a round robin declaring their determination to vote for no nominee of their party unless he is satisfactory to them in his personal character and in his attitude toward this and other moral reforms in which the signers are deeply interested. In more than one constituency I have known the party nomination effectively controlled by a hundred men, and in one case by far less.

But whatever the means and methods to be adopted in order to heal this serious malady in the body politic, it must be undertaken with the courage of faith and a determination begotten of belief in "the final perseverance of the saints," so that whatever the cost of trouble or time or personal service or party interests, we, as Christian patriots, will press on with buoyancy that will not down, zeal that will not flag, and resourcefulness that cannot fail, until the fair name of Canada is cleared of this stain.

MORAL AND SOCIAL REFORM.

The General Assembly's Board of Moral and Social Reform of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, met last week in the Confederation Life building, Toronto, Rev. Dr. Pidgeon in the chair, when it was resolved to recommend hearty co-operation in forming moral and social reform leagues in the various electorates to promote political purity and other reforms.

The organization of Presbyterian brotherhoods in connection with all the congregations of the Church was also recommended. The Committee on Literature was directed to prepare a special course of reading providing reliable scientific training on the various aspects of economic and industrial problems of the day in consultation with Principal Magill of Halifax, Mr. W. L. M. King, Deputy Minister of Labor, and Professor Shortt of Kingston, one of the two new Civil Service Commissioners. The Synods are to be asked to arrange for conferences on brotherhood work.

Another resolution stated that in view of the prevalence of the social evil and of its terrible results the board was opposed to any policy of dealing with it other than uncompromising warfare, as it was contrary to the law of the land, and, therefore, it was the duty of those who administer the law to suppress it wherever found.

The board expressed gratification at the action of the Deputy Minister of Labor for the suppression of the opium trade, and at the prompt and unanimous response of Parliament to his appeal.

With regard to the new law restricting the use of tobacco by youths, the Secretary was instructed to correspond with education departments, police authorities, and others in the various Provinces to secure its general observance.

The board authorized the Committee on Gambling to press in co-operation with other Churches and sympathetic bodies at the next session of Parliament for legislation already sought to suppress race-track gambling by bookmakers.

Letters from Major Wood of the Northwest Mounted Police, and from the missionaries to the Indians in the western Provinces urged aggressive action by the board in securing the enforcement of laws, against liquor, gambling, and the social evil, and others which have a moral bearing.

It was recommended that Presbyteries and leaders in Sabbath school and young people's work unite in pushing a campaign for the signing of total abstinence pledges.

The board also recommended all ministers to follow the initiative of Rev. Dr. Shearer and Rev. Mr. Pidgeon, and arrange for meetings with the different workingmen's societies in their respective districts for the discussion of social problems. The board expressed itself as being in hearty sympathy with the workingmen's attempt to secure improved legislation regarding child labor, sweatshops and working more than six days a week. It was resolved to give all possible aid to those engaged in the work.

Says Henry M. Hall, in the Philadelphia Westminster: Quaint, curious, old Quebec, with its grand setting upon the mountain brow, upon a populated rock vaster than Gibraltar, is a romance, a dream of beauty, antiquity, mediaevalism and modernism combined. The St. Lawrence and this Laurentian valley and its mountains, together with this city, create a panorama unsurpassed for magnificence by any scene, perhaps, upon the continent.