

FOR years the people of Canada have been told that fidelity to party is the tap root of many of the evils from which the country suffers. The truth of this theory is being severely tested. Mr. McCarthy and his friends are dealing terrific blows at the Government of the Dominion. The Patrons attack both parties. Candidates who describe themselves as independent are canvassing many constituencies. If there is any virtue in breaking away from party ties, the next Parliament of Canada should be almost perfect. People who take an academic interest in politics are wondering whether after all breaking up the parties is a remedy for the ills that afflict the body politic. A concrete illustration may be found without going far away. There are three distinct parties and several so-called independent members in the Ontario Legislature. Is the Legislature a better one than the Legislatures of fifteen or twenty years ago, which were elected on strict party lines when only two parties existed. We are strongly of the opinion that a moral toning up of the electorate—a quickening of the public conscience would do the country more good than breaking up the parties into the smallest fragments.

A QUIET AND GOOD WORK.

THIS is the description applicable to the work of the Upper Canada Religious Tract and Book Society. Silently, unostentatiously, but diligently and beneficially it pursues its way, and has been doing so for now sixty-three years. It has just issued its sixty-third annual report. It is a most modest document, but it tells of an amount of work quietly done which we suspect very few have any idea of. It is an inspiring thing for a society or individual to be associated with others in any noble undertaking. This society is one of several, some of them perhaps better known, all engaged in this good work of issuing and sending through various lands the healing, life-giving streams of a pure, sound Christian literature. The London, American and Stirling Societies all similarly engaged might be mentioned.

First in the list of the agencies employed by this society and noticed in its report comes the Religious Tract. When these simple messengers of truth and mercy are written in a short, pointed, attractive, telling style it is impossible to say how much good they may accomplish. They are like the smooth stones from the brook which David used with his sling with such effect. Where they do not supersede, they supplement the spoken word, reach many whom it never reaches, and often make a silent but powerful and effective appeal, where the spoken word would be resented and the living messenger turned away from. Very truly does this report say, "One need of Christian workers is the very best Gospel Tracts, attractive in appearance, earnest in spirit, and thoroughly practical in their application, tracts for every condition of mind, heart, and life."

It would be well for every minister to become acquainted with some of the best of them of various kinds, and for every church to keep on hand a supply for free distribution. Of this kind of Christian literature every year this Society is circulating no less than a million of pages in many languages and with the best results.

The next agency which is employed by the society is religious books. Only the other day in the Woman's National Council was a strong resolution passed against the vile literature introduced into the country, polluting the minds alike of old and young. An important part of the work of this Society is to counteract and neutralize this evil. Its aim is "to circulate every kind of Christian literature to meet the needs of the most advanced thinker and of the humblest reader. It speaks well for our people that a taste for this kind of reading exists to the extent it does, so that, as the report tells us, such works as "The Present Day Tracts," and those of Spurgeon, McCheyne, Baldwin, Nelson, Hall, Geikie, and many others of like character, find a ready sale. During the past year 36,000 volumes of such books have been placed in Canadian homes—safe Christian books of special value for time and eternity. Every such book taken into the home and read, is like a good seed cast into the ground, producing a harvest of good, and that producing another and an ever-widening one, and on and on until eternity alone will reveal the full and grand result.

Yet another feature of this Society's work is the circulation of the Scriptures. As the sublime ideal

and aim of the founders of the British and Foreign Bible Society was to put a copy of the Scriptures in their own tongue into the hands of everyone who can read, so this Society seeks to do its share on this divine endeavor, by reaching every family within the field of its operations with the Word of God in its own mother tongue, for not only in new settlements, but in old, there are many homes even in Canada without the Bible.

The report says:—

"One special work of the Society is to circulate Bibles of every kind, from the cheapest to those supplying every modern help, and more particularly those containing Psalms, Paraphrases and Hymns. In the past year the Douay translation and the different versions of the French New Testament have reached many Roman Catholics, yours being the only Evangelical Society in Canada circulating these versions. If we would thoroughly evangelize Canada, the Word of God in every form must be carried to the homes and hearts of the people; and your Directors thankfully report that 7,500 copies of the Bible have gone into use during the past year through the agency of your Society."

An important, indeed a principal means, whereby this work is done is by Colporteurs, the employment of earnest, pious, if they are but plain men, who know their Bible, love God and the souls of men, to travel over the country and offer books, tracts and Bibles for sale, or donate freely in suitable cases, and to talk, read and pray with those they visit as opportunity may offer. More and more is this work assuming an important place in the operations of this and kindred societies, the sales of the Colporteurs amounting to \$4,186, show the very encouraging advance on those of the previous year of \$640; or, if the sales of 1886 be compared with those of 1896, they stand as \$2,092 to \$4,186, just double. The Society's Colporteurs travelled during the year 8,932 miles, visited 15,274 widely scattered families, sold 3,228 Bibles and Testaments, and 12,254 volumes of the best religious books. Thus, through this means 15,482 volumes of wholesome reading are doing God's work—doing it quietly and blessedly.

A strong claim of this Society to the support of Christian people arises from the fact that it reaches, and its aim is to reach, some classes, and a large number of individuals who are not and cannot be reached by the ordinary means of grace. The first we may mention are the sailors on our lakes, canals and rivers. For their special benefit, a "Sailor's Rest," the first of its kind in Ontario, has been provided at Kingston. This city and the Welland Canal are the centres of work for sailors. Mr. Potter is engaged at the former place and Mr. Bone, both well known for their zeal and aptitude in this work, is employed as he has been for many years on the canal. Between them, aided by volunteer helpers, during last year, 333 sailors' bags, filled with healthy Christian reading, were placed on board vessels and warmly welcomed; 1,234 visits were made to vessels, and many tracts and periodicals sold or given away.

Shanty men and lumber camps are another important sphere of work which has been carried on by our Church for years past, especially by the Synod of Montreal and Ottawa. In the Ottawa valley and North-eastern Ontario eighty-three lumber camps were supplied by this Society in a way similar to the sailors, and in addition many French New Testaments, Gospels, and 132,000 pages of healthy reading, reaching at least 16,000 men in Quebec, Algoma and Manitoba.

In new settlements, the Sabbath school is often the very first form taken of Home Mission work. To aid and encourage these in their first struggling efforts to live and do some work is most important, for out of them, eventually, churches with all their appliances for Christian life and work, grow. "The Directors of the Society report with much pleasure that they have been able to aid many such Sabbath schools, especially in Algoma and the North-west." Besides direct assistance through the good offices of the secretary, Rev. Dr. Moffat, many of the richer Sabbath schools have gladly aided the poorer schools in new and needy mission fields, conferring thus a double blessing.

Passing by some things, we cannot but note the society's colportage work in distant China, carried on by means of the generous bequest of the late Mr. William Gooderham, which annually realizes \$500. Through the kindness of the Rev. Dr. Griffith John, president of the Central China Religious Tract Society, and who has spent forty years in this work, a small committee of representative missionaries has taken charge of this agency without any expense to the society. The report says:

"Four thoroughly trustworthy native-Chinese Christian

men were selected, and under careful supervision are now doing thoroughly practical mission work, as Colporteurs in the missionary stations around Hankow, and in the provinces of Hunan and Hubei. These men are at home, they have their own Chinese standard of living, and thus can do your work most economically and effectively."

One important means of keeping this work before the Christian public and so of securing interest and support for it, is the service of the secretary, Rev. Dr. Moffat. The directors say in their report "That the Rev. Dr. Moffat, in addition to all his yearly increasing office work in Toronto, travelled over 7,000 miles, preached 86 times, gave 110 addresses, and held 75 public meetings, so as to keep the many-sided mission work of your Society fully before the churches. By his pulpit services and Sabbath collections, he paid all his travelling expenses, and in addition passed over \$403 to the general funds of the society." Reviewing the work of the year, they gratefully and reverently say: "Ebenezer, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

We gladly commend the quiet good work done by this society to the sympathy, the prayers and support of all our readers, in the future, as we are glad to understand from the secretary they have given them in the past.

SYNOD NOTES.

IT was the unanimous opinion of all in attendance at the Synod of Toronto and Kingston that the programme and topics discussed were the best ever prepared.

Principal Caven's address on "Methods of Training in our Theological Halls" was particularly good. He scored the students who were in the habit of using what he called "catch words," and confessed that some of the expressions he sometimes heard were a strange language to him. The paper by Dr. Somerville, of Owen Sound, on "Special or Evangelical Services," was full of good points. He was a firm believer in personal appeals and quiet home talks for the purpose of winning souls.

While some of the addresses were open to criticism, it seemed as if the members were desirous of avoiding anything that might be termed controversy, or so much good was presented that they were prepared to overlook the weak points.

Considerable disappointment was expressed at the small attendance of elders, or, as some termed them, the lay element. One elder expressed the opinion that those appointed should either attend, or see that a substitute was appointed who could attend. Every speaker had invariably to take the platform.

Dr. Grant, of Orillia, made a good remark by stating "that every service should be an evangelical service and every service a special service." The excursion on Wednesday was a pleasant surprise and perhaps was all the more enjoyable on that account. The Rev. Dr. Macrae, the genial pastor of the congregation where the Synod met, was an ideal host, and made everyone feel at home, while his amiable helpmate, Mrs. Macrae, was untiring in her efforts to minister to the comfort of all and is certainly a model pastor's wife.

It was the unanimous verdict of all present that the good people of Collingwood placed the members under a debt of gratitude to them for their kindness and hospitality, which will not soon be forgotten.

ARMENIAN RELIEF FUND.

Amount previously acknowledged.....	\$1,464 77
Alameda (Assa.) Congregation, per Rev. T. R. Scott.....	5 70
Ox Bow (Assa.) Congregation, per Rev. T. R. Scott.....	8 05
Claude Presbyterian Church, per Donald Smith, Treasurer.....	19 00
J. S. Smith, Kamloops, B.C.....	2 00
Presbyterian Congregation, West Flamboro (additional) per W. Henderson, Rockton, P.O.....	2 00
Osceola Mission, County Renfrew, per John B. Boyd.....	10 50
Micksbury Mission, County Renfrew, per John B. Boyd.....	4 70
Shotland Mission, County Renfrew, per John B. Boyd.....	9 20
Additional from "A Friend" per Thomas Baty, Wilson Grove P.O.....	2 00
	\$1,527 92