

The Dominion Presbyterian

IS PUBLISHED AT

644 RIDEAU STREET - OTTAWA

—AND AT—

Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg.

TERMS: One year (50 issues) in advance..... \$1.50

Six months 75

CLUBS of Five, at same time 5.00

The date on the label shows to what time the paper is paid for. Notify the publisher at once of any mis take on label.

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ADVERTISING RATES.—15 cents per agate line each insertion, 14 lines to the inch, 14 inches to the column. Letters should be addressed:

THE DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN,

P. O. Drawer 1070, Ottawa

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Ottawa, Wednesday, Sept. 21 1904.

THE RE-ORGANIZED BIBLE SOCIETY.

As growing out of the stimulus generated by the centenary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, an important conference has been held in Toronto, at which representatives from all parts of Canada were present, with the view of reorganizing and confederating the various separate auxiliaries. The committee to which was deputed the task of reporting on the matter recommended the formation of a Canadian Bible Society embracing all the existing auxiliaries in the Dominion, to be called "The Canadian Bible Society Auxiliary to the British and Foreign Bible Society." The auxiliaries of the Bible Society entering into this arrangement shall in the meantime carry on the work at present under their care. A general board would meet yearly and be composed of members elected annually, as follows:—One member from each auxiliary, one additional member for each auxiliary having between 50 and 100 branches, and one for each additional 50. Toronto will be made the headquarters of this organization. Regarding the appointment of officials the committee suggested that the general board appoint an Executive Committee, composed of the officers of the board and seven members, which shall meet quarterly, or whenever it is deemed necessary. The general board will also select the district secretaries, with the concurrence of the auxiliaries concerned. The general secretary will be appointed by the British and Foreign Bible Society, with the approval of the general board; he will have no authority except what may be accorded him by the board. In the administration the auxiliaries will look after the revenue needed for colportage in their territory and will remit their balances to the general secretary. The general board will use the money sent by auxiliaries for the extension of the work in Canada and for grants to the parent society.

Copies of this plan will be sent to all auxiliaries for consideration, and they will be asked to signify their concurrence before February 1st. When a majority of auxiliaries accept these propositions the chairman of the conference will request the appointment of representatives, and the first meeting of the general board will be summoned.

The conference was much indebted to one of the able general Secretaries, of London, England, Rev. J. H. Ritson, M. A., a man of remarkable stimulating and organizing power. Mr. Ritson considers the meeting at Toronto epoch-making in the history of the Canadian Society.

THE SCOTCH CHURCH DECISION

The Westminster Gazette, of London England, discussing the recent Scotch Church decision aptly remarks that the very strength of the United Free Church on this occasion is that they are stripped of everything. The practical injustice of the decision is thus vividly brought before the country, as well as the chaos and confusion which must result if it is carried into effect. What the House of the Lords decides is law, and for the legalist there is no more to say. But the Lords appear nevertheless to have done two inconsistent things. They denied that it was their business to choose between two Churches, as Churches, and yet they have in effect deposed one Church and set up another. They declared it was a question of property and a Trust, and yet they took no steps to discover that the body to whom they gave the property was in a position to fulfil the Trust. They might in a strict consistency with their own principles have declared that the United Free Church had gone beyond its Trust and yet had refrained from handing the property over to the Free Church. In an ordinary action, raising the same issues, a Court would almost certainly have contented itself with declaring that the defendants had violated the Trust and then have left an interval before enforcing the judgment, that they might have an opportunity of setting themselves right and coming to terms with their opponents. That would have been the practical and politic course in the present case, and we are greatly at a loss to know why it was not adopted by the House of Lords. For it is plain that the Free Church is not in a position to discharge the Trust and that burden placed upon them will, unless they be relieved from it, crush them and disorganise both communities. The twenty-eight ministers of the Free Church have not only to take over the patronage and the endowments but they have to finance colleges, churches, and missions without touching the capital. Early next year, as a correspondent of the *Times* points out, they will have to find \$40,000 to pay the feu duties, insurances, and taxes upon the United Free Church buildings. How can they find it or find the subscriptions necessary to maintain

the missions and finance the organisation? And yet, otherwise, how can they fulfil their Trust? It is a grotesque result which discredits the decision and must finally lead to its reversal. Sir Edward Fry finds it to be "a source of profound satisfaction that we have in the House of Lords a body of men whom the sense of all that would result from their decision could not move one hair's breadth from the strict rule of right and law." But supposing it was possible, as we believe it was, for the House of Lords to have decided exactly as it has done, and yet, "without moving one hair's breadth from the strict rule of right and law," to have avoided these disastrous practical consequences, is it really "a source of profound satisfaction" that they should have insisted on encountering them? We think not.

POLITICAL CORRUPTION.

Partizans continue to accuse each other of political corruption. One cure is the raising of the general moral atmosphere in the community. A very important practical aid to moral cleanliness in elections would be the adoption of obligatory voting seeing that most of the corruption occurs in "getting out the vote." The vote is not a chattel; it is a trust, a public duty, as well as a privilege.

The London Spectator, noted for its fairness in treating all moral issues, returns to the question of London's church-going, and upon careful study of the late church census comes to the same conclusion that we stated at the time the figures were first given to the public; viz., that nearly one half the persons able to attend service on Sunday when the count was taken, were actually present. The population of London and its suburbs is given as 6,240,336. There were in the pews upon the Sunday selected for the census, 1,524,025 persons. Counting out the proportion believed to attend twice on Sunday, it was estimated that the actual attendance was 1,253,433 individuals. This is a little less than one in four. But as the Spectator says, there never is a time when more than one half of any given population is able to attend a public service, because of childhood, old age, sickness or defective senses. Making such allowances the editor works out the problem and reduces it to its lowest terms thus: "Four hundred and seventy four persons attended out of a possible thousand." Now if any minister should count his "habitual attendants" by running over his list of pastoral visitations and then count the actual attendance upon any particular day, he will find that there are never more than two-thirds of any "regular" churchgoers in the pews at any selected service. In other words, the people in church any one Sunday are by no means all the people in the city who commonly go to church not by at least fifty per cent.