

The Century Fund,

Toronto Meeting.

On Thursday evening of last week the first public meeting in the interests of the Century Fund in Toronto, was held in Cooke's church. The sanguine ones doubted the capacity of even that great auditorium to hold the crowd that would come, the pessimists mournfully shook their heads, and wondered whether there would be a couple of hundred present. The sanguine ones were nearer right, for the church was fairly well filled, and those who were there were representative Presbyterians.

Dr. Warden was chairman, and, in his twenty-minute opening address gave the text for the evening. This million dollars was to be our thanks-offering to the Lord. The chairman's theme was "our obligation." He illustrated it by the wonderful progress our church has made during the century, and especially since the union. We had twelve ministers when the century began, we have 1,300 now. We had 360 ministers when the union was consummated in 1875, we have 1,300 at present. We had 80,000 communicants twenty-five years ago, we have 220,000 to-day. When united we raised \$982,000 for all purposes, last year we raised \$2,500,000. And this progress is ours because of the rich blessing of our God upon the labor of His people. His goodness has placed us under a deep debt of gratitude.

The Century Fund is some small recognition of that debt. It has been well received, in the General Assembly, in the Presbyteries, since the Assembly, and by the ministers, to whom alone an appeal has yet been made. They were asked to give \$100,000, and 600 of them have already responded with upwards of \$600,000. With 700 to hear from, the balance of \$30,000 should be forthcoming. What will the elders do? Dr. Warden asked, and the Hon. G. W. Ross answered,—"Just what the ministers have done, nothing more, nothing less. In justification of this appeal to classes, and pitting of class against class, Dr. Warden quoted the appeal when the Temple was built as a precedent, and so far as the record of the response is concerned, the precedent might hold.

Toronto Presbytery is asked to contribute \$150,000. There are about 13,000 communicants in the bounds, and this will mean less than \$12 per communicant during the two succeeding years. That ought to be within the possibilities. If only the idea of stewardship be kept prominent, there will be no difficulty.

Keeping to the text, the general agent, Dr. Campbell, who was the next speaker, dwelt upon "Our Opportunity." God has given us great leaders, statesmen in the church, who could forecast the times, reading the future in the light of the present, and these men urged us to embrace the present opportunity. It was our flood-tide, and if taken, would result in wonderful achievement in the succeeding century. Into the great Northwest were pouring men from all other lands as well as from the older-settled portions of our own. A nation was being built there, the first foundations were being laid. We have the opportunity of giving it form

and direction. God has entrusted to us this mighty work. Shall we prove true to the trust, or recreant to it?

Rev. A. S. Grant of Dawson City had spoken but a very few minutes when a ripple of applause, the first of the evening, though the mutterings of it had been heard, ran round the room. He spoke of "Our Great Need." One million would not meet it, and before Grant had done speaking we were ready to agree with him, though he took our breath away when, in his opening sentence, he asked for ten millions. The speaker did not tell us of our duty, but he spoke of the possibilities in the work in Alaska, and we "sensed" our duty pretty clearly before he was through.

The address to the young members was entrusted to Mr. G. Tower Ferguson, and he introduced a new element. To our mind he dwelt upon the basal element in this whole movement—the unifying influence of contributing to one common fund in order that the church may be free to prosecute her legitimate work effectively. If only we can obliterate the old dividing lines, and forget where they were; if only we can present an unbroken front as we face the work that has been laid upon us, then work will be easy, and results beyond anticipation will crown our effort. The church in Canada has never formed a fair estimate of her strength. When all her forces have united under one whom God shall give to lead us, she will simply be irresistible.

But the address of Hon. G. W. Ross fittingly closed an evening that had been growing in interest since the opening hymn. There was more than humor in his treatment of the question as a government measure, introduced by the finance minister, and which the government had pledged itself to carry through. \$1,000,000 was asked for by the measure! What reason had been urged in behalf of the vote for this sum? Was it valid? There was no doubt about that, for the reason was—we are under deep obligation to our God. None would deny the validity of that reason. Lest there might be some doubter Mr. Ross outlined the growth of our nation, under the good providence of God, during the century it has been proposed to mark by this movement. But what of the purpose for which this vote is being asked? Is it a worthy one? We are asked to contribute \$400,000 to pay our own debts. That surely is worthy. We are asked to contribute \$600,000 more to advance the work of missions, of education, and of benevolence. We ought to show our gratitude to the men who laid the foundation of our Presbyterian church in Canada. None will refuse to contribute to the assistance of the fatherless children and the widow of the minister suddenly cut down. The work of the theological schools is too evidently important to cause hesitation in that respect. It was quite evident that, were the speaker not held by loyalty to the common fund he would make his personal contribution payable to the fund for theological education alone. In his opinion the man who comes from our theological hall should be the best educated man in the community. His education should be broad enough to enable him to see on every side of a question, and to estimate the good in all things. Then, too, it

surely was good business to provide sufficient funds to carry on the work of the church without the necessity of being carried for months by the banks, at an annual cost of some thousands of dollars. On the whole he thought this vote for \$1,000,000 should pass, and that it would pass triumphantly.

Such meetings arouse interest, and give information. Men will talk of the Century Fund now who had only heard of it before. Opinions may differ, and different opinions may be ventilated, and will be the sweeter for it. The appeal for contributions will begin soon, and, before that time, men will understand the movement pretty thoroughly. That is what the average Presbyterian demands before he will respond to an appeal for money. Sentiment will not draw a cent from him; but to a rational appeal he will always respond.

An Opportunity.

It does not occur to the average man that a call for service is to him an opportunity. The call often breaks in upon his own carefully pre-arranged plan. It is frequently a call to service for which he has no inclination. It sometimes means the sacrifice of personal comfort, and the giving up of long-cherished plans. To call this an opportunity seems to him playing with words.

We usually think of opportunity as the opening of a door hitherto closed, allowing access to better things than we have formerly enjoyed. The sacrifice of an ambition, or of a long-cherished desire would scarcely be called an opportunity. Yet it may be the opportunity of a lifetime. It was so to McKay of Uganda. A successful career in his profession was opening to him, and with the keen ambition of a young Scotchman, he looked forward to it. Then came the unmistakable call to serve in Africa. It was the opportunity of his life, he accepted it, and from that day God's riches began to pour, in an ever-increasing stream, into his life.

The opportunity is coming to some in these closing months of the century, to follow out a plan long since formed, or to listen to a call that has come athwart that plan only recently. If this call be from God it is our opportunity, and we shall do well to accept it, and let the other go. It is worth an hour of conference, apart from God, to know whether this call be from God or not.

We note this item in an exchange. "We have a friend in this city who has made one hundred and eighty business applications without success. He is known, and respected, but his hair is grey." We have frequently heard it said that in all professions and callings but the ministry, age and experience were at a premium. It seems that the age-limit holds outside the ministry.

It was said of one that as he prayed he spoke as if God was near, and talked with him so really and confidently, that those who were beside him found themselves almost looking around to see where God was.—Taylor.