

THE

# Dominion Presbyterian

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Thursday, February 1st, 1900.

The man who is content with surface appearances will not meet with serious trouble in life. To him the world will seem a pretty good sort of place after all. It is the earnest man, who goes deep enough to detect the underlying selfishness, that finds it hard to believe.

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Most of the congregations have come out of the bout with the statistical fiend before this, but some of them will bear scars for some time. The secular papers give considerable space to the reports of congregational meetings, and the astute reporter has no use for anything but tangible results. When the session report says that the numbers stand as last year, but add that there has been great spiritual progress, the secular press writes that church down as non-progressive. It is not true, but according to the world-standard there has been no progress. The things that are spiritual can only be discerned by those whose spiritual eyes have been opened. It is one of the things congregations must bear as an offset to the desire for the assistance of the secular press.

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The men who are not in it know how the struggle should be conducted. We listened to two workmen discussing the campaign in South Africa the other night. Neither of them had ever smelled powder, yet the number of pointers either of them could give Buller was amazing. It reminded us of some men whom we had heard criticising their minister as to the way he did his visiting, and utilised his time. They could map out a day for the minister that would accomplish more real good than a month of days spent in the manner of that minister's ordinary

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life. These men, too, had never smelled powder. If that minister could give each of them a small district, a very small one, for he could not afford to neglect a large section of his parish, it would cure the grumbling. Men have no time to stand and talk. The king's business still requires haste, and when a man begins to discuss methods, he needs more work.

### Assembly Committee Work.

For the first week at the General Assembly the work is not interesting, except to a comparatively small number of the commissioners. The usual method has been to have certain long documents read; these are received, and the matter to which they referred, remitted to a committee to consider, and report at a later sederunt. The matter may be one of grave interest, and the committee to which it has been remitted may have been chosen with the utmost care, but no time except the interval that may be snatched from the ordinary business of the Court, or the intervals of adjournment for lunch, is at the disposal of this committee to give to the consideration of the matter in hand. Many of the men chosen to so important committee work are men who have the most lively interest in the ordinary proceedings of the Assembly. This special work they have been instructed to do prevents them from attending the ordinary sederunts with such regularity as to keep them closely in touch with the currents of opinion that prevail in regard to the questions debated.

Then, too, this method of remitting important matters to a committee without allowing a specified time in which that committee shall meet, often robs the Assembly of important counsel at critical moments. The most experienced men are out on committee work. The opening exercises, also, are often conducted with a bare quorum, because committees must meet in the intervals of adjournment, and often sit beyond the hour of resuming to finish a section of the work committed to them. And, at length, making the best of the time thus snatched, when the report of the committee is presented, it is often but half-digested, and its recommendations carry little weight. We have yet to hear of the Convener of an Assembly committee who was satisfied with either the form or the matter of his report. And little wonder!

Is it not possible to remedy this? Why should not a definite portion of the time of the General Assembly be set apart for committee-work? Let it be recognized that the work of the committees should have a definite place on the docket, that their work cannot properly be crowded into niches between other work, but is worthy of a place by itself. The General Assembly usually meets on Wednesday evening. Let the whole of Thursday be given to ordinary routine work. On that

day several committees will, in all probability, have been appointed, and matters of moment remitted to them. When the Assembly adjourns on Thursday night, let it adjourn until Friday at 1.30 p.m., thus allowing Friday morning for committee work. Then let Monday and Tuesday morning be similarly set apart for committee work, the afternoons and evenings being devoted to the usual business of the Assembly.

We believe that more business would be transacted, and that it would be better done. It is no disparagement to the conveners of committees to say that acrid debates, and useless and worrying debates have frequently been precipitated upon the Assembly by the presentation of a hastily prepared and half-understood report. There has not been time to fully consider the matter, much less has there been time to carefully compile the results of the debates in committee. Of course the personnel of each committee should be carefully guarded, so that, as far as possible, each commissioner should have a place on a committee, and yet important matters should not be entrusted to entirely untried members.

### A Highly Useful Work.

Doubtless most of the readers of The Dominion Presbyterian have heard of the work done by St. Andrew's Institute, a branch of the church work of St. Andrew's church, Toronto, so long under the pastoral care of the late Rev. D. J. Macdonnell. One branch of that work is of such a character, and has been so successful in its aim, that special reference to it is justified. We refer to the Penny Savings Bank.

The bank was established twenty-two years ago with a view of encouraging habits of thrift among a class generally too ready to squander their earnings as soon as they come into their possession. At that time the facilities for putting away small sums in savings banks were not so great as they now are. The first year 335 depositors opened accounts and the amount deposited footed up \$844.79. For the year 1899 the open accounts had increased to 1036 and the amount deposited during the year to \$10,790.35. The balance standing to the credit of depositors on the 31st of December last was \$11,069.07, the business of the year being the largest in its history, notwithstanding the fact that the rate of interest had been reduced on the 1st of January to 3½ per cent. The bank is open for two hours on Saturday nights only. Deposits of a penny and upwards are received at 3½ per cent., interest added every 6 months, the money being invested in debentures or placed in chartered banks though subject to call. The withdrawals are always largest in November and December, when the savings of the