

Our Contributors.

A FOUNDATION MAN IN CHURCH LEGISLATION.

BY KNOXIAN.

George Brown used to say that men who initiate and carry out reforms seldom get any credit or reward for their work. In so saying George Brown was distinctly right as he generally was. Initiating and carrying out reforms in either church or State involve more or less friction and fighting. When the reform has been secured the people are tired of the strife and they nearly always give the rewards to some good easy man who judiciously kept behind the wood pile while the strife was going on.

DR. JOHN LAING

furnishes in his own person a good illustration of the truth of George Brown's theory. Dr. Laing has done foundation work on nearly every scheme in the Presbyterian Church. Some of the schemes that were bitterly opposed when introduced are among the best things we have now. The credit for them is not always given to the man who suffered more than any dozen men by the friction which arose when the foundation work was being done.

Well do we remember the time when Dr. Laing began an agitation to have the scholastic part of the entrance examination to Knox College conducted by an examining board instead of by Presbyteries. A shut went up about the "rights of Presbyteries" that must have made outsiders think the Presbyterian Church was being assailed by some terrible foe. Of course most of the students were strongly opposed to the "innovation." It was not about the "rights of Presbyteries" that the student mind was mainly exercised. The fear of facing an examining board that could examine had much more to do with the college opposition to the measure than anxiety about the constitutional rights of Presbyteries.

Would any thoughtful and fair-minded minister say to-day that it is not better to have the entrance examination conducted by a competent board. The Presbytery enquires as to the character, piety, motives and general fitness of the applicant and the examining board tests his schoolship and assigns him his proper place in the classes. Candidly now, was not Dr. Laing right when he advocated this plan thirty years ago? This contributor was one of the bumptious youths who joined in the shout about the "little tyrant from Coburg" and he now apologizes publicly and is most happy to acknowledge that the Coburg minister was distinctly right.

Our Home Mission scheme is one of the best things the Church has, and the Home Mission Committee, as it has been constituted for years, has done splendid work. But it ought to be remembered that Dr. Laing devised the scheme in its main features. Nor was the present plan adopted without much opposition. The "centralization" cry was raised vigorously enough and it was strongly urged that each Presbytery should manage its own mission field. The fact was overlooked that some Presbyteries have no mission field to manage and so was the other fact that some Presbyteries could no more manage their own mission fields than they could manage the affairs of the Dominion. Good ethics required that if the whole Church raised money for Home Mission work an executive body, representing the whole Church, should disburse the money.

All the foundation work, however, in which Dr. Laing was engaged has not turned out as well as the Home Mission operations. The Probationers scheme, which, in its main features, was, we believe, devised by him, has hopelessly broken down. The failure was not caused by any inherent defects in the plan as originally drawn. Presbyteries are mainly to blame for the existing chaos which is fast becoming a scandal. Even Chalmers could not draw up a scheme that would do any good if it was not properly

carried out. Vacant congregations insisted on doing pretty much as they pleased and Presbyteries allowed them so to do. The original intention of the scheme was to supply vacancies with suitable men. How far that praiseworthy intention has been deviated from the Church knows to its sorrow. The matter was not mended by the regulations which the Assembly tacked to the scheme with marvellous regularity.

The success of the Augmentation Scheme is still an unsolved problem. Dr. Laing has had a good deal to do with this scheme also but it is only fair to say that he was from the first in favor of the sustentation principle. Whether the sustentation plan would have worked better it is impossible to say. One thing is clear—If the Augmentation Scheme fails it will be either because the plan has inherent defects or because the Church is not Presbyterian enough to work it. Than Mr. Macdonnell, Dr. Warden and others, who give much time, thought and labour to the scheme, there are no better men in our Church, or for that matter in any church.

Dr. Laing used to get a good deal of blame because he seemed to be a specialist in the matter of statistics. He was not the originator, we believe, of our present elaborate system. If we are correctly informed the late Rev. Simon C. Fraser was the man who did the first foundation work in this department. Dr. Reid, Dr. Gray and others did their full share, and, after a time, the work got into the hands of the present Master builder, who has raised the most complete statistical and financial structure known in any Church in modern times.

Probably Dr. Laing would admit that in the matter of college examinations and statistics the Church pendulum has swung to the other extreme. Is there not quite enough said now about examinations, and degrees, and bursaries, and honors, and University affiliation and all the rest of it. Is there not quite enough attention given to Church statistics? Over in the States they speak about the "statistical fiend" that has attacked the Church, and we know at least one good brother in Toronto who says that the statistical fiend is destroying the real life of the Canadian Church.

No fault to Dr. Torrance even if that view of the situation is correct. He does with marvellous accuracy and skill just what the Church asks him to do. If anybody uses the Blue Book instead of the Bible Dr. Torrance is not to blame.

THE SCHEMES OF THE CHURCH.

BY FRANCIS BLAIRIE.

A great deal has of late been written in the religious press of a very discouraging nature, relative to the financial difficulties in connection with the schemes of the Church, and some suggestions made toward remedying the evil, but in my opinion to no purpose whatever and some of them not to be commended.

Having been looking into the subject a little and gathering what information can be obtained from the General Assembly's Acts and Proceedings, generally termed the Blue Book, there is certainly abundant reason to come to the conclusion that there is great room for improvement or, as the Committee on Systematic Beneficence in Appendix No. 3½ puts it, there is ample field for ecclesiastical statesmanship, in devising a more effective method in calling out the great resources of our Church. As for system it can scarcely be said there is any, certainly no generally recognized one. It is well enough for the Committee on Systematic Beneficence to try and educate the people up to their duty, but, without some definite plan, extremely little advance will be made. Now it is not my purpose merely to find fault; that is easily done and altogether too common in many ways. My object is to propose what seems to me a more excellent way.—In the first place, I take the ground that giving to the Lord, or in other words giving to the support of Gospel Ordinances, whether at

home or abroad, is a means of grace, an act of worship, a manifestation in a practical way of the grace of love, so far reaching in its effects, that, being admitted, the whole Communion Roll must necessarily be included, and acting on that principle, I propose that the Session see to it that each member be given twelve envelopes with the name written on each one, and that on the first Sabbath of the month, a contribution enclosed in one of these, be put into a plate at the door, or each door as the case may be. The more conspicuous the arrangement in that connection, the better, that it may be a reminder. Parties would be appointed whose duty it would be to wait at the doors and take charge of the money thus collected. I would also propose that the minimum amount supposed to be put into any envelope be ten cents per month. This may seem an unnecessary provision, but I regard it otherwise. It is a very common thing for people to feel, or imagine they do, that they can't afford to give to any such purpose, thinking that a great deal is expected. Now my object in putting that low minimum is to do away with any such excuse. It would be absurd to say that any one was so poor as not to be able to give ten cents per month. The poor widow gave a very small sum, but how valuable in the sight of our Saviour, it is the principle that is the important part, not the amounts. I wouldn't think of keeping any account at all of the individual amounts given, they might not even be always the same. People will doubtless give just as they feel able. It is absolutely a free will offering to the Lord, and given in such a way would never be felt, but the aggregate would doubtless be a surprise and help to open many willingly blind eyes, to be found in every congregation, members of the Church who are not on the Roll. Such might be asked to hand in their offering without the envelope.

Having already spoken of the parties being appointed to look after the contributions, I propose that they have each a pass book on which all the names would be put down, and all the envelopes handed in would be checked off each month, so that at the end of the year it would be seen if there were any who had not contributed, and if there were such, that the Session, or some member of Session, see them and ask for their reason. I would also propose that the funds be remitted quarterly to the church treasurer. Some may look upon such a system as involving a great deal of work. I think not. There is first of all the addressing the envelopes, no doubt quite a large number; but if the elder feels it too much, no doubt many of the young people would be only too glad to assist or do the whole. When done it is for the whole year. And as for the finance, it is but a small thing that would only occupy a very short time each month. The work is exceedingly little and of a more pleasant kind than having collectors going around for contributions, etc. Very many congregations simply take up a collection or collections and divide up amongst the schemes. Now it is evident that such a method is extremely partial and does not represent the Church as such, nor yet the congregation as such, but a comparatively small portion of either. So much so is this the case, that it is scarcely correct to say that Christ's Body, the Church, is doing the work to which she is called.

The total number of communicants in the Church is given (Appendix 26) as 174,912, mission stations not being included in that number, and the sum total given to all the schemes is \$290,700. Now supposing each one were to give at the rate of twenty cents per month, which is surely an extremely low average, the largely increased amount of \$419,768 would be obtained. Without system, however, it would be a failure, and the state of spiritual life in the individual or Church must always be taken into consideration.

It might not be amiss if the individual believer, who has made a public profession of faith in Christ and supreme love, were to take

a little time and consider how the measure of love practically, compares with love to self in the way of personal gratification in all and sundry entertainments. How much per month to the one and to the other. Possibly such an investigation might result in showing a very, very small per centage of the grace of Christian liberality.

Doubtless if such a system as I have endeavored to indicate were acted upon it would prove an effectual remedy against an empty treasury, with all its attendant evils.

Sarnia, January, 1895.

FRUIT BEARING AFTER LONG SOWING.

Some of the best work done for the Master is like the flower that blooms in the desert, unnoticed by the eye of man, yet fills the air with its fragrance, and bears thus its silent testimony. Many of the best men and women have wrought quietly and unobserved in the vineyard of our Lord during the past half century in this land. Not a few of these noble pioneers have been called home to their rest and reward. Others remain doing active work for Christ, and some have retired yet manifesting the deepest interest in the progress of the Messiah's Kingdom in this and other lands. Their memories will be held in perpetual remembrance. We have a striking instance of this in the life and labors of that noble pioneer Home Missionary, the Rev. John Morrison, who labored with untiring zeal and energy in the congregations of Cedarville and Esplin, in the Presbytery of Saugeen, during the long period of thirty years. Mr. Morrison began with his people when they were establishing new homes for themselves and their children in the Canadian forest. He preached to them on the Sabbath, held prayer meetings in their humble dwellings, during the week visited them in their homes, comforted them in trouble, and in his own practical, unostentatious way gave timely help to the poor and needy. There was no more welcome visitor to the homes of his people when death was knocking at the door and summoning some loved one away. In the house of mourning like his beloved Master, the pastor was sure to be found, where his presence was a benediction. While he wept with his people in the hour of sorrow, he also rejoiced with them in the time of rejoicing. Owing to failing sight, Mr. Morrison asked to be relieved of his charge about a year ago, which was reluctantly and regretfully acquiesed in by his attached flocks and Presbytery. Mr. and Mrs. Morrison are residing in their own home in the midst of their people, manifesting the deepest interest in their temporal and spiritual welfare, visiting the sick and dying as of old, welcomed and beloved by old and young.

During last summer the work in Mr. Morrison's old field of labor was carried on with great success, by a young laborer and name-sake of the retired pastor, Mr. J. D. Morrison, B.A., student of Knox College. Mr. Morrison's faithful summer's work had a telling effect in quickening the spiritual life of the whole community. On Mr. Morrison's leaving for college in October, the services of Mr. McLeish, Evangelist, were secured to conduct the work for the winter. He lately held a series of special meetings in Esplin Church for nearly two months with marked success. Mr. McLeish is a strong Calvinistic preacher. Salvation by grace, sovereign grace, is the great doctrine which he proclaimed, night after night, to the great crowds that pressed to hear the Word of God. These services it is hoped and believed have been helpful to the faith of God's professed people, and the means under God of leading other to see their last and ruined condition and to see that Christ is their only Saviour and Redeemer. At the preparatory service held in the Esplin Church on Friday, Jan. 18th., forty united with the church by profession of faith, some of them well advanced in life, others middle