

## JUST OUT: The "Presbyterian Year Book,"

EDITED BY REV. JAMES CAMERON.

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Edited by Rev. Wm. Inglis.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, JANUARY 7, 1881.

### TIME EXTENDED.

In order to accommodate a number who have not yet completed their clubs, we have decided to extend the time TO THE 1st FEBRUARY NEXT. A good deal may yet be done, and we urge friends to make an effort, especially in congregations where THE PRESBYTERIAN has few or no readers.

#### LOOK AT LABEL

on this copy of your papers, and if you find that the figures do not indicate 31st December, 1881, kindly remit at once, and thus become entitled to the beautiful engraving, "God's Word," which is sent to all subscribers paid up till the end of this year. If it should happen that your label tells a tale of remissness or carelessness in paying your indebtedness for your Church paper—shews you to be in arrears for TWO, FOUR, OR SIX YEARS—let not a day pass without making remittance to balance account, and payment for a year in advance. Don't meanly allow your paper to go unpaid for years, and then pay up and stop. This is scarcely "doing unto others as you would be done by."

### THE SUPPORT OF THE POOR.

IN a new and sparsely peopled country like Canada there ought to be but a comparatively small number who really need to be supported by public charity. Of course there will always be some, even in the most prosperous communities, who, without any fault of their own or of their natural protectors, are in this condition of dependence; but with us all who are really in this condition might be easily and amply provided for. The vicious and improvident, or their children, are what constitute the greater portion of the burden, as they are always the most exacting in their demands and the most dissatisfied with their treatment. Of course even these cannot be allowed to starve, and they know it. Every now and then the cry is accordingly raised that a poor rate ought to be levied, and that the whole matter ought to be taken out of the region of charity, and made one of legal obligation. It will be a sad day for Canada when this course is adopted,

for all experience goes to shew that nothing is more efficient as a pauper-maker than legal provision for the support of the poor. It may be that, as things are at present, some escape from what might be called their proper share of this burden. If they do, it is to their own loss, and in leanness of soul they meet with their own appropriate punishment. It would be an imputation upon the religious character and spiritual vitality of any Christian congregation to suppose it either unable or unwilling to attend to the wants of its own poor. Nor does it savour of Phariseism to add that the heavier part of the work of attending to the necessities of those outside the Church must also fall upon the followers of Christ. It has always done so, and it is doing so now. The work has been peculiarly Christian in its character and origin, for, spite of all that men may say to the contrary, it is to the direct and indirect influences of Christianity that the legal and voluntary provision for the poor owes its very existence as well as the larger portion of its extent and power. Take away all the charity that in one way or other flows from the teaching of the wonderful Prophet of Nazareth, and it will only be a very poor residuum which will be left. To say, indeed, that Christians are all doing their duty in this respect would be wildly beyond the mark, but to affirm that they are doing almost all that is being even attempted is also too evident to be effectively gainsaid. Even in Canada, however, there is plenty of room for the full exercise of this grace, and need for more being done than has yet been accomplished; not, however, in indiscriminate giving, but in ready sympathy, careful inquiry, and wise as well as prompt liberality. Clamorous mendicants will not easily suffer or starve. The difficulty lies not with them but with the modest, the retiring and the self-respecting, who will do anything rather than beg, and whom a little timely help and sympathy might strengthen and comfort and save. Will our readers excuse us if we ask whether or not they are doing all they can, and all they ought, in this good work?

### THE WEEK OF PRAYER.

THE week of prayer at the beginning of the year, which has now become something like an institution, has again nearly closed, and it is to be hoped that it has been a season of refreshing the world over, the results of which will be felt in blessing for not only days, but weeks and months and years to come. No spiritually-minded person would ever think of objecting to such special seasons of devotion, or would ever for a moment doubt about the certainty of full and overflowing answers being vouchsafed to such united supplications. If even two are encouraged to look with perfect confidence for gracious returns to prayer unitedly presented, shall not the mighty company, not easily numbered, out of many a kindred and people and tongue who have for these past days been meeting at the throne of grace, with confessions, supplications and giving of thanks have a like full confidence and a proportionately encouraging response? To think otherwise would be a practical surrender of all confidence in the efficacy of prayer, and in that would be involved the surrender of all that is really valuable in our faith and all that is really comforting and encouraging in our hope. God, our own God, really and truly, hears and answers prayer. Alas! for the individual or the church where this is practically ignored though still in theory retained as among the things most surely believed, and among the privileges most earnestly improved. Where the theory even has been surrendered it is not a case of spiritually dying, but simply one of spiritual death.

While all this, however, is regarded by every professing Christian as among the most evident of commonplaces, may there not be the possibility, unless great watchfulness is exercised, of such a fixed season of special supplication degenerating into a form, or on the other hand of its coming to be regarded as of peculiar significance and value, so that when it has been got over with more or less fervour and interest the ordinary and quiet use and wont is to be fallen back upon as at once inevitable and a matter of course? We do not, however, say that this possibility would be any valid reason for giving up the week of prayer at the beginning of January. Very much the reverse, though it is perfectly evident that in very many instances it is not gone into with the fervour and spontaneity by which in earlier times of its history it was characterized. In very many congregations, nay in whole districts, it is scarcely taken any notice of at

all, and it would be uncharitable in no common degree, and in many instances very wide of the mark, to say that in all such cases this neglect arose from a species of languor and spiritual deadness prevailing in these communities or congregations. In some instances this may have been the case. In others it is no doubt very different. The subjects suggested for each day of the past week are very appropriate for all the year round, and it will not be well if they are not made subjects for united supplication, not only for the first days of the year, but for all the rest. We should hope that very many, in their private and family devotions as well as in the more public meetings, joined cordially in the course suggested by the Evangelical Alliance. But it will be better and more blessed still if there be increasingly established the world over, a concert of prayer, not for one week merely, but for every week; when men and women, everywhere and at all times, shall lift up holy hands without wrath or doubting; when every season shall be one of special supplication, and the revival and the blessing shall be as continuous as they are precious and indispensable.

It will be matter for gladness and gratitude indeed if this be the case with all Christ's people and all His churches during 1881; if an ever-growing number have to say, it may be with wonder, it certainly will be with joy, "There have been those who have been praying for us, and the Lord has been graciously answering their petitions as we know and feel this day," if, not by spurts of excitement, but by the steady glow of living faith, of ardent affection, and of changed spiritualized lives, the moral miracles of healing become ever more numerous and ever more striking and unquestionable; if the whole tone of thought and sentiment become more and more elevated and purified; and if even those who have not themselves been partakers of the blessing have in the presence of such transformations—so wondrous and so unquestionable—to acknowledge that their usual theories are at fault in accounting for the phenomena, while the practical good produced is, they must confess, as evident as it is influential and excellent. After all, the moral miracles of healing are the mightiest and most satisfactory. The changed heart and the forsaken sins are of far more significance than crutches cast aside at any miracle-working shrine, or than pads and bandages hung up as votive offerings and ocular proofs that visitors from the other world have at particular places and in particular circumstances shewn themselves mighty in working physical changes, if not in producing spiritual vitality and health, and filling the soul with light and peace. Whether or not the power of physical healing is still to be reckoned on as part of the instrumentality vouchsafed to Christ's Church for the gathering in of Christ's people and for their upholding in the faith we shall not say. Well authenticated cases of such healing in post-apostolic days are still evident desiderata. But about the moral miracles there can be no doubt whatever, and in the presence of these, and with such indefinitely multiplied, we can well leave the speculations about the other to rest in the meantime in abeyance under the full conviction that the recorded doings of the Lady of Lourdes or the cures of Springfield or Marmedorf or Boston or half a dozen of other such places have no such power to silence the gainsayer or to give rest to those who are tossed about and not comforted, as the sight of spiritual madmen, clothed and in their right mind at the feet of Christ; the darkened life made bright and beautiful, and the hopeless, aimless soul a veritable partaker of that which serves it as an anchor entering in within the veil, and all-sufficient to make it ride out in safety the mightiest spiritual tempest that ever blew. John Foster remarks in one place that when a man was able to ring the great bell of the universe it was a clear sign that the sermon coming after was certainly worth listening to. The misery is that the so-called bell-ringing at Lourdes and other places has ushered in no sermon whatever, or at the very best none worth either the time or patience necessary to attend to or be benefited by its teachings. But a soul enslaved—whom Satan may have bound, lo, these thirty or forty, ay, or even fifty years—set forth emancipated and free, is not only the ringing the bell to the sermon, but is a mighty sermon itself, and one which so bears the seal of its divine Author that no thoughtful man can hesitate, in the contemplation of a change so radical and so permanent as it indicates, to confess that here is miracle, and from heaven.

Blessed with abundance of such miracles during