

Editorial Articles.

THE CHURCH'S ROLL-CALL.

The time of the year is upon us when it is held to be appropriate to have evening gatherings and the like, of more or less a social character, in connection with churches and Sunday schools. In lieu of—or perhaps, better still, in addition to—the ordinary “Anniversary,” when with sacrifice and trouble (which does not always properly pay for itself), some famous Doctor of Divinity is brought from a distance—try the “Roll-Call!”

Members will vote for a Roll-Call, when as each name is called, members are to respond—or if dead or absent, have some one to speak for them, who never themselves opened their lips before the assembled church; and they don't see till afterwards how they have “committed” themselves. Well, so much gained! And a meeting that will compel preparation and thought and planning beforehand, and furnish food for many remarks and recallings afterwards, must needs be an important meeting; and where the object is a religious one, must needs be a good meeting.

In very old churches, the names which properly belong to the last generation, might be passed lightly over, or—beyond a certain date agreed on—be left out altogether. But commencing, say, twenty years ago, let the names be called, and responded to. Letters from former members will get into the habit of finding their way to the pastor in time for this meeting, as it becomes known to be an “institution” of that church; those resident will think of something to say that is edifying. It is wonderful what bright thoughts one sometimes has when alone. A good and wise plan is to repeat aloud—and several times over if necessary—the expression or thought that has struck the mind. We have it then; we have made it “ours.”

In Napoleon's time, the French regiments had a Roll-Call, at which all the names of the recent dead were included; and a comrade would give a step forward from the ranks, and, saluting the officer, answer, “Died upon the Field of Battle!” Think in our churches, of this one and that one being an wered for, “Dead upon the Mission

field!” “Died in Hope Triumphant!” “Went into the Lord's Work, and now winning Souls in the Backwoods!” “Sick, and nearing the Heavenly Gates, but sends his Christian Love and Cheer!” “Sore Buffeted and Afar, but with you this day in Spirit!” A writer in *The Treasury* (New York) says:

“The simpler the programme of exercises, the better. It ought to be a service admitting of larger spontaneity of testimony and desire, a kind of home fireside-meeting for the local church. Sometimes a sermon is preached, sometimes the Lord's Supper is administered; the whole day, in certain places, being given to the matter—and it is worthy of it.”

As such an institution gets established in a church, particular notice will naturally be directed to the changes of the twelve months immediately preceding. It will be useful information for many members to know just where certain lately removed members are, and what they are doing for the Lord, and what they are doing for themselves. And the church has a right to know what use those former members have made of the letters of transfer they took with them—for every church has a right to insist upon removing members taking a letter, and using that letter! And to some minds, the farther back the date is, the more interest centres around the case. The editor enjoyed it better than a feast, the meeting in Toronto last year of an old school class-mate of fifty-six years previously—and they had never met in the interval.

A church should always be devising new ways of working—the old foundation motives being ever the same: the glory of Christ, and the good of souls—and seeing that “socials” and entertainments have run themselves into the ground, and become in many instances a snare, rather than a help to godliness, it is a good time to enlist the Roll-Call; and to keep it, as at the beginning, a solemn, spiritual, inspiring reminder of mercies in the past, and goodness in the future.

SOME THINGS WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR.

Wishing is a cheap commodity, but there is more in it than many people think. Wishing begets desire, and desire runs into plans and schemes to bring the thing about. And, seeing that as a