

THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JULY 11, 1883.

THE N. Y. "Independent" lately referred to the death of a wealthy citizen. The only evidence the "Independent" had of his decease was that he had given a million dollars for the education of the coloured people of the South. The good man is alive and well, but the "Independent" concluded that any man who gives a million dollars for a philanthropic purpose must necessarily be dying when he does so. This is rather a hard commentary on the lives of American rich men. Some rich men, however, won't do anything generous even when dying.

A FRIEND informs us that one of the clerical delegates of the Pan Presbyterian Council in Belfast is an Irishman. As the gentleman in question resides in Nova Scotia and has not laboured very long in this Church, we may be excused if we were not acquainted with his nationality. The fact remains, however, that not a single Irish minister west of Truro, N.S. has been sent to the council to be held in the very heart of Irish Presbyterianism. The more one thinks of the blunder the more he wonders how a body like the General Assembly could have made it.

A GOOD many people labour under the delusion that the itinerant system makes much more frequent changes in the pastorates of Methodist churches than take place in any other communion. This is not so. The average pastorate of the Baptist Church of the United States is about three years; in the Congregational Church three years; and in the Presbyterian about three years. If these figures are correct—and we have them on the best authority—then there must be many pastorates in these three Churches a long way under three years, for we know many go up to ten, twenty, thirty, and even to forty years. It should be remembered, however, that the Methodist pastorates can never average three years. If the maximum length is three years the average must be a good deal less. It may be a bad feature of our religious life on this continent, but it is clear that we have struck a period of short pastorates. Probably short pastorates are more in keeping with the peculiarities of our new life than long ones. Things are always more or less unsettled in a new country. In the old land things run in ruts. We think it would be found on examination that, other things being equal, pastorates are long in Canada and the United States in proportion as the old country element predominates in congregations.

I HAVE been attending that church for a year and no one has recognized me. Indeed! That is a serious matter for you. The very fact that you have not been recognized is of itself presumptive evidence that you have been living a useless life for the past year. If you had brought two or three children from the street to the Sabbath school the superintendent and most of the teachers would have recognized you at once. If you had induced a few careless, Godless men to attend church the minister and some of the elders would soon have recognized you. If you had gone regularly to prayer meeting most of the praying members would have found you out. If you had even rented part of a pew and paid for it regularly some of the managers would know you quite well by this time. An earnest worker in any department commands speedy recognition. Good workers are not so numerous that they escape notice very long. Come now,

what did you do to deserve anything special in the way of recognition? Is the Sabbath school so overcrowded in your church that they never see a stranger? Is the prayer meeting so well attended that a man may attend fifty times a year without any one seeing him? Honestly now, did you do anything more during the year, than attend service irregularly? If you had acted more like an earnest Christian don't you think you would have felt more at home in the church?

THE Presbyterians of Canada may claim credit for having shewn other, and older, and larger Presbyterian bodies the way to deal with the organ question. Twelve years ago the General Assembly of the Canada Presbyterian Church permitted congregations to use an instrument in all cases where there is reasonable unanimity on the question. After a long and bitter controversy, the United Presbyterian Church of the United States came to substantially the same decision, a short time ago. The last General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland solved the difficulty, by the same deliverance. The General Assembly of the Irish Church has followed suit. The Free Church Assembly declared by a majority that the use of instruments is not contrary to the Word of God and the Irish Assembly found that congregations using an instrument, are not amenable to discipline. For all practical purposes both decisions are the same as that given in Canada twelve years ago. Whether our example was good or the reverse it is something to know that these old influential churches have followed it. If we are on the wrong side the company is getting large and rather distinguished. We don't know that any of the distinguished debaters in the Free and Irish Assemblies quoted our action as a precedent, but they took our decision all the same. The decision will not injure these churches any more than it did ours.

THE Rev. Mr. Parsons alluded to a matter in the Toronto Presbytery the other day to which we ask the very special attention of our readers. It appears that one of the elders of Knox Church is an employé in the Toronto Post-office. Sabbath labour is required of him, and he determined to resign rather than desecrate the Lord's day. Mr. Parsons very properly advised him not to resign, but to throw upon the Government the responsibility of discharging him for not working upon the Sabbath. We earnestly hope the elder will take this advice. If the Government of this professedly Christian country dare dismiss a public servant because he refuses to labour on Sabbath, it is high time the people knew it. Are the people of Canada to understand that one of the necessary qualifications for the civil service of this country is to be a Sabbath breaker? If so let the Government proceed to carry out their theory. The people have very little control over the railways of the country, though they built some of them with their own money; but fortunately we are yet a self-governed people. Though we sympathize with this elder and every other man who has to suffer in a Christian country for conscience' sake, we are not sorry that the case has occurred. His dismissal will force on a crisis on the Sabbath question, and the sooner it comes the better. Meantime let every public servant whose position is threatened because he will not labour on Sabbath throw on the Government the responsibility of dismissing him.

SABBATH DESECRATION.

THE action on Sabbath observance taken by the Presbytery of Toronto at its meeting last week was both fitting and timely. Those interested in the proper observance of the Sabbath do not fail to perceive that there is a growing disregard of the requirements of the sacred day. The opponents of the Sabbath may ridicule the claims put forth in its behalf. They may impute any but the right motives on which they are urged. All the more reason why Christian people and those who desire the public welfare should stand firm in defence of one of the greatest blessings we owe to Christianity. There is no desire to interfere with the liberty of others; there should be just as little desire to allow the rights of the people to be trampled upon as they are now, and will be much more largely if the present tendency extends much further in the same direction. The number of people employed in Sunday labour in Canada is now far from being considerable. That number is increasing every year. Cases of necessity and mercy do not justify half the

amount of the Sunday labour now performed on that day.

Railway Companies have this season increased the number of passenger trains running on Sabbath. Steamboat companies have made it their business to run excursions at cheap rates on that day for the special purpose of inducing great numbers to travel by them. Extra Sunday labour is being exacted by post-office authorities. This is inflicting an unjustifiable wrong on employes, and it is simply demoralizing in its effects. The dimensions of this evil may as yet be measureable; but, if the public conscience is not aroused to action, they will very rapidly expand. Many who cater for the public amusement and recreation will not be content to close their businesses on the Sabbath if they see railway and steamboat companies and the post-office authorities disregard the sacredness of the day, and wound the feelings of the Christian and order-loving portion of the community.

In seeking to direct public attention to this important question, the Toronto Presbytery were discharging a duty incumbent upon them. Mr. Wilson, Dr. Caven, Mr. Parsons, Mr. Milligan and others gave no uncertain sound on this question that must soon press itself on public attention. They have assumed the proper attitude in dealing with a subject with which the true well-being of the people is most intimately associated. They are not the men to let the matter drop till a satisfactory conclusion has been reached. The views expressed by them commend themselves to the judgment and conscience of the Christian community. The people ought to give them the necessary moral support to render effective their efforts to conserve the blessings of the day of rest.

The Ministerial Association of Toronto also deserve credit for the opportune action taken by them before their regular meetings were discontinued for the season. The attention of the various evangelical bodies in their annual Assemblies, Conferences, and Synods, was called to the importance of dealing immediately with Sabbath desecration. The result so far as has been ascertained is decidedly satisfactory. Judging from published reports, the subject received due consideration from the bodies under whose notice it was brought, and committees were appointed to consider the nature and extent of the evil, and to devise means for its removal.

In all sections of the Church evangelical concerted action is wanted. All are agreed as to the sacredness of the Lord's day. Its importance as a benevolent institution is universally recognized. There are no real differences of opinion wide enough to prevent united action on a subject of deep interest to all professing Christians. The design contemplated is twofold: to enlighten the public conscience on the sin of Sabbath desecration, and if need be to approach the legislature to urge that existing laws be cleared of all ambiguity, and that they be impartially enforced.

Christian people need to exercise vigilance in regard to this question. If they are themselves indifferent, their rights will be encroached upon. If they do not guard the sacredness of the day they will soon have cause for astonishment at the rapidity with which anti-Sabbatarian views will be propagated. It is while men sleep that the enemy sows tares. There is reason for alarm. There is an urgent call for consistent individual and united action to preserve the Sabbath from the encroachments with which it is at present menaced by self and pleasure.

DIRT, DISEASE AND DEATH.

AT Damietta, on the Delta of the Nile the scourge of cholera has appeared. During the short time it has been at work its ravages have been deadly. People are dying there at the rate of about 115 a day. As usual when a virulent epidemic breaks out the inhabitants become panic-stricken. All who can fly from the plague-infected place, betake themselves as far as possible from the danger. The medical men are overworked and several of them have succumbed to the fell disease they were unable to combat.

This outbreak of cholera has been sudden. No premonitory warnings preceded the cable announcement of the first fatal cases reported. Since the beginning of the dreadful mortality at Damietta there has been no diminution of its fatal results. Day after day the information comes that the deaths of the preceding twenty-four hours have been over a hundred. Despite the most rigid precautions the disease has been extending. Deaths have occurred at Man-