

## THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY APRIL 4, 1883.

It is a definitely understood rule that anonymous communications to a journal, whatever may be their interest, are from the fact of their anonymity absolutely valueless. Last week a Scarborough correspondent omitted to give his address. It would be a kindness to us and a benefit to himself if he would now supply the omission.

FROM an announcement in our advertising columns it will be seen that the seventh annual meeting of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society will be held in the school room of New St. Andrew's Church, Toronto, next week. These meetings will, it is confidently expected, be of a most interesting character. The public meeting on Tuesday evening, 10th inst., ought to be an overflowing one. This Society is year by year becoming a more influential auxiliary in the Church's work of extending the cause of Christ in heathen lands.

A CONTEMPORARY gives the following very suggestive passage from Renan's "Recollections of His Youth." After giving up his religion, he says:

"The universe assumed the aspect of a cold and arid desert. From the moment when Christianity was no longer true, everything else appeared to me indifferent, frivolous, scarcely worthy of attention. The collapse of that which had sustained my life left a feeling of emptiness like that which follows an attack of fever or a disappointment in love. The struggle in which I had been absorbed was so ardent that now I found everything narrow and mean. The world looked mediocre and poor in virtue. I seemed to behold a fall, a decay; I felt almost in an anti-hill of pigmies."

He also says that though he remained moral in his conduct there seemed no good reason for being moral. Here is a warning for those people who tell us that a collapse of faith would not necessarily be followed by immorality. If a man trained as Renan was in his younger days felt under no obligation to be moral when he laid aside his faith it may well be asked how would men of grosser natures act under similar circumstances? Renan's experience shows that when religion goes morality must go along with it.

"No minister can please everybody." The frequency with which we hear this remark made shows that there is a universal underlying conception that it would be a good thing if ministers could please everybody. Where is it said in the New Testament that a minister should try to please everybody? Where is it said that he should try to please anybody. Paul did not please everybody. His congregation mobbed and imprisoned him more than once. Christ did not please everybody. Some of the men he preached to crucified him. Paul teaches that part of a minister's duty is to "reprove." People are not apt to be very well pleased when reprov'd. The same authority tells us that a minister should at times "rebuke." To rebuke men rarely pleases them. The theory that a minister of the Gospel should mainly and constantly aim at pleasing everybody is low, grovelling and unscriptural. The only popularity worth having is that which is obtained by honest, manly dealing with men's consciences and hearts. The sincere and lasting respect of many men is often obtained by conscientiously doing that which doesn't please them, but which their consciences tell them ought to be done. Burke told the electors of Bristol that he had "advanced their interests contrary to their opinions." Should a minister of the Gospel take lower ground?

AFTER reading the last issue of "The Bystander" on Canadian politics and politicians one cannot help asking the question—Are Canadians fit for self-government? The late election in Ontario is described as a mere "faction fight," in which the combatants do

not conduct themselves with anything like propriety. The public men of Ontario, "though servants of faction and no saints, keep themselves, for the most part, in decent moral vogue; they may job, but they do not steal." A very doubtful compliment certainly, and one which clearly implies that the public men of some of the other Provinces do steal. In another Province "the Treasury is empty," "direct taxation stares the people in the face," "a conspiracy is in progress for extorting money from Confederation," and the "master of the political situation" seems to be a "minor rival of Jim Fisk." The Legislative Council of a third Province "is put exactly to the same use as its larger counterpart, the Senate of the Dominion. It is a political infirmary, alms house and bribery fund at the same time." In a fourth there has been a "saturnalia of land-jobbing," and "municipal corruption has broken out in the capital." Is this really a correct description of Canadian politics and Canadian public men? If it is correct, or anything like correct several questions must suggest themselves to every patriotic citizen. Are we really fit for self-government? How long can Canada exist as a nation under such political conditions? We have free institutions, self-government, a free press, freedom of speech, a good educational system, and the Gospel. How does it come about that, with all these advantages, our political life is so bad? May it not be possible that the "Bystander" takes a dark view of the political situation? Probably the "Bystander" would answer this question categorically—Are Canadians fit for self-government?

THE cruel and scurrilous attack made upon the Rev. James Robertson, Superintendent of Missions for the North-West, by an anonymous writer in the "Mail" a few days ago produced a great amount of indignation. Every decent man feels that Mr. Robertson has been grossly abused. There are few men in the Church, probably, that can better afford to treat his assailant with dignified contempt than can Mr. Robertson; but the malice and brutality of the attack remain all the same. It is much to be regretted that a leading journal like the "Mail" allowed such a communication to appear in its columns. It is quite true that our contemporary did all in its power to make amends, but it does not help matters much to say that the character of the letter was not noticed on account of the inevitable hurry of business. It should have been noticed. No man's reputation is safe if a malicious libeller can push malignant aspersions through the hands of subordinates unnoticed—perhaps unread—into the columns of a daily paper. We know very well that it is very difficult for the responsible conductors of daily journals to examine carefully everything that goes into type. That, however, is but one side of the question. Respectable citizens should be protected, and when they are not protected from such assaults journalism suffers as well as the person attacked. If newspaper conductors would agree among themselves to give the name of such assailant, if asked for, the responsibility would rest upon the writer. Why should the conductors of a journal be under any obligations to keep secret the name of every man who assails his neighbour in their columns? Why should such a rule exist in journalism? What good purpose does it serve? As long as it exists all journalists must observe it; but why should it exist? Bearing the responsibility and odium that often come from the publication of anonymous communications brings neither gain nor glory to a newspaper.

## THE HOME MISSION COMMITTEE.

THE Western Section of the Home Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church met in Toronto last week. A synopsis of the business transacted appears on another page of this issue. Representatives from Quebec on the east and Manitoba on the west, and from most of the Presbyteries between these limits, met for the transaction of the half-yearly business connected with this most important department of the Church's work.

There are people who imagine they know a great deal, who claim to be conversant with the quickly beating pulses of active life, and to be deep in their knowledge of human nature, who rather pride themselves on their sagacity in discovering that ministers as a rule make poor business men. Had some of these preternaturally shrewd critics been present at

the meetings of the Home Mission Committee they would have had good reason to revise a prejudice that in many cases will not bear examination. With the exception of one gentleman—the Mayor of Sarnia—all the members of the Committee present were ministers. It is open to question if a committee composed of men in other professions would have been able in the same time to transact a similar amount of business with an equal degree of careful consideration of details to which each individual case was subjected in the deliberations of the Home Mission Committee. It is not claimed that as a general thing clergymen are possessed of superior executive talent, but it is claimed that in this respect they are neither much better nor worse than other men. While much of the efficiency of the Home Mission Committee is justly due to the special fitness of the Convener and Secretary for the positions they occupy, the members composing the Committee contribute their share to the remarkable success that has attended its management in the past. That this important part of the Church's work is conducted by men possessing so largely the confidence of the people is very satisfactory. It is essential that it should be so. Divided counsels, sectional jealousies, and personal rancours would be destructive. Happily there is not the slightest evidence for suspecting the late existence of such evil surmising. Neither can it be said that there is any lack of manly independence visible in the Committee's deliberations. Each member seems zealous in the interests of the particular constituency he represents, while this is not permitted to blind him to the general requirements of the Church.

No time is wasted in wordy eloquence. Life is too short for that, and business is too pressing. There is a systematic order rigidly followed out. All possible facts are elicited. However enthusiastic an individual member may be in his advocacy of a particular case, his claim is kindly, but at the same time firmly subjected to the searching light of a clear criticism in order that every member of the Board may be seized of its true inwardness. There are the most conscientious effects to do justice to every case on its merits. At the recent meeting the feeling is general, that in this respect the results arrived at are very satisfactory. It is not claimed that absolute perfection has been attained. There was unmistakably the honest endeavour to come to just and wise conclusions, and it is within the mark to say that it has been approximately successful. While there was an earnest effort to avoid all appearance of undue discriminations in the allotment of services and grants, so that all sections might obtain an equitable share, thoughtful and anxious attention was devoted to the ever increasing claims of the great North-West. What could be done with the resources in men and means at their disposal has been done by the Committee, so that it is expected a good work in that important field will be accomplished this summer.

It is expected that the annual report will present a favourable showing as to the amount contributed by the Church during the financial year now nearing its close. This is encouraging. At the same time it should stimulate to better and still more sustained effort to advance the great work specially under the supervision of the Home Mission Committee. Presbyterian people love their Church. They are attached to its principles, its polity, and its history. That is one reason for seeking to advance its prosperity and usefulness. There are higher reasons. This Dominion has a great future before it. It is destined to occupy a leading part in the civilization of the future. The value of that civilization will depend on the place Christianity obtains in the personal and national life of the people. Presbyterianism has ever been the firm friend of liberty and progress. Together with other branches of the Christian Church, it is from its position and resources fitted to exert a powerful influence for good in extending the work of Christ in this young nationality. Let its friends realize their responsibility, and appreciate their duty, and a great and useful future awaits the Presbyterianism of Canada.

## CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

IMPROVEMENT in many things connected with the Presbyterian churches in Canada is discernible. The first settlers in too many instances had the greatest difficulty in obtaining public religious services at all to be very fastidious about accessories. Many hearts were gladdened when it was known that in some sparsely inhabited settlement a Presbyterian