

The Presbyterian Review.

Vol. XII.—No. .

TORONTO, JUNE 11, 1896.

\$1.50 per Annum

The Presbyterian Review.

Issued EVERY THURSDAY, from the office of the Publishers, Rooms No. 20, 21, 23, 25 Aberdeen Block, South-East corner Adelaide and Victoria Streets, Toronto.

TERMS, \$1.50 per annum.

All communications for either Business or Editorial Departments should be addressed PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, Drawer 2464, Toronto, Ont.

ADVERTISING RATES.—Under 3 months, 15 cents per line per insertion; 3 months, \$1.00 per line; 6 months, \$1.75 per line 1 year, \$3.00. No advertisement charged at less than five lines. None others than unobjectionable advertisements taken.

Toronto, June 11, 1896.

The General Assembly.

THE scene presented at the opening of the General Assembly last night at the Central Church was impressive and most inspiring. The crowded house, the undivided attention, the ringing utterances of the preacher, and the grave decorum of the fathers and brethren, lighted up, here and there, with the glow of enthusiasm as a forcible passage went straight home, boded well, were an augury needed, for the earnestness with which the work of the sessions, now in full swing, will be conducted. The retiring Moderator was vigorous and masterly. His message was timely, comprehensive in its survey, and expressed with that energy and directness which are conspicuous in Dr. Robertson's addresses. The grand sweep of the sermon shows the familiarity of the speaker with the work of the Church, his knowledge of the needs of the day and his courage in facing duty. Dr. Robertson magnifies the power of the Gospel in every position he assumes. In Christianity, of a virile type, he finds the remedy for social cancers, and the foundations on which communities and nations must be established. He warns against the danger of neglecting localities where the population is declining and religion allowed to decay. He instances the condition of some of the Eastern States where, by a displacement of the population, weak and dying congregations were left to languish. It has been found necessary to prosecute Home Mission work in these States to recover, if possible, lost ground. There is real danger of a similar condition of affairs in Canada. As Dr. Robertson points out, the population of Canada has decreased during the period between 1881 and 1891 in thirty-eight constituencies, due to some extent to the soil becoming exhausted, to the lumber industry disappearing from certain places, to the hankering after city life, and to other obvious causes. Examples can and have been furnished to the same effect, but from different causes, in the "townships" of Quebec, where English speaking Protestants have been pushed out by the onset of the French Canadian habitat directed by the colonization genius of the Roman Church. The weak congregation, from whatever cause the "weakness" may arise, requires the tender and loving sympathy and support of the Church, and that duty is one of the most important and sacred the Church has to discharge.

Another extremely important point emphasized is the great necessity of evangelizing the population in the West as

the country is being settled. The settler must be followed by the Gospel and the Gospel must be presented to the settler on the frontier, to the miner, the profane American and other foreign elements, by able, skilled, and successful preachers of the Word. The catechist, the student, and the wandering probationer are useful and they do admirable work, but the pioneer work in the mountains, and on the wide prairies ought to be in the hands of approved ministers whose experience in dealing with men of varied character has been tested and whose ability to break the Word of life has been signally proved. The Church ought to aim at the noble end of giving of her best to her most needy and most difficult field. For much depends on a right beginning. The stability of the religious and civil institutions of the West depends, in Dr. Robertson's opinion, on the hold that the Gospel may lay on the people now. He is right absolutely so. He is master of the subject as none else is, and his urgent warnings ought to receive the especial attention of the General Assembly. He points out the heterogeneous character of the population, and the danger of a Godless people springing up and possessing our great Western territories. Is there any reason to doubt the probability? The Church must act. Dr. Robertson shows the geographical difficulties that exist in consolidating the various parts and peoples of the great Dominion. They are real. He graphically likens the country to a huge dumb-bell, the narrow neck of land between East and West, being uninhabitable for nearly one thousand miles. The bond of sentiment that should exist between both these parts, he suggests, ought to be founded on Church connection and religious interest. Again he takes up sure ground. With an unbelieving West and a Roman Catholic East, where will Ontario be? he asks. Let the Church answer! Here the retiring Moderator faithfully places the two great fields of missionary effort before the Assembly, the West, the enormous responsibilities towards which, it seems to us have never been adequately acknowledged; the East, where the Work of French Evangelization is being conducted vigorously within the means at hand but far short of the needs, and possibilities of the field.

Happily, burning questions of controversy will not, as far as can be now seen, disturb the deliberations of the the august body. A considerable portion of the time will be devoted to the routine work of the Church as furnished by the reports of the standing committees. But, in addition, questions of great importance will, as always, claim the attention of the Court this year.

There is the Knox College Professorships. It has not become known at this writing what recommendation the Board will make, but whether one professor be appointed, and the services of lecturers availed of for another year, as some suggest, or whether the Board recommend Dr. Robinson and one of the prominent alumni of Knox for the two vacancies, the action of the Assembly will be of peculiar interest and importance, for the welfare of the College which is bound up with the welfare of the Church, greatly depends, and especially so at this juncture in its history, on a wise decision. The proposal of the Board will most likely be accepted by the Assembly, for while the college is