

THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 1882.

THE Rev. J. M. Douglas and Miss Roger, missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in Canada at Indore, India, are at present in this country on furlough.

THERE are only 1,000 Agnostics in England. Judging from the amount of noise they make, one would suppose there was a million at least. 'Twas always thus. One sore head in a congregation makes more noise than a score of active, earnest Christians. One heretic in a church makes more fuss than a hundred orthodox men. One Agnostic in a community attracts more attention than a hundred Christians. Foolish people conclude that the noise an Agnostic makes must necessarily mean influence. They cannot distinguish between fuss and power. Do these people who talk about "society being honeycombed with scepticism," ever reflect that in all England there are only a thousand Agnostics?

THE Boston "Journal" thus describes the condition of a congregation that has long been hearing candidates:—

"Restlessness and the critical habit grow upon such a congregation until it clamours for a fresh candidate each Sunday, very much as the Roman populace used to shout for a new victim in the arena. Spiritual barrenness and absence of religious activity are as sure to attend such a system as night is to follow day."

Very cleverly said, but very hard on the congregation, and still harder on the candidates. Fancy a congregation in church on Sabbath morning, instead of being in a devotional frame of mind, clamouring for a fresh candidate, as the Roman populace used to shout for a new victim in the arena. Fancy the feelings of a preacher as he walks into the pulpit conscious that the supposed worshippers are shouting for him as for a new victim! And yet this description is in many cases true to the life. Just what remedy to apply is another question. Perhaps there is no remedy in the Presbyterian and Congregationalist systems.

IN the matter of hearing candidates and having a long vacancy, a Congregationalist church in a Massachusetts town takes the palm. This church was vacant for nine years, and heard two hundred and forty candidates. The settlement was not unanimous. A minority that had broken up one council that met to install the minister, and tried to prevent the action of the second, entered a protest. The "Christian at Work" thinks it would be better to authorize a committee to settle a minister over such congregations than allow such a disgraceful state of things to continue. Certainly it would. And just here is the right place to say that this is the view held by many Presbyterians, with this difference, that they would substitute the Presbytery for a committee. There is a point at which a Presbytery should interfere when congregations seem determined to go on hearing scores of candidates. Where that point is must be determined by circumstances. The line should be drawn a long way on this side of nine years and two hundred and forty candidates.

WE are quite aware that every question cannot come first at the meetings of Assembly. There must be order, and something left over to the closing sederunts. This, however, is no reason why certain matters should always be brought up near the close, and discussed, if discussed at all, in a very thin house. The Sabbath Observance Report and the Sabbath School Report were this year, as usual, brought up very near the close of the meeting, when the Assembly was not much larger than the Toronto Presbytery.

The Sustentation and Supplemental Schemes, which have been before the Church for two years, were handed over to a Committee very near the close of the meeting. Now, what the ministers and people of this Church wish to know is why three such important matters were left over and taken up in the dying hours of the Assembly? Will any one say that whole sederunts were not taken up with matters of infinitely less importance than either of the three? Is the Sabbath so well kept in the Dominion that the Sabbath Observance Report is little more than read year after year? Are the children of the Church so well trained that it is not necessary to say anything about Sabbath schools? Are our ministers so well supported that no action need be taken in the way of trying to increase their stipends? Just before these three important questions were hurriedly put through a very thin house, a considerable part of a sederunt was spent in discussing the mode of examining students—a question which was settled only a few years ago. Theological education is important, but it is not everything. There are many who think there is altogether too much time spent in the Assembly on minor questions connected with the colleges. It is a very unfortunate thing that this movement to curtail the process of Presbyteries should have been made when steps are about being taken towards endowment. It does not help the colleges financially or any other way to be continually dragging these matters of detail before the Assembly. Whether the students are to be examined by a Presbytery or a Committee is not a matter of immediate and overwhelming importance. We mention this question merely as a sample of others that are allowed to take precedence over such matters as Sabbath Observance, the Sabbath School, and Sustentation Fund. Everything can't come first, but the more important should come before the less important, and that which many think is of no importance at all.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND.

THE General Assembly of the Irish Presbyterian Church met in Belfast on the evening of Monday, the 7th of June. Dr. Stevenson, the retiring Moderator, preached from John xvii. 20. After the sermon, the Assembly was constituted and addressed by the chair. The Rev. Mr. Killam was unanimously chosen Moderator. The attendance at the Assembly was very large, and the interest manifested in the proceedings keen and sustained. The principal discussion was on the use of instrumental music in public worship. The debate was very earnest and able, though occasionally somewhat acrimonious. The result was that liberty to use instrumental music, as craved by the overturists, was refused, but by a very close vote, 345 voting to give congregations the liberty asked for, and 360 against. It is very evident that the question is, even in Ireland, coming rapidly to a settlement, and that no long time will elapse before congregations connected with the Irish Presbyterian Church will have the liberty asked for.

A GOOD IDEA.

MR. MACFIE, the wealthy, well-known, and very liberal Free Church elder, some time ago did a kind, considerate and most praiseworthy act, which may well be imitated, and ought, therefore, to be better known throughout Canada than it is. Mr. Macfie's idea was to force ministers to take necessary relaxation in travelling, and for this purpose he so far provided the means by donating to his own Presbytery, that of Lorn, the sum of £1,000, the yearly interest of which, amounting to about £45, was to go to each of the clerical members of the Presbytery, in turn, for the purpose of travel. Knowing that generally other demands were very pressing on a minister's household, and that the temptation was great when such a wind-fall came for the minister to stay at home, and replenish his wardrobe, library or larder, Mr. Macfie made it obligatory upon each beneficiary that he should spend the whole amount received in travel, so that any one not prepared to accede to those terms was not to receive the cash. In this way there could be no upbraidings of conscience, and no feeling that the money might have been spent to better advantage. The result is that the whole arrangement has been a great success, and that Mr. Macfie has been encouraged to give another thousand to the neighbouring Presbytery of Tain on the same conditions.

One beneficiary writes that in this way he has recently enjoyed five weeks of travel, has managed to see London, Paris (including St. Cloud and Versailles), Mont Cenis and its famous tunnel, Turin, Milan, Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples (including Pompeii and Puteoli); and then back by Rome, Pisa, Genoa, Mont Cenis, Paris and London, with souvenirs of travel for those at home, and all without taking a penny from the ministerial income.

Now, which of our rich men is going to follow suit in this matter, and thus give many a hard-working, poorly-paid minister of the Gospel a taste of travel, to his own great benefit and the consequent advantage of his congregation? The continent of Europe is not so accessible to Canadians as it is to the people of Scotland, but two or three hundred dollars coming in every few years, which had to be expended in travelling, would be as life from the dead to many a weary one, and could easily be expended to the very best advantage, even though the "Grand European Tour" were not taken.

THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

AMONG all the different Missionary Societies there is no one with whose history there are entwined more hallowed associations than that which has been long known as the "London." Its roll of missionaries is a very long and a very honoured one, while the amount of success with which it has pleased the Great Head of the Church to crown its labours has been as gratifying as it has been widespread. Much of the romance of modern Missions has been connected with its enterprises. Its heroes of the faith have not been few, and its martyrs have not been wanting. While its Missions in the South Seas have been specially noticeable, its efforts in many other regions have been at once persistent and successful. In the East and West Indies, in South and Central Africa, in China, and, above all, in Madagascar it has accomplished a great and good work; and now, when it approaches its centenary, it shows as much vitality and enterprise as ever, having nothing of age about it but its matured experience and mellowed devotedness.

On the 5th of May last a valedictory service took place in the Weigh-House Chapel, at which public leave was taken by a large and appreciative audience of some twenty missionaries destined for Madagascar and Central Africa—an incident, we believe, unparalleled in the history of the Society. The funds keep well up, and what is especially gratifying, fully one-fifth of the whole now comes from mission stations and native contributions.

We notice a change made in the course hitherto pursued with missionary students. Up to this time, so soon as a student was accepted for missionary work, the Society took full charge of his education, and bore all the expense from the very commencement of his studies. In this way a considerable amount of unnecessary expenditure was incurred by education being given to those who on further trial were found unsuitable, or who might see cause to change their views of their call to such work. Henceforth, accordingly, every missionary candidate must be half through with his studies before he can be accepted. He will thus, it is hoped, give evidence of his suitability and effective power of study, and literary acquirement as well. It is very evident that too much may be done for theological students as well as too little, and we are quite sure that the error by excess is far more fatal to ultimate success than that by deficiency. When everything is carefully laid to a student's hand in the way of board, books, education, and clothing, there is not much likelihood of robust, manly, Christian self-reliance being developed.

When a young man's heart is set upon being a lawyer or a doctor, he will find means, some way or other, of eventually gratifying his aspirations; and surely the love of Christ and of souls ought to be a still stronger and more stimulating power in developing a spirit of such self-sacrificing energy as may enable a believer to secure all the needed educational equipment for the work of the minister or missionary without needing to be helped at every step, and thereby running the risk of being coddled into insignificance and commonplace, if not into absolute failure. In any case the prospect of generous sympathy and adequate support after the work of active evangelistic labour has really been entered upon will do more than all the bursaries and board which either Churches or Mission Boards could possibly