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Edited by Rev. Wm. Inglis.

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## CONGREGATIONAL FINANCING.

IT has passed into a proverb that multitudes of business men are ruined by bad book keeping. They don't know how their affairs stand, and they are either unable to ascertain, or afraid even to make inquiries in that direction. Everything is done in a slovenly, unbusiness-like style, with the vague sort of hope that if matters are not all right at present, they will be by-and-by. It would perhaps be too much to say that congregations are sometimes ruined in the very same manner; but at any rate we are quite within the mark in affirming that they are often greatly hampered and that their progress is often greatly retarded because their "secular concerns" are not looked after with proper energy and in a business-like fashion. We are not aware of any of the Presbyterian churches in Canada that, like some few which used to be spoken of in Scotland, have no account books but the beadle's memory. But there are too many where moneymatters are managed in a very careless, slipshod style, to the disgust of some, the annoyance of many, and the general injury of the cause; while year passes on after year with vague, ineffective wishes that a more rational system were adopted, and yet without a single step being taken to bring round the change and improvement.

The rules and regulations of the Presbyterian Church, as laid down in the Forms of Procedure, are all well enough, and if they were rigidly and intelligently carried out, would leave nothing further to be desired. But everyone knows that in very many instances they are absolutely a dead letter. It too often is the case that almost all are anxious to have as little trouble with church matters as possible, so that the whole is handed over entirely to one or two, who by-and-by almost look upon it as a private matter of their own, to be managed as they think best, and with as few records of the particulars as possible. In how many cases do the treasurers of congregations mix up the church funds with their own, and think it quite sufficient to say that they are responsible and can always make things square. That may be all true, but in the meantime the whole proceeding is contrary to the law of the Church, and contrary to the dictates of ordinary prudence and common sense. Treasurers of churches are required to keep all church funds entirely separate from their own, to have a separate bank account; never to have more than \$20, or some such sum, of these funds in hand, and never to draw out any money without two signatures being attached to the cheque. Is it said that all this would be something like an imputation upon the honour of the treasurer? It is the very reverse. It is the only thing which makes such imputations impossible. No sensitively honourable man would ever count church moneys when alone, or have them in his possession without their being all first duly certified. He would say, "I will not put it in the power of any one, either by a look or a shrug of the shoulder, to insinuate that I follow the example of a church treasurer whose record, as given in the Gospel history, was not of the most

glattering description." Yet how often are collections put into a handkerchief and, all uncounted, carried off in the treasurer's pocket to be dealt with as he sees fit! We don't believe that in one case out of a hundred is there anything but the most scrupulous honesty. We are quite sure that most of the treasurers do a great deal of hard work without fee or reward. But in the meantime, such a plan of doing it is not business. No one would ever think of it in his own private concerns. Why should he act differently when the church is involved? As a matter of fact, there are, every now and then, dishonest treasurers turning up, and who knows who shall be the next? In the meantime, the careless, unbusiness-like plan we speak of, encourages such dishonesty and exposes the most sensitively honourable men to cruel insinuations and surmises which, though without foundation, are at the same time incapable of rebuttal. We have known cases in which the church collections increased in a very remarkable manner upon a change of treasurer, and we have also known of more than one or two of our ministers having to submit to the mortification of their treasurer's cheque being tossed across the bank counter with the curt suggestive remark, "No funds." In not a few cases, also, there is not even the form of auditing the treasurer's books, from the absurd fear of its giving offence or being thought to imply something like a doubt of that official's honour. Any man who would take offence at such an ordinary business course being followed would afford considerable grounds for the very suspicions he professes to be so sensitive about. In fact, in this as in the matter of counting collections, no very sensitive man would consent to act as treasurer without insisting upon his books being audited and every copper being seen to be duly accounted for.

It may, no doubt, be said that church accounts are, alas, only too easily kept, and that the great work is to get hold of the money, rather than to account for it, or leave traces of how it has been spent. Very true, but if the church book-keeping is so easy a matter, the greater reason why it should be done thoroughly and why everything connected with ecclesiastical finance should be so arranged that any one interested could, at any moment, see exactly how matters stood, without any difficulty being put in his way, or without need for apology because of his persistent curiosity.

## THE SCHOOL BOOK CONTROVERSY.

A BOOK publishers' quarrel promises to become a matter of importance to all the people of Ontario, if not to those of the whole of Canada. So far as it merely concerns the parties with whom the trouble has originated, the general community has little or no interest. It is very likely that merely selfish considerations have had the chief, if not the exclusive influence on both sides, and that, had all the arrangements either proposed or made been regarded as mutually advantageous, any considerations about the public interests or the unnecessary burdens laid upon the parents of school children would have had little, if any, power to effect a change. But while a "mere trade difference" might be very easily and very naturally passed over in deserved silence if not in absolute contempt, it is very different when the interests of the ratepayers are involved in the controversy and that to the extent of thousands of dollars every year.

Many may not be aware that when a new set of "Readers" was introduced into our Public Schools, about eleven or twelve years ago, the copyright of the whole set was secured to the Province, not by any direct payment being made to the compilers out of the public treasury, but by its being officially ruled that those publishers who asked and received the privilege of printing and publishing the books in question should divide \$3,000 among the gentlemen who, chiefly with scissors and paste, did the necessary literary work of compilation. This remuneration was exceedingly liberal, more so than was ever accorded to the same amount of independent literary work in Canada, either before or since. We say "independent" as having reference to that which has had to make its way by its own merit, for compared with the "royalties" which have been gathered in from the forced sales of "authorized" publications, this *honorarium* was, we suspect, but small.

Under this ruling, two publishing firms paid each \$1,500, and went on for some years printing and pub-

lishing the series according to the regulations laid down by the Council of Public Instruction.

Upon the resignation of Dr. Ryerson and the appointment of a Minister of Education for the Province certain changes were made in the school book arrangement. It was declared, for instance, that those firms that had paid the \$3,000 had had the exclusive privilege of supplying the "Readers" for a sufficiently long time to remunerate themselves handsomely, and that therefore that privilege should be withdrawn; and so the trade in those "Readers" was made absolutely free to all—under the old recognized regulations about quality, and a maximum retail price. Those who saw the privilege they had paid for in this way confiscated might possibly be inclined to grumble, but they could not help themselves, and therefore accepted the situation, and set about making the best of it. A few other firms went into the work, and altogether five were eventually engaged in printing and publishing those "Readers." In due time an "understanding" was come to, in other words "a ring" was formed, and all its members engaged to supply the booksellers at a uniform rate of discount. This continued till one of the firms secured, or said at any rate that it had secured, a peculiar and improved method of binding, far more durable, it was alleged, than that in general use. Of course all means were employed to impress the public with the great advantage of buying only the books so bound. The public bought accordingly, and the other firms found their business disappearing. One of them protested that unless this kind of binding were allowed to all, it was absurdly unfair to be obliged to charge as much for what was proclaimed far and wide to be inferior, whether it actually was so or not. So the "ring" was broken, and the books hitherto sold for eighty-five cents on the dollar came down to sixty, with in most cases a corresponding lowering to the public. In order to coerce the offending publisher, resort has lately been had to exclusive dealing so that it was thought he would either have to submit or go out of the business. But he will do neither. On the contrary he carries the war into Africa, and shews how that by the system of private copyrights secured in authorized school books, publishers and compilers have for years past been making the public pay for those books thousands of dollars more than either reason or equity would justify.

We are not inclined to prejudge matters before all that can be urged on both sides is before the public. Only we cannot but say that so far as things have as yet gone, the balance of argument and reasonableness lies with the offending member of the "ring," Mr. Warwick. He shews that the "merit" of an "authorized" school book has little if anything to do with the extent of its circulation. Good, bad or indifferent it *must* be bought, and therefore, he argues, it is simply monstrous for writers and publishers to claim a permanent copyright in books which, altogether apart from their merits, are forced into circulation by the orders of the Department. A writer of a book for which as an independent venture, he would think himself handsomely paid by a *douceur* of \$500, under the system at present in operation among the school books, gets a royalty on every copy sold, and this brings him a handsome yearly income larger than all he could otherwise have secured, and that at the expense of all the parents of the Province. For instance, it is said that for merely changing the system from currency to the decimal plan, a royalty of two cents on every copy of the small arithmetic used in all the public schools has been levied for years, and that for labour for which hundreds of teachers would have regarded themselves as handsomely remunerated by a cheque for \$150. Who shall say how many thousand dollars have been paid for this alone? With other books, Mr. Warwick alleges, that the same abuse prevails, and that the absolute copyrights of either those in present use, or others equally good, could have been secured by the Department at a tithe or a twentieth of what is levied every year by those who have secured them. To bring the matter to a practical issue, Mr. Warwick offers, if the Department do with all school books as it did with the "Readers," to publish, under a penalty of \$50,000 in case of failure, the whole series of "authorized" school books, at present held under private copyright, at very nearly one-half of the prices at present charged, and declares he will ask no privilege in the matter not accorded to any publisher who likes to go into the business. Viewed in this light, this matter comes to be no longer a mere trade squabble. The