

LEADING LAYMEN.



XI. MR. GEORGE RANDALL ASHWELL.

No list of leading Methodist laymen in British Columbia could have been compiled during the past thirty years or more without including the name that stands at the head of this brief biographical note. Both the name and the face that adorns this page have been familiar in connection with nearly all important gatherings of Methodists in the Province for more than a generation.

Mr. Ashwell was born in 1833 at Henlow, Bedfordshire, Eng. His parents were staunch Episcopalians, and during his childhood and youth he knew little of the people with whom he has since been so long and prominently connected. In 1856 he moved to Toronto, where he remained for a year. It was here, during the year after his arrival, that he was converted to God through the influence of a series of revival meetings held in the old Elm Street Church. The young Englishman's case was a clear one, and he immediately united with the church which had been instrumental in leading him to Christ. For four years longer he remained in Ontario, living at Caledonia and other points on the Grand River. In 1861 he removed to British Columbia, reaching New Westminster on the very night of the opening tea meeting in the first church built in that town. He was given a hearty welcome by the pastor, Rev. E. White, and the little band of Methodists, and from the day of his arrival was actively associated with them in their work. Mr. Ashwell remained in Westminster ten years, engaging in business first with Mr. Thos. Cunningham, theirs being the first hardware store on the mainland of B. C. The partnership being dissolved, Mr. Ashwell continued in business alone, devoting himself to the furniture part of the business. In 1866 Mr. Ashwell returned to England on a visit, but soon came back with a wife, in the person of Miss Sarah Webb, who has been a genuine "weaver" of his fortunes, and has done him good and not evil all the days of her life. In 1871 he came to Chilliwack, and opened the first store in

the place, carrying on business for years at the landing, and for the last ten years in what is now the thriving town of Chilliwack. While attending the Conference of 1898, Mr. Ashwell received word that his place of business, Ashwell & Sons, with their entire stock, had been destroyed by fire, the work of an incendiary. The loss was heavy, but with characteristic energy the firm began to rebuild, and now occupy the finest and most modern business block in town. In addition to his other business Mr. Ashwell is a large landed proprietor, owning several farms in different parts of the valley. Throughout his long life he has experienced the abundant blessing of God upon his temporal affairs, and is one of the most prosperous and substantial men of the community.

Mr. Ashwell is a man of strong convictions, and holds tenaciously to his views of right, but is always willing to yield to the will of the majority in minor matters, and to work heartily for the general good. Though intensely practical he has a well marked emotional vein running through his nature. Throughout their lives Mr. and Mrs. Ashwell have dispensed a generous hospitality. Their home is a favorite haunt of preachers, and of all who are connected with religious or philanthropic work. He has also been a wise and liberal giver, not only to local church support, but to all the benevolent and educational enterprises of the church. From his earliest association with the church in the Province he has been continuously a member of the Quarterly Board and a trustee of numerous churches. He has also been frequently delegated to the District Meetings, and for the past six years has been a member of the Annual Conference. In 1898 he received the well-earned honor of election to represent his Conference at the General Conference in Toronto. He has been a member of the College Board of Directors since its organization, and has been one of the most hopeful and generous supporters of that enterprise.

For many years Mr. Ashwell has held a commission as Justice of the Peace, and at the present writing has just received the nomination of his party as

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its candidate for the next Provincial Legislature. His friends declare that his election is assured. Whether that be so or not it is certain that, if elected, his vote will always be given on the right side of all moral questions, and there will be one member of the Legislature who will always be in his place in class meeting of a Sunday morning.

CUMBERLAND.

Rev. W. Hicks, Superintendent.

Despite the depression in business here our sale of work by the Ladies' Aid netted the handsome sum of \$270. This is most encouraging, and sets us in a fair way to obtain the mark we aimed at for the Twentieth Century Fund. We had an Easter Monday Social under the auspices of the Epworth League, the main feature of the evening being selections on the piano by our younger members, also some glees and solos by the choir. At the last business meeting of the Church the Quarterly Official Board extended a cordial invitation to the Rev. Wm. Hicks to remain as pastor for the fifth year.

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