

Our Contributors.

THE FOREIGN MISSION SECRETARY.

BY KNOXONIAN.

The question of appointing a permanent Foreign Mission Secretary is creating so much interest that we may imagine the Presbyterians of Careyville holding a meeting to discuss the Remit sent down by the Assembly for the consideration of the Church. It requires no great flight of the imagination on the part of any one who knows Canadian Presbyterianism to give a report of the typical speeches delivered at the Careyville meeting. The first speech was by a well-known Presbyterian gentleman who speaks at nearly every Presbyterian meeting held in the country, especially those held in the Scotch settlements. His name is Mr. Obstinate. Mr. Obstinate is a member of a large family and a well connected gentleman, being a lineal descendant of the gentleman of that name who figures so prominently in Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress. His speech was vigorous and was well received by his friends, though a majority of the meeting did not seem to be much impressed. He spoke as follows—

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I am opposed to these innovations. I want to do things as they were done before. That is what I want. The Fathers had no Mission Secretary, and why should we want one? The Apostles had no Mission Secretary. John Knox never said a word about a Mission Secretary. Now what I want is just to go on and do things as they were done before. There are too many new things in the Church, too many Committees and Conveners and Summer Sessions and innovations. I am opposed to these things. What I want is to do things as they were done before. Yes that is what I want—to do things as they were done before.

Deacon Skinflint then addressed the meeting. He said that what he chiefly opposed was the expense. He didn't care whether the Apostles and Fathers had a Mission Secretary or not. He objected to the whole thing on financial grounds. It was the duty of the Church to save money. Even supposing the work could be better done by a Secretary, it would cost more and the Church should keep down the cost. To his mind the main thing was to keep down expenses. The people are poor and not able to contribute much. No doubt the work was important, and it would be a good thing to let the heathen have the Gospel as soon as possible, but they should never forget that our first duty is to keep down expenses. The speaker then gave some rather striking illustrations of the manner in which expenses could be kept down, the principal one being Talmage's story about the man who trundled his wife's body to the cemetery in a wheelbarrow to save the cost of a hearse. The speaker said he would hardly carry economy so far as that at funerals, but he did think economy was the right thing in missionary operations. There were various ways in which the work might be cheaply done. For example the Toronto ministers might attend to it time about. Then some of the ministers and elders from the country might go in occasionally. He himself was quite willing to go in his turn, provided the Church paid his expenses, paid a man to do his work at home and gave him \$5 a day for his services. He had always been in favour of economy in Church operations. (Laughter and cheers.)

Mr. Kirkman Oldschool was in favour of a Secretary, but he thought the Government should defray the expenses. He saw no reason why they should not ask Mr. Mowat for a small appropriation. He had always voted against Mowat, but was quite willing to take money from him or anybody else if he could get it.

Mr. Jeremiah Weakfaith said he believed the appointment of a secretary would split the Church. (Laughter and cries of "we heard all that before.")

Mr. Ira Bighead said if a Secretary were appointed he would join the Methodists. (Laughter and cries of, the Methodists have several secretaries.)

Mr. Bighead subsided, evidently satisfied that threatening Presbyterian people is a rather unsatisfactory kind of business.

E. Themistocles Cram, M.A., said the Secretary should be a graduate of some university. It would mightily overawe the young heathen to know that the man at the helm of affairs was a graduate. He himself was a graduate.

Mr. John Calvin Commonsense then closed the discussion in a ringing speech that awoke the true Presbyterian spirit of Careyville. He said he had listened for the hundredth time to these speeches on economy and innovations. In fact he had been listening to them ever since he was a small boy. They were old speeches used in a new way—applied to a new situation, but they had been used in one way or another since Presbyterianism began, and that was when the Apostolic Church began. (Cheers.) Mr. Obstinate had said the Fathers had no Mission Secretary. Certainly not. They had neither missions nor missionaries, and therefore did not need a Secretary. The Apostles were missionaries themselves and had no work for a Secretary. If Mr. Obstinate and his friends would make the millionth part of the sacrifices for missionary purposes in a year that Paul made in a day, the Church would excuse them from contributing anything towards the support of a Mission Secretary. (Cheers.) Mr. Obstinate grows quite eloquent about what the Apostles did *not* do. He says nothing about what they *did* do. The things they *didn't* do are the only things he tries to imitate.

(Loud cheers.) Why does he not try to imitate their self-sacrifice, their self-denial, their heroism, their life-long devotion to their Master's cause? Deacon Skinflint thinks the first duty of the Church is to save money. If his position is correct he should carry his argument a little farther and contend that we should save it all. We can easily save it all by not giving any. He (Mr. Commonsense) was old-fashioned enough to think that the first duty of the Church in mission work was to send the Gospel to those who have it not.

If the sending can be better done by having a Secretary by all means let us have a Secretary. My old friend Mr. Obstinate wants to do everything in the Church as he says it was done before. Why don't men farm as they did before—keep store as they did before—travel as they did before? The only kind of business he and his friends want to do in the way it was done before is the Lord's business. They take precious good care that they introduce all the best modern methods into their own business. Mr. Obstinate's farmer friends use binders just as other farmers do. They don't take off the harvest as they did before. His business friends don't give a year's credit and take maple sugar in pay as they did before. Not they. Mr. Obstinate himself does not travel as he did before. (Cheers.) The only business they want to keep behind the age in its methods is the Lord's business. We are told that times are hard and the people poor. Within the last few weeks hundreds, thousands of the people have gone to public meetings and the polls and declared that the people are prosperous, that the country is making splendid progress and that even the farmers are doing well. He could not understand the kind of poverty that comes on when money is wanted for missions and suddenly turns into prosperity when an election comes round. There was ample work for a Mission Secretary; there need be no difficulty in getting a good man to take the position, and he had no doubt the Church would make the appointment. In fact he almost felt ashamed that there had been so much talk about so small a matter, while other Churches had secretaries years ago, whose services were considered indispensable to good mission work.

The meeting decided by a large majority in favour of a Secretary and a decent salary for him.

SERMON REVERIES.

NO. VII.

Last Sunday morning the sermon was based upon Joshua's death, its peacefulness and the good effects of his just rule, as evidenced by the good behaviour of the people for long afterwards. The exact texts chosen were Joshua xxiv. 29-31. It was evident that the sermon had special reference to the death of Mr. Spurgeon, and the parallel was exquisitely drawn. As a matter of fact, pure eloquence was a leading trait of the whole discourse. The people, I noticed, paid undue attention, not but that they always pay the requisite attention, but this time a deeper feeling than ordinary held sway. The fact is, Spurgeon held many and many a heart over the whole world in thorough touch with his ideas and sympathies. His sermons were models of evangelical thought, and being very widely disseminated the whole world might with propriety be styled his congregation. This, then, was the reason for the interest manifested in this sermon of eulogy. My attention did not wander away much, less than ordinary I think, but several times I kept thinking of Church choirs. Something or other in the sermon started it. You all have thought the subject over, talked it over, etc., and all to no purpose. The positive assertion can be made, that probably there are two good Presbyterian choirs in Toronto to-day, certainly not more. I do not say anything regarding other denominations, the chances are that they have less difficulty, and, besides, our own case is bad enough without starting to others.

This whole business of choirs and Church singing must be taken a hold of boldly. There is no use mincing matters. We have the worst singing there is anywhere. If we attend any other Church the same rule is found to be applicable; truly a most awkward state of affairs. The music is often of the most simple description, although one would judge by the method of its rendition that Chopin's finest efforts, or Mendelssohn's celebrated songs had at last found words and were being surely murdered. In our Church we have a good organ, and it is only fairly well played. This is one great drawback. The organist delights in soft tones and touching phrasing, misses an odd note or two, and does not excel as an accompanist. Of course respect is not begotten of such music, and thus control, which is begotten of evident ability, is not present. Nor is this organist different from many others. There is not any standard, unfortunately, for Church musical committees to judge organists by, and often the best-looking and lowest-priced individual is chosen. The college of organists is making a record in this matter, and we may perhaps hope in coming years to see demanded the certificate of ability so very necessary now. Then our singers are not the best in the Church by any means. They were in it, many of them, years ago; and even if they do not sing as well now as then, still they stay. Good voices are attracted by good singing, and the rule, unfortunately, is not productive for our choirs, for obvious reasons.

We well remember the old precentor style. With organ accompaniment it presents many features not excelled to-day,

by any ordinary choir at all events. Now, I do not purpose to keep on at this choir business any longer. I wish that our people would get over that foolish objection to paid leaders for our choirs; also solo singing. Indeed, in our kirk, the Session rigorously prohibits any playing on the organ, unless accompanied by singing; the result, when a selection has to be sung by the choir no matter how many are there, is oftentimes humiliating. The fact of the matter is, that Session control of singing and Church music is very unproductive of anything else but noise and dissatisfaction. A musical committee should be elected from the Session, managers and choir, with full powers every annual meeting; and these should have a certain taste for the art, in order to ensure success. A choir leader is an absolute necessity; and if it can be afforded the two leading lady singers should be paid, in order to ensure regular attendance, fair musical ability and consequent success in the rendering of this important branch of Church work. Many an old elder, and some not quite so old, except in feelings, will smile when they read some of my conclusions. I say, take a compromise before more drastic measures are engendered. I can con over in my mind many a dozen active young workers who are to-day in favour of boys' voices only, and who knows but that ten or twenty years from now the spirit of John Knox will accompany a choir of surpliced boys up the aisles of one-time strict and plain Auld Kirks. One thing is as certain as bad singing, and that is, we have got to have better music, and it does not matter which committee gives it, so long as it mes.

I did not think all this during the sermon; if I did, you would be apt to think that the singing had been especially bad on this occasion. Not so, many of these thoughts have had their birth on as many different occasions, and they now gush forth.

Thinking of elders. Those old democratic forefathers of ours in old Scotland, who drafted the groundwork of our most holy Presbyterianism, were grand, far-seeing men. Their original plan of government by the people, for the people, included the plan of time service in the eldership. It appears to have been altered in some latter-day wisdom freak. The Cumberland Church in the States appears to be the only exponent of this system; and I warrant it works well. We all venerate our loved elders. Their many honoured white and growing-white heads fill us with respect and love; yet many of us, believing that having the great power which they have, by law, in the Church, it would only be right to make a time limit for service, in order to make the office what it should be, viz.: thoroughly representative. This statement will not be contradicted—one-half the members of Session in every Church have lost ten years ago their representative character, and do not in any way represent the feelings, aspirations or desires of the majority of the congregation. Supposing that a limit of service of say five years were in vogue; it will be granted that many more will offer for election; busier men will be tempted thereby, as relief would eventually come; more energetic laymen will reach the Church courts, instead of, as at present, the most venerable; and a constant change of administration will be conducive of great activity in Church affairs. Oh, yes, give the young people, above all things, full play in the Church; far better there than outside.

I believe that in St. Andrews in this city there are appointed, every year, sidesmen, whose duties are mainly ushering and taking the collection. I was thinking on Sunday when I saw one of our managers, who is a busy man, taking up collection, ushering, etc., etc., that this idea surely was a good one. These sidesmen would have in charge strangers as well, and who better able to speak kindly and invite back? It would be well not to lose sight of this idea. The managers have enough to do without looking after a detail of this ordinary description. By all means take the services of, say, a dozen people who have at present nothing special to do in Church, give them this task, and the end is as certain as can be. Many strangers will be looked after, new interests will be developed, and a new sphere will train useful hands for higher offices. So much for Church fault-finding. I trust my readers will bear with it and believe me when I say that these are every-day reveries of every Presbyterian. I shall not refer to Church complaints again for some time, but rather stick to every-day thought, fancy and dream, as concocted by the Sabbath a. m. sermon.

Meantime, our Joshua panegyric had finished in a brilliant peroration. The wealth of to-day's descriptive enterprise, compared with the simplicity of Old Testament records, was duly pointed out. Also the difference of the national monument of to-day and the simple mound of nature of the olden time. Altogether I like our age the best. So do the preachers, even if they say different in their sermons. Even if we do not raise pyramids hundreds of yards in extent any way you take them, we do raise many noble monuments of enduring material, and pay the people for erecting them; so that the most common labourer can enjoy his night of repose like a king, and with decent comfort. This day is better than Shakespeare's, even if he is not here; more glorious than Elizabeth's, although other lands out-rival hers in many a race. The world is better for all who have gone before and will be better for all who come after. The preacher aptly quoted Newton the converted as against Newton the unconverted:—

I am not what I wish to be,
I am not what I ought to be,
I am not what I hope to be,
But thank God I am not what I was.

CURLY TOPP.