

THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN,

— PUBLISHED BY THE —

Presbyterian Printing & Publishing Co., Ltd.

AT 5 JORDAN STREET, - TORONTO.

Terms: Two Dollars Per Annum, Payable in Advance.

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The Presbyterian Printing and Publishing Co., Ltd.,

5 Jordan St., Toronto.

The Canada Presbyterian

O. BLACKETT ROBINSON, MANAGER.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23RD, 1895

THE worst enemy of voluntaryism is the man who defends voluntaryism run mad.

JUDGING from the disclosures made at a recent election trial it does not take a new party long to fall into some of the worst habits of the old ones.

PRESBYTERIAN people cannot meditate too long or too seriously on Principal Rainy's late saying that the Free Church of Scotland has "more influence" and "less authority" than it ever had. To try to exercise ecclesiastical authority without intellectual, moral and spiritual influence is the shortest and surest way to wreck a church or congregation.

DR. WHYTE, of Edinburgh, says in one of his recent lectures that no kind of reading matter should make a pastor more anxious or more humble than his own visiting list and communion roll. There is no kind of literature published in Canada that should make a Presbyterian more thoughtful than the Blue Book, especially the column that reports the additions by profession of faith, and the vacant columns that report no collection.

THE Presbytery of Toronto did a highly proper thing the other day when it nominated Dr. Gregg as Moderator of the next General Assembly; but we are not so certain that it was quite right when it allowed the Doctor to withdraw his name. In the Church, as at present constituted, Dr. Gregg has never been Moderator of anything larger than a session. We are quite aware that Dr. Gregg cares nothing about such honors; but we are equally well aware that he has many influential friends in the Church, some of whom think that he has been passed over in the distribution of honors, because he is a modest, humble-minded, Christian gentleman, who never pushes himself nor allows others to push him. The Church cannot afford to allow any such feeling to exist in regard to a minister of Dr. Gregg's character and standing.

WE have reason to know that some of our readers enjoyed a quiet chuckle over the clever letter of "A Country Reader" published in these columns a fortnight ago. There is no little force in some of the points made by our racy correspondent; but in one particular his letter may be a trifle misleading. He says he is working as best he can "under a shower of seventy-five outside appeals, and as many inside ones." That may be all true, and his congregation may be wrestling heroically with the hundred and fifty appeals; but the

hard fact remains that the Church answers all the appeals with one dollar and sixty-nine cents per annum. What difference does it make if there were a hundred and fifty thousands appeals if the giving keeps below a dollar and seventy cents per member. The amount given, not the amount asked is the true measure of liberality.

STRANGE is it not that the two most attractive nationalities in the civilized world should be the two that constantly raise doubts about their capacity for self-government. There is no more attractive man in the world than a Frenchman, except it be a well bred Irishman; and yet there is grave doubt on the minds of many thoughtful people as to whether Ireland and France can govern themselves. Self-control is absolutely essential to self-government; and that is the quality in which both nationalities seem to be lacking when on their own soil. Many people are willing to give Home Rule a fair trial but the Home Rule members by dividing and sub-dividing killed Home Rule themselves. France may have a revolution any day. Ulster men might govern themselves if alone; but Ulster and the South in one parliament house might make things as lively as they did in the French Chambers the other day.

THE Home Mission Committee (Western Section) have asked the General Assembly to enact that all graduating students and ministers received from other churches be required to give one year's service in the mission field before being eligible for a call. Opposition to this proposal will come mainly from students and from vacant congregations. At bottom the question is whether students and vacant congregations rule the Church. The question is an old one, and, during all the time it has been discussed, we have never heard half a dozen fairly good judges say the arrangement would not be highly beneficial to the Church as a whole. It should be remembered, too, that the best students always carry out loyally and enthusiastically any reasonable regulations the Church may make. It would be easy to name ministers now occupying influential positions in the Church who voluntarily gave more than a year after graduation to Home Mission work. Let the regulation be made, and students who do not like it can apply any remedy they deem proper. The best students will always be willing to do what the Church needs to have done. As regards ministers from other churches, if they do not like our regulations they can remain away. There is no special need for good men on the Home Mission field. The opposition that comes from vacancies—some of them may have evicted their old pastors—should not be considered very formidable. The Church should not be ruled by its vacancies; and, anyway, a graduate with a years experience in the mission field is likely to make the best pastor.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS.

AT this season of the year annual congregational meetings are very much in evidence. During the past ten days those of many of the city churches have been held, and many more over the country generally. It is a time of much anxiety to ministers, members of sessions, boards of managers, and those at the head of the many organizations now found in all our congregations. It is pleasant to observe that a spirit of harmony and goodwill is generally reported as prevailing at these meetings, and a wide-spread interest is shown for the most part in congregational work, evidenced by the large attendance usually present. In many cases the meetings combine business with social good cheer, which, where it can be conveniently done, makes a happy combination. Without almost an exception the city churches report an increase to membership already, in many cases, quite large, so large, indeed, as must make anything like efficient pastoral oversight by the minister alone, added to all his other congregational and public duties, a most formidable, and, in many cases, an impossible undertaking. Only the most thorough and efficient organization of sessions, aided by other pious and qualified men and women in a congregation, can overtake this department of work. Judging from the reports presented the inference would be warranted that the spiritual life of the congregations is generally in a healthy state.

In evidence of this it is satisfactory to observe that, although the past year has been one, according to general reports, of great depression in many kinds of business,—yet deficits in the ordinary revenue of congregations are comparatively rare, and the contributions to the benevolent work of the Church at home and abroad have not only been kept up, but, in many cases, are in advance of last year. It is a good evidence of the power of religion when it reaches the purse, and, even in years of depression, not only keeps up, but increases the sums given to religious and charitable objects. The number and variety of the good works engaged in by most of the congregations cannot fail to strike every reader of their reports, and call for large sums of money. In Toronto alone these run up into many thousands. Mortgages to a very handsome amount, which many of the churches are privileged to possess, are, for the most part, judiciously kept in the back-ground. Their exact amount, in some cases, is stated; in a much greater number a discreet silence respecting them is observed.

Large Sunday Schools, Bible Classes, Christian Endeavor Societies, Bands of Hope, Mission Bands, Ladies' Aid Societies, and Home and Foreign Missionary Societies, Mission Churches and other Christian activities are maintained some or all of them in connection with most of the congregations. When one reflects that the pulpit, the man in the pulpit, the regular return of the Sabbath and its observance as a day of sacred rest and worship, are the main outward agencies by which all this good work is set going and kept going, the value of these—their unspeakable value—becomes very evident. For if our pulpits should cease to be occupied and become silent; our Sabbaths turned into a day, not of worship and holy activity but of simple cessation from toil, or of pleasure-seeking,—can any one believe that these beneficent, elevating and heaven-born, as well as heavenward-leading, labors of disinterested love and goodness would be continued? The pulpit losing its power! In the broad sense in which this term is usually understood, the pulpit never had so much power as now. And this blessed power is growing, because, in spite of all drawbacks and antagonising forces at work, it is being more and more supported by an ever-increasing body of Christian people to whom, under God, it supplies constant energising force, and from which again it draws encouragement and support. May the Spirit of God descend in large and still larger measure upon all our ministers and congregations, and multiply and bless their labors manifold and make them more blessed and still more a blessing.

THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISIONS ON THE PROHIBITION ISSUE.

THE suppressed and anxious interest with which the advocates of Prohibition have for months been awaiting the decision of the Supreme Court upon the test case submitted to it has, at last, by its recent decisions, been relieved. This decision is probably such as many expected, though it is not that which those who have wrought so long and hard in the cause of Prohibition in Ontario would most desire, since Sir Oliver Mowat promised to bring in a prohibitory act for the province should it be found that the local legislature had the power to enact such a measure. It does not follow, of course, that it would have carried in the Provincial Legislature had it been introduced, although it cannot be doubted that, if not now, it soon would have carried, for the force of public opinion is so strongly in favor of Prohibition, as shown by the plebiscite, that if the present Legislature would not pass Prohibition, another would soon have been elected which would. The wisdom of the course pursued by Mr. Mowat and his government for the cause of temperance, in refusing to pass a prohibitory measure until the question of authority was settled, is now abundantly evident. For had he done so, and it had been found, as it has been, in the opinion of the Supreme Court, that it was ultra vires, and the whole system of license set aside, as would have been the case, what a high carnival of free selling of drink we should now have had.

The decision which has been rendered furnishes a beautiful illustration of the old saw that "doctors differ." In only two of the questions submitted to it was the decision of the Court unanimous, namely that the Provincial Legislature has not the power to prohibit the manufacture and importation