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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1883.

THE Hebrew manuscripts which Mr. Shapira, a citizen of Jerusalem, says he found in the Arabian desert are a fraud. Mr. Shapira offered them to the British Government for the modest sum of \$5,000,000. The Premier thought this a large sum to invest in twenty five sheepskins unless they were genuine, and commissioned Dr. Ginsberg, a Hebrew specialist, to examine them. Dr. Ginsberg was assisted by other eminent specialists, and these learned gentlemen declare that the ink in the manuscripts is not more than ten years old. Mr. Shapira is a rather noted discoverer. He found the Moabite stones that were sold to the German Government a few years ago for a large sum. The manuscript business would have paid him well had he got these five millions out of John Bull's treasury. As matters now stand, his chances for getting the money are of the slimmest kind imaginable. This gentleman's name is painfully suggestive. It reminds one of a lady that figured in a land transaction nearly two thousand years ago at Jerusalem. If Mr. Shapira is a lineal descendant of the wife of Ananias he should give up the manuscript business and try his hand at the paper city business in the North-West. Real estate is more in his line.

THE holiday season for business and professional men is about over. The long vacation for the lawyers is ended and the gentlemen of the long robe are again at work. Ministers who were fortunate enough to have holidays are returning to their pulpits. The noble army of teachers resumed operations this week. Business men are getting back to their counters and desks. The play is over and work has begun. These classes, however, form a small part of the community. The great majority of our people are farmers, and they too should have their holiday. September and October are the holiday months for them. Harvest will soon be over and the winter wheat sown. When this is done we hope our many friends in the rural districts will take a good enjoyable trip. They need a rest, and so do their wives and daughters. There are few farmers in the older parts of Ontario now that cannot afford a trip to Toronto, Montreal, New York or Chicago. A run to one of these cities is a capital thing for one who has been closely at work all summer. If a visit to some quiet rural spot is good for a city man, the man who spends his year in a quiet place finds corresponding benefit in a visit to a large city. A complete change of surroundings is highly beneficial. Farmers need a holiday quite as much as any other class, and we hope there will be a general move along the whole line during the next two months.

As we write, the debate on the basis of Union in the Conference of the Canada Methodists is in full blast. The whole ground is being gone over and the interest is intense. There is no use in denying that a majority of the very able and influential men will fight against the present basis to the last. Just how many members of Conference are opposed to union on any basis may never be known; but it is clear that some of the best men in the Church are opposed to union on this basis. Most of those who attack the basis are careful to declare themselves in favour of union. It is just possible that the union negotiations may have been unduly hurried. When there is "union in the air" important interests are likely to be overlooked, and

minorities are not always treated with judicious kindness. It certainly was not wise for the union party to open the Conference with the declaration on the part of a prominent member that no amendments could be moved to the basis. The anti-basis party accepted the challenge, and began to make amendments forthwith. It is a very risky thing to challenge a body in which a large number of full-grown Englishmen are found. They don't take kindly to being challenged. It is difficult to say at the present writing what the result may be. The basis can be carried, we believe, as it stands; but a victory of that kind may not mean a peaceful and prosperous union. Meantime we hope our brethren may soon come to a wise settlement of the question.

Now is the time for ministers who have had a vacation to prove to their congregations that a vacation is a good thing. The way to do it is to preach real good sermons immediately after resuming work. There will be no trouble about holidays next year if the people leave Church saying, "How our minister has brightened up during his vacation: the rest did him so much good, that was a capital sermon: he is himself again, fresh, vigorous and better than ever; a vacation is just the thing for a minister." It is rather discouraging to a congregation if the first few pulpit efforts after their minister's return are below the mark. It is a great pity if the people should have cause to leave Church saying, "What is the use of giving him a holiday—he is as dry as ever?" Autumn is a good time for first-class pulpit work. The weather is cool, churches are comfortable then, if comfortable at any time, and the people are not weary and jaded as they often are in the heated term. A minister should do his best at all times, but the times are not all equally favourable. Humanly speaking the present is a good season for the best possible pulpit efforts. Let the ambassadors of the King begin their work with renewed and increased zeal and power. In this way they will prove that it is a good thing to follow the Master's example and go aside and rest a while. They will also enjoy something better than can be enjoyed during vacation—that intense pleasure that always springs from doing the Master's work faithfully and well.

HOME MISSIONS—QUEBEC PRESBYTERY.

INTEREST in the Home Mission work of the Church is steadily growing. The efforts to supply Gospel necessities to Presbyterians throughout the older Provinces for a time absorbed almost all the attention of the office-bearers of the Presbyterian Church to the exclusion of Home Mission work properly so-called. Owing to circumstances this was all that could be done, and in some instances only too imperfectly. In certain districts of Ontario to-day when the country was first settled, numbers of Presbyterians were deprived of their own forms of worship. The resources of the Church were then so limited that no provision could be made to supply the pressing wants of these early pioneers. It might be said that had a few earnest ones among them organized services and held occasional meetings till effective help came, large and flourishing churches might have been in existence where only a languishing mission station can at rare intervals be found. The might have been, however, is a poor consideration as a guide for present duty unless it be to warn against a repetition of the mistakes of the past. A few devoted men in a district sparsely settled by Presbyterians, may, under exceptional circumstances, be able to effect much good, but opportunities are limited, results are disappointing and apt to be discouraging.

Now that flourishing congregations are in existence in all centres where population is numerous, the neglect of past years would be inexcusable. Throughout the Church there is a growing interest in mission work, and the result is most gratifying. It would, however, be a grave mistake to sink into a state of self-complacency and imagine that the very best is being done that can be done. There are congregations in the Church which have had their early struggles, but are now in the enjoyment of congregational contentment and prosperity. Within reach of them are weak and struggling stations to whom a little self-denying help would be very useful and encouraging. But no! They are permitted to struggle for existence as they best can so far as their nearest sister congregation is concerned. There are, even in

the congregations most noted for their liberality and missionary enterprise, individuals of so churlish a disposition that were all to act on the same niggardly scale of giving for Home Mission objects the cause of Church extension would be in a miserable condition now. In this important branch of Christian endeavour the apostolic injunction, "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things," ought not to be overlooked. If the feeling that the well-established congregations would find it a most useful and elevating work to foster the nearest weak congregation or mission station were more generally diffused than it is at present, an immense impulse to the cause of Home Missions would be supplied. It would be a mutual blessing in which it would be difficult to say whether the giver or the receiver would most largely participate.

In the Report presented to the last General Assembly by the Home Mission Committee, Western Section, there is a detailed and very interesting account of the present condition and requirements of the Home Mission field. Attention is very properly directed to the large and promising field for Church extension in the new Province and territories of the great North-West. While anxious that all that can be done ought to be done for this vast field so promising in relation to the future destinies of the Dominion, we ought not to overlook the old historic fields whose claims have not been brought before the Church with the same prominence and persistency that the missions in the North West have justly received.

What a field for evangelical missionary enterprise does the Province of Quebec afford! Presbyterians are to be found throughout that ancient Province outside the cities they are comparatively few in number, and those intimately acquainted with the state of affairs declare that, in remoter parts, they are disappearing altogether, being absorbed by the surrounding population. In the Presbytery of Quebec at the date of the union in 1875, there were thirteen settled congregations and two vacant charges; now sixteen congregations and one vacant charge are reported. There are six mission stations reported in this Presbytery. In several instances gratifying progress is noted, but a tone of despondency is too apparent in the report. The field is a confessedly difficult one. The distances a missionary has to travel in many cases under great disadvantages, the want of suitable men and adequate means, and the overshadowing influence of Romanism have retarded the work in the past. The preponderance of the Church of Rome like an advancing tide in some localities sweeps away the few remaining representatives of Presbyterianism, so that not a few missionary labourers are becoming discouraged.

The immediate outlook in the Province of Quebec may in some instances be somewhat unpromising. There should, however, be no talk of retiring from the field because present appearances are discouraging. Little congregations of evangelical Protestants scattered throughout Quebec would be as beacon-lights amid the surrounding gloom. They would have an influence for good. By their mutual sympathy they would strengthen and encourage each other, and act as a restraint on those who are pliant enough to yield to the social and ecclesiastical pressure with which they are surrounded.

It is clear that if missionary operations in the Province of Quebec are to be successful they must be prosecuted by the Church as a whole much more energetically than they have been in the past. Small mission fields have been cultivated by missionaries and students; but their opportunities have been so limited that these stations have been left for many weeks without supply of any kind, and this would be disastrous in far more vigorous mission fields than any to be found in Quebec. There ought to be a band of well-equipped ordained missionaries, men imbued with the self-denying spirit of the Gospel, men who are prepared to consecrate their lives to this special work. If men are forthcoming then the Church must not be niggardly in their maintenance. A mission in Quebec Province cannot be carried on exactly on commercial principles. The question is one of duty. If the Church feel the obligation to send labourers into the field, then it is as much her duty to extend to them sufficient support. With enlarged sense of duty and steadily augmenting resources the Church at large ought to show greater diligence in supporting the cause of evangelical Christianity in the Province of Quebec.