

THE Dominion Presbyterian

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The editor can not undertake to return unused. Mass Correspondents are asked to note that anything intended for the first issue should reach the office on Tuesday morning.

Thursday, May 3rd, 1900.

The Ecumenical Council has closed and many of the delegates have returned home again. Some will linger for a time in America, and may visit the Conference on Foreign Missions to be held in St. Louis, in connection with the meeting of the General Assembly held there during this month. The great influence of this Council will not be felt this year. The opening year of the new century will feel its power more fully.

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An overture is going up to the General Assembly from the Presbytery of Owen Sound, supported by two of its Doctors of Divinity, asking for the introduction of the term service in the eldership and in the deaconate. We doubt if even these two weighty sponsors will get the matter past the door of the Assembly. There is much to commend the measure, but it is out of the ordinary channel, and will be stopped. If the promoters are persistent it may yet carry—in some future decade.

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Should it be found that our Sabbath Schools are not up to the mark, we trust time will not be wasted in useless reprimand. There is need for earnest, united and immediate effort to check the outflow and to draw the current inward. There may be blame in the home, in the school, on teachers, superintendent and minister. Let each buy back the opportunity, and do some hard thinking and prompt acting before the summer season sets in. Do not put it off till the autumn homecoming.

Out of every one-hundred communicants in one of our great presbyteries, only thirteen meet for prayer every Wednesday evening. That is not a good showing, but were these faithful thirteen faithful in the highest sense of the word more would be accomplished than has yet been done. Out of the thirteen perhaps three are something more than silent partners with the minister to carry on work in the congregation. Can we not rise to the higher conception that we are co-workers with God?

Morally Impotent.

He was a most agreeable man in conversation. He was well educated and had moved all his life in a cultivated circle. He had high ideals and talked of them freely. Young men, after half-an-hour's conversation with him went out into life with higher aims and stronger determination. Yet this man accomplished nothing. He was but a dreamer. All his life he had formed plans for action but had never carried one of them into execution. Now he could not if he would. He was morally incapable of action. Physically he was strong and able for work. Mentally he was the peer of any of those about him. But the abused will refused to be held to any one purpose long enough to secure its accomplishment.

The sketch is not a random sketch. The man of ordinary penetration may find its counterpart among the circle of his own acquaintances. There may not be those about him so thoroughly incapable as the subject of this sketch, but there are men who have so habitually planned to do noble things and left their plans unfulfilled, that now they are preforce content with the lower accomplishments. We are given these promptings to the higher things, these visions of the possibilities within us that we may be led on to do them. When we put the vision aside, as a thing of imagination only, we do violence to the powers with which God has gifted us, and kill their aspiration for development. And, at length, we must content ourselves with climbing the Rigi when we might have stood on Mont Blanc.

Nor can we win back the power in its fullness. In part it may be recovered, but to reclaim the morally impotent is as painfully slow and difficult, as to bring back strength to the placid muscles of the physically incapable. By slow degrees we destroy our God-given power, but infinitely slower is it built up again, and even then it is but in part reconstructed. Some would check the ambition of the young man. It is a crime to have the ability to do and not to accomplish. And the one who discourages from doing is scarcely less criminal.

The Worship of the Congregations.

Eighteen centuries ago Christian disciples were warned not to forsake the assembling of themselves together as the custom of some is; the exhortation given when the church was small, and its members despised and persecuted, is still quite applicable. The circumstances of our life, and the constitution of our church may be somewhat different, but our faith, our aims and our hopes are the same. We are called in the same terms and the same tones to work for Christ. There is little wonder that in those days of persecution some whose life was shallow had fallen away from the company of the disciples and lost their interest in the kingdom of Christ. To-day the same thing comes about in a different way. Those who do not really surrender themselves to God and enlist in the service of the King lose interest in the Church; its ordinances seem tame and cold to them, and they fall victims not to fear but to sloth and pride. Then the power of habit and the influence of custom comes into play, so that those who most regularly and punctually, and most reverently seek the house of God are those who get the greatest blessing. On the other hand it is true that those who allow neglect of worship to become a custom can scarcely drag themselves to an assembly of God's people. The words, "I was glad when they said unto me let us go unto the house of the Lord" have lost, for them, their deep meaning and secret beauty—custom may be our friend or our foe. Let us try to keep it on the side of virtue and good Christian fellowship. Underneath the crust of custom let there be a true insight and loyalty of heart.

The life of the congregation may be summed up in two words, worship and work, and in two of slightly different meaning, inspiration and organization. Of these the latter one refers to the spirit the other to the form, one to the dynamics the other to the mechanics, one to the gaining of energy and the other to the using of it. A congregation is a body of people united in worship and work, in service and sentiment.

Be it far from our thoughts to limit the presence of God to any sanctuary or assembly. To the devout man his own heart is the Shekinah, and the great world a temple of God. But unless our religion is to be allowed to become shallow and feeble we need definite times of public worship and regular seasons of spiritual communion. The individual life needs daily food and stimulus and the life of the congregation needs regular renewal. We meet to offer common prayer and united praise, believing that they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. If we count ourselves as common men and women, with ordinary cares and needs, we regard this as an indispensable part of our life.