

Huguenot liberties, and in it certain cities of refuge, 150 in number, were named where they could openly worship. La Rochelle was one of these. After a quarter of a century of peace and quiet, by an uprising of the Huguenots incurred the displeasure of Richelieu, Prime Minister of Louis XIII., and he determined finally to subdue this town, and in spite of the assistance rendered by England, and bravely holding out eight months, one authority says, and another fourteen months, they were obliged to capitulate. It was during this time that Richelieu raised the wall to cut off the approach of the English. La Rochelle was the chief port of trade between France and Canada, till Canada became an English colony.

There is now a special Protestant hospital, and many of the old houses bear French or Latin inscriptions of a moral or religious turn, and mostly of Protestant origin. This is a short account of these two towns in which we are interested. Of their present religious aspects M. Durreleman speaks hopefully in his last year's report. The hall or station at Rochefort has 170 sittings, that of La Rochelle 195. He speaks of having commenced a fraternal society, eighteen members at first, now forty-eight; and you will please notice I am quoting from the report of 1886. That of 1887 (they are generally published in December), we ought soon to receive so probably the society is now much larger. These fraternal societies are for converts who meet together together to perfect themselves in the study of God's Word and in prayer. He says: These converts meet regularly at the house of one of their number to read and meditate on a portion of Scripture, to exchange thoughts and to pray for the work God has committed to their trust, and each Sunday they meet in the mission hall to read and pray, and one day—Nov. 1—they spent the entire day together, many giving their testimony. This, M. Durreleman says, gives him great encouragement. At La Rochelle they have added to the usual evangelistic meeting and practices of hymns twice a week, fraternal meetings, weekly special meetings, meetings for women, and also special meetings for those living in the country who cannot attend at night. They have had in these two towns 289 meetings for adults; attendance for the year, 14,000; thirty-seven adult Bible classes and sixty-eight children's meetings. At La Rochelle they have had evenings with dissolving views, which have been made a recompense for those children who have been faithful in attending the meetings. They were much benefited by the arrival of the missionary boat, the *Mystery*, belonging to the Protestant Gospel Seamen's Society, which was placed at the disposal of Mr. McAll and his workers for a part of the summer to visit the seaports and present to the people the Gospel of glad tidings. It visited not only La Rochelle but Boulogne, Brest, Calais, Dunkirk and St. Malo. It was at La Rochelle for the month of July, and daily meetings were held, which were crowded. M. Durreleman hoped it would come to Rochefort the next year. One woman at Rochefort ascribed the impressions she had received to the visit of this boat. M. Saillens, in speaking of the visit of the missionary boat to La Rochelle, says: "This fine old historic town, which held out so bravely against Richelieu, has again become a stronghold of Romanism, but is opened now to the preaching of the pure Gospel, and who knows but it may become once more a centre of light."

Our missionary's life is a busy one. These towns are large. He needs our prayers and sympathies, and I think we all echo the wish of M. Saillens that La Rochelle may become again "a centre of light," that it may again rise to former bravery and courage, and that not by any bitterness of faction, but by the pure sweet truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

CANDIDATING.

MR. EDITOR,—Candidating is the curse of the Presbyterian Church. It degrades the ministers; it makes the members critical instead of teachable. It keeps many ministers idle and many congregations vacant. It is the cause of numberless quarrels, which lower the tone of the Church life, lessen its aggressive force, make it a laughing-stock to the world, and causes other Christian bodies to pity it. And what is gained by it? In this century and in this country nothing! In bygone days in Scotland, when there was often danger of an obnoxious, because godless, minister being forced on an unwilling people,

it was of the utmost importance that the greatest freedom of choice should be secured to congregations. And that freedom was probably worth more than the loss caused by the strife which accompanied it. But here and now there is no danger of the entrance of a godless minister; the danger is that freedom shall more and more degenerate into license and sap our life away. Why do we need candidating, when neither the Episcopal nor Methodist Churches require it? In the first the Bishop and in the last the Conference appoints. In both, every congregation has a pastor; and any minister has a charge as long he is able for the work, and when he is not he is definitely retired. The result of this system is energetic work without a break between each successive pastorate; and usually harmony. If, for any reason, the pastor proves unacceptable, he is exchanged, still without a break in the congregational work. How different our procedure, and how disastrous its results, are well known to every Presbyterian. It is not too much to affirm that if it had not been for this "curse" the Presbyterian Church would to-day have been the largest body in the United States and in Canada.

As the first step in getting rid of it I propose a law. (a) Absolutely forbidding candidating; (b) enacting that whenever a congregation has remained vacant three months, the Presbytery shall appoint a minister to it for one year, and with the understanding that if, at the end of that time, another has not been called, and if no objections, which the Presbytery considers weighty, have been made, he shall be confirmed as pastor; (c) and that all congregations formed after the passage of the said law shall have ministers appointed for them in the Presbytery, such appointments to take effect unless protested against by a majority of the church members. A. Y.

CENSUS OF MONTREAL CHURCH-GOERS.

MR. EDITOR,—In your issue of February 22 your Montreal correspondent criticises what purports to be a census of the church attendance of Protestants in Montreal, published in the last issue of the *Presbyterian College Journal*. We do not wish to accuse your correspondent of intentional unfairness; but in justice to ourselves, and that our action may be set before your readers in a truer light, we wish to point out a few errors which occur in his statements.

He says that "mistakes in counting are manifest," and "that the numbers do not convey an accurate idea of the numerical strength of the congregations is still more evident." Now, on the contrary, since the counting was done by reliable persons, the probabilities are very strong that the numbers are correct, especially since in direct opposition to the statement that the counting was done "from a seat or two," the people (except in a very few cases) were counted one by one as they entered the church.

In regard to the second statement, there was no intention of giving an accurate idea of the numerical strength of the various congregations; it is distinctly stated in the prefatory note that the numbers were obtained more as a comparison of the church-goers with the nominally Protestant population than as a comparison of the relative strength of the different churches, and what there was no intention of presenting we can hardly in justice be blamed for not giving. There may be, as your correspondent states, a difference of 1,000 between the morning and evening services in one of the Montreal churches; but this is altogether aside from the question, for the article calls particular attention to the fact that the statistics have no bearing on the evening attendance. We acknowledge that an error has occurred in our figures; the total should read 12,312 instead of 13,213; but it is hardly prudent to call attention to mistakes in printed figures until one can lay claim to some accuracy oneself. A set of figures are given which "purport" to be those published by us in our last issue; they are not accurate, though the correct copying of them would seem a simple matter.

Again, it is said the addition of these figures gives 12,812; this is incorrect by over 500, but supposing it to be correct, this leaves the article states, a discrepancy of 901 between the correct sum, 12,812, and our sum, 13,213, to be accounted for; by his own figures the discrepancy is over 400 less than this. When an honest and, we claim, successful attempt has been made to obtain the church attendance of Protestants on an average Sabbath, and the conditions under which it was made have been stated, it is, to say the least, uncharitable to the students who lent their aid, to make such a criticism without ascertaining the methods on which the numbers were obtained.

R. McDOUGALL.

(By order of the editorial staff.)

Presbyterian College, Montreal.

REPORT OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION FOR 1887.

MR. EDITOR,—The question of religious instruction in the public schools can by no means be said to be a dead issue. For the last ten or twelve years, it has been, more or less, continuously before our people, in the Synods, in the public press, or both together; and not long ago even on the public platform, as it perhaps has not been for many a day. Evidently it has occupied a considerable share of the time and attention of the Government during the past year, of which the report submitted to the House of Assembly, at its present sitting, gives abundant proof.

The minister takes up fifteen pages of the report with this subject alone. He first seeks to define the position of our public school system in relation to the matter of religious denominationalism, giving the origin and reason for being of the separate schools—Catholic and Protestant. He next outlines the school laws of the other Provinces of the Dominion, in regard to religious instruction, and adds a summary of the history of legislation in Ontario, on this subject down to the present time. In this connection, the regulations now in force are referred to at length, and fully explained, as are also the views of the Government on the whole question.

In all this there is much that is very gratifying, not only in the evidence the report bears that the subject is receiving a good deal of earnest thought on the part of the Minister of Education, but also in the promise it seems to give of bringing this important matter more prominently before the minds of all public school officials, and thereby ensuring that the regulations thereon shall be less than ever the dead letter they have been. It is something to be assured that every public and high school must be opened and closed by devotional exercises and the reading of the Scriptures; that this regulation is not a mere lifeless recommendation, but a positive law; that the Scripture may be read from the Bible instead of from the Government Book of Selections, and that where the "Selections" are preferred, a new book has been prepared for the purpose that is intended to supersede the old, and lacks many of the most objectionable features that it had; further, that trustees may order the reading of the Bible by the pupils, as well as by the teacher at the opening and closing of the school, and the repeating of the ten commandments at least once a week; and also that the clergy of the various denominations may arrange with the trustees to give religious instruction to the pupils of their respective churches at any hour of the day outside of the regular school hours, at least once a week. Besides this, we are assured that "the Education Department has always recognized, and does still, that 'Christianity is the basis of our school system, and therefore its principles should pervade it throughout.'"

For all this, and anything else the report may contain, the tendency of which is to make the religious element a prominent one in our educational system, every person awake to the importance of the subject will be devoutly thankful. It is to be hoped too, that these regulations shall not lie a dead letter on the table of the department, but that diligence will be used to see that they are brought before the notice of trustees and teachers. It is to be hoped that the proper machinery is provided for ascertaining from year to year, whether or not, or to what extent these regulations are carried out in each school section; and if, in any case they are not, for ascertaining the reason why.

So far as the new Selections are concerned, I need hardly repeat that I disapprove entirely of selections in the circumstances. To select a portion of Scripture to be read on any given occasion is one thing; to have it ostensibly given out that the Bible, as it stands, is not a book fit for moral reasons to be put into the hands of the youth of our public schools, and for this cause, portions of it must first be clipped out, is quite another thing; and those who have lent their hand to such a work have done a thing that can bring them but little honour. Besides, this work was quite unnecessary, and so also the expense of it. "The Selections are so tabulated, that a list indicating their place in the Bible may be conveniently published in separate form." If so, the publication of such a list was all that was necessary to be done, and some thousands of dollars would have been saved and much honour. However, since it has been done, it is to be cheerfully put to the credit of the Government, that (1) "each lesson contains a continuous selection from the Bible, and its place in the text is indicated by chapter and verse; and (2) the historical portions of the Bible are given with greater fullness."

While there is so much that is favourable in the report, I am sorry that there also should be other statements, with which it is impossible to agree. It would neither be fair to the Minister of Education, nor to our people, to allow them to pass without notice. With your kind permission, I shall refer to some of them in a subsequent letter. Yours, etc.,

ALEXANDER HENDERSON.

Hyde Park, March 1, 1888.