

# The Dominion Presbyterian

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## A Christian Father.

He did not live in the early centuries. He lives to-day, and we hope he may see the twentieth century well on its way before he is called from us to higher service. The Canadian Church is immensely richer because she has in her ministry such men as Dr. Gregg. He has passed the four score limit, and looks back through a long vista of years, every one of which has been filled with service for Christ. He loves as only the well-tried servant can love, and it the irrefragable evidence of that love that makes his life so gracious.

He was minister in Cooke's Church before he was called to fill a chair in Knox College. He preached again on the last Sabbath in April of this year in that church, which has now the largest auditorium in Toronto. His voice rang out clear in every part of it, and one might easily forget the four score years' service it has done, were it not for an occasional tremor in it. And how rich was the undertone of spiritual thought that one felt as he spoke. Out of a life in which the cup had been overflowing for many years, a life that grows yearly sweeter as that overflow purifies it, his heart spoke out to the hearts of all.

It was the communion season. Doubtless memories of former communion seasons when he was minister there came back to him as he spoke. Perhaps there rose before him some one, more vivid than the rest, with more meaning for him now than it had then. And it may be that there came to him a clearer anticipation of another feast, of which these are but faint foreshadowings, where there shall be another presence visible, and the soul shall look upon Him and be satisfied.

On Wednesday of this week, Dr. and Mrs. Gregg celebrate their golden wedding by quietly receiving their friends in their own home during the afternoon.

Many will go to greet them on that day; many more would go were it possible, for Dr. Gregg is a man greatly beloved. The Dominion Presbyterian joins heartily with the throng of well-wishers, and unites in the hope that there may be yet much work for Dr. and Mrs. Gregg to do together ere the Master shall say to them, "Well done."

## A Startling Statement.

Certain figures reported by one of the religious papers as having been submitted at the recent meeting of the Toronto Presbytery demand more than a passing notice. They are taken from a summary submitted to the Presbytery by its clerk, and compiled from the annual returns of congregations. They refer to the year 1898, and a comparison is instituted between that year and the year 1897.

It is stated that there are 17,193 communicants within the Presbytery, and that there are only 2,960, all told, reported as attending the weekly prayer meeting. Taking into account the two facts, that this is but an estimate, and is probably a generous one, and that the attendance comprises adherents as well as members, the showing is a deplorable one. And the attendance is decreasing, there being 200 less in attendance in 1898 than in the previous year.

Is it so that the rush of business will not permit men to meet for one hour for united prayer on Wednesday evening? Is it that men do not want to come to the prayer meeting, that they find no attraction or help there? Is it so that the multiplicity of organizations—for the children, for the young people, for the women, for the students, for the workers, for each and every little coterie—has robbed the prayer meeting of its strength, turning the one great stream into numberless little channels?

It is proper that a biography of the late Rev. Dr. Cochrane should be forthcoming. Numbers of people, all over the Dominion, will like to be possessed of a volume recounting the labors and depicting the life of one so well known and generally beloved, and who for so many years served the Church with marked ability. We take pleasure, then, in announcing that at the request of friends of Dr. Cochrane, the Rev. Dr. Grant (Knoxonian) has undertaken the task, and probably the end of the holiday season will see the manuscript in the hands of the printer. The members of his Orillia congregation, with their usual thoughtfulness and liberality, will supply the pulpit, and give Dr. Grant all necessary time for the work. The selection of biographer is most suitable, and a readable book may safely be promised. Any of our readers having letters of Dr. Cochrane's likely to be useful should send them to Dr. Grant, the manse, Orillia.

## What Good?

In connection with the present aspect of the temperance movement, important questions have been raised as to the relation of sentiment to law, and as to how far it is correct to say that the mere fact of a law being on the statute book gives it an educating power. It would perhaps be more correct to say that the agitation which precedes the enactment of a law, and the effort to maintain it are educational in their influence. Thoughtful men agree that it is worse than useless to place a law on the statute book which is likely to be a dead letter or to be a matter for wholesale evasion. Such law-making is either useless tinkering or it is a thing that breeds contempt for law. There are, of course, fundamental laws the observance of which is absolutely necessary not only to the well-being, but to the very existence of society. If reckless men were allowed to plunder and slay, or if there was laxity in dealing with the thief and the murderer, the very foundations of social order would be threatened. But there are other laws which are much more a matter of expediency, and that must be proportioned to public sentiment; to gain the law without the public opinion to sustain it is like having a machine without steam. A law of this kind, which is too far ahead of public sentiment, not only does not educate, it may even provoke a reaction, which is in proportion to the amount of coercion required to enforce it. Healthful agitation, however, does educate the public conscience, and leads many men to think out the important questions of civic privilege and duty. Though majorities may sometimes show a disposition to tyrannical haste and impatience of discussion, such agitation implies the right and duty of each individual citizen to canvass the particular question and form an honest conviction. Without discussing the English bishop's paradoxical statement—by the by, he was an Irishman—that he would rather see England free than sober, we must admit that freedom is essential to the highest forms of virtue, and to the kind of sobriety that is worthy of being prized. Unless a man gives his own deep, strong conviction, his opinion is not worth anything, and the vote may be a delusion and a snare. No great moral reform can be real and lasting that is the result of a mere snatch vote, and that represents a moment of emotion without fighting energy and staying power. Some of us may be disposed to be too critical and to spend our strength balancing conflicting probabilities when we should be striking a strong blow for righteousness, but that which pertains to the life of the nation, and is not merely for to-day or to-morrow, demands our most earnest thought.

A great question of social life is of necessity complex. Such a question is