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MR. WALTER KEIR—for many years an esteemed elder of our Church—is the duly authorized agent for THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN. He will collect outstanding accounts, and take names of new subscribers. Friends are invited to give any assistance in their power to Mr. Keir in all the congregations he may visit.



TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1886.

THE *Interior* says: "The essay of THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN on General Cantankerousness is going the rounds of the religious papers, and it ought to be reprinted in every one of them. Hereafter, always when the *Interior* and THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN are called to officiate at the same services, we propose to read the Scriptures and line out the hymn, and let the Canuk preach the sermon." Spare our blushes.

FOR some time Mr. Frederick Fenton, York County Crown Attorney, was in impaired health. His voice was enfeebled. Only a few weeks ago he returned home, having been under a specialist's care in New York, with apparently well founded hopes of entire recovery. On Saturday last he seemed in good health and spirits. Next day, while preparing to attend church, he was taken ill and expired suddenly. Mr. Fenton was distinguished for his integrity and the faithful discharge of duty in every relation of life. He was a sincere and intelligent Christian, gaining the respect and esteem of all who knew him. His bereaved family have the heartfelt sympathy of a wide circle of friends.

THE *Interior* often makes a good proverb evidently without trying. Here is not a bad one taken from the last issue: "The most ungracious things said about a man are said by those who are trying to imitate him." True as sacred writ. Here is a preacher that has a full and growing church. The people like his mode of presenting truth, think they are benefited by it and fill up the church. Over the way is another whose pews are empty. Instead of trying to improve his own methods of working, ninety-nine times out of a hundred he simply sneers at the man with the full church. He can't preach like the man he envies and therefore he sneers at him. Here is another man who writes in such a style as to attract public attention. His articles are quoted, commented on and often referred to by people who read. His success is always certain to excite the envy of people who cannot get anybody to notice their own literary work. In various ill-disguised ways the envy always crops out and the little soul abuses what he cannot imitate. A thin-skinned, conceited, envious character always says the most ungracious things about people whose work he would like to imitate but can't. A very large proportion of what passes for criticism is nothing more than a bitter, envious nature finding fault with what it cannot imitate.

It goes without saying that the congregational meeting is a most important gathering. The proceedings may not be very exciting, but the less exciting the better. The worse days a congregation ever sees is when the congregational meeting is very exciting. The proceedings ought to be of great interest to every good Christian in the congregation. What should interest a good man more than the affairs of his own church? But whether the congregational meeting is interesting or not, one thing is certain; it is the one meeting without which all the others will soon dwindle and die. A business meeting to wind up the year's transactions, ascertain how the ma-

chinery is working, appoint new office-bearers, and attend to things generally is just as necessary as the prayer meeting, or any other meeting. Always go to the congregational meeting. Always go with some idea of what is to be done, and be ready to contribute your share. Don't sit in a back seat as a mere spectator. Always remember that it is the easiest thing in the world to find fault with everything that has been done during the past year. Anybody can do that. Fault-finding is always easy; doing is always difficult. Help rather than criticise. What God's cause needs is men who help. If the congregational reports are favourable, thank God. If they are not, then see if you are not to blame as much as anybody else. If there is anything wrong in the machinery, put it right. Keep one question steadily before your mind: what is best for the interests of the congregation?

IT is a mistake to say that the people are tired of the old doctrines. It is something worse than a mistake to say that the Gospel has lost its power over the hearts of men. All the world over the men who preach the Gospel in the boldest and plainest manner are the most sought after. What the people are tired of is old phrases, old technical terms, old forms of expression that through frequent use have lost their power. We don't mean that these worn-out phrases have lost their power over the people. There is something worse than that. They have lost their power over the man that uses them in his sermon, and because they have no power over his mind they have no power over the minds of the people. The Gospel preached in the language of to-day is just as powerful as the Gospel ever was. And why not preach it in the language of to-day? Why not speak to the people about their souls in the phraseology used in discussing other matters? Are souls more likely to be saved by truth expressed in phrases a century old? The longer we hear and read sermons, the more we study the methods of Gospel preachers that have the English-speaking world for an audience, the more thoroughly are we convinced that the prime element of success in preaching is the ability to present the old truths in a fresh style. The people are not tired of the truth, though some of them may be tired of old stereotyped modes of presenting it. Given a man, of even moderate scholarship and ability, who can put the old doctrines in a fresh light, and bring them to bear on the heart and conscience in living language, and you have a successful preacher.

A FEW weeks ago we alluded to the fact that the Presbyterian ministers of Chicago had spent a day in prayer and meditation on three separate occasions, and at the close of the third day dispensed the Lord's Supper. We ventured to predict that these meetings for fresh consecration would produce an effect on the congregations. "Clement," the well-known correspondent, writes to the *New York Evangelist*:

In many of our Presbyterian Churches there is an unwonted degree of religious interest, and in some of them marked tokens of revival. In the First (Dr. Barrows') there have been many conversions, and the interest seems to be deepening and spreading. In the church at Hyde Park (Rev. E. C. Ray's) there has been quite an ingathering, as also in the Eighth Church (Rev. T. E. Green's). In the Third Church (Dr. Kittredge's) it is always harvest time. Sixty-four were received at the communion service the first Sabbath of January!

There is almost nothing needed in the machinery of a well-equipped Presbyterian congregation. It may be necessary at times to adjust the machinery a little to meet emergencies, but in most city and town congregations there is quite enough of machinery to do effective work. The thing needed is life-power to work the machinery. Might not this life—this indispensable power—be greatly increased if elders and ministers held more frequent meetings for prayer and consecration—we mean meetings of a distinctively religious character? Every earnest man knows there is little stimulus in a conference in which mere modes of working are discussed. Private prayer and study are the main sources of power; but could not the power be increased by continuous social prayer and meditation? The moral effect of such meetings upon any community would be good.

A GOVERNMENT Inspector of the schools in India says that the visits of missionary ladies to the zenanas are of more importance than the establishment of Government schools for girls.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS.

AT this season most congregations hold their annual business meetings. It is often complained, not without reason, that sufficient interest is not taken in congregational affairs by church members generally. Why this is the case it would be difficult to say. Every member of a congregation ought to be interested in its well-being and prosperity. If all who could attended the annual meeting with the desire to advance the common cause, great improvement, both in Christian activity and in Christian life, would be soon visible.

The numerous congregational reports that have already reached us, for all of which space, we regret to say, cannot immediately be found, indicate, among other improvements, that there has been a gratifying increase in attendance at the annual business meetings of many of the congregations. It has also to be noted that the old methods, or rather in some cases the utter want of method, in managing congregational business have well-nigh disappeared. Common-sense and system are now generally recognized factors in dealing with the various matters pertaining to the material concerns of the congregation with which the higher interests have a vital connection. In times past congregations have been weakened, friends discouraged, and the minister burdened with anxiety because of the loose way in which the business affairs have been conducted. Good people, with the very best intentions, for the want of a little systematic attention to business details, have allowed things to drift, and drifting is never in the direction of success.

In almost every report we have been privileged to receive there is evidence of a steady increase in Christian liberality. When it is considered that in business and commercial circles and throughout agricultural districts generally the last has been anything but a prosperous year, this steady advance in contributions for religious purposes affords matter for profound gratitude to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. It is a sign that the principles and spirit of the Gospel are being better understood, and that the sense of obligation is growing in strength. There is reason to hope that with returning material prosperity, there will come a richer and fuller development of the grace of liberality.

Among special contributions there is one mentioned in the report presented at the annual meeting of Knox Church, Toronto, that claims notice. One gentleman, Mr. Donald McKry, connected with that congregation, has given the handsome donation of \$2,000 to the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund. Were even a few possessed of wealth to emulate this praiseworthy example, the hearts of many worthy men would be gladdened.

No less gratifying is the marked increase in membership that many congregations are able to report. This too must be regarded as an indication of spiritual health and vitality. Though statistics are very definite they do not tell everything. It would be interesting as well as useful to know what proportion of the year's accession of membership was composed of young people. There is much faithful work done among them in the home and in the Bible class, and Christ's claims on them are frequently and affectionately presented; it would therefore serve as a guide to pastors, elders and others in their methods of dealing with the young who form a most interesting portion of their charge, were the proportion of young people joining the Church more definitely known.

One other healthful sign deserving mention which these reports indicate is the effort made in many cases to reduce the debt resting on churches. Whatever may be said of incurring heavy pecuniary obligations for the erection of imposing ecclesiastical edifices, the solid truth remains that a building unpaid for is a fettered church.

The encouraging facts brought out in the synoptical reports mainly relate to the business affairs of congregations. When once the more extended reports containing those presented by kirk sessions are received, a better idea can be formed as to their conditions in relation to the true work the Church is instituted to accomplish—the extension and upbuilding of the Messiah's Kingdom. These outward and visible signs are cheering, and they are significant of spiritual vitality and progress. The real want of the Church is a larger baptism from on high; an increased measure of spiritual power that will be felt, and more earnest consecration to the work of the world's evangelization.