

# The Dominion Presbyterian

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## Presbyterial Oversight.

Toronto Presbytery declared, by a decisive majority recently, that Presbyterial Visitation after the manner outlined in the "Blue Book" is not expedient. The debate on the question was an animated one. The point at issue was not whether Presbytery ought to visit congregations under its care, or not. That is not a debatable question. The debate centered around the manner of conducting the visitation, and it was decided that the mode which has received the commendation of the General Assembly is not tolerable. And the deliverance was so emphatic that it cannot easily be misunderstood.

By two widely separated sections of the Church the action of the metropolitan Presbytery may be misconstrued. The extremely radical member will see in it a refusal to submit to authority. Such members, however, have usually many years of experience before them, and in these will learn their mistake. The men who led the debate against the proposed visitation are the most loyal Presbyterians. They willingly submit to all rightful authority, but quickly resent anything that savors of interference or tyranny. The extremely conservative member deploras such action as an evidence of the growing influence of Independence. May it not be, however, the natural protest of the true Presbyterian against prelacy, the prelate being, not an individual, but a Church Court.

There is a form of oversight which the Presbytery should exercise. It should maintain such closeness of touch with the various congregations in their leading lines of work, that at any point, it is in a position to counsel, either in the way of discouraging or encouraging the course the congregation is pursuing. Too often the congregation looks upon the

Presbytery merely as a place of final resort when internal fires become too hot for comfort. The visit of the Court, called in under such circumstances, takes on the form of an investigation and it is sometimes frankly called a Presbyterial investigation. In this enquiry sore points are uncovered and probed, and irritation often becomes open rebellion.

The true relation of a Presbytery to a congregation is not judicial but paternal. The latter, of course, includes the former, but judgment is its strange work. It seeks to encourage and direct, rather than to check and restrain. Formal visitation by a Presbytery's Committee will not reach the desired end in maintaining this relation, any more than the formal yearly call of the professional pastor serves any good purpose. The scheme outlined in The Dominion Presbyterian in its issue of the 4th inst., seems to us practicable. In the debate in Toronto one member referred to a somewhat similar scheme, but the smoke of conflict obscured it. We commend the scheme again to sober judgment.

## Ministers' Salaries.

A writer in The Outlook discourses the question of ministers' salaries. According to Dr. Carroll, who superintended the church statistics in the last census, many a well educated minister must content himself with a salary of \$500 per year, barely support for the most pressing necessities of his family, with no margin for the education of his children. The same authority gives the following averages:—Presbyterian Church, from \$1,000 to \$1,200; Methodist Church, \$847 (this less average is caused by the prevailing low salaries in the south, where the average falls to \$500); the Congregational Church, \$1,047. This latter, according to the present writer, is too low, and he gives detailed statistics for Congregationalism in 42 States and territories. The lowest average is Georgia, \$285, and the highest New Jersey, \$1,693, and the general average, \$1,125. The same denomination shows in the State of Minnesota an average to mission workers of \$688. In other States it probably falls far below this sum. As to mission workers in the Presbyterian Church, Wisconsin and Utah have the highest average, \$1,000, and the general average is a little over \$866.

His conclusions are that for the good of the ministers and the honour of the Church,

1. The workers in difficult mission fields should be as well paid as those in more forward places.
2. Alms-giving donation parties, and all things of that kind should be rooted out.
3. The members of churches should increase their subscriptions and place the financial standing of the ministers on a basis more in harmony with his position and the work expected of him.

These and other recommendations are certainly wise, though difficult to carry out.

## The New Statistical Schedules.

Church statistics are valuable when they are accurate and easily accessible. In spite of the fact that our Church has, at the head of its statistical department, a man who has few peers as a compiler, our church statistics are neither accurate nor accessible. There are two causes for the inaccuracies that are constantly appearing. Several reports are sent in to different officials covering, in part, at least, the same ground; and these reports cover different periods of the church year. The amount of labor entailed upon the chairman of the statistical committee to secure even the approximately accurate statement provided, is enormous.

The proposed new schedules, copies of which are now in the hands of Presbyteries for examination, will remove the first of these causes of error. They assign to each of the several officials of the church, his exact portion, and hold him responsible for it. There is no overlapping. Thus assuming ordinary care on the part of each, the statistics obtained may be fairly accepted as accurate in each department. Were the accompanying recommendation that all departments of the church's work, of which it is desirable to take a tabulated statement, shall close with the calendar year, carried out, we might then hope to secure statistics of sufficient accuracy to make them of real value in estimating the progress of the work of the church.

But the best feature of the proposed schedules is that they make statistical information so readily accessible. Few will now wade through the mass of detail with which the statistical report is burdened to reach desired information. The new schedules classify the information given, and in one or other of the nine forms will be found, clearly tabulated, the information desired. All that pertains to the congregation, its minister, its representative, its statistics and finance, will be found in the first schedule. Here, too, is an admirable grouping of the congregations of the Presbytery, according to their status as self-sustaining, augmented, mission charges or other stations. Under the last would, we presume, be included, unorganized mission stations under the care of individual sessions, such as are to be found at any important centre. In this schedule are two columns, to which we trust the General Assembly will direct special attention—that indicating the value of the church property, and that reporting the debt upon the church property. Some congregations will resent the question, some will refuse to answer it; the Supreme Court ought to make it clear that this information is desired.

The next schedule deals with contributions to the Schemes of the Church. In the past this has been prepared by the Clerk of the Presbytery from information received from the Sessions of the