

The Presbyterian Review

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ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING.

NOW is the season of the annual congregational meeting. Thus far the reports have been very satisfactory. The past year proved, on the whole, a prosperous one in the various departments of Christian effort. In several of the reports a noted and welcome feature is the prominence given to work among the congregational poor; not merely Evangelistic mission work, but also in the direction of relief, and securing employment to artisans upon whom hard times have fallen disastrously. In cities such as Toronto and Montreal, every pastor knows of dozens of cases of real hardship for which it would be difficult to find a direct cause. These affect people who are trustworthy and industrious, but who have the misfortune to be, perforce, idle. How to deal with large bodies of the unemployed is a public question of great magnitude; the church in showing practical interest in this question is but following her usual practice, were it but generally known; and many a poor home has been rendered happier than it otherwise would have been by the timely aid of the pastor or elder, acting as the dispenser of church bounty. It is also noticeable that the claims of the church at large on the liberality of the congregations are being discussed with increasing interest. The churches begin a New Year with a promising outlook, which it is to be fervently hoped will be fully realized.

AMEND OR ENFORCE.

The value of righteousness in public affairs is incalculable. When the public conscience is dull or dead, national honor and national morality are on the lowest possible plane, and corruption worms out the core of public life; when, on the other hand, the public conscience is quickened, vice hides its head, and national integrity asserts itself. To maintain public opinion at a high pitch is one of the most sacred duties of the Church. Politics may be carefully eschewed, but a firm and abiding protest must be raised against politicians, of every grade, who trample under foot the laws of God and man. Corruption in politics is as deadly, if not more so, as the most demoralizing criminal offences, and it ought to be brought under the same repressive methods, as thieving, forgery, assault, etc. It would be natural to suppose that such is already the case, and that the laws against bribery and corruption in political elections are stringently drawn and sufficient. It may not be the letter of the statutes that is defective, but it is certain that the enforcement of the law is a failure. In the election trials recently disposed of in Manitoba and Ontario, on breaches of the law having been admitted by the defence the elections were declared void and the cases were thereupon dropped. There was no effort made to investigate the charges and to bring the guilty ones to punishment. That there had been

guilt was admitted but no fine nor imprisonment followed. The vacancy of a seat in Parliament is a punishment inflicted on the member only, who admittedly was personally innocent; while the real culprit, the briber and corruptionist is allowed to go at large. This certainly is a miscarriage of justice and if the law be at fault it ought to be amended, but if it be the practice, public opinion ought not to slumber. In this field the Church has a grave duty to discharge and the time is now opportune to set about the performance of it. The country expects the pulpit to arouse the popular feeling in favor of the right and ministerial utterances will be cordially welcomed.

THE WEEKLY HALF-HOLIDAY.

The course pursued by the Lord's Day Alliance with respect to the weekly half-holiday is to be highly commended. The appearance of the deputation representing the Alliance, before the Ontario Government, on Tuesday, with a well-defined, well-considered programme proves the comprehensiveness of the movement in which the Alliance is interested, embracing not merely Sabbath observance, but also an arrangement between employer and employed which will enable the latter class to enjoy the rest and blessing of the Sabbath to the best advantage. A Saturday half-holiday is a most desirable privilege and the favor with which it has met in European countries is of itself a strong reason why it ought to prevail in Canada. So far as it has been in use here the practice has proved successful, but there are many employments excluded from its advantages and legislation of a permissive kind is necessary to the uniformity so desirable in business. The propositions submitted to the Government were these:

1. All shops shall be closed in each week on the afternoon of one working day at the hour of one o'clock, with such exceptions as are necessary in the public interest, such as the case of drug stores and restaurants at all times, and butcher shops during the months of June, July, August and September.
2. In the absence of a municipal by-law appointing another day, the closing day shall be Saturday.
3. In each municipality the Municipal Council shall have power by by-law to appoint another day instead of Saturday.
4. All shop assistants in excepted shops shall have a half-holiday, from one o'clock on some working day of the week.
5. When a public holiday occurs in any week it shall be sufficient to close shops on such holiday instead of the closing day.
6. All shops may remain open on the afternoon of the working day preceding Christmas day, New Year's day, and other public holidays, although such working day may be the day appointed for closing.
7. All shops, except drug stores, shall be closed on Saturday evenings at nine o'clock.

THE NEW "DAYSPRING".

Canada has shown practical sympathy with Rev. Dr. J. G. Paton's Mission Steamer scheme and shared in the general regret with which the news of the wreck of the steamer was received. Nothing daunted by so serious a blow, the veteran missionary, lion hearted and splendid in his courage has appealed for funds to build another. And he makes out a strong case. After proving the need of such a Mission Steamer, and giving figures to show the advantage from the financial and missionary stand-points, of having a steamer. He concludes with these pathetic