

THE  
CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

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ABOUT THOSE LOVE GIFTS.

THERE seems to be some little confusion in the minds of our correspondents about what is proper or not proper to give a pastor as a token of regard. One thinks the gift of a suit of clothes a very handsome and kindly present. Others deem such a gift quite *infra dig.*, because in their estimation it contains a possible hint of supposed poverty. These persons would not object to the gift of a "Chambers' Encyclopaedia," or "Lange's Commentary," or an "English lever gold watch." But a suit of clothes is almost too vulgar a thing to make a gift of or to stoop to receive. The difficulty seems to be to define what is delectable on the one hand, and receivable on the other. What articles should be tabooed when presentations are to be made? How many articles may be admitted to the list of gifts, what should be left out? It would be very hard to reach any unanimity of opinion on this point, for ideas differ so widely. One man would consider a suit of clothes a handsome present, except they were of shoddy material and antediluvian in style. Another would disdain such a gift, though of the best cloth and of the latest fashion. So agreement on this matter is impossible.

Is there not to be the most deference paid to the feelings of the persons who makes the gift? A gift is of pure grace. Who but the person graciously inclined enough to make a present has any right to determine what it shall consist of? The receiver has no right to be a selector or suggestor. Passiveness and thankfulness belong to the receiver, while activity and generosity belong to the donor. Now in various communities ideas may differ so widely that very different gifts may be presented. In rural communities ideas are not the same as in city communities. And so presents are likely to vary with the ideas. But the love behind the gift is identical in both communities; love is genuine, warm, considerate in all places. The gifts that may come from that love may not be the same, but the love is the same.

In a rural section some benevolent ladies planned the gift of a pair of fine blankets for the pastor's wife. A long time was spent in their weaving to make them extra nice. They were offered to the lady, but refused because they seemed to suggest poverty. Was such refusal a kind one? Was it proper? Love had planned those blankets. Love had woven them. Love tendered them. Besides, in a country section a pair of blankets is set great store by. And the ladies who tendered them thought they were making a most sensible and most generous present. "Such as we have give we thee," was their unuttered language. In such a case was not refusal unkind? Was not the sensitiveness which shrank from taking a slight put upon genuine though rustic love? We cannot help thinking it was. Receiving in such a case would have been better than refusing.

People who are recipients should remember this, that in giving, it is not the gift but the love that gives which ought to be considered. And whatever form that gift may come in, it should be welcomed for the sake of the love which prompted it. No matter if it should appear in suits of clothes, or oats, or turnips, or books, or gold watches, take it for the sake of the benevolence at its back. We can be too sensitive, proudly sensitive, about our accepting a gift. Even though to us it may seem *malapropos*, uncouth, or meagre, let there be no refusal of it. For refusal may choke up the fountain of generosity, the streams of which should be inspired constantly to pour forth.

SPARKS AND FIRE.

THERE is one passage that often occurs to us in connection with the growth of the estrangement which sometimes occurs between pastor and people; it is this, "Behold how great a matter a

little fire kindleth," with the words immediately following, "the tongue is a fire." We are sure that a large amount of anger, hatred, and strife is kindled from this source, and that in churches, as well as in families, societies, and neighbourhoods, the dropping of tongue sparks is a most dangerous and sinful practice. We say practice, for we find that those who give way to this form of sin fall under its power, as surely and as fatally for spiritual life, as those who yield themselves to the domination of sensual indulgences; and the sooner it is understood and felt that back biting, scandal-mongering, unkind insinuations, and such like, are sinful, the better for the Christian world at large. Quite recently heavy damages were given against one of our railway companies because, through carelessness, sparks from a locomotive had set fire to, and thereby destroyed, a large amount of lumber. No court can assess the damage arising from the sparks an evil tongue scatters, but the record is on high, and the day is coming that shall make manifest the evil and its results.

We propose in this connection to call attention to one phase only of the working of such practices, that which relates to pastors and churches. We have never yet met a man who had not some weakness, some peculiarity, or some habit, harmless enough perhaps, which could be laid hold of by unkind criticism, and made objectionable, perhaps ridiculous; and when ridicule comes in, respect is gone.

Let us take an illustration. A pastor is called by a church almost unanimously; he appears to have the gifts and graces that will make him a good minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there is a pleasant prospect to him of a happy and successful sphere of labour. But there are a few discontented ones, we will suppose, who did not fall in with the action of the great majority; they had fixed their minds upon someone else, perhaps, or upon an unattainable angelic abstraction. Their duty, plainly, is to abide by the decision of the church, and to endeavour, with hearty good-will to strengthen the pastor's hands; but they do an altogether different thing, they set themselves to find out his faults, if he has any; finding those, his ways and methods are made points of attack. He has come from a different part of the land, from the old country, or from the States, perhaps, and he has been accustomed by his surroundings, to a different order of church management, or, of divine service; possibly the congregation to which he previously ministered was of a different intellectual or spiritual calibre, or were in different social circumstances, any of which may have produced in him a special emphasising of certain truths, or a presentation of them in special aspects. Now come the sparks that are to kindle the fire of discontent, and end, perhaps, in a church conflagration. An utterance of discontent here, an evil suggestion there, "we haven't been used to such ways," or, "such preaching as that won't do for us," instituting invidious comparisons with the preceding pastor, or other ministers, discussing the pastor before the younger members of the family—these are the courses that are sure to widen the area of disaffection and call forth murmurings where else they would not have been heard. If the pastor is a strong man he will either go on his way heedless of the discontent, or he will throw himself into strong antagonism. If he is a weak, gentle man, his soul will be cut as with knives, and soon, discouraged and depressed, his place will be empty. In either case there will be discussions and heart-burnings, a schism in the body; even if it does not develop into an open rupture and division, the work of the Church will be hindered, and its spiritual life become sickly and dying. This is no imaginary sketch, we have seen it in all its stages, and know that it is only too true.

What, then, it will be asked, is the remedy? Simply this: a solemn resolution on the part of all church members that they will abstain from every utterance that may weaken their pastor's influence or hinder his work; that if they have any complaint they will tell it to him personally, in a kindly, affectionate manner; that they will be slow to hear, and still slower to repeat, any tittle-tattle or derogatory talk respecting him, and that they will discountenance to the utmost

such practice by others. If this plan had always been followed in churches how many troubles would have been prevented, how many a pastorate broken up in sorrow and anger might have been continued happy and prosperous, while many a church which, if not utterly wrecked, has had its influence largely impaired, would have been strong and growing, a city set on a hill, a light shining to the glory of God.

CORRECTION.—We are asked to say that Mrs. Evans whose death was recorded last week was in her seventy-seventh year, one year older than stated.

CANADA CONGREGATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

Greatly deprecating another report of deficiency, like last year, I am becoming anxious as to the amount of contributions likely to reach the treasury; the more so as information reaches me from the west that the hints thrown out regarding "consumptive churches," "unwise past policy," "need of committee of investigation," etc., are checking the flow of liberal giving. Should this information turn out correct, the result cannot fail to be disastrous. A further remorseless cutting down of grants must follow, and that in fair proportion all along the line. For be it observed that no "consumptive churches" are now aided, so far as is known. Everyone receiving a grant is doing a good work for Christ, and promoting the welfare of the denomination. Much of the increase of the stronger churches comes from those in rural districts which need some small aid. One great reason why Halifax, N.S., has not a Congregational church is that the whole country around that city is destitute of such an institution. The young men and others, who repair to the city, naturally seek the Churches therein which are connected with those they have left. Our friends in England have just inaugurated a policy in their Church Aid and Home Missionary Society, similar to that we have all along pursued; they are bringing the wealth of the commercial and manufacturing centres to bear on the poorer rural agricultural districts, for the support of feeble churches which are struggling within them. Our policy has been also that of the American Home Missionary Society. If there be a better policy let us have it by all means, but let there be no holding back from present effort until that is found and established. Will the honoured brethren who expect a remittance from the treasury on the first of April take note that at present there is no prospect of their receiving it, they may have it later in the month, but they may be placed as last year.

H. WILKES.

THE EASTERN MISSIONARY DISTRICT.

Although the bounds of this Eastern Congregational District are large, the churches within them are neither numerous nor large, for their number does not exceed eleven, besides several preaching stations. The soil is not rich though the rocks are, and this has an influence in moving many tried and trusted supporters to other parts in quest of better farms. However, as indicated, nature has made full compensation by its rich and generous mineral deposits, for this district abounds in phosphate of lime, mica, iron, lead, and is not without its deposits of silver and gold. It is not safe, therefore, for any of our farmers to answer the various denominational claims by saying, "Silver and gold have I none," for they do not know how much they may have of both.

Happily, all the churches of this district have been supplied with settled pastors for several years past, and in a quiet but efficient way have been carrying on their work. Even thunder cannot kill, but the electricity can, and what is better, its silent current can carry on a wonderful work for man. Without an exception, each church in this district has remitted a collection to the College, giving, in all, \$527.43, an increase on the previous year of \$34.93, while all have made or are making their annual subscriptions to the Canadian Congregational Missionary Society, with the prospect that the amount will equal, if it does not exceed, that of last year. Although seven of the