

THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 1882.

THERE are one hundred and six Presbyterian churches in New York. The Episcopalians come next, with eighty-two, the Roman Catholics with fifty eight, the Methodists with fifty-seven, and the Baptists with forty-four. Nobody speaks of New York as a Presbyterian city, but the Presbyterians far outnumber the other denominations, and many of them are princely givers. One-sixth of the Home Mission Fund of the Presbyterian Church of America is raised in that city. The most magnificent benefactions given to Princeton College have been raised in New York. Some of the largest revenues raised by congregations in any part of the world are raised in that city. It is a great pity that so many people who might know better always speak of that great city as a city almost entirely given over to wickedness. Perhaps the most liberal Christians in the world are there.

THE fund for the support of Knox, Queen's and Montreal College is a little behind. It would be a relief to see a small surplus in our college funds just for a change, if for no better reason. Our people believe in ministerial education, and have confidence in our colleges, but they don't raise collections for college purposes as they should. Doubtless one reason is because it is difficult to raise enthusiasm about a college. There is no Dr. McKay or Mr. Robertson to work up sentiment on the question. It is easy to fire the Presbyterian heart with a speech about Formosa or the great prairies of the North-West, but not so easy to rouse the people about colleges. Ministerial education is a cool subject. A man who contributes to a college must do so from cool conviction. The right way to get over this miserable business of deficits is to endow the colleges and be done with it. The whole energy of the Church could then be devoted to Mission work. It would be a great thing to have these colleges endowed.

ALL things considered the past year has been a prosperous one for the Presbyterianism of the Dominion. The reports presented at the Assembly show substantial progress in every department. There is marked improvement from year to year in the support of Missions. The report on the State of Religion is, on the whole, encouraging and hopeful. Our Church grows in numbers and liberality. So far as we can remember, it has never been the duty of our Supreme Court to receive a statistical report setting forth either a falling off in our numbers or a reduction in the sum total collected for Church purposes. Certain schemes have at times had the balance on the wrong side, but the sum total has always shown an increase. It is easy to say that the Church only gives so many cents per member for Home and Foreign Missions, so many for colleges, and so many more for the smaller schemes. True, but the amount given for all purposes foots up a good sum. We might give more; we hope to give more; but the people will never be made more liberal by belittling their present efforts. Let us thank God and take courage.

EVERY reader of THE PRESBYTERIAN has heard the proverb about "all work and no play." That kind of treatment makes dull ministers and dull sermons as well as dull boys. Congregations that give their minister no holiday are in their own light. A minister or any other brain worker can do more and better work in eleven months than twelve if he "recreates" on the twelfth. Besides, ministers are forced to work seven days per week, while most other men work only six. No constitution can long stand seven days' work

each week. Mind or body, or both, will break down. It is easy to say that the minister may take his Sabbath rest on a week day. Does he? Can he? Each day brings its duties. Rest is an impossibility while a man is looking at undone work. Change is needed as well as rest. Change of scene takes a minister out of a rut, freshens him up, brightens him, and gives him a new start. A fresh start is a good thing. A cheque for a nice sum, when the minister is leaving for his vacation, is also a good thing. It helps a minister mightily to enjoy his holidays if he knows his expenses are not coming out of his ordinary income.

WE have not much sympathy with the cry for short sermons, though we have a most profound conviction that more sermons are spoilt by length than brevity. A clock is not the correct standard by which to measure sermons. Some sermons are longer at twenty minutes than others at an hour. If a preacher is in a good vein, has a rich subject, has the ear of people well, and is making a good impression, let him go on, even if the clock handle has come round to the usual place for stopping. If, however, his chariot wheels drag, if his brain works badly, if his voice is bad and the whole effort drags and the people weary, why should he drag on simply because the clock handle has not come round? At this season of the year it is well to curtail. A thirty-minute sermon is longer on a hot sultry day in July than a forty five minute sermon on a clear, crisp, frosty day in January. Most of our churches are wretchedly ventilated. Many hearers are not accustomed to sit in crowded rooms buttoned up in their Sunday clothing. When the thermometer is about 90° the service should in a measure be suited to the weather. People who say it is not pious to shorten in July are generally those who go asleep. If a man is sound asleep, he does not know how long the service is.

THERE are not many things about Presbyterianism that any good man need feel ashamed of. There is one part of the Assembly's report, however, which must make good Presbyterians blush as they read it. We refer to the proceedings anent the Fund for the Support of Aged and Infirm Ministers. It is often said that our Church should make more progress than she does. It is perhaps more wonderful that the Almighty blesses and prospers as much as He does a Church that gives to its aged and infirm ministers the magnificent sum of \$220 per annum. To say that this amount is shamefully small is to treat the subject very mildly. If it is the duty of the Church to support retired and infirm ministers at all, in the name of Christianity, decency, and common sense, let them have at least such a sum that a respectable Presbyterian can read about without hanging his head with shame. There are lawyers at the bar who would not put on their gown *once* for the whole sum paid annually to a retired Presbyterian minister. And still we call ourselves a great Church, and say big things about the "Church of our fathers," the "blue banner of Presbyterianism," the "blood of the martyrs," and kindred subjects. The worst kind of martyrdom a minister can suffer is to live on \$220 a year. Compared with dying slowly on this pittance, death at the stake was a glorious thing.

MARRIAGE WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER.

THIS vexed question has been again up before the Assembly, and it is very evident that it will come up again and again until some plan be fallen upon to give it a final and universally acceptable settlement. It is confessedly a matter on which unity of opinion does not prevail in the Presbyterian Church of this Dominion. Both ministers and elders have in open court advocated a modification of the statements in the Confession on the subject; and if there is to be no tolerance given to those who do not think that the relationship in question is not forbidden by the Word of God, this will have to be definitely understood and acted upon. This is the more necessary, as such marriages have now been declared to be perfectly legal and binding in Canada; so that it is for the Church to let it be definitely known whether or not every one who in this matter follows the law of the land shall be disciplined as guilty of a violation of the law of Christ. We can easily understand how a cause may be perfectly legal, and the very opposite of being Christianly legitimate. But in the confusion

and contrariety of opinion prevailing, both within the Church and without, on this vexed question of marriage with a deceased wife's sister, it will be indispensable that our Assembly should give forth no uncertain sound, and should at the same time be ready and prepared to follow the decision come to, to all its legitimate consequences.

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.

THERE cannot be anything more painfully offensive than mere cant—the formal use of language, especially on religious subjects, that does not in any great degree represent the feelings cherished, or the convictions really entertained. But while the fear of this, or even the fear of being suspected of this, may lead many to maintain a very great amount of silence on the personal joys and difficulties of the religious life, or even on the great verities and obligations of Christianity, it surely cannot fully account for the absolute reticence on all that class of subjects which is so rigidly maintained in their families, in social gatherings, and in friendly personal intercourse—among too many professing godliness. Let any non-controversial religious topic be introduced in conversation among those who may all be members of the same Church, or even in some cases ministers of the Gospel, and what a strange air of constraint will frequently be induced, as if some evident violation of good taste and social etiquette had taken place. How speedily will the conversation die altogether away, or assume a formal, uneasy, unnatural tone, as if the whole matter in hand were forced, unpleasant, and uninteresting; and how readily will such a turn be given that the *dénoir* will be got quit of with all expedition, and the company will again find itself refreshed and interested by what one used to call "a little pleasant carnal conversation." In connection with all other matters in which people are interested, there is natural, frank, frequent, and spontaneous conversation. With some, politics can scarcely ever be thought out of place; with others, business is always in order; farmers will have their professional talks, and lawyers naturally discuss their cases—the rulings of this judge, or the foolish mistakes of that brother of the long robe. Every one is full of the matter in which he or she is specially interested, and is ready to talk on it if the slightest inlet is given. One often laughs or is tempted to get angry at the persistent and perennial flow of remarks on matters exceedingly insignificant or strictly personal, and still more when the law is laid down on all imaginable subjects, without allowing others the opportunity of interjecting a word or putting in the mildest possible caveat. But how changed all this becomes when religious matters are brought forward, and more especially when the soul's sorrows and joys are introduced as fairly important and interesting enough to be talked about in a quiet, natural way, by those who have professedly tasted the grace of God in truth! Why should it be thought almost a virtue in so many cases to maintain a silence as of the grave on such subjects? How much of the conversation in going to and returning from the house of God has even a shadow of such religiousness about it? Every one will be ready enough to acknowledge, with more or less regret,—not much. How often are the services of the sanctuary dismissed with the curt "How did ye like the minister the day?" "Oh, very well. How did you?" "Oh, very well. Man, this is fine weather for the crops." And then there is a full course of remarks on all kindred topics, and the sermon and sanctuary service are quietly and definitely laid on the shelf. In many cases it would be thought singularly offensive if, amid friendly expressed anxiety about health and secular welfare, there should come in the slightest reference to or enquiry about spiritual prosperity and the health of the soul. Even formal religious "enquiry meetings" tend in the same way to relegate such matters from the natural, ordinary thought feeling and talk of every-day life, and make it appear as if all that dwelt apart, and were either too serious or too transcendental to be discussed at ordinary times and in ordinary tones. And then when these concerns of the soul and the grand wondrous things connected "with life and salvation" are brought up, how frequently do men assume a *falsello* tone of voice, and strange, stilted forms of speech, as unnatural and forced as can be well imagined, and as far as possible removed from the way in which they discuss every other subject, or indicate how they are disposed to every other interest. Drop into very