

## Our Contributors.

### THE UNCERTAINTIES OF THE BALLOT BOX.

BY KNOXIAN.

What is the most uncertain thing in this world? Sir John Macdonald said it was an election or a horse race. A famous English barrister declared that the verdicts of a petit jury are so uncertain that even omniscience could scarcely say what they are to be. A friend of ours who travelled in the old country some years ago found the weather over there so uncertain that when he went out to pull a flower in the garden he always took his umbrella with him.

On the whole we think Sir John Macdonald was about right. Among the uncertainties, a Canadian election holds a first place. It is hard to say just what many Canadian electors may do when they go behind the screen to have their "moment of sovereignty." Some vote Tory, some Liberal, some Patron, and not a few spoil their ballots. The result can never be known until the ballots are counted and in a few constituencies it does not seem to be known even then.

Nothing seemed more likely a few days ago than that Quebec would give a large majority in favour of separate schools for Manitoba. The Hierarchy were strongly in favour of separate schools. They issued a mandement in favour of separate schools. They preached in favour of them, used the power of the Church in favour of them, canvassed in favour of them, and threatened the electors with ecclesiastical pains and penalties if they did not vote in favour of re-establishing separate schools in the prairie Province. People who have been accustomed to think that the priests rule in Quebec very naturally assumed that Quebec would give a large majority in favour of the Government policy. Under all these circumstances it seemed almost certain that Laurier would be buried and separate schools triumph. But when the ballots are counted it is found that the electors of Quebec are not worrying over separate schools for Manitoba. The Hierarchy are no doubt considerably exercised over the matter but the average Quebec elector does not seem to care a straw about it.

Of course nearly everybody assumed that Manitoba is a unit against separate schools. For years we have all understood that the good people of that Province were engaged in a deadly struggle against Rome. Mr. Greenway asked them last winter to say at the polls what they thought about re-establishing separate schools, and almost unanimously they declared they would do nothing of the kind. No separate schools for them. If ever a unanimous verdict was given by a free people it was the verdict given a few months ago by the electors of Manitoba against the re-establishment of separate schools in their Province.

But what did these electors do the other day? If the returns at hand are correct they have elected a majority of member in favour of Remedial legislation. If Remedial legislation means coercion, they have voted in favour of coercing themselves. They voted against separate schools last winter and in favour of them last week. Even of the newly elected members, are not four to two in favour of separate schools. The result seems to show that the people are not much in earnest about the school question. Their friends in the older parts of the Dominion have been shouting for months, "Hands off Manitoba;" and when they became so hoarse they could shout no more, the people of Manitoba went to the polls and said, "You may lay your hands on Manitoba if you want to." At all events that is what the returns now before us seem to say.

No doubt the Patrons put two constituencies on the side of separate schools. But blaming them does not mend matters. The Patrons are Manitobans, and if they cared much about the school question they would

not have endangered the interests of the Province by going to the polls.

For the last eighteen years the cities of the Dominion have with scarcely an exception pronounced in favour of the Conservative Government and of the N. P. Naturally enough many people expected them to go solidly in the old paths. That was just the thing they did not do.

Farmers are said by many to suffer on account of the N. P. People who say this of course expected farmers to vote against the N. P. Thousands of them voted in favour of it while the manufacturing city of Hamilton went the other way.

Ten years ago the anti-Catholic was the most potent cry in Ontario. It will never be so potent again in this generation. When Catholic Quebec pronounces against Remedial legislation and Protestant Manitoba favours it, or at best seems indifferent, it is high time to stop electioneering on religious lines.

The Protestant horse is dead. Quebec and Manitoba killed him.

Verily elections are uncertain things. As a fellow student of ours used to say, "The public is a curious animal."

### TERM SERVICE IN THE ELDERSHIP.

BY REV. THOMAS NATTRESS, B.A.

A subject that is brought before the public by the religious press from time to time, because it is of interest to many in our Church, is that of a limited time service in the Eldership. The question recurs because it is of interest—and importance, and because, never having been brought properly before the General Assembly, it has not yet been passed upon by that body. It may not be to no purpose, therefore, as we begin a new Church year, to review the position taken by our sister Church across the border—the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

Up to the year 1872 the question was not finally settled by this Church, but had repeatedly been up for discussion. The Assembly of 1835 found that "the mode of electing elders for a term of years was irregular, and ought in future to be abandoned." The Assemblies of 1852 and 1862 found [Moore's Digest, 1886—pp. 342, 343; sec. 12 a. b.] that "the most obvious and natural construction of our Form of Government does not contemplate a rotary eldership; and while such an organization of a Session is not *anti-Presbyterial*, yet the Assembly would discourage the adoption of the principle in our Church, from respect to the plain meaning of our rule; but nothing in this resolution is intended to disturb the relation of those churches which have adopted the principle of a limited period in the services of elders." Thus the action taken by one congregation in electing elders for a term of years is declared simply to be "irregular," by the Assembly of 1835; and the principle involved in that action is declared by the Assemblies of 1852 and 1862 to be "not *anti-Presbyterial*," and is not held to prejudice the case of those churches which have adopted it. There is a perceptible advance here, but no contradiction.

The Assembly of 1872 affirmed the right of a congregation to elect elders to serve for a term of years. Here is further advance—and legislation. The case at this time reported upon by the Judicial Committee, and passed upon finally by the Assembly, was that of a Church electing elders for a term of years, whose action was endorsed by Presbytery. The Synod of Philadelphia, being appealed to by a minority of the members of Presbytery, endorsed the Presbytery's approval of the congregation's action. Complaint was made to the next Assembly against the Synod's finding in the case; which complaint the Assembly did not sustain. A Committee was appointed to draft "a minute with reference to the case just decided." The personnel of this committee is not without interest for these are

the names: Rev. Charles S. Robison, D.D., Rev. Tryon Edwards, D.D., Rev. Elliott H. Payson, Hon. James E. Brown, and Hon. Lawson A. Parks. Following is their report, adopted by the Assembly, and it embodies, we believe, the law of our sister Church to-day [Moore's Digest, 1886—p. 345; sec. 13, c.]—"The case seemed to present in a judicial form the question of the interpretation of our Constitution concerning the election of elders and deacons, and yet many of the Assembly do not regard it as really involving that question. Hence, in defining its own action, the Assembly is not to be understood as deciding that in any case the actual service of the eldership should be either permanent or limited; but while the office is perpetual, the time of its exercise in each individual congregation may be left to the decision of the Church itself, according to the mode approved and in use in such a church."

What, then, eventuates when this law is operative?

(1) That when an elder's "usefulness is gone" (as the current phrase is), and his term of service for which he was elected to serve has expired, he need not be re-elected.

(2) When an elder's term of service has expired, and his continuance in office is desired by the congregation, he may be re-elected and re-inducted to office, but needs not to be, and shall not be, re-ordained.

(3) "The office of the eldership being a perpetual office, the elder who simply has not been re-elected, is still eligible to represent his Presbytery in the General Assembly. (Case of elder Freeman Edson retaining his seat as a member of the Assembly of 1835. [Moore's Digest, 1886—pp. 348, 349; vl. i. a.]

(4) Where an elder has not been retired from service by the congregation that elected him to serve for a limited term, but has retired on his own motion, he shall not then be eligible to hold a commission to the General Assembly. [This, in view of (a) Digest, pp. 348, 349, vl. i. a., above referred to; (b) Subsequent legislation of the same Assembly of 1835, "that no ruling elder who has retired from the active exercise of his office in the church to which he belongs can be admitted as a member of a Presbytery, Synod or General Assembly;" and (c) the tenor of the Assembly's finding in 1872 as quoted.]

(5) An elder who is simply retired by his congregation on the occasion of a new election, would be eligible for re-election by the same congregation at any future time in the event of his remaining in the congregation, just as, in the present order, he is eligible for election to the eldership of a congregation of which subsequently he may become a member.

(6) Meanwhile an opportunity has been afforded the congregation to strengthen itself by the induction of new officers to the (perhaps) most essential office in the Church. Amherstburg, Ont.

### THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY REV. PROF. F. R. BEATTIE, D.D.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, popularly known as the Southern Presbyterian Church met this year in Memphis, Tenn., a prosperous city, with a strong Presbyterian population, situated on the banks of the Mississippi River. The meeting was in every respect a pleasant and cheering one, showing by the reports for the year past that there were not wanting many tokens of the divine favor upon the work. It may be that a few items will be of interest to some of the readers of THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

The territory embraced by the Southern Church is a wide and growing one. It extends from Maryland to Texas, and from

Missouri to Florida. Its field therefore lies in sixteen states with a very wide area. In this field there are thirty Synods, and seventy-four Presbyteries. The communicant membership is over 210,000, which makes the fourth in size of the Presbyterian Churches in the world, the three larger ones being the Presbyterian Church, North, the Established and the Free Churches of Scotland. The Southern Church began its career in 1861 with a membership of about 90,000, so that its progress in one generation has been full of encouragement.

The ratio of representation in the Assembly differs greatly from that in the Canadian Church. Instead of one in four it is one in twenty-four. Hence a Presbytery with but twenty-four ministers sends only one minister and one ruling elder; and if more than twenty-four ministers belong to a Presbytery, two ministers and two ruling elders are sent as commissioners. It is, therefore, a strictly representative body, and numbers just about two hundred members. The expenses of commissioners are paid by the Presbyteries who send them, and there are very seldom any absentees. This year the attendance was large, and many of the commissioners were new men, and not a few of them were young men. In ten days the business was concluded, and the proceedings were harmonious and earnest throughout. One feature of the proceedings of the Southern Assembly is the strict manner in which they follow the requirements of the Book of Church Order, and adhere to the rules of parliamentary procedure. The result is that confusion seldom arises in the conduct of its business.

There were no burning questions before the Assembly, so that it devoted itself largely to the consideration of the practical work and welfare of the Church. The reports of the past year were presented and considered, and plans were projected for the coming year. Only a few items can be noted here.

The Home Mission work as usual engaged earnest attention. This field in the South is wide and expanding. The Southern States, especially Texas, is sure to increase rapidly in population. Indeed it is the opinion of many who understand the situation that during the next twenty-five years, the Southern States will advance more rapidly in population and wealth than any other section, and there are many things which point in this direction. This being the case much importance is to be attached to the work of Home Missions. In the Southern Church this work is pushed vigorously, but it can scarcely be said that it is so well unified in the mode of conducting it as in the Canadian Church. It is, in fact, carried on by three separate agencies. First, Presbyteries do part of the work, each having its committee, raising its own money, and disbursing this sum for mission work in its own bounds. Secondly, Synods have a similar plan of work, raising money and employing missionaries in their own bounds. Thirdly, the General Assembly has its committee, and raises its funds, which are chiefly expended in the distant frontier districts. This being the plan of work it is not easy to obtain a compact view of the whole of the Home Mission work for a year, as the Presbyteries and Synods do not make any formal report to the General Assembly. But speaking in a general way about \$150,000 must be expended in this work in all its branches. The results are excellent, and more and more it is made to appear that Presbyterianism is entirely suited to all classes of the people in this wide field.

The Foreign Mission work is well unified and is conducted with great vigor by its committee, and is liberally supported by the people generally. This year \$142,000 were given for this cause, and although nineteen new missionaries were sent out there is a handsome balance in the treasury for the future. The fields occupied are Mexico, Brazil, China, Japan, Corea, and the Congo, and the reports from all the centres of work were full of cheer. Young men and women

\* Sequences (3) and (4) are submitted for consideration, rather than as necessarily following, for other questions are involved.