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## The Canada Presbyterian.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, MANAGER.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3RD, 1894.

TWO Methodists tried conclusions for the mayor's chair in Toronto last Monday. Dr. Douglas must have been satisfied.

THE minister who talks continually about some "case" that is, or has been before the church courts, does not usually say much about sermons or books.

IF Presbyterians were as particular about orthodoxy in giving, as they are about orthodoxy in teaching, instead of one heresy case we might have several thousand.

COMPARE the splendour of the World's Fair at Chicago with the condition of the 150,000 human beings in that city who are now clamouring for bread, and you have a striking illustration of the tendency of the Adam family to go to extremes.

THERE is not so much said about congregational meetings as about some of the other ecclesiastical meetings, but we venture to say congregational meetings are among the most important meetings held in the church. The congregation is the basis of everything in the church. If congregations prosper, everything in the church prospers. If congregations decline, everything declines. And yet people often take more interest in a "social" than they take in the congregational meeting.

ONE can easily understand how people who like to listen to arguments should crowd into a court room to hear distinguished counsel conduct a criminal case. But why hundreds of presumably civilized and christianized men should gather from all parts of a township to gaze at a fellow-creature whose only claim to notice is that he has been accused of murder is a mystery that even coroners seem unable to comprehend. Manifestly there is a good deal of taste in this country that might be improved, and a goodly number of people who have not much to do at home.

A PART from considerations of study, the Knox College post-graduate session should be a pleasant thing. Two weeks spent in Toronto will help to break the back of the winter, and enliven one of the dullest months in the year. Then the meeting of old friends, and the making of new ones will be pleasant and profitable. One of the most accomplished ministers in the Presbyterian church of this country used to say that an occasional hour or two spent in a large book store was no small part of a ministers' education. He was right, even if the minister bought no books; and he generally buys one or two. The expense of the session need be little more than the railway fare, as the Alumni Association, if notified in time, will provide homes.

THE Presbyterians of Ulster have long had the best system of Presbyterial visitation in the world, and they seem to have exhausted the possibilities of their system. There are cases of ministerial inefficiency, the Belfast *Witness* thinks that cannot be very well met by a Presbytery. The members of Presbytery are the next door neighbours of the inefficient brother, and naturally they do not like to interfere with him. The *Witness* has laid its finger on the weakest spot in the Presbyterian system. Who has not seen dozens of cases of the kind referred to. It is a very unpleasant duty to tell a ministerial neighbour that his lack of preparation for the pulpit, or the slovenly manner in which

he does his pastoral work, or some other cause, is ruining his congregation. The duty is all the more unpleasant because everybody knows the moment any action is taken, all the cranks and lewd fellows, and personal enemies, and loud-mouthed brawlers, and men under discipline in the congregation will join in the cry against the minister. Still the duty devolves upon somebody. A writer in the *Witness* suggests that an independent committee of the General Assembly should investigate all cases of ministerial inefficiency. A committee of Synod would suit Canada better. The suggestion is well worth considering. Of course there would be the usual cry about interference with the rights of Presbyteries. If Presbyteries cannot, or will not do their duties, they should not object to having them done by some other body.

THAN Canon Hincks, of Windsor, there is no more earnest, devoted, self-sacrificing minister in any church in Canada. The worthy gentleman shook up his congregation and made what has been described as a "tremendous sensation," the other Sabbath, by the following paragraph in his sermon:—

"I am a Socialist myself, and it is enough to make any one the same when they see poverty on every side—men, women and children actually starving for the want of food, while others have an over-abundance of money and spend their time in trying to squeeze more out of their unfortunate brothers.

"You are not satisfied to insist on social distinctions during the week, but you must bring them into the church, the very house of God, the place above all others where we would expect to see the rich and poor sitting side by side. Here in this church you insist on paying for a seat in order to keep as far away as possible from those whom you are pleased to term your social inferiors. Do you realize that if this continued blood will be running down your streets, and brothers will be fighting against each other in that awful conflict?

"I ask you to listen to those cries from the hungry and distressed. Give to them from your abundance. Share with them what you have, and in so doing you will save the whole world from the awful judgment that will otherwise be cast upon it. I warn you, and if you value the safety of you children, let not this warning go unheeded."

That is a good wholesome talk and does infinite credit to Canon Hincks, even if his views do seem somewhat extreme. Better a thousand times over to have an honest, manly man in the pulpit, with apparently extreme views on any question, than a creature who panders and toadies to "society" and is afraid to say his little soul is his own.

GOOD Presbyterians sometimes ask, why this discussion about changes in the system of Presbyterian government? Has not the system worked fairly well in Canada? Why talk about a modified itinerancy and other changes? The answer is easy. There never was much strain on the system until the present time. So long as towns and townships were steadily filling up with people any kind of a system that organized a congregation and found a reasonably suitable minister for it did well enough. But things have changed. Many communities are at a standstill in the matter of population and some are going back. The strain comes with a stationary or diminishing population. The people too have changed considerably. The original Scotch and North of Ireland settlers were a church going people strongly attached to Presbyterianism. They went long distances to church and went without any coaxing. In these modern days church connection with many people is largely a liking for a minister. If they happen to like the minister they attend church, but only so long as they like the minister. The difficulties of the minister have also changed. In the early days the obstacles were largely physical. Long distances had to be travelled over rough roads. The boarding arrangements were sometimes rather primitive. But the people were kind. They were willing to be organized and anxious to hear the gospel. There was no list of fifty candidates to make a selection from. Under these circumstances there was much good work and little strain. The real strain is coming now with a diminishing population and people largely changed in their tastes and habits.

WE have just been examining the "Teachers' Preparation Leaflet" and the "Home Study Leaflet," intended more especially for scholars. They are both published weekly by the General Assembly's S. S. Committee, the former by an editing committee, consisting of Rev. T. F. Fotheringham, M.A., Jas. Turnbull and Principal Kirkland. The two aids are adapted to each other, so that teacher and scholar are prepared to meet one another, having gone over in their study the same ground according to the same general method. This

is an important matter for both teacher and scholar. The information in both, while condensed, is clearly arranged, and the memory is thus helped to acquire and retain it. For the scholar especially, but for the teacher as well, we like both these subjects and their order as thus given in the Home Study Leaflet: the Golden Text; commit to memory; prove that; Shorter Catechism; and this, "Always bring your Bible and Shorter Catechism to Sabbath School;" daily portions to be read are given from the selections of the International Bible Reading Association. Children well taught according to the system here laid down, cannot but grow up grounded in all that has made their forefathers so notable a power wherever they have been found. These helps, it may be added, are so cheap as to be within reach of the poorest Sunday school. They are published weekly at five cents a year by Rev. T. F. Fotheringham, St. John, N.B.

IT is a hopeful thing for our church, and a step altogether in the right direction, to see becoming much more frequent than formerly, Presbyteries holding conferences upon subjects of vital importance to the spiritual life of congregations, and apart from ordinary routine business. Here is one, a specimen of many which might be easily pointed to; it is that of the Presbytery of Barrie. Afternoon—Prayer meeting, Rev. Dr. Grant presiding; "Prayer for awakened spiritual life in our congregations;" 3-5, Conference—Rev. K. Burnett presiding; subject: "How we may promote religious life of congregations," introduced by the Rev. J. Carswell, in ten minutes; "Difficulties in the way;" "Methods of work." Discussion in five minute speeches. 5-5.30, Testimonies on special methods of service. Evening—7.30-9. Influence of the pew on the pulpit. Rev. A. B. Dobson presiding. "How the pulpit may be made more effectual." Introduced by the Rev. J. Leishman. 9-10, "Responsibility of Elders and Managers for the prosperous working of congregations." The range of subjects which might be discussed in such conferences with the greatest profit to both ministers and people is practically without limit, and the way to make them most highly useful is to approach them in a prayerful spirit, so that beginning with a prayer meeting is a most happy idea. Having such a conference continued in the evening could not but quicken the interest and spiritual life of people as well as ministers and be thus productive of the best results.

## ANOTHER YEAR.

WITH this issue we wish for all our subscribers and readers a Happy New Year and many Happy New Years. To all our contributors and correspondents especially, who by their generous aid have greatly added to the interest and profit of our columns, do we wish a Happy New Year. The patience of some has no doubt been often taxed by having to wait for their contributions to see the light. To all of them we now render thanks and assure them of our appreciation of their patience and forbearance. It is necessary to study variety in serving up the weekly bill of intellectual and spiritual fare, and so it has often happened that, things good in themselves, have, we trust, been made better by being set in appropriate surroundings. From all of his co-labourers the Editor would respectfully bespeak a continuance of their valued assistance. His consciousness of the great limitations of his knowledge, makes him all the more value their aid.

In looking forward to another year, to use an old and familiar Scottish phrase, "if spared and well," the most earnest desire and aim of Publisher and Editor are to keep before themselves and strive to attain a higher ideal of usefulness in every respect, especially to the Presbyterian Church, and to the cause of Christ which embraces within itself every good cause. For this end few, if any, departments of labour offer greater opportunities than journalism. It offers opportunities for instruction, for inspiration and setting at work influences for good or for evil whose results in time and eternity are incalculable. Questions of the most general and comprehensive kind are agitating the whole Christian world and inviting discussion, in which the best intellect and most ample knowledge can find full scope for exercise. Let 1894 be fruitful of intellectual activity in the investigation and discussion of some of those far-reaching questions.

Many subjects affecting our own Church are calling for fresh discussion, and I Presbyterianism, to retain its hold and wield its naturally great influence for