

Messenger and Visitor

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Political Duties.

The date on which the general election for a new Dominion Parliament will be held has not yet been announced, but it is well understood that it is to take place shortly,—perhaps within a few weeks and at farthest within a few months. This is an important fact; for the holding of a general election involves for the people of the country duties and responsibilities of a very serious character.

It is not the province of this journal to discuss politics from a partizan standpoint. It is not our business to instruct and persuade our readers as to which of the political parties and policies now prominently before the country should receive their support. But it does seem to be the duty of a religious journal such as this to remind Christian electors of the seriousness and importance of the political duties which are entrusted to them and to exhort them to discharge these duties in the fear of God and for the highest interests of the country. What the highest interests of the country demand in respect to the support of different policies and parties is a matter which each individual elector should honestly endeavor to settle for himself, using the best means available in order to reach a right conclusion. To reach such a conclusion, it must be admitted, is frequently a matter of no little difficulty. Even if one possesses the courage and disposition to act independently of party considerations, it is not easy for him to gather the information necessary to enable him so to act. The number of men who can command the data, the time and the ability necessary in order to form a really intelligent opinion and deliver an unbiased judgment as to the acts and policies of political parties is not large. For the most part, it must be confessed, little attempt is made to think or to act independently. The men who are accustomed to be addressed from the hustings as "intelligent and independent electors" are too generally willing to march meekly in the ranks of one or other of the great political parties, forming their political opinions in the light of the caricature of truth held before them in the party newspaper, willing to believe that all the honesty and ability in leadership is on their side, and all the incompetence and rascality on the other, and impatient of anything that would disturb that comfortable conviction.

A larger measure of independence in respect to enquiry, discussion and action is constantly to be greatly desired in our political life. As things now are, almost all that finds expression in speech or action in the political life of the country is subject to party control. Those who are not willing to think and work within party lines are for the most part silent and inactive. There are indeed a few constituencies in which there is enough of independence to send to Parliament men who are not pledged to support any party. There are in Parliament a few men who occupy such an independent position, there are a few also who, while in the main supporting one or other party, give evidence occasionally that they do not consider themselves bound to follow any leaders blindly or to support any party without reservation. There are a few newspapers too which venture to discuss political matters in a more or less independent spirit, and which do not consider that the fact that an act or a policy has the endorsement of a certain political party is sufficient to settle it beyond debate. Such instances, however, are not conspicuous by reason of their numbers. It would be well for the country if there were more newspapers to discuss political questions on their merits simply and not in reference to party interests and exigencies, more men in Parliament with whom the ruling question should be not what does allegiance to party require, but what does the honor and highest interests of the country demand, and more constituencies ready to send such men to Parliament. But we must take things as we find them and

make the best of them. There is connected with the party system much that is objectionable, as every serious and intelligent man will readily admit. But it has become so much a part of the political life of the country that we could not have much hope of eliminating it, even if we were sure of being able to put something better in its place. Most of the electors who act at all in the coming election will act within party lines, and as units of one or other of the two great political parties. And, as we have intimated, it is not our business to interfere with men's party affiliations. We only counsel that, in forming and maintaining such affiliations, they act intelligently and honestly, according to the best information within their reach. Even within party lines there is a considerable and important sphere for freedom of action. This has respect especially to two things, namely, the selection of candidates, and purity in elections. The elector who belongs to a party may yet use his influence within that party, and certainly should use it to the full, to secure the selection, as candidates for the suffrages of the people, of men who possess the superior ability and worth of character to enable and entitle them to serve the country as the makers of its laws and the guardians of its interests. It is much to be regretted that Christian electors are not more generally and strenuously exerting their influence to secure the nomination by their respective parties of the best men available, and especially men of high moral and Christian principle, men who can be depended upon to exert a wholesome moral influence in the public affairs of the country, who will work heartily for the promotion of temperance and other moral reforms, men whose character and personal influence will always and everywhere make for the encouragement of virtue and the discouragement of vice and crime. Since party men will vote for the party candidate, and since in almost every case the nominee of the one or the other party will be elected, the great importance of seeking to make the party nominations the best possible is very evident.

The other matter referred to in which the partizan elector possesses the power of independent action, is also of great importance, but the remarks which we have to make in that connection must be reserved for another occasion.

Editorial Notes.

—The Watchman makes the following very suggestive remark: "It may be that the first experience human beings have on entering the future life is a choice and the decision determines destiny. All that we ever thought or felt or willed or did, may find its manifestation in that choice."

—We should be pleased, if we could, to grant the requests which our friends sometime make, to insert one or more stanzas of a hymn in connection with obituary notices published in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. But if all requests of this kind were acceded to, a much larger amount of space than we could afford would be occupied in this way, and, as it would be unfair to grant such a request to some and refuse it to others, we are obliged to make it an invariable rule not to print verses in connection with obituary notices.

—Recent despatches have brought the gratifying news of abundant rains in India. Reports from Simla indicate the assurance of an excellent harvest of cotton and grains in northern India, and a large reduction in the number of those on the relief list. But in some parts of India the rain-fall has been so great as to cause destructive floods, involving large loss of life. In the vicinity of Calcutta, where considerable tracts of country are inundated, it is reported that 20,000 persons have been drowned and thousands of others made homeless.

—The Protestants of France are not numerically a strong body, but that they are making their influence felt is shown by the fact that a French Roman Catholic, M. Renaud, has recently written works with the alarmist titles, "The Protestant Peril," and "The Protestant Conquest." The same writer is quoted as saying in a recent article in the "Pays": "The Protestants advance farther and farther in the conquest of Catholic France. A day will of necessity come when they will drive the curé from his church, the Bishop from his cathedral, and every Catholic from public office."

—We deeply regret to chronicle this week the death of Professor E. A. Read, son of Rev. E. O. Read, of Waterville, N. S. Professor Read was a man of ability, who had spent much time and hard study in preparing himself for his life work, and it seems very sad indeed that just when he had fairly entered upon a career that seemed so full of promise his life should suddenly be cut short. To the bereaved family, to whom this must be a very heavy blow, we desire to offer Christian sympathy. There are many who will feel for them in their sorrow.

—The dispensary system of the Carolinas, which is a modification of the Gothenburg system, appears to be generally regarded by the temperance people of those States as decidedly to be preferred to the licensing of the liquor traffic, and more practicable than its entire suppression. Of five candidates recently nominated for the office of Governor in South Carolina, not one advocated

a return to the old system. Four stood for the Dispensary, and one advocated complete prohibition. The vote in the primaries is said to have indicated that 57,000 citizens of the State approved of the dispensary as the best solution of the liquor question, while 34,000 demanded that liquor selling be entirely prohibited.

—From Newton and Rochester Theological Seminaries come favorable reports as to the prospects for the year upon which they are entering. The new students at Rochester number 29, of whom three come from Acadia. At Newton it is said there will be a slight increase in the enrollment, as compared with last year, notwithstanding that the standard has been raised so that only college graduates can obtain admission. The raising of the standard has caused disappointment to quite a number of men, some forty students having been turned away because they were unable to meet the required conditions for entrance. Professor Anderson who succeeds Professor Rhees in the department of New Testament Interpretation, has made a very favorable impression.

—It seems that the activity and success of Protestant bodies—especially the Methodists, Baptists and Waldenses—in preaching a New Testament Christianity in Italy and Rome, has attracted the attention of the Pope and called forth from him a public denunciation, in which he alludes to the work of the Protestant teacher as "the insidious activity of heretical men," and speaks of "the design harbored by these heretical sects to fix the standard of religious discord and rebellion in this Peninsula and chiefly in this *alma urbe*." This is not complimentary, but certainly the evangelical teachers in Rome have reason to be thankful that their work is being done in the days of Leo XIII. and not in the times of some of his predecessors.

—Little progress evidently is being made toward a settlement of the trouble in which China is involved with the Powers. What principally stands in the way of such a settlement is that for the most part the nations have little confidence in the good intentions of each other or of China. In England, Russia especially is an object of distrust. While posing in the interests of peace and forbearance, she is believed to be plotting to secure her own national interests by an attempt to shield the anti-foreign Chinese leaders from deserved punishment. At the same time the reports of Russian barbarities toward Chinese in Manchuria are so terrible as to seem entirely incredible if they were not supported by many other accounts of Russian atrocities. That distrust of Russia's policy is not confined to England, is evident from the editorial utterances of some leading American papers. Thus the New York Tribune says: "From the beginning of the troubles down to the present time, Russia has expressed no especial indignation at the Peking outrages and no especial zeal for the punishment of the guilty authors of them. So far as it has sought vengeance or the infliction of punishment, it has been in the wholesale slaughter of innocent men, women and children. Its chief aim has apparently been to use the whole tragic episode as a means of settling to its own satisfaction various questions of political influence and territorial control. Thus it was far more ready to send an army for the occupation of Manchuria than a regiment for the relief of the Peking legations, and it is now ready to abandon Peking to anarchy while it shows no sign of relinquishing its possession of Manchuria."

—There is at the present time a movement in Maine looking toward the enforcement of the prohibitory liquor law of that State, which it seems to be admitted had come to be very generally disregarded at least in the cities and larger towns. A minister, Rev. S. F. Pearson, has recently been elected sheriff of Cumberland County. Alluding to this, Zion's Advocate, of Portland, says: "Mr. Manly of Augusta, hastens to tell his associates the meaning of this election, viz., that the prohibitory law must be enforced so long as it is on the statute books. He evidently thinks, however, that resubmission might bring about a repeal of the law. We believe he is as much mistaken in this as many Republicans have been in the view that the people do not want to have the prohibitory law enforced. Every time the issue has been made the people have spoken with a voice that cannot be misunderstood, and they will speak again if necessary. But attention need not be diverted to his point now. The most significant fact is the present general admission that the prohibitory law can be enforced. We have been told by officials of various kinds who have taken an oath to enforce the laws, and who have unblushingly violated that oath, that the prohibitory law cannot be enforced in large cities. What have we heard during the past week but a wait long and loud from those whose traffic is in danger in Portland! And yet, one raises his voice to say to those who have elected Sheriff Pearson, 'You deceive yourselves, the law cannot be enforced.' Another significant fact is the effect which the election in Cumberland county is having in other counties. The voice of the people has been heard, the rum-sellers all over the state and those who have allowed them to prosecute their unlawful traffic, find that the day of judgment is not already past. The handwriting on the wall can be read without any difficulty."

The Fountal Christ.

BY J. D. F.

It is many centuries now since a Hebrew seer, looking forward to the advent of Judah's deliverer, hailed his coming with these triumphant words, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." The prophet's glowing hope is now the Christian's glad experience. The splendid forecast has been crowned with glorious fulfilment. Today the pilgrim church of God throughout the world unites to sing—

O Christ He is the fountain
The deep sweet well of love.

In Christ we find a fountal fullness.

A cistern may be emptied, A brook may run dry,
The well may hold its unfailing waters in shaded deeps
far down below the surface of the earth. But a fountain