

**Executive of the Whole Church.**

EDITOR DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN: Dr. Laing has very properly called attention to the passage in last Assembly's proceedings, relating to the proposed Executive for the whole church. The record is manifestly incomplete, and I must assume the responsibility therefor. The matter was disposed of hurriedly in the last hours of the Assembly; and the minute regarding it was also drawn up in haste the same day, at the close of the Assembly,—the court, in its generosity, giving the clerks authority to frame the minutes of the last sederunt and issue the same. On this occasion at least it would have been well if the record had been actually read to the Assembly before it was sustained. The defect, no doubt, would have been noticed and remedied.

The minute clearly should have specified that the outlined plan of a Standing commission of the church for dealing with emergencies, submitted in the report, was sent down for the consideration of Presbyteries, under the barrier Act; that this was what the Assembly actually ordered is to me plain from the fact that, in the memorandum of matters to which the attention of Presbyteries is called, prefixed to the Assembly Minutes, I there inserted the instruction of the Assembly regarding the question of the proposed commission, as one of those sent down in terms of the barrier Act. Unfortunately, I had not an opportunity of seeing the proof of the last sederunt, having left for Britain before it was set up, or I should, doubtless have detected the shortcoming of the minute, and corrected it. But, even if the minute were complete, there would remain Section VII referring to "An Interim Act." When the Assembly adopted the report, it would seem as if it passed the proposals entertained therein into an Act, valid for the current ecclesiastical year. Whether that construction may fairly be put upon Section VII or not, the Assembly manifestly did not intend to commit itself to any such procedure. It may be doubted if it was even seized of the drift of this section; for the report was read hurriedly, and the impression that was gained from it was that the entire proposal was sent down to Presbyteries for consideration, and the clause anent "An Interim Act" amongst the rest. This was my understanding of the matter, at all events, when I seconded the motion for the adoption of the report. For, when a draft of the proposal was sent me as a member of the committee, by the Convener, I took strong exception to the clause about "An Interim Act" on the very grounds stated by Dr. Laing. I presume Dr. Laing, as a member of the committee, with the views he holds did the same. The General Assembly did not at least knowingly adopt hasty legislation, on this subject. And that I am correct in the view stated seems to me clear, from the fact that the Assembly did not at once proceed to appoint "The Commission of Assembly," as it would have done, if it had intended to give the proposals of the committee the force of an Interim Act. I have no right to assume to interpret the bearing of Section VII, for, although, like Dr. Laing, a member of the Committee appointed to deal with the matter, I was unable to be present when the report was discussed and adopted by the committee, yet I take it that both the term "Interim

Act" employed in that section, and the term "Commission of Assembly" employed in a previous section, are not to be understood otherwise than in their usual sense. Perhaps the term "Experimental Act" would have better designated the aim of Section VII. And, to avoid confusion of terms, perhaps the original phrase employed regarding the matter when it was first introduced at a former Assembly, "Executive of the whole Church" had better be adhered to, if the proposal is to receive the sanction of the church at all. As to the merits of the question, and other points raised in Dr. Laing's communication, I may, with your permission return to the subject on some future occasion. ROBERT CAMPBELL.

Montreal, Dec 24th, 1901.

**Curious Causes of Merriment.**

BY MARGARET JOHNSTON MERRILL.

Some one has finely said "I judge a man by knowing the things at which he laughs." It seems as if the judgment based upon such a foundation would of necessity be correct in most cases. How often the personal appearance, lack of beauty, or even the actual deformities of people are made the subject of mirth, scarcely suppressed in the presence of the victim! Surely it is hard enough to endure deformity without feeling that one is likely to be made a laughing stock at any time.

If children were the only transgressors, we might be pardoned for regretting that the so called higher criticism is sweeping away all faith in the truth of the destruction of the children who called the prophet a "baldhead." Unfortunately this vice is practiced by adults as well as by little ones, so we can only enter our protest and trust that this new century may witness a much needed improvement in this respect.

The present generation's loud laugh at the unfortunate or unsuccessful is a sad comment upon our civilization. A refined and sensitive temperament shrinks from contact with those who may at any moment wound the feelings or shock the moral nature by an unfeeling jest. Life's tragedies, even, cannot escape the monotonous buffoon who constantly "laughs in the wrong place." Why should divorce furnish such a fruitful theme for the attempted witticisms of the average newspaper? Only the unkind, shallow or ignorant find in it any cause for laughter.

Those who profess to follow Christ should look to it that they are not offenders in this respect. Misfortune appealed to the Master, and, instead of jeers, the physically maimed or soul sick received tender consideration and immediate help. Might we not, at least, give this a little more thought in our churches? Asheville, H. C.

**Presbyterian Banner:** A personal word from a friend is often more effective than an appeal from the pastor, as it is free from all professionalism and comes warm from the heart. One cause, if not the main cause, of the weakness of the Church is the fact that this personal work has so generally ceased among its members and been left to the pulpit and pastor. Let all the members begin this work and the Church will be a mighty army that will lay hold of the world at millions of points, and multitudes will be brought into its fold.

**Sparks From Other Anvils.**

**Michigan Presbyterian:** Some one has said: "God wraps up his best things in dark coverings, in husks that repel us by their sharpness and their bitterness. But if we face courageously the hard conditions and stern trials which we meet, we shall find within them a sweetness which will well repay us for the discomfort and pain. 'The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.'"

**Christian Observer:** In those communities where Calvinistic doctrine of the Presbyterian type prevails, we find the home at its best, the marriage bond sacredly kept, children well trained, and the home circle a little theocracy where the head of the home is really the king and the priest of his divinely appointed realm. In all their public instructions let our ministers lay stress upon the importance of the home!

**North and West:** There are a great many people who believe in prayer who do not fly their kite up into the air and invite Heaven's messages. They have no doubt in the efficacy of God's great "coherer," but they fail to send the message. A great many people carry their belief in prayer around like a "pocket piece." They like to feel that it is there but they won't use it until they are in some strait.

**Christian Guardian:** If the Canadian public cordially gives approval and honor to such heroism and sacrifice as was shown by young Harper, of Ottawa, and Dr. Sweetman, of Toronto, because the effort in each case was to save an imperilled life, surely the giving up a small and dangerous luxury in our social customs to safeguard a hundred imperilled lives is a simple and reasonable service. We must do it or stand condemned, and this is the condemnation—that light has come, but we have loved the darkness rather.

**Presbyterian Witness:** Of course there are other sins besides intemperance. There are other reforms besides Prohibition needing advocacy. Certainly: but the action taken heretofore so seriously year after year by societies, by public meetings, by churches seems to us to demand the final step in advance. As to the trouble, the anxiety, the cost connected with the bringing in the intended reform, they are not to be compared for a moment with the benefits sure to accrue from a faithfully enforced Prohibitory law.

**United Presbyterian:** The "Week of Prayer" is approaching; now, and at that time the burden of our prayers should be "Lord, wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." Let us throw aside all those formal programs, and coming together as believing suppliants remember such words as these: "We will give ourselves continually to prayer," Acts 6:4. "Give yourselves to fasting and prayer," 1 Cor. 7:5. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," Eph. 6:18. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God," Philip 4:6. Let us not depend upon large meetings or great conventions, but upon the Holy Spirit. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," James 5:16.