

A RELIGIOUS NEWSPAPER.

On this subject the Belfast Witness has a sensible article from which we quote the following paragraphs:—

A newspaper devoted to the interests of a particular church is of immense service to that church. For, in the first place, it gives expression to many desires and convictions that would else be quite inarticulate. Church members are necessarily scattered over a wide area, many thoughts and feelings are secretly cherished about matters of religion and church, but there are few opportunities, or none at all, for hearing such matters discussed. Into the home once a week the religious paper comes with a breath of life. It makes vocal what had been lying silent, it gives form and force to what had been only half conceived, brings to the birth what may have been long in gestation, confirms opinions previously cherished, or corrects misapprehensions and erroneous notions. The religious paper makes the church member feel that he is not alone, but one of a large society, a mighty Brotherhood. * * * The printed page that brings us news of what our fellow-churchmen are thinking or doing in all lands is a great power, it makes for the communion of saints, and the solidarity of "the holy church throughout all the world."

The church paper helps to give religion its proper place and power in great public matters of political and social importance. The State and society are none too ready to recognize spiritual claims in any case. * * * The church paper can fulminate with a force which the minister, by a self-denying ordinance, forbids himself. On the subject of education, for example, such a paper helps to create a sound public opinion, and then to enforce on statesmen and publicists the value of that opinion. On temperance, on commercial honesty, on social purity, on capital and labor, landlord and tenant, employer and employed—on all such matters there is a moral side which interests the Christian people, and which is better set forth and debated and defended by the religious paper than by any other means. And in many matters the interests of our own particular Communion are affected, the welfare of our own church members endangered, and then the denominational print becomes a necessity and a tower of strength. Specially is this important service rendered to men's spiritual interests in the present day, when there is a cold wave of rationalism and secularism chilling the very heart's blood of the nation. The making of money in order to enjoy the "good things" of this life, the craze for sport and pleasure, the old Epicurean maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"—this passion of the moment threatens to crush out religion and the things of God and the soul. The religious paper is of value in keeping our spiritual nature in sight, and the higher claims of spiritual morality. If man has no soul and no hereafter he is not so respectable as the horse, not so happy as the bird. If religion and God are eliminated out of human life, human life becomes a very poor business, a business that does not pay its expenses. The religious paper, whatever else it may fail to do, emphasizes the spiritual interpretation of the universe and man's first and chief necessity, the need of God and of our being "partakers of the Divine Nature," which is the work of the Christian faith.

In smaller ways also the church paper is very useful and worth its room. It is a vehicle for the exchange of ideas and sentiments amongst members of the same Communion. "We all remember Dean Ramsay's story of the Scotchwoman who "wadna gie the crack in the kirk yard for a' the sermon." The sermon is supreme in its own place—she, like all good Presbyterians, knew

that right well—but there are subordinate matters that have an importance of their own. Now the church paper once a week gives just this "crack in the kirk yard." It tells us what ministers have been "called" and "installed," and even such very human particulars as the minister's marriage, or address and presentation—all very good things to hear of and to know. It tells us of new congregations established, new church edifices erected, new preachers that have come to the front, and prints their best sermons for our edification. It allows correspondents to suggest reforms in this or that direction, and the varied readers everywhere see what the people think, and are stimulated to think for themselves. It blows a wholesome breath of controversy, ventilating religious or church questions, and so leading on to many improvements in church life. Instead of stagnation and apathy it stirs the mind of the people, and quickens their interest in every pin of the Tabernacle, society.

OWEN SOUND PRESBYTERY.

The Presbytery met in Division Street Lecture Room on the 10th of April and was opened with devotional exercises by Rev. Mr. Black, moderator. Circular letters were read intimating that Presbyteries were making application to the General Assembly for leave to receive the following ministers from other churches viz: Methodist, H. B. Beavis and J. R. Sanderson; Congregational J. R. Solandt, B.A., other churches, Messrs. Thomson, Nilsson and Anderson. Mr. Black reported that he had completed the report of Church Life and Work—that the following were the recommendations:

1. That the questions of this report be made the subject of discourse by the pastors.
2. That all members of congregations be urged to contribute to the support of ordinances and schemes of the church and that parents encourage their children out of their own earnings to have a share in supporting the cause of Christ.
3. That pastors and parents encourage the young who appear to be endowed with the necessary gifts and graces, to turn their thoughts upon the exalted calling of the ministry as their life work.

Mr. McNabb reported that the Heworth charge had increased their contributions so that their minister would receive the \$800 minimum stipend and manse. The moderator and clerk were instructed to sign and forward in behalf of the Presbytery, the petition to Parliament prepared by the Lord's Day Alliance. The Sabbath school report being still incomplete was left in Mr. Shepherd's hands to be completed, and all congregations which have not reported send their reports immediately to Rev. A. Shepherd, Markdale P. O. Mr. Barton was instructed to forward his report of Young People's Societies to Synod's Convener. Dr. Fraser submitted a resolution to the Temperance Act, which was adopted and ordered to be sent to the Hon. Mr. Hanna. A plan for the order of service in Allenford, Elsinore and Skipness was adopted. Presbytery approved the action of Mr. Eastman and the clerk in appointing the induction of Mr. Lemon in St. Vincent Church on Thursday 19th April at 2 o'clock—the moderator to preside, Mr. Barton to preach, Dr. McLaren to address the congregation. Presbytery adjourned to meet in Knox St. Vincent, April 19, at 1.30 p.m. and was closed with prayer. —J. Somerville, clerk.

The proprietors of St. Andrew, the Scottish religious weekly, are extending the scope of the paper. The new editor is Mr. William Seatter.

ON SUNDAY SCHOOL "HELPS."

Editor Dominion Presbyterian:

In the General Assembly of 1903 at Vancouver I moved the following resolution: "The General Assembly suggest to its Publication Committee as regards 'Sabbath School Helps' the consideration of the advisability of no longer printing the text of Holy Scripture in the 'Helps,' but simply indicating in clear large type the place in the Bible where the lesson of the day is found." (Minutes of Assembly, Page 38.)

This was adopted by a large majority, in fact the court was in a mood to pass even a stronger motion, enjoining the Publication Committee to make such a change in the their "Helps." But at the suggestion of some members of Assembly I put the resolution in the above form. Three years have passed since this motion was adopted by our Supreme Court, and what has been done? So far as the court at large knows, nothing. The "Helps" are still published with the text of Scripture printed in full, and if the committee has ever considered the recommendation of the Assembly it is known only to themselves.

Now what is the result? It can be told in one brief sentence. These "helps" are driving the Bible out of our Sunday Schools. This is a fact, an appalling fact which no unprejudiced observer can deny. Our scholars are taking these leaflets into the classes and are almost universally substituting them for the Book itself. I have spoken to ministers, superintendents, and teachers, and have hardly ever found one who has not agreed with me that such was the case. More than this, these "Helps," leaflets and monthlies are being used in the homes in place of the Bible to study the lesson, so that both in home and Sunday School the complete Scriptures are being superseded by these fragmentary scraps of Scripture which are printed at the top of the lesson "helps."

I am perfectly aware the Publication Committee advise that the Bible itself be used in the school, but I am calling attention to a practical fact, and one which the action of the committee itself, in giving the lesson in this convenient method has made almost an inevitable fact.

If the scholars have the lesson text on a slip of paper, which can be put in the pocket, or folded up in "the library book," they will not, and as a fact are not carrying the Bible to Sunday School. The slip has created a baneful habit which it will take time to break. The text in the lesson paper, has become largely the Sabbath School Bible. The whole Bible is becoming an unfamiliar book in the hands of our scholars and even teachers, the practice of turning up references is now being discontinued because there are so few copies of the Scriptures in the class, the feeling of familiarity with, and the attachment to one's "own Bible" is becoming an obsolete sentiment, and the Word of God is associated in our children's minds with the shreds of Scripture printed on the leaflet. My own feeling on the subject is so strong that I say without hesitation that those who originated and those who are perpetuating the present system of Sunday school "Helps" are doing irreparable injury to our children and young people. Let us by all means have all the explanation, illustration, light which the "Helps" furnish, these are excellent, but for the text of Scripture send the learner to the Scriptures themselves. Let the place in the Bible where the lesson for the day is found be indicated in clear bold type at the top of the leaf, but nothing more.

J. F. DUSTAN.

Grove Manse, Halifax.

Pilgrim—a handsome monthly magazine—will be sent one year to any address for \$1.50. The Pilgrim is an illustrated high class publication, and once known will be a welcome visitor to your home. It is published at \$1.00 per year, or 10 cents per copy.