

British American Presbyterian.

Vol. 3.—No. 6.]

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY MARCH 20, 1874

[Whole No. 110

Contributors and Correspondents.

OUR CHURCH AND TOTAL ABSTINENCE.

BY A. C. F. MINISTER.

In the year 1811, a committee was appointed by the religious body of which Dr Lyman Beecher was a member, to report what could be done to stay the progress of intemperance. The report lamented the wide-spread evil, but weakly added, "that there seemed to be no feasible remedy." Thereupon Dr. Beecher "immediately moved that the committee be discharged, and that another Committee be appointed to report instantly, a remedy for intemperance. He was made chairman and reported resolutions at once, recommending to all Christians and good men, the immediate and entire abandonment of intoxicating drinks. The resolutions were carried, and this, it is believed, was the first step taken in the great history of total abstinence."

The "American Temperance Society," was organized in 1825, and changed into a "Total Abstinence Society" in 1835. The first European Temperance Society was established by Rev. D. Edgar, of Belfast, at New Ross, in June or July, 1829. In October of the same year John Dunlop introduced Temperance Societies into Scotland; and in the following year at Dunfermline, the first Abstinence Society in Scotland was organized; while at Bradford in the same year also, the first English Society was formed. Father Mathew's crusade dates from 1838.

The attention of Church Courts was very early turned to the Total Abstinence movement. In 1845 "The United Presbyterian Church, (Scotland) Total Abstinence Society" was instituted, which by statistics of that date, numbered, twelve years ago, 220 ministers, in addition to elders, preachers, and students. This Society was followed in 1849 by the organization of "The Free Church of Scotland Temperance Society," which, in 1862, was made up exclusive of students, preachers and elders, of 800 ordained ministers and missionaries.

It is pleasing to find that, about this time, the subject came formally before our own Canadian Church Courts, and that, from the very first, an advanced position was taken. The first resolution of the Free Church Synod is recorded in the minutes of 1846. It is worth giving in full, as an indication of the state of opinion at that date. The Synod resolved, "That inasmuch as it appears that habits of intemperance have of late been greatly on the increase in not a few places of the Province, and that these habits are the prolific source of a large proportion of the sins of society and the church; and whereas the sin of intemperance operates as a strong barrier in the way of the success of the Gospel ministry; and whereas there is reason to fear that the sin will go on with rapid strides, just in proportion as the Province increases in population and wealth, unless some strenuous effort be made to check its progress; the Synod agree to enjoin all its members to discourage, by their influence and example, the ordinary use of intoxicating liquors, and those drinking usages which have so long proved the bane of Society. The Synod further agree to enjoin all Presbyteries and Sessions to use their best endeavors to secure the exercise of faithful and Scriptural discipline." Following the development of the Total Abstinence movement, the Synod, at Kingston, in 1852 agreed to petition the Legislature of the Province "To enact a law for the total suppression of the importation, manufacture, and sale of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and recommended each congregation to adopt similar petitions, and appoint a Committee to take further measures for the suppression of intemperance."

In the United Presbyterian Synod similar action was taken about the same date. In 1852 an overture on the subject was presented, signed by William Taylor, D.D., R. H. Thornton, William Aitken, and James Skinner, the two first of whom still remain in the active ministry, and still strenuously advocate the cause thus early brought by them under the notice of the Church courts. In this overture Total Abstinence and Legislative Prohibition were the main points. The recommendations of the overture were adopted by the Synod.

From time to time, till the Union in 1801 the principles of Total Abstinence were re-affirmed by both Synods, and ministers and Sessions enjoined to use every lawful means to advance the cause.

The United Church took the same ground as had been previously held by both Synods of it, and continues to reiterate, year by year, its convictions of the correctness of the principle, and its injunctions to office-

holders and members to discourage liquor drinking, and in every legitimate way, endeavor to suppress the liquor traffic.

It is well known that the large majority of the ministers of Canada Presbyterian Church are consistent advocates of Total Abstinence, and that their example is followed by many of the office-bearers and members; and that Total Abstinence is gaining ground in the Church.

But much remains to be done in and by our Church, and the present appears a most favourable time for energetic aggressive action. At no period since the inauguration of the movement has the public mind been more engaged with the questions, or the advocates of Total Abstinence and Prohibition more alive and hopeful. Without going beyond our own Dominion, we hear on every side of enthusiastic meetings, of largely signed petitions to the Legislature of the Churches, Romish and Protestant alike arousing themselves to the conflict with the most deadly enemy of religion. Leading newspapers are filled with telegraphic and other reports of the progress of the movement, and politicians, so many of whom, like the early Dutch citizens of New York, of whom Irving relates that they used to send their servants out every morning to see which way the weather-cock on the Governor's residence pointed, and then set their own to the same quarter,—are so skilful in bearing before the breeze of popular sentiment, though themselves not Total Abstiners, are heard to make eloquent appeals in favor of prohibition. Everything indicates the return of the tide, the ebb of which the friends of temperance have for some years past sorrowfully witnessed.

A most timely question is, "What is our Church's present duty with reference to the Temperance movement?" The answer may be given in a few words, for it is surely sufficiently plain to all who will but seriously seek for it. There are four great objects to be kept in view,—the reformation of individual drunkards; the preventing of the young from acquiring the appetite for strong drink, the education of public opinion, and prohibition. For the sake of brevity, the duty of the private Christian is passed over. It is surely scarcely necessary to point out the obligation of every one who loves the Perfect Man to remove from the path of his child and his neighbour every stumbling block in the way of following the Divine Master. On the office-bearers of the Church a double responsibility rests. Their example is looked up to by the private members, and their position affords them a vantage ground for effort. What is needed is more individual zeal in this cause. A respected Sabbath School superintendent, or elder, or minister, with a little book carried in his pocket, on the fly-leaf of which is written or printed the pledge, can, by personal appeal often do far more than the most enthusiastic meeting. Let the simple experiment be tried and the result made known. While a "moderate drinker" is accounted rather a curiosity among the ministers of our Church, and while from the platform the cause is frequently and ably advocated by them, there is reason to believe that the duty of preaching on the subject is not always conscientiously attended to. The Bible contains much about drinking. Let that much and no more, but no less, be plainly taught from the pulpit. Increased interest of ministers and office-bearers in, and effort on behalf of the cause will ensure its fuller consideration by the Assembly; while, on the other hand, the action of that body largely shapes the action of ministers and congregations. The Assembly has certainly given the subject some attention in years past, but not to the extent which its importance demands. In 1802, a standing Committee on Temperance was appointed. In 1863, the Committee presented a report, but at the last moment and last hour of the 24th and last Sederunt, a memorial from the Grand Division of the Sons of Temperance was remitted to this committee. At the 24th and last Sederunt of 1864, the report of the committee was called for, but the Convener was absent and no report was given. In 1865 there is a similar record, as the Committee, while in response to an overture from five elders, the Synod's former testimony was renewed and gratification expressed at the passage of the Dunkin Act. In 1866, memorials from the Montreal Presbytery and from the Sons of Temperance were read, and the consideration delayed. In 1867, testimony renewed at last Sederunt. In 1868, an overture which was to have been considered, was set aside, its originator being absent. The Synod of 1869 at its last Sederunt, recommended "an earnest address from the pulpit, at least once a year," and ordered the preparation of a pastoral letter. In 1870, at the last Sederunt, attention was called to former deliverances. The record for 1871 is similar. The Standing Com-

mittee under their failure to report, never having been re-appointed. In 1872 "The Memorial on the subject of Temperance was remitted to the Committee on the State of Religion," which in 1873 submitted nothing new in reference to the evil or the mode of dealing with it. At the Assembly of 1873 two important overtures were presented, one from the Presbytery of Montreal, asking for a petition to the Legislature for a prohibitory liquor law, a standing committee on Temperance, and that a conference of the Assembly be held on the subject; the other from the Presbytery of Ontario to the effect that Total Abstinence be enjoined on the members of the Church, and that the Assembly take measures for forming Temperance Associations in the Sabbath Schools. In response to these overtures a Committee with the Rev. Dr. Thornton, as Convener, was appointed to prepare a report on the subject to be submitted to next Assembly, and the Assembly resolved to petition both Houses of Parliament in favour of a Prohibitory Liquor Law. Something, it is confidently expected by many, will now be done. It is to be hoped that this Committee will recommend the setting apart of a whole evening during the Assembly's sittings for a conference on Temperance. The Wesleyan Methodists and other bodies have done this. It is the most convincing way of testifying to the Assembly's interest in the cause; it cannot fail to help on the work in the city where the Assembly meets; and it will strengthen the hands of ministers and elders in their local advocacy of Temperance. It is to be hoped, also, that some plan may be matured for the prosecution of the work in and by congregations and Sabbath Schools. The Church holds an immense amount of machinery in her power, which may be easily directed to working out great results in this holy cause.

It would not be right for our Church to make Total Abstinence a term of Communion. Most are agreed that Scripture does not require this. What is required, and what will, in due time, be attained is this, through Church Courts and office-bearers and members, such a full and consistent advocacy of the principle of Total Abstinence, that Church members may be delivered from a bondage in which they are sometimes found, and that their children may be brought up free from the degrading, slavery of the drinking habits and customs, which, notwithstanding the untiring efforts of the advocates of Total Abstinence, still so largely prevail.

The Assembly has more than once petitioned for a Prohibitory Liquor Law, and must make its voice heard in our Legislature halls till such a law is placed on the Statute Book.

"CANADENSIS" TO "A READER."

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN

DEAR SIR,—I claim the right of a few words in reply to the remarks of "A Reader" in my article on "Dr. Caird and his Critics." In the first place I must promise that, while I could thoroughly respect a candid opponent, and while I do not wish to be uncharitable, even in the interests of charity,—I think that any one who could so grossly misrepresent an article which he would seem not even to have read carefully, shows himself hardly qualified on Christian principles, to deal with the subject at all.

I simply refer him back to the article itself, to show him what I think any candid reader might easily have seen,—that, so far from being "an apology for doubt and unbelief," it *deplored* the existence of doubt as a *sad and perplexing evil*.—attributable, in many cases, to a false or imperfect conception of Christianity. When "A Reader" admits that there are "honest doubters," and that the degree of culpability attaching to doubt depends on circumstances,—he concedes almost all I attempted to show. When he says that the *honesty* of doubt does not affect its culpability, he dissociates religion from morality, and concedes a principle which logically carried out, would prevent all conversions from false religions;—which would have crushed the reformation in its cradle, and would have justified the persecutors of Galilee. For "honest doubt" would be a contradiction in terms, if it did not imply a *sincere and honest desire for truth*. Its right use is defined for us in the words—"prove all things,—hold fast that which is good." But I do not think, with "A Reader,"—judging from my own observation,—that "all doubt is necessarily honest." I think on the contrary that many cases of unbelief spring from *sinful doubt*,—determined not to be convinced;—the opposition of "the natural man that receiveth not the things of the Spirit";—and to such cases my remarks did not in the least apply.

My article aimed simply at removing what I believed to be a misconception of Dr. Caird's meaning,—a belief since justified by his own declaration; and at showing,—what I believe to be incontestable,—that our Lord always laid more stress on the *religion of heart and life*,—on the *test of "deeds" and "works"*, than on mere correctness of theoretical belief. At the same time it urged the necessity of greater zeal, and more loving and earnest efforts on the part of Christians in presenting the blessed truths of the everlasting Gospel; of greater faithfulness and consistency in *living* the Truth we profess to believe, so as to win doubters by the most forcible of all arguments;—of "letting our light so shine before men, that they may glorify our Father in Heaven." Instead of "predicating the future" of the classes referred to, the article deprecated all dogmatic attempts at such prediction in regard to a subject which has been for wise reasons, doubtless, left in much obscurity.

In regard to the statement quoted by "A Reader" for which he sees no warrant in the Word of God, I would refer him to such passages as Romans ii, 6-16; and Acts x; 45,—especially these two statements; "Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and immortality,—eternal life; and "In every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him,"—i.e., as we believe from other passages, accepted on the ground of the full and all-sufficient atonement which Christ made for the world,—that the world through Him might be saved." As the two statements above quoted have no limitation,—since in the context of the first the Apostle is speaking of the Gentiles, who, *having not the law, are a law unto themselves*,—and, in the second, the words "every nation" must certainly have included many to whom both Judaism and Christianity were entirely unknown; and as they are borne out by the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, as well as by many passages in the Old Testament, they seem to me a clear and conclusive warrant for the statement to which "A Reader" objects. The need for "preaching the gospel to every creature" is obvious enough, without believing that *all* who have never heard of it *must therefore* be lost,—which is, to say the least, rather a hasty conclusion from our Lord's command,—a command which, I may say in passing, professing Christians are *lamentably* remiss in fulfilling; I could say more on this point, but will content myself with this for the present. Indeed I should have preferred not to recur to the subject at all, but that it was necessary to do so in order to correct a complete misrepresentation.

In venturing to touch, with due reverence and caution, on a subject which I frankly admitted to be encompassed with difficulties beyond our present powers to solve, I desired to take neither broader nor narrower ground than is taken by the Word of God; and carefully refrained from making one assertion, which could not be borne out, as I believed, both by the letter and the spirit of that Word whose ultimate and absolute authority I hold as strongly as your correspondent can. It appears strange to me that any thoughtful reader of the Bible should not see what seems to me so manifest in the spirit and tenor. Yet, if "A Reader's" reading leads him to a different conclusion, he has, of course, a perfect right to hold his own opinion, and to express it too. But he should concede the same privilege to others, and he has hardly a right to impute to those who feel compelled to think differently, designs which they have distinctly disclaimed, or to denounce them for expressing and defending their honest convictions of truth.

Trusting, Mr. Editor, that you will not be biased to undue latitude in admitting these remarks,

I am,

CANADENSIS.

The Chicago correspondent of the Philadelphia *Presbyterian* writes as follows.—"The Rev. J. M. Gibson of Montreal, who recently received a call to the Second Church, Chicago, has filled the pulpit of that church, and preached to large congregations for the last two Sabbaths. If Mr. Gibson is as favourably impressed by the field as the people are by him, he will probably accept the call at once. If he does not, the people of that congregation will feel like having a general cry."

"The BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN publishes our article on ministerial salaries and credits the same to the Carleton Place Herald."

We regret the injustice done our Kingston contemporary, the *News*. The *Herald* is to blame, as it copied without giving credit.

Explanations and Suggestions.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN

SIR,—I desire to make few remarks relative to the last meeting of the Toronto Presbytery, and to make a suggestion with reference thereto. I did not make any remarks at the time, as I did not wish to retard the business of the court. A regret was expressed and very justly too that at our Sederunt at least of the preceding meeting, when important business was before the court, so few members were present. Now this is a matter much to be regretted. I for one hold that it is the duty for every member of Presbytery to attend faithfully its meetings from time to time, and take his share of duty and responsibility in connection therewith. When ordained as pastor of a congregation I had very strong convictions on this point, and have still. But I beg to say, on behalf of myself and others similarly situated, that the meetings of the Presbytery of Toronto being necessarily frequent, and often protracted, it requires a greater sacrifice to attend all the meetings than some are aware of. Being, as myself and some others are, at a distance from a line of railway, it takes a good part of a day to get to the city, and then, the stage it may be connecting only with some particular train, if that train is missed, there is no help for it only lie over till the next day; and thus not only one whole day is spent, but perhaps two. Or suppose a man takes his own conveyance, a late train may involve a long journey in a dark night, when the state of the roads is such, as to make it positively dangerous. Another difficulty is, that we are for the most part in the dark, as to the amount of business to come before the court until we get there. Now, we sometimes take it for granted, that one day will suffice, and on that supposition we make engagements at home for some meeting or other, which must be attended to; and thus we are often obliged, however reluctantly, to leave before the close of the meeting; and often too, hurriedly, and unceremoniously, in order to be in time for the train. Now, the Presbytery of Toronto being a large and important one, and having from its connection with the College a large amount of business to do, it has often occurred to me, in these no way by which business might be expedited, and valuable time saved, without slighting the work, or interfering with the independence of the court, or the rights of individual members? any plan that would secure this, deserves careful consideration. Now it is well known, that valuable time is often lost, in settling the order of business, and in determining how a particular question is to come up. It is natural for each member of the court to press forward that part of the business in which he is specially interested, while perhaps commissioners from some congregation in the country have to wait on, so a very inconvenient hour. I remember very well when a student waiting most of a day, to appeal before the Presbytery, and then to come back in the evening. Now, I would humbly suggest as a remedy for this, that a business committee, say of two or three along with the clerk, should be appointed for three or six months, or from meeting to meeting, as the case might be, whose duty it should be to prepare and arrange the order of business, a day or two before the meeting, subject of course to the approval of the Presbytery. This committee of course would see to it, that business requiring the appearance of commissioners from a distance, would come up at a time that would permit them to return if possible at an early hour. And suppose the Presbytery should meet on Wednesday, instead of Tuesday as at present, if this committee were to meet on Monday preceding, then at a small expense, an abstract of the business to come up, the time and the probable length of the meeting, might appear in Tuesday morning's paper; and thus all might know what was to be expected, and make their calculations accordingly. I would suggest still further, that this committee having considered the various items of business should be prepared either as a committee, or as individuals to make suggestions or recommendations; or to bring forward resolutions, or in any way to open up if willing to do so, any question that was to be submitted, so as to facilitate the business of the meeting. It is well known that when a matter is brought before the Presbytery, it often happens that no one is prepared to say anything on it, not having thought anything about it, and thus it takes sometime to get the matter into shape, so that the Presbytery can deal with it, and come to a decision in the case. I feel confident that with a good business committee, much work might be prepared for the Presbytery, and a great deal of valuable time saved, without at all interfering with the freedom of speech, or the rights of any member of the court. If this suggestion were carried out, perhaps we might, make at least a nearer approximation to that great desideratum of public meetings where free speech is allowed, very less talk and more work; and those of us at a distance knowing something of what was to come up, would be likely to take a deeper interest in such matters than we do at present. I make these suggestions, Mr. Editor, with some diffidence, in hope that some more experienced pen will take up the matter, and if my suggestions are impracticable, or unpresbyterian, that some wiser head will set me right in the matter.

JAMES BRUCEWELDER.

Streefville, March 11th, 1874.