

# The Presbyterian Review.

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Toronto, May 28, 1896.

## Young People's Societies.

THE sessions of the General Assembly of the Church in the United States, being held at Saritoga, have so far furnished material of great interest to the church. One of the reports which will arouse interest everywhere has been that dealing with the Young People's Societies, presented by Rev. Dr. David R. Breed, of Pittsburg. The findings so far sustained merit full insertion. They read as follows:

"This Assembly recognizes as under the jurisdiction of the Church all young people's religious organizations of every name which are to be found within its churches or composed of the members of its churches. The variety in the forms of these organizations cannot affect the substantial relation which they all alike sustain to the Church in her organized capacity. That relation is, in one sense at least, the relation of a child to its mother, and involves thereby mutual obligations. The Church in her courts owes it to her young people to take account of their aspirations and activities, and to provide proper media for the exercise of these, and the young people, on their part, as members of the Church, have a duty of recognizing fully her spiritual authority, implying, as it does, her right to advise with them, and to direct their movements. It is this authority which unites together all Presbyterian Churches into one common body, and it must reach to all of its organizations. Such being the case, the Assembly deems it unnecessary to prescribe any specific form of organization for individual Young People's Societies, while it expects them to conform to certain acknowledged principles, both general and particular, as follows:

"In general, these societies are to be organized and to work in conformity with the historic position of the Church, as expressed in her standards and interpreted by her courts. This historic position of the Church needs to be emphasized to-day with reference to the separation of the Church in its organic capacities from all political creeds and all methods of political action. Our Young People's Societies may not be utilized for the advancement of any political project, however apparently laudable. The Church inculcates upon her members the loyal discharge of their responsibilities as citizens, but, in political matters, leaves it to the individual conscience to determine as to political parties and candidates and platforms."

## Scottish Church Union.

The first of the great annual church meetings in Scotland is that of the United Presbyterian Church, a report of the proceedings of which is just to hand. The United Presbyterians do not call their Supreme Ecclesiastical Court a General Assembly, as do the Established Church and the Free Church of Scotland, but a Synod,

but the difference is not one of function, but of name. At the meeting just closed questions of much importance were discussed and disposed of. First among them may be placed the attitude of the Church on the question of Union with the Free Church. Overtures were made on behalf of the Free Church by Rev. Dr. Ross Taylor, and were received with remarkable cordiality. The Synod passed a resolution which practically commits the Church almost without reserve to a Union with the Free Church. What this implies is of great importance to Scotland. The two great bodies which have been drawing closer to each other these many years would exercise a vast influence for good in spheres now beyond them, and Home and Foreign Missions would receive an impetus which would be felt for many years. There would be a saving of resources, of machinery, of money and a consequent ability to face present problems and undertake new projects, which divided has been impossible. These and many other reasons, which are obvious, lend interest to the hope that the Union so cordially approved of by the Synod will be carried to a speedy and happy conclusion. Not long ago the result of negotiations between the three great Scottish Churches with a view to union, was given to the world, and from the reasons published, it was clear that the great obstacle in the way to a United Scottish Presbyterianism was the State connection of the Established Church, involving a principle and privileges which the Free's and U.P.'s could not accept, nor the Established Church abandon. The statements, however, were clear on another point, and it was, that no insuperable obstacle lay in the way of Union between the U.P. and the Free Churches, and it seems but a corollary from the positions then taken up that these two churches should now seek to become one. Dr. Taylor did not speak officially for his Church, (the Free) but evidently with the endorsement of the leaders and it is more than probable that ere this writing reaches our readers a responsive message shall have been drafted and adopted by the General Assembly of the Free Church. Unanimity in the Free Church on such a question is not to be expected. A considerable section holds to the distinctive principle of the Church with respect to State connection. When the Free Church was founded in 1843 the Establishment Principle was a vital element in her constitution. The great leaders—Chalmers, Candlish, Cunningham, Begg, Macdonald, etc., did not dream of accepting the principle of voluntarism of which the Church they founded has been perhaps the most notable exemplifier, and there is a strong party in the Church which is tenacious of the articles of the constitution in this matter. It showed its strength many years ago when Union negotiations had been in progress and it still is possessed of vitality for vigorous struggle. Yet its numbers and influence are on the wane, and its position has been weakened by sundry resolutions of the General Assembly antagonistic to the existence of the Church of Scotland as an Established Church, and presumably to the Establishment Principle upon which the State connection is based. Furthermore, the opinion has been gaining ground of late years that the work of evangelization of the lapsed masses at home and of the heathen abroad has been grievously retarded by continued division, and a corresponding weakening has been manifesting itself in the ranks of the champions, within the Free Church, of a Church establishment. The prospects of a happy and favorable issue are brighter, therefore, now than a few years ago, and whatever the immediate result, there can be no doubt, the action of the United Presbyterian Synod will do much to bring