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SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 1877.

LOOKING TO GENERAL CONFERENCE.

THIRD ARTICLE.

Special Work for the Session of 1878.

This special work will probably begin at home. In the selection of representatives, too much care cannot be exercised. Certain qualifications should be combined in those who are to shape the constitution and, under Providence, the destiny of the Methodist Church of Canada for the next quadrennial period. The aged should not be overlooked. As a reward for faithful, lengthened services, their claims are not so strong, however, as in the offer they make of wisdom and prudence. Nor should youth be any objection where necessary abilities present themselves. The main thing is to secure the best legislative and executive talent in the church. Drones in General Conference there must be while human nature is constituted as at present; but they should not be sent up in any undue proportion. Strong men do not always lie on the surface; it is found that great genius for ecclesiastical management often shrinks from public knowledge. Our best men—lay and clerical—will be elected without solicitation, or not at all. Canvassing is seldom resorted to where a consciousness of real worth is possessed. Our church is very rich in gifted laymen—men who have a noble reputation. It may safely be assumed that a man who stands well in his community, who commands influence at home, is quite suitable for General Conference.

It is more than probable that our new Discipline will be subjected to considerable revision. As it now stands there are grave difficulties in the way of its continuation as in all respects our church standard. A formal vote of last General Conference brought this book into use; but this vote has not secured an unequivocal assent to its expressions in every instance. There are sentences in the general obligations which it lays upon members of the church, which have no more force among us than the injunctions of the Koran, and which its compilers might have known would not be acted upon. It has positive regulations, too, which cannot be, without much unnecessary difficulty, carried uniformly into effect. Its provisions were tentative. Much of this discipline is excellent, and will be, after a fair experiment, gratefully retained; but the remainder may as well be struck out of the record.

The next formidable difficulty to be encountered is that of Transfer. As an element in the church's life, and a means of promoting its welfare and peace, this agency cannot be too seriously considered. If all the Annual Conferences are to retain their present ministers, who shall go over in succession the same ground, and monopolize it as their particular territory, we see no good reason why the same prerogative might not extend to districts, and even to individual circuits. In that case it would be felt (what we are now unwilling to acknowledge) that our economy is a congregational, and no longer a connexional, one. There must be interchange, and if so, it follows that power must be vested in some central board in order to regulate the needed movements. Let that power be well guarded; so fenced about that no violence shall in any case be offered to our known principles and the rights of all parties concerned; but when this is effected, the prerogative must be owned and exercised, by which the itinerancy shall be preserved in its general as well as its local application. This would necessarily include provision for the expenses of transfer—a most important regulation, the absence

of which has hindered thus far, to some extent at least, the disposition to effect interchanges.

It would be superfluous to enumerate the advantages which would follow a thorough system of transfer throughout our territories. Apart from its absolute necessity as a vital part of the great itinerant principle, we can see many reasons for the speedy and complete enactment of a transfer law. To break down any of those undue attachments by which men can be bound to men, or men to localities, to the hindrance of the scheme for "spreading Scripture holiness throughout the land;" to disseminate properly the gifts of capable ministers, so that Conference boundaries shall be no obstacle in the way of throwing supplies to the weakest points of the army; to secure uniformity of mode in the working of our system, by carrying Western experience to the East and vice versa; to give feeble and diseased constitutions a longer lease of comfort and usefulness by removal to inland or seaside atmosphere—these are but a few of the benefits which occur to any reflective mind.

A change in the hymn-book for Canadian Methodism was provided for at last General Conference, so far as to appoint a Committee who were instructed to "proceed to revise and prepare the materials for a new hymn-book, to be submitted for consideration on the opening of the next General Conference." This we assume decides that a new hymn-book shall be adopted. With all our prepossessions in favour of these glorious stanzas which did so much in early Wesleyan days toward moulding multitudes and saving souls, it must be acknowledged that the time for a revision of the old book had fully come. In England there is pleasure beyond expression with the change made by their hymn-book Committee. Their new book of sacred song is an immense success. Much prudent guardianship would be needed to prevent an elimination of those grand hymns by which God has so marvelously wrought amongst us; the most refined and devoted intellects might even err on such a Committee without the true poetic appreciation; so that General Conference ought, for a day or two, to resolve itself into a patient, enquiring, eclectic Committee of the whole, with a view to accomplish this exceedingly important work. Nor should Judge Wilnot's motion of 1874, looking to a select Tune book for the church, be lost sight of. Music and melodies of very questionable tendency are coming in like a flood, and ought to be stayed by prudent legislation in our church.

A change should be made as respects the dates of meeting for Annual Conference. The autumn is decidedly preferable in every respect to the spring, as we have urged in these columns already; and the interval between Annual Conferences ought to be sufficient to admit of a free visitation from one to the other. Systematic interchange of delegates would tend to foster our connexional affection; but apart from these, many ministers would be delighted and profited by a run to the adjoining or more distant annual gatherings, which, under the present arrangement, is simply impossible.

A property-law, which would secure our connexion, as far as possible, against losses by fire, injudicious location, extravagance, or unsuitable architectural construction; having also a fund to encourage thrift and enterprise in the erection of parsonages and churches, ought to come into force. Local funds, aiding in these directions, are effecting a saving to our Mission-Society, which ought to become a general advantage. One direct way of releasing the Missionary Committee from heavy burdens, would be to provide against heavy rentals as far as possible. There is nothing to prevent a saving in this way, by a suitable fund, vigorously worked, of \$15,000 a year at the very least. Such a scheme would require an agent whose direction could be sought in every emergency involving property interests, who could visit localities where ground was to be purchased, or buildings erected, and prevent such calamities of debt and unhealthy location as have sometimes brought sorrow to our Circuits. Departmental officers are coming into place all over Methodism. Where

splendid annual results are following these agencies, it is quite time our prejudices, if we have any, were melting away.

Already a Western Conference is asked, by a Committee of General Conference, to set a man apart for Sabbath School supervision. The question of right in this particular case we will not discuss; but the principle itself is a sound one, as has been fully proved in English Methodism. Much, of course, depends upon the man; yet risks must be encountered here as elsewhere in designating officers. Where our economy betrays a want of strength, a plain inference is that more system, vigour and application, are required in bringing that part up to perfection. The Sabbath School system, the Educational Society's interests and church property, require each a little more direct, individual attention. Some one must take the cause to his heart in each case, and go through the land infusing his own enthusiasm into the souls of others.

But we must defer further remarks on the subject till next week.

HYMNAL.

One difficulty very generally experienced in regard to the Hymn Book and the Prayer Meeting has been that the Editions of convenient size, suitable for the pocket, are too fine in type to be of service in the dim gaslight; and so half the people go to prayer meeting without a book. The Hymnal of which we have announced the publication meets this difficulty. The paper is good, numbers of hymns distinct, and type clear and refreshing to the eye.

Of 216 compositions contained in the hymnal, about 115 are from the Hymn Book. It will be gratifying to our friends to find almost all the hymns that we have been accustomed to think of as distinctively Wesleyan, in themselves a treasure that any denomination might prize as of priceless value, and which we expect to sing more or less in every service. All emotions of the heart, all experiences of the life, all moods of religious feeling, through all gradations of penitential sorrow, clinging faith, exalting hope, find in these hymns of the Wesleys full and Scriptural expression. These are hymns that we expected to find in any hymn book; and without them no devotional manual would be complete.

In addition to these familiar hymns, the Hymnal contains about one hundred other selections from various sources. Cowper's "fountain filled with blood," Montgomery's "Song of Jubilee," and "Forever with the Lord," Heber's Missionary hymn, Peronnet's "Coronation," and Charlotte Elliot's hymns; "Just as I am," and "Thy will be done," will be welcomed in every congregation. "Nearer my God to Thee," with an additional stanza, full of Christ. "Sweet hour of prayer," changed into direct petition, "All upon the Altar," "Near the Cross," "Jesus paid it all," "I need thee every hour," "There's life for a look," "Rescue the perishing," "Almost persuaded," "Ring the bells of heaven," "Guide me O thou great Jehovah," "The mercy seat," and many others of the same class, will afford ample variety for selection. The Section, Sunday School Service of Song, will give our children a claim to the book. Such hymns as "Ninety and nine," "Hold the fort," "Gospel ship," "Whosoever heareth," "Armour bearer," "Brightest and best," "Safe in the arms of Jesus," "Stand up for Jesus," "I will sing for Jesus," "Old, old story" and others, make up the Sunday School portion.

A PRESBYTERIAN COMPLAINT.

The following letter appeared in the Presbyterian Witness of last week:

To the Editor of the Presbyterian Witness: CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

It has long been a cause of complaint and annoyance to Presbyterian ministers and Kirk-Sessions, that Methodist ministers administer the sacrament of baptism to the children of parents who are, at the time, under the discipline of the Presbyterian Church. Our church's law and practice have been not to administer baptism to the children of parents guilty of an open breach of the Divine law, until they professed repentance and exhibited amendment. The administration of this discipline has been found to exercise a wholesome effect as a guard to morality, and an appeal not often in vain to guilty

parents to repent and reform. But the readiness with which parents who have by their conduct incurred the censure of the church can obtain baptism for their children at the hands of Methodist ministers, greatly interferes with our discipline. The conduct of our brethren in this matter is to be regretted on many grounds, but, in the meantime, I only speak of it as destructive of one of the restraints which the Presbyterian church has over the moral conduct of professing Christian parents.

This cause of complaint however is aggravated of late years by the fact that those preachers of the Methodist Church, whom they designate "young men," who are simply candidates for the holy office of the Gospel Ministry, and are not ordained, administer the Holy Sacrament of Baptism, of course with a readiness and indiscriminateness equal to the ordained Methodist Minister. Now I hold that any schoolboy or school teacher, or College student, who purposes to be a candidate for the sacred office of the ministry, can administer this sacrament on equally lawful grounds as these "young men" of the Methodist Church.

I write this for two reasons: (1) that the above fact may become generally known to our people; (2) with the hope that some one either within or without the Methodist church may offer some explanation of it.

Yours &c.,

A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER.

We are bound to acknowledge the courtesy with which the Editor of the Witness has treated this subject in his comments appended to the communication. That reputation of regard for inter-denominational comity with which he credits us as a body we would not willingly forfeit. Some better explanation might be offered if we knew the circumstances; as it is we can only state in general terms, what we know to be the principles by which our ministers are regulated in relation to the baptism of children. Indeed, even this need be given only in part, as the Witness defines our ground in language from which few of our theologians would dissent. Thus:—

It is easy to explain the origin of the trouble. The Methodist Church being of English origin naturally pursued the same system as the Church of England, and the other Episcopal Churches with respect to the baptism of children. No parental qualification is demanded. The infant as such is, in their view, entitled to baptism, no matter who or what the parents are. There are no "vows" or responsibilities assumed by the parents: indeed there is only one reference to the parents in the ritual, and that is in connection with naming the child. We mention this to show how widely different the Methodist theory and practice in this respect is from the Presbyterian theory and practice.

It may be added, that it would be considered among us a cause of grievance to deny baptism to any seeking it for their children at our hands. We have no right to question the conduct of other bodies in the administration of their own discipline; but if parents honestly assured one of our ministers that the denial of christian baptism to their children was the result of their own (the parents) disobedience to certain rules, and that this ordinance was being used as a kind of ecclesiastical whip for bringing them into subjection, or punishing them, a very awkward dilemma might at once ensue. We differ from our Presbyterian brethren on some points of discipline. Where moral character is involved, there could be but one opinion; they have matters of discipline, however, which we do not regard as in any way associated with the moral law. Marriage with the sister of a deceased wife is one instance. "A Presbyterian Minister" should therefore state the facts, if he wishes any explanation.

As to the "young men,"—their "readiness and indiscriminateness"—his picture is entirely overdrawn. Permission to baptize, before ordination, is rarely given in our connexion, and then only to judicious probationers stationed far from ordained men.

Without intruding upon that privacy which of right belongs to Editors in gauging anonymous correspondents, we have learned sufficient to satisfy us that the grievance alluded to has occurred in the territory of the New Brunswick Conference. Perhaps some one knowing the circumstances may give us such light as will satisfy our Presbyterian brethren that the Methodist Church is not to be opened as a refuge for fugitives from Presbyterian discipline.

The Methodists of Kincardine have just completed the most handsome church in this vicinity, and held their opening services Feb. 16. Rev. B. J. Ives, D. D., presided, and collected between \$8,000 and \$10,000, more than covering the whole debt. An immense tea meeting was held in the evening, when addresses were made by Rev. G. R. Sanderson, President of the London Conference, Rev. C. Lavell, chairman of the district, Rev. J. E. Lancelley, of London, and Dr. Ives.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

A London clergyman's experience, given in another column, shows a rather sad condition of things as regards the curates of Great Britain. Bishops are more or less favoured, and Bishops are always secure against poverty; but the wretchedness of patient waiting, to be smitten with disappointment, is the fate of many curates. They do the practical work—the higher grades enjoy the stipends and livings.

As will be seen by our correspondence this week, the New Brunswick Conference is looking up as regards the Educational work of our church. So far well. But this revival must continue and spread. Each conference and circuit should show new energy in the same direction.

The Guardian, in a brief notice of the Hymnal, says "We do not know, of course, how far it is intended to anticipate the work of the General Committee." The preface of that little collection, after quoting from the General Conference Journal as to the General Committee's work, says:—"The undersigned members of said committee, hope that this Hymnal will contribute in some degree, towards securing a larger and better hymn book for the services of our church." For ourselves, we have no interest at stake in the venture, beyond that of a desire to foster the publication of good Methodist literature in the East; but for the sake of our brethren who worked upon the Hymnal with the motive of counteracting a movement calculated "to multiply books; to disturb the established order and unity of worship; and to substitute, for the time-honoured and unrivalled hymns of Methodism, a class of necessarily ephemeral compositions," we could wish that our contemporary had felt free to recommend this one eastern enterprise.

The following letter, from one of our literary and critical ministers, is a little in contrast with the "Guardian's" notice:—

"I must congratulate you on the publication of a much needed Hymnal. In my humble opinion the selections are just suited for the object designed.

The hymns taken from our own book are the most generally used, therefore, best known, while those from the modern popular sacred songs appear to me to be quite as extensive as there is any need for. I am sorry it was not out sooner, and then it would have been largely adopted during the dreest winter's services, but feel sure it needs only to be known to be appreciated.

Our Provinces are rarely shocked by tidings of riotous proceedings, ending in death and misery. But one such instance is recorded of last week's proceedings at Londonderry Mines. Workmen, notified of the intention to change the scale of their wages, refused to work, and, inflamed it is said by liquor, attempted to drive off other men employed to take their place. A serious disturbance ensued, ending in one man being shot, who has since died, and in another being dreadfully injured by a blow from an iron bar. The rioters were from Pictou and Cape Breton; and the riotous element was bad rum. Will our working men, so slow usually to lend themselves to such wicked habits, take useful lessons from this occurrence?

Another startling piece of news this week has been the discovery that the Nova Scotia Governor and Legislature have been working since Confederation under the old seal, necessary to give authenticity to certain documents, and not under the new seal prepared and designated by formal Act of the Imperial authorities. What may be the extent of informality resulting from this, or the injury caused to the Province, if any, we are not in a position to say. But the affair on the whole is very curious, and will create no little anxiety in quarters supposed to be affected by it.

Mr. Johnson, Barrister, whose card appears in our columns, has obtained an LL.B., and is accordingly congratulated by his numerous friends. Mr. Johnson has given his services to Methodism when occasion offered, having acted in the capacity of Recording Steward for some time. We join in wishing him all success.

Messrs. Moody and Sankey are breaking down all prejudices in Boston, except in chronic cases. We will publish some account of their success next week.

There is a rage for blue glass, as a means of restoring health and promoting growth among human beings, as in the vegetable orders of creation. It is proved beyond dispute that flowers, plants, vines, &c., are really stimulated by light shed through blue glass; and theorists are striving to establish the same reputation for it as regards human invalids. Consequently many believe; and glass

MARCH 3, 1877
We are some idea simply imp this month in Halifax while storm us. Train within a had none to have by the Gult
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