

WESLEYAN, The only Methodist Paper published in the Maritime Provinces.

\$2 PER ANNUM, IN ADVANCE POSTAGE PREPAID.

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SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 1877.

A NEW DIFFICULTY IN METHODISM; AND ITS CAUSES.

This very significant paragraph we copy from a London Methodist paper:

We are informed that for the supplies in the necessity of circuits which have arisen in the year, not only has the "President's List of Reserve" been exhausted but that students in the Theological Institution have to be drawn from thence before their three years of instruction and training in it have been completed.

It will at once strike the reader that the drying up of streams which have been overflowing their banks for a hundred years, must be owing to some strong and apparent law; or, in language less metaphorical, Methodism in England must be undergoing some changes which affect its vital interests to a considerable, perhaps serious, extent.

Has it ever occurred to the intelligent student of Methodism that the decline in ministerial supply has corresponded with the growth of prejudice against local preachers?

Philosophical minds, looking upon the marvel of Methodistic progress, have attributed it to two causes:—The itinerancy and the employment of lay, local agencies. They might safely have added another,—the practical, simple, common-sense nature of its doctrines and discipline, adapting its modes and requirements always to the condition of things which hinders the common people from studying abstruse subjects, and bring them to the acceptance of the self evident in religion as in other affairs of life.

In modern American Methodism there are causes underlying the abundant supply for the ministry which we do not fully understand. One very effective means, indeed, we can see, which is productive of great results, and to which as the next best to the old method we of Canada would do well to pay some attention.

By bringing a thorough education within the reach of the poorest student, every disposition of gratitude and loyalty is excited in the breasts of those who owe to Methodism the advantage of culture and position. This is one aim toward which our Educational Committee is working. To keep at home, by offering them equal advantages in our Dominion, the numerous candidates for the ministry who are perpetually pressing toward American colleges, our officials ask for help to equip and endow their institutions and give deserving young men all the help they really require.

Ministerial supply in England, however, has been dependent upon a very different source. True, the element of help in education has been at work there; but not primarily. A principle has been fostered in the Methodism of England which gave always a powerful impetus to its operations, namely, that in every human being brought to Christ there were elements of usefulness—that every converted soul had a mission to the lost and fallen sons and daughters of Adam.

We had the opportunity of hearing Wendell Phillips in St. John on "Daniel O'Connell" last Saturday night. He is a great thinker and a fine speaker. His lecture was calculated to do more harm than good, however. In treating upon the disabilities of the Irish people years ago, his strong language would awaken animosities which were buried long ago among our people, and ought never to have a resurrection.

How this has been brought about, and its particular application to our own condition of things, we must leave for another article.

St. JOHN—which we visited last week—is progressing, notwithstanding commercial distresses which have shaken that city and New Brunswick generally, to a considerable degree. Its architecture has improved greatly during the last twelve years. Nothing superior to the new Market House, the Victoria Hotel, and some of its Churches and School-houses, can be found in the Lower Provinces.

Let a placard of "To Let" in the windows; the tenement blocks are well occupied; while the population continues to crowd the better classes into the suburbs, which are becoming fine villages of picturesque appearance.

Together we conclude that, with the turn of the commercial tide, increasing prosperity must come to these very energetic and ambitious citizens. St. John is well prepared to take all advantage of the new and better current of trade.

The scene of the late fire on Prince Wm. Street is a very sad one. An immense pile of ruins, rendered the more dreary by their distressing associations, is all that one can say in this description.

METHODISM IN ST. JOHN holds its own well in the great inter-denominational contest. Naturally where energy shows itself in other departments among a population, religious zeal also is manifest. The pulpits generally in St. John are well and ably manned—perhaps as well as in any city of the same population on this continent.

It is a curious coincidence that the President of the Council and the Speaker of the Assembly in P. E. Island, as well as the Speaker of the Legislature in Nova Scotia, are Methodists. Usually Methodists are supposed to have training toward expressing themselves in public; but they seem to be qualified as Speakers in other ways as well.

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THE ST. JOHN FIRE.—THE CORONER'S JURY'S VERDICT.—The following is the verdict of the jury in the case of the St. John fire:—

"We find that Edwin D. Watts, Le-Baron Akerley, George Budd, Samuel Lister and Samuel Conboy, came to their death by the falling of a portion of the north wall, roof and upper floors of a building in Prince William street, in the City and County of St. John, occupied as a dry goods store by Watts & Turner, which buried them beneath the ruins. We find that the falling of the walls of this and other buildings adjoining occurred during the progress of a fire, existing in Prince William street at that time, in the Ennis & Gardner, Burpee, and Beard and Venning buildings, and that an explosion occurred in the Burpee building immediately before these walls fell.

In one clause of an explanatory communication, published last week, from Rev. J. Lathern, on the Hymnal, forming the pivot of the whole, the sense was unfortunately obscured by a wrong phrase: When the Hymnal was "completed," a thought was cherished that in a very subsidiary and general way it might constitute a contribution towards the movement for securing a Hymn Book for the Methodist Church of Canada—unless a new arrangement of Hymns were determined upon."

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

CROWDED OUT.—Our Sabbath school lesson we are obliged to omit this week, as the matter could only appear outside, and that was quite full without it. Several letters also will appear in their turn.

THE BALMORAL COMPLAINT CASE.

The following letter is all that is needed in confirmation of that harrowing relation of trial in last week's WESLEYAN. We will cheerfully receive help, and forward it safely for this good man, acknowledging amounts, or otherwise, as may be desired. The public need no further appeal.

Campbellton, March 19, 1877.

DEAR MR. NICOLSON,—The letter which appeared in the last WESLEYAN from Bro. Blackwell, is strictly true. I think he has eight children, and only one able to get his own living. Bro. B. was a Primitive Methodist minister for 25 years before he came to this country. You can imagine what such a man with such a family can do on a farm only an acre of which was cleared when he took possession of it.

Yours, &c. W. PENNA.

A horrible case of suicide or murder is reported from Welford, forty miles north of Moncton. A man named Kingan ran away from New York, having failed heavily in business, and after coming by Halifax, proceeded by the Intercolonial to the place mentioned, where he was found on the railway track, dreadfully mutilated. A verdict was given accordingly. His body has been sent home.

The Nova Scotian Government are to confer with that of New Brunswick on Maritime union. If we may judge from indications in the debates, the latter authorities will not be averse to talking about the subject. P. E. Island seems clearly opposed to the movement.

Will our good brethren listen to us? During the past week a few obituary communications have reached us, each of which would fill a column and half of the WESLEYAN—three times as lengthy as any obituary John Wesley ever wrote upon his gifted and favourite preachers. We are obliged to cut these down; but it is not a pleasant task to do that which the original writers could do so much better. Any Christian who cannot be sufficiently described in one-third of a column, must be altogether extraordinary. Of course our deceased ministers are exceptions.

METHODIST MATTERS

NOVA SCOTIA.

Rev. G. F. Day has been assisted by Mr. Grierson at Burlington for some time. There is promise of good at the services. Several have been added to the church at Chevarie.

On Monday evening, 12th inst., the friends of the good cause met at Mr. Geo. Parry's, Bear River, and contributed a handsome donation towards the minister's support.

The annual Sabbath school concert at Amherst, on Tuesday evening was very largely attended and presented a great variety of exercises.

A donation in the vestry of the Hantsport Methodist Church last week was a very enjoyable affair. Proceeds something over \$80. Owing to the bad state of the roads and weather, there were none of the friends from Falmouth present. They now propose to have one at the Falmouth Church.

There is a blessed revival in progress at Kay St. Church, Halifax. We are informed that never in the history of the congregation was so much of the divine influence experienced as on last Monday evening. Several families as well as solitary individuals, have professed religion.

Weymouth reports a very encouraging state of things. Thirty persons have been added to the classes. Mr. Brett—Chairman—visited the Circuit in February, preached, baptized three candidates and received six into full membership. Three classes meet regularly at the Bay. There have been two good donations toward the minister's support.

A temperance meeting in the Graton Street School-room on Tuesday night gave great satisfaction, and did, doubtless, much good.

NEW BRUNSWICK & P. E. ISLAND

On Friday evening last the members of the Upper Sackville Bible Class met at the house of Mr. S. Albert Fawcett, and presented their teacher, Rev. George Steel, with an address of thanks and \$18. The members have, during its existence, prepared their lessons with great care.

In Cape Traverse, a part of the Tryon Circuit, there is a work of grace in progress, and the interest seems not to be abating.

Over twenty souls have indicated their desire to serve the Lord, the most of whom have professed faith in Christ.

The Lord is powerfully blessing us at Tray Creek, a part of my Circuit. About 30 have risen for prayers, and a large number have found peace through believing. Praise God.

Yours truly, W. J. KIRBY.

Stanley.

Bro. McKeown of Fredericton is away on a brief vacation to the United States. His departure was made the more easy and graceful by the considerate aid of friends towards his expenses on the way. We wish him bon voyage.

CORRESPONDENCE.

CHURCH EXTENSION FUND.

SECOND LETTER.

MR. EDITOR,—In my last communication the subject of help in Parsonage provision was discussed, and its advantage clearly suggested. In this letter it is intended to indicate the probable advantages of a fund, such as proposed, in church building and the extinction of church debt. We have no data in our own Conference and though report of similar funds elsewhere have been sought for, none have so far come to hand. We can therefore only strive to show what may be done in the way of stimulating effort among congregations to secure comfortable, commodious and suitable places of worship free of debt and properly finished.

It is to be deplored that a very considerable amount of debt still lies uncancelled upon many churches in the Conference. This debt wherever found lessens the resources and weakens the energies of the people. It is a burden felt by every one. The spiritual exercises of the church suffer depression by it. The Missionary zeal is dampened. It is a dead weight upon pew and pulpit. It hinders and retards Christian enterprise and effort.

To pay debt upon Church property in the ordinary way and with the ruling rates of interest, is, after energies have already been severely taxed, always a tedious and often a hopeless task. More than once in the past few years has it appeared that in the struggle to meet the annual tax for interest the principal of the debt has remained unredemed, its first proportions still continuing. Sometimes it has been slightly lessened, but that only under pressure, and at the expense of something more than self-denial on the part of those most deeply interested.

It will therefore readily be granted that any way by which the burdens might be lessened, or plan by which, with some degree of ease and certainty, they might be ultimately removed would be of incalculable advantage to the congregations and consequently to the circuits in which they are situated and to the connexion at large. This could be accomplished by a fund from which might be loaned to needy trusts, and upon well defined conditions, such sums of money as would relieve them of the burden of interest they now carry.

Suppose a church, the income of which from pew rents is some fifty dollars in excess of its incidental expenses, to be in debt \$500. Then the balance of income which might be devoted to payment of debt would be only \$15. This amount funded or paid upon the principal would extinguish the debt in between twenty-five and thirty years, or not until the building needed a large expenditure of money for painting and repairs. On the other hand if a fund under the control of a Committee could advance the money to be repaid in annual instalments, the whole amount, after providing for a small premium to meet necessary expenses, would be paid in eleven years, or by adding five dollars extra effort per year in ten years, the period which would seem to be most advantageous to the Church and to the fund.

Such a fund would be productive of the spirit of self-dependence in the erection and fitting up of churches. One often sees in the columns of the WESLEYAN appeals for help, and one learns from time to time of direct application to our more wealthy and liberal friends for assistance in the erection of churches in the country districts. It adds nothing to the self respect and self dependence of a people to take alms at the hands of others. The plan proposed would preserve all that is now endangered by the conduct referred to, and would enable a people to say of their neat sanctuary with commendable pride, "This is the result of our own endeavors." At the same time the relief given to those so constantly applied to for assistance would enable them to devise and carry out other schemes of Christian usefulness and benevolence.

The wise administration of such a fund would prevent the repetition of such sights as now occasionally pain our eyes and hearts. Here and there we meet with large edifices, half finished, encumbered with debt, and occupied by only small congregations, the last the result of the other attendant circumstances. Wise building, having due consideration of site, cost, location and other matters, is absolutely necessary, and much might be done to prevent the recurrence of such errors as the erection of large, costly, and unsuitable structures in localities where in the ordinary course of work and results comparatively small congregations can only be looked for.

These are but a few hints. Let the thoughtful of the church carry the subject further, and it will be found that under present circumstances a Church Extension Fund is required for the rapid and successful development of Methodism in Nova Scotia.

Yours, JOS. G. ANGLIM.