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The Canadian Presbyterian Magazine.

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THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.

At the conclusion of the article, in last number, reviewing the extraordinary procedure of certain Presbyteries, an open door was given for anything the opposing parties might choose to write. We were ready to insert anything, but especially desired some shadow of proof for their accusations; but, up to this hour, not a line has come. If any were simple-minded enough to expect it, they must just bear the disappointment, and learn that some Presbyteries can do, what we hope none of our readers will practice—accuse a man of what is very criminal, and condemn him on the accusation, and, when called on, refuse to give the evidence on which the accusation rests.

The United Presbyterian Magazine, published in Edinburgh, has, however, in the September number, taken up the matter, and as, no doubt, by certain persons, the most will be made of it; and as, also, we wish our readers to have the whole discussion on both sides before them, we give all the remarks which the editor makes. An outline of the case, as before our Synod, is given, and then is appended the following, as a "bulwer" for the article in our July number:—

On the question that issued, an editorial article appears in the Canadian Presbyterian Magazine, annulling the decision of Synod. As the editor of the Magazine is also the moderator of the Toronto session, one of the parties in the case, allowance will be made for such a degree of bias as would effect, in a one-sided way, the most upright mind. The only wonder is, that in a quasi organ of the United Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Synod's judgment should be annulled editorially as it is, and the opinion of the minority advanced in preference. One circumstance in particular calls down the editorial rebuke. The Committee appointed to mature the case had reported more resolutions than were adopted by the Synod. "The eighth resolution especially," he observes, "the Synod by a large majority refused to adopt!! It is worthy of being set in capitals as a key to the whole thing, and we give it:—

"8. That this case ought not to be decided by this court merely upon the grounds of ecclesiastical forms of procedure, but on the high ground of Christian principle, and under a sincere desire to do all in our power, so we shall be answerable to Christ, to restore peace to the congregation of Toronto.

"It is a serious fact," continues the Magazine, "that a majority of Synod decided against that, and consequently determined that they would not be bound to decide the case on the high ground of Christian principle."

Now, surely this is a very unguarded writing. Because the Synod does not choose, at the bidding of a minority, to adopt a formal resolution, in which not only it would make an unnecessary and ultraconservative avowal of "high Christian principle," but might also seem to put forward the "peace of the congregation of Toronto," as the one grand aim of its decision, in a case in which that church, or its session, is a party, is the Synod therefore to be branded as having determined that it "will not be bound to decide the case on the high ground of Christian principle?" We hope that when our brethren in the minority have cooled down a little, not many of them will join in this railing accusation against the Synod to which they belong. "There are at least fifteen ministers in a state of high dissatisfaction with the issue," says the Magazine, and as we can well believe. It would be unreasonable to expect those fifteen to be satisfied with a judgment which appears their own conscientiously formed opinion. It is quite reasonable, however, to demand that, having discharged their conscience in the matter, by doing their best to carry their own opinion, and having failed in this good intention, they should now be satisfied, especially after having entered their dissent, to let the opinion of the Synod—an doubt as conscientiously formed as their own—be peaceably received as a final settlement of the case. "People at a distance will certainly expect this of them. Their friends who are looking on remember that in all cases of appeal there are two parties, and that it generally happens that one of the parties is disappointed in the final decision. If, in every case of appeal, the disappointed party, after having his cause discussed and pronounced upon in Presbytery and Synod, is next to carry his appeal to the world in the pages of a Magazine, and discuss it there—protesting that the decision his brethren have pronounced "is the most inequitable decision that was ever perpetrated in any case," there is an end to church order and brotherly harmony.

The manner in which this Magazine apologizes for its extraordinary proceedings in taking up and annulling a sentence of the Synod whom it is understood to represent, is, in our view, an aggravation of the offence:

"Brothers," he observes, "this is apparently a local case, some may think we have given too much prominence to it. It is not because we, individually, are interested, that so much is written, but because the ploughshare of division has made a deep and a broad furrow. There are at least fifteen ministers in a state of high dissatisfaction with the issue; and that is no light matter in our Church. It is notorious through out communion, and our membership, all have a right to know the actual facts and merits of it. We hold that the Synod is not the Church, but the Church is comprised of the whole membership, and one member cannot suffer without all the other members suffering along with it."

The furrow is made deep and broad by what has been done at Synod; and to remedy this mortal case, the furrow is to be made deeper and broader by inserting the ploughshare anew in the Magazine! The judgment of the ministers and elders of the Church, in Presbytery and Synod assembled, and after long and anxious travelling in the case, is not to the appellant's mind; but the Synod is not the Church, and to obtain a calmer, more deliberate judgment, the merit of a closer and fairer investigation, is next carry his cause before the whole membership; the members at large being, of course, far better acquainted with this and other synodical questions than the ministers and elders they have chosen for their guides can be! And this writer is a Presbyterian!

It may be proper we should state that, in making these observations, we have not acted on the sound judicial maxim, to "hear both sides." We have heard only one side; but that is the side represented by the Canadian Presbyterian Magazine. Further than what the Magazine has told us, we know nothing whatever of this case; but we know enough now to satisfy us that in respect to the merits, the Presbytery and Synod may have had good reasons for pronouncing as they did; and if we might suppose that the case, while before the Church judicative, was conducted by the appellants with as little regard for order and propriety as it is now commented on by one of them after it has been judicially issued, we could only wonder at the patience and restraint exemplified in the findings of both Presbytery and Synod.—Ed. U. P. Mag.

There is no manner of doubt that the above was written and intended for the Canadian meridian. And what is the opinion worth? We do not assume any superiority, but are not prepared either to bow in servile humility, even though we do belong to the Canadian branch of the church; and therefore take the ground, first of all, that that is only the opinion of one of the quasi organs of the U. P. Church in Scotland, against what he says we are—the quasi organ of the U. P. Church in Canada. It is not the opinion of the Church in Scotland, but of the editor (!) of one of its periodicals. It is one man against another; and until we shall have settled that the man in Scotland had equal facilities for judging, and was not biased to the opposite side, as he thinks we may have been to ours, we cannot see that that article can prove a snifter. Besides, he is on the side against us, but there are ministers in Scotland on the side against him—that is, on our side. Viewing the case as an ecclesiastical one among ourselves, we cannot, so far as the editor has written, see at all why he took it up, unless to play the part, in his forgetfulness of Solomon's proverb, of the man who meddling with strife not belonging unto him.

If we were in a particularly controversial mood, we have ground enough given in that article to gratify it, but as we are not, a few running comments must be our answer; and perhaps, when we come to the close, they may be found enough for the mental deglutition of our trans-atlantic brother.

He finds fault with our interpretation of the reason of the majority of Synod in rejecting the 8th Resolution, and states what he believes was their reason for doing so. Well, if that was their reason, and he knows it to be so, we are satisfied; but as the majority assigned no reason to us, nor to the minority, we have, in the absence of a reason, and on the evidence of behaviour, as good a right as he has to presume what it was, peradventure it was not quite so charitable.

Again he thinks, if the case was conducted in the Courts as in the Magazine, he could only wonder at the patience, and restraint of Presbytery and Synod. Had he been here he might have formed a different opinion. At all events we were not rebuked by Synod, for language used in the case, though others were.

But the main point in the article, the grovelling of the whole, is in the paragraph before the last; and here, as he has thrown down the gauntlet, we fearlessly take it up, and apply to him his own words—"Now, this is surely very unguarded writing." Says he, with his consolation, "and this writer is a Presbyterian!" He wonders at us, says more, he wishes to discredit our Presbyterian attachments and principles. What for? Because we said that the case was one that had caused much excitement and division, and that our membership all had "a right to know the merits of it; and we did more than that, and said that the Synod was not the Church, but that the Church is comprised of the whole member-