

THE PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL.

BY REV. PRINCIPAL MACVICAR.

The Fifth Council of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System, met in Toronto from the 21st to the 30th September. It was in all respects a successful meeting—undoubtedly the great ecclesiastical event of the year on the American continent. The members, ministers and elders, came by appointment of their Churches from all parts of the world, from Europe, Great Britain, Asia, Africa North and South America, the Western Islands, Australia and New Zealand. They represented 91 distinct Presbyterian organizations, 23,951 ministers, 2,594 licentiates, 120,933 elders, 69,805 deacons, 4,169 theological students, 3,020,765 sabbath school pupils, 4,092,965 communicants and 20,000,000 adherents. We venture to think that very many are ignorant of the progress and position of Presbyterianism as thus set forth by figures which are in no way exaggerated.

The question is sometimes asked, what is the use of these great Councils? Do they accomplish anything to justify their existence? They do, judged by a purely utilitarian standard they serve many worthy purposes. They collect through official and reliable channels, a vast amount

of valuable information, which is published in their proceedings regarding the organization, history, religious life, social movements and missionary efforts of the Reformed Churches. They voice the opinions of leading men in these churches, and often the unanimous judgment of the entire assembly upon many of the great questions of the day. They give encouragement in the form of moral influence and financial aid to weak and struggling churches. Bohemia may be named as having enjoyed these benefits. And surely it is a good thing that churches in their corporate capacity as well as individual believers should bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the the law of Christ.

Each successive Council has taken steps to bring about a wise adjustment of the work of all Protestant churches and Missionary Societies on Foreign Mission fields, so as to prevent conflict and secure cordial co-operation in carrying out the Savior's great commission to his people to evangelize the world. Efforts in this direction require time, patience, perseverance, and much heavenly wisdom, but they cannot fail to be profitable. Great good must result from a careful consideration and comparison of the