

The Presbyterian Review.

ISSUED EVERY THURSDAY, from the office of the Publishers, Rooms No. 20, 21
22, 25 Aberdeen Block, South-East corner Adelaide and Victoria Streets.

TERMS, \$1.50 per annum.

All communications for either Business or Editorial Departments should be
addressed PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, Drawer 2104, Toronto, Ont.

ADVERTISING RATES - Under 3 months, 15 cents per line
per insertion; 3 months, \$1.00 per line; 6 months, \$1.75 per line;
1 year, \$3.00. No advertisement charged at less than five lines.
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Toronto, April, 19, 1894

The General Assemblies.

IN another column will be found a reference to the arrangements made for delegates to the General Assembly. The travelling comforts have evidently been well looked after and if the journey be long to many of the fathers and brethren it will be seen that at all events the tedium of travel has been made as light as possible by the excellent precautions of those having the care of this matter. The stated committees have been at work on the reports, and will continue their labors for some considerable time yet, ere the order, condensation and tabulation necessary to concise and clear form be accomplished. For some weeks to come, it is safe to say, that the busiest men in the church will be the ministers who to their pastoral duties have to add the arduous work of committee. As wide a division of labor in this respect is desirable, so that an undue share may not fall on few shoulders.

While at home preparation is being thus pushed on, the sister churches in Scotland are equally busy in anticipation of their great annual gathering. The religious press contains the usual notices for the dispensing of hospitality to the delegates for which Edinburgh is famous.

A threefold anniversary will be celebrated by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. This year, in which the representation of the Church in the General Assembly has been increased, especially in the proportion of elders, is the two-hundredth anniversary of the year in which the representation was last adjusted. This year, 1894, in which the finely-reformed Hall will be first occupied, is the fiftieth anniversary of the year in which the Hall at the time of its erection was first occupied by the Assembly. It is also the fiftieth anniversary of the year in which the first unbroken Assembly met after the secession of 1843. Those fifty years have been years of persevering work and marvellous prosperity. We may well think of the present one as a jubilee. It is at least the jubilee of the chamber from which has gone forth the legislation and counsel that have guided the Church's course.

It is not unlikely that the Free Church Assembly may have to deal with the question of Union with the United Presbyterian Church. The movement in this direction has had its present starting point among the laity of Dundee. At a meeting held in that city some time ago motions were carried enthusiastically (1) to communicate with office-bearers in other towns and districts with a view to united action; and (2) to approach the Presbytery of Dundee on the subject, and generally

to take such steps as may be fitted to bring about the desired result of an incorporating union between the Free and United Presbyterian Churches. Action has been pretty widely taken on these resolutions, and overtures will in all likelihood reach the Assembly from a number of Presbyteries. There is no doubt a discussion on this subject would gather additional interest from the progress of the movement for Disestablishment. That question has been definitely alluded to by Lord Roseberry, as within the scope of practical politics, and to be dealt with by his government, hence the air is full of controversy, in which the Free Church finds herself divided. There will be other interesting questions before the Free Church Assembly.

So far very little has transpired as to what will be the question of greatest moment to the United Presbyterian Synod. It is known that the committee on Disestablishment has a very radical report to present, but that it will evoke much opposition is not expected, the Synod being practically unanimous on the severance of Church and State.

The Australasian Exchanges just to hand contain accounts of the twenty-ninth meeting of the General Assembly at Sydney from March 5th. What will strike the reader as perhaps the most singular feature of the proceedings was a proposal to establish a Presbyterian village settlement or land colony, with the view of providing for members of the Church who may be unemployed and in distress. The scheme was elaborated by some of the ministers who visited New Zealand in order to obtain information about the village settlements there, and a practical knowledge of the working of the system. The scheme is to be purely co-operative and strictly under the supervision of the Church, which will rigidly enforce certain rules. Only Presbyterians will be admitted, and an effort will be made to help those who really need assistance and to cultivate in them a spirit of self-reliance. A similar scheme has been tried by the Victorian Church, and there have been numerous attempts to establish labor settlements in New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand, none of which have been very successful. Speaking of New Zealand settlements one of the ministers attributed their want of success "to the selection of poor lands for the colonies and to the absence of self-reliance amongst the settlers. In the first place the Government gave the land free, and among a great many of the colonists there has been far too great a tendency to rely on the government for assistance in other directions. This destroyed the spirit of self-help and self-reliance. The Assembly had to mourn the death of several highly esteemed ministers among whom were notably Revs. Dr. Steel, J. M. Ross and J. W. Inglis. Much time and thought was devoted to a consideration of arrangements for carrying on the work of the Church at headquarters, a question involving many difficult and important problems.

A Common Hymnal.

It is known to our readers that when the Council of the Alliance of Presbyterian Churches met in Toronto, a Conference was held by representatives of British and Colonial Churches at the request of members of the Hymnal Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. A resolution was adopted unanimously, at this Conference that it was very desirable to secure a