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Contributors & Correspondents.

NEW BRUNSWICK.

Feeling on the School Question—Progress of Presbyterianism—Pay of Pastors—Foreign Missions.

(From our own Correspondent.)

I referred in my last to the intense feeling that was aroused down here when it was understood that Chauveau's Amendment was likely to be carried, and that with the concurrence of the Government. There was a perfect storm raised in this Province, and rightly, too, as I believe. The danger has passed for the time, but the surface of the sea has not come back yet to its wonted smoothness. The best friends that the Government have in this city do not feel towards it as they did before. It would not have been believed before-hand by these friends that the Executive could stand by and allow a breach to be made in the Constitution, and that was not the most of it. They not only manifested indifference towards a proposal of such great importance, it is plain that they connived at it until their sleep was rudely awakened by the indignation aroused in the Maritime Provinces. The more thoughtful and intelligent of the people will not be induced to confide as much in an Executive that could act so for a long time again, if ever. For myself, I am in no way wedded to either political party in the House, and if I were, the columns of this paper is not the place to express such a preference, but I have declared the sentiments of men that are or have been extremely warm supporters of the party now in power. It is a satisfaction to find that in questions of constitutional as well as educational policy, our community can be brought to rise far above party ties and attachments. The motion that was carried is by no means satisfactory. It is, to say the least, an impertinent interference in the matters that belong to the Provincial Legislature. All that are possessed of any independence of spirit will resent such interference, giving the Dominion House of Commons to understand that it had better mind its own business and permit the Local Legislature to mind theirs.

The statistics of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces for 1871, have just appeared in the June number of the *Record*. The Presbyteries number 10, but some of them are pretty large, four having under their care from 21 to 25 congregations each. Some time ago when giving you the statistics of Dominion Presbyterianism, a paragraph by the way, which has gone the rounds of the press, I have noticed it myself in some eight or ten newspapers and periodicals published on both sides of the Atlantic. I set down the congregations of the Church, now under consideration as 127. The figures now before me show that it was an underestimate that I then presented. There are 144 given in the tables. It is but fair to say, however, that 10 must be taken from that number, because of cases where two or more are under one minister, and three more are marked as stations. Making these deductions there remain some 132 bona fide congregations under the care of the Synod at this moment. At the time the returns were made out, there were about 112 settled pastors. These, with four Professors, the Agent of the Church and the settlements made since the beginning of the year would make about 120 in active service, and there are at all events three retired ministers. The adherents, including children, are set down as over 76,000; the families, 14,500; the communicants, 17,700. The net increase in the membership during the year is 740. There are 374 sabbath schools, 1,600 teachers, and 13,000 pupils. In all the items there is a considerable increase. There was given to all purposes during the year, about \$184,000, the half of which was expended in Pastors' salaries. Including about \$3,000 which is given to supplement the smaller incomes, the average salary over all the Synod is hardly \$600. It is lamentable to contemplate the inadequate rate at which the services of pastors in many cases are remunerated. The highest sum that is given is nothing to boast of. Hitherto no pastor in the synod got more than \$1,200, and not more than five at that. In cities that can secure a bare subsistence and hardly that. This year, one pastor reports having got \$1,400, and in a call reported as moderated in a few days ago there was \$1,200 promised with \$300 additional for house rent. Only some half dozen more get \$1,000 and upwards. There are signs of progress,

however, very encouraging signs. The people are awaking up to a sense of their short-comings, and in good sooth it is time. It is no agreeable task for pastors to educate the people, to give, especially to themselves, and above all when there is any room for the miserly to throw the accusation of selfishness in their teeth. Still, unless the pastors do it, the lesson will not in many cases be learned. The Presbytery must bring their influence to bear and that not in spasmodic efforts, but by a steady and persistent pressure so that such a state of things may be remedied as soon as possible.

The contributions to the schemes of the Church were in round numbers \$18,500, an increase of over \$1,100 as compared with the previous year. Nearly a third of the whole sum was given to Foreign Missions, which is evidently the most popular scheme we have. I would be very slow to say that one cent too much is given for the conversion of the heathen, I think a great deal more might be given for that purpose than there is. When we compare, however, the large amount given by some congregations to that object, and side by side with that an exceedingly mean sum given to objects nearer home, say to the scheme for supplementing weak congregations, I cannot help thinking of the caricature which Dickens drew long ago of the lady that was so absorbed in the temporal and spiritual interests of the children of some barbarous tribe in Africa, that she utterly neglected the affairs of her house and especially the interests of her own children. As I have said the interest in the Foreign Mission is not to be lessened, but this rather to be the rule, "These ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone." The other two-thirds of the gross sum were given to the Synod Fund, the College and Theological Hall, Home Missions, the Supplement Fund, and the *Dayspring*. This last, the name of the Mission ship of the New Hebrides, is the children's scheme, and right heartily do they respond. For example this year double the usual amount was asked in order that the ship might be repaired, and in a short time all that was needed was forthcoming. I must now stop somewhat abruptly as this letter is already too long.

St. John, 5th June, 1872.

QUEBEC.

The Congregational Union and Wesleyan Conference—Slow Progress of Congregationalism in Canada—The Remedy—Dr. Punshon on the Christian Ministry—Personal—Dr. Porter, of Belfast.

(From our own Correspondent.)

The past week has been one of unusual interest to religious circles in this city, honoured as it has been by the presence and deliberations of the Congregational Union and the Wesleyan Conference. The proceedings of these bodies hitherto have been marked throughout by harmony and good feeling, and by an entire absence of those exciting discussions, which so often constitute a prominent, if not an attractive feature in ecclesiastical courts. One might suppose that the proverbial "odium theologium" had received its death-blow, and that the strife of eighteen centuries was becoming merged in millennial peace. But we are checked by the remembrance that in distant Hamilton another grave and reverend assembly is holding high converse regarding the interests of the Church, and judging from past experience and antecedent probability, we fear that the discussions there have not been entirely destitute of the warlike element. As yet, however, no echo of the supposed conflict has reached our ears through the columns of the Montreal journals, and we will rest in hope that "no news is good news."

Perhaps the most noteworthy feature in the proceedings of the Congregational Union, was the opening address delivered by the retiring chairman, Dr. Cornish, one of the professors in McGill University. It was marked by great vigour of style, clearness of thought, and of the forcible presentation of truths, which however wholesome, must have been somewhat unpalatable to his ministerial brethren. The burden of the address was an inquiry into the causes and remedies of the comparative, and in fact, absolutely, slow progress which has been made by the Congregational Church in this country. The speaker adverted to the advantages enjoyed by other communions in more compact organization, or in the possession of more distinctive doctrinal peculiarities, and urged that these features afforded a powerful lever-

age for the promotion of the interests of such churches. The remedy for the existing state of things lay in a deeper study, and a more forcible presentation of the history and principles of their church, coupled with earnest and intelligent effort on the part of pastors and people. He also insisted strongly on the care and discrimination that should be exercised in the acceptance of candidates for the ministry, whether from their own theological halls or the ranks of other denominations.

The Wesleyan Conference, presided over by the Rev. Dr. Punshon, as we must now call him, began its session at about the same time as our own Assembly and is now therefore, we presume about halfway through its business. The service held yesterday (Sabbath) on the occasion of the ordination of some thirty candidates for the ministry, was deeply interesting and impressive. The announcement that Mr. Punshon was to preach filled the Great St. James Street Church, one of the largest in the Dominion, to its utmost capacity, nor were the anticipations of the audience disappointed. You in Toronto have happily little need for a minute analysis of Dr. Punshon's style, and still less for a panegyric on his oratory. Suffice it to say that within the limits of one short discourse he presented before his audience a clear and triumphant vindication of the office of the Christian ministry, claiming for it, its proper place and power in the development of the destinies of our world. He addressed himself during the latter part of his discourse more particularly to his brethren already engaged in the ministry or about to enter upon it, dwelling upon the manner in which they should strive to discharge the responsibilities of their office. Finally in a peroration of great power and pathos, the orator addressed himself directly to the young Candidates for ordination, and urged them to be brave, tender and patient in the arduous, yet blessed toils that lay before them.

The churches of our body in this city enjoyed a rare privilege on the same Sabbath in listening to the graphic eloquence of the Rev. Prof. Porter, of Belfast, whom you have lately had with you in Toronto, and who is so well and widely known for his missionary labours and biblical researches in Syria and Palestine. His sympathetic voice, graceful diction and varied powers of description have charmed us here, in common, we doubt not, with those who have heard him elsewhere.

"DIGAMMA."

Montreal, June 10th, 1872.

CONVERSIONS FROM PROTESTANTISM TO POPY.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—An event lately took place in the parish of L'Assomption—the first below Metis—which has caused great joy among our Roman Catholic neighbours. *Le Courrier de Rimouski*, of May 3d, devotes nearly half a column to a communication regarding it. Last Easter Sunday, "two adult Scotch persons"—as the writer terms them—George Meikle, aged 22, and Mary, his sister, aged 25, "publicly renounced Protestantism in the parish church, in presence of an immense number of the faithful belonging to the place and neighbourhood, and expressed their desire to enter into the bosom of the Catholic Church." This event, he tells us, has made that day doubly memorable to the parishioners of L'Assomption de McNader. I must say that our Roman Catholic neighbours have very little cause indeed for rejoicing over the conversion of George and Mary Meikle. I know them both, and therefore can speak with authority.

They can as truly be termed "French Canadians" as "Scotch," for though their father is the latter, their mother is the former.

I never knew that they were Protestants. I, always, looked on them as neither one thing nor another in the matter of religion. Every one of those acquainted with them, to whom I have spoken about their conversion—among whom are some of their very near relations—has expressed himself in the same manner. The idea of their renouncing Protestantism amused him very much. I am certain that every Protestant who has known them for some time, has the same opinion of them. He is truly a poor specimen of a Protestant whose religion has never been discovered by those who have known him for years, and been much in his company. The father of George and Mary Meikle calls himself a Protestant. But, about ten years ago, he left his wife and family here, and went to the United States, where he is now living.

For some time before that, he lived very little with them. The bringing up of the children was thus committed to the mother. She is a Roman Catholic of no education. A brother of George and Mary once told me that he sometimes helped his mother to count her beads. Had poor Mr. Keith acted as Mr. Meikle did, he would have had no difficulty about the training of his children. Of course, in the circumstances referred to, George and Mary Meikle could not be very strong Protestants. The great Dr. Johnson once said of a certain person who proposed to be an infidel, "He an infidel! A horse is as much an infidel as he is. He never gave the subject of religion any consideration." A like remark will apply to the Protestantism of George and Mary Meikle. Persons renouncing the errors of Protestantism, who know as much about it as a wild Kaffir does about mathematics, and the overflowing joy of the Popish party on account of it, are things, certainly, in the highest degree ridiculous. A friend of mine said when I told him about the conversion of the Hon. Mr. Le Boutillier from Protestantism to Popery—"Well I am glad that he has some religion now, for, before, I never could see that he had the slightest trace of any." I may say the same of the converts to Popery of whom I am speaking. They are very fair specimens of such converts. Others may be better educated than they. It may be that they are "belted knights, marquises, dukes and a' that." Yet, on examination, it will be found that they are about as ignorant of the Gospel as a "heathen chinee." Mary Meikle's conversion is not to be wondered at. The happy young man is a Papist. Had he "followed do Scotch way,"—as one of her brothers expresses it—she would have done the same. It is a proverbial saying that Love is blind. This is true, but it is also true that he is sometimes very sharp-sighted. Cupid often enables people to see clearly through things which, before, were perfect mysteries to them. No doubt it was he who enabled Mary Meikle to see the vast superiority of Popery over Protestantism. A young woman living in a neighbouring parish, changed her religion a few years ago. A day or two after, she took the bridal veil. A few months after, I had occasion to be near where she was living. I called on her. I found her recovering from a very severe illness. At one time, the doctors had pronounced her case hopeless. I asked her if the faith which she now professed gave her peace of mind in the prospect of death. She would not answer. I asked her if she ever read the Bible now. She said that she had none, as she had given hers to her sister in Metis, lest it should be burned. Seeing a rosary—a string of beads used by Papists in their devotion—hanging at the head of the bed, I asked her if she ever made use of it. She said that she did not, for she did not understand it. I said that there are many things which she could learn which would be of far more use to her than learning to use the rosary. But, let us return to the narration under consideration.

Mary Meikle, before she was received into the Romish Church, was baptized. Her brother was not, for he was baptized in infancy by a priest. But, Mary was baptized before, by a Protestant minister,—Dr. Cairns, I believe who belongs to the U. P. Church. Of course, then, baptizing her a second time was treating her first baptism as nothing. Now, the Church of Rome most distinctly teaches that heretical baptism is valid. Several of her standard writers say that by baptism, heretics are made her subjects. If this does not teach the validity of heretical baptism, language has no meaning. Again, the Council of Trent says—"If any one shall deny that Baptism even when it is administered by heretics in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost with the intention of doing what the Church does, is true Baptism, let him be accursed." According to this, then, the priest who baptized Mary Meikle is accursed. Yet, it is the fashion, now, to baptize a Protestant, when he became a Papist, though he may have been baptized before. The reasons given for so doing are most childish. One is that he may not have been baptized with due intention. Well, let us go no farther than the case of Mary Meikle. What reason, I ask, have we to believe that the priest who baptized her did so with due intention? Who, save God and the priest himself, knows what his intention was? I defy any person to prove that any of the Sacraments of the Church of Rome has ever been validly dispensed, according to the doctrine of intention.

But, I must pause here for the present. I have a few more remarks to make on the article in *Le Courrier de Rimouski* relative to the conversion of George and Mary Meikle from Protestantism to Popery, which I shall reserve for another letter. In the course of these, I shall give a faithful but not flattering picture of the priest who presided when they were received into the Romish Church. I shall, also, exhibit some of the heathenism of that Church and unmask her hypocrisy in the use of a certain term which she often applies to Protestants.

I remain, yours truly,

T. FENWICK.

The Mause, Metis, June 5th, 1872.

SABBATH SCHOOL LITERATURE.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—I was much pleased with the tenor of an article in a late issue of your paper on this subject. I believe that a great deal of money is thrown away yearly in the purchase of S. S. Libraries, which are wholly unfitted for the object intended. I do not approve of teaching religion by means of romance and fiction. A fact need not be covered with fiction to render it wholesome. The true and live stories contained in such papers as the *British Workman*, together with the splendid illustrations, are wielding a far more potent influence on the minds and hearts of children and the homes they reach, than many of the pigmy volumes consisting chiefly of binding and gold letters, with very little soul nourishment, reminding me of some common article of food served up in a golden vessel. What becomes of S. S. Libraries? Unless some system of exchange with other schools is carried on, or some charitable use be made of them, they lie useless and unread on the shelves. S. S. papers of the right sort are not of this character coming weekly or monthly, nothing can be better calculated to keep up the interest of the children. Our religion should, if I may use the expression, be advertised, so that he who runs may read. I do not need a lecturer to tell me of the evil of Intemperance when I see the poor drunkard in his misery and can see the ruin wrought in his own home by the maddening cup—the living example is sufficient. Welcome then, we say, to literature that does not weave around us romantic ideas of religion, ideals, unattainable examples, that never had a living exponent. Obscene prints and pictures are interdicted by the laws of the land as well as Police Gazettes, &c. Suppose that instead of deeds of darkness and crime, we portray in pictures of reality noble deeds, heroism, and biographies, these, I have no doubt, would do good service. The spiritual food of children should be selected with as much care, and as carefully given, as that which nourishes their bodies. While we cry out against S. S. reading, we would not exclude Bible Dictionaries and works of lasting value, that are not as mere fossils in a cabinet, just to be looked at and not more, but rather fitted to educate and fill with love and admiration the reader for the solid truths of Christianity.

Your well-wisher,

JOHN S. DOULLIER.

When Albert Barnes sent his father a handsomely bound copy of his commentaries, the old gentleman's only remark was: "Albert was a good boy to work."

We should give as we would receive,—cheerfully, quickly, and without hesitation: for there is no grace in a benefit that sticks to the fingers.—*Seneca*.

As nothing truly valuable can be attained without industry, so there can be no persevering industry without a deep sense of the value of time.—*Sigourney*.

There is as much difference between the sins of believers and the sins of carnal men as between a meadow accidentally overflowed with water and a stagnant marsh.

A few minutes devotion at night will not clear the conscience of a foul trick done during the day, nor will going to church on Sunday atone for the wilful sins of a week.

The only way to meet affliction is to pass through it solemnly, slowly, with humanity and faith, as the Israelites passed through the sea. Then its very waves of misery will divide, and become to us a wall on the right side and on the left, until the gulf narrows and narrows before our eyes, and we land safe on the opposite shore.—*Miss Muelch*.