

AN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL.

The day is not far distant when the forces of Christianity will be better marshalled and compacted than they are at present. Much has already been gained in this direction. The churches, as they see more and more each others sincerity and devotion—as they apprehend more clearly how much all evangelical bodies have in common—as they rise to the conviction that union is strength—incline toward each other for sympathy and council. This is more the result of an actual growth in knowledge and grace than of the commingling of the Christian sects in public worship. Most of the admirable union meetings and other occasions of confraternity to which have been credited a growth of Christian charity, are really themselves but the fruit of an intelligent, Christ-like spirit, which has been gaining upon the Christian world. And as this spirit enlarges, its operations will assume new practical forms. It is already tending in the direction of ecumenical counsels—which mean really a development of the union meeting, with the addition of consultation for the purposes of fellowship. Presbyterianism began last year a signal example of this form of council. Men of different branches of that great family came together. They made grand speeches. They formed acquaintances. They learned to look kindly upon each other's faces, the recollection of which would forever incline them afterward to forbearance and love. Beyond this, perhaps, not much was effected; but the meeting was really but an introduction. Next council will bring about more practical result—more concentration of the church's forces, comprehensive plans and schemes for the regulation of missions and other church schemes at home and abroad. Thus begin all great progressive movements.

It is with this ambition that we look forward to a near ecumenical council of Methodism. John Wesley's family has been much disintegrated—rent asunder by diverse opinions. A calm day has at length dawned when these sects are beginning to look each other in the face—to step over long-established boundaries and shake hands. Yearnings toward union we find where they were least expected. Unions are not always possible—perhaps not always desirable; but, in the interval of growth—while the union sentiment is gathering strength—surely we can all afford to make common cause in so directing our forces that the greatest possible good may be gained by them in the least possible time. Why could there not be an ecumenical council of Methodism to direct our missionary operations? True, the mission-field is wide, and there is little difficulty in choosing a centre of operations for any branch of the church having energy or means to spare; yet does any man imagine that much light could not be afforded by a council of experienced and discerning men—that much means would not be saved, and great general good accomplished, by a comparison of opinions on this great subject. If, with all our boasted progress in Christian union, the several members of the Wesleyan family cannot agree to a general fraternal consultation, where are the evidences of our sincerity?

In missionary enterprise there are now several Methodist Churches engaged. In England, the Wesleyans, the first and the strongest, have their own magnificent machinery under fine control; but separated from this are several other Methodist missionary organizations. The Northern and the Southern States are distinct in their missionary undertakings. The Dominion has some five or six branches of Methodism—how many missionary boards we cannot say. Surely it would be possible to give new impulse to, and shed new light upon, the mission work of Methodism if a council were to assemble and spread out before them the map of foreign Christian work.

And the advantages would not be confined to missions. But for other suggestions we have not space at present.

The competitive examination for entrance to the Halifax High School was entered upon with great spirit, notwithstanding the extraordinary standard of excellency which had been adopted by the council of Public Instruction. When it was known that papers less than 50 would count for nothing; that the aggregate marks must reach 70 to secure a prize—the maximum number being 100—it was generally supposed that all ambition in the direction of free entry would be paralyzed. So far from this, however, twenty-eight pupils, representing some seven or eight schools, entered the contest. Dr. Curren and Rev. John Forrest were the examiners. The papers were very difficult.

The following are the results:—

PRIZES, ENTITLED TO FIVE YEARS FREE TUITION, IN THE HIGH SCHOOL:

Albro Street School.—Fred James, John A. Bell, Edwin Mutch, Frank Nicolson.

Morris St. School.—Robt. Hedley.

PUPILS ENTITLED TO ENTER BY PAYING EACH \$20 A YEAR:

Morris St. School.—Cornelius Fletcher, John Miller, Stanley Harrington, Alfred Harley, Munro McDonald.

Albro St. School.—A. C. Hawkins, Geo. C. Lintaman.

St. Mary's School.—Daniel Cahill.

Dartmouth.—Geo. A. Sterns.

It is noticeable that no pupil from the Roman Catholic schools has met the test of excellency, and only one from these is entitled to entry by paying. Albro St. School, of which John T. Mellish, Esq., is Principal, sent up seven competitors; four of these take the first rank, and two may be admitted by paying. Six of the seven make an honorable record. We congratulate Mr. Mellish upon results which always attest to the efficiency of a principal and those under his direction. Halifax may also be congratulated upon possessing such teachers as Messrs. Jack and Mellish. Mr. Jack sent up several students to the High School at a previous examination, which accounts for the fact that only one succeeded this time. Mr. Mellish's friends would have gladly spirited him off toward his native Island some months ago; but if the patrons of education in Halifax are wise, they will guard their own interests by keeping up their staff of capable men.

OUR MISSIONS.—It would please us very much if the Methodism of our lower Provinces could be brought more practically, personally, into connection with Foreign Mission work. We know this subject has been exercising the minds of our Missionary Secretaries, so that our remarks are intended not to reflect upon them by any means, so much as to help and encourage them. Before the union, we had to bear an unjust reproach from other denominations, who did not understand our true position. They averred we had no Foreign Mission interests—that our missionary money was all absorbed among ourselves;—this, although we were in direct and devoted relation with the great missionary work of the British Conference. Now, however, it is seen that we are linked with the missions to Japan, British Columbia, the North-west, and the French Missions of the General Conference. Four years have elapsed since union; but as yet no man from the East has gone into purely mission work. We have looked upon the faces of our returned missionaries—and great good they have done us; we have read with intense interest the letters of men who are facing the stern conditions of Pagan life, supported by our money and prayers. We need now a personal consecration from the East; the opening of a new religious life among us—one which will make the last, the purest, the holiest sacrifice demanded of the church. We desire to see our sons and daughters coming forward for this purpose; and to help in dedicating them unreservedly to the work of calling the heathen world to repentance. It may be supposed that it is comparatively easy for us to write in this strain, but out as we are at present from the possibility of being called upon to give practical effect to our own counsel; but we say deliberately that, when the church chooses to indicate its willingness to that effect, ours shall be a cheerful offering. We have no purpose to-day which would hinder our going to any place in the wide mission field; and of

all ambitions, the missionary is with us the most ardent at this moment. These, however, are decisions into which the question of adaptation should always enter, and of that question the missionary authorities are ever the best judges. And what we say of ourselves in this regard, we sincerely hope is the spirit of many of our ministers. Let us see the fruits.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS.—Our readers will find this week a good report of letters from several parts of the world. A special feature of the WESLEYAN for some time, has been the direct contribution, from localities to which we all naturally turn with interest, of facts and news, always well written and authentic. Provincial correspondents will not imagine their letters are by any means underrated. Comparing our papers with others of the Methodist Churches, we find a most liberal quota of correspondence from Circuits. This week there are several such; not least of which in real value—discriminating and eloquent as it is on the character of a man remarkable for piety and good works—is the obituary of the veteran Mr. Morton.

Our English correspondent takes up several salient points of public and denominational intelligence beyond the water. His aim seems to be, to keep well before his readers those leading topics of English and Continental news which lie on the surface of public observation and discussion. An index of his letters for 1877 would show that few matters of great importance had escaped his attention. From Montreal we have an excellent resume of a months public affairs, social and ecclesiastical. We incline to think "E. B." has established in the minds of all who have followed his interesting letters a conviction that in the Province of Quebec there are some powerful agencies at work both for good and evil; and that the genius of both the good and evil of the Province radiates from Montreal as a centre. Hence the advantage of having an observing Montreal correspondent.

Rev. T. Berton Smith occupies a position from which he can clearly estimate the force of the "close communion" question pro. and con. Around the person and church of Dr. Pentecost there has been, since his protest against close communion, an agitation of considerable moment, inasmuch as his is an initial movement in certain circles. Mr. Smith appreciates the situation and does it justice.

From the Mission fields we have our first letter direct—a sensible, calm review of work which requires more than philosophy or stoicism to sustain it. Young men and women contemplating missionary life in the North-west, will understand that it requires, as a first qualification, the grace of sacrifice.

"One of the Luty" looks at Judge Marshall's argument upon the "six days of creation," from a critic's standpoint. We incline to think, after all, a calm discussion on this subject, kept within proper bounds, may result in good.

Rev. S. T. Teed's affecting letter needs no comment.

THE Week of Prayer is now an established observance in Christian lands. Untold blessings are sure to follow prayer so united and persistent at that which prevails at the opening of each year. But what a privilege and responsibility have they who direct this great annual movement! If the subjects for prayer have been defective in any respect, in has been in their redundancy and multiplicity. For services of an hour, or even two hours, half a dozen topics are entirely too many. It has the effect of distracting the mind to hear such a multifarious topic as that for Wednesday or Thursday last announced at the opening of a meeting. One, or two at most, direct ideas, help to urge and lead devotion; but beyond this an opposite effect may be produced. Still, we cannot always judge for others.

TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT.—Evidences are all corroborative of the fact that a reaction has set in upon the Maritime Provinces, which will severely try the charity and patience of all who consider themselves the friends of the poor. The fire in St. John created an agitation among mechanics, running up wages and providing extensive employment. The very mild month of December encouraged builders to keep up their work well into the winter; but now that building has ceased, the strain upon the poor becomes very severe. Reports agree in representing many out of employment in that city. From other towns in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia we have but one assurance—money is scarce, times are dull. During the late autumn, a spir-

ited importation of goods kept things lively and hopeful. Now, that this is over, we incline to think traders are again putting on their considering caps. Indeed, the severe lessons of the past two years have left behind them a degree of prudence and watchfulness which may cramp our industries for some time yet.

PERSONALS. Rev. John Bead was presented with a gold watch by his congregation at Milton, Yarmouth, during the holidays.

Rev. J. M. Pike and Mrs. Pike, of Providence Church, Yarmouth, were also the recipients of several New Year's favors.

Young Goodwin, who carried off the Gilchrist Scholarship, has been doing admirably in England. He holds a high place as a student; while in competitive examinations he has taken additional honors.

THE SACKVILLE PRESIDENCY.—We understand that Rev. Mr. Sprague does not feel himself in a position to accept the honorable position of President of Mount Allison College, to which he was recently nominated. Probably the delicate state of Mr. Sprague's health has something to do with this decision.—St. John Telegraph.

Up to a recent date, there were hopes that Mr. Sprague's health gave every promise of speedy restoration. On such a close examination as the circumstances rendered necessary, it has been found that his constitution is not in a state to justify acceptance of a position involving much responsibility. He may possibly be obliged to seek a year's rest; so that both Centenary and the College may be deprived of his services. This opens a new chapter to the Trustees of the College. We hope Mr. Sprague may, by generous dealings with himself in pastoral work, yet gather strength for an unbroken continuance in pulpit labours, which he has so much adorned.

A misapprehension may have been caused by the substitution of Laura for Leora R. Tweedie, in the report of Mt. Allison Exercises, though we think the words were copied directly from our authority. It was Leora R. Tweedie whose name was connected with the Essay on "Hidden Lives."

Rev. Joseph Cook has been invited to lecture in London.

Bishop Haven is still a sufferer from the effects of the African malaria.

Mr. Thomas Spurgeon, son of the Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon, of the London Tabernacle, is preaching very successfully in Australia, where he has gone to recruit his health.

Dr. Milburn, the blind preacher, is lecturing and preaching in Ireland to large audiences.

NEWS FROM THE CIRCUITS.

SCOTT'S BAY.—During the past four weeks we have been holding special services in this place. The church has been greatly revived and quickened. Backsliders have been reclaimed; and a number of persons have forsaken the paths of folly and sin, and have turned their faces Zionward. To God be all the praise. The Lord grant that they may all continue faithful unto the end. Next week we intend, God assisting us, commencing a series of services in another part of this circuit. Pray for us that God may continue to favor this portion of his Zion.

Yours, &c., J. H. DAVIS.

ELGIN CIRCUIT.—On the Friday before Christmas the members of our congregation at Pleasant Vale gave us a surprise by coming to our house with a great number and variety of very valuable presents, including a barrel of flour. The whole value of the presents was about fifty dollars. May the Lord reward their hearts.

J. K. KING.

RICHIBUCTO, K. Co., Jan. 5.—Last week a committee from Kingston waited on the Rev. Mr. Parker, (Methodist clergyman here), and presented him with a Seal Skin Cap of the value of \$14, and on Friday last Messrs. Forbes, Benley and Robinson, placed into the hands of the rev. gentleman a Fur Coat valued at \$40, as a token from contributors in Kingston and Richibucto, indicative of their respect for the rev. gentleman, and appreciation of his work. One pleasing feature in this matter is that leading citizens of Richibucto (outside of the Methodist church,) Catholics as well as Protestants, joined in the testimonial in recognition of the high esteem in which Mr. Parker is held in this community.—Moncton Times.

WOODSTOCK presents a very changed appearance this first week of 1878 from that which it wore at the same period last year. It has an appearance of newness and incompleteness, but looking at its long ranges of really fine and substantial buildings on King and Main streets, and the streets in the centre of the town

running into these, one can scarcely realize the fact that so recently as the 17th of May last the locality referred to was entirely burned over, and 60 buildings, including \$275,000 worth of property, destroyed. Yet the fact is a palpable one. And while the present rapid restoration of the town speaks emphatically in praise of the individual enterprise and undaunted courage which has produced this repeatedly the advantage of fire insurance, and the honor and stability of those Insurance Companies who maintained their integrity and paid their losses.—Sentinel.

In the last Charlottetown Argus the following announcement was made:—

Presentation Second Methodist Church, Sabbath School, Charlottetown.—On Sabbath afternoon last, Judge Young was presented by Mr. Herbert Hewson, on behalf of the class, with a well-bound family reference Bible, and an arm chair and table. The last two articles to be used in the class. In accepting the present the Judge said that the class was commenced seven years ago with six scholars, and only one still remained. During its existence hundreds had passed through it. Mr. Towan and he were the only two teachers who had maintained their connection with the school since its commencement.

The person, who kindly communicated this pleasing event, misunderstood the Judge in his acknowledgment of these handsome gifts. He said that only one member now remained in the class, that was commenced in the Free Church, seven years ago, and that Mrs. Towan and he were the only two teachers present who had classes when the school was organized. The school had now 4 officers, 15 teachers and 260 scholars on the roll. Judge Young's class of young men numbers about 30.

DIGBY, January 7th, 1878.

REV. A. W. NICHOLSON.

Dear Brother.—We feel thankful to the Giver of all good, to be able to report that in our little town, the late Xmas holidays have been marked by an almost entire absence of intemperance, (a rare thing in Digby for many years past) and there have been such gatherings as have tended to foster the true social element; and to encourage all those who are laudably seeking the good of society and the prosperity of the cause of God. In this we, Methodists, an unassuming folk, had a share. Our ingenious and indefatigable lady friends, with one at their head, whose name I could not venture to mention without consent; prepared with unabated enthusiasm for our Xmas Tree festival (quite an institution here) and everything with regard to it, came off pleasantly and satisfactorily. Our own people patronized it commendably and our expectations were more than realized; under the shadow of which appetite might well be excited and could be fully satisfied; it returned a net sum of a little more than \$100. The Xmas Eve gathering was followed by a larger congregation at our Public Service than we have seen before on Xmas Day. And last though not least, from a financial standpoint the occupants of the Methodist Parsonage. Last Thursday evening after the Prayer Meeting, a number of our friends repaired to the Parsonage and after spending about three hours, during which in singing, music, conversation, and appropriate addresses, the social feeling ran high, we were made the thankful and happy recipients of a purse of over \$60. Verily our mercies abound and they seem to brighten as they give notice to take their flight. O this inexorable itinerancy! Personally and relatively, as we get older, it seems less attractive. Albeit we must not say a word against it. It is good if not pleasant. A few of our friends have opened a Reading Circle in the Vestry for mutual improvement during the winter months, which we hope will be attended with interest and advantage.

Our Gospel Temperance Prayer Meetings increase in interest and spiritual tone. We had an excellent meeting yesterday. We are constrained to thank God and take courage.

ELIAS BRETTELE.

PORTLAND AND ST. JOHN, N. B.

DEAR MR. EDITOR.—The winter solstice has occurred—the holidays have arrived and departed, and yet during this usually inclement season old Dorcas has been most remarkably considerate; the weather up to the present date being the mildest and most beautiful ever experienced by even the "oldest inhabitant." Up to the 5th inst., the ground was almost destitute of snow as in August, and at present there is barely enough to make sleighing, which is however very good, and is being enjoyed more especially by those who delight in fast horses and the merry jingle of sleigh bells. The very favorable weather has been a great boon to those who lost their homes in June, by the calamitous conflagration which were placed in the same position by the more recent fire in October. The desolated city is rising from its ruins with astonishing rapidity. When contrasting its present appearance with that of a very few months ago, one can hardly fail calling to mind the fable of the phoenix being reproduced from its own ashes. The indomitable energy and tireless perseverance displayed by the citizens in rebuilding their fire-ravaged city is in the highest degree praiseworthy. Much has also been accomplished in the way of covering the burnt districts in Portland with buildings, many of which we regret to say are not very substantial, but such as the circumstances compelled them to erect. Noble efforts have been put forth to relieve the sufferers by the fire in October. Almost before the fire was extinguished the members of the St. John relief committee called a meeting, and with a magnanimity beyond all praise voted \$5000 to mitigate the distress of those who had been rendered homeless and foodless and almost in-