

EVENING SEDERUNT.

The Assembly resumed at half-past seven, and was opened with singing and prayer.

The minutes of the afternoon sederunt were read and confirmed.

STATE OF RELIGION.

Rev. James Mitchell, of Mitchell, read the report of the Committee on the State of Religion, of which the following is an abstract:

The Committee report that increasing attention is being given to the returns required in connection with the important matters committed to them. Replies have been received from upwards of 400 sessions—an increase of 40 over last year. Presbyterial reports have been forwarded by all the Presbyteries in the Synods of Montreal and Ottawa, Toronto and Kingston, Hamilton and London, by the Presbytery of Manitoba, and by most of those in the Synod of the Maritime Provinces. In the order of completeness the Synod of Hamilton and London stands first, with 126 sessions reporting out of 190; Montreal and Ottawa next, with 80 out of 129, followed by Toronto and Kingston, with 113 out of 191, and the Synod of the Maritime Provinces, with 82 out of 159. The Presbyteries of Miramichi, Brockville, Owen Sound, and Paris furnished complete reports, and were closely followed by that of Stratford, in which 20 out of 21 sessions had sent in returns. The lowest places in the Western Synods were occupied by the Presbyteries of Kingston and London, the former furnishing six returns from twenty congregations, the latter eight from forty. The Committee remark that on a survey of the returns they cannot say that there is reason to believe that family worship is observed in more than half of the families under the pastoral care of the ministers of the Church. They are cheered, however, by a knowledge that the attention directed to this matter is already bearing fruit, and they hope that the efforts already made to that end will be continued. The Committee remark that the number in the congregations of the Church over eighteen years of age, not in full communion, varies very greatly, but generally speaking is very large. This is to some extent attributed to the raising of the standard of qualification on the one hand, and on the other a fuller appreciation of the responsibilities of a Christian profession. While the Committee deeply deplore this state of things, they consider it would be still more deplorable if an idea should prevail throughout the Church that the young should, as a matter of course, take their place at the Lord's Table at any particular age. The answers to the questions under the head of "The Care of the Young," though somewhat fragmentary, are for the most part satisfactory and indicative of decided progress. Regret is expressed, however, that so many, especially of those children above the age of fifteen, are not to be found attending the Sabbath School, and are only to a very limited extent gathered into the Bible classes. The Committee were impressed with the importance of giving due prominence to the distinctive principles of the Church, both in the pulpit and in the instruction of the young, and while carefully avoiding a polemical spirit, and everything that would justly mar the harmony that exists or interfere with the co-operation of this Church with the other evangelical Churches of the land in common efforts for the advancement of Christ's cause, yet would lay stress on faithfully maintaining their distinctive testimony. The report states that special Evangelistic services had been held during the year in about seventy congregations, and the reports almost without exception speak of "good results," these results being, when specified, "the conversion of sinners," "increase of brotherly love," "the infusion of a new life," "increase of attendance at prayer meetings and public worship, adult baptism, increase of membership, and the strengthening in a marked degree of many who were formerly members," etc. These special services had for the most part been conducted by ministers of the Church. The Committee, after impressing upon ministers the necessity for greater attention to pastoral visitation, remark that the elders do take part—in some congregations a very important part—in the supervision of the people, but the answers to the questions on this head make it abundantly manifest that the mighty power which is latent in the eldership has not been called into active exercise. There was only one congregation reported as having no weekly prayer meeting; and some of the reports speak very encouragingly regarding the attendance and interest. The "hindrances to spiritual life" which are specified in the reports are prevailing worldliness, intemperance, pleasure-seeking, levity, and Sabbath-breaking. The Committee rejoice that they are able to express the strong conviction that intemperance is upon the wane. Very much had been done during the past year to promote the cause of total abstinence from the use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage. The movement known as the Gospel Temperance movement was worthy of the special approbation of the Assembly, and it was worthy of consideration how it might be best directed. The Committee was convinced that only as this cause was advocated on Scriptural grounds, and carried on as a department of the work of the Church of Christ would its results be valuable and abiding.

Rev. Principal Caven moved:—

The General Assembly receive the report, and in doing so would express their thanks to Almighty God for the many encouraging facts which it reveals, more especially for the increasing interest shown on the part of Presbyteries in this great scheme of the Church, for the times of refreshing vouchsafed to many congregations during the year and the signs of spiritual life everywhere apparent around us; and in reference to the evils complained of—such as the neglect of family worship by many of our people, the small share of labor taken in the work of the Church by many from whom good service might be expected, the prevalence of sin in many forms, and the great number that have reached mature years being without God and without hope in the world—the General Assembly deplore the same, and appoint that in their devotions during the Assembly humble confession of these sins be made at the throne of the heavenly grace, and application for a larger measure of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In support of the deliverance he said he would not detain

the Assembly long in making the motion, because he thought the addresses should be numerous and brief. In approaching that work they were coming to one which was very sacred—they were no longer in the outer courts of the temple, but they were touching the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant, etc. The chief matter of thankfulness was:—The good state of the funds in connection with the various finances of the Church. While the whole evidences of prosperity in the spiritual life of the Church were not manifested by the state of the finances, yet such was after all an index of the Church's prosperity. It was to be regretted that so much money should be expended for the erection of magnificent buildings and their fittings, and so little given to the funds to be used in extending the influence of the Church. It was gratifying during the last year that those funds had been better supported than previously. The accessions to the numbers of communicants during the same period was another source of gratification. Large numbers of young persons were offering themselves for full communion with the Church. Special outpourings of the Spirit of God had been strikingly experienced by seventy of their congregations. No member could refrain from rejoicing that such special blessings were conferred by God. If God scattered the clouds in sparse drops all over the territory there was cause for joy. The great aim of the Church was to preach God's Word on abideth days. No form of vice had obtained a stronghold in the Church in Canada—those forms of immorality which had been felt so heavily in the old land were strangely absent, yet there was considerable vice prevailing. A great many communicants were ignorant of the efforts which the Church was making by way of missionary and other effort to advance the Church of Christ. The result of these General Assemblies was that fathers and brothers became impregnated with the spirit of God, and going home spread that influence among their congregations. A great many people stood aloof and would not make any Christian profession, and in saying that he did not exclude the young people who had been baptized or the children of those who were members of the Church. It was a vicious system which taught that those who were twelve years of age were outside the Church and could not be converted until they were grown up and approaching the years of manhood.

Rev. A. Wilson seconded the motion, and was glad of the statements which were made in reference to the infant membership of the Church. He was surprised that the report said those who were not communicants were without the pale of the Church.

Rev. Mr. Mitchell—The report does not say that.

Rev. Mr. Wilson took the words down when they were read. In another portion the young of the Church were represented as large masses without Christ, because they could not yet see their way to go to the communion table. In the concluding part of the report reference was made to persons who had not yet gone to the Lord's table, yet leading in prayer, as those not owning allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. Those were statements which the Assembly could not endorse. He was not surprised that more young people did not come to the Lord's table when they were spoken of as they were by many ministers. The members of the Church were spoken of as communicants and adherents. All such language ought to be guarded against, and young people taught that they were members of the visible Church of Christ, and that they were to own the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. If such were done then they would not have the report saying that large masses of the young people were without Christ.

Rev. Mr. Mitchell said that the words only occurred in a report sent up from the Presbytery which the reverend gentleman himself represented. (Laughter.)

Rev. Mr. Wilson said that when the report was adopted he was in his bed ill; but it did not matter whence it came, the sentiment was wrong.

A portion of the 51st Psalm was sung, after which the Rev. Mr. Duncan, of Halifax, led in prayer.

Rev. P. M. McLeod said considerable misapprehension existed as to the evangelistic work of the Church. There were two classes of work for the ministry, the quiet method and the spasmodic. Some thought these methods were antagonistic, but he believed them to be one; and what God has joined together let no man put asunder. The young people who were not open professors of Christianity should be pressed to make a full confession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Evangelistic services have nearly always resulted in a large accession of young people to the membership of the Church. The truth of that statement was borne out by the report. These services were also useful for reaching the multitude who never went near the house of God. If they were reached they would soon be setting up their family altars, and beneficial results must follow.

Rev. Mr. Thomson, Sarnia, hoped every member would carry home and remember the practical remarks of the mover and seconder of the deliverance. In his opinion every service of the Church, whether on Sunday or Monday, was evangelistic work. He was sorry to hear the young people being spoken of as being out of the Church. Six young people had recently joined his Church, and not one of them, he believed, could point to the date of their conversion. They had been brought up and nurtured in the Church, and had always been treated by him as members of the Church. It was possible for little infants to belong to the Saviour, and to grow up such, knowing no experience except that of God's people. He had no objection to Evangelical meetings, but he did object to the way they were conducted. Every person attending them was called "unconverted," "ungodly," "children of the devil," etc., and the number of the conversions made last night would be told next morning. Some conversions would take months to be realized. Those who referred to the date of their conversion were resting on an artificial basis.

Rev. Dr. Cochrane rejoiced to think there were many, especially among the Highland congregations, who, from a mistaken idea as to the importance of the sacraments of the Church, absented themselves for years from the Lord's table, yet who were eminently pious and godly men and women, and who would be received in any Church. A great deal of

the evangelistic preaching has been erroneous in doctrine. Many evangelists taught that a man was a believer who gave an intellectual adherence to the principles and facts of the Christian religion. The teachers in Sunday Schools should be those who had been actually brought to Christ; and if all their teachers were prayerful there would be no such need of special evangelistic services. Family training and prayer by the parents should be encouraged. Family worship could be, in his opinion, either silent or open. The ministers of the Church should not let any of the evangelists have the use of their pulpits, unless their views as to the great doctrines of the Bible were known.

Rev. Mr. McCaul, of Three Rivers, referred to the manner in which he and his congregation were isolated from their brethren and surrounded by the crushing influence of the systems of Rome. Before he could grasp a brother minister by the hand he had to travel from sixty to ninety miles. He came from his distant mission to get a little fire from the Assembly, and to go back and melt a portion of the iceberg which surrounded him. He was gratified to learn from the report that the General Assembly had taken her stand on the temperance question where she should have taken it years ago.

Rev. W. M. Roger thought there were matters of sufficient importance in the report to justify the Moderator in issuing, as suggested by the Synod of Toronto and Kingston, a pastoral letter on the state of family religion. As a proof of the need of family worship he referred to the fact that within the past few weeks the son of a Presbyterian father and mother had been condemned to death on the gallows for sins too shameful to mention. As for the "Gospel Temperance Movement," he did not think there was much Gospel in it; therefore he thought there was great need for the Church to do her own temperance work.

Rev. Principal McVicar moved that the debate be adjourned. The motion was carried, and the Assembly adjourned after the benediction had been pronounced.

THIRD DAY—MORNING SEDERUNT.

HAMILTON, June 14.

The Assembly met this morning at ten o'clock, Rev. Dr. Jenkins, the Moderator, presiding. Devotional exercises were conducted by the Moderator and Rev. Donald McCrae.

Rev. Mr. Torrance presented the report of the Committee on Bills and Overtures, setting forth the order of business for the day, which was adopted.

COMMITTEE ON CAUSES.

A Judicial Committee on Causes was nominated as follows, in accordance with the report of the Committee on Bills and Overtures:—Rev. Dr. Topp (convenor), Rev. Dr. Cochrane, Principal McVicar, Principal Grant, Rev. J. Scott, Rev. Kenneth McLennan, Rev. Mr. Laing, Rev. Dr. Waters, Mr. T. W. Taylor, Hon. Alex. Morris, Hon. J. McMurrich, Mr. Gordon, Mr. James McLellan, Mr. John Charlton, Rev. Mr. Sedgwick, Rev. Mr. Young, of Napanee, Rev. Principal Caven, Rev. Dr. Robb, Mr. Laing, of Whitby.

PRINTED PROCEEDINGS.

Rev. Mr. Gordon, of Ottawa, suggested that the order of proceedings of each day should be prepared in time for it to be printed for use of members.

Rev. Mr. Torrance said it would be impossible to do that, but the order would be posted every day at the door of the church.

Rev. Dr. Topp thought it would be well if an arrangement was arrived at whereby the orders for each day should be finished, and not carried over till another day.

THE MISSIONS OF LINGAN AND VICTORIA MINES.

The Clerk read an appeal on the part of the Presbytery of Sydney from the decision of the Synod of the Maritime Province with respect to the Lingan and Victoria Missions. In this case the Presbytery of Sydney had declined to adopt the views of Rev. John Murray and others of Falmouth Street church, Sydney, in favor of uniting the missions of Lingan and Victoria Mines with Falmouth Street church. An appeal being made to the Synod of the Maritime Provinces the judgment of the Presbytery was reversed. From this action the Presbytery dissented on the grounds that the missions of Lingan and Victoria Mines were able to support a missionary, that in the interests of Church extension these missions should have a catechist or clergyman of their own, that the entrusting of mission stations to individual ministers instead of to Presbyteries, was unconstitutional. The Presbytery appointed the following representatives to support its views: Principal Grant, Rev. Mr. Sedgwick and Dr. Murray.

Rev. Mr. Gordon asked whether a Presbytery could appoint representatives who were outside of their Presbytery.

The Moderator questioned whether that could be done; it was like engaging lawyers to advocate their interests in the Church Courts.

Rev. Principal Grant dissented from the views of the Moderator, expressing the opinion that a decision on the matter should be given by the Assembly and not by the Moderator.

Rev. Principal Caven maintained that the rights of the General Assembly were being infringed by any Presbytery which took from the Assembly one of its members to represent the views of such Presbytery. By taking Principal Grant, for instance, from the Assembly to represent the Presbytery of Sydney, that Presbytery was depriving this body of his wisdom, and the Assembly certainly had a prior claim upon him.

Rev. Dr. Jenkins held that Principal Grant and other members of the Assembly were to act as judges in such matters, and to call upon them to support an appeal from a Presbytery was like calling them down from the Bench to act as advocates. The principle was exceedingly dangerous.

Rev. Principal McVicar moved that the parties appointed by the Presbytery of Sydney should be heard on behalf of that Presbytery.

Rev. Mr. Scott seconded the motion.

Rev. John Wilson supported the views of the Moderator, and thought that an overture embodying his views should be introduced.

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