

time he has heard of the recommendation that has just been read. For his part and as a member of the Committee he entirely disapproves of it!" That little speech of a half-awake man may effectively kill an excellent recommendation, that is the result of days of careful thought on the part of the ten active members who have attended the meetings of the committee. As a nominal member of that Committee, whose meetings he has never attended his word has a weight that is entirely disproportionate to its real value. It is easy to kill the best of measures. All that is needed is the suggestion that this is a little matter that a few members of the Committee would like to see railroaded through.

Three years ago the Synod of Toronto and Kingston agreed to appoint three members on each Standing Committee. The work was well done, better, we submit than it would have been had there been the usual number of members, of whom the greater part did not hold themselves responsible, yet whose possible opinion the Convener felt himself obliged to seek. So in Assembly committees ten men chosen for their fitness and selected from points that make frequent conferences possible, would do the work of our Church to greater advantage and at less cost than is possible under the present system. Each committee could then come to its respective Court with a clear-cut, well-arranged report, in which the main features of the opinions of all ten were fairly represented, and which would gain immensely in value because it would be the result of the calm deliberation of these ten men, rather than the pains-taking but diffident view of the unhappy man who holds the position of the Convener, and who is responsible for the presentation of some report.

The amount of work done by the women in the churches is being noted now. It is compared with the amount done by the whole congregation, a most unfair comparison. As a rule one tenth of the women of the congregation get together, and with an earnestness that would startle the Church were it to mark the whole congregation, carry through their plans for congregational or missionary work. Most unselfishly have they toiled during the past year, and receive a place for their modest results in the annual returns. The real relation between them is well indicated in the gifts that Jesus saw dropped into the treasury of the Temple, and upon which He commented to His disciples.

We are asked to remind all Sabbath Schools, as well as individual friends supporting pupils at Pointe-aux-Trembles Schools, to forward their contributions to the Rev. Dr. Warden on or before 28th February, so as to enable the Board to meet all necessary expenditures before the books close.

We must not expect to have the patience of Job without his grace.

## SYNODS AND ASSEMBLY.

### A Frank Discussion of the Subject

Editor DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN:—Your editorial last week on the "Power of Synods" is timely, thoughtful, and well worthy of being studied. It may be doubted if there is a thoughtful man or woman in the Church who if he or she took the time to think it over, would not unhesitatingly disapprove the present arrangements of Synods and Assembly. It is like Dr. Johnson's leg of lamb dressed-ill, cooked-ill, served-ill every way. The Synods have nothing to do and they do it. The Assembly has too much to do and it does not do it. The Conferences that are attached to the Synod meetings, as you truly say, "have no immediate connection with the business of the Church," and they are for the most part not worth attending. The same stale topics are brought up in some form or other every year. Every body is sick and tired of this.

The Synod is a court of the Church, not a Conference. It is as much so as the Assembly. It is more representative and it is more scriptural. It is far better adapted to do justice to local and district issues than the Assembly can be. What do we in Ontario and Quebec know of the local environment of a question of discipline in British Columbia or Prince Edward Island? The intelligent ministers and elders in those Provinces know and are far more capable of judging and doing justice to an ordinary local issue than a General Assembly, whose members are for the most part more bent, after the leading reports are presented, on returning home or taking a holiday than on minutely examining the merits or demerits of a small local issue in some congregation of which perhaps they never before heard the name.

After forty years of experience and frequent attendance at Assemblies, I have no hesitation in saying that the General Assembly is the worst possible court to do justice to a matter that may be of vital importance to a district or to a congregation concerned; and for two very obvious reasons: first, it cannot deal with it intelligently because of its necessary ignorance of the local environments; and secondly, it will not take the time or the trouble to deal with it patiently and judicially. Synods can do both these things, and do both all the better that they have not before their eyes the fear of an ill-informed Assembly reversing their actions.

And what, if the Synods were given a free hand, is the need of an annual Assembly? It may afford a pleasant outing and an agreeable variety to a number of men who have little to do during the summer months and plenty of money to do it with; but for the average pastor, and especially the country pastor who is anxious to do that part of his visiting work that lies in the remoter parts of his charge while the weather and the roads are good, it is the loss of the best month of the year, the month of June, in which the farmers are not overly busy and the people in the towns and cities have not fled to Muskoka or the sea-shores.

And what is there, if the powers of the Synods are liberally extended, to prevent a judicious commission, with the Moderator of the Assembly at its head—with the army of conveners, agents and so forth in attendance on its meetings, though not

necessarily its member—to prevent the business intervening between triennial assemblies, being attended to quite as well as it is now? We believe that it would be better attended to. We believe that a judicious commission of tried and trusted men, nominated by the Presbyteries, would do better and safer work than an annual crowd of three or four hundred, three-fourths of whom are happily as mute as oysters, and not a few of whom are as indiscriminating as the occupants of the back benches of our legislatures.

Moreover, the expense of annual Assemblies is not only something, but a very great deal to many. How many of us can afford, even once in four years, to spend a hundred dollars in going to an Assembly in Winnipeg or Halifax or St. John? We would be doing the church more true service by expending that amount on our libraries, and our families more justice by paying that amount on our butcher's or baker's bills.

As to the time of meeting of Synods and Assembly, almost any time of the year would be better than the present custom. No farmer can leave his farm in May without loss, and although June is not the most pressing month in the farmer's time, he is always busy making preparations for the harvest. It is true, however, that for the Synod in Ontario and Quebec, as at present constituted, it does not matter much when they meet, or whether they meet at all.

But if things were wisely arranged, if the Synods had anything worth while to do the time would be in October or Nov. The commission would meet when it pleased and as often as it pleased, and the tri-annual Assembly should meet in January or February, and then not meet for a week or ten days, but for a whole month, if necessary, to do the Church's business calmly, judicially and thoroughly. These have been my own views for many years, and I have on many occasions expressed them. I know well that I shall never see them put in practice, but there are those living who will see them, in some measure at least, realized.

F. McCUAIG.

Welland.

A table furnished by Rev. Dr. Warden, published elsewhere, reveals a state of affairs not very creditable to a number of our Presbyteries. It is too bad that so many congregations make no returns. A glance at the table will show that large Presbyteries are the greatest sinners in this regard. We trust that an immediate effort will be made all along the line, so that every scheme the church is pledged to support may receive the full amount allocated to it. It is only by a prompt response to the General Agent's appeal that a serious deficit can be averted at end of the financial year.

Rev. Dr. Moore of Bank Street Church, is recovering from a prolonged attack of the prevailing malady. He was able to take his own pulpit on Sabbath evening, Rev. Mr. White preaching for him in the morning.

The Sabbath school that runs in a grove runs into a grave.