

Pastor and People.

Interesting Union Meeting in Chalmers' Church.

An interesting meeting in connection with the recent consummation of union between the different branches of the Presbyterian Churches in the Dominion, was held on the evening of the 18th inst., in Chalmers' Church. It was regretted by some that the meeting was not held in St. Andrew's Church, as being the oldest Presbyterian Church in the city, and the scene of the celebrated disruption in 1844. There would have been a peculiar fitness in making that the place of meeting, but this was not thought of when the first meeting of the United Presbytery—in connection with which the meeting was held—was appointed to take place in Chalmers' Church. There was a good attendance, including an influential representation of the three Presbyterian congregations in Kingston. The platform was occupied by a number of the members of the Presbytery, the Rev. Prof. Mowat, as Moderator of the Presbytery, presiding. The combined choirs of the three congregations, assisted by the fine organ of Chalmers' Church, sang several beautiful anthems, and led the congregation in singing the 192nd and 138th psalms and appropriate hymns. The Rev. F. W. Dobbs, of Portsmouth, being present, took, by request, a seat on the platform, a pleasant token of the kindly feeling which the Episcopal Church, through its highest authorities, has shown toward the Presbyterian Church in connection with the newly established union.

The meeting was opened with prayer by the Rev. Mr. Wishart, and the Rev. John Gray read the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. The Rev. W. Smart, formerly of Brockville, who is, with the exception of Dr. Henderson, the oldest minister in the church, and probably in Canada, then gave a very interesting address. He looked back to the time, sixty years ago, when he first came to labor in Canada, when there were but three Presbyterian ministers in the country,—the Rev. Mr. Harkness at Quebec, and the Rev. Messrs. Somerville and Esson at Montreal. It was then his great desire to see the formation of a Presbytery, and this was long accomplished at Montreal, notwithstanding that it stirred up a good deal of excitement in the newspapers, which thought so mysterious a proceeding must conceal some political designs. His prayer then was, to live to see a Synod formed. When this was accomplished, his desire was to see the formation of a General Assembly in Canada, and when this prayer had been granted he had prayed yet farther, that he might be spared to see the consummation of the union now happily accomplished. This prayer, too, had been granted, and he was ready now to say—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." He would leave to his hearers his parting charge that they should go on to build up and increase the usefulness of the united Church. God had put into their hands every possible instrument for so doing. He gave a brief description of the state of Canada when he came to it. No post office,—no school between Brockville and Kingston,—roads rough and dangerous from the wolves, bears and other beasts of prey that infested the woods, churches few and far between. Now, the whole face of the country was changed, cultivation had changed even its external aspect,—schools and schoolmasters were good and abundant, the educational system was excellent, locomotion comparatively easy in every direction, and they were to make use of these facilities in extending the usefulness of their Church, and show their gratitude to their Saviour who had died for their sins, by seeking to make it a blessing, religiously, morally and intellectually to this fast growing country.

The Rev. Dr. Neil, of Seymour, was the next speaker. In an eloquent and earnest address he expressed his deep gratification at the consummation of Union. As one who witnessed, and deeply, bitterly felt the unhappy disruption of 1844, he rejoiced to see the prevalence of a wiser and better spirit, and to witness the consummation of an Union he regarded as a concession on the part of the United Church, that cruel rending asunder of fathers and brethren, labouring unitedly in the work of the Lord, should never have taken place. It is owing to human weakness and imperfection, that the Christian Church is broken up into so many sections. When any of these breaches are healed, every rightly constituted mind must rejoice. We have good cause for gladness and natural congratulation in the Union so happily brought about between the different branches of the Presbyterian Church in the Dominion; an Union which, while it may not be productive of all the good that some sanguine minds anticipate, must remove occasions of strife and hindrances to evangelization, so that the future generation, if not the present, may reap from it a rich harvest of blessings. While rejoicing in what has been accomplished, however, we are not to forget that there is a higher and more important Union than that which is merely outward and external—the Union which Christ asked for his church, resulting from Union to Christ and having Him dwelling in us by His spirit, making us one in heart and mind. Without this, the mere ecclesiastical incorporation would be of little avail, and might prove to be not freedom but bondage, not Union but conflict, not the oneness of the living fountain flowing forth in streams of life, fertility and beauty, but rather the oneness of the dead and frozen lake. The lengthened preliminary negotiations have shown us that there is much need for forbearance, forgetfulness of the past, and greater mutual confidence in the future. The Union, therefore, calls for earnest united persevering prayer on the part of the members of the United Church for that baptism of the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of love, which alone can make our Union glorifying to God, and a fruitful source of blessings to ourselves and our fellow men. The ecclesiastical incorporation is only the scaffolding for the spiritual structure; and having set up our tabernacle we must pray that God will vouchsafe His spirit and fill it with His glory. The Union demands also, our united strenuous efforts for purifying

and perfecting the United Church. We are told that we are now the largest Protestant body in the land. It is, the weightier must be the responsibility resting upon us, as ministers and elders, members and adherents, to strive together, by holy lives and earnest prayers, by liberal contributions and self-denying labours, to make our Church, not merely the largest in numbers, but the purest in doctrine, the holiest in life, the most zealous and fruitful in good works, that she may be purified from all remaining error and imperfection, may own whatever is "true, just, pure, lovely and of good report" so that she may be an object of attraction to the world, a centre of union for the Protestants of the land, a rallying point for the soldiers of the cross, in anticipation of that mighty conflict which seems approaching, when the Church of Christ must meet the onset of the confederated armies of idolatry, superstition and infidelity, and be prepared to triumph in the name and might of our God. The present union may also encourage us to hope for the wider and more extended union, when all Christians holding the truth as it is in Jesus, being drawn together in love, will form one glorious united Church. We believe that the divisions which have originated in human weakness and imperfection have been permitted and overruled by God for wise and gracious purposes. Each section of the Church of Christ has had its special work to do, and has been employed and honoured by God in the past in promoting His glory and the salvation of immortal souls. At the same time we believe that the spirit of union now abroad is the sign of the coming of the day when the several sections of the Church of Christ shall be found, not only keeping the unity of the Spirit, but, under the baptism of the Holy Spirit, brought nearer in knowledge, purity and love to their blessed Redeemer and to each other, until,—all distinctive characteristics being obliterated,—they shall stand forth before the world as one Holy Catholic Church—the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Then shall the Lord comfort Zion, beautify the place of His sanctuary and His Church shall come forth as the morning, "far as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners." (i.e. terrible as the adversary of all anti-Christian error and superstition,) and going from victory to victory as the sacramental host of God, until all the kingdoms of the world shall have become the kingdom of the Lord, and the voice is heard, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

"With that blessed hope before us, Let no harp remain unstung. Let the mighty advent chorus Onward roll from tongue to tongue"

The Rev. John Burton, of Belleville, followed in a very able speech. He referred, also, to the causes of thankfulness which we have in the completed Union, but more especially to its influence on the mission work of the Church. He rejoiced in the foreign missions which the Church had undertaken—to the Islands of Polynesia, to the Chinese, to the Hindoos, to the Indians of our own land. But we have a field not yielding to any of these in importance in the home mission field, the claims of which he wished to present. In doing so he had no vivid pictures to present such as stimulated the imagination in regard to foreign missions. All was bare, prosaic, hard work, often that hardest, most discouraging work of all, the work of toiling in an old, worn-out field, where by long carelessness the people seemed hardened into utter unresponsibility. In such fields there were labourers just as heroic, martyrdom as true as had ever honored even the Islands of the South Sea. He referred more particularly to certain branches of this mission within the bounds of the Kingston Presbytery. There were patient self-denying labourers working in these fields, where, if the ground was rough and people scattered, we yet must not leave them to suffer from the want of Gospel privileges. If we are a United Church, it is one of the duties of Christian brotherhood that we bear each other's burdens, and in so doing we shall find a blessing returning to ourselves. He spoke of the spiritual destitution of the young men who went to work at lumbering in the far back country, and who, removed from gospel preaching and ordinances, contracted and brought back with them loose and vicious habits. All that was given to such missions would return to the givers in increasing the moral and spiritual prosperity even of the more highly favoured cities. And there were workers in cities too, in wretched lanes and alleys and forbidden paths, who deserved our fullest help and sympathy. He referred briefly, also, to the mission field presented in the province of Quebec, where we knew that Presbyterianism and even Protestantism was not indigenous, but an exotic, and where our most active efforts were needed to advance that form of religion which we conscientiously believed the very best fitted for our growing country. He was not ashamed to defend the principles of Presbyterianism. Those were no weak or shallow principles which had nerved William the Silent to his stern conflict, which had animated true hearts behind the dykes of Holland in the struggle they had waged with the empire of Charles the Fifth, till they had won the prize of religious liberty, not for themselves alone, but for the world,—yet, while valuing our distinctive principles, we do not arrogate to ourselves infallibility. Presbyterians should be the last to forget the claims of religious liberty. They maintain the rights of every individual to draw truth for himself from the open word of God. And cherishing a spirit of brotherly love towards those with whom we may differ on smaller points, while united in the greater, we look for the time when differences shall be swallowed up in a fuller measure of light and love.

The Rev. M. MacLean of Belleville, now spoke. He said that numbers had been called a vulgar estimate, but this, though true, was only a half truth. If the largest Church is not also the strongest, it is the fault of the unfaithfulness of its members. Numbers mean facilities for increased usefulness, more labourers, greater ability to take up new fields, larger sources of support. A church's work is to lengthen her cords. Every church recognized this in

seeking to add to her membership and to increase her power for good. If we believe, as we doubtless do, that Presbyterianism is the form of Christianity best calculated to develop attachment to both civil and religious liberty, and to combine personal obligation, and pious reverence on the one hand, with steady independence and individuality of thought and action on the other, then we should use all honest means to advance that form of polity and doctrine which we believe best adapted to call forth the noblest feelings and the purest life. And one grand means to this end is unity, the gathering up the scattered fragments of the Presbyterian family in this Dominion, and as they are already one in spirit, to make them one also in corporate organization. The Union, in making us numerically strong is a matter for congratulation, chiefly because efficiency is increased thereby. It has put an end to a state of things in which strength was wasted and energy mis-directed by keeping up two weak and struggling congregations in some places, leaving others destitute. Such struggling congregations will doubtless ere long unite their powers and work and worship together. Our schemes ought to be enlarged and vitalized. Our boards of home and foreign missions ought to double their work; and our best young men will have strong inducements to flock into the ministry. The Union has removed the strange anomaly which existed during the last thirty years when two bodies with common history and common belief, working for the same ends, with the same weapons, and side by side, were yet as far apart as the poles. Impartial observers told us that our continued separation and rivalry brought reproach on our common Christianity, and wondered what kept us apart. Indeed, it would have required the metaphysical brain of a Scot'sman to tell where lay the difference. We were not responsible for this state of affairs, but we were responsible for its continued existence,—whether we should keep it up, or bequeath to our country a church united in heart and work. After much negotiation and much anxiety,—on the 15th of last June the estranged children of Presbyterianism shook hands over the filled-up breach, and showed to the world their readiness to forget the past, and with it unseemly rivalries, and their determination to work together for the cause of the Master by doing their part towards the fulfilment of the intercessory prayer "that they may be one, as we are one." But we are not now to stand content with increased numbers and efficiency, but, remembering that "to whom much is given, of him much shall be required," to go on, animated with a spirit of consecration, in all our members, from the smallest Sabbath-schooler to the minister in the pulpit, to advance the Master's cause, working and praying; for so only shall our church fulfil her mission towards rendering that great Dominion, growing as it is in material greatness, rich also in that righteousness which "exalteth a nation." Let us then, as churchmen,

"Be up and doing, With a heart for any fate, Still achieving, still pursuing, Learn to labor or to wait."

The Rev. W. Conithard spoke last, and said that owing to the lateness of the hour he would not prolong his remarks. He said that but a few years ago it would have seemed Utopian to predict that in so short a time Union would be brought about. God had led them by a way that they knew not, and they had thankfully acknowledged what he had wrought. He alluded to the spirit-stirring traditions of Presbyterianism in Scotland,—to the history of the Scottish reformation from the time when the brave young Patrick Hamilton's martyrdom proved to be the seed of the Church,—to the days when the Covenanters, worshipping in lonely glens, and surrounded unawares by soldiers, would reply to their menaces by singing the noble old Scottish psalms, full of faith in God. He referred to the completeness of the reformation in Scotland, and to the pure doctrine of which this Church, descended from it, is the inheritor, in order that it may make the faith it holds a blessing to this great Dominion, which it is to seek to conquer for Christ, by pointing men to Him who came to save them from the bondage of sin and error of every kind.

The meeting closed with the singing of the Doxology and the Apostolic Benediction, pronounced by the Rev. Mr. McMechan of Picton.

A Praying Mother.

She died three thousand years ago. But her name is still a household word, and the story of her life has a perennial freshness. Her history, which is briefly recorded in the first chapter of the first Book of Samuel, opens with a scene of domestic discord. She was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. The root of her grief was her childless condition. She had not been cultivated to the point where the extreme of civilization meets the extreme of barbarism, and regards children as an affliction and an embarrassment; but with the faith of the holy women of old, she believed that "children are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward." Her grief was aggravated by the fact that, contrary to the precept of the Levitical law, her husband had taken another wife "to vex her during her lifetime." (See Leviticus xviii. 18.) No wonder that Hannah was in bitterness of soul, when her jealous and more fortunate rival "provoked her sore to make her fret." Even her husband's love and tenderness could not remove her grief, so long as she was exposed to the reproaches of her adversary.

But this scene of domestic discord is but the dark background, upon which a picture of importunate prayer is exquisitely portrayed. Weighed with the strife of tongues, and heart-sick with hope deferred, Hannah goes up to Shiloh and prostrates herself at the door of the tabernacle. Her husband had offered bullocks upon the altar, but she presents at the Mercy-seat the sacrifice of a broken spirit and a contrite heart. It has always been lawful to urge our pleas for divine blessings by vows lying in the same direction. If a man asks for a competent portion of this world's goods under the general petition for "daily bread," he

may solemnly promise that all he may acquire beyond a certain specified sum shall be devoted to the cause of Christian benevolence; and, if we may believe the testimony of many who have tried it, such vows will bring down God's blessing upon his basket and his store. And so a praying mother, after Hannah's example, may consecrate her unbegotten child to God's service, and by subtle influences which the eye of human science cannot trace out, may mould that child's soul to the accomplishment of her own holy desire. Hannah's prayer and vow were "the son's sincere desire." She did not pray out of a book, nor use any set form of speech. "She spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she had been drunk." How touching was her reply to the old priest's hasty condemnation! "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord." How wonderful is the relief which the burdened soul experiences when it has cast all its care upon God! The quietness and composure of spirit which we inhale with the very atmosphere of the Mercy-seat, is itself the sweet first fruits of the answer to prayer.

Hannah returned from Shiloh with a light heart and a serene countenance, having the witness in herself that her prayer was heard. When her husband prepares to make the next annual visit to Shiloh, she declines to accompany him. She has home duties so pleasant that she gladly exchanges for them the excitements and privileges of the yearly sacrifice. The joy for which a woman "remembers no more the anguish" has filled her heart. The soft cheek of her first born has been pressed upon hers. An angel from heaven would not have been so beautiful in her eyes, nor could all the speech that angels use have told so eloquently of God's love as the voice of that child of Prayer singing its sleepy song in her bosom.

And this was but introductory to a third scene in the beautiful history. The story of Hannah ends with a picture of sublime consecration to God. Three years, or perhaps five, have passed, when the same faith that prayed at the door of the tabernacle came back to return to God the precious gift He was asked to bestow. "The child is weaned. The earliest and most indelible part of his education is completed. His soul has received the impress of a mother's love, and imbibed the spirit of devotion with her milk. He has learned to talk, and his first words are the words of piety and prayer. He has learned to think, and his first thoughts have been directed upward to God. From the beginning he has been regarded and treated, not as a heathen child, who must be allowed to grow up impenitent and unbelieving, in the hope that he may be converted and "join the Church" when he is old, but he has been treated as a birthright member of the Church, as a consecrated child of the covenant, in the confident expectation that God would accept the consecration, and seal him with the Holy Spirit from his birth.

And now, at the very age when a more human fondness would desire to keep him as the pet and ornament of the household, the mother, with the father's full consent and cooperation, takes him to Shiloh to perform her vow. The last time she went to the tabernacle she had only tears and bitterness of soul to present. Now she is laden with precious memories. The same kind of bright sayings, and cunning ways, and sweet traits of infant affection which we treasure from our little ones, filled (I) is mother's heart three thousand years ago. She carries with her also precious sacrifices. The three bullocks, and the ephah of flour, and the bottle of wine which she has to present as a thank-offering upon the altar, were nothing in value compared with the weaned lamb she led by the hand. And yet did she count it a sacrifice, in any painful sense, to give back to God what He had given to her? No; to part with him was the most joyful act of her life. Our translators have accurately interpreted her meaning in the saying, "I have lent him to the Lord." The surest way to keep anything for ourselves is to hand it over to our God to keep for us. And this is especially true of our children. Every year Hannah's inheritance in her boy grew larger, and her recompense of reward more full. A thousand years afterwards, Mary, the mother of Jesus, caught up and repeated her song of thanksgiving; and thus, under both dispensations, the hiding place of divine power in the Church, and the fountain of blessing to a lost world, is in the heart of a praying mother.—By Rev. Henry J. Van Dyke, D. D.

The Business of the Preacher.

To guess; to "think out" ingenious surmises; to be undetermined, and indeterminate; this is sometimes supposed to be the sign of great mental activity, and even force. Such a man is not in "ruts"; he is out of the beaten track, truly; he is "suggestive." But of what? A preacher of the gospel is not a builder, beginning at the ground and constructing a theology, or a theory of the universe. He is an ambassador with instructions, a messenger with a message. Let him deliver his message. He has no business to say:—"I have been thinking of this theme. I have reached such and such results with my present light. I give you my conclusions so far as I have gone; they may be different next week or month, as I get further light, and then—for I am perfectly honest—I shall report them to you with reasons." That is not, I humbly think, the tone for Christian preaching. It was proper enough in the academic groves where Plato, Zeno and Socrates gave their best thoughts to their disciples.

But we are not, gentlemen, heathen philosophers, finding out things; we are expositors of a revelation that settles things. Our authority in speaking, like our right to speak, is founded on the Word of the Lord. And it would, surely, be a little unreasonable to expect our fellow-men, as intelligent as ourselves, to repose with confidence on conceptions that are in obvious perpetual flux! That were to build on a moving bog; to anchor to a log,

itself drifting; to get up landmarks of snow. They might well enough say to us, "Gentlemen, get something settled, and then come and tell it." We need not affect surprise at religious indifference, or the growth of all manner of abnormal mushroom crudities, springing up in the night which such speculation in the pulpit makes, and which must be treated with caution, since it is difficult to distinguish the edible from the poisonous fungus. Life is too brief; men's souls are too valuable; too little time can be had for spiritual affairs to waste any of it on such day-dreaming. When Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," he spoke positive truth, which it is our business to echo. He indicates a road to the Father, on which no human engineering can make improvements.—Dr. John Hall.

Random Readings.

If you feel angry, beware lest you become revengeful.

Principles must be rooted in affections; life can only be nourished by life.

Conscience warns us as a friend before it punishes us as a judge.

The test of a man's honesty is the sacrifices he will make to preserve it.

All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirit. God pardons like a mother, who kisses the offense into everlasting forgetfulness.

Whatever God gives men as stepping stones, they often make into stumbling-blocks.

Heaven's sweetest music is played on the harp of kindness. Its chords may be touched by the smallest fingers.

Light hath no communion with darkness, in the next world any more than in this.

Cultivate such an habitual cheerfulness of mind and evenness of temper, as not to be ruffled by turmoil, inconveniences and crosses.

Dr. Adam Clarke, the celebrated commentator, said:—"Strong drink is not only the devil's way into a man, but man's way to the devil."

The old city of Troy had out one gate. Go round and round the city, and you could find no other. If you wanted to get in, there was but one way, and no other. So to the strong and beautiful city of heaven there is but one gate, and no other. Do you know what it is? Christ says, "I am the door."

King Louis XI. used to say, "When pride rides in the saddle, mischief and shame sit upon the crupper."

Death meets us everywhere, and is produced by every instrument, and in all chances, and enters in at many doors, by violence and secret influence, by the aspect of a star and the stink of a mist, by the emissions of a cloud and the melting of a vapor, by the fall of a chariot and the stumbling at a stone, by a full meal or an empty stomach, by watching at the window or by watching at prayers, by the sun or the moon, by a heat or a cold, by sleepless nights or sleeping days, by water frozen into the hardness and sharpness of a dagger, or water thawed into the floods of a river, by a hair or a raisin, by violent motion or sitting still, by severity or dissolution, by God's mercy or God's anger.

The chains that confine us to this condition are strong as destiny and immutable as the eternal laws of God.—Bishop Taylor.

Open your hearts to sympathy, but close them to dependency. The flower which opens to receive the light of day shuts against rain.

Many of us have to lament not so much a want of opportunities in life as our unreadiness for them as they come; and "it might have been" is oftener the language of our hearts than complaining words. God sends us "flax," but our "spindle and distaff" are out of repair.

Children are sometimes half-starved for a little hearty praise. Conscientious teachers and parents refuse it on principle. They are conscientious fools for their pains. Boys will act up to the estimate put upon them, or at least try to, if they are worth their salt. A hearty word of commendation is meat and drink to them for the next endeavour. Sincere commendation is the wine of life. He who withholds it, when he can give it, is a churl.

We may differ as to our mode of doing good, while our motives may be equally pure. Why then should we impinge other's motives? We may be equally anxious to serve God, why then should we be charged with selfishness when laboring to save souls?

It is a mistake to imagine that only the violent passions, such as ambition and love, can triumph over the rest. Idleness, languid as sin is, often masters all; shrewd, indeed, influence all our designs and actions, and insensibly consumes and destroys both passions and virtues.

Science and Christianity have vital and precious truths of their own to give to men, and they can develop together without interfering with each other. Should science increase its present knowledge tenfold, there is nothing it can discover which will enable it to close up that region in man where the spirit communes in prayer and praise with its Father, where the longing for rest is content in the peace of forgiveness, where the desire of being perfect in oneself is satisfied by union with the activity of the unselfish God, where sorrow feels its burden lightened by divine sympathy, where strength is given to overcome evil, where, as decay and death grow upon the outward frame, the inner spirit begins to put forth its wings, and to realize more nearly the eternal summer of its presence, in whom there is fulness of life in fulness of love. No; as Christianity can expand to fit into the progress of politics, and it can adapt itself to the demands of art, so it can also throw away, without losing one feature of its original form, rather by returning to its purer type, all the elements opposed to the advance of science which have been added to its first simplicity.—Dr. A. Brooks.