

Our Contributors.

OUR JUNE EDUCATORS.

BY KNOWNAN.

Leafy June of this year should do much in the way of educating the Canadian people. Our people do not need education as badly as the people of some older and larger countries we could easily name, but still a few more ideas would not hurt the most of us. There may be a few people in every community who know all about the heavens above, and the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth. We are all favored with the society of an elect few who have circumnavigated the ocean of knowledge, but the rest of us need to learn something, and we ought to learn a good deal this present month.

The General Assembly meets this month. A General Assembly that cannot give Presbyterian people some knowledge about their church affairs meets in vain.

The annual conferences of the Methodist Church, and the Anglican Synods, and a number of other representative bodies meet and deliberate in June. No doubt these bodies do much in the way of educating their people.

The press men tell the whole country what the ministers and elders and other officials do and say when they meet for business, and if they do and say wise and good things the people are the gainers. Nobody can tell how much the press does in this way to help on church work. A writer in the *New York Evangelist* stated the other day that a large number of the members of the American General Assembly, then in session at Saratoga, learned nearly all they knew about the business of the Assembly from the New York papers. That may seem an absurd thing to say, but it is true of an Assembly that meets nearer home than Saratoga happens to be. Very few members, other than the clerks, sit right through a General Assembly meeting and keeps the run of all the business. To sit ten hot days in a crowded and poorly ventilated room and watch business—some of it very tedious—is more than most sensible men care to do, more than many men are able to do without injuring their health. It is much easier to sit in a cool shady place next morning and “read up” the business from the report of your favorite paper. If anybody says that our favorite paper is the *Globe*, we would not care to contradict the assertion. People who remain at home and read the reports carefully often know far more about the Assembly business than some of the members who attend. Through the agency of the much abused newspapers a supreme church court may do a great deal of educative work in ten days.

June of this year should give our people much political as well as ecclesiastical knowledge. The franchise is, or should be, a powerful educator. From the speeches of intelligent men the people should learn much, and we believe do learn much. Along this line there has been immense improvement within the last few years. It goes unsaid that all the speakers are not equally well equipped, nor are all the people specially anxious to learn. Occasionally one hears or reads of a “stumper,” whose special business it is to abuse the opposite party and courageously and coolly heap praise of his own. There are communities, too, we are sorry to say, in which fair discussion is of no use. If you give the people an idea they have no place to put it. What they want is oratorical blackguardism and boodlie, especially boodlie. Of course these are not Presbyterian communities. Presbyterian people, as a rule, want ideas, argument, discussion, a fair, stand up, oratorical fight with a good joke thrown in occasionally to give spice to the proceedings.

Has the quality of our political discussion improved during, say, twenty-five or thirty years. The proper reply we believe is that the average is higher than it was. Whether

we have individual men now who can speak as effectively as some of the leaders of a quarter of a century ago is a question we do not care to discuss. Comparisons are not always pleasant and the man who made great speeches thirty or forty years ago has a tremendous advantage over the men of the present time because his faults are forgotten. The average in political discussion like the average in preaching, or in teaching, or in practicing medicine, in practicing law, or in fact the average in almost any line of activity is going up all the time.

The other day we heard a bright and gifted young professional man say, “No use in anybody trying to do anything now unless he has ideas.” That is a most valuable thing for a young man to know at his start in life. It wouldn't hurt a girl either to know that ideas are useful things to have.

We cannot recall a public question that the people understood as thoroughly as they understand the Manitoba school matter. If the verdict on the 23rd, of this month is not satisfactory the trouble will not arise from ignorance. The question never was a hard one to understand. Some Tariff problems are hard to understand. Many people did not understand them in 1878 and perhaps a considerable number do not understand them yet. The Manitoba question may be hard to settle, but it is as plain as a pike staff.

Let everybody learn as much as he can from the Church courts and politicians. Most of us can easily carry all the knowledge we are likely to get from any direction.

POWERS OF MINISTERS AND RULING ELDERS.

BY REV. JOHN J. A. PROUDFOOT, D.D.

The question whether ruling elders are eligible to the Moderatorship in the judicatories of Presbyterian churches is a very simple one, and can be easily decided by reference to their usage and standards. The Westminster Assembly attached supreme importance to the office of ruling elder. They considered that a great point was gained when it was “decided that pastors and doctors or teachers are essentially the same, and form the highest order of divinely appointed officers in the Church; and that ruling elders are also of divine appointment, and distinct from pastors.” [Hetherington, p. 171] Hence Episcopalians chose the eldership, and especially the claim of divine appointment for it, as their special point of attack, maintaining that the eldership was designed to wrest the power of government from the Bishop; while, on the other hand, Independents opposed it, because it deprived, they said, the people of the right of self-government. Thus the eldership was admitted to be a distinguishing characteristic of Presbyterian polity. This the gospel ministry could not be, as it is held by all these Churches.

Proof that ministers of the Gospel are the moderators of Presbyterian Church Courts, and should be:

1st. In the “Law of the Church of Scotland” [Pordovan's Digest] it is said: “Seeing the Moderator is frequently called to exercise the power of *Order*, as solemn ecclesiastical prayer, at least twice every Session, to wit, at its first opening, and then at its closing, authoritative exhortation, rebuke, direction, it is convenient that the Moderator be always a minister.”—p. 212. “There is no constant Moderator but in Kirk Sessions, when the minister moderates *ex officio*; and if there be colleagues, they moderate by turns.”—p. 213.

2nd. In the Form of Government of the American Presbyterian Church, it is said: “The pastor of the congregation should always be the Moderator of the Session; except when, for prudential reasons, it may appear advisable that some other minister should be invited to preside.”—Chap. ix. 3. There is one case stated in which an elder may be appointed to preside; but it is “in the absence of a pastor, and when there is great difficulty in

procuring a Moderator—there being no minister of the Presbytery residing within forty miles—and when the Session is not convened for judicial business.” It is generally assumed that the case supposed will never, or need never, occur. [Moore's Digest, p. 125, 126.] An exception like this greatly confirms the rule. Dr. J. A. Hodge remarks: “In the higher judicatories such an emergency cannot occur, for a certain number of ministers must be present to form a quorum. And although the word *minister* is not used in describing the Moderator, several ministerial duties are required of him, such as preaching a sermon, offering the ordination prayer, and pronouncing the apostolic benediction. In the Assembly the Moderators have always been ministers.” [A.D. 1880; Presbyterian Law, p. 498.]

3rd. Usage of the Free Church of Scotland, as set forth in its “practice.” It is said: “The presence of a person invested with all the functions of the pastoral office is held essential to constitute a meeting of *Kirk Session*.”—p. 7. “It is a settled practice for every *Presbytery* to elect one of the ministers included in it as their Moderator; the Presbytery has perfect freedom in the election of its Moderator from the list of its ministers.”—p. 37. After the Roll has been made up, the Synod proceeds to elect a new Moderator. They may appoint any ordained minister who is a member of the Synod to fill the office.”—p. 76. Referring to the appointment of a Moderator of the General Assembly, it is said: “Any member may propose any pastor or ordained minister, though not a pastor, as a candidate.”—p. 87. Thus in all the judicatories of the Free Church, the Moderator must be an ordained minister.

4th. Forms of Procedure in the Church Courts of the Presbyterian Church in Canada: “The minister is the Moderator of Session.”—p. 17. “The Moderator (of a *Presbytery*) is a minister, and is generally appointed for six or twelve months.”—p. 21. “The Moderator (of *Synod*) is a minister, and is chosen at each ordinary meeting by open vote.”—p. 24. “The Moderator (of the *General Assembly*) is a minister.”—p. 27.

Other official testimonies might be furnished, but these are sufficient to prove that in the various branches of the Presbyterian Church it has been firmly held that the Moderators of its judicatories should be ministers of the gospel. This testimony is not impaired by the few exceptions furnished by individuals, or even by Presbyteries, that have not been loyal to the Standards of their Church.

It is difficult to understand why attempts should now be made to subvert the Policy which has been maintained for upwards of three hundred years, which was sanctioned by Calvin, Knox, and other great reformers, and which has been a bond of union and Christian affection that even tyranny and persecution could not break. What is to be gained by making elders Moderators? Utility or expediency, much less necessity, can not be pleaded for it. There must be some latent error lying at the foundation of a movement, which if persisted in, will impair the harmony of the Church if it does not produce strife and divisions. That error probably is that ministers of the gospel and ruling elders are by some thought to be of the same order, and to have the same functions; and that any difference between them is not official, but merely due to personal peculiarities or states of mind.

But the testimony of the Presbyterian Church is as strong and united against this as against the moderatorship of elders.

Examples:—John Calvin, who was considered by his opponents the author of the ruling eldership, makes a wide difference between it and the gospel ministry. Referring to the former, he says: “Governors I apprehend to have been persons of advanced age, selected from the people, to unite with the bishops (i.e., pastors) in giving admonitions and exercising discipline [1 Cor. xii. 28; Romans xii. 8]. Therefore, from the be-

ginning, every Church had its senate or council, composed of pious, grave and holy men, who were invested with that jurisdiction in the correction of vices.” [Institutes, B. IV., 3, 8]. Referring to ministers of the gospel, he says that God “declares His kindness to us, since He chooses from among men those who are to be His ambassadors to the world, to be the interpreters of His secret will, and even to act as His personal representatives.” And he says in another place: “There is no passage more remarkable than 2 Cor. iii. 6, where the apostle professedly discusses this question. He contends that there is nothing more excellent or glorious than the ministry of the gospel in the Church, inasmuch as it is the ministry of the spirit, and of righteousness, and of eternal life” [B. iv., 3, 3]. Persons holding Calvin's views could not believe that ministers of the gospel and ruling elders are of the same order, and have the same functions.

Calvin's views are well represented in the Form of Government of the American Presbyterian Church. “Ruling elders are properly the representatives of the people, chosen for the purpose of exercising government and discipline in conjunction with pastors or ministers” [Chapter v]. Of the pastor it is said, “As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed ambassador. And, as he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed steward of the mysteries of God” [Chap. iv].

Having stated the views of the great men of the Reformation period in reference to the functions of ministers and elders, respectively, which views are crystallized in the standards of all Presbyterian Churches, it may be well to show that they are scriptural.

Now, as ruling-elders exercise government, and in conjunction with ministers, it is plain that if they are classified it must be under a general term indicating government. This is the function which they have in common. It fully expresses all the functions of ruling elders, while it only partially expresses those of ministers, as it leaves out of view entirely their highest functions, as preachers of the gospel, ambassadors of Christ, called by Him to do this work. Now, it can be easily proved that “elder” in Scripture means ruler. Hence it is not only used in reference to ruling elders, but also in reference to ministers of the gospel, so far as they are spoken of as rulers, or in connection with other rulers. Elder itself does not fully explain itself. Hence, in any case, you must ascertain from the context which office it designates, or what his functions are. It is easy to prove that elder in the Old Testament invariably denotes merely a ruler. There were elders from the time of Abraham who were rulers; these entered into the Mosaic Church, without any remark; they also in the same incidental manner entered into the New Testament Church. In Acts xi. 30, elders received contributions; in Acts xiv. 23, it is said that elders were appointed by Paul and Barnabas, but there is not a word said about preaching. And we know there was no stated ministry while the ministry of gifts lasted. In Acts xv. we are told that they sat in the council, but they are not spoken of as preachers. Indeed, their conduct showed that they were not fit to be teachers. It is not till the ministry of gifts including the apostles was drawing to a close that we read of an elder appointed to preach the gospel. It was then the gospel ministry was instituted. This can't be mistaken because their qualifications are stated. There are only two passages in Scripture in which an elder is spoken of as a preacher. These are 1. Timothy v. 17; Titus i. 5. If you add to these 1. Timothy iii. 1-7; and 11. Timothy ii. 2-24, you cannot fail to see that these all refer to the institution of the Christian ministry. Whenever ministers and elders are addressed, collectively, there is invariably a reference to government or discipline, as in Acts xx., and in 1. Peter v. 1-5. The old historic eldership that originated in the time of Abraham, and flourished under Moses, still exists, and will continue to the end of time.

It is preposterous to speak of ministers and ruling elders as of the same order, and to contend that the latter should preside over the former.

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