

The Church is growing in the favor of the people, and steadily increasing in members, and if only her leaders would endeavor to combine a true literature and a true conservatism in matters of church government, she would soon become in a wider sense than ever the church of the people.

The question of Patronage remains vexed and vexing, and patrons, clergy and people are alike anxious to find some way out of the difficulties that seem rather to be increasing than otherwise under the working of the existing law. There was no alternative but to put in the three presentees in the Dunblane, Scoonie and Tyree cases, if the Assembly were really to administer the law—but I believe, from all that I can learn, that notwithstanding the character and ability of the presentees, the issues are likely to prove most disastrous to the Church in at least two of these cases. Once that people have taken an active part in a prolonged opposition to any man, whether the objections arose from causeless prejudice or not, you cannot wonder that they should feel a decided aversion to receiving him warmly as their minister. For the sake of harmony in the Church it is to be hoped that a satisfactory settlement of the question may not be far distant. And I have good reason for saying that were this stumbling block taken away, there would be a vast number return, who, because of this one thing, felt themselves conscientiously called upon to separate from her communion.

The Lord Advocate's School Bill is exciting some considerable attention just now. I need not enter on the merits of it, as you may already be acquainted with them. It is intended as a settlement, by a kind of compromise, of a long disputed question. The tendency of it is chiefly to raise the status of the school-master, giving him a higher salary and a retiring allowance, and to liberalise the school, by allowing others besides members of the Church of Scotland to be eligible as teachers. There are points in it that do not meet with the approval of different parties, but the country in general is, I believe, satisfied to receive it as a very reasonable compromise. The Church party are, many of them strong against it, as an "unhallowed" encroachment on the rights of the Church. (Pity such a word was allowed to stand in the motion that went from the Commission of Assembly to Parliament.) And the dissenters, many of them, are as decided against it because it only gives them part of what they have been for years asking—an ignoring of the position and rights of the Church of Scotland. It is expected that, with a few amendments, it will pass this session.

But I am afraid you must have almost concluded by this time against reading any further, so I promise not to say much more in the meantime. There is just one other matter that occurs to me, and that is the question of union among the leading Presbyter-

rian bodies. In the Colonies the tendency, I see, is to sink denominational differences, and to become a United Church, as has been accomplished in the case of the Australian Churches. I do think that when men have gone so far from the scene of their original differences, and when practically the working of these various churches is very much the same, that such union is most desirable, and only zeal for a party supplanting zeal for Christ can stand in the way of the accomplishment. You can easily see how here there should be greater difficulties in the way, and it comes to be a question, how far it is desirable to have a form of unity, covering the most inconsistent elements, as would certainly be the case, or whether it be not better to have churches cultivating a unity of spirit, and each working in its own sphere and in its own way. So far as my experience goes, and it is confined chiefly to the West of Scotland, there is a growing feeling for this essential unity, and ministers of different denominations now associate privately and professionally in a way which, not many years ago, would have been reckoned inconsistent with their distinctive principles. That there are many who are so exclusive still is quite true, but the feeling of the great body of the people, and the more liberal and intelligent of the clergy, is towards brotherhood.

As a specimen of what is doing, I observe that, a few Sabbaths ago, Dr. Caird, of Glasgow, officiated at the opening of a United Presbyterian Church, in Helensburgh. In Glasgow there is the most thorough harmony between the clergymen of the various churches, (I should except the Free Churchmen, who stand aloof from all contact with even the *leprous garments* of the Church of Scotland); but between the United Presbyterians and Established Churchmen there is the greatest good will and frequent interchange of professional civilities. In the neighboring town of Paisley, which used to be rather notorious for its bitter animosities alike in civil and sacred matters, there is the most exemplary harmony. Indeed, I am quite convinced that the clergy are more to blame by far than the laity, for disunion where it exists, for invariably when ministers exchange pulpits there is a general impression of satisfaction by the people. I trust that the bigotry that has marred our Presbyterianism is fast going; and especially should I feel sorry to think that sectarian animosities should continue amongst those who in the Colonies ought sorely to stand by one another, because of what they have in common rather than oppose each other, because of their minor points of difference.

That we may all see eye to eye, all go hand in hand, all work harmoniously as laborers in the same vineyard, servants of the same Lord, members of the one true Church of Christ, must be the earnest prayer of every one who loves more to see the spread of