

THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY APRIL 11, 1883.

COMMENTING on a speech in which a Presbyterian minister is reported to have said an uncomplimentary thing about Methodist churches the "Guardian" says:

"We think offensive and slashing statements against a sister evangelical Church, by ministers, editors, or members, are neither in good taste, nor helpful to those who have recourse to this method of exalting their own Church."

In the same issue our excellent contemporary blandly affirms that "the zeal and activity of Presbyterians are inconsistent with their creed." That statement is decidedly "slashing." It would also be "offensive" had we not heard it so often. Neither is it "good taste" to tell "a sister evangelical Church," that it believes in a creed inconsistent with Christian "zeal and activity." The speaker alluded to probably used the words reported—if he used them at all—in the excitement of the moment. Our neighbour sitting quietly in his sanctum deliberately declares that the Presbyterian creed is inconsistent with Christian zeal and activity. Now neighbour don't "slash" in that way again, please don't.

We quite agree with the member of the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Committee who says in the last issue of THE PRESBYTERIAN that "ministers themselves are a good deal to blame" for the present condition of the Fund. If the average attendance at Committee meetings has only been *three or four* Mr. Middlemiss should certainly report that fact to the Assembly. How can ministers expect the people to take an interest in the matter if they take no interest in it themselves? Speeches have been made again and again in the Assembly and in some of the lower courts that were not of a nature to help the scheme—to put the matter mildly. So far as we can remember they were always made by ministers. If any minister can suggest a better plan than the one now in operation by all means let him do so. Everybody will be glad to examine it. In the absence of any better scheme or any other scheme, it surely becomes the duty of all to give a hearty and generous support to the scheme now in operation. The Widows and Orphans' Fund is the best in the Church—perhaps the best ecclesiastical fund in the Dominion. It was originated mainly by elders, and perhaps it would not be a bad move to put a majority of first-class business men on the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Committee. There can be no better Convener than Mr. Middlemiss, but if he had the financial ability of Gladstone he cannot make this Fund a success without help. We believe the people will do their duty if the ministers do theirs. An appeal of real merit has never been made in vain to Presbyterians. That is a strong statement. We won't take it back unless compelled to. The money is there, and we believe the heart to give it.

THE new Chief Justice of Manitoba is the right man in the right place. Last autumn six young men, Presbyterians from Prince Edward Island, engaged with a firm of contractors on the Canada Pacific, to work from November till April. Soon after their engagement they were ordered to work on Sabbath. They refused. The contractors dismissed them in just such language as one would expect a Sabbath breaking contractor to use. The young men brought an action at the recent assizes claiming damages for wrongful dismissal. In charging the jury Chief Justice Wallbridge said:

"It appeared that one Sunday morning they were told to go to work, but they did not go, and he (the Chief Justice) was bound to tell them that they were not bound to go. Some people were more strict than others in the observance of the Sabbath. Presbyterians were particularly strict, and these men were Presbyterian. They had a right to be strict; the law gave them that right. If they were dismissed, he considered the dismissal was a wrongful one."

The jury gave the young men eighty dollars each as damages. A few such lessons would have a good effect a little nearer home than Winnipeg. An employer has no legal right to compel his employé to work on Sabbath. The employé has a right to refuse, and, if dismissal follow refusal, damages can be collected. It should be remembered, however, that the young men in question were faithful workmen. All the ingenuity of the lawyers could prove no other charge against them but that they would not work on Sabbath. All honour to the young men who had the principle to refuse to desecrate that day, and the pluck to bring the Sabbath-breaking contractors into court. We venture to say that these young men know the Shorter Catechism. They were taught their duty in some Presbyterian home—it may have been a humble one—in Prince Edward Island, and when they went to the North-West they knew their rights and knew how to defend them.

OUR good neighbour the "Christian Guardian" sees in a late discussion on the revision of the Westminster Standards in the Presbytery of London, England, a "revolt against Calvinistic creeds." The "Guardian" also declares that it is "absurd to say in the face of" certain statements made by two or three members of that Presbytery "that there is not a decline in belief in the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism." Does the "Guardian" mean to affirm that a Church cannot revise its Standards without changing the doctrines contained in these Standards? Does a re-statement of doctrines imply "a decline in belief" in the doctrines re-stated? Surely not. Presbyterians can re-state the doctrines of the Calvinistic system without giving up anything like as much in doctrine as the Canada Methodists are surrendering just now of their distinctive form of Church government in order to have a union with the other Methodist bodies of the Dominion. About a year ago a prominent minister of the Canada Methodist Church wrote a letter which many of his brethren declared contained statements inconsistent with Methodist teaching on several doctrinal points. Was there a revolt against Arminianism in that letter? The brother was tried by his Conference, but the court failed to convict. Was there a revolt against Arminianism in the Conference in Woodstock last spring? Did the action of the Conference in acquitting Dr. Burns indicate a decline in belief in the peculiar doctrines of Arminianism? Supposing two or three Methodist divines should discuss in a District meeting the desirability of revising the Wesleyan creed (if there is one), the "Guardian" would scarcely admit that the discussion meant a revolt against Arminianism. Even if the General Conference prepared a re-statement of Methodist doctrine our excellent contemporary would not make any such admission. The Presbytery of London is not the Presbyterian Church, and all that Presbytery did was to discuss the desirability of revision. That certainly was not a very serious "revolt."

KNOX COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT.

BY a peculiar use of language the close of an academic session on this continent is termed the commencement. Whatever peculiarity of circumstances at first led to this inversion of terms, the word has now a fixed meaning in college vocabularies. There is nothing to be gained by finding fault with its use, commencement it is likely to continue to the end of the chapter. Knox College commencement, then, for the session 1882-3, was more than ordinarily brilliant. The proceedings were of a most interesting description. The large assemblage convened in Convocation Hall in the afternoon of Wednesday last, testified to the warm interest the Presbyterians of Toronto take in the theological training of the rising ministry. Representatives were also present from a good many Presbyteries throughout Ontario. The hall was filled almost to its utmost capacity. The announcements by the esteemed Principal of the successful competitors for college honours, were hailed by outbursts of vigorous applause, which may be fairly considered as an expressive manifestation of good feeling on the part

of their fellow-students, and the just discharge of their duties by the examiners. It was obviously a red-letter day in the annals of Knox College.

The power of conferring degrees, recently acquired, is evidently exercised with judgment and prudence. There is, no doubt, a strong temptation to bestow much coveted distinctions on candidates for academic renown for adventitious reasons. College authorities may sometimes err in bestowing titles, which, if they mean anything at all, signify that their possessor has attained eminence in theological lore, and has made valuable contributions to sacred literature. It is not claimed that these have always been the chief considerations in the bestowal of the cabalistic capitals with which ministerial names have been adorned. Samuel Johnson said of a Scottish university he visited, that it would get rid of its debt by degrees, they were so plentifully and indiscriminately bestowed. Knox College is not open to a like charge. This year the honorary distinction of D.D. was conferred on two gentlemen who have special claims to its possession. Principal McVicar, of Montreal Presbyterian College, is a man of extensive and varied scholarship. He presides over a well equipped theological seminary, that has done good work from its commencement to the present time. Dr. McVicar is no mere bookish pedant, he is an eminently practical man, and has ever since entering on the responsibilities of the ministry taken an active and a prominent part in the general work of the Church throughout the Dominion. In selecting him as meriting the honorary distinction, the Senate of Knox College did a graceful thing, evidencing that cordial, fraternal feeling exists between the sister institutions. The other recipient of academic honour, though from circumstances not closely identified with scholastic pursuits, is one of the early graduates of Knox College, and has discharged with rare fidelity and earnestness the duties of a lengthened and successful pastorate in one of the important congregations of the Church. The Rev. John Scott, of North Bruce, was selected as a worthy recipient of the title of Doctor of Divinity. With a manly candour that does him credit, when responding to the Principal's remarks during the ceremonial of investing him with the insignia of his degree, he disclaimed distinction in scholastic attainments, and frankly accepted it as a recognition of his services in the cause of the Gospel. Dr. Scott has all along taken a deep interest in the work of theological education, and has proved himself a devoted son of his *Alma Mater*. During the course of his extended ministry he has been an earnest exponent and a strenuous defender of sound doctrine; he has laboured faithfully in promoting the interests of Presbyterianism in the western part of Ontario, and above all he has been zealous in seeking the glory of God and the good of souls. By his long tried fidelity, Dr. Scott has purchased a good degree and is worthy of double honour.

The evening meeting in Knox Church was, in the best sense of the term, a most successful one. In making a new departure the Senate are to be congratulated. The adoption of the course suggested by THE PRESBYTERIAN has shown that the people of Toronto are anything but indifferent to the prosperity of Knox College. After business hours many people are able to attend an evening meeting, who would be precluded from being present at an earlier hour. The spacious church was filled to overflowing by a deeply interested audience. In a large city like Toronto there is scarcely an evening when there are not special attractions to compete for popular favour. It has also to be borne in mind that it was the usual prayer-meeting night throughout the city. Nevertheless, Knox Church was completely filled. The proceedings were specially interesting and impressive. The address to the graduating class by Professor McLaren, was appropriate, concise, and replete with valuable counsels to the young men entering on their life-work as heralds of the Cross. Mr. Builder's valedictory was all such a form of address ought to be. It evidenced a mind of much original force, earnestness, logical acumen, enhanced by literary culture. It was also evident that, intellectual cultivation is not incompatible with spiritual fervour. The response by Mr. Jaffray of the first year, was appropriate and modest. Dr. Cochrane, Moderator of the General Assembly, whose restless energy and versatility are simply marvellous, gave a stirring and eloquent address in harmony with the day's proceedings. Meetings like these cannot fail to popularize an institution which in itself is a power in the Church and the community.