

THE Presbyterian Review.

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Presbyterian News Co., Toronto.
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THE EDITOR.

Presbyterian Review, Toronto.

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THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 1889.

TO SUBSCRIBERS

During the past few weeks the Publishers of "The Review" have sent out accounts for all overdue subscriptions. They have to thank the friends who have promptly remitted and respectfully to request those still in arrears to remit without further delay. The attention of all subscribers is directed to the "General Notices" above.

THE NORTHERN GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

THE General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States (North) which met in Fourth Avenue church, New York, (Rev. Dr. Howard Crosby's) on May 16th, concluded its deliberations on Tuesday, May 28th.

The proceedings of the Assembly attracted much notice even in New York, and the daily papers gave reports of the acts and debates with more or less fulness and a fair degree of accuracy. The press despatches also contained a summary of the more important resolutions of the Assembly. Though these despatches were often marked by gross inaccuracies and, especially in the matter of the Revision of the Confession of Faith, were coloured by the heterodox sentiments of the compilers, they served none the less to show what a commanding place Presbyterianism holds in the estimation of the secular world. The editorial correspondent of the Philadelphia *Presbyterian* even finds, in a remarkable instance of the opposition of open enemies of Presbyterianism, a sure sign of awakened interest in the Assembly and its work:

"Up and down the pavement in front of the church trooped one or two men, scattering leaflets in which the 'blasphemous' of the Presbyterianism was detailed, and their faithful history blackened. We did not ask where these men came from, or by whom they were hired, and the leaflets generally fell quickly from the hands into which they were thrust into the gutter, but as a rare specimen of impudence the whole proceeding was certainly matchless. The men who distributed the coarse leaves were poor in face and mien, but we could not discern any sign that they were conscious of doing an impertinent thing, and we suppose that they were hired for the purpose, and were working lustily for their pay. The novelty of the enterprise and the industry of these 'walking delegates' of infidelity made many stare at the first, but the ill-looking emissaries soon fell into contempt, and the intervals between active business with them soon grew much longer. After all it was simply another testimony to the fact that heretics and unbelievers of all kinds and shapes recognize the Presbyterian Church to be one of their chief foes. Undoubtedly they are right."

The Moderator's chair was occupied with much grace and dignity by Rev. William C. Roberts, D.D., President of Lake Forest University near Chicago and formerly Secretary of the Home Mission Board.

The evening of the first day of the Assembly was appropriately spent in the observance of the Communion or the Lord's Supper, the retiring Moderator, Rev. Dr. Thompson, presiding.

Among reports of general interest presented was that of the Special Committee on Revision of the Proof Texts of the Confession of Faith. The Committee reported progress and recommended that the Committee be enlarged. This was agreed to and the matter thus goes over to the next Assembly.

The Special Committee on Sabbath Observance reported indications that there is now in some parts of the Union

much better observance of the Sabbath than formerly, and reference was made to the fact that freight traffic on some of the great railway lines is being discontinued.

The statistics of the Home Mission Report showed contributions during the year \$838,334.02, an increase of \$49,752.87; missionaries 1,592; missionary teachers 318, additions on profession of faith 10,499, additions on certificate 6,585, Sunday schools organized 349; number of Sunday schools 2,439. Among the recommendations adopted was one setting the sum to be raised for the cause of Home Missions during the next ecclesiastical year at \$875,000. The Assembly placed on record its hearty and grateful approval of the work of the Women's Executive Committee of Home Missions—an organization which though not formally recognized as an Agency of the Church yet presents an annual statement of the work accomplished. It is exceedingly interesting to note that the receipts from the Women's Home Missionary Societies this year were reported as being \$321,244.09, an advance of \$94,573.42 over the previous year. The Women's Committee represents twenty-six Synodical Societies and 3,510 Presbyterian and local societies. With a staff of 318 teachers, it maintains 107 schools among the Mormons, Indians, Mexicans and Southern Whites.

The matter of how best to deal with the Immigrant Problem came up on the report of the Special Committee on the Immigrant Population and occupied the careful attention of the Assembly. The report set forth that in the seven years of the present decade, 1881 to 1887, the immigrants have numbered 3,724,237 and that the total foreign population of to-day, including the children of the first generation of immigrants, is somewhere about twenty millions or one in three of the people. The resolutions adopted look to a more thorough organization of the work of the Church towards the immigrant population. A resolution was also adopted, that a third Secretary of the Board of Home Missions should be appointed whose time should be devoted to the immigrant population and that he be able to preach in one or more foreign languages—the German at least.

The Report on Foreign Missions showed an increase in the number of missionaries, scholars and communicants over the previous year. The following are the statistics: Of the 532 American missionaries in the field seven had died. Including native workers, there are now 1,741 employed in missionary work. Scholars in schools, 27,394, communicants in their churches, 25,346, of whom 3,067 had been added during the year. The income of the Board was \$851,415, being less than the year before by \$49,764. The following items show a decrease in contributions: From the churches, \$20,663; Woman's Board, \$17,669; Sunday Schools, \$11,930; legacies, \$18,542. There was an increase from other sources, yet the balance was on the wrong side. According to the estimates received from their several agencies, the amount needed to carry on the work for twelve months was \$1,018,000. These estimates had been cut down so that the Committee recommended that \$850,000 be apportioned to this cause during the coming year. Among the recommendations which were adopted were the following:

"That we utter our gladness over the zeal and labours and unceasing petitions of all Women's Boards."

"That we urge upon all our Sessions to see that the superintendents of our Sabbath schools secure a far larger attention to the work of this Board as part of the education of our children, and that all proper means be used to secure offerings from all our schools for Presbyterian Foreign Missions."

"That we counsel all our pastors and ministers to guard against lethargy in fully acquainting their people with the history, the needs, the motives, the progress, and the hope of this blessed work."

"That we recommend to our Board of Foreign Missions to formulate some plan by which all our churches shall be induced year by year, and in time for each Assembly to report a certain sum to which they will severally stand pledged for the work of Foreign Missions for the Assembly's year next following, thus obtaining many of the blessings and necessities incident to the present casual methods of giving, and securing contributions from a large number of churches who do not remember this cause."

The subject of the Revision of the Confession of Faith came up on the report of the Committee on Bills and Ordinances. It was reported that overtures had been received from fifteen Presbyteries in relation to a revision of the Confession, especially the 3rd and 10th sections. The Committee sub-

mitted the following as their unanimous finding:

"Whereas, In the opinion of many of our ministers and people some form of statement in our Confession are liable to misunderstanding and expose our system of doctrine to unmerited criticism; and

Resolved, Before any definite steps should be taken for revision of our Standards, it is desirable to know whether there is any general desire for such revision; therefore,

Resolved, That this General Assembly overtures to the Presbyteries the following questions:

1. Do you desire a revision of the Confession of Faith?

2. If so, in what respects and to what extent?

Over the recommendations of the Committee, a spirited discussion was carried on, lasting for about two hours, in which the main opponent of any movement towards revision was Rev. J. T. Duffield, D.D., of Princeton College. It was strongly argued, however, on the other side, that it was but right to give the Church an opportunity to express itself through the Presbyteries on the subject, and this view prevailed. The vote of the Assembly, however, is not to be taken as favouring revision, but only as calling upon the Presbyteries to express their opinion upon the advisability or non-advisability of such a step. What the Church will ultimately decide in regard to this question can only be a matter of conjecture. From the fact that only fifteen Presbyteries have sent up overtures, and that no less than 196 Presbyteries have refused to join with the Presbytery of Nassau in making the overture, and that only one Presbytery out of the fifteen has asked for an entire unqualified revision, it would appear that the Church is not by any means ready for making any radical change in the Confession of Faith. Whatever the ultimate result of the action of the Assembly may be, the immediate effect will undoubtedly be to set the members of the Presbytery, and therefore the congregations, to studying the Confession of Faith.

By a vote of 174 to 165, it was recommended that the subscription price of the *Church at Home and Abroad*, the monthly magazine of the Church, be reduced from \$1.50 to \$1.00, and that, with a view towards meeting expenses, select advertisements be allowed.

The main issue in connection with the Report on Temperance was on resolution three, which was as follows:

"Resolved, that we hereby reiterate the denunciation of former Assemblies upon this whole subject, and express our warm sympathy with the widespread popular movement now in progress in favour of the complete suppression of the traffic in intoxicating liquors as a beverage, and we bid all wise and proper methods to secure this issue a hearty God-speed."

A substitute for this resolution was offered, which read:

"Resolved, that while endorsing no political party, we express our warm sympathy with the widespread popular movement now in progress in favour of Constitutional Prohibition, and we bid these efforts to secure it a hearty God-speed."

After a debate of more than two hours, the substitute was laid on the table by the vote of 210 to 105. The resolution of the Committee was then adopted by a considerable majority.

The report of the action of the Assembly on the important matter of Co-operation with the Southern Presbyterian Assembly, involving the Colour Question, we must reserve till next week.

A very pleasant episode in connection with the Assembly was the visit of the Commissioners to Princeton, on invitation of the authorities of the College of New Jersey. They were in many instances accompanied by ladies, and altogether the company numbered nearly seven hundred. At Princeton the body was received by Dr. Francis L. Patton for the college and Dr. W. Henry Green for the theological seminary. Excellent addresses were made, luncheon was served, and after four hours of social and friendly intercourse the Commissioners returned to New York delighted with their brief sojourn in what the New York *Observer* calls "the Jerusalem of Presbyterianism."

A reception, tendered to the Assembly by the Presbyterian Union, of New York, was a very successful affair. Amongst other speakers on this occasion was Rev. Dr. John Hall, who gave some interesting facts about Presbyterianism in New York city. And he added:

"Our ministers preach on the old lines, and therefore do not get into the newspapers. They are not often found in police courts or Legislative bodies, leaving denominational funds. It is not the line of Presbyterianism to preach on 'Robert Elmer' or otherwise to favour sensationalism. We hold to the Word of God, and are satisfied with what has been revealed. Presbyterian ministers do not usually come under the criticism of the Scotch servant girl, who said the minister's

sermon was very nice, but it was not suitable for Sunday. When we consider the growth in numbers of Presbyterianism throughout the world, we need not be particular. As to the revision of our Standards, just as by the new revision the Bible did not suffer, so with our Confession of Faith we need not fear the result. He had just received a letter from a minister of the Presbyterian Church in England, saying that although the Confession of Faith had undergone revision there, not one doctrine had suffered."

OUR GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

BEFORE another issue of the Review is in the hands of its readers the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada will have convened and proceeded to the dispatch of the vast mass of important business which the passing of another year brings before the Commissioners. Happily for the Church there are very few matters coming before the Assembly likely to divert the attention of the delegates for any length of time from the great concerns which bring them together. The various reports, which we understand are quite voluminous, are well forward and will be in hand in due time. The Committee on Arrangements have been indefatigable in their efforts to secure the convenience and comfort of the commissioners; and we venture to think it will be found that they have done the delicate and onerous work entrusted to them most satisfactorily. It is most fitting that the prayer should be made that the Great Head of the Church may be present in its Supreme Court that all its deliberations may be guided to the praise of His great name and the extension of His kingdom on earth.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

We would like to ask the reverend Toronto contributor of the article "Jesuit Aggression in Canada" in the *Chicago Interior* of May 30th, what good purpose he intends to serve or what he hopes to gain by insinuating, as he does, that the Anti-Jesuit movement is likely to come to nothing through lack of "patriotic men who believe in principle, who value the heritage of freedom in Church and State, and who would be willing to make sacrifices if need be to preserve and extend the blessings they prize." It must be known to the writer that the head of the movement in Ontario is Rev. Principal Caven, Chairman of the Citizen's Committee, and in Quebec, Rev. Principal MacVicar, and that closely allied with these trusted leaders are Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, Dr. Laing, Mr. J. K. Macdonald, Mr. John Charlton, M. P., not to mention scores of other well known citizens, ministers and laymen, of our own communion. These gentlemen are men who unquestionably believe in principle, who value the heritage of freedom in Church and State, and who are willing to make sacrifices, if need be, to preserve and extend the blessings they prize, and the fact that they are known to be such affords honest men large ground of hope that the movement will not come to naught, but be ultimately conducted to an issue helpful to the maintenance and extension of civil and religious liberty. It is a gratuitous piece of impertinence to leave the *Interior* audience under the impression that these men are not true men but in their appearances on public platforms are merely "stump orators" touting for a political party. A downright falsehood is less dangerous than a half-truth.

THE forty-ninth annual meeting of the Upper Canada Bible Society was held last Thursday evening, in Elm street Methodist church, Toronto, Hon. G. W. Allan, President of the Society, in the chair. There was, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, a large attendance, representative of the evangelical churches in the city. The Annual Report stated that, during the past eighty-five years, 197,767,638 copies of Scripture, and portions thereof, had been issued by the British and Foreign Bible Society and kindred societies in Europe, British India and America. Tribes and peoples speaking nearly three hundred different languages are now supplied with the Word of God in their own tongues. During the past year twenty-three new Branches had been organized in Canada: thirteen in Ontario, five in Manitoba, two in the North-West, and three in British Columbia. There are now 440 Branches and twenty-six depositories in connection with the Society. The total income of the Society from all sources for the year ending March 31st, 1889, amounts to \$32,618.56, being an increase of \$32.16 over the previous year. It was derived from the following sources.—Proceeds of sales, \$10,351.55;

free contributions, donations, bequests, etc., \$22,061.37; interest, ground rent, etc., \$205.64. This was apportioned as follows.—Upper Canada Bible Society, \$14,580.18; British and Foreign Bible Society, \$6,197.70; Upper Canada Tract Society, \$31.82; Joint building fund, \$71.24; Montreal Bible Society, \$82.42; Ottawa Bible Society, \$13.59; Quebec Bible Society, \$1,034.42. Seven hundred and sixty dollars has been subsequently donated to the Society. The Toronto Depository distributed 42,613 Bibles and portions of Bibles—an increase of 1,652 over last year. Amongst the speakers of the evening was Rev. Dr. A. T. Pierson, of Philadelphia, who delivered an eloquent and inspiring address in moving the adoption of the Resolution: "Tried by whatever test, the Bible vindicates its august claim to the exalted dignity of being the Word of God, and especially the Revelation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The growing prosperity of the Society should be a cause of thankfulness to all the Churches.

THE report of the proceedings of the Foreign Mission Committee, at the meeting held last week in this city, will be perused with deep interest. It will be seen that, through the liberality of certain congregations and individuals, and the co-operation of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, the Committee is able to send out to India and China no less than seven new missionaries. The various appointees are, without exception, well qualified for mission work. The prayers of the Committee for God's blessing on these seven new ambassadors of the Cross to the heathen will be re-echoed throughout the Church, with gratitude for such manifest tokens of the Divine favour.

We notice that an excellent report of the late Synod of Toronto and Kingston, from the pen of Rev. Dr. J. B. Fraser, of Annan, Ont., appears in the *Chicago Interior* of May 30th. Such reports must prove acceptable to American Presbyterians generally, and doubly acceptable to Canadians resident in the United States, who, we are sure, by the increasing circulation of the Review across the lines, do not forget the Church of their fathers.

By the bursting of the dam of an artificial reservoir, the town of Johnstown, in Pennsylvania, was on Friday evening last completely submerged and no less than 10,000 people lost their lives. The calamity is one of the most dreadful of modern times, and the circumstances are such as to call for widespread sympathy and assistance for the survivors.

A LARGE number of our leading ministers and laymen are taking a very prominent part on public platforms in protesting against the Jesuits' Estates Act. The Anti-Jesuit movement is daily increasing in strength and volume. Everywhere a great cry is going up "Country before party!" And the people mean it.

Literary Notices.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF WILLIAM FLEMING STEVENSON, D.D. By his wife, with Portrait. Thomas Nelson & Sons, Edinburgh. 1888: John Young, Toronto. pp. 306, price \$2.

IN this biography we have the portrait of a many-sided man. Dr. William Fleming Stevenson is, perhaps, best and most widely known as an able and earnest advocate of the Foreign Mission cause. His home training and early associations were such as to ensure his interest in missions and missionaries, but from the year 1871, when he was appointed to assist the venerable Dr. Morgan as convener of the Foreign Missions of the Irish Presbyterian Church up to the last day of his life, his whole soul was in this branch of his Master's work and the service which he rendered to that great cause cannot be estimated here. By manifold labours of voice and pen, by journeyings oft, by planning and persuading, by an administration of unwearied skill and patience, by loving sympathy and direction towards those labouring in distant lands and by encouragement and wise counsel to those offering to go thither, his influence and his guiding were felt not only in his own Church and in Great Britain, but throughout the Christian world. It would not be easy to mention many who have done more for the missionary cause, not excepting those actively engaged in the work. Nor would it be easy to name one to whose judgment has been paid on these subjects. The story of his life as Convener of Foreign Missions with all that the office implied in his hands would form a most instructive and stimulating book by itself. The chapters of this biography devoted to his missionary journey round the

world and his correspondence as convener, with extracts from his public addresses are worth the price of the whole volume and form a valuable addition to our Foreign Mission literature.

With such a record as this in one sphere of Christian activity it might be supposed that other pursuits would naturally fall to a more or less subordinate place. Far from it. In the work of the pastorate we have in Dr. Stevenson an example of untiring diligence and of unusual success. In 1860 he entered on the ministry of the church at Katugar, a suburb of Dublin. We cannot in this short paper go into a detailed account of his pastoral work. His relations with his people were of a singularly close and loving character, and his ministrations were very fruitful in spiritual blessing. "It was impossible," says one who knew him intimately for years, "to frequent his ministry whether on the Lord's Day or at his week evening service, without gaining the most attractive views of the person and character of Christ, without being fired by a sense of the nobility of a life lived after Christ and for Christ, and without the conviction of the dignity and blessedness of being fellow-workers with Christ in His beneficent purposes towards our race." His sympathy with the children and young people, and his tender ministrations to the sick of his flock, endeared him in a special manner to their hearts, and made his circle of influence a wide and lasting one. The fostering care which he found time to give these lambs of his flock was something to awaken almost surprise, considering the manifold demands upon his time and thought. Indeed he took a deep personal interest in apparently each and every member of his charge and the letters written to them in various circumstances of affliction or trial breathe forth a sympathy and affection which must and did bind them very closely to their pastor. As a minister he ever felt in a very real sense the responsibility of his sacred calling. His aim was in his own words, "To study the character of people, to get below the formalism of the ministerial relations one bears to them, to reach their thoughts when perhaps they have but few, and to speak to them as an earnest friend would if roused." To one so conscientious in every part of his work, the importance of pastoral visitation was sure to appear in its true light and we find, as might have been expected, that he was not only keenly alive to the importance of meeting with his people, but also realized the difficulties of making such visits profitable. His visits were no mere calls of formality. His great concern was for their spiritual welfare. At the same time so simple and true was his nature that he could not endure anything like cant or unreality in conversation on religious matters. "I cannot bear religious commonplaces, and if people drop into religious phrases and a religious voice I change the conversation to the flattest and most directly secular subject. I determined from the beginning to wait, no matter how long, until the heart would be touched and the crust of phrases disappear; for it is an awful temptation both to them and to me to be satisfied with a gloss of words."

The same repugnance to every thing artificial in Christian converse made him strive only after that which was simple and true in his prayer-meetings and similar gatherings. "A stiff religious meeting is horrible, and the absurdity of a set of decent people, when they come together to speak about their best friend, sighing incessantly like so many wheezy bellows, irritates me beyond measure. Why can't they be frank and natural, as they were ten minutes ago, when you met them in the street, as they would be if you met them at any social gathering the next evening? And then the awful commonplaces that echo grimly across the dull silence of the room. Oh! to banish shams out of such assemblies and make the people and the evenings more sprightly and comfortable."

In 1873, Mr. Stevenson visited America and was present at the meeting of the Evangelical Alliance, held in New York, in October of that year. Extracts from his journal and from letters to his wife during this tour of three months, give a vivid idea of his impressions of the country and people, from whom he received a very warm welcome and who would fain have weaned him from his native land to settle among them. We have but little space left to speak of the literary productions of our author. He had a special gift of writing, and one cannot but regret that the many engagements of his pastoral and public work left him only snatches of time such as he could take, too often from the hours of sleep, for this much loved pursuit. In the early days of *Good Words* he was a valued contributor, and it was in the pages of that magazine that the articles, afterwards embodied in "Praying and Working," at first appeared. "Praying and Working" is too widely known and appreciated to need more than mention here. It was written with a definite aim, and to say that it fulfilled the purpose of its gifted author is only very meagrely to indicate the great usefulness of this little book. Mr. Stevenson was an enthusiastic lover of poetry and music. In 1873, he published a collection of "Hymns for the Church and Home," which commended itself to the admiration of the most competent judges. His posthumous work "The Dawn of Modern Missions" was the subject of