

## THE TREASURES OF THE SNOW.

HAST thou entered in  
To the treasures of the snow?  
Knowest thou the gems  
The warder sun can show?

Leave the bustle and the noise,  
Turn thee to a quiet place  
Where the tassels of the pine  
Shade the sun-glare from thy face.

'Gainst a silent tree-trunk lean,  
Now behold the glittering sheen—  
Crystal gems, as when the crescent  
Of the moon doth light the scene;  
But now they're flashing iridescent  
Like a dove's breast in the sun,—  
Fire of roses, orange, green,  
To blue and violet flashes run  
In a glory opalescent.

How the gems of earth are duller,  
Flashing from the graceful hand,  
Trembling on the snowy breast;  
On the bosom of the land,  
Gem-like, disembodied colour  
Lieth in its spirit-rest.

There a ruby blaze is shown  
Where no ruby hath been set;  
Emerald lights are twinkling, yet  
No star amid the snow is known;  
The emerald to blue hath grown,  
Sapphire fades to amethyst,  
Then momentarily the gleam is missed,  
The soul was there, but not the stone.

See the sardine's crimson blaze,  
The golden-green of chrysolite,  
The sun-ray of the topaz bright,  
The glory of the chrysoprase;  
Flashes as from the starry ways;  
Jacinth-purple from the west  
When violet hills have twilight rest—  
The snow hath these in treasures.

Hidden lie they in the whiteness,  
Spirit beauties of the pure,  
Till the sun reveals their glow;  
But fairer gleams the sight allure  
When love of God reveals in brightness  
One made "whiter than the snow!"

WILLIAM P. MCKENZIE.

## A UNITED CHURCH.

IF, a quarter of a century ago, a proposal had been made that the Protestant denominations of Canada should coalesce into one united church, such proposal would have been met with the laugh of incredulity, if not of scorn. The idea would have been regarded as quixotic and absurd by many, and by others as undesirable, even if possible. But time has wrought a marvellous change. To-day, the press, secular as well as religious, devotes considerable space to the ventilation of this subject. The problem has been lifted out of the region of the quixotic, the impossible, the undesirable; and worthy leaders of all schools of Christian thought are bending their minds to its solution.

We need not wonder that the spirit of union should have seized the Protestant denominations. It is the *zeitgeist* which has seized everything. In all affairs, political, social, economical, consolidation is the order of the day. We no longer tremble for civilization, or bemoan the loss of the balance of power, if we hear of some great empire becoming greater still by swallowing a province or two. In commercial matters the spirit of the age is rampant—too much so for the public good—in rings and trusts; we are, it seems, being educated up to reconstruct the old adage, and to maintain that, not competition, but combination is the life of trade.

It is no wonder that this spirit should have possessed Christianity. Indeed, a large portion—by far the largest portion—of Christianity has always been possessed by it. *Divide et impera* was the motto of imperial Rome, and Rome knows its value. In spite of all resistance, in spite of all hostile attacks, that great mediæval power remains a power still. Protestantism, on her evangelical platform, may rail at Rome, but she curtsies to her at the hustings. To compete with her rival more creditably she must put her own house in better order.

But it is not from this quarter alone that non-Roman Christianity feels the pressure upon her to close in her ranks. From the opposite quarter comes the ever-increasing pressure of free-thought. That the secularism which denies or ignores the supernatural is becoming a more and more powerful factor must be patent to any fairly attentive student of modern literature. Protestantism feels that to-day she has something more to do than to protest: she has to affirm. She has taught faithfully enough the evils of believing too much: she must now in self-defence point out—and that in some corporate and authoritative way—the evils of believing too little. She sees that this is a time, not to divide her forces into skirmishing parties, but to form a solid square, for the enemies are coming to close quarters.

Again: the waste of money and energy caused by our various divisions, the rivalries, the efforts of the various sects to seize the points of vantage, the jealousies and misrepresentations, and loss of discipline consequent thereon, the hindrances in the mission field, the sorry figure we cut before the educated Mahomedan or Brahmin—all these are forces compelling Christians to seek a remedy and frame a better state of things. To this end suggestions of many kinds are made in the several contributions to the press. Of all these contributions a most happy sign is the spirit of fairness and generosity which they evince. Each strives to see, not alone the good in his own sect, but whatever is good or worthy of adoption in others. Each is willing to make generous concessions to bring about what all so much desire.

The three larger bodies—Presbyterianism, Methodism and Anglicanism—have taken important steps towards the end in view. Anglicanism in her corporate capacity has spoken in the Provincial Synod, in the General Convention of the P. E. Church in the U. S., and finally, through the whole episcopate, in the last Pan-Anglican Council. The pronouncement of the last named body on this subject is as follows:—

"That in the opinion of this Conference the following articles supply a basis on which approach may be made by God's blessing towards home reunion.

"(a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

"(b) The Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol, and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

"(c) The two sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unfailing use of Christ's own words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.

"(d) The Historic Episcopate locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

"That this Conference earnestly requests the constituted authorities of the various branches of our communion . . . to enter into brotherly conference . . . with the representatives of other Christian communions in the English speaking races, in order to consider what steps can be taken either towards corporate reunion or towards such relations as may prepare the way for fuller organic unity hereafter."

Presbyterianism and Methodism have given this movement towards unity a practical turn, the last few years, by unifying their own respective communions. Eminent divines of all the three bodies alluded to have individually signified the utmost willingness to give and take. Foremost among these was Rev. Principal Grant, whose essay, read at the meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in Montreal in 1874 and entitled "The Church of Canada: Can such a thing be?" struck a note which awakened the echoes that have been resounding ever since.

Then there was the famous article in the *Century* magazine by Dr. Shields, of Princeton, entitled "The United Churches of the United States," in which a graceful tribute was paid to the Anglican Prayer Book, and a suggestion made that all denominations should adopt its forms, at least at stated times, so that, though we could not at present unite on a basis of Faith or Government, still in the worship of the One Lord we should all speak "with one mind and one mouth."

Of course any scheme proposed will have its objections: but every such proposal does its share towards toning down the sharp lines of demarcation.

Another contribution to this grand symposium has lately appeared in a pamphlet by a Methodist divine, viz., "A United Church, or Ecclesiastical Law,"\* etc., by Rev. Dr. Stafford. This little work is very suggestive and demands much careful consideration: like the rest it displays a noble spirit of charity and candour. The author sums up his argument (pp. 69 *et seq.*) in the five following propositions:

"1. There is a general agreement in all doctrinal truths essential to Christianity, and freedom in the statement of others.

"2. In the field of religious experience there is also a manifest advance towards unity.

"3. In the constitutions of the various churches we have seen there is a general likeness. The relations of the lower to the higher courts in each is much the same in all.

"4. So far at least as practice goes, the conditions of church membership are about the same.

"5. The widest remaining difference is in the extent to which the church, as a body, follows the individual, as a member, into his private life. In respect to minute laws for the particular government of the individual the Methodist Church is at variance with all others."

Passing by the 1st and 2nd of these propositions without any remark, save of general acquiescence, we see that in the 3rd our author, unlike Dr. Shields, sees no insuperable difficulty in the matter of Church Government. In pp. 30 *et seq.* he traces the analogy of the church courts in the three denominations. Of course the main exception to this general similarity lies in the Anglican Church, whose chief executive officer is an individual who holds the office for life. But our very fair-minded author most generously accords to this system great advantages (pp. 40-43). In fact we fear he is too sanguine in some respects. In p. 42 he says of Episcopacy: "It furnishes an ideal stationing committee. The constitution of this

body is certain to be the subject of much heated discussion in the future." "The Episcopal Methodism of the United States is free from any difficulties." We fear, alas! that under whatever system may be adopted this question of the stationing of ministers, whether for shorter or longer terms, will often be the subject of heated discussion. At least such is frequently the case in Canada under Episcopal rule. Individualism will assert itself against authority, no matter how admirably constituted that authority may be. Loyalty to "the powers that be" is not looked upon with much favour now-a-days. But doubtless this whole movement towards a united church will tend to revive this moribund virtue; and the individualism and congregationalism of the several members will learn to be subservient to the integrity of the whole body.

The fourth and fifth propositions are closely enough related to be taken together in review. In the latter Dr. Stafford apprehends the greatest obstacle to a United Church. But we do not see why. That the great United Church which is contemplated should adopt the "minute laws," "in which the Methodist church is at variance with all others," is not to be expected, nor would our author—if we read him aright—desire it. He confesses that these "minute laws" which follow the member into his private life, are extra-scriptural—that it is impossible to rigidly enforce them always, even in his own communion—that they are some times enforced by zealous but rash ministers to the detriment of the church, and the injury of the individual disciplined, and that in consequence they are often a dead letter. We will let him speak for himself.

"No church can make an act a crime which the law of God does not make a crime" (p. 52). "Assuredly no one could rank attendance at a dancing party, or the playing of a game of whist, with lying, theft or murder. It would be exceedingly dogmatic to assert that no man could be saved if he should die at a theatre no matter what the circumstances might be; or that if he should cease to live while swallowing whiskey, or playing cards, or looking at a horse race, he will inevitably perish" (p. 56). It is urged by opponents "that such legislation tends to weaken Christian character. Everything in the religious life is reduced to a system of rules. The novice is put into this machine. . . . He may become an unreasoning bigot putting the rules of his church in the place of God" (p. 57). It is unquestionable that . . . neither at the present time is there generally among the members of the Methodist church, nor of any other, need for close questioning of one Christian by another as to the purity and honesty of his life, nor would such prying into purely personal matters be endured" (p. 50). "The church is a remedial institution, and it is always better to save a man than to enforce a law." "A rigid disciplinarian may go through his church, cutting off everyone who has become careless in his attendance upon that useful means of grace (the class meeting) or who has been known to drink intoxicating liquor, or to attend some prohibited form of amusement; and having scattered his membership right and left, may say in triumph to his bleeding church: 'I have fewer members than before, but I have enforced your laws to the very letter.' He says the simple truth; . . . but he is indicted by common sense and by the best type of morality with the guilt of having done a very foolish thing. He has retained all of those who stand in fear of everything bearing the name of law, but he has cut off many of those stronger characters who discern from the heart the import and substance of true laws of morality, and who may possibly have aimed, in an occasional transgression, at the very end those laws contemplate. Of course this can never be true where a positive precept of the Word of God is transgressed" (p. 62). "Sometimes an adverse decision of his church in his case would break the last restraining band which holds a man back from utter demoralization." "The Christian church is (?ought to be) broad enough in its platform to exercise charity towards the erring. A temperance society has but one thing to guard. . . . But in contrast, the church has the whole round of virtues. He who fails in one may yet have others to build upon" (pp. 67, 68). "The reasonable inference is that, in the Methodist church usage, yielding to new conditions is preparing the way for legislative enactment which will doubtless in due time bring this body into harmony with other churches as to the conditions of membership" (p. 51).

These extracts sufficiently indicate our author's line of thought that these "minute rules" for "prying into purely personal matters" would not be advisable for the united church, nor indeed would they "be endured." But, on the other hand, why should they be discarded altogether in the event of union? These rules have been and are valued by thousands in the pursuit of holiness, and why should they not be still retained in the united church by those (and those only) who elect to adopt them? This is no impossible theory: it is what was actually in existence about a century ago, when these rules were adopted. Dr. Stafford says: "Wesley had organized within the Established Church a society purely for the mutual spiritual improvement of those who belonged to it" (p. 47). "By neglecting the class-meeting repeatedly he forfeited his connection with the society. But he was just where he was before he joined it. He was a member of the Church of England." "Methodism was only a society within a church" (p. 49).

We feel sure that any concordat which may be concluded between the three "great powers" under consideration would accord full liberty to carry out the "discipline" to all who chose to band themselves into a "society within the church" so united. The Catholic church has at all times had such societies (whose members are known as "Regulars"

\*Toronto: William Briggs.