

**Extracts from Rev. G. W. Spratt's report of Church matters in Ontario.**

On the 10th I met at Toronto, in accordance with previous arrangement, the Foreign Correspondence Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, and other leading members of the Church to whom intimation had been sent by the Convener. There were present the Rev. Messrs. Lang, Dobie, Watson of Thora, Campbell, Hutcheson, and Galbraith, Judge Miller, of Milton. T. McLean, Esq., of Toronto, and from twenty to thirty other representatives of congregations, some of whom had come long distances. Our conference lasted seven hours, and turned upon the condition of the Church, the Union, the hardships which they had suffered owing to the legislation in Ontario, and the prospect of assistance from home.

*State of the Church.*—In Quebec and Ontario there are 12 ministers not in the Union and 36 congregations. Several of the ministers have, from various causes, demitted their charges, but continue to officiate as missionaries. All who were in the Church before the Union receive grants from the Temporalities Fund. The congregations are chiefly in the country; and the number mentioned includes the smaller stations and minorities who declined to enter the Union. A large proportion of the number are Highlanders.

It is a matter of deep regret to the minority that their brethren in Synod, before the Union was consummated, by adding largely to the list of beneficiaries, made demands upon the Temporalities Fund beyond the yearly interest. The result is that already £14,800 of the principal, which amounted to about £130,000, has been spent, and that with the sanction of both Church and State. The expenses of the lawsuit may possibly be allowed from the same source, and it is to be feared that this Fund, which was created with so much self-denial on the part of the clergy, and which might prove so great a blessing to the future Presbyterianism of Canada, will share the general fate of Church property in times of change.

*Congregational Lawsuits.*—Under the Act, as at present in force, there has been

a large amount of litigation in Ontario. Before the Union separate Acts were passed in the several provinces in which the Churches were about to unite. The legislation of Ontario bore hard upon minorities, and there seems at first to have been much doubt as to the effect of some of its clauses. It held all congregations to be in the Union, but that any of them might secede, provided that at a meeting regularly called, according to the constitution of such congregation, or the practice of the Church with which it was connected, and held within six months after the Union, it should be decided to withdraw by a majority of those who, by the constitution of the said congregation, or the practice of said Church were entitled to vote. There were disputes as to the mode of calling meeting, the practice of the Church, the constitution of congregation, and as to whether the majority was absolute, or only a majority of those who attended the meetings. Hence many bitter and expensive lawsuits. It was ultimately ruled that the majority required was an absolute one, and of course in all cases, minorities, whether they withdrew from the Union or remained in it, lost their share of the Church property. It was represented to me that there were cases where, with an undoubted majority against union, the property had been lost, and wrong done through legal technicalities, and that large sums had been spent in fruitless attempts to obtain redress. The London congregation, so far as I could learn the facts of the case, seems to have lost its property in this way. Several gentlemen present mentioned instances where the property had gone to those who had contributed almost nothing to it. The Rev. Mr. Dobie was authorised by the meeting to draw up a statement as to the wrongs considered to have been suffered in particular cases for the information of the Colonial Committee. That statement has been forwarded to me, and is now in the hands of the Convener. I took the opportunity afterwards of saying to some prominent members of the Union Church, that, in the interests of justice and of future reconciliation, these cases should be looked into by them, and any good ground of complaint removed.