

any wisely considered union here that I believe that they would not only express it in words, but by deeds; that they would grant us assistance thereafter in money if we needed it for our weakest stations. Of the advantages of a union I will not suffer myself to speak. They would be great, immediate, and lasting, but it is better not to speak of what is to come nor to allow the imagination to describe the future for us. The evils of our present position,—our isolation from each other, the small part of the Province that we can even attempt to introduce our Church system into, the enormous expense that we are to the mother Church without our realizing any corresponding benefit for ourselves or for her,—these and others less patent but just as injurious are well known to us all. Should we make no effort to get rid of such evils, and at the same time present to these Provinces the spectacle of what a well-equipped Presbyterian Church really is? I believe that the honest convictions of almost every one of our ministers and members are that we should—I am more afraid of obstacles that may be thrown in our way by a few men in the other Church, who have often enough professed to be in favor of union, but only of such an union as they would be able to represent to the Free General Assembly in Edinburgh as a triumph of Free Church views. But I think I know enough of the great body of leading men in our Sister Church to be assured that no such sectarian feelings would be allowed to come in and mar or put a stop to the blessed reunion that must come sooner or later, and the sooner the better. We desire a union in which no party victory shall be gained, and which shall endure because it includes all that the separate Churches honour, because it galls no one with a sense of injury, inferiority, or of friends or associations sacrificed.

I have nothing more to say on the subject at present. I hope to see in the *Record* expressions of opinion on it from others before the Synod meets—and if we all come to its consideration desiring the glory of God, He will bring it to pass so far as it is good. "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

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#### PRAYER MEETINGS.

Either there is not very much religious life in an average Christian Congregation nowadays, or, if there is, the ordinary prayer meeting is a failure in manifesting and quickening it. I have heard people say that the prayer meeting is a barometer of the spiritual life of the congregation; and if it is, then, from all that I have seen of prayer meetings I could not augur very favorably as to the

state of religion among us. In our cities they are attended not by one-third, sometimes not by one-tenth of the congregation. And it is of our cities and villages that I wish chiefly to speak; for prayer meetings in the country vary so much according to circumstances that it is impossible to speak very definitely about them; in some districts they are not held at all, in others they are held in the daytime and it is not wonderful that few besides the old people can spare the time to attend them. Where a minister's field of labor is very wide, however anxious he may be to institute such meetings he cannot expect the people to come long distances to them, and he cannot be expected to take charge of half-a-dozen different ones per week, or even per month, and he may not have in the various sections of his congregation men qualified to conduct them. But in towns and villages where there are no obstacles to the people assembling on an evening for any purpose, we would naturally expect the great majority of the congregation to devote one evening in the week to a social religious meeting, and yet they don't do it. They will crowd to a lecture, to a reading, to a concert, to a soiree, to a party, to a debate, but the great majority seldom or never attend the prayer meeting. It is better in some places than in others, but in the best that I have seen it is not very good, and in the worst it is simply pitiable; and what complicates the matter is that many of the best people in the congregations do not attend. These are facts that cannot be explained away, and I would like to ask if a better state of things can be reasonably expected.

In Halifax we have a joint weekly prayer meeting for the two congregations of St. Andrew's and Matthew's, and when it has been thinly attended I have always acted on the belief that the fault was not the people's but the minister's and elders'. About nothing have I been more anxious than to have it not only a reality and a blessing but also to make it fully correspond to the actual religious life among us, knowing that if it did so it would also stimulate and increase that life. But it is still far from being up to the mark aimed at, and the reason why I cannot tell. As compared with many others that I have seen, it is in a high state of prosperity, for it is now attended by from 100 to 300, there are some fifteen or twenty persons who take part in it, and the exercises generally are engaged in by all with seeming earnestness and delight. I write this article for the two-fold purpose of asking hints from any one who can give them as to the best means of making it better suited to all classes, and as a better representation of the whole of the spiritual life there may be among us; and also of telling others of the last step we have taken ourselves to bring about the same end. We found that there were some of the people who wished it to be managed wholly by the clergymen, while others preferred greater variety