

The Presbyterian Record.

VOL. XXI.

JULY, 1896.

No. 7.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

WITH "Queen's weather" the "Queen city" greeted the Assembly on the 10th of June, and with hearty welcome, as is her wont, entertained its more than 300 commissioners until their eight days' work was done.

On the night of opening, Central Church was thronged. Dr. Robertson chose that rich missionary text:

"But ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts i. 8.

He preached, as might be expected, a very practical Home Mission sermon, on the needs, opportunities and successes of our work in the North-West.

After roll call, Rev. Prof. Gordon, D.D., of Halifax, was unanimously and heartily chosen Moderator for the current year, and proved second to none in the long line who have worthily filled the chair; the Assembly, under the wise and courteous guidance of its officials, being considered by many, as on the whole, the best in the history of our Church. That each Assembly should be better than the past, as the Spirit leads the Church upward and onward, is what should be expected and prayed for.

The vacant chair at the Moderator's left was an impressive sight. Dr. Reid, who so long had filled it was there no more. At the Union, in 1875, he, Prof. Mackerras, and Dr. Fraser, clerks in the supreme courts of their respective churches, were retained in that position;

"One by one they've crossed the river,"

and now the last of these "fathers" is gone. It seemed a breaking with the past. Dr. Campbell, appointed a few years ago as joint clerk, sat alone. But Dr. Warden, who has Dr. Reid's other work as agent of the Church, was soon chosen to fill his place as joint clerk of the General Assembly, and to say that no more fitting appointment could have been made is a truism.

Besides Dr. Reid, other well known names, on earth no more, Dr. Williamson, Dr. R. F. Burns, Dr. Laidlaw, and Mr. Macdonnell, were feelingly referred to by the retiring Moderator in reviewing the losses of the year.

Living familiar faces were also wanting at this Assembly. Drs. Forrest, MacVicar, Grant, Cochrane, Bryce, and others, who have almost always been present, taking a helpful and leading part in the work, and without whom a prospective Assembly seemed incomplete, were now absent, some of them at the meeting of the Presbyterian Alliance in Glasgow, and yet the work went on: emphasizing the solemn truth, so hard for each one in his sphere to learn, that "no man is necessary"; and the still more humiliating, but useful and wholesome practical lesson for each one of us, that, few men are missed. We drop out; others take our work. Men come and go; God ever lives and reigns.

The course of Assembly work is usually on this wise. All sessions are opened with singing, reading the Scriptures, and prayer. The mornings and afternoons are then taken up with "business," the consideration of various questions regarding the work of the Church, that require examination, discussion, etc.; while the evenings are devoted to reports and popular addresses on one or other of the great missionary schemes.

Besides the three daily sessions much of the work is done by committees, outside of Assembly hours. When a subject of importance is to be considered it is usually referred to a few men who look carefully into it and submit to Assembly their report as to what should be done. Their view of it may be accepted, amended, or rejected, but in any case their work does much towards helping to a right "finding."

When a subject is set down on the "order of business" for a particular hour, the preceding subject, if not finished, has to be left over to be taken up again and perhaps yet again, until completed.

One important matter, the support of missionaries in the far West, was taken up the first day, and after, as opportunity offered, for several sessions. Hard is the lot of some of the devoted men and women who are doing our work on the frontier. Their conflict with indifference and even hostility has sometimes been made harder from the fact that, with prices much higher than