

Meetings of Synod.

Toronto and Kingston.

THE Synod of Toronto and Kingston met in Westminster Church, Toronto, on Tuesday evening, when Rev. Samuel Houston, M.A., retiring Moderator, preached the sermon, an eloquent and practical discourse, from Col. iv. 5: "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." The theme of his discourse was the treatment which those "that are without" the Church receive or should receive at the hands of those within. A feeling of self-sacrifice should be cultivated, and a thorough Christian attitude should prevail in all dealings with them. At the close of his sermon the reverend gentleman retired from his position, and Rev. Robert Fowle, of Erin, was almost unanimously chosen Moderator of the present Synod. A vote of thanks was tendered to the retiring Moderator, who made a neat reply.

The proceedings for the Synod were then read, and it was decided that should any of the business taken up be not finished at one sitting, that no new items should be begun until the former be wiped off the board.

On Wednesday-morning Synod resumed.

The applications of the following student probationers for ministerial licenses were granted:—For Kingston Presbytery—Messrs. McMillan, Wilkie, McKlextan and Rollins; for Toronto Presbytery—Messrs. Tuft, Crow, Munn, Webster, Johnson, Watson, Lawrence and G. L. Johnston.

At the request of the Presbyteries interested the mission fields of Haliburton and Minden were transferred from Peterboro' to Lindsay.

The overture presented by the Peterboro' Presbytery, recommending that some matters be added to the usual business of the Synod so as to give the annual meeting greater interest, was received after some discussion as to whether the question should be immediately discussed or not it was sent on to the General Assembly.

A request from the Prisoners' Aid Association that the Synod join in the petition to be presented to the Dominion Parliament praying for much needed prison reforms was then taken under discussion. Rev. Alex. Gilray moved that the communication containing the request be referred to a committee to be appointed by the Synod.

Rev. D. J. Macdonnell took an entirely opposite view to that evidently held by the majority of the members present. He considered that the church went out of its province and jeopardized its influence by dealing with details of legislation. He therefore moved in amendment that "it is not expedient for a church court to enter in the details of legislation." This prison reform might be needed, he said, but if the Church meddled with it they would probably be asked before long to assist in obtaining woman suffrage.

Rev. Mr. Jackson, of Galt, deemed it right for ministerial bodies to protest against wrongs in high places. He was of the opinion that they should not stand aside and allow toughs and ward-healers to influence legislation.

Rev. Dr. Grant thought some line should be drawn. The less they, as a body, interfered in legislation the better.

There was a vote then taken on Mr. Macdonnell's amendment, which was defeated. Mr. Gilray's motion was adopted.

The Owen Sound appeal in re the Keady congregation was dismissed.

It was agreed that the next regular meeting of the Synod be held at Orangeville.

Wednesday evening sederunt was largely attended by the public. Mr. J. K. Macdonald spoke briefly, but with much point and convincing argument, on the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund. The original intention was to form a fund of \$200,000. Of this amount \$120,000 had been subscribed.

STATE OF RELIGION.

Mr. Brown, treasurer of the Synod, also presented a favourable report, which was received and adopted, and then the Synod settled down to the hearing and discussion of reports on church work. Rev. John Hay, convener of the committee on the state of religion, then read the report, which, in opening, stated "that returns have been received from all Presbyteries within the bounds." Most of these reports are very full and show that they have been prepared with care, while a few are rather too brief to give an adequate idea of what has been done. The Presbyteries of Whitby and Lindsay report returns from all congregations in their respective bounds; Saugeen from all settled and from one vacant charge, and Orangeville from all settled congregations; Guelph from twenty out of twenty-six congregations, and Algoma two out of eight pastoral charges. But the latter did not receive the blank form of questions in time to obtain replies from every congregation. Toronto reports "nearly all congregations" sent replies, and Kingston reports "many kirk sessions have failed to answer." The Presbyteries of Peterborough, Barrie, and Owen Sound do not say how many, if any, neglected to send answers on state of religion, but no complaint is made, so we can believe that answers have been sent in by nearly all sessions. The actual state of religion cannot be tabulated, and yet the only way to arrive at a fair idea of the religious life in the Synod would be for every congregation, settled or vacant, especially the vacant, and all mission stations to send in returns. Most of the reports are encouraging; while here and there can be found evidence of indifference and partial failure, still there is good testimony borne to the excellent work that has been done by devoted and consecrated men and women engaged in the service of the Church. For all which we have much reason "to thank God and take courage."

The committee made the following recommendations:—

1. That the Synod record its gratitude to Almighty God for the blessings He has vouchsafed to the Church, and for the progress and peace within our borders during the past year.

2. That Presbyteries instruct sessions to prepare as full answers as possible to the questions sent down on the state of religion early in the year, so that returns can be made to the Synod Committee by the 15th of April.

3. That Presbyteries advise all sessions to divide their congregations into districts, and to obtain full and definite returns on family religion and Christian life in the home.

4. That Presbyteries do all in their power to maintain the sanctity of the Sabbath, and to urge upon sessions that they bring before the Sabbath schools, parents, and congregations, the necessity of an early decision for Christ, the proper use of all the means of grace, and individual responsibility regarding all the schemes of the Church.

Rev. Dr. Smith, of Port Hope, in an eloquent address, moved the adoption of the report, which was seconded by Rev. Mr. Abraham, of Burlington.

TEMPERANCE.

The next report read was that of the committee on Temperance. This was presented by Rev. Wm. Frizzell.

The report, in opening, stated that "during the past year events have transpired which serve to throw light on the temperance question throughout the Province. The vote taken on the first of January revealed the pleasing fact that temperance sentiment was stronger than the most ardent prohibitionist had dared to hope. The splendid majority of 81,760 was recorded in favour of the 'immediate prohibition by law of the importation, manufacture, and sale of intoxicating liquors as beverages.' Even every city throughout the Province, with the single exception of Windsor, gave a majority in favour of prohibition. Toronto, which was thought to be the stronghold of the traffic, declared by a majority of 1,463 that the traffic should cease. Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia have all spoken through the ballot box to the same effect. With four provinces committed to prohibition, and doubtless more to follow, we can truly say the outlook from a temperance standpoint was never before so bright. The prohibition sun is rising. Already his projected rays are illuminating the horizon. This prospect seems to have brightened the very tone of the reports from the different Presbyteries throughout the bounds. All the Presbyteries have reported, and in most cases the reports are full and encouraging. Special mention should be made of the carefully prepared reports received from the Presbyteries of Peterborough, Guelph, Toronto and Lindsay. Some of the conveners complain that it is difficult to secure replies from every session, and would remind the Synod that so long as reports are called for by the General Assembly, every session should loyally respond. Guelph Presbytery holds the enviable position of having received a report from every session within its bounds. Only one session failed to report in Saugeen Presbytery. Forty-two out of fifty reported in Toronto Presbytery. Thirty-six out of forty-four in Orangeville. Their are sixty-five regular charges in the Presbytery of Barrie, and ninety-five mission stations. Only thirty-eight reports were received from all. In Peterborough twenty-three out of twenty-four sessions report, and in Owen Sound seven out of thirteen. Four Presbyteries do not state the number of sessions reporting. Your committee would here voice the feelings of some of the Presbyteries' conveners regarding the importance of every session reporting if statistics are to prove of much service to the General Assembly. Five questions have been sent down to sessions this year for consideration."

The third question was as follows:—

"What do you regard as the best method of preventing the indiscriminate sale and use of intoxicating liquors?"

The committee reported on this question as follows:

"Prohibition" is the prevailing answer to this question. All the sessions in the presbyteries of Algoma, Lindsay, Kingston, and Owen Sound regard prohibition as the best method of preventing the indiscriminate sale and use of intoxicating liquors. The same view is taken in twenty-one out of twenty-five sessions in Guelph presbytery; by thirty-two sessions out of forty-two in Toronto; by all but one session in Orangeville; by ten in Saugeen; and by sixteen in Barrie. Whitty gives no figures, as the full report by mistake was sent on to the General Assembly's convener on temperance. Among the sessions that do not commit themselves to prohibition, we have such methods as these suggested; 'Better enforcement of the license law.' 'Educate the youth in our schools and homes in the principles of total abstinence.' 'Let the public conscience be more enlightened on the subject.' One session favours 'the placing of the sale of liquor in the hands of salaried Government officials.' Another suggests 'high license.' Your committee is gratified to find such a consensus of opinion in favour of prohibition as the best method of preventing the indiscriminate sale and use of intoxicating liquors."

With reference to the question of the legal enforcement of prohibition, the report of the committee was as follows:

"In summarizing the views of sessions on this question, it may be said, the vast majority are of opinion that prohibitory measures could be enforced, and that our people would give hearty moral support to officers in carrying them out. One Presbytery report voices the views of the people thus: 'The members and adherents of our congregations are, almost to a man, quite confident that prohibition can be legally enforced, and with most satisfactory results, and they are ready to give moral support to officers in enforcing it.' Another says: 'There seems to be a general conviction that such a law could be enforced, and that the people, as a whole, would give strong moral support to officers who were honestly seeking to enforce the law. Some would make the appointment of faithful officers, in sympathy with temperance sentiment, a condition of proper enforcement. Others speak with a good deal of caution, in view of failures in the past to enforce local option laws. On the whole, however, the views of our sessions take of this question are encouragingly optimistic.'"