

PRINCIPAL PATRICK ON CHURCH UNION.

By Rev. A. B. Dobson.

Dr. Patrick has said that "the united church would wield a greater moral authority than the separate churches." In dealing with governments it would be better able to influence legislation and administration on moral questions. This is a mere matter of opinion, not of argument, and, for my part, I believe that the opposite is true. The Christian judgment of the country would be more fully expressed on any moral issue if each of several churches speaks than under any one-church arrangement whatsoever. It is not oneness of organization which governments respect, it is unanimity of action on the part of people who have votes, whether they be Methodist, Congregational or Presbyterian. They don't care a button for one church more than another, nor more for a church than a temperance society, or a fraternity, insurance body. They don't consider the visit of a few "leaders" of this or that church to the halls of government as of much importance. They rather want to know what the people, the individual congregations, think of a proposed course. And, accordingly, the leaders send word to pastors to write letters to their representatives in Parliament, and to forward petitions to government from their separate congregations. In this way the moral force of the church is exerted to its fullest advantage. We do not act as an organic Methodist church or as an organic Presbyterian church, but as individual pastors and as individual congregations. The very same course would be followed under union, simply because it has proved to be the most effective method. And even were it otherwise, what reason has Dr. Patrick for supposing that fifty men from one large organization would make a greater impression on a government, or secure greater results, than would fifty men chosen from each of two smaller bodies? He knows perfectly well that when the several churches co-operate they get from governments all that they could possibly get in any circumstances whatsoever.

In concluding his articles Principal Patrick pretends to state the vital objections which his opponents have to this proposed union. He declares that there is not "one which touches principle." Well, if this be correct, it is because he and his party have not stated an argument "which touches principle." Non-unionists have simply followed and completely answered each and every argument produced by the Unionist party. That was all they had to do. If there was not one of their arguments "which touches principle" Non-unionists can't help it. They had to take them as they were. If the main objections to this union were honestly stated by Principal Patrick then certainly not one of them would touch any principle which ought to be respected. He declares that our objections are nothing else than "aversion to change," "contentment with things as they are," "disinclination to this or that branch of the church," every word of which is absolutely untrue, so far as nine out of ten men who are opposed to this union are concerned. These are not our objections. We not only have no "aversion to change," but we are anxious that many things in the church should be changed. Not to mention others, we would like to see a change, e.g., in the respect which some men seem to have for the constitution and procedure of the church, so that it would be impossible for any man or body of men to ride rough shod over the heads of the rank and file of ministers and laymen as the union committee has done. We are anxious also that other men should respect themselves sufficiently to vigorously resent any such conduct on the part of any man or men. "How much better is a MAN than a sheep?"

To say, as Dr. Patrick does, that we have "a disinclination to any branch of the church is a libel-upon men who have each done more gratuitous, brotherly work for other denominations,

probably, than he himself has ever done. During a period of thirty-five years among these men the writer has learned that they have generally allowed themselves to be imposed upon rather than even appear to show discourtesy to other denominations. Such a statement is on a par with former insinuations of Principal Patrick's, one of which was that the pastors on the minimum salary might be persuaded to enter the union by a promise of money—salary of \$1,000 per year. When the true character of this bid was pointed out in the columns of this journal the union committee withdrew it. If such treatment will be tolerated by the average minister of the church, I for one hope that the union may come. Dr. Patrick has not stated our objections to union; but he well knows what they are. We object to this union for the sake of other denominations not less than for our own. We have no dislike for them.

A criticism of the Principal's remarks on the basis would require too much time and space. If his expectation is that the church will take his word for the excellence of the basis, his dogmatic style is capable of being understood. But his articles do not make the basis any clearer than its own language does, and all that fairness requires here is to meet his positive assertions with an equally emphatic denial.

As a final word, Dr. Patrick makes an almost pathetic bid for the support of the church in this movement. He says that "it is the right of the people to have leaders." Agreed. It is also our right to appoint them, which right was forbidden us when Principal Patrick and his company were appointed. Again, he says: "The people will trust and love . . . such leaders . . . as the members of the joint committee."

What have these "leaders" done to deserve our trust; to say nothing of our love? Does Dr. Patrick expect us to trust and follow men who have violated our constitutional rights, who have, without our permission, used our name and authority to destroy the identity of the church? Does he expect us to trust and follow men who not only accepted this illegal appointment but who also boldly set to work to act upon more illegally than their illegal appointment called for? Does he expect us to follow men who, in order to do this work, accepted about \$2,500 which the people, living and dead, contributed for totally different purposes, missions, widows and orphans, aged ministers, etc.? Are we expected to follow men who led the church into a canvass for upwards of a million dollars for two colleges, who have since established two others, and who intend to hand over the whole to a new church which may find them all unsuitable and may close them? Are we expected to follow men who have spent five years and so much money to prepare a contract—called a basis—for us to sign without knowing whether we want any contract at all, and which when it is made contradicts itself? Considering the history of the union committee it does not look like an intelligent or a safe act to follow them, nor yet to give them liberty to go on to lead the church into even greater humiliations. For some time after the writer began to look into the movement he could not believe that it was seriously intended by its promoters, and in this paper of July 17, 1907, stated reasons for this view. But the course of Principal Patrick and his friends has compelled us to believe that they will force union if they can. They are more to be feared than union itself. I can only say for myself that if the ministers and laymen of the church are willing to submit to all this and to follow the "leaders" into this union, if they be willing, then there is no particular reason for the further existence of the church. She is a corpse and may as well disappear. This would be a genuine "case for church union," which Principal Patrick's articles are not.

Forwidge, June 30, 1910.

SCOTCH GENERAL ASSEMBLIES.

The following are extracts from The Interior's report: The General Assemblies of the two great Scottish Presbyterian denominations—the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church—met, as always, simultaneously in Edinburgh. The moderator of the former was Dr. MacAdam Muir, pastor of the Glasgow cathedral; the moderator of the latter was Dr. John Young. The reports received by both bodies from their constituents were discouraging relative to increase of numerical strength. The Free Church in the year lost ten congregations chiefly through emigration from country districts to Canada, and in the whole denomination it gained only 700 members. The Established Church noted a decline of 1,700 in the membership of its Sabbath schools, although this item was in part offset by an increase of nearly a thousand in the membership of adult Bible classes. In strange contrast with this discouragement over numbers, there came remarkable encouragement in the reports from all the benevolent and financial interests of the churches. The various benevolent funds were filled with more liberal contributions than ever before.

It will be remembered that a year ago both Scotch Assemblies appointed commissions to confer together and try to discover whether there was any feasible way of uniting a church that depends on the state for support with a church that has no public relations whatever and contains a considerable proportion of members who regard state aid as essentially wrong. To this spring's Assemblies the respective sections of the joint committee reported back no definite propositions but the general statement that they were getting nearer together. Both sections asked to be continued in order that the conference might be prolonged, and both held out the hope that there might be something tangible to report in 1911. Dr. Norman Macleod told the Established Assembly that he was far more hopeful of union than he was a year ago, and Dr. Robinson in the United Free Assembly said that the obligation to accomplish union if possible was not a sentimental but a practical one; the spiritual condition of Scotland calls to-day for the most effective organization of unified forces. In both Assemblies there was some manifest antagonism to the union idea, but in neither did it crystallize into an opposition, and the authority for the committees to confer during the year coming was voted in each body without dissent.

BARON KELVIN'S NATIONALITY.

William Thompson's Life of Lord Kelvin which the Macmillan Company published in two volumes a few weeks ago, has served to revive interest in the personality of this famous scientist of the nineteenth century. Among other points raised, is the question of his nationality. A correspondent in the New York Times clears this up beyond a doubt. He writes as follows: "The Great Duke of Wellington, when taunted with being an Irishman, is said to have observed that a man is not a horse because he had been born in a stable, and Lord Kelvin might equally exclaim that one is not a fish if he happened to be born at sea." It is true Kelvin first beheld the light of day in the Emerald Isle, but he was of Scotch parentage and passed practically the whole of his long life in Scotland, while, when he was raised to the peerage, it was not to Ireland he went for a title, as assuredly he would have done had he considered himself to be an Irishman, the Kelvin being a small stream which runs through the city of Glasgow."

Members of the Darling family have presented the Lansdowne church with a valuable bell, which has just been installed.