

religious bodies. In the conflict that ensued Mr. Slaght took a prominent part, along with such men as Dr. Ryerson, afterwards Chief Superintendent of Education, and our own beloved Dr. Fyfe. A remarkable meeting to discuss this burning question was held in Simcoe in July, 1851. The cost of publishing the report of this discussion, which Mr. Slaght was chiefly instrumental in arranging for, was \$500; and of this sum Mr. Slaght assumed the one-half, payable by the friends of voluntarism.

Mr. Slaght has been criticised, and I think unfairly criticised on two grounds. One is that he took an active part in politics, even in party politics. As a general principle I think it is wise for a minister to keep himself aloof from active participation in politics. True he has a right to his political views; and a right to express these views on all suitable occasions. In becoming a minister he does not cease to be a citizen. But to take sides publicly on merely party questions will, in most communities, and with most men, be destructive of a minister's peace and to his usefulness. But Elder Slaght could do what he did do because the circumstances were peculiar. The community in which he lived from boyhood, and the congregation to which he ministered were almost to a man of one political party. He grew up with his congregation, and naturally there were attracted to that congregation only those whose political sympathies were with the pastor. It was therefore safe for him to do what in any other locality in Ontario would have led to friction and disaster.\*

The other point that has been criticised is that Mr. Slaght engaged in secular pursuits while also engaged in the work of the ministry. This is an important question, and one that might well be discussed in view of the ever broadening field calling, and often calling in vain, for gospel labor. Here, I believe,

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\* An interesting illustration of the influence that Mr. Slaght exerted in political matters is afforded by the following incident in his eventful life. About the year 1872 the leaders of the Liberal Party in Canada were looking for a man who would be likely to gain a victory in Norfolk County, which, I understand, was at that time represented in the Dominion Parliament by a Conservative. The late Hon. George Brown wrote to Mr. Slaght strongly urging upon him to allow himself to be nominated. Mr. Slaght at once declined. He however suggested the name of John Charlton, headed a deputation which waited upon him, secured his consent to run, and so exerted himself that Mr. Charlton was elected, and has worthily represented the County of Norfolk in the Dominion house ever since.