

## ASSEMBLY SKETCHES.

### Descriptive Notes of the City of St. John—The Sabbath Services—The Hymnal Debate.

#### *Special Correspondence.*

Now that Presbyterianism has taken such a firm hold on this famous sea-port of New Brunswick, perhaps your readers might see something of interest in the rambles of a Commissioner to the General Assembly. Here first permit me to say that on all sides are heard very favorable comments on the enterprise, general get up and character of the "PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW" and especially with last week's issue containing the opening services of this General Assembly. St. John has welcomed in the most cordial manner the representatives of the Presbyterian Church and nothing seems too good for a Commissioner. The people of St. John have a just and well deserved pride in their city, but no people point out the beauties of their surroundings with more modesty than they, yet "what do you think of St. John?" is an oft heard, oft repeated question. And one is glad that he can say St. John is a beautiful city. When on all hands you are experiencing a most hospitable welcome from a warm-hearted kindly people, it is a gladdening thing to be able to conserve the truth and at the same time gratify the hearts and minds of your kind entertainers by the honest assurance that you are not only pleased but delighted with the beauty of their city. Of course with that true pride which every true people have in their own home, they know it is beautiful, but to be wholly satisfied they require that their guests be also captivated as they are by its beauty, so that they too may be at home while they sojourn here. The beauty of St. John does not consist in any conspicuous specimens of architectural beauty or symmetry of its buildings public or private, though these are for the most part solid, substantial and comfortable looking. It is well built, especially that portion which phoenix like has risen from the ashes of that great fire of the 20th June, 1877, a day that will ever be memorable in its history, when St. John became a smoldering ruin. The fire was a sad loss to St. John, but the heart of all Canada was touched, and as never before, our brethren by the sea then learned how warm and true were the cords of sympathy and love binding all the Canadian people into one indivisible whole.

The beauty of St. John then consists chiefly in its situation, and here on all sides nature has done its part with no stinted hand. The city proper is built on a peninsula of solid rock. On the west lies the beautiful river St. John, and the harbor, on the east Courtney Bay. On the west of the harbor in Carleton created on its top-most height with a martello tower of such ancient history that my good friends in St. John could not tell by whose hand it had been erected, but from which on a fair day such a magnificent view is had of the beauties of land and sea, nature and art, embracing the whole of St. John and its surroundings, that memory will long linger over this scene of combined activity and restful peace. Looking down the harbor one sees to the north Fort Howe, Portland Heights and Mount Pleasant, on the west Lancaster Heights. Out in the ocean lying across the mouth of the harbor is Partidge Island.

St. John appears to have a splendid harbor where ships of greatest burden can find safe anchorage. Every care seems to have been taken to provide all necessary marine devices for safeguarding the ships to and from this port, and on a clear night the harbor is a "thing of beauty" with its many colored lights and signals. As we saw it the soft beams of moonlight ever and anon in fitful gleams glinted over the gently undulating waves of the tide as it receded out to ocean, and greatly enhanced the beauty of the scene. What one misses most in St. John is the beautiful trees of our western cities, the well kept lawns, the gardens, squares and parks, and in this a great contrast is felt. On Saturday the Assembly was treated to a most enjoyable sail of twenty-five miles up the famous river St. John by the courtesy of some members of the Board of Trade. So that everything should be in harmony and in keeping with the occasion the "Aberdeen" was selected as the best and most appropriate boat to bear so many sons and daughters of Scotland, or of those claiming an inalienable heritage in all the glory of that land, on this delightful trip. The St. John is a beautiful river, broad, swift and deep, and passes through a country of ever varying scenery. Near St. John city the cliffs on either side rise high up in rugged grandeur and splendor and makes an especially beautiful scene where the

waters of the river take their wild joyous leap or plunge over the rocky gorge in their haste to join the waters of old ocean. As the journey upwards progresses the bold cliffs and frowning headlands gradually recede into distant hills, and waving forests are the background to the picture. Lovely islands dot the water here and there, some with cosy summer cottages nestling most invitingly amid the trees, others apparently in their primeval beauty silent in their glory, and away up on the slopes on either shore are seen many pretty dwellings and farm houses. The view from the steamer is extended and very beautiful, the weary city man longing for rest and relaxation can scarcely seek a more peaceful or restful place in which to gain strength and health.

On Saturday evening the Presbyterian ladies of St. John held a reception for the Assembly in the Mechanic's Hall. Many if not all the Commissioners were present and enjoyed a very pleasant evening.

On Sunday many of the pulpits of the city were occupied by Presbyterian preachers. At St. Stephen's Dr. McCrae's church, Rev. Mr. Herridge, of Ottawa, preached an admirable sermon in the morning on the theme "Provide things honest in the sight of all men," and in the same church in the evening Rev. D. J. Macdonnell delivered on the text, "In my fathers house are many mansions," a touching and impressive sermon, powerful in the intense earnestness with which the truth of the fathomless love of the risen Lord was carried with conviction to the hearts of the large congregation. This sermon was solemnly impressive and doubtless brought comfort to many a heart oppressed with care and bereavement.

The business of the Assembly has been carried on with great earnestness and close application and much good work has been the result. Perhaps no more important subject engaged the attention of the court than that of the hymnology as brought up by the report of the Hymnal Committee, the chief interest was taken in that part of the report which dealt with the Psalmody. The report recommended that while the whole 150 psalms should be retained in the "Book of Praise," selections which had been carefully made of psalms and portions of psalms more commonly used in public worship should also form a distinct part of the book. A very earnest debate took place on this proposition which resulted in the recommendation of the Hymnal Committee being sustained by a vote 156 to 89.

The great missions of the Church received much attention, and all the sessions of the Assembly dealing with these and kindred subjects were largely attended by the Presbyterians of the city, in fact great interest was shown in all the deliberations which came before the Assembly, proving that our people are intensely interested in everything which concerns the working and prosperity of our Church.

Very gratifying to those who look beyond the limits of our own particular branch of the Christian Church and desire fuller expansion of the bond of Christian unity and love was the presence of so many representatives from other Churches who came under the authority of their various church governments to express their regard for and appreciation of the great work this Church was doing for the Master and to wish her all prosperity. All were ably represented. All were well received, but, perhaps, none were more happy in the form, manner and substance of these greetings than the representatives of the Church of England in St. John. Whatever lines may divide and forms may separate, the great heart of protestantism is one and the Church is one, in the broad and ever broadening bonds of Christian love. The scene was impressive and uplifting when the great missionary Moderator, in apt and eloquent terms conveyed to these brethren the assurance of the respect and love which the great Presbyterian Church in Canada entertains for its brethren of the English Church. At the close of the reception with one accord all joined feelingly in that immortal hymn

"Hildest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love,  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above."

This Assembly is remarkable in many ways. Many are disposed to judge an Assembly and its power for work only by the speaking ability or conspicuously directive force displayed. This is no doubt a good test, in a measure, but it is not the only criterion or the best, of its power and worth. It is a note worthy fact, that in this Assembly there are, now, no leaders or at least no leaders in the sense of party, college or section. Each question has