

Our Contributors.

A PECULIAR SITUATION.

BY KNOXONIAN.

With the exception of Mr. Joseph Martin all the representatives of Manitoba in the Dominion Parliament voted for the second reading of the Remedial Bill.

The representatives of the North West Territories voted solid for the Bill.

With the exception named every representative of the people from Lake Superior to the Pacific voted for the Bill. We have been told a thousand times that the people of Manitoba are strongly opposed to Separate schools. Appeals almost pathetic have been made not to coerce Manitoba. For purposes of climax "Hands off Manitoba" is about the best thing a political orator can use in Ontario. It divides the honors with "the flag that braved a thousand years," etc. And yet when the representatives of Manitoba are asked to say in Parliament what they think about the Remedial Bill, they with one exception say the Bill is a good one. If these Hon. members really represent their constituents the people of Manitoba are not nearly so much opposed to Separate schools as the people of Toronto the Good are.

Perhaps it may be urged that the representatives of Manitoba and the Territories at Ottawa do not fairly represent the views of their constituents on the school question. Those who take that ground say they cannot be returned at the next election. That is prophesying and prophesying about elections in Canada is a risky kind of business. Sir John Macdonald used to say that an election and a horse-race were the two most uncertain things in this country. Sir John knew. Perhaps the four members from Manitoba who voted for the Remedial Bill are just as likely to be returned next election as the one member who voted against it, and who has made a specialty of opposing it ever since he had a seat in Parliament. Mr. Robert Watson used to stand up alone for what he considered Manitoba interests, but Mr. Watson had a very hard fight for his seat, and he finally dropped out of Dominion politics altogether. Who knows that Mr. Martin has not the same future before him?

Really the situation is peculiar. The people of Ontario are alarmed lest Separate schools be fastened on Manitoba and the Territories, and while they are in a state of alarm the representatives of Manitoba and the Territories, Mr. Martin excepted, come up smiling and vote for Separate schools.

The recent Provincial elections in Manitoba add to the peculiarities of the situation. If a general Provincial election ever decided anything that election decided that the people of Manitoba are opposed to Separate schools. If we rightly remember the majority against Separate schools in the Local Legislature is eight or ten to one. The majority in the delegation to Ottawa is four to one in favour of Separate schools. Now what can an outsider make of a situation like that? Of course it is easy to say that the representatives at Ottawa do not really represent the people. Perhaps not. A few weeks will tell the tale.

It may also be urged that at the recent local election the one issue was the school question, and that in Dominion contests other issues come up. There is force in this contention, but when admitted it merely shows that the good people of the Prairie Province four or five years ago at least attached quite as much importance to other questions as they do to Separate schools. It is quite within the bounds of probability that the schools of Manitoba will occupy a more prominent place in the elections in Ontario than in the elections in Manitoba herself.

Will anybody explain why Ontario should worry so much about Separate schools in Manitoba when four out of five of Manitoba's chosen representatives vote in favour of Separate schools.

Above all things why should Church courts in Ontario leave their own special work and spend days over the Manitoba school question. Surely the representatives of the Manitoba people in Parliament know as much about the mind and interests of their constituents as can be known by Ontario Synods and Conferences. The people of Manitoba sent their members to Ottawa to represent them, but they never gave a commission to a Conference or Synod to act for them. If they don't like the way their members represent them they can easily send others. Who knows that in a few weeks the Manitoba Legislature may not do some of the very things that our Synods and General Assembly were helping them not to do.

Is it not about time that the Church had let peculiar political questions alone. When every citizen not a criminal nor a lunatic—and these are not always rigidly excluded—has the ballot, there is little need for Church courts going into politics.

MAY RULING ELDERS BE MODERATORS?—I.

BY REV. JOHN A. G. CALDER.

Two Presbyteries, viz.: those of Hamilton and Whitby have elected Ruling Elders as Moderators. The Synods, within whose bounds the elections took place, have been enjoined to consider the appointments, deal with them according to the laws of the Church, and report to the next General Assembly. It is to be hoped in the meantime that the discussion which was opened by Dr. McMullen will be thorough, and that it will comprehend the history of our present practice and the grounds on which that practice rests.

That the elections in these Presbyteries were illegal is beyond controversy, and that they are without warrant or sanction in Scripture is equally plain.

The Presbyteries have, however, in Mr. McQueen a doughty defender. But the problem they have thrust upon the Church is not solvable, in my opinion, by the means which he employs. His argument may be briefly stated in three propositions:—1. The fountain of Church power is the body of believers; but for the sake of orderly government it vests the power in office-bearers usually known as elders. 2. The distinction made between Teaching and Ruling Elders has no warrant in Scripture, and there is, in fact, no distinction as regards official standing and authority. 3. The one, indispensable condition of presiding as Moderator in Church Courts is long and faithful service as Ruling Elder.

The briefest exposition of Church power must, of course, include a statement of the source of the power. Whence does it flow? What is the origin of its jurisdiction? Mr. McQueen says in effect that the fountain of all Church power is in believers. It inherently rests in them. They create Church Courts, and invest them with the power by which they dispense ordinances, ordain pastors and administer the ordinary affairs of the Church. The Presbyterian Church, in other words, pursues the same line of conduct that every voluntary society does when it surrenders its power, and commits it to a select few from its own members. But the power, in that case, emanates from within, and the office-bearers act by the delegated authority of the members who compose the society. That Mr. McQueen believes the Church a voluntary institution, "voluntarily divesting itself of its sovereign powers," and "vesting them as delegated powers in the hands of Church Courts," shows that he is extremely far out on the subject of Church Government as laid down in the Confession of Faith. If he will heed this venerable symbol of our Church, and then look at the assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland, written by one of the brightest stars among the leaders of the Westminster Assembly he will find the subject of Church power presented in a light,

the reverse of the one which he has certainly maintained with much clearness and force. The plith of George Gillespie's reasoning is this:—"The Church as a society owes its origin to Christ. He is, therefore, Head of the Church—Head of the Church at large—Head of the local congregation, and Head of Church Courts great and small. He is Head of Church Courts, in the sense that He invests the ordinary affairs of the Church in office-bearers who receive their office from Him, who exercise authority in His name, and, who administer the power which He gives. But, as Head of the local congregation, He bestows Church power that the members may enjoy its benefits and use the right to submit to its wholesome authority." The writer was careful to add "that yet nothing had been done by the greater or lesser Presbytery, but according to the settled order of the Church, and with the express or tacit consent of the congregation."

But it is astonishing to see the diversity of opinion held in regard to the eldership. One sees, for example, in Scripture only one class of elders and all in this class of course authorized to teach, preach and rule. They possess the right to dispense ordinances and ordain pastors if they choose so to do. As, however, it is freely conceded that all elders are not competent to exercise the higher functions of the ministry, the question arises: Can they possess the right if they want the talents? Is it credible that they would have been appointed by inspired men to the particular duties of an office for which they had not received special gifts and graces from Christ, and for which they had not been qualified in any way? To ask the question is to answer it. Reading the same Scripture Dr. McMullen discovers two orders of elders, lay and clerical, and he cites triumphantly in favor of the discovery, the opinion of the late Dr. Hodge. It is always necessary to speak, on any subject upon which the great Princeton divine has expressed a decided opinion, with caution and diffidence; but the question is one in regard to which competent divines have expressed a diversity of judgment. The doctor is a reading man, and is familiar with Henderson and his formidable allies. These men held that the office of Presbyter and elder is one, and "repudiated the nickname of lay elders, by which they were reproachfully called." And so the distinguished Free Church leaders, the late Principal Cunningham and Dr. Bannerman, held that bishop, presbyter and elder belonged to a common order and maintained that there are, in our Church Courts, no lay representatives and no lay elders. But they just as distinctly maintained that in this common order there are several classes or sorts of office-bearers. Is there any ground for the distinction? Does the Word of God warrant it? The synagogue, after which the polity of the New Testament Church is modelled, and the Scripture—Romans xii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28, 29; 1 Tim. v. 17—afford evidence that is quite decisive on the point, and would if prejudice or interest did not oppose, set the matter at rest forever.

But now the vexed question is, Who may preside in our Church Courts? The practice of the Presbyterian Church, for three centuries and more, is not doubtful. But what is the origin of the practice? Can we point to the fountain of its authority? Elder sees it spring, full grown, from the polluted fountain of sacerdotalism. Dr. McMullen says it is a matter of Church order, and was made such because the minister is the connecting link between the Presbytery and the congregation. That it is a Church right, derived from ancient custom, may or may not be in its favor. That depends mainly on the support the practice derives from the Word of God. Has it any? It has the same warrant as much else in the polity of our Church. The apostles, for example, ordained elders in every Church, but no law upon the subject can be found in Scripture. And yet we believe the example is just as binding upon us as if the appointments had come down to us by positive legislative enactments.

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

To Rev. John Laing, D.D., Convener of General Assembly's Committee on Public Worship:

SIR,—From the circumstance that the three letters which I ventured to address you last November on the subject of Public Worship have been somewhat criticised, I feel it a duty to trouble you with a few remarks on some of the objections which have been raised.

A dislike has been expressed to a liturgy. My third letter deals with this point; it is therefore unnecessary to repeat the facts I submitted, but I may be permitted to refer to an excellent paper on this subject, from the pen of Mr. Wm. Mortimer Clark, Q.C., M.A., which appeared in the issue of THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN of the 18th ult. I do not feel myself called upon to justify the use of an inflexible liturgy for I do not advocate its introduction. I alluded in my letters to a liturgical service mainly for another purpose. My object was to give prominence to the fact that such a service is related historically to our own branch of the Presbyterian family, that it is, and always has been, the form of worship in other Reformed Churches, and that there is nothing in our principles, traditions or standards to prevent the reading of prepared prayers.

My aim has been to point out defects, not in Presbyterian principles or doctrine, but in the form of our worship, as at present prevailing. My hope has been that we should find a remedy for these defects, not by revolutionary change, not even by reverting to the practice of the fathers of our Church in the first century of its existence, but rather by a process of evolution or well considered adaptation to present needs in complete harmony with the spirit and polity of Presbyterianism.

My appeal has been that of a layman pleading that the people be allowed as fellow worshippers a larger participation in the public service of the congregation than they now exercise.

In my former letters I endeavored to express the views entertained by many like myself. We are convinced that Public Worship is a Divinely appointed duty in which all the people should have an opportunity of taking a full part. Under the present system only a limited share is vouchsafed to the congregation; too much is allotted to one person—the officiating minister—and too little to the people. We recognize that it is the proper function of the minister to preach, to exhort, and to lead in the exercise of devotion; but we ask is it necessary or desirable that the people should be excluded from participation in the service so much as they now are? Those who think with me, are of the opinion that some of the prayers offered by the minister should be, what for want of a better name, may be termed, congregational prayers of the people. That is to say, they should not be extempore prayers previously unknown to any individual present. On the contrary that they should be familiar compositions expressing the common wants and supplications of the worshippers; and whatever our views on other points, all must acknowledge that these wants and supplications of our common humanity do not vary from week to week or from year to year. We hold it to be desirable that every member of the congregation should be acquainted with such prayers as well as the minister. Such prayers should therefore be in printed form, and placed within reach of all, with the approval of the Church as a whole.

Some persons object, I think most unreasonably, to forms of any kind. One minister thus expresses himself: "By reading prayers worship would become mechanical and those taking part become untrue to Self and to God."

I remind those who hold these opinions that many of the psalms and hymns are forms of prayer, and I ask what objections can there be to the use in a Christian congregation of such precomposed forms of prayer as Psalms 8, 16, 25, 34, 67, 71, 86,