

Rev. Robt. Rogers—"The Characteristics of a Prosperous Congregation."

These subjects were all elucidated in a popular, scriptural, and instructive manner. The Voluntary Principle of supporting the Gospel which distinguishes the United Presbyterian Church in Canada from other Presbyterians, was, by several speakers, ably brought out—it was clearly shown that this principle was founded in Divine truth, that it gives active and enlarged benevolence to this Church, and, consequently, can only be acceptable to Him by whose authority it has been sanctioned. The Chorus belonging to the various Churches in Paris, performed, during the evening, many pieces of sacred music in very good style. The meeting separated at a late hour, highly gratified.—The proceeds collected on Sabbath and Monday towards defraying the expense of the building, were £20 6s. 0d.

CHURCH LIBRARIES.

To the Editor of the Canadian Presbyterian Magazine.

SIR,—I thank Mr. Torrance for his direct and satisfactory reply to my letter of the 27th June. I have also to make my acknowledgments to Mr. Thornton for the readiness and frankness with which he has informed us of the existence of the communication from Mr. Somerville, respecting Church Libraries, of his being the person who received it, and of the course which he took, in regard to the matter to which it related.

I should be most happy, did I feel at liberty to stop here, with the persuasion that any further remark was unnecessary. But, after Mr. Thornton's disclosure, I feel constrained to say that, in my opinion, the exercise of another description of charity than that for which he gives me credit for a measure, would not be out of place. For my part, I deprecate alike the advice which he received and his action under that advice. That Mr. Thornton should recognize in the letter from Mr. Somerville anything having the least connection with the business of the Book-Depot Committee, and that he should have once thought of any other course, as the Convener of that Committee, than to report to the Synod, is to me not a little wonderful: yet he expressly refers to this Committee, and reasons, that communications on the subject of Books would naturally be made to him and not to the Mission Committee. If this be an illustration of Mr. Thornton's estimate of what is due from Convener of Committees, I must say that I cannot agree with him. Admitting, even, that, from the nature of that letter, there was no legal objection to make it public, I should have thought that it would at once have suggested itself as the best course to have been taken—and especially when so favorable an opportunity offered—that the benevolent proposals of Mr. Milrose, and of the Tract Society, should be thrown open to free and fair competition. There can be no question that the design of those proposals was to help the weak. Now, this benevolent intention was most likely to be defeated by the course which Mr. Thornton adopted. It gave no time for deliberation. It afforded the opportunity, only, to those ministers who could, at once, and without hesitation, give the required guarantee on the part of their congregations, to close with the scheme—thus helping those who were able to provide Books for themselves, at whatever cost, while those who really needed such assistance, but who would require to deliberate and consult, would be excluded from the benefit—besides, the evident want of generosity, in concealing the letter altogether from some who may have been, for aught Mr. Thornton knew, just those to whom the donors would most readily make such proposals. Had the letter in question been communicated to the Synod, surely some plan could have been arranged by which the object could be gained without any unsightly scramble; and, at all events, Mr. Thornton would be most effectually exonerated from the imputation of partiality, from which his explanations have no tendency to relieve him.

It is sometimes said of certain transactions, that there can be no two opinions about them. But there must be two opinions about this. The perfectly self-satisfied air with which Mr. Thornton explains the business, and his own action respecting it, shows clearly that he is of one opinion—and, in all probability, those who may receive the benefits of the scheme, and perhaps some to whom it was made known, may agree with him—but I think I may safely venture to say, that another and very opposite opinion is entertained by those who feel that, in this transaction, they have not been treated with fairness, or courtesy, or generosity. It may be useless to balance those opposing opinions, or to attempt to decide which has most weight. I cannot refrain, however, from saying—

though I deeply regret the necessity—that, in my view, Mr. Thornton's procedure in the case was altogether unjustifiable.

Sept. 3, 1853.

A MEMBER OF SYNOD.

N. B.—I have no inclination to parade my name publicly; but if Mr. Thornton has any curiosity on the subject, the Editor is at liberty to give him the requisite information.

Original Articles.

[FOR THE CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.]

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HISTORY.

BY THE REV. DR. FERRIER, CALEDONIA.

The early history of the division of the Secession Church, known by the name of Burghers, is identified with those distinguished brothers, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, to whom we particularly referred in our last communication, and whose departure from the stage of life was so deeply deplored. They were so prominent and so excellent, and are so well known by their writings in the general religious public, and so justly admired by the pious of all denominations, that sometimes they have been presented erroneously as the only originators of the whole Secession Church. It is even common in some quarters (which might be better informed) to speak of the Secession of the Erskines. These great and good men had no wish to monopolize the honour of being the founders of our church, nor do they need to be thus exhibited to give renown to their names. Their ministrations for a long course of years, had a powerful influence in preserving evangelical truth in Scotland, and by their writings it is true that being dead they yet speak. They are allowed on all hands to have been eminent ministers of Christ. This division of the Secession, as well as the other, was never without men of distinguished talent, extensive learning, and genuine piety. When the two fathers to whom we have referred were taken away, the Church's Head remained, and He brought other instruments into the field to maintain the high character of this portion of his church. There was still Mr. Fisher of Glasgow, the youngest of the Four Brethren, and already there were other afterwards distinguished individuals on the field:—as Mr. John Swanston of Kinross, and Mr. John Brown of Haddington, who succeeded each other in the Theological Chair after Mr. Fisher had retired from it. Such men were calculated to give a high character to the denomination; and they were all blessed with success in raising pious and talented young men for the holy ministry in this church.

The rapid growth of this branch of the Secession, and of the others and of dissent in general, produced great alarm among the friends of the National Establishment. They were long of the opinion that the division in the Secession would check its progress: but they at length found that so far from having this effect it rather operated in the opposite way. For those two bodies, being rivals to each other, seemed to be more active than ever in spreading their respective causes over the whole country. This alarm on the part of the Establishment became so great that in the year 1765 the General Assembly took up the matter in an Overture, which called the attention of the Court to the progress of dissent, and prayed that such measures might be adopted as should be judged proper for arresting this alarming evil. This was called the schism overture, in which after stating it to be affirmed that a hundred and twenty meeting-houses had been erected, to which more than a hundred thousand persons resorted, who had been formerly in communion with the Church of Scotland, it prayed—"That the venerable Assembly should take under their mature consideration this alarming evil, which had so threatening an aspect to this church, to the interests of religion, and to the peace of the country, and that they would provide such remedies against this schism as in their wisdom they shall judge proper."

The Assembly agreed that a committee should be appointed to consider this overture, and report their opinion thereupon to the next General Assembly. Accordingly the committee reported in May, 1766, to the following effect:—

"In respect to the dangerous consequences that are to be apprehended from the increase of Secession from the legal Establishment of this church, and as it is reported that no fewer than one hundred and twenty meeting-houses are already erected, although it never was, nor is, in-