

Our Contributors.

CONCERNING UNREST IN THE CHURCH.

BY KNOXONIAN

It is assumed by some excellent people, chiefly ministers, that there is a great deal of unrest in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Ask for evidence of the unrest and it will generally be forthcoming along these lines—short pastorates, long vacancies, ministers desiring new congregations and congregations desiring new ministers. Besides these outward and visible signs it is alleged that in many places there is an undertone of discontent that one can hear if he wants to, and that this alleged undertone is a serious thing, because, like the P. P. A., its dimensions are veiled in mystery.

So much impressed are some excellent people with this unrest business, that they propose various remedies. More than one of the remedies suggested involve a change in fundamental parts of the Presbyterian system. That need not worry any earnest man. If any part of the system hinders us in doing the Master's work, let it go. If we can adopt anything that will enable us to do His work more efficiently, let us have it. The main thing is, to do Christ's work—not simply to carry out a system of church government. But before we make any changes of a revolutionary nature it may be well to ask one or two preliminary questions. How widespread and serious is the disease? Would a modified itinerancy or some of the other remedies proposed be any real remedy? Is there any unrest that our own system, if properly worked, cannot deal with as successfully as any other can?

How much unrest of the bad kind is in the church? Much has been written of late about short pastorates. Nobody has said anything about the long ones. No insignificant number of congregations, not by any means new, have had only one pastor. There has not been much bad unrest in them on the pastoral tie question. A large number of the very best congregations in the church, some of them well-nigh half a century old, have had only two. In most of the cases the first pastor retired because he was worn out and the second is carrying on the work. Now just begin at Sarnia and count in an easterly direction until you get down to Brother Moore in Ottawa, who, by the way, is the first and only and original pastor of Bank St., and you will be surprised to see the number of congregations working up to their half century with their second pastor.

Now look at a very large number of the changes that have taken place. They were not brought about by causes that were discreditable to anybody. They were not forced. They were not evictions. The ministers were not starved out. They were at what they believed was the call of duty and they said good-bye amidst the tears of a devoted people and were followed by the prayers of their best parishioners to their new field of labour. Now count out all the congregations in which no changes have taken place, count out those in which a second pastor came after one whose long working days were ended, count out all those in which changes took place that were entirely creditable to both pastor and people, and how many have you left. Not very many and scarcely one, that could be called a representative Presbyterian congregation.

There is another class that perhaps should be left out of the reckoning—a class that might be described as unfortunates. A congregation of this class calls a minister and in an amazingly short time the good brother shows with painful clearness that he is—well, that he is unsuitable. Of course there is unrest. Or what happens just as frequently, a Presbytery starts a congregation where there is no room and no chance, inducts a minister over it and asks him to do the utterly impossible. Of course unrest comes. It always does come when people are trying to do impossible things. It is not fair to blame the unfortunates for being unrestful. A congregation with a useless, or worse than useless, pastor ought not to live at rest. A minister expected to build up a congregation where none can be built cannot feel restful, especially if he is hun-

gry. The unfortunates, whether pastor or people, ought not to be blamed for their unrest, and he it remembered a change of system would not help the matter. There would be some unfortunates under any system. Now, after all that has been said and written on the subject lately, is it not fairly clear that the unrest is confined to somewhat narrow limits and largely to congregations that cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called representative?

Then it ought to be remembered that unrest is always noisy and blustering. Ten men going on with their work do not make as much noise as one idle fellow who does nothing but stand around and talk. One man who has dyspepsia very badly makes more trouble than a hundred men with a good digestion. One congregation that has a case of some kind on hand makes more noise than fifty that are quietly and effectively doing their Master's work. The unrest is noisy, and sad as it may appear, there are a good many people even in this country of schools and colleges who don't know mere noise when they hear it.

Time is up. More next week. Dearly beloved brethren, as some of the effusive preachers say, the subject for meditation this week is how much actual unrest of the wicked kind exists in this church? May it not be possible that in many places the church suffers more from stagnation than from unrest.

Written for the CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

THE RELATION OF THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR SOCIETY TO THE CHURCHES.

BY REV. FRED. B. DUVAL, D.D.

Standing in conversation one afternoon with my loved friend and instructor in Natural Science, Dr. Arnold Guyot, an unpretentious looking man, who had been spending a season dredging in the Caribbean Sea, approached and handed him a bit of coral. He eyed it earnestly, passed it to me and said, "There is one little fact that destroys all Professor W.'s theory." The Spirit of God in His work of developing the world's modes of thought, feeling, and action, now and then surprises us with a new spiritual fact with which we must square our theories or witness their failure. The Jews had their idea of how spiritual things ought to go; and through the veil of their prejudice they could not discern the signs of the times. They could indeed, kill the blessed Christ as one entirely out of harmony with their theory, but the power of the spiritual fact manifested in His marvellous life, moved right on in quiet majesty to tread their theory in the dust. The work of sending the Gospel to the heathen was compelled to fight its way to favor even among Christians, notwithstanding it was a part of the charter of the church's existence. To effect the happy union that now exists in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Spirit of God, had to endure much opposition of faulty prophecy. But spiritual forces moving quietly on, have set before us noble spiritual facts that have made foolish the wisdom of the wise, and laid to rest the theories of some very good men. These things ought to make us approach all patently, creditable, spiritual movements not only with a philosophic, but very prayerful spirit.

The Christian Endeavor Society is a spiritual fact. Commanded to try the spirits we have had some twelve years for its examination, and find it about as free from those defects that challenge kinship with the Spirit of God, as any organization we have met.

It was born in a revival of religion when the young converts, out of hearts of new-born love to the Saviour were saying, "Lord, what will Thou have me to do?" When pastors were concerned for the best means of conserving the influences of the Holy Spirit, and making their continuous and progressive forces on the side of Christ and His church. Such sacred thoughts and feelings were not confined to Dr. Clarke, nor encompassed by the walls of the Williston church. Nevertheless if God gave to him and his, just the form of union, which from its purity, simplicity, catholicity and conscientious devotion, has made it the most effective for the end in view, we have only to rejoice with him, and the more

undantly in God, that the little one has become a thousand, that the fruit of the handful of corn now shakes like Lebanon, that there are now over twenty-eight thousand societies, and over a hundred new ones added weekly; that there are now one-and-three-quarter millions of young members walking under a conscientious vow of love and loyalty to Christ and His church. People ask, "What is the secret of its success?" There is no secret about it. Read the pledge which the young Christian takes. There are just three main ideas in it: (1) Trust in Christ for strength. (2) A conscientious promise to strive to do His will. (3) An engagement to use the means of knowing His will, and keeping the conscience awake to the sacredness of the vow to perform it. It is nothing more than keeping the young soul aroused to the necessity of living a true Christian life.

The trouble with so many young people's societies now past, lay in the fact that the very genius of their constitutions depreciated the degree of pure, heroic, Christian, self-devotion of which youth was capable. It baited them with something lower than their highest moral idea, and so often weakened rather than strengthened the noblest religious life. It forgot that many of the noblest martyrs of the early church were youths. And the faith of to-day with two thousand years of Christian light, ought not to be inferior to those of early times. The genius of the Christian Endeavor Society presumes upon and appeals to the purest heroic self-devotion, and it is not disappointed.

But some ask, "Is there no fear that the society will exercise a disruptive influence upon existing church organizations?" There should be no more fear of this than that the Gospel of Christ will destroy the States where it is propagated. The society exists only in the churches and for the advancement of their spiritual life. If its interdenominational and international character may come in any way to soften the asperity that now exists between some branches of the Christian church, and superinduce such fraternal relations and confederation as will help us to a more economical use of means to convert the world to Christ, then blessed be it! For if we have not prayed for this, we are not Christians; if we have prayed for it, and do not practically wish to apply it, we are hypocrites.

But all of this, so far as the Christian Endeavor Society goes, is left to the operation of the Spirit of God upon the bosom of the churches. This society is not an imperium in imperio. It has no power independent of the individual churches. The so-called united society is simply a Bureau of Information; it exercises no authority over individual societies. The conventions, local, state and general are simply for enlightenment, encouragement, and mutual help in doing the Master's will, while the pledge binds each individual to be loyal to his own church and pastor.

What good effects may we expect to flow from it?

1. A greater knowledge of God's word, both from the pledged daily perusal and weekly public study.

2. A more practical godliness.

The emphasis the pledge puts on the endeavor to do what Christ would have them do, is a healthy halt in the tendency of religion to unfold in many people along the line of fruitless discussion. It will have its effect in family religion, the public prayer meeting and in destitute places, where even elders, in the absence of a pastor, often suffer the religious life of a neighborhood to die out, because they were never drilled to public religious exercises in their youth. It is having its effect upon the Christian charity. In the writer's own field these noble hearted young Endeavorers are among the first to discover want and relieve it, because they feel it is what Christ would have them do. It will have its effect upon the great work of missions. Bismarck won his battles after drilling the school boys of Germany for a quarter of a century at soldiering. I cannot but feel there will be some missionary victories won, after the Christian Endeavor Society has drilled a generation of youth to systematic monthly offerings for mission work and led them into an intelligent and jealous affection for its success in bringing the world to Christ. There is every reason to hope that, guided and aided

by pastors, encouraged and counselled by the older people, this awakened young life may become beautiful in homes, and powerful in its influence, bringing unbounded joy throughout the length and breadth of the Kingdom of Christ.

Written for THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

A CHURCH BASEMENT.

BY W. H. M.

In an Aberdeen daily newspaper of recent date there is an interesting account of the opening of the basement portion of the Free North Church buildings, in West North Street (a needy part of the city), as recreation and reading rooms for the use of the people of the district; the initiation and carrying out of the plan being due to Mr. William Garvie, builder, an elder of the church. A pleasing feature of the enterprise was that six of Mr. Garvie's workmen spontaneously offered in their own time, and without payment, to carry through, and did carry through, part of the inside work on the rooms, while several contractors did work at cost. The undertaking and the principles upon which it is to be conducted have met with hearty approval, and the large and influential audience assembled at the opening of the rooms received Mr. Garvie's explanations with much enthusiasm. It may serve a good purpose to set out briefly the nature of the enterprise, which seems even in Scotland to have been greeted as a novelty.

The idea is to provide a place of healthy entertainment which will successfully compete with the public-house. People are received at the refreshment and reading rooms from eight a.m. to eleven p.m. every day of the week. Appliances are provided for making tea and coffee quickly, and food is served at thirty tables. Every item costs a penny; and no refreshment is dispensed free. Tickets may be purchased for free distribution to needy persons. A charge of sixpence per month is made for the use of the reading rooms. It is intended to arrange various social meetings, limelight entertainments, children's meetings and games, penny readings and lectures, cookery and health lectures, temperance meetings, etc., particularly on Saturday evenings.

It was distinctly stated that the institution was not connected with the church, but carried on by individuals; though it was hoped that many who had drifted from church connection would, through its instrumentality, be regained.

It seems to me a matter of grave concern that a scheme such as this is not made a part of the ordinary church work. It was stated as a feature to be commended, that the scheme was a private undertaking, but surely work along this line should be as much a part of the regular work (of, at least, many city churches as Sunday School work), the elders or managers having the control of it. I insist upon this as important, and it is an admirable thing to give such an enterprise visible connection with the church by using, if possible, as in this case, a part of the church building. It would be a plain acknowledgment to the world of its mission in this respect.

Such work would not only do much direct good but would be especially, when carried on by the church as a church, as a part of her ordinary work, expressive of a concern and sympathy that would go a long way towards winning the lessening confidence of the poor in the sincerity of our religion; and also would bring all classes into more vital connection and the church itself out of its Sabbath isolation into every-day life. There are at least four churches in Toronto that might with advantage establish such rooms, namely St. Andrew's, which, of course, already has St. Andrew's Institute; Knox, Erskine and Cooke's Church; all being in the neighborhood of poor districts.

I would remind those who like to have the stay of Bible precept for all their actions, that the Apostles attended to this very thing themselves until it became too much for them, when Stephen and the other six deacons were appointed officers of the church for this