

THE WESLEYAN

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 1879.

THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE AND CHRISTIAN UNION.

The general observance of the Week of Prayer just closing, recalls attention to the Evangelical Alliance, with whom it originated. To lay down a common basis, on which the churches, holding in their integrity the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, while differing upon minor points, could unite in prayer for the furtherance of their common work, was certainly a sublime conception, and one which the experience of the thirty-four years of the Alliance's existence fully justifies. And to set apart the first week in each year for this sign of united affection was equally happy; for, after rallying round one common centre, at the feet of God, where the several members of the one great family can interchange expressions of mutual goodwill, while yet the echo of the Natal song lingers upon the church's ears, the various evangelical sections of the one Body are better fitted to go forth and do battle for the Lord. How much this bond of union has tended to cure church bigotry of its lispings, enabling it to articulate without impediment the Shibboleth of Christian charity, it were hard to say; but certainly it has contributed not a little towards this gratifying result. It would seem, indeed, that the British and Foreign Bible-Society and the Evangelical Alliance are among the noblest monuments of Christian achievement, and stand out upon the vantage ground of Christendom, supporting the weary arms of truth, like Aaron and Hur holding up the intercessory hands of Moses, while the mighty conflict is raging below. If the former possesses the truth as a sacred deposit, which it seeks to disseminate in its silent majesty and untarnished purity—"as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,"—the latter holds "the truth in love," vitalized and embodied in the heart of an evangelical unity. Both are the custodians of precious interests, like the two cherubs spreading their wings over the ark of the covenant. Christian union, not of form, nor yet of faith, but of affection, is the grand mission of the Alliance. So that the Church of Christ, like the world of nature, has, at least, one rainbow spanning the storm of clashing creeds and ecclesiastical contention, brightening a scene of moral darkness, and giving promise of a coming universal peace. In this age of doctrinal controversy, when men are contending, not for Christ's sepulchre, for that period has passed, nor yet for His body and blood, as that age too has gone, but for His word; when science, so-called, arrays itself against the truth, and philosophy attempts to explain away its hidden mysteries; when the house of Christendom is so strangely divided against itself, until the common charities of life are almost impossible; it is grateful to the Christian mind to contemplate one spot, at least, where a perfect calm prevails, and where pure love sheds its genial radiance. And surely there is a need for such a bond of union as the Evangelical Alliance offers, not merely for the honour of our holy Christianity, which has been outraged by unholy strife, but also that the evils of contention might be stayed. We hear sometimes of the ravages of international and civil wars. It is said, for instance, that the wars of the last twenty-five years have cost the civilized world more than three million lives; but who can estimate the dire and disastrous consequences resulting from doctrinal contention and ecclesiastical wrangling? How many souls have been beaten back into the dark chaos of a dark, miasmatic infidelity, just as they were feeling the pulsations of a new life, and entering the light and warmth of a new world? If there must be contention among the churches, then, as an old divine quaintly puts it, let them contend like the olive and the vine, as to who shall produce the best and the most fruit, and not like the aspen and the elm, as to who shall make the most noise in the

world. Moreover, success in church work depends largely upon united effort. Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great owed their splendid military successes to the introduction of the phalanx. Napoleon gained his victories by concentrating his forces upon a single point. So the church militant will succeed best by presenting a united and concentrated front, and by gathering to a volume its wealth and omnipotency of affection. And this is all the more necessary when it is remembered how united and determined are the assaults of evil and error against the truth. "When bad men combine," says Edmund Burke, "the good must associate." Such a union on the part of all the churches—a growing charity, kindlier sympathies, and a hearty co-operation in Christian work—is the great need of the present day, and an essential condition of enlarged success.

"WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?"

There was sound philosophy, as well as profound Scriptural truth in the old Methodist definition of sanctification,—A beginning and a growth of religious purity and energy. It may apply to religious life in general. Let us not undervalue the work of the churches even at the worst;—they are fostering, nurturing, edifying believers. But we may well enquire whether they are meeting their obligations in the other respect—calling sinners successfully to repentance and following them persistently till they begin a new life. Of course there must always be difficulty in forming a correct judgment of the actual progress of religion in a given locality or territory, even with the best opportunities of observation. It is a work which proceeds largely beneath the surface, though, coming up, like all growth of Nature, in due time, it ought to show some evidence sooner or later. Elijah had thousands of godly associates, while all the time he thought himself bereft. God's garden is not always so exposed or so fragrant that even good men can observe it. Nevertheless, God pitied the solicitude of a desponding prophet, and soon turned his anxiety into heroism,—his sense of loneliness into joy and prosperity. May He so deal with the watchmen of this day!

It seems to us there are but few reports of revivals abroad. There are localities even in our revival church which have not been religiously disturbed for ten, fifteen or twenty years. Here and there souls have been brought in; but no revival wave has swept over the place. In certain centres, where young persons are growing up in numbers, where strangers are moving in and out perpetually, and which, consequently, should, to over-take the needs of the population, be in a perpetual agitation of revival, there has been no signal religious movement for some time. With our creed all this reflects discredit upon the church. It is an article of our belief that faith and works are factors in the world's evangelization. While admitting that there may be both faith and works, it is chargeable upon us, perhaps, that these are not properly directed. We may outline just a few thoughts which force themselves upon us in this connection.

We are not cherishing the revival spirit as did our fathers—as did we ourselves some years ago. Successful ministers have always stood out in contrast to all others in this respect—they lived and worked under mighty pressure. What this pressure was we need not define. A sense of responsibility—one of anxiety because of the minister's immense influence and corresponding accountability. A decline in this fervour may be owing to several causes:

We yield to the prejudice against revivals. "They are exhausting to ministers and officials. They create much unpleasant opposition and worldly remark. They leave churches often in a state of depression after their period of success and excitement is over. After all, the reckoning shows such losses by backsliding that their actual gain is questionable."

These are old arguments. They have deterred many from direct, energetic work for souls. This one fact explodes them all, however:—Methodism has been built up by revivals; where forty of the hundred were wrecked by backsliding, the remaining sixty have been saved. That, at any rate, was sixty per cent. clear gain. Most of merchants would be content with such a balance-sheet.

We are leaning too much upon the ministers. Preaching was never more faithful and eloquent than now. But it is possible we have too much of it. We defy any ordinary hearer to remember half the good things he receives from the pulpit now-a-days. Not a tenth part of these good things is put in practice. Our ministers are worn with study, with perpetual talk, while Christians listen and grow fat. "You are an eloquent man. We pay you for preaching well. See that you do it." That is the common maxim of this time. A rousing prayer-meeting, with a hand-to-hand conflict between the church and practical infidelity, would be a brave, beautiful substitute for part of this ministerial eloquence. How would Christ have looked upon, spoken to, such disciples as these in our churches to-day? Christian life, instead of being a warfare against sin—a perpetual consecration to religious work, not always pleasant but pleasurable,—is now but a conflict by proxy. The enlisted soldier shuns going to the battle. Our trouble is that where there is but a single (ministerial) substitute, the enemy and the drill too often overpower him while he is yet but a youth in the ranks.

Oh for more spontaneity in the church! In and out, up and down, in regular grooves, this machinery moves with elegance and regularity. The religion that was once a thing of surprises, of wonders, of remark, is passing away. We have the old Methodist singing, in all but the searching, burning, harrowing sentiment, repeated over and over, which made the soul look in upon itself and shudder if not at peace with God. Who now sings—"Into its darkest corners shine, and take the veil away!" or, "Terrible thought shall I alone?" &c. or, "Stay, thou insulted spirit, stay." Yet they did good work, those rugged stanzas. As for Methodist shouts, they are banished to lands less cultivated and more earnest! We escape the odium by not having the inclination.

This may seem severe criticism. Is there cause for it? That is the question. May the good Lord visit us with the mighty power of His Holy Spirit, breaking up smooth places and sweeping away conventional barriers. We could forgive a little extravagance just now if only we had the fervor which produces it. Refined observers might sneer at us, but the world would feel our influence and yield to it.

AN IMPORTANT EVENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL HISTORY OF NOVA SCOTIA.

Within three months, two large, thoroughly equipped buildings have been added to the public school property of this Province. The opening of the Normal School at Truro has been followed by that of the Halifax High School—a superb structure, in every way adapted to modern ideas and necessities. At a very large meeting, composed of the first citizens in social and educational rank, on Tuesday last, the building was formally opened by several eloquent speeches. The Governor, the Chief Justice, the Episcopal Bishop, the Chancellor of the University of Halifax, the Superintendent of Education and others, delivered addresses of great merit. It was the first occasion on which Dr. Allison appeared before a general assembly of Halifax citizens, representing the interests of that important system over which he is now official head. His address was received with universal appreciation.

A few thoughts came out prominently in our recollections of the meeting:—

1. Though the free school system fortunately transcends all denominationalism, yet Methodism may be

proud of the generous recognition given by men who are themselves ornaments to society, to the influence of two distinguished educationists in our church. Chief Justice Young paid a warm tribute to the energy and wisdom of Dr. Ryerson in connection with the free school system of Ontario. That system he regarded as the most complete in the world to-day. To Dr. Allison's speech several speakers ad- veyed with compliments which were really enthusiastic. That the Doctor could awaken so much admiration among a very select class of educated hearers, is perhaps the best certificate that could be furnished of his rare qualifications for his present office.

2. A suggestion was thrown out, and afterwards elaborated, that, to make the system complete, an additional link should be added to the chain of educational facilities. From the common schools, any poor boy may compete for entrance to the High School, where, having once entered, he may obtain five years free tuition. A university training should be made available in the same way, by competition among High School pupils once a year. This would preserve what the Governor designated "an aristocracy of intellect."

3. There is no reason why all this wealth of reward should be denied to the female sex. The High School is for boys exclusively. No girl, however gifted and ambitious, may aspire to High School advantages. This is a reproach upon the system, and should be remedied at once.

We congratulate the citizens of Halifax on the immeasurable advance made in their educational work; and we cherish the hope that the valuable and weighty representations of this public meeting may help to bring about speedily a perfected school system.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

A few marriages and a letter have been overlooked for this issue. We are sorry. They will be in next week.

A few Pastors have reported upon their lists of subscribers. We hope to hear from all very soon.

The Dominion Parliament is summoned to meet on February 13th.

A copy of Harvie's Almanac for 1879 has been sent to us. It must be a very useful publication in P. E. I. land especially.

Rev. E. Brettle, we are sorry to say, has been quite poorly. He is deprived of the privilege he has long and so much enjoyed—that of preaching the Gospel. Will our readers remember in their prayers one who has long and faithfully served the church?

Two important failures in St. John, two in Windsor, and one in Charlottetown, besides others of lesser moment throughout the country, are in the papers this week. The number of failures in 1878 exceeds by nearly one-third those of the disastrous 1877 for the Lower Provinces. When shall the end be?

The *Guardian* issued its Jubilee number last week. We congratulate our confere on seeing an honorable completion of a period of great usefulness. The paper has been a power in Canadian history, and promises still to influence the Dominion for many generations.

Y. M. C. A.—The Rev. S. B. Dunn will deliver a Lecture under the Auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association of Halifax, on Tuesday evening Jan. 14th, in Association Hall, Subject:—"Laconia, or Short, Sharp and Shiny." Chair to be taken at 8 o'clock. Admission 10 cents.

Rev. John Brown has written us disclaiming all intention of reflecting on ourselves personally, and speaking kindly of our attitude in what has been a somewhat difficult position. His disclaimer we cordially accept; but as he is not disposed to modify his expressions in regard to Mr. Currie, we see no necessity for publishing the letter.

Several attempts are being made to bring the Canada Temperance Act into force. Among other places reported, we see united and intelligent action said to exist in Newcastle, N. B., Halifax and other important centres. Moncton is also urging it. Prohibition is virtually in the hands of the people, if they but choose to exercise their rights. Five years will see a great change in Canada as to the liquor traffic, or we are much mistaken.

Dr. Stewart, our Theological Professor, visited Windsor last Sabbath week, in the interests of the Educational Society. His sermons were greatly admired for their

finish and power. Those who remain of friends who sat under his profitable ministry in old times, received him with delight. It is generally felt that his services have given fresh impetus to the cause of our educational institutions and religious enterprise generally.

It is to be hoped that children in other places are protected from the cruelty of kindness which comes to many of them in these parts with Christmas and New Year. Children's parties, with the excitements of gits and the indulgence of sweets, leave many little pale faces and troubled brows. A strange—we fear an unfavorable—contrast to the plain social habits of our predecessors is presented in our holiday festivities. Will the children equal, in physical constitution the fathers? And is it possible to have a race morally robust who are infirm in body?

We have to acknowledge the receipt of an elaborate Wood Trade Circular from J. B. Snowball, Esq., of Miramichi, N. B. The recapitulation of shipments from that vicinity is as follows:—

	Veneer.	Tonnage.	Superficial Area, Decks &c.	Falings.	Timber
					Price.
To England	137	72,779	63,099,145	5,890,011	54
" Scotland	19	7,200	6,984,109	11,325	
" Ireland	5	25,738	21,040,829	132,963	6
" Continent	36	14,81	18,642,900		6
	241	120,687	105,793,792	3,03,131	66

Venor may be comforted. He predicted a very severe winter. Up to last week we were laughing at his prophecies. Now come the tidings that the thermometer fell in twenty-four hours to 29 degrees below zero at Winnipeg, 25 below at Fort Pelly, and 60 below at Battleford. In the Northwest the frost has prostrated the telegraph wires. In the Upper Provinces heavy snow storms and severe frosts have prevailed. Here we have snow, but pleasant weather. On Saturday morning the barometer fell to the lowest point we have ever seen touched and we have been studying that delicate instrument six years. The explanation we cannot give.

Newspaper enterprise in St. John is something wonderful in contrast with that of most of our cities. Not a religious service of any special importance escapes those vigilant reporters. They do betimes overstep the bounds of ecclesiastical nomenclature and phraseology it is true, but this is pardonable. For instance, it was announced last week that "Rev. Dr. Knight made a brief address at the Centenary Watch night service." This may be prophetic of the youthful associate pastor of Centenary. The name of Dr. Knight in St. John Newspapers would, however, awaken many slumbering recollections in the minds of a remaining few who admired the eloquence of one now succeeded by his promising grandson. With all its imperfections of detail, the churches owe much to the daily press of St. John.

An explanation, taking the force of an apology, has been expressed by the managers of our vice-regal household, as regards the order for ladies to be presented in low-necked dresses. It is said to have been an unwitting promulgation on the part of the Governor-General's private secretary. This we doubt. The same order was issued in Halifax, to regulate the receptions, and was designedly published. A rule which appears natural enough in England, is considered unnatural here. Our habits are as yet free from much of the extravagance of European court life, and we desire that they should so continue. Even the Romish Archbishop of Quebec has preached against the order of low-necked dresses. We forgive the Archbishop! The order has been repealed, however; but we have no doubt a useful lesson has been taught to both His Excellency and the Canadian public at this early stage of the new administration. We are willing to have royalty. We shall always welcome relatives of Queen Victoria; but we must preserve ourselves from becoming ridiculous in our own estimation.

OUR CHURCH WORK.

The Methodist congregation of Middle Musquodoboit, a few evenings since, took possession of their parsonage, and, after enjoying themselves for a considerable period, evidenced their respect for their beloved and eloquent pastor and his wife by making them several valuable gifts—*Herald*.

The Gagetown Methodist congregation held a concert and entertainment on New Year's Eve in Temperance Hall. Mrs. Duke, the wife of the pastor, was the presiding genius in music, and elicited great praise by her versatile and graceful playing. Mrs. Duke is an accomplished pianist and organist.