

Our Contributors.

OUR COLLEGES—THEIR CONSOLIDATION.

MR. EDITOR,—I have read "Our Colleges Their Consolidation," in your issue of the 12th inst., by Dr. Beattie, of Brantford. I am glad he has opened the question for consideration and, I hope, friendly discussion. With regard to the Presbyterian College, Halifax, Dr. Beattie is mistaken when he states it "is closely identified with Dalhousie College." The two are entirely different. One is denominational, the other is not. One is strictly confined to the study of theology, the other strictly to an "arts course." One is wholly under the supervision of our Church, by whom its professors are all appointed and paid. In the control of the other the Church has nothing to do whatever. The identity existing between them is exactly the same as that existing between Toronto University and Knox College. The Church insists that a student must complete his studies in Dalhousie before he is allowed to enter the study of theology in the Presbyterian College.

Under the question, "Is consolidation practicable?" Dr. Beattie presents the negative on what, no doubt, seem to be strong grounds.

1. "The historic origin and growth of the several colleges must be considered." We admit this fact, but do not think such consideration should be an insuperable barrier to consolidation. At the time of Union in 1875 had not each Church of the different bodies an historic origin and growth peculiarly its own; but did that fact prevent Union? True, a certain few did advance this argument, and remained out of the Union; but many have already seen their mistake and rectified it. If, then, the historic origin and growth of the several bodies did not prevent consolidation of Presbyterianism in 1875, why should the historic origin and growth of the several colleges prevent consolidation of these colleges in 1885? Each Church had its "ecclesiastical and historic moorings" to which it held fast. These were neither "ignored nor torn rudely asunder," but they yielded to the intense force of sound judgment when the future good of Presbyterianism was considered. Now that the Church is one, by all means let all these things be buried, and not stand in the way of consolidation, *if it is desirable*.

2. Mr. Beattie's second proposition is "The present position and location of each college is another fact of importance. Each college is rooted in its own constituency." Dr. Beattie does not tell us what "its own constituency" is. The Maritime Provinces support the Presbyterian College, Halifax. The congregations in the Quebec Presbytery, at the last meeting of the Assembly, were "cordially" recommended "to aid Morrin College financially by every means in their power." But where is "its own constituency" for any of the others? In 1881 the Assembly instituted a common fund to be known as the "College Fund, for the support of Montreal, Queen's and Knox. From this fund Knox was to receive \$10,000, the Theological Faculty of Queen's, \$4,000, and Montreal \$5,000, in all \$19,000, the amount required. This fund has never been done away with. On page forty-six of the last Assembly report we find the following amongst other recommendations: "That the common fund for the support of the colleges be continued," etc. From page forty-seven of the same report I quote this sentence from a motion ament the "common fund": "The General Assembly, therefore, earnestly commend the fund to the liberality of all the congregations in the joint constituencies of the theological schools at Montreal, Kingston and Toronto." I ask attention to the term used by Assembly: "joint constituencies." This is very different from "its own constituency," of which Dr. Beattie speaks. This common fund is the constituency in which our colleges are rooted, or the particular soil in which all grow.

Manitoba College is aided by the whole Church. The Assembly not only commended it "to the continued liberality of the members of the Church," but appointed collections to be taken throughout the Church for its support on the third Sabbath of January. In the matter of endowment each college does not confine its efforts to any prescribed limits, but seeks aid from all alike. "Its own constituency" is more imaginary than real.

3. "Each college has had, and still has, its benefactors. This is a fact which it is not fair to ignore."

It is a fact we cannot "ignore," and do not wish to "ignore." But exactly the same argument would hold against the Union in 1875. Each Church had its own benefactors; but when the Assemblies and Synods after mature deliberation declared their belief that the consolidating of the different sections of the Church into one grand whole would promote the interests of Presbyterianism, and when that Union became an accomplished fact, did these benefactors cease their liberality? Will the benefactors of our colleges be less true to the interests of our Church now? I believe they would be the most liberal supporters under consolidation.

Dr. Beattie says: "Ask the friends of any one of these colleges 'Are you in favour of consolidation?' and the answer will generally be: 'Yes; but you must not touch our college.'" This is the purest selfishness. It implies absorption rather than consolidation. It means "we are *the* people." Halifax, Montreal, Queen's, etc., must allow themselves to be absorbed in Knox or Knox will not favour consolidation. Montreal and the others must give up everything to Queen's or Queen's will oppose consolidation, and so with the others. This does seem like children's talk. "If you don't let me have my way I won't play." Now, if the friends of our colleges are going to act the part of spoiled children if they are going to discuss the broad question of consolidation from the narrow standpoint of self if they are going to view the future interests of our Church from the lofty pinnacle of "I" then, surely, consolidation is farther in the distant future than many had hoped. I have a better opinion of the friends of ministerial education. Let the Church once settle the desirability of consolidation and I am sure the friends of our colleges will never propose such arguments as against the practicability of the scheme.

4. "The graduates of each college have strong attachments to their own Alma Mater. This feeling is a perfectly proper one, and it is not desirable to kill it out." This is indeed true. Something would be wrong were it not so. But which should be strongest, attachment to Alma Mater or attachment to the Church? If by doing away with my Alma Mater I can the better advance the interests of the Church, it does not follow that I love Alma Mater the less, but that I love my Church the more. Our colleges must always be secondary to the Church. The Church must never stoop to a second place *must never become the servant of the colleges*. The Church is the great Alma Mater every minister must love supremely; and, while it is not desirable to kill out the feelings of attachment to any of our colleges, it is desirable to increase those feelings for our united Church to the highest possible degree. The question in this discussion should not be: "Will the particular college at which I studied suffer by consolidation?" but: "Will the best interests of the Church be promoted?" If we can, after full consideration of this question, answer in the affirmative, then we declare consolidation is desirable, and if desirable, the practicability of the scheme will be arranged. A forcible unification is not proposed, and if, after the desirability of consolidation is carried, "the sympathy of any number of our ministers and people with the interests of theological education" be broken, surely that sympathy cannot be very great in either quantity or quality.

5. "The property of each college gives it a permanency which cannot be overlooked." This is indeed a difficulty and, to my mind, the only difficulty Dr. Beattie has suggested. Could this be satisfactorily arranged consolidation would be easily effected. But while it is serious, I do not think it is insuperable. As great difficulties stood in the way of the Union of 1875, but the wisdom and good sense of the different sections of the Church overcame them. If the buildings could be disposed of, why could not the present endowment funds be amalgamated? In most cases the present subscribers would allow this. Of course, it would take time and trouble, but we would then have one fully endowed and thoroughly equipped college, instead of three or six partially endowed. The most zealous advocates of the new scheme feel that the disposal of the present college buildings to the satisfaction of all concerned is a difficulty to be met in effecting consolidation. Under the heading: "Even if practicable, is consolidation desirable?" Dr. Beattie suggests certain "main things which may be said for and against consolidation." With regard to those "in favour of it" we have nothing to say at present. Some of them are entirely new to me and

certainly not such as I would propose. "Against consolidation," he argues: "A greater number of our people would be directly interested in the college work of the Church under our present policy," etc. If the whole argument presented in this paragraph proves anything, it proves too much. If "the interest of the people in any of these places," where colleges are now situated "is greater than it would be if the college were not in their midst, but in another city," then the more colleges we establish the more wide-spread the interest becomes. Instead of consolidation let us multiply. Establish colleges in all our cities, and, as "people naturally feel a greater interest in that which lies near to them," the interest in all our cities will be greater than at present. The same applies in his next where he says: "A strong centre of Presbyterian influence would be established in a greater number of places." Then the more colleges the more strong centres. If the presence of professors and students, as well as the whole work of the college, is a rallying-point for the Presbyterianism of the locality, then let us multiply these rallying-points, and we will increase Presbyterianism and build up our Church more rapidly.

"A greater number of men will be secured as candidates for the ministry. It is said that when a college is near at hand it is likely that the claims of the Church in regard to young men entering the ministry will come before their minds, and that they will be more likely to give themselves to the work of the ministry when the college is not a thousand miles away." Distance from college has little to do with young men entering the ministry in the great majority of cases. Young men do not always attend the nearest college. Take, for instance, the list of students on the roll of Montreal College after the close of session 1884-5; and out of the sixty-five names thirty-seven live outside of the Province of Quebec. Some of these are from Prince Edward Island, some from Manitoba and some from sections in Ontario very much nearer Kingston or Toronto than Montreal. Not one of these colleges has a mere local attendance, as will be seen by looking over the list of students. In not a few instances students from our Church attend Princeton. Nearness to a college can scarcely be said to be a means of securing a greater number of candidates for the ministry. The influence of ministers and other friends have much greater weight in determining the choice of a college. "It makes it possible to give better supply to the mission fields, especially during the winter months, when they are often so destitute. This is held to be a strong point." The supply of mission fields during the winter months can scarcely be worse than at present. A few places in the vicinity of the colleges may be supplied; but the mission field as a whole is not reached by students during the winter. Take the mission districts of Algoma, Parry Sound and Muskoka, Manitoba and the North-West Territories, and how many Sabbaths during the winter did the students supply them? The Presbytery of Sarnia, by an arrangement with its members, gave much of the winter supply to its own mission fields. Chatham Presbytery says: "During last winter while the students were at college, several elders and other godly men did good service in the mission fields of the Presbytery." The Presbytery of Barrie states: "No winter supply. Not only winter cold, but winter silence reigns throughout a great part of this large mission field." The Presbyteries of Lindsay and Peterborough cry out for improved winter service. Indeed, nearly every Presbytery suffers from the scant supply given to its mission fields during the winter. Were consolidation to take place immediately I cannot conceive of our mission fields being more destitute during winter than they are now. Surely, Dr. Beattie does not mean what he says when he states: "As it now is, with centres at Halifax, Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto and Winnipeg, almost the entire country is accessible from these centres." The very opposite seems correct, and it is only very small parts of our mission fields that can be reached by the students during winter. They cannot leave college till Saturday and must return on Monday. Distances are too great, and the time at their disposal is too short to enable them to reach remote parts of the field. If "almost the entire country is accessible from these centres," then why so many vacant Sabbaths? why the present destitution? why the incessant cry for supply and why so many overtures from Presbyteries asking for a summer term in one of the colleges, so as to enable the students to supply mission fields during the