

## The Presbyterian Review.

Issued EVERY THURSDAY, from the office of the Publishers, Rooms No. 22, 23, 25 Aberdeen Block, South-East corner Adelaide and Victoria Streets.

TERMS, \$1.50 per annum.

All communications for either Business or Editorial Departments should be addressed PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, Drawer 2134, Toronto, Ont.

ADVERTISING RATES.—Under 3 months, 15 cents per line per insertion; 3 months, \$1.00 per line; 6 months, \$1.75 per line; 1 year, \$3.00. No advertisement charged at less than five lines. None others than unobjectionable advertisements taken.

Toronto, January 30, 1896.

### The Church Agency.

FOR several reasons, the Rev. Dr. Warden has been unable to decide the matter of the General Assembly's appointment as Agent of the Church in Toronto.

Upon learning however of the Rev. Dr. Reid's death, fearing lest there might be legal complications were there no duly appointed authorized Agent, he at once intimated to the Moderator of Assembly his formal acceptance of the position meantime, so that no interest of the Church may suffer. He has already entered upon the discharge of the duties of the office in Toronto, and until the meeting of Assembly in June will conduct the affairs of the Church there, as well as in the Montreal office.

He requests that all correspondence and money for the Toronto Agency of the Church be addressed Rev. Robt. H. Warden D.D., Confederation Life Building, Toronto and that all money and correspondence pertaining to the interests he represents in Montreal be, as heretofore, addressed Rev. Robt. H. Warden D.D., Box 1169 P.O., Montreal.

### Uniformity of Public Worship.

Now that we have before us the three interesting letters of Mr. Sandford Fleming and the full statement by Dr. Laing in the *Record* for January of the action of the Assembly's Committee on Public Worship, the church is in a position to form some opinion as to the programme of change that is likely to be proposed in the near future for its acceptance. The Committee is to be commended for its course in taking the whole church into its confidence as early as possible and will doubtless welcome such discussion of its proposals as may be fairly given them in this preliminary stage of its work. These proposals are certainly interesting and extensive enough to afford room for a good deal of consideration.

The first thing that strikes one in connection with the programme sketched by the Convener is that either the title of the Committee is a misnomer, or the Committee has greatly transcended its functions. It certainly has interpreted in a very liberal way its instruction to "take the whole question regarding Uniformity of Public Worship into consideration and report to next Assembly." Many members who were present when this somewhat non-committal motion was rushed through must be rather astonished at the size of the scheme which has come out of it. Like the mysterious smoke from the little magic jar in the Arabian Nights it has well nigh filled the whole heaven with its cloud. Judging from the Assembly minutes one would suppose that it had taken its powers rather from the overture of the Synod of Hamilton and

London than from the resolution under which it was appointed. Uniformity at any rate is about the last thing the recommendations of the Committee are likely to promote.

It is true they propose to prepare an order of service for the guidance of congregations in the hope that it may be generally adopted for uniformity's sake. But they have really introduced additional opportunities for variation in suggesting that the audible repetition of the Lord's prayer, responsive readings, the Creed and the Ten Commandments should be embraced in that order. These are novel features in our service and will certainly not be adopted by the majority of congregations in the near future. If any or all of them are adopted by some it will give us greater variety than exists at the present time. This applies to the Communion services as well as to the ordinary Sunday diets of worship. About the only points where greater uniformity is likely to result are in the occasional services—marriages, baptisms and burials—which are now for the most part either furtively or openly read from some book. Forms of our own may displace some of these and hold the field. The fact is that the proposals of the Committee are obviously dictated far more by the desire to improve our services than to make them uniform. To this in itself there can be no reasonable objection. Only it is better to call things by their right names. Uniformity after all is never likely to be secured by any Committee however wise, and would be but a poor thing if it were secured. A living church had better leave room for wholesome development of its form of worship as its needs from time to time demand.

Assuming, however, that the Assembly really meant the Committee to consider the best mode of improving Public Worship let us look at their proposals from that point of view.

There are three directions in which improvement may be attempted. We may elevate the character of the existing parts, or we may add new features more suitable for certain ends or we may substitute a liturgy. The committee have endeavored to provide something for all three.

They indeed decide that no liturgy in the common meaning of that word should at present be contemplated. But they nevertheless propose a liturgy for the use of laymen that they may conduct services when no clergyman is available, and also one for the guidance of ministers in conducting such special services as the Sacraments, marriage and burial. If judiciously drawn up something may come of these last, for there is a very widespread desire among younger ministers for help in that direction at the outset of their ministry. But the lay liturgy, whatever may be said in its favor, is likely to be still-born. As long ago as 1849 the Church of Scotland appointed a Committee for this very purpose. After struggling with the problem for nine long years they managed to get their report through, but from that day to this it has never been heard of.

The new features which they propose to add to the service—the audible repetition of the Lord's Prayer, responsive reading of selected passages, the recital of the Creed and of the Ten Commandments, are harmless enough in themselves and are being introduced as a sort of novelty for freshness sake into some of our Sunday schools and Young People's Societies. But it has yet to be shown that they can maintain themselves in the Presbyterian Church after lengthened use. They all had a place in John Knox's Liturgy, but after about