

THE PRESBYTERIAN PARLIAMENT.

REGULAR and stated representative meetings of the Presbyterian Church are an essential part of her polity, and are indispensable to her well-being and progress. The Churches that prefer other politics find it necessary to form unions, associations, district Synods, conventions and conferences that those actively engaged in the work of the Gospel may meet together and consult as to the wisest measures to adopt for the well-being of the Churches to which they belong and for the promotion of the cause for which they exist, that they may bear testimony to the truths of the Gospel and to seek its extension among all nations. However earnest the individual minister may be in his field of labour, and however vigorous the life and devoted the spirit of the congregation, both are benefited and refreshed by meeting with their spiritual kindred from all parts of the country. Critics may find several things open to question in the management and methods of our ecclesiastical courts. They may suggest alterations and what to them seems improvements, but no one has yet ventured to propose their abolition. The tendency now is to widen their scope and to bring them into closer harmony with popular sentiment. From the first, Presbyterianism has steadily resisted the temptation, apparently incident to ecclesiastical human nature, to make broad distinction between clergymen and laymen. Whenever and wherever this tendency manifests itself it is uniformly met with the principle of Presbyterian parity. In every General Assembly, as well as in other courts of the Church, intelligent and business-like elders take an active and influential part in the proceedings. The Assembly now in session is no exception. Men eminent in the business and professional life of the country are among its members, and several of them have taken a prominent part in its deliberations.

Those who have an acquaintance with the habits of Assemblies in past years still observe some characteristics common to ecclesiastical and other assemblages as well. After the opening it takes some time to settle down to a systematic transaction of the business. The first days of the session are usually marked by effusive and exuberant oratory. Hours are taken up in coming to a decision of matters comparatively of little importance. The proposal to enlarge somewhat the powers and functions of Synods, thereby making them more useful and lessening the plethora of business coming before the Assembly, might have been disposed of in half the time that its discussion entailed. Technicalities entered largely into the debate. Important constitutional questions were no doubt to some extent involved, and members of high standing and influence spoke well and sensibly on these aspects of the case, several of them viewing with apprehension any change from the established use and wont. In the manifest reluctance to entertain any new departure there is a safeguard against rash and impetuous changes, but when the proposal to give district Synods larger powers in dealing with appeal cases is granted, we shall be surprised if the Presbyteries in their consideration of the question do not indicate a feeling in favour of the movement.

Matters in the Assembly proceeded with much smoothness and cordiality until the time when the college reports were presented. The first of these went calmly through. Pine Hill was able to give an account of satisfactory progress both in the work done and in the financial affairs of the institution. Dr. Pollok and Rev. T. Sedgwick emphasized the need for an increase in the number of those who ought to devote themselves to the work of the holy ministry. They urged that ministers individually should look out young men giving evidence of suitability for the work, and Presbyteries have also a duty to discharge in endeavouring to encourage those who are willing to devote their lives to the ministry of the Gospel. It is gratifying to learn that there is a near prospect of an addition to the professional staff of Pine Hill. The retirement of Dr. R. F. Burns, who took a lively interest in the college, and who did so much to advance its usefulness and prosperity, has occasioned heartfelt regret to all connected with it—a regret which was shared in by the entire Assembly. Morrin College also had a progressive year to report. It was able to do efficient work, and has done fairly well in keeping its financial balance true. Through the timely intervention of a friend it was fortunate in this respect. Last year has for it been one of mourning. In the deaths of Professor Weir, Rev. George Coull and Principal Cook it lost three of its warmest friends and efficient instructors. The tributes of those who had studied under the first and last

named were timely and fervent, worthy alike of the speakers and of the memory of the departed. The Presbyterian College of Montreal continues steadily in its career of advancement. It is doing excellent work and extending the sphere of its influence from year to year. Financially it is in an excellent position, and has the prospect of being in a still more satisfactory condition in this respect in a short time. This college has another piece of good fortune to record. A general of liberal disposition and a refreshing modesty—for in these days of universal publicity he has the courage to withhold his name—offers to pay for five years the salary of an additional professor in the Montreal College. May the example of this estimable unknown be contagious among the friends of all our colleges.

Queen's University and College had likewise a good story to tell of excellent work done during the year. Its financial position was not quite so satisfactory as its best friends could desire. But here the first snag was struck. The peculiar relation of Queen's to the Church is not what some would like it to be. When the motion was made for the reception and adoption of the report, Mr. W. Mortimer Clark sprang an amendment on the Assembly that at once roused the spirit of discord. The desire that the appointment of professors in the theological colleges by the Assembly is in itself a very laudable one for which much can be cogently urged. The manner in which it has been introduced at this time is far from being best fitted to secure its impartial and dispassionate consideration. Unhappily it has the appearance of being pressed by what some, erroneously, are supposed to consider a rival institution. Mr. Clark at the outset, however, made a statement that ought to be sufficient to dispel that notion. It was, he intimated, entirely of his own motion that he had taken the course he was now pursuing. Principal Grant made a trenchant and able reply, but as the hour for adjournment had come it was unfinished, and the Principal of Queen's has the floor when the debate is resumed. It is to be hoped that the irritation occasioned by the manner in which this question has been introduced will subside as quickly as it has arisen, that a satisfactory settlement of it will be amicably reached, and that hereafter, as formerly, the brethren more immediately interested in our theological colleges will dwell together in unity.

MISSIONS, HOME AND FOREIGN.

THE Missions, Home and Foreign, maintained by the Church are viewed with great interest throughout the Church. That interest is evidently deepening. It is right that it should. It is for the preaching of the Gospel at home and abroad that the Church exists. That is its special mission and when the Church becomes unmindful of its duty in this respect its influence and usefulness is on the wane. It is a mistake, as some suppose, that there is any antagonism between the work at home and the work in foreign lands. The Gospel of Christ knows no geographical limitations. Its constituency is the world. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord." So the Church is not only justified in seeking to provide Gospel ordinances for the neglected masses in great cities, the settlers in new and remote districts in the older provinces and in the new and inviting fields extending across the prairies of the West to the Pacific Ocean. Nor is the obligation resting on the Church less imperative to preach the Gospel to the millions inhabiting the other great continents and the isles of the sea. There may be too great laxity in the discharge of this duty, but neglect of foreign missions cannot be justified by increased attention to home evangelization, neither can activity in foreign missions be pleaded as an excuse for allowing the lapsed masses to remain uncared for. "These ought ye to do, and not leave the other undone." The mission work of the Church is a unity, and the more fully this is realized the larger will be our efforts, and greater may be the blessings expected. Our Church is beginning to realize more fully the fact that Gospel work is world wide.

The Home Mission Report presented in a forcible speech by the respected Convener, Dr. Cochrane, showed that with undiminished zeal, energy and prudence the ever-expanding Home Mission work of the Church was carried on during the year. The efforts of the Committee are bounded only by the resources in men and means the Church places at their disposal. The good work accomplished by the Augmentation Fund was very clearly presented this year. It is apparent that the distrust with which

some are disposed to regard it has not yet altogether disappeared. Its purpose and mode of administration need only to be better understood to commend it to the full confidence and liberal support of the Church.

The Foreign Mission report was submitted in a judicious and clear speech by Mr. Hamilton Cassels, the painstaking and enthusiastic Convener of the Committee. Foreign Mission night was decidedly interesting owing to the presence and addresses of Rev. W. A. Wilson from Neenach, and Rev. J. Macdougall from Honan. The speech of the former was full of interesting facts relating to mission work among the natives of India, and though he wisely chose to speak of the obstacles to its progress was able also to tell of the encouraging and hopeful indications of better days for India by its acceptance of the Gospel. Mr. Macdougall gave a strikingly graphic narrative of the trials through which the brethren in China had to pass. That their lives were mercifully preserved is owing to God's gracious care, for they were very near joining the noble army of martyrs. The ministers and elders who were present on Thursday and Friday evenings of last week will have a stimulus to work more devotedly than ever for the extension of the Gospel at home and abroad.

THE CARE OF THE YOUNG.

Nothing of greater importance can challenge the attention of parents and ministers of the Gospel, at the present day, than the care of the young. To attain success in it, parents and ministers must work together. There is little hope without this. The minister may do his best, but if the home is deficient, he will fail. If there is not an avowed consistent religious life in the home, the children will not follow the minister, but the parent instead. Example outstrips precept, though the teaching be the very Gospel of God. If children grow up to be averse to the Church and to take no interest in spiritual things, in the majority of cases we shall find the cause of it in the home. What is the conversation, what the dominant atmosphere there? Is it religious or worldly? Would the child or youth venture to speak on religious subjects if so inclined? The themes of the newspapers, the doings of society, the party, the entertainment, the dancing and day school, the fashions, and so on, these are discussed freely. Indeed, every side of human nature often gets attention—but the religious. On this what silence, what careful reserve! And if a dear child, touched by the Spirit of God in the catechetical or Sunday school class, does timidly venture a word, how often that cold blighting expression "You are not fit" is the response. It is not always so. Alas! that it is ever so. In many homes, it would be impossible to find out from any religious conversation and godly living that the children had immortal souls for which Christ died. The body is cared for, so is the mind; but the soul, that which needs most care, is treated often with indifference or total neglect. The first place for a parent to be faithful to God and to his own is in the home. That secured, all else will follow. It is here parents and the ministers of Christ must work in unison, if our homes are to be saved.

MODERN INDIA.

I have often amused myself, during my solitary peregrinations, by imagining what a Hindu of the last century would think of the present state of this country if he could re-visit the earth. I have supposed that his first surprise at the outward physical changes had subsided, that he had got accustomed to the fact that thousands of square miles of jungle, which in his time were inhabited only by wild beasts, have been turned into fertile crop-lands; that fever-smitten swamps have been covered with healthy, well-drained cities; that the mountain walls which shut off the interior of India from the seaports have been pierced by roads and scaled by railways; that the great rivers which formed the barriers between provinces and desolated the country with their floods have now been controlled to the uses of man, spanned by bridges and tapped by irrigation canals.

But what would strike him as more surprising than these outward changes is the security of the people. In the provinces where every man, from the prince to the peasant, a hundred years ago went armed, he would look around in vain for a matchlock or sword. He would see the country dotted with imposing edifices in a strange foreign architecture, of which he could not guess the uses. He would ask, What wealthy prince has reared for himself that spacious palace? He would be answered that the building was no pleasure house for the rich, but a hospital for the poor. He would enquire, In honour of what new deity is this splendid shrine? And he would be told that it was no new temple to the gods, but a school for the people.—*Sir William Hunter.*

THE Rev. Alexander Middleton, assistant at the Barmy Church, Glasgow, has been elected to St. Margaret's Parish Church, Ayr.