

REUNION OF SCOTTISH CHURCHES.

Belfast Witness.

This good cause has made decided advance at the three Assemblies in Edinburgh. If we consider how slowly such bodies move, and how cautious and conservative Scottish Churchmen constitutionally are we must feel gratified that even so much progress has been made. For what took place at the recent meeting? First of all the Established Church cordially and handsomely offered terms for co-operation leading up to incorporate union of the three Churches in Scotland—a consummation devoutly wished by all right-minded Presbyterians. The Established Church has acted a noble part in this crisis ever since the decision of the House of Lords. With a motherly affection she opens her arms to embrace all the daughter Communions. Moreover, the National Church makes these overtures while knowing that the United Free Church continues the agitation for Disestablishment. In face of that agitation, so calculated to prevent harmony, the old Church still hopes for unity and fraternity. What happened next? The United Free Church proposed the usual resolutions for Disestablishment. These were carried, but observe the vote against was 167, being four times as large as the previous record. That is a fact significant of much. It may not show that the United Free Church has lost faith in the abstract theory of a free Church. But it does clearly show that the desire for union is overbearing the desire for Disestablishment. The vote shows that union is a nobler thing than Disestablishment; it also shows that the younger Churchmen of that Communion are weary of division, and look with "enervation on the Church of Scotland, and do not see any sacrifice of principle in the proposed co-operation, or even incorporation. More gratifying still is the fact that in a later sitting Dr. Henderson, Principal Clerk, in a high-toned Christian speech, said the conscience of Scotland had inspired this movement for union. His resolution to enter into negotiations with the Established Church was carried by the whole Assembly standing up, excepting two only, the mover and seconder of a narrow-minded refusal to make any approach to the National Church. Finally, the United Free Church Moderator, in his closing address, made reunion the theme of his serious and sympathetic remarks. And there is a reason. The reason is that the Scottish Establishment is like no other Established Church. In their Assembly, while this matter was discussed, sat the King's Lord High Commissioner, but he meddled not with the proceedings. The Assembly marches from St. Giles' to the Hall, escorted by military, but it is merely a pageant of respect. The Church of Scotland is a free Church in all essentials, its congregations are free to elect their Ministers, the Court is free in the exercise of Church discipline, it is free to alter the formula of subscription to the creed. The State Church is not perfect, far from it, but there is nothing about it to prevent the co-operation and ultimate incorporation of the other Presbyterian Churches.

What happened further? Why, nothing less than that the legal Free Church Moderator took the proposed union as text of his closing address from the chair. This little Benjamin, who is understood to abhor innovation as very near deadly sin, cleaving to the Confession in the literality of every clause, and worshipping in every detail as the fathers worshipped, even this Church, conservative of conservatives, feels the drift of the great national movement, the craving for reunion of the severed members of Christ's Body in Scotland. All these things are decidedly encouraging and hopeful.

Now a word on the discouraging features, things which still hinder, or at least threaten to hinder, full corporate unity. These are that each of the Assemblies laid down certain conditions on which alone they will combine. The Established Church says:—We will unite—if the principle be preserved of State recognition of religion. Well, there is a sense in which every Christian desires that the State should recognize religion. Probably in the end the Established Church's desire for that can be met and satisfied without any violence done to Free Church feeling. The Resolution is very cautiously worded, and leaves open a door of hope. The United Free Church said:—We will combine when Disestablishment has removed the only barrier that separates us. But, as already mentioned, this condition was voted against by a majority four times larger than formerly. This barrier, therefore, though not removed, is in a shaky condition. "That which waxeth old is ready to vanish away." The little Free Church (mostly Highlanders) said:—We will combine, but only on condition of the fully accepted Confession, and no organs or hymns. Well, the separating influences here can be left to the action of time, and to the experience of Church difficulties.

We close by saying frankly that we are not of those who deride Presbyterian divisiveness and dourness. We lament it, but see that it has its good side. Depend upon it, where men take religion seriously there will arise differences of opinion. Scottish Presbyterians have always been terribly in earnest about Religion, and this perferendum ingenium Sctorum has often caused secessions and divisions. But all the sections continue as orthodox as ever, and as good Presbyterians. The fault among them is that they think a difference of opinion demands separation, and another organized Body. That is a grievous mistake. People may differ widely, and yet remain in communion and Church unity. Here in the Irish Church we have people who would not more sing a hymn than they would pick a pocket. Very well, nobody meddles with them, they are in full Church communion with others of a different mind, they sit and legislate together as one Presbytery, one Assembly. If every difference is to cause division the end is disaster. There is a small town in Ulester where the Plymouth Brethren split up and separated, until at last one section consisted of one man and his wife, who met to "break bread," that is, to observe the Lord's Supper, by themselves in their own drawing-room! A better day, we trust, has come to Scotland. It was said freely last week "that if the Laity had this matter in hand there would be union in six months." Laymen do not split hairs, probably because they have not been to college, and learned to chop logic.

One never knows, says the Vancouver World, what Mr. Mackenzie King is going to turn up when he begins excavating in that dim, mysterious oriental world which has established itself in the heart of western civilization. Last fall it was a whole system of immigration contracts which he discovered. This time he finds that opium manufacturing is carried on to such an extent here in Vancouver that one man alone sells the stuff to the value of \$170,000 a year. China is making what looks like an honest effort to wipe out the vice of opium-eating and most people will agree with Mr. Mackenzie King that Canada should not linger behind. As he says, it should be made impossible to manufacture opium at all in the Dominion.

RESULTS OF A SERMON.

(By C. H. Wetherbe.)

Not long ago an article appeared in the Western Christian Advocate, written by Mr. William R. Chase, of Columbus, Ohio, in which he stated that about twenty years ago Bishop Thoburn preached in a camp meeting at Columbus. During the sermon a young man of dissipated habits came along and entered the tabernacle. Mr. Chase says of him: "What he heard was that, through the new birth, anyone and everyone had a new chance. There was a ray of hope in that for him. He determined, then and there, to let God, through the new birth, undertake for him. He went forward and was converted."

Columbus still feels that sermon, and will, for it was the time and place of the birth of the Union Mission Association. James Haig, its founder, and still its superintendent, was the young man converted. Mr. Haig soon felt that he ought to enter the ministry. He served in the pastorate a short time, and then gave himself to mission work. He went to the chief of the police of Columbus and asked to be shown to the wickedest section of the city. He found it, and in September, 1888, he opened a mission.

"In referring to that mission," Mr. Haig says, "the work was never more prosperous than now. During the month of January, just past, twenty-three souls bowed at the altars of the mission."

Mr. Haig also formed other branches of work, among them being five Sunday schools. That writer says: "It was a big sermon that Thoburn preached that day at Lancaster camp—big at least in results for Columbus." It was indeed a very fruitful sermon, for God used it to secure the conversion of an intemperate young man whom He intended to employ in an eminently effectual manner. It is not stated that anyone else was saved through that sermon, but if he were the only one it was a priceless result. No human being can fully estimate the worth to God and man of that one service. What a wide and deep stream of both present and eternal blessings has followed that hour's holy service.

This incident ought to strongly stimulate every pastor and his mission-ary who may read it. Let them not think that unless many are converted during a series of meetings, the work is a failure. Any sermon which results in the salvation of one person is a great success.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY NOTES.

Hamilton's invitation to the Assembly to meet in that city next year, gracefully presented by Rev. Dr. Fletcher, was heartily accepted, so the thirty-fifth meeting of our Supreme Court will be held there on June 1st, 1900.

The appointment of Rev. Childerhose, of Parry Sound, as successor to the late Rev. Dr. Findlay as superintendent of Missions in New Ontario is an excellent one; and the Home Mission Committee is to be congratulated on being able to secure his services. The work so successfully carried on by Dr. Findlay for more than twenty years will be continued with undiminished vigor by Mr. Childerhose who loves the work and knows well the field.

It is reported that out of a possible attendance of 498 commissioners, all were present except six. Winnipeg is a popular place at which to hold the annual Parliament of Presbyterians!