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THE WESLEYAN,

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SATURDAY, MAY 26, 1877.

CONGREGATIONAL STRENGTH—IN WHAT IT CONSISTS.

All Christians are interested in ascertaining the relative strength of their favorite churches or societies. No enquiry is more common than that which refers to religious bodies, their numbers, resources and capabilities. We ask respecting these for information; sometimes compare them with pride; occasionally parade our own statistics with haughty boastfulness. But on no subject are we so liable to make mistakes as on this. Appearances are fallacious, and never more so than in the externals of churches or congregations. Numbers do not always indicate strength; the magnitude of an organization may be, indeed, its greatest hindrance to usefulness. Wealth is not strength; lying in strong coffers it may be a drag and not a blessing. The same may be affirmed of individual congregations. The mere facts of a full house and a delighted auditory may mean very little as regards actual power and employment for good. They are often only contingencies. An eloquent preacher may draw a full house, from month to month, while the religious energy of his church may go on declining. In fact it may be seen that spasms of growth in congregations are, in nine cases out of ten, rather injurious than otherwise; while success continues, the membership have good heart, but when it dies away then zeal abates with it. The royal churches of this day are those which have grown gradually from little germs, as oaks mature by years of steady enlargement, shooting their roots deeper and throwing their branches wider.

This is not a subject which may be discussed or dropped according to ones inclination. It involves more than an answer to curious enquiries:—the strong church is the true church, the Apostolic church. No religious body can properly claim to be Christ's either exclusively or relatively, whose boast is only in appearances, or whose main argument is in history. Christ's church like Christ's disciple, is that which does his work most effectively, which is best adapted to the aims He has in view respecting this world. Apostolic succession is a figment when unsupported by Apostolic life and energy. Immersion in the early centuries, even if substantially proved, can afford a church no valid argument for sufficiency or superiority, if it be not aggressive. If it be aggressive, the other argument may then be allowed as a harmless conceit—nothing more. What form of Church government the Apostles originated does not matter so much as what form Christ owns and blesses today. If, then, numbers, wealth, pretensions, do not constitute a true, strong Church, what does?

1.—The true Church is that which has influence over the lives and daily habits of its members. Its voice proceeds from the pews as well as the pulpit, and penetrates to the home, the counting-house and the workshop. Eloquence on a Sabbath evening, delightful music a thronging congregation and a large collection, are very well; but what is the result? All that we have enumerated are means, not results. In political work, or any secular calling, ap-

pearances and numbers may be allowed to count: but religious enterprise must go beneath the surface, must revolutionize moral conditions and create new spiritual inclinations. Each Church has its own tests of prosperity. Ours are the class-room, the family altar, the character of our people in their community. Where these stand well the Church is strong; not otherwise. Where these are of daily growth the very best conclusions may be drawn; not otherwise.

2.—The true Church has large sympathies. All reformed Churches take the whole world into their evangelistic plans. At the reformation the missionary Spirit revived; after a century the Church declined in energy and the missionary idea died also; the Church needed another reformation. Every true Church lives in the atmosphere of the Lord's prayer—"Thy kingdom come!"

"Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith."

REV. JAMES ROY, A. M., we learn by Montreal news, has been suspended. His brethren have reported that they find his writings, in expression and tendency, much opposed to the standard of Methodist theology. Letters have been passing in the "Witness" (Montreal) between Mr. Roy, members of his congregation, and outsiders. These seemed to indicate an intention of forming some separate organization, in the event of Mr. Roy's suspension. All sincere lovers of peace must have regretted the action of the congregation in presenting Mr. Roy with an address, in the first place; announcing, by inference, their anticipation of an adverse decision by the committee which was then trying his case, and showing a disposition to influence the jury by threatening to leave Methodism should he be expelled. It has pained us not a little to find that Mr. Roy's subsequent action confirms the opinion that he and his congregation—or a portion of them—had some understanding as to the course which might be pursued in the event of his suspension. He has hired a hall and preached on the Sabbath to those who were disposed to follow him. This proves that, in Mr. Roy's judgment, the opinions of his brethren are not of sufficient value to weigh against his own; and that the Annual Conference, just at hand, to which the committee make their report, is not to be considered a sufficient tribunal for appeal and decision.

Very foolish conjectures have been advanced, as to the probable results of Mr. Roy's attitude. In one paper we see it stated that "we may expect a Methodist schism." In another that "a John Wesley Congregational church is to be established by the friends of Mr. Roy." As to schism, there has been, unquestionably, something of it already. How far it may grow, is a question which needs but little foresight. If the new organization is to be based upon Mr. Roy's suggestions—for his pamphlet, to our mind, consists only of suggestion—it will require much study to formulate a creed for it to begin with. They would be strange Methodists, surely, degenerate followers of John Wesley, who could receive Mr. Roy's notions of Christ's divinity in any other than a hypothetical light. A John Wesley Congregational Church, is something new under the sun. "The world is our parish," said the irrepressible founder of Methodism. Doctrines he had, clear and consecutive, which the poor might read and understand, adapted to all mankind, much needed by the perishing world, and not to be hemmed in by "congregational" boundaries. If Mr. Roy can go through the land, calling multitudes of the common people to his feet, offering them spiritual nourishment on which they can live and thrive, he may well adopt the name of John Wesley, and the world will bid him God-speed. But his pamphlet scarcely awakens the hope that he will do this; yet it is his pamphlet which, if we understand the merits of the case, forms the foundation of this "schism," existing or to exist.

Since the above was written, the agitation has taken a new shape. Mr. Roy turns upon the committee, accusing them, or the men they represent, with practising moral habits opposed

to the Discipline. In two instances—representatives of other churches have written in the "Witness," finding fault with the committee for alluding in their report to the doctrines of "the evangelical churches," and accepting Mr. Roy's pamphlet as an orthodox expression. The chairman of the special district was Dr. Douglas, a fact which is sufficient to give the outside world fullest confidence in the fairness and justice of its proceedings.

Two questions force themselves upon us in reviewing this unhappy secession. One respecting Mr. Roy himself. Was it quite honest in him to stay at work in Montreal after the sentence of his suspension was pronounced? He injures directly the Methodist Church by his pamphlet, and follows by using his influence to break up one of its prosperous churches. The other question refers to the Montreal "Witness." Have its statements and reports of this case been quite fair to the Methodist Church? We wish we could feel satisfied upon this point.

WOMEN PREACHING.—Says the Presbyterian Witness:—

The word of God distinctly commands that women should not preach in public assemblies. There is scope enough for their energies in the church and the family and in general society, without trenching on a field distinctly forbidden in the word of God. Emphatic enough; but is it true? Able men say it is; and other able men say it is not. If the word of God really placed women under religious disability, two or three questions would arise. 1. Was the prohibition to extend to all countries and ages. 2. What was the reason for placing one-half of the church under so serious a ban? 3. What is the precise meaning of the word "preach?" It is certain that women prophesied in old times: that Christ gave some of his female disciples religious commissions; and that women are among the most effective workers in the church to-day. If preaching be made to mean pulpit address, we imagine there are strong physical reasons why women will not obtrude themselves on the public to any great extent.

There is a class of advertisements obtaining great prominence lately in the newspapers throughout the country, about which we want to drop a word of caution. Usually they profess to offer some article of exaggerated value for a very small consideration in money or post-office stamps. Some of them are harmless; but others are "blinds" or "decoys," and made to subserve the vilest purposes in corrupting society. No respectable newspapers will knowingly give them room in their columns; but even the most cautious are occasionally deceived.—Pres. Witness.

That is so. Advertising agents are becoming positively reckless in the use of such deceiving means. At least a dozen stereotypes are in our office, setting forth unparalleled chances for buying articles of great value for a mere fraction. Any paper which publishes an offer of twenty or thirty dollars worth for 25 cents, just helps in deceiving its readers. The agents, moreover, commit the publisher of each paper, more or less, to the perpetration of a fraud, by intimating that "the subscribers of this paper may obtain" so and so. It strikes us that some advertising agencies are bordering on the criminal, and should be punished.

It seems "Uncle Tom" made a good thing of his mission to England. John Lord, writing to the "Christian World," April 24th, says: "So large a number of your readers having displayed their interest and zeal in the object of 'Uncle Tom's' mission to England, they will be pleased to hear that, after paying the mortgages and interest on his farm, and other debts connected with the 'Dawn Institution,' Mr. Henson will yet have the handsome surplus of two thousand pounds. And among a variety of presents made to Mr. and Mrs. Henson, they have each received a very handsome and valuable gold watch. On their behalf, I have very sincerely to thank a host of your subscribers who so kindly cooperated with me in relieving the worthy couple from the harassing and oppressive difficulties connected with their work in Canada. By the Cunard steamship 'China,' Mr. Henson and his wife will leave Liverpool this week for Canada, after the third, and probably their last visit to England."

PERE HYACINTHE has an audience of 4,000 persons every Sunday. He preaches in the amphitheater of the Chateau d'Eau at Paris.

TRAVELLING ARRANGEMENTS.—The Superintendents of Digby, Yarmouth and Horton Circuits are requested to perfect their arrangements for reaching the Nova Scotia Conference, and publish them as soon as practicable.

In quoting Romans v. 18. last week, in Mr. Hemmeon's letter, a line of type was unfortunately left out which gave the verse an awkward turn. We gave our readers credit for so good a knowledge of scripture that the defect would scarcely have been remedied had not the contributor made the request.

Applications have reached the Book Room for Circuit Account forms. These have been mailed to Secretaries of Districts, and will doubtless be mailed by them to Circuit Superintendents. Blank books for Districts have also been mailed to Secretaries, who will be kind enough to inform us if any have missed.

THE WEEK.

A curious word is that which English newspapers retain in reporting popular speeches—"Cheers." A British Cheer is known the world over to mean the united, spirited shout of a multitude or an army. But those repeated cheers in public meetings are sadly puzzling to the uninitiated. Are they clappings, or stampings, or what else? By reports of May Meetings this year one would imagine the multitude arose every five minutes or so to hurrah and wave handkerchiefs.

If anything is ever to be done in the matter of the Nova Scotia Education Office, we hope it will be well done. It has been said in an evening paper that the Superintendent alone is under a cloud. For our part we can see nothing to prevent a thorough re-organization of the whole machinery. Troublesome elements left in this administration would be certain to destroy another.

English news brings the intelligence that Dr. Pope, of Didsbury College, has been invited to take part at the Presbyterian Synod, to be held in Edinburgh next August. The students of Didsbury presented an address to Dr. Pope, early in this month, congratulatory of his receiving recent honors. He replied that he could scarcely have regarded his degree as complete without the address. This seems to be really the true justification of honorary divinity degrees—the verdict of a man's companions and ministerial judges.

As will be seen by our obituary records, Rev. J. Strothard has lost his father by death. Our good brother deserves, as he will we are sure receive, the sympathy of his many friends. He was from home himself an invalid when the painful intelligence reached him. The deceased was a true follower of Christ.

Our Roman Catholic neighbors understand the science of display. Last Thursday they filled Halifax with show and music, calling out the whole population as spectators. If an opinion of the relative strength of Roman Catholicism were to be based upon that Episcopal retinue and procession, one would naturally decide that the ancient was the more potent system. A priest was to be consecrated Arch-bishop; his invitation brought to the scene of religious service a host of clerics, high and low. If Romanism ever possesses unity it is on such occasions. It can do no great thing in a corner. Its Churches are built on the highest hills, decorated with every art which money can furnish, and opened with infinite pomp. The power which that church exercises over its subjects continues to be among the world's marvels. Fond of display by nature, Roman Catholic religionists are educated systematically to admiration of ecclesiastical finery. They are the most enthusiastic processionists in the world. If mankind could be subdued through their senses, numerous and abiding conquests would follow these Romish exhibitions. But the world of to-day only bows to agencies which reach the intellect and the heart.

PICROU, as will be seen by an extract on another page, adds another to the list of provincial heroes. It was heroic for a child to jump from the window of a locked room for the purpose of saving her brother. But what of the person who turned the key and left two children thus alone? Of all cruelty to children this thoughtless act of locking them in while their parents stray elsewhere, is the most reprehensible. Yet we have reason to believe it is too often done. There are children who never recover fully from the nervous shock of awaking to find themselves alone and helpless in a locked house. The venture may succeed a hundred times; but it may fail in a way to leave unending distress of conscience.

The Queen.—God bless her! has a warm heart. While those miners were imprisoned in a coal pit in Wales (elsewhere described), Her Majesty was anxiously awaiting the tidings. Is it any wonder that she is admired and loved the world over.

Experiments continue to be made in carrying sound by telegraph. The Telephone has succeeded in giving a distinct rendering of music at a distance of 145 miles. It is plain that great advantage will follow in the train of this latest scientific discovery.

In no other city of the Dominion can such a sight be witnessed as in Halifax on each Sabbath morning. It would seem as if the spirit of military activity which now pervades the countries of Europe, is here represented in part, excepting the collision of arms. The movements of soldiers towards the different churches, between 10 and 11 o'clock of the Lord's day, is specially interesting. Small companies march in the direction of several Protestant and Roman Catholic places of worship; but the great display is always in the vicinity of the Garrison chapel. Bodies of noble specimens of British soldiers, now dressed in blue, with red facings, and again in red, with dark facings, the new helmet on their heads setting them off to fine advantage, pass up and down the different streets. There is a spring and energy and compactness in the march of British soldiers, which always thrills the spectator. Occasionally a small company of marines and sailors from the dockyard, the latter with wide blue collars and trowser-legs, come in toward the close, as if to show the combined forces of British strength. Our brave fellows deserve good spiritual nourishment, which we hope is freely furnished to them.

Rarely have they had such good missionary May meetings in London as this year. The Breakfast meeting seems to have been particularly successful in speech-making. Dr. Punshon, we perceive, maintains a leading position without any indications of failure of his great powers. But the surest proof of prosperity is found in the collections. These show that the mission cause is gaining perpetually upon the intelligent sympathy of the British people.

Rumors of national troubles have not decreased during the week. The United States have Utah—Mormon Utah—on their hands. Law and Licentiousness have met once for all, and Law will conquer. Brigham Young will yield to Jonathan—or die. France is again in a turmoil. Its President McMahon, seems defiant towards the Republicans, and is thought to be aiming at supreme power, in the event of an European war. England is still drifting war-ward. Austria is also going in the same direction, apparently, Russia is moving her great forces systematically toward the Turkish frontiers and rivers; and Turkey shows no little metal in repelling her foes. Skirmishing there has been for some weeks; but no definite information can be obtained. Both powers repress all attempts at reporting.

LAMENTABLY DESTRUCTIVE FIRES have swept over two New Brunswick towns since our last issue went to press. At St. Stephen a fearful loss of property followed a fire, the origin of which seems to be a matter of doubt. We sympathize deeply with the sufferers. Z. Chipman, Esq., a most generous and public-spirited merchant, has, we see, lost considerably. At Woodstock, on the 17th inst., about two o'clock in the morning a fire began which, in a few hours, swept off all the stores and many of the most valuable dwellings in the town. What the recent policy has been in governing Woodstock, we are not aware; but years ago the system of economy, particularly in regard to preparation for fires, was not such as to inspire confidence among wooden structures. We see that an accident hindered the operation of the fire-engine. Surely our enterprising officials, surrounded by combustible material, would do well to live in readiness for this chief, dangerous enemy. But for those whose property lies in ashes, we have only words of sympathy. At the very best, theirs will be, for a while, uphill work.

There is something startling and exciting in the thought that property, if not life, are held in our provincial towns by so frail a tenure. The glories of to-day may be in ashes to-morrow. If ever discipline and drill are needed for emergencies of fire, they are in our existence; yet this is a contingency of which we rarely think, excepting when frightened into it.

OF THE WAR we can say but little definite. There have been battles, but none decisive. The European powers continue about the same in relation to the trouble.