

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

THE EDINBURGH PRESS ON THE
UNION DIFFICULTY.WHAT IS SAID OF THE LONDON AND
BAYFIELD CASES.

We extract the following pungent article in reference to the Church of Scotland difficulty from the Edinburgh "Courant" of June 28 :—

There has been a union movement going on for some time in the Province of Ontario about which our Pan-Presbyterian visitors did not tell us quite so much as they might have done at their late conference. Reference was made to Canada as one of the privileged countries in which all the divided Presbyterian flocks had been gathered anew into one fold. It was left to be inferred that this had been a spontaneous and purely spiritual operation. We were encouraged also to hope and believe that the Church was to gather strength from the happy reunion of its several members. Later accounts from Ontario do not bear out the congratulations which the Pan-Presbyterian delegates exchanged with each other on this subject. The union is now alleged to have been of the kind which sacrifices spirit to appearances. Far from having introduced unity and peace into the Church, it has yielded an abundant crop of heartburning and litigation. It turns out, as far as the Church of Scotland is concerned, to have been a disestablishment *coup d'état*. Ontario, though rather backward politically, is far enough advanced ecclesiastically to possess Rai yites. They are, it is to be feared, a rather strong party, and there can be no question whatever as to their audacity. They have some pliant tools in the Provincial Legislature, and last year a Unionist measure, adroitly framed in their inter-

est, was smuggled through in the teeth of such opposition as the Church of Scotland party had time to form against it. The Mowat Act was perfectly explicit in its provisions. It allowed Presbyterian congregations six months in which to decide formally whether or not they should join the Unionist communion. This was to be done by a plebiscite, the rules for which, like Canadian electoral laws in general, were not too stringent to prevent an active minority working up a vote in their own favor. In the event of no vote being taken, it was to be legally assumed that the congregation tacitly assented to its absorption in the Union ranks. Most of the Church of Scotland congregations being, from various sources, well endowed, the amalgamation became in practice a dissenting scramble for confiscated property. It is alleged that facilities were afforded by the Act for Unionists outside the Church forcing admission, and leaguering themselves with those within for the overthrow of anti-Unionist majorities. Acts not only of sharpness, but of outright violence are said to have been committed in connection with several plebiscites. When the Unionists succeeded no quarter was given to the defeated opposition; when they failed they appealed to the civil magistrate to give them the property of which they had just before been trying to deprive their brethren who differed from them. The Ontarian courts are full of litigation arising out of the Mowat Act which was to have caused peace and good will among Ontario Presbyterians. The Dominion Legislature has been made an indirect party to the conflict by its Act for constituting a local supreme court, with a view to debarring appeals to the Privy Council. It is hardly credible, however, that such a stretch of judicial independence should be recognised by the Imperial Government, and the victims of the Mowat law will no doubt in