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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3rd, 1891.

It is very doubtful if the temperance cause is helped by the manner in which it is handled in the House of Commons. No doubt some of the members are actuated by the highest motives, and there is just as little that others use the question for party purposes. The Session of Knox Church, Toronto, refused to sign a petition in favour of prohibition on the ground that the question is being used for party purposes. A few more such scenes as that enacted in the House recently may lead other Sessions to follow suit.

THE attitude taken by Dr. John Hall has been a matter of general interest. He took no part in the proceedings of New York Presbytery when the case was up for consideration. Although appointed to attend the General Assembly in Detroit, he did not go. In an interview he is reported as giving expression to his personal friendship for Dr. Briggs, and that the views of the latter contain nothing new, being only the reproduction of what has long been discussed in England and Germany.

DR. JOSEPH PARKER looked in upon the Synod of the English Presbyterian Church, and the *British Weekly* says he was impressed with its "strength, solidity and power to cope with difficulties." That certainly was a good impression for the Synod to make. The power to cope with difficulties is often the real measure of the usefulness of a Church. There are always difficulties of some kind to be overcome and a Church that simply looks them boldly in the face and passes on will soon find a difficulty in existing.

CANADIANS bulk largely in the Church courts this summer. Our old friend, Dr. John Munro Gibson, is Moderator of the Synod of the English Presbyterian Church. Dr. Patton, an old Knox man, is the acknowledged leader of the Conservative wing of the Detroit Assembly. In judicial proceedings and what may be called ecclesiastical politics, in the good sense of the term, he stands easily first in a Church of over six thousand ministers. It is pleasant to see our old friends acquitting themselves so well in such prominent places, but still more pleasant to know that we have any number of good men at home and are getting on fairly well without those who have left. If there are any other members of the Presbyterian family needing material out of which to make good Moderators, presidents of colleges, theological professors or distinguished people of that kind, this little Church can supply them.

DR. ROSEBRUGH, Secretary of the Prisoners' Aid Association, who has taken a most creditable and active part in recent praiseworthy efforts to secure needed reforms in the methods of dealing with criminals, has forwarded a communication for publication. It has reached us too late for this issue, but will appear in next number. The report of the commission appointed by the Government of Ontario was presented at the late session of the Legislature, and meets with the approval of those who took part in the Prison Reform Conference, held in November, 1889. It is found, however, that in order to secure the adoption of the indeterminate sentence system and conditional liberation on parole of juvenile offenders it is necessary to obtain the co-operation of the Dominion Legislature. For the promotion of this object it is intended to hold another conference this autumn, and arrangements are in progress for bringing the

matter favourably before the annual Assembly, Synods, and Conferences of the respective Churches.

THE squabble that disgraced a Church in one of our Ontario cities not long ago has reached the final stage. During this stage there is always just one question asked, and that is: Who began? Every Church row reaches that stage sooner or later. The public learn the facts, comment on them, and the belligerents chiefly interested, becoming ashamed, try to roll the blame on each other. "You began," says one; "no, you began," replies the other. Every Church quarrel reaches this stage, and if the belligerents had been as careful to avoid trouble in the beginning as they are to roll the blame on some one else, there never would be any quarrels to disgrace the Church. When bad blood gets up in the early stages of the disturbance it is considered brave "to fight it out." Later on the shame and remorse come in, and it is considered a duty to say "You began." If people who have little or no self-control would only remember in time that the "who began" stage is certain to come sometime, they would save themselves and others a vast amount of trouble and the cause of Christ no small amount of injury. Remember that no matter how a quarrel looks at the beginning the time will come when everybody will be ashamed of it and perhaps of those engaged in it.

THE Briggs case has many lessons but perhaps the most important is that a church should keep the appointment of Theological professors in its own hand. To veto an appointment is an entirely different thing from making one. To put a professor out after he is in is a much more serious thing than not to put him in. A professor, we shall say, is appointed during the summer or autumn. The Assembly does not meet until May or June of the next year. Meantime the new professor has taken his place and begun his work. Unless he has committed a grave immorality, it is impossible to put that man out without trouble. Somebody will be sure to defend him no matter what he teaches. Not only so but it fixes a stigma on the man to veto his appointment. Not to have conferred the status of a professor would not have injured him. There are thousands of ministers who can never be professors of theology. But to put a minister into a college as professor and then turn him out is a serious business. The right way is for the Church itself to appoint its own teachers and if they do not turn out well there will be the College Board to blame. The Briggs case will not be an unmixed evil if it teaches not only the American Church but every other Presbyterian body to do its own work and not delegate its powers and duties to anybody.

SO much valuable time is often lost during the earlier days of Synod and Assembly meetings in discussing mere matters of routine, that vitally important questions are thrown over until near the close of the meeting, and then disposed of by a mere skeleton of the court, or thrown over for a year. The Church courts do actually what as a matter of theory they would split the Church rather than consent to do. Let anyone propose to give twenty or thirty members Assembly powers, and the proposition would meet with a storm of opposition. And yet a mere handful of members transact most important business at the close of almost every meeting. Ask a Synod to delegate its powers to twenty members and see what the reply would be. Less than twenty members sometimes do important Synodical business. Who has not seen four or five men doing the work of a large Presbytery, the other members being at home or on their way there. A storm would rise from Halifax to Vancouver if two or three members tried to usurp the power of a Church court. Two or three men often do the work of a Church court and not a word is said. How ready even ministers and elders are to fight against things in theory that they never notice in practice. It may be a good thing to defend our rights: it is often a better thing to discharge our duties.

THE meeting of the General Assembly held ten years ago in Kingston was one of the most pleasant since the union. With Principal MacVicar to hold the scales with scrupulous evenness in the chair and Principal Grant as General Director outside and within, the meeting was enjoyable throughout and still lingers in the mind of many as a pleasant memory. Why should not the meeting

of this year be equally pleasant. There are no burning questions but unfortunately that is no guarantee for anything. Deliberative bodies are perhaps more likely to get "into a state of mind" over small questions, than over large ones. Meeting on historic ground, in a University city, a city noted for its genial cultured hospitality, the Assembly should be and appear at its best. It ought to be remembered that Presbyterianism is the largest thing in Kingston. Owing partly to the presence of our University there the Church is influential and conspicuous. The deliberations of the Supreme Court should be worthy of the Church and worthy of the Church's University Seat as well. We earnestly hope the meeting will be characterized by a goodness of spirit, and dignity, and urbanity of manner in all its proceedings. What did the Assembly think of Kingston? is one question that will be asked when the commissioners go home. There is another and equally important enquiry—What did Kingston think of the Assembly?

THE graphic pen and ink picture of the "Churchless minister" and of the spectacle too often presented by one who is afraid of becoming churchless is taken from one of the reports presented to the Assembly at Detroit last week. The original may be seen nearer home.—

The churchless minister must button-hole his friends, he must resort to correspondence, he must apply to vacant churches, and solicit hearings, and begin a process of canvassing, and sometimes, in the sheer and desperate strait for a living, submit himself to mortifications and personal humiliations that to some sensitive souls are tortures worse than the stake. Out of this evil has grown another. Recognizing the discouragement and difficulty of securing a charge when without charge, the feeling has more or less come to prevail that a minister must keep his field by hook or crook until he find another. Hence the spectacle of a minister holding on to a charge of which he is in possession, after his usefulness is ended, and almost everybody in the parish is wishing for the termination of the pastorate. It only needs the slightest consideration to see that here is a great folly and a great wrong.

Would it not be well for the Canadian General Assembly to devote some time to the earnest consideration of this matter before it grows into such "a great folly and great wrong" that legislation will be of no use. Let Presbytery Clerks and members who have recently been Moderators of Sessions in vacant congregations just stand up and honestly tell the Assembly all they know about the way in which the system works. If they do the Assembly will stop spending time discussing the deceased wife's sister and cognate questions.

THE following vigorous paragraph from the report of the Committee on Unemployed Ministers and Vacant Churches shows that our neighbours across the line have not yet discovered a successful method of bringing churchless ministers and vacant congregations into proper contact:—

On the one side our churches are open to all sorts of ecclesiastical prowlers scouring the country for a new field in which to exploit their vagaries and idiosyncracies, appearing with no proper credentials, driven from one city and fleeing to another, with just enough of external gifts to capture itching ears and to give promise of filling the pews, and so getting long enough lodgment to vex and fret, if not to divide and even destroy, the little flock. Our churches, too, in their strait of finding suitable men to minister to their need, and not knowing where to turn for authorized and intelligent counsel, have been frequently led to resort to the devices of the shop, and to advertise for a preacher, hawking through the religious press the peculiar wares by which they would attract candidates to their pulpit.

The Committee emphatically declares that "if our polity is right we have not worked it. If it is not right it is time we made it right." That is exactly what a large number of people over here have been thinking for a long time. There is a splendid opening for a Church legislator of good constructive capacity just now. The man who can devise a good system by which vacancies can find suitable pastors in a reasonable time and worthy ministers find congregations will render more needed service than the man who helps to revise the Confession.

THE DYING PREMIER.

RUMOURS for some time were afloat that the aged Premier of this Dominion was in an enfeebled state of health. These were so promptly and emphatically contradicted by writers enjoying his confidence that when the tidings came that he was nearing the end they created a sad surprise. With that indomitable power of will familiar to Canadians, and which has marked his public life, Sir John Macdonald faced the advances of the illness that laid him low. The warnings of physicians and the entreaties of friends did not deter him. He