

SPECIAL ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK REVIEWS

MR. DOBSON REPLIES TO DR. DUVAL

Editor, Dominion Presbyterian. — The issue of Aug. 24, which reached me only to-day, contains a letter from the Rev. Dr. Duval, of Winnipeg, complaining of letters of mine which lately appeared in your columns. I may say at the outset that the letters were not written with any intention of provoking a controversy with any one, and I shall not now enter into any argument except so far as it may be necessary in order to remove Dr. Duval's dark suspicion. Only for this I would not have troubled you again. I wrote with the object of entering my humble protest against a movement which I believe to be both unwise and hurtful. It is a scheme which will not affect Dr. Duval and the Union Committee, but which will affect principally rural ministers and congregations. To me it seems certain that it will bring irreparable loss without any compensating advantages whatsoever to anybody, without it should be a few people of another denomination, and even this is not certain. We have had no evidence of it whatever. If evidence has never been collected and laid before the church. It is not easy to submit meekly and silently to any revolutionary measure even if it were possible to introduce it in the most irreproachable manner. It is not reasonable to ask it. When a man cuts away a pound of flesh from another man, without giving him the most satisfactory reasons, he need not expect the other man to avoid wincing or to admire his generous intentions.

Another object I had in view was to show your lay readers how at least one rural pastor looks at the union movement and the grounds on which it is being promoted.

Dr. Duval's complaint grows out of a statement of mine regarding the constitutionality of the whole Union cause. I had stated that, in my humble judgment, the whole matter should have been referred to presbyteries or people first and that the decision to appoint a committee to negotiate for and facilitate a union without a mandate from them was beyond the powers of the Assembly, i.e., if the committee were really appointed with such powers as they have always claimed that they were. I do not think that they were; but taking their own view of their own powers I believe that the appointment was not constitutional. And if this be so, then the subsequent decision to pay the expenses of the committee was equally so. This briefly is the position. It is certainly not only a fair, but a necessary, subject for discussion. Dr. Duval affirms that the whole matter is perfectly constitutional and practically denies the right of any body to call it in question. He says: "I ought to know a little about it, having been pretty well educated in Constitutional Law and subsequently in ecclesiastical law and procedure; and I wish to say that, so far as I know, there has been no violation of it in the matter so bitterly criticized. But if there were such violation it could not be chargeable to the Committee, but to the Assembly." That is mere assertion. If it be correct there will be no difficulty in strongly supporting the statement. For it is a mere truism to say that anything which is constitutional must be explicitly stated; or necessarily implied in the constitution; or that it must be sanctioned by long, steady, and undisputed custom. If some one would take the pains to tell us under what permissive declaration of the Constitution the Union Committee received its appointment—with the vast power which it claims—it would forever silence all objections from this standpoint. Tell us where it is to be found, and we will ask no more. Or if there be any difficulty in finding that the church has made no constitutional provision for

her own abolition, if Dr. Duval, or some competent person will even assure us that there is good precedent for it, that the course followed is in accord with historic Presbyterianism, we will be sorry for having asked your readers to consider the point. At present a good many believe that the Committee's work and the powers it claims are without parallel in the history of Presbyterianism in Europe or America. If this view be a mistaken one it ought to be easy to convince your readers of the fact. When and where has the like been done before? Is the procedure in the Union case in accord with the principles of any free institution? Let the advocates of union name any free state whose government would dare to treat with another state for annexation or amalgamation under a new constitution, and a new name without first of all receiving the authority of the people.

If the act be constitutional why has not our own General Assembly always followed a similar course? It has not done so. On the contrary the Supreme Court has always been more than anxious to conserve the rights of Presbytery and people. It has been customary to remit to Presbyteries everything of importance to the well being of the church. Matters pertaining to the administration of the schemes, the amalgamation of church committees, statistical forms, supply of vacancies, and scores of less important concerns have been constantly sent down for the consideration of Presbyteries. But, strange to say, when the all important question as to whether the church shall continue to exist or be blotted out comes up, a committee is appointed which claims that it has full authority to treat for the obliteration of the church, without the voice of a presbytery. Everything of lesser importance sent down to the direct representatives of the people and the matter of the church's name, the church's creed, the church's polity, the church's very existence placed in the hands of sixty-four men to arrange for and to facilitate her abolition! If the Assembly all the way down its history has been acting constitutionally how is this break to be explained?

A. B. DOBSON.
Fordwich, Sept. 15, 1910.

"IT IS MORE BLESSED."

Technically speaking, I am not a commercial traveller, though, I occasionally take trips in the interests of commerce—for orders! I make a rule to attend church service whenever I am from home. One Sabbath I was in the town of N—— and, of course, went to church. Whilst waiting for the service to begin (I rarely miss being in my seat five minutes before the time of starting), I was interested in seeing a poorly clad ancient dame approaching the four score year mark hobble down the aisle. I cannot tell who created the impression, but I could not resist the feeling—go and visit the old dame. When the service closed I enquired who she was and got her name and address and the next day I made it my duty to call upon her. I found her a devoted Christian woman with a ripe Christian experience. It was truly a season of refreshing to hear her talk. Before leaving I said I suppose the minister occasionally calls upon you and reads and prays with you, in other words has worship. Well, Sir, the minister does come to see me and he prays, but never reads to me! I was somewhat surprised at this and said: Well then bring out your Bible and I'll read and we'll have prayer. She left me and returned with a small Bible with such type small that I could with great difficulty read myself even with the aid of my spectacles. So I said: Now come this won't do; bring the one you use yourself—never mind if it is worn and well thumbed,

it will be all the better! She replied: "That's the only one I have." "Why, my dear old lady, I don't think you can read this even with your glasses on." To which she replied that she had not been able to read "the word" for a good many years. I read to her The Shepherd's Psalm, also about the many mansions and a few of the "tit-bit" parts suitable to the case in hand and after a few words of prayer I left her.

I made the best of my way to the Depot of the B. and F. Bible Society—purchased a large type new Testament and made a second visit to my good old, yet new, friend. I presented her with the Testament. She examined it, and with tears of joy asked: "Is this for me?" "Why Sir, I can see to read it without specs," and hugging it to her breast she thanked the Lord, then me for what to her was a most precious gift.

I felt the Masters words were true: "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and retiring experienced the happiness of those who make others happy.—G. W. A.

CROP CONDITIONS IN CANADA.

The Census Office publishes, under date 11th October, a bulletin on the condition of crops in Canada at the end of September. The reports show lower averages of condition for the whole of Canada than those of a year ago, but the reduction applies chiefly to the Northwest provinces. In the eastern provinces a high per cent. is maintained for nearly all the crops, and quantity and quality are nearly as good as a year ago and better than two years ago. In Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta there is a drop of about twenty per cent. in the quality of grains and roots, but the threshings indicate that the yield will be larger for wheat, oats and barley than was promised at the end of August.

For the whole of Canada the condition of rye at the end of September was 83.59, which is ten per cent. better than two years ago and 2.39 better than last year. Peas and beans are nearly eight per cent. lower in condition than a year ago, but nearly ten per cent. better than in 1908. Buckwheat is about the same as last year, and 12 per cent. better than in 1908, whilst mixed grains are better by five per cent. than last year and by 19.47 per cent. better than two years ago. Corn for husking, compared for the three years 1910, 1909 and 1908, shows percentages of 85.12, 86.77 and 82, and corn for fodder of 89.82, 87.18 and 92 for the respective years. The condition of potatoes is 76.08 at the end of September compared with 90.37 last year, of turnips 82.09 to 83.34 and of sugar beets 83.13 to 81.02, whilst in 1908 their condition ranged from 68 to 74. Alfalfa has a condition of 83.30 for the end of September, and it exceeds 90 in the Maritime provinces and Ontario. In Quebec and the Northwest provinces it is not more than 70 per cent., and in British Columbia it is 83.33. All field grains in the province last named exceeded 82 per cent. in quality.

The estimated yield of rye this year for Canada is 1,634,000 bushels, of peas 6,444,500 bushels, of beans 1,089,600 bushels, of buckwheat 7,302,000 bushels, of mixed grains 20,106,000 bushels, of flax 4,314,000 bushels and of corn for husking 17,682,000 bushels. The average bushels per acre of these crops is 19.43 for rye, 16.69 for peas, 20.54 for beans, 26.98 for buckwheat, and 53.82 for mixed grains, 9.04 for flax and 53.82 for corn. Better averages for wheat, oats and barley are assured when the final returns are made in December than the reports for the end of August gave.