

DEATH OF THE REV. DR. WILLIAMS

Canadian Methodism mourns to-day the fall of one of its most beloved and honoured standard bearers, one of its most devoted chief shepherds and one of its wisest counsellors and guides. In a more than ordinary sense it is true that a prince and a great man is fallen this day in Israel. For half a century Dr. Williams lived in the love and confidence of his brethren—a love and confidence growing deeper and stronger as the years passed by. Early in his ministry he came to the front as a potent energy in Canadian Methodism. He had great native force of character, which he exhibited in his preaching, his circuit administration, and in the important positions of Chairman of District and President of Conference, to which he was early and repeatedly called, and as General Superintendent.

Dr. Williams was a fine example of a type of Methodist preachers which is fast passing away—men who before the days of railways with Bible and saddle-bags rode through the country, enduring toil and hardship, and laying broad and deep and stable the foundations of the Christian civilization of this new nation. Dr. Williams' aggressive energy of character made him seem at times abrupt in manner, but those who knew him best knew how sound and sweet and true he was at the very core of his heart. He was a man of strong convictions, and staunchly maintained what he conceived to be right; but even in the most earnest debate he was without a spark of bitterness, and no differences of opinion on questions of policy cast the least shadow of a shade on the warmth of his private friendships. Yet strong as his convictions were, he was not a man who never changed his views nor yielded to the logic of events. The freshness, vigour and comprehensiveness of his mind are seen in his relation to the question of the recent Methodist union in this country. While in favour of

union, he was strongly opposed to the proposed basis of union, and was a pronounced leader of the opposition to that basis, both in his own Conference and at the Belleville General Conference. But when this basis was once adopted he ceased all opposition. He at once began to adjust himself to the changed condition of things. It was not without a struggle that he gave up his cherished convictions. He said to the present writer that he never went to bed all night after the decisive action of the General Conference. He spent the whole night on his knees in prayer. When on the following morning in the first meeting of the united General Conference he was called upon to pray, the fervour, the power, the divine unction of his prayer made us feel that he had been talking face to face with God. From that moment, with characteristic heartiness and energy, he devoted himself to the task of perfecting the organization of the newly-formed Church; and it was he who was elected Chairman of the provisional General Conference—a signal proof of the confidence of his brethren of the integrity of his purpose and of the transparent honesty of his soul.

When little more than a year after, his life-long friend, Rev. Dr. Rice, with whom he had had many sturdy differences of opinion, was summoned from labour to reward, it was Dr. John A. Williams who was selected to succeed him—a selection which was fully confirmed at the next General Conference. Dr. Williams entered upon the duties of his office with tireless energy; travelling ceaselessly throughout every province of the Dominion and in the island of Newfoundland. No diocese in the world, we think, is so vast as that presided over by the two General Superintendents of the Methodist Church of Canada; nor is there any demanding more long and arduous journeys, more frequent and important delibe-