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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 7, 1883.

THE Port Hope "Times" says: "The frequency of domestic scandals in which ministers play an important part is becoming notorious." The strict accuracy and charity of this statement will be greatly appreciated by the ministerial brotherhood and the Christian community generally.

THE attention of readers is called to a circular which appears in this issue by the Moderator of Assembly, appointing Sabbath the 10th inst. for special prayer for colleges, and also for the youth of the Church generally. The Moderator has very properly suggested that sermons appropriate to these subjects be preached in the various congregations and mission stations of the Church. The wisdom and importance of this suggestion will commend it to the favourable notice of ministers throughout the Church.

CO EDUCATION is clearly one of the questions that must be decided in the near future. The medical students at Queen's may have settled it for a time so far as they are personally concerned, but it will not keep down. A petition signed by many prominent citizens and distinguished educationists was presented to the Legislative Assembly the other day, asking that ladies be admitted to the lectures in University College. A number of ladies have already asked admittance to the College, but they were officially informed that their presence would not be "compatible with due order and discipline in the institution." Not long ago the President of one of the largest American Colleges answered a similar application by saying that his institution would be opened to ladies as soon as the ladies' colleges were opened to young men. How would it do to test the question in that way in Ontario? Are our Methodist friends ready to admit young men to their ladies' colleges in St. Thomas, Hamilton, Whitby, and other places? Supposing a few nice young men were admitted to our colleges in Brantford and Ottawa! That would be co-education. One of the arguments used in favour of admitting ladies to the University, is that they are intellectually equal to the young gentlemen, and could therefore profit by the lectures. Quite likely. But some nice young men might perhaps be found who are equal in point of intellect to the young ladies in our excellent institutions in Brantford and Ottawa. It is hard to say what our Local Parliament may do about it. At present candidates are too busy with the elections to say anything. We may hear more of the movement in the near future.

MR. LYLE brought an overture before the last meeting of the Hamilton Presbytery in favour of term-service in the eldership. We have not heard the particulars but presume the change sought is to have elders elected for a number of years. As matters now stand the ruling elder occupies a much more permanent position in a congregation than his minister. If a minister loses his influence in a congregation, his removal follows almost as a matter of course. If on trial it is found that he cannot do the work required of him, he almost invariably moves. In fact, he moves or is moved quite frequently because a few people—perhaps the worst people in the congregation—clamour for his removal. It is far otherwise with an elder. He may have lost his influence for good, though he may have a good deal for evil; he may be totally unfit for the

discharge of any duty; his position may have so changed that if out of office, not half a dozen members would vote for him; he may be an eye-sore and drawback to the entire congregation, and yet unless he resigns himself—which he hardly ever does—there is no way of getting rid of him. Now why should it be so easy to change a minister, and so difficult to change an elder? The fact that a man "once an elder is always an elder" is not of any importance. He is not necessarily always an elder in the same congregation, any more than a minister is always pastor of the same congregation. Practically the change would simply amount to this: good elders would always be re-elected, and would be strengthened and encouraged by knowing that they had the confidence of their fellow members; useless elders or elders worse than useless would have to give way to better men. Worse things than that might happen. Without committing ourselves to the change, we ask Mr. Lyle to let the Church consider his overture. A good discussion can do no harm.

OUR Methodist friends are considerably exercised on the Union question. Meetings are being held in all parts of the country, and the press, secular and religious, teems with contributions for and against the proposed basis. How the agitation will end, no one at present is able to tell, but one thing is certain—the question is being thoroughly discussed. We venture to make a prediction. If the union is formed on the present or any other basis, both union and anti-union men will be partially disappointed. "United Methodism" will not prove as great a boon as sanguine unionists predict, and it will not do as much harm as excited anti-union men dread. This, at least, has been the experience of Presbyterians after two unions. Those among us who thought union would be a grand panacea for every ill have of course been disappointed. Those who thought union would cripple, if not ruin Presbyterianism, have found that their fears were unfounded. The fact is the essential conditions of the fight against sin are not changed by organic unions. The great fight remains essentially the same. Our unions have, on the whole, worked well, but how many ministers have found that union has made any practical difference in their daily work? It will be exactly so with our Methodist friends. If they unite there will be a tremendous demonstration when the union is consummated. This will be followed by a considerable amount of friction when the immense ecclesiastical machinery is being adjusted to the new conditions. Then a calm will ensue, and everybody will have to work as hard as ever, and nine out of every ten workers will not know that the union has been formed, unless he stops to think about it. Our good neighbours will not consider us impertinent if we say, "Take it coolly, brethren. Union, if you do get it, will not make half as much difference as you think."

CREED REVISION.

IN the February number of the "North American Review" there is a noteworthy article on "The Revision of Creeds." It is not an elaborate discussion by a theorist on a question of growing interest to the Christian Church, but a brief record of the well-considered opinions of different writers, representing several branches of Evangelical Protestantism. Each writer speaks from personal knowledge of the state of opinion within his own denomination. The contributors to the paper may justly be called representative men. They are well known, not only in their own communions, but their names and writings are familiar to Christian people generally. For the Episcopal Church, Dr. Henry C. Potter speaks; Presbyterianism has Dr. Howard Crosby for its spokesman, the Baptist body has an exponent in Dr. J. B. Thomas; Dr. J. O. Peck represents the opinion of the Episcopal Methodists; Dr. G. F. Kretel, those of the Lutheran Church; and Dr. T. W. Chambers makes the statement on behalf of the Reformed Dutch Church. Thus, it will be seen that these men individually may fairly be reckoned to as possessing the confidence of the religious bodies they represent. They enjoy a reputation for scholarship and good common sense. On a question of this nature they are entitled to a respectful hearing.

In certain quarters at present there is a clamorous cry against creeds, against dogma, even against all positive religious teaching. It is a confused and

somewhat inarticulate cry. It has a far larger volume of sound than meaning. Here and there some earnest thinker, in his search after truth, becomes bewildered, and the authorized formulas of belief seem barriers to his progress, and his passionate inculcation of creeds may be regarded as the honest expression of what he feels. Others again, listening to the confused and contradictory voices occasioned by the conflict of opinion, sincerely believe that the symbols of the Christian system may be considerably simplified, and their formal expression reduced to what is only essential, in order to commend them to more general acceptance. There may in these days be some who, longing for notoriety, catch at the cry for the demolition of creeds with no very definite aim, beyond being regarded as having attained to the doubtful glory of ecclesiastical demagogues. Such may contribute not a little to the unsettling of men's minds, and increasing meaningless clamour, but these do not, as a rule, aid in the removal of difficulties or in shedding light on perplexing questions. Considering how strong the expressions of opinion for the simplifying and shortening of Church creeds outside her pale may be, it is astonishing how little agitation there is within for a modification of her formularies. In relation to this question, there has been more or less discussion among the various branches of the Presbyterian family; but, for the most part, these debates have been occasioned more by accidental circumstances than by the felt need for a settlement of the question by itself. It has not grown up as a spontaneous movement, requiring careful deliberation and authoritative action. Rather, in certain cases where individual opinions have come into seeming conflict with authorized standards in the heated temper of debate, the rigid character of the creeds has occasionally been called in question. Thoughtful men in various branches of the Presbyterian Church have pronounced in favour of creed revision, but the question is in abeyance, and likely to be for some time to come. This may be considered a favourable circumstance. An undertaking of such magnitude ought not to be entered on rashly. It should grow, and not be forced. It is better that it is thought desirable to come slowly, as the result of calm, earnest and prayerful study, and not emerge from the fiery heat of acrimonious contention.

The only writer in the group above named who pleads for revision of the creeds is Bishop Potter. He speaks in intelligible terms and in an excellent spirit, though in the statement of his case there is nothing new. He answers the query, "Is it not a fact that creeds differ greatly from the opinions of a majority, or at least of many, of the people who hold them?" in the affirmative. Holding this opinion—and opinion it is rather than fact—he properly concludes that such a state of things causes much disadvantage and injury. Yet he proposes no adequate remedy for so undesirable a condition. He insists forcibly on the practical aspect of Christian faith, and this is well, but it is not all. Revealed truth appeals to the understanding as well as to the heart, and the generalization of truth is a necessity of the intellect. Dr. Potter seems hopeless of the attainment of a satisfactory revision of the creeds.

In striking contrast to these views are those of Dr. Howard Crosby. He states, with a positiveness quite refreshing, that he knows of no creeds differing from the beliefs of those that hold them, excepting in very small and unimportant points, and he adds that he speaks only for his own creed—the formulas of the Presbyterian Church. In relation to the essential doctrines, he believes that substantial unity exists, and that in the various Churches there is a growing doctrinal approximation. He concludes his testimony with this crisp statement: "The Bible and the creeds have been assailed, in the name of science, by worldly men in every age, but they have never been harmed, and never will be."

Dr. Thomas, on behalf of the Baptists, considers that the discrepancies between creed and opinion are greatly exaggerated, for which statement he gives several reasons. He is also of opinion that the Churches, formerly most divergent, are now much nearer to each other than they were. Like Dr. Potter, he does not lay much stress on symbolic expression. The least satisfactory of the contributions to this symposium is the one by Dr. Peck, who speaks on behalf of the Episcopal Methodist Church. It is to be hoped that he is more accurately conversant with the creed of his own Church than he seems to be