

THE Home and Foreign Record

OF

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF THE LOWER PROVINCES.

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THE PRESENT ASPECT OF PRESBYTERIANISM.

Presbyterianism is neither dead nor dying. Never before was it so full of life and vigour as at this moment. The same good news come to us from England, Scotland, Ireland, from the United States, from the distant isles of Australasia,—of a drawing together of the different branches of the Presbyterian family, and of extraordinary zeal and success in evangelistic and missionary work. Hearing this good news, and feeling around us the warm pulsations of living Presbyterian hearts we may well thank God and take courage.

While other churches have to contend with deadly foes in their own bosoms, while those who minister in their pulpits and eat their bread are in many cases the champions of Romanism, Ritualism or Rationalism,—all the branches of the Presbyterian Church are pure in practice and sound in doctrine, holding by the Head, acknowledging the supreme authority of the only rule of faith. Wherever false doctrines, or practices at variance with the word of God, manifest themselves within the Presbyterian Churches, the application of discipline is prompt and sure. And the testimony which we utter against errors prevailing outside of our Churches is clear and strong.

Although there is no formal organized union between all the branches of the Church, yet there is a substantial union of the most powerful and influential character. The Westminster Confession and Catechisms are the common symbol of the Presbyterian family from Australia and

New Zealand to Nova Scotia and British Columbia. There never was a time when so many adhered heartily to this "Form of sound words." The same family memories and traditions are dear to us all. We claim a common interest in Calvin and Knox, and Henderson and Rutherford, in the Erskines, and Browns, and Chalmers, in the Alexanders, and Hodges, and Barnes. Party spirit is dying the death, and above its ashes rises a strong and healthy feeling of christian brotherhood.

In Ireland the Presbyterian Church is undergoing what is tantamount to a disestablishing process. Yet we hear no wild wail of unreasoning anger or despair. Our brethren are not disheartened, they know that many of the noblest victories of Presbyterianism have been achieved in the face of the antagonism of the civil power. So, they pursue their labour of love at home and abroad—among the wilds of Popish Connaught, and in India, Syria, and in polished continental cities.

In Scotland the churches that are free are drawing closely towards each other, seeing eye to eye, patiently preparing the way for a harmonious Union, and in the meanwhile manifesting all the signs of living branches of the true vine. Their organizations are more thorough than ever before; their active ministers are better paid; their infirm ministers are better cared for; their missions to the heathen at home, to the Jews and to the heathen far away, are extending and multiplying.—Vital religion, judging by the only rule on which we can safely rely, is prospering.