

as Mr. Wellwood of Minnedosa, Mr. Smith of Grand Valley, and Mr. Hodnett of Birtle, have to travel over trails extending twenty and thirty miles, with no house on the road where they can rest or lodge. Not infrequently man and beast are mired and drenched with rain, with no alternative but to hasten on as best they can, to the end of their journey. This, it is hoped, will soon, to some extent, be changed by the completion of the railway to such distant fields.

It is exceedingly desirable that a fund should be raised to aid in the erection of church edifices, at points which are destined to be important centres of trade and population. Preaching from house to house is a necessity at present, but such a mode of conducting our work cannot effectively advance the cause of Presbyterianism in the North-West.

The Manitoba Presbytery seem thoroughly alive to the necessities of this great mission field, and are now endeavouring to develop the liberality of the people in the most systematic manner. During the present summer, deputations were appointed for this purpose to all the stations, and answers sought to the following questions:

1. How much will your station raise for the year beginning April 1st, 1881, to support your minister?
2. Have you a Managing Committee appointed? Is it active? Is there a Treasurer? What arrears are now due, if any?
3. Does the meeting pledge itself to raise \$— for the year?
4. Is a collection taken upon the Sabbath?
5. Has your station sent statistics to the Presbytery Clerk last year?

The Portage la Prairie church, under the pastorate of the Rev. Allan Bell, is perhaps, next to Winnipeg, the most prosperous in the Province, of our new organizations. Formerly it was connected with Burnside, now it stands alone as a self-sustaining congregation, giving its minister a stipend of \$1,000 per annum. The old log church, which cost them about \$300, has just been sold to the Canada Pacific Railway for \$3,000; and next Thursday the foundation stone of a fine new building, to hold 500, and cost some \$8,000, is to be laid. The membership is now seventy, and contains many of the representative men of the town and district. The Sabbath school numbers 150 children, with an effective staff of teachers. The town itself, since the definite locating of the railway, has sprung into importance, and speculation in land is at fever heat. It is the gateway to the granary of the great North-West, and must of necessity continue to be a thriving and busy centre, second only to that of Winnipeg.

The question of dividing Knox Church, Winnipeg, into two congregations, to which I referred in my last, is still unsettled. Different opinions prevail as to the wisest course. A very large number desire to sell the present church and land, for such a sum as \$50,000, and divide the amount (less the debt on the present building) between the two congregations for churches to be erected in suitable parts of the city; others dislike the idea of selling the present building, and would prefer to hold it for one of the proposed congregations, and give aid to the other newer congregation; while a third party are opposed at present to a severance, and would call one minister only, for the present congregation of Knox Church, leaving to the future the question of another organization. To my own mind it seems the wisest course (if two congregations are needed) to call two men at once, and not postpone a division until after a pastor has been settled. To do so would be unfair to the minister called to the united congregation.

W. C.

Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, July 25th, 1881.

CHURCH WORK AND CHURCH WISDOM.

Through the kindness of the Convener, the "Report on the Welfare of the Youth of the Free Church of Scotland," has just been received. It presents this department of work in a light that challenges reflection, comparison and wonder. We have had hints, and isolated facts about this work through the press; but the scheme has not been given to this country in any full and comprehensive form. We propose to do so in a careful summary.

It has three divisions—Junior, Senior and Special. The junior subjects of study during the past year were "The Life of David;" a selection from the "Shorter Catechism." The subjects for the senior section

were: "The Tabernacle in the Wilderness;" portions of the "Shorter and Larger Catechism;" "The Sacraments." The special division embraces one subject of examination, and essays on: "The Prophecy of Zechariah;" "Elijah;" "The English Bible;" "The Foreign Missions of the Free Church from their Foundation, 1830;" "Hugh Miller."

The questions set, and the reports given in by examiners, require to be carefully read to be appreciated; and the importance attached to the work as a whole is manifest from the men who have given time and attention to further its interests—Professors Blaikie, Salmond and Macgregor, Dr. Marcus Dods, with Messrs. Thomas Morrison and Maurice Patterson of the Normal Colleges of Glasgow and Edinburgh, with Dr. White of Free St. George's as Convener.

The following quotation from a letter received from the Secretary of the Committee, will best indicate the extent and interest of the work:

"While at the examinations no fewer than 1,615 competitors presented themselves, and about 200 essays were sent in, yet this by no means represents the enormous amount of work done throughout the Church in connection with this scheme. At least 25,000 to 30,000 young people are believed to have been studying the subjects prescribed. The simple statement of this fact is surely enough to shew the importance of the scheme."

In all these sections of work and examination, there has been distributed in prizes of money about \$1,500, besides many prizes in books, yea, even medals, and certificates signed by the Moderator of the General Assembly that year. The following is the deliverance of the late Assembly on the report:

"They rejoice in the continued and increasing acceptance with which this scheme is regarded throughout the Church, as shewn by the largely growing number of competitors for its prizes; approve of the scheme for the coming year; and authorize the Committee to appeal to the members of the Church for funds for the prizes and expenses; which appeal they recommend most strongly to the liberal support of all friends of the youth of the Church."

This certainly manifests a form of Church life and work that may without fault be coveted; and the decision of the supreme court sets forth an earnestness and wisdom that might safely be imitated. Twenty-seven Presbyteries, each of which have twenty competitors for examination, being nine over last year, with the same number, and many other Presbyteries with fewer—indicate a work for Presbyterian interest and oversight that must tell on the future strength and efficiency of the Church. The coming parents, office-bearers and instructors of youth will, in intelligence and scriptural knowledge, certainly not be behind those who have gone before them.

THIS WORK, IN A SOMEWHAT SIMILAR FORM, has been presented to our Church at two successive Assemblies by the report of the Sabbath School Committee; in the first instance it was treated coldly and with dubiety, as impractical, cumbrous, and invidious in its proposal to recognize work and merit in examinations; indeed, in the submitting of the scheme at Montreal, 1880, one distinguished member of that Assembly moved that it be held as read.

Leave was given to try the scheme, and the record of the trial is before the Church, and we need not repeat the encouragements to go forward.

But in a Church like ours, where there are ever-recurring endeavours to introduce legislation on abstract issues, and disturbing fears as to results that are to follow certain measures, upon the grand economic maxim that "a stitch in time saves nine," the tendency is to proceed *instantly* to arrest carefully considered plans of work, so that the judgments and fears may be relieved by ecclesiastical action. On grounds very much in this line, our Assembly were led to enact that the Committee be intrusted with "The Sabbath School Teacher's Course of Study"—

1. Shall not make provision for giving certificates of merit.
2. They shall not report to the General Assembly the names of those who pass the prescribed examination, on the prescribed subjects.
3. They shall not give prizes in money or books for attainment in these subjects.

The contrast between this legislation and that of the Free Church of Scotland in the interests of the youth, as presented above, is clear.

Why should our Church have come to a conclusion so directly negative to the foregoing? The following is the line of pleading:

1. Because competitive examinations are not "an unmixed good."

2. Because it was unseemly that "the highest court of the Church should be made an Examining Board for boys and girls."

3. Because it tended to supersede parents in their desire to instruct their children, by boys and girls under twenty who had passed an examination—indeed an instance was quoted of litigation having arisen out of a dispute over a prize given in one of our Public schools as to the fruitful possibilities of evil in such a course.

4. Many would be led to study the Word of God not from the love of it—but for the sake of the prize.

In all sobriety of purpose we have to put the following questions:

Is there any unmixed good in the Church (or out of it) in her methods of work?

Is there any good thing that may not be administered to the possibilities of evil?

Is anything unbecoming a "General Assembly," to commit to a committee of its own appointment, that will help in the line of the commission, "go teach all nations?"

Does the increasing of the intelligence of the youth of the Church supersede parental duty? or help to make strong and faithful fathers and mothers for the generations to come?

If there should arise a mal-administration of the prizes, etc., has the Church no power to deal with it?

Who is commissioned to divide in legislation between the light and the darkness in the world of motives, and winnow them after that in connection with studying the Word of God.

Have we not many a thoroughly earnest, faithful and conscientious Sabbath school teacher to whom a Commentary, or a Bible Dictionary, or the "Life of Duff" would be an "unmixed" boon for the rest of his life; or awaken a sense of hunger that would lead to the possession of other books? Such an object set before him would be a safe and healthy stimulus.

It is to be hoped that while the Sabbath School Committee is ruled out of this subordinate department of "The S. S. Teacher's Course of Study" and stimulus, that Presbyteries and sessions will be encouraged to give the matter careful consideration, and that this summary of work in Scotland will at least indicate that encouragement in prizes—in books and certificates—is not to be resisted as full of evil.

JOHN MCEWEN.

THE HALL FUND.

Rev. Wm. Lohead, \$2; Wm. Grabam, \$2; R. P. McKay, \$5; Donald Fraser, \$4; Walter M. Roger, \$2; R. C. Moffat, \$2; Thos. Robson, \$2; A. Friend, \$1.50; C. B. R., \$5; James Walker, \$10; James H. Duncan, M.B., \$4. R. HAMILTON, Treasurer.

PRESBYTERY OF STRATFORD.—This court met on the 2nd inst. The committee appointed to visit Elma Centre and West Monckton reported the fulfilment of the duty, and Elma Centre had agreed to give a retiring allowance to its minister of \$100 a year for eight years, and West Monckton \$40. Mr. Renwick's resignation of the charge was accepted, and the vacancy appointed to be declared by Mr. Hislop on the 21st inst. It was agreed to ask permission for Mr. Renwick to retire from the active duties of the ministry, and to have his name placed on the list of the Fund for Aged and Infirm Ministers. Mr. Bell was appointed Moderator *ad interim* of the session of Elma Centre and Monckton. The fact of Mr. Hall's death on the 26th ult. was taken up. Presbytery engaged in prayer, after which his name was removed from the roll, a committee appointed to propose a suitable minute, and the vacancy ordered to be declared. Steps were taken to have his widow's name put on the Fund for Ministers' Widows and Orphans. Mr. McAlpine was appointed Moderator of the sessions of Missouri, North and South. The ordination of Mr. Andrew B. Baird was appointed on the 16th inst., prior to his going as a missionary to the North-West. Mr. Mann's claims against Biddulph were taken up, and a committee appointed to inquire into the matter and report. It was decided that no action could be taken at present in regard to the proposed union of Biddulph and Lucan. Arrangements were made for missionary meetings. Mr. James Balfour, student, was heard, delivering a discourse on a prescribed subject, which was well approved, and he was encouraged to prosecute his studies.—JOHN FOTHERINGHAM, Pres. Clerk.