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## Contributors and Correspondents.

### NEW BRUNSWICK.

**THE N. B. SCHOOL BILLS.—THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BILLS OF QUEBEC AND NEW BRUNSWICK STATED.—PRESBYTERIAN DISTRICTS.—INTERESTING PARTICULARS.**

The School Bill—yes, the School Bill again, for the question is forced upon us whether we will or not—still continues to be the issue of the hour down here. We shall continue to assert our deep regret and entire disappointment at the way in which the Clear Grits of Ontario deserted the principles which most of them have ever avowed, in order to bring over to their side the Romanists of Quebec. And the Toronto *Globe* forgot for the moment that which had been one of its principles from the moment of its existence—forgot it for no other reason, as far as I can see, than the promotion of party. The *Canadian Monthly* discusses the question aright, and it seems to be among the few that discern it aright in Ontario. It is all very well for the Romanist papers to contrast the Legislatures of New Brunswick and Quebec, lauding the tolerance of the latter in granting separate schools to the Protestant minority, and denouncing the intolerance of the former in refusing separate schools to the Roman Catholic minority; but for a large portion of this press of Ontario to argue as if the same ground was taken, is a proof to us of the little trouble that the editors of those papers take to acquaint themselves with the issues that are raised in the Maritime Provinces. No comparison can be drawn between the two Legislatures and the School Bills that have been passed by them. As I pointed out on a former occasion, the School Bill of Quebec, as your readers in Ontario know a great deal better than your correspondent does, legalizes Roman Catholic teaching in the schools, and that as part and parcel of the ordinary work done in school-rooms. It were idle to suppose for a moment that such legislation is a dead letter. To give any ground for comparison there must needs be a clause in the New Brunswick Act authorizing Protestant teaching of a dogmatic kind in our schools here. But this is emphatically not the case. Religious teaching of a sectarian character is strictly prohibited during school hours. There is in it no ground for a grievance on the part of any sect or division of religionists of any description whatsoever. Therefore it is a delusion and a snare for writers to keep carping about Quebec as an example that New Brunswick should follow. It is a new thing for Romanists to be held up as models of tolerance to Protestants. Has the whole voice that the history of the last 1200 years sends forth been reversed? We have been beginning to suspect of late, and we have learned that there are good grounds for the suspicion, that the insignificant concession of separate schools to the Protestant minority of Quebec is not due so much to the generous and tolerant spirit of the French Romanists, as to the fact that the influence of Protestant Ontario wrung the concession from them. We are therefore inclined to say, when that flag is flashed in our faces day after day, "Thank you for nothing."

We are glad to see that the Basis of Union has been carried so successfully in the General Assembly and Synod, and we take it as ominous of what will be the result in the Synods down here, both of which assemble in a few days now. The Synods meet this year in great Presbyterian centres, in the strongholds of our faith in these Provinces. Truro, where the larger of the two meets, can point to a century of Presbyterianism—the congregation of Dr. McCulloch celebrated its centenary a year or two since—and the country round about is thickly studded with congregations. The town itself, though rural in its character, has grown rapidly within the last few years. Some eighty members were dismissed about two years since to form a new congregation a little bit out, and in a short time again the church was crowded. Now it is contemplated to form a second congregation in the town itself, and this will be accomplished very soon. I understand that steps have been taken already to effect the division. Of late years a congregation in connection with the Kirk has been formed, and it, too, is growing rapidly. Pictou was somewhat later in being occupied, but it has taken the lead since then in population. Both Pictou and Truro were seats of learning for the Presbyterian Church, but Halifax has monopolized all that, and to this day there are some that mourn over the removal of the College and the Seminary to the metropolis. I should have said that Pictou is where the other

Synod is to meet. To show the strength of our cause in the two districts, let me refer to the census of the counties which Pictou and Truro represent. In the County of Pictou, of a population of 82,114, there are 26,377 Presbyterians; and in the County of Colchester, of which Truro is the shire town, of a population of 23,891, there are 15,514 Presbyterians. Perhaps I should not have said that there are two centres of Presbyterianism here, but one, as the two counties adjoin. Taken altogether, the region is rich, both in soil and minerals. Of the latter there are the iron mines of Londonderry and Acadia in the one county, and the coal mines of the other county are known far and wide. As to agricultural resources, it would be hard to find better soils than are to be seen in Onslow, which looks out on the Bay of Fundy, and in the valleys of the Shubenacodie, the Stawiacke, and the three rivers of Pictou. As to the business that will be transacted at the Synods, I will give you some account in due time.

20th June, 1873.

### GOOD FRIDAY.

To a *Canadian Presbyterian*:

DEAR SIR,—I am sorry that circumstances prevented my addressing you last week touching your communications about Christmas Day.

In your first letter you, in effect, charge a certain religious community with the commission of a serious offence against religion or morality, by so far conforming themselves to Papists as to meet for worship on Christmas Day, and that another religious community perpetrated a like offence and were "equally guilty," and the grounds of your making this sweeping condemnation against these parties seem, from your letters, to be (1) that there is no express authority in the Scriptures for the observance of any day except the Sabbath day, and that no other day ought to be observed or kept except the Sabbath and occasional fast days; (2) that, any way, the 25th of December is not, certainly, the natal day of our Saviour; and lastly, that the observance of that day was originally a heathen and afterwards a Popish institution.

Now, my friend, if you keep in view the object of these parties in assembling, themselves together, and will look at the matter, if you can, with a mind free from prejudice, will you not be constrained to confess that these grounds, when properly considered, are small grounds upon which to charge these people with being "guilty" of a grave offence?

It appears to me that the proper way to look at the matter—aye, and the way in which a good and right-minded Christian man would look at it—is this, what did these people meet together for? Why, to offer up to Almighty God the adoration and praise of grateful hearts for his infinite goodness and mercy in sending His Son from heaven to save perishing man, and, even supposing that there is a doubt as to whether the event which they had assembled to commemorate happened, strictly historically, on the day in question, and even supposing it to be true that some heathens, eighteen or nineteen centuries ago, made a festival of the same day in the year, and that, afterwards, some Pope appointed it to be observed in the Latin Church, what small considerations are not these in the matter?

I believe that for the proper consideration of the true merits of the question it is not necessary to adduce any authorities from the Bible, or to quote fathers or divines. Doubtless, all Christians are aware that there is an uncertainty as to the exact date of our Saviour's birth, but a large proportion of Protestants have fixed upon the 25th of December, and assemble on that day to observe it by a solemn and religious service; and, in the name of common sense, what is there so dreadfully wrong in this, that the persons concerned should be held up to the public as guilty of some serious offence? Surely the motives and the acts of the parties concerned would be sufficient to cover any errors to historical date. As to matter of the 25th of December being a heathen-popish festival, what has that to do with us, or with any religious community among us who choose, by common consent, to meet on that day for adoration and worship? Do you think that, when they would be thus worshipping, and their hearts going up to God and the Saviour in adoration and praise, God himself would frown upon them, or even disregard them merely because of a mistake as to the day?

I have often wondered, and, notwithstanding the Confession of Faith and Dr. Miller, do still wonder, why Presbyterians (I have been an adherent of Presbyterianism myself for upwards of twenty-five years) omit the observance of the anniversaries of the two great and important events in the world's

history—the day on which our gracious Saviour was born into the world and the day on which he suffered and died for us. Presbyterians, all over Canada, observe, by religious service and a kind of jubilee, the anniversaries—the building and opening of their churches, but no effort is made to commemorate these two great events, which were ordained to happen from the commencement of the world, which are the prominent subject of early prophecy, and which were fraught with so much compassionate goodness and mercy to man. If there is not anything in the Bible expressly enjoining the observance of Christmas on Good Friday, there certainly is not any thing, either express or implied, forbidding it. Indeed, I cannot conceive how any man of intelligence and education, and of a regulated mind—I don't care what his religious profession is—could find fault with the observance of either day. I can only imagine a person doing so to be under the influence of strong unreasoning prejudice.

The hearts of men are, I believe, very hard now-a-days, and Christians (as they style themselves) are especially harsh in their judgments towards one another in matters of religion. At the bottom of all this is the fact that there is, at present, among people professing religion—clergymen and laymen alike—a very small amount of real vital religion or true Christian charity. A standing and prominent evidence of this is the persistent perpetuation of sects and denominations, hedged round with strong prejudices, which are jealously guarded, and preserved, and which, very often, show themselves in no very charitable spirit. I much fear, my dear friend, that a strong prejudice against the unfortunate Papists and against anything Popish, no matter how good in itself, had something to do in moving you to such strong feelings of indignation against these innocently offending Christmas Day denizens.

Many a time does my mind recur to the oft repeated, though good old fable of (I think) John Wesley: how, in his dream, he found his way to the door of heaven and commenced questioning St. Peter as to the different denominations inside, and how he was astonished on being informed that there were not inside any Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Papists, or other religious sects, and how he was affected when St. Peter told him that there were none in there but Christians.

My dear friend, lay this little allegory to heart. We all need to have our hearts softened and filled with Christian love and charity one towards another. If our hearts were right we would not judge one another so harshly.

June 17, 1873.

T. D. D.

## NOTES ON THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—Being in your city during part of the Session of the Assembly, I availed myself of the opportunity to attend several of its sittings. I was all the more strongly drawn to the place of gathering because the propounded terms of Union were on the programme for discussion. Like many, I long for the day when the several sections of the Church of Christ shall return to their normal state of unity on the broad and blessed basis of faith in a common Saviour. My object in this writing is to briefly state my impressions in regard to the Assembly and its sayings and doings. Whatever may be written, no one can say in truth, "an enemy has done this." Assuredly, friendliness, if not positive partiality, possessed one toward the Canada Presbyterian Church and her assembled delegates. On entering Cook's Church I beheld a goodly company of grave and intellectual men, apparently capable of dealing becomingly with matters of high concern. It was, however, very note-worthy that, as far as the bald or hoary head indicates age, there were comparatively few of the clergy that could be called old men. This I could not help regretting, aware that "days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom," and that as a general rule there is safety in the counsel of the aged. However, a goodly number of the ministers are verging on old age, as their grey or iron grey hairs attest. By the bye, it appears that heads are fast climbing into the pulpit—indeed, they are becoming quite the fashion among clergymen, to the obscuration of that all but sole remaining clerical badge viz., the snow-white necktie. Well, there is no Scriptural objection to wearing beards. Antiquity largely favours the practice. Many of the good and great of former ages appear to have regarded that facial appendage as almost sacred; at least they deprecated all intemperate trouble. I know not how it is with others, but I find it difficult to get rid of the idea that there is some connection between the beard and the brains—something more than the accident of racre propinquity. The size and shape of beards and the degree of attention paid to them never fail, when observed, to wile me unwittingly into the wide and ill cultivated field of inductive philosophy, and the results of my rambles are not always in accordance with the dictates of genealogy. Perhaps

charity should induce us to look on the prevalence of beards with the Protestant clergy as a real reform, a practical protest against the *barba-facundia* of the popish priesthood. Be that as it may, I fear this trifling will over-tax your tolerance and that of your readers. I was noticing the fact that there were but few old ministers in the Assembly. The great majority consisted of comparatively young men, ruddy and robust, which told of abundance of healthful exercise in the open air; while a few appeared wan and worn, suggesting excess of study, or a plethora of pastoral anxieties. The chairman performed his part well. As regards firmness, suavity, and business-tact he is a model Moderator. The members generally were sparing of speech, one of the surest indications of wisdom. There was very little twaddle compared to what is often vented in similar assemblies. On the whole the speaking was pertinent and seldom prolonged to weariness. It were well if the members made it an inviolable rule never to rise till confident they have some new light to throw on the subject under consideration, and then let that light fall direct and at once, accompanied with as little verbiage as possible.

The lay members or elders impressed me very favourably. Intelligence and sedateness characterized them. No doubt they are men of stalwart principle, decided piety, and exemplary life, the cream of the congregations they represent. Pity it is they do not take a more prominent part in the deliberations of the court. Some of those present proved themselves well able to do so.

The subject of Union was handled well, and the decision came to wise. Not a little credit is due to the convenor of the Union committee for the excellent spirit manifested, and the judicious manner in which he conducted this very delicate business. In other hands the result might have been less satisfactory. There is now good ground to hope that one other breach in Zion's walls will be speedily healed.

There is room for grave doubt whether the Assembly acted wisely in appointing two additional permanent professors in the present state of the College finances, and in view of an early union with the Presbyterian Church of Canada, when College matters must of necessity be re-arranged. Not a few believe that the appointment of temporal lectures should have sufficed in the meantime, not merely for the reasons above given, but also to give opportunity to aspirants to theological chairs to grow somewhat in mental stature and acquirements, so that they might be easily distinguished, as Saul was among the people. When party obtains among a great number, selection becomes difficult and somewhat invidious. The brethren elected are said to be most respectable ministers, and every one, I am sure, will wish and hope they may come up to exceed the expectations of their warmest friends. There were some very sensible remarks made by a member in regard to the staring and glaring disparity between the average salaries and those assigned to theological professors. Were there a like difference in talent and acquirements and in cost of living between the one and the other no one would have cause to complain. But many fail to discover such a difference as to warrant such a distinction. It is to be hoped the congregations will not stultify the deed of the Assembly in this matter; but cause for fear is not wanting.

The writer was grieved to hear principles enunciated and practices resolved on, in regard to aiding weak congregations and infirm ministers, which he believes to be utterly repugnant to the spirit of Christianity. He heard but indistinctly it is true, and glad would he be were the impressions made solely the result of faulty hearing. Is it really true that the Assembly has imposed a specific money tax on certain of the poorer sections of the church under its jurisdiction? Is it true that so many dollars on an average per member must be contributed by weak congregations or they shall be denied the help of the church to have ordinances maintained amongst them? And in regard to aged and infirm ministers I thought I heard something to the following purport, viz., that entering the ministry after a certain age would prevent participation in the church's beneficence if infirmity set in, and that annuities were to be graduated according to the age of the invalid, and the number of years he had been in the ministry. Now such a worldly mercantile policy is surely not in accordance with the "bonnets and mercies" peculiar to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. It were well that Christians and churches would be-true their "what manner of Spirit they are of," and know that their benedictions, whether to the heathen or to weak congregations, or to infirm ministers, are to be disposed on the very same principle that souls are saved—that need, and need only, and neither worth nor work, nor age, nor length of service, constitutes the claim to help from the followers of Christ. The Assembly's decision in regard to weak congregations and infirm ministers demands speedy and thorough re-consideration. The proceedings in most of the other matters before the court were in a great measure worthy an assembly of Christ's servants. Fault-finding is so painful work, and I grieve that necessity has been laid upon me to do so in any degree. My gentle reproach is that of an affectionate friend that loves Zion's citizens and desires and seeks her good. The mission spirit manifested, and the mission measures adopted, were of a very gratifying character, and the steps taken towards Union deserve all praise.

AMICUS.

Ontario, June, 1873.]

Mr. Sanford Fleming has nearly recovered from the injuries he received some time ago, and will soon be able to attend to his professional duties.

The foundation stone of the new Presbyterian Church in Paisley was laid the afternoon of Tuesday, 24th inst., in the presence of a large assemblage. The preliminary services in the old building were conducted by the pastor of the congregation, and the Rev. Mr. Tolmie, of Southampton, after which the audience adjourned to the site of the new building where, in due form, Mr. Straith laid the stone, enclosing a glass vase, which contained the coins of the realm, history of the congregation, papers of the day, and other documents. The Rev. Mr. Cochrane, of Brantford, then delivered an address, congratulating the congregation and Presbyterians generally on the rapid increase of the denomination in that section of the country, and urging them to still greater efforts. Mr. Cochrane lectured again in the evening to a very large congregation.

Mr. Froude, the historian, has been contributing a series of articles to the *Christian Intelligencer*, in the last of which he has some hard things to say respecting the Church of England. In his opinion, it no longer lends strength to the cause of Protestantism. It is the enemy's chief depot and recruiting ground. The ascendancy which it enjoys through its connection with the State; the exclusive possession of the old cathedrals and parish churches, the tradition that hangs about it that Dissent is vulgar, and that to be an Anglican, if not a Papist, is essential to being a gentleman, are weapons in its hands which it uses with fatal ingenuity. The youngest curate affects the airs of a priest. He roves a counterfeiter of the sacramental system, in which he pretends to have a passionate belief. He decorates his altar after the Roman pattern, and invites the ladies of his congregation to confess to him, whispering back his absolutions. The Dissenters themselves are not proof against the baneful influence, which is extending even into their own borders. To those who have eyes to see, there is no more instructive symptom of the age than the tendency of Presbyterian, Independent, and even Unitarian clergymen to assume a sacerdotal dress and appearance. Mr. Froude does not bring those weighty charges against the evangelical party in the State Church, which, he says, furnishes but an insignificant number of converts to Romanism.

Although the Swedenborgians have only one church in New York its members are very actively engaged in propagandism. They, however, have an extensive rival in a sect calling themselves the "Progressive Spiritualists," the moving spirit of which is a female.

The *New York Observer* says that the Newton Presbytery recommend that the use of tobacco be forbidden to students of theology; and the Congregation Convention of the North-west requested the Western Education Society to refuse aid to any student who uses the weed.

The Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society estimates that during the present century about 110,000,000 copies of the Scriptures, in whole or in part, have been put into circulation by Bible societies alone in various parts of the world.

A writer in the *Churchman* denies the report of the *Catholic Register* concerning the large number of conversions from the English to the Catholic Church, and asserts that more converts have come to the Anglican Church than have gone over to Rome, two to one.

A Christian was once asked how he could keep so calm amidst all the cares of life. He answered in this way:—"I train my eyes; for all evil, as well as all good, comes from the mind to the heart. Every morning before I enter upon my daily work among men, I fix my eyes thoughtfully on three things: first, I raise them toward heaven and remember that life and all its struggles will be over there. Secondly, I look towards earth and reflect how small a portion of it I shall need when I am laid in my grave. Thirdly, and finally, I look upon the surging crowds of mankind, and think how much sadder many of their lives are than mine. In this way I console myself for all sorrow, and live amidst the cares of life, satisfied in God."—*From the German.*

The prejudiced man is like a man walking on a narrow path with his eyes downward, and will not raise them to behold even the grandest scenery which appear on either hand. Or, like a man shut up in his house, with the doors locked, the windows closed, the shutters fastened, and the blinds down; without a candle or a lamp to light his dismal condition, dark, and in the dark, without much hope of seeing things differently; yet he is indulging a kind of satisfaction that he is right, and all who differ from him necessarily wrong. He is afraid of opening his eyes, for fear that he will see something to disconcert and rob him of his present condition of complacent satisfaction. Blindness is the safety and happiness of prejudice, as well as its sure universal result.—*T. Hughes.*