

# Dominion Presbyterian

OTTAWA

Single Copies 5 Cents

\$1.50 Per Annum.

## NOTE AND COMMENT

The statement is made that prohibition has put the poor houses out of business in Kansas. Because there are no paupers to care for, forty-nine of the county poor farms have been turned into experiment stations in connection with the State Agricultural College.

The last difference on property questions between the United Free and the Free Churches of Scotland has been settled. It related to the mission property in South Africa. When it became evident that further pressure of its claims would involve a law suit, the Free Church withdrew.

St. Andrew's College, Toronto, breaks up for the Christmas vacation on December 20th, and re-opens on January 11th, 1911. The term just closing has been one of the most successful in the history of the college. The attendance has been large and the general spirit of the boys excellent.

Western Australia, which a few years ago was a blank on the map, is rapidly settling up. The country is almost desert from lack of rain, but there is a large yield from the gold mines, wool and live stock are exported, and there is a trade in pearl shell and sandalwood. Nearly half a million dollars' worth of the latter is shipped from Australian forests.

The Persian government, seeking a larger independence of action, has entered upon negotiations with Russia for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Persian territory. But Russia insists upon certain mining and motor-service concessions as a condition to withdrawal, and even if these concessions are granted, does not promise that the withdrawal shall be complete.

In a series of bloody massacres by Bedouins at Kerak, a town in plain sight of Jerusalem but fifty miles across the Moab Valley, probably 500 Christians have been killed. The encounters, which have been waged between bands of bloodthirsty, roving tribesmen on the one hand, and a mixed garrison of Turkish troops and Armenian residents on the other, raged intermittently for several days, and at its conclusion the nomadic savages marched through a lane of bodies of their victims into the fortifications, which they are now reported to be holding. The slaughter of the Christians, men, women, and even babies in arms, was wanton in the extreme, the fanatics falling on the defenseless crowds with their knives, slaughtering them merely as a matter of revenge for the execution by the Sultan's troops of a Bedouin tribal chief about a month ago.

"If Judas Iscariot had received three thousand pieces of silver instead of thirty for betraying Christ, the moral character of his act would not have been improved. And if, as almost all the churches have declared, the liquor traffic is contrary to the spirit of the Christian religion, then it cannot be licensed without sin, nor will a large revenue from license make right the wrong." So spoke the Rev. Dr. MacTavish, of Kingston, in a sermon in the Century Baptist church, on the text: "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink." Heb. 11, 15. The speaker declared that all the good features of the license law were the prohibitory ones, but he saw no reason why the electors should content themselves with half-way measures. Other evils are exterminated wherever possible, he said, and there is no reason why an exception should be made of the liquor traffic.

## MR. DOBSON REPLIES TO DR. DU VAL. II.

Editor Dominion Presbyterian:

There are matters of government and discipline which the Supreme Court, so far as I know, has never claimed to have and which have never been assigned to it, apart from the action of a presbytery or a congregation. For example: A minister is primarily responsible to his presbytery, a layman to his session. The presbytery licenses the minister, ordains and inducts him, receives his resignation or orders it, certifies his ministerial character and standing, etc. Suppose that an Assembly should, without reference to presbytery or congregation, treat with another denomination for the transfer of a certain minister and his congregation to that other body, and then, when negotiations were complete, it should send its conclusions down to presbyteries "for rejection or approval," would that act be called constitutional? The most ardent unionist will not say that it would be. No Assembly would attempt such a thing. Well, if the Assembly cannot constitutionally treat for the disposal of one minister and one congregation without first securing a presbytery's action how can it constitutionally treat for the disposal of seventeen hundred ministers and three thousand congregations without first receiving authority from the same source? The only defence offered is that the Assembly sends the case to Presbyteries "for approval or rejection." There are matters which no Assembly has any authority to remit, matters which do not come, except indirectly and remotely, within the scope of its authority. For it is under limitations as well as presbyteries and congregations. For example: (1) The question whether an unacceptable candidate for a pastorate should be forced upon a congregation cannot be remitted; (2) The matter of ordering a certain minister, without cause, to abandon the ministry cannot be remitted; (3) The question as to whether a doctrine contrary to the accepted creed shall be received cannot be remitted. Fancy a remit like the following going down to presbyteries for approval or rejection: "The doctrine of a living, personal God shall no longer be the belief of the church!" (4) An act of Assembly ordering a private member to hand over his fortune to the church or be excommunicated cannot be remitted. And if such matters were remitted and sanctioned by a majority of presbyteries they would not become constitutional. They are matters which are already settled by the constitution of the church. They are not matters of mere administration, subject to the mood of a church court, but of constitutional right. Now if, as I understand, such subjects as these are not remittable without first changing the constitution, what shall be said of remitting the much greater question of the continued existence of the church? Can it be constitutional? I humbly think that it is not. But after all it might be a matter of little practical consequence were it not that the procedure followed is calculated to give an unfair prestige to the Union cause.

Now if I am right in the above stated position the other matter referred to by Dr. DuVal, which alone incited this letter, is not hard to explain. He speaks of the "enormity" of a "charge" which he considers that I have intentionally made against the Assembly, and says "it amounts to a misappropriation of funds by the Assembly." If Dr. DuVal means by this statement

that I charged the Assembly or the Union Committee with a dishonest use of the funds of the church, I emphatically repudiate his statement and declare that I had not the slightest intention of even suggesting such a preposterous absurdity. What possible advantage could I gain by such a "charge?" What result except shame to myself? For who would believe it? Dr. DuVal must have a little faith in the good sense and loyalty of the church as he has in mine if he thinks that even the most ordinary man would, on the statement of one obscure individual, believe that either the Union Committee or the General Assembly is composed of dishonest men. He would be a strange man indeed who would stain his own character with the bare hope of injuring another. But as Dr. DuVal has no hesitation in imputing this to me I must ask the favor of a little further use of your space.

The use of the church's funds, like the appointment of the Union Committee, is a fair subject of discussion. It is the most common of all subjects in every business meeting, and properly so.

The Assembly having appointed a committee must as a matter of course pay its expenses from some source, and accordingly voted to do so by levying a certain proportion on each of the church funds. These are the facts as stated in the Blue Book. The second fact was really made necessary by the first. But in my humble judgment each of these acts was a constitutional mistake, but NOT A MORAL OFFENCE, as Dr. DuVal would have me say. It certainly is an absurdity to suppose that the public acts of a public body, as related to the constitution, cannot be criticized without impugning the character of its members. It is no concern of mine to explain these acts of the Assembly or of the Union Committee. My only concern is to say that I hold the character of both to be inviolate. To this end may I also say that, as the matter appears to me, the whole case was put through the Assembly in the ordinary way of business. The vote to appoint the Committee having passed, the vote to pay expenses would pass as a matter of course. When men are busily engaged in pushing practical business they are not so apt to trouble about the deeper aspect of things. It is always easier to see afterwards. Besides, a constitutional mistake is not a new thing under the sun. Legislatures in Canada have made them pretty often, even under the sharp eye of constitutional lawyers. And they make them at the expense of the country, too. But no one dreams of charging the Legislature with dishonest conduct merely on the ground of such mistakes. We must distinguish. From the Christian standpoint, the only harm in making a mistake lies in the refusal to acknowledge it and to make amends, whether it be made by an Assembly or by a single individual.

The man who would stoop to wound an opponent by slandering his character need not be characterized. He may write strong things, he may even ridicule his argument, but if he stoop to slander, he is worthy of contempt. And if a word of mine could be fairly interpreted as casting such reproach upon any one I would regret it more deeply than it is possible for Dr. DuVal to do.

Further, it would ill become me to belittle the learning and ability of the Union Committee. I do not compare myself with these men. I do not "mount a throne of intellectual superiority," or pose as a "chief justice"; but I decline to acknowledge the infallibility of any man, and will claim the right to use my own intelligence in judging the words and works of my fellowmen.

A. B. DOBSON.  
Fordwich, Sept. 15, 1910.