

CONCERNING LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH.

By Knoxonian.

The passing of Principal Rainy raises questions in regard to ecclesiastical leadership. One of these questions goes straight to the root of the matter. Is leadership, such as that exercised by Principal Rainy, a desirable and necessary thing? Dr. Robertson Nicoll—no mean judge—in a recent article in the *British Weekly* says no: "There will be no successor to him, and no successor is needed. The Church has her living Lord, and it is far better that her energies should be guided by the free and frank and democratic action of the rank and file. Men of special power will have special offices given to them, but for our own part we are most deeply convinced that our Nonconformist churches are most wisely guided by the judgment of the average man. Just as the world is wiser than any philosopher, so the church is wiser than any churchman."

Principal Grant used to say that the General Assembly is wiser than any one man in the Assembly an opinion which coincides exactly with the opinion of Rr. Robertson Nicoll. Manifestly the Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland did not always think in that way for W. Nicoll says: "So great did his power become, that on one occasion, we remember when some question had to be decided, and it was discovered that Rainy was not in the house, the assembly quietly adjourned to wait for his opinion."

The pleasant fiction about the parity of Presbyters seems to have been taking a holiday on that "occasion". No doubt the "quiet adjournment" was a marked tribute to Rainy's skill and power as an ecclesiastical leader, but was it not a little hard in the theory that the Presbyterian form of government is essentially democratic. The incident somewhat painfully suggests an Anglican Synod waiting for a Bishop, or a Roman Conclave waiting to hear from the Pope.

Far be it from us to say that the quiet adjournment was not the right thing to do. Perhaps Rainy's opinion was much needed. Possibly the Assembly could not go on without his guidance. All we venture to suggest is that adjourning to wait for the opinion of any one man does not seem to be in accord with what the text books say about Presbyterian church government. And apart altogether from considerations of church government, though leadership with such power did not in the least degree inspire Principal Rainy, it would ruin forty-nine ecclesiastics out of fifty. The lust of power is quite as dangerous and deadly as any other lust, and nowhere it is more offensive than in a church court.

Ian MacLaren draws a pretty picture of Principal Rainy leading the General Assembly:—"The leader of the opposition—an imposing figure of large proportions and leonine face, Dr. Begg, no doubt,—is speaking to some point of procedure, and it is an excellent opportunity of studying Principal Rainy's face. His head is thrown back, and through half-closed eyes he is watching his opponent. His commanding fore-

head, clear-cut profile, firm chin, his air of culture, and his aristocratic bearing, mark him out as a member of the ruling caste, who are born to direct and command."

A pretty picture no doubt, drawn from a master pen, but candidly now does it not suggest parliament more than it suggests Penticost? Does it not remind one of Gladstone watching Disraeli across the table? Does it not suggest Sir John watching the movements of Blake or Mackenzie? Does it not remind one of Sir Oliver sitting in front of his Grit battalions looking over his spectacles at the leader of the Opposition? Perhaps Presbyterian church business is better done by having a government and an opposition in the Supreme court, but that arrangement does seem a little worldly.

How about leadership in the Canadian General Assembly? Our own opinion is that we must have it if we have a Rainy. In any deliberative body the man who can lead will lead. And there are some marked advantages in having a recognized leader. If he is a Rainy, or anything like a Rainy, he may save the church from much crude legislation, from ill-considered, reckless movements that are sure to bring trouble. Just here some reader may be inclined to ask where was the advantage of recognized leadership when the United Free Church was allowed to go up against the House of Lords and lose all its property in a single day. That question need not be answered. Perhaps before our union question is settled we may find our own church making a mistake equally great without a recognized leader. Two things are clear—the man who can lead, will lead; and one man that nature built for a leader is millions of times better than a dozen ambitious little clerics striving for leadership who are not fit to lead a kindergarten.

"Old Ebony," a name by which Blackwood's is familiarly known, well maintains its record as a purveyor of able articles on timely subjects, as well as of stories of considerable merit. The February number contains, among other things, "Fiscal Policy in France and Britain," by Sir R. Hamilton Long; "Nabob Castle, A Legend of Ulster," by Andrew James; "A Forgotten Precursor of Savonarola," by Mary Love; "The Treatment of Sedition in India," and two or three chapters of "Daft Days," by Neil Munro. In "Musings Without Method," a number of topics are treated in an interesting way. Leonard Scott Publication Co., New York City.

Business failures in the Dominion of Canada and Newfoundland in 1906 number 1,239, a considerable decrease from the number in 1905. In that year there were 1,430 and 1,175 in 1904. The total assets amount to \$4,305,076, as compared to \$6,584,191 in 1905; the liabilities were \$9,450,093, whereas they amounted to \$13,879,700 the previous year. Lack of capital is given as the cause of failure in 626 cases out of the 1,239 and 203 are set down to incompetence.

THE TERM SERVICE ELDER.

Much may be said in favor of the introduction of the term-service into the eldership. The strong city charge or equally strong town charge have many eligible men from whom to choose, and can make their choice in a leisurely way. The recently erected mission charge and the rural charge must take what material offers. In the majority of cases the men who are nominated realize their inability to fill the important office, and would fain escape from serving but loyalty to their little congregation overcomes personal scruples. Were it possible for many of these men to say—"I will do my best for a term of five or seven years,"—they would gladly take up the work and do their utmost to meet all its demands.

There are members of Session who have grown arrogant since they were chosen by their fellow members for this responsible position. Of his fitness for the work of the eldership such an elder never has a doubt, though many a misgiving crosses his mind when he thinks of his associate elders. Such a man is a thorn in the side of every other member of session and especially is he a salutary discipline for the Moderatorship. He has opinions on everything, and what does not square with his opinion is—an unsafe practice. It would be a most salutary discipline for such a man to leave him in the ordinary pew at the end of the term.

It has been said that better material could be obtained were elders elected for a term only. Some good men, who can not give time for the remainder of their life would give it freely for a brief period. That is, to our mind, a destructive argument. We believe the elder is called to his important work whether he be a teaching or a ruling elder. That call he disobeys at his peril. If other business interferes with it, the other business must give place. If he be called for a term only, the way will be opened for his retirement when that term is completed, and he ought to retire. The command to lay aside his work will be as distinct as was the command to enter upon it. But the command does not come from man, nor is the term limited by the dictum of man.

We believe that here may be found the true solution to this perplexing question. By whose authority does a man receive a call to the eldership? By Him alone may that call be set aside. We come at His bidding, we take up the burden He assigns and, at His word, and at no other, we lay it aside.

The seventh annual meeting of the Canadian Association for the Prevention of Consumption and other forms of Tuberculosis will be held in Ottawa the 13th and 14th of this month. A public meeting of the members of the association and of the citizens generally, at which His Excellency will preside, will be held in the Assembly Hall of the Normal School here on Wednesday evening, March 13th., at which Dr. Sheard, the chairman of the Ontario Provincial Board of Health, will deliver a lecture upon "Home Treatment of Consumption."