

8, 9; 1 Sam. xxx. 5; 2 Sam. ii. 2; 2 Sam. lii. 3; 2 Sam. xii. 8, 9, 10, 15.

I was going to say that I would venture the assertion—but I have just discovered that another has made it and has proved it conclusively too—the assertion, namely, that the Hebrew never has such an expression as the widow (*almanah*) of A B or X Y. In English, we can say, the widow of James Jones. There is no such expression in the Hebrew Bible. Widow (*almanah*) is used to express the desolate, lonely state of a woman whose husband is dead, and to express this state absolutely, that is to say, without any reference to her dead husband. If reference is made to her husband, she is not called *almanah* Mahlon, but *esheth* Mahlon, or *esheth* Nabal, as the case may be.

The effect of this *usus* is that, when it is said in plain, preceptive language, without any express limitation or qualification, "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife; it is thy brother's nakedness," a Jew would understand the prohibition to be a bar to marriage with a brother's wife forever. And I have no doubt that this *usus* influenced the minds of Jews even when they spoke Greek and Latin. Wherefore, when Paul denounces the offending Corinthian who had his father's wife (*γυναίκα*, not *χρησά*) he does not think it necessary to state whether his father was dead or alive, for in either case the conduct reprobated was a violation of Lev. xviii. 8. I cannot speak of the Greek classics; they constitute a wide field for the investigation of which I have neither time nor facilities; nor do I think that their *usus* would be of any value in this argument. But I can say of the *usus* of New Testament Greek that it gives no countenance to such phraseology as the widow (*χρησά*) of John or James. Its phraseology is, "the wife" (*γυνή*) of John or James, whether John or James be living or dead.

For these reasons I reject the exegesis founded on the Principal's criticism, and cleave to the generally received view that Lev. xviii. 16 forms a barrier to marriage with a *deceased* brother's wife. And then if there is any force in the principle that *what is law for a man is law for a woman also in similar relations*, Lev. xviii. 16, drives the full force of that principle against marriage with a *deceased* wife's sister.

Mr. Editor, I believe there is force in that principle, and through your kindness and indulgence I shall (D.V.) make known the grounds of my belief.

Mosa.

N. MCK.

### THE BELFAST TOWN MISSION.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM HAMILTON, D.D.

MR EDITOR, — Toward the close of last year, I published in THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN, with your sympathetic approval, my reminiscences of the Belfast Town Mission from its commencement half-a-century ago. The wonderful success of that mission and of other church agencies in raising Belfast and Ulster generally from a condition of spiritual decay and indifference to a state of Christian energy and activity must afford practical lessons that would be profitable elsewhere.

Many of your readers will remember the visit paid to Canada by the Rev. Dr. William Johnston, of Belfast. He has long been one of the most devoted and successful Christian workers in the Irish Presbyterian Church. He is, indeed, sprung from a good stock. His father was a man of the same stamp.

When I was preparing the paper on the Belfast Town Mission, I wrote to my friend and *quondam* pupil, asking for information on that subject. In the answer to my letter, after some reminiscences of school and college life, Dr. Johnston proceeds as follows:—

"As to the Belfast Town Mission, I do not think there is any printed history of it; nor have I time to look up and draw out such an elaborate paper as you seem to desire. I shall give you only a few facts which you can use.

"I think the first form of the Belfast Town Mission was the employment of Wm. Cochrane, to visit among the poor and hold meetings. He was at work when I came to Belfast as a schoolboy in 1832. Dr. Edgar, Dr. Morgan and a few other Christian friends took a deep interest in him and his work. He caught fever and died, much regretted and missed. After his death the Belfast Town Mission was formed; and the various denominations united in supporting it on a common platform. There was a number of laymen like William Cochrane employed, and the poor were well

looked after. The town was not then very large (about 60,000 or 70,000; now 250,000). Students were employed to conduct meetings.

"This united mission continued many years, until a very active High Church clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Monsell, came to the 'Magdalene.' He would not recognize any man as a minister who had not received Episcopal ordination. He struck out, therefore, for denominational organization and action. He formed an Episcopalian Mission. The old Town Mission held on for two or three years after the secession of the Episcopalians; and then the members of the Presbyterian Church felt constrained to form an organization of their own. This led to the formation of the present Town Mission, which is Presbyterian.

"Charles Finlay, a pious man of business, was appointed as Secretary, and a very good one he made. The town was then divided into districts, and an agent appointed for each, with a superintendent to counsel and co-operate in the work.

"The first agents or missionaries were promising and pious licentiates, who were coming out as ministers; and their work was to visit from house to house so many hours, four days in the week, and conduct so many meetings on the Sabbath and two or three other evenings in the week. They worked very well for some time till several country congregations, trusting to the judgment of the Town Mission directors, asked these town missionaries to preach as candidates; so they were scarcely ever at home on the Sabbath, and they continued but a short time on the Mission. There were several new congregations formed in the town by their agency. They were gathered by the licentiate missionaries for themselves; and they were not all or always of the stamp many would have liked for Belfast. Still they did their work, or parts of their work, wisely and well, and nursed their infant congregations into a vigorous maturity. The system and the settlements, however, did not give entire satisfaction.

"There was a change, therefore, made. Students were employed and set to do the same work in the same way. But this was found to interfere with their studies, and their studies interfered with their work. Another change became necessary.

THIS WAS THE EMPLOYMENT OF PIOUS LAYMEN, who knew their Bibles, and could state and teach the Gospel. They were to be wholly devoted to the work, not being allowed even to attend college. This system and agency are still in active operation. The salary of each missionary is about £70, or less than \$400. The work of visitation is well done.

"The superintendents and agents meet once a month; and every agent gives a report of his work for the month with the results. The superintendents successively invite the meeting to their own homes; and, after tea, attention is given to the business of the Mission.

"Since the employment of laymen as agents, there has not been the same increase of congregations, nor the same amount of visible fruit.

"When Mr. Finlay's health began to fail, he resigned the Secretaryship, and the Rev. Dr. Knox was chosen as his successor. He worked very diligently for many years. His manner did not please all parties; and there were sometimes rather unpleasant differences. He organized also a church-building association, and some three churches were erected in or near Belfast. The town is still rapidly increasing, and we are trying to organize congregations to keep pace with the population; but times are dull, business is bad, money is scarce, and the work is not easy.

"I was myself obliged to rebuild the church on Townsend Street. It will hold 1,400 seated, the lecture hall 500, and with the library partition open, 700. The school rooms below will accommodate from 500 to 600; and the entire cost amounted to £11,200.

"I send you a memorial volume, which will bring up old times and old friends. I hope you will get it safe. I send also a copy of the Town Mission Report.

"I have your address, and I will send you occasionally a pamphlet or report, which may inform you what is going on. I am very sincerely,

"Yours in Christian love,  
"WM. JOHNSTON."

FROM the sixty-third Annual Statement of the Presbyterian Church, Prescott, of which the Rev. James Stuart is pastor, it appears that the congregation is in a prosperous condition. The income for the year was \$1,475, and the managers began the next financial year with a small balance in their favour. The Ladies' Aid Society and Sabbath School, judging from the returns given, are doing good work.

### THE COLLEGE OF EX-MODERATORS.

MR. EDITOR,—I notice in a recent PRESBYTERIAN an article condemning the College of Moderators as a serious innovation, as something calculated to undermine the rights and privileges of Presbyteries. You say: "If anything worthy of serious attention can be urged in favour of the College of ex-Moderators, nobody has yet favoured the public with it."

It is no doubt right and proper, when a new plan is put forward, that the reasons for it should be shown. But it is equally reasonable when an old custom is defended, to show the advantages belonging to it. And I think I may say that if anything worthy of serious attention can be shown in favour of the old system, nobody has yet favoured the public with it. It may be asked, what rights have Presbyteries in the matter? Have Presbyteries the right to appoint the Moderator of the General Assembly? or has the Assembly the right, like every other court in the Church, to appoint its own Moderator? And if the Assembly has the right to choose its own Moderator, why should Presbyteries complain if it does so, and does so in its own way? What is the advantage secured to Presbyteries by the right to nominate? What privilege is lost when that right is withdrawn?

If the nomination by a majority of Presbyteries did secure the position to the man so nominated then the nominating power might be valued. But the Assembly was not bound to appoint the man who had most Presbyteries at his back. It was still at liberty to choose its Moderator by open vote, and it might choose the man with most nominations or the man with fewest, as it saw fit. In these circumstances the nominating power was a very empty privilege indeed.

Nor did Presbyteries, so far as my experience goes, attach very much importance to the privilege. Nominating the Moderator for Assembly never occupied a very prominent place on the docket. It served sometimes to fill an unoccupied five minute space before adjournment; or if not it was usually relegated to the list of routine business of little or no interest.

Nor was the exercise of the right always profitable in the Presbytery. The principal object of it seemed to be to give an opportunity to discuss pretty freely in open court the comparative merits and claims of certain prominent doctors, professors, and fathers in the Church. The "reasons" for and against the proposed nominees were not always of the most dignified kind. Nor were they always flattering to the persons whose names were thus bandied about. Sometimes a man was proposed because he belonged to a certain college, or to a section that was supposed to represent one of the uniting churches. Sometimes because he had been unceremoniously passed over at last Assembly, sometimes because he belonged to the Presbytery making the nomination, and sometimes because while he had no chance of being elected, a nomination would gratify him. All this was mere child's play. Indeed the Presbyteries never had a privilege in this matter worth "a hill of beans." The Assembly always has had and still retains, as it always should retain, the power of electing its own Moderator. And if it chose to appoint a committee of ex-Moderators to propose some suitable person, and thus remove the necessity for discussing claims in open court, it has a perfect right to do so. If the rule had been that the man having a majority of nominations was chosen; or had the rule been that each Presbytery in its turn had the right to nominate and its nominee was accepted; or that the Presbyteries composing a Synod had in turn the right to nominate and their nominee was accepted, there would have been a privilege in the case. As it was the nominating power was a most barren privilege. The Presbyteries might as well have played at nominating the President of the United States, so far as any advantage went. These facts show that there was no grievance and no injury done when the Assembly appointed the College of ex-Moderators.

Now as to the new system, what can be said for it?

1. No privilege or right of the Presbyteries is withdrawn, and no interest or liberty of the Church is endangered, by the Assembly taking this course with reference to the election of its Moderator.

2. No committee could be more thoroughly representative of the different interests, institutions and sections of the Church than a committee composed of ex-Moderators. None could be named or suggested that could more fully command the confidence and respect of the Church. There is no danger, then, of sectionalism or centralizing tendencies in the new plan.