

THE WESLEYAN

FRIDAY, APRIL 27, 1883.

CIRCUIT RECORDS.

It would be well if the inquiry, "Are our circuit records properly kept," were placed on the list of annual questions to superintendents. The inquiry, if honestly answered, would at first, we fear, call forth numerous replies in the negative. It is true that a carefully prepared and uniform book would be necessary, but such records were provided for the Provincial ministers under the regime of the English Missionary Committee, and are now prepared under official direction for the use of our American Methodist brethren. In the latter, pages are arranged for the history of the circuit, the reception and disposal of probationers, the arrangement of the classes, lists of official and other members, baptisms, marriages, funerals and other statistics. This record, full as it is, however, is said to be surpassed in adaptation for its intended purpose by one prepared by a gentleman in Fredericton and shown to some of our brethren in the N. B. and P. E. I. Conference.

Any one who has had occasion to consult our circuit memoranda in the course of historical investigation must have been forcibly struck by their incompleteness. There are circuits, for generations on our Minutes, about whose early history little can be ascertained save from the failing memories of a few who yet remain. If records were ever kept, they have carelessly been allowed to go astray. But the defects in our records have been sadly evident to others. Who is not familiar with the frequent complaints of names not removed from the list, when those who bore them had found homes in some distant locality or had removed from the church below. Cases have even been found where the class papers and the circuit record of members could by no means be made to correspond. It is safe to say that comparatively few of our thousands of members in the Maritime Provinces could learn from these records the precise date on which their probation and full membership commenced. Possibly some of the votes of the recent Quarterly meetings have no record save in condensed form in the Secretary's office at Toronto, or in the columns of the WESLEYAN.

The system of public registration now in use may have lessened in some degree, it is true, the necessity for certain columns in the circuit records, but should at the same time serve to impress Superintendents with the necessity of caring for any records now growing yellow with age. The writer of this article has had it in his power to furnish from a carefully kept Methodist record an extract which was the link in a chain of evidence necessary to secure a pension of no small value to the anxious applicant. And even by these records of to-day a benefit may be conferred if they serve to render assurance doubly sure in some case in which doubt may arise upon a point affecting the interests of some individual belonging to the coming generation. A properly kept register should preserve a record of all who have held a private or official relation to the church to which it belongs. Dates should be carefully given of all receptions of members or appointments to office, and of all removals or expulsions from membership, as well as data of any action in relation to the local church interests or connexional schemes. Again and again we have questioned how some of our circuit records would fare if brought into a court of justice in connection with any important case. The careful provision of a simple but comprehensive system of circuit records should, we think, be a matter of Conference action, and the careful attention to such plan a matter of Conference inquiry.

THE LOYALISTS.

It is to be hoped that Mr. C. F. Fraser, Superintendent of the Institution for the Blind, will deliver his lecture on the "United Empire Loyalists," in all parts of the Maritime Provinces. The one hundred years which have elapsed since these patriots hoisted the flag of Britain at the fore and left friends and home to seek a new home in the wilds of Nova Scotia, have seen changes in the contemplation of which the sorrows and toils of the loyalist fathers are too often forgotten. Among them Canadian Methodistism found such men as Robert Barry, Col. Bayard, James and John

Mann, and Stephen Humbert; and among their descendants such names of strength as those of Lemuel Allan Wilmot and Egerton Ryerson, the first two to preside at the first Canadian Methodist General Conference. In naming these we have mentioned but a few of the whole. In political life too, and in England's service on the field and on the ocean, loyalists and the sons of loyalists have made an imperishable record, so far as earth is concerned. Of politicians let the names of Joseph Howe and L. A. Wilmot, the leading champions of responsible government in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, suffice.

St. John should not have a monopoly in Centennial commemoration of the landing of the Loyalists. At Fredericton, Gagetown, and various places in New Brunswick they were the first English settlers. At Annapolis they found a small population, and at Digby few or no inhabitants. As the transports sailed up the beautiful harbor of Shelburne, Anthony Demings went on board as pilot and representative of the few families on its shores, to cheer the assembled thousands with the information that "poverty took him there and kept him there." They furnished the first settlers of Wallace, who found their way thither from Baie Verte, a British band of whose existence Sabine, the historian, seems to have been quite ignorant, though they have given to their adopted country in their descendants men of worth. We need not ask, concerning the sons of the loyalists, Where are they? but rather, Where are they not? Many of them have wandered over the earth. Of the 20,000 who left the United States at the close of the Revolutionary War, some found a resting place in the ocean depths, where the transport *Martha* went down; others landed only to resume their wanderings. Of them, more than of almost any other section of Englishmen, Felicia Hemans's words may with truth be quoted:

Go, stranger, track the deep,  
Free, free the white sail spread,  
Wave may not foam, nor wild wind sweep  
Where sleep not England's dead.

Mr. Fraser has told the story well, when we consider the time at his command. Few could tell it better. We thank him for having taken up the topic. It can now be told without prejudice against our American brethren. Mistakes are freely admitted to-day, and hard feelings are forgotten. The generation represented by the dear old lady who hesitated to visit her friends across the line lost, perchance, her bones should be laid there are all gone. The story can be freely told to our profit and pleasure.

THE LATE JOSEPH BELL.

The Brunswick St. Methodist Church in this city has lost an esteemed member by the death of the late Sheriff Bell. Mr. Bell was the son of the late Hon. Hugh Bell, one of the first trustees of the church in which his son so long worshipped. The son, like the father, filled various official positions in the circuit, and also took a prominent part in the work of the Sabbath-school, of which he was for some time superintendent. The Bible-class which he led until failing health obliged him to desist was a place of profit to numbers of the youth of the congregation. But for the comparative retirement which ill-health of late rendered necessary, the death of one so faithful in service and so exemplary in life would have been even more keenly felt in that congregation. Such retirement, with its lessened reasons for absence from home, must, however, make his departure a more painful fact in the pleasant household of which he was a so prominent member.

As a public officer Mr. Bell was most highly respected. The duties belonging to his position were less pleasant than those of some others, yet from the day that he became the successor of the late John J. Sawyer, in 1870, he has been regarded as a model Sheriff. A city paper remarks that "the only complaint ever made against him was that he sometimes allowed too much latitude to the dictates of a large and generous heart." This thought, since those who knew him best know that he was firm as well as gentle, and scrupulously careful in attention to his work, will but endear him the more to those who naturally mourn for him most.

Mr. Bell was not permitted to die under the roof of the home in which he had lived for so many years. The partial destruction of his residence by fire about a fortnight ago had led him,

with Mrs. Bell, to seek a temporary home with his daughter, Mrs. Wm. A. Black. Though the sudden alarm of fire had not seemed to disturb his equanimity, yet there can be little doubt that it, in connection with a cold which followed, aggravated the heart-trouble with which he was known to be afflicted, and, when his family fondly hoped that he was improving, suddenly ended the mortal stage of life. By them, as no doubt by himself, a sudden seizure of weakness, a few mornings previous to the day on which he died, was accepted as some premonition of an event which could not very long be delayed. Many die as suddenly, not all, it is to be feared, as safely. His bereaved family have much in the way of public expression of esteem for a departed friend and sympathy for themselves, but more in pleasant memories of him who has gone to be with Christ, to cheer them.

IS IT NECESSARY?

We observe that our contemporary, the *Christian Messenger*, is hankering after one of those periodical discussions on baptism which help to fill his columns, but in which the great majority of our readers have little interest. All candid inquirers can easily have any doubts removed by a call upon the nearest Methodist or Presbyterian pastor or by a perusal of some one of the numerous books and pamphlets on the topic, and any introduction of religious discussion as a mere matter of "bluff" or sport is unworthy of attention. At the close of some such discussions we have been reminded of the half-grown lad who was being taught the alphabet. "That's 'A,'" said the teacher. "How do you know it's 'A'?" said the scholar. "So and so taught me so," was the reply. "But, how did he know?" was only one of the final questions with which the half-satisfied fellow closed the inquiry as to whether the first letter of the alphabet was really "A." And in the majority of cases discussions on baptism result in much the same way. Of one noted exception we are sometimes reminded by a glance at a book or two on our shelves—that of a former Baptist pastor at Bridgetown, who entered the lists in reply to the Rev. George Jackson's able pamphlet on baptism, and who in the endeavor to answer it became a convert to the opinion he had once strongly opposed, and for the open profession of which he was expelled from the Baptist Church. As we have no wish to involve any of his successors in such difficulty we forbear. In this day when the dangers of a formal religion are so great, evangelical denominations like the Baptists and ourselves can ill afford to whet theological swords for the attack on each other.

An incident in our always suggestive contemporary, the *Nashville Advocate*, is so appropos to the subject that we copy it. It comes from the pen of a layman:

A young Methodist preacher, in conversation, was discussing a matter about which Christians differ in opinion. He kept on with his argument while shaking hands with Mr. G., a stranger and a layman in the Methodist Church, who was introduced. Pausing at length, he asked: "What do you think of it?" "I think," said Mr. G., "that so many good and great men of profound learning having differed in opinion and gone to heaven, leaving the matter unsettled, you and I can hardly settle it this evening."

Slightly disconcerted, the young minister said: "When I was in the army we sometimes threw shells as feelers for the enemy. I like such sport, and I am trying to get up a little contest this evening."

"If you threw shells into a division of your own army you pleased your enemy, and you displeased your general in command. Denominations are divisions of Christ's army in the world. When two of these engage in a violent contest with each other a feeling far different takes the place of love. Then Satan, the enemy of both, knows that they are already in his service. Jesus Christ, the lover of both, turns sorrowfully away."

The next morning, when Mr. G. was about to mount his horse, he turned to the young preacher, who had walked with him to the gate, and said:

"When the bell rang for prayers last night we were talking about experimental religion. Did you enter into the spirit of the chapter that you read, the hymn that you sang, and the prayer you offered up, with better feeling than you would had we been engaged in controversy?"

Smiling, he replied: "Yes I did. May God bless you my young brother. Good-by."

There are said to be 14,000 teetotalers in the Indian Army.

Comment has been made upon the Queen's remarks through the Court Circular upon the loss of her devoted Scotch attendant. On the Queen's frank utterances on this event the *London Spectator* has some suggestive thoughts: "We wonder," says the *Spectator*, "how many of her subjects ever reflect on the pathetic element in the Queen's present position. There is no one living who could address her by her christian name, or, indeed, on any terms of equality; while all her children but one are married, scattered, immersed in business and households of their own. It is a lonely peak to sit on, at the top of the world, and as age draws on the Sovereign, who already has reigned so long that men passing middle age have consciously known no other, must feel this more and more painfully, with a sadness which the movement of the world does not diminish. We are not devotees of monarchy, gravely holding self-government to be more educative and more dignified; but there has never been in history a reign like that of Queen Victoria, who surrounded by an impenetrable etiquette, breaks it to tell her people that devotion, even in the humblest of followers, has aroused in her a real friendship. Republicanism in England sleeps, and will sleep while the Queen reigns. Is there not in that mere truism a sufficient biography!"

Some of our friends in some of the sections of the Church will be inclined to place the Rev. Dr. Wild, of Toronto, in the list of Canadian prophets in which Venor and Wiggins occupy a prominent place. Perhaps in doing so they will not be very far astray. In a recent sermon in Toronto Dr. Wild remarked: "Now, you say, what kind of religion will prevail in Canada. Why, three or four kinds are going to take Canada eventually. Which are they, pray? Episcopalianism will take the cities and towns. No good for the country, not a bit. Presbyterianism and Methodism are the next. These three bodies will be the supreme bodies in Canada one hundred years from to-night because they are suited to the conditions that this country will produce. And so our Methodist friends are banding together; they know that division is now weakness. We only want one Methodist, one Presbyterian and one Episcopal church, and these three societies are, in my opinion, to rule one hundred years from to-night. They will take Canada and control it." Which church may or may not prevail a hundred years from that evening will then trouble us little. Let us try to make the world better while we are in it.

The St. John *Daily Evening News*, which has taken a deep interest in Methodist Union, claims for the N. B. and P. E. I. Conference "the glory of heading the list in behalf of the unification of the Methodist bodies of British North America." Counting all the tie votes as votes against union, as they practically are, it gives the following figures: New Brunswick and P. E. I. stood seven and one-third boards for union to one against; Toronto, ten and three-quarter boards for one against; London, nine boards for to one against; Montreal, three and nearly one-third boards for to one against; Newfoundland, two and one-third boards for to one against; and Nova Scotia, two and nearly one-half boards for to one against. "The final returns" may alter the above showing to some extent," it says, "but the Conference of New Brunswick and P. E. I. Island seems sure to retain its pre-eminence."

The Bible Christians of Prince Edward Island will be the only body in the Maritime Provinces besides ourselves affected by the proposed Union of the Methodist Churches in Canada. From the Rev. John Harris, pastor of the Bible Christian Church in Charlottetown, we have received a copy of a small work just prepared by him, and published at the English Bible Christian Book Room, entitled, *The Life of the Rev. Francis Metherell*, and the History of the Bible Christian Church in Prince Edward Island. We are glad to know of the publication of this interesting little volume at a time when we are hoping for a more intimate personal acquaintance with our Bible Christian brethren. A knowledge of their history will the better prepare the way for a union of interests. Those who wish to read this book can procure it by forwarding their address and thirty-five cents to the Rev. J. Harris, Charlottetown.

Missionaries in Italy are cheered by the favorable attention of King Humbert. He has received Protestant deputations with affability, has listened with interest to their conversations, and has inquired of them earnestly respecting their doctrines and work. At the close of one interview, not long since, he cordially shook the Protestant minister by the hand, and bade him a hearty Godspeed. Copies of pamphlets and books exposing the errors, corruptions, and superstitions of Romanish ecclesiastics have been sent to the royal family, and received with courtesy. Even the priests and monks are reported to be not wholly unaffected by the influences pervading the religious atmosphere. One of the Vaudois preachers was sought for by a monk, in whose hospital lay a Belgian Protestant near his end. The other monks present received the minister of the Gospel with respect, offered to prepare for him the elements of the Lord's Supper, thanked him for his visit, and asked him to return.

The *Missionary Outlook* sees a bright prospect for the future. In reporting revivals, it remarks: "As one result of Methodist Union, we expect the mightiest revival of God's work this land has ever known. The consolidation of forces will necessitate a grand onward movement; the quenching of rivalries will beget a kindlier spirit; hope and expectation will stimulate to prayer and effort, and prayer and effort will bring the blessing. This has occurred already and will occur again on a wider scale. One of the most blessed revivals of the year has been at St. Thomas, where a Union Service of the different Methodist Churches has resulted in the conversion of over 150 souls. Let all who love Christ and Methodism look and pray and labor for a glorious revival to consummate Methodist Union." And let all the people say Amen.

Many wonder at the slow growth of the Church. With many of the causes which keep down her numbers, in spite of the many conversions reported, our readers are familiar, but they are apt to forget the great drain upon the Church by deaths. A contemporary says: "The gates heavenward as well as earthward are always open—and every moment some of the redeemed and saved are passing them, escaping to their eternal rest. A passage in a memoir now before us forcibly illustrates this momentous fact. It says of a noble deceased brother, that he united with the Church in February, 18—, during a revival in which 700 were added to the membership of the circuit, of whom but a single survivor remains."

The application of a rule prohibiting the use of intoxicating liquors by certain employes on the Intercolonial Railway has been extended to the officials of that service generally. The added words are: "And, hereafter, any officer or employe who is known to be intoxicated, whether on duty or not, will be at once dismissed from the service." We are not aware with whom the decision as to what constitutes "intoxication" is to rest. Opinions differ widely as to this point.

We are requested to state that a meeting of the members of the Camp Meeting Association is called for Tuesday, May 8th, at Berwick, at 1 p. m.

A GREAT REVIVAL.

American Methodist papers give lengthy accounts of the great revival at Decatur, Illinois, under Thomas Harrison. On April 10th a jubilee sermon was held, an account of which, as given in the *Western Christian Advocate*, we somewhat abridge. At one of the services of the day it was stated by a Dr. Joyce, of Cincinnati, that at least 90 per cent. of the converts in the great revival under Mr. Harrison at Cincinnati had remained faithful.

Decatur is a town of about thirteen thousand inhabitants. There are two Methodist Churches. Rev. Thomas Harrison, the well-known evangelist, began a series of special revival services in the First Church on the evening of the 30th of last November, and for a period of nearly five months the services have been continued, with two and three services each day except Saturdays. Both the pastors, the presiding elders, and ministers from surrounding charges, have been constantly engaged in the great work, aiding in every way the evangelist in the greatest revival ever known to that part of the country. There was not a night that did not witness the conversion of souls. The highest number forward for prayer at one time was 78, and the highest number of conversions

35. February 8th, an all-day jubilee service was held for the conversion of 1,000 souls. It was a day of power and of victory, and it was thought by many that the tide of power would rise any higher, but they were happily disappointed; the influence swept on and widened its circle, and April 10th a second jubilee service was held for the conversion of 2,000 souls.

The services began at 5.30 in the morning, and 800 persons were present, and in 50 minutes 355 persons testified to the saving power of God's grace. It frequently occurred that five and six persons would be testifying at once. At half-past ten o'clock Dr. Hatfield of Chicago preached an effective sermon to 1,000 people on the subject of the Christian's possessions. It was good to be there; the aged Christian and the young convert alike rejoiced in the glorious truth that all things belong to God's children. At 2.30 p. m., Dr. I. W. Joyce, pastor of St. Paul Church, Cincinnati, addressed a packed house on the subject of "Spiritual Victories Reasons for Religious Jubilees." The spiritual fervor of the audience was intense, and the spirit of rejoicing abounded on every hand. Short and effective addresses were also delivered by Dr. Fry, editor of the *Central Advocate*, St. Louis, and others. The service at night was conducted by Mr. Harrison. He was in his happiest mood. His address had great power upon the great congregation, and when the invitation was given the altar was filled almost instantly with persons who seemed anxious to kneel first, for the pardon of sins, and many were converted before the service closed. It was a remarkable day, such a one as few people ever saw.

All ages are represented in the results of the revival. But the large majority is composed of young and middle-aged people. In many cases whole families have been brought into the Church, and the effect upon the town and surrounding country is wonderful. Thirteen States and Territories are represented in the converts. Mr. Harrison's health is remarkably good, and his power over his audiences is wonderful, and his usefulness seems to be constantly increasing. He has invitations from almost every point in the United States. Over fifty ministers were present at the services during the day.

IN MALTA.

In this island, an important military and naval station, Methodism has again taken its place. Many years ago Methodist services were introduced by some pious men in the British forces, and English Methodism sent her ministers in their wake. The little church in which the late Rev. John B. Brownell preached, and the home in which his amiable wife presided, during their residence in that island, formed a centre of religious activity and a place of Christian communion for Christian men of various nations, resident in the islands on military duty or passing on to the mainland of the East. Soon after their removal the mission was abandoned and Methodist services were discontinued, except when held by those devout men whom the British army and navy has always produced.

Abroad, the idea prevails that Malta is simply a barren rock, thinly inhabited except by the British soldiers and seamen quartered there. Of it an English Methodist paper says:

The native population, which at the commencement of the British occupation in 1800 numbered barely 100,000, now amounts to 150,000. So that, instead of a mere rock, commanded by fortresses, and inclosing commodious harbours, it is the home of a busy and frugal people, with its towns and villages, its agricultural and mechanical, and even its manufacturing industries. From this fruitful hive there are ceaselessly moving out to Egypt and the other states of North Africa large numbers of people, keen and eager traffickers, who, even if some of them are characterized by all the vices of the Levant, are nevertheless important factors in all the semi-civilized African populations, and none the less need the efforts of the Christian philanthropist.

The Maltese vernacular is one which adds weight to these considerations. With a strong infusion of Latin and Italian, and traces even of the early Phœnician colonization, it is in the main Arabic, showing the energy of the Saracenic occupation of the islands. Hence a Maltese is not only qualified by his sunny clime and his frugal habits to endure the heat of Africa, but by his language is readily understood among all Moorish and Arabian peoples. Here, then, is an opportunity for the Christian Church, an island within the precincts of the British Empire, with a teeming population which is continually moving out to the northern seaboard of the Dark Continent, not content to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, but equalling the Greek in push and enterprise, a veritable centre therefore from which, if we will, laborers may be sent forth to reclaim those gardens of the Lord which the sword of Mohammed has so long made a wilderness. True, there are difficulties. Where are there not? True, the difficulties are great, but to the faith which has fellowship with the Almighty, difficulties are the incentives, not the hindrances, to enterprise.