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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8th, 1892.

A MAN is never in a much worse position than when he has to defend his conduct by saying that he was drunk. Still for the sake of our country we could hope that the member of the Dominion Parliament who sang "Nearer My God to Thee" during the recent all-night sitting was under the influence of liquor. Such blasphemy shocks everybody of good taste, not to speak of Christianity, but there are worse people in the Dominion than the legislator who thus outraged common decency. We mean the electors who send such men to Parliament.

A CONTEMPORARY observes that seeing he has no D.D., Mr. McTavish's new title is as good as any he can have. The degree of D.D. would certainly have not been amiss. The Premier knows the Evidences of Christianity quite as well as any minister who has recently been made a D.D., and perhaps a little better. He is a sound Presbyterian, and could no doubt make an argument in favour of Presbyterian polity that few D.D.'s could equal. Besides there is a high precedent. Bismarck is a D.D. The most pronounced Tory in Ontario would probably say that the Ontario Premier would make a better Doctor in Divinity than Bismarck. Our colleges go to Germany for many things. One of them might follow this precedent.

THE American Assembly that has just closed its sittings at Portland was in several respects a remarkable body. There was not an ex-Moderator in it. Old ecclesiastical leaders are irreverently called "wheel-horses" by our neighbours. There was surely a "wheel-horse" in Portland. Of about six hundred members only twelve were members of last year's Assembly. Neither Princeton nor Union had a Professor on the floor. And yet the business was perhaps done better than if the court had been crowded with "wheel-horses," "friends of Princeton," "friends of Union," and specialists of various kinds. As Principal Grant occasionally observes, "the General Assembly is greater than any man in it." It is a pity all the members do not make that estimate of themselves and the court.

THE Assembly of the American Presbyterian Church is wrestling with the Briggs case. The Free Church of Scotland has a good deal of trouble with alleged heresy in one or two of the colleges. Other members of the Presbyterian family have their troubles. Ours is perhaps the only member of the family in the world that has nothing on hand but plain straight work. We have a thousand and Home Mission stations, and supplying these stations is much better work than trying professors for heresy. We have a good Foreign Mission

interest, and sending men and women to the regions beyond and raising money to sustain them is as good work as God ever gives His people to do. Most of our numerous colleges are full of students, and what better work can the Church have than training well-equipped ministers of the Gospel? We might at any time have our burning questions, but that is no reason why we should meet them half-way. God is now giving us plenty of work and ample opportunity to do it. Let it be done gratefully, unitedly, vigorously.

AS we go to press, members of Assembly from every point between Cape Breton and Vancouver are gathering in Montreal. The feeling of the Church at the close of another ecclesiastical year should be one of profound gratitude to Almighty God. The past year has been one of peace and substantial prosperity. The reports will, we understand, show that nearly all the schemes are in a fairly prosperous condition. The old common place "more might have been done" is not worth discussing. Of course more might have been done, and much less might easily have been done. If all the members and adherents of the Church had been perfect or nearly so they would no doubt have done and given much more, but if perfect they would not be here. We must deal with men and conditions as we find them. On the whole and judged by human standards the Church is doing fairly well. Thousands of noble men and women from the Atlantic to the Pacific have worked hard and given liberally. We prefer to judge the Church by them, not by the people who oppose, and protest, and wrangle, and dodge when there is work to be done or money to be raised. The Church has some people who might help her by joining some of the other denominations, but she has thousands of noble self-sacrificing men and women.

THE following recommendations made by the committee in co-operation with other Churches to the American Assembly, and unanimously adopted, are well worthy of consideration in Canada. It so seldom happens that "union" committees of any kind do anything practical that this deliverance strikes one as a rare and worthy exception:—

First, That where doubt may exist as to the propriety of the organization of a new Church, such organization shall not be effected until after conference with other local Churches and with the Board of Home Missions.

Second, Where Churches have been assisted by the Board for several years, and show little prospect of growth and self-support, the Board be urged to suspend further appropriations pending a conference between itself and the Home Mission Committee of that Presbytery.

Third, That Presbyteries be enjoined to exercise the utmost care alike in the selection of new fields and of the men who are to occupy them; that new work be undertaken only when it gives promise of decided growth.

Fourth, We recommend a joint conference of the executive officers of the allied denominations, to be held at some time in the near future, for the purpose of devising some plan for future operations in the general line of the facts and principles herein given.

Fifth, We recommend that the committee be continued for such further work as increasing knowledge and the necessities of the case may seem to make advisable.

For Canadian purposes we would add a sixth: That where mission stations are within two or three miles of each other a conference be held between a committee of the Home Mission Board and the Presbytery with a view to union.

PEOPLE who think that nothing new can be said on the temperance question have been given a genuine surprise by an old Torontonian, at present an Episcopal clergyman of high standing in New York. Dr. Rainsford's theory is that all good men should join in an earnest effort to reform the saloon. Most clergymen think, and we heartily endorse their views, that the right reform for the saloon is to reform it out of existence. Dr. Rainsford, however, is of the opinion that the saloon has come to stay in New York, and the right thing is to have it conducted by good men who will manage the business in an orderly, decent sort of way, and sell nothing very strong. We have not the slightest confidence in Dr. Rainsford's theory, and we cannot help wondering that a man in his position should suggest such a plan, but at the same time we have no respect for the conduct of many who will be found loudly condemning him. Have the advocates of any other plan had such brilliant success that they can afford to speak contemptuously of Dr. Rainsford's proposal? Has high license, or prohibition, or local option, or any other system done so much that its

friends can sneer at anybody who is in earnest, even if some of his methods are almost unthinkable. The root idea of Dr. Rainsford's theory is a good one. Manifestly he is trying to find a substitute for the saloon, and in doing so he simply substitutes one kind of saloon for another. There is not any doubt that coffee houses, properly managed, comfortable, cosy places, in which men of moderate means could rest, sip coffee, lemonade, or any harmless drink, chat and read the papers, would do more to undermine the influence of the saloon than sulphurous abuse of saloon keepers.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

THE General Assembly that meets to-night in Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Montreal, will be a matter of interest from one side of this continent to the other. Not that anxiety is felt concerning any of the questions so far as known to be brought before the Supreme Court of the Church lest heated discussion may arise, or that undesirable results may follow, but the kindly interest that the great body of the people have in the prosperity and well-being of the Church to which they belong may be advanced. The year that has passed has been one of quiet and progressive work in all departments of Christian activity coming within the range of the Church's influence. The measure of that progress will be better understood when the reports of the various committees have been presented and disposed of. It will be doubtless seen that faithful work has been done in all departments and that results in some measure commensurate with the efforts expended have been realized.

It is matter for congratulation that while other branches of the Presbyterian Church have been more or less agitated by exciting questions, the Canadian Church has providentially been permitted during the past year to pursue the even tenor of its way. Our neighbours across the border have been disturbed by the continuance of the Briggs case which as yet is being far from ended. The difficulty arising out of the relation of Union Seminary, New York, has not yet been adjusted, and divergent views between members of the General Assembly and the directors of that institution continue to prevail. The difficulty is not insurmountable, and will no doubt reach amicable settlement in time. Harmony, however, will not be restored until a final disposition of the Briggs case has been made. That serious matter will continue to agitate the American Church for a long time to come. It goes back again to the Presbytery of New York for trial and adjudication. Whatever decision is reached by that court of primary jurisdiction can hardly be expected to be conclusive. If the teaching of Dr. Briggs is condemned, then he and his friends will doubtless carry it through all possible stages of appeal. Should a majority of his Presbytery absolve him from the charge of erroneous teaching then those who regard with apprehension and distrust the views to which he has committed himself will be certain to appeal to the higher courts until an end is reached. Meanwhile the agitation will continue, and lines of cleavage will become more distinctly marked. The whole case will be kept steadily before the public gaze and discussion, becoming heated as it is prolonged, will possibly tend to greater disturbance, rather than to calm and deliberate judgment. Those who desire to see the Church earnestly engaged in the furtherance of the Gospel rather than in fierce polemics cannot but regret the occurrence of such agitation. It is, however, no longer a matter of choice. When these questions are forced upon the consideration of the Church they have to be frankly and squarely met, not in the narrow and bitter spirit of the heated partisan, but in the broader, larger and more comprehensive spirit of the Christian who realizes his responsibility to God and to truth. The great principle that ought to underlie all Christian activity, as it ought to be the basis of individual Christian life, is a sincere desire for the advancement of God's glory, a motive that, in the strife for mastery and temporary triumph, it is feared is too much overlooked.

Questions of such a nature, however, do not at present appear likely to emerge in the Canadian Church. All the more then ought the time and attention of the General Assembly to be concentrated on the proper work of the Church, that such measures may be devised, and administration so arranged that the interest of the people may be deepened, their liberality more freely evoked, and, above all, that a fuller and healthier glow of spirit-