

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWSTHE FAILURE OF THE UNION
COMMITTEE.

By Rev. A. B. Dobson.

If it were granted that the committee is a constitutional body, and if it were further granted that it was appointed to do just what it has done, another question of equal importance arises. Has it done anything, after all, to assure the success of its own scheme? By its completed record its success or failure must be judged. In passing judgment no account is to be taken of the disappearance of the sharp emphasis formerly laid on doctrinal and other differences between the denominations, for that is news to no one. It is the work of time, not of the committee, and is one of the most obvious of facts. The only pertinent question to ask is whether the committee has touched the greatest, the vital, difficulties of the situation. If it has not, the work of five years and the expenditure of many thousands amounts to practically nothing. There are some who do not oppose organic union in itself, but who do not like the methods of the committee; who feel that it has dismally failed to make out a case for the scheme which it has so persistently championed; who believe that it has failed to think the question out. The committee finds an easy answer to this. It declares that it has not to prove anything; that its business is to bring about union; and that it is the business of anti-unionists to prove that they should not do so.

"New exegesis!" Be it said to the credit of the members of the committee that they do not quote John's gospel, chapter 17, and Paul's Epistles in support of this new view. According to this dictum some very important things which have been for ages regarded as being nobly settled must be re-opened. The Reformation must justify itself anew. Denominationalism after nearly 400 years of useful history must prove anew its right to exist. It has fought and won that battle once, and has held the field ever since. It will continue to do so. It needs not to offer further proof of its right to live. History has justified it. Of course, no such question can, at any one time, be settled forever. Readjustment is of frequent necessity. But when the time for revolution arrives a heavy task devolves upon the revolutionists. They must first convict the old order, pass sentence upon it, and, if necessary, execute it. But execution is the last act, not the first. This is the course followed by all patriots; others may take an opposite course. It was perfectly pitiable to hear learned and reverend D.D.'s declare that they had nothing to prove; that the denominations have no right to exist as such. How close to despicable it was to hear such men argue so recklessly that their Church has outlived its usefulness and must prove that it has not! This dictum would undermine civilized society. If the well-behaved citizen could be called upon at the will of any dissatisfied person to prove his right to live or else be crucified, what safety would there be? Under this canon the tragedy of the Judgment Hall and of Calvary would be condoned. But, strange as it may appear in gentlemen who claim to have a vision, it is the rule which the committee has adopted. It is convenient. It saves trouble. No proof is required. None is given. None is seriously attempted.

The committee did not investigate the great difficulties, for they do not lie primarily or chiefly in doctrine. Nor even in polity. They are chiefly

those of which no creed, no polity, can take account. They are to be sought in the different religious ideals of the people; in their belief that such a conglomeration of people will neither go together nor stay together; in the adjustment of congregational property; in the waste of Church equipment now existing; and in the unfortunate number and distribution of small Methodist congregations throughout the country. The committee has touched none of these.

Is it any wonder therefore, that they have failed to substantiate their strongest claim, viz., that of economy, the prevention of waste by overlapping? Assertion is not proof. No information has been given, and so far as anyone certainly knows there is less waste at present than there would be under union. Take the following estimate as fairly representative:—A district here ten miles square has nine pastoral charges. Under union six churches worth, at a very low estimate, \$20,000, would be abandoned; six others enlarged for \$6,000. Total loss in working equipment \$26,000. But there would also be eight small Methodist churches, now self-supporting, which would become missions, and would require \$800 yearly from a new mission fund. Not one pastor would be spared. The only change would be that three out of the nine ministers who are now living at points convenient to railway, post office, stores, schools, etc., would have to move out to these new missions where new mansees would have to be built, and where they would be far from all conveniences. In a district only 50 miles square the loss in church buildings would be nearly three-quarters of a million dollars, and in mission money the loss would be \$15,000 yearly. The very same men working the same territory as before at \$15,000 greater yearly cost, and with six churches worth \$20,000 going to ruin! If this estimate be not representative nor approximately correct, why has not the committee furnished data which would enable the Church to form a comprehensive and a correct judgment on this important point? It is urgently needed. We want to know whether on a survey of the whole field there is anything at all, anything worth while, in this cry of overlapping. It was as easy to get the facts as fully and as correctly as we get our annual statistics. Perhaps the committee did not care to do so, for, really, the argument loses all its dignity when it is remembered that at present the average cost to each member of the Presbyterian Church is about four (4) cents for each Sabbath service; in rural districts, about whose welfare-Unionists are so anxious, it is not more than 3 cents per service, with all the other services of the minister absolutely free. The cost to the other churches is probably less. A committee which is willing to spend five years of time and possibly \$25,000 of money in devising a scheme which may enable pious men to obtain their religion for one cent and a third instead of four cents per Sabbath service, will deserve to be canonized. And it will be a pleasure on the second Sunday in October to tell people about such an act of philanthropy.

Fordwich, July 5th, 1909.

Wilfrid Ward's article on "Moral Fiction a Hundred Years Ago," which the Living Age for July 10 reprints from the Dublin Review, is chiefly noteworthy for its warm appreciation of Miss Edgeworth. In spite of Miss Edgeworth's too ostentatious moralising, she had rare powers of analysis and portrayal of character, and were things might happen than a revival of interest in her stories.

ABOUT SCHOOL TEXT BOOKS.

By Ulster Pat.

At a time when the Provincial Government is preparing text books for the Public schools of Ontario, it may be worth recalling the experience of the celebrated Dr. Thomas Guthrie, as recorded in his autobiography. He says:—Having learned our letters and some small syllables, printed on a fly-leaf of the Shorter Catechism, we were at once passed into the Book of Proverbs. In the olden time this was the universal custom in all the common schools in Scotland, a custom that should never have been abandoned. That book is without a rival for beginners, containing quite a repertory of monosyllables and pure Saxon—"English undefiled." Take this passage for example, where, with one exception, every word is formed of a single syllable and belongs to the Saxon tongue:—"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." What a contrast to the silly trash of modern school books for beginners, with such sentences as "Tom has a dog," "the cat is good," "the cow has a calf." While learning the art of reading by the Book of Proverbs, we had our minds stored with the highest moral truths, and by sage advice applicable to all ages and departments of life, the branch, while it was supple, received a bent in a direction highly favorable to future well-doing and success in life. The patience, prudence, foresight, and economy which used to characterize Scotsmen—giving occasion to the saying "a canny Scot"—and by which they were often able to rise in the world and distance all competitors in the race of life, was to a large extent due to their being thus ingrained in youth and childhood with the practical wisdom enshrined in the Book of Proverbs.

In those days what Solomon says of the Rod was literally understood, and the teacher of the school in which young Guthrie was prepared for college had not learned to govern his passions. In a fit of ill-humor he gave the lad a "licking" that left him with "brow and face all marred and swollen." In his old age the good doctor wrote:—"My parents were wiser than my teacher, my mother telling me, when I said I would not return but tell my father how I had been used: 'You had better not; he will lick you next.' We were brought up harder louns than the present generation, and did not get on any the worse in life for that."

If this remark was true in 1871, is it not tenfold more so in 1909?

We find the following suggestive paragraph in a recent issue of the Toronto Sun. The writer is Professor Goldwin Smith:—"Those who have most carefully studied the labor question are, it is believed, pretty unanimous in holding that the establishment in some form or other of a partnership between employer and employed is the only way of putting an end to a war which causes an enormous loss to the community, and may even in time transfer the centres of industry to nations such as China and Japan, comparatively unaffected; besides the disturbance of good feeling between classes. It is from this point of view that Mr. MacKenzie King is understood to approach the subject, his knowledge of which, and his ability to deal with it he has clearly shown. Apart, therefore, from any party or political question, we have reason to rejoice in his election and continued presence in the Government."