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Toronto, May 16, 1895.

United States General Assembly.

THE General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America which will convene to-day at Pittsburg, Pa., has been looked forward to with considerable interest. Among the pleasant amenities will be a recognition of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the re-union of the old and new school churches, as they were called, which took place in the same city in 1870. Among those who will deliver prepared addresses is Rev. President Francis L. Patton of Princeton, whose address at the Knox College Jubilee was so greatly admired. The business of the Assembly includes items of general importance, which will elicit much discussion and probably prolong the meeting of Assembly for at least three weeks.

The Briggs case, it is supposed, will re-appear. It may take the form of a motion to depose him from the ministry. He is now under suspension, but the Union Seminary has kept him on its staff. Should he be deposed he would have to cease being a Professor in the Seminary, only a regularly ordained Presbyterian minister being eligible for the position. On his connection with Union Seminary depends the other vital question of the attitude of the church to graduates of that institution. It is held by not a few prominent ministers that graduates who have come under the influence of Dr. Briggs' teaching out not to receive license at the hands of the Presbyteries. Dr. Briggs removal from the ministry would obviate the necessity of dealing with the students' license question.

The relationship between the Theological Colleges and the church has been widely and exhaustively discussed in the church papers during the past year. It has been dealt with ably from all points of view, and the space devoted to the subject shows that the people have taken a deep interest in it. It is now three years since the question was raised and the church seems to be ripe for a change. The Colleges hold that they ought to have practical autonomy in the management of their own affairs. The church holds itself responsible, and rightly does so, for the teaching, for the soundness of doctrine taught, and for the general success of the colleges. Hence there is a demand for a closer supervision over funds and instruction. This, many of the Seminaries are strenuously resisting and may carry their point in the Assembly, although the powerful institution of Princeton will likely forward a resolution in favor of Assembly control.

The election of Moderator is exciting lively interest.

Several likely names have been mentioned in advance but the division will be, generally speaking, on the lines of the Briggs and anti-Briggs factions.

The Vacant Professorships.

A satisfactory feature of the deliberations over the vacant chairs in Knox College is the manifest desire on the part of all concerned to make the best possible choice of occupants to the important positions of professors. We have not observed a single expression of opinion that could be otherwise construed than as we have indicated. The names of several gentlemen have been brought forward, but in every case grave reasons have been given to show that the nominees were specially fitted to advance the interests of "Old Knox." In this spirit lies the hope of an ultimate good choice, and the feelings which prevail are, therefore something to be thankful for.

Complaints have reached us that the time allowed in which to choose is altogether too short. If this be so, it is certainly desirable that a clear understanding should be immediately arrived at. The importance of the appointment called for is altogether too great, for hurried action, and it would be well to consider whether a temporary settlement be possible until next year. On another page will be found a few communications regarding the subject, with valuable suggestions, but other letters for which no space could be found deprecated a hasty decision and others still have urged us to place this point before our readers. These correspondents are earnest and well-proved ministers, men of influence, and speaking for them we have no hesitation in saying that the feeling in favor of delay for a year is strong and influential.

It is to be hoped that, what ever may be the course adopted, delay or immediate action, Knox College, whose honorable history is something to be proud of will be furnished with a teacher of distinguished ability, and of such character and standing as to command the confidence of the whole Church.

Synod Conference.

The conference has become a most useful adjunct of the meetings of Synod. It has been a source of complaint that the routine business of the Synods usually proved dry and unprofitable and the suggestion of a Synod Conference was in the nature of prescribing an antidote. So far the experiment has worked satisfactorily. An opportunity is afforded for the public discussion, in an informal, but impressive way, of questions which engage the attention of the active membership of the Church, and the exchange of views by practical men cannot fail of good results. The Conference held at Orangeville this week was as interesting as its predecessors in the Synod, and for that result the Committee is to be thanked for an exceedingly wise selection of topics and of leading speakers.

On Monday afternoon, the topic "The Administration of the Holy Spirit in the work of the Church" through its officers, and through its members was an appropriate opening for an Ante-Synod Conference, The ever interesting topic of Foreign Missions occupied Monday evening and well was the cause advocated. Timely was the topic of Tuesday morning and evening, viz: Sabbath Observance, at a period when the enemies of the Lord's Day are unusually overbearing and active.