

THE PRESBYTERIAN.

FEBRUARY, 1868.



INSTRUMENTAL music in our public service is one of those questions which are most judiciously settled by being in a great degree left to the sound common sense of congregations themselves. It appears too evident that prolonged discussion on this point before the Church Courts has a most prejudicial effect, and when we see the heart burnings, bitterness and ill feeling which it has stirred up, and which continue to be exhibited in the Canada Presbyterian Church in relation to it, we cannot help congratulating our own Church, that it has been settled so wisely and that the decision of the Synod has been marked by so much calmness and reason. There are, and must be, differences of opinion on this, as on other questions; practices (lawful in themselves) which may be not only harmless, but actually beneficial, under certain circumstances, may be positively injurious in others. The effects of early education, the prevailing atmosphere of local opinion, the subtle and appreciable, although undefinable, influence exerted over the minds of communities by vague and unexpressed fears on all sides of something monstrous springing out of new modes of doing things, although these fears could not be put in shape, or their nature described, have much to do with this, and inspire a dread of "innovations," which has a favourable as well as an unfavourable side. It helps to keep back men from rushing into novelties, from running into extravagancies, and from changing about from one thing to another, wavering, unsettled and driven about with every breath of fancy. It is a potent safeguard, and to this unwillingness to depart from old forms, the Church of Scotland owes much of the dignity and seemliness which attach to the proceedings of her Courts. To the want of reverence for old institutions, for old practices, for the wis-

dom of ages, and for customs descending from past generations, may be attributed the ceaseless changes among the Americans of the United States, and the numerous sects and beliefs which prevail among them. They are the type of restlessness, as the French Canadian resisting every improvement, content with the rude implements of his forefathers, and satisfied, in spite of every evidence to the contrary, of the superiority of his antiquated fashions, is the type of immobility. Need we follow either of these examples?

A pamphlet* containing reports of the discussions which took place in the Presbytery of the Canada Presbyterian Church in Montreal, and in their Synod held at Toronto, has been forwarded to us. The pamphlet will not be without its use if it serve to bring the question more clearly before the public, but we should have liked to have seen more full reports of the speeches of those who opposed the overture on the subject which was brought before the Synod. The proceedings in that Court were not reported at any length in the Toronto papers, which probably accounts for this defect, and is the more to be regretted as the arguments on that side here contained are of the weakest possible description. We do not intend to enter at length into the arguments brought up, and which are to some extent reproduced in the preface in a condensed form. But we may say in passing, that the preface, while it might have been written with a little more of the spirit of forbearance to those who are opposed to the views of the writer, yet brings the points on which its argument turns, clearly and ably before the reader. The argument in brief is: The use of a musical instrument in leading Divine praise is either right or wrong. If right, allow congregations to use it, where the

* The Organ Question. Line upon line or Instrumental Music in Presbyterian Churches. Montreal: Murray & Co.