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THE WILL OF A MAJORITY.

One of the hollowest shams of the men who set themselves to the task of removing our Church out of the way, was the pretence that the people were to be consulted, and that whenever there was a majority opposed to entering the new Church, the wishes of that majority were to be respected. In the bills passed by the local legislatures, there were even clauses inserted to give effect to such an expression of opinion. Great credit was taken for the liberality with which we were treated in this respect. When the matter was discussed before the two Houses at Quebec, much stress was laid upon this, and it was, in fact, only the solemn assertions of the promoters of the Bills there (in the Legislature of Ontario there was no opportunity afforded for remonstrance) that every precaution had been taken to preserve the right of the minority, that they were passed.

But what was the process employed to stifle the voice of the majorities in Congregations before the final scene at the Skating Rink, the conclusion of a series of the most extraordinary violations of constitutional safeguards that has probably ever been witnessed. We have already given some facts bearing upon this point, but it may not be without benefit to refer briefly to some of the schemes resorted to. In most Congregations it is the case, as a usual rule, that the members are diffident of expressing an opinion in opposition to the wishes of their minister. It is also the case, usually, that the minister, as Moderator of Session, has a controlling, almost despotic power; especially when, as was the fact in the present instance, every exertion had been used to create a *factitious, ignorant public clamour in favour of a particular course*. It is easy to see from these considerations with what facility the real mind of a Congregation could be misrepresented, and returns of the most fallacious

kind could be made up and palmed off as the real views of the people. We know as a matter of fact, that Congregations were returned as voting unanimously for Union, which had shown in the strongest possible way their repugnance to it. We have proof of this which we can easily produce, not with respect to one or two solitary congregations, but to many all over the country. And it was on the strength of this solemn mockery that acts were obtained to set aside the most carefully secured rights of a Christian people; to annul the title deeds to their church properties, title deeds carefully prepared so as to prevent the success of the attempt which was foreseen and, as was believed, securely guarded against by the true members of our Church, who knew there were professed adherents who only waited an opportunity to turn and rend the Church to which they owed allegiance, and whose existence they had vowed to maintain.

This policy having been successful in the Church Courts before the late secession, surely when all was done that could be done in the way of making it appear that there was a majority for breaking up the Church, when the very records of the Synod themselves show there was only a handful present of the members of that Court, it might have been expected that the terms of the Acts would have been complied with. But this was very far from the intention of the enemies of our Church. The plans adopted varied according to circumstances; where it could be managed, in the Congregations in which there was no doubt that a vote would have been obtained adverse to the breaking up of the Church, the members were not allowed an opportunity of expressing an opinion. No meeting was called before the expiry of the six months graciously allowed to the Congregations in Ontario to come to a decision as to their future ecclesiastical connection. So soon as the 15th December had passed the people were then told that they were helpless, that they had, to use the elegant words of one of the reverend gentlemen who had been playing so Christian a part "slid into Union without knowing it." But where the members would not allow this scheme to be carried out; where they had meetings called, however legally or formally these might be summoned; however large the majority against severing their connection with the Church of Scotland and becoming seceders; of what avail was it? We need not cite particular cases, there are many of them, but in all, the pleas were the same; some petty, technical quibble was raised; in one gross case, that of London,—the minister himself actually led the meeting astray as to the proper mode of taking the votes (whether designedly or undesignedly, let his own conscience say, we judge not) and took advantage of that misdirection to take the case into the Courts. There could be no question in many of the Congregations as to the numbers. Yet the most solemn pledges as to the respect to be paid to the wishes of majorities were cast to the winds.

In some cases after the Congregations had resolved unanimously to remain

by the connection with the Church of Scotland, their Churches were broken into with brutal violence, the perpetrators of these acts of violence, Christian pastors! trusting to the peaceable dispositions of the God-fearing people, upon whom they tried to impose themselves. In other cases, legal proceedings are threatened against those who still hold possession of their Churches by an incontestable title, the presumption being that some technical error may be found by which a decision may be wrested from the judges in favour of those who seek to break away from the Church to which they once belonged and to seize hold of properties to which they have no claims, either legally or equitably. Yet we, who have decided to remain by our Church, are branded as greedy and unscrupulous.

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COMMUNISM IN CANADA.

With what a feeling of horror was the news received here that the communists were committing excesses in Paris; that the Red Flag had been raised, and that no property was safe; no rights respected; nothing but the popular will, directed by demagogues, to be regarded as the rule for the disposal of all things. Such a state of affairs is one not greatly to be desired, yet there was no disguise in the matter; all this disorder was open and recognised as an overthrow of constituted authority, as an uprising against law and order, as the reign of lawlessness, and a contempt for courts of justice and the setting aside of existing rights. There was at least no hypocrisy about it, no pretence of appealing to law as a justification for doing away with all laws.

We do not pretend to deny that in great national crises, there may be a justification for setting aside legal rights; such was alleged to be the reason for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of Ireland. It was held by those who advocated that measure, that great irritation existed on the part of the Irish people at the existence of an institution, which, to the large majority, was a sign of the supremacy of a small portion of the community over the great bulk of the people, and that until this was removed there could be no peace, no cordiality between the two nations. That, on the one hand, there was a smouldering discontent, ready to break out into a flame of insurrection; on the other, a privileged class lording it over a conquered country and keeping watch and ward over a tributary province, from which it drew supplies to maintain a privileged class in ease and luxury. Such were the arguments used. We are not called on to express an opinion as to the truth or error contained in them. But strongly as the case was put by Mr. Gladstone, and earnestly as he advocated the putting an end to this state of affairs, which, rightly or wrongly, he held to be one great reason for Irish disaffection, he yet showed that he appreciated to its full extent the gravity of the measure which he had

introduced. He stated emphatically that there could be no justification for the course he proposed to adopt, but the fact of the enormous national interests at stake; the plea that there could be no peace, no cordial understanding, no real friendship between the two countries until the grievances, sentimental grievances they might be called, but not the less real, had been removed. These considerations, and these alone, he held, could justify his interfering with the funds of the Church of Ireland, and diverting them from their original destination to others, which he maintained were identical in their real objects, although apparently varied from their original purpose.

Has any such justification been shown in the case of the funds and properties of the branch of the Church of Scotland in Canada? Has there been any grave national crisis such as that which Mr. Gladstone held to have existed when the Irish Church was disestablished? Was her existence preventing the cordial union of the different provinces? Were the fabrics erected for the celebration of her worship regarded as the emblems of a conquering nation, dominating over a conquered race? Yet these alone were the considerations which were held by Mr. Gladstone as the justification for setting aside the revenues provided for the Church of Ireland. We pass over the fact that the Parliament which enacted the law to which we have just referred was an Imperial Parliament, possessing almost unlimited powers, powers certainly uncontrolled, whilst the Legislatures which have passed the Acts of which we complain, are limited in their objects, and have only a delegated authority. We pass over this point because the right or wrong, the justice or injustice, of a measure does not depend on the power to enforce legislation, but on its equity.

Setting aside altogether the ecclesiastical character of the parties to the struggle, the decision of the Court of Chancery in the Church cases which have been brought before it are such as to make every member of the community tremble for the safety of his investments. Of what avail are title deeds, agreements or conditions, however stringent? Take the case of the Temporalities' Fund, and extend that to other cases of a similar nature, of a purely business kind. The words of the bargain, made when the Temporalities' Fund was established, are as stringent as words can be: "All persons who have a claim to such benefits shall be ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, and they shall cease to have any claim on, or to be entitled to, any share of said Commutation Fund, whenever they shall cease to be ministers in connection with the said Church." Or the title deeds of the churches. They clearly state that the congregations shall only enjoy the right to the properties so long as they continue congregations in connection with the Church of Scotland. No majority, however large, can deprive the adherents of that Church of their rights. Yet we are told by the Court of Chancery that we have no rights which that Court is bound to respect.

It has been pretended that the Local Legislatures can deal with all property as it will, because by the British North America Act the power of dealing with questions affecting property and civil rights has been delegated to them. Are our farmers, our business men, our workmen who have secured homes for themselves, prepared to accede to the truth of this proposition? Will they admit that the Legislature of any of the Provinces can transfer their properties to their neighbours on the strength of a Bill rushed through without examination? If so, no doubt we ought to be content, but in the meantime we take leave to differ from this interpretation of the powers of Local Legislatures, and we believe that the courts of law, either in this country, or in the court of final appeal, will decide that we are right.

FINANCIAL EMBARRASSMENT.

We have referred to the state of weakness produced by the forced union of various bodies of Presbyterians at the dictation of certain leaders. That the union was a forced one nobody who knew the circumstances could doubt. Yet the statement was denied, and the newspapers were filled with congratulations on the glorious union that had been accomplished. Now we have the evidence of the convener of the Home Mission Committee of the state of embarrassment into which the funds have fallen, and the likelihood that the operations of the Church, which were to be greatly extended, must be restricted.

The falling off has been very marked. An appeal was issued by the convener, by which it was shown that previous to the union there was a deficiency of \$2,000. At the meeting in June, an effort was made to have this liquidated, so that the churches could unite free of debt. This, we are told, was only partially successful. The partiality of the success may be judged from the fact that at the end of September the debt had doubled, and that after meeting all liabilities the deficiency had been increased eightfold, or from \$2,000 to \$16,000.

But this is not all. Loans were effected, on which interest must be paid, to the extent of \$17,000, and claims have accrued, or are accruing, which by the first of June will amount to \$35,000. To meet this all that had been raised at the date of a second appeal from the convener was \$3,000, or little over one-twelfth of the sum required. It has been attempted to explain this away by assertions that nothing had been done to call attention to the claims upon the funds; that the schemes of the Church had been allowed to depend altogether on voluntary contribution, and that until the machinery was in fair working order such a deficiency might be expected, which would soon be far more than made up at the first effort which was put forth. But the words of the convener of the Home Mission Committee of the United Presbyterian

Church contradict these assertions in the most positive terms. Mr. Cochrane states distinctly that he has used every effort to raise the amount necessary to put the fund on a satisfactory footing; that he has not only published the appeal in the journals, and official record of the Church, so as to secure the utmost publicity, but that he has also appealed to all the ministers individually, urging them to wipe out the reproach of incurring liabilities which they had no means to meet. But the call has been unanswered; the returns have been most insignificant, the result will be the withdrawal of Christian influences from localities where such influences are most needed.

Do we rejoice in this failure; in this want of means to carry the Gospel to those who are perishing from lack of knowledge? Far from it. So far from indulging in congratulation on the truth of our predictions, we lament that such should be the result. But it does not surprise us. No blessing could attend the measure which were adopted to force into union those who were not drawn together by the spirit, love, and fellowship which alone could have justified such a step. As the Spirit of God does not hallow the marriage contracted from unholy motives and consecrated by no union of feeling, as nothing but wretchedness and mutual upbraidings can be expected, neither can anything but discord be looked for from those who have been forced together from political motives, into an unnatural alliance in the name of religion.

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HONOUR TO WHOM HONOUR.

There is a curious disinclination on the part of many in the present day to listen to the truth regarding any wrong doing, if the expressions are not smoothed down till they become almost meaningless. It is the age of rose water, and yet singularly enough this state of things co-exists with, and perhaps has been produced by, the most extravagant vituperation. So accustomed have men become to the abuse of partisans that the gravest charges of personal dishonour; the most serious attacks upon private character, are looked upon as only the outbursts of political enmity which may or may not be true, but which, whether true or false, are only to be held as barriers to a man's advancement when he thinks differently from ourselves. This has led to a feeling on the part of many, as we have said, to believe nothing which is charged against a public man if the charge is made with even the slightest appearance of indignation. No matter how clearly proved the charges may be, no matter how fitted they are to rouse in every honourable mind the just anger which such a course of conduct may well produce, strong words have been used, therefore the man who uses them must be wrong, and the man whose conduct he denounces, must be right.

In such a state of things, and with such a feeling in the community, what

chance would John the Baptist have in denouncing the sins of those who pressed forward to hear him? "O, generation of vipers." By the present rule of interpretation, John the Baptist must have been wrong. True, he proved his words to be correct; true they were a generation of vipers whom he addressed; true they were guilty of all with which he charged them. But his words were too strong. If he had been right he would not have used them. Such at least is the interpretation that would have been put upon them by our modern men of refinement. As the supercilious Pharisee came with head erect, with nostril dilated, with eye scornful; with words full of praise of self and contempt of others, it is easy to picture what would be said by the haters of blunt speech as the words of John reached their ears directed towards the great leader of the Church, so unceremoniously accosted. They would, no doubt, say the charge was untrue, the words were rough and therefore not to be believed. Has not the name of this Pha-isee been known as that of an eloquent speaker at the Sanhedrim; as one who has filled a large space in the public history of the country; who has been for many years the leading figure wherever religious meetings took place. He is not one of the generation of vipers, and for saying so we will not take the part of the Baptist but of the man with whom he finds fault.

Such reflections may not be without their uses. The very sayings which we have pictured as possible, nay, even as probable, in the Baptist's time, have been heard over and over again in the present day. In discussing the causes which led to the secession of so many of our brethren, it has been necessary to give the full honour to those to whom the honour was due of leading this secession. By the most indisputable proof we have shown the course followed by some who professed to be ministers of our Church; who were filling her charges; occupying prominent positions, and all the time plotting her destruction. We showed clearly that some of these men had not only done nothing for the Church, but had actually trampled out every effort for the extension of her bounds. Yet, in spite of the abundance of proof, we have been told that some members of our Church make it an excuse for having left her communion, that we spoke too openly, and that, therefore, we must be wrong, and the men who were too clearly proved to have been guilty of the conduct with which we charged them must be right. Would these gentlemen act up to these convictions if placed on a jury to try a criminal. The proof, they might say, is so overwhelming that the prisoner cannot be guilty. The crown prosecutor must be wrong, because he has spoken strongly. True, the crime is a heinous one, but no man should use strong language, however deeply he feels. We find the prisoner not guilty for that reason. And on the theory of the man to whom we have referred they would be right.

UNITED PRESBYTERIANS.

Poor Hector McIntyre! How he writhed and flew into a passion every time his Uncle Monkbarns referred to his unfortunate attempt to capture the *phoca* or seal.

It was, no doubt, cruel of the antiquary to chuckle in so grimly humorous a way over his nephew's misadventure. We are not unfrequently reminded of Hector when we see the contortions displayed by some of our recently seceded brethren at the merest hint of the name "United Presbyterians." We do not altogether wonder at the dislike to this name. There is not the least doubt that a feeling is springing up and gaining strength daily, that these people are not united, and there is every evidence of the intention of the majority of them to unload the ship of the Jonahs who have sought refuge therein from the plain and straight path of duty. But more provident and grippy than the mariners of Joppa, they have resolved, and even got an Act of Legislature to authorise it, to strip the Jonahs of their clothes before getting rid of them. Before long the truth of this will be proved, and we need not now speak more plainly.

If the name of United Presbyterians does not apply, and we accept the disclaimer of those who are in the new Church as to their not being united as a fact, there is a name to which they can certainly offer no valid objection. For our own part we can see no objection to the name "United Presbyterians," as a designation for a body which has displayed the teachings of that respectable branch of Christ's Church so prominently in the basis of Union. But, as none of the parties to the change can deny that a junction has taken place of new and old seceders from the Church of Scotland, the new body might very properly be called the United Secession, since they are united in that, if in nothing else.

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PERTH.—The adherents of the Church of Scotland in Perth have secured the Town Hall there for service. On the 13th and 20th ult, the Rev. Neil Brodie preached to good congregations with great acceptance, having been appointed by the Presbytery of Glengarry on a requisition from the congregation. The lamented death of Mr. McPherson, one of the elders, and a firm adherent of our Church, cast a gloom over the people. Measures are being taken to secure regular services, and for this purpose funds are being raised. Mr. Brodie, in accordance with instructions from the Presbytery, dispensed the sacrament of baptism, and officiated at the funeral of the late Mr. McPherson, besides doing other pastoral duty.

BALDERSTON'S CORNERS.—Services were held here on the 20th ult., by Mr. Brodie, in the School House, to a large and attentive congregation.

BAYFIELD AND VARNA.—On the 17th ult., the solemn ceremony of induction took place by the Presbytery of Hamilton, the Rev. John Moffat having received a call to this united charge. The call was most harmonious, and the congregation at the close of the services welcomed their new pastor cordially. Representatives of the Varna Congregation were present, the induction having taken place at Bayfield.

A suit has been entered by the seceders to obtain possession of the Church properties, but the Congregation have collected sufficient funds to defend their interests, and have secured legal assistance in Toronto.

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