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THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 1868.

REUNION IN THE ASSEMBLIES.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

Our readers will perceive that our General Assembly on Friday last at 10 o'clock, P.M., voted to approve and send down to the Presbyteries, the Joint Committee's Basis of Union, without modification. The unanimity of their action was qualified by four persons declining to vote, and by the dissent (previously recorded) from the tenth article, of thirty-six persons, two of three of whom also dissented from the second. These dissentients generally voted in the affirmative upon the plan as a whole; no one voted in the negative. Article tenth admits the right (but denies the imperative duty) of Presbyteries to examine ministers coming to them with clean papers from sister Presbyteries. Whatever might be argued upon the abstract right, the recognition of such a right in a plan of re-union had a suspicious look. The unwisdom of conceding what imperils the standing given to a minister by the organic law of the whole Presbyterian body, and which virtually erects each Presbytery into an independent body, i. e., reduces us to virtual Congregationalism, was deeply felt, and will hereafter be deeply felt by many who yet have voted and will probably vote for the plan as a whole.

The Assembly of the other branch has also voted to approve of the first or doctrinal article, the most important one from their point of view. They do not appear to have associated with it any special interpretation, as was done in our body. The vote by which it was approved, 185 to 77, shows, probably, more diversity of sentiment than the other articles will develop, but as the minority includes some of the most able and influential members of the body and numbers more than one-fourth of the delegates, it is altogether uncertain what the fate of the measure in the Presbyteries will be. We think they will kill it, though it is very likely their action will show an advance upon that of last year.

JUNE 1, 1868.

Since the above was written, an event of the most remarkable character bearing on this subject has occurred. A delegation from the body at Albany has visited our body in this place, to urge upon us such a modification in the terms as will secure the final adoption of the basis by their Presbyteries. The history of the case is this: The several terms of the proposed basis were adopted without change, in the face of much opposition and many attempts at amendment, by a majority finally of 185 to 69. The opposition being formidable and being mainly directed to the doctrinal article, it was suggested to the friends of Re-union at Albany, to inquire whether all the explanatory and liberal-toned phrases of that article might not be surrendered by our body, and thus nearly, if not absolutely, ensure its final passage by the necessary number of the Presbyteries in their own. The Assembly resolved to make the attempt, and telegraphed their action to our body in a dispatch, costing within a fraction of eighteen dollars, after which a delegation, consisting of Dr. C. C. Beatty, Chairman, and Dr. V. D. Reed and Messrs. Robert Carter and Henry Day, were commissioned to tack up the telegram. Their appearance on the floor of our body at about five o'clock this afternoon, was a most interesting, even an extraordinary spectacle. When a hearing was given them, they expressed themselves, as not the persons desiring the alteration, as reluctant or almost ashamed to bring the request, and only willing under the urgency of the case. They had adopted the article as it stood, and were prepared to go into the campaign on that issue, but the alteration would make it easier and surer. It was avowed that we had the case in our own hands; nay, even the destinies of the two branches of the Presbyterian Church were declared to be under our control. It was protested that there was no desire or purpose to question our characters or to abridge our liberties, any more than their own, by this change. It was hoped, however, that by it the suspicions of the captious would be allayed, and respect shown to the fathers, who, it was admitted, were opposed to these clauses of the basis. All five of the

Seminary Professors in Albany had voted against it. It was argued that the Confession without comment, was better, less liable to be a bone of contention, better understood by the common people, and more likely to promote Presbyterian Union on a broader scale. The objections also arising from questions of property, involving \$200,000 at Princeton alone, would be obviated, and the danger of losing a portion of the Old School body in case of Reunion would be removed by the change.

But the arguments used had no weight, in comparison with the fact and spirit of the delegation. The profound, even tearful, earnestness of the speakers, the beseeching tone of the plea they made, the throwing themselves upon the generosity of our Assembly, the protestations of entire confidence in our body, were as novel and heaven-wide from the old tone of arrogance, so familiar up to recent times, as was possible to conceive. When they sat down there was a pause. Prof. H. B. Smith broke silence by proposing a vote reconsidering the whole matter, if the required two-thirds in such cases were present. Prof. Morris moved the following:

Resolved, That a committee of five be appointed by the Moderator, to confer with the committee in attendance from the Assembly in session at Albany, and to recommend to this Assembly such action as they deem suitable in the case.

In answer to some searching questions addressed to the delegation by cautious members on our floor, it appeared that the explanations appended to the Joint Committee's Report, which gave it a more favorable aspect to New School men, were not adopted by the O. S. Assembly, as they were by ours; and that it would probably be impossible to procure a repeal of the Tenth Article, in return for the repeal of the clauses of the first article referred to by the delegation. Dr. Nelson, with the same frankness which has made the very air of the Assembly more wholesome, whenever he has spoken, put the case, to the delegation of the application of a minister holding the opinions of Albert Barnes to a specifically Old School Presbytery, and asked pointedly whether the same freedom would be accorded to New School men in passing from one Presbytery to another, as he was sure would be given to the Old School. He received no answer. The roll was now called, and the necessary two-thirds not being found present, or voting in favor of reconsideration, it appeared to be out of the power of the house to touch the project of our Old School brethren. The resolution of Prof. Morris above given was adopted, and a Committee of Conference, in courtesy, was appointed, consisting of Rev. H. B. Smith, D.D., R. W. Patterson, D.D., and Messrs. W. E. Dodge, and Edward Miller who, in conjunction with the O. S. delegation, may propose some action on the subject not violative of order. They are in deliberation as we close this letter.

P. S. Late in the evening the Committee reported the following, which was adopted:

This Assembly has heard with profound satisfaction and reciprocates, with cordial fellowship, the statement of the delegation from the General Assembly at Albany about the plan of Re-union.

In respect, however, to the proposition for a change in article first, as our Assembly is on the eve of adjournment, and greatly reduced in numbers:

Resolved, That we regret that no action can now be had upon this subject, as it cannot, according to our rules, be reconsidered and amended at the present session of the Assembly; nor on the proposed amendment be now sent down to our Presbyteries in such a form as that its adoption would be of any legal effect.

This was supposed to close the case, but at about eleven o'clock, the following telegram from Albany was handed to the clerk:

Resolved, That this Assembly hereby desires distinctly to be understood that the first article of the joint resolutions of the Committee, which is the doctrinal basis of union, adopted on Friday evening last by the Assembly, is not to be interpreted as giving license to propagate doctrines, which have been condemned by either Assembly, nor to permit any Presbytery in the United States to license or ordain to the work of the ministry any candidate who maintains any form of doctrine condemned by either Assembly.

The sessions of the Southern Assembly in Baltimore were taken up principally with routine business. The Declaration and Testimony Synod of Kentucky was represented by delegates who, invited the Assembly to meet next year in Louisville, but the Assembly resolved that it could not meet outside the bounds of the Church it represents. So as the mountain went to Mahomet, then — But what becomes of the claim to the "General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States," after this admission as to "bounds"?

THE SUSPENSION OF GEO. H. STUART.

When the Presbyterian Church met in council in this city, seven months ago, the question of "Who shall preside at our Pan-Presbyterian Council?" was one of easy decision. There were eminent Doctors of Divinity and clergymen of weight present from five denominations, but, as if, by one consent, all these were passed by, and an elder from the smallest Church represented on that floor, from the little Benjamin of the tribes there assembled, was placed in the Chair. His services to the nation and the Church, his fact and ability as a presiding officer, his warm and hearty enthusiasm for every good cause, and especially for the good cause there represented, his magnetic power as the leader of a popular assembly, and above all the lofty type of his Presbyterianism, — rising high above the pettiness which had long divided us, rushing, perhaps, into an impatience with just distinctions, which his dislike for the mere technicalities of theology was likely to foster — all these qualities pointed him out as the proper man for the place. Never since the days when George Buchanan presided in old Greyfriars Kirk, over the deliberations of the General Assembly of the newly Reformed Church of Scotland, had any Ruling Elder been placed in such a position of honor; never did any man more merit it by his past record, or more thoroughly justify the choice by his administration of the trust.

There is a woe upon those of whom all men speak well, but Mr. Stuart is likely to escape it. A prophet has no honor in his own country, and the qualities which commend a man to the love of the Church are not just what make him acceptable to the self-love of a sect. He has, too, as we have said, the misfortune to belong to one of the smallest of the sects, and sectarianism is usually — the Moravians are an exception — in the inverse ratio to size. His support has been given more heartily to national than to narrow ends, to the building up of the kingdom of Christ, than to erecting churches on the basis of psalm-singing and close communion. This has, of course, lost him favor with the petty clique, who rule in this little Church very much as cliques rule in all such Churches, and it was determined to make an example of him. The thing was proposed last year, but Mr. Stuart's friends were too strong in Synod; the sensation which arose, even among the Conservatives, showed that the time was hardly ripe for it; and, worst of all, Synod was meeting in New York, and it did not suit some very prominent members that the thing should be done so near home.

In Pittsburgh, however, it has been done. A resolution, suspending George H. Stuart from the Eldership and membership of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, for singing hymns and communing with Christians of other names, offered by Rev. A. G. Wylie, the obscure pastor of an obscure congregation near Schenectady, has been after several days of embittered discussion of this and previous similar resolutions, adopted by a vote of twenty-five to eighteen. Few people have any notion of how much that is exasperating, vexatious and unfair, can be said by such people on such an occasion, — even of such a man on trial for such offences. "Covenant breaker, perjurer," &c., are hurled with an unctious that Bishop Potter might envy. It is hardly to be wondered at that the disagreeable excitement attendant on such a squabble has broken down Mr. S.'s health, and that he comes back to our city suffering from his old asthma, to the sorrow of personal friends more numerous on either side of the Atlantic, than the entire membership of the Reformed Presbyterian Church thrice-told. When his excuse for absence from Synod during the last days of the case (trial it was not) were presented, the mover of the resolutions finally adopted, did himself the honor to insinuate, without rebuke from Synod or the Moderator, that the excuse was a sham, and he was hissed by the audience for the slanderous insinuation with a fervency that did honor to Pittsburgh lungs and pluck. When this Reverend abuser of better men than himself proposed that the church be cleared and an interlocking session be held, Dr. Howard, of the Old School Church, was heard to exclaim that if they expected that statement to pass un- hissed they had come to the wrong place. A member of Synod — Rev. Thos. Johnston, of Tallecavey, Pa. — gave utterance to the

feelings of all, when he said that "if the people did not hiss such a statement, the very stones ought to."

The plea of conscientious adherence to conviction and to principle will be entered by the authors and champions of this decision, but we trust that no one, outside (or even inside) of the ring of the psalm-singing sects will be deceived by any such talk. Granting, for the sake of argument, what we do not believe, viz: that Mr. Stuart has broken some law of his Church, — the bitterest persecutors in this instance, as some of them owned, have members in their churches, who have broken, with impunity, every law that Mr. Stuart has broken. Mr. Stuart's friends on Synod's floor did not hesitate to say that they had done all that he was charged with, and that if he was condemned they should not be passed by. But only one man has been dealt with, and he was selected for various reasons. (1) He is personally disliked by the clique of which we have spoken, and for the reasons we have given. (2) His influence in the denomination itself is in too liberalizing a direction. (3) As some members of Synod are said to have privately avowed, it is desirable to drive him and his friends out of the Broad Street church, of this city, to the building of which he and his friends and sympathizers gave 87 per cent. of all that was given. Should he be gone, the chance of that church's going into any Presbyterian union would (it was supposed) be indefinitely diminished. It was said by one man at Pittsburgh: "We have lost enough property by ministers going over to the other Churches, and we are not going to let that handsome property in Philadelphia go." How conscience or principle can be pleaded in such a case we cannot see.

The authors of this new decree deserve still prominence as may be accorded to them. We will only specify the Philadelphia voters. — Dr. Crawford, of Chambersburg, Dr. Steele, of 18th and Filbert sts. (Moderator of Synod,) and Elders John Scott and John Holmes voted for the resolution. Drs. Wylie, Sterrett and McAuley, of course, voted against it. Elder Alex. Kerr did not vote. Dr. McLeod, of New York, by his speeches, did his best to secure conviction, bringing personal charges against Mr. Stuart, and hinting to the weak-kneed that the civil courts would sustain Synod, even in condemning a member of Church unheard, untried, and without action from the lower Courts. But when, as Clerk of Synod, he called the "Yeas" and "Nays," he broke rule and passed by his own name, although his vote was repeatedly demanded, until the roll was finished, and then, to the amazement and disgust of his followers, voted "No." Such management will not prevent those who understand "the wheels within wheels" of the sect from holding him mainly responsible for the result, any more than will his lame and contradictory "reasons for his vote." Had he voted at the proper place, a dozen or more of "the intelligent eldership," who do the bidding of their leaders, would have followed suit, and defeated the measure. As it was, his clerical followers, by words and still more expressive looks, clearly showed their disgust.

To make matters of property still more secure, the suspension was followed up by setting aside the Presbytery of Philadelphia, to which Mr. Stuart belongs, and suspending the session of the church from judicial functions; while a Commission, composed of seven of the pastor's bitterest opponents, is to sit in judgment in, and do its pleasure with, the First church. We trust that, whatever the consequences, the doors of that building will never open to them.

What will be the results of this action in the civil courts, where it will finally be adjudicated, is the only point yet uncertain. The verdict of public opinion is assured, but we do not know enough of the legal technicalities to say whether the hopes of a righteous decision are well founded. Should they not be so, should the law not be able to do justice, should that Christian pastor and people be driven forth by an intolerant faction, should the building so often consecrated to Christian charity be given over to bigotry and exclusiveness, should that edifice, memorable for so much of good, and over whose portals the eyes of many that have no ecclesiastical interest in it see written "MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER," fall into the hands of those who have no moral right to it, then the

fearful ending of that text will be added, and over that entrance shall be written, in characters that no hand of man and no lapse of time can efface — "BUT YE HAVE MADE IT A DEN OF THIEVES."

This high-handed act of discipline is most probably "the beginning of the end" of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (N. S.) The bulk of two Presbyteries will go, with or without their property, into the National Presbyterian Church, while the stricter men in the farther West, will find a more congenial home with the United Presbyterians. A handful will, probably, hold out in the East, going through the motions of Church government, and dying by inches. It was evident to most who attended the closing sessions, that there was little spirit left in the body. The delegates to corresponding bodies refused to serve, as, indeed, it would have been a farce to have appeared on the floor of any but the U. P. Assembly, after such a direct and unqualified insult to the great mass of Evangelical Christendom. How little will Christendom lose by the extinction of such a Church!

We rejoice to learn that the delegates, from our own and the Old School Assembly promptly withdrew from the Synod upon the perpetration of these outrages, and thus expressed the sentiment of the Christian community to their authors. We sincerely hope that all public recognition will be withdrawn from men who have so disgraced the Christian and Presbyterian name, and that the fragments of bitter sectarianism which remain, may be left to complete their own disintegration and suicide in obscurity.

The installation of Rev. Herriek Johnson, D.D., as pastor of the First Church, by the Fourth Presbytery of Philadelphia, will take place this evening. Sermon by Rev. Dr. Humphrey. Charge to pastor by Rev. A. Barnes. Services commence at 8 o'clock.

The death of Matthew Newkirk, Esq., which took place on Sunday evening, May 31, (being his seventy-fourth birthday,) will excite unmingled sorrow in the hearts of true Christians of every name. The deceased was born in Pittsboro, N. J., in 1794, but came to Philadelphia in 1810. In 1839 he retired from business and became President of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad, of which he was the projector. He was President of more than one of our benevolent institutions, an elder in the Central Church (O. S.) of this city, and the oldest trustee of Princeton College. His real estate in this city was very extensive and valuable. His only child is Rev. Matthew Newkirk, Jr., of the other branch.

We regret that we have neither had time to prepare, nor space in the present number to insert, a worthy report of the Centenary services in Old Pine St. church. We can only say that the whole affair was a grand success — the church was most beautiful, the programme excellent, the speeches worthy of the occasion, and the entertainment in every way excellent. We hope to have a full report in our next, as we are afraid, if we do not do some justice in the matter, that the Pine Street folks will not send us an invitation to their next Centenary.

A very full report of the recent dedication at York, Pa., furnished by our Rochester correspondent, is in type, but also unavoidably postponed.

The Third Presbytery of Philadelphia will meet by adjournment, in the Logan Square Church, on the 9th inst. (next Tuesday,) at 4 o'clock, P. M., for the examination of Mr. Thomas J. Brown, preparatory to his ordination as pastor of said Church. The ordination services are appointed for the evening of that day, the programme as follows: Dr. March to preside and offer the ordaining prayer; Dr. Herriek Johnson to preach the sermon; Rev. W. E. Moore to deliver the charge to the pastor, and Dr. Humphrey that to the congregation.

The Methodist General Conference has adopted a plan for the reception of Lay delegates — to be elected by the meetings of Lay stewards — into the Annual and General Conferences.