

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, MARCH 7, 1866.

SOME of our readers who take but little interest in legislative matters and the public business of the country, will perhaps think that we are appropriating too much of our space to reports of Parliamentary proceedings. We would respectfully ask such persons, if there are any, to reconsider their judgment, and not pass over that part of our pages as if it did not contain matters of interest to them. We believe a perusal will give information on a number of subjects which every one ought to know. We only give such a digest of the sayings and doings of those entrusted with these important interests as we think should be read by every body. It would be a waste of the time of many persons to read all that is said; so long as they know the substance of the business and debates, they can understand what is passing as well and perhaps better in some cases than they would by reading fuller reports.

We have no desire to make men and women politicians, as that term is often understood, but we believe that every person should be informed on such matters of government as affect their well-being, and as will assist them in forming correct opinions with regard to their own rights and privileges, and the duties they owe to the properly constituted authorities.

The fair name of the Baptist denomination in Nova Scotia has been assailed; and that from a source whence it ought to have been least expected. It has been done, too, in a quarter where it might be supposed to spread abroad more widely, and be more difficult to meet than in any other. The attack is also associated with circumstances calculated to awaken the greatest possible amount of prejudice in the minds of those unacquainted with us. The time of doing this, too, is when the person most concerned in it, and who could disprove or sustain the charge, is no more amongst us, but is removed, we doubt not, to a brighter and purer state, where all misconceptions are removed, and where eternal rest and peace forever dwell.

In the London Freeman of January 31st, is a letter entitled "Death of the Rev. J. J. Joplin," dated Halifax, Jan. 18th, and signed "W. Aokhurst, a member of the Tabernacle Church, Halifax, N. S." It notices the arrival of Mr. Joplin in Halifax and his labors at the 'Tabernacle,' and then proceeds:

"When Christ was upon earth, He was wounded in the house of His friends, and if Christ was so wounded, is it much to be wondered at that some of His most faithful ministers should be wounded, and that by those who ought to extend to them the right hand of fellowship, and receive them as co-workers with Christ. It grieves me to be obliged to say, that my late dear brother and pastor has been wounded time and again by those who ought to have been his nearest and dearest friends. May God, in His goodness, forgive them. The Tabernacle Church stands out separate and distinct from all other Baptist Churches in this province as an open communion Church; and hence the determined opposition, and I might almost say, persecution of the Church and their affectionate pastor from the Baptist denomination of this province, who are close communionists."

We read the letter in the Freeman, but feeling that any discussion of the matter in our pages might cause pain to one whose sorrow is already sufficiently great, and whose feelings we have a right to consider in such a matter, and who, we doubt not, was greatly grieved to find such a statement associated in that journal with the memory of her departed husband; we therefore intended to have allowed it to pass without notice in our columns, leaving the letter to make its own impression and to receive such attention as it deserved, and such correction in that journal as might be deemed necessary by any of the parties concerned. But we now find the said letter copied into the Presbyterian Witness of Saturday last, whether by request or not does not appear, and therefore although the duty is a painful one, yet, as the Baptist denomination of this province is charged with a grievous offence, we have no choice in the matter.

The charge is either a gross slander, intended to accomplish some other object than what appears on the surface, or else it is true. The writer of the letter must suppose there is some truth in his statements, or surely he would not have taken the trouble to write, and send them to the principal Baptist paper of Great Britain. If true, the statement might have been made public here at the time the 'opposition, or almost persecution' took place. Abundance of opportunity would doubtless have been afforded for ascertaining the facts; and punishing the guilty parties. There was no popular prejudice against Mr. Joplin, but everything of an opposite charac-

ter, and he would have received from ourselves and from the press and the public generally, we believe, every possible consideration.—More notices were given, and more public attention was called, in the city papers to the subjects of his discourses than to those of any other minister in the city, and every instance of his public labor was, we believe, favorably noticed, by all denominations and parties, so that there was no danger of any injustice being done to Mr. Joplin, or to the Tabernacle by making known any acts of the above named character.

And now, as we wish to discover the truth of the above allegation, and to prove that we have no desire to screen even "the Baptist denomination," in any act which could by any fair or unfair use of the term be denominated "persecution," we therefore offer the unlimited use of our pages to the writer of the above charge for the publication of facts on which that charge rests. All the facts in our possession are of an entirely contrary nature, and we shall feel at liberty to make use of them when it becomes necessary.

We have great reluctance to enter upon an enquiry which might give pain to Mr. Joplin's real friends—and we regard ourselves as such both publicly and privately—but our duty to "the Baptist denomination" forbids our silence.

Character we value far above gold or silver, or even popular favor. The unjustly taking away of its character from a religious community, we regard as a most serious matter, of more consequence than the private feelings or interests of individuals. We therefore ask for justice to be done in this case.

EDUCATIONAL MATTERS.

SEVERAL highly important documents have been laid before Parliament during the past week, but perhaps there is no one of greater importance, or involves more serious consequences, than the Report of the Superintendent of Education, laid on the table on Saturday last. Probably no interest has been subjected to so much careful, earnest enquiry, during the past year, as that of Education. How shall the appropriations be most effectually applied so as to secure the great end desired,—the greatest good to the greatest number, and justice to all?—has been asked by hundreds of worthy patriotic men of all parties and denominations. The answers given have greatly varied from each other according to the circumstances or locality in which it has been asked.

We were disappointed that the opening Speech did not allude to the subject, but have since been fully persuaded, that it was better to leave it to be dealt with altogether by the Assembly. This Report gives the facts and the results of experience, on which action may be based, in making such changes in the law as may be demanded. We have not had time even to glance at the whole Report, but have noticed the suggestions it gives on the "Mode of Support, &c." On this, Mr. Rand shews that taking the whole sum, or the larger portion thereof, out of the public revenue, would be a fatal mistake, and liable, by any sudden change in commercial relations, or public exigencies, to produce a general derangement and prostration of educational affairs which would render the teaching profession more precarious than at present, and "in a single year blight every school in the land, that many years would not suffice for recovery."

The present mode of apportioning the Provincial Grant in definite sums to the several counties or districts, also appears objectionable. In those Districts where there are the smallest number of Schools, the teachers obtain the largest amount of salary, although perhaps having smaller qualifications than those in an adjoining District, where the schools are more numerous. Mr. Rand suggests a very simple but effectual remedy for this state of things, so as to make the qualification of the teacher the criterion of the amount he or she shall receive from the Province. The question of Assessment and its various phases is fully exhibited; and how each mode operates on the people and the schools. Subscription for sustaining Free Schools has been condemned almost universally. County Assessment of a sufficient sum to sustain an ordinary school in every section is considered that on which reliance must be placed, but, in cases where the people of a Section wish to raise a larger sum, so as to have a higher class teacher, a majority of the rate-payers may determine at a regular school meeting to raise such larger sum by a Sectional assessment. These are, in brief, some of the suggestions of the Superintendent. The Committee of the House on Education will probably prepare a bill for amending the law.

Notwithstanding the statements made from time to time of the Schools being injured by the legislation of the past two or three years, the Statistics show that:

"There were built during the past year 164 new school houses; erected and in process of completion, 136: voted to be built at the last annual meetings, 220. Total number of new school houses undertaken in one year, 520. The number of old houses repaired was 241. These figures include 17 counties only, Queens not having yet reported."

We must defer further notice of this mass of valuable material to another time, but would take the liberty of saying that the education committee would be doing good service to the country by recommending an edition of several thousand copies of this Report to be distributed throughout the province.

The South Sea Island Missions.

In a late number of the Christian Messenger we laid before our readers a letter from Rev. J. D. Gordon, the missionary at Erromanga, giving an account of the destruction effected by a British man-of-war there. The Home and Foreign Record of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, for February, gives a severe denunciation of the steps taken to punish the natives of that island, and of the neighboring island of Tanna. We feel that it is due to the Presbyterian body to make known their dissatisfaction with the course taken in this lamentable case. We have not space for the whole article and must content ourselves with the following extracts:

"We scruple not to denounce these proceedings as unjustifiable outrages, and we would hold ourselves as unfaithful to the trust imposed on us of representing our church in the public press, if we did not at once do what in us lies to clear her skirts of all complicity in such transactions. In regard to the demand that in twenty-four hours the chiefs should come on board the British man-of-war, it is to be observed that these were independent chiefs, who had never owed any subjection to British authority, and Commodore Wiseman had no more right to demand that they should come on board in that time, than Com. Wilkes would have had to come into Halifax harbor and make a similar demand upon our Governor and his officials, with the same threat of firing on the city."

"We have examined carefully the letters of the missionaries both official and private, to ascertain what are the outrages complained of, on account of which these things have been inflicted, and it seems clearly stated that the main, if not the only, reason for what took place on Tanna, was the destruction of Mr. Paton's property at the time of his leaving." "Mr. Paton's house stood on what had been their battle-ground from time immemorial. The friendly natives urged him to remove his property. He refused, and as he was warned, a fight took place around his premises, and he fled for safety. At night the teachers and the friendly natives removed to a place of safety all his property that they could. There remained however some articles which they could not remove, and fighting having been resumed on the following day, the natives broke into his house and destroyed its contents."

"On the first intelligence we could scarcely believe it possible that the missionaries were implicated, and we have read their letters in the hope of finding that they had kept themselves clear of all share in these measures of violence, and that as in the case of other missionaries, they would have shown themselves the friends of the weak and have lent their influence on behalf of the much abused natives. But with equal shame, astonishment and sorrow, we have read their own statements showing too plainly that the missionaries and the mission are deeply involved in the proceedings from first to last. From their own account it appears that they first memorialized the Commodore, and that it was on their memorial that he acted, Mr. Paton was the interpreter at Port Resolution, and conveyed the message of the Commodore to the chiefs—that the Dayspring lay along side the man-of-war, while engaged in her work of destruction,—that most of the missionaries were there by their presence lending their countenance to the sad proceedings, and when it was over in solemn council passed a vote of thanks to the commodore."

"It is but just to say that we have not received full explanations from the missionaries of the circumstances in which they have acted, and the reasons for this course. More minute explanations from them may present their conduct in a more favorable light. We cannot for an instant believe that they could have contemplated the destruction of life which resulted from the proceeding. If we could believe that they really expected the loss of human life in revenge for the loss of some trumpery property of Mr. Paton's, we would say that the sooner they left the mission work the better for the cause of Christianity in the South Seas. Still we cannot see how they can be held altogether blameless in regard to the lives of those unfortunates. It may be added, that our missionaries at present in the field have not had much experience in mission work, and might be expected to yield to the opinions of others, who had been longer there. Mr. Gordon it appears at first opposed the measure. Mr. Copeland was absent, and Mr. Paton's practice and experience of missionary life on Tanna has only shown how totally ineffectual was his plan of winning the heathen to Christianity by threats of man-of-war, &c. We are, however, astonished beyond measure, that a man of Mr. Inglis's experience should have lent himself to these proceedings. Still with all the palliations we can offer, it

remains under the hand of our own missionaries an undeniable fact, that they have been implicated in transactions which are a disgrace to a christian and civilized nation, and which, had they been committed by a French man-of-war, at the instigation of Roman Catholic missionaries, would have roused the indignation of all the Protestant missionary societies of England and America. We would be unfaithful to the cause of justice and humanity, as well as christianity, if we did not strongly denounce the whole affair as entirely contrary to the spirit of the gospel, as opposed to the practice of the most successful missionaries of ancient or modern times, likely to be attended with most disastrous consequences to our missionary affairs, and directly in the teeth of the commission of our great Master."

"The peaceable character maintained by the missionaries—their being entirely disconnected from any acts of violence has hitherto been their chief security. The sandal-wood traders have been abundantly supplied with arms and have used them freely, but what are the consequences. Why, some time ago the missionaries drew up a list of more than 300 employed in that business who had been killed by the natives, and yet of the agents of the London Missionary Society not one known as a peaceable missionary has ever fallen a victim to violence. Williams and Harris it is true were killed on Erromanga, but it was by mistake, and in revenge for the brutalities of white men. Mr. and Mrs. Gordon's death we may also observe, was the result of ignorance and the misrepresentations of white men. As Bishop Patteson who lands freely in the midst of the wildest savages says, their "very defencelessness is their best protection."—With such facts before us, we cannot but have fears for the future safety of the missionaries and of those on board the Dayspring, such as we have never had before. "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword." This has been illustrated abundantly in the case of the sandal-wood traders, and who will wonder if dangers should surround the Dayspring, should she ever again visit the scene of these outrages. Already these proceedings are bearing their natural fruit. For ten years there has been no white man killed on Tanna, but a week did not elapse after the visit of the man-of-war to Port Resolution, till one was murdered in cold blood at another part of the island.

One of the most curious chapters of Presbyterianism we have read for many a day is contained in the Presbyterian Witness of Saturday last. The editor does not acknowledge his error in the use of the "hard" name he applied to Baptists, but "cheerfully with draws it!" It would have been more manly to have confessed the wrong. He says: "We 'presume' still to assert that Presbyterians acknowledged the validity of Baptism as administered by 'Baptists,' and every other christian denomination." Which of course must include Roman Catholics as well as Protestants.

But the Rev. Mr. Sommerville the minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Cornwallis, writes a letter to the editor, which appears on the same page, commencing:

A brief statement may serve to anticipate any difficulty between you and the Messenger, and it is made with much pleasure. What some other, or others may have done I know not, but I baptized two persons, who had been for several years members of a Baptist Church, and one who had been immersed by a Methodist minister, on receiving them into the fellowship of the Reformed Presbyterian denomination. This thing was not done in a corner, but in the presence of the congregation, and in open day, and with open doors. We know no secret societies,—no hole-and-corner baptisms of adult or infant. Should the Messenger think proper to publish the names of the parties so baptized by me, I am persuaded that, instead of blushing, they will esteem it an honorable distinction. And notwithstanding the statement of the Messenger that one "was required to be sprinkled," which sounds very like an insinuation, perhaps not intended, that they never would have been baptized by me if I had not had reason to believe them as fully persuaded of the propriety of the act as I was.

When I ask either Synod or Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces to sustain me they will sustain me in "a moment."

And again:—

But I must protest against the baseless insinuation that I have re-baptized any one; at the same time I am gratified to testify of my Baptist friends that they are innocent of the same charge. I did, in a pamphlet on the mode of Baptism, call them Anabaptists; but should it ever be republished, the offensive term will be omitted.

We leave the editor to settle this little matter between himself and the Rev. Mr. S. Any effort on our part to defend our position is thus rendered perfectly unnecessary.

Our neighbour carefully avoids the principal point in our interrogations, and merely quotes from the Westminster Confession the following statement as his confession on the question of communion: "All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, (Christ) so are they unworthy the Lord's table, and cannot without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries or be admitted thereunto." And adds, "There