

For the Christian Messenger.

"Distinct Schools."

No. 4.

Dear Brother,—

There is an ambiguity in the wording of the Bill introduced to the House last Session, which, if the expressions used be retained, will be productive of very unpleasant results.

Any minority in a school section may petition for a "distinct school." Minorities, it is manifest, may be constituted in various ways. A Teacher may be unacceptable to a minority of the rate-payers;—they may ask for a "distinct school." Another minority may object to the introduction of Geography and History, Singing, and Drawing, as branches of instruction, and may insist on confining the attention of the pupils to reading, writing, and arithmetic;—they also may ask for a "distinct school."—If it be said that such requests would be denied, still the right of presenting them exists, and the exercise of that right will certainly entail on the communities which may choose to exercise it a large amount of undesirable excitement, tending to ill feelings, bad tempers, and in some cases to permanent alienation. It would be excessively unwise to expose the communities to these evils.

The Hon. Mr. Flynn, who admitted that the Bill was "hurriedly drawn" (why so? why wait till nearly the end of the session, and then strain every nerve to push it through?), suggested that the word "religious" might be prefixed to the words "majority" and "minority," thus restricting the operation of the Bill to those places in which religious minorities, objecting to the present law, may be prepared to assert the rights bestowed on them.

Such minorities will be found all over the province, and every district will be convulsed with wrangling and discord, should the Bill be thrown in among them.

We have now a system of education, which, besides its intrinsic excellence in all other particulars, is based on "respect for religion and the principles of Christian morality." This system is objected to and opposed. It is even denounced as "godless." Those who so denounce it say that they hold that religion should be the "basis of all instruction"; meaning, by "religion," their own form of religious profession, and desiring that a large portion of the time of the children attending school should be spent by the Teachers in indoctrinating and training them in that form.

How shall these demands be met? How shall the difficulties arising out of them be removed?

Various plans have been projected, one is, that the Teacher shall teach all the religions professed by the parents of the children;—so that, on the days appointed for this purpose, the Roman Catholic class may attend at one hour—the Episcopalian class at another—the Presbyterian class at another—and so on, with the Baptist, the Methodist, the Universalist classes, and any others that may be constituted, including Mormons, Jews, &c. &c. It will be evident that this plan can be carried out in a graded school only, where there is a class-room that may be used on such occasions; for it would be highly improper that all the pupils should be present while these multifarious instructions are given. It is also evident that the Teacher should have a remarkably elastic conscience, or, in other words, be totally indifferent to all religion, and therefore willing to teach any thing. How far the adoption of such a course would be consistent with the inculcation of "respect for religion and the principles of Christian morality," may be safely left to the decision of your readers.

Another plan is, the setting apart of certain hours for religious instruction, to be occupied by the ministers of the denominations represented in the School, should they choose to attend for the purpose specified. The objectionable feature here is the derangement that will be produced. In a well-ordered School every hour has its appropriate employment. If, at a certain hour, all the children of one denomination were to be abstracted from their classes, the work of those classes would be imperfectly performed, and great confusion would result. Very few Teachers, I think, would consent to take Schools placed under this arrangement.

A third plan is, the detention of the children after school hours, in order that they may then receive the requisite religious instruction. The chief objection to this scheme is the difficulty of carrying it into effect, especially in country districts, where many of the children have considerable distances to walk, and are sufficiently weary already, when school-time closes. Cases of truancy during the extra hour appointed for religious instruction would be alarmingly numerous.

We come now to the remedy proposed by the Bill, viz., the establishment of "distinct schools." I shall find it necessary to postpone the examination of this to my next letter, and will close by calling attention to two preliminary considerations.

One is, the undesirableness of making religious instruction a specific branch of school-work. The wise man said, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." But the question is, *Who shall train him?* Primarily, the parents, no doubt; christian mothers, especially, have weighty responsibilities, and have received glorious rewards. Next to them, the recognised public religious instructors, by whatever names they may be called: on them the duty of caring for the young in their respective congregations naturally devolves; and then, in subordination to them, the Sunday School teachers. If all these ply their tasks faithfully, there will be no need of any further arrangements. The Common School is not the place for such teachings. It is associated with compulsory exercises, not unrequitedly performed with great effort, and sometimes with reluctance. It has to do with the sternness of command and the necessity for submission. It brings with it no associations tending to prepare the mind for the calm and serious contemplation of heavenly truth. The doctrines of christianity should not stand connected with the ordinary topics of Common School education, to be learned in the same manner and under similar restraints. It is abundantly sufficient that the course of instruction be pervaded by the spirit of religion and morality. Specific indoctrination should be left to other times and other places.

The rights and duties of minorities may also be briefly noticed. The general rule is, that the will of the majority must prevail, the minority quietly submitting. But the Bill now under notice proceeds on a different principle. It provides for minorities, and that by nullifying, as far as they are concerned, the restrictions under which the Teacher is laid in regard to religious instruction, as will be more fully shown hereafter. Now, it deserves to be seriously considered whether this is a wise or safe course of action. Applied to politics, would it not unnerve all energies, and prove an element of crushing weakness? Would it not take away the stimulus, and administer an opiate? Would it not involve parties in discreditable compromises? Would it not, in many instances, be a bar to progress, a break on the wheels of legislation?

If a law is passed, intended to promote the welfare of the whole community, and admirably adapted to secure that result, is it wise or safe to pass another law, exempting from the operation of the former as many parties as may choose to declare themselves dissatisfied with its enactments? Would this deference to minorities work well?

Yours truly,

J. M. CRAMP.

Acadia College, Nov. 17, 1868.

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, NOVEMBER 25, 1868.

A Proposal—Great Inducements.

We hereby offer to send the *Messenger* WITHOUT CHARGE for the remainder of this year, to New Subscribers for 1869, from the date of receiving their names with the payment in advance.

We also make the following proposal. We will send a copy of Dr. Cramp's Baptist History to every person who sends us

FOUR NEW SUBSCRIBERS

as above, before the end of this year.

Will our friends who are in arrears for the *Christian Messenger* have the kindness to forward the amounts due at their earliest convenience. Demands which must be met are pressing upon us. If we had the whole of what is owing, we should be relieved from a vast amount of care and anxiety. Delay causes us expense and trouble. What is owing by any one may seem a small sum, but when they are numerous they become in the aggregate a large amount, and a serious inconvenience.

We are sorry to afflict those of our Patrons who pay promptly in advance by inserting such a paragraph as the above. It all our Subscribers, who have not heretofore done so, would imitate their good example, we should be greatly obliged, and be under no necessity of referring to money matters,—a consummation devoutly to be wished.

The Communion Question.

For several months past there has been considerable of discussion going on in the religious papers of the United States on the communion question—whether baptism should in all cases precede a participation in the Lord's Supper. At the Warren Association in Rhode Island some few expressed the opinion that baptism is not necessarily a prerequisite to communion. This called forth a host opposed to such a sentiment. From that time there has been a continuous stream of resolutions coming from Association after Association in pretty well every State in the Union, affirming the views entertained by Baptists that the New Testament order, and that observed by all denominations of Christians, is: first Baptism, then the Lord's Supper. The Pedobaptist organs have hereby learned that there is scarcely to be found any difference of opinion, on the subject in the Baptist body, or, as the N. Y. *Independent* puts it, the Baptist denomination is "yet almost wholly given over to close-communion."

We have made no lengthy reference to these discussions, as we regard the question scarcely a practical one in this province, there being, as we believe, but one opinion generally entertained. We regard any other than a restricted communion so inconsistent with the constitution of a christian church as to become almost an absurdity. The occasional references of our contemporaries to our practice in this particular, we hold, are but ebullitions of feeling, as inconsistent with their own practice as they are unworthy of their christian charity and candor.

"Fresh Air as a means of Grace."

The N. Y. *Methodist* gives a very sensible article under the above caption. We copy the closing paragraphs as containing instruction that may be beneficial to Baptists as well as Methodists:

"Many a good sermon has been spoiled for want of fresh air during its delivery. The preacher has felt heavy and the people drowsy; the one, perhaps, blaming his flock for listlessness, and the other finding fault with the minister for being uninteresting; while all the time the fault was in the foul air. Who has not noticed the deadening effects of bad air in a prayer meeting, when held, as such meetings often are, in the basement of a church—a room usually built with height of ceiling absurdly low in proportion to its size? In such a place, full of people, the air becomes vitiated in a few minutes, and every breath inhaled after that is poison.—We have no doubt that many ministers have broken down in health and gone to premature graves by reason of preaching and praying, night after night, for weeks at a time, in badly-ventilated rooms.

Architects, building committees, trustees, and sextons ought to have some one to remind them perpetually that fresh air is a vital necessity in churches. Better do without almost any thing else than this. A living gospel ought never to be preached in a dead atmosphere. Give us plenty of pure air, and the preachers will preach better, the brethren will pray better, the people will sing better, all our meetings will be better attended, and followed by better consequences. Give each one of us our forty cubic inches of fresh air for inspiration, and for every minute of the service the eighteen pints to which we are each justly entitled, according to the doctors, and we shall complain less of languor, headaches, poor preaching, and dull meetings, and be less in danger of backsliding; for we devoutly believe that fresh air is a means of grace."

The Elections in England are occupying the attention of the people and filling up the newspapers. They are also made the principal material of news for telegraphic communication across the Atlantic. It would appear from the returns thus far, that the Liberal party are largely in the ascendant, having nearly two-thirds of the whole. There is not much doubt, therefore, but there will be a change in the administration.

Some riots had taken place at Birmingham, and at Belfast, in Ireland. In the former place the police and mob were fighting; in the latter the troops had taken possession of the town. Some persons had been killed.

The leading men on either side are elected. The Attorney General, John Stuart Mill, and Baron Rothschild have been rejected by the constituencies they previously represented.—Parliament will assemble on Wednesday, the 9th of December. The administering of the oaths will take several days. The public business will commence on Monday the 14th of December.

The Episcopal Church in Canada are experiencing some difficulty in obtaining a Bishop in place of their late Metropolitan, Bishop Fulford.

The nomination of a successor rests with the remaining Bishops—curiously called a House of Bishops. The elections then are made by the Synod. The House of Bishops were determined to nominate no candidates for election but those in the Episcopal Order in the Dominion of Canada, and sub-

mitted the names of the Bishops of Fredericton, Nova Scotia, Huron, Ontario, Quebec, and Toronto. The Lower House of Clerical and Lay Delegates, would have none of these and rejected all. The Upper House refused to make any further nominations. The Synod wished for either the Bishop of Rupert Land, or Dr. Balch, a clergyman from the United States, who has for some time past been settled in Montreal, whereas the House of Bishops were determined not to nominate either of them, and the House has therefore adjourned for six months, to meet again in May.

There is some talk of the Synod repudiating the authority of the Bishops and electing Dr. Balch, and then sending him home to England for consecration.

This contest is a very remarkable comment on Episcopacy and on the divine appointment of that order of church government.

THE LADIES SEMINARY AT WOLFVILLE.—We are glad to learn that Mr. James S. Morse has undertaken the Superintendence of the Boarding Department of the Grand Pré Ladies Seminary until more permanent arrangements can be effected.

The Committee having it in charge have had a severe trial by the failure of Mr. Blair.

The Lady Principal Miss Emerson, and her accomplished Assistant, Miss Norris, have the sympathy of many friends of the Institution under existing circumstances. We hope to hear that their past success is but a precursor to more extensive appreciation of their labors and abilities.

"God everything to the Upright" is the title of two sermons published by Rev. Charles B. Pitblado, on Falmouth Circuit. One who felt inclined might here indulge a spirit of criticism *ad lib*; but by the author's confession in his preface to these Discourses one is dissuaded. He says, "We are greatly inclined to use the pruning knife, but had we time to do so they might be pruned to death. Go little darlings of my head and heart; go and may the Lord God go with you." PITBLADO.

It is surprising that at this day men of any intelligence persist in charging the Revision of the Bible with being an attempt to make a "Baptist Version of the Bible;" whereas the very terms "baptize" "baptism" &c., are changed into immerse, immersion, &c. Our neighbor, the *Provincial Wesleyan* indulges his readers, and discloses some of them, by frequently copying from its exchanges in this time. John Wesley was not afraid of Revision.

The Rev. Charles M. Grant left here in the *Etna* for England, on his way to India on Friday last. On the previous evening an interesting social meeting of ministers was held at the residence of John S. McLean, Esq.—By request several of the ministers gave an account of what was being done in their respective churches on behalf of Foreign Missions, in the following order: Rev. P. G. McGregor, on Presbyterian Missions; Rev. E. M. Saunders, on Baptist Missionary work; Rev. Mr. Elliott, on the Congregationalist Missions; Rev. Mr. Milligan, on Wesleyan Missions; Rev. Messrs. Atwood, and Hill, on Church of England Missions; and Rev. G. M. Grant on Church of Scotland Missions.

Rev. Chas. Grant then gave some account of his views, and the motives that had induced him to offer himself for the Foreign-field. The evening was closed by offering praise and prayer, specially committing Mr. C. Grant to the Divine protection and guidance.

UNION OF THE MARITIME PROVINCES.—The *Charlottetown Patriot* says, in alluding to the reported visit of Messrs. Anand and M. Kelly to P. E. Island, in reference to the above subject:—

"If these gentlemen were here on such an errand, they must have been very confidential in their communications. The day for such a Union, we fear, has gone by."

Another letter from Hon. Mr. Howe appears in the *Chronicle* of yesterday morning, defending his position against the Motion of Council and Hon. Mr. Anand's letter. A further viewing the action of the Delegates in London, he says:—

"But what is there now, or what has there been since July last, in my conduct, so difficult to understand? When the House of Commons rejected our petition, even for enquiry, (Repeat being out of the question), there were six Nova Scotians in London—the four Delegates—Northup, and Mr. Gavie. We saw each other frequently, discussed the situation with the utmost freedom, and with the benefit of ready access to Mr. Bright came unanimously to this conclusion:

"That any further attempt to obtain the repeal of the British American Act, in England, would fail, unless a six-tenths Union were first formed; and that, by inspiring hopes for which there was no foundation, we should but delude the people and waste the public money.

From this opinion, deliberately formed, after consultation with our friends, and with all the facts before me, I have never varied. A dozen gentlemen