

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

NOTES FROM THE MARITIME PROVINCES.

HALIFAX, N. S.,

which is the capital of the Province of Nova Scotia, is an old city of about 30,000 inhabitants, and is justly regarded as the wealthiest city for its size on this continent. Some of its merchants are worth their million dollars, while not a few run up to one-half or one-fourth of this amount.

The city is nicely situated, and is much celebrated for its pleasant drives, well-kept gardens and splendid harbour. But it is an old-fashioned city—the streets are utterly neglected, and show but poor samples of civic government. The breaking of limbs, whether of man or beast, does not seem to create any surprise. The houses are uneven and irregular, and whatever else they may have had to contend against in the past, they would seem to have escaped the tortures of the painter's brush. The "Arm" is the fashionable part of the city, and here are to be found a number of costly private residences. For situation and scenery it is almost unequalled anywhere, and should attract Upper Province tourists in larger numbers.

Halifax is a garrison city, and it is doubtful if the influence of the military on the citizens generally has been favourable to industrial pursuits, as a large number of the young people would seem to be more anxious to get into society than to emulate the success of their fathers in the more ordinary but not less honourable walks of life.

PRESBYTERIANISM.

This is the capital of Presbyterianism for the Provinces; it is the seat of Dalhousie College, which possesses facilities for the training of a large number of students for the learned professions, besides a theological hall for the education of students for our own Church.

There are six Presbyterian congregations, well equipped, and all doing good work. There were two vacancies, which have lately been filled up, by which the cause will be strengthened in the city. St. John's Church was rendered vacant by the appointment of the Rev. John Forrest to a professorship in Dalhousie College, and Chalmers Church was vacant by the removal of the Rev. Mr. Pitblado to Winnipeg. In St. John's Church the Rev. H. H. McPherson, from Ontario, was settled in December, and gives promise to sustain the work so well carried on by Professor Forrest. Mr. McPherson is a distinguished student of Knox College, Toronto, and judging from the large congregations which wait upon his ministry, it is evident that his abilities are appreciated in his present charge. Chalmers Church have called the Rev. Mr. Whittier, who is a native of the Province, and a student of Dalhousie, but who at present is labouring in Newfoundland, and cannot assume his duties here till spring. It must be gratifying to a young man to be called by such an important congregation, and, in addition, to have them wait for his convenience.

Fort Massey, of which the Rev. Dr. Burns is pastor, is the most recent erection, and stands on Queen street, occupying a commanding position. The church is a handsome structure, well built and comfortably furnished throughout.

Dr. Burns is too well known to your many readers, and throughout the Church generally, to require any lengthened notice here. Suffice it to say, that his sermon on Sabbath morning was up to the mark. The subject was "The Deluge and its Lessons," founded on 2 Peter iii, 6. The discourse abounded with fresh and manly thought, setting forth prominently those truths which are surely believed among us; and was illustrated and enforced with that eloquence which has raised Dr. Burns to a foremost place among the many good preachers in our Church, if not in the Dominion.

Fort Massey congregation is among the important congregations of our Church, and comprises some of our most wealthy merchants and liberal contributors—such men as Mr. J. S. Maclean, who is an elder, and superintendent of the Sabbath school, and who for a considerable time, until lately, was President of the Y. M. C. A., in whose welfare he takes a lively interest. We augur for this church, under such a pastorate and such management, a prosperous future.

ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH.

In a former correspondence I have given you some particulars of the history of this important congregation, and will content myself at present with giving you an imperfect synopsis of a sermon preached by the pastor, the Rev. Robert Laing. The text was Matthew x. 33, "But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." The preacher set out by remarking that in this chapter Jesus commissions and instructs His disciples; He tells them where to go, what to do, how to conduct themselves, and what they might expect. To incite them to fidelity, He gives them a promise; to caution them against apostasy or neglect of duty, He accompanies the promise with a warning.

The speaker then proceeded to show some of the ways in which men deny Christ:

First.—They deny Christ who refuse to accord Him the position and character assigned Him in the Gospels. Especially do they deny Christ in this respect who reject the doctrine of the incarnation, which is the corner stone of the whole system. It is the central fact about which all Gospel truth revolves or crystallizes. If God was in Christ—if the eternal Word was really made flesh, then miracles, the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, offer few or no difficulties; but if Jesus be not the Son of God—if the incarnation be not a fact, then the Christian system cannot be upheld. If Christ be not divine, our Christian faith falls to the ground and our Christian hope expires. The incarnation is the key of the whole situation. You deny Christ when you reject any one of the distinctive doctrines of Christianity, but more especially when you deny or reject the doctrine of the incarnation, for with the rejection of that all must go eventually, and with its reception all will come in its time.

Second.—We reject Christ by assailing or speaking lightly of religion. Some there are who embrace every opportunity of attacking everything religious. The very name of religion, whether worn as a grace or a cloak, excites their fury and calls forth their opposition. It is not from its avowed enemies, but often from its own friends, that religion receives its most deadly thrusts. More harm is done to religion by the light, frivolous, heartless way in which many professing Christians talk of it, and treat it, than by the loudest denunciation of sceptics. Religion is not a thunder-cloud that we should carry its shadow on our faces all the way through life, neither is it a harmless phantom that we should make sport of it.

Third.—We deny Christ by conduct inconsistent with our profession. To have an orthodox belief joined to a poor character and a bad life is the worst way of denying Christ. Actions speak louder than words. One bad act will checkmate a hundred fair words; one bad act will outweigh a score of the loudest professions. It is our conduct as Christians, our conduct at home and abroad, in business and out of it, our general character for truthfulness, for honesty, for purity, for goodness, for Christian manliness, that are the true test of our religious faith. Deeds are the current coin of God's kingdom; words merely are the "money of fools."

The main causes that lead to a denial of Christ are, first, the supposed absurdity of many Gospel truths; second, moral cowardice; third, weakness of faith. It is admitted that there are difficulties in the Bible, that there are mysteries there, that there are truths there that transcend human reason. But will you deny Christ because there are depths in the Christian system which you cannot fathom, heights which you cannot reach, prospects which as yet you cannot take in? Will you reject the claims of religion because there are mysteries in it? Then, to be consistent, you must reject science and regard the Universe as a myth.

The second cause that leads men to deny Christ is moral cowardice. This is a hard word, a harsh judgment, but true. Fear leads many to deny Christ. One is afraid of being thought odd or singular, and would as soon appear in the streets in the dress of a Chinaman as show his principles in company. Another is afraid of being thought unmanly or uncultured, and conceals his convictions and follows the multitude. Still another dreads loss of gain, and considers the price too high, and so keeps his religion hidden from human sight. There is a city on the gates of which these words are inscribed: on the first gate, "Be bold;" on the second, "Be bold, be bold, and evermore be bold;" on the third, "Be not too bold." It

is a sermon for Christendom. In religion, be bold, be not ostentatious, be not presumptuous, be not over-dogmatic, but let perfect love cast out fear.

The third cause that leads to the denial of Christ is weakness of faith. This is doubtless the most radical of all the causes. Faith is a slender stream in some hearts; it exists, and that is all you can say about it. Faith in Christ must be strong before it can live in the storm, or work its way above the cloud and reach eternal sunshine.

The consequences.—To deny Christ here is to be denied before the Father. It is not a light thing to be denied before God, and to be driven from His presence—to go away into darkness with the mark of sin visible to every eye. "Deny Me," says Jesus, "and you will be denied." Is it a hard sentence? It is prefaced by a message of peace. The door of mercy is not shut. The day of grace has not yet passed. The sword of justice is still sheathed. While it is called to-day, flee to the only ark of safety.

THE ENGLISH CHURCH

has five congregations, including the Bishop's chapel, and, as in our case, two of these have been vacant, which are now filled up by the appointment of Canon Partridge to St. George's, and the Rev. Mr. Murray to St. Luke's. The latter is an Englishman, but has been labouring in Newfoundland, and arrived here last week. As Bishop Binney has High Church tendencies, your readers will be able to form an opinion as to the proclivities of those who are honoured with his patronage.

The Rev. Mr. Murray made his *debut* last Sunday, and on Thursday evening there was a meeting in St. Luke's Church of the "Church of England Institute." There was a full choral service, which was rendered by a surpliced choir of about sixty, composed of boys from about eight years to men of over fifty, ladies being conspicuous by their absence. The entire service was of a Ritualistic type—even the preacher.

On the occasion, Canon Partridge claimed an apostolic ministry in an unbroken chain since the days of the apostles. Well, friend Editor, don't be alarmed, but I also believe in apostolic succession. I believe in preaching apostolic doctrine. I believe in Churches being founded on and governed according to apostolic pattern. I believe in our bishops (or pastors) doing the work of evangelists, and making full proof of their ministry. I believe in a Church exhibiting apostolic zeal in her missionary operations, and extending that kingdom which is not "here" or "there," and which does not consist in cassocks, or the number of yards of linen contained in a surplice, but which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

PULPIT POWER.

A great deal has been written and spoken on the power of the pulpit. It is very difficult to apply a test here. I am disposed to think that a great deal of the power is gained or lost in the "study." Even able men occasionally deliver discourses which do not flavour of much study or careful preparation; they are entirely wanting in arrangement and symmetry, the introduction sometimes occupying twenty minutes, and the preacher probably talking ten or fifteen minutes after the sermon proper is ended. Such a practice, I think, weakens even a good discourse. Another injurious practice, which seems to be growing of late, is that of making numerous church announcements at the conclusion of the sermon, and probably speaking a few minutes to each one.

I remember hearing a very devoted minister announce his missionary collections, which were to be taken up the ensuing week, and to which suitable reference was made in the sermon. He had furnished books to the collectors, but it took him a very long time to explain that they were only to write on one side of the paper, and he talked about this till the people not only forgot the sermon—which was really a good one—but also forgot the object of the collection. Announcements, I think, should be as few as possible, as brief as possible, and as distinct as possible; and where the daily papers and church organs can be used, they should be taken advantage of to advertise church business.

Halifax, N.S.

The Durham "Review" reports continued improvement in the health of the Rev. Charles Cameron.