

Our Contributors.

Looking Forward.

BY KNOXIAN.



WITH this issue THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN ends the first twenty-five years of its life. The regular office staff will, no doubt, do the looking back. This contributor purposes to look forward.

Perhaps the chief promoter will look back to the beginning of the twenty-five years and think of the amount of money he put into the paper at the start. If we had that amount we would be able to put a few thousands into the mission funds of the Church, give a cool thousand or two to Knox College, a tidy little sum to Augmentation, and have enough left to buy Christmas presents for our friends. It would be hard to tell where that money is now. You might as well look for the grave of Moses.

Perhaps the business manager may take a look over the arrears that have accumulated during twenty-five years. Only a business man with nerve could do that. It would knock the breath clean out of a mere parson to glance over those arrears.

Paul tells us that we should forget the things that are behind. Some subscribers, even of a church paper, include their arrears among the things that are to be forgotten.

Paul would never have included his subscription among the things to be forgotten. His motto was never to owe any man anything. A printer is a man. What the Apostle wanted to forget was any past work that he had done, any past opposition he had met with, any past difficulties he had overcome, any past sufferings he had endured.

He would not begin every sentence by some reference to that speech I made before Agrippa, or that oration I delivered on Mars Hill, or that day I made Felix tremble. He never carried around a few of the stones they pelted him with at Lystra and exhibited them to the people as evidence of the persecution he had endured.

If Paul were a member of our General Assembly he never would say anything about the "good old days of the Establishment," nor about the "U. P. practice before the Union," nor about the "men who came out in 43." He would say: "Brethren, press on. Go forward and do something yourselves." We all know something of what the Presbyterian Church has been and has done during the last twenty-five years. What will it do during the next twenty-five? What will it be at the end of the next twenty-five, or say at the end of the next fifty years.

Does it follow that because the Presbyterian system is the best for Scotland and Ulster it will necessarily be one of the best for Canada and Canadians? Is it a reasonably sure thing that the third or fourth generation of Canadians will have the self-control, the capacity for self-government, the patience, the steadiness, the love of order and respect for authority that are absolutely indispensable to the successful working of the Presbyterian system. There is room for argument on that question.

Assuming that the people adhere to the distinctive doctrines of Presbyterianism, is it quite clear that they will retain the self-control, the patience, the steadiness, the love of order and respect for authority that characterized their fathers? Will any thoughtful man say that these qualities are among the distinctive features of Canadian character?

Dr. Cochrane used to have an eloquent speech in which he dealt sledge-hammer blows at the theory that Presbyterianism is a system of religion mainly adapted for the use of Scotchmen. Fifty years hence it may be fairly clear that the theory is not so far wrong. Most earnestly we hope and pray that it may prove to be all wrong, but facts are stubborn things. Presbyterianism died out of New England. Presbyterianism has no hold on some of the older parts of Canada. Deny it who may, the distinctive features of Presbyterianism die out of a country in exact proportion as the Old Country element dies out.

We despise a pessimist. We have no respect for a man who is always crying "wolf" when there is no wolf. If there is one kind of a man on earth we have learned to distrust, it is the man who is always canting about the Church of his fathers, but who never gives a dollar, nor an hour's honest work to the Church of his children. Still it is a good thing to survey questions on all sides at times. It cannot be a bad thing to ask if Canadians are likely to be a people fifty years hence that can work the Presbyterian system as successfully as it is now worked in Ireland or Scotland.

What kind of a man will the typical Presbyterian minister be at the end of the next half-century? Hillocks described Dr. Davidson's successor in "Drumtochy" as "a weel-meanin' bit craturie, an' handy wi' a magic lantern." From Dr. Davidson to a "bit craturie handy wi' a magic lantern" was a shocking descent. Is there not some reason to fear that too many people are beginning to think that the magic lantern business in its many ramifications is quite as important as preaching? In fifty years, aye, in half that time, the man with the magic lantern and the little "talk" to please the people may be preferred by many to the man with a strong message designed to make the people forsake their sins.

Not long ago we heard a bright young graduate of one of our Universities say that a certain minister, whose name every Canadian knows, would never do as pastor of a prominent congregation now vacant, because he would "never go around among the people and give them taffy." The minister in question is a noted preacher, a natural born organizer, a man with an amount of energy that at times seems superhuman, and, we should say that as a "taffy" dispenser, his gifts are at least average. But our young friend thought he was not an expert in the "taffy" line and therefore would not suit the place. There is a terrible possibility that the young man was right, not only in regard to this particular congregation but in regard to a good many others. If the dispensation of "taffy" takes the place of proper pastoral visitation of the spiritual kind the days of Canadian Presbyterianism are numbered.

What kind of a man will the theological professor of 1946 be? Who can tell! Perhaps he may be as good as the best of his predecessors and that will be quite good enough. Possibly he may be found diligently engaged in secretly undermining the faith of his students and that will be quite bad enough.

How will the mission funds stand at the end of 25 or 50 years! Who will then be Convener of the Home Mission Committee? Who will manage the foreign mission work? What like will the membership of the Church be fifty years hence? Will it be better than or not so good as it is now! Who can tell?

It is easy to say, the Lord will take care of His own. That is a glorious truth, but will His own be found in large numbers in our Church or in some other in which the society, and the service, and the spiritual food are better? That is the question for us to consider.

Let us all hope and pray that our Church of the future may in all respects be better than the Church of the present or the Church of the past; that our colleges may be well endowed and well equipped; that our mission treasuries may be well filled; that our pulpits may be manned by strong gospel preachers, and our pews filled with intelligent, devout gospel hearers; that our office-bearers may be progressive, capable men who know their duty and do it; that our missionaries may be noted for that zeal and devotion without which mission work must always be a failure. In short, that our Presbyterian Church of the future may be stronger, purer, more aggressive, more spiritual, more efficient in action and more Christ-like in spirit than any Church has ever been in any age or in any land.

A Prayer.

R. S. G. A.

O God! we pray for sight to see,
We pray for hearts to feel
The aching hopelessness of men
Ground by oppression's heel,
And should their passion's cry be heard,
Despair misguided be,
May love forgive the wrong they do,
And fight to set them free.
O God! we pray for pity's tears
To wash away our scorn
Of those whose quivering hearts of shame
Sink them in sin forlorn.
O! for the love that sees the good
That still within them lives;
For the strong heart of purity
That touches and forgives.
O God! we ask not love alone,
But passion deep and strong—
A righteous wrath at empty shams,
A burning hate of wrong.
Give us the scorn that dares to spurn
The profits of a lie;
Give us the spirit that can dare
To live the truth or die!

Wroxeter, Ont.

We are indebted to our contemporary, *The Westminster*, for the portraits of Professors Robinson and Ballantyne which appear in the article on Knox College.

Whatsoever Things Are Honest.

BY REV. JOHN CAMPBELL, LL.D.



AROLD FREDERIC has written a book which a great many people are reading. Like many other things, it bears different names in England and in the United States. The English euphuist labels it *Illumination*, but the American man of straight speech—let not my Christian reader be shocked—sets it down as "The Damnation of Theron Ware." Well-bred people avoid the first word of note, and, when obliged to employ it in a so-called theological sense, they project it into a future state. Mr. Frederic apparently limits it to the fall and fate on this side of the grave of a Christian minister. The advanced critics of Germany called the period of rationalism which arose towards the close of last century that of "Illumination," and, as negative criticism had much to do with the Reverend Theron Ware's fall, the English publisher, being a German named Heinemann, consciously or unconsciously by his title, makes things that are equal to the same thing equal to one another. This is a peculiar application of the first axiom in Euclid. Whatever the views of Harold Frederic and Mr. Heinemann may be as to the connection of the large "I" and the big "D," it is evident, from a perusal of the volume so differently named, that its author had something more in his mind, as a corrupting and destroying power, than a movement in religious thought and literature. This is the moral quality which rises all the way from dishonesty to dishonour.

The town of Pisa, famous for its leaning tower—always seems to have been off the straight. At any rate, an Etruscan monument erected to commemorate the virtues of an aged Lucumo or president, referring to the mean subterfuges by which the city on the Arno had evaded its lawful assessment for the same, bears these severe words: "Be ye unable to give a great soul to Pisa." One mark in the story of Theron Ware the utter absence of a great soul. Of all its characters there are only four, and these not leading ones, that are fairly honest. One is a woman, the minister's young wife, two are ignorant Roman Catholics, and the fourth is not a church member. All the rest, ministers, trustees, revivalistic debt-raisers, Roman Catholic priests, scientists, and private professors of religion, are steeped in dishonesty, which steeping they exhibit in ways that are partial, tricky, mean, playful, temporizing, and, like the Jesuits at times, for the greater glory of God. If Harold Frederic's picture of a manufacturing town's religion be a true one, it is a terrible revelation. Theron at first was honest, or wished to be so, and such was the magic of that honesty that it drew towards him people of widely different creeds and culture. Strange to say, this very tribute to his original moral worth became the means of his losing it, and of his sinking, through abounding hypocrisy, into the pit of dishonour. Nor is there any evidence that he repented.

The original Theron Ware had no social culture, his learning was below par, his knowledge of the world that of a schoolboy, and his natural eloquence possessed little drawing power. His simple-hearted honesty was his one talent that led men and women to take an interest in him. When he became flattered thereby and egotistical, his talent was taken away. A good many Theron Wares lose this talent in school, university, and theological seminary, and enter the ministry destitute of it. Others drop it in Presbytery, mislay it in Synod, or have it pilfered from them in the lobbies of the General Assembly. Some loudly profess to have it, but, as it is invisible to the ordinary eye, it must, like that of the little trusted servant in the parable, be kept laid up in a napkin somewhere. The reputation of being honest is so valuable that there can be but few people who do not care for it, or are reckless about it. What a glorious thing it was for Aristides to be called *The Just*! The superlative genius and political success of the corrupt Themistocles could not throw that bright, clear star of virtue into the shade. Doubtless Themistocles would like to have been thought honourable also, like many a popularly-named Honest Tom, Dick and Harry of later days. Unfortunately, even in this enlightened age, reputation and character do not always go hand in hand; the soul of honour is not the one most highly honoured. Yet we may thank Harold Frederic for again reminding us that there is a something implanted divinely, even in crooked and sordid natures, which does homage at the shrine of other honesty.

It was Pope who said, "An honest man's the noblest work of God." Burns also sang:

"The king can mak' a belted knight,
A marquis, duke and a' that,
But an honest man's abun' his might."

Such an one in humble life Crabbe had before his mind when he wrote: