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Contributors and Correspondents

[For the Presbyterian.]

THREE OLD SCOTCH WORTHIES.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, TORONTO.

III.—ROBERT BLAIR.

Robert Blair was the son of John Blair, as William Row tells us, "a gentleman living in the town of Irvine and grandson of Robert Blair of Windgedge, a brother of the Laird of Blair, the ancient and honorable family of that ilk." Like both Ruthersford and Dickson he came of a worthy stock. His mother was Bessie Muir of the equally "ancient and honorable family of Rowallan." He was born in the year 1598. He was tenderly reared and piously educated; he tells us that his father was "much addicted to prayer." A grand thing in a father! the root and power of every religious principle and of every righteous action. He tells us too "how tenderly he walked, refusing to enrich himself by buying commodities from pirates, as his neighbors did, and also that he was twice spoiled at sea by pirates. He was left an orphan, and his mother a widow when he was only six years of age. At that time his mother was, in his own words, "only civil" (only decently and outwardly religious), but "many years after the Lord showed her mercy under the ministry of his worthy and famous servant, Mr. David Dickson, for she lived near fifty years a widow after his father's death." During his early years he took great delight in "reading Holy Augustine's Confessions," and accounted it an honour to repeat Mr. Welsh's Catechism before Sermon, both before and after noon, in church. At one Communion season he was greatly ravished in his spirit, so that he earnestly desired to communicate, but, he says, "having gotten my breakfast I durst not; for it was then generally received opinion that the sacrament behoved to be received fasting." This was a relic of popish superstition that still lingers among the people, but was discontinued by the ministers. However, at the second table he was so deeply moved that he determined to communicate upon this ground—"After supper" I thus reasoned with myself: Did Christ and his disciples celebrate this sacrament after supper, and can it be a fault of mine to celebrate it after breakfast? Sure it can be none, so at the next table I sat down and communicated. This was thy work O Lord, to thy poor child, to make me thy covenant and sealed servant." This was under the ministry of David Dickson, a ministry of which Ruthersford wrote: "It is but little that I know of God; yet this I dare write, Christ shall be glorified in David Dickson, howbeit Scotland be not gathered." "I am glad that the dying servant of God, famous and faithful Mr. Cunningham, sealed your ministry before he fell asleep; grace, grace be with you." O that we had more sealed ministers. After a careful training in philosophy under the hands of his brother, Mr. William Blair, he entered the University of Glasgow in 1611, and in 1614 took his degree of Master of Arts, and after two years spent in teaching in a public school, he was appointed regent in his own college, and the same year, 1616, he was licensed to preach the Gospel. Fleming has preserved an anecdote of this period which is well worth repeating. "Upon his first coming forth to preach, he by a remarkable providence had Mr. Robert Bruce of Edinburgh to be his hearer; and I have heard himself declare, it was his desire to have the judgment of so great a man upon his discourse, whose censure he said he would never forget, it has been so much blessed. It was this, I found," said he, "your sermon very polished and digested, (which has indeed easy tones of his parts) but there is one thing I miss in it, to wit, the Spirit of God; I found not that." This Mr. Blair often repeated afterwards, it made a deep and lasting impression on himself, and led him to see this, what many do not see, that it is something else to be a minister of Jesus Christ than to be a knowing and eloquent preacher. While in the ministry he was colleague with Mr. Dickson for some time, for Mr. Dickson went to Irvine while Mr. Blair was regent, and entered on that work so blessed of God to multitudes of souls. He often went to Stewarton to assist in that work, especially in the College vacations, and had much converse with the people, "and profited, he tells us, more by them than I think they did by me, though ignorant people, and proud secure lives, called them, 'the deaf people of Stewarton.'" I bless the Lord that ever I was acquainted with that people, and for the help I had by interchanging letters with blessed Mr. Dickson after he left the College." In the College he sought earnestly to form the young men under his care, to virtue. Robert Bailie blessed the goodness of God, who in his rich mercy, did put the almost white and raised table of his spirit under his hand to be engraven by his example and labors with the first most sensible and remaining impressions, whether of piety or of good letters or of moral virtue. In 1628 being wearied of teaching philosophy, and on account of a dispute with the principle of the University, he accepted a call to the ministry at Baugor, Ireland. Though this was the Episcopal Church into which he entered, he did so without question. In 1638 he was called to be colleague with Mr. William Amund, at Ayr, and about the same time to go to St. Andrew's. The contention between Ayr, where Mr. Blair had been some time, and where he had endeavored himself to the people, and St. Andrew's was not without much feeling, however. St. Andrew's being the most important place, and where he could "insinuate the fear of God in the hearts of young scholars," he was ordered by the General Assembly to go there, whereupon he said: "I content

am in the hands of the Assembly, but I protest here in God's presence, that I had rather lay down my life than be separated from my flock at Ayr." Beautiful twin graces, humility and love! Here he exercised his ministry with great success, till ejected in 1652.

Of the character of his ministry we have no memorial left. Dr. McOrrie says, "the literary remains of Robert Blair, once so famous for his wisdom and learning may be said to have been lost to posterity." But while this is the case we are not without some precious hints of what it would be. Mr. Blair while regent, recorded in a notebook many passages of God with his soul which were the spiritual preparation for his life's work; these give us inkings, if no more, of what his ministry, so wise, so tender, so strong, so evangelical, would be. Take these extracts: "I perceived that many who make right use of faith in order to their justification, made not directly use thereof to sanctification," "but I had not, before that, learned to make use of faith as a means and instrument to draw holiness out of Christ, the Well of Salvation, though it may be I had both heard that and spoken that by way of transient notion; but then I learned to purpose that they who receive forgiveness of sins are sanctified through faith in Christ, as our glorious Saviour taught Paul, Acts xxvi. 28." "In conference with me, he, (Primate Usher of hallowed memory) desired to know of me what my mind was concerning the nature of justifying and saving faith. I told him my mind, that I held the accepting of Jesus Christ as He is offered in the Gospel, etc. With this he was well satisfied." "The Lord is pleased by trials to find the faith of his servants, teaching them to trust alone in him who quickeneth the dead. Gifts and graces, example in others, and experience in ourselves, may be pinnings, as it were, in a wall, to further, encourage and advance our faith; so may also the diligent use of the means and ordinances of life. All these, though in their own place, may and do prove useful to our faith and living thereby; yet if we offer to make all of these, or any of these, the object for our soul to rest or rely upon, in order either to our salvation, our sanctification, or our escape from trouble, they are not able to support and bear up the weight. As pinnings laid into the foundations, these all will be crushed, for they are out of their place and office. The Lord Jehovah, in whom alone is power—the Father, I say, in his Son and Spirit—without partners and colleagues—will be the only object of our faith to rest on. For this, see Ps. lxxii. 2, 5, 6, and in all these verses compare the word only with the word truly in the first verse, and thence we will learn that we do not truly wait, trust, or hope in God, when we do it not only, excluding from being the object all means and helps, outward and inward. "Who that knows anything of God can be ignorant of this, that every good duty must be performed by strength and furniture from the Lord himself." "This true and spiritual knowledge is affectionate and practical, as it floweth from the Spirit of grace, so it carries with it a stream and current of holy affections, and stirreth up to endeavors and earnestness in holy practice. A little of this reacheth very far.

These are the grand key-notes of a ministry. We know that the men of those days were not superficial, but deep, spiritual, and very Scriptural. The warrant of the word was necessary to every utterance, hence "their light shines and their influence is felt in Scotland still. Yes, with the ever widening waves of Christian teaching and example, and energy, they are being felt in all the world.

In 1640 he was sent to London along with Henderson, Bailie, and others, to attend to the affairs of the church during the formation of the treaty of peace. In 1646 he was appointed chaplain to the king. An anecdote is told connected with this portion of his life by Mr. William Vilant, of St. Andrew's, who after stating that scarcely did he ever know a more rare conjunction of these things more eminently shining in any one minister, than in Mr. Blair, viz., eminent piety, prudence, and learning, and a most peaceful, calm temper of spirit, tells us that in Oliver Cromwell's time, when he was called before the English Council, they intended to take his place from him as King's Chaplain, but he made such a wise appearance before them, that the President said to the rest, "It is well that this man is a minister, for if he were not a minister, he might vex us all with his great wisdom and policy; therefore, let us not take his pension from him, but let him keep it." And so they dismissed him with great respect. After a season of annoyances at the hands of the Council, in which he was confined to Musselburgh, Kirkealdy and Aberdeen, and where he was ever engaged in the work of God—he died in the Castle of Couston, in the parish of Aberdeen, Aug. 27, 1666, aged 72. He was buried in Aberdeen churchyard, where he now awaits the morning of the resurrection of the blessed.

LETTER FROM SCOTLAND.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN

DEAR SIR,—I would not have troubled you with my ideas on the subjects mentioned in an article in your paper of 11th Aug., headed "Rome to Edinburgh," but some of the strictures are so severe I cannot let them pass. I don't know what kind of ears your correspondent has reference to in his letter, but I have travelled a good deal between Aberdeen and Torquay, and I never saw any such as he describes. To be sure, I generally travel in second class, but I have been a good deal in third, and a little in first. I consider the Canadian railway system superior to the British in many re-

spects. The first-class carriages are luxurious, inasmuch as they were just well-stuffed arm chairs, and only six in a carriage, three on each side. The second are well cushioned, both seat and back, and many of the third are cushioned too, though many are not. If people smoke where they should not, the guard will stop the nuisance as soon as he is informed of it; but a smoking car in Canada beats anything I have seen here. With regard to school-houses many of the old ones are poor enough, but not quite so poor as still abound in Canada, and the new ones being built everywhere are very handsome, both in town and country, and generally have a house for the teacher. The new churches in Scotland, too, are very handsome, and are being well arranged for heating and ventilation. Some of the old ones are not very comfortable, but I think a good many in Ontario can be very honestly placed in the same category. I think the great fault in Britain now is the advance in luxury in every thing almost, and it is pretty much the same in Ontario. I went a short time ago to Athelstanford in this country, expecting to see a venerable little old church where the author of "The Grave" used to preach, but instead, there was one of the prettiest little new churches I have seen in Scotland, and built after the correct episcopal fashion, with the ten commandments behind the raised platform on which, in a corner stood the little pulpit. There was no preacher's box or seat. There were texts in old English letters over the doors and windows, and there was a box on the front of the platform with I. H. S. on it just like the Episcopal table, and this is the "Parish Church." With regard to scenery the countries are so different that it is not easy to make comparison, but as I lived about four years in Quebec, I know it pretty well. As a town, to compare it with Edinburgh would only make one laugh, but the views of the river and country are very beautiful. Still, I think the views from the castle of Edinburgh or Arthur Seat on a fine, clear day, are superior not only to Quebec, but to a y place I have seen as yet. Then the poor Scotch weather. Your correspondent can't remember a "whole day of sunshine." Well, I can't think where he lived, but in Howe Street which is nearly the lowest ground in the new town. I saw many a whole day of sunshine in the months of May, June and July. From the 8th of May till the 22nd July, I was in the good town, and a finer summer I never saw either in Scotland or Ontario, where I lived some forty years. I heard of great heat in England, but my thermometer in the shade never reached eighty, and only seventy-five these or four times. It was very dry in some parts, but we had some nice showers now and then in Edinburgh, and the gardens were beautiful. By the bye, two more statues have been put up since last I wrote you. One to David Livingstone is erected close to Scott's monument, and will be seen by thousands every day on their way to the great North British railway station. It is a very handsome and striking statue, and is the production of Mrs. D. O. Hill, a very talented lady. The other is a splendid equestrian statue of the "Good Prince Albert," erected in Charlotte Square at the West end of George Street. It stands on a solid pedestal of Aberdeen granite, and is a very fine piece of sculpture. I think George Street, Edinburgh, with St. Andrew's Square and its fine monuments at its East end, and Charlotte Square with the Prince's monument at the West end, to say nothing of Pitt and George the Fourth's in the middle, is equal to any street either in Canada or the United States. Yours faithfully,
SCOTCH CANADIAN.

Dunbar, 7th September, 1876.

THE PASS WORD OF THE CATACOMBS.

BY PROFESSOR JULES DELAUNAY.

The glory of Rome lies with the dust of her catacombs. Amidst the martyrs' bones are the martyrs' names. On the tombs is the record of their faith, their obedience, their victory, the palm, the crown, the triumph—for they overcame! Never did I walk the streets of Rome without feeling that with every footfall I was awakening an echo in the caverns of the precious dead! I had come to Rome in search of the light of the apostles' doctrine, and I found it (eureka) in the caverns beneath her. A hermit (don Geronimo) once employed by the Roman Congregation of Belios as a conservator of the catacombs, said, "Come, and I shall be thy guide." "Ed io sarò la tua guida." We both tied a lamp around each other's ankle, and as did David, who 3000 years before us, went exploring under Mount Zion, the foundations for the temple, and set his harp to the tune, "Thy word, O Lord, is a lamp on my feet," and so with our small lamps, we peered through the gloom that shrouded once the infant church. "Pause," says Geronimo, "here every outsider to gain admittance in these catacombs had to give a certain pass word." It was that form of doctrine once delivered unto the saints. The angels of the church, from A.D. 65 to 815, Linus, Cletus, Ana Cletus, Clemens, Evaristus, etc., succeeded each other as the guardians of that doctrine. Each wore a bridal ring on his finger, and on that ring was a signet, and on the signet was that pass-word or form of doctrine. None understood the word except he that received it, and that

word was "IOHTHYS," or Fish which contains the initials of JESUS, CHRIST, THEOTI, UROS, SORRE, or Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour." Thus, every church of Asia had a sign, seal, or pass-word. When the disciple of John—(Polycarpe) angel of the church of Smyrna—sent to the banks of the Rhone at Lyons, the two missionaries, Irenaeus and Pothinus, he sealed their commission letter with the seal of the Church at Smyrna, and on it was "the crown of life" (Rev. ii. 10), and the letters which Timothy sent to Paul at Rome were sealed with the seal of Ephesus, and on it was the tree of life (Rev. ii. 7). That seal of the angel of the Church of Rome, now worn by the Popes, is yet called the seal of the fisherman, because of the mystic fish. It is commonly believed that the fish on that ring was the sign of the prophet Jonah—typifying the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. And this was the form of doctrine once delivered to the saints buried in these catacombs, said Geronimo. The access to the catacombs which we first visited was by a narrow flight of steps, almost perpendicular. We were in the cemetery of St. Priscilla. On one of the first tombs we read the two words "Oro nos." Don Geronimo reminded me of this frequent exclamation upon tombs (words of the charges of Paul to the churches); the Pauline, "I beseech you," as in Rom. xii. 1, and the oro nos, seem to bring fresh to the memory of every one that entered, "Now, I beseech you (oro nos) brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which they had received, and avoid them." It is thus that the fish became the conventional form of doctrine, and meant "Christ" in every eye. Hence, says Geronimo, a ship upon a Dolphin, signified a church of Christ, i.e., a church built upon Christ. The fish shibboleth of fellowship, was served to the Christians at their love-feast. It was deposited into the baptismal font, which they called *Piscina*, from *Piscis*, fish.

In this form of doctrine, or apostles' doctrine, the church of Rome continued steady, full of faith, and obedience, and generous heroism unto blood for 800 years. Bride of Christ, she walked after the Spirit, not after the flesh, and stood not under condemnation; and adorning the doctrine of Christ with the lives of her saints, she kept her garment unspotted from the world till the day when sitting upon the lap of the emperors, she committed fornication with the kings of the earth, and ceasing to be a spiritual became a secular and political power. An offspring was born to the adulteress, and history called her "Popery." From henceforth the form of doctrine became deformed, till the day when it became reformed by Luther, and Calvin, and the other Reformers.

A COLLECTOR'S EXPERIENCE.

No. one greets us with "what, begging again: I never saw the like; its give give forever; one might just stand with their hand in their pocket all the time. But you won't be contented without I give you something so here's fifty cents, and I think I do pretty well when I give that."

No. two says "well, really it is too bad: you have caught me at home, for I have been fortunate enough to be out every time the collectors called for the last year and a half. Well, since you have caught me, I suppose I must give something, and I think fifty cents should satisfy you."

No. three meets us with: "No, you need not ask me for anything. I think it would be more like the thing if you came with something to give me, and besides four times a year is too often: now I will give you twenty-five cents, and I do not want to see you again for a year."

"Surely," says No. four, "you do not mean to ask me for anything; I have just begun business, and you must let me have a fair start before you come begging from me."

"Please let me see the book," says No. five, "and then I can better tell what is expected of me; I want to be thought as respectable as my neighbors, but I see no necessity for being more generous than they—well here is thirty cents; that is neither less or most that has been given, but that will do for me."

"So you have found me, have you?" says No. six. "Well I am on the saving list just now, and so I must economize, and this giving is the best thing to begin with, as I will give you fifty cents instead of my usual dollar, and as that is as much as those rich fellows give that you have the names of. I will keep it at that after this."

No. seven says, "No I have nothing to give, times are too hard, and charity begins at home, (charity does a flourishing business at home too, for she is dressed in silk, lace, and jewelry) so you must really excuse me this time."

No. eight runs out the back door as we enter by the front, and thinks he is so smart to have escaped us in that way.

Now dear friends, is it any wonder that the Mission Board have ever and anon to cry out "Poverty," when members of our church give in such a stinted and begrudging manner? Is it any wonder that we hear of cold and dead congregations throughout our noble Dominion when the Mission Board have to tell us that she is in

debt? Is it not a disgrace that our congregations had to be taxed that that debt could be cancelled. And what better will it be next year? none unless we are roused to a sense of duty in this matter of giving. God could easily carry on the great and glorious work of the ingathering of the heathen to himself without our puny assistance, but he has honored us by allowing us to give—the means he has given us to help on this work.

Search the Scriptures and you will be surprised at the many blessings, promised for the cheerful performance of this one duty. God claimed the tenth from the Israelites of old: and can we expect his blessing who throw our paltry cents to him as to a beggar? surely not. O that the spirit of liberality would descend on us, to quicken us; then would the dry bones rise up an exceeding great army to fight the battles of the Lord.

Senior and Junior Pastors.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—It appears from the proceedings of the last meeting of the Toronto Presbytery, that an attempt is being made to extend the system of double pastorships, to an extent that is calculated to become injurious to the churches. It is the part of wisdom to narrowly scan any change that is attempted to be made on our old and wisely established customs.

It appears that one of the oldest and most respected ministers of the Presbytery has been compelled, through increasing bodily infirmity, to tender the resignation of his charge. The churches interested, through their representatives, for the reasons assigned, did not oppose his resignation, and after bearing testimony to the high esteem in which their minister is held, giving substantial proof of it, by promising (according to their means) a liberal retiring allowance.

Instead of carrying out the thus expressed wishes of both Pastor and people, the Presbytery has for the purpose of honoring the retiring pastor, referred the case back to the parties, to see if an arrangement can be made, whereby the retiring minister may, for the sake of the honour, still retain the position nominally as senior Pastor.

It has been customary for large churches, especially in cities, when, through the increasing infirmity of the Pastor, he is unable to keep up with the work required of him, to call an assistant to labour with, and succeed him in his pastorate. Few I think, would call in question the wisdom of such a course. But it is quite a different thing to the retaining the name of a retired minister on the roll as senior Pastor, merely for the sake of conferring honour upon him, when all the duties and responsibilities are to be undertaken by the junior Pastor. Now, common equity, not to speak of Christian courtesy, would decide that the man who undertakes all the responsibility, and performs all the duties, is entitled to whatever honour there may arise therefrom.

No one acquainted with the highly, and deservedly respected minister in question, would object to the Presbytery conferring upon him all the honour within their power, provided it be not at the expense of the churches under consideration or his successor.

Were the plan adopted, suggested by those zealous brethren in the Presbytery, the people would be deprived of offering his successor a certain consideration, evidently set much store by, by those brethren, viz., the honour of being chief Pastor of those churches. It does not require much knowledge of human nature to know, that an active, zealous, and talented young probationer, who would have no hesitation in accepting a call as the sole Pastor of the churches, would refuse to take the position of junior Pastor of two small country congregations, it may be for ten or twenty years to come. It would be unjust to the junior pastor in another respect, inasmuch as he would be deprived from taking his rightful position amongst other ministers in the Church Courts, as the senior Pastor would still be entitled to that honour.

Were this case to be decided in the way desired by those members of the Presbytery, we would find that the next infirm minister retiring from active duty, would consider himself slighted, if not honoured in the same way. And so the evil would keep increasing, until a new order of church office-bearers were established, at present unknown to Presbyterianism.

Feeling confident that the parties to whom the matter has been again referred, will give the Presbytery intimation in unmistakable language, that they know best what is for their own interests, I shall not therefore at present take up more of your valuable space, in combating the introduction of this anti-Presbyterian system.

King, Sept. 19th, 1876. EQUITY.

A Palpable Mistake.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—In a short paragraph at the bottom of the middle column of the 8rd page of your latest issue, I find certain figures given as the number of Protestant churches in Palestine, of Protestants in Jerusalem, and of children attending Protestant schools in the same city. The numbers are evidently greatly exaggerated, though I do not pretend to be able to give the correct figures. The fact that the total population of Jerusalem at present is set down in Smith's Bible Dictionary at 17,000 is sufficient proof of the error.

These current paragraphs which go the round of the periodical press are so often unreliable that it would take Argus himself to take note of, and correct all the blunders they originate and perpetuate.

Yours Truly, SCRUTATOR.

Toronto Sept. 25th, 1876.