

Our Contributors.

Westminster College, Cambridge.

BY REV. PROF. JORDAN, B. A., D. D.

One of my brightest days during my recent trip to England was passed at Cambridge, as there I had the pleasure of seeing the new college, and meeting some old friends. As a graduate of the Presbyterian College, formerly in Queen's Square, London, and now removed to the famous University city this visit was particularly pleasant. By the bye, on my homeward journey I learned a fact about the old college which was quite interesting, to me at least; I met on board ship a young Jewish clergyman and on comparing notes, I found that we were both educated in the same college, that is in the same building. This was news to me. I did not know that the Jews had an academic institution of that kind, a theological seminary; and still less that the large, dingy old mansion, in Queen's square, had passed into their hands. Well! in the movement of life many such curious changes take place. Good work was done in the old hall in Queen's Square, but in its new surroundings we trust that the English college has before it a still brighter career.

On arriving at Cambridge I took the liberty of calling on the Rev. Hailiday Douglass who was at that time recommended by the Board of Knox College as professor in Apologetics, and who has since been appointed by the General Assembly. As I write these words the time of his induction draws near, and he will soon be engaged with his students facing the problem of modern religious thought. I was glad to be one of the first to say a word of welcome, and to assure Mr. Douglass that in Canada he would find a cordial reception and a large field of usefulness. The new Professor is a man of keen intelligence and breadth of view, who will hold fast to the essentials of the faith while dealing sympathetically with the great thoughts that God gives to His Church to-day.

The greater part of my time in Cambridge was spent at the college in company with the Rev. Principal Dykes. I shall not attempt a detailed description of the college buildings; but I may say that I was delighted to go over them with the Principal as my guide. It is a handsome block of buildings, beautifully situated. Small it may be in comparison with some of the elaborate academic buildings of the English universities; but considering the cost, and the accommodation required, it is highly satisfactory, everything being neat and in good taste. The residences of the professors are in one wing; those of the students in another; and the class rooms, library, chapel, &c., in the main building. Each student has a small suite of rooms, and the arrangements in the student's quarters combine opportunities for both sociability and privacy. The class rooms are rather small but as the different years are taken separately that is not an inconvenience. Dr. Skinner, the Old Testament Professor, was not at home; and I had not, therefore, the pleasure of meeting him. Neither did I see my old friend Mr. J. G. Smieton, the Librarian and Honorary Bursar; but I was pleased to see his comfortable offices, as I remember how he was cramped, cabined and confined in the old

days. Mr. Smieton is an old student, a bachelor who has long been married to the college; his services to it are free and faithful. Some of us remember with gratitude how at Queen's Square we received our first lessons in German from him in the spare moments which were snatched from other studies. I was delighted to meet Dr. J. Gibb, the one professor of the present staff who has been a long time in connection with the work of the college. In my time he lived up stairs in the Queen's Square Hall, and exercised a gentle supervision over the resident students. Now he has a beautiful house; and it seemed to me that in the new surroundings he looked younger than ever. His welcome was hearty, and as he traced the fortunes of the men who belonged to my year I learned, what some perhaps would not suspect, that he took an interest in men as well as in books. May he long be spared to do steady, effective work in expounding the Book and presenting the history with which he is so familiar!

The Rev. Dr. Dykes had laid me under obligations by his friendship over a dozen years ago, and especially in connection with my transition from the Presbyterian Church of England to that of Canada. No one could have felt greater satisfaction in his appointment to the headship of the college; and I was glad to have the privilege of meeting him in its new home and receiving such kind and courteous treatment. Dr. Dykes is a gentleman, a scholar and a preacher who would do honor to any position in the Christian Church; and it goes without saying that he is a worthy representative of the Presbyterian Church in the old University city. The Presbyterian college will no doubt gain something from its nearness to the other great colleges; but the gain will not be all on one side. Dr. Dykes held for very near twenty years a heavy charge in one of the busiest cities of the world. Regent Square Church, where Edward Irving and Dr. Hamilton had ministered, was a sphere of labor sufficient to tax the strength of a strong man; but Dr. Dykes was all through a student and a scholar. When I referred to the great labor he must have put into the work of The Declaratory Act, The Articles of Faith, &c., he admitted the work had been heavy, but pointed out that it had been a good training for his present position. That was certainly true; and in these days when there is so much thin, shallow preaching, it would be well to remember that our theological training is scarcely begun when we leave the college. Never was it more important that the busy minister should also be a thoughtful student, and never did the church need more a clear, strong living theology. It was a privilege to discuss with such a man, not only the social and political outlook in England, but also burning questions of Biblical criticism and theology. The Presbyterian church of England owes much to Dr. Dykes in these days of criticism and discussion that she has not been driven into "the falsehood of extremes," but has held fast to the great central verities; and at the same time kept an open mind and a Catholic spirit. He has never degenerated into a mere church politician; but has always shown patience, tact and perseverance, as well as a fair measure of energy and original initiative. He knows that "a leader" is to some extent limited by circumstances and

by his followers; but also that it is the duty of a leader to lead, to go forward steadily to meet the growing light, so that the church facing the problems of to-day may be prepared for the duties of tomorrow.

Decision.

BY REV. R. E. SPEER, D. D.

"Indecision," said Dr. William M. Taylor used to say, shaking his shaggy head,—"indecision is the paralysis of usefulness." Truly indecision is one of the things that unmake a man. Decisiveness, positiveness, certainty of character, are the qualities demanded in a man. Many sports are so admirable because they train the boys to quickness of sight and judgment, and discipline the life with all its powers and faculties to respond instantly to the will.

Decision should begin with the positive and fearless choice of sides, in those matters where each real man, eschewing all trimming and compromise, must have convictions and show them. The true man never drifts. He has chart, compass, course, and helm. He steers. Least of all does he drift with reference to his relationship to God and Christ. He heeds the words written in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and he gives thought to the great truths of life "lest haply he drift away from them."

All sorts of influences work on men to break down decision of character. There is a moral gravitation that draws men down earthward, makes them spiritualy stoop shouldered. Life is like a stream in which all things that are dead drift down, and only those things work up that possess the power of decisive resistance. Men are caught in the current of weakness of will, the current of sin, the current of cowardice, the current of selfishness or narrowness, and, wanting the faculty of quick, sharp decisiveness, are swung away from their moorings and adrift before the will is awake and the resistant forces can be summoned into action.

The useful men in the world are the men of decision. Perhaps sometimes they err. But the slow, hesitating, irresolute men are left maundering and gurgling by the roadside as the great stream of life flows past. "The fact is," said Sydney Smith, "that, to do anything in this world worth doing, we must not stand back shivering and thinking of the cold and danger, but jump in and scramble through as well as we can. It will not do to be perpetually calculating risks and adjusting nice chances; it did very well before the flood, when a man could consult his friends upon an intended publication for a hundred and fifty years, and then live to see his success afterwards; but at present a man waits, and doubts, and consults his brother and his particular friends, till one fine day he finds that he is sixty years of age; that he has lost so much time in consulting his first cousins and particular friends, that he has no more time to follow their advice." There is a wise deliberation. There is a holy impetuosity.

The Bible constantly holds the irresolute, undecided life up to contempt. It speaks of men who are like "clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." It refers scornfully to the "double-minded man,