

afterwards ordained as minister of Spronston, Roxburghshire, from which he was translated to the East Church, Perth, and subsequently to New Greyfriars, Edinburgh, at the time when the "New Town" was being built. To meet the requirements of that fashionable quarter of the metropolis, the Town Council had erected a large and handsome church in Charlotte Square, named St. George's. On looking for a minister who would be likely to "fill the pews" and create a revenue, their first offer was made to Mr. Thomson and was accepted by him. That church was opened for worship in 1814. It was no light task that Dr. Thomson undertook. The church was seated for more than 1600, and the congregation was to be drawn from a class of people with whom church-going was well-nigh out of fashion, and who were least of all pre-disposed to "evangelical preaching." But evangelical preaching was just what they got; yet it was not long before every sitting was taken. Gifted with remarkable fluency of speech, Dr. Thomson had hitherto preached *extempore*, but now he took to writing out and reading his discourses from manuscript, devoting much time to careful preparation. This led an easygoing brother minister, who was a keen angler, to express surprise that one so ready of speech as Dr. Thomson should spend so much time on his sermons. "Many's the time," said he, "I've both killed a salmon and written a sermon before breakfast!" To which Thomson replied, "Well, sir, I would rather have eaten your salmon than listened to your sermon." Lord Moncrieff's estimate of Dr. Thomson's preaching was that "He was one of the greatest teachers of men he had ever come into contact with." Dr. Chalmers describes him as "A man of colossal mind, whose talents and advocacy threw a lustre on evangelical religion. The prejudices of thousands gave way before the might and the mastery of his resistless demonstrations." To his other great gifts he added a fine taste for music. To the collection of psalm tunes which he edited, he added several of his own composition of acknowledged beauty, and by the attention he bestowed on the subject, he was largely instrumental in the improvement of the church psalmody of Scotland.

It was, however, on the platform that

Dr. Thomson achieved his most brilliant triumphs of oratory. He was abreast of the times in every social and philanthropic movement, and far in advance of his brethren in regard to some of the ecclesiastical questions of the day. He introduced a new era in Scottish education, the day-schools which he established and superintended, serving as models for the normal schools of the present. He took a leading part in the "Anti-Apochrypha controversy," and to him we are largely indebted for the integrity of the sacred canon and the rejection of the Apochryphal writings from our Protestant Bibles. No less remarkable were his speeches and personal influence in behalf of the "absolute and immediate abolition of slavery." His last and crowning speech on this subject is still remembered as "one of the most magnificent and effective orations ever heard in Edinburgh."\*

On the ninth of February, 1831, returning from a meeting of Presbytery, where he had displayed his usual interest in the business of the court, Dr. Thomson fell down on the threshold of his own door and expired without a struggle. He was buried in a piece of ground close to St. Cuthbert's churchyard, since acquired by St. John's Episcopal church. Dr. Chalmers preached his funeral sermon in St. George's church, and the tidings spread to every village and hamlet in the country—"A master in Israel has fallen!"

## Presbyterianism on the Prairie.

EDMONTON.

WHEN we talk about the new towns that have sprung up in the west, it must not be forgotten that new as they are in their present aspects, and recent as they are in their present ambitions, some of them have what is for Canada an ancient lineage. Such a town is Edmonton, on the Saskatchewan River, nine hundred miles north-west of Winnipeg. It was founded in the last decade of the last century and has a history full of romance and stirring adventure. Not to speak of the feuds of the rival fur com-

\* Slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire on the first of August, 1834, when \$100,000,000 were voted by Parliament to the West India planters, as a compensation for their loss by the abolition of compulsory labour.