

Our Contributors.

TORONTO PRESBYTERIANISM ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Why say about twenty-five years ago? Because we have neither time nor inclination to ransack the blue books for exact dates. Dates make dry reading for most people. Well, about twenty-five years ago, there were just five Presbyterian churches in Toronto. Now there are about—about is a useful word—twenty, and several mission-stations that soon will be self-sustaining congregations. We can count seventeen congregations in our own body, and one or two more if we count the Carlton Street congregation, and the Independent congregation that the Toronto Presbytery was exercising itself about not long ago. In round numbers, there are twenty Presbyterian congregations in the Queen City. An Irishman was once sent by his employer to count a flock of sheep. Pat said he counted nineteen, but the last one jumped around so he couldn't count him. Presbyterian congregations spring up so quickly in the Ontario Capital, that it is difficult for an outsider to keep track of them. It is barely possible that there may be good Presbyterians, even in Toronto, who might be a little puzzled if asked to give the exact number of Presbyterian congregations in their own city. We often hear that the people are tired of Calvinistic doctrine. Calvinism is said to be dead, or at least dying. Manifestly it is not dying to any extent in Toronto.

About twenty-five years ago, St. Andrew's, Knox, Cooke's, Bay Street, and Gould Street, represented nearly all there was of Presbyterianism in the Queen City. The West End Church was a vacancy, and the Charles Street Church was beginning; St. Andrew's has become St. Andrew's, East and West. Bay Street developed into the Erskine and Central Churches; Gould Street has become St. James Square. The West End and Charles Street have become large and flourishing congregations. The East Church, College Street, Parkdale, Chalmers' Church, Deer Park, West Toronto Junction, Bloor Street and Leslieville, have all come into existence within the last few years. Knox and Cooke's are where they were, but not as they were. Many changes have taken place in both, but both are flourishing. "Men may come, and men may go," but the Lord's work goes on.

Some people who take their troubles in advance, but never take much work or responsibility, think that Church extension has been carried too far by Toronto Presbyterians. Probably the Presbyterians of the Capital know their own business. If the city is growing at the rate of 10,000 a year, an additional church each year would not be too many. The population is now 175,000, and seventeen churches for 175,000 are not too many. In Guelph, Galt, Brantford, St. Catharines, Woodstock, and dozens of other places, there is a Presbyterian church for ever four or five thousand. We happen to know a stalwart Toronto minister, conservative in theology, but aggressive and progressive in work, who says he could locate two additional churches that would soon grow into self-sustaining congregations, without in any way injuring existing organizations. Our friend strongly believes in predestination, and is of the opinion that Presbyterianism is predestinated to be a great power in Toronto. He also believes in using the means.

COOKE'S CHURCH

illustrates in a striking way the changes that may take place in a congregation in a few years. On the Assembly Sabbath a minister who had worshipped in Cooke's during student days attended morning service there and found everything changed but the site and the walls of the old building. There was a large, intelligent and devout congregation, but it was not the congregation of twenty years ago. Looking around he could recognize only two Cooke's men of the olden time—Mr. Rogers, the elder, and Mr. Hunter, the former superintendent of the Sabbath school. There may have been others, but certainly their number was not large. George Brown, Principal Willis, Thomas Henning and others who rarely missed a service in the old days were no longer seen in their places. The stalwart Ulster men who founded what used to be known as the *Irish* Presbyterian Church, were conspicuous by their absence. A friend remarked that they are to be found in nearly every Presbyterian congregation in the city. Senator Brown, Principal Willis, Mr. Henning and other well-known Cooke's men of bygone days have joined the Church above. The "up-town movement" has taken others away and some may have removed for reasons that need not be mentioned, but the good work still goes on and old Cooke's flourishes under the ministrations of its youthful and energetic pastor.

The changes around the pulpit were as marked as the changes in the congregation. Right on the spot where Dr. Gregg preached many a good sermon there was a good choir and a large pipe organ. We have no quarrel with choirs or organs but we would like to have seen the Doctor stand there once more and deliver one of his old-time sermons. However, as the people have moved the pulpit forward no one has a right to complain. Had they put the pulpit in the background something might be said, but putting the pulpit forward among the people is not a kind of change that should be condemned. Some of the changes one sees in a church at the end of twenty years are saddening, but the changes made in the interior of this church are not of a kind to make any normal specimen of humanity sad. The walls, gallery, pews, in fact everything contrasts favourably with the surroundings of twenty years ago. We hope the heating apparatus is more

powerful than it was at that time. In those days only an Irishman could feel comfortable in Cooke's on a cold winter morning. Irishmen are always warm.

The two things suggested by the Presbyterianism of Toronto to one who knew it personally twenty odd years ago are change and growth. There have been wonderful changes but the growth has been equally wonderful. Five congregations have increased to nearly twenty. The figures might show that Knox, or old St. Andrew's, or St. James Square actually do more for the schemes of the Church than all the Presbyterians of the city did a quarter of a century ago. Some of the changes make one sad but why feel sad when the Lord's work is going on with such marked success? The work is the main thing.

DARWIN AND DEITY.

BY REV. JOHN DUNBAR.

Charles Darwin, a naturalist of high eminence and world-wide fame, was born in England in 1809. Beginning his educational course in Shrewsbury, his native town, he carried it on in Edinburgh, and completed it in Cambridge, taking his B.A. in 1831. Soon thereafter he was engaged as naturalist on board H. M. S. *Beagle*, about to commence her voyage round the world. On his return in 1836 he published a very interesting account of the voyage, and then devoted much of his after life to scientific research, securing thereby several honorary medals, while various associations conferred on him divers and deserved honours besides. His publications were very numerous and varied, but it is by his "Origin of Species" that he is most widely known. He died in 1882, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

In the life of Darwin we see the sad facts of both the how and the why he renounced that Christian faith he had so long held in common with others bearing the Christian name. It appears that about his fiftieth year his feet first began to slip. By long pondering over a pet scheme, by the writings of other kindred spirits, and specially by the preponderance of his own predilections, his footing gave way, and he came to the conclusion that the various species of plants and animals instead of being created by God to bring forth each "after its kind," thereby to reproduce and perpetuate its own species, all were ever changing through a mysterious inherent power, and an external process, so that every now existing species may have thus been produced from but very few of the lower forms of life. Darwin, though a scientific man, yet in this signally failed to produce a scientific system. Science deals with the knowable, not the conjectural. Science is knowledge of actual existences, but as science here did not serve his purpose, he entered the domain of conjecture, where his fancy could construct a world and his imagination populate it as he saw fit. In short, yielding to the first temptation, "Ye shall be as God," he, by his mere word, sought to bring something out of nothing, and every element therein to "bring forth after his kind." He did not deny or even disown creation, but he held that it was limited to a few primal germs, and these, as has been said, by inherent power and external process, developed or evolved into all the diversified species which now exist, and in full accord with so called natural law, and independent of any supernatural interposition.

Having called into being his conjectural creation, he next set himself to find the wherewithal to give it position and permanence, and thought that he had found all in this—that as man, by art, had done so much to give diversity to existences, so by nature these existences had thus diversified themselves by supposing the latter process to have gone on for a countless cycle of ages, this was sufficient to account for all the divergent species that now exist or ever have existed in the world. The great difficulty, however, was that the facts of Scripture were ever too much for the figments of his fancy. Still, all this diversified development or evolution he held was the natural law of reproduction, growth and heredity, then with these, the struggle for life, natural selection and survival of the fittest, ever gave the variety to all that exists. Despite all this, when scientific criticism was brought to press upon him he frankly confessed his profound ignorance of the causes of these variations of species, and attributed them to accident or chance. If, then, he was profoundly ignorant of the causes of existing variations, and if the combinations of these variations constitute species, then he was ignorant of the "origin of species," while Darwin owned that there were some serious difficulties and objections to his pet eureka theory, yet, like every one else, partial to his own predilections, he settled the matter to his own satisfaction by simply saying that the balance of probability was in favour of his theory. To the objection that no new specimen, or even an approach thereto, has ever appeared within the range of human experience, he said that not five thousand, but five hundred millions of years would be needed to develop existing species. Thus in boundless space and with unrestricted fancy, he roams at his own sweet will, and, carried away by his own conceit, he thinks to conquer the real by the conjectural.

But some may be ready to ask, May not Darwin's theory be tolerated and left to be dealt with by scientific men? This may be, did he only roam in the realm of so-called science, but he ever designedly gainsays the Bible and gives the go-by to our holy religion. As to the origin of man, for instance, he holds that he is the developed image of some low primeval form, merely living, and no more, and further, that while life may not be a product of matter, yet it is a property of it, and its development, whether intellectual, emotional or moral, is simply the evidence and effect of simple natural law. Every one, however, knows well that mere law

is inert and imperative, and ever presupposes an enactor and executor, for law cannot act but is simply a process of action. Every feeling that the creative record which says that God not only made all things, but made each to perpetuate itself "after his kind," not only stood sadly in his way, but threatened the very existence of his theory; by direct collision and plain contradiction he found that both could not stand, and whether, after little or long consideration, little or much reluctance or regret, he decided that Genesis must go. Having thus rid himself of so much of the sacred record, he now promulgates his theory more fully and freely than man is but the accident of an indefinite series of evolutionary accidents, beginning with the lowest primal germ of God-given life, and therefrom his manhood is matured by purely natural causes without any supernatural intelligence, power, purpose or plan, and says that he does not see that there is anything in his theory to shock the religious feelings of any one, but he fails to consider how that holding to such a theory must of necessity dim the eye and deaden the feelings in regard to religious things.

The first step being thus taken in so far prepared, if not required, him to take the next, which was, that as Genesis was a part of the Old Testament, and that as the Old and the New together constitute the recorded basis of Christianity, and that if Genesis was not correct, and other portions of the sacred record may be the same, he concluded that the record was not trustworthy and Christianity was not true. This doubtless seemed to him a grand and gigantic leap, but where did it land him? into denying a truth he could not destroy and in propounding a theory which he could not substantiate. Although he could say, "I gradually came to see that the Old Testament was no more to be trusted than the secret books of the Hindu," yet thereafter his conscience would rise against such a reckless refutation, and could not "be down" at his bidding, and he had again to rouse himself to the conflict by attacking the reality and possibility of miracles on the ground that the more that is known of the fixed laws of nature the more incredible do miracles become. Holding that the clearest evidence would be requisite to make any sane man believe in miracles, he declared that the men of that time were, almost to an inconceivable degree, alike ignorant and credulous—that it cannot be proved that the Gospels were written by eye-witnesses of the events they record, and that differing as they do in regard to many important details, he says, "I gradually came to disbelieve in Christianity as a divine revelation."

But if the fixed laws of nature are so fatal—as Darwin holds to the possibility of miracles—the same fixed laws have fatally "fixed" his pet theory of the origin of species; for if that fixity is so fatal to change in the case of miracles, it can evidently be no less so in the origin of species. He does not, however, venture to say in so many words that miracles are impossible *per se*, but that there is such a pitiful lack of convincing evidence for their existence, and the more especially is this growingly manifest as the so-called reign of law is becoming more clearly and better understood. Hume rested his opposition to miracles on being contrary to experience, but Darwin, on their being contrary to his convictions and belief. But suppose that miracles were given up, Christianity is not dependent on their existence, and to disown Christianity on the ground of the defective evidence for miracles, is at once illegitimate and illogical. While we have, however, on the one hand miracles set before us as recorded facts in the changes they produced, where have we, on the other, even the single shadow of the sample of the man evolved from the monkey, or even a turnip from a potato. It is easy for a man to conjecture, theorize and philosophise, but if not substantiated by facts they may be brilliant as soap bubbles in the sun, but to touch them is to terminate their existence. People sometimes labour long and at no little expense of money, and sometimes of truth too, to trace out a lofty lineage for themselves that they may air alike their honours and emoluments, but for a man to labour as Darwin has done to show that he is but a developed monkey is not very praiseworthy in itself, and no one will envy him the honour of his origin. But suppose that evolution without aid, or intelligence develops the monkey into the man, if this is not miraculous, it is at least marvellous, and is such a feat as no miracle worker ever achieved or even attempted. But suppose this possible, on what ground does the process there cease, and why does not the same inherent power that matured the monkey into the man not mature the man into the God, and thus fulfil at once the promise and prediction of the tempter, "Ye shall be as God"? It appears, however, that his convictions were not always so strong as he wished, or his decisions as his desires, for he says, "I was very unwilling to give up my belief, but I found it ever more and more difficult to invent convincing evidence, and thus unbelief crept upon me till it was complete, but so slow that I felt no distress." Thus he fostered and fed his convictions until they developed into the conclusion that as Christianity and his creed could not be true, he would cast aside the former and cleave to the latter.

It seems that the notable "Robert Elsmere," who has attracted far more notice than he deserves, trod in a somewhat similar path to Darwin, and went farther and easier therein by simply saying, "Miracles do not happen." Thus he settles the matter, and excludes all that is supernatural either in Christ or in Christianity as being at once useless and burdensome. He creates evidence in the same way as Darwin does, and holds that as the habits of the witnesses were premature and crude, they were in consequence credulous and not critical, exaggerating what they saw, and giving a miraculous