

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND WITH PRINCIPAL CAIRNS.

In my boyhood I was wont to hear certain friends speak with measureless affection and admiration of John Cairns. Although personally unknown until two or three weeks ago, he thus became an object of great interest to me even in early youth. I have ever since done him homage in my heart as one of the best, ablest, and most learned of modern Scotchmen. Accordingly when recently he visited the Maritime Provinces I was very glad to avail myself of the opportunity of seeing and hearing him as often as possible. Along with the Rev. Mr. Carruthers, of Knox Church, Pictou, I did myself the pleasure of accompanying him to New Glasgow and Charlottetown, in each of which places, as also at Pictou, Truro, and Halifax, he preached on week-days to large audiences. Very seldom in this age, except on the Sabbath, does the most eloquent and accomplished preacher of the Gospel find so many men and women willing, nay eager, to hear him. In this case the crowds that came were amply rewarded for coming, for Principal Cairns fed them "with knowledge and understanding." I have read of a lecturer who once complained that certain persons came like sheep to his lectures, looked like sheep while he spoke, and went away understanding like sheep. It seemed far otherwise, and I believe it was far otherwise, with most of those who assembled to hear our distinguished Scottish guest. Nowhere were his hearers permitted to enjoy themselves after the good old fashion—a fashion which still survives—of the English farmer who made the ingenuous and comforting declaration to his bishop that for his part he always managed to pass sermon time very comfortably and pleasantly: "I lays up my legs, my lord, and shuts my eyes, and just thinks of nothing like." In most complete contrast with this was the enjoyment which the masculine eloquence and powerful thinking of Principal Cairns ministered to his audience. In every place where I heard him, his preaching was very fresh and fervent; but at Charlottetown, in Mr. Kenneth Maclellan's beautiful new church, he excelled himself, and "laid about him like a man inspired." The tones of that urgent, commanding, entreating voice, and the sight of those swaying arms will not soon be forgotten. Despite the absence of all merely superficial graces on the preacher's part, the public appreciation has been general and pronounced.

For the benefit of any who may wish to take the same route, I mention here that at Pictou Landing we took passage in the steamer "Princess of Wales" for Charlottetown. Rain was falling at the time and continued to fall throughout the day. It was a gracious rain—for the country's sake, one might almost say a golden rain—but it was somewhat disappointing to us who would have liked Principal Cairns to see our fine coast scenery under the flooding sunshine that usually marks a Canadian June. Under dull skies, over a gloomy sea, and along mist-veiled shores, our vessel ploughed her way. Towards sunset the clouds lifted a little, and our eyes were gladdened with a yellow and purple gleam in the west. As the hours wear on, there rise clearly before us rugged cliffs of red sandstone which constitute the sea wall of most of the Island. At one part of our course the line of sight is broken by the bold projection of Point Prim. The coast is in many places indented with spacious and far-stretching inlets. As we approach Charlottetown, our vessel's course is along a well-wooded and undulating shore. Indeed, I believe that the surface of the Island is generally undulating, the hills being almost invariably of very moderate height. The soil is said to be extremely fertile. The rich promise of the fields we saw seemed to give unmistakable evidence of the correctness of this statement. Not exactly in due time—for we were a little late—we come to anchor in the noble harbour of Charlottetown, in whose safe deep waters, as one of our company declares, all the vessels of the royal navy could ride with safety. We find the hearts of the citizens to be like their harbour, large and hospitable. "Insular narrowness" is a common phrase in some quarters; the thing it describes we did not find in Charlottetown, whither a number of prominent persons had come, several of them a considerable distance, to hear and welcome our trans-Atlantic visitor.

While on the Island, as well as during the run to

and fro, some of us sought to glean what information we could respecting its resources, population, educational system, and churches. Concerning some of these points Dr. Cairns was particularly wishful to be accurately informed. Coming from a country where there is a State-paid Church, he was naturally desirous of learning all that can be known respecting the different ecclesiastical communities in a land where there is no Church establishment, where all denominations are equal before the law, and where the voluntary system, which he esteems so highly, is in full operation. We found that the population of the Island is upwards of 100,000, while that of the capital is about 13,000. The House of Assembly consists of thirty members, and the Legislative Council of thirteen. The Province is entitled to four seats in the Senate of the Dominion and to six in the House of Commons. We were most deeply interested, as most of those who read this paper will likely also be, in the religious condition of the Island, as far as that can be gathered from the relative strength of the different denominations. We learned that the Roman Catholics are considerably more numerous than any one Protestant body, being about 45,000 all told, while the Presbyterians number about 35,000. The other denominations are very much lower in point of numbers, our Methodist brethren not exceeding 14,000. There is in the Island but one Presbytery, comprising twenty-six congregations, three of these being in Charlottetown. I have ascertained from a statement issued by the Rev. Dr. McGregor that the contributions of the Presbytery, for the main schemes of the Church, for the year ending May 1st, 1880, amounted to \$3,009.87. With the prospect this season of a singularly abundant harvest, it seems not unreasonable to hope that the receipts for the current year will be even larger, and that they will keep pace with the growing needs of our Church's enlarging work.

I presume that of those who read THE PRESBYTERIAN the proportion is not large of those who have any knowledge of a body of professing Christians called Macdonaldites, after their founder, who came from Scotland probably not less than fifty years ago, and who died in 1867. Mr. Macdonald who was powerful and eloquent in speech, and is reputed to have been a man of fervent piety, described himself as "of the Church of Scotland, unattached." His followers retain the same designation still. They are believed to be about 7,000 in number. They are much more demonstrative in their worship than Presbyterians are wont to be. They are said, however, to be gaining in self-repression. The successor of Mr. Macdonald is a Mr. Goodwill, who was formerly a missionary in the South Seas. He preaches at upwards of twenty different points, being the only minister of the body. What the future relation of the Macdonaldites to the Presbyterian Church may be, it is difficult to foretell. At present they are absolutely independent.

We were all glad to know of the existence and prosperity of a Normal School for the Province, and of an institution, known as the Prince of Wales College, and somewhat similar in character to Upper Canada College. As was to be expected the large number of Roman Catholics has created serious difficulties in connection with elementary education. The stirring elements of religio-political strife that used to make themselves felt in Ontario more than twenty years ago in connection with the school question, still come prominently to the front here at the time of a general election.

I have thus tried to tell something of what I saw and heard of the fair and fertile Island of Prince Edward, nothing exaggerating, "nothing extenuating, and setting down nought in malice." A good deal remains to tell; but it is time to start for home.

As we leave Charlottetown, the picture is a most charming one. As the eye turns away from the pretty, quiet city, it wanders over a wide expanse of sheltering woods, comfortable looking houses, and fields vividly green on this June morning. As we are borne along the shining water, there is much "wholesome talk," some of us choosing to be listeners, as we well may be when we have the opportunity of listening to a powerful and independent thinker like Principal Cairns, who never for an instant seeks to monopolize or even to lead the conversation. It is delightful as we pace the deck or look out on the restless sea, to welcome the outpourings of a mind so rich and full on such subjects as German rationalism, the State of the Churches in America, Germany, and at home, and the great names of different denominations and

countries. Somehow the topic of the origin of evil is introduced. As the discussion proceeds one almost feels that the subject is a sea more truly boundless and fathomless than the one on which we are sailing. But one cannot help observing that Principal Cairns, while speaking with his accustomed fulness of knowledge and probably going as far in the examination of such a high theme as human intelligence can go in this world, does not, as so many of us are apt to do, suffer himself, like a bird caught in a net, to get entangled in any of the specious and pretentious theories which profess to explain the inexplicable, and which multiply perplexities while seeking to remove them. It was very satisfactory and comforting to be led up to the point of trustful acquiescence in the solemn, awful, and probably inevitable reservations of Infinite wisdom and goodness in dealing with creatures of clay who "are of yesterday and know nothing." It was thus, both without and within, a time of clear vision; for the clouds of yesterday have all disappeared. So bright is the water and so green the fields that the harbour whence we set out glows in blue splendour, a vast sapphire surrounded with great masses of emerald, while overhead bend skies, higher, purer, brighter, than ever span "the great metropolis of the north," which the Principal knows and loves so well.

Again the "Princess of Wales" is at the wharf. In apostolic fashion we take up our carriages; for the hour of parting has come. Friendly messages are given; cordial adieux are spoken. We are mutually commended to the love and grace of the everlasting Father. His fellow voyagers receive the warm clinging pressure of the Principal's right hand and an affectionate benediction from his lips. As we take our homeward way, the desire rises instinctively to the tongue and finds spontaneous expression in the dear familiar words that the "kindly Light" may still lead him on. Many will offer a similar prayer, for John Cairns, plain, steadfast, strong, and good, has left pleasant memories far and near behind him. He has about him the touch of nature that makes the whole world of childhood and of all simple hearts kin to him. His visit was all too brief. Young and old we enjoyed it much and will remember it long. W. D.

NOTINGS FROM RICHMOND TO DENVER.

MR. EDITOR,—Our last notes were from Richmond; these from the "Queen City of the Plains," "The Wonderful City of the New West," or the "New Chicago," as this city has been styled. We have passed over 2,000 miles and two ranges of mountains—the Blue Ridge and Alleghany in Virginia. The railway passes through nearly 300 miles of continuous mountains, ravines, gorges, rocky bluffs, with cultivated patches or broader plateaus, like those in the Alps. The Virginian range differs from the Alps in being thickly wooded to the summit, not so high, but a hundred times as extensive. The scenery is bold, grand, varied, and vast in extent. It is a marvel how a railway has been made over such a wide range of mountains. There are literally scores of tunnels, some of which are several miles long. However the highest point on the line does not reach 3,000 feet.

Before writing to you again we expect to have crossed the Rocky Mountain range, where the highest point—over 10,000 feet—of any railway in America or the world has been built.

After 300 miles of this rail ride we take the steamer on the Ohio river for Cincinnati—150 miles—with the State of Kentucky on one side and Ohio on the other. The passengers with great zest point out Gen. Grant's paternal home on a farm in Ohio.

At Cincinnati the Democratic Convention was in full blast. The city was packed with strangers from every state and city. What a motley host! It would need the pen of Dickens or the pencil of West to do justice to such a mongrel crowd. Notice a few salient characters in the vast mass. The first gentlemen of North and South, the latter chiefly, for like the Conservatives in Canada the Democrats claim, with some show of right, to be the "gentleman's party," rough Hoosiers of the West; wild, weird Texans; sharp "skinny" down-east yankees; long black-haired Georgians; sallow, gaunt, ague-shaken Michiganders; bluff, showy, consequential looking politicians from the Pacific Coast, of varied nationalities, German, French, Irish, English, Scotch, etc., figured in the unique throng as delegates—wirepulling, caucusing, dicker-ing, bribing, "booming" for favourite or local candidates. Then the hybrid army of visitors, gamblers,