

Our Contributors.

KNOX SHOULD JUBILATE NEXT YEAR.

BY KNOXONIAN.

We learn from Dr. Gregg's admirable "short history of the Presbyterian church in Canada" that Knox college began to exist on the 5th of November, 1844. The institution was opened in a room in the residence of Professor Esson, on James St., and had fourteen students, about half of the number that were graduated at last convocation. The furniture of the institution consisted "of a long deal table, two wooden benches and a few chairs" which no doubt were wooden too. The library was made up of Mr. Esson's books and a few more kindly lent by neighboring clergymen. Dr. Gregg does not say anything about the opening ceremonies. Perhaps there were none and the good doctor not being in the habit of drawing on his imagination for his facts could not give a graphic description of events that never occurred. Dr. Gregg is not gifted in that way. His forte as a church historian is to stick to the bare, bald facts. Unless somebody gifted with a lively imagination comes to the front and writes up a description of the first opening of the college, we fear the "inauguration ceremony" will go unreported.

Knox has always been a modest kind of institution. Far be it from us to say that all her sons have been specially afflicted in that way; but the institution herself has always been modest, almost to bashfulness. Even her rivals, or perhaps we should say co-workers, will admit that Knox has never been a selfish, aggressive, self-assertive college. No doubt her generous policy has paid her well in the end, but it was never adopted because that kind of a policy always does pay best in the end. One thing everybody will admit Knox has never amounted to much in the matter of state occasions. She has always been a dead failure in the show business.

In the session of 1845, the college moved from James to Adelaide st. Dr. Gregg says nothing about the moving but we venture to say the institution moved modestly. Quite likely a number of the students carried the long deal table, and two or three shouldered the wooden benches and the others carried the chairs. Dr. Burns very likely was about to see that everything was put in good shape in the new quarters. Next year there was another flitting. The institution moved down to the building now used as the Queen's Hotel. Dr. Gregg is exasperatingly brief here to. He does not say whether there was any "inauguration" at the new quarters or not. If there was a demonstration of any kind we venture to say it was modest. We say that on general principles. The institution never was much good at getting up demonstrations.

In 1854 the college moved up to Elmsley Villa, the residence of that noble man, Lord Elgin, when he was Governor-General of Canada. Owing for the first time in its existence a home of its own, and that home the residence of a man like Lord Elgin, Knox might well have been excused for demonstrating a little at that happy epoch in the history of the institution, but we do not learn that there was any demonstration. Somebody should turn up a file of the Globe, and see if the enterprising reporter of that day had enterprise enough to write up the "inauguration" of the new building. By way of parenthesis, we may say that we hate that word "inauguration" more than any word in the English language not absolutely wicked, but some people seem to like it and we give it to them.

Twenty years afterwards the corner stone of the present building was laid. It was modestly done of course. A group of Presbyterian pastors and elders of all ages and sizes, and attainments might have been seen wending their way in a North westerly direction across the common, towards what was then the north-west angle of the city. They did not march in single file, or double file, or any other kind

of file. A high church Episcopalian doctor once told us that his great objection to Presbyterian ministers was that they cannot keep step at a funeral. Whether they can keep step at a funeral or not, they certainly did not keep step going across the commons that day to lay the foundation stone of Knox. Some of the rural brethren said that the college Board had made a great mistake in selecting a site so far out of the city. It certainly did seem out of the city at that time. Arrived at the site, the Hon. John McMurrich, chairman of the building committee, laid the stone. If we rightly remember some of the fathers present made a few remarks, and the ceremony was over. The proceedings were proper, decorous and becoming but they were so utterly featureless that even a fairly good memory cannot recall much at the end of nearly twenty years. We have often seen a much more impressive ceremony at the laying of the corner stone of a church. The fact is, a live congregation with a few men in it who know how to organize, often does that sort of thing very much better than a college, or even a General Assembly.

In another paper we may have something to say about the opening of the present building. That was not a strikingly impressive ceremony either, and when we recall some of its features we think all our readers will be ready to say it is high time Knox had a rousing demonstration. We mean a demonstration that will rouse her rich friends to endow one or two chairs and all her friends to take increased interest in her affairs. Let that come at her semi-centennial in the autumn of next year. It may be too soon to take any active steps but it is not too soon to start people to think about the jubilee.

Far be it from us even to hint that the men who have made Knox what she is failed in their duty because her history has been quiet and her career modest. They did noble work, and they did it in what at the time was no doubt, the right way; but all the same we should have a jubilee and a good one.

MODERN SCOTS WORTHIES.

JOHN BROWN, OF HADDINGTON.

BY J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D., PH.D., GALT, ONT.

"A good name is better than precious ointment," and no name is more beloved in Scotland, and more respected in religious circles all around the world, than that of John Brown of Haddington. His name is in all godly Scotch families a household word. Attention has been drawn to him not alone by his own literary labours and high ministerial character, but also by the virtues and works of his sons and his sons' sons. He is the founder of a patrician family, one of those that bring honour to Scotland and blessing to the world.

John Brown was born in 1722 at Carpow, near Abernethy, a small town on the south side of the Frith of Tay. His father was a weaver; and a godly man who carefully instructed his household in the fear of God, and in the knowledge of the truth. The means of the family being narrow, John was sent out to help by herding sheep. How early this was we cannot tell, but no doubt it was very early. By this means he was cast upon the bosom of nature, and revelling in her beauties, his eye would look out upon the "Carse of Gowrie," the silver Tay, and the rich picturesque scenery all about him, declared to be unexcelled in all lovely Scotland. Who can tell the deep thoughts, the high imaginations, the weary hungerings the little herd boy had all alone with the sheep? Then his mind would mount upon the wings of a worthy ambition, and his soul would be stirred to high and noble endeavour, for it is ever true "The child is father to the man."

He gives us, himself, an interesting account of his religious experience, and also of his intellectual progress—the two things that average godly youth of Scotland care most about, and set store by. It was customary in his youth to exclude all children from the communion service, but when he was eight years old he somehow got

in and heard several tables served ere he was thrust out. He was deeply touched by what he heard and saw, and from his experience at that time, he is led to say, "Little ones should never be excluded from the church on such occasions. Though what they may hear may not convert them it may be of use to begin the allurements of their hearts to the Saviour." His thirst for knowledge was great, and the poverty of his parents did not permit them to keep him long at school. He had but "a very few quarters at school for reading, writing and arithmetic, one month of which, he' without their permission bestowed on Latin." He was hardly eleven years of age when his father died, his mother following closely after, so that he says, "I was left a poor orphan, and had nothing to depend on but the providence of God." Ah, yes, but they that trust in the Lord shall never be confounded.

At twelve years of age we find him engaged at such work as Vincent and Flavel's Catechisms, the Assembly's larger Catechism, Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted, Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ, Rutherford's Letters, Gouge's Directions Showing how to Walk with God all the Day. These would call forth the intellectual vigour of the boy and exercise his heart. At this time he was very religious, vowing and praying, working as a genuine legalist. No inkling of what grace was had yet come to him. He was doing law work; and so passing through an experience that would be of great value to him afterwards in dealing with souls. To-day the law seems to be forgotten, hence conviction of sin is seldom heard of, or if it is, it is exceedingly slight. A thorough conviction of sin imparts a thorough appreciation of the Saviour! We make too little of the law to-day. We keep too much on the bright side of things, and there is a dark side that needs to be discovered to men that the sweet light of God's love and mercy may be properly valued.

When he was about eighteen years of age he was laid low by fever. All hopes of his recovery were given up, and while his sister was praying for him very earnestly there came to her mind a word almost prophetic in its character, namely: "With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation," which made her perfectly easy as to his recovery. After this he heard a sermon on the words: "There are some of you that I believe not" which so came home to him that it said: "Thou art the man!" He was in an agony of deep conviction. Next day he heard another sermon on the words: "Surely he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows" which enlightened and melted his heart in a way he never felt before. Then he essayed to appropriate Christ as having done all for him, and as wholly made over to him, in the Gospel, as the free gift of God, and as his all-sufficient Saviour, answerable to all his folly, ignorance, guilt, filth, slavery and misery. This was the turning point in his life. He was converted from the error of his ways, and made alive unto God. Henceforth he is a Christian, not only in name but in nature.

For some time he kept a school at Gairney Bridge. While here he attended the ministry of Rev. Ralph Erskine of Dumfermline. And long after when he looked back on the days when he travelled over the hills of Cleish to hear "that great man of God" whose sermons, "said he," I thought were brought home by the Spirit of God to my heart; at these times I thought I met with the God of Israel and saw him face to face." A grand testimony that! Genuine Scriptural preaching there! No filigree work of science, that seems to forget that God has given to us a Bible! No purely ethical teaching that hides the cross of our Saviour out of sight as though by our own might we can do all! No. The Erskines honoured the revelations of God both written and incarnate. Would that we had an army of them to-day!

While a herd boy tending the sheep he mastered Latin, Greek and Hebrew. How he overcame the difficulties is too long a story to tell. He had got a Greek

Testament from a gentleman in a Andrew's book store for reading some of it, and afterwards made good use of it. He had a genius for learning languages. In process of time he could read and translate French, Italian, Dutch, German and also Persian, Arabic, Syriac and Ethiopic.

When he was twenty-six years of age (1748) he entered on the study of divinity in connection with the associate Synod. Mr. Erskine affectionately recommended him to the Synod which met at Falkirk that year. One proposed an objection to his being received based on the absurd claim that he had got his learning from the devil; but Ralph Erskine replied: "I think the lad has a sweet savor of Christ about him." He studied under Ebenezer Erskine and James Fisher. He was a most diligent student. He laid the foundation deep, and broad, and solidly. He abridged the whole of The Ancient Universal History, consisting of 20 large octavo volumes. In divinity he perused Turretin, Pictet, Maestricht and Dr. Owen; Boston Erskine, Hervey, etc.; but above all the Bible. He had a rare knowledge of God's Holy Word. A text could not be quoted but he could give its meaning and point out its connection with the context.

In 1750 he was licensed to preach, and in 1757 ordained at Haddington; his first and only charge. One man held out against his "call" and Mr. Brown meeting him when they could not avoid each other, was addressed thus: "Ye see Sir, I canna say what I dinna think; and I think ye're ower young and inexperienced for this charge." Then Mr. Brown's native shrewdness came out: "So I think too, David, but it would never do for you and me to gang in the face of the whole congregation!"

His work in the congregation was enough to occupy all his time to the full. He preached three sermons every Sabbath, for he had a large parish. He gave also an expository discourse. In winter he preached two sermons in addition to the lecture. All his families were visited once and examined twice every year—besides diets of catechizing for the young. He seldom visited except in the way of duty. He rose at four in the morning in summer, and at six in the winter and continued his studies till eight in the evening. In his preaching he was solemn and grave, appealing directly to the conscience, so that one who heard him said, that "he preached as if Christ were standing at his elbow."

In 1767 he was called to act as Professor of Theology, which he did for twenty years. He wrote thirty-one important treatises on theological subjects—including his "Self-Interpreting Bible." He was an indefatigable worker. He packed every moment with earnest, thoughtful labour. He was so highly esteemed abroad that he received an invitation to teach Divinity in the Hall of the Dutch Church, New York. He was like Goldsmith's Vicar passing rich on forty pounds a year. His salary for a considerable time was only forty pounds a year, and never over fifty. For his professional work he received no salary at all. Yet he was exemplary in his charity. His life was one of quiet devotion to the glory of Christ. His name and his holy and elevating influence abide because he was true to Christ. He had a Gospel for men's hearts and consciences, and not simply for their ears and intellects. He laboured to save souls. Burns has given him an honoured place in one of his poems:

"For now I'm grown so cursed douce,
I pray and ponder but the house;
My shins, my lane, I there sit roastin',
Perusing Bunyan, Brown and Boston."

His life is full of inspiration. May it put spurs in the side of our intent and lead us into self-sacrificing life of devotion to the Lord. To have a large congregation, and a large salary, and a large esteem of oneself is one thing, but to have a large overmastering desire to have Christ formed in the people may be altogether another thing. They are not incompatible, John Brown lived for Christ, and when he died, his last words were "My Christ," and after thirty-six years' service in Haddington and the large parish then belonging to it, he went home to the presence of the Lord.