

Our Contributors.

DR. DONALD FRASER IN MONTREAL.

BY KNOXONIAN.

It rarely happens that a young minister is called to the congregation of which he was a member before going to college; but Donald Fraser was an exception. As soon as licensed he was called to Cote street church, Montreal, at that time one of the most important and influential in the Free Church. Principal Willis introduced the new pastor, and preached from Philippians II. 29.—“Receive him in all gladness; and hold such in reputation.” Dr. Fraser tells us he thinks the text was not quite suitable. Epaphroditus was to be received with gladness, because he was recovering from a long illness; while he was in blooming health. Criticism of that kind is scarcely what one would expect from a pulpit-prince like Donald Fraser. If a text with a man in it is never to be used unless all the circumstances connected with the man correspond exactly with the occasion of the sermon, texts of that kind can never be used at all.

Dr. Fraser's salary at that time was only a thousand dollars a year. There was a debt on the church, “and some of the office-bearers had fallen into a feverish anxiety to have the burden removed. So it was resolved rigorously to keep down expenses. The pews filled, and the revenue greatly increased,” but the surplus was applied to the reduction of the debt. The debt was gradually paid off; but it did not seem to dawn upon the mind of the office bearers that the heavy end of the paying was being done by the young and popular pastor. The problem is not a difficult one to understand. If a pastor's salary is kept down, say, five hundred dollars a year, until a debt is paid; practically the pastor pays five hundred a year towards the paying of the debt, while perhaps even the richest man in the congregation does not pay fifty. Dr. Fraser tells us that his experience in this debt-paying business in Montreal enlisted his sympathies in after years for young ministers “treated in a similar fashion;” and he never hesitated to consider that kind of financing “downright injustice.” A very large number of the Presbyterian Churches in England were afterwards opened and dedicated by Donald Fraser; and it is in the highest degree probable that somewhere in the opening services he managed to tell the people they were not to expect their pastor to pay the heavy end of the church debt. He might easily be trusted to say a thing of that kind in good style. It is only fair to add that the salary in Cote street was raised to sixteen hundred a year; and that the congregation generally did not know, so the pastor thought, that it had ever been kept down to a thousand. One cannot help thinking that if the youthful pastor had been treated more liberally in financial matters, his splendid services might have been retained in the Canadian Church. Whether the debt on the Cote street church was paid off one year or the next, is not now, nor was it ever, a matter of overwhelming importance; but the loss of a preacher such as Donald Fraser, was a distinct loss to the Presbyterianism of Canada. A few dollars of interest could not mean much to a wealthy congregation in a city like Montreal; but the translation of the pastor of Cote street deprived Canada of a man whose splendid eloquence made every Presbyterian feel grateful and proud. However, perhaps financial reasons had not much to do with the matter, though one cannot help thinking, from the tone of the autobiography, that they had a good deal to do with it.

While in Montreal Donald Fraser did not, by any means, confine himself to pastoral and pulpit work. Ecclesiastical work was not nearly as well distributed as it is now; and the youthful pastor of Cote street soon found himself Presbytery Clerk, Convener of the Home Mission Committee, and in a number of other posi-

tions, the duties of which must have entailed no small amount of responsibility and work.

A reference at this point in his ministry to the spiritual side of a minister's work, might well teach some Canadians modesty, if that were a possible thing to do. Says Dr. Fraser: “How I rejoiced when I found that not only the believers were fed and confirmed, but that some who had been unconverted were turned to the Lord. Not many, however, so far as I knew. And in all my subsequent course my ministry has been more successful in the instruction and comfort of saints, and in the guidance of those who had been undecided or perplexed, than in this direct conversion of sinners.” Compare the modesty of that statement with the bombastic telegrams and swaggering interviews we read in the daily journals about hundreds of conversions in a few evenings. Can anyone doubt, who ever heard Donald Fraser preach the Gospel, that on the great day he will have many stars in his crown; but he modestly says: “Not many, however, so far as I know.”

MODERN SCOTS WORTHIES.

THE REV. A. A. BONAR, D.D., OF GLASGOW.

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

One of the loveliest characters of our age is that of Dr. Andrew Bonar, of Glasgow. The story of his life is full of thrilling interest. He belongs not to Presbyterianism alone, but to the Church universal. He was a true son of the Church in which he had been born and bred, and that fitted him to be a lover of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Like a true son of Scotland his heart was knit to Scotland, and so was ready to appreciate the whole round globe. There was nothing narrow about him; everything was noble, generous, magnanimous. And we shall presently see that that came from his drinking into the spirit of his Lord. He was a native of Edinburgh, being born there in 1816. He was educated in the famous High School, having as schoolfellows there Robert M. McCheyne, whose life he afterwards wrote. Here they became acquainted and endeared to each other, and they were loving friends to the end. They had as fellow-students at the High School Archibald Tait, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and John Inglis, afterward Lord President of the Court of Session—but above all stood Andrew Bonar. He was dux in the class, and so carried off the medals.

Bonar and McCheyne attended the University and the Theological Hall together, and were deeply influenced by the two remarkable movements then on foot, the non-intrusion controversy, which culminated in the Disruption of 1843; and the revival movement which came to its ripe fruit in the Kilsyth Revival in 1838-39. This last was but the wave of blessing that America enjoyed under the faithful preaching of Nettleton and Beecher (Lyman) and their associates, flowing over to Scotland and arousing God-fearing men there to anxious concern for the salvation of dead professors and of careless sinners.

At this time, 1832-1836, a number of theological students and influential ministers of the Church of Scotland met every Saturday forenoon for prayer. Among the students we find the names of W.C. Burns, Alexander Somerville, R. M. McCheyne, and Andrew and Horatio Bonar. They were at the time treated with scorn, and in derision called “the babies,” and even after the Disruption, “the infantry of the Free Church.” But their scorners are forgotten, while their own names will be held in everlasting remembrance by a people grateful for the saving truth they brought to them.

Andrew Bonar was called to Collace, twenty miles from Dundee, where McCheyne was settled in St. Peter's; so their sweet fellowship was not broken. They wrote to one another regularly and often exchanged pulpits. McCheyne falling sick through the effect of excessive self-sacrificing labours during two years was ordered immediate rest and change. Just then Dr. Candlish advocated the sending of a deputation on a mission of inquiry into

the state of the Jews, who were thought much more of by the Church at that time than they are now. This approved itself to the Church, and a deputation consisting of McCheyne, Andrew Bonar and Drs. Keith and Black was sent to visit Palestine, Hungary and Prussia. This visit was fruitful in results. Dr. Bonar wrote his “Narrative;” McCheyne his poems and pastoral letters. On the return of the deputation McCheyne seemed quite restored, and threw himself into the great revival work that W. C. Burns had been carrying on in his absence, with such devotion of soul that in two and a half years he broke down again, and after ten days' illness of typhus fever, went home to rest forever, in the bosom of his Lord. None knew McCheyne better than Andrew Bonar, and so was led to write his memoir, which he did so wisely and well that it has been ever since a classic biography. A bundle of myrrh to put in one's bosom. A tonic for a worldly Christian; an inspiration and a quickener for a forgetful and slothful follower of the Lord. Had Andrew Bonar done nothing else than know McCheyne, and let others know him through the interpretations of his loving heart, his life would have been a grand success. Where is his book not found? It is in the homes of godly parents all over the world.

Dr. Bonar remained in Collace thirteen years after McCheyne's death; but in 1856 he was called to Finnieston Free Church in Glasgow, where he labored on through thirty-six years, dying on Dec. 30th, 1892.

He was a good scholar and a grand man. While a student of theology at Edinburgh he attended the lectures of Edward Irving on the Premillennial Advent, and was fully convinced of the Scripturalness of the doctrine, and embraced it and held it firmly, though without ostentation. On the walls of his study ever before him were these words, “Behold I come quickly” and “Even so come, Lord Jesus.” When he went to Glasgow his congregation numbered ten, yet in thirty-six years he raised it to nearly a thousand. He had much to fight against; his charge was a “mission”; he was a premillennarian; he had mannerisms that were not attractive; and a weak voice.

How did he work so as to succeed? I have been told by one who knew him well at this time, that he went out to the corner of the street and invited them in; he also went every work-day at the noon-hour to the works of J. & G. Thomson, and standing on a chair or other elevation, would speak for twenty minutes—the men gathering about him intensely interested. He was old looking at this time, and the men looked up to him as a father. He was sympathetic and kindly—a true brother man.

He never preached without reading beforehand his text in the original Hebrew or Greek. He was a devout student of the Holy Word, and so he was all through his life a growing man. He was always doing work that bore directly on eternity. He saw everything in the light of eternity. He was an intensely spiritually minded man. That is felt in his edition of Ruth-erford's Letters; his exposition of the Psalms and Leviticus, and his little books on The Person of Christ and The Old Gospel Way, and McCheyne's memoir. Everything he did bore this stamp on it.

When the Church of Finnieston became too small for him, the new and larger and more handsome building, erected on the classic ground of Kelvin Grove, had an Hebrew inscription on the front of it, namely “He that winneth souls is wise.” A Jew reading it was desirous of speaking with the minister who put it there. All his life he was a soul winner. At home in Scotland and abroad in Hungary, Prussia and Palestine he distributed tracts, gave away books, and sowed beside all waters. He watched for souls as one that must give account. He was diligent in knowing the state of his flock. When no other engagements prevented, he visited on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, from noon till five every day. Friday and Saturday he was shut up in his house, so that no one could see him, that thus he

might be thoroughly prepared for his Sabbath work. He preached three times a Sabbath till he was eighty years of age. He had genius, that enabled him skilfully to enter into the spirit of the Scriptures and bring out their deep meanings. The effect he sometimes produced upon his hearers is said to have been “magical.” Mr. Moody was strongly influenced by him. Some of his expositions took hold of the evangelist so effectively that we find him repeating them. They must have been both interesting and apposite to touch a mind like Mr. Moody's, so thoroughly imbued with the truth. Dr. Stalker says of his expositions “he could make the quaintest and most unexpected meanings peep from a text or incident of Scripture, while over his audience passed shock after shock of delighted surprise and waves of sunny and internal laughter.” The Rev. H. C. G. Moule, Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, says of him: “He was one of the very sunniest Christians I ever met, and one of the wisest.”

In 1874 he received the degree of D. D. from Edinburgh University. In 1878 he was Moderator of the Free General Assembly. In 1888 he celebrated the jubilee of his ordination, and was presented with a cheque for £4,000. In 1892 he died, passing away full of years as of honor, a man of whom Scotland may be proud. One of the true saints of God. And he being dead yet speaketh. Who will be his biographer? Will some sweet, saintly soul give us a complete account of his life of separation and sanctification and salvation? We trust that no grain of the precious gold he wrought out of the rock of his experience will be lost. When all that is known of Andrew Bonar is recorded faithfully we may expect a biography like that of his own McCheyne, a book that will be a fountain of spiritual power for future generations.

UNIFORMITY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION.

There are some whose meat and drink it is to make complaints. But others than these frequently lament that the Canadian Presbyterian Church is not the well jointed and compacted body its name should indicate. I hope that these men who are easy-to-be-entreated will consider the following proposal with favour.

Unity should be instilled into the individual members of the Church, and this is accomplished by the Record; but it will not become effectual till our ministers are possessed by it, and this will be most certainly done if they grow up into the belief from their student days. Now we have half-a-dozen colleges scattered over the Dominion, each pursuing an independent course, and in one or two instances at least entering into rivalry. This ought not to be so. We are one Church, our aims are one, and our colleges should have every element of antagonism removed. It is perhaps hopeless immediately to expect a college committee to be appointed by Assembly for theological oversight. But is it not our ideal to strive after a uniform education for our ministers? While we are unwilling to interfere with the liberty of the individual professor; and while the efficiency of the college must depend upon the calibre of the men who are on the staff, yet it might be possible to secure a general uniformity of teaching by having one final examination for all our colleges. The scheme is perfectly feasible, for the Free Church of Scotland has proved it to be so; and it is needless to refer to details until some such proposal is adopted. The colleges and students would by this means fall into line, and by passing the final examination, which might be accepted as a basis for licensure, men would feel that they belong to the Canadian Presbyterian Church, instead of as now to only a section of it. It might also be possible to grant a travelling scholarship to the most worthy student of each year, and these specially equipped men we should expect to promote biblical learning in Canada and to fill our professorships. The supreme benefit would be a cohesion of our ministers and students, who would come to understand that our colleges are not provincial, but that their aim is to train a ministry for one church whose education and work from Atlantic to Pacific are one, and as uniform as possible. X.