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## Contributors and Correspondents

For the Presbyterian.

### FARADAY, THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER.

Conspicuous among the great names of those who have risen from the lowliest positions to the greatest eminence in the pursuit of physical truth, stands the name of Michael Faraday, who well earned the still more noble distinction of being, in a prominent degree, a "Christian Philosopher." His father was a journeyman blacksmith; a humble lodging over a coach-house in a London Mews was his early home; and his first employment was that of a bookbinder's apprentice. But the boy had mastered the elements of all learning, in reading, writing, and arithmetic, acquired at a common day school; and on this foundation, quite sufficient, if thoroughly laid, the future philosopher began to build a superstructure of his own, by diligently reading the books within his reach. His natural bent soon developed itself in his fondness for books on chemistry and electricity, and he began to attend evening lectures on natural philosophy, an elder brother kindly paying the necessary shilling, which was beyond the capacity of the lad's own purse. With how much pleasure, one would think, must that brother of Faraday's have remembered in after days, this little act of fraternal kindness, which had helped the distinguished philosopher to his first step in his successful career!

At the close of his apprenticeship, Faraday did not very long remain a book-binder. Having secured the notice of Sir Humphrey Davy, by some notes which he had written on his lectures, he received through his interest, the post of Assistant in the Laboratory of the Royal Institution, of which Sir Humphrey was Director. The position and the salary were humble enough, but it secured him no common advantages in his constant intercourse and association with Davy in his investigations and experiments, which he considered to be "an inexhaustible mine of knowledge and inspiration." Among the investigations which he was thus privileged to witness was that resulting in the discovery of the safety lamp, with which Sir Humphrey Davy's name will always be associated.

A few months after his appointment he spent a few months abroad with his kind patron, keeping a journal which evinces the quickness of observation which the study of natural science is so well fitted to develop, while his letters to his home exhibit the strength of his domestic affections. On returning to England he began to use his own stores of information for the benefit of others, in delivering lectures at the City Philosophical Society's rooms, while carrying on his own self-education, and faithfully performing his ordinary duties. The investigations which he made on his own account being published in scientific Journals, soon made his name pretty widely known, and besides becoming a member of various societies, he received in 1828 the coveted F.R.S. to his name, an honour not however achieved without some opposition, the most painful instance of which, to young Faraday, must have been that of his first patron, Sir Humphrey Davy.

In 1821 he was united in marriage with one whose love he never ceased to consider his most valued possession. His letters to her during brief separations, reveal a depth and ardour of affection whose bonds time only drew closer, and the current of his domestic happiness flowed on through his life, a peaceful and untroubled stream.

Four years later, he was advanced from his position as Chemical Assistant, to that of Director of the Laboratory of the Royal Institution, which he retained to the end of his working days, declining professorships and other appointments which would have removed him from his first foster-mother in science, for whom he felt that both duty and gratitude claimed his services. He however, in addition to his work at the Royal Institution, undertook, in 1829, the duties of lecturer at the Royal Academy at Woolwich, and in 1838 became professor of Chemistry at the Royal Institution, with an addition of \$100 to his former salary of the same amount, a salary which seems singularly inadequate for a thoroughly equipped scientific man, doing important work. Yet he was extremely reluctant to accept a pension from government, and even after his friends had extorted a hard-won consent, he withdrew it again, in consequence of an offensive expression, used by Lord Melbourne at a private interview. Mr. would he retract his refusal except on condition that the expression should be apologized for, a condition which it is to Lord Melbourne's credit that he complied with; while the incident is an evidence of the manliness and independence of character

ter, which Faraday united with much gentleness and simplicity.

In 1830, he received the Government appointment of Scientific Adviser to Trinity House, and in this capacity, carried out some needed improvements in Lighthouses. His services to the State were always willingly rendered free of charge, while he invariably declined applications for his advice from private sources, although in this way he might have secured large emoluments, resisting all temptations to turn aside from the steady pursuit of truth in order to amass wealth. Indeed, as the salary mentioned ceased altogether after a time, Tyndall says of him, without the least exaggeration, that he "had to choose between a fortune of £150,000 and undowored science." How many in this money-worshipping age would have chosen, as he did, the "undowored science?" In one of his earliest lectures, he seems to have thus indicated one of the leading principles of action which guided his life.

"It is not he who has soared above his fellow-creatures in power, it is not he who can command most readily the pampering couch or the costly luxury; but it is he who has done most good to his fellows, he who has directed them in the weak moment, aided them in the moment of necessity, and enlightened them in their ignorance, that leads the ranks of mankind."

And in the peace of mind and satisfaction of conscience which he enjoyed, he had an abundant reward, even in personal happiness, for his unselfish pursuit of noble aims. His life was a quiet and retired one, divided between experimenting and lecturing, and varied by occasional excursions to the country or the Continent. He went but little into society, in order to have time for his important work. His lectures were characterized by remarkable clearness in presenting and explaining scientific truth, and those which he gave to popular audiences were eagerly listened to by the elite of London Society—as those of Tyndall are now; Prince Albert and the royal children being frequently present.

His extensive correspondence included such names as Humboldt, Arago, Liebig, Babbage, and one name not less illustrious in the political world, that of Louis Napoleon, who, while a captive at Ham, wrote for advice about a voltaic battery. Honours reached him from other lands, as well as his own, in various marks of distinction from foreign governments, and he was offered the presidency of the Royal Society and the Royal Institution, both of which he declined.

But the distinguishing grace of Faraday's noble life was his thorough and pervading Christianity. His religion would have stood the test given by the author of some powerful satires recently published, as being "that which informs and possesses a man's soul, and rules with despotic sway his whole life." He belonged to a small body of Christians called Sandemanians, whose principal tenets were those held by most Evangelical Christians, with a few minor peculiarities. They gave special prominence to the life of faith, and believed that, like the primitive Christians, believers should hold their possessions for the common good, and should refrain from laying up in store for an uncertain future. For some years, Faraday discharged the duties of an elder in his church, preaching on alternate Sundays, with much earnestness and unpretending simplicity. In private, he was very reticent on religious subjects, so much so that Tyndall says he never spoke to him of religion, except in reply to his questions. One can scarcely help regretting that Tyndall should not have heard more of Christian truth from one whose scientific eminence commanded his respect; but Faraday was by nature singularly reticent and undemonstrative, and his life gave a more powerful testimony to his faith than any words could have done. And in an age like the present, when so many physicists are materialists or sceptics, such a testimony as the following to the relative places of Investigation and Revelation, Reason and Faith, is doubly valuable when coming from a philosopher like Faraday.

"I believe that the truth of that future cannot be brought to man's knowledge by any exertion of his mental powers, however exalted they may be; but that it is made known to him by other teachings than his own, and is received through simple belief of the testimony given. Let no one suppose that the self-education I am about to commend in respect of the things of this life, extends to any consideration of the hope set before us, as if man by reasoning could find out God. It would be improper here to enter upon this subject further than to claim an absolute distinction between religious and ordinary belief. I shall be reproached with the weakness of refusing to apply those mental operations which I think good in respect of high things to the

very highest. I am content to bear the reproach. Yet even in earthly matters I believe that "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead;" and I have never seen anything incompatible between those things of man which can be known by the spirit of man which is within him, and those higher things concerning his future which he cannot know by that spirit."

Next to his earnest Christianity, the most remarkable traits in Faraday's character, were his perfect simplicity, gentleness, kindness, freedom from vanity, high toned morality, genuine tolerance and simple reverence. Thoroughly averse from show and ceremony, his manner was characterized by a polish and refinement not often found in self-educated men, and due probably, chiefly to the simplicity and refinement of his nature, and to his love for the "society of good books."

In 1865, feeling the symptoms of an over-taxed brain, in a frequently recurring giddiness and loss of memory, he resigned the directorship of the Royal Institution, and retired to Hampton Court. There for two years he lingered on in a state of weakness and decline, but able still to enjoy beautiful scenery and poetry, his favorite recreations, and "just waiting," as he said, for the message which came at length to call him away, on the 25th of August 1867, in his sixty-sixth year.

It is well that such a life as Faraday's should have been lived, to show alike to the scientific and the religious world, that the most devoted pursuit of physical truth is in no wise incompatible with the most implicit faith in the Cross of Christ and with the most earnest spirituality of mind; and to compel even a sceptic to say (as Tyndall did) of his last resting place in Highgate cemetery, "though this God's acre is the last retreat of many an eminent man, we may confidently say that it does not contain one more truly great than that of this blacksmith's son."

For the Presbyterian.

### THE LATE REV. HENRY RENTON.

BY REV. J. KING, M.A.

In the first week of the year, a minister of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland passed away, who for almost half a century has occupied one of the most important pulpits in the south of Scotland, and whose name and person even must be familiar to many readers of the BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN; we refer to the Rev. Henry Renton, of Kelso.

Mr. Renton was born in Edinburgh in 1804. His parents, very different in their natural dispositions, were both alike eminent for piety and active interest in every good cause. The father was a quiet, upright, consistent Christian merchant, attentive to business, but not so engrossed with it as not to find leisure for rendering much valued service both to the Church and to the State. He was for fifty-three years a manager, and for forty-eight an elder in Broughton Place congregation, and its treasurer for forty years. The mother was a small, intelligent, public-spirited lady, with a pleasant face, a well-knit frame, a ready tongue, and a heart full of sympathy with the oppressed, the suffering and the fallen. She was an enthusiastic advocate of freedom for the slave, of total abstinence, of prison reform, and indeed of every good cause; and, notwithstanding the demands of a family of ten who reached mature years, she managed to find time and strength to render important personal service in connection with several of the charitable institutions of the city. In the walks of Edinburgh charities, twenty-five or thirty years ago, no form was better known than that of Mrs. Renton.

Mr. Renton inherited his mother's disposition. He was frank, active, and eminently public-spirited. His course of study, which embraced attendance at the Universities, both of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and at the Theological Hall of the United Presbyterian Church, was considerably longer than that prescribed by the Church. At its close, he was licensed to preach the Gospel in 1829, and on a call subscribed by over seven hundred names, he was ordained a minister of the congregation of Kelso, on the 6th of January, 1830. In this sphere he remained, first the assistant pastor with Mr. Hall, then sole pastor, and for some years the senior pastor, until the close of his life on the 4th of January, within two days of the forty-seventh anniversary of his ordination.

Mr. Renton was possessed of a clear, vigorous, logical mind; one able to take a comprehensive view of any subject to which it turned, and to present it in well-

chosen and even elegant words. It was cultivated by wide reading, large intercourse with men of all classes, and extensive travel, embracing journeys to South Africa, Jamaica, the United States and Canada. He was distinguished above most, by candour, courtesy, a high sense of honor, by everything in short, which goes to make a Christian gentleman. His most characteristic trait was fearless loyalty to principle. Whether in the courts of the Church, of which he was a constant attendant, appearing in them and taking active part in the business, when men less ardent, or less conscientious would have been in the sick-room; or, on the platform of political discussion, where his powerful voice was often heard; there was no doubt as to where Mr. Renton would be found. Trimming was his abhorrence, and compromise hardly less so. No man was ever more fearlessly resolute in carrying out a right principle—or what he believed to be a right principle—to its utmost consequences. In doing this, however, he never forgot what was due to the convictions of others, and accordingly, while himself immovable, he was never bitter or abusive towards opponents. On questions of doctrine he was eminently conservative; on political and social questions, he was exceedingly liberal, setting his face and raising his voice on all occasions against oppression and class privilege in every form. On many subjects, both ecclesiastical and civil, he held opinions in advance of most of those around him. He was among the first, for example, almost forty years ago, to advocate in the Synod of his own church, the examination of students, by a Board of Examiners, appointed by the Synod; and though the doctrinal controversies which then arose, delayed for many years the change which he advocated, he lived to see it adopted by all the Presbyterian churches of Scotland, and by many outside of Scotland.

Mr. Renton was a clear, fluent and vigorous preacher, a diligent and faithful pastor, a wise counsellor of his people when any of them were in difficulty, and a warm sympathizing friend to those in trouble. His manse was for many years the seat of a generous hospitality, in which some of the highest of the land, and many who were humble enough, shared, and received equal courtesy. It might be expected, of such a man, that he would have high ideas as to what church membership implies, and that he would be strict both in his admissions to the Lord's table and in his exercise of discipline towards offenders. He continued, notwithstanding, to retain to the last, the unabated attachment of the large congregation to which he ministered. His moral and intellectual qualities combined, made him a man, whom many warmly loved, whom more highly respected, whom some feared, and whom none could despise.

From a copy of the *Kelso Chronicle* before us, we see that a company assembled to show its respect for his memory, which in point of members, and wide range of social position, and of locality, the funeral of no other person in the district could have gathered.

In the beautiful town, of which he was the ornament for almost half a century, his tall, thin, graceful presence will be greatly missed, and by many, even in this land, who in other years enjoyed his ministry, or rallied to battle with injustice at his call, he will be long and gratefully remembered.

### NOTES FROM MUSKOKA.

BY REV. A. FINDLAY.

MR. EDITOR.—We have just finished our missionary tour through this district, and as a few jottings by the way may not be uninteresting to the many readers of the PRESBYTERIAN, I send you the following. But first a few words about the field. We have here three districts lying side by side: Muskoka, Nipissing, and Parry Sound. The former of these lies within the bounds of the Presbytery of Barrie, the latter in the Presbytery of Owen Sound, and Nipissing so far as I know has as yet no presbyterial connection. As this district is fast filling up with settlers, it will soon require to be recognized and active operations carried on in it. The whole territory is some 150 miles long by 100 miles wide. The field proper assigned me is the former of these districts—but as it is—I sometimes find myself in Nipissing and again in the Parry Sound district. As no protest against this intrusion has reached me from the fathers and brethren of the Owen Sound Presbytery, I presume no great harm has been done.

It was resolved by the Presbytery of Barrie to hold missionary meetings in the various stations in this district during the present winter, and for this purpose the Rev. D. McDonald of Creemore was appointed delegate. Our work commenced

on the 15th of January at Gravenhurst, where though the night was stormy we had a very good meeting. From there S. Falls, Draper, Monck, Braebridge, and Baysville were visited in succession. With scarce an exception the attendance was as large as could be expected and in some instances larger than we anticipated. Brother McDonald (who was paying his first visit to the district) frequently repeating the question, "Where do all the people come from?" At Baysville especially the meeting was very enjoyable, where we had a warm house well filled, and a very excellent choir under the leadership of the Rev. Mr. Reynolds, junior minister of the C. M. Church on this circuit. From this point Mr. McDonald returned to Braebridge on Saturday to take the Sabbath service in these stations while I remained to hold service at Baysville on Sabbath morning. On Monday morning we again took the road for the north, holding a meeting at Allansville at 2.30 p.m., and at Huntsville in the evening. We were glad to see that the friends here have got the frame of their new church erected and enclosed. We trust they will not be weary in well-doing, but will carry it on to completion during the next summer. Our next appointment was at Doe Lake, some thirty-four miles north and west of Huntsville. One way led us through the township of Perry, said to contain some of the best land in the district. It is quite new but is settling rapidly. As yet we have no station in this township, but this will be remedied we hope during the next season, as many of the settlers are Presbyterians. From Doe Lake which was the most northerly point touched by us, we turned our faces homeward striking across to the Nipissing Road by the Missionary Road. Whence this latter road got its name we could not find out by enquiry—we concluded that it must be from one of two reasons—either because it is travelled only by missionaries—we found no track, but had to break our way over the greater portion of it—or because like the missionaries path generally it has its difficulties. We reached Seguin Falls about 2 p.m., ready for dinner, which in a few minutes was ready for us. After enjoying the hospitality of mine host Mr. D. F. Burke, a warm friend of all travelling preachers, and resting our jaded steed, we again set out for Rosseau, our place of meeting for that evening. My good brother and I had a very convenient arrangement for making time by the way, which, however, failed us on this occasion. My watch was forty minutes fast by the correct time and his as many minutes slow. We had hitherto started in the morning by my watch and opened our meetings by his, which gave us an hour and twenty minutes to come and go on. But even this simple device failed us on this occasion. That Missionary road had spoiled our calculations, and it was somewhat past the hour of meeting ere we arrived at our destination. However in the comfortable quarters which we found waiting us with our kind friends Mr. and Mrs. Reid, we soon forgot the weary way we had travelled that day. For want—not of a better—but of another place of meeting, Mrs. Reid had placed at our disposal her parlor, a large upper room, wherein we found a goodly number assembled and waiting patiently for us. We hope by next winter that our friends at Rosseau will be able to hold their missionary meeting in the new Church. Our next appointments were Raymond at 2 p.m., and Deebank at 7.30 p.m. At both places the meetings were good; the interest in the cause in both places being apparently revived. Our last meeting was at Port Carling. Through the kindness of Mr. A. B. Shannon our pony got a rest, he driving us to this appointment some fourteen miles with his own horse, leaving ours by the way. The meeting here was small, as the Presbyterian element is somewhat scattered at this station. That same evening we reached home again in safety, having visited sixteen townships and held as many meetings, and in order to do this having travelled nearly 300 miles in the cutter.

We have great reason for thankfulness in connection with this tour. We were preserved from all danger and accident, nothing more serious than the breaking of both cutter and harness befell us, and that is saying a great deal considering the roads we passed over. Everywhere we experienced that kindness and enjoyed that hospitality for which the settlers in Muskoka are proverbial. The weather was all that could be desired. Not a single disappointment was experienced either in reaching appointments or in finding proper arrangements for holding our meetings.

We have attended missionary meetings in other places, when in a thickly settled community we had little more than a beggarly array of empty benches. In marked contrast with this we had settlers in some instances coming five or six miles with the ox-sleigh that they might bring their families with them, and in others men travelling eight miles on foot to be present. The effects of these meetings cannot but be for good to the stations. If they do nothing more they will show those who are deprived of the means of grace for six months of the year that they are not forgotten. By drawing their attention to what is being done by the church both at home and abroad, a greater interest in her prosperity will be kindled, and we believe in many instances our people in these stations will be stirred up to do more for themselves. Our collections at the meetings amounted to thirty-seven dollars. But as I have already exceeded the space I intended to occupy, and have not yet said all I would like to say regarding this most important field I will pause here in the meantime.