

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### THE SCOTCH HERESY CASE.

MR. EDITOR,—Some of the readers of your paper will doubtless be more or less interested in the *cause célèbre* which has, for the past year or two, preplexed the Church courts of the Free Kirk of Scotland and caused more heart-burning and recrimination than any event in her history since she left the State fold and set up house-keeping for herself. The case does not stand alone in the Free Kirk for there are more than one of her dignitaries that are suspected of being "tarred w' the same stick," and the United Presbyterians also have been exercised considerably over the recent cases of David Macrae and Fergus Ferguson. There has passed over Scotland a wave of heterodoxy that bodes ill for the future peace of the Scottish Church, and Professor Robertson Smith is but the scapegoat who has to bear the sins of many transgressors, simply because he has the courage to express his opinions and chooses to abide the consequences. As you are aware he has failed to profit by the lesson read to him at last Assembly, when he escaped "by the skin of his teeth" and has got himself into a scrape, out of which it will take all the ingenuity of his friends to extricate him. And I am inclined to think that they will fail. He will have to go out "into the wilderness."

I happen to know Professor Smith, and in many respects I admire him. He has undeniable ability, great power of acquisition and assimilation, but very little originality. He is the slave of what he reads and the prey of opinionativeness. Raised in an Aberdeenshire parish, the son of a Free Kirk minister raised to that eminence from the level of a schoolmaster by the force of circumstances, he occupied an educational hot-bed for the first dozen years of his life. He and his brother were indoctrinated into "the rudiments of all thought" from their veriest infancy, and rumour has it that the Professor could read a verse or two of the Hebrew Bible at six years of age. I have seen him and believe it.

His younger brother and he entered college together at Aberdeen in the same year. I am not alone in the opinion that the former was the more gifted of the two. At least he looked it. He, unfortunately, died after scoring a victory such as can hardly be paralleled in any university—having carried off the *spolia opima* of his year—the two "Seventy Pound" scholarships for classics and mathematics respectively.

The present Professor had, meantime, prudently retired to recruit, and thus saved his life. It was reserved for him, after a German sojourn, to come back to disturb the Kirk and provide material for dissension and discussion in the ranks of the faithful.

I do not in this letter wish to enter on the merits of the case, further than to say that Professor Smith has, very foolishly, and—as I think he will confess at a later stage—very rashly, committed himself to statements which he will be fain to recant when he comes to weigh their value with their consequences. In point of fact his assertions in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" are the merest theories, such as, if advanced in connection with any of our ordinary classics would call for hardly any remark, but which, affecting as they do the whole of revealed truth, have aroused an amount of inquiry and excitement far beyond their merits.

What after all are his strictures on the canon? Nothing more than the self-satisfied *ex cathedra* utterances of a dabbler in the Tubingen school—a slavish follower of Ewald. Freed from the trammels of all that is akin to reverence, he hurls the javelin of his Ishmaelite criticism right and left, regardless of all consequences, and in his pursuit of truth (for its own sake) he destroys, or fancies he destroys, the creed which our fathers died for, and establishes in its place—what? Just the gospel of Daglish, the microscopic hair-splitting of the metaphysical German—the revelation of the Vaterland—the outcome of much tobacco smoke, and unlimited lager beer.

I have said that I knew Professor Smith and I repeat that I know him about as well as one man can know another, that is, so far as his mental capacity is concerned. A more self-sufficient man I never knew. A better read man I never met. But he lacks the modesty that is content to wait until it is assured of truth before taking it for granted. He can never go but *per saltum*. He is more of a *Shaker* than a *Peripatetic*. If he lives long he will yet be, I

am convinced, one of the best theologians of the day, one of the best Biblical scholars of the century; but, before then he will have outgrown the faults of his training and have become a humble Christian, content, notwithstanding his great erudition to sit as a little child at the feet of the Master who taught, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, that "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."

There is another text bearing on those through whom offences in the Church come which I might quote, but I prefer to leave the matter for the present where it is. It is a source of the deepest regret that a man of such gifts should be led away into the ranks of the sceptic and the scoffer; but I am not without the hope that he will yet be found in the true place, "clothed and in his right mind." F. C.

### IN MEMORIAM.

Comparatively few of the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN will recognize the name that appears in this obituary notice. But the few who will recognize it will read these words with a sigh, and some of them with a tear. Ella Chambers was the eldest daughter of the Rev. Thos. S. Chambers, minister of Stonington, etc., who has laboured in that one charge for more than twenty-one years, and who for the greater part of that time has been the clerk of the Kingston Presbytery. She was the friend and favourite of all who knew her. Possessing far more excellent qualities of head and heart than most persons of her years, she was universally respected and beloved. She was indeed a girl of rare abilities, and these fine abilities her fond parents took pains to cultivate. After a special course she graduated in the Ottawa Ladies' College in music. An enthusiast in music, in which she was more than ordinarily proficient, she was taking organ lessons in Kingston at the time of her death. But suddenly she was called to sing the "new song." On Monday, the 10th of May, she left her father's house in her usual health or nearly so. On Tuesday she had her usual exercise on the organ. Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, she was indisposed, but not at all alarmingly so. The physician who called on Friday evening about nine o'clock saw no danger, but at ten that same night she was gone. She died as others sleep.

The funeral was such as shewed the respect cherished for the dead and the living. Stonington is an old township, but never before was such a funeral seen within it, and yet it was in the midst of seeding time.

A few days after the funeral the young people of Mr. Chambers' charge met together, and after having secured the permission of the sorrowing parents, resolved to erect a marble monument over the grave of their friend and school-mate, at their own expense. They did so, and there it stands, where the writer saw it last week, pure and polished, and stainless, like the bright spirit whose earthly name it bears. The following chaste inscription is written on the monument: "Erected by the young people of the Rev. T. S. Chambers' charge, in memory of his eldest daughter, Ella, who died May 14th, 1880, aged 23 years. 'God is love.'—1 John iv. 8."

Miss Chambers was a true Christian—a communicant in her father's congregation—and at the time of her death a teacher in Chalmers' Church Sabbath School, Kingston. F. MCC.

### DIVORCE.

MR. EDITOR,—The unusual prominence given to this subject in the last Assembly, and the articles subsequently appearing in THE PRESBYTERIAN, have induced me to look at the New Testament view of the matter, and while I frankly acknowledge I have little chance for critical examination of the case, such examination as I have been able to give it, has led me to a very different conclusion from that generally held apparently.

The Assembly took it for granted that Mrs. Phillips had a perfect right to sue for a divorce on account of the admitted adultery of her first husband. Now the only two authorities I have consulted—"Buck's Theological Dictionary" and "Cassell's Bible Dictionary"—both say the only condition on which a divorce can be granted, in English law, is "the proved adultery of the woman in a proper court." Of course I am not prepared to say the law is the same in Canada, and it may be quite different, and the Assembly be quite

right in the position they took. But such, I am sure, was the English law a few years ago.

But having, as I said, read over the most of the passages referring to the subject in the New Testament, I have come to the conclusion that neither the guilt of one or both, nor any court of human jurisdiction, can dissolve the union God has formed when a man and woman are pronounced one in marriage.

Let us look first at the passages where the law is stated in the New Testament, omitting first the two references in Matthew. They are Mark x. 11; Luke xvi. 18; Romans vii. 2, 3; 1 Cor. vii. 39. There are some others, but I think these are the most distinct, and I would ask any candid person after reading over these if he would not come to the same conclusion I have stated above.

But if this be so, what is to be done with the two passages in Matthew, omitted above? What does Christ mean by "Except it be for fornication?" I think the circumstances of the case in Matt. xix. give the key to both. The Pharisee came asking Him if it was lawful to put away a wife for *any* cause (not "every" as in our translation), and in answer he first lays down the irrevocable law of God from the beginning, as the whole three evangelists record it. Mark and Luke omitting the parenthetical exception which he explains in Matt. v. 32: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery;" i.e., he is responsible for the consequences that follow, forcing her out from her natural protector and support.

A child may so conduct himself as to justify his parent in thrusting him out of the family, or handing him over to the civil authorities, thereby barring all claim to the care and privileges of home. But neither his crime nor the parent's casting of him off in any way destroys the tie which binds them to each other. That criminal is still the father's child, and that parent is still the child's father. So in the case of adultery a judicial separation may take place; the husband is not bound to protect and support his wife who has broken off her allegiance, and laid his crown of glory under the feet of another; but her crime can no more absolve her from the moral obligation of love, obedience and faithfulness to that husband after its committal than it did at the moment when she trembled at the grasp of his hand as the minister pronounced them man and wife. J. H.

### CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY.

What proportion of my income should I give to the Lord? and for what objects should it be given? are questions which every intelligent disciple of Christ will ask himself. The questions do not admit of a simple answer. It must largely be left to the individual conscience and the circumstances in which we are placed to decide. Still some general considerations may be suggested for guidance.

1. Everyone who has an income should give something.

2. Everyone should give in proportion to his income and to the demands made on it.

3. The amount left after deducting the necessities of life from income should form the basis of contribution. Suppose, for example, that the cost of necessities for two persons is \$200 per annum, then a man having a wife, but no children, and having an income of \$400 per annum should pay more than another man having a family and the same income. Again the amount contributed by a family of which three, four, or five members are earning ought to be greater than that paid by a family of the same size where only the father is earning.

4. Suppose that one-tenth be assumed as the average proportion of income to be devoted to charitable and religious purposes, still the claims of poor, sick or dependent relations, or contributions to local charities may be so disproportionate that while one man should pay nearly all into Church and missionary funds, another might properly not give one half of the tenth to Church and missionary funds. Every man must decide for himself regarding the object to which this tenth of income is to be appropriated, provided that it is not expended for his own profit, pleasure, or entertainment, but is devoted in some way to his Lord's cause.

Let us now try to suggest a scale for contribution suited to the circumstances of those who have an income more than is required for the necessities of life, and who have from \$100 and upwards to be spent on comforts, amusements and luxuries, or to be laid