

from the Students' Missionary Society of Knox College. From the nature of the constitution of their Society they are enabled to take up fields which the Presbytery would be unable to touch, and thus they have not been slow to do. During the past summer four missionaries under the auspices of this Society have been laboring within the bounds of this field. The immediate results of their well directed labors are well illustrated by the case of the Maganetawan and Doe Lake fields, which have always been under their care—though for three years only—who now come forward asking the services of an ordained missionary, and guarantee the greater portion of his salary themselves. Though two fields will thus be withdrawn from the care of this Society, we trust they will not lessen the number of their missionaries for a few years at least, as there is scope enough still for the labors of four missionaries in the newer portions of the district.

We commend the Society most heartily to the liberal support of those who may be privileged to sustain them in their noble work by their contributions. Their funds, so far as this place is concerned, are expended wisely and well. As the forerunner of more perfect organization, they may be said to have laid the foundation of our Church in very many portions of this district.

We again venture to express the hope that not only will supply be obtained for the stations during the winter, but that ordained missionaries will be placed at such points as are prepared to receive them—as for instance at Parry Sound and Maganetawan. Other centres will soon be found from whence will come the request for similar supply; and as the work thus, slowly it may be, yet steadily progresses, we may hope ere long in these districts to see many settled charges.

A commencement has been made at Gravenhurst, yet it is only a beginning of what must be if the work is carried on with energy and in faith. A tide of emigration hitherto unknown must set in along the line of railway now under contract and in the parts adjacent thereto, calling for the combined efforts of both the Presbytery and the Students' Missionary Society to overtake the work thus brought within their reach; while as prosperity attends the labors of the settlers in the older stations, groups will be found here and there claiming for themselves that which is the inherent right of every Presbyterian congregation—the right to call and support their own pastor.

We may be deemed visionary in this prediction—We think not. The event will warrant the prophecy.

ALLAN FINDLAY.

Brucebridge, Sept. 23rd, 1878.

### THE SPIRIT AND ATTITUDE OF THE GENUINE TRUTH-SEEKER.

BY JOHN ROSS, D.D.

In our last issue we gave a report of the opening of Knox College Literary and Metaphysical Society. We now place before our readers the Inaugural Address delivered on that occasion by the president. After some introductory remarks, which were valuable and important in their place, but for which we cannot make room here, Mr. Ross introduced his subject as follows:

What spirit should characterize the earnest seeker for truth?

There should be a *humble disposition of mind, arising from a just estimate of man's power to attain truth*. That man is really capable of acquiring truth, needs little argument. He finds in himself that which prompts him to engage in the search, and faculties wherewith this craving for knowledge may seemingly at least be satisfied. Nor is this a delusion. That power within us which thinks and reasons and judges is really a power of acquisition, and not solely of search. We are not led on by a deceitful mirage—by a phantom ever receding, yet always eluding, the grasp. We may not say of truth as Carlyle says of hope—

'Tis a smiling rainbow,  
Children follow through the wet;  
'Tis not here, still yonder! yonder!  
Never urchin found it yet.

Man's power to know is not an illusion. It is a real gift which he is called upon to exercise, and not in vain. He is not left to wander amid intellectual shadows and darkness with the deep melancholy in his heart which drew from the poet the cry—

Would this weary life were spent,  
Would this fruitless search were o'er,  
And rather than such visions, blessed  
The gloomiest depths of nothingness.

For the human intellect there is no despair of knowledge. Its power to acquire truth, if rightly exercised, will always result in substantial attainment. To learn this lesson is important. It will free the mind from distrust of self, and animate it with that consciousness of power which is requisite to conduct it to highest results. And not only will such confidence in its ability preserve it from the "slough of despond," into which the doubting fall, but it will also prevent it from going to the other extreme and falling over the precipice of belief in its infinite capacity. The power to acquire truth, while real and great, is nevertheless *limited*. There is a point beyond which the mind cannot go. While there are problems which it can easily solve, and truths which it reaches by triumphing over difficulties and obstacles, yet there are barriers against which it impinges and which impede its farther progress. Just as the eye which follows the outline of some cloud-piercing mountain is forced to retrace its vision without beholding its sunlit summit, so the mind, follow far as it may, is often thrown back upon itself, its task incomplete, its object unattained, but fragments and glimpses are seen where totality and completeness are sought. And we must accept this limitation of the intellect in a philosophical spirit. Who has not started out in the confidence which youth inspires, resolved to solve every difficulty and unravel every mystery—or at least to throw some new light upon questions which have occupied the attention of the thoughtful ever since the beginning? But, alas for humanity, the result has too often been disappointing—these questions remain unsettled still. The lesson should not be lost. But it is to be feared it is the case of many who exalt reason to the throne of universal empire, and give it a seeming sway over every realm. It is, however, but a mock royalty; the sceptre of the human intellect rules over but a very limited domain. And if the intellect is *finite* it is also *fallible*. Its range is narrow, but even within that circle it is not free from fallacy and self-deception. What gross errors have been embraced, as is seen in the history of science and philosophy, even by men gifted with the highest intelligence. The most brilliant genius has time and again gone astray and cheated himself with a falsehood. How slow man is to learn the lesson that the intellect is circumscribed and fallible. Rejoicing in the power which he possessed, too often its limited range has been forgotten and its accuracy too implicitly relied on. There cannot be too much caution observed. And if we but rightly estimate the power of the mind to attain truth—and recognize that it is limited and fallible—we shall then cultivate that intellectual humility which should characterize the seeker for truth.

There should be also a *sincere love of the truth*. Truth is a thing of inestimable value. It is the Kooh-i-noor, the brightest gem in earth's possession. It should be sought for its own sake alone, rather than desired for anything beyond itself. It brings, indeed, in its train much good, both material and practical, but it is not for these that it is to be striven for. Its own intrinsic worth is the great attraction in the eyes of him who seeks it worthily. He exalts it far above any advantage which may accidentally accrue from it, and with a pure and noble spirit the genuine truth-seeker prosecutes his work. A low, material, selfish view will mar the mind's keenness and blunt its susceptibility, rendering it incapable of appreciating and acquiring the highest form of truth.

Again, there should be a *readiness to receive the truth from whatever quarter it comes*. Many minds are only open to the reception of the truth coming through a single channel. They are like a house all of whose windows are on one side, and that, perhaps, having a northern aspect and a narrow and gloomy landscape. Much of the brightness and beauty of nature is lost to those within, and is, so far as they are concerned; non-existent. So it is with many minds. They see but a part, and that not the most inviting one, of the field of truth. The ideas they gather from it are narrow and gloomy, and lack both warmth and beauty. Yet they have become so enamoured with what is visible from their little sky-light that they satisfy themselves that there is nothing more worth knowing, and have a complacent contempt for everything which does not come within their own narrow circle.

But truth is not a thing which can be thus circumscribed, or defined and measured out like a garden plot or a park for recreation. It is not confined within some narrow circle, but is rather like the great

ocean, vast, limitless, infinite. To most, nay, to all, but a small part of this field is familiar; in its broad expanse, it is as an undiscovered country. And just as the untraveller, knowing of nothing beyond sight of the smoke of his own hamlet, concludes that *therefore* there cannot be anything beyond—so the mind which has bent all its attention upon but one section of truth, forgets that there is a wider field than that which it explores. Such a course as this will cut the mind off from many sources of truth, and not only is there loss sustained in this respect, but it narrows the intellect and renders the individual unable to take a liberal and broad view of even his own favorite department. He fails to obtain the additional light which would be thrown upon the pathway he prefers to tread by the side-lights of other related sciences, if only they were allowed to shine upon it. The man who thus shuts himself up intellectually is doing himself a grievous wrong. It were more wise to throw the mind open to every avenue where truth might come. Just as the river does not merely receive tributaries from one side, but is fed by rills flowing from every quarter, and glides on in fulness and majesty; so the mind should lay every department of truth under tribute, and welcome it, no matter whence it comes. If the pearl be genuine, if the diamond be real, it matters not that it was covered with slime or imbedded in the mire. It is none the less valuable or worthy of reception. We cannot have every truth hammered on our anvil, we cannot determine that the sun shall shine only from one quarter of the heavens. Let us welcome the light from whatever direction it may come.

But I must hasten on to consider the *attitude* which should be assumed towards the prevailing spirit of the age. This will have much to do with moulding our intellectual life and giving it its peculiar tone. What are the characteristics which mark the thought and opinion of the present day? How shall we be influenced by them? Shall we passively surrender to them to be carried whither the popular tide may bear us, or shall we oppose and resist their tendencies? The tide, indeed, does not flow smoothly or in only one direction. There are discordant elements discernible in the movements and tossings, which reveal an undercurrent flowing in a diametrically opposite direction to that which seems at a superficial glance to be the characteristic of the age.

We have a liberalism, so-called, which claims to carry with it the majority of the thinkers of the day; and on the other hand there is a stern conservative dogmatism which ever and again comes to the surface and asserts its presence. Thus we have seemingly two extremes, and against each there is equally need of warning.

*We should not, on the one side, submit to dictation or coercion, nor, on the other, be led away by the cry for liberty of thought*. In both there is at the bottom the same danger, that viz., of surrendering our intellectual autonomy. If we but guard and preserve this in its rational exercise we have nothing to fear. Against mental bondage the whole being rebels. The mind claims as a right, inalienable and absolute, the liberty to exercise its God-given functions without restraint, other than that which is imposed by the laws of its own nature. It resents all usurped authority over it, and claims to be its own sovereign not only *de jure* but also *de facto*. By no menace or threat, if it heed the voice of its own consciousness, will it be enthralled. It refuses to become the slave or tool of any. It does not cower to human opinions, but stands free in its inborn independence and native freedom. The mind that realizes its true dignity cannot be fettered or coerced. It hears the voice of the divine within, which it dare not disobey but at its peril. The very notion of conditions imposed from without as a restraint, is an opponent to freedom of thought, and the liberty to learn and to know. Acquiescence in such thralldom robs the mind of its true dignity and manliness, and makes it a cringing, cowardly slave. To this condition, if the mind be faithful to itself, no power in the wide universe can degrade it. It will not, on the one hand, have outwardly forced upon it that which in its inward consciousness it rejects; nor will it, on the other hand, be led away by a disingenuous and hollow cry for liberty. There is a liberty which every true man holds as his inalienable right—the liberty to give or withhold his assent, according as his judgment may decide after due deliberation. But the liberty of the present day, of which so much is heard, has another meaning. It is the liberty to