

Our Contributors.

KNOX COLLEGE AND THE COMING MEN.

BY KNOXIAN.

The Presbyterian Church should be thankful that so many good men are available for the vacant chairs in Knox College. Considering the salary that we pay to professors the Church might be very glad to get any two of them. The qualifications of the gentlemen whose names have been mentioned are as minutely examined and as sharply criticised as if the Church proposed to pay each of them ten thousand a year. We sometimes laugh at congregations when they expect pulpit brilliance for the minimum salary. Pretty much the same thing is done by the whole Church every time a professor of theology is appointed. Perhaps that is all right. Modesty and poverty are not Siamese twins.

It should, we think, be assumed by everybody that the coming professors will be appointed in June. No doubt the lecturers at present filling the vacant chairs are doing their work well. Still the interests of the Church as a whole, and of the college, require that no further time should be spent in making the appointments. Two years should be long enough to make up even a Presbyterian mind. If the appointments are not made in June the privilege of lecturing vacant congregations for not calling pastors within a reasonable time will be lost for a generation. None of us wish to lose that privilege.

It should be assumed, too, we think, that other things being equal, or nearly so, two of our own men should be appointed.

Bringing an American citizen over here and putting him into a vacant chair in Knox College might be treating the learned gentlemen with scant kindness. In the event of a "war scare" breaking out he might feel the atmosphere too hot even in January. His feelings might be lacerated by frequent and fiery references to the Old Flag. Even the students in his class might throw out ominous hints about "shouldering their muskets" if a certain emergency should arise. He could not read his morning paper without seeing something that might spoil his breakfast. The good man would not be safe even in church. Just fancy a live American professor listening to the exposition of President Cleveland's message that Principal Grant gave in St. Andrew's Church the Sabbath after the "war scare" broke out two months ago.

A man from across the Atlantic would not of course be pained by references to the Old Flag, but he might find it difficult to adapt himself to our ways. He might not be able to do so if he tried, and there is a painful possibility that if we went down on our knees and coaxed him to come out here he might not try. Those who had the privilege of knowing Principal Willis are well aware that he never took kindly to Canada, though he did noble work while he was here. He always dreaded our winters, considered himself more or less of an exile and often spoke pathetically of going home. His condition was here, but his heart was in the Old Land. We all love the land of our fathers; in fact, love it so much that we would not like to ask any more old countrymen to come out here and sacrifice themselves for us unless in a case of dire necessity. It may be found possible to fill the chairs in Knox without asking anybody to banish himself for our benefit.

At Toronto and within the Central Church there, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada met on the day of June, 1896. The Report of the Board of management of Knox College was read recommending the appointment of ——— to the vacant chairs in that institution. It was then moved by Dr. ——— and duly seconded, that in view of the large number of nominations made by Presbyteries, the General Assembly appoint a

small select committee to consider the qualifications——. No, thanks. Knox is a daylight institution. No backstair nor downstair work for her. She has lived and flourished in the light for fifty years and her sons propose to keep there. "Hands off Manitoba" committee men. There has been too much committee work in the Church during the past twenty years. That small select committee might go downstairs and strike out every name mentioned by the Presbyteries and the College Board and then come upstairs with an air of innocence and two new names and rush their reports through the Assembly. Even if the men thus appointed happened to be the best, they would be handicapped at the start by the unpopular manner of their appointment. This Church is getting tired of committee rule in the Assembly.

CARLYLE, THINKER AND TEACHER.*

BY REV. W. G. JORDAN, B.A.

This new book on Thomas Carlyle is the first volume of "The Famous Scots Series," to be published by Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier. The title of the series may seem to contain an appeal to patriotism, but if the high level reached by the first volume is maintained, the books will stand upon their merits, and not need any other recommendation. This is not a portly and expensive volume, but a cheap book; it may be had for about 50 cents, and makes one marvel that so much good work can be got for so little money. The book is neatly bound and tastefully ornamented, and possesses an attractive title page where we look for the date of publication and do not find it. However, we will not complain of what is evidently considered a trifling omission when, considering the price, the appearance of the book is so satisfactory.

With regard to the author the *British Weekly* says that "he is the Editor of the *Edinburgh Evening News*, a paper which contains much clever writing." We, however, make our acquaintance with Mr. Macpherson through our reading of this brief biography and have formed a very favorable opinion of his literary powers. He acknowledges that "of making books on Carlyle there is no end," but because of the demand of this series he ventures to add another to the list and in this we think he has done well; to condense so much into so little space, and to do it so neatly, is a very creditable piece of literary workmanship. Working within these narrow limits he has been largely indebted to Mr. Froude's Biography, and to the "Reminiscences," but into the controversy over Mr. Froude's editorial conduct he has wisely declined to enter. In the body of the work, however, there is a letter which the author received from Mr. Froude some years ago, and which has not been published before. This letter is interesting as presenting strongly Mr. Froude's view of an affair which caused great controversy, but it is not likely to influence any one who has formed a personal judgment on the matter in question.

Mr. Macpherson has had the sympathy and assistance of several competent critics, namely, Prof. Masson, Mr. J. Morley, and Mr. Haldane, M.P. This book consists of nine chapters. In the first seven the biography, exposition and criticism run side by side, while in the last two there is an attempt to sketch Carlyle as "a social and political thinker" and as "an inspirational force." The biographical part of the work is well done; the lights and shadows are effectively arranged, so that, notwithstanding the comparative brevity of the sketch, anyone may gain from it a clear and correct view of the man and his work. We have the story of his early struggles, of his herculean labours, in which he received from a loving wife such constant sympathy and stimulus, of his final success in which his wife in some

* "Thomas Carlyle." By H. C. Macpherson. Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, London and Edinburgh.

measure lived to share. Then there is the picture of his splendid reception at Edinburgh University, followed so closely by the sudden news of his wife's death. And lastly we see the old man bearing the burden of his years in sad loneliness. Concurrently with this we have an account of his literary labours, the early magazine articles, the studies in German literature, the great books: Sartor Resartus, the French Revolution, Cromwell, and Frederick the Great, the political pamphlets, and the various courses of lectures. From this part of the book the reader may learn that with all Carlyle's eccentricities there was one thing in which he was consistent: if he preached "a gospel of work," he lived that as few men have done.

In the preface we are told "if we could imagine the spirit of a German philosopher inhabiting the body of a Covenanter of dyspeptic and sceptical tendencies a good idea would be had of Thomas Carlyle." We are glad, however, that Mr. Macpherson does not leave us to an imagination of that kind, as we do not know what a German philosopher's spirit would do with the body of a Covenanter, but in the chapter on "Carlyle's Mental Development," he shows that Carlyle was powerfully influenced by "the simple faith, the stern piety and the rugged heroism of the old Seceders"; and also by the study of German philosophy and poetry. It may seem paradoxical to say that we regard this chapter as the most helpful, and yet, in a certain sense, the most unsatisfactory in the whole book. The saying of Hegel with which the book opens is both true and striking: "A great man condemns the world to the task of explaining him." And equally true is the author's addition that before a great man can be explained he must be appreciated. But it is scarcely possible for anyone to explain the Hegelian philosophy and Carlyle's relationship to it in a few pages. Some very able men have confessed their inability to understand the Hegelian philosophy, and others have differed in their interpretation of it, but Mr. Macpherson tells us very clearly that "idealism is simply materialism turned upside down," and that "Hegelianism as much as naturalism leaves man a prisoner in the hands of fate." We have not space to criticise these statements, but any intelligent person can see that they are open to criticism. Of course it would not be fair to expect in a work of this size a full and satisfactory discussion of such questions. It seems to be implied that Mill and Spencer have given us the true philosophy and correct psychology, and Carlyle is criticised from that standpoint. We are told that he found salvation in Transcendentalism, and yet his system is "Calvinism minus Christianity," and although he detested Darwinism, it is startling to find that he was an evolutionist without knowing it. There is, we believe, some truth in all these statements, but they need careful examination and qualification. We cannot now discuss the ethics of evolutionists and intuitionists, but must hasten on to note the luminous exposition of Carlyle's critical method. "To German philosophy and literature Carlyle owed his critical method by which he all but revolutionised criticism as understood by his Edinburgh and London contemporaries." This statement is, we think, proved and illustrated with great clearness and force. "To readers wearied with the facile criticism of conventional reviewers it was a revelation to come in contact with a writer like Carlyle." And if he failed occasionally in the application of his own fruitful method it was because of the strength of his personal sympathies and the power of the old Covenanted idea.

According to Mr. Macpherson the German philosophy which helped Carlyle in his early life did not give him peace, and we are not surprised at this, as philosophy is a matter of thinking, and thinking is not the whole of life. A system of philosophy however noble, cannot meet the demands of our complex nature. Then even this philosophy was not held by Carlyle as a reasoned system

but rather as a vague poetic atmosphere. We cannot go to Carlyle for a perfect philosophy either of history or of life; neither can we expect him to meet our political perplexities or solve our social problems. He has given magnificent historical pictures and biographical sketches, but has not dealt with the causes of the complex events with which he was concerned. His political remedies are insufficient for the great evils which he sees so clearly and bewails so powerfully. But Carlyle is a great moral force not only as a literary critic but as a preacher of righteousness. There is something poetic and even prophetic in his tone, so that his best books belong to that "literature of power" which does not soon get out of date. This Mr. Macpherson shows under the head of "Carlyle as an Inspirational Force," and passages are quoted showing the great thinker's demand for wonder and reverence in the face of the mystery and infinitude of life. We think that the comparison with John the Baptist at the close of the book is more appropriate than the reference to Isaiah which occurs twice. Isaiah had a gospel, and his golden age was in the future, while, according to our author, Carlyle "with not a little of the wilderness atmosphere about him, preached in grimly defiant mood to a pleasure-loving generation, the great doctrines which lie at the root of all religions—the doctrines of Repentance, Righteousness and Retribution." We have now exhausted the space at our disposal and yet feel that we have not given a full representation of the great wealth of this small book. We have much pleasure, then, in recommending it as a splendid introduction to the study of Carlyle's life and literature, which is specially opportune in view of the Carlyle centenary which has been so recently celebrated.

Strathroy, Ont.

REV. D. J. MACDONNELL, B.D.

BY REV. G. M. MILLIGAN, D.D.

The death of the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell cast a gloom over all classes of men in every part of the country. Rich and poor mourn his loss. All sections of the Church feel a leader has fallen in Israel. The honor and affection he won came all unsought. We do well, especially ministers, to ask what mean these tributes of loving regard towards our departed friend, and why those aching voids in so many hearts because his "vanished hand" will never be clasped here again, and the sound of his voice, to guide and cheer, is, for this life, forever still?

Enough has been told in these last few days of the external framework of his life, so that biographic facts need form no part in carrying out the purpose for which we now write. His frank, hearty manner, his humane spirit, his ever ready helpfulness towards every good cause, and his Catholic sympathies like a city set upon a hill could not be hid. Yet these are not sufficient to account for his widespread and deeply penetrating influence.

He was a man naturally loveable. Yet no mere natural goodness; no genial display of one temperamentally, happily constituted, could exercise the deep moral power which he did. One felt that all his natural qualities, attractive as they were, derived their tone and life from Christian principle. The question to do or not to do any act was determined by him according to what he believed was the will of Christ. "Our wills are ours to make them" Christ's, was the motto of his life. Hence, however widely you differed from him, you respected him; for you always felt his position was taken, not from wanton or selfish impulse, but on the highest ethical and religious grounds. So transparent was the spirituality of his motives in matters where many disagreed with him regarding the way he sought to give effect to them, that he has done by his whole life more than we imagine to show men that there may be diversities of view regarding the methods to be adopted to