

1886, and also the names and addresses of the families connected with the church. This congregation has now nineteen elders, nine of whom were elected in October last. The communicants number 575, a net increase of twenty for the year. The ordinary revenue for the year was \$14,100, derived from pew rents, \$7,547; plate collections, \$3,556; and drawn from a guarantee fund, raised about two years ago, \$3,000. The expenditure for ordinary congregational purposes was \$13,700, including \$9,300 for salaries of minister and of pastor emeritus; \$1,000 for organist; \$741 for the poor, and the rest for gas, fuel, sexton, etc. The contributions for the Schemes of the Church amounted to \$3,886.75, in addition to nearly \$1,500 for the salary of a missionary in India. Of the 125 contributors to the Schemes of the Church, one gives \$400, another \$300, another \$200, etc. The Sabbath school raised \$198 for benevolent purposes, and the Mission Sabbath School on Forfar Street, \$148. The total amount raised for all purposes last year was \$22,288, an average of about \$38.75 per communicant. The church property is entirely free from debt. Mr. Andrew Allan is chairman of the board of trustees, Mr. E. B. Greenshields, secretary, and Mr. Alexander Ewan, treasurer. Mr. J. L. Morris is superintendent of the Sabbath school, and Mr. John Larmonth of the Victoria Mission School. Mr. R. A. Ramsay is president of the Young Men's Association, and Mrs. Tasker, of the Dorcas and Ladies' Aid Society. This congregation is probably the wealthiest in the Dominion. Its annual expenditure exceeds that of any of the theological colleges of the Church, and is nearly one-half that of the Home Mission Committee. At present there are only five or six unlettings in the whole church.

KNOX CHURCH, Montreal, Rev. J. Fleck, B.A., pastor, has had another prosperous year. There were forty-one members received and thirty-one removed, being a net gain of ten. There are at present 396 names on the communion roll. The revenue is raised chiefly by means of Sabbath envelopes, which realized \$4,850 last year—plate collections, \$525 and special collections and subscriptions (for carpets), \$460, making a total of \$5,835. The ordinary annual expenditure of the congregation is about \$4,000. Upwards of \$1,500 was appropriated to missionary and benevolent purposes. The church property is unencumbered, and the congregation is in a healthy financial position. Mr. W. D. McLaren is president of the board of managers, Mr. H. B. Picken, treasurer and Mr. John Baillie, secretary. Mr. A. C. Clark is president of the Missionary Society, and Mr. Walter Paul superintendent of the Sabbath school. At the annual meeting it was resolved to take up a special collection monthly by means of envelopes on behalf of the Assembly's Fund for the Augmentation of Stipends.

STANLEY STREET Presbyterian Church annual meeting was held on Wednesday evening. The attendance was fairly large and the reports submitted were, as regards the session and interests presided over by the pastor, most encouraging, showing a net gain to the membership during the year. Rev. J. McCaul, the pastor, reviewed the growth from the beginning in 1874 with a membership of seventy-five, to a present membership of 272. During the seven years of his pastorate, 350 names had been added to the communion roll, an average of fifty annually. During the same period the debt had been reduced from \$25,000 to \$3,100, chiefly due to the persistent, energetic efforts of Mr. McCaul, who deserves the warm gratitude of his people. During the evening, remarks were made by Sir J. W. Dawson, Colonel Stevenson, Messrs. W. Drysdale and James Ross. At the close of the meeting, refreshments were served by the ladies.

OBITUARY.

REV. JOHN MACDONALD.

The subject of the following remarks—the Rev. John Macdonald, late of Scotstown, Quebec,—was born in the parish of Logierait, Perthshire, Scotland, on the 26th of July, 1829. At an early age he entered the University of Edinburgh, and studied at various times in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and for a period he followed some studies in Dundee.

In addition to a full course in arts and theology, in both of which he distinguished himself as a diligent and apt student, he took part of a medical course before coming to this country. Under the Ladies' Association of Edinburgh he conducted for a time a mission school in a destitute part of the Highlands. After completing his studies he served for a period as assistant to the Rev. Neil Taylor of the Free Gaelic Church, Dundee. On the 14th of January, 1863, he was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Free Presbytery of Dundee. Soon after that date he came to Canada under commission from the Free Church. He was designated to Upper Canada; but calling upon some of the ministers in Montreal, to whom he had letters of introduction, it would appear they laid hands upon him. In any case Mr. Macdonald did not proceed to Upper Canada; but was sent by the then Presbytery of Montreal to labour for a time among Highland settlers in Compton County, Quebec. His own intention was to proceed to Ontario after a few months' labour among his countrymen in Quebec; but Providence had ordered otherwise: the congregation of Winslow extended him a call in February, 1864. He accepted this call, and continued to minister to the spiritual wants of a large district of country amid the trials and difficulties incident to new settlements and the backwoods.

He laboured in Winslow and adjacent districts for about fourteen years. In 1877 he was called to the neighbouring congregation of Scotstown. This call he accepted and became the first pastor of Scotstown, and continued to labour there until death dissolved the tie.

During the session of 1865-66, the late Mr. Macdonald attended the classes of McGill Medical School (Montreal), thus completing the medical course which he had commenced in Scotland. From that period till the end came Mr. Macdonald, in addition to his ministerial duties, practised medicine. This to the new and poor settlers was a great boon. For a long time three or four townships looked to him in time of sickness; and even a few weeks before his death it was quite common for him to be called away a distance of

from fifteen to twenty miles. About the middle of October last, he dispensed the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in the vacant congregation of Lake Megantic, of which he was moderator. That was the last occasion on which he served and preached publicly. On his return home he was ill, and for twelve days after he was in a very critical state, life being at times despaired of. He became better, however, and for about four weeks hope was revived and all expected to see him enter upon his work again. Three physicians gave attendance upon him, and all that his family and a kind congregation could do was cheerfully done.

A few days before death he took a sudden turn for the worse; alarming symptoms appeared and the hopes of friends, fondly cherished, were again doomed to disappointment. He sank rapidly until the morning of the 7th of December, 1885, when, surrounded by members of his own family and kind friends, he was released from suffering, and fell asleep at the comparatively early age of fifty-six. He left a widow, three sons and two daughters to mourn their great loss. He was buried on the 10th of December at Scotstown. Although the roads were in a very unfavourable state, people gathered in large numbers from the surrounding districts. The church on that solemn occasion was filled to its utmost capacity, and scores, if not hundreds, were unable to gain admittance. Several members of the Presbytery were present. By request of the family the Rev. J. R. MacLeod, of Kingsbury, conducted the service. He addressed the audience and friends from the words: "The night cometh when no man can work" (John ix. 4) and "And the Lord . . . said unto her, Weep not" (Luke vii. 13). The Rev. Dr. Lamont, of Hampden, gave an impressive address in Gaelic, based upon the words: "For I know that Thou will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living" (Job xxx. 23).

Mr. Macdonald was held in high esteem by his brethren in the Presbytery of which he was a member. Few could be more regular in attendance upon its meetings, or more willing to undertake their share of its work than he. He was well versed in Church law and was generally a safe guide in forms of procedure. He was a diligent and critical student of the Word—ever seeking to find the mind of the Spirit in the portions which he undertook to expound. He excelled as an expository preacher. Few could with more power and clearness set forth the terrible consequences of sin. He was kind and generous to a fault. His medical services were at the disposal of the poor and needy. He was never known to refuse such if his ministerial duties would permit, nor was he ever known to make a charge or ask for remuneration. That was ever left with those whom he served. He was a strong upholder of the doctrines of grace, while in non-essentials he exercised the greatest charity.

In his removal the Presbytery of Quebec sustains a great loss, and all who knew him lose a friend. This is the third time that death has left a vacancy in this Presbytery within a short space of time. The first called was Rev. Wm. Ross, of Lake Megantic, then Rev. J. W. MacKeown, of Valcartier, and now Rev. John Macdonald, of Scotstown.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

BY REV. R. P. MACKAY, B.A.

Feb. 14, } **THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.** } Dan. 5: }
1886. } } } } } 13-17, 25-28

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."—Dan. v. 27.

INTRODUCTORY.

In the fourth chapter it is related that Daniel, again, after a long interval, interpreted a remarkable dream for King Nebuchadnezzar. After the completion of his wonderful works, and the conquest of all his enemies, the king was inflated with pride. In order to bring him to a sense of dependence he was smitten with a kind of insanity, called *zoanthropia*, in which a man imagines himself to be changed into a beast, whilst retaining consciousness in other respects. He imagined himself an ox, and ate grass and lived in the open air until his hair became long and matted and his nails like claws.

When Daniel discerned the nature of the dream, he was so impressed that for an hour he could not speak. He then at the king's request, gave the interpretation, adding a faithful admonition, in the hope that by repentance the calamity might be averted.

This chapter is particularly interesting on account of the hope it encourages, in the opening and closing verses, that Nebuchadnezzar was a converted man. It is true that other expressions in the chapter imply that he still adhered to his former views that there are *gods many*; but, from the appreciative words of verses 34, 35, may it not be inferred that he forsook his former idolatry and clung to the one living and true God?

What a wonderful illustration of the mysterious ways of God if this great man was led by means of insanity out of darkness into light! We shall by and by know the truth—we know now that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

EXPLANATORY.

About thirty years elapsed between these two chapters. *Nabonidus* was the last king of Babylon, and between him and Nebuchadnezzar three others reigned for short periods. He associated his son *Belshazzar* with him, which is proved by the stone records, and removes the difficulty of reconciling the record of Daniel with secular history, in which *Belshazzar* is not numbered amongst the kings of Babylon.

The Medo-Persian Empire was rising into power. Cyrus had been two years already besieging the city. The king *Nabonidus* went against him and was defeated, but escaped to *Borsippa*, a town south-east of Babylon and was not therefore on that fatal night in the city.

I. The Madness of Sin.—The city was besieged by one of the greatest conquerors the world ever saw. That should have made *Belshazzar* and his lords watchful lest he should gain any advantage over them. They were in a very safe condition if *careful*. There were supplies in the city that would last for several years, and the walls were secure. But the best cause can be defeated by folly.

(1) *Feast.*—It may have been an annual feast to some idol-god, or it may have been one form of the fatal indulgence of a profligate fool. Instead of attending to the critical duties of the hour, he gave himself up to eating and drinking with his dissolute companions.

A thousand.—What we would consider a large feast, but not then accounted large. Alexander the Great invited 10,000 to a wedding feast. Recall the numbers in attendance at Solomon's court as an illustration of oriental grandeur.

(2) *Drunkenness.*—They drank wine—usually to excess, and out of that every other kind of excess came.

(3) *Irreverence.*—When under the influence of wine men do what at other times would be too daring even for them. The king now calls for the *sacred vessels* his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, that they might drink in them, and thus boast of the victory won by the gods of Babylon over the Jehovah of Israel.

His father.—The word *father* is also translated *grandfather*. It is believed that *Nabonidus* married a daughter of *Nebuchadnezzar*, and thus *Belshazzar* was a grandchild of that great king. His knowledge of what *Jehovah* did to *Nebuchadnezzar* should have taught him better than to praise the gods of gold.

John Bunyan tells us about another city—the city of *Mansoul*—that is besieged, and that is just as fatally neglected by its defenders. Men give themselves up to feasting and drunkenness and profanity, and leave the gates open for the enemy to come in and take possession! That is the greatest example of madness the world has ever witnessed.

II. Conscience Awakened.—In the very midst of their revelry—when it was at its height—the messenger came, for in such an hour as *we think not* He cometh.

Handwriting.—The king saw the fingers of a hand—only so much as held the pen—writing mysterious characters on the wall. Whether engraved or traced upon the plaster—or letters of light outshining the sun—as some have said, is uncertain. Enough, that the king and his lords *saw* the fingers and what they wrote.

Troubled.—The king is so unnerved that his knees smite each other, and his countenance becomes the expression of terror. Why? He knows that this is supernatural. But why should he be afraid of the supernatural? Why not take it for granted that messengers from the other world are *friends*, instead of regarding them with fear, as has always been? Because conscience told him that his life was offensive and deserved the enmity of Heaven. "Conscience makes cowards."

What a poor thing is the bravado of the sinner when the curtain is drawn aside and he begins to see the Eternal!

The Eternal is near us, and needs but to put forth His hand and become visible.

Cried for help.—His only resort is the help of man. He calls for the astrologers (star readers), Chaldeans (priests, learned in all religious matters), and soothsayers (who practised secret arts). In order to stimulate them to greater diligence he promises rich rewards, but they could do nothing for him.

Third ruler. (Ver. 7.)—Another proof that he was himself associated with the king as *second ruler*. When days of trial come that man is in a sad plight who cannot say: "God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Ps. xli. 1.)

III. The Judgment.—The queen mother remembers Daniel, and now comes in, and tells what he did in former days. Daniel came and made known the writing, but not without administering severe rebuke to the king for not reading the lessons of Providence.

Contrast.—Notice the contrast between the dignity of Daniel on this occasion and the poor king's cowardice.

A gold chain and scarlet robe to Daniel! It looks like humour to offer such baubles to the old man living with God and seeing the golden streets.

Mene means numbered. It was the *fulness* of time.

Tekel means weighed and wanting.

Peres is the singular form of *upharsin*, and means *divided*. His kingdom was to be broken in pieces, and given to the Medes and Persians.

They did adorn Daniel against his will; but it was not worth while resisting, for even then the enemy was within the walls.

IV. Judgment Executed.—Cyrus turned the water of the river into an artificial lake near the city that his soldiers might enter by the bed of the river. But even then, they could not enter the city had the gates not been left open by the drunken rioters who should have been on the alert. They entered and soon the city of Babylon was in their possession. The king was slain and the prophecy fulfilled.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. We may give ourselves up to feasting only so far as can be without letting the enemy in at the gates.
2. All sacred things should be reverently handled.
3. At midnight, whilst they slept, the Bridegroom came, and they had no oil in their lamps.
4. There is a point when it is *too late*.
5. Who would not be a Daniel?

AUTOGRAPH hunters are said to deluge Mr. Harris, of the *Atlanta Constitution*, with requests for his signature. A friend of his says he always drops such letters into the waste basket, but that when he goes to dinner the elevator boy amuses himself by filling out the blank cards and placing them in the return envelopes addressed "Joel Chandler Harris Atlanta Ga."