

### Presbyterian College, Montreal.

This institution owes in large measure its origin to the warm interest which the late John Redpath took in the establishing of such a college. He it was who invited a number of prominent Presbyterians to meet at his residence, Terrace Bank. The night was cold and frosty, in the month of January, 1864, now thirty-five years ago. Those present were Revs. A. F. Kemp, D. H. MacVicar, Principal (now Sir J. Wm.) Dawson and Messrs. John Redpath, Joseph Mackay, Laird Paton, George Roger, Warden King, and John Stirling. Only three of those present still remain to tell the story of its beginnings, viz., Sir J. Wm. Dawson, Principal MacVicar, and John Stirling. It will be observed the large number of laymen who were present, foreshadowing the place which the college has ever since held in the confidence and esteem of the people, and the hearty and generous support which has been extended to it.

Another meeting was held in February of the same year at the residence of the late John C. Becket. At this meeting Mr. Redpath was called to the chair, and Principal Dawson presented a report from the committee appointed at the first conference. This report emphasized the great need of such a college, and it was unanimously agreed to go forward.

The college originated in the desire to secure missionaries and ministerial laborers, especially for the Province of Quebec, Eastern Ontario and the valley of the Ottawa.

It has since, through its alumni, extended its influence for good far beyond these limits into the foreign field and from Prince Edward Island to the Pacific coast. The territory at first contemplated has been well overtaken, and a considerable number of graduates have settled in Manitoba and the Northwest.

The story of the college is one of steady and remarkable progress. After several preliminary meetings, two of which have been referred to, the proposal to found it was submitted to the Synod and approved, and the charter was obtained in 1865. The work of the first session commenced in October, 1867, and was conducted by Rev. W. (now Dr.) Gregg, Toronto, and Rev. W. Aitken, Smith's Falls, who lectured three months each. Ten students were enrolled. For five sessions the trustees of Erskine Church granted the college the use of their lecture-room and vestry with fuel and light free.

This was the day of small things financially, and in every sense. The proposal was that one man, for some time at least, should be charged with all departments of the work, including finance.

In June, 1868, the present Principal, Dr. MacVicar, of the Free Church, Cote street, Montreal, was appointed Professor of Divinity. In October of the same

year he entered upon the duties of his office. The movement has been ever since onward; and now the teaching staff consists of five professors — Principal MacVicar, Professors Campbell, Cousirat, Scrimger, Ross—and four lecturers. Among these Rev. Dr. McNish, who has ably lectured in Gaelic to the students for many years.

The curriculum, while embracing the subjects usually taught in theological seminaries, possesses some special features. The chair of French theology, so ably filled by Dr. Cousirat, is of this nature. His distinctive work is to train in their own language missionaries and ministers. At the same time the students of his classes attend lectures with all the other professors and are thus qualified to preach and do pastoral work in French and English. This is essential in many of the mixed fields of Quebec and Eastern Ontario. Upwards of forty thus educated are now preaching the Gospel among their fellow-countrymen.

The college has from the first been affiliated with McGill University, and its students enjoy all the educational advantages of this strong and growing institution, including the use of its magnificent library and freedom to compete for its numerous and valuable scholarships, medals and other academic distinctions.

The buildings and equipment are well arranged for the convenience and comfort of the students; from the kind and generous friend of the college, David Morrice, Esq., there was provided a magnificent convocation hall and library, with dormitories for the students. This gift was completed and presented to the college authorities on the 28th November, 1882. Rev. Dr. Warden, as treasurer, and representing the college, received the deed of donation from the hand of Mr. Morrice, and in thanking him for the magnificent gift, expressed the belief that it was the largest made to the Presbyterian Church by any one person. In the matter of finance, while large gifts have been made from time to time, notably from Mr. Redpath, Terrace Bank, founding the John Redpath chair to the extent of forty thousand dollars; Joseph and Edward Mackay, founding the Joseph Mackay chair with fifty thousand dollars; while the three nephews of these gentlemen founded the Edward Mackay chair by the sum of fifty thousand dollars, surely commendable example of enlightened generosity. Notwithstanding these gifts and annual scholarships of fifty thousand dollars from many prominent people of our church, the college is greatly hampered for want of adequate endowment. It was in 1871 that the General Assembly, by resolution, approved of a scheme to endow both Knox, of Toronto, and Presbyterian College, Montreal. This scheme fell through. Surely, as we draw near the close of the present century, the aim of the alumni of this college, as well as its many friends scattered throughout the Dominion, should be the raising of

an endowment fund of such an amount, say two hundred thousand dollars, as would place the Principal and management in a position free from the worry of having to finance for professors' chairs, scholarships, etc.

A curious and interesting article might be written on the way in which means have been provided for this college. Many instructive examples of liberality might be mentioned. Children gave their offerings; widows have bestowed their mites; Sunday-schools and Bible classes have contributed bursaries. In one instance a pious mother, on being bereaved of a son, gave the entire portion which had been laid up for him, along with fervent prayer for God's blessing on the work of the college. Where there is a good cause, prayer, business energy, and strong faith in God are the best means of getting a revenue, and these are weapons which have been well used by the college authorities, notably the Principal, who has done much of the hard work, indeed, it is thought by some, of three men.

With such a record as God has enabled this college to make; with the large band of graduates scattered throughout the Dominion, and away out to foreign fields, all loyal to the truth and their Alma Mater; and with new friends and benefactors arising throughout our great country, we predict greater things in store for the college—a more complete equipment and still greater eminence.

### Russian Exploration in Asia.

Deserts are becoming comparatively scarce on modern maps. Little by little as they come to be explored it is found that the word desert should not be applied to the territory. The great Gobi desert in Asia is still put down in almost every atlas as an arid waste, but Russians exploring it have found it is not a desert, as has been supposed. Obrutscheff says that the physical features of the so-called Gobi desert show that it is not a sandy waste at all, but a plateau with all the characteristics of the Steppe. It was evidently once claimed by the sea, and its many hills and valleys are the results of a long erosion since its elevation above the sea. A precipitation occurs in all parts of the Gobi territory, and although it is not very plentiful, still the quantity of rain and snow produce a good growth of grass. The caravan route from China to Urga is traversed every year by about 100,000 camels with loads of tea, and the wells in the more barren part of the Gobi territory are usually not more than twenty or thirty miles apart. Wandering bands of Mongolians have large herds, and only in years of great drouth have they any difficulty in finding sufficient quantities of fodder. It was from the Gobi desert that great hordes of mounted barbarians issued who gave great trouble to China. It was these barbarians which caused the Chinese to erect the great wall, more than 1,200 miles in length, around the northern frontier of the empire.