

organized in 1833, the Rev. L. H. Jordan, B.D., being the fourth pastor. Dr. Taylor, its first pastor, was for upwards of forty-three years minister of the congregation. There are eleven elders and 475 communicants, there being a net increase during the year of thirty-one. The attendance at the week night prayer meeting averages from 180 to 200. The Sabbath school roll during the year has increased from 164 to 250 and the teachers from twenty-two to twenty-six. Mr. C. W. Davis is superintendent of the Sabbath school. The pastor's Sabbath afternoon Bible class numbers seventy-seven. The church building is entirely free from debt, the repairs and improvements effected during the year, including the cushioning of the gallery pews, having been defrayed by special subscriptions. The weekly envelope system is adopted by the congregation both for ordinary expenditure and for missions. The ordinary receipts last year were \$5,589 for congregational purposes, \$1,350 for repairs, etc., \$7,472 for missions, and \$202 for Dorcas Society, etc.; in other words, while there was expended on congregational purposes \$6,939, there was given for missionary and benevolent purposes \$7,674. Included in this latter is the sum of \$560, raised by the Sabbath School Missionary Society. Of this amount Master John P. Copeland collected \$122.79, and Master Percy C. Leslie \$95. In the Sabbath school the envelope system is now in use for the class collections for missions. Upwards of \$5,800 have been contributed to missions by the Sabbath school during the past fourteen years. The credit of this is largely due to Mr. Wm. Yuille, the president of the Missionary Society. The Young People's Association, Mr. J. S. Archibald, president, has a membership of seventy. There are also in connection with the congregation an active Band of Hope, Mr. K. A. Becket, president, with an attendance of from sixty to seventy at its fortnightly meetings; a Woman's Working Society, Mrs. A. C. Leslie, president, with fifty-one members; a Dorcas Society, Mrs. S. Bell, president; a Visiting Committee, Mrs. Williamson, Convener, with twenty-six lady visitors; and an Hospital Committee, Miss Johnston, secretary. Mr. J. R. Lowden is president of the Board of Management, numbering seventeen members. Mr. R. J. Weir, B.C.L., is organist and choir master. The choir numbers twenty. The expense of organ and choir is about \$1,000 per annum. The area or body of the church is practically filled up, the sittings being all allocated with one or two exceptions, and the galleries, since the seats were cushioned, are much better occupied than formerly. The report gives the names and addresses of all heads of families connected with the congregation, as also of single persons not identified with any of the families of the Church.

THE Rev. Dr. Smyth, of St. Joseph Street Presbyterian Church, Montreal, gave his second lecture on "Pre-historic Times of America," before the students and professors of the Presbyterian College. Dr. MacVicar occupied the Chair. A hearty vote of thanks was rendered Dr. Smyth for his kindness in delivering his interesting and profitable lectures.

OBITUARY.

FREDERICK FENTON.

In one of the palaces in the city of Paris, there is a painting which illustrates our feelings over the departure of our esteemed friend. The painter has for his subject the death scene of one of France's noblest patriots. At the feet stands an angel clad in deepest mourning, whilst at the head appears another angel all radiant as with the light of heaven. Death had caused deep and general sorrow; but in the dark hour there came the remembrance of a brave life filled up with many generous and tender deeds.

Thus were we impressed by the sudden removal from our midst of one whose daily life was a testimony to truth and honour. The first deep thought of sorrow was in a measure relieved as we remembered the strong though quiet faith and singular devotion to the principles of integrity and righteousness which characterized the life of Mr. Fenton. "Being dead, he yet speaketh."

It is of Mr. Fenton as we knew him in Christian work that we shall specially speak now. Eleven years ago, amongst the fifty members that then composed the congregation of College Street Church, we found Mr. and Mrs. Fenton. From that time till they removed beyond the bounds of College Street Church, Mr. Fenton was not only most exemplary in his attendance on divine worship on the Lord's Day, but as a manager he was ever anxious to advance in every possible way the interests of the congregation. His fellow managers cherish only the deepest and tenderest regard for him. Nothing was thought a trouble that would in any way aid the work of the congregation. Even when removed at too great a distance for his family to attend regularly, he still continued his kindness and liberality. The congregation has lost in him the kind friend, the wise and able counsellor.

Mr. Fenton was, however, not only loyal to his congregation; his Christian life found expression in many forms. Knox College found in him a warm and liberal friend. In his official capacity he came in contact with infidelity in some of its worst aspects. He addressed himself to the examination of the leading sceptical works of the day. It was truly interesting to hear him in his home of an evening opening up and exposing the logical errors of such books as the "Creed of Christendom," by W. R. Greg.

Few were in the position to see the practical results of so-called "Freethought" and downright infidelity as Mr. Fenton. He felt that more instruction should be given in the pulpit to the young men concerning popular and dangerous forms of scepticism. This city has lost one of her most faithful and noble-minded officials. May his mantle of fearlessness in doing the right fall on the one who shall take his honoured place as County Crown Attorney!

If we are asked where the finest qualities of Mr. Fenton's heart were most manifest, we answer, in his home. Free from all affectation, he was the true husband, the faithful and fond father. He has left that home for the heavenly, but he has left it filled with tender and noble memories. Yes; he has left it walled round with virtue. We feel

assured that He in whom the father's faith rested will be the abiding consolation of the mother and children. We cannot better close this imperfect notice than with a few words coupled with the following verses, which Mr. Fenton wrote to a friend when absent from home last autumn: "I live on, trusting in the goodness and mercy of Almighty God to restore me to usefulness in His own good time, and I know He orders all things well."

"One thought I have, my ample creed,
So deep it is and broad,
And equal to my every need—
It is the thought of God.

"Each morn unfolds some fresh surprise,
I feast at life's full board;
And rising in my inner skies,
Shines forth the thought of God.

"At night my gladness is my prayer,
I drop my daily load;
And every care is pillowed there,
Upon the thought of God.

"I ask not far before to see,
But take in trust my road;
Life, death and immortality
Are in my thoughts of God.

"To this their sacred strength they owed,
The martyr's path who trod;
The fountain of their patience flowed,
From out their thought of God.

"Be still the light upon my way,
My pilgrim staff and rod;
My rest by night, my strength by day,
O blessed thought of God."

A. GILRAY.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.—Dr. Reid has received the following anonymous contributions. A Friend, Stirling, \$10, equally to Home and Foreign Missions; Thank offering, from a Member of Union Church, Esquimaux, \$50, Foreign Mission; A Member of Cooke's Church, Kingston, \$20, for North West Indians Mission; A Friend, Hamilton, \$8, Foreign Mission, Indore; A Friend, Churchill, \$100, for the Schemes of the Church; A Friend, Melville Church, Brussels, \$5, for Knox College Students' Missionary Society; A Friend, per Rev. J. Fraser, Cushing, \$10, for Foreign Missions, China; A Member, Knox Church, Toronto, \$200, equally to Aged and Infirm Ministers' and Augmentation Funds; A Friend, Parkdale, \$50, for food and clothing for North-West Indians; Dufferin, \$1, for Foreign (Zenana) Mission; "One who has faith in God," \$50, viz.—\$30 for Foreign Mission, Formosa, and \$20, North-West Indians; A Friend, Owen Sound, \$4, equally to Home and Foreign Missions; Four Young Friends, Melville Church, Brussels, \$5, to Knox College Students' Missionary Society; O. K., St. Augustin, \$2, equally to Home Mission and Augmentation Funds; Ladies, Hillsboro', \$5 for Foreign Missions; Friend, Hillsboro', \$1 for Foreign Missions; J. H. Moore, Mildmay, \$1 for Foreign Missions.

"In memoriam" of W. P. James, per Rev. John James, D.D., Paris, \$300 for the missionary schemes of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

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

March 14, } ESTHER'S PETITION. { Esther 4. 10-17.
1886. } 5: 1-3.

GOLDEN TEXT—"So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to law; and if I perish, I perish."—Esther iv. 16.

INTRODUCTORY.

This charming story, like the story of Ruth, reveals God's individual providence in the midst of great national changes. The individual and national deliverance here recorded took place somewhere in that period of fifty-eight years intervening between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra.

Ahashuerus.—It is now generally agreed that this was Xerxes, who reigned for twenty-one years—486 B.C. to 465 B.C. He is best known in connection with his invasion of Greece with an army that numbered over five millions—not over five thousand of which returned with him. He was first arrested by Leonidas with his famous three hundred at the pass of Thermopylae. Then came the naval engagement and defeat at Salamis by Themistocles, and others followed, so that he was glad to escape with his life. It is supposed to have been after his return that Esther was chosen queen, when he—in order to drown disappointment and shame—gave himself over to pleasure and voluptuousness. The great feast of 180 days, at which the Queen Vashti was insulted and rejected, was held before that unfortunate invasion.

Comparing chaps. i. 3 and ii. 16, we find that between four and five years transpired between the rejection and selection—about the time the King was absent upon that expedition.

EXPLANATORY.

The verses chosen for this lesson are but a fragment of a story that must be studied as a whole. We may conveniently cluster all the leading thoughts about the most interesting character.

I. Esther's Origin.—She was an orphan child raised by Mordecai, her cousin,—whose grandfather was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar (chap. ii. 6). She was very dutiful to her guardian even after she got beyond his power, which is an evidence of good training.

Name.—Her name was *Hadassah*, the myrtle, a shrub much esteemed in the East. Her Persian name was *Esther* or the Greek *Aster*, which means a star.

II. Esther's Promotion.—In the eyes of the world it was promotion, but in reality it was not. It was rather degradation to become the wife of one who was a voluptuous, cruel and selfish tyrant. Very likely both she and Mordecai thus regarded it. How well it would be for society if right views prevailed as to the marriage relationship. Much misery would be avoided, if character were taken into account. She came into the place of another who had been insulted and injured, and might any day receive similar treatment. She was chosen on account of her personal beauty, not on account of beauty of character, which continues and retains affection after the former is forever gone. It was, and always is, a dark outlook for a woman who falls into such hands.

III. Clouds and Darkness. (Chap. iii.)—A terrible calamity threatened the whole Jewish race that remained in the land of their captivity. They must have felt regret then that they did not return to Palestine when the opportunity was given. It might have been inconvenient, but not so bad as total destruction. So will multitudes feel by and by who refuse to accept the great salvation, and there will be no escape from their mistake.

Haman.—He was an Amalekite—the old hereditary foes of the Israelites. Because one Jew declined to bow and reverence him, he determined to exterminate the whole race, and got the King's decree that on a certain day they should be slaughtered and their property confiscated. For this privilege he offered to pay a very large amount of money, of course expecting to more than make it up from the spoil.

Mordecai.—He is the cause of all this trouble—but an innocent cause. His conscience would not allow him to offer anything like worship to a fellow-creature, especially to an Amalekite, the historic enemies of the Lord's people. He knew the danger of offending the king's favourite; but better offend the king than the King of kings.

IV. Esther's Perplexity.—She is, in this great crisis, the hope of the nation. She only has access to and influence with the king, and Mordecai urges her to the exercise of her gifts.

She hesitates because of the danger and difficulty of the task. Her objections are:

(1) *Influence*. (Ver. 11.)—She once had influence, but that is on the wane. The ardour of the king's affection had cooled, for he had not called her into his presence for thirty days.

(2) *Law*.—Also a dangerous law stood in the way. Any one—even the queen—who ventured into the king's presence unasked, and to whom his uncertain humour did not hold out the golden sceptre, was to be put to death. So that she was risking her life by approaching him. That law was intended to protect the king's person, which after all it did not do, for he was afterward assassinated.

It was also intended to surround him with mystery and deepen the impression of his divinity.

How different all this from our blessed King, who is always holding out the golden sceptre of mercy, and inviting us to come boldly in every time of need. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift. Her objections are answered by Mordecai:

(1) *Danger*.—The danger is as great if she does not go, for she is a Jewess and must perish with the rest. She had many enemies, who would be only too glad to take her life. Like the lepers at the gate of Samaria, it is death to remain, and to go can be no more.

(2) *Lost opportunity*.—He rises to a loftier reason here. He has faith in God that deliverance and enlargement will come from some quarter, and if she will not act she will miss the privilege of being the honoured instrument. That is a most weighty consideration for us all as to the work of life. The Lord will accomplish His work; but unless we act we shall lose the honour and glory of being co-labourers with God.

(3) *Divine purpose*.—May not God have placed you in your present position for the very purpose of giving you this opportunity of being a deliverer? Will you fight against God? Shall we?

V. Esther's Heroic Resolution.—When we remember that she was but a young girl, this decision is truly noble.

(1) *Prayer*. (Ver. 16.)—She tells Mordecai to gather all the Jews in Shushan together for prayer and fasting—for three days—to seek the Lord's guidance and blessing. She and her maidens, who were in sympathy with her, would wait on the Lord for the same object. This was earnest prayer, and they were all agreed.

(2) *Trust*.—After that she would leave herself in the Lord's hands and follow the only course that seemed open, and if the Lord willed that she should perish she was willing to perish.

The result was what we would expect. She was graciously received by the king, and her invitation to a banquet accepted, and that led the way to the deliverance of the Jews and the overthrow of their enemies. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him; but justice and judgment are the habitations of His throne." Is that not precisely the course that is needed now? Multitudes are perishing—doomed to death eternal—in the power of the enemy. Should Christians not betake themselves to prayer, and in the strength of that go forth to their rescue? Surely, if so, the results would be greater. We are not straightened in God, but in ourselves.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. The untested power of prayer!
2. In the net that he hath hid is his own foot taken.
3. Who walketh in darkness and hath no light? (Isa. i. 10.)
4. Work while it is day, for opportunity vanishes.

TWENTY-FIVE years ago Mr. (now Sir) Edward Baines was the only total abstainer in the House of Commons. In the new parliament the number must be nearly fifty. Sir Edward, now eighty-five years old, has lived to read the obituary notices of nearly all those of his contemporaries who used to predict that, while his career could not be merry, there was every probability it would be short.