

British American Presbyterian,
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FOR TERMS, SEE FIRST PAGE.
C. BLACKETT ROBINSON
Editor and Proprietor

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Letters and articles intended for the next issue should be in the hands of the Editor not later than Tuesday morning.
All communications must be accompanied by the writer's name, otherwise they will not be inserted. Articles not accepted will be returned, if, at the time they are sent, a request is made to that effect, and sufficient postage stamps are enclosed. Manuscripts not accepted will not be returned, and subsequent requests for their return cannot be complied with.

OUR GENERAL AGENTS.

Mr. Wm. Selby, General Advertising and Subscription Agent, will visit Brantford, Galt, Guelph, etc., in the course of this and following weeks.
Mr. Charles Nicol, General Agent for the Presbyterian in Western Ontario, is now in Toronto publishing the interest of this journal. We commend him to the best offices of ministers and people. Any assistance rendered him in his work will be taken by us as a personal kindness.

THE CANADA

Christian Monthly.

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British American Presbyterian,
FRIDAY, MAY 4, 1877.

We understand that College Street Presbyterian Church has determined on securing a new site for their future church—the corner of Spadina Avenue and College Street.

We are reluctantly compelled to hold over several editorials, letters, book reviews, etc., until next issue. Correspondents must have patience. They can help us very much, and render more certain the insertion of their contributions, by studying brevity.

It is intended to send a parcel of ladies work from Kingston to Calcutta via Edinburgh, about the end of May, and a box of work, clothing, etc., to Madras about the end of June. Those who have been preparing work for this purpose will kindly bear the above dates in mind.

Mr. J. C. Gilchrist, the Treasurer, asks us to say that—the contributions of the Woodville congregation for the past year were not "nearly \$4 000," as reported in our issue of last week, but nearly \$5,000, the amount being \$4,998.45, being far in advance of the contributions of any previous year.

The Synod of Toronto and Kingston met in Knox Church yesterday (Tuesday) evening. There was a good attendance of members. The retiring Moderator, Rev. Prof. McKerran, M.A., of Queen's College, Kingston, preached an able and appropriate sermon; and thereafter the Rev. Thos. Wardrop, of Guelph, was unanimously elected Moderator for the ensuing year.

The new Central Presbyterian Church, corner of Grosvenor and St. Vincent streets, will be opened for Divine service next Sabbath, when the Rev. D. Inglis, D.D., of Brooklyn, will preach at eleven a.m. and seven p.m., and the Rev. John Potts at three o'clock. On Monday evening there will be a dedication service at half-past seven, when the Rev. Dr. Inglis will preach the sermon. We hope to see a large attendance of the Presbyterian public of the city.

From the *Madras Mail* of February 24th, now to hand, we learn that on the evening preceding that date, Rev. J. Fraser Campbell, missionary to India of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, presided at a meeting of the Hindu Club. An interesting lecture on "The Future of India" was delivered by Mr. V. Rajarathnam. The subject of the lecture was briefly discussed by members of the club; and at the close of the discussion the chairman delivered an excellent address. A vote of thanks to the lecturer and chairman terminated the proceedings.

"SEEKING UNTO THE DEAD"

The subject of spiritualism has lately been exciting a good deal of interest in England from a Christian point of view. A pamphlet has been published by a Christian writer, entitled "Reflections on the Character and Spread of Spiritualism," by Benjamin Willis Newton. The writer of this pamphlet declares that, notwithstanding the many deceptive tricks practised among Spiritualists and their imitators, he has been for twenty years convinced that "the facts of Spiritualism are true," i.e., that there are real supernatural manifestations, and the aim of his pamphlet is to show the identity of origin of these manifestations with the "divinations" and "necromancy" described in the Old Testament as an "abomination" to the Lord, and with the demoniac possession and sorcery described in the New Testament. As Mr. Newton says, we have no reason to suppose that these undoubted manifestations of the agency of evil spirits were to be no longer possible, but on the contrary the warnings and prophecies of the Book of Revelation show the contrary. There is every reason to believe that Spiritualism is only the modern form of an ancient device of Satan to destroy human souls. Apart from Christianity "some in the very remotest rank of men of culture and of science assert that the facts of Spiritualism are true," so far as the evidence of our senses and of trustworthy witnesses can be relied on. And since the year 1848 three millions of persons in the United States have taken themselves to what may be called "seeking unto the dead," although it is believed by those who have most closely investigated the subject that the manifestations,—where real,—are due to *Satanic* agency, instead of being, as most of their devotees believe, real communications from departed friends. It is a curious fact that even "table-rapping" is not a modern invention, but is said by Tertullian to have been used in his day when demons were consulted!

As many people have contented themselves with laughing at Spiritualism as a humbug and imposture, it is well that its more serious danger should be seen and pointed out. Certainly one fact should not be lost sight of;—the usually brief life of "mediums" and their prematurely destroyed constitutions, as well as the often stated circumstance that a "medium" can rarely shake off the accompaniment of "spiritual manifestations," even when these are not desired. Has the first of these facts no connection with the solemn judgments declared by God against those who turn aside after familiar spirits? It is well, at all events, that the young and inconsiderate should be warned against playing with "table-turning," "planettes," etc., for mere amusement. It is playing with edge tools. It is of course a legitimate subject for scientific investigation whether these manifestations can yet be ascribed to merely natural causes not yet discovered. But the using of so dangerous and possibly so diabolical an agency for mere curiosity cannot be too strongly discouraged.

"I believe it," says the author of the pamphlet, "to be the bounden duty of every minister, and of every private Christian, to refuse fellowship in any Christian work with all who countenance Spiritualism or practice it in any of its developments. If any have entered the awful circle thoughtlessly or from vain curiosity, let them repent and forsake the sin, and like Mary Magdalene and Manasseh of old, find mercy. The sin now is greater than in the time of Manasseh, for it is committed against greater light. 'Blessed are they that wash their garments, that they may enter in through the gates into the city,—without whose gates are sorcerers and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie.'"

PRAISEWORTHY LIBERALITY.

It has been our privilege on former occasions to take notice of the generous gifts of His Honor Judge Gowan of Barrie, to the Presbyterian Church.

A short time ago, though a member of the Reformed Episcopal Church, he sent to the Rev. J. Gray, of Orillia, the deed of a house and lot at Shanty Bay, a settlement six miles east of Barrie, and adjacent to Gowan railway station.

The house is compact and commodious, and pleasantly situated on Kempenfeldt Bay. It is to be used meanwhile as a manse for Guthrie Church congregation. It was built as a residence by the late Rev. S. B. Ardagh, an excellent, warm-hearted and thoroughly Evangelical clergyman of the Church of England. He is affectionately remembered throughout the county of Simcoe as one of the pioneer ministers of the district. As a graceful tribute to his memory, the building has been named the "S. B. Ardagh manse."

This liberal donation is worth about \$1,200, and was as unexpected as it is grateful to the numerous Presbyterians throughout the county.

What an example this gift of the judge sets before our people in the way of devising more liberal things for our Church.

The Rev. J. McFarlane's resignation of his charge at Farnham Centre has been accepted by the Presbytery of Montreal.

THESE DEFICITS.

ARE MINISTERS TO BLAME?

Each succeeding year of late, we have been hearing of deficits in this and that scheme of the Church, and this year, we regret to learn, the expenditure has again largely exceeded the revenue in several of the schemes, especially the Colleges. So serious has this matter become that no time should be lost in endeavouring to discover the cause of the deficits, and to apply the remedy. A few weeks ago a communication appeared in our columns from a respected correspondent in regard to the subject, but we fear the main cause of these deficits was largely overlooked. The following is an extract from a letter recently written by one of the ministers of our Church: "I fear there will be deficits this year again. It is too bad that there are so many ministers so neglectful and indifferent about the matter of plainly presenting these things to their people. I am persuaded from my short experience that that is all that is needed. Give the people a knowledge of the necessities of the work, and they will respond more or less liberally according to their circumstances, and we would have enough for all our schemes." Is this charge true? Are neglect and indifference in advocating the claims of the Church's work upon the part of some ministers, reasons why many of our congregations contribute so little to the schemes? Are any of the ministers of the Church to blame for these deficits? Unpalatable as the truth may be, we fear that the charge is true, and that the blame lies largely at the door of not a few of our ministers. We have confidence in the liberality of our Presbyterian people, and in their willingness to contribute to carry on the Church's work, provided the claims of the work are properly laid before them and an opportunity given to contribute. Of course there may be, and doubtless are, exceptions to this, but we are persuaded that it is true of the vast bulk of our people.

When we look over the statistical tables published in the Appendix to the Assembly Minutes, and find that large numbers of congregations have contributed nothing to this or that scheme, the only explanation we can give in most cases, is that the people have not had presented to them the opportunity to contribute. Where there are no missionary societies connected with congregations the Assembly has enjoined that Sabbath day collections be taken up for the several schemes, and where a congregation fails to contribute, we fear it is too often because the minister has failed to announce the collections as enjoined by the Supreme Court of the Church. Again there are congregations which some years ago were wont to give largely to the several schemes, but where after a change of minister little or nothing is now given, though there has been no apparent change in the circumstances of the congregation rendering them less able to contribute. We have gone over, somewhat carefully, the financial returns of all the congregations in the western section of the Church for the last year (1875-6) and cannot point to half-a-dozen whose ministers are known to be loyal to the Church's work that are not contributing fairly to the several schemes. We know of no valid reason why any settled congregation should fail to contribute to every one of the schemes yearly, and we know of no valid reason why any minister, or session, should fail to give their people the opportunity to contribute to every one of the schemes. When deficits do arise it is not fair to ask those congregations that have already contributed to make up a deficit caused by the failure of others to give, till first of all the defaulting congregations have been dealt with. It might be well for the Assembly to instruct Presbyteries not only to deal with defaulting congregations, but also to report the cause of such default to the Assembly, with the Presbytery's judgment thereon. Were all our ministers but truly loyal to the several departments of the Church's work, and alive to the importance and necessity of efficiently carrying it on, we would hear of no more deficits. As the minister whose letter we have above quoted, says: "Give the people a knowledge of the necessities of the work, and they will respond more or less liberally according to their circumstances, and we would have enough for all our schemes."

Rev. J. S. Black, of Erin Church, one of the delegates to the Presbyterian Council in Edinburgh, leaves Montreal in the middle of June, and will be absent two months.

The Sandwich Islanders have now for several years given voluntarily about \$24,000 per annum for the support of the Gospel at home and on adjacent islands. They thus prove their "knowledge of its worth."

The Empress Normal School at Tokio, Japan, has about 250 women and girls in it, besides fifty or sixty in the Kindergarten. Mr. Namakura, the superintendent, is a Christian. He was formerly a high official of the Tycoon, and considered by the Japanese a very wise and learned man.

THE REV. FERGUS FERGUSON ON THE REVISION OF THE CONFESION OF FAITH.

Our readers are aware that the subject of the revision of the Confession of Faith has been under discussion for some time in at least one branch of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland. The Rev. Mr. McRae introduced the subject in the United Presbyterian Presbytery of Paisley and Greenock, in a speech marked by extraordinary violence and extravagance of statement, and betraying, it was thought by his brethren, a rather slight acquaintance with the contents of the Confession.

Dr. Gillilan, of Dundee, continued the discussion in a sermon, more violent and denunciatory still, and containing statements, not perhaps surprising as coming from him, but such as would have been surprising had they come from any other minister of the same advanced age in the body to which he belongs. The latest plea, and in some respects the most elaborate plea, for revision of the Standards has just been put forth in the Presbytery of Glasgow by the Rev. Fergus Ferguson of that city. Mr. Ferguson is a minister of considerable eminence in the body as a scholar and as a preacher. From the notoriety which, even prior to this discussion, he had gained, it might be fairly inferred that he is more adventurous than wise. Mr. Ferguson's speech in the Presbytery of Glasgow, as reported in the *Daily Review* of April 11th, while bold and forceful, is singularly wanting in wisdom and moderation. The speaker seems to have the very slightest appreciation of the difficulty of embodying in a systematic form the teachings of Scripture on the manifold, and for our minds often difficult and mysterious, subjects of which it treats. On the contrary he is prepared himself and at once to replace the paragraphs of the Confession so "illogical" in their construction and "unhappy" in their expression, by an adequate, consistent, and Scriptural representation of truth, not only on such subjects as the Being of God, the person of Christ, and the salvation of man, but on "the nature, origin and end of the universe." The speech contains the outline of such a system of doctrine, and boldly compares or rather contrasts it step by step with the Confession of the Westminster divines. For the latter, not one good word is spoken, although the speaker has at least three times in his life solemnly and publicly accepted it as containing an exhibition of the sense in which he understands or understood the Word of God, and although he has a place in the Presbytery in which he denounces it, simply in virtue of the last and still very recent acceptance of it.

It is not alleged that Mr. Ferguson makes no points in his speech deserving the Church's attention, but we fear it must be said that the speech as a whole indicates the rejection by the speaker of the system of doctrine embodied in the Westminster Confession, and not in it only, but substantially in the Standards of the several churches of the Reformation. The *justice* of God is not indeed denied, but it is made a simple phrase of the divine goodness. The Trinity has much appearance of a Sabellian Trinity. The Covenant of Grace or the conception of it in the Confession "is a piece of theological mechanism, dead and wooden to the core." "The one ground of acceptance in the sight of God is necessarily determined by the *being of man*, and consists in conformity to the will of God, as expressed in and through that being." Many other positions, equally or even more divergent from those of the Confession, and these respecting vital questions, are taken in the speech, by which Mr. Ferguson supports his overture for revision of the Standards. It is not our intention to criticize these positions or even to specify the instances in which the doctrine of the Confession is unfairly dealt with. The speech has produced on our minds the most painful impression, and one might well despair of the future of the Scottish Churches if it were to receive general sympathy. Of this there is little likelihood in the meantime. In the Presbytery the motion found a somewhat reluctant seconder in Mr. McRae, the father of the minister of Greenock; and the further discussion of the overture was deferred to another meeting.

It will be evident to our readers that it is a misnomer to call the overture introduced by Mr. Ferguson one for the *revision* of the Confession; it is, as interpreted by the accompanying speech, one for its *rejection*, and the substitution in its place of an entirely different system of doctrinal belief. A Confession which is demonstrably erroneous in its teaching about God, about the person of Christ, involving the denial of His Divine personality and Divine existence, about the condition of man as a fallen being and the ground of acceptance before God, is not one to be revised; it is one to be buried out of sight and memory, and the Church which has held it forth as the truth of God should humble itself in the dust for the fearful crime of which it has been guilty. It is true that nearly all the Churches of Christendom would in this case have to unite in the act of correction.

Mr. Ferguson protests against "re-

ligion, the most living of all verities and the most beautiful of all spirits, being doomed to wear the shackles of a grim and ungratefully past, and to grind for ever in the prison house of a gloomy and dead metaphysic." The reference to "the prison-house of a gloomy and dead metaphysic" comes with ill grace from the speaker. The Confession is simplicity itself in comparison with the statements about the Being of God and the nature of man to which Mr. Ferguson treated the Presbytery of Glasgow, and which he gravely proposes to make the doctrinal basis of the church of the future. It would be difficult indeed to find, even in the most transcendental systems of theology which have issued from Germany, a specimen of more arbitrary, pretensions and only half intelligible word-play, than that in which he sets forth the attributes of God and the nature of man as made in God's likeness. The following extract will suffice in proof of the truth of this characterisation:

"As made in the image of God, man is triune in the constitution of his being—consisting of body, soul and spirit. As having a body, within which he holds the idea of himself, and by means of which he can give free and full expression to that idea, he is made in the image of the Divine omnipotence. As having a soul, in the light of which he can understand the reason and end of his own existence, and in the understanding of that, comprehend the reason and end of all existence, he is made in the image of the Divine omniscience. And as having a spirit, which pervades his entire body and soul, while yet in its influence and range it is not limited to either, he is made in the image of the Divine omnipresence."

The subject of the revision of the Confession, though even nothing more than this was sought, is one which every thoughtful and right-minded person must at once feel to be one of the greatest delicacy, and when taking the form suggested by this overture, certain to imperil for the moment very sacred interests, and to awaken the fears of many pious and far from weak-minded persons. It is one, nevertheless, which our adventurous assailant approaches in a quite lively spirit, and in the course of his speech he makes more than one hit of a witty kind, which would have been in doubtful taste on an occasion as unimportant as this was grave.

The whole proceeding is one very much to be regretted. If in the opinion of any, there is room and need for a revision of the Church's Standards, in the way of shortening or simplifying them, or removing expressions which are susceptible of being misunderstood, or of adding statements in which certain aspects of the character and love of God should receive greater prominence, the movement can only be retarded by such speeches as that which is now before us. One is safe in saying that a revision of the creeds of the Reformed churches will scarcely be undertaken by men who regard them with the sentiments entertained by these overtureists, or if it is, the course of these churches will be nearly run.

An important question and one demanding the immediate attention of the United Presbyterian Church is raised by these public declarations of Dr. Gillilan and Mr. Ferguson. They have made it evident that they do not any longer believe the Confession to be even in its fundamental teaching in harmony with the Word of God. Neither of them could put the questions of the formula to an elder or a minister at ordination, without being guilty to their own conscience of a grievous immorality. How long will they be permitted to remain in the ministry of the Church? How long can they remain with a good conscience, or even with self-respect? Those who love that Church will pray that it may be guided of God in the trying circumstances in which it is placed; as they will pray that even yet these brethren who are threatening to read it, may receive a better mind.

THE CANADIAN MONTHLY. Toronto: Hart & Rawlinson.

The contents of the number for May are varied and interesting as usual. "The Comedy of an Umbrella," is amusing, and so is "Round the Table." *Fidelis*, so well and favourably known to the readers of the *Monthly* as an essayist, appears in the character of a poet. The piece is entitled "Spring Birds," and contains a good deal of true poetic sentiment, well versified. In the article on "The Evolution of Morality," Mr. J. A. Allen, Kingston, replies to an essay with a somewhat similar leading by Professor Watson of Queen's College, which appeared in the October number. Professor Watson's essay was an able refutation of Mr. Darwin's theory that human morality, even at its best, is only a "development" of the social instincts of the lower animals. Mr. Allen enters the arena as the champion of the Darwinian theory. His article shows that he is possessed of very great ability, and his courteous tone is that of a person well qualified to conduct a controversy, but we rather think that the position taken by Professor Watson in the October article is still intact.

Paris is to have sixteen miles of underground railway.