

British American Presbyterian.

Vol. 3.—No. 20.]

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY JUNE 26, 1874

[Whole No. 124

Contributors and Correspondents.

LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MADOC.

WEDNESDAY, 17TH JUNE, 1874.

There was a great stir in Madoc on Wednesday last, at the laying of the Corner Stone of the Presbyterian Church. The rain had poured in torrents the day before, and as it drizzled during the forenoon of that day, it was feared that the attendance would be small. The different arrangements made had to be departed from, but when it approached noon, muddy though the roads were, and damp the air, the people hastened up to the hill from the different roads, and before the exercises commenced, fully 600 people had gathered. Had the day been favourable at least 1,000 would have been present.

A platform erected inside the tower was crowded with the members of Session, the building Committee, their wives, the choir, and several strangers from a distance; and the multitude stood around. At 10 minutes to 12 o'clock the pastor commenced his address, of which the following is the substance—

This Church is called St. Peter, after the name of the first Confessor of Christ. We claim for our church both a Scriptural and Historical Apostolicity; and we have the best right to him whom Christ made the chief foundation stone of his Church. It is a grand thing to belong to a Church shaped after the Scripture model; grander when it is the Custodian of sound doctrine; grandest, when its ministers and people are living Confessors of Christ. Yet, as in the case of the Israelitish Temple, He will desert us however Apostolic our Ritual, and pure our Creed unless we be living Epistles.

God answers prayer. At the dread hour of midnight, 2nd May, 1873, we were all aroused from our beds by the fearful cry of fire. What a sight presented itself to our view! On the one side, one-third of the business part of the village wrapped in flames—on the other the woods in several places. The wind a hurricane, showering down blazing shingles on church and home between, as if all the meteors of heaven were seeking the earth along its path. The weird look of the villagers, the lurid sky, the crackling and hissing of the writhing tongues of fire gave such a picture of Pandemonium that will not be effaced while memory lasts. Mounting the roof I swept the falling embers as fast as I could, and when I saw the Church roof taking fire, I felt that I could scarcely save my home when the fire was 500 yards away, how could I when it would be only 100? I descended and prayed with the family that the Lord would change the course of the wind two points, to save my home, and I vowed that I would do what I could for a better Church. When I returned to the roof, though the glowing embers fell a mile off, and I remained there till break of day and I saw the Church and Town Hall reduced to ashes, all the flakes of fire fell two points to the north. That vow I have redeemed, but I shall not rest till I see the Church completed.

I have little faith in Tea Meetings or Concerts as means of raising money. Were we trusting to them alone a few successful ones would delay the completion of our Church to the day of judgment. We cannot afford to rely on them. I have tried to instill into your minds Scriptural principles and I would back a few of these against a host of carnal demonstrations. The noble spirit exhibited by many is beyond all praise and few and poor as we are the object of our ambition is not beyond our reach. I wanted to have this public demonstration put that we may rejoice in God together. We thank him for the work He has given us to do, and for the success already vouchsafed.

The 20th Paraphrase was then sung. Then the pastor prayed. He next read the MEMORANDA OF THE CHURCH.

This congregation took shape on the 9th Sept. 1858, when Mr. James Chesnut was ordained its first minister. Forty names were enrolled as members, and they represented a tract of country fifteen miles in diameter. He resigned the charge at the close of 1855. After a vacancy of eighteen months, Mr. David Wishart was ordained its second minister, 6th April, 1857. He remains the incumbent still. At that time the membership was fifty-three.

Gradually three churches were built in different parts of this extensive field, and the work became so heavy that in 1866 he petitioned the Presbytery of Kingston to erect St. Columba and Elzire into a distinct charge. It was lived off with a membership as large as the whole of the original congregation. The same year St.

John's Huntingdon, was made a separate preaching station with a membership of 27.

The prosperity of the remaining part of the congregation continued to grow so that it was found necessary to make another hire in 1871; and St. Paul's was separated with 39 members.

During the pastorate of 17 years, the loss by death has been one and a half times the original membership; and because of the want of expanding industries to retain the increase of population, fully thrice the same number have migrated to parts remote. Yet notwithstanding the loss of nearly six times the original members, the membership is nearly double what it was then with a population remaining nearly stationary. Surely the Lord hath blessed us.

The liberality of the people has increased in a still greater ratio. The present fragment of the old congregation gives about two and a half times what the whole did at first.

Our first Church was a frame building 42, 36 originally. It was enlarged three different times till it was 81 in length.

It cost in all from \$5,000 to \$6,000.

On the 2nd of May 1873, we were all aroused at midnight by the fearful cry of fire. Though one-third of the business part of the village was one mass of flame, no one dreamed of the Church taking, as it was isolated by a distance of 400 yards, and stood on a considerable elevation. In a little while it was a heap of ashes.

The loss to us was great.

However by a kind Providence and with brave hearts the people have come nobly forward to erect a new and better Church. Mrs. Wishart was appointed to lay the Corner Stone on the 17th of June, 1874, at noon, with the fullest confidence that by the blessing of heaven the structure shall be completed in due time.

A. F. Wood, Esq. Warden, in the name of the ladies of the congregation, presented to Mrs. Wishart a silver trowel, with which to lay the Corner Stone. It is of solid silver, and the inscription is as follows—Presented to Mrs. Wishart by the ladies of the congregation on the occasion of laying the Corner Stone of St. Peter's Presbyterian Church, 17th of June, 1874.

The Session consists of Rev. D. Wishart, Moderator, and Messrs. A. F. Wood, J. Rollins, H. Seymour, A. Allan and W. Leslie, elders.

Managers and Building Committee. The members of Session ex-officio. F. E. Seymour, Treasurer, W. Fuller, J. Deans, J. Harper, and G. Miller.

Trustees, H. McKenzie, F. E. Seymour, J. Deans, J. Harper, and J. Whytoch. Architects, Langley, Langley and Burke, Toronto.

J. P. Shurie of Trenton is the foreman mason.

The cost will be as great as contributions will allow us.

The jar contains a copy of this memorandum: several coppers and silver coins of the Dominion; and a copy of each of the following papers. *Globe, Mail, Montreal Witness, Intelligencer, Ontario; BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN and Missionary Record.*

We can say with Isa. 64-11, "Our holy and beautiful house where our fathers praised thee is burnt with fire." But we can also say with Ezra 3-10, that we are laying the foundation of a new house for the Lord "with praise and shouting." And may the Prophecy of Haggai 2-4, be fulfilled in our blessed experience. "Be strong O Zerubbabel; be strong, O Joshua the High Priest; be strong all ye people of the land, and work for I am with you, Saith the Lord of Hosts."

Let us never forget however that Christ is the chief Corner Stone of His Church, Eph. 2-21. May we all grow up together an holy temple in the Lord, and be accepted by Him at His coming.

The choir then sang Ps. 118, 20, 22. Immediately thereafter Mrs. Wishart laid the Corner Stone, and after three raps declared it to be well and properly laid—and in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God.

All then joined in the Doxology. After the Benediction was pronounced the Assembly retired to the temporary place of worship, when nearly 400 sat down to a sumptuous dinner prepared by the ladies.

A Bazaar was held in the afternoon in the Masonic Hall, of a great variety of articles which were all priced under value.

In the evening a concert was held in the same place.

The sum realised was \$900, and the people separated after spending a most enjoyable day, and profitable to all, and long to be remembered.

THE NEW CHURCH.

Its extreme length is 87; width 44; height of basement, 18; of Assembly room,

81; of spire 120; Provision is made both for a clock and bell. The material is stone. The style is gothic, and it promises to be a credit to the good taste of the Architect.

The situation is magnificent and may it prove of incalculable value to the people of the place for many a generation.

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH OF GENEVA.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—Having been lately in Geneva, I purpose to give you some account of the state of matters as they affect religion in that city, at the present time. I need make no apology for troubling you with such a statement, for Geneva must ever be interesting to every true Presbyterian, however great the spiritual eclipse which has come over it. There is no reason to reason to despair of Geneva; for a that country produced such men as D'Aubigne and Malan, when the Church was in its lowest condition, and when the sacred fire of divine truth had to be kindled in their breasts, by a foreigner, what may we expect from Geneva, when its National Church appears to be rising from its ruins? But though the Church with which D'Aubigne was connected, is still in a vigorous condition, spiritually, and though many of the pastors and people of the Established Church are making decided progress, in their views of Evangelical Christianity, it is to be feared that the great body of the people are in a deplorable condition, both as to correct views of divine truths and the performance of the practical duties of religion. The Sabbath is desecrated in Geneva, to as great an extent, so far as I have seen, as in any city of the continent. And indeed, it may be safely said that Sabbath desecration is the master sin of Continental Europe, and the main cause of the ungodliness which is making such havoc throughout it. Men reputed pious and evangelical, are not ashamed to do things, from which a Scotch or a Canadian Christian would recoil with horror. Unsound views in regard to the Sabbath, from which even Calvin was hardly free, appear to me to be the weak point in European Christianity, which at one time had nearly ruined it, and which still prevent it from attaining the strength, which would make it the great power on the continent, which it ought to be.

But whatever the Churches of the Evangelical union may be, the Established Church is now completely enslaved by the State; and though certainly in a better state, doctrinally, than it was, it is, I am afraid still, to a considerable extent, under the influence of rationalism. And yet it is undoubtedly making progress towards sounder views. The teaching and writings of D'Aubigne, and Gaussens, and Viuet doubtless extended far beyond their own students and communions, and must have exercised a salutary influence over the present ministers of the Established Church. But to whatever extent improved the doctrinal views of the present pastors of the Genevan Church may be, their teeth are now being set on edge by the wild grapes, which their fathers planted. In the providence of God, it is generally not when a Church is in its lowest and darkest state, that his judgments are poured forth upon it, but rather when light has risen upon it, so that it may be enabled to recognize his hand in the punishment inflicted upon it. But however this may be, the Church of Geneva has now been subjected to a degree of humiliation, to which no Christian Church is justified in submitting. Up till April last, it possessed rights and privileges sufficient to have enabled it to work out its reformation; but of these rights it has now been deprived and the government of the church placed entirely in the hands of the Council d'Etat. Up till April last the consistory had still the power of appointing the professors of divinity, but that power has now been wrested from them by the State; and we know how the government of another Canton in Switzerland exercised this power, when the infidel Strauss was appointed to a Divinity Chair in their University. Up till April last, no pastor could be appointed to a Genevan Church unless he was a member of that Church; but now that restriction has been removed, and there seems to be no legal barrier in the way of their appointing anybody they please.

The pastors of Geneva seem to be now thoroughly alarmed by these changes in the constitution of their country; and twenty of the most eminent of them have issued a protest against the New Constitution, in so far as it interferes with the privileges of the Established Church. So alarming to these pastors regard the present state of matters, that they seem to have deliberated on the question of separating their Church altogether from civil

connection, and seeking security and freedom, in absolute independence. This step, which we think the only right and proper one, they have not taken; but have resolved to submit to the new order of things, "taking careful note of future legislation." No future legislation is necessary to render the present state of affairs unendurable by a Christian Church. "No illusion," the pastors say, "is possible. The former National Protestant Church of Geneva has ceased to exist; and there is nothing left in its place, but a species of religious establishment, which is not a church, in the sense at least which has hitherto attached to the term."

"If we take the assurance of the twenty pastors, says the *Swiss Times*, "the Church is now deprived of all real authority; it has lost the right even to constitute itself upon any Christian basis whatever. We cannot consider this too serious a view to take of the recent changes. A State-recognized Church is one thing; a State-dictated creed another." The pastors fully recognize the danger to which their Church is subjected by this new Constitution; but for the present they have resolved to submit to the new system, and observe how it works, waiting for the day when the separation of the Church from the State being decreed, all religious beliefs could be constituted on the ground of liberty."

We do not presume to judge these pastors, we can see certain modifying circumstances in their case; at the same time, we think they have let slip a noble opportunity of testifying to the truth, and showing to the world that there is something in the world which Christian men value far more highly than ease and comfort, or social position and secular advantages of any sort. They have tacitly at least, accepted a compact, which is unjustifiable, by which the interest of Christ's Church is sacrificed, and on which God's blessing cannot be expected.

On Sabbath last, the 10th inst., being disappointed in getting to the Church of the Madeline, where I was led to believe that divine service began at 9 o'clock, I went to the fine old Cathedral of St. Peter, which I reached about 9:20. The people were assembling, but the Church was not yet, by any means, well filled, so that I had no difficulty in getting a seat near the pulpit. Regular service begins in St. Peter's at 10 o'clock, but already a reader was in the pulpit, with bands, but no gown. Shortly after I had taken my seat, he rose, and commenced reading the Scriptures, while the people were assembling. This is just a countenance of the old practice which prevailed in Scotland, when Bibles were scarce, and many were unable to read. At the regular hour of service, the reader descended from the pulpit. A very gentleman like person, with hands, entered a small pulpit, or reading desk, placed against a pillar, at some distance from the pulpit. This was the Chantre or precentor. Soon after, the pastor, in gown and bands, ascended the pulpit and opened the service with prayer. He had a prayer book in his hand which he sometimes looked on, but he seemed so familiar with its contents that he scarcely used the book. He evidently entered into the spirit of the prayer, and offered it up in a most devout and affecting manner, the people standing, as they do in Scotland. After this a hymn was given out, the organ pealed forth, and the precentor led the singing with a noble voice, whilst the people, most of whom had books, with music, very generally joined in the song of praise. I ought to have mentioned that, by the time the reader had done his work, the cathedral was about full. In the neighborhood of the pulpit, chairs were placed in the aisles, and though near the entrance, at a great distance from the pulpit there was space enough, still there was a vast congregation. This great congregation as I afterwards learned, had been attracted by the expectation of hearing a discourse on the crisis of the Church. The preacher was the Rev. M. Barde, fils, a fine-looking man, who evidently felt the importance of the position in which he was placed. I am not so familiar with the French as to be able to follow the speaker's train of thought and appreciate the force of his statements, but I could perceive the drift of the discourse, and there was no mistake as to the effect produced on the audience. On one occasion, when the preacher paused, one could hear the people breathing freely and loudly for a moment, as if taking their breath, after their feelings had been highly wrought up. After what I witnessed, I felt that there is a living power in the old Church of Geneva still, which, if the ministers are but faithful to the trust committed to them, no civil government will be able to extinguish. I introduced myself to the precentor, who procured for

me an introduction to the minister, with whom I wished to shake hands for the testimony which he had borne to the truth.

What, it may be asked, is the cause of the sad spiritual blight which has come over the city of Calvin and Bezer, the cradle of the reformation, the asylum of the persecuted reformers, when one of the best translations of the Bible, which existed at the time, was executed by the English refugees, and from which the light of divine truth, radiated and enlightened many lands? Why has the gold become dim, and the fine gold been changed? I believe one of the main causes which led to this was the loose and unscriptural doctrine in regard to the sanctification of the Sabbath, which, from an early period was held by many in Geneva. That repose of the soul being broken, that supplier of spiritual food being corrupted, that sentinel of divine truth being cut down, error rushed in like a flood, till, towards the close of last century, the most precious and fundamental truths of Christianity were denied. The shepherds were unfaithful, they were corrupted themselves, and became the corruptors of others. It was the professors of theology, and through them the pastors, who introduced these soul-destroying errors throughout the Continent, which have made the people what they are at the present day. They let loose a power which they cannot now control, and of whose tyranny and ungodliness the present pastors are being compelled to eat the bitter fruits.

It is encouraging to know that there is a considerable number of the people of Geneva who sympathize with the pastors in their present distress. A public meeting was held at Geneva, on Monday last, the 11th inst., called by the National Evangelical Union of Geneva, for the purpose of moving an address of sympathy with, and confidence in, the twenty pastors, who have published the manifesto to which we have alluded, relative to the New Constitutional Laws of Geneva, as they affect the National Church. The meeting was a great success. The hall in which it met was crowded by upwards of 500 people, and the address was unanimously adopted.

Much as we sympathize with the evangelical Christians of Geneva, at the present time, we cannot but feel that the position which they have taken up is a weak one, perhaps I should rather say a false one. The gentleman who presided at the meeting said that their Church had received from the law recently enacted its death-blow, and yet they have resolved to continue in it. In the address itself this passage occurs. "The ancient Protestant Church of Geneva, that Church has so long been the glory, and the happiness of our country, has ceased to exist since the 26th of April, 1874. But the Evangel on which it was founded cannot perish, and no one can prevent us from reconstructing on that corner stone, a new church, which preserving the traditions, the breadth, and faith of its predecessor, shall be its direct offspring, and shall have, like it, the right to call itself National." The concluding passage, which we greatly rejoice, as showing the progress which evangelical doctrines have made in Geneva.

"The fidelity and energy, always increasing, with which you have not ceased up to the present time, to affirm, in your preachings and your writings, your faith in the teachings of the Evangel, in presence of the rising tide of incredulity and rationalism, are sure pledges for the future. We know that you will continue to confess aloud our Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, slain for our sins, and arisen for our salvation; we know that if you rest at your post, it is in order to work faithfully, and spread and enforce continually in the midst of us the good news of spiritual health. So long as you march thus before us, animated with the spirit of Jesus Christ, you will find us ready to follow you with joy, and to confide to you the religious and moral education of our children, to work with you in the maintenance and development of the Church of Jesus Christ, which always living in the midst of, endures even amidst the ruins of the churches of the earth. With this object, and in this spirit we are thoroughly decided to employ to the full extent, every time the occasion requires, the full measure of liberty which the law that has just been voted guarantees us. And when the day arrives, and it cannot be remote, of the complete separation of State from the Church, the Protestant Evangelical Church of Geneva will find itself alive and upstanding, thoroughly organized and ready to provide a shelter for the generations that shall succeed us. May God, which ever our efforts and make them tend to the advance-

(Continued on 25th Page.)