

THE
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AN UNEXPECTED VOICE.

THE closing exercises of Knox College were held recently, and the worthy principal—Rev. Dr. Caven—delivered an address. The theme was a striking one when used in a Presbyterian circle, though to Congregationalists it is familiar. It was this:—"Progress in Theology." The address was a masterpiece, and proves the possession by Dr. Caven of a thoroughly disciplined mind. We must be permitted to congratulate the speaker on his grand effort, for in a place where we did not expect it, one of the cardinal tenets of Congregationalists has been advanced and defended with a power considerably above the average.

One of our watchwords has been and is this: "We believe God has more light to break forth from His word than we have yet seen." This was the sentiment of our ancestral Robinson, of sainted memory. And it is the sentiment which prevails in Congregational circles to-day. We believe in the "progress of theology." Truth breaks slowly and continually upon the human mind. And believing this, we welcome its coming, we close up no avenue by which it might come. This is the genius of our system. And as the early disciples could not bear many things when the Christ was fellowshiping with them, but had to await a future development when the Comforter should come; so we, not knowing many things yet, go on trusting in the ever-present Spirit to make these all plain.

Quite unexpectedly to us, Dr. Caven emphasizes strongly just such views from the principal's chair of Knox College. True, he is cautious. He is slow to declare them. But declare them he does, unless words do not bear their meaning in their face. We quote two or three of his fine, germinal sentences:

"Inexhaustible material for the construction of doctrine lies before us in the Bible; and in the improvement of the human mind as an instrument of discovery, the increase of knowledge which may subserve theological investigation, and the fresh light continually shed on Scripture by the unfolding of providence we may have the assurance—certainly the possibility—of a continual progress in theological knowledge. . . . No new revelation will be vouchsafed, but the Spirit, communicated with increasing fulness, will enable the Church more perfectly to understand the revelation which we now have; and her knowledge—her theology—will become increasingly profound, comprehensive, and harmonious. . . . The Church will not lay the foundations of a new edifice, nor tear down the courses which have been securely built, but whatever additional stones she may find worthy to have a place in the structure will be laid on and incorporated in harmony with the design. Imperfections will be removed, additional buttresses supplied, a more perfect beauty added, but the noise of demolition—of those who 'break down the carved work with hammers and axes'—will not be heard."

We can only add this pregnant question from the same source:—

"Do we discourage the aspiration after higher light which it is the glory of the human soul to be conscious of? Surely not. For whatever limits are prescribed to man's knowledge of divine truth we may not venture to say that we have entirely reached these limits."

No one can peruse these sentences without

coming to the conclusion that Dr. Caven has been ably advocating one of our fundamental principles in his closing address. He admits theological progress. He believes in it. He does not discourage the aspirations after higher light. And he sends forth his students with the advice: open your windows to the light of progress. We are glad to know that we have a friend in a quarter where we did not expect to meet him. The voice is unexpected.

In closing, we put it to the incisive and logical mind of Principal Caven whether he has not undermined the Westminster Confession as a test for the Presbyterian Church? That Church says to-day, there can be nothing in advance of the Confession! Principal Caven says there may be advance in theology; yes, he goes further, and says there is and there will be. Then, consistently, he cannot any longer help to tie men down to a creed formulated centuries ago. So, we conclude that the worthy professor has broken away from the tradition of his Church, and we welcome him into the circle of freer men.

NEATNESS.

OUR church buildings should all be made as bright and cheerful as possible. Nowhere do taste and artistic beauty seem more in place than in the house of God. The surroundings of the Gospel should be pleasant and attractive. We do not advocate gaudiness. A church edifice may be made so grand as to be nothing more than a magnificent burial vault to a people. Self-denial and piety may be lost to sight in them. But we do advocate neatness and taste both in the interior and exterior arrangements of our churches. Anything like slovenliness we can hardly forgive.

Yet, how often is neatness overlooked. Approach one church, and the first thing that meets your eye is a gate hanging on one hinge, or a fence sadly dilapidated, or a step broken down, or the roof all moss-grown and leaky. Enter another, and a lot of unsightly tin pails hanging under the stove-pipe greets you. Or the lamps have either a broken or uncleaned chimney, through which the light vainly attempts to reach your hymn-book. Or the frosting is scratched off the glass panes. The stove is red with rust, looking as if blacking was dear and elbow-grease scarce. Or there is a great pile of wood hurled carelessly down by the front door. And so on, *ad libitum*. Now we contend that at a very little cost all these slovenly things might be set to rights. And they ought to be. The fence should be mended. The step fixed. The gate re-hung. The stove blacked. And so forth. And if some matting were laid down in the aisles, the late comer with No. 12 boots on would not so easily disturb the solemnities of the service.

It is a pleasure to visit such churches as Durham, Stouffville, Cobourg, Listowel, etc.,

They are bright, neat, clean. And there is no reason why all our churches should not be as bright and neat and clean as those we have specified. The cost would be insignificant. All that is wanting is the will. There is hardly an instance of slovenliness which the minister might not remove by a kind suggestion. And an occasional sermon on "neatness," as it respects the person, the home, the house of God, would not be out-of-place. Culture should be made a handmaid to the Gospel. The pious heart loses nothing by the cultivation of its aesthetic tastes.

COLLEGE CLOSING.

CLOSING exercises of the fortieth session of the Congregational College of B. N. A. were held in the lecture hall of Emmanuel church, April 9th. The Chairman of the Board, Rev. J. F. Stevenson, LL.B., presiding. After devotional exercises conducted by Rev. A. J. Bray, who also at an after stage of the proceedings made some remarks, and a short address by the chairman, the principal, vice-principal and lecturer on Greek exegesis gave an account of their respective work during the session and the results of the sessional examinations. The Calvary Church Silver Medal for Church History was awarded to Mr. Wm. Ewing, B.A., who with Mr. A. McFadyen, B.A., received the Certificate of the College at the close of their curriculum. It was mentioned that sixteen students had been in attendance, eight of whom formed the theological class; that the college had during the session supplied a greater number of stations with Sunday preaching than heretofore; and that for vacation work six would supply places in Ontario and three would do the same in Quebec, comprising all who had made application for summer employment.

The principal mentioned that the collection of the Endowment Fund had reached the amount of \$11,500, and that there were about \$1,500 good subscriptions yet unpaid. This would leave \$2,000 short of the \$15,000 necessary to be raised before the \$5,000 gift promised at the beginning, on these terms, could be realized. Mr. Hague made a short, telling speech on the subject and offered to pay the last \$500 of the \$2,000. He has already given \$400. The immediate point now is to obtain this \$1,500 in order to secure Mr. Hague's \$500. Dr. Wilkes will be glad to hear from friends in any part of the Dominion or elsewhere with subscriptions payable at once or in two instalments to make up this amount. He would be glad to have to report the sum subscribed and partly paid at the annual meeting in June.

SIGNOR VIEVIA a colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Portugal, has been tried for the crime of circulating the Word of God and condemned by the judge to one year's imprisonment. The priests, of course, were the plaintiffs.