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Contributors and Correspondents

PSALMODY UNDER THE NEW TESTAMENT DISPENSATION.

BY REV. JOHN DUNBAR, DUNBARTON.

No. III.—(Continued.)

At what time a metrical version of the Psalms, in the language of the country appeared in Scotland, cannot now with certainty be determined; but as they were introduced into England with the Reformation, so it may be that then, if not before, they appeared also in Scotland. It would seem, that at least portions of them were there known in a versified form even at an earlier period, and it is held as certain that prior to 1646 a number of the psalms was translated into metre and in use, George Wishart singing at least one of them on the night on which he was apprehended. In Scotland as well as elsewhere it would appear that the first publication of the metrical psalms preceded the publication of any other portion of the Scriptures. In 1631 there appeared a new version of the psalms said to have been composed by King James I., and Charles among his other ill-judged innovations insisted on this version being used instead of the old one, but in this he was unsuccessful. Of the numerous scholars that devoted themselves more or less to this work, Zachary Boyd, one of the most learned of the old Scottish divines, excelled them all, at least in the extent of his labours. It is said that he turned into metrical verse the whole Bible, but while this may be questioned, yet it appears that he not only turned into verse the four evangelists, but cast into dramatic form several of the most striking incidents of the Bible. In his life-time there appeared, from his hand, three editions of the psalms in metre, the first and second of these are now rarely to be met with, the third is not so rare; of this edition he sent a copy to every presbytery in the church, requesting to know their opinion of it at the following General Assembly. The expressed opinion of that body was such that his version was neither adopted nor recommended. It may seem somewhat strange that the version of psalms, now, and so long in use, and which seems to be exclusively Scottish and Presbyterian in their use, should have been nearly altogether from the pen, either of a Scotchman nor a clergyman, but from a native of the south of England, a member of Cromwell's Council, as well as of the Long Parliament, called Francis Rouse. Being of a poetical turn, he like many others of his day exercised his talents in versifying the psalms. His version was recommended by the ruling powers of the day to the Westminster Assembly as being superior to the more ancient version of Sternhold and Hopkins. The Assembly carefully examined it, and after somewhat altering and amending it they returned it to parliament with the expressed opinion that it would be both useful and profitable to the church if permitted to be sung in public worship. In their alterations the wisdom and taste of the Westminster Divines are seen in their retaining Hopkin's grand version of the c. Psalm, perhaps the finest in the whole collection. The cxiv. is also nearly his, and with the exception of the viii., which is not generally believed to be Rouse's, all the others are supposed to be versified by him. This version was published in 1645 by the authority of both houses of parliament, and recommended for general use. In England it was only very partially adopted, but in Scotland it met with very general acceptance, and the title pages of our psalm books tells us that this version is "allowed by the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland to be more plain, smooth and agreeable to the text than any heretofore," and by their authority it was "appointed to be sung in congregations and families." Although the rendering of this version, may, in certain passages, appear at first sight, somewhat rough and uncouth, yet taken as a whole it is really fine, exhibiting a robust and a rugged grandeur, elevating, animating and ennobling, ever blended with the most simple, tender and lofty sublimity, and approaching more nearly than any other, not simply in the letter, but specially in the spirit to the unapproachable grandeur and soul stirring power of the Hebrew original. Some years afterwards one of the most readable of all the older versions appeared from the pen of the celebrated George Tandy, much more elegant than Sternhold's or Rouse's, and set to beautiful and appropriate music in two parts by one Henry Lawes, the friend of Milton; by the metres being somewhat complicated and unusual they never became popular. After this a feeling became more and more prevalent in Scotland that the common version of the psalms should be improved, and in consequence the General Assembly, annually, for some years, appointed a committee to revise it, but their labours seem to have terminated in any satisfactory result. Ultimately at the suggestion of Sir Walter Scott it was agreed by the Assembly that no further attempt at alteration should be made. Sir Walter, who was no mean judge in such matters, considered the version, with all its real and supposed harshness, yet so beautiful that any alterations would eventually prove just as many blemishes. Irrespective of such opinions, however, one, the Rev. James Maxwell, offered a new version to the Church of Scotland in which, as a strange and unwarrantable peculiarity he suppressed all those phrases that referred to instrumental music, but this expedient did not secure for it the popular favour. Since his time several other attempts have been made to modify and improve the version. The last attempt made on the other side of the Atlantic upwards of half a century ago was not so much intended to supersede the existing version, as under the title of "additional psalmody" to introduce metrical paraphrases of some of the psalms in style more conformable to the taste and skill of the age, and in view of this, several eminent poets were asked to contribute to the work. In due course their combined labours were printed, and inspected by presbyteries, but they never came to any account, and from that day to this the whole subject has there been permitted to slumber, and although of late the churches have awakened up to a wide-spread and keenly felt sense of the nature and importance of the service of sacred song in the sanctuary, yet the anxiety and the effort have not been manifested in connection with the existing version, but rather in the selecting and associating therewith a number of "hymns and spiritual songs," and thus in the service of the sanctuary completing and employing the apostolic triad of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Quite recently, one section of the American Presbyterian Church prepared and published a new metrical version of the psalms, but as I have not seen it I can say nothing regarding it, but from the exceedingly little notice that has been taken of it by the periodicals of the day, may be inferred the popular estimate in which it is held. Our present version then, with all its occasional defects has not yet, and is not likely soon to be replaced with a better. This has been the opinion of many competent judges, among whom, as already mentioned is Sir Walter Scott. To these may be added that of Allan Cunningham, who says that "the want of elegance which I have heard complained of, is but a poor reason for throwing into oblivion a vast body of verse, which abounds with such simplicity of language, such sincerity of expression, and wears such an old world air, as no living bards with all their harmony and polish can equal." One who was well fitted to judge says of Scotland, and we may warrantably extend his remarks to Presbyterians generally; he says that "while the church in that country has possessed ever since the Reformation a version of the psalms, equal to any other body of Christians, and adapted to it too, a body of music of the very highest excellence, it is an indisputable fact that in no country in Christendom has this delightful and important part of worship been performed in so slovenly a manner or been allowed to fall into so low and discreditable a state as in Scotland." This however, while unfortunately a too true picture of the past, is happily not the state of psalmody at the present.

(To be continued.)

NOTES FROM EUROPE.

PAYING TRIBUTE—A GREENLAND OWL.—FIRST SIGHT OF IRELAND.—FIRST SUNDAY IN EUROPE.—REV. DONALD MILLER'S WORK AT GENOA.—A PROTESTANT SCHOOL.—DENSE DARKNESS OF ROMANISM.

MR. EDITOR.—It is a comparatively easy thing in these days, if one only has time and money at his command, to make a pilgrimage to this city, which is so full of interest to the classical and Biblical scholar, the antiquarian, and the lover of the fine arts. In the huge floating palaces which cross the Atlantic, you can enjoy the comfort and luxuries of home, and if you possess good sailing qualities, and are not compelled to pay tribute to old ocean as it tosses its mighty billows in scornful defiance of the winds, you will experience a great deal of pleasure during a voyage. I must confess, however, that my pleasure was not unmixed on board the steamship *Sardinian*, which sailed from Quebec the day after I met you in Montreal, and rashly promised to send you a few jottings from old Rome. Though she is, perhaps, the finest vessel that crosses the Atlantic, still, for two days she plunged so violently

that I had to yield to the inevitable process which Mark Twain so comically describes as the "Oh my!" What a pity it is that science and engineering skill have not yet been able to devise some method by which all the discomfort of sea-sickness may be prevented.

Nothing of particular interest occurred during the voyage until we were in mid-ocean, when a Greenland owl, a magnificent specimen, alighted on the rigging of the ship. He must have been carried out to sea by the violent storm from the north, whose effects we had already felt. He was caught by one of the sailors, and was an object of much curiosity and sage speculation, and before our arrival at Moville, he was purchased by a gentleman from Belfast. What has been his fate since I cannot say, but I should not be at all surprised if he has by this time taken his place among the treasures of one of the museums of the Emerald Isle.

When the grand, rugged coast of Eria was sighted the monotony of a "life on the ocean wave" was broken. Every one was on deck rejoicing in the prospect of soon again treading upon terra firma. The magnificent cliffs, the bold headlands, the castellated rocks excited the admiration of every one who had not before seen them. Arriving at Greencastle, many of our fellow-voyagers bound for Ireland and Scotland landed. It was amusing to watch some of the steerage passengers, who evidently had a hard time of it during the preceding five or six days, and whose faces beamed with joy at the prospect of once more treading upon the "old sod." Fifteen minutes or so were occupied in their transit to the tender that was to carry them to the pier, and away we steamed for Liverpool, arriving there exactly ten days after we left Quebec. Taking train immediately for London, I spent twenty-four hours in the great metropolis, then resuming my journey across the channel, through France by Paris, over the Alps by the Mount Cenis tunnel, I halted at Turin, in Northern Italy, for a day. Genoa, the city of palaces, I reached on the fifteenth day, and there I spent my first Sunday in Europe. The Rev. Donald Miller, M.A., a man of great ability and an accomplished scholar, is minister of the Scotch Church in Genoa. His congregation there is small. The Presbyterian residents number only ninety in all. Some of them being engineers on the railways and seafarers live outside of the city, and are able to attend only the morning service. But, being a great commercial city, about nine thousand British sailors visit the port during the year, and Mr. Miller devotes a good deal of his time in ministering to their spiritual wants. Although he has a missionary engaged in labouring among them, he superintends and directs his efforts. Thus far the congregation have been worshipping in the Waldensian Church, which was built about eighteen years ago. Previous to its erection the Waldensian congregation had purchased an old Roman Catholic Church which had fallen into disuse, but when it became generally known that it was to be used as place of worship by the heretics, a great excitement arose and threats were uttered, so that the protection of the civil power had to be sought. The late Count Cavour informed the congregation that their rights would be protected, but in the interests of peace, he advised them to surrender the church to the Roman Catholics, promising to do all in his power to secure them an eligible site for the erection of a building. Having selected their present site and commenced to build, the Roman Catholic clergy vowed to the Virgin that they would build a church sacred to her if she would only bring to naught the devices of the heretics. The church was commenced on the opposite side of the street, but the Virgin was not propitiated. The Waldensian edifice was completed and used for public worship for seven years before the temple to the Virgin was finished. The Waldensian Church has been the rallying point for the Protestants of Genoa, so that now there is an Episcopal Church only a few yards from it, and Mr. Miller's congregation are building one on the same street which will be ready for occupation very shortly. The building includes a manse and school-room, and together with the site will cost nearly thirty thousand dollars, ten thousand of which are yet to be realized. Where this sum is to be got is a problem which is giving Mr. Miller no end of anxiety.

Mr. Miller takes a deep interest in the subject of education, and has succeeded in establishing a school for young ladies of the higher classes in Rome, which is in charge of an efficient lady teacher, Miss Dalgas. She has two assistants. Italian parents, who are Roman Catholics, have

sent their children to this school, and these have been instructed in Bible history, and have become so deeply interested in the Scriptures that they have procured copies for themselves. The school has won such favour in the eyes of its Italian patrons that its efficiency has come to the knowledge of the Minister of Public Instruction, and the Government have, unasked, offered a small grant in aid of its work. Mr. Miller is hopeful that through this educational agency many of the better classes may be led to break loose from the Church of Rome, and be no longer entangled with its degrading yoke. The school was opened only thirteen months ago, and its success has surpassed the most sanguine expectations of its originator, who expects now that in a year or two it will be self-supporting.

A Sunday in Genoa, as in all the Italian cities, is anything but a day of holy rest. The shops are nearly all open, and the streets are thronged with people engaged in business or the pursuit of pleasure. The cries of newspaper vendors, and tinkler pedlars, and green grocers, and much-abused donkeys, make the day hideous. Still the Churches are crowded with devout worshippers, chiefly old men and women and young children. No matter at what hour you enter you find great numbers kneeling at the various altars and "seeking heaven's grace and boon." It fills one with sadness to think of the dense darkness in which this land is steeped. How earnestly we who are blessed with a pure faith and an open Bible should pray that the Light of the Sun of Righteousness may arise upon it with healing in His wings, and that the power of the Spiritual power may be broken.

But I am beginning to think that my first epistle to you from Rome is already too long, so I shall break off my narrative here, and in a day or two resume recording some of my experiences in this wonderful place. Yours truly,

ROME, 4th Dec., 1876.

DONALD ROSS.

Letter of Acknowledgement.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—As our new church in Bracedge, which we have been endeavoring partially to complete during the past season has been formally opened for public worship, I deem the present a fitting occasion to acknowledge, on behalf of the Building committee and congregation, the kindness we have received from many friends in different parts of the church. Contributions have been forwarded from the following congregations, viz., Fullerton and Downie, Woodville, Hibernia, Fingal, Bluevale, St. Marys, N. Easthope, and from individuals in Stratford, Woodstock, St. Catherine's and Guelph, amounting in all to about \$800. Though we have taken possession of the church it is not yet finished, having received but one coat of plaster, and being yet unpainted—the first of these affecting our comfort in this extreme climate—the latter militating against the preservation of the work, on the outside especially. As for pews and a pulpit we cannot think of them for sometime to come. We had resolved not to incur any serious amount of debt beyond a mortgage of \$600, but notwithstanding the care of the committee in this respect we find liabilities to the amount of about \$400 unprovided for. We desire through your columns gratefully to acknowledge the various sums contributed by those above referred to, and will not soon forget the kind words with which in many instances they were accompanied. We had also expected aid from other friends to whom we made known our case, from whom no report has been received. Others again knowing our circumstances for the first time may desire to aid us in our struggle. No more fitting opportunity could present itself. Let it not be forgotten that this is purely a mission field, and that in aiding us in this enterprise the mission work of the church is being most surely advanced. In no field in the whole church, do we know of a more important point than Bracedge—the capital of the Free grant district—the centre of some twenty-six mission stations. Our position here has a direct influence on the whole field. Taking into account the points yet unoccupied, as well as the rapidity with which this District of Muskoka and the neighboring Districts of Parry Sound and Nipissing are being settled, the number of stations in this field must be doubled within the next few years, if our church is to supply the wants of those who naturally look to her and have a claim upon her for the enjoyment of ordinances. It is a matter of some importance then that as soon as possible the older stations if not self-supporting be at least ranked as aid receiving congregations. The prospects of this being the case are good with respect to Bracedge but for this unavoidable debt. It must militate against our growth so long as it exists. I have sufficient faith in the christian liberality of those in our church who have enough and to spare, to believe that we shall not be long left in this condition, but that as the wants not only of this particular congregation but of the whole District become better known, our burdens shall be shared by many who not only wish and pray for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom in our land, but who desire in themselves to fulfil the law of Christ. Thanking you, Mr. Editor, for the space thus afforded me.—I am yours etc.,

A. FINDLAY,

Missionary.

Presbytery of Manitoba.

The Presbytery of Manitoba met in the Presbyterian Church, Kildonan, on the 6th day of December, for the transaction of business; Prof. Hart, moderator, presiding. There was a large attendance of members considering the season of the year. A letter was read from the Rev. J. S. Stewart declining the call from the Boyne and Pembina Mountain congregations. The Presbytery concurred in the declination, and on motion the call was set aside. Dr. Black reported that he had preached at Sunnyside and held a meeting with a view to calling a minister, but that the people were not ready to call. The reports were received and Dr. Black's conduct approved. The Rev. Mr. Donaldson reported that he had moderated in a call at Portage la Prairie on the 6th day of November, and that the congregations of Portage la Prairie and Burnside unanimously called the Rev. Allan Bell. The call signed by thirty-two members and forty-four adherents was laid on the table. The call after explanations given by the commissioner, Mr. Sutherland, was unanimously sustained and placed in the hands of Mr. Bell; and the call was at a future adjournment accepted. The Presbytery appointed an adjourned meeting to be held at Portage la Prairie on the 3rd day of January inst., and at the hour of 2 p.m., for the induction of Mr. Bell. At the induction the moderator was appointed to preside, Mr. J. S. Stewart to preach, Dr. Black to address the minister, and Mr. Robertson the congregation. A letter was read from the Rev. Mr. Frazer, Saugeen in reference to the defraying of his expenses in returning to Ontario and other matters, and the moderator and clerk were appointed a committee to consider the matter and report at the next meeting of Presbytery. A circular letter was read from Dr. Reid amount the debt of the Home Mission Fund of the General Assembly. The clerk was instructed to direct attention to the contributions already made by the Presbytery to this fund.

About fifteen months ago the Presbytery passed a resolution authorizing the Rev. Mr. Boyd, of Crosshill, to collect books from friends in Scotland for the library of Manitoba College. There was a report handed in by Prof. Bryce showing that 247 volumes had been forwarded, that some friends had contributed \$110, and that the Free Church of Scotland had made a donation of \$20 sterling in aid of the library. The report was received and adopted, when Prof. Bryce moved, seconded by Prof. Robertson, that the thanks of the Presbytery are due and are hereby given to the Rev. James Boyd, of Crosshill, for his interest in Manitoba College while on a visit to Scotland, in collecting books and money for the procuring of books for the College Library; and that thanks of the Presbytery are also tendered to the friends in Scotland for their reasonable donation of books and money, and to the Colonial Committee of the Free Church of Scotland for the gift of \$20 sterling. The motion was carried unanimously. Dr. Black reported that the General Assembly's Foreign Mission Committee had made a grant of \$150 per annum in aid of the mission school on the Roseau Reserve. Reports were handed in from congregations and mission stations of Presbytery showing the amounts subscribed for the support of ordinances. These all showed great liberality on the part of the people in the present circumstances of the Province. The following are some of the stations reporting:—Springfield and Sunnyside, \$808; Hookwood, etc., \$300; Caledonia and Clearsprings, \$200; Portage la Prairie and Burnside, over \$800; and Little Britain, over \$240. The Presbytery's Home Mission Committee was instructed to secure complete returns, and dispose of the whole matter at their earliest convenience. There was read an amendment to the constitution of a Knox Church, Winnipeg, adopted at a congregational meeting, and transmitted through the session providing for the filling up of any vacancies in the board or management during the year by the managers, without going to the trouble of calling a congregational meeting. The change was granted, provided that in each case the appointments made secure the approval of the session, and, on this understanding, the clause was confirmed. The General Assembly appointed the first Sabbath in December for collections to be taken up in the congregations of the Church in aid of the Colleges. That day having passed the Presbytery recommended congregations and mission stations to take up such collections on Sabbath, December 8th, where annual contributions are not given on some other system, and appointed the moderator, Prof. Bryce, Dr. Black and the clerk, to prepare a suitable address to be read in such congregations setting forth the objects and claims of the college. On recommendation of the Home Mission Committee the Presbytery decided to write at once to another missionary to be stationed at Rockwood, one had been telegraphed for before for Springfield and Sunnyside. Arrangements were made for missionary meetings in the various congregations and stations of the Presbytery. Messrs. Donaldson, Bell and J. S. Stewart were appointed for the western part of the Presbytery, and the Presbytery's Home Mission Committee was charged with the duty of arranging in the eastern. The next regular meeting of the Presbytery is to be held in Knox Church, Winnipeg, on the first Wednesday in March. The Presbytery then adjourned to meet at Portage la Prairie for the induction of the Rev. Mr. Bell, on the 3rd day of January next, and at the hour of two o'clock in the afternoon.

Eighty-eight and three-tenths of "Old Prob's" predictions last year have come true.