

KNOX COLLEGE.

Celebration of the Semi-Centenary.

Illustrated Report of the Proceedings The Auspicious Occasion Successfully Honoured.

The eyes of the Church were fixed on Knox College this week. They were loving glances that turned upon the dear Alma Mater in the keeping of her jubilee. How the hearts of her sons warmed towards



REV. F. L. PATTON, D.D., LL.D.

her as never before, how friends and neighbours joined them in doing her honour, how the great public looked pleasingly on, may be gathered, so far as can be from cold print, from the following pages.—

The celebration of the jubilee of the College was decided upon over a year ago, and a committee composed of the following gentlemen was appointed to work out the necessary arrangements:

FOR THE BOARD.—W. Mortimer Clark, Drs. Caven, Reid, Fletcher, A. D. Macdonald, Wardrope, Torrance, R. N. Grant, Laing and Armstrong, Rev. Messrs. J. Neil, N. J. Clark, John Abraham, R. D. Fraser, and Messrs. Geo. Rutherford, J. K. Macdonald, Robert Milgour and Geo. Hay.

FOR THE ALUMNI.—Revs. J. A. Macdonald, R. H. Abraham, J. L. Campbell, H. R. Horne, D. C. Hossack, D. Y. Ross, J. R. Gilchrist, Prof. McLaren, D.D., and W. Burns. Part of the plan was to raise funds to liquidate the debt on the building, and for this purpose, Rev. Wm. Burns, whose services to Knox College in times gone by, and to the Church, in financial matters, pointed to him as eminently fitted to pilot this scheme successfully through the breakers of hard times and other dangerous rocks, was appointed secretary. The result of the arduous labours of all actively concerned has been a most interesting and memorable tribute to Knox College, the influence of which will be of permanent value to the institution and to the Church at large.

The proceedings were begun on Tuesday of this week by a sermon preached to a vast audience in Knox church—a church associated not merely in name, but from years long ago, in sympathy and co-operation with the college—by Rev. F. L. Patton, D.D., LL.D., president of Princeton University, one of the ablest and most distinguished of the graduates of Knox College.

THE SERMON.

After devotional exercises led by Dr. Parsons of Knox church, and a few preliminary remarks by Rev. Principal Caven of Knox College, Dr. Patton took as his text Mark xi. 30—"The baptism of John, was it from Heaven or of man? answer me." This was for the Jewish authorities an embarrassing question. They could easily have said pleasant things about John, but they did not like to be brought face to face with such a stern choice of alternatives. So they took refuge in a convenient agnosticism. Many people take this method when asked a similar question about the Christian religion. This may arise from policy, from a chronic habit of procrastination, or from honest doubt, but, they say, you must not put them down as skeptics; they have not yet made up their minds. Now there are some things about which this attitude is excusable but not about this, and especially those who represent this college cannot take this position. It has no excuse for its existence unless it take the position of a high supernaturalism on the question "Whence came Christianity?" The burning question of this day is not one which concerns this or that denomination, but all denominations, and all denominations alike. The subject which we choose for to-night is not one which concerns Presbyterianism merely, or Protestantism, but Christian faith. The question for us is "Is Christianity from Heaven or of men?" Some people can take an indifferent position about this, but not those who are interested in theological education. Our subject then is "Supernatural religion," and in regard to this we ask three questions. First,—“Is Christianity a supernatural religion?” Second,—“Has it any obligatory dogmatic contents?” and third,—“What is the basis of Christian certitude?”

With reference to the first question it must be said that there are many influences at work which lead men to take a negative position. There is a tendency to cut and out naturalism in our day. Men are anxious to have uniformity of nature recognized as universally in the moral world as in the physical world. Our religion posits exceptions to this uniformity. A naturalistic religion is being presented to us in this day in two forms; first, the form which posits everything in terms

of matter and motion. This might be called the Spencerian form. The second form posits everything in terms of mind; this may be called the Hegelian form. The Spencerian philosophy tries to interpret the entire world in terms of matter and motion, and when it shall have succeeded in interpreting everything, religion included, in these terms, of course religion is at an end. Religion implies an infinite spirit up yonder and a finite spirit down here, and a relation between the two. If the former is denied, then there is no religion, nor is there if you deny the latter. Both of these are denied in the Spencerian philosophy. It would not be difficult to show if time permitted that in elementary religion it eliminates morality as well. What is true of the Spencerian is just as true of the Hegelian philosophy, though while saying this we admit the good work Hegelianism has done in demolishing materialism, as in Green's introduction to Hume. The next good thing to do is to go on and demolish Hegelianism. For after all, Hegelianism gives us nothing more than that there has been an evolution in mind. Immortality is gone,—a personal God is gone. Now, the Church is most vitally concerned in the position that is being taken by philosophical thinkers, for you cannot separate your religion and your metaphysics. The Christian religion will have to reckon sooner or later with this philosophy of uniformity. There must be a pitched battle between supernaturalism and naturalism, and the result must be all for one or the other. We have the right to choose the place where this battle should be fought, and we are willing that it should be waged over the grave of Jesus Christ. We fully appreciate the work that has been done in the matter of Old Testament study in the interests of pure literary criticism, but we are speaking within bounds when we say that the masters in this school know perfectly well that the reconstruction of the Old Testament is to be explained in the interests of naturalism, but in order to make their position consistent they have also to explain Christ's person and work according to the same principles: The adherents of a naturalistic religion child those of a supernatural religion for being otherworldly, and concerning themselves about the salvation of men's souls to the neglect of their bodies. Our reply to this is that it is not true, and that the philanthropy of the world is the child of Christianity. There is another question with which we have to deal, and that is "Has Christianity any dogmatic contents which are obligatory?" It is not "how many dogmas are there?" but is there anything which a man who is a Christian ought to believe. Now it would seem that if Christianity is a supernatural religion, a miraculous invasion of the world by the Almighty, it would seem certain that it must have something peculiar which gives it its right of way. What is it that makes Christianity what it is, and justifies its claim as the exclusive religion, and so justifies our missionary enterprise. It is that Christ was not only a great example, but that He came and claimed to be the world's saviour, and that the only way of salvation is through Him. True or false, that is His claim. There is peril, or there is no peril. We may be in peril and there is no deliverer or Christ is the deliverer. If we are in peril and can see we are in peril, we are sure either that there is no deliverance or that deliverance will come to us through Christianity; we will not change it for anything else. Can we doubt what the essence of Christianity is, what its claims are? This is its doctrine,—That we are sinners, and that without shedding of blood there is no remission. The question is, whether there is any dogmatic content in this Christianity which is not obligatory upon all Christians. Does not the possibility of salvation depend upon the facts of the incarnation and atonement of Christ,—not the knowledge of these facts, but the facts themselves. If this be true, may we not put these facts into words? When I have embodied that fact in a propositional statement I have a dogma or doctrine. If God has given man information that the salvation of any individual is possible only upon this fact, then I am obliged to believe that and rest upon it. That is obligatory dogma. Where am I to find a basis of certitude for my Christian belief? Christianity, a piece of information given by God to man. Where is that information lodged? Different answers have been given. God may have given this information to each man for himself. He may have committed it to Christian people collectively. When a community of sentiment is entertained there is strong support for my position. That is the Christian consciousness. Then, again, God may have lodged this information in the Church in its corporate capacity. And, lastly, He may have lodged it in literary shape, and we have it in the Bible. And thus we answer our question; we shall find our dogmatic content in the Bible. This raises the question of the inspiration of the Bible. In regard to this there are two lines of argument. First, the external evidences; second, the fact that it fits our spiritual nature—subjective certitude. These are not in conflict with one another; we need both; and they depend one on another—they complement each other. In closing his sermon of which the above is necessarily a brief synopsis, Dr. Patton, referred to the present commemoration, and expressed a sincere hope of the future prosperity and usefulness of Knox College. His address, which occupied about an hour, was a wonderful piece of oratory. Although almost entirely devoid of any flights of rhetoric, it was from beginning to end one perfect piece of reasoning, in which every separate line of thought was carried to its ultimate conclusion. It was listened to with close attention throughout.

Wednesday's Proceedings.

Early yesterday morning the interesting proceedings were again resumed.

Rev. Professor W. MacLaren, D.D., of Knox College, presided over the morning meeting.

The following were also on the platform:—Rev. Dr. F. L. Patton, D.D., LL.D., of Princeton University; Rev. G. M. Grant, D.D.,