

The University Sermon.

DELIVERED BY THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP
BISHOP OF NOVA SCOTIA, JUNE 27th, 1895.

"Other men labour'd, and ye are entered into these labours."—S. John IV, 38 p. p.

It does not need that I should tell you in this sermon of the circumstances which surrounded those who originated Bishop's College, nor of the difficulties which had to be faced by them; nor of the contrast presented by the outward and visible appearance of things in 1845 and that of a later date, for all these matters were recorded in an address by the first Principal, Dr. Nicolls, in 1860, which was printed in full in the April number of the MITRE, and are therefore fresh in your memories.

But the present occasion furnishes us with an opportunity for recalling the past, endeavouring to estimate its significance, to recognize its principles, to ascertain whether or no we have been, and are still, true to them, what changes of method in applying them have been necessitated, and whether any, and what, further changes are required, or will be in the near future.

I. We note, in the first place, the significance of the object which the originators of Bishop's College set clearly before themselves. That object was to furnish those who should come under their influence with the best and highest education possible, and therefore to exercise their powers upon upon the best material available. For we must never forget that education, as its name imparts, is the drawing forth and maturing of the powers of the individual. Experience teaches us two things in this matter: First, that individuals are variously gifted as regards their intellectual endowment; and second, that the intellectual endowment of the individual brings forth a harvest accordant to the quality and variety of the material furnished for its exercise.

Keeping this, then, clearly before our minds, I think we may feel sure that the founders of Bishop's College were profoundly convinced that long experience had established as the best method of procedure the early teaching of Latin and Greek, together with mathematics, for the purpose of strengthening, by exercise, the powers of the mind, and giving the mind itself the tone and temper derived from those two so-called dead languages, in which are enshrined, in almost perfect forms of prose and poetry, some of the noblest, most exalted, and vivifying thoughts which have stirred and enriched the minds of men.

And this, I take it, was in order that the young mind, thus trained, should be the better able to enter upon the study of literature, logic, law, mental and moral philosophy, and all that comes under the designation of Letters.

But our wonder and admiration for these men

are evoked when we remember that this highest ambition as regards education was deliberately adopted, as worthy to be aimed at, and as possible of attainment, in a comparatively new country, and by a people whose attention was concentrated upon levelling the forest, cultivating the soil, and engaging in trade, for the purpose of gaining a livelihood—in which pursuit the boys of the family were generally expected to take an active part at as early an age as possible. We do not wonder that they were laughed at, their vision regarded as unrealisable, their scheme derided as Quixotic, they bidden to betake themselves to England, and leave the colonists of Canada to work out their future with such an education as was within their reach, and suitable for a practical, lumbering and farming community, "whose talk is of bullocks," and who had no ambition of being "found where parables are spoken." But they disregarded the counsel given them, and, instead of withdrawing from their work, made use of such materials as they could lay their hands on, and, if obliged to put up with "plain living," yet accompanying it with "high thinking," willing to wait for the verdict of the future, when the infallible test would be applied, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

II. But if they tenaciously held to the soundness of their convictions on this, which may, in an accommodated sense, be called the secular side of education, no less clearly did they proclaim that they believed the truth of the ancient saying, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." Nay, they made it abundantly evident that, in their estimation, greatly as they valued knowledge of every kind, and desirous as they were of setting up a high standard of scholarship, these would be robbed of virtue in their eyes, and their results like the stalks of corn in Pharaoh's dream, "thin and blasted with the east wind," unless they were rooted in the Christian religion, and it might be said to each pupil, on going out into the world, "from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

And, in a community, the large majority of whose number, outside of the Roman obedience, were so torn with religious dissensions that they were willing, if not desirous, to leave all teachings in the doctrines of Christianity to parents and Sunday School teachers, shutting their eyes to the plain fact that such a course meant, through the default of a majority of parents, and the attendance of only a minority of children at the Sunday School—to say nothing of the incompetency of many of the teachers—the absence of any intelligent knowledge of even the simplest of such doctrines, or a large absorption of them by the Roman Catholics through their schools and convents, to aim at providing an education which should be saturated with Christianity, and that, distinctively Church of England Christianity, as distinguished from