

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

NOVA SCOTIAN CORRESPONDENCE.

I am very glad and thankful to observe that you desire to be a means of inter communication between the Eastern and Western branches of our Presbyterian Church in Canada. There are countless and very weighty reasons why feelings of the most close and cordial fellowship and friendship should be cherished between the Synod down by the sea, and her younger sisters, whose homes are far up in the heart of our continent. I remember the late William Arnot, writing to Dr. McCosh in reference to the latter's removal to Princeton, expressed the hope that his translation would be one more fibre in the cord that bound England and America together. I hope, and believe, that in like manner the influence of THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN—whose weekly visit is hailed with much satisfaction in a growing number of Nova Scotian homes—will prove a strong and strengthening fibre in the cord that binds, with ever-increasing closeness, the different portions of our far extended Church.

I hope that the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN—the great bulk of whom cannot be presumed to have an intimate personal acquaintance with the east—will not be inclined to look with disfavour on the recital of a few facts respecting the position and work of our Church in Nova Scotia. They will, I hope, be pleased to know that in this Province, Presbyterians greatly outnumber any other Protestant body, and somewhat exceed the Roman Catholics, who are 102,001, according to the latest official returns, as against 103,539 Presbyterians. The other Churches in respect to numerical strength come in the following order: Baptists, 73,430; Church of England, 55,124; Methodists, 40,871. It will be seen that the Baptists are numerous in the Province. I am glad to say that they are a very useful and respectable body and, as I believe is the case almost everywhere, extensively energetic. The story goes that a zealous coloured brother confessed on one occasion, "I'se a mighty pore Christian; but I'se a first-rate Baptist." I fear, sir, that up in Ontario, and I know that down here by the sea, a good many persons of other creeds and complexions might very truthfully make a confession of corresponding character. At the same time, it is due, I think, to all the Churches of the Province—and it is specially due to the Presbyterian Church—to say that there is a great deal of steady and solid work done here with less pomp and show than in many other places. The man of whom it is recorded that, at a convention, he was so full of zeal and fervour that it took two men to hold him, and that when he reached home, all the men in the neighbourhood could not start him, was not a Presbyterian, and did not live in Nova Scotia. On the other hand, a greater slowness of movement than you would expect to see in Ontario, characterizes in general, church action here, and, indeed, united or corporate action of every kind. For example, a system of municipal organization for counties, somewhat similar to that which obtains in your great Province, has only come into force with the beginning of the new year. The time was when I never expected to see the *Custos rotulorum* out of Shakespeare; but I have had the pleasure of beholding, in Nova Scotia, that highly respectable official, not simply as a creation of the imagination or the memory, but a visible entity in actual flesh and blood. The laudably conservative spirit which leads to the perpetuation of these old English forms and names, naturally, and perhaps necessarily, manifests itself also in the Church, not only in connection with her courts but, in many places, likewise in connection with her public services. In these an observer from Ontario would often discern a closer adherence to ancient customs than could generally be perceived in the West. In this connection I may mention that the problem of higher education in its relation to the Churches has not yet been satisfactorily solved in this Province as will appear from the fact that several sectarian colleges are subsidized from the public exchequer. These grants, however, are only guaranteed for a short time longer; and, although there is no agitation of the question as yet, I have been interested in learning that some of the Baptists, who have been generally strenuous defenders of the old order of things, are suggesting important modifications, if not an entire change of base, with respect to their college in its relation to the recently established

University of Halifax, which is as yet little more than an institution on paper. Our own Church in the Maritime Provinces has been carrying on, for many years, and continues to carry on still, a double work in reference to education, paying the salaries of several professors in Dalhousie College, besides maintaining three Professors of Theology who carry on their work in a beautiful building recently purchased, and charmingly situated on the North-west Arm. Fifteen students are, this session, prosecuting their studies in the Theological Hall there. I believe that in both institutions good work is done. May I hope to be forgiven if I mention here a remarkable report to which the "Dalhousie Gazette" has given currency? I am inclined to think that the rumour lacks confirmation. But if it should prove true, and the experiment referred to be successful, it will be a matter of great interest both to students and professors in all the colleges. The report is to the following effect: A certain professor, believing that memory is extraordinarily quickened when a person is at the point of drowning, has ordered a large tank, into which he intends to plunge the members of his class before every oral examination!

It is well known in Ontario and Quebec that the Church in the Lower Provinces has long had a noble record in connection with Foreign Mission work. I am glad to be able to say that the old fire still burns, and much liberality is manifested, although it is likewise true that the Fund has been subjected to no small strain of late. One of the missionaries in Trinidad, the Rev. Thomas Christie, visited a number of the congregations last season, and rendered excellent service, both in stimulating the zeal, liberality, and prayerfulness of the people, and in giving much valuable information. It is a great satisfaction to know that the work goes on in a very encouraging manner, and that native helpers are rising up, whose labours, in the capacity of catechists, are attended with no small share of blessing.

The Home Mission Committee held its half-yearly meeting some time ago. A considerable indebtedness which rested on the Fund at the previous meeting had been paid by the time at which the Committee last met, but the satisfaction which that circumstance awakened, was qualified by the other fact that the sum then in the treasury was wholly insufficient to enable the Board to pay the sums voted at the meeting. But collections have since been flowing in with considerable liberality; and the outlook in that direction is not at all discouraging. Lest injustice should be done to the Western Section of the Home Mission Committee, whose operations have been so seriously embarrassed by want of funds, I may inform the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN that the work required of the Home Mission Board of the Maritime Provinces is on a very small scale when compared with that which taxes so sorely the resources and the energies of their brethren in the west.

A difference of a painful character has arisen between certain brethren of St. John Presbytery in reference to the charge of plagiarism preferred last summer, by one of your correspondents, against "a minister from a distant part of the Dominion." The matter has got into the newspapers, and I fear that the effect on the public mind is not wholesome.

W. D.

OUR NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES AND DEGREES IN DIVINITY.

I assume that it is the desire of the majority of the people that deserving men should be honourably distinguished by receiving Degrees in Divinity, and that it is expedient to encourage the study of Theology. I also assume that while natural theology, Christian ethics, and the study of the Greek and Hebrew sacred books, may properly, nay ought to, have a place in the curriculum of a national college in a Christian country, the teaching of Theology proper is wisely left to colleges supported by the various denominations of Christians. The question I wish to raise is: By what corporate body ought examinations in Divinity to be held and Degrees to be conferred on deserving candidates?

Since the thirteenth century until within the present generation, a faculty of Theology was found in every university, and the study of Divinity has hitherto held no second place and received no second honours. Science and literature are now the chief pursuits in our colleges, and there seems to be a tendency to drop Theology from among the subjects within the range

of academic study. Our universities have faculties in law and in medicine, and confer honours on men distinguished in these branches of learning. There is no sufficient reason why they should decline to recognize Divinity in the same way, by having a faculty and honours for it. If graduates in Arts who afterwards study law and medicine receive additional honours in these pursuits from their *alma mater*, why should those who enter on Divinity find herself less gracious and bountiful to them? Why should schools of law and medicine, which are affiliated with our National Universities, receive encouragement and honours, while Theological schools, affiliated in like manner, are denied these privileges? Why should Divinity be dropped from among the learned professions? Surely any senate can be trusted to examine and award honours to meritorious students in Divinity as in doing so they would no more assent to the truth of the doctrines than they do to the mythology of Greece and Rome, or the arguments of *Cicero de Natura Deorum*, when examining in these subjects and conferring B.A., in view of the excellence of the answers.

There are reasons why Divinity should be recognized and encouraged by our National University, and not contemptuously dropped out, or offensively ignored. I mention one or two:

1. The subject of Divinity is one of supreme importance. It deals with the highest relations of man and his noblest instincts. The religious belief of a nation is by far the most potent of all social agencies. Religious teachers have always possessed great influence. Superstition, Atheism, Scriptural Christianity, have their respective and necessary consequences. It can never be a matter of indifference which prevails as the religious belief of a nation. And so long as the nation professes to be Christian the learned classes, which are intended to influence the religious belief of the nation, and do so, ought not to be ignored or dishonoured by national institutions.

2. During the agitation which resulted in King's College, Toronto, passing from the control of the Church of England to a non-denominational basis, the chief promoters of that measure had no intention of dispensing with theological learning. They ably strove to obtain the training in literature and science which is common to all professions, for students having the ministry in view, so that they might, after graduation in Arts, enter on the more important study of Divinity. And if they deemed a degree in Arts desirable they certainly would not think less favourably of a good degree in that higher and more important branch of learning. They did not certainly contemplate the possibility of every other University continuing their Theological faculties and honours, while the students of University College, Toronto, should be denied any such privilege. The way in which the honorary degree of D.D. has been too often conferred may have lessened its value, but that certainly is an insufficient reason for abolishing all such academic honours.

3. If our National Universities do not recognize Divinity, they will put their graduates who may afterwards study Theology in colleges affiliated with them at a serious disadvantage. The effect naturally will be that students intended for the ministry will prefer the denominational colleges whose curriculum is more adapted to their intended pursuit, and their proficiency in their special studies will be duly honoured. Surely the withdrawal, to any extent, of this class of students would be a serious loss to our national colleges.

4. The secularist spirit, which ignores Scripture, refuses to have anything to do with what claims to be a Revelation from God, ought not to be allowed so to dominate in our National Universities as to exclude the recognition of Divinity. Thank God, we are still a Christian nation, and God's Word is still acknowledged in our laws and institutions. So long as this is the case our institutions of learning should do God's word honour. When the majority of the nation are no longer Christian, and Christianity is to be excluded, the Christian Church will know what to do. Then, knowing she is among heathen, who know not God or Christ, she can repeat the work of apostolic times and have her own institutions, as now every church has in every heathen land. As yet, however, Christian feeling is too general, and the secularist unbelief is too limited, to justify the ignoring of Revealed Truth by our schools and universities.

Our National Universities then seem to be a proper source from which honourable Degrees in Divinity