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## Contributors and Correspondents.

For the Presbyterian.

### The Late Murdoch Johnston of Mara.

Sunday the 22nd day of October last, witnessed the departure of Murdoch Johnston, of Mara, well-known to the Church in this district as the heart and soul of the Presbyterian congregation of North Mara. The following paragraph appeared in the *Orillia Expositor*, from the pen of Rev. John Gray, of Orillia, anent his death and labours, and no one could have been better able to judge of the value of them:

"There is a great mourning among the Presbyterian Highlanders of Mara. Their faithful and religious leader of nearly thirty years has been removed from among them by the hand of death. Last Sabbath evening in great peace, humbly resting on his Saviour, with the promises pouring into his heart like a flood, and surrounded by his family, this true servant of the Lord, literally fell asleep in Jesus. The funeral took place on Tuesday afternoon, the 24th inst., and was largely attended by the settlers in Mara, by many of whom he was highly esteemed. After short services at the house, conducted by his pastor, the Rev. D. Macgregor, the body, prior to interment was deposited in the North Mara church. The services in English were conducted by the Rev. J. Gray, who had had intimate ecclesiastical relations with the deceased for upwards of twenty-five years. After reading the latter half of the 7th chapter of Revelation, he proceeded to sketch the character and labors of his departed friend. He stated that, when Mr. Johnston settled in Mara, two courses were open to him, that of setting his heart on getting riches, or serving the Lord. He chose the latter course, and remained comparatively a poor man, but had thus a happy life and a peaceful end. He described his devoted attention to the spiritual wants of his countrymen and neighbors, spoke of his diligent prayerful study of the Bible, being eminently a man of one Book, and showed how he was pre-eminently a spiritual man, as well as gifted and fervent in prayer. He pointed out that, while he was a skilled expounder of the law and discernor of the evil heart of unbelief, he was also a preacher of the gospel, directing sinners to Christ. He told his hearers that Mr. Johnston did not now regret the hours and years of his life, given to the service of his Master, and explained what a loss a man of prayer and a man of spiritual power, like the deceased, was to any community. He declared to the meeting that this church was full of voices and sounds of truth, from the floor to the ceiling, and warned his hearers against the world, and against becoming cast-aways. Before concluding, he alluded to the late Mr. George Thompson, an Elder who had long labored with Mr. Johnston in the same church. Messrs. Thos. Dallas, Colin Mackinlay, and P. Murray, Elders of the Orillia congregation; were also present at the funeral. The two former were ordained as Elders, along with Mr. Johnston, by the Rev. J. Gray, about twenty-five years ago, and they very appropriately took part in the services by engaging in prayer.

For nearly thirty years, Mr. Johnston, being a fluent Gaelic speaker, conducted services in that language in Mara, and gathered around him a band of devoted Highlanders. Latterly he had become somewhat feeble, but before he was unable to undertake his labors of love among the people he had the satisfaction of seeing placed over them as a pastor, a man after his own heart, the Rev. D. Macgregor. It is a somewhat striking fact, that, when the work of the deceased seemed ended, the Lord said to him, "Come up higher."

Mr. Johnston had reached the ripe old age of seventy-one years, and died universally respected and honored. In the course of his long and often arduous labors as an expounder of Scripture, and conductor of religious services in Gaelic, Mr. Johnston was made instrumental in leading several to the Saviour. Peace be to his blood-bought ashes. He leaves this world in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection."

Murdoch Johnston was a native of the Island of Coll, Argyllshire, Scotland. His advantages for acquiring an education were very scanty, being no more than three or four years at school at most, yet his strong intellectual grasp might have been noticed in the fact that he acquired a penmanship that was singularly elegant, and was able to speak on religious matters, and others that came within the sphere of his knowledge, with great force, clearness and precision. From their youth upwards he and his brothers were men of the highest moral standard, and yet they were always the stars of every "goodly company" in which they took part, and no social gathering was complete without them. His conversion took place in the year 1848, though before that time he was a member of the Communion of the Church of Scotland, and held in high esteem by the Rev. John Maclean, a bluff clergyman of the old school. At this time a great awakening, following in the train of the disruption, swept over the islands like a mighty tide, and Murdoch Johnston and his brothers were swept along on the crest of the wave. Mr. Wm. McKay, a man of remarkable spiritual insight, and great devotion to the cause, commenced the revival, and the results of his ministrations were wonderful. So severe a shock did Mr. Johnston receive,

under the weight of conviction, that his reason seemed to be in danger, and he wrestled in prayer until he eventually received peace for his soul. The event occurred in this manner.—A Mr. Neil Maclean, schoolmaster, a native of the island, and a man of marvellous eloquence and zeal, hearing of the revival under Mr. McKay, came home to take part in it, and it was under his powerful appeals that the subject of our sketch was so smitten that he fell under the notice of the speaker. "What do you want?" he asked as he noticed the depth of his hearer's emotion. "I want Christ for my soul!" was the answer. "You shall receive the desire of your heart!" was the assurance. Shortly afterwards, however, he passed through a period of great distress of mind, and spent one particular night in agonising prayer, during which certain passages of Scripture occurred to him as a sign of acceptance with God, but as if indirect communion with the Almighty he rejected all as a source of comfort until the passage, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," came to him with singular force, and he rose from his knees exclaiming—"I will take that as a sheet-anchor of my soul forever!" The change which took place in him, after this event, was so marked and so well-known throughout the whole community that he was called upon to officiate at, and conduct prayer-meetings, and thus carry on the good work which had been productive of so much good to himself, and the work of the Lord prospered in his hands. Shortly afterwards the devoted band encountered the bitter enmity of the Factor, who had the administration of the Coll Estate in his hands, and he forbade them the use of the school-house, (the church was in the hands of the Old Kirk party) but they immediately commenced building a chapel for themselves. He then threatened to dispossess them unless they desisted, and sent them severally a notice to that effect. This brought matters to a crisis, and Mr. Johnston and a few others were delegated to interview the implacable factor, who lived in another part of the kingdom. Mr. Johnston, whose genial and respectful manner was almost irresistible, expostulated with the official in earnest and forcible terms, and at last solemnly asked him if he was prepared to oppose the cause of God. "Indeed, Murdoch, far be it from me to do that," was the answer, and the delegation were treated in a very respectful manner, entreated to go home for the present, and that he would think the whole matter over. Nothing further came of it, but when, in 1847, Mr. Johnston decided to emigrate to this country, the factor came personally to see him, and strongly advised him to stay, and that he would befriend him as far as it was in his power. However the die was cast, and in that year he embarked for this country, and after coming through many troubles, settled in the township of Mara. On the voyage out the ship in which they sailed was infected by both violent fever and small-pox, by which himself and several members of his family were seized, and to which four of them succumbed beside his beloved partner in life. His wife, a godly woman, died in the hospital in Montreal. He was himself an inmate of the Toronto Hospital at the time, and the very night she died he had so strong a presentiment of the event having taken place, that he believed that it was revealed to him by a higher power. Rev. Dr. Burns, at that time, was in the habit of visiting the hospital to administer religious consolation to any of the inmates who might need it, and in this way he became acquainted with the subject of our sketch. The latter requested the good Doctor, if possible, to furnish him with a Gaelic Bible. The Doctor said that he knew of but one in the city; however, the next day he appeared with a fine new one. Long afterwards the doctor met him in one of his northern journeys, and joyfully renewed the acquaintance of the hospital time. "You gave me a Gaelic Bible!" said Murdoch. "Ah, yes," said the delighted doctor, "and you took it like a feast!" In the spring following he left the hospital and arrived at the house of Mr. Neil McKinnon, of Mara, a warm personal friend, by whom many besides him were entertained with unstinted kindness during their first experiences of this country. He proceeded immediately to call a prayer-meeting for the following Sabbath, and thus at once buckled on the harness. As the principal portion of the Highlanders in that locality were from his own native place of Coll, there was no difficulty in gathering a goodly assemblage to hear the word of God from his lips. Before this time, the place, although there was considerable settlement, was altogether destitute in regard to religious privileges. The families in that locality were like sheep without a shepherd,

but under his unceasing and energetic ministrations they were gathered together like one family, and a deep foundation of true godliness, by Divine assistance was laid, which will produce good fruit through the ages. It is to be remarked that, with but very few exceptions all the families who came under his exhortations adopted the habit of holding family worship with the utmost regularity both morning and evening. There were among these, fourteen members of the prayer-meeting, who offered up prayer publicly. So remarkably blessed were his labors in Mara, as evinced in the depth of spiritual feeling, that all the eminent Gaelic ministers who visited the locality, expatiated on the delightful sense of freedom they experienced in speaking to the people, as if among another race of men, and nearer heaven. In fact so earnest was his zeal for the cause of God and Christ's Covenant, that neither sickness nor any other sorrow seemed able to turn him aside from the path of duty, and his earnest petition at a throne of grace, for the last ten years, was that he might be permitted to die in the discharge of his duty, and that he might see a faithful pastor placed over the congregation ere he should be called away. As an instance of his faithful and unwavering fidelity to his engagements in holding prayer-meetings, it might be mentioned that while crossing an arm of the lake, covered with ice during the winter, so violent a storm did he encounter that he knelt three times and prayed for strength to go on. He was a man of hardy frame and sound constitution, and quite lively and active, while his cordial good-humour and his almost boyish geniality will never be forgotten by those who knew him, bearing out the words of the poet that "time cannot steal the soul's youth away." At another time he fell through the ice, extricated himself with difficulty, but nevertheless went to the meeting, conducted the services, and returned home without changing his clothes, declaring himself "quite warm and comfortable." At the earnest request of some of his friends he applied to the Synod, during the earlier part of his career, to be appointed "Catechist" over the Presbyterians of Mara, who were already under his ministrations. That body appointed a Rev. Mr. Cameron and the late Rev. Mr. Wightman of Innisfil, to confer with him at a communion service to be held in Beaverton. These reverend gentlemen formed a high estimate of him, and gave him the following text to discourse upon before the congregation: "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak kindly unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." Mr. Johnston expounded the text with such freedom of utterance and fulness that Mr. John Gunn, the well-known ruling elder of the Beaverton congregation, a gentleman of keen penetrating intelligence and profoundly critical judgment, rose in his place to give his cordial testimony to the value and soundness of the sentiments uttered. He was ordained a catechist in the winter of 1848-49.

He was ordained an elder by the Rev. John Gray of Orillia, over twenty-five years ago, and about the summer of 1853, he in conjunction with the late Mr. George Thompson, elder, proceeded to raise funds for the erection of a church building in Mara, in which they succeeded, and presented it free of all debt. This part of the vineyard was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Rev. John Gray, who administered the ordinances of baptism and marriage there for nearly a quarter of a century, and his gentle manner and cordial kindness endeared him to these early settlers. After Rev. Mr. Gray's other weighty engagements obliged him to withdraw from this field, the congregation was greatly revived by the visits of Rev. Mr. Fraser of Kincairdine, who besides having the advantage of a profound mastery of the Gaelic tongue, is also an English speaker of remarkable eloquence. Both minister and congregation were mutually attracted, and the Highlanders regarded him as "a prince and a father in Israel." Shortly afterwards they were visited by the Rev. Dugald McGregor, and he was at once singled out by Mr. Johnston as the fittest pastor for the people, taking all the circumstances into consideration, if Rev. Mr. Macgregor could be induced to undertake the charge. To his great joy the matter was finally settled, and it then seemed as if the burden that bound him to earth was lifted from his soul, and shortly afterwards in a fervid address to the congregation he resigned all charge over them to his beloved friend, Rev. Mr.

Macgregor, openly stated that he would not be long with them, encouraged them to fight the good fight of faith, to lay hold of eternal life, and God would fulfil that promise to them which he had himself for the sheet-anchor of his soul.—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He had the fullest conviction that Rev. Mr. Macgregor came in direct answer to his prayer, on account of that gentleman's extraordinary fitness for carrying on the scheme whose foundation he had himself so firmly laid. Another prayer seemed answered when he found that he was seized by his mortal illness while in Church on the Sabbath before he died. He felt something unusual, and after the first sermon, before the service was ended, he left the Church and walked straight home. He was able, however, to be up and about the house until the following Friday and Saturday, but then he was unable to move about much, but still was not confined to bed. On Sabbath morning he called his family about him, and announced that the messenger of death had come. He experienced great difficulty of utterance then, but prayed fervently for strength to enable him to speak to each member of his family separately. This took place about daylight on Sabbath morning. As day approached he seemed to receive more strength, but as the evening drew near he sank lower and lower, and at last, surrounded by his family and his beloved friend, Rev. Mr. Macgregor, he faintly asked to be allowed "to rest," and with that prayer on his lips his freed spirit passed away to "the rest that remaineth for the people of God."

## Colleges and their Constituencies.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—In the matter of estimates for Colleges, we are getting light in the usual way—by degrees.

"Your Contributor's" glossary is growing in bulk and usefulness. We now know that "the estimated amounts" means his estimates, that "at present" denotes "with the present endowments, staff, etc.," that "bequest" has a dual significance, and that "annually" is equivalent to "annually hereafter." The latest addition makes the phrase, "the statistics of last year," comprehend College accounts, besides what it seems specially to include in the paragraph where it first occurs—to wit, the source of information as to Presbyteries, membership, etc.: that is, the report of the Assembly's Committee on statistics. It would have been manifestly unfair to have supposed that, in a matter of such importance, affecting so many live interests, as that on which "Your Contributor" undertook to enlighten the Church and to challenge the justice of the Assembly's territorial arrangement, he should have to resort so extensively to the lexicographer's art in order to make his meaning clear; but, in whatever way attained, great, in discussion, is the advantage of knowing what a writer does mean.

It is, however, still noticeable that "the statistics of last year" do not supply the information that \$2,450 is the estimate for Queen's College this year, far less that it is the estimate for Queen's "annually hereafter." And so, while "Your Contributor" calls it "my estimate," meaning his own, he has to inform us that it was furnished to him by a friend who represented it as "Dr. S's." I presume it is competent for me to object to its being called "Dr. S's." Without any doubt as to competency, I especially demur to its elevation to the rank of an annual estimate. It is also to be observed that new light, as to the authority for it, shows that the "official circular," of the existence of which "Your Contributor" very soon became aware, not "the statistics of last year," is, as I supposed from the first, the source whence it came.

The statements of "Your Contributor," in his last letters, are not "quite convincing," as to the correctness of his "original position," that the amount required annually from collections for Montreal College is \$7,000. He himself in a way reduces it to \$6,460, giving an explanation as to the difference which I shall notice immediately. Who, but "Your Contributor," could make such a difference, and account for it as he does "from the statistics of last year," and who but he, from the same statistics, (which, however, appear to include information obtained by him from other sources than those which he says they comprehend,) would be apt to think of excluding from his deductions from reported expenditures the sum of \$1,900, entered under the head of "Special Subscriptions for Theological Chair." I gather from these circumstances some idea of the largeness of that charity, in the exercise of which he did not draw a "strongly probable" inference, that I saw and read the Treasurer's statement, but preferred, as he said in his reply to me in your number for Dec. 29th, to conclude that I "wrote in ignorance of the facts of the case."

It is certainly remarkable that "Your Contributor's" estimate annually for Knox College, namely, \$8,750, should come within \$50 of what is produced by deducting interest on the Hall bequest, to wit, \$8,200 from the official estimate of \$11,900 for this year, the current expenses for last year being, as reported to the Assembly, \$18,981.80. I am unable to track the process by which the "calculations compiled" by him, "from the statistics of last year," are made to produce it, and therefore write

for the "statistics" subsequent communication" with reference to membership and finances.

In one of his letters in your last, "Your Contributor," when giving the reduced estimate of \$8,400, states that it "is on the basis of last year's expenditure, and interest calculated at eight per cent.," and then adds:—"The increase in the number of students will largely increase the expenditure, so that it will be found that the amount annually needed from the constituency will reach the estimate I formed, viz., \$7,000." In his letter in your issue of 29th December, he said, "That the expenditure in more ways than one will this year be much greater than last on account of the large increase in the number of students is evident." According to "Your Contributor," the number of students and the mode of classifying them is a side issue, and one that does not largely affect the main point in dispute. He needs to be reminded that the space devoted to these particulars, and the use made of them in his first communication as grounds of appeal against the injustice of the territorial arrangement, are inconsistent with his treatment of them now as mere side issues. So also is the statement I have just quoted, that "the increase in the number of students will largely increase the expenditure"—will increase it according to his own showing from \$6,460 to \$7,000. An element that has this augmenting effect claims a more appropriate name than "side issue."

In his first communication he gives the number of students at Montreal College thus:—"Thirty-two literary and twenty-two theological; total 54." (The Senate reported to the Assembly in these terms:—"The total number of students preparing for the ministry, in connection with the College, is fifty-four. Of these twenty-two are in the theological classes, and thirty-two pursuing their literary curriculum, partly in the preparatory classes and partly as undergraduates of McGill College.") Had the number of students "actually in attendance this session" been as he puts it, when he quoted it from some notice in your paper, as "seventy-one students enrolled," then the increase—seventeen—might have been called large; but now in one of his last contributions he says, "it is well to note the fact that the Montreal College has a certified roll of sixty students—actually in attendance this session." Noting the fact as "well" as he needs, the increase is six. This turns out to be the "large increase" to which he repeatedly refers. It is not to be said, as things are, that six is a small addition, but as compared with seven it is not large.

On account of this increase "Your Contributor" says, "the expenditure in more ways than one will this year be much greater than last." He has the faculty of saying things which excite one's curiosity. How an addition of six students can largely increase the expenditure of a College one does not want to know. My experience teaches me nothing on this point. The attendance at Queen's has for some time been steadily though not largely increasing year by year, but I am not aware of any additional charge on that account. Several of the College funds are improved; but the expenses chargeable to the Church are not augmented. Is it to be understood that as the number of students increases in Montreal College the only financial gain is an increase of expenditure at the rate of at least \$90 per student? Knowledge is valuable—on a point like this, valuable to the Church, and especially so to me and my colleagues. "Knowledge is power," and if your communicative contributor will tell us by what arrangements this anomaly is legitimately produced, we might speedily rival them at Queen's and frame estimates that would astonish him. The number of students here might increase fifty per cent. without perceptibly augmenting the charge to the College fund of the western constituency. In this incidental revelation as to largely increasing expenditure, do we at last find some explanation of an increasing attendance? One is prepared to make due allowance for charges on account of French speaking students and the work of French Evangelization, but "Your Contributor" gives the information that "no money," so he understands, "was paid by the French Board last year to the Treasurer of the College for any purpose whatever." How much money was paid by the former to the latter, or for what purposes paid, dependent saith not, and "the statistics of last year" do not seem to tell.

As to "Your Contributor's" imputation of "seemingly envious feeling," the joy which a doubled attendance at all our Colleges would occasion in view of the clamant demand for labourers at home and abroad, and the satisfaction to be derived from the securing of justice and largely increased revenues, it seems to me to be well to withhold my utterances until we come nearer on the questions of fact raised by "Your Contributor's" first communication, reserving until then the consideration how far such utterances may be for edification. I am, yours truly, W. SNODGRASS.

Queen's College, 15th January, 1877.

We should give as we receive—cheerfully quickly, and without hesitation, for there is no grace in a benefit that sticks to the fingers.

A well ordered home is a paradise on earth. No earthly pleasure is equal to the calm contentment felt at the family fireside. The excitement of even successful business is attended with vexation; the enjoyments of travel are associated with fatigue and danger; the pursuit of fame is distracting; and even the pleasures of knowledge are combined with bitterness. But the happiness of the fireside is unalloyed.