

## Our Contributors.

### The Death of Dr. Fraser.

The following brief tribute to the worth of Dr. Thomas Fraser, who first saw the light in Canada, but who passed the greater part of his life on the Pacific Coast, is from our Californian contemporary, The Pacific Presbyterian.

His career on this Western field was long and eventful. It would require more than a few articles in a religious paper to do justice to his missionary experience and achievements. He was a maker of history and the historian of Western Presbyterianism will find in his faithful labors much that will enrich and adorn the chapters relating to the work in California.

Dr. Fraser retained his powers of body and mind in a remarkable degree to the last. He had passed the four-score limit by almost three years. He was a sufferer for many months before his release came, but he bore suffering with cheerful courage. He kept in touch with the great movements of the day. He was a keen observer. He discussed current events with unflinching interest. He remembered his younger brethren and inquired after them, and ceased not to pray for their success.

His service in the cause of home missions will make inspiring reading to our younger ministers. He came here when things were new. He endured hardships. He laid foundations. He bore the brunt, and both rejoiced in and triumphed over obstacles. He was of the stuff of which heroes are made. He was "a great man and a prince" in our Western Israel.

Dr. Fraser was Calvinistic to the marrow. His theology was part of him; he loved the great doctrines of historic creeds, but he was not narrow in spirit; tenderness and strength were combined in him, and love went with conviction. He was a theologian by instinct and taste. Some of his best work was done while he held the chair of Systematic Theology in the San Francisco Theological Seminary. When he theologized, he glowed; thought and feeling were fused into one; the former was always accurate, lucid and discriminating, and the latter warm deep and pervading.

Dr. Fraser was characterized by simplicity of manner. He was kind and hospitable, easily approached, a model of unfeigned courtesy, cultured in the graces of the renewed heart, a lover of his kind, generous and unselfish to the last degree.

He had the Pauline conception of death. The last time the writer had the privilege of seeing Dr. Fraser, he found the veteran Christian reading Paul's epistle to the Romans, and was informed that the Bible was now his chief companion. How he triumphed in the thought that death had been robbed of its sting! He quoted the words, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," and remarked, "Not the life of the saints, but their death, and why? Because their death marks the completion of the Redeemer's triumph!" We think of him as going from this earthly scene with faith's challenge on his lips: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Dr. Thomas Fraser was the eldest son of

the late Rev. Thomas Fraser, and a brother of the late Rev. Joshua Fraser, both well known in the Presbyterian Church of Canada; and our contemporary promises to give ample space in a future issue for an estimate of his character and a detailed account of his work, adding that "Earth is poorer and heaven richer because of the passing of this dear soldier-saint."

### Savonarola.

By REV. W. J. CLARK.

The list of those who may be properly called great is not a very long one, and while the Florentine Monk, whose strong, sad face looks out at us from this page, under the cowl of the Dominican costume, may not have a right to stand in the front rank of the great sons of men, yet time has unquestionably placed him high above the masses.

Born in September, 1452, martyred on the Piazza in Florence in May, 1498, his great public work extending over only eight or nine years, he nevertheless made so great an impression on the world's thought, that, so long as men's hearts are stirred by the recital of great heroism and entire self-sacrifice, the story of Savonarola will be told to willing ears.

Even as a boy, Girolamo's heart was hot within him, as he looked upon the contrast that presented itself so vividly in the Italian city of Ferrara, his birthplace. On one hand unbounded luxury, splendor and power, on the other, the most miserable, helpless poverty. When his parents would have taken him across the threshold of the Prince's palace, from the halls of which came the sound of music and dancing, while from the grated dungeons below came the cries and moans of tortured prisoners, he drew back and refused to enter.

As his boyhood blossomed into youth, he still brooded over the iniquities that so much prevailed. "He took pleasure," says Padre Marchese, in solitary places, in the open fields, or along the green banks of the river, and there wandering, sometimes singing, sometimes weeping, gave utterance to the strong emotions which boiled in his breast.

At last he came to a decision; and in 1475, when he was twenty-three years of age, one April day, while the rest of the household were absent at a great *fiesta* he went away unannounced, and left his father's house forever. He was received in the Dominican convent at Bologna, and the very next day, giving us a glimpse of his strong affections, he wrote a letter to his father, in which he justifies the step he had taken. "Do you not think," he said, "that it is a very high mark of favor to have a son a soldier in the army of Jesus Christ? . . . If you love me, seeing that I am composed of two parts, of soul and body, say which of them you love most, the body or the soul. . . . If, then, you love the soul most, why not look to the good of that soul?"

The limits of space will not permit us to even glance at the training the young man received in the passing years. It was not till August, 1489, that he came to his place of power in that strange, old, turbulent city of Florence. His throne was the pulpit of the great cathedral, and thence he governed the stormy passions of the Florentines with

wonderful skill. He was orator, prophet, statesman, poet; and wielded more than monarch's power. Only the Divine Master knows how many sad souls were comforted by him, how many evil lives purified through his faithful presentation of truth; but there are two or three pictures that stand out in his life in Florence, that may well fascinate the imagination.

There is his interview with Lorenzo de Medici, when the "Magnificent" lay on his deathbed; his confronting of Charles the Eighth of France, when that monarch was on his way to Florence; the day when he knelt before the masses of people in the great public square and called upon God, if he had deceived anyone, to send down fire from heaven and consume him in the presence of the multitude; the proposed ordeal by fire in the Piazza of San Marco; and the last terrible scene, when he was done to death by strangling and his body burned. But we must confine ourselves to a description of the scene in the cathedral, when he was about to preach in the day of his power, told by the ancient chronicler, Burlamaqui, and then a few sentences to describe the end.

Says Burlamaqui: "The people got up in the middle of the night to get places for the sermon, and come to the door of the cathedral, waiting outside till it should be opened, making no account of any inconvenience, neither of the cold, nor the wind, nor of standing in winter with their feet on the marble; and among them were young and old, women and children, of every sort, who came with such jubilee and rejoicing that it was bewildering to hear them, going to the sermon as to a wedding. Then the silence was great in the church, each one going to his place. And though many thousand people were thus collected together, no sound was to be heard, not even a 'hush,' until the arrival of the children, who sang hymns with so much sweetness that heaven seemed to have opened. Thus they waited three or four hours till the padre entered the pulpit. And the attention of so great a mass of people with eyes and ears intent upon the preacher, was wonderful; they listened so, that, when the sermon reached its end, it seemed to them that it had scarcely begun."

"One of the most pleasing evidences of his kindly heart is found in the way in which he gained the hearts of the young boys of Florence who were wont to indulge in riotous demonstrations during carnival time. He so won their affection that they were transformed into soldiers of Christ, who went about gathering all sorts of vanities and piling them up in a great pile in the public square, where they were consumed in a mighty bonfire. When the 'ordeal by fire' was in contemplation, a story is told of a beautiful boy of noble family who came to him in the convent garden, and asked that he might be allowed to enter the fire. Turning to Fra Placido, Savonarola said, 'Many such papers have been brought to me, but by none have I had such consolation as by this child, for whom God be praised.'"

But though the padre earned much love, there were many wicked ones who hated him, and at last their plots were successful, and with two dear friends and disciples, Fra Silvestro and Fra Domenico, he was arrested, imprisoned and tortured.

His right arm was untouched by the torture, and in the interval ere the arrival of the wicked Pope's messengers, who were to condemn him to death, he spent his time in his cell in writing meditations on the 51st and 71st Psalms.