

KNOX COLLEGE HISTORY.

The following is the interesting lecture delivered by Dr. Gregg, Professor of Apologetics and Church History in Knox College, at the opening of that institution on Wednesday afternoon last:

In the history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Knox College is entitled to occupy an important place. Within its walls many of our ministers and missionaries, and of our theological professors and teachers have been trained. Through these it has been largely influential in moulding the character and habits of thinking of our people. Its influence, it may fairly be claimed, has ever been on the side of sound doctrine and vital religion. A review of its history may therefore serve to awaken gratitude to God, who has made it an instrument of good, and may at the same time stimulate both professors and students to a higher appreciation of their responsibilities and to a more faithful discharge of their duties. It may also satisfy the friends of the institution that their generous efforts on its behalf have not been unproductive of worthy results. With these objects in view, I propose to present in this lecture a brief sketch of the history of our college.

This college was opened for the training of students in November, 1844. Previous to this time efforts had been made in this Province to train young men for the ministry in the Presbyterian Church. These may be briefly noticed. In the year 1829, the United Presbytery of Upper Canada, at a meeting held in York (now Toronto) entered upon the consideration of a plan for the establishment of a literary and theological seminary, and a committee consisting of the Rev. Messrs. Bell, Boyd and Stuart, was appointed to take steps towards its establishment. The United Presbytery had then twelve ministers on its roll, most of whom had come from the Secession Churches of Scotland, and Ireland, and from Churches in the United States. The committee agreed to petition the House of Assembly to aid them by a grant of land or money, but without any apparent result. About this time an informal correspondence took place between Mr. Stuart and the secretary of the Canada Education and Missionary Society in Montreal, regarding the establishment of a theological seminary, of which Kingston was suggested as the proper location. Formal communications with this society were laid before this Presbytery in 1830, but nothing definite was effected. In the following year the Presbytery resolved "that a respectful and immediate application be made to his Excellency the Lieut.-Governor, Sir John Colborne, requesting him to procure the United Presbytery of Upper Canada the privilege of choosing a professor of divinity in King's College to sit in council and in every respect to be on an equal footing with the other professors in said college." The charter of King's College, as is well known, had been obtained with the avowed purpose of placing the education of this Province under the control of the Church of England. According to the charter, the Bishop of the Diocese, was to be visitor of the college, its president must be a clergyman of the Church of England, the council was to consist of the chancellor, president and seven other members of the Church of England, and who were required to sign the Thirty-Nine Articles of that Church. The Government of the country was then in the hands of an oligarchy of a similar complexion. Little deference was paid to resolutions of the House of Assembly, which represented the people. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the application of the United Presbytery should prove unsuccessful. In 1832, the United Presbytery, which had now become the United Synod of Upper Canada, entered upon the consideration of a proposal to establish a literary and theological seminary at Pleasant Bay, in the township of Hillier, Prince Edward County, and a committee was appointed to procure a site and to solicit subscriptions towards the erection of the necessary buildings. But this, like previous efforts, proved unsuccessful; nor did the United Synod afterwards succeed in establishing a theological seminary. In a private way, however, under the superintendence of members of Presbytery, several students were trained for the ministry, among whom were Messrs. John Dickey, William Lemont, Duncan McMillan and Dr. James Cairns. The United Synod ceased to have a separate existence in 1850, when, with sixteen ministers on its roll, it was united with the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland. It was for many years the only Presbyterian Presbytery or Synod in Upper or Lower Canada. The Synod in connection with the Church of Scotland was organized in Kingston, in 1831, with nineteen ministers on its roll; and soon afterwards took steps towards training students for the ministry. In 1822, in accordance with an overture from the Rev. William Rintoul, then minister of York (Toronto) the Synod resolved to appoint "a committee to prepare an humble memorial to his Majesty, crav'ing his Majesty's Government to endow, without delay, an institution or professorship for the education and training of young men for the ministry in connection with the Synod." Similar resolutions were adopted year after year, for several years. But, as in the case of the United Synod, the Scottish Synod could obtain no help from Government. This was prevented by the predominant influence of the Church of England in the Legislative and Executive Councils. Baffled in this quarter, but encouraged on the other hand by the promise of assistance from the Colonial Committee of the parent Church in Scotland, the Synod at last resolved to adopt measures to establish a college without Government aid. These measures proved successful. Great enthusiasm was awakened among the Presbyterians of the country. Liberal contributions were made for the endowment of professorships and for the erection of college buildings. Applications were made to the Legislature to incorporate the trustees of "St. Andrew's College"; then to establish "The Scottish Presbyterian College" in Kingston, and then to establish "The University of Queen's College" at Kingston. The last-mentioned application was granted, but as her Majesty's consent had not been obtained for the name, the name was changed into "The University of Kingston." But in 1841 a royal charter was obtained and the name of the University of "Queen's

College" restored. This college was opened for the reception of students in Kingston* in March, 1842. The Rev. D. Liddell was appointed principal, and the Rev. P. C. Campbell professor of classics. Under these able and eminent divines, it was fondly hoped that Queen's College would have a career of uninterrupted success in training an adequate supply of ministers. But, in 1844, occurred the disruption of the Scottish Synod in Canada and the organization of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, which, because of its sympathy with the Free Church of Scotland, was commonly called the Free Church. The majority of the ministers—three-fourths—remained in the Synod in connection with the Church of Scotland; but nearly all the theological students cast their lot with the Free Church. The success of Queen's College, as a theological seminary, was thus seriously arrested. But in more recent years the tide of prosperity has returned, and at the present time, with its fine buildings, rich endowment and able professors, it occupies a foremost rank among the colleges of the country in the training of students in theology, in arts, in medicine and in law.

The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, or Free Church Synod, was organized, with twenty-three ministers on its roll, on the 10th July, 1854. On the very next day it resolved to take steps towards the training of young men for the ministry, and Presbyteries were directed to enquire after young men of suitable character and gifts. At meetings of Commission and Synod within the next few months, arrangements were made for opening, if practicable, a theological seminary. On the 5th November, 1844, arrangements having been completed, the seminary was opened in Toronto—Toronto at this time contained a population of about 18,500, the one-seventh or eighth part of its present population—a few days later than the time proposed. The classes were conducted by the Rev. Henry Esson, minister of St. Gabriel Street Church, Montreal, who had been appointed professor of literature and science, and the Rev. A. King (afterwards Dr. King), a Free Church deputy, who was appointed interim professor of divinity, and who afterwards became professor of divinity in the Free Church Presbyterian College, Nova Scotia. The number of students in attendance during the first session was fourteen. The place of meeting was a room in the residence of Professor Esson, on James Street, near where Shaftesbury Hall now stands. "Its furniture (as described by a correspondent of the *Record*, May, 1851) consisting of a long deal table, two wooden benches, a few chairs and a range of shelves containing Mr. Esson's library and some books kindly lent by clergymen and other friends for the use of the students during the Session." In the report of the College Committee, given to the Synod of 1845, a high tribute is paid to the fine talents, the warm enthusiasm, and academic taste displayed by Mr. Esson, in his professorial labours, and to the indefatigable zeal and singular ability manifested by Mr. King in the direction of the theological studies of the young men during the first session of the infant college, and also to the encouraging progress and satisfactory conduct of the students.

During the second session, that of 1845-6, the number of students in attendance was twenty-two, of whom half were in the theological and half in the literary classes. As in the first session, literature and science were taught by Professor Esson. Lectures on "Systematic Theology" were given by Dr. Michael Willis, of Glasgow, who had attained to high distinction as a learned, acute and profound theologian, and who had come to this country on a temporary visit as a Free Church deputy. Lectures on "Church History," given by Dr. Robert Burns, formerly minister in Paisley, Scotland, who had visited this country as a Free Church deputy in 1844, and who had accepted a call to Knox Church, Toronto, into the pastoral charge of which he was inducted in 1845. Dr. Burns had been for fifteen years the most active and indefatigable secretary of the Glasgow Colonial Missionary Society, which had sent out a large number of ministers to the British American provinces. In addition to the pastorate of Knox Church, he was appointed Professor of Divinity in the college. His extensive knowledge of ecclesiastical history, ancient and modern, and his long experience as a pastor fitted him for the special work he now undertook. Biblical Criticism and Hebrew were taught by Mr. Rintoul, then minister of Streetsville, who, amidst his duties as a pastor, and while taking an active part in the Home Mission work of the Church, had not omitted the cultivation of sacred literature and the study of Oriental languages, for which he had a special taste. During this session the college met in Adelaide Street, and was furnished with a valuable library of between 2,000 and 3,000 volumes, which Dr. Burns, with characteristic energy, had collected from friends of the college in Scotland. During this session, it may be added, impressive and stimulating addresses were delivered to the students by the Rev. Mr. Somerville, of Glasgow (now Dr. Somerville), who, since resigning his charge, continues, at the age of fourscore, to labour as an evangelist with wonderful energy and success in all parts of the world; by the Rev. Ralph Robb, of Halifax, afterwards well known and esteemed as the faithful and successful pastor of Knox Church, Hamilton, in this province; by the Rev. James Begg (afterward Dr. Begg), one of the most distinguished leaders of the Free Church of Scotland, and the Rev. William C. Burns, nephew of Dr. Burns, whose two years of evangelical labour in Canada are still remembered with gratitude, and whose amazing labours and success as a missionary in China will never be forgotten.

At the meeting of Synod of 1846 the name of Knox College was for the first time given to the theological seminary. This name it retained till 1858, when in the Act of Incorporation, it was designated Knox College.

During the third session of the College (1846-7) the number of students in attendance had increased to thirty-seven, of whom twenty-one were in the theological, and the rest in the literary classes, Science and Philosophy,

Church History and Pastoral Theology, Hebrew and Biblical Criticism were taught, as in the previous session, by Professor Esson, Dr. Burns and Mr. Rintoul. Systematic Divinity was taught by the Rev. Robert W. Corkhill, who, like Mr. King and Dr. Willis, had come as a Free Church deputy, and to whose great abilities, unwearied labours and great success, a high tribute is paid in the report of the College Committee. During this session classes in Latin and Greek were taught by the Rev. Alexander Gale, who had been appointed principal of the Toronto Academy. This institution was established in 1846 as a preparatory school for the instruction of young men intending to study Theology in Knox College, and of others who might avail themselves of its advantages. Mr. Gale had previously been the minister of Knox Church, Hamilton, and was for many years the Convener of the Committee on Home Missions. Both before and since the disruption he was one of the most prominent leaders and wisest councillors of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The college met this session in the buildings in Front Street, afterwards known as Lund's Hotel and Queen's Hotel. Here it remained till 1854.

Besides the particulars which have been mentioned regarding the first three sessions of the college, there are others to which a brief reference may be made. The students were animated by a deep, earnest, religious spirit, which was developed in various forms of Christian work. Tract distribution was engaged in, prayer meetings were held, conducted in English, in Gaelic, and also in French. Missionary meetings were held and a missionary society instituted, which contributed and collected funds for the support of missionaries to the French Canadian Roman Catholics, to the Jews and to the heathen in India. During the summer, and to some extent during the winter months, the students laboured as catechists in the more destitute parts of the country, and to their labours then, as now, the gathering together and organization of many of our congregations may be traced. It may be stated that the expenses of the college (including the payment of one professor's salary) were confined within the limits of about \$900 yearly. The expense of sending deputies and some other expenses, were defrayed by the Colonial Committee of the Free Church of Scotland.

At the meeting of Synod in June, 1847, the affairs of the college occupied a large measure of attention, and a series of resolutions was adopted. Mr. Gale, Principal of the Academy, was formally appointed professor of classical literature in the College. The professorship of Divinity in the college was separated from the pastorate of Knox Church, on the ground, among others, that the increase of students required the undivided services of a professor in the department of Theology. Mr. Bayne (afterwards Dr. Bayne), of Galt, was appointed to proceed as a deputy to Scotland, and in concurrence with the Free Church Colonial Committee, to choose a fit and proper person to be a professor of Theology. The result was that Dr. Willis, whose qualifications for the office had already commended themselves to the Church, was selected. He arrived in Toronto in the month of December, and at once entered upon his work as professor of Theology. The duties of this office he continued to discharge for three and twenty years. I think it is not too much to say that to no other man is the Church more indebted, under God, for the sound evangelical doctrine which is maintained by our ministers and prevails among our people even to the present day—for it was no diluted, vacillating, or molluscous theology he taught. The doctrines of grace, as found in the Scriptures and exhibited in the Westminster Standards, he clearly unfolded. Ministers who, when students, listened to his lectures, still speak of the clearness, force and power with which he expatiated on the sovereignty of God, on the doctrines of predestination and election, on the covenants of works and grace, on the vicarious nature and definite purpose of the atonement, and on those other great doctrines which relate to the person, offices and work of Christ and of the third person of the Godhead.

Having dwelt so long on the history of the earlier years of Knox College, I must now proceed more rapidly. Between the time when Dr. Willis was appointed professor and the year 1861, when the United Presbyterian Synod and the Free Church Synod were united, the chief events in the history of the college are the following: In 1848 Mr. Rintoul, having been released from the charge of the Streetsville congregation, was appointed interim professor of Hebrew—final arrangements as to this department being deferred until it became apparent what provision was to be made for the chair of Oriental Literature in King's College. In the same year the Synod resolved to take steps to procure the services of a well-qualified tutor in English, Classical Literature and general mental training. The result was the appointment of the Rev. M. Lyall, who rendered valuable service to the college till his removal to Nova Scotia, where he is now the eminent and esteemed professor of Metaphysics in Dalhousie College, Halifax.

In consequence of arrangements having been made for teaching Hebrew in University College, it became unnecessary to continue the Hebrew professorship in Knox College. Mr. Rintoul, therefore, retired from this position, and accepted a call to St. Gabriel Street congregation, Montreal, in 1850. He died in the following year while on a missionary tour to Metis. In the years 1853 and 1854 occurred the deaths of two other fathers of the Church, who, like Mr. Rintoul, had been faithful and able professors in the college. Mr. Esson died in 1853, and Mr. Gale in 1854. On the death of Mr. Esson the Synod resolved to appoint a second professor of Divinity, to whom should be assigned the departments of Logic, Mental and Moral Philosophy, and the Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion. As best fitted to give instructions in these departments, all eyes were directed to the Rev. George Paxton Young, the minister of Knox Church, Hamilton, and, accordingly, he was unanimously appointed second professor of Divinity. He resigned this position in 1864, but in a few years returned to take charge of the preparatory classes. In 1871 he was appointed to the position which he now occupies with so much distinction as professor of Metaphysics and Ethics in University College.

* Kingston was at this time the capital of the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, which had been united in 1840. In 1849, the seat of Government was transferred to Toronto.