

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### RECOLLECTIONS OF STUDENT LIFE IN EDINBURGH.

BY REV. A. C. RAIPY, EDINBURGH, N.B.

After the keen attention required to follow the elaborate lectures of Professors Flint and Davidson, it was like a rest to sit and listen to

DR. JOHN KER,

the Professor of Practical Training in the U.P. Hall. His easy conversational style required no effort to take it in, and it was something of which one never got tired. His lectures, simple though they were, had no traces of the commonplace, but abounded in exquisite touches of poetry, and his Nathaniel-like character gave a tone to all the exercises of the class. Two lectures in the week were occupied with homiletical exercises. The hour was spent on, perhaps, half-a-dozen verses from the English Bible, which had been assigned on a preceding day; members of the class were called upon to give their opinions in regard to these texts, as to whether they should be treated topically or textually; what subjects were to be found in them; how these subjects should be divided, and by what considerations proved or enforced. The other days of the week were occupied with courses of lectures, which the doctor varies from year to year. Last winter's course was devoted to considering the relation which the students' previous training has to the work of sermonizing. Taking up in detail the subjects that make up a course of study in Arts and in Divinity, he shewed how classics, history, systematic theology, etc., may be helpful in the preparation of sermons; what faculties they develop, and what kind of illustrations may be looked for in each of them—all these departments being copiously illustrated by specimens drawn from the extensive range of reading which our genial professor has been accumulating even since his very early years. This course of lectures occupied the earlier part of the session; later we had a series of lectures on the history of preaching in Germany. Beginning with the precursors of the Reformation, he led us down through the times of Luther, his followers, the Pietists, the Rationalists, and on to the present day, shewing what was the ideal of the preachers of each era, and giving ample illustrations from the works of all the more eminent men.

Altogether, there was no class that I enjoyed more than Dr. Ker's. Whether regard is had to the inspiration received from merely knowing the man, or to the practical value of his lectures, there was no course which surpassed his in helpfulness to the young man who is preparing to make the preaching of sermons his life-work.

These were the classes which I attended regularly, but my curiosity did not allow me to stop with these, and there was not a teacher of theology, and scarcely a professor in the Arts department of the University, whose class I did not visit occasionally. In this way I heard something of that grand old man, Dr. Cairns, of Dr. Raipy, who shines to much better advantage, I think, as a Church leader than as a professor, of Dr. Calderwood, whose sterling character and conscientiousness in the performance of his work made his class in Moral Philosophy something of the moral force that such a class ought to be; of Professor Tait, whose clear illustrations and pleasant manner made even physics palatable; and of John Stuart Blackie, who, under guise of the pleasantest nonsense under the sun, taught—as the students used to say—a little of everything but Greek. There were, of course, besides these, many able and a great many worthy men, but even Edinburgh professorships present a weary rank and file of commonplace occupants. Altogether

#### OUTSIDE OF THE COLLEGES.

however, Edinburgh has a great deal to attract the student. Everyone knows something of its picturesque beauty and the magnificent walks in the neighbourhood. The places of historical interest in and about the city are too well known to require me to dwell upon them. The social advantages are very great. There is so much that is educational and professional in the city that it gives quite a literary aspect to almost every gathering. On account of the largeness of the classes, there are fewer opportunities of meeting the precursors in private than with us in Canada, and besides, nearly all the best professors

—Flint, Davidson, Ker, Cairns—are bachelors, so that it is less in their way to entertain socially. Still, no one who has spent the winter in Edinburgh, and with others whom opportunity has thrown in his way, can fail to look back on the social part of his experience as of the agreeable and inspiring character. One spends so much time in the company of his fellow-students, and interests are so similar, that agreeable acquaintances ripen very rapidly into close friendship.

#### THE SCOTCH STUDENT

is usually a man of reverent nature, of wide yet careful reading, and of logical thought; and, surprising as it may seem to those whose study of national character has been limited to a familiarity with current proverbs, he is often a man of fine fancy and the keenest wit. The long letters from thoughtful, genial young Scotchmen, which have followed me from post-office to post-office during the wanderings of the last six months, and have at last run me down away out here in the wild west, will prove, I hope, but milestones in the course of friendship, which will last as long as life itself.

A great deal is to be learned in studying the Church life and listening to the

#### PREACHERS OF SCOTLAND.

Although I had the pleasure of hearing many of the celebrated ministers in different parts of the country, the two men to whom I listened with the most profit were Dr. Alexander Whyte, of Free St. George's, and Dr. Walter C. Smith, of the Free High Church. Two men they were of radically different styles—one, the preacher of the deepest-going and most heart-searching sermons on Christian experience that ever I heard; the other, practical too, but in the way of persuasive eloquence and a kind of original suggestiveness: the one, with a fervid and overpowering eloquence; the other, charming you into enthusiasm for what is highest and best. But besides these, there were of course numbers of others, whose carefully prepared sermons—more carefully prepared, I think, than average sermons of a corresponding class in Canadian cities—amply repaid my long walks three times a Sunday, sometimes even to the furthest quarters of the city.

One of the richest treats of last winter was the opportunity of attending the course of lectures on Bible Criticism delivered by

#### PROFESSOR ROBERTSON SMITH,

and since published under the title of "The Old Testament in the Jewish Church." The crowd which found its way every Thursday afternoon to the Queen-street Hall gave ample evidence of the interest felt in those questions, which for the past few years have been shaking ecclesiastical Scotland to its very centre. It may not be out of place in this letter, which, at any rate, is much more taken up with men than things, to give a sketch of the youthful Free Church professor whose case has been the subject of so many keen debates among the fathers and brethren of the General Assembly.

He was born in Aberdeenshire in 1847—the son of the Rev. W. P. Smith, D.D., Free Church minister of Keig Tongh, near the beautiful vale of Alford. The father is very proud of his son, and may be seen in the Assembly Hall, an eager listener to all the debates on the case. The boy occupied an educational holiday during the first dozen years of his life, and it is said he could read Hebrew at the age of six years. His college course was a series of triumphs. He graduated in Edinburgh with the highest honours in Logic, Philosophy and Mathematics, and became at once assistant to Professor Tait in the Natural Philosophy class. Soon after he went to the continent for the purpose of study, and spent several years in Berlin, Bonn and Göttingen, his attention being specially directed to the study of the Semitic languages. Soon after returning to Scotland, and when only twenty-four years of age, he was appointed professor of Old Testament Exegesis in the Free Church College, Aberdeen. His distinguished talents and scholarly research soon brought him into notice, he was chosen a member of the Bible Revision Committee, and became a contributor to the "Encyclopædia Britannica." His articles in the latter work attracted but little notice till an Established Church professor directed attention to their peculiar features, and an investigation took place which lasted five years, and the *quietus* which it received at the last Assembly is likely to be only a temporary one, because instead of

deciding upon the merits of Prof. Smith's views, it merely opened them up for discussion.

In person, Prof. Smith is short and slight. His round, cheerful, thin-bearded face and dark, brilliant eye have at first sight an extremely youthful appearance, but closer acquaintance discloses lines of care with which years of harassing discussion have seamed his face.

The youth and a great deal of the talent of Scotland are on his side, and although he is no longer a professor, the Free Church is still proud of him, and evidently loth to part with him. If she does force him away from her communion, she will lose not only her most distinguished scholar and ablest debater, but one of the most sincere Biblical critics that the century has produced.

#### THE TWO SCHEMES AND MR. KING'S LETTER.

MR. EDITOR,—Permit me a brief reply to the interesting letter of Rev. Mr. King in your last, hoping the discussion may serve a useful purpose. And first, I must point out that Mr. King throughout his letter completely ignores the principle on which the Sustentation Fund rests. Had this been kept in view, it would have resolved the difficulties he felt in the statements of my former letter. He agrees that the "general tendencies of any Scheme should not be overlooked in this discussion." It was to this truth I wished to call attention; and if the Church, with Mr. King, would only accept this truth, the Supplemental Scheme would not find any more supporters here than in other lands. For that Scheme has a powerful tendency to perpetuate views of the Church, and the relation of the ministry to the Church, which are not conducive to the Church's welfare and prosperity. That Scheme has no principle in it of any kind to commend it to the Church. Hence, as I pointed out, that Scheme has been adopted by no Church in the world but one, after deliberate examination. That Scheme is not much admired by the only Church in which it is in operation; and it is worthy of notice that the Supplemental Scheme has not enabled the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland to contend successfully with the spiritual necessities of the poorer districts of the country, nor would it enable ours. And I notice that, amid the noble energy and liberality of that Church, it yet deplores for the past two years a large falling off in its membership and contributions; and in a recent number of its magazine, one reason assigned for this is the pressure of its financial claims. All I say of this is, that it is worthy of notice. It shews the importance of a sound financial system, and it suggests to every unprejudiced mind the question, why should we be in a hurry to adopt a Scheme of this kind, when every Church we know of that is considering this subject rejects it? It is because, therefore, as Mr. King admits, that the "general tendencies of any Scheme should not be overlooked," because I think these tendencies are immensely more important than mere details, that I would urge the Church to pause before adopting a Scheme whose only one commendation, as far as I can see, is that it is in use in the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland—a circumstance largely in its favour, no doubt, but not a circumstance that should influence a Church like ours here to adopt it, since this one circumstance in its favour is counterbalanced by so many historical facts and so much miserable experience in our own Church here that testify with such damaging emphasis against it. And as to the tendency of the one Scheme to foster and the other to kill congregationalism—using that term, as so well defined by Mr. King, as "the disposition manifested by a congregation to exert itself for its own interests to the either partial or total neglect of the general interests of the Church"—I would point out: The underlying principle of the Sustentation Fund, as I understand it, is, that it is the duty of the Church as a whole to provide Gospel ordinances wherever needed throughout the country; that it is the duty of each congregation to contribute to its means for this purpose, to cast its contribution into the general treasury of the Church, and ask the Church to use that gift in giving the Gospel to those who need it, receiving back from the Church what itself requires, the surplus being at the Church's disposal for the support of the Gospel elsewhere. Hence, when a congregation contributes for the Sustentation Fund, it is taught that it is not only paying the hire of its own