

British American Presbyterian,

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FOR TERMS, SEE EIGHTH PAGE.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON,
Editor and Proprietor

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Letters and articles intended for the next issue should be in the hands of the Editor not later than Tuesday morning.

All communications must be accompanied by the writer's name, otherwise they will not be inserted. Articles not accepted will be returned if at the time they are sent, a request is made to that effect, and sufficient postage stamps are enclosed. Manuscripts, unless accompanied, will not be preserved and subsequent requests for their return cannot be complied with.

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FRIDAY, MAY 19, 1876.

THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

There is at the present moment a great deal of excitement over the case of the Rev. D. J. MacDonnell. The discussion upon the point that has been raised increases in volume from day to day. New developments on the matter involved are constantly occurring. The religious and secular press are throwing open their columns to the fullest discussion on the subject of the controversy. It is characteristic of the pulpits of the day, that the clergy of the various churches, are earnestly considering the collateral aspects of the case, such as liberty of conscience, the uses of creeds and confessions, the right of private judgment, and the duty of appealing to the Scriptures for the solution of doubts and difficulties. Whatever may be said as to what evils may have arisen from the discussion in which we are involved, we feel it our duty to say that no real harm can be done to the Truth. On the contrary, it may be that the controversy will lead us all to a devout and earnest study of our creeds and confessions, and a more thorough appreciation of the Word of God. The Confession of Faith can well afford to be critically examined. It is a remarkable document both as to its logical structure, and its marvellous adaptation of Scriptural language. What is wanted most of all, is that people may become thoroughly acquainted with it. And so of Scripture itself. If the controversy lead to a more thorough study of the Bible, if the Book regain once more its place in the study, in the family circle, in the Sabbath Schools, and the colleges, it will indeed be a cause of gratitude amongst all who have the cause of religion at heart. It is not for us to fear discussion and enquiry. We believe that all things work together for good, and it will be a reason for rejoicing, if after the present excitement is over, men turn with eager interest and keen delight to the constant study of the Gospel of Christ. There is more reason to fear the neglect of Scripture than earnest and animated discussions as to its meaning.

The Bible is indeed a most wonderful book. Never was there a volume that has been so fiercely attacked. It has been assailed by infidels and sceptics, and yet it stands its ground. Every year witnesses its advancing circulation. Not a day passes that does not give evidence of its controlling power. Were there not something in the Bible that is exceptional, it would have been consigned to oblivion long ago. But while all this will be acknowledged, by some intelligently and by many more as a matter of wonder, there is a popular idea abroad that it is simply a religious book, but that it has no claims to be considered as a work of literary power. It were almost sufficient to say in answer to this, that no other book has so moulded the English language. Our vernacular is richly freighted with Scriptural expressions and illustrations. Even those who affect to despise it, are found unconsciously using it in their every-day conversation. But this even is nothing as compared with other considerations. As a book in which the Divine Being in His attributes and works, the relation of man to his Creator, and the hope of immortality which inspires the human breast, are clothed in appropriate language, it stands alone. In its philosophy, it rivals the works of Socrates and Plato. As a history, away from all religious considerations, it will always be highly esteemed by scholars. It is the history of civilization. It is the history of the dealings of providence with men. It is preeminently valuable as a book of jurisprudence, furnishing as it does all the principles of justice and liberty, which have found expression in the codes of nations. The Bible is brimful of most interesting biographies, from those of the patriarchs, of the exiled Joseph, of Moses the great leader, of Elijah the renowned prophet, of David and Solomon, who invested the throne with a most dazzling splendor, to those of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, who must be accepted as at least distinguished reformers of their age and nation. And if we so deservingly esteem the writings of Shakespeare and Burns and Wordsworth, as giving special gratification to the poetical taste, what shall we say in its human aspect of the noble poetry of the Bible? Were ever such poems penned as those concerning the creation in the book of

Genesis, or those concerning providence in almost every page of Scripture, or those regarding salvation in the Gospels and Epistles. The Bible is a book of sacred hymnology far outstripping the works of modern names, who have shown a special genius in this direction. The Psalms of David and the Songs of Moses, Hannah, Mary and Zacharias, and even let us say of Paul, are the most precious legacy which we have inherited for giving expression to the triumphs of faith, to the duties of resignation, and to the hopes of immortality. And we have only to turn to the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, to find specimens of the highest literary culture, and of the loftiest genius.

These things we mention that if possible we may lead some to an earnest perusal and constant study of these Scriptures. That they are sadly neglected is evident on all hands. That they are too readily laid aside for the newspaper, the work of fiction or romance, is painfully manifest. The Word of God is not prized universally as it ought to be, even from a consideration of its human qualities. And when we regard the book as a revelation to man of the Divine Will, it will surely be felt that it is much and sadly neglected. At the same time we delight to think of the vast number who are daily living upon its truths who value the Bible more than any other book, more than life itself, and in whose closets and homes it commands a prominent place. And we take much courage from considering the enlarged and more enlightened study of the Scriptures, in our Sunday Schools and ministers' classes, and which has been so largely fostered and developed by the International series of lessons now in use. Meanwhile let us hope that men will go to their Bibles to discover for themselves, whether this or that doctrine be of God.

At a recent meeting of Plymouth Church (H. W. Beecher's), Mr. Bowen proposed to confide all his important and mysterious secrets, regarding his pastor, to Rev. W. M. Taylor, D.D., minister of the New York Congregational Tabernacle. Dr. Taylor was asked to pronounce his opinion upon the case as referred to him. Was ever folly like this? Substituting confessional and private judgments for a thorough, legal investigation of the case. The answer of Dr. Taylor to the request to be father-confessor, is just what we expected. The doctor positively declines. He does not want to be the depository of the slum and filth of Brooklyn. He declines to give an opinion in such circumstances. All this shows the necessity there is for a proper ecclesiastical investigation. The case will never be settled without it. Dr. Taylor does not desire to take the place of the Ecclesiastical Court, and wisely suggests that a mutual council should be called.

Ministers and Churches.

THE Rev. Mr. Inglis, Ayr, has removed into the new "manse," lately erected by the Stanley Street Church congregation.

THE Rev. John M. McIntyre, having accepted the call of Knox Church, Harrison and Cotswood, was inducted at an adjourned meeting of the Presbytery of Saugeen on Wednesday.

THE Presbyterian Church, Wroster, is undergoing a process of repair, and is being put in thoroughly good order. In the meantime the congregation will meet in the Wesleyan Methodist chapel.

THE London *Advertiser* says:—"Dr. Campbell, of this city, who has conducted divine services for some time past in the Presbyterian Church, South Delaware, has been presented with a purse containing twenty dollars. Mr. Robert Scott represented the congregation.

THE *Guelph Mercury* says:—"A joint committee has been formed, consisting of three members of each of the Presbyterian Churches in town, for the purpose of taking a general supervision of Presbyterian Sabbath School work in Guelph and vicinity. Mr. D. McCrae is chairman of the committee."

We understand that the new congregation at Blue-field, and the congregation at Rodgerville formerly presided over by Rev. Mr. Logie, have each moderated in a call to Rev. Thomas Thompson, of Dufr's Church, McKillop. This marked appreciation of his abilities and Christian earnestness must be most gratifying and encouraging to Mr. Thompson himself, and pleasing to his many friends.

THE Stratford *Herald* says:—"We notice by our Guelph exchanges that a congregational meeting in Knox Church in that town held for the purpose of deciding on a successor, for which office candidates have been heard for some time, the choice fell on Mr. A. Campbell Black, lately pastor in St. Andrew's Church here. Mr. Black is an excellent leader of psalmody and a good teacher of music; and we congratulate the congregation of Knox Church, Guelph, on their choice."

The induction of the Rev. Robt. Harkness, probationer, late of Scotland, took place at Maxwell, township of Osprey. The Rev. John McAlmon of Markdale, presided and preached a very excellent and appropriate sermon from 1 Cor. ix. 24. "So run that ye may obtain." The attendance was not so large as might have been expected, but this no doubt was owing to the very rainy weather and the bad roads. The Rev. Mr. Gregg, of Orchardville, conducted the induction services, and addressed both the minister and the congregation in a very instructive and effective manner. It is hoped that Mr. Harkness will be abundantly blessed in his labours in this position of the Master's vineyard.—*Com.*

THE Rev. James Fleck, Second Armagh, has accepted a call from Knox Church, Montreal. The Presbytery of Armagh, at its meeting on Tuesday last, released Mr. Fleck from the pastoral charge of the congregation over which he has had the oversight for the last seven years. The members of Presbytery spoke in the highest terms of Mr. Fleck, and expressed deep regret at parting with him as did also the representatives of his congregation present at the meeting. Mr. Fleck is a native of Broughshane, a district which has given to the Presbyterian Church not a few able and earnest ministers. He is a young man of highest promise, and loved and admired by all who know him. We wish him God speed in the new sphere of labour to which he has been called.—*Irish Paper.*

On Thursday, the 27th ultimo, the Rev. R. J. Craig, M.A., was ordained over the Presbyterian Congregation at Mill Point. The Rev. Mr. MacMechan, of Picton, opened with the usual devotional exercises, and preached an appropriate sermon, taking for his text, Rev. xiv. 6. The Rev. T. G. Smith, of Kingston, as Moderator, put the prescribed questions to the candidate, which, being answered satisfactorily, he was solemnly set apart to the sacred office of the Ministry, and by laying on of hands of the Presbytery. In the evening a very successful soiree was held in the Town Hall to welcome the new Pastor. Addresses were given by Revs. MacMechan, Craig, Smith and Young, and music furnished by an efficient choir. The meeting passed off very pleasantly, and we congratulate Mr. Craig on his auspicious beginning.

At a meeting of the Union Congregation, Lancaster, held in McRae's Hall, Lancaster, on the 8th inst., John McLennan, Esq., in the chair. It was resolved and unanimously agreed to, that the building of a church and manse be proceeded with at once. A committee of nine, consisting of the following:—A. McLennan, chairman; A. B. McLennan, D. McLennan, D. Fraser, John McKenzie, R. Cameron, R. McDougall, and A. Dingwall, was chosen, with full power to solicit subscriptions, determine the character of the building, and complete the work with as little delay as possible. A subscription list was opened, headed by the chairman with \$500, followed by many others at respectable distances, soon amounted to a considerable sum. It was then agreed that proper steps be taken to dispose of a certain property now held by the United congregation, to be invested in a new manse, the ladies assuming the responsibility of a balance. Church and manse to be completed on or before the end of December. The tone and temper of the congregation evinces earnestness and unanimity. We wish this congregation so happily launched a prosperous voyage.

A revival has been going on in the Presbyterian Church, Dresden, for the past few weeks. A good work has been done. The Rev. David Cameron, of St. James' Presbyterian Church, London, preached in the Church on the evenings of Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, last week, and the large audience which attended, especially on the last night of his services, the Church being full, gave abundant evidence of the spiritual feeling at present pervading the congregation. Our cause was only established in Dresden a little over two years ago, and though there were then no less than seven other churches in the place, the Presbyterians have gradually increased and are still increasing. Mr. Alison who is in charge of the Church, has every reason to feel encouraged with the growth of the congregation, and the unanimity and harmony existing amongst the people, and between them and himself. The amount subscribed this year towards the "Home Mission Fund" from this congregation, was nearly three times that of last year. A handsome lot of ground, in rear of the Church building, was recently purchased by Hugh Currie, Esq., of Dresden and Detroit, and presented, the other evening, to the congregation, for the purpose of building a manse. This gentleman has by this, and other liberality, shown himself a sincere friend to the Church. He is Chairman of the Board of Management.—*Com.*

THE Presbyterians of Dublin, Ireland, are about to build a Church Institute and Hall, at a cost of \$20,000.

Dresden last year 700 men were employed in the restoration and completion of the Cathedral of Cologne, begun in the year 1248.

Book Reviews.

SKETCHES OF INDIAN LIFE AND TRAVEL, By Mrs. Murray Mitchell: Nelson & Sons, London.

Few more charming books have ever been published in the interest of Missions than Mrs. Murray Mitchell's "Sketches of Indian Life and Travel." While much has been written about India, especially of late, we have, as Dr. Mitchell observes in his editorial preface, "not many books about India written by ladies," and the present one contains much information which could hardly have been given by a male writer, which will be found deeply interesting by all who are interested in one of the most interesting kinds of Missionary work, the Missions to the Zenana homes of India.

Dr. Murray Mitchell and his wife had been formerly for years engaged in Mission work in India, at a time, however, when Zenanas were not thrown open to the entrance of gentle Christian ladies, as they are now. They had returned to Scotland on account of Dr. Mitchell's health, and he had been for years settled over an attached congregation. But a call came to him to go out on a Mission from the Free Church of Scotland, somewhat similar to that entrusted to Dr. Norman McLeod and Dr. Watson, by the Established Church. Its fulfilment detained him several years in India, residing temporarily at various Mission centres;—so that Mrs. Mitchell had ample opportunities of collecting the information which abounds in this interesting book, which will doubtless largely increase the interest already taken in the most Christian work of carrying at once intellectual and spiritual light to those immured in the Zenana prisons,—in the very "region and shadow of death."

To the Women's Foreign Missionary Association now being formed in various places, this volume will be most interesting and most useful. We would recommend each such association to procure a copy for social reading,—for few things could stimulate more the Missionary zeal of women who live in the light and love of happy Christian homes, than Mrs. Mitchell's graphic pictures of the sorrowful lives of their Indian sisters.

The authoress begins with a lively sketch of the various vicissitudes of the "Overland Route,"—and gives the following vivid sketch of the entrance to Calcutta, up the Hooghly, which will probably be new to most readers.

"There is nothing to strike one much as you approach the mouth of the river. First, there is a long, low, indistinct margin of land; then, as the channel narrows, a dense jungle, with clumps of the picturesque cocoa and other palms, which seem to wave as a welcome to their tropical domain; then an occasional native hamlet of very poor little huts; new we proceed onward between two flat shores of the brightest and most luxuriant green. You may fancy with what an intensity of interest and expectation we watch it all. The river itself is as yellow nearly as the "yellow Tiber"; and people tell us of hidden dangers beneath the smooth waters, and we hear the initiated congratulating each other as some quick-and-some hidden bank and shoal are safely passed. The Hooghly is a very difficult piece of navigation; and yet, as we slowly steam on, the busy scene on its surface becomes busier and more animated every moment. Crowds of native craft of the most varied description continually pass us by. There are fleets of fishing-boats, and some queer looking cargo-boats, with thatched roofs from bow to stern. Now and then, a magnificent ship on its way to the ocean is towed past by a tiny tug-boat; and now further up, as we approach Calcutta, there come a perfect forest of masts. Ships of all nations lie thickly moored in the stream; and we see that we have reached one of the great commercial centres of the world. On one hand was an imposing building, which we were told is Bishop's College; and on the other, the king of Oude's palace; and stretching upwards the handsome line of houses called Garden Reach."

We have not space for the interesting sketch of Calcutta,—its palaces, public buildings, drives and the lovely country roads and lanes, fringed with feathery bamboos and beautiful flowering shrubs. The following passage however takes us into the life of the people.

"Behind all this, there lies a very different picture. A few of the native bazzars are wide enough, though the buildings which line them form a series of the most extraordinary contrasts. Here is a Babee's palace, and next to it, the meanest hut. Most of the streets are simply narrow lanes, which have deep odoriferous drains on either side, full of stagnant water (though this is being altered now), with a plank to every door. It is sometimes difficult, in threading these labyrinths, for two conveyances to pass abreast. The houses in these poorer bazzars are mere huts, rudely constructed of bamboo and mud, or sometimes only date-matting with bamboo posts, roofed with red tiles, and not even picturesque in their poverty and squalor. The shops are ranges of queer open, low stalls—piled round with merchandise; if they contain clothes, or if sweetmeats or grain, then the goods are arranged on shelves like steps. The bazzars of Bombay and Delhi, and some of the other cities I have seen, are clean and tidy, and picturesquely eastern. Not so those of this comparatively modern capital. Dilapidation seems written on most things; for which, however, the cyclones may largely account."

"It is all strangely, deeply interesting; and I never weary of watching the quaint scene, and all the fantastic novelties, with

which pure native life abounds. You are surprised to find that some of the lanes are skirted by high blank walls, instead of houses, as you imagine, presenting here and there a small closed door to the street. Within these walls, however, are some of the finest houses of the rich native gentlemen; with their Zenanas—prison-like homes of the higher born women of Bengal. These houses face inward to a court, paved generally with marble, and ornamented with pillars and balconies, and perhaps a fountain. This may lead onward to another court, or half-garden, with a few plantain, pomegranate, and other trees, and a small tank in the centre. There is sometimes a low column with a flower-pot upon it, containing a sacred plant, which is watered and cherished, and has offerings made to it."

"Very few women are to be seen in the Calcutta bazzars, and those only coolies, or of the lowest caste. The whole female community of the upper and middle classes are shut up in their Zenanas, and never on any pretext go abroad except in closed up gharrtees or palanquins. You sometimes meet one of these conveyances with a sheet tied closely round over window and door; and you know that a woman is within, who not only must not be seen, but must not *see*. The lady of the Turkish harem may see what she can through the veil which completely conceals her face—not so the poor Zenana lady. She must not have so much as a passing glimpse of anything going on in the outer world. Even if she goes to the river to bathe in the sacred water, and do pooja or worship—and this is almost the only thing which takes her abroad—she must go in a palkee with a perforated bottom, that the water may enter and make her pure without her requiring to leave her asylum. Let us rejoice and give thanks to God that now these poor prisoners, by reason of our Zenana Missions, are becoming "prisoners of hope," and are daily (some of them, at least) hearing of the pure river of the water of life, and are being invited to come and share in the glorious liberty with which Christ makes his people free."

The most interesting passages of the book refer to these "poor prisoners" whose condition is described with the true pathos of Christian sympathy.

Here is the account of Mrs. Mitchell's first introduction to the Zenana life in person.

"My heart has been strangely stirred and touched to-day. I have had my first glimpse into Zenana life and Zenana work. You know that one of the great desires of my heart in returning to India was to see, and, as far as I could, to help in this most interesting and to me comparatively new phase of Mission work. Of course, in Western India we tried to get access to the women, and in a few isolated cases were admitted into families to teach the ladies; but the Zenana (or Hindu harem) is not an institution in the other presidencies in the same sense it is in Bengal. The women lead much less secluded lives, and therefore, though their need of instruction may be as great, one seems to commiserate them less; at least, one's heart does not ache over them so painfully as mine did to-day. I had often heard of the 'prison homes' of Bengal, of their 'caged' inmates, and so forth; and now I know that these are no figures of speech, no fiction, no exaggeration. It is a terrible reality that the gentle creatures I saw, and more than thirty millions like them, are in virtual imprisonment—and in the solemn language of the Apostle, are living without God and without hope in the world. It is an appalling truth, and one's very soul is burdened with the thought of it. We think we are doing a great Missionary work; the Churches think so, and our nation, I dare say, thinks so too, with so many Societies engaged. Whatever is doing for the men, here are the women—half the community—shut up and utterly helpless. What is doing for them? One is told that female education is advancing, and it may be so, inasmuch as it is now possible to get access to the women; but the truth is, that while there are about thirty-three millions of women in Bengal alone, only about fifteen hundred of these are receiving instruction."

"Let us pray without ceasing, and work without ceasing, for the women of India. O day of days, when the Light of Life and Healer of the nations shall be revealed to this unhappy land!"

We hope to return to this most interesting book and glean some more extracts, for the benefit, especially, of female readers. In the meantime we close with a paragraph which must go to the heart of ever Christian women.

"I have spent a day with Miss Brittain (of the American Mission), and her energy is quite catching. She has organized a most efficient Women's Mission, and her teachers go out into the houses of the native gentry all over the city. Her account of the manner in which the ladies receive her instructions is most touching. She says she has often seen the tears roll over their faces, as she has spoken of the love which made Jesus come down from His home above to seek and save and comfort the poor and heavy laden ones of earth. The tenderness and lovingness of the gospel touch these tired and weary hearts. It is all so different from the harsh utterances of their own sacred books, which pronounced woman to be false, cruel, impure, and everything that is bad. I remember hearing of the woman who said, 'Ah! I know who wrote your Bible! It must have been a woman; no one but a woman would say such kind things about women.' Yes, I know who wrote your Bible!"

To individual faithfulness, and to the energy of the private conscience, God has committed the real history and progress of mankind.

Did you ever notice what a different aspect everything wears in the sunshine from what it does in the shadow? And did you ever think what an analogy there was between the sunlight of the cloudless skies and the sunlight that gleams into the darkened chambers of the human soul? How bright and beautiful are the golden beams that break through the riven clouds to lighten up the world again after a succession of dark and stormy days.