

## SKETCH OF PRINCIPAL CAIRD, D. D.

BY REV C. B. ROSS, B.D., LANCASTER, ONT.

**D**R. JOHN CAIRD, Principal of the University of Glasgow, is one of the most eloquent preachers of the Scotch Church. Not long ago, a religious periodical in Scotland invited each of its subscribers to send in a list of twelve of the best preachers of Scotland, the names to appear on the list in their order of merit, according to the opinion of each contributor. When all the lists were compared, it was found that Principal Caird had the largest number of votes. And the result of this test coincides with popular opinion in Scotland. When it is known that Dr. Caird is to preach, the Church is certain to be crowded. The late Dean Stanley, indeed, regarded Principal Caird as a greater preacher than Robertson of Brighton. In one sense this opinion is correct. Principal Caird's sermons are more elaborate, and his style is more ornate than that of the great English divine; but, in reading them over, we miss somewhat of that deep penetration into the meaning of Scripture, and of that wonderful intensity and earnestness in the exposition of spiritual truth, which are so characteristic of the writings of M. Robertson, who has been called "the most original preacher of the 19th century."

John Caird was born at Greenock in 1820. He studied at Glasgow University; and at the age of twenty-five years he was appointed to the parish of Newton-on-Ayr. In 1847 he was translated to the charge of Lady Yester's parish in Edinburgh—a charge which had, previously, been filled by such able men as Dr. Blair, Principal Lee, Dr Binnie, etc. The young preacher fully maintained the reputation of Lady Yester's pulpit; and, during his incumbency, the Church was crowded every Sunday. The work of preparing and preaching two sermons a week, however, began to tell upon the young clergyman, who was in delicate health, and he was glad, after a short pastorate in Edinburgh, to undertake the charge of the parish of Errol in Perthshire, to which he was called. Here he fully maintained his reputation, and was frequently invited to fill important pulpits on special occasions. In 1857 he accepted a call to Glasgow, where he still further advanced his reputation as a preacher and an author. He received the degree of D. D. in 1860, and was appointed to the chair of Theology in the University of Glasgow in 1862. During his long tenure of this office he was

one of the principal ornaments of the University. He studied carefully the different philosophical schools of Germany, and (with his brother, Professor Edward Caird,) became a warm admirer of the Hegelian philosophy. When the Principalship became vacant in 1873 Dr. Caird was appointed to that office, and thus reached the highest point of his successful career. Since then he has lived a more retired life, giving himself to literary pursuits, while performing, with becoming dignity and with marked ability, the duties of Principal; and preaching, on special occasions, with all the eloquence which marked his earlier career.

The elements of Dr. Caird's popularity as a preacher consist chiefly in his refined power of thought, with the charm of his rich and sympathetic voice, the grace and force of his delivery, and the cultured style of his composition. No Scotch preacher has at command a more finished literary style than Principal Caird. Perhaps no writer of the English language excels him in this respect. His writings have all the grace of Dean Stanley's, all the force of Canon Liddon's, and they have a majesty peculiarly their own. "In the hands of Principal Caird, the English language dons the imperial purple."

The following is an extract from his sermon on

## "THE SIMPLICITY OF CHRISTIAN RITUAL:"

"The danger, incident to an elaborate ceremonial, of substituting ritual for religion, is increased by the too common tendency to mistake æsthetic emotion for religious feeling. It is quite possible, apart from a religion of conscience and spiritual conviction, to get up a sensuous mimicry of pious emotion. As the outer form of a book, its showy binding or fair type, may be admired by many who have neither intelligence nor taste to appreciate its contents; or as the fair and noble features and graceful form of man or woman may be beheld with delight by not a few, who are incapable of honoring the still nobler beauty of the mind within—so there is that in the mere dress and drapery of religion, the arbitrary form and accidents of spirituality, which may elicit deep emotion from many a mind that has never felt one throb of true religious feeling—of reverence or love for the inner spirit and essence of religion itself. Beauty, it is true, is not hostile to Goodness; on the contrary, the Beautiful and the Good, ever closely akin, blend ultimately in the one glorious unity of the Divine Nature. The highest perception and keenest relish for the Beautiful, therefore, is that which is possible only to the pure and holy mind. Yet there is a lower sensibility to Beauty which is attainable apart from the moral condition of the heart, and which is often felt most keenly by the most unspiritual and irreligious of men. A refined bodily organization, a susceptible nervous system, a strongly emotional temperament, especially if these be combined with a mind of some measure of intellectual culture, will render a man extremely sensitive to the beauty of the outer accompani-