

EN ROUTE FROM DEMERARA

Our Special Commissioner to the West Indies has completed her journey to Demerara and return. This week's letter is written from Antigua. Next week's letter, the last of the series, will be profusely illustrated from exceptional photographs.

Off Antigua, 13th May, 1909.

Dear Mr Editor:—

Since leaving Trinidad we have paid our return visits to Barbados and Dominica. I have already told you something of what I saw on our downward trip and now homeward bound, I have tried to see a little more. From a picturesque point of view Barbados lacks something, owing to the absence of surrounding high hills, but the capital, Bridgetown, is in itself an interesting town and the public buildings, as I think I mentioned, are handsome and worth a visit. I was particularly pleased with the Anglican Cathedral; it is much older than I had expected, some of the many vaults in the nave dating from about 1650. Bridgetown boasts no electric car service, but the open trams drawn by mules afford pleasant runs. Taking one of these to Hastings, I had an opportunity of seeing something of the result of the withdrawal of the British troops, in the vast collection of empty buildings, once occupied by the garrison, and built at enormous expense. If the Empire had some of that wasted money now we might put it to better use.

From Barbados we came to St. Lucia, which island was new to me, not being included in the itinerary of the outward voyage. As at the former place, the native boys indulge in really splendid diving contests for coins thrown by the passengers on the steamers. I have witnessed the same thing in the bay of Naples in comparatively shallow water, whereas in the West Indies it is quite "a deep sea fishing" competition. The little I saw of St. Lucia impressed me very favourably. At Castries, the chief town, we had the great advantage of getting right up to the wharf. The *Dahome's* only business at this port was to take on water and coal. The former bears an excellent reputation and as the coaling process is carried on almost entirely by native women, each bearing a basket with a load of about one hundred pounds, on her head, it is a most interesting, if somewhat dusty, sight. My visit to the botanical gardens delighted me greatly and owing to the courtesy and generosity of one of Messrs. Pickford and Black's agents, who accompanied me on my visit, I bore away such a bouquet of roses, ferns and frangipanni as would have been the envy of those living in a northern latitude.

The cathedral of Castries varies considerably from those on the other islands owing to the quantity of fresco work employed in its mural decoration. Some of the upper portion of this bears very visible evidence of the earthquake which took place here two years ago. Later in the day I came unexpectedly on the cathedral again and found a very large congregation assembled for evening service, which during the month of May is held here every night.

Yesterday we returned to Dominica for an all too short visit. Arriving about 7 a.m. I went ashore after breakfast, having received an invitation from the Hon. I. Cox Fillau to visit some of his estates on this island. Unfortunately, owing to the *Dahome* being due to leave at 5 p.m. my sight-seeing was considerably curtailed and I can say nothing of the sulphur springs, the waterfalls and some other features which are the glory of Dominica. They had had some heavy rain in the early morning ashore, and Diablotia, the highest peak of the Caribbean archipelago and said to be over 5,000 feet, wore a rather heavy cap of cloud, but the surrounding hills were bathed in sunlight and verdure, and I enjoyed our drive over beautiful roads, over which huge lizards ran out of our way, and either side of which were thickly bordered with heavily-laden lime trees, sugar canes, etc., while tall palms waved majestically over all. Short bridges took us across some of the many rivers—there are reputed to be three hundred and sixty-five—rushing down from the mountains.

Our first stop left us a hundred feet or so below the agent's house, to which a short ascent on foot took us. Here seated in the cool porch with open slats and looking over the tropical blue sea far beneath us, I had my first drink from a perfectly fresh cocconut and a subsequent light repast on some of the jelly, which by the time the nuts have reached northern climes has become a solid mass and constitutes the well known fruit in our home markets. It seems a pity that some enterprising firm does not start a canning factory for the preserving of some, if not all, of the many rich tropical fruits which never can, under present conditions, come to our shores at all.

Resuming our drive we arrived at my host's residence, "Wall house Estate," and there I experienced some of the hospitality which has earned for him the title of "prince of entertainers." After lunch I had a glimpse at some of the photos and curios brought back from many of the foreign lands he has visited, and then "inexorable time" ordered out the carriage again and we returned to the little town of Roseau by way of the botanical gardens, which I had previously seen and which are equal in beauty to many others which are the pride of the "B. W. I." and British Guiana. The Roman Catholic cathedral I found well worthy of a visit and the "vista" from one of its open doors into the well kept gardens of the adjoining handsome presbytery made a most beautiful picture. Shortly after I returned to the *Dahome* and we left the fair island of Dominica about 5 p.m. Until dinner time we had lovely coast views, after which darkness set in and we were out at sea once more.

This morning found us off the harbour of St. John, Antigua. It is a very long and sometimes, as to-day, a very rough row ashore. I had three negroes and the poor fellows had a pretty tough

time taking me over, being frequently drenched by the water we were shipping, which often splashed up to me in the stern. However, though rough, I was very glad I made the passage, for Antigua proved much more interesting than I had anticipated from its appearance out at sea. From the roadstead, the twin towers of the Anglican cathedral had made a most imposing landmark, and I was in no way disappointed by a visit to the interior. I have never seen an exactly similar building. Outwardly it is of stone, inwardly of wood, each being independent of the other, so designed to withstand earthquakes, one of which in 1843 destroyed the former ancient edifice, and the devastating power of which is amply shown in the shattered condition of some handsome but very old tombstones in the surrounding churchyard. The public library is a most creditable institution and the botanical gardens, which like the similar beautiful enclosures of the other islands, are charmingly situated on rising ground a short way out from the city.

Even Antigua is not without its tragedies. Passing by the court house I was attracted by the stir of people on the steps to go up to ascertain the cause. Looking in one of the open windows I had a momentary glimpse of the interior and learned that it was the trial of a woman for the murder of a little girl of eleven. I had no time to wait, perhaps, so much the better. Returning to the wharf I was fortunate in finding the harbour launch on the point of starting and stepping on board had a pleasant steam over to the *Dahome*.

Yours truly,
SIDNEY A. GIBSON.

CANADIAN PRESBYTERIANISM

By DR. QUILL

THE General Assembly is the annual review of Presbyterianism in Canada. As its men and measures belong to the national assets the opening of its Parliament in Hamilton on June 2nd is of great public interest.

The officers of this supreme church court are few and its procedure simple. The chairman or president bears the striking title of Moderator—a term of Huguenot descent, like the veteran presbyter who at present graces the position. The office is a popular gift and insures a year of many honours. In clerical etiquette he becomes "the Very Reverend," and of Frederick B. DuVal, it may be said that no name has been added to this very select list of "the Fathers" who measures up better to the traditions of "a learned and godly divine."

Two joint-clerks, Dr. R. Campbell of Montreal, and Dr. J. Somerville of Toronto, hold the keys and decipher the documents. In them are to be found distinct types of "Auld-kirk" and "Free," and are thus glowing proofs of the blessings of "the Union." Dr. E. A. McCurdy of Halifax should be named in the same breath with the above, as he is General Agent of the "Eastern Section." He is one of the "big-men" of the Maritime Synod, and the wonder is that he has so long avoided the Moderatorship.

The network of organisation is woven out of forty-two "Conveners," who in the business of the Church are the "Heads of Departments." Eleven elders are in this executive. Mr. R. Kilgour of Toronto, whose name stands for financial soundness, is chief of the Trustee Board and thus scrutinises all investments and safeguards the endowments. Sir T. W. Taylor of Hamilton, as a son of the manse, lends his high judicial acumen to the protection of Church property. Mr. J. K. Macdonald, a prince of financiers, has long been devising ways and means for Aged and Infirm Ministers, whose finances are small. And Mr. J. Henderson, also of Toronto, has been "a son of consolation" indeed in his support for Ministers' Widows and Orphans.

Dr. E. D. McLaren, Dr. S. Lyle and Dr. R. P. McKay are "the Great Triumvirate" in Home Missions, Augmentation and Foreign Missions. For only a "coalition" of interests can secure the best results. Many others stand near "the throne," such as Rev. J. S. Sutherland, the "optimist," from Halifax; Rev. W. A. J. Martin, the Convener par excellence, of Brantford; and Dr. Carmichael, the last of the Apostles to the "dispersed of Presbyterianism."

John Knox drew from the fountain of learning in Geneva the conviction that education was the strength of Protestantism. The six theological colleges of the Church join hands in confirming the same ideal in a "far-flung Dominion. Since Ex-Principal McLaren, "the grandest of them all," has laid down the burden at Knox College, the courtly Principal of Queen's, Dr. Gordon, may be called the

"dean of all the Principals." President Forrest of Halifax as master polemic, has done service on many "glorious fields." Principal Patrick, however, holds the central dais in the public eye. The man himself, so polished and deft of touch, and as masterful as the syllogism itself, is from Alpha to Omega, academic. Thus if he shows a weakness in handling the great matters of the Church, it is in assuming the attitude of one who thinks that both the postulates of Euclid and the Principal of Manitoba College are axiomatic.

Church Union has reached the "critical hour." Five years ago these brave theological knights marched out to the music, "that a union of the churches to be real and lasting, must carry the consent of the entire membership." Will the tune be changed? Dr. Sedgwick, whom Providence has spared out of a brilliant array of churchmen, has the ability and spirit to do his Church a great service at this "the parting of the ways." Dr. McMullan of Woodstock, whose mind and heart are ripe enough to be trusted, must needs be a member of that solemn conclave which will issue this matter. Principal MacKay of Vancouver led the first open attack upon the "Union breastworks," and is still the best recruiting general of the opposition. Dr. R. Campbell, ex-moderator and clerk of assembly, has also issued his ultimatum.

But Principal Patrick has beside him good advisers and loyal churchmen. President Falconer of Toronto University has already stepped to the front on behalf of Union. Dr. Armstrong of Ottawa, who yields to no man a better title to Calvinistic principles, knows the Canadian Church and sentiments as few do. The Moderator himself, as the "keeper of the gates" between the East and West, might well be the mediator between all extremes, and is yet frankly in favour and ready to give his powerful support to the cause of Union.

Some are asking will Higher Criticism be ventilated? We may safely answer, no. There are several books by advanced critics and yet in no Presbytery or Synod have they been "put under the ban." Hence although both Knox and Queen's are at this Assembly making loud appeals to the Church, yet in the face of unmistakable spiritual awakenings there is no disposition to engage in an indifferent heresy war.

The ways of the various members of the human race are often past explaining. A writer in M. A. P. tells an amusing story of a gentleman who wrote one day asking for a ticket of admission to the Strangers' Gallery of the House of Commons. He was politely informed that the gallery was closed, and he could not therefore be admitted. Shortly afterwards he wrote again saying: "As the gallery is closed will you send me six tickets for the Zoo?"