

# PROMINENT CANADIANS.—XXIV.

SKETCHES of the following Prominent Canadians have already appeared in THE WEEK : Hon. Oliver Mowat, Dr. Daniel Wilson, Principal Grant, Sir John A. Macdonald, K.C.B., Louis Honoré Fréchette, LL.D., Sir J. William Dawson, Sir Alexander Campbell, K.C.M.G., Hon. William Stevens Fielding, Hon. Alexander Mackenzie, Sir Samuel Leonard Tilley, C.B., K.C.M.G., Alexander McLachlan, Hon. J. A. Chappleau, Sir Richard Cartwright, K.C.M.G., Sanford Fleming, C.E., LL.D., C.M.G., Hon. H. G. Joly, Hon. P. J. O. Chauveau, Sir Wm. Buell Richards, Hon. Wilfrid Laurier, M.P., Hon. Honoré Mercier, Q.C., Hon. William Macdougall, C.B., Rev. Principal MacVicar, D.D., LL.D., Prof. Charles G. D. Roberts, M.A., George Paxton Young, M.A., and Hon. Auguste Real Angers, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec.

THE REV. WILLIAM CAVEN, D.D., PRINCIPAL OF KNOX COLLEGE.

In these days there is a general impression that within the circle of physical science with its vast sweep, exploring, as it seeks to do, the entire material universe, all possible knowledge may be comprehended. Many would relegate metaphysics and theology to the realm of dreams. It is nevertheless true in our day as in that of Shakespeare, that

There are more things in heaven and earth  
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

Mental and moral science is intrinsically and relatively of the utmost importance, and has a direct and intimate bearing on all the principal problems of human life. Its conclusions may not indeed have all the obvious certitude that pertains to the discoveries and deductions of the exact sciences, but its data and applications are to all candid and unprejudiced inquirers clearly discernible. Those then who select this field of research are entitled to the respect and appreciation usually accorded to the men whose labours are directed to the advancement of learning and the promotion of the general well-being.

Profound and comprehensive study of theological science, though not conspicuously pursued by Canadians, has not been neglected. No one individual in any one of the various denominations may be selected as a representative Canadian theologian; there are men in all the more prominent churches whose attainments have received cordial recognition. In the Presbyterian Church there are several besides the subject of the following sketch entitled to be ranked as theologians, but Principal Caven has, on many occasions, held the position of a representative of the doctrinal system that, with modifications, finds general acceptance in the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

William Caven was born in Wigtonshire, Scotland, on the 26th December, 1830. His father, a man of more than average intelligence, and of much amiability and gentleness of disposition, was a school teacher. In uprightness of character, conscientiousness and firm adherence to principle, Dr. Caven's father was one who commanded the respect of all who knew him. If the Principal of Knox College owes much to his father, he is no less indebted to his mother, whose excellence of character was strongly marked. The Caven family left their Scottish home in 1847, exchanging the neighbourhood of the Solway Firth for the banks of the Avon, in Perth County, Ontario. Here, in comparative seclusion, the studious youth passed an important period of his life. Strange to say he did not find his way to academic distinction, for he is not an alumnus of any university. In his case the lack was equally compensated for by the rare advantages he enjoyed. He belonged to the branch of the Church in Canada known down to 1861 as the United Presbyterian, which, in that year, merged with the Free Church into the Canada Presbyterian, and subsequently united with the Church of Scotland in 1875, embracing within its fold most of the Presbyterianism of British North America.

The United Presbyterian Church in those days had a theological seminary presided over by a man of rare accomplishments and of distinguished ability. The Rev. William Proudfoot, father of Hon. Justice Proudfoot, has left a deep and abiding impression wherever he was known, and in the London district his memory is, to this day, affectionately cherished. To this distinguished teacher Dr. Caven owes much, for from him he received not only valued and varied instruction, but also much that has been of permanent help to him in methods of study. The Rev. William Proudfoot's efficiency as an instructor is attested by the fact that two such scholarly men as his son, Rev. John J. A. Proudfoot, D.D., and Principal Caven received from him alone their classical and theological education.

Principal Caven completed his educational course in 1852, and in October of that year was ordained to the ministry at St. Mary's, where he laboured with great acceptance for fourteen years. In 1866 he was unanimously chosen to fill the chair of Exegetical Theology in Knox College, of which institution, on the retirement of Dr. Willis, he was appointed Principal in 1873. Two years later, Queen's University bestowed upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. In the same year he was chosen Moderator of the General Assembly which met in Montreal, and at which the reunion of Canadian Presbyterianism was consummated. He was President of the Ontario Teachers' Association in 1877, and was appointed by the Ontario Government a Member of the Senate of Toronto University. Dr. Caven took an active interest in the formation of the Presbyterian Alliance, generally known as the Pan-Presbyterian Council, and has been one of the prominent members of all the Councils yet held; in that at Edinburgh in 1877, Philadelphia in 1880, Belfast in 1884, and at London during the present year. In the various courts of his Church Dr. Caven has taken a prominent place; his eminently judicial intellect and his peaceful counsels have gained for him a weight and influence in deliberation that do not always fall to the lot of the most eminent debaters. Even when excitement runs high the tall spare figure, the somewhat precise and formal bearing, the modest demeanour and the pacific tones of the learned

Principal, as he proceeds to address the Fathers and Brethren, have generally a soothing effect, and he is listened to with silent respect even by those who do not always accept his conclusions.

Dr. Caven is frequently called upon to fill prominent pulpits, and to preach sermons on special occasions. He is in great request for Church openings, and his solid, clear and fervent Evangelical discourses are much relished, especially by the more thoughtful of his hearers. When he preaches it is evident to every listener that he is deeply impressed with a sense of responsibility. He speaks as in the presence of the Great King, and is accountable to Him for the fidelity with which he delivers His message. As far as time and opportunity permit, he takes an active part in the promotion of philanthropic enterprises. While strongly attached to his own Church Dr. Caven is large-hearted and Catholic in his sympathies.

By his clear apprehension of truth and his habits of faithful and patient investigation, Principal Caven has mastered the Theology of the Reformed Churches, and is its able and persuasive exponent. He is not a discoverer in the field of systematic divinity. He has added nothing specially new to theological speculation. For him speculation and theorizing have no charms. The higher criticism, so-called, meets with but a chilling reception from him. He is conservatively orthodox as a theologian, and as such he renders important service. He feels the ground firm beneath his tread, and leaves to others the task of pursuing the phantasms which fascinate many of his contemporaries. He keeps steadfastly to the old landmarks; he contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. In the discharge of his teaching functions, he is earnest, painstaking, faithful and courteous. In him his students not only find a preceptor but a friend. While he holds the principles to which he is attached with unfaltering conviction, there is nothing whatever of the bigot in his composition. He cheerfully concedes to others the rights he claims for himself, and is without one of the most genial and lovable of men. Though he himself might deprecate being classed among prominent Canadians, it is the rank cheerfully accorded him in virtue of the honoured position he occupies, and because of the many excellent qualifications he possesses. All Canadians who know him entertain a high respect for the Principal of Knox College.

SIGMA.

## CHARADE.

My head is a member familiar to you;  
It is also a liquid, and strange, but yet true,  
'Tis not dry nor yet wet, nor cold nor yet hot.  
It runs through all lands, but the deep knows it not.  
My body is small, and never in sight;  
Good sooth! it is barely the fourth of a mite.  
In heaven and earth it may plainly be seen;  
In morn you search vainly, but find it at e'en.  
Tho' tedious the search, it is true as you please,  
In the end you are certain to find it with ease.  
My tail's its own head, a strange piece of news;  
The truth it loves dearly, base falsehood eschews.  
The poet and painter alike it embrace;  
And nothing from art can its features efface.  
My whole is a word, a curious one quite;  
It may help in the day, and yet hinder at night.  
'Tis a word, did I say? and yet I know better;  
For, truth told, it is simply but just half a letter.

E. A. M.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF KANT.

It was Hume, Kant himself admits, who first roused him from his "dogmatic slumber." With a logic that seems pitiless, Hume, accepting the premises laid down by the earlier English philosophers, proceeded step by step towards a scepticism which sought to give satisfaction by a denial, not only of the existence of God, but even of the universality of mathematics and the laws of science. It seemed to Hume that reason, following the path of its own making, must conduct to its own annihilation.

Kant was not behind his great predecessor in his recognition of the sovereignty of reason, for he says in his preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* that he had evaded no question on the plea of the imbecility of human reason. But Kant had an ethical enthusiasm which impelled him to find, if possible, a rational solution for the perplexities which beset thought in its endeavour to solve the questions of *God, freedom and immortality*. Nor did he believe that reason can sign its own death warrant. Thus it is that he, having no enmity against the sternest criticism, raises stone by stone, a structure which many yet think to be the greatest monument wrought by any modern philosopher as a tribute to the priceless value of truth.

For two reasons, then, the writings of Kant are worthy of study. In the first place, his philosophy, like the work of every man of genius, is the product of long toil and much high thinking concerning questions of the nearest import. In the second place, a knowledge of Kant tends to turn the student away from doubt, as well as from that despair or indifference which is too often the companion of doubt, and enables him to give a reason for the faith which is in him. Kant says of his own age that it was an age of criticism. The spirit of enquiry, at one time confined to a few, had

\* *The Philosophy of Kant*, as contained in extracts from his own writings. Selected and translated by John Watson, LL.D. Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Queen's College, Kingston, Canada, author of *Kant and his English Critics*. Glasgow: Maclehose and Sons, publishers to the University; Kingston: F. Nisbet. 1888.