

OUR PLANET'S DESTINY.

(By Rev. Joseph Hamilton, Lindsay, Ontario, author of "Our Own and Other Worlds.")

A short time ago there was an article in the Christian Herald on "Our Planet's Destiny." It was a study in astronomy. Now, astronomy is a science of demonstration. Observation and calculation are the sole factors that enter into it. We can hardly avoid speculation also. But it is a pity when this comes in, as not only does it lead to mere guesses, but divorces many from the study of the grandest science that is known. It is felt that after all nothing is certain, and so the matter loses much of its interest. But a great deal can be known to a certainty; and we are thus introduced to the mystery and glory of the universe, which have an everlasting charm.

I think it somewhat of a pity, therefore, that the author of the article referred to deals so much in mere speculation, instead of ascertained facts. No doubt he could give an array of the most wonderful facts if he had chosen to do so; and these would be sufficiently overwhelming in glory. But instead of that, he forecasts the final fate of our planet, which after all is a matter of mere speculation. In fact the plans and operations of the Creator are far too vast for puny man to have more than a mere glimpse of them.

But let me note one or two things in the realm of ascertained facts; and I think the effect will be to commend this glorious science to a more general appreciation and study.

Take one fact in regard to the distance of some of the stars. There is nothing that we know of that has such a bewildering rate of motion as light. It traverses the amazing distance from the sun to the earth in eight minutes. That would mean that it would flash round the earth seven times in one second. When that amazing conception gets hold of you, think of this—that the union of the telescope and the photograph reveals stars so far away in space that their light would not reach us in less than ten thousand years!

When you have realized that stupendous marvel, take another fact in reference to the size of some of the stars. They must be of unthinkable size, else they would never be seen, they are so far away. But take the fact that this earth of ours is a mere speck in comparison to the size of the sun. It would really take fourteen hundred thousand earths to be equal to him in bulk. To be sure, he looks small; but that is because he is so far away. Yet he is really a speck himself in comparison with some other suns. There is one sun we know that is two hundred times of greater bulk; and even that sun is probably but a speck compared with others away in space.

If you have imagination enough to realize this, think next of the number of the stars. They seem numerous enough, as seen in the sky on a starry night. But all we see is as nothing to the number that the telescope reveals. Suppose that all of these were brought near enough to be seen by the naked eye, what would be the effect? The entire dome of heaven would be a solid mass of gold round and round the world. Not only so, but you would have to pack the stars in many layers to find room for them in the sky. You might take off a solid layer of stars, and you would have a golden dome behind. Then you might take off another solid layer of stars, and still you would have a golden dome behind. Then you might take off another solid layer of stars, and

still you would have a golden dome behind. And thus you might take off fifty solid layers of stars, and still you would have a golden dome behind! Oh the immensity and glory of the starry hosts!

I need say no more. Surely it is evident that astronomy should be taught in the public schools. If it had been so taught during the last fifty years, there would be less materialism in the world to-day. For in the study of astronomy we rise from nature up to nature's God, until we are lost in wonder, love and praise.

TORONTO.

Rev. J. W. Bell, of Kew Beach, asks to be retired or account of continued ill-health. Mr. Bell has been in the ministry almost forty years. His congregation ask him to be retained as senior pastor, offering a retiring allowance of \$500. He has accepted the offer.

Toronto Presbytery sends the following commissioners to the General Assembly: Ministers—Dr. Parsons, Dr. Pidgeon, Dr. Gilray, Dr. Milligan, Dr. MacKay, Dr. R. D. Fraser, Walter Amos (Aurora), R. C. Tibb, Dr. Shearer, Dr. McTavish, Alex. MacGillivray, Alfred Gandier, Elders—W. D. Ballantyne, John Lowden, R. S. Gourlay, J. McClure, Geo. Keith; the other seven to be nominated by Sessions and will be elected at next meeting of Presbytery.

The election of officers for the Knox College Students' Missionary Society resulted as follows: President, A. C. Cameron, B.A. (acclamation); 1st Vice-president, R. Duncanson, B.A.; 2nd Vice-president, J. W. Johnston, M.A.; Treasurer, T. A. Swington, B.A.; Recording Secretary, G. P. Bryce, B.A.; Financial Secretary, W. A. Cameron, B.A. (acclamation); Corresponding Secretary, A. A. Scott; Secretary of Committee, H. B. Johnston; Councillors, B. A. Gardner, H. Boyd, H. A. McFarlane, C. H. Best. The generous support of friends who have aided in the past has so encouraged the society that it feels justified in extending its field of operation this year. The aim is to supply 40 fields, being five more than last year. This will increase the expenditure, but the society looks forward to a very successful year.

Foreign Missionary Tidings for March contain the following list of new Life Members: Mrs. Pickard, W.F.M.S. Auxiliary presentation, Rosland, Man.; Miss Elizabeth Christie, Utica Auxiliary, Whitby Presbytery, Manchester; Miss Jessie Donalds Bell, The Westminster Auxiliary Toronto; Miss Mary McGillivray, presented by Whitby Auxiliary, Whitby; Mrs. John Dobbin, Drummond Hill Auxiliary, Niagara Falls; Miss Adaline M. Cooley, presented by Drummond Hill Auxiliary, Niagara Falls; Mrs. Robert Dalgarna, Newdale Auxiliary, Newdale, Man.; Miss K. Walker, W.F.M.S. Auxiliary, Orillia; Miss Jean Gowanlock, presented by St. Paul's Mission Band, Port Arthur; Miss A. Mitchell, presented by Westminster Auxiliary Toronto; Mrs. John Mutch, College Street Auxiliary, presentation; Mrs. F. J. Anderson, College Street Auxiliary, presentation by Mrs. Gilchrist; Mrs. D. Brown, College Street Auxiliary, presentation by Miss N. Brown; Mrs. Lawrence Hunter, College Street Auxiliary.

The above Life Memberships were given on the occasion of the twenty-first anniversary of College Street Church Auxiliary, Toronto. Miss Mary Murchison, W.F.M.S. Auxiliary, presentation, Lucknow; Mrs. J. A. Snell, W.F.M.S. Auxiliary, Moosomin; Mrs. W. T. Allan, W.F.M.S. Auxiliary, Collingwood; Mrs. A. Gandier, presented by The Murray Mitchell Auxiliary, St. James Square, Toronto; Miss M. McGregor, "The Gauld," M.B., Kippin; Miss Gretta Gauld, "The Gauld" M.B., Kippin.

PRESBYTERY OF KINGSTON.

The Presbytery met on the 5th March specially to consider the subject of Church Union, as instructed by the General Assembly. The attendance of members was large, and the interest deep. Principal Gordon moved a resolution expressing gratification at the report of the Union Committee, noting with pleasure the progress made; and that the Presbytery proceed to consider the report with the view of offering suggestions as directed. He spoke at length in explanation of the proceedings. Rev. Dr. Mackie moved in amendment to strike out the first two clauses of the resolution, adopting the other. The motion of Principal Gordon was carried by a vote of twelve to six. The doctrinal basis of union was then considered. It was read section by section, and a number of suggestions made, some of which were adopted and others rejected. As the hour was late when this point was reached, the Presbytery adjourned to the regular meeting next morning.

The Presbytery met and spent the whole day in the transaction of ordinary business. The demission of the charge of Macdonald's Corners, etc., by Mr. Gny was accepted; and Dr. MacTavish, Kingston, appointed moderator of the vacancy. The proposal to form Stirling into a separate congregation was approved, and the commission of Presbytery instructed to meet there and endeavor to secure a rearrangement of neighboring congregations. Some remits considered; that relating to the place on the roll of assistant pastors was decided to be given only to those regularly called and inducted as assistants and successors. Reports on Augmentation, Home Mission, and the examination of students were presented and approved. Seven students are at a stage to apply for licenses, and a number of others are prepared to take mission work for the summer. Rev. Mr. Shearer reported on Sabbath schools. The report was much more satisfactory than that of the previous year; and several valuable recommendations were made.

G. M. Macdonnell, K.C., a member of the Assembly's Committee on Temperance and Moral Reform, addressed the Presbytery on this subject, and suggested the appointment of a committee. This was done, with Mr. Macdonnell convener, and Rev. Mr. Laidlaw vice convener. Rev. Mr. Smith reported on U. P. societies. Twenty-four of these are in the bounds of the Presbytery. Little progress could be reported; and a number of recommendations were made with the view to improvement, the last in favor of the appointment of a general field secretary, also approved with the others. Rev. Dr. Mackie presented a long and able report in church life and work. It followed the questions, asked by the Assembly's Committee, bearing on the Church's relation to the community. Several members spoke on the subject in conference; and the report was cordially approved. The Presbytery adjourned to meet in Kingston on the first day of July next.

Rev. Dr. MacLean, of Avonmore, preached a powerful Gaelic sermon at Maxville last week. The attendance was large, and many greatly enjoyed hearing the Gospel in the language familiar in the long ago.

Owing to the illness of Rev. W. W. McRae, the service in Knox church, Ganabridge and Beaverton, was conducted last Sabbath week by Rev. D. W. Best, of St. Andrew's.

Brockville Presbytery nominates Mr. Walter Paul for the moderatorship of the Montreal and Ottawa Synod, and a capital nomination it is! Mr. Paul will make a model moderator, and we hope to see him take the chair at Lachute.