

## Our Contributors.

## SERMON REVERIES.

## DOWN THE CARIBBEAN.

## PRESBYTERIANISM ON THE PACIFIC COAST.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Columbia is a Presbytery of grand scenery and magnificent distances. Its eastern boundary is crossed in the mountains near Revelstoke. It is bounded on the north, I suppose, by Alaska, on the south by the United States, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. Viewed from the standpoint of square miles, Columbia is perhaps the largest Presbytery that is or ever was or ever will be in America. The territory it covers must be about as large as the whole Province of Ontario.

These long distances must be trying to the finances of a Presbyter. If the Presbytery meets at Vancouver or New Westminster, the pastor at Kamloops, as cultivated, genial and accomplished a gentleman as can be found in the ministry of the Church, must travel 250 miles to attend the meeting. If a minister in Sarnia or Windsor, in Kingston or Brockville, had to travel to Toronto to attend Presbytery and pay his own expenses we would probably hear about it. But not one of the places named is as far from Toronto as Kamloops is from Vancouver. Even a Victoria minister has to travel eighty miles, spend three days and spoil ten dollars to attend Presbytery in any place outside of his own city except Nanaimo. And yet I venture to say that these brethren on the Coast attend Presbytery meetings more regularly than some Eastern men who have nothing to do but put on their hats and walk into the court.

All told we have twenty-three congregations in the Presbytery of Columbia and the number will no doubt rapidly increase. I had the pleasure of seeing half-a-dozen of them and can speak only of those that it was my privilege to come more or less in contact with. I say privilege advisedly, for to meet warm-hearted, generous, active, loyal Presbyterians is always a privilege.

## VANCOUVER CITY

has three congregations. Whether this youthful city really needs three is a question that must be left to the Presbytery of the bounds. As none of them get anything from the public funds of the Church, the matter is a purely local one. Considerable latitude in such matters may be taken with perfect safety in a community that grows from one house to a population of 13,000 in five years. St. Andrews congregation, the only one of the three I had the pleasure of seeing, is a liberal, progressive, highly intelligent body of people. Their place of worship would be an ornament to any Eastern city, and its handsome style of architecture and comfortable, elegant, and well furnished audience room are quite equalled by the advantages of its situation. Placed on the brow of the hill on which the city is built, between the business part and residential West End, near the C. P. R. and other leading hotels, within easy reach of the hotels and boarding houses where the bachelors congregate and the private houses in which prominent citizens dwell, St. Andrews must always hold its own and a little more. Mr. McLaren has seen his cause grow from a small beginning to its present influential position, and like most ministers with growing congregations he seems contented and happy. He took the risks and went three thousand miles when there was little to go to, and nobody will grudge him the fine position he now enjoys.

## NANAIMO,

the coal city on Vancouver Island, thirty miles straight west from Vancouver City, has one Presbyterian congregation. I had the pleasure of being present at the induction of a minister there, and if the attendance and interest seen at the induction can be taken as an earnest of what is to come, Brother McRae is going to have a good time in Nanaimo. No doubt there will be plenty of work, but what are ministers for if not for work? There are few of us so handsome that it would pay any congregation to keep us for our good looks. Not many ministers are so entertaining that a congregation could give them a salary for their society. There is plenty of work for a minister in Nanaimo and there is plenty of work anywhere. An earnest man will always find his work.

I expected to finish in this paper what I had to say on the Presbyterianism of the coast, but the weather is hot and long articles and long sermons should be avoided when the mercury is away up. Next week I hope to move on to Victoria and New Westminster and may have something to say on the Chinese question. This may be a good place to remark that a Presbyterian minister cannot travel from Toronto to the coast without being powerfully impressed with two things. One of these is the fact that Providence has assigned us as extensive and hopeful a Home Mission field as can be found in the world, and the other is that, all things considered, the Church has done her Home Mission work well. The field through which I passed begins at Gravenhurst and ends on the western side of Vancouver Island, a distance of over 3,000 miles, and between these points there are few if any settlements in which a Presbyterian missionary or minister is not found, at least in summer. For the splendid results obtained the Church can never tell how much it owes Findlay and Robertson, who direct operations on the field, and Warden and Cochrane who plan the campaigns and help to find the sinews of war. Beyond all doubt our Home Mission work has been well done. No fair man can go over the ground and come to any other conclusion. The Presbyterians of Old Canada have found the supplies with a commendable degree of liberality, but in many cases they were doing nothing more than sending the Gospel after their own children.

## NO. I.

There is a spirit of unrest and worldliness within us, which, if the sermon be not of that continuous interest we like so much, is apt to spring into action and take possession of our minds, to the sad detriment of the train of thought engendered by the preacher's previous words. No matter how good and well-balanced the mind of the listener may be, I imagine there is now and then, throughout an ordinary sermon, one or more of these wanderings of the mind among the forests of imagination. Now these lapses, while detrimental to the proper digestion of the sermon, would be intensely interesting studies to those inclined for such things. Any others, of course, may read these reveries as they appear from time to time, but should they not desire to do so, why they will miss a reflection perhaps of their own thoughts as they whirl around during the course of the Sunday a.m. or p.m. sermon. These reveries are surely not sinful, else we all sin in this respect grievously; rather let us while indulging in them strive to elevate the tone and bring it nearly into tune with the discourse.

Last Sunday a.m. the sermon was preached from the text: "What I do thou knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter," John xiii. 7, and the interest therein was fairly well sustained notwithstanding the fact that it was warm and the attendance was very small. I followed the preacher fairly, he not magnetizing to a great extent. The thought uppermost in his mind appeared to be the blind devotion with which the Christian should accept every trial and temptation, loss of father, mother, friends, wealth, etc., etc., all to be borne with that fortitude so characteristic of the Christ-like faith, because thou shalt know hereafter. Such a line of dissertation, of course, while pleasing and indeed proper in degree, grows wearisome when drawn out through a sermon's length, and thereupon I fell into a reverie anent the average speaking ability of our Toronto clergy. I think probably the finest sermon ever preached in the pulpit of fine sermons, St. James Square, was preached by the Rev. Mr. Smith, of Auld Reekie, on Abraham's intercession for the cities of the plain. I thought over the fact of our extra Canadian bumptiousness regarding our preachers and preaching, and here was a young man, evidently an ordinary Scotchman, whose powers were described in one word, and that aptly, viz.: electrical. His powers were marvellous and were used for every effect they were worth. I was just coming over the names of some of our lights, such as——, when the sermon I should have been listening to broke in with a diatribe against false philosophy, etc. Now this philosophy, of which we hear so much and about which some of the best informed, I fear, know least, is a wonderful thing. I asked a fourth-year university man the other day to define the clearest meaning given of "the science of sciences," and he said Prof. B—— was not sure himself of what he exactly believed regarding cause, effect, and being. And so on I meandered during that sermon. A remark referring to our noble Queen's Park (that is, what is left of it) set me off on a new tack. What necessity for instance is there for cutting up that beautiful piece behind the college into building lots. The actual money realized will surely appear very small ten years hence, when our breathing spots are rendered more necessary than ever. That is a most beautiful portion of the park, the noble elms and beeches; who can cast an eye up these noble trunks into the leafy branches without a sigh of exquisite pleasure? and a lounge beneath these beautiful giants is not to be thought of without very comfortable feelings. Yes, and all to go, and that right early. Let us hope that every rod of the balance will be spared, that the university will become beautified by the removal of those old kitchens and "gardens" facing the back, that a new lawn will face the north, that a drive direct from College Street with a circle on either side of the front lawn will be among the early possibilities of our grand old park.

I had by this time quite forgotten the preacher. True, he had now and then awakened me from my open-eyed slumber, but not effectually. His peroration was laboured, but not very much so. You know it is not everyone who can manage this exquisite and necessary part of a speech perfectly. In fact there are very many who do not know how to close up their remarks with the necessary relish for the listener. No matter how well the sermon has been preached, it can be spoiled by unnecessary dawdling at the close. The different threads should be smartly and deftly picked up and brought to a climax, and the climax should be delivered with sufficient spirit and feeling to convey the impression to the mind of the listener of complete satiety. Not that I set up for a professor of elocution, far from it, but I well remember when at school being taught writing by Mr. L—— who wrote an execrable hand himself. He was nevertheless a good teacher. Same with public speaking and preaching; the poorest speakers make oftentimes fairly good critics. The pastor of this church is a splendid speaker, yet pays absolutely no attention to the finale, and when you think he is in the middle of a branch of the subject, he thinks he is done, which particular difference of thoughts is not satisfactory, to say the least. Our Presbyterian ministers are nevertheless a splendidly educated and eloquent body of men, notwithstanding the fact that elocution does not enter enough into their collegiate training. Thank God for their fearless advocacy of right against wrong anywhere and everywhere when opportunity affords.

CURLY TOPP.

BY REV. JOHN MACKIE, M.A.

ST. CROIX.

It was in 1494, on his second voyage, that Columbus discovered the Virgin group and this more southern island of Santa Cruz or St. Croix, or the Holy Cross. At that time they were peopled by the Caribs, the savage aborigines of all the West Indian Islands, and after whom the sea has been named, the Caribbean. What befell them we know not. Mayhap, maltreated and massacred, or carried as a new and valuable cargo to the markets of Spain, or fled in terror and hidden in the depths of Brazilian primeval forests, or scattered on the llanos and mesas of Venezuela, they left but their name behind them. Certain it is that when foot of European touched their shores again, no human being was found; not even the track of beast in the tangled luxuriance; nor a sound of living creature was heard, save the melancholy cry of the wild sea-mew. From 1666 however, rescued from buccaneers that had taken possession, they were grouped by the British under their own, the Danish and the Spanish Governments. The central islands belong to the Danes and St. Croix, fifty miles distant from them, and properly speaking not of them, is the residence of the Governor and the seat of authority. The island is twenty-four miles long, and nearly eight miles broad, with an area of about 110 square miles and a population upward of 30,000, of whom only about 2,000 are whites. Very pleasing it looks from the sea—consisting of a long series of mounds leaning upon hillocks, and the hillocks looking up to the hills; some in the dark green of the young sugar plants; others in the greenish gold of the ripened cane; while others that are recently reaped are clad in russet; and some wear the darker hue of the up-turned furrow. On the crest of the hills are lines of palms, looking in the distance like soldiers in battle array, ready to rush down on the hostile invader. The ravines, running like veins in all directions, are clothed with a thick foliage of green of every shade, interspersed with patches of autumn tints. Beautiful houses are dotted over the scene, generally square in shape, of two storeys high, with verandahs all round, both below and above, and shaded with clumps of evergreen vines. On the summit of the nearest hill to each is a tower-like structure, surrounded with a wall. This is the wind-mill, which every estate possesses for crushing the cane and making the sugar.

Now we are anchored in the bay in front of a pretty little village, built at the foot of the hills, which here with a widening gradual slope reach down to the shore. The most prominent feature is a square church-tower, with corner turrets, from which is ringing out over the peaceful waters either a welcome to their port or a call to prayer, and which awakens many a holy memory and whispers "Home! Sweet Home." On the left is a mimic battery built out on the rocks, mounted with several playthings, behind which two sentries keep pacing to and fro, as if on important duty. A boat flying the Danish colours comes out for the mails and returns in a deluge, the first rain they have had for nearly six months; and surely thrice welcome must it be to the Crucians, though not by no means to us eagerly anxious to set foot on shore and touch a world where all things are new.

And yet all things were not new. The school-room walls were hung with maps from Scotland; the class books were Chambers' Educational Series; the language spoken and read was English; the feelings of loyalty in the hearts of all, teachers and scholars, was decidedly English; and the names of the children were those that are most familiar in English households. And all this though a Danish island! The Principal, a coloured man, received us with that courtesy that is ever the accompaniment of a cultured mind, and conducted us over the institution. The girls' department was visited first, where, under the superintendence of a coloured lady assisted by several monitresses, over seventy children from the age of six to thirteen were at the time receiving instruction in arithmetic. All turned to the door on our entrance making their salaam and saying in unison and a sweet ringing tone, "Good morning, sir!"

There was no rude staring: no taking advantage of a stranger's presence: but the most perfect manners and the most perfect order. Their proficiency was surprising; not a whit behind our own children of equal age. Their faces were of every shade, from the densest black to the almost white; and a neater, a prettier gathering of children we have seldom seen. On our way to the boys' department under the manifestly able superintendence of the Principal, assisted by several masters, we passed the alphabet class in an open corridor, where a little one of very grave countenance was for punishment learning his A B C on bended knees. Poor little chap! such a mite; and the stern trials of life begun so soon, tugging at the little heart and forcing the burning drops to fall over the long black lashes, and down the soft bronzy cheeks. On entering the class-room, we beheld no fewer than sixty boys seated at work. Instantly they rose to their feet, gave the military salute and wished "Good morning, sir." They were at their reading lesson—the story of heroic Grace Darling; and we listened with surprise and pleasure to a pronunciation and expression that an Inspector of our schools at home would designate excellent. Noble-looking boys they were; well built and graceful, with pleasant open faces. What will they be? God bless them every one! so will they, every one, be a power for good wherever their lot is cast in God's wide world. We examined the time-table