

Our Contributors.

DR ORMISTON ON THE MEN FOR THE PULPIT

BY KNOXONIAN.

It was a cold day for Canadian Presbyterianism when Dr. Ormiston, Dr. Donald Fraser, Dr. Munro Gibson, Dr. Waters and Dr. Patton left this country. Of course we can get on without them, but we could get on very much better with them. The presence and labours of a few pulpit princes like Ormiston and Fraser have an inspiring effect on a Church. Apart altogether from what such men may do in their own congregations, they are invaluable to their denomination. After listening to an Ormiston or a Fraser for an hour the typical Presbyterian goes home feeling that preaching is a great power, that Presbyterianism is a great institution, and that it is a good thing to be a Presbyterian. That is the right way for a Presbyterian to feel. We doubt very much if a Presbyterian ever went away from a service conducted by Dr. Ormiston inwardly resolving to "join the Methodists." If any such man ever existed we should like to see his photograph. We venture to say his head is small and not overly well constructed. Apart from the spiritual results the highest and most desirable of all results that flow from the pulpit work of a preacher like Dr. Ormiston his value as a denominational factor is incalculable. Nobody can tell how much is done for a Church by a few preachers who stand head and shoulders over the average man.

We rarely pick up a first-class religious paper or review without seeing something contributed by a minister who once laboured in Canada. The brethren who have gone away seem to use their pens more freely than many of those who remain. In the current number of the *Homiletic Review* Dr. Ormiston has an article on "The Men for the Pulpit," which deserves a wider circulation than it can have in the pages of the *Review*. The Doctor begins by affirming that "the pulpit demands

THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST

of our homes." True, and it is just at this point that serious mistakes are often made. One boy in the family is a slow, quiet, long-faced, solemn little chap and his parents conclude he ought to be a minister, mainly because he is quiet. Perhaps the boy is lazy. Perhaps his health is not good. At all events, he never plays, nor wrestles, nor runs foot races, nor fights, and because he never does these things his parents conclude he is the raw material out of which a good minister can be made. This test would have shut out Chalmers and Guthrie and Arnot, for most assuredly they were not noted for being quiet boys. The test of quietness would have remorselessly closed out Dr. Ormiston himself in his boyhood, and might have gone hard with him many a year after. The brightest and best are the boys needed in the ministry. A quiet boy may be both bright and good, but no boy should be sent to college simply because he is quiet.

The next qualification mentioned by the Doctor is "deep, earnest, unfeigned personal piety." This qualification is of course indispensable. A preacher's piety "should neither be artificial, sentimental or sickly, but healthy and happy, hopeful and cheerful." There is a world of truth in these words. Piety alone is not of itself any guarantee of a minister's success. How often have we seen ministers fail whose personal piety and earnestness was never for a moment questioned even by their enemies. The type of piety is all important. The sentimental, sickly type never fits a man for being a leader among his fellow men; the healthy, happy, hopeful, cheerful, courageous type is essential to successful leadership. A desponding spirit can never lead to anything but failure in the ministry or in any sphere of activity. Pluck is half the battle anywhere.

This type of piety is nearly always associated with a sound body, and the Doctor says

It is further exceedingly desirable that a candidate for the pulpit should possess a vigorous, well developed physical constitution, and be free from any organic disease or bodily infirmity or deformity; a sound body is needed as the servant of a sane mind and an active spirit. Many men, doubtless, notwithstanding wasting disease and severe suffering, have done good service in the pulpit, as did Robert Hall, the eloquent preacher in Leicester. But it is difficult for one suffering from the weakness, weariness and frequent despondency incident to ill health, to minister suc-

cessfully and in such a way as to be truly helpful and inspiring to inquiring minds or distressed souls. His views of truth and life, and his manner of expressing them, are likely to be tinged with his own personal disability. Dyspepsia and nervous headache have spoiled the effect of many a good sermon.

About the most miserable piece of work that can be done is to grind the life out of a young man for seven years, and then turn him loose on the Church a physical wreck, unable to meet the duties and responsibilities of the ministerial office. How can any man be helpful and inspiring to others if so weak that he can hardly drag himself around? A dyspeptic's views of "truth and life" may be positively hurtful to his congregation. Truth may be so tinged by the weakness or despondency of the personality through which it comes as to almost cease to be truth.

The sound body however should have in it not only a mind, but a mind of a certain type.

Intellectual ability and mental energy are required in a candidate for work in the pulpit. A man may be a true believer, and a delightful and interesting brother in the church, and may be eminently useful in other departments of Christian labour, and yet not be qualified to render efficient service in the pulpit. If weak, or sluggish in intellect, if slow of speech and dull of temperament, the pulpit is evidently not his sphere. Even enthusiasm in service and an ardent love for the Master and for souls may all exist apart from the qualities desiderated for pulpit efficiency. The mere sanctimonious commonplace of official routine, or the delivery of a series of pious, hackneyed exhortations, though uttered in a tone of assumed earnestness and seemingunction, does not fill up the idea of the pulpit service, and in few instances will be likely to accomplish much good.

Many excellent young men when converted seem to think that the only way they can serve the Lord is by preaching. About such the Doctor says:

Many young men, who are truly converted, and feel within them the stir of a new spiritual life, desirous that others might also share with them in like precious faith, and anxious to do good, think they have a call to preach, and seek for guidance and assistance to reach the pulpit. Not unfrequently this supposed call is all a mistake, and it were wisdom on the part of a true adviser to urge upon them the propriety of proving their usefulness in some other sphere. Many an excellent mechanic or successful farmer has been spoiled in the vain effort to become a preacher, and their own happiness and usefulness marred by, it may be, a laudable but vain ambition.

The idea that a young man cannot serve the Lord effectively in any place but the pulpit is a huge delusion. We need Christian lawyers, Christian merchants, Christian doctors, Christian manufacturers, Christian politicians, Christian men in all walks of life quite as much as we need preachers and perhaps a little more.

EVANGELISTIC WORK.—II.

In the English Presbyterian Church a good deal of attention is given to this work both in Church schemes and by individual congregations. The committee of which Dr. Gibson is Convener makes arrangement for services where found desirable, and for some years past has employed two evangelists, giving their whole time to the work. Recently the Presbytery of Liverpool held a conference upon some important questions of congregational and family life, giving a prominent place to the welfare of the young. This was followed by a fortnight's services, specially intended to reach and influence children and youth. With the aid of an evangelistic association, composed of earnest and active laymen, the city (including Birkenhead) was mapped into districts with choice centres of operation, to which various workers and services were assigned. Along with local men, several from a distance known to be specially qualified, were called in and the work begun upon a Sabbath was continued each night through the two following weeks. In this I was privileged to see and participate to a considerable extent, and was impressed with the fact that the fruits were very much in proportion to the pains taken in the exercise of faith and lively expectation. The largest and most promising meetings which came under my observation were in connection with a mission school in Queen's Road, where in addition to large attendance and deep attention there was a large number of very hopeful cases of decision among the older scholars. The pastor, Dr. Howatt, was, I believe, away from home, but the superintendent and teachers were on hand full of zeal and tact. They had sent a preparatory circular letter to the homes of the children and followed it up with personal influence to bring out the children. Then

each night they were present in force to watch and to aid in the after meeting, carefully noting those impressed, for future attention, and at the close remaining for brief conference and prayer. Can it be wondered that they received a rich reward?

In Rockferry and Brassey Street, Birkenhead, there was also much interest and blessing. Here were to be seen cases of men of wealth leaving their comfortable homes after a long day of business, on inclement nights, to aid in the work, and with them occasionally poor parents, weary with a day's toil, but deeply concerned for the best interests of their children. Who can wonder that if there were more of this that the fruits would be yet more abundant and manifold? In this connection one case struck me as especially interesting and suggestive. One Thursday evening in the after meeting I came upon a bright little girl of eight and asked her, "Well, is your heart given to Christ?" "Yes." "When was that, a night or some time ago?" "Tuesday night." Further conversation showed that she fully understood and meant what she said. Her mother joined with eager interest to help tell the joyful story.

Tuesday night the child went home in much trouble. She had come away without giving her heart to the Saviour. She knew it and was sad. "Well," said the mother on learning the case, "just kneel down and do it now before you go to bed. You don't need to wait for another meeting." This direction she gladly followed, and had been happy since in the thought that she was a child of Jesus and had her dear Saviour.

To any one who would venture to cast a shadow of a doubt upon such a hope, I think I hear the Master say, "Except ye shall receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter therein." Would God we had many more such mothers!

A REMARKABLE CONVERSION.

Rev. M. Moore, of Cheltenham, whose acquaintance I had the privilege of making in the course of this work related to me the following instance of the wonderful power of divine grace. His former charge, Dudley, as in the heart of the "Black Country," a region of blackness and darkness, both literal and figurative, here he seems to have been owned of God to do blessed work.

One Sunday morning a sturdy collier, noted for his drunken excesses and brutal devotion to the prize ring and cock pit, as he rose late, after the night's orgies, found himself possessed with a sudden impulse to go to church instead of the usual tap room or gambling den. He could not overcome the unaccountable impulse, and so, washing and donning his best, he was soon in the street; but then a fresh problem confronted him as to which of two churches to enter, the Methodist on the right or the Presbyterian on the left. Of the minister of the latter he had heard a good deal, so the matter was settled by a resolve to go and hear what he had to say in the morning and take the other in the evening. He entered and slunk into a corner. As the sermon proceeded the Lord smote that man with conviction. He saw with alarm his evil nature mirrored in the glass of vine truth. He confessed afterward his first impulse was to seize his hat and hurry home to beat his wife. She must have been telling the parson all about it. But then a remnant of reason in his depraved soul suggested this could hardly be, as she could not know of his coming to the place. So he sat it out, hanging his head over lower and lower to escape observation. He went home with a distressed spirit. Unable to remain away he returned in the evening and back again the next evening, by which time he fell under observation of the minister, who succeeded in matching him after the service before he reached the door. As the result of conversation then and subsequently he was brought to the feet of Jesus, relieved his burden and "returned home to tell his friends great things the Lord had done for him." Eventually he became an elder of the Church, and an earnest worker among his profligate companions, and my little service of power and blessing they had won in the dark pit, in the little low, coal-walled cave, where they gathered at noon with their tins for diet, and many a trophy of grace among the fruits, something too hard for the Lord? His Spirit not straitened, but we, alas, in ourselves are straitened. Might we not well ask, Wherefore is it so?

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Liverpool Nov. 1, 1887.