

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

NOVA SCOTIAN CORRESPONDENCE.

It has been my hope that when I should next write to THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN, my letter would be from Chatham, a flourishing town in New Brunswick, where the Synod of the Maritime Provinces will meet to-morrow, and that I should have some account to give of the proceedings of that venerable body. But circumstances absolutely preclude me from joining the fathers and brethren in their May meeting this year; and I shall thus be unable to say anything at present touching the work of Synod. And, by the way, I suppose it will be a question with some how far the notice which the press sometimes takes of what is said and done in Church courts is either desirable or useful. I observe that in his monthly notes, the editor of the "Catholic Presbyterian" complains of the want of administrative power and attention to detail in certain courts of the Church and makes the very significant remark that "Presbyteries in large towns, having a reporter's table as part of their furniture, are liable to become great nuisances." He continues, "we know of some Presbyteries where instead of doing what Presbyteries are intended to do—looking after the welfare of congregations and building up in detail the kingdom of God—they become public meetings and debating societies, where ambitious men make speeches to air their crotchets, narrow men find fault with their more active brethren, men that have failed in their congregations try to make themselves conspicuous by public appearances, and a spirit is generated and expressed that tends to vulgarize Presbyterianism, and lower Christianity itself." But I must not proceed further with the citation. And indeed, I fear that the brief quotation I have made may expose me to the charge of seeking to use the highly respectable editor of the "Catholic Presbyterian" as a stalking horse from behind which I might take aim at some of our Canadian brethren. But far be it from me to think of putting so dignified a person as Dr. Blaikie to so ignoble a use; and equally far be it from me to cherish a wish to fire a Parthian shot at men so diligent and self-denying as are most of the ministers of our Church. The remark was literally one by the way.

I was about to say, when the thought of Presbyteries having a reporter's table tempted me from the straight path, that there are few evils for which there are no compensations; and I was going to mention as an illustration that in consequence of being obliged to forego the pleasure of meeting with my brethren in Synod, I have enjoyed the opportunity to-day of witnessing an interesting and somewhat imposing ceremony.

THE CORNER-STONE

of a new and splendid building for the use of the Pictou Academy was laid this afternoon in presence of an immense concourse, the Rev. Dr. Allison, Chief Superintendent of Education for this Province, and Mr. Simon Holmes, Premier of the Local Government, both delivering orations. The proceedings—though the Academy is now, and has long been, simply a seminary of secular learning—began with prayer offered by one of the ministers of the town, a circumstance which by the law of association brought to my recollection the fact that at the opening of the Anderson School of Natural History, Agassiz proposed "a moment of silence" for asking the Divine blessing; a suggestion which was at once acted upon, all the students standing for a short time in silence with bowed and uncovered heads. The erection of the building is an event in itself of no more than local interest. But the Pictou Academy has had a very remarkable, and I think that I may justly say,

AN ALMOST UNIQUE HISTORY,

connecting itself most intimately with the growth of Presbyterianism in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The story has been fully and graphically told by the Rev. Dr. Patterson to whom our Church is indebted for much valuable service in disinterring and preserving records and traditions which but for him must have perished. The tale belongs to the heroic age of our Church's history in the Eastern Provinces, and is well worth the telling; but can be given here only in briefest outline.

AS EARLY AS 1805

the idea of an institution for the training of a native

ministry was suggested by Dr. McCulloch, a man of unusual talents and immense energy; but the attempt failed at that time. A good deal was done, however, by different ministers in the way of educating young men with a view to the ministry, and with so much success that the project of a College was again revived, and in 1816 an act of incorporation was obtained for the Pictou Academy which now began its work in a very humble way, as the following incident will show: The desks—plain pine boards—were so tottering and insecure that a very unsophisticated Highland student, who was taking notes with praiseworthy diligence, found the task almost impossible under the movements of his fellow-students, and felt compelled to interrupt the lecturer by exclaiming with Celtic fire and Gaelic accent, "Please, sir, they are shaking the *dash* upon me." But notwithstanding the very unfavourable surroundings at the outset, a remarkably successful work was done; and it does not seem too much to say that but for the Pictou Academy a great part of the country would have been a spiritual waste from absolute inability to secure an adequate supply of ministers. It is proper to add that from the same institution went forth considerable numbers who were afterwards highly distinguished at the bar, in public life, and at least in one very conspicuous case, in the realm of science. But party strife was extremely violent in those days. Joseph Howe was wont to say "the narrower the pit, the fiercer the rats fight," and fierce in the extreme was the strife in the small Province of Nova Scotia. For reasons that it would take too long to explain or even indicate, the Pictou Academy became most unhappily the battle ground of madly contending parties in Church and State. The ultimate result was that the Arts Department was transferred to Halifax, and the institution ceased to be the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, becoming indeed, something similar to an Ontario High School. But the Church did not long pause in her career. She felt that to her had been committed the weighty and solemn task of perpetuating and educating a Gospel ministry. Accordingly, a Theological Seminary was by and by organized at West River, a quiet rural neighbourhood of singularly great natural beauty, where one thinks of the students leading a sort of idyllic life—which must have had its prosaic side, however—and where the conditions of study must have been similar to those in the remarkable Divinity Hall days at Selkirk under "the Christian Socrates." After a few years the Seminary was removed to Truro (where, I understand, it flourished greatly), and afterwards to Halifax where I had the pleasure, a few weeks ago, of witnessing the closing exercises of the Session which were held in beautiful Fort Massey Church. A striking illustration of the extent to which the different portions of our Church

ARE GETTING PRESSED AND WELDED TOGETHER, is furnished in the fact that at the close of the College Dr. Burns presided, and of the three addresses given on the occasion, two were delivered by Dr. Waters and Mr. K. MacLennan, formerly of Peterboro' while prayer was offered by another minister, from Ontario, who is now labouring in a "sea-board parish." The attendance was very large and the proceedings interesting. The appearance of the young men preparing for the sacred office was very encouraging, though the number was smaller than could have been wished. They were only fifteen in all. Dr. Waters who spoke very impressively on the responsibilities of the Christian ministry, paid very high but well merited compliments to the Professors. I was thankful to observe that in our College by the sea, as in those which are situated in the interior of the country, an accurate acquaintance with *sound* philosophy and *genuine* science is encouraged and exemplified, while at the same time there is no attempt to fetter youthful minds or to force them into antiquated moulds. Hume has spoken very sarcastically of the angels who veil their faces with their wings, as the type of a blind religion. In view of what I used to see done in Knox College, in view of what I now know to have been done in Halifax, and in view of what I believe is being done in all our Theological Halls, it is permitted to us, in answer to the sceptic's sneer, to reply with Principal Cairns, that the eyes are neither closed nor useless, and that it is not blindness but sight that constrains adoration.

OUR YOUNG MEN,

while they are carefully instructed in the truths most

surely believed among us, are not hampered or impeded in the earnest and fearless pursuit of truth. A note-worthy feature of the closing exercises was the delivery, by Mr. McLean Sinclair, of an able address, in which he sketched very carefully, the history of theological education from the apostles downwards. I think he desired to teach by implication the competence of theological system as well as the high value which the Church has always set on a thoroughly trained ministry.

Western friends will be glad to learn that good progress has been made in raising

A COLLEGE ENDOWMENT FUND,

the amount actually realized for that object being considerably over \$50,000. The arrearage of subscriptions, however, is very heavy, and the shrinkage will, it is feared, be very great.

In connection with most of the funds there has been a large measure of liberality during the financial year 1879-80. The Church dare not say, in respect to the means at her disposal, that she is "on Fortune's cap the very button," but the Rev. Dr. McGregor, the agent of the Church, has been able to give a most encouraging statement respecting the state and prospects of the ecclesiastical exchequer. Partly in consequence of this, but much more in consequence of "great doors and effectual" being opened in Trinidad, the Board of Foreign Missions, at a meeting held on the 12th inst., felt strongly inclined to appoint a fourth missionary to that island, but finally decided, in view of all the circumstances, to ask the advice of Synod, and directed the Secretary to lay all facts of the case before that court during the present week. It is almost certain that an additional labourer will be appointed to the island field where already much noble work has been done.

The readers of THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN who are interested in

WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATIONS

will be glad to know that similar organizations are multiplying in Nova Scotia; and wherever they are established, congregations appear to realize more clearly the obligation incumbent on the Church of Christ to prosecute Foreign Mission work. The anniversary of the Halifax Woman's Foreign Missionary Association was held a few weeks ago. It seems clearly established that two important benefits rise from the formation of such societies. The first is that a very wholesome effect is exerted on the members themselves. It seems scarcely possible for Christian women to meet together for the prayerful prosecution of some task which Christ has given them to do, without receiving good to their own souls. The second advantage is that without interfering with other forms of beneficence, comparatively large sums are raised to aid in carrying on missionary work.

While speaking of the College, I forgot to mention a method of raising money which has been recently initiated among us. Dr. Burns, who possesses much of the activity, and generous devotion to the Church's interest which many in Ontario will remember as characterizing in an eminent degree his honoured father, has been delivering, in the chief towns of the Province, in aid of the College library, a

VALUABLE LECTURE ON DR. CHALMERS.

The lecturer traces with much power and effect the career and character of the great and good man of whom all Scotland is so proud, and whose name and fame are dear to all Christendom. Some of the stories illustrative of the humorous side of Chalmers' mind and life were entirely new to the great mass of those who listened to the lecture, and were immensely enjoyed. The following delightful incident—I don't remember whether it is given by Dr. Hanna or not—is a specimen: At one of the breakfasts to which Dr. Chalmers was wont to invite the members of his class, the blessing had just been asked and the guests were about to sit down, when one of the students came in late and I suppose somewhat flustered. The illustrious host desiring to introduce the new-comer to his eldest daughter, said briefly—using Miss C.'s beautiful Christian name—"Grace, Mr.—" Mr.—, who by the way had a glass eye, not seeing the young lady, and understanding that he was requested to say grace, proceeded a second time to ask the blessing, to the wonder and amusement of the company who then sat down with much hilarity to the meal thus doubly blessed in so unexpected a manner.

I must not fail to mention the death of a noble Disruption and pre-Disruption hero, the