

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### PRESBYTERIAN PULPIT.

A SERIES OF SKETCHES BY GREY FRIAR.

MR. EDITOR, I count it an honour to be requested by you to contribute what you call "a series of Pulpit Photographs." As you suggest, the subjects require delicate and judicious treatment. I shall endeavour to discharge the onerous duty you impose upon me as faithfully as I can; and, it is hoped, in a becoming spirit. The generous terms you are pleased to offer. . . . [Here follow some criticisms and hints of a flattering nature, modified by a little mild censure, but, as these would be of no interest to the reader, the editor judiciously omits them] . . .

With kindly wishes for the prosperity of THE PRESBYTERIAN, I am, etc GREY FRIAR.

The ministry of the Gospel has in every age been held in the highest esteem. There have been times when an almost superstitious veneration was entertained for those in the sacred office. That has passed away. Now the respect entertained for the preacher depends on his fitness for the work to which he is dedicated, and the fidelity with which he discharges its responsible duties. There is no special danger of minister worship in these days. Yet it remains true that those who proclaim Divine truth to their fellow men are to be held in esteem for their work's sake. Presbyterianism has contributed largely to the religious enlightenment of the nations, and continues to exercise an important influence in the formation of religious belief and character. In thus stating its claims there is no wish to undervalue the excellent work done by other communions. They are working to the same glorious end, and there is ample room and urgent need for the united labours of all who seek the advancement of the Divine glory and the good of men.

While in the first instances, these sketches will be of pastors occupying prominent places in the Church, I am not unmindful of the principles of Presbyterian parity. He who holds the stars in His right hand has no less faithful servants in the remote districts of the country. Their labours are essentially of equal importance with those occupying the high places of the field. The Gospel they preach is the same, so is the responsibility, and so will be the final reward. They may have peculiar hardships to endure, but their work is honourable, and they too are worthy of the highest esteem.

Nor is there any desire to give pre-eminence in the order in which the subjects of these sketches are selected. As far as possible the order followed will be historical.

The first Presbyterian minister that visited Little York and preached in various parts of western Canada was the Rev. Robert McDowell, sent as a missionary by the Classis of Albany, in connection with the Dutch Reformed Church. The first settled minister was the Rev. James Harris, who came from Ireland in 1820. The Rev. William Jenkins also laboured among the scattered Presbyterians, more particularly in the County of York. After the arrival of Mr. Harris a church was built on a lot where Knox Church stands, generously denoted by the late Mr. Jesse Ketchum. This church was in connection with the United Synod of Upper Canada. A number of persons who were members of the Church of Scotland were desirous of forming a congregation in connection with that body. They held a meeting at which Mr., now Sir, Francis Hincks presided, and William Lyon Mackenzie acted as secretary. These friends organized St. Andrew's Church. Their first minister was the Rev. W. Rintoul, who was succeeded by the Rev. W. T. Leach, then by Dr. Barclay, on whose retirement the present minister, the Rev. D. J. Macdonell, was appointed. The disruption in the Established Church, occurring in Scotland in 1843, divided the Church in Canada the following year. A number seceded from St. Andrew's, and uniting with Mr. Harris' congregation formed what has since been known as Knox Church. Mr. Harris retiring at this time, the Rev. Dr. Burns resigned his charge in Paisley, Scotland, to take the oversight of the Free Church congregation in Toronto. Being appointed to the chair of Church History in Knox College in 1856, the Rev. Dr. Topp became the pastor of the church in 1858, which position he occupied till his death in 1879.

THE REV. HENRY MARTYN PARSONS.

was inducted into the pastoral charge of Knox Church on April 15th, 1880.

On Sabbath week the usually large congregation assembled for worship. The occasion was an ordinary one, there was nothing special about it. The calm and orderly demeanour of the assemblage was striking. One felt as if a spirit of reverence and devotion filled the place. The devotional portions of the service were impressive. The praise is led by a precentor and a finely toned organ. The music was conducted with good taste and most becoming simplicity, but the congregational singing seemed defective. There was not that full heartiness of expression of which so large a congregation is capable. This part of the worship of Knox Church is susceptible of improvement. Mr. Parsons occupied the pulpit, and selected for his text

Deut. xvi. 16, 17. "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose . . . in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles . . . and they shall not appear before the Lord empty . . . Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee."

The duty of giving is not confined to stated times. The time is every day. We owe constant gratitude to God the giver of all good. All we have is God given. We ought therefore to give to God as a living person in token of our love and esteem. It is the feeling of the heart that should prompt us to give. Giving is an act of heart worship. It should spring from the consciousness of the blessings He bestows. After a brief but lucid explanation of the three great religious assemblages of the people during the Jewish year, the preacher went on to illustrate that on all these occasions of public worship the same element of giving entered into the service. As one gives a present to a friend, the gift is a heart offering expressive of the esteem and love entertained for that friend. In the later days of the Jewish nation there was but little relation between giving as an act of acceptable worship and similar acts of service. It is too much the same in our own days. There has been a large enough expenditure of money to convert the world within the last three centuries, but there has been no comparison of the giving to the Lord as an act of worship. There is plenty of money, but it is of no use to Almighty God because it is not given to Him. That is not a sufficient recognition of the personality of God. We must experience a personal sense of obligation.

1. The three Jewish festivals in their design, though not a parallel to the existing state of things under the Christian dispensation, are very suggestive. The passover commemorated deliverance; Pentecost, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; the feast of the Tabernacles, at the season of ingathering, was a special expression of thanksgiving. The first was typical of God's deliverance; the second, His coming down to dwell with men; the third, of God's bounty. Christ delivers from sin, and comes into living fellowship with men; the third is prophetic of the great millennial harvest. The Lord's day is commemorative of the resurrection and the gift of the Spirit. When by the spread of the Gospel the world shall be gathered for Christ, then would be the true harvest festival. The Lord's day is no Jewish Sabbath now. It is not a rest day, that is gone, it is God's work day.

2. No one is exempted from giving as an act of worship to the true God. In worship we are to commune with Him as does a man who visits his friend. Think of the Lord Jesus, and attribute all to Him, giving thanks always. All comes to us through His death. We are to thank Him for our afflictions; they are sent as blessings. We are to be profoundly conscious of the personality of Christ. We rejoice to bring our joys to Him. After glancing briefly at various motives for giving, Mr. Parsons showed that true giving had nothing to do with unworthy motives. God bestows according to the measure of giving. No Church that adopted the principle of giving lacked prosperity. They always had plenty of money. It was so with ancient Israel. At the first passover the Israelites' first-born were spared; they belonged to God. Instead of the first-born, the command was fulfilled by the selection of one tribe, Levi, to maintain the sacred service. Every one had to redeem his first-born. So, too, Christian parents ought to dedicate their sons to the service of God in the Gospel of His Son. The Church ought to furnish its ministry. They ought to give the redemption money of their first-born. God had a lien on that child. A very different sentiment from this prevails. People say "I can do as I please." There are a thousand ministers wanted in Canada and the United States. God will perhaps raise them out of the lowest. See how He blesses the labours of Moody and Sankey. Why? Because the Church has been recreant. Christ chose as His apostles twelve uneducated men. There was not a doctor of divinity in all Jerusalem fit to preach the Gospel. It is because of the Church's failure to give to the Lord. God's power is not limited, it is our obligation. When money is asked for the Lord, it is looked on as a species of begging. It is no begging. Jesus Christ says, "How much have I done for you, what are you giving for Me?" The whole problem is solved when the true idea enters the heart, "How much lovest thou, what hast thou done for Me?"

3. The measure of the service is "as he is able." It must be honest giving. If you are in debt, if you owe money, God does not want it. Giving must be the offspring of your delight in Christ. Think of what you have been saved from. When a person has received a favour he is gratified. Is anything due to God for protection? Are we not receiving from Him week by week, day by day? The practice of the primitive Church was to lay aside on the first day of the week. The Church was never so thrifty as it was then; though never so poor as in the first three centuries. When its money increased the Church lost its power. In giving to God believe His word, put it to the test. He

loves to be tested. The Lord's love realized in the heart is the true basis of all acts of worship. God is to treat you as you treat Him, and He is the larger giver. He owns everything. (Quoting the passage, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc., Mr. Parsons illustrated it by the example of the redemption of the widow's son. There is no limitation on God's part, it is on ours. Every faculty of body and mind can be filled by God's beneficence. Giving is a greater blessing than receiving. After giving several illustrations of this principle, he showed how miserable it was for people trying to fill themselves with selfish comforts, closing the discourse with the following appropriate lines:

"Is thy cruse of comfort wasting? Rise and share it with another,  
And through all the years of famine it shall serve thee and  
and thy brother;  
Love divine will fill thy storehouse, or thy handful still  
renew:  
Scanty fare for one will often make a royal feast for two.

"For the heart grows rich in giving; all its wealth is living  
grain;  
Seeds, which mildew in the garner, scattered, fill with gold  
the plain.  
Is thy burden hard and heavy? Do thy steps drag wearily?  
Help to bear thy brother's burden; God will bear both it  
and thee.

"Numb and weary on the mountains, would'st thou sleep  
amidst the snow?  
Chafe that frozen farm beside thee, --d together both shall  
glow.  
Art thou stricken in life's battle; many wounded round  
thee moan;  
Lavish on their wounds thy balsams, and that balm shall  
heal thine own.

"Is thy heart a well left empty? None but God its void  
can fill;  
Nothing but a ceaseless fountain can its ceaseless longing  
still.  
Is thy heart a living power? Self-entwined its strength  
sinks low;  
It can only live in loving, and by serving love will grow."

After prayer numerous announcements were made, which indicated the varied and well equipped organizations for efficient Christian work in the congregations. Mr. Parsons then characteristically said, "Let us worship God by making our usual contribution."

Mr. Parsons is a native of East Haddam, Ct., where his father, the Rev. Isaac Parsons, was pastor of the Congregational church for the long period of forty years. Henry M. Parsons studied at Yale College, where he graduated in 1848. For the next three years he was engaged in teaching, having been appointed to the classical school at Lynne, Ct., and afterwards to the Academy at Richmond, Va. He received his theological education at the Connecticut Theological Institute, graduating in 1854. In the same year, licensed to preach the Gospel, he was called to the pastoral oversight of the First Congregational Church, Springfield, Mass., being ordained in November of that year. Here he remained till 1870, when he was settled as associate pastor of Union Church, Springfield, Mass. In 1874 he resigned this charge to gather and organize Olvet Church, Boston. After excellent work in the latter charge, he received a call to Lafayette Presbyterian Church, Buffalo, where he was settled in 1877, continuing till called to Knox Church.

Mr. Parsons' ministry is eminently practical. He is an indefatigable worker. His efforts at good doing are large, many-sided and effective. Recently he has begun a Sabbath afternoon meeting for Bible study, and large numbers attend, taking a deep interest in the subjects selected for consideration. This is a department of Christian work that with the Divine blessing cannot fail to be very profitable to the large number of people who assemble for the study of the sacred Scriptures. Mr. Parsons evidently understands the practical spiritual wants of our time, and his large sympathies qualify him for the exercise of a fruitful ministry.

### CONCERNING BAPTISM.—XIII.

BY REV. W. M'KAY, B.A., WOODSTOCK, AUTHOR OF "IMMERSION A ROMAN INVENTION."

From the Christian Standard.

MR. EDITOR,—There is one thing in which you excel most writers, even immersionists. The unhesitating confidence with which you make your statements is really remarkable. These statements are not infrequently both logically and chronologically absurd; yet you make them with as much composure as if they were the utterances of the Divine Spirit. The argument of "confident assertion" is one in which immersionist writers generally are very powerful, because with a certain order of minds it is so potent. But you, sir, ought to be aware that a considerable number of your readers have copies of my book in