

THE KNOX TERCENTENARY.

THE CELEBRATION IN TORONTO.

The Presbyterians of Toronto determined to celebrate the tercentenary of the death of John Knox by a public meeting in Knox Church the evening of Wednesday last, at which addresses would be delivered on the life, character, and work of the great Reformer. Every seat in the spacious edifice was occupied at the hour named for the commencement of the proceedings, and the celebration was in all respects a success. The chair was occupied—on motion of Rev. Dr. Topp, seconded by Rev. Mr. King—by Hon. John McMurich. On the platform were Rev. Prof. Gregg, Rev. Dr. Jennings, Rev. Dr. Topp, Rev. Prof. Cavan, Rev. D. J. McDonnell, Rev. M. Nisbett, Missionary to the Red River.

The Chairman said he considered it no ordinary compliment to be called on to preside on such an occasion as this, still he could have wished that some one more competent had been chosen, as it was important that such a meeting should get a good start, and a good speech from the chair at the outset had often the effect of giving a tone and character to the subsequent proceedings. He felt somewhat relieved from his task by the programme which apportioned the different subjects to be spoken upon to different gentlemen, so that anything he could say would be trespassing upon ground already appropriated. He understood this gathering not as a display of Presbyterianism, nor as an act of man-worship, but as a grateful remembrance of a great and good man, to whom Scotland owed much and the world also owed much, a good Reformer of 300 years ago—John Knox. He was one of the instruments chosen by God to do a noble work. That work was nobly done, and to him they were indebted, under God, for the inestimable privileges they now enjoyed of civil and religious liberty. He called on the Rev. Dr. Jennings' duct the religious exercises.

Rev. Dr. Jennings led upon the congregation to join in singing the 46th Psalm. He then read the 132nd Psalm, and the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after which he led in prayer. He then gave out the 146th Psalm.

The Chairman announced that the tune to which this was to be sung was composed in the end of the third century. He therefore requested that the choir would sing the first four lines alone, as the congregation would then be better able to join them. The request was complied with.

The Chairman announced that each speaker was limited to twenty minutes. He then called on the Rev. Professor Gregg, M.A., to speak on the "Times of Knox."

Rev. Professor Gregg said he thought it a good thing to cherish the memory of the illustrious dead, of confessors who in the face of persecution had witnessed for Christ, and of martyrs who had sealed their testimony with their blood. They might be guilty of superstitious in dedicating particular days of each year to particular worthies, and they might be guilty of hypocrisy in building the tombs and garishing the sepulchres of the righteous in whose footsteps they were unwilling to walk. Nevertheless he thought it profitable for Christians to muse upon ancient times, to recall the patient endurance and the dauntless courage of God's servants in former generations. Alexander gathered inspiration at the tomb of Achilles, and he trusted the might get some good that might as they gathered around the grave of Knox. He was to present a brief general view of the times in which Knox lived. He was to set before that congregation the plain, coloured canvas, dark, it was true, in its shades, on which Mr. Campbell was to draw the outlines of the life of Knox, on which Mr. King with deft and cunning hand was to fill in the finer outlines of his character, on which, with accustomed skill, Dr. Topp was to construct the ecclesiastical edifice which Knox erected after the pattern shown on the Mount; on which Professor Cavan, as became a teacher in an institute which bore the name of "Knox," was to paint the schools and colleges which Knox projected, and on which, finally, Mr. McDonnell was to present a panoramic view of the institutions and churches in all parts of the world which owed their origin to the influence which, under God, Knox was enabled to wield. (Cheers.) Coming to his own particular part he might remind them that it was in the year 1517 that Luther posted his famous theses, whereby he virtually inaugurated the Reformation. At that time Romanism had fully developed itself into the great antichristian apostasy. It retained, indeed, many of the great principles of the Christian faith, but these had virtually been neutralized by the maintenance of doctrines which were subversive of the gospel of Christ. The Bible claimed to be the sole authoritative rule of faith and life; Romanism exalted traditions, oral and written, to equal authority with the word of God. The Bible taught that God alone, the True Jehovah, was to be worshipped; Romanism taught that religious homage was to be paid to saints and angels, and especially to the Virgin Mary. The Bible taught plainly that there was one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, and that no man could come to the Father but by Him; Romanism taught that there were other intercessors of whose prayers in Heaven we might avail ourselves. The Bible taught that the soul of man was regenerated by the special almighty power of God's Holy Spirit; Romanism taught that this was effected by baptism, which introduced a man into the Kingdom of Heaven made him a child of God, or the heir of eternal glory; while the simple Scriptural sacrament of the Lord's Supper gave way to the oblation of the mass, which brought along with it the monstrous doctrine of the Transubstantiation. The Roman Pontiff had well earned for himself the title of the Man of Sin; he sat in the temple of God virtually calling himself God. He claimed not merely an extravagant amount of power on earth; he claimed to hold the keys of the invisible world, and, when suffi-

cient money was paid to him, to release the souls, confined in purgatorial fire. The dogma of the Papal Infallibility had not then been formally established as it had recently been, but the Popes of Rome acted virtually on the assumption that his mandates ought not to be resisted or questioned. In no part of the world did the disastrous influence of Romanism manifest itself more plainly than in the kingdom of Scotland. In illustration of this he would read a few extracts from the life of John Knox, written by Dr. McCrie, who had fully investigated the facts of the case. He said—

"The full half of the wealth of the nation belonged to the clergy; and the greater part of this was in the hands of a few individuals, who had the control of the whole body. The lives of the clergy, exempted from secular jurisdiction and corrupted by wealth and idleness, were become a scandal to religion and an outrage on decency. Through the blind devotion and munificence of princes and nobles, monasteries, those nurseries of superstition and idleness, had greatly multiplied in the nation; and though they had universally degenerated, and were notoriously become the haunts of lewdness and debauchery, it was deemed impious and sacrilegious to reduce their number, abridge their privileges, or alienate their funds."

They had an example in their own day of the bad use which might be made of monasteries and similar institutions. They knew the feelings of indignation which, though not loudly expressed, existed in the minds of the inhabitants of this city through a recent occurrence, in which the parent of a family had been unable to come into contact with his own children, who had been spirited away in some mysterious manner beyond his control; and in this, which so deeply affected the minds of so many here and in other parts of the Province, they had only a glimpse into the character of the olden time. Dr. McCrie went on to say—

"The kingdom swarmed with ignorant, idle, luxurious monks, who like locusts devoured the fruits of the earth, and filled the air with pestilential infection. Large sums of money were annually exported out of the kingdom, for the confirmation of benefices, the conducting of appeals, and many other purposes, in exchange for which were received leaden bulls, wooden palls, old bones, and similar articles of precious consecrated mummery. It is difficult for us to conceive how empty, ridiculous, and wretched those harangues were, which the monks delivered for sermons. Legendary tales concerning the founder of some religious order, his wonderful sanctity, the miracles which he performed, his combats with the devil, his watchings, fastings, flagellations; the virtues of holy water, crism, crossing, exorcism the horrors of purgatory, and the numbers released from it by the intercession of some powerful saint; these, with low jests, table-talk, and fire-side scandal, proved the favourite topics of the preachers, and were served up to the people, instead of the pure, salutary, and sublime doctrines of the Bible."

Thus deplorable was the state of Scotland at the commencement of the 16th century. The nation was prostrated beneath the usurpation and polluted by the abominations of Rome. How was the enthralled nation to be liberated? How was a degraded Church to be reformed? How was a bigoted priesthood to be encountered and overawed? Who now was the Lord God of Elijah? Who, catching the mantle and fired with the spirit of the Tishbite, would be bold and brave enough to confront the Ahab and Jezebel of his day, and whose burning eloquence, like lightnings from heaven, would slaver into atoms the massive pillars of the temples of idolatry? (Cheers.) God could always raise up instruments to accomplish His own purpose, and accordingly in these dark times God raised up an instrument for the Reformation of Scotland in the person of John Knox. Others before him, or at all events before he took a prominent position up on the scene, had done good service in the Lord's cause. Patrick Hamilton, who was of royal lineage, and George Wishart, and many others, were found right noble confessors for the cause of truth. But head and shoulders above all others towered the gigantic figure of John Knox, whom God especially brought forward at this era to plead His own cause, and to rescue the nation. The time would only allow him to advert to a very summary way to some facts in those stirring and eventful times when Knox lived. It would be enough for him, speaking to a Presbyterian audience, to mention such scenes and localities, as Holyrood Palace, Stirling Castle, and Loch Leven, and to mention the names of Darnley, Rizzio, and Bothwell, Mary of Guise and Mary Queen of Scots. It would be enough for him merely to mention such names to recall to the minds of Scotchmen and intelligent Presbyterians and Christians throughout the world the stirring events of those eventful times in which the life of Knox was spent. And, to the student of English history, it would be only necessary to mention the names of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. and Bloody Mary and Queen Elizabeth, and the names of Wolsey, and Moore, and Cranmer, and Latimer, to recall the stirring events that took place in England during the years of the life of Knox. Of Ireland—which, in ancient times, was spoken of as the seat of learning and the isle of saints; and which, in latter times had contained within its province the purest branch of the English Church, and also had contained the not unworthy representatives of Presbyterianism, those Presbyterians who manned the walls of Derry, and detained the conflict between James and William; and which, in still later times, sent forth the pioneers of Presbyterianism to this continent of America—of Ireland little could be said, but that the country of Europe, was less blessed by the coming of the Reformation than that country was. If they crossed to the continent of Europe, he would like to speak a good deal about Luther, and Calvin, and Knox together, and about their peculiar offices—of Luther whose special function was to vindicate the priestly character of Christ, in connection with the great doctrine of justification by faith; of Calvin, whose great office and special function was to vindicate the character of Christ as the sole prophet of the Church, in connection

with the rule of faith; and of Knox, whose special office seemed to him to have been to vindicate the crown rights and prerogatives of Zion's mediatorial King. He would like to speak of the Diet of Worms, and of Spire, and also of the Council of Trent, where the errors that had been kept in solution for ages were precipitated, and crystallized, and consolidated, so as to exert a still more baneful influence on the nations of the earth. He would like also to speak of the efforts made by the Romish powers in Europe—Holland, Germany, Spain, and France—to crush the Reformation; of the Spanish Armada, which England and the elements had overthrown; and finally, of the fearful massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve, three months before John Knox died; but time would not allow him to do so. He had only to say in closing his brief address that he trusted that meeting would not be in vain—he trusted that they might catch something of the spirit of the great Reformer of Scotland. They knew how the heart of the patriot who trod among the relics of departed worth, or lingered on the spot where some patriot band rolled back the tide of invading foes, or explored the mountain retreat where liberty, battled for a time, had found shelter from the tyrants rage, might be kindled into a nobler enthusiasm; and he trusted that they would be inspired with a holier enthusiasm when reminded of the exploits of that great man who, because of his dauntless courage and unwavering intrepidity, well deserved to be ranked among those witnesses mentioned in the chapter which had been read that evening, those faithful men of the days of old, the Gideons and the Samsons, the Samuels and the Davids and the Maccabees, men who quenched the violence of fire, stopped the mouths of lions, out of weakness were made strong, waved valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. (Loud cheers.)

The Rev. John Campbell was then called on, his subject being "The Life of Knox." The subject required that he should tell a plain story, but in that audience he was quite sure the bare facts of the life of Knox would be found eloquent enough in themselves not only to command attention but to awake enthusiasm. Professor Gregg had said that it would be his duty to give an outline for others to fill in, and he would, so far as lay in his power, erect a skeleton and trust to others to clothe the bones with flesh and make the whole figure live. Born in Gifford, and not in Gifford as some had contended, Knox received the elements of education at the Grammar School of Haddington, and went in 1521 to the University of Glasgow, where he studied, under John Mayor, the scholastic philosophy and theology. It might be said in passing that Knox came of a respectable family originally from the west of Scotland, and at one time they had been lords of a place called Knock, a word which was found in many Scotch names in that district, and which, signifying an omphalos, was appropriately borne by one who was destined to occupy so large a space in the history of those times, and to rise so high above ordinary men; those who saw him enter Mayor's study little thought what an "omphalos" he was fated to become. (Cheers.) We next find Knox a priest in Romish orders and teaching philosophy in the University of St. Andrew's. But men had begun to think; the spirit of enquiry was abroad; many had openly or secretly embraced the new creed; a philosophy which concerned itself with foolish and futile questions, such as—"How many angels may dance upon the point of a needle?" could not cut a mind like that of the future reformer, and it was not therefore surprising that he should have begun to enquire whether the opinions which were current within the walls of St. Andrew's—whether the scholastic theology and the teachings of the Papacy—were in accordance with truth. He searched the Scriptures, and received no small assistance from Thomas Williams, chaplain of the Earl of Arran, of whom Knox spoke as the means of leading him to see the errors of Popery. His mind revolted against certain practices of the Church, and retiring from St. Andrew's, he became a tutor to the sons of two noble families. The third scene was some five years later. It was not laid in Scotland, but in France. A galley was moving up the Loire, and toiling amongst the slaves was John Knox. He had attached himself to George Wishart, and as an attempt had been made on Wishart's life it was customary for Knox to go before him, bearing a great two-handed sword. One day Wishart said to him—"Go back, one sacrifice is enough." After the death of his friend he became remarkable amongst the Protestant refugees in the City of St. Andrew's as a powerful preacher against the Papacy, but, the French squadron proving too strong for them, the garrison surrendered and hence the moving picture of the man of God toiling at the oar in France. Five more years pass, and we see him in England, one of the chaplains of Edward VI., who held the glittering bat of a bishopric before his eyes, from which he turned aside because he did not believe that diocesan episcopacy was in accordance with the word of God. Five years more pass, and he having fled from England on the accession of Mary, we find him at Geneva, where, after taking part in the memorable troubles in Frankfurt, he settled down as the pastor of a small English congregation, and where, as one to whom Calvin detested as a sower, he held converse with the great reformer and the learned Beza. In Scotland a small assembly of reformers individuals met him in Edinburgh, which was the first General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. A papal conclave having met was broken up when it was heard John Knox was in Edinburgh. They had heard that name before and would not face the man. Wherever he went the idols fell. Passing over seven more years we find Knox in England as representative of the Scottish Kirk. He comes to treat with the Queen, whom he found more difficult to manage than Mary herself. He is also associated with the Puritans. We then find him preaching Presbyterianism before Mary. In 1572 there was gloom over Scotland. John Knox was dying. He and his kindred through many sufferings, and braved many dangers, threatened with assassination by his ene-

mies, he was but partially supported by some of his friends. He now rejoices that his end is come. It is the day he has often looked forward to, when all his sufferings and sorrows should have passed and he be at rest with Christ his Lord. He calls his friends around him—"Come, behold the wonderful work of the Lord;"—and while on that day, the 24th Nov. 1572, he proclaims that he deserves nothing, and that all the glory was the Lord's; his soul passes and John Knox is Hallowed with Christ. (Cheers.)

Dr. Jennings then gave out the 132nd Psalm, 6th verse, four verses of which were sung to the old and well-known tune "French."

The chairman then introduced the Rev. J. M. King, Gould-street Church, Toronto, who said: the part which has been assigned to me in connection with the proceedings of this evening is to sketch the character of the eminent man, whose memory we have met to honor. It is frequently anything but an easy matter, to give an accurate and trustworthily estimate of the character of any of the more prominent figures of history, to discover how much of the traditional opinion regarding them, is due to the partiality of friends, and how much to the misconception or misrepresentations of foes. The difficulty is lessened somewhat in the present instance, by the strong and marked individuality of the man, and by the remarkable directness and transparency of his course of conduct throughout. In this way the leading features of the Scottish Reformer's character stand out with such boldness, and there is about the whole such an entire absence of disguise, as to render misconception of them well nigh impossible even to the most hasty observer; while they are not the less susceptible of receiving increased distinctness and force from such delineators of his life and times, as those to which we have just listened.

Doubtless the most prominent feature in the character Knox, is that to which the Regent Morton bore testimony at his grave in the well-known words, "There lies he who never feared the face of man." He stood before the men of his day, before the Scotland, or rather the Europe of the sixteenth century, as this evening he stands before us, and before the still wider Christendom of our day; a man of singular nobility of purpose, and of not less singular intrepidity of action. Distinguished by great clearness of discernment, and vigour of understanding, gifted with the rare power of looking deeply into the nature of things, and the motives of human actions, he was still more distinguished by his boldness in the assertion of truth and right and in the performance of duty, or of what seemed to him to be such; a characteristically strong man, who seized the object before him clearly and firmly, and then moved forward to its attainment, in the directest way possible, and with a strength of purpose and an ardour of spirit, which swept away all opposition. Himself intensely in earnest in all he said and did, he carried along with him in the tide of his own energetic convictions and passionate impulses, the great majority of men of less vigorous minds and less resolute will. Possessed of a weak and frail body, he had a spirit within so ardent and impassioned, and at its service a tongue of such eloquence, that it is doubtful whether any Scotchman before or since has ever wielded the same power over his countrymen. "Where your honor exhorteth us to stoutness," writes an English Ambassador to the Secretary of State, "I assure you the voice of one man is able in an hour to put more life in us than six hundred trumpets continually blustering in our ears." This fiery ardour his spirit retained almost to the last. It was a light to fill men's minds, not with wonder only, but with awe, when with a body broken down by years, labors, anxieties, and sorrows, and needing to be almost lifted up to the pulpit stairs, by two strong men, he gradually rose as the discourse proceeded to vehemence of speech and manner, that sweeping all before it, seemed little less than miraculous, in one so frail. And yet strong, and fearless always, vehement often, he could be moderate when the occasion demanded it. In point of fact, he was often a mediator in the midst of contending factions; a counsellor of peace and submission for the time to the usurpations of power, when these affected not the honor of God's truth, and the freedom and purity of Christ's Church. When they did, when countenance was given in high places or in low, to what was to him a deadly superstition, then there was nothing left for him but to fight with all the strength and fierceness of his nature. He knew nothing—happily for Scotland and for Scotland's children, wherever found—of those compromises with error, which bequeath legacies of difficulty and discord to future generations. His intense dislike of Popery is so well known to need more than a passing allusion here. The enemy then as now of human rights, invading not only those of the state, but the still more sacred rights of the family, as it has been doing lately, and indeed is still in our own city, obscuring the glory of the Saviour's work by ceremonies and superstitions, identified in his mind by all that is crafty, tyrannical, and degrading; in his view the very antichrist of Scripture, the hatred of it was with him a passion. We are not called on in these days of fuller enlightenment, to approve of all he said and wrote on this subject, but while conceding to our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects all the liberty we claim for ourselves to worship according to their conscience, and to proselytise to their faith, a liberty, he it observed, which the head of the Roman Catholic Church never conceded within his own territories, we do not the less rejoice in the dislike of Popery, which Knox has done so much to stamp on the minds of his countrymen, and in the wide gulf which he has placed between them, and any return to that unscriptural system.

But with all his hatred of Popery, and notwithstanding his characteristic directness and intensity of nature, the Scottish Reformer was essentially a broadman, we may say, a man of singular breadth of view for his age, as far in advance of the statesman and confidors of his country in enlightened views of life, as he was their superior in nobility of purpose and purity of character. In keeping with this feature of his mind, it was his constant aim to secure a wide and gen-

erous culture for all classes of society, while he has sought in stamping on the church, which he may be said to have originated, a breadth of Catholicity of sentiment—a striking contrast with the narrow and exclusive spirit which unhappily took early possession of some of the churches of Reformation—which it has not yet lost, and which it is to be hoped it will never lose.

His naive modesty and diffidence—shrinking from the assumption of the ministerial office, until all but forced into it by the solicitations of his brethren, his disinterestedness and freedom from vulgar ambitions; his invincible integrity scoring all baseness in word and act, his exquisite tenderness and sensibility, his unflinching firmness, as reminding some times by his bearing, of the rugged hills of his native land, yet remaining unmovable as they amid the tale of tears or the storm of passion by which he was assailed—these qualities of the man—must be known to all and cannot be farther referred to now.

In sketching, however briefly, the character of John Knox, it would be an unpardonable oversight to omit a distinct reference to his piety, a piety characterized not only by robustness and intelligence, but by great depth and spirituality. He was a patriot, a reformer, a friend of human liberty, and of human progress, a careless assessor of the rights of men, the humblest and most defenceless, against all forms of tyranny, but he was above all else a man of God, a good man and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith, a humble Christian, mourning often most bitterly his own sins and shortcomings, finding his only comfort amid these in the sacrifice of the cross, and ever striving after greater conformity to the will of God. Overlook this feature and you cannot understand either the man or his work. Nature had done much for him, had put within him thin but wiry frame, a large and noble soul, but grace did still more than nature to make him the man he was, the power in the church and in the world, which he became. Of him, it might be confidently said; he feared not man, because he feared God, he stood firm and unshaken when others faltered and gave way because he stood on what was to him the word of God, he saw far ahead and clearly, when darkness and confusion overtook the counsels of others, because he was not blinded with selfish aims, and he fought bravely and was over confident of victory when others despaired, because he was enlisted on what was to him the side of Christ's church, and fought with God at his back. (Applause.)

It is not necessary we should claim for Knox a freedom from the weakness of human nature, which he would have been himself the first to disavow. It may be at once admitted that he was frequently intemperate in speech, that he used his power with a greater regard to the accomplishment of the end in view than consideration for the feelings and conviction of those about him, that his vehemence was occasionally such as to provoke the opposition or wound the self-respect of men of independent mind, that he was slow to concede to others the rights of conscience which he claimed for himself. After all his faults were largely the faults of the age. His virtues were for the most part his own. Upright in the midst of intriguing bishops and courtiers, disinterested and selfish statesman and nobles, holding on steadfast to truth and right in the face of the ever shifting policies of expedience, insensible to the influence alike of flattery and of threat, he stands before us this evening, so noble in purpose, so wise in counsel, so intrepid in action, so true a friend, so enlightened a patriot, so thorough a Protestant, and so humble, yet so ardent a Christian, so enthusiastic in his devotion to the Kirk of Christ, so ready either to do or to suffer in its behalf, and so confident in its society and triumph, that it is not unmeet that, three hundred years after his death, and on a spot so remote from the scene of his labours, we should give thanks to God in his behalf, and fan the fires of our own patriotic and Christian zeal, by the contemplation of his untiring doctrine. (Applause.)

Prof. Cavan said that as the hour was late he would be very brief in his remarks about "Knox and Education," but before commencing he expressed his regret that there was not upon the platform Rev. Dr. Jenkins, who, he believed, was present, and also a distinguished gentleman in public life in this country, who was in the audience. (Applause.) He expressed the great pleasure with which he had listened to the Hon. Mr. Mackenzie's able and eloquent address at the Hamilton celebration upon the political character and political services of Knox. (Renewed applause.) Prof. Cavan then briefly described the state of education in Scotland when Knox appeared, and showed what grand results had flowed from the great reformer's labours in the cause of education. Knox's intellectual requirements were alluded to. Prof. Cavan insisted upon the great importance of education being provided over in all its aspects by religion.

Rev. Dr. Topp, in addressing the meeting upon "Knox and Church Polity" said the work which Knox and his confidors had, under God, to do was two-fold, first to bring out the truth of the statements of the Word of God, to separate them from the corruptions and superstitious dogmas of Popery; to preach Christ and Him crucified, to offer perfect and free salvation to every sinner of the human race—to provide to do these things and to provide that the same should be done by others; secondly, to secure a constitution, government and organization of a Church such as it ought to be, to lay down the principles upon which such should be founded, and then to make arrangements for the continuance of the faithful preaching of the Word of God and for the government and organization essential to the Church of Christ. These were the grand objects which were set before the minds of these men in the momentous enterprise in which they were engaged. They would readily understand that the preaching of the word of God came first, because he had no hesitation in saying that all the benefits that had accrued from our education and our civil and religious liberty were inseparably connected with it. To the question sometimes put by the opponents of Protestantism—"Whose was your religion before