

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

## THE PRESBYTERIAN PULPIT.

THE REV. D. J. MACDONNELL, B.D.

Visitors to Toronto, especially from American cities, are impressed by the fine church architecture which is so marked a feature of the chief city of Ontario. Of late years great advances have been made in the style of church building throughout the country, but in Toronto many of the older edifices can still be regarded as striking specimens of architectural taste. Among many recently erected and renewed ecclesiastical buildings, St. Andrew's Church retains its pre-eminence as a massive and imposing structure. To long-time residents of Toronto the first St. Andrew's Church, on the corner of Adelaide and Church streets, was a conspicuous object. It was opened for public worship in 1831, and continued to be used for Presbyterian services until Old St. Andrew's Church was built at the corner of Carlton and Jarvis streets. But in 1876 the larger portion of the congregation migrated westward to the magnificent edifice erected at the corner of King and Simcoe streets. It is curious that the social forces should be so well represented at the intersection of these streets. At one corner the residence, with its tastefully planted and beautifully kept grounds, of the Lieutenant-Governor is situated; facing these to the east is St. Andrew's Church; on the north side King street the handsome front of Upper Canada College is seen, or would be but for the barbarous fence that well nigh excludes it from the prying gaze of the ignoble vulgar. The other coign of vantage is occupied by a drinking saloon; thus religion, government, education and whiskey are at least locally linked. Why don't those whom it concerns remove the unsightly board fences from the public buildings in this quarter, when by so doing the beauty of this locality would be enhanced at a trifling cost? The ground on which the church is built is unenclosed, and were the other fences removed the improvement would be striking.

St. Andrew's Church, with its lecture hall, school rooms, and other apartments forms one harmonious architectural whole. The style is Norman, with all its leading characteristics tastefully embodied in details wrought out with fine artistic skill. The material is mostly Canadian stone brought from the Georgetown quarries, while for decorative purposes, Ohio sandstone has been utilized. The front on King street is grand in its massiveness, and in the appropriate character of its ornamentation, being neither too lavish nor too meagre. The fine circular windows and the perfect symmetry of the arches, with ornate carvings and polished Nova Scotia granite pillars, complete a handsome and imposing facade. From the southwest angle of the church a massive square tower rises to a height of one hundred and sixteen feet. The interior is in harmony with the general design. The tint of the walls is delicate, there being an agreeable absence of the tawdry frescoing by which the churches built fourteen or fifteen years ago were so generally disfigured. On the southern wall, on either side of the pulpit, in tasteful gilt lettering, are the beauties and the Apostles' Creed.

A large congregation assembles here, Sabbath after Sabbath, for worship. On a recent occasion, an ordinary one, the large and intelligent assemblage had convened for Divine service, when the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell conducted the devotional services with earnestness, fervour, and becoming reverence, after which he announced as the theme of discourse.

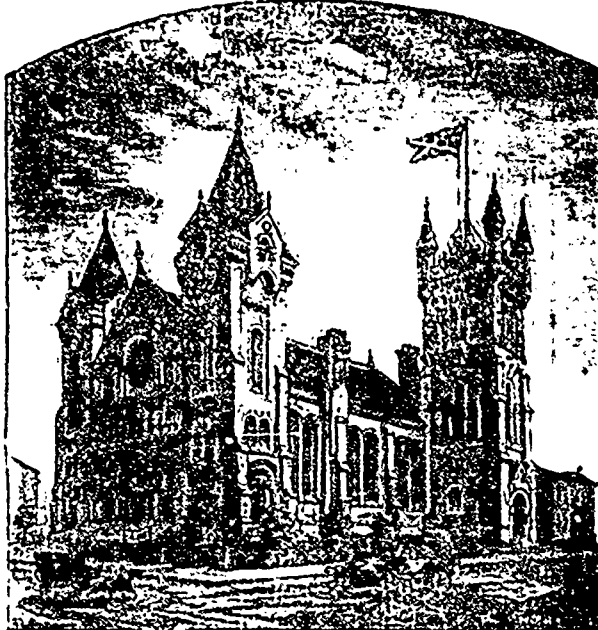
"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit is no guile."—Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

After a few explanatory remarks on the arrangement and authorship of the Psalm, the preacher said that it was probably composed soon after the fifty-first. That contained the confession of great crimes, sins against his brother, sins against God. He had passed through the valley of humiliation in the realization of his guilt, and now there was a renewed expression of his trust in God, after he made confession and had a renewed experience of God's forgiveness. He was now in a conscious state of blessedness. The same three words used to denote sin in this psalm were employed in the fifty-first—iniquity, transgression, sin. These were used to explain the different aspects of sin. Transgression meant rebellion against God's authority. It was the wilful disobedience of God's clearly revealed law, purposely breaking the Divine commands. Some are accustomed to think of wrong-doing as a violation of public opinion. It is more

than this, though even the opinion of good men ought not to be lightly regarded. It ought to make us pause and consider whether we are not in the wrong. The judgment of good men is a reflection of God's righteousness. Transgression is a violation of the authority of the Supreme. It is true also that sin is against ourselves. The sinner always wrongs himself. But the evil does not stop here. People often say of an erring one: "Poor fellow he is nobody's enemy but his own." It isn't true; or only with a qualification. He may not injure others intentionally, but he does inflict grievous wrongs on others. While a man follows these sinful courses there are hearts breaking about him. But the sinner is also God's enemy. He is consciously, nay, wilfully, violating God's law. He is resisting the will of God, not revealed in a book merely, but in his own body and in his own experience. God is speaking to us every day, every hour. He is speaking to us as plainly as he did from the top of Mount Sinai. If we do not hear his voice we are dullards. If we disobey Him we are rebelling against His authority as our King; we are rebelling against His love as our Father.

The word rendered "sin" means a missing of the mark. It is from the same root as the word used in the Book of Judges to describe the sharp-shooting of the Benjamites, who could sling stones at a hairbreadth and not miss. We miss the mark. We come short of what we ought to be and what we ought to do. So long as we continue under the power of sin we are missing the aim of life. How we see this in the lives of men and women! The great purposes of life are missed, uprightness, purity, love, God, are missed, and thus they are missing all true blessedness. "Transgression" is doing what we ought not to do; "sin" is neglecting to be and to do what we ought.

The word translated "iniquity" means something twisted, wrong from the straight line. It is moral perversion, as exemplified by the expression in Job, "I have perverted that which was right." It is a perversion of man's true nature. When a man does wrong it is sometimes said of him, he is acting only according to his nature. This he is not doing, he



NEW ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, TORONTO.

is perverting his nature. A true nature loves righteousness. God has made man for that. Sin is not natural; it is unnatural. If we continue in sin we have the consciousness that we are not walking according to our nature; we are twisting it from the direction in which it was meant to go.

After a brief recapitulation of the meaning of the terms already given, he proceeded to illustrate the blessedness of the man who is delivered from all this. His iniquity is not reckoned by God. In whose spirit is no guile, no doubletiness on his part, no regarding of sin in the heart. The confession is sincere and the forgiveness complete. Gregg, in "The Creeds of Christendom" speaks of God as the only being who cannot forgive. He states that there are two senses of forgiveness. 1. Removal of the consequences of wrong-doing. 2. Forbearing to retaliate. That the first is not possible except by miracle, and the second involves unworthy notions of God. But the writer referred to misses the whole thing. It is true that consequences remain; the penalty remains. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." This law is inviolable. These words are absolutely true. Lay that to heart, young people. God will by no means clear the guilty. The consequences of sin are not only felt by the sinner himself, but by his children, and his children's children. Sin does not stop with himself. He is a fool who supposes that he can have the sinful indulgence and not the consequences of it. There are different ways in which God punishes sin. Every man must bear the consequences of his sin. The sins of the flesh are obviously punished. Men see a punishment in the shattered health, the blighted reputation, the ruined home. The punishment of the sins of the proud, the envious, the unforgiving, is not so clear. But we may be convinced of the general law by reflecting how we feel when the sins are entertained. They make a very hell in our hearts. Sin makes a man miserable. God's law in the spiritual realm is as infallible as in the natural. The law of gravitation is no surer than the spiritual law which annexes blessedness to goodness, misery to sin. This law works everywhere and in every age.

God does for the penitent sinner something far better than removing the outward penalty. We misjudge God's forgiveness by likening it to the pardon granted by the Queen

or the Governor, which is concerned only or chiefly with the outward penalty. The pardoned murderer or burglar may have to endure the real penalty at the hands of society after he is out of prison—that is, men will regard him with distrust and suspicion until they know that he is a changed man. Real forgiveness for a man is taking him back into your confidence, showing him that distrust and disapproval have entirely vanished. This is what God does for the penitent man. He takes him back to His heart. Forgiveness is the removal of the worst consequence of sin, viz., separation from God. The penalty annexed to the act of sin may be rigidly exacted, but when the spirit of the sinner has been changed every cloud is cleared away and the light of the Father's face is upon him. This is made plain in the parable of the Prodigal Son, which, while it does not tell us all about the method of God's forgiveness through Christ, does set forth what the forgiveness is, and how closely connected with the acknowledgment of sin. The forgiveness comes the very moment the prodigal says, "Father I have sinned." Fre the words were spoken his father fell on his neck and kissed him. The robe and the ring and the feast would have been valueless if the father had sat apart, with displeasure on his brow. It was the glad love shining in the father's face that satisfied the son's heart. The forgiveness of sins is God taking us, penitent and contrite, back to His heart, making His face to shine upon us, bestowing on us eternal blessedness.

The discourse was one of a series of expository sermons which Mr. Macdonnell is in the habit of delivering on Sabbath mornings.

Mr. Macdonnell is a native Canadian, the son of a Presbyterian minister. He was born at Bathurst, N.B., in 1843. His father having resigned his charge in New Brunswick, returned to Scotland, where he remained for a time; there the elementary part of the future divine's education was obtained, partly in the west-country town of Kilmarnock, and partly in stately Edinburgh. Once more the Rev. George Macdonnell came to this western continent, where he ministered successively at Nelson, Fergus and Milton. Now young Macdonnell's education commenced in earnest, he having the good fortune to be placed under the care of one of the most distinguished educationists in Ontario—William Tassie, LL.D. In due course he graduated at Queen's College, Kingston, at an age when most boys are scarcely fit to enter on an university arts' course. After spending a few years in teaching he went to Glasgow University for the study of theology. He also embraced the opportunity of visiting the renowned universities of Heidelberg and Berlin, where he enjoyed the lectures of such profound theological thinkers as Professors Dörner and Hengstenberg. Mr. Macdonnell was licensed by the Established Presbytery of Edinburgh in May, 1866. Returning to Canada soon afterward, he was ordained minister of St. Andrew's, Peterborough, in November of the same year. He continued in his first charge for about four years. His ministry there was attended with most encouraging success. The Rev. Dr. Barclay retiring from the active duties of his sacred office in St. Andrew's, Toronto, Mr. Macdonnell was called to that important charge.

His reputation had preceded him, and in the course of a short time the congregation had increased to such an extent that the spacious accommodation of the old church was no longer sufficient for the increasing numbers that desired to sit under his ministry. This growing prosperity led to the erection of the handsome church where Mr. Macdonnell now preaches to a large and attached congregation.

Mr. Macdonnell was a most ardent advocate of Presbyterian union, and laboured hard for its happy consummation. Shortly after the accomplishment of the union he became a conspicuous figure in the courts of the united Church. He was the involuntary object for a time of general attention. Having broached some speculative views on the eternity of future punishment in a discourse which found its way into the columns of a daily journal, they attracted a great deal of public notice and occasioned much anxiety. After protracted debate in the Church courts the difficulties were happily adjusted, and the ministry of Mr. Macdonnell has been growing in interest since the subsidence of the excitement his speculations occasioned.

His style of preaching may be fitly characterized as earnest and thoughtful. Though a keen and subtle thinker he is no mere scholastic pedant. He gives utterance to living thought, aglow with the pulsations of a large and affectionate nature. He speaks direct from heart to heart. Like all true men he realizes the solemn responsibility of his sacred office; hence he is faithful and conscientious in the discharge of its onerous duties. He takes a prominent and a laborious share in works of benevolence and philanthropy, and