

REV'D WILLIAM ORMISTON, D. D.

Sometime in the month of May, 1861, I was a passenger between Kingston and Montreal on the Grand Trunk Railway. Several ministers and elders, or deacons were in the cars, who belonged to the two religious denominations then known as the Canadian branches of the Free Church of Scotland and of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. They were journeying to Montreal, to consummate in one Synod the union of the two denominations, as the Canada Presbyterian Church. They were personally unknown to me; but from the positions in which we sat I could not avoid hearing their conversation, nor refrain from the speculative exercise of estimating the probable sum of the intellectual forces of each; a presumptuous indulgence, yet one which seemed to add speed to the rapid, rushing, roaring train; we were at Montreal before I had brought the task to a satisfactory conclusion.

One attracted notice sooner than the rest; partly from the remarkable intellectuality of the countenance, but chiefly from his pleasing simplicity of language, cheerfulness of tone, lucidity of idea, earnestness of argument, and variety of topic. I heard him name the place of worship to which he had been appointed to preach on the following Sunday, at Montreal, and promised myself the benefit of listening to one from whom might be expected—if the countenance and conversation had not wholly misled expectation—a sermon in which eloquence would give force and beauty to a large amount of common sense. I mean the common sense of practical Christianity, as distinguished from dogmatic theology, or rhetorical declamation.

Cote street Church was the one named.—Thither I repaired and discovered in the preacher the traveler from the West—the Reverend William Ormiston, D. D., Minister of the Central Presbyterian Church in the city of Hamilton, whose portrait is this day published on the first page of the 'Canadian Illustrated News.' By inquiry I further ascertained that Dr. Ormiston was Government Inspector of Grammar Schools in Canada West, and official visiting Superintendent of Schools in Hamilton; that he had been for some years one of the foremost scholars of Canada, tutor and professor at Victoria College, Cobourg; lecturer on Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and Mathematics at Toronto, in the establishment where the professional teachers of the Upper Province are educated. These, and other scholastic employments, of Dr. Ormiston, will be related presently in the order of their succession. So far, I have told in what manner my attention was first turned upon this eminent Minister of the Gospel and public servant of Canada. He has recently retired from the official inspectorship of Grammar Schools, and from the visiting superintendency of the schools of Hamilton. The publication of his portrait and the present attempt at a biographical and moral portraiture, from his boyhood to the current time, have been suggested by the occasion of his relinquishing those public functions. Not being familiar with his pulpit ministrations, nor at all with his educational and other widely diversified lectures, which gave him prominence in Canada before the country or his name was known to me, I proceed to make a few descriptive sketches from information variously collected, but entirely reliable:

At the Castle Hill farm in the parish of Symington, Lanarkshire, Scotland, on the banks of the Clyde, under the shadow of Tintock hill, on the 23d of April, 1821, the child was born, who is now the Reverend Dr. William Ormiston. His father, Mr. Thomas Ormiston, rented the Castle Hill and Town Head farms. His mother's name before marriage was Margaret Smith. To her naturally vigorous intellect and to her intelligence acquired by reading and sound judgment, the son is indebted for much of those qualities which in larger and masculine form make him remarkable, even amongst remarkable men. There were other children, but of their number I have no information.

When William was in his tenth year, his father removed to a farm within the bosom of the Pentland Hills, at Habbie's Howe, near Edinburgh. There, amid the charming scenes of Allan Ramsay's 'Gentle Shepherd,' the boy went to school at the village of West Linton, or assisted in the minor labors upon the farm. There, amid the scenes where the persecuted Covenanters sought the refuge they did not find, whose memory is dearer to Scotsmen than even the charms of Ramsay's pastoral poetry, and inexpressibly more important to their descendants, for to them does Scotland owe much of her vigorous freedom, strength of intel-

lect, and independence of action, in alliance with England—(the distortion of Scottish history in the romances of Sir Walter Scott, to the contrary notwithstanding.)—amid some of the scenes which are hallowed forevermore in Scotland by the persecution of the Covenanters, the young boy's mind was trained and tutored in history and popular traditions by his mother.

In 1834, Mr. Thomas Ormiston with his family emigrated to Canada, and settled in the township of Darlington, about thirty miles east of Toronto. William spent four years on the farm, taking a man's share, though only a boy in age, in all the toil, the tear and wear of felling trees; in cross-cutting and rolling logs into piles; in burning the piles; digging, ploughing, harrowing, sowing, mowing, harvesting, threshing, and conveying produce to market; making or mending implements of work; repairing his boots or the harness of the horses at hours when others would have rested; yet all the while reading books and acquiring a knowledge of arithmetic, mathematics and Latin, so far as books could assist without a teacher.

One day in winter, when in his eighteenth year, he was cutting firewood in the 'bush,' his father conveying it home. Towards evening, during the absence of the sleigh, the young man sat down on a log, and fell into a mood of deep, intense, inspiring, thought. It was not discontent with hard toil but an aspiration to engage in higher work. The intellectual forces of his nature impelled him to form visions of other employment than wood-cutting and farm labor. He informed his father, who in turn consulted with the mother, and both agreed that William should go to school and college, and be educated for the pulpit; to effect which the father proposed to sell a portion of his land to meet the expenses. But to that proposition William firmly said, no; it would be unfair to the rest of the family; he had his plans formed and would work them out.

Without so much as a sixpence or a penny, at command, he went to the town of Whitby and opened a school. The present educational system did not then exist. He relied entirely on fees for his income. The school prospered; it was attended more largely than any other had been in that part of Canada. While teaching, he prepared himself for entering College, which he did in 1843, and took the degree of B. A. in Victoria College, Cobourg, in 1847. Mr. Ormiston filled a tutorship in that institution during all the time of his studies, and was elected to a Professorship, the duties of which he discharged for two years. In 1849 he was ordained to the ministry in connection with the Canadian branch of the Scottish United Presbyterian church. His first pastoral charge was in the Township of Clarke, and there he still pursued the acquisition of learning in classics, theology and science. In 1853, he removed to Toronto, where for the space of four years he was Mathematical Master, and Lecturer on Chemistry and Natural Philosophy in the Normal School—the Provincial institution in which teachers, male and female, are instructed and trained in the art of teaching; many of whose students, however, go into other professions. While thus employed in the Normal School he preached frequently, and from time to time lectured, as he had done in years before, on temperance and kindred moral subjects, through every town, and almost every village and township in Upper Canada. He had been a teetotaler from childhood. In 1855 this diligent and successful scholar was appointed Inspector of Grammar Schools, first for the whole of Canada West, but subsequently for half of that vast area. He held the inspectorship with the local superintendency of the public schools of Hamilton until recently, the pressure of other duties and delicacy of health compelling him to retire.

In 1857 Mr. Ormiston accepted a call, which he had previously declined, to be pastor of the Central Presbyterian congregation of Hamilton, soon after which the large church, which is now filled with his warmly attached hearers, was built. In 1860, he took the degree of Doctor in Divinity conferred on him by the University of New York. In 1862 he visited Britain for the first time since he left it as a boy, and since returning to Canada has given a series of lectures descriptive of his journeys to New York, to London, to Scotland, to places of personal and historical interest there and to the Swiss Alps. To say that such lectures were delivered by Dr. Ormiston, means that they were graphic and amusing; occasionally pathetic; in all their parts instructive and eloquent. He preached on several occasions in the British metropolis last year, and, since his return, has received a call to become pastor of the congregation in London, of

which the celebrated Alexander Fletcher was once minister; but, as might have been expected, has declined that call, and decided to remain in Canada. An extract from a speech delivered before the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, is given on page 258.

I would have it understood that it is of William Ormiston, the scholar, the practical, eloquent preacher of the Gospel, the self-reliant man that I write; not the Scotchman, nor the ministering member of a church whose distinctive element of ecclesiastical polity is a somewhat haughty assumption of superiority over Caesar and the things which are Caesar's. A minister and man less dogmatical, more tolerant of others, more genial and cosmopolitan, or larger in human sympathies and loftier in thought, word, and action than Dr. William Ormiston, does not breathe, nor utter the words of eternal life in any church or any land.

ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE.

'Whistler at the Plough.'

NOTICE.

The public will please beware of a smooth-faced young man calling himself T. Dodd, as we understand from letters in our possession, that he has been canvassing for the 'Canadian Illustrated News.' Dodd canvassed a few days for us in Toronto, and not liking the gentleman's manner of doing business we discharged him. Without our knowledge or consent he has taken money from people in the country, representing himself sometimes as an agent, and at other times proprietor of the 'Canadian Illustrated News.'

NOTICE TO CANVASSERS.

ALL parties heretofore canvassing for the Canadian Illustrated News, will please call at the office and settle up. The public are cautioned against subscribing, or paying money to any one for said paper, unless the name of the party soliciting such subscription appear in the paper as Agent, or have the written authority of the undersigned that he is a properly authorized Agent.

W. A. FERGUSON.

Hamilton, April 7th, 1863.

THE CANADIAN Illustrated News.

HAMILTON, APRIL 11, 1863.

MR. JOHN H. CAMERON AND MUNICIPAL REFORM.

Mr. Cameron has prepared and obtained a first reading for a Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act of Upper Canada. The bill is short and unpretentious in appearance. If it passes into law it will probably be because no one will consider it of sufficient importance to call for a vigorous opposition.

Sections 1 to 3, inclusive, prevent Municipalities from incurring a greater amount of debt than can be met by an annual tax of 25c on the dollar. Any Municipality now levying a higher rate than this is not permitted to increase the amount of its liabilities until its assessment is reduced within the limits named in these sections. Every bond or other security issued by a Municipality 'shall take priority and precedence according to the By-law under which it shall be issued.' Section Four is worth giving in full.

'No person shall be entitled to vote on any By-law to create a debt not payable within the year in which the By-law is passed, who is not a freeholder or a tenant for a term of years, who has agreed to pay taxes for the period of time over which the debt is made payable.'

By section 5 every elector who has the right to vote on any By-law to create a debt may do so in every ward of any Township, Town or Village in which he has property qualifying him to vote.

Mr. Cameron's remedy then for Municipal extravagance is partially to disfranchise the great majority of the present electors, and to give additional power to the favoured minority.

Those who argue in favour of this measure usually sum up with what they conceive to be a comprehensive and unanswerable proposition, viz: that the man who has no property himself should have no power to mortgage that of his neighbor. Now, this specious argument has just sufficient truth in it to make it dangerous. As applied to the individual relations of men it is quite true so far as it goes, its fallacy lies in not stating the whole truth, which is, that no man should have the power to mortgage his neighbors property, whether he possesses any of his own or not. But the principle enunciated by either of these propositions if applied to society as a body politic would produce a revolution, which the conservative mind of Mr. Cameron would contemplate with dismay.

We do not know that the argument which

we have been combating is that which Mr. Cameron himself will use in support of his extraordinary measure, nor can we conceive what he will substitute in its stead. He certainly cannot contend that freehold property and long leases confer on their possessors, either great intelligence or high moral worth, they may indeed indicate a certain mercantile shrewdness—a more than ordinary power to scent a good bargain at large range, or a thorough subordination of all the faculties to the accumulation of wealth, but that there is any necessary connection between them and the qualities which make a wise and prudent citizen, is a proposition not to be entertained for a moment.

Nor can it be maintained that the privileges which society confers on the man of property and wealth, are an insufficient reward for the toil and trouble which its accumulation has cost him. He leads a life of comfort, so far as physical necessities are concerned. The whole legislation of the country is in the hands of his own class. Those 'Social lies that warp us from the living truth,' all work in his favour. His broad acres and imposing edifices give him an influence and a power in the community which his natural abilities alone, could never confer. By the accident of his position he is a leader in politics, whether Municipal or Governmental. If then public affairs go wrong, if corruption fattens behind the scenes, if extravagance marks the expenditure of the people's money, we may be sure that the men of property and long leases are in the main responsible, either by sins of omission or commission.

But the property-holder is tied to the place where his property is located, while the non-property-holder may remove at pleasure and thus escape the burden of taxation. So he can; but can he do so without a sacrifice, as great, perhaps greater than, that which his wealthy neighbor suffers by the depreciation of his property? While, if he does not remove he must bear his share of the municipal expenses, unless indeed taxation in Canada is on a basis which political economists have not hitherto been able to discover.

There is yet another peg on which Mr. Cameron may possibly hang an argument in favor of his measure: that of expediency; not expediency in its loftier, nobler sense, but in that sense in which politicians are unfortunately too well acquainted with it.—As a condition to this, however, it would be necessary to show that the men whom it is proposed to disfranchise, have been alone, or mainly guilty of the errors which have led to such unfortunate results. But so far is this from the true state of the facts, that we have no hesitation in asserting that every one of the extravagant schemes which together have resulted in municipal embarrassment, were undertaken in the interest of property, were carried out by property-holders—who monopolized whatever profits accrued from them—and that the burden has been shared by all classes. It is not, of course, pretended, that the class whose cause we are defending are entirely free from blame; far from it. They listened too eagerly, and put too much faith in the promises of high wages and constant employment, in the event of certain debenture by-laws being passed. In the city of Hamilton, for instance, they were much to blame in allowing themselves to be misled by the Board of Trade, the City Council, and the then city member—S. Allan McNab—into supporting the Port Dover Railway grant. They were much to blame in following the example of their wealthy neighbors, who refused to support the present Mayor in his first praiseworthy stand—some years ago—to stay the tide of extravagance. But they were not to blame above others, nay, not up to levels of others. They were but the followers, the men of property were the leaders in the matter. Mr. Cameron proposes that the followers should be punished while the leaders are not only to go scot free but to be rewarded. Surely this is equity turned upside down.

Municipal reform is urgently required; of this there can be no question. But we have grave doubts of the efficacy of Acts of Parliament to bring it about. There should be more good sense and less bad whiskey to preside over the selection of Municipal representatives. There should be fewer axes to grind, both on the part of representatives and constituents.

If these reforms cannot be had, then all that legislative wisdom can do for us will be so much labor thrown away.

OMISSION.—We omitted to mention in our last week's issue that we were indebted to Messrs. Matthews & Anderson, Artists, King street east, Toronto, for Photographs of Skating Rink and prizes. Those gentlemen have attained a high degree of perfection in the art, judging from the pictures sent us.