

Messrs. Thompson and Cuthbertson were appointed to represent the Presbytery when the question of settling the relationship of Strathroy comes up before the meeting of the Synod. Mr. McRobie, on behalf of the Committee on the State of Religion, gave an excellent report, which was received. The Presbytery tendered their thanks to the committee, especially to the convener, for diligence in the matter, and instruct the convener to forward the same to the convener of the Synod Committee. The report of Sabbath school work was presented by Mr. McAlmon, which was received, and instructions were given to those parties who have not reported to send in their reports to Mr. McAlmon, with a view of having them forwarded to the convener of the Synod committee of Sabbath schools. Leave was granted to Camlachie and Parkhill to have calls moderated if necessary before the next ordinary meeting. Mr. Currie gave in the yearly report of the Home Mission Committee. Messrs. Duncan, Wells, and Currie were appointed a committee to draft a minute in reference to remits sent down and submit the same to the meeting in April. A complaint was laid on the table with reference to financial matters at Logierait. After hearing the case at length, it was referred to a committee consisting of Messrs. Currie, Cuthbertson, and A. S. Robertson, to confer with the parties and report in April. Reports were received from congregations in regard to holding missionary meetings, and the Presbytery expressed satisfaction therewith. The next ordinary meeting was appointed to be held at Sarnia, in St. Andrew's Church, on the third Tuesday in June, at three p.m.—GEORGE CUTHBERTSON, *Pres. Clerk*.

SYNODICAL CONFERENCE ON STATE OF RELIGION.

MR. EDITOR,—The Committee on the State of Religion of the Synod of Toronto and Kingston, in view of the expressed desire of many for more deliberate and systematic conference upon questions of Christian life and work connected with their department, and feeling the great practical difficulty of providing for this during the session of Synod, have, with the cordial co-operation of some of the most earnest and eminent brethren within the bounds, succeeded in arranging a programme which, by the blessing of God, it is believed will secure a highly interesting and profitable series of meetings for mutual counsel and edification within the twenty-four hours preceding the meeting of Synod in May. It is hoped the attendance of members of Synod and others will be large. *Those so purposing are requested to give intimation to the Billiting Committee at Guelph.* The programme will appear shortly.

W. M. ROGER,
Convener Com. S. of R.

Ashburn, March 12th, 1883.

THE FORMOSA MISSION.

Professor McLaren, Convener of the Foreign Mission Committee, has forwarded the following correspondence for publication. Readers will peruse it with deep and thankful interest:—

H. B. M.'S CONSULATE,
TAMSUI, Oct. 10th, 1882.

SIR,—I have been requested in writing by Mr. Li, one of the international agents at this port, to make the following communication to you:—

In view of the fact that by means of the Oxford College, which you have lately established here, you will spread education through this far off island, where the means of disseminating it are insufficient, and thereby earn the gratitude of the population, the local authorities would feel dissatisfied with themselves if they did not assist in the payment of the expenses of the College. Accordingly the Perfect has written to Mr. Li to say that he has received instructions from the Tamai to offer you yearly the sum of one hundred dollars as a contribution from the public funds towards the payment of the salaries of the College teachers.

Mr. Li wishes to get permission from you to make a personal (annual) visitation, and hold an examination of the scholars in conjunction with myself (or the Consul for the time being), and promises to give prizes of writing materials, books, etc., to those who have made most progress.

He also suggests that if you have failed to find a capable teacher of literature the local mandarins should procure for you the services of one of character and ability, in order to increase the success of the

College, and that, at any rate, they should do so next year.

A. HARTY, *Officiating Consul*.

Additional light is thrown on the character of the donation by Dr. Mackay's own letter, which is as follows:—

TAMSUI, Formosa, China.

Rev. Prof. McLaren, C.F.M.C.:

MY DEAR BRO.,—The above despatch speaks for itself. When the Consul sent it to me he added. "Never in my consular experience have I met anything on the part of Mandarins to be compared to this generous offer." Look at it from any standpoint. I submit that it is remarkable, and shows how the Chinese are really advancing. Whatever else these Mandarins thought or knew, one thing is certain, they knew that Oxford College was Christian, and in connection with a Christian mission. Indeed, the one who lives here knew the subjects taught, and yet note the above generous offer. Let some person suppose guile at the bottom, or suppose that all they cared for was a literary training. Still, I submit that the offer is generous, and shows a move in the right direction. As to guile, I ignore any such unjust imputation. I have known the mover in this matter for 10 (ten) years, and never found him guilty of any such thing. He has presented the students with paper, pens, ink, envelopes, etc., etc., and came yesterday in his sedan chair to visit me. G. L. MACKAY.

We understand that the Rev. Dr. Mackay, while thanking the Mandarin very cordially for his generous offer, has deemed it prudent to decline it. In so doing, we have no doubt, he has acted wisely. The fact that such a remarkable offer has been made is, however, full of encouragement.

The following letter of a later date is also very gratifying:

FORMOSA, Tamsui, Jan. 2nd, 1883.

Rev. Prof. McLaren, C.F.M.C.:

MY DEAR BRO.,—Another year is past forever. God has been most assuredly with us during its fleeting moments. Since our return to our beloved Formosa, I baptized 140 persons, including old and young. Let cold hearted professed Christians in Canada tell me if this work in Formosa is not of God. At *Sintiam*, when we observed the commemoration of our Saviour's dying love, fully 500 souls in and outside the chapel either sat or stood with profound solemnity. What an outburst of song when we closed by singing the hundredth Psalm in Chinese! I wouldn't give it for all the jaunty, theatrical performances in some churches by ungodly men and women, though their voices should be sweet enough to charm the devil.

At another town just when the converts were being seated around the Lord's table, two Sorcerers appeared in front of the chapel and summoned hundreds of devotees by beating gongs, etc. In a few minutes an angry mob pushed to and fro looking in at us. What think you? The converts took their places as coolly as going to their dinner table. I stood on the platform and announced the 32nd hymn of our collection, that famous song we used in days gone by, "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord," etc.

Almost unconsciously the converts were on their feet, and made the chapel ring and echo with praises to the God of our fathers. I thought of the covenants in the moors and glens of dear old Scotland. The mob stood completely baffled. A few moments more and men from the Yamen appeared and dispersed the crowd. We had a sweeter communion than if the enemy had not been aroused. "At evening time there shall be light." After all of that I nearly ended my poor labours in the mountains. Passing over a high range along a winding path a deadly, venomous serpent, the *Cobra di capello* with hooded head struck at me with incredible violence and just missed. Tall grass stood on each side of the path so that I did not see him at first. God reigns; Jesus lives; heaven is open; so no matter. Mrs. Mackay teaches every day in Oxford College.

G. L. MACKAY.

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XIII.

April 1, 1883.

SIMON THE SORCERER.

Acts viii. 14-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thy heart is not right in the sight of God."—Acts 8:21

NOTES.—Simon, called "Simon Magus"—that is, Simon the magician or sorcerer. He is said to have been of Gitton, a town of Samaria; probably educated at Alexandria; practised magic in Samaria; professed to believe at Philip's

preaching; rebuked by Peter. Some say he again opposed Peter at Rome, and was defied there; others that he killed himself. Samaria, a noted city of Palestine, about thirty-five miles north of Jerusalem, and about midway between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan. It was founded by Omri about 925 B.C.; twice besieged in vain by the Syrians (1 Kings 20: 1; 2 Kings 6: 24; 7: 20); captured by the king of Assyria (2 Kings 18: 9, 10), again taken by Hyrcanus 109 B.C.; improved by Herod; Josephus says the capital or chief city of Samaria was called Sebaste, at this time; it soon began to decay on the rise of Neapolis or Nablus, and is now only a mass of ruins. Jerusalem, the capital of the Hebrew nation, and known as the sacred city of the world. It is mentioned in Scripture as "Salem" (Gen. 14: 18); "Jehovah-jireh" (Gen. 22: 14); "Jebus" (Josh. 18: 28); "Jebus" (Judges 19: 10); "Zion" (1 Kings 8: 1); "City of David" (1 Kings 8: 1); "Ariel" (Isa. 29: 1); "City of God" (Ps. 46: 4); "City of the Great King" (Matt. 5: 35); "City of Judah" (2 Chron. 25: 28); "Holy City" (Neh. 11: 18); "City of Sodomities" (Isa. 33: 20); "Castle Zion" (1 Chron. 11: 5); symbolically Jerusalem is called the "City of Righteousness," "New Jerusalem," etc. It is situated eighteen miles west of the north end of the Dead Sea, and about thirty miles east of the Mediterranean Sea.

I. THE APOSTLES SENT DOWN.—Ver. 14.—The apostles heard the people of God always hear of conversions; the converts cannot keep it to themselves. They are like the prophet; Jer. 20: 9. Sent . . . Peter and John how often these two acted together! Yet each had a brother in the twelve.

Ver. 15.—That they might receive the Holy Ghost: they had been renewed in their hearts but perhaps the special gifts of the Spirit were not bestowed under Philip's hands, to show that the work could not be perfectly carried on independently of the apostles.

Ver. 16.—Fallen upon none of them: they had His renewing power, but not the gifts as bestowed on Pentecost.

Ver. 17.—Laid their hands on them: after the first pouring out of His power, the Holy Spirit chose to give His great gifts in connection with the laying on of the hands of the apostles. All men would understand that these gifts came from no other source than God, and they were in direct answer to prayer.

II. THE FALSE DISCIPLE.—Ver. 18.—When Simon saw: he would "wonder" at this, even more than at Philip's miracles. Greater than working miracles, was the bestowment of power by which miracles could be wrought. Offered them money: thought they were possessed of greater magical secrets than his own; and he would buy these, as perhaps he had bought secrets before. Shows he knew nothing of a proper change of heart. Origin of the term "simony"; i. e. buying positions in the Church.

Ver. 19.—Give me this power: no desire of glorifying God: but all self glory.

Ver. 20.—Thy money perish with thee: not so much a curse, or a prophecy, as a solemn declaration of his state. As if to say, "thy soul is in a perishing condition: and thy money (*keiron*, "silver," "silver") shall perish along with thyself." That the gift of God may be purchased: the gifts of the Spirit—the new birth, holiness, acceptance with God, meetness for heaven—can no more be purchased now, with money, influence, or human merit, than his special gifts and powers could be purchased than by Simon's ill-gotten money.

Ver. 21.—Neither part nor lot: thou art not God's child, and hast neither part nor lot: two words to emphasize the same thought, in their blessings. In this matter [lit. "this word"] not merely meaning "in this matter of special gifts;" but in this salvation—in this family connection with God and Christ.

Ver. 22.—Repent therefore: this shows that Peter had not judiciously pronounced on his case in verse 20. If, however, we identify this man (and no doubt correctly) with the wicked Simon mentioned by Josephus, he never repented, but lived and died a great opposer of Christianity. The thought of thine heart: to be "right before God" (ver. 21, *Reversion*), therefore, the heart must first be cleansed and purified.

Ver. 23.—Gall of bitterness: referring to his enmity of heart toward holiness and the Spirit of God. Bond of iniquity refers to the fetters and chains with which sin had bound him. How many are like him!

Ver. 24.—Pray ye . . . for me: we see no anxiety for cleansing from sin, but only to escape punishment; and he vainly turned to Peter (as many now do to Peter's pretended successor), for a mediator, instead of Christ. See I. Tim. 2: 5.

Ver. 25.—When they had testified and preached it would seem that Peter and John stayed some time there. How long, we know not. Preached in many villages: John once wished to call down fire from heaven on one of these villages (Luke 9: 54), and now he goes there, the apostle of love, with offers of salvation from his Lord! The Samaritans: though of mixed stock (II Kings 17: 24), they claimed the God of the patriarchs (John 4: 12), and probably had fewer superstitions than the Jews proper. They did not admire Judaism, but they welcomed Christianity.

PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

1. To hear that a work of grace is going on excites the liveliest interest of believers. A believing army officer in India, got six month's "leave," and sailed for England with his two daughters to get them into Moody's meetings in London. And the girls were both converted.

2. Have we received the HOLY GHOST, in all the fullness in which he offers Himself to us? Think! Answer! (Eph. 5: 3.)

3. The servants of our God are always safe in beseeching men to repent. (Ver. 22.)

4. Simon might, like Saul of Tarsus, have become a leader in Christ's cause. He chose the service of Satan. How many make the wretched choice still.