

The Presbyterian Review.

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THURSDAY, APRIL 22ND, 1886.

WHITHER ARE WE DRIFTING?

WITH the Saturday paper in our hand, giving in its advertising columns a list of the attractions provided for the church going public in this city on the Lord's Day, we ask the question, "Whither are we drifting?" At the Pavilion we observe a series of sermons is being delivered on "Doubtful Things"; and while the preacher is busy straining out gnats for the benefit of his hearers, they are drawn in crowds to witness his feats in swallowing camels. While he is busy rebuking card-playing, dancing and theatre going, and thinks, doubtless, he is doing good, he is not only tolerating, but zealously encouraging, the turning of the worship of God into an opportunity for the display of the musical gifts of operatic singers, and is pleased to find hearers willing to endure the sermon for the sake of hearing Madame So-and-so sing her solo. Special soloists are certainly a great attraction; but they cost money. They must be well advertised, and the sermon thrown in must be of a kind to draw the people of musical tastes.

But it is not at the Pavilion only that this sort of thing is going on. At another church, on a recent Sabbath, the minister was preaching on "Home," doubtless by arrangement with the soloist, and stopping in the midst of his sermon, he gave out that he was tired, and asked, by way of refreshment, if any of the choir could sing them something about home. A young lady came forward and sang the old secular song, "Home, Sweet Home." At still another church, the papers announced that the Silver Quartette will sing plantation melodies on the Sabbath evening! This musical craze is an importation from the United States, whence originates so much that is flashy and sensational. What happened at one of Sam Jones's farewell meetings in Chicago illustrates the struggles of one sensation to gain the mastery over another sensation, and shows how futile is the attempt to make anything sensational in religious services contribute to proper devotional feeling and true worship. A large crowd gathered, and the proceedings opened with a solo on the cornet by a young lady who played the tune, "The Sweet By and By," so sweetly that the crowd vociferously demanded an encore, and for some considerable time refused to allow the meeting to go on. What did that crowd care for Sam Jones's farewell in comparison with the young woman with the cornet? Absolutely nothing. They were in quest of sensation and amusement, and they showed their preference as if at a theatre or music-hall. And all this in the name of religion! We protest in the name of all who love the truth in sincerity, against this offering of unhallowed fire. We prophesy that Ichabod will very soon be written upon the doors of the churches that seek to attract crowds by such miserable artifices.

The question, Whither are we drifting? must be asked not merely in reference to the accessories of public worship, but with regard also to the thing preached. Again, let us look at the Saturday paper and read the announcements of the subjects to be treated on the Sabbath. In many cases we find they are grotesque and sensational. The old, old story of the love of Jesus seems to have lost its charm, and so there must be something more "spicy" for a religious public that seems to have of late acquired a depraved taste. There are some poor weaklings in our midst who strive to imitate Talmage, but, having nothing of his genius, succeed in imitating only what is within their reach—his follies—and so make but a sorry figure, but none the less dishonouring to the gospel. There are others who pose as preachers to the times, and others, again, who seem to care little what they say or do in the pulpit so long as they can draw a crowd, who will not leave before a "silver collection" is taken up. Doubtless the Apostle of the Anglo-Israel Theory deserves, in the opinion of these people, the credit of bringing about this state of things in Toronto, but even "the prophet" is really becoming tame beside some of his competitors. The ministers who thus degrade the pulpit are evidently not aware of the crimes

against pure and undefiled religion and the simple gospel of Christ they are committing, but we venture again to predict that their eyes will be opened one day to the mischief they are working. They are creating an appetite that grows by what it feeds upon. Soon their invention will tire and their themes will wear out, and then some new orator will appear, who, going further than they are ready to go, will draw the crowd and leave them desolate. In the meantime, as Milton describes it:—

The hungry sheep look up and are not fed, But swollen with wind and the rank mist they draw, Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread.

That our own churches in Toronto have thus far kept free from sensationalism is a cause of thankfulness. We believe that they are, every one, growing more solidly, and enjoying greater prosperity, both spiritually and temporally, than those churches which are making frantic efforts to keep themselves before the public. No Presbyterian minister of this city, we are glad to say, announces his subjects or advertises a special musical programme. But in the midst of such influences as we have described we may, unless we take great heed to our ways, possibly fall into the very errors we are reproving.

But we fear we are not at the end of this drifting. Sam Jones, we hear, is coming. If he treats Toronto audiences to the same high spiced pabulum as he gave to the people of Chicago, the religious public of Toronto will be still further demoralized. We do not doubt his power in reaching a certain class; but we deny the truth of his theory that you must be vulgar to reach the vulgar, and make a travesty of the gospel to get sinners to listen to it. Personally, and in this we know we are not singular, we do not want to listen to a sermon on the Prodigal Son which provokes laughter at every sentence, nor to hear descriptions of the "German" which are openly and shamefully lewd. The Apostle Paul preached the gospel in Corinth to the most wicked and lascivious people of the ancient world, but he adopted no such methods as these American evangelists. He was determined to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The very idea of reverence for holy things is in danger of being driven out from amongst us, and the coming of Sam Jones will not help us to recover it. It seems to be forgotten that holiness becomes God's house, and that He is as jealous of His own honour now as when He punished with instant death the man who touched with unhallowed hands the ark. Let us, then, who have been trained to worship reverently and with godly fear, keep ourselves free from these snares, and if our ark can be steadied only by operatic singers and sensational preachers, let it fall and let our ministers take to some honourable calling in which they can honestly glorify God, and prepare to enjoy Him forever.

CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION IN THE PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS.

PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES—DIFFERENCES OF CHRISTIANS.

IT is not to be denied that there are serious practical difficulties in the way of the communication of Christian instruction in the provincial schools. Many who are fully satisfied that it is open to no objection on the ground of principle, appear to have settled down, some of them with no little regret, in the conclusion, that instruction in the facts and distinctive principles of Christianity by our public teachers is impracticable, and that effort made with a view to the attainment of what they believe to be in a high degree desirable is doomed to failure. We cannot, however, sympathize with those who take this hopeless view. We cannot think that any of the practical difficulties that we have reference to, and whose weight we are not disposed to underrate, is of such a nature as to be insuperable. It is well to bear in mind that all good work is uphill work, and that we shall do little good, if we are not prepared to confront difficulties that we find in the way of the attainment of important ends. If, keeping this in mind, we are not disposed to magnify the difficulties connected with the subject under consideration, and not unwilling to grapple with them, we shall probably find that they are insuperable only to those who shrink from assailing them.

In referring to the difficulties in the way of Bible instruction in our schools, we take up first that which presents itself in connexion with the differences of Christians. We refer to their differing among themselves in the views they have of the teachings of Scripture. This difficulty may be said to be nearest to the objections that have been already dealt with. In dealing with it, we set aside at once our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens, for whose education the law makes separate provision. It seems to be all but conclusively settled that there can be no co-operation between them and Protestants in the matter of primary education, their ecclesiastical authorities insisting on having the control of it, and on introducing their own distinctive religious tenets. Whatever may be thought of the provision that has been made to meet their views, there can be no doubt that it reduces to comparatively small dimensions a difficulty that would otherwise be very formidable. Though the provision does not include the High Schools, they have little reason to complain. If more than enough has not been done for them already, it is, at least, certain that far more has been done than we can ever expect their co-religionists to do for ours, where the position of the parties is reversed. They ought, we think, to be well content with perfect freedom to have their own higher education in accordance with their own views at their own

expense, if they are not satisfied, as a minority, to take advantage of a conscience clause.

Setting aside the Roman Catholics, we venture to say that the differences among Protestants present no very great difficulty. Adding together the four or five leading Protestant denominations—Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, (Pedobaptists and Antipedobaptists), there is not much left—probably not five per cent. of the Christian profession of the province. And, unless we are greatly mistaken, there are very few belonging to any one of these denominations who would object to their children receiving Christian instruction from a teacher, on the ground of his belonging to another of them. Nor would an intelligent and judicious teacher of any of these denominations find it in the least difficult to impart instruction in all essential Christian principles, doctrinal and practical, without bringing forward the distinctive tenets of his own denomination. Of the more than four hundred propositions said to be contained in the Shorter Catechism of Presbyterians, there are probably not more than half a dozen that these denominations do not unite in assenting to.

A great deal too much is made of sectarianism. It is confessedly an evil thing; but a man is not stigmatized as sectarian because he is "fully persuaded in his own mind," in relation to the distinctive views of his own denomination. And we need not hesitate to say that a teacher's decided and intelligent attachment to his own branch of the Christian Church, while it does not disqualify him for the work of religious instruction, is, in reality, a most important security to the Christian public, in connection with what, we apprehend, constitutes the greatest difficulty of all in securing for Christian instruction its due place in our schools. The great difficulty, so far as we can see, lies in the want of sympathy, on the part of teachers, with the teachings of the Bible. Let us have teachers who really value the Word of God, and it will be a small matter what branch of the Church they are in connexion with. That a teacher is firmly attached to his own denomination will, instead of being a reason for distrusting him, be one of the best guarantees of his Christian principles. No doubt sectarianism or bigotry would be justly regarded as a disqualification. But these, we believe, are not times in which we have much to fear in that direction. And, for our own part, we would greatly prefer the man whose decided attachment to his own denomination might expose him to the charge of bigotry, to the man who under the vaunt of liberality, is really a religious indifferent, believing in nothing.

The Toronto correspondent of the Montreal Witness in the course of the year presents his views upon a great variety of political, municipal and other topics, and shows especially a very keen interest in educational affairs. It is to be regretted that sometimes he fails to reflect the prevailing opinion of the city, and writes more as a partisan or one who has some private purpose to serve. Notwithstanding his generally commendatory tone regarding our seats of learning, it may well be doubted if the following excerpt from his letter of the 10th inst. will give the readers of the Witness a correct idea of the kind of work Knox College is doing, or presents on the whole such a picture as the friends of Knox would like to see:

"College commencements have already begun, and they will keep on at intervals till June. The first of closing meetings this year was that of Knox College, which took place this week. The graduating class was up to the average in number and proficiency, but it was not what the friends of Knox would like to see. What the cause of the college's unpopularity may be I do not pretend to say, but the complaints about it are widespread, and if the college is not to lose its high relative position something must soon be done for it. One great need is enlargement of the teaching staff, and this means more revenue. If a thoroughly earnest and vigorous effort were made by the alumni of the institution, an important addition might be made to the capital of the endowment, but the Church has so many schemes before the people, each of which has its energetic supporters, that there is little chance of anything worth while being done at present in that line."

This thrust at the professoriate and graduating class of Knox College is clearly a stab from behind. It is very probable that the friends of Knox College would like to see a more numerous and proficient graduating class than there is this year, though it is an undeniable fact that this year the quantity is larger than ever before, and, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, the quality certainly not inferior to the work turned out at any time by Knox herself, or any other theological college in the Dominion. We venture to think that the graduating class this year is exceptionally well trained and well furnished, and as such likely to add much real strength to the pulpit and the pastorate of the Church. It is certainly news to the people of Toronto that Knox is at a stand-still. It is true there is not in the professoriate a Robertson Smith, or Professor Witherow of Southern fame, nor others of the "advanced" school, nor are the students much given to airing heterodox notions, but along the old lines laid down by the fathers of the Church there is unmistakable progress. In Knox, as in every other educational institution, there is, of course, room for improvement, but to hint that the authorities of Knox and her alumni are inert and undesirous of advancing is a gross calumny. We are sorry to see emanating from Toronto such an untruthful notice of Knox College in a newspaper which, though no longer under the control of Presbyterians, has still a wide circulation amongst them. In its changed relations the Witness may not feel any special interest or pride in our seats of learning, but, at any rate, if it desires to please a portion of its patrons, it would do well to be on its guard against accepting without a grain of

salt the estimate of a correspondent respecting them who has evidently original sources of information within his reach, but for some mysterious reason prefers to be as disparaging as he is incorrect.

THE elections to the Senate of Toronto University made by the members of Convocation, promise this year to be of more than ordinary interest. There are altogether seven candidates in the field for the three vacancies. The proposal made to have an increase in the number of senators elected by Convocation is leading to much discussion, and judging from letters in the daily papers, there is a decided difference of opinion on this subject amongst leading university men. The attitude of the *Varsity* towards the affiliated colleges is also calculated to stir up additional interest at this juncture, and is as far as possible from what might fairly be expected from a college journal which professes to express the consensus of opinion on important questions. Theoretically, an increase of graduate representation with a view to strengthen the university is to be commended. But if such an increase is sought for the purpose of adding strength to the hands of those whose views are represented by the *Varsity*, or who have any other selfish end in view, then we are sure that the large number of graduates whose interest is also identified with the affiliated colleges, will very justly oppose increase of such representation. It is surely a fair and prudent thing to have rallied closely round the Provincial University, not only its own graduates, by a good representation of their number on the senate, but also the affiliated colleges with the immense strength they must undoubtedly bring to the university. We would especially warn those graduates who may have interest in Knox College to be careful in regard to their action in voting at the approaching elections. We would not venture to advise in regard to the candidates for whom the vote should be cast, but we feel convinced that those who identify themselves with the *Varsity's* position in regard to the affiliated colleges should be left at home. Fair-minded men who might even favour increase of graduate representation, and at the same time rejoice in the accession of strength which the affiliated colleges afford the university, are the kind of men needed at this crisis.

OUR THEOLOGICAL HALLS.

PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE, MONTREAL.

CLOSING EXERCISES, CLASS LISTS, SCHOLARSHIPS, GRADUATES, ETC., ETC.

THE annual convocation and conferring of degrees of the Presbyterian College, took place, on the evening of the 7th inst., at the David Morrice Hall. It was attended by a very large and select audience of ladies and gentlemen. The chair was occupied by the Rev. Principal MacVicar, D.D., and on the platform were Mr. D. Morrice, Rev. L. H. Jordan, B.D., the senate and alumni, amongst whom were the Rev. Professors Cousinrat, Scrimger, Dey, N. MacNish, Currie, Campbell, J. Smyth, J. C. Murray, A. C. Hutchinson, McLaren, Darling and others. The Rev. Dr. Smyth opened the convocation with prayer, after which came the presentation of prizes, scholarships and medals, as follows:—

PRIZES.

Philosophical and Literary Society's prizes—Public speaking, Mr. A. S. Grant, B.A.; English essay, Mr. J. H. MacVicar, B.A.; French essay, Mr. S. Rondeau, B.A.; English reading, Mr. R. Johnston; French reading, Mr. J. Loda. Sacred music—First prize, second year only, Mr. G. J. A. Thompson, B.A.; second prize, all the years, Mr. N. Waddell. Ecclesiastical architecture—First prize, third year only, Mr. J. H. Graham, B.A.; second prize, all the years, Mr. A. Ogilvie, B.A. Sacred rhetoric—First prize, first and second years only, Mr. R. Johnston; second prize, all the years, Mr. F. H. Larkin.

SCHOLARSHIPS (SPECIAL).

University scholarships gained after the close of session, 1884-85—The Sir George Stephen, first year, Mr. H. N. Goff; the Stirling, second year, Mr. R. Johnston; the Drysdale, third year, Mr. J. Macdonald; the Slessor, fourth year, Mr. J. A. Macfarlane. French scholarships—The Hamilton (McNab Street), theological, Mr. S. Rondeau, B.A.; the Guelph (Chalmers' church), theological, Mr. A. B. Groulx, Mr. H. O. Lusselle; the Galt (Central church), literary, Mr. J. E. Cote; the College, literary, Mr. P. N. Cayer. Gaelic scholarships—The H. McLennan, senior, Mr. Murdoch Mackenzie; the K. Campbell, senior, Mr. D. A. McRae; the T. Z. Lefebvre, junior, Mr. M. McLennan; the D. McTaggart, junior, Mr. M. J. MacLeod. The Nor-West scholarship—Awarded to Mr. J. L. Hartgrave.

SCHOLARSHIPS (THEOLOGICAL AND GENERAL).

Pass work—The Greenhills, first year, Mr. R. Johnston; the Hallow, second year, Mr. G. J. A. Thompson, B.A.; the Hugh McKay, third year, Mr. J. H. Graham, B.A.; the James Robertson, fourth year, Mr. A. Ogilvie, B.A. Pass and Honour work—The Anderson, first year, Mr. M. McLennan; the John Redpath, first year, Mr. A. S. Grant, B.A.; the College, second year, Mr. S. Rondeau, B.A.; the Peter Redpath, second year, Mr. N. Waddell.

MEDALS.

Gold medal, the highest prize of the year for all work, pass and honour, awarded to Mr. J. H. Graham, B.A. Silver medal, second prize for the same, awarded to Mr. A. Ogilvie, B.A.

DEGREE OF D.D.

This was followed by the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Divinity upon the Rev. Narayan Sheshadri, of Poonah, India, and the first ever conferred in the college. It was announced that Mr. S. Rondeau and Mr. N. Waddell had passed the first examination of D.D.

VALEDICTORY.

The valedictory address was delivered by Mr. A. Currie, B.A. He said it was a solemn occasion, and one of vast importance. The familiar halls were to be left for the great field of labour. It was a responsible work they were going to engage in, but they had God's blessing to look to if it was faithfully done. In concluding, he said that it would be well if there were more professors in the college, and advised the putting up of a gymnasium for the students. Then followed the presentation of diplomas to the graduates of the year: Messrs. T. J. Barron, B.A.; A. Currie, B.A.; J. H. Graham, B.A.; D. H. Hodges, B.A.; MacLaren, D. A. MacLean, A. Ogilvie, B.A.; W. D. Roberts and Murray Watson, B.A. The Rev. L. H. Jordan then delivered a very interesting address, in which he congratulated the graduates on their success.