

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.

In the last number of the Presbyterian Quarterly there is a most suggestive article upon Doctrinal soundness in Teaching. In its opening sentences are some very just remarks upon the value of dogmatic study, especially as a preparation for the work of the ministry. The cry at present is for practical training. Let the teacher for the Sabbath School, and the student for the ministry be trained to win souls, and it will not much matter whether they are acquainted with the various forms of doctrinal teaching or not.

That sounds very wise. It finds a ready response in the minds of active men and women, whose business is to make the very best use of each moment. As a matter of fact, however, it is vicious teaching. Certainly there ought to be training in practical Christianity, but of what use is it to teach the impecunious youth what might be done with great wealth. Tell him how to secure wealth, and you will do him a favor.

The cry for practical training tends to produce superficial and weak Christianity, if it be followed. There could be no better illustration of this than is to be found in the Young People's Societies of the present day. In many of them the aim has been to do something, and attempts have been made to do what only strong men could hope to do. The result has been superficiality and disappointment. Quite true the ideal of the Society has been to produce a strong life; and much prayer has been urged that the members may be kept in close touch with the Source of all strength. But the religious life produced in it has been more a life of impressions than of conviction. The latter will never be reached till we go deeper; till we look long enough into the Word to see beneath the surface, and learn something of the richness of its doctrinal teachings.

It is well to be able to arrest the attention of the careless by skillful speech, and winning methods. But have you anything to offer them after their attention has been secured, anything that they will consider worth while? If you have not, they will turn from you in irritation because you have presumed to interrupt them in their ordinary life. The great things of the spiritual life do not lie upon the surface. They are hidden where only patient and hard study can reach them. But the mind that grasps one of them is forever enriched.

The Presbyterian Church in England has now 76,111 members, 321 congregations, and 166 391 sittings. The church with the largest income—over £9,000—is that in St. John's Wood, of which Dr. Monro Gibson is pastor. The next richest church is Sefton Park, Liverpool (Dr. Watson's).

It is said that no fewer than 250,000 books for the blind are borrowed annually from the free libraries in the United States.

CALLED UP HIGHER.

It is with sincere sorrow we learn of the death, at the post of duty in far Formosa, of Dr. George Leslie MacKay, the greatest missionary of recent years. During the past thirty years he accomplished a marvelous work. Of the successful result of his labors our contemporary, The Globe, says: "When Dr. MacKay arrived in Formosa he was virtually the pioneer of Christianity. On an island considerably less in area than Nova Scotia, were some two millions of people. The Chinese were the governing race, but in the southern portion were numerous small tribes of aboriginal savages, who carried on perpetual warfare with the Chinese. The sly and broken nature of the interior favored this state of affairs, and Japan, which acquired Formosa as one of the conditions of the treaty that followed on the conclusion of the Chino-Japanese war of a few years ago, has been busily employed in the effort at subjugation that had proved too big an undertaking for their predecessors.

How Dr. MacKay set at his work with dauntless courage, how he acquired the language and committed his acquirements to the pages of a philological book, how he established 60 or 70 churches and so transfused his personality into his operations that in the history of missions the northern part of Formosa is set down as being "in the hands of the Presbyterian Church of Canada" cannot be recorded in the space of a newspaper article. Enough to say that "MacKay of Formosa" became a watchword in the annals of the propagation of the gospel in heathen lands.

Dr. MacKay, of Chalmers Church, Woodstock, in his "Zorra Boys Abroad," gives the following interesting particulars of the life of the missionary whose death is so widely mourned:

So much has been said and written of this most famous of all the sons of Zorra, that it may be thought preposterous to attempt anything new. And yet one who has known him and his father's family intimately for half a century, who has prayed and preached, worked and worshipped, talked and travelled with him, may be pardoned if he seeks to bring out of the treasury of pleasant memories things new and old.

The character of this really wonderful man is unique and made up of apparently contradictory qualities. So simple and yet so sublime, so meditative and yet so active, so tenacious of purpose, yet so yielding in matters of detail, so humble before his Maker, yet so fearless before his fellowmen—all this makes a personality that Christian people in many lands have admired and even revered.

There are many interesting points of comparison between George Leslie MacKay and Charles Gordon, the hero of the Soudan. In both we see the same unflinching faith in divine sovereignty, the same unswerving loyalty to the Work of God and to prayer, the same heroic conception of duty, the same complete consecration to the cause espoused, the same disregard of personal comfort or discomfort, and the same intimate uplifting fellowship with the divine. MacKay was not less a soldier than Gordon, for though he has fought with spiritual weapons, he has been no less intrepid and heroic as a soldier of Jesus Christ.

The parentage of G. L. MacKay, like that of all Zorra boys, is of the plebeian order. He can truly say:

"My boast is not that I can trace my birth
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,
The sons of parents passed into the skies."

On the school playground, which was just the public road, G. L. MacKay was always a prominent figure. None could overmatch him in a footrace, or in a shinty game, and although it could not be said of him, as of Thomas Guthrie, that he was noted only for fun and fighting, yet, as some of his old schoolmates will remember, he sometimes showed that "the martial fires which thrilled his sires" were alive within him.

In the school room he was ambitious and generally stood "dux." On one occasion, when he was unfortunately obliged to relinquish this position in favor of his brother, he begged his brother not to report the fact at home.

He writes: "Before I reached the age of ten the ever-blessed Name was sweet and sacred in my ear." About this time the famous missionary, W. C. Burns, visited Woodstock and Zorra, proclaiming the Gospel of "free grace and dying love," and rousing the churches. His enthusiasm was contagious, and fired the boyish heart of G. L. MacKay, and from this time MacKay was in heart consecrated to the foreign field.

After this he entered Knox College, at the same time taking classes in the university. He completed his theological course in Princeton.

When about to leave home for the foreign field, his father, with the natural feeling of a parent's heart, said to him: "George, could you not get work enough at home?" "Father," was the prompt reply, "For years the words have been ringing in my ears 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.' Nothing more was said by the father. The mother was seen trying to hide her tears. Being remonstrated with, she replied, amid sobs: 'A ta an spiorad ge deimhin togarrach ach a ta an fheoil anmhunn' (the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.)

In 1871 he went forth as the missionary of the Canada Presbyterian church, scarcely knowing whither he went, as he received no more specific instructions than to proceed to some part of China.

After varied experiences on sea and land, he in March, 1872, first saw Tamsui and the dark green hills beyond, and there came to him a calm, clear, prophetic assurance—this is the land. He was not disobedient to the heavenly voice. How he learned the language from the Buffalo herd boys, so that in five months he was able to preach a sermon, his conflicts with the literati, the bitter persecutions he endured, his hairbreadth escapes, his many trials, his purpose of evangelizing the people through native converts, his method of educating the students and his converts, the wonderful success that ultimately crowned his labors—into these we cannot here enter. They are recorded in his book.

The Catholic Register, of Toronto, is to have Mr. P. F. Cronin as manager and editor. Our contemporary has always been well edited; and under its new management we are sure there will be no backward step taken. Mr. Cronin is possessed of ability and experience.