

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY.
No. XIII.

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FRIENDLY REPLY TO FRIENDLY CRITICISM.

If the writer of these sketches may be permitted the use of a *Becherism*, he will frankly confess that "if his foresight had been as good as his hindsight," he would have omitted one or two expressions in his notice of the rejection of the "American ministers" at Clinton, to which his friend Rev. Duncan McMillan takes exception. They were unnecessary to the full statement of the two facts—the rejection, and the consequent organization of a new Presbytery on the same territory—and they could as well have been left out. But, inasmuch as the expressions were made in good faith, and the writer now believes them to have been substantially true as well as just, he feels called upon to say a few words in defence of the orthodoxy of the ministers referred to, and in support of the opinion that the doctrinal differences between those afterwards known as "Old School" and "New School" Presbyterians, as between the members of the Presbytery of York and the "American ministers" on the Niagara Peninsula, were "more imaginary than real." This seems the more necessary because the usefulness of these historical articles depends almost entirely on their accuracy and impartiality.

"AMERICAN" OLD SCHOOL TESTIMONY.

Rev. A. W. Buell and Rev. Edwards Marsh received their theological education at the Seminary at Auburn, N.Y., and they preached no other theology than the theology taught in that institution by Dr. James Richards. In 1837, a convention was held at Auburn, with Dr. Richards in the chair, consisting of about two hundred representatives of churches afterwards connected with the New School Assembly. In 1868, a minority of the members of the Old School Assembly, under the lead of Dr. Charles Hodge, having filed a protest against the "terms of union" just agreed upon by both Assemblies, in which protest the old charges of New School heresies were repeated, a committee of which Rev. Dr. Shedd was chairman, and Rev. Dr. S. J. Prime was a member, reported an answer which was adopted as the testimony of this the highest court of the Old School Church. From that report, so adopted, the following extract is taken.

"The Auburn Convention held in 1837, under the influence and doctrinal guidance of that excellent and sound divine, the late Dr. Richards, specified sixteen doctrinal errors, which contain the very same latitudinarian and heretical tenets mentioned in the Protest, *repealed them in toto*, and set over against them sixteen 'true doctrines,' which embrace *all the fundamentals* of the Calvinistic creed. This Assembly regard the 'Auburn declaration' as an authoritative statement of the New School type of Calvinism," &c.

One of the articles of agreement for union, against which especially the protest was aimed, contained these words: "It is also understood that various methods of viewing, stating, explaining and illustrating the doctrines of the Confession, which do not impair the integrity of the Reformed or Calvinistic system, are to be freely allowed in the United Church, as they have hitherto been allowed in the separate Churches." The Old School Assembly, by the adoption of their committee's report, declared that they regarded the "Auburn declaration" as "indicating how far they [the New School Presbyterians] desire to go, and *how much liberty they wish* in regard to what the terms of union call 'the various modes of explaining, illustrating and stating' the Calvinistic faith." The Assembly also put on record its declaration that "The errors and heresies alleged in the Protest are combatted and refuted in the Theological Seminaries of the New School," and it might have been added "as they were combatted and refuted in the Auburn declaration, thirty-one years before."

It was in this matter of the different modes of "viewing, stating, explaining and illustrating the doctrines of the Confession" that the difficulty seems generally to have arisen. Rev. James Rogers says that, at the time of the application of Messrs. Buell and Marsh for admission to the Presbytery of York, "there was nothing said definitely in explanation of the difference of interpretation, but it *was known* that they endorsed the Hopkinsian doctrines, which were a mixture of Calvinism and Arminianism." It seems to this writer, in view of the orthodoxy of the Auburn

Seminary, as shewn by the highest Old School testimony, and of all the attending circumstances, that the theological opinions of the rejected ministers were not as well "known" as some honestly supposed, but that there was at Clinton, as there was throughout the American Union, before and after, a misunderstanding of expressions used by both parties, and that they were never really far apart. As different provincialisms sometimes make it difficult for two subjects of the same human government to fully understand each other in conversation, so loyal subjects of the King of kings, from locality of residence, or circumstances of education and association, may find in their provincialisms, a difficulty fully to comprehend each other's statements of the same great spiritual truths.

A BRITISH BORN AMERICAN'S EVIDENCE.

An illustration of this view, amounting nearly to direct testimony on the main question, has recently been published by Rev. H. A. Nelson, D.D., of Geneva, N.Y., one of the Union Committee representing the New School Assembly, in 1866-8. He says:

"About that time, I was on an Ohio River steamer, the good 'Botanica,' when her obliging captain introduced me to another Presbyterian minister, much my senior, who had come to our country ten years before. He was very kind, and cordial and sociable. He said, 'When I came to America I expected to find the New School Presbyterians quite lax in their theology, but after ten years of intercourse with brethren in both these Churches, I really do not see any important difference between them. I suppose, however, that there must have been much unsoundness in theology among the New School, in the beginning, or else I do not see how the disruption could be accounted for.' Not attempting to account for the disruption, I assured him of my belief that such candid observation as he had been making for ten years would have led him to the same conclusion, if it had been made during either of the two preceding decades. He expressed surprise at my remark, but most at last proceeded to inform me that he was quite familiar with the writings of Albert Barnes before coming to the United States. 'Have you read Mr. Barnes' Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans?' I asked. 'Yes,' he replied, 'I have read that and also Mr. Barnes' book on the Atonement; and I remember that Mr. Barnes and Dr. Hodge held essentially the same view of the atonement. Do not misunderstand me,' he took care to add, 'I do not say that Mr. Barnes has used the word *imputation* in what I deem its true historic sense; but, having read the writings of both men with the sincere desire to ascertain their real meaning, I undertake to say, that if they will both state their views in other terms than those which have got the flavour of controversy, they will state essentially the same view.'"

Good old Dr. Archibald Alexander once said to his class at Princeton. "Two persons who believe that the death of Christ was *vigorous*—that He died for us to save us from dying cannot differ much in their views of the atonement, and if they would but *define what they mean by the words they use*, they would probably find they more nearly agree than perhaps they thought."

AT ONE ON EFFECTUAL CALLING.

The occasion of Dr. Nelson's writing as above was the presence of Dr. A. A. Hodge, the present professor at Princeton, at one of the Geneva prayer meetings, when, providentially it would seem, the theme predestinated for discussion was the answer to Question 32 of the Shorter Catechism. Dr. Hodge discussed the subject of effectual calling in his usual lucid manner, as he would discuss it, as a professor, before his theological class. To his astonishment, Dr. Nelson found himself listening to what he had ever regarded clear New School interpretation of a doctrine in reference to which the schools were long in dispute. The simple fact was that these two representative men of the two former divisions in the Church, having, since the Union, forgotten "the terms which have the flavour of controversy," had come to speak the same Presbyterian language, and to understand each other's provincialisms when, "stating, explaining and illustrating" the common standards.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

In 1831, Rev. William F. Curry was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Lockport, N.Y., a bold, clear, logical, educated and earnest preacher, ever seeking and winning souls to Christ. At the earnest solicitation of Rev. Mr. Eastman, he took a recess from his pastorate and came over to assist in revival work in Canada. He did most of the preaching at meetings at Gainsborough, Louth and St. Catharines, and laboured successfully in other places. Resigning his charge at Lockport, in January 1832, he commenced missionary work on the Niagara Peninsula, in association with Messrs. Buell and Marsh and other American ministers, with whom he was in entire sympathy and accord, *doctrinally and otherwise*. In

July, 1832, he went to Grimsby with "a carriage load of American ministers," held a series of meetings,* and, at their close, organized a Church with sixteen members, ordained two elders, and, *with their official aid*, dispensed the Lord's Supper to the Church members present. He acted as pastor at Grimsby for some time, supplied a new church at Brantford for a few months in 1833, and continued in labours abundant in that region until May, 1835, when he accepted an appointment as Secretary and Agent of the Canada Education and Home Missionary Society, and took up his residence in Montreal. In his new field, he enjoyed the confidence and had the active co-operation of those two eminent divines, Rev. Archibald Henderson of St. Andrew's, and Rev. William Taylor of Montreal, who were officially related to the Society. No evidence remains that they ever doubted the soundness of their American brother, or questioned his method of "stating, explaining and illustrating the doctrines of the Confession." And yet Mr. C. was as thoroughly New School as were Messrs. Buell and Marsh, or even the chiefest of the New School leaders in the United States.

WHAT LIVING WITNESSES SAY.

Three of the active "American" associates of Messrs. Buell and Marsh in pioneer missionary labours and revival work in Canada are now living. Having carefully read the communication of "J. P." published in September, 1878, with the extracts quoted from the journal of Rev. William Proudfoot, each for himself has testified most emphatically that no such Arminian doctrines as therein represented were ever uttered in sermon, exhortation or prayer, in any meeting, regular or special, *held under Presbyterian auspices*, during their residence in Upper Canada. They affirm also, in substance, that the revival preaching of the American ministers in Canada in those days was not different in doctrine from the approved modern revival preaching to which the soundest Calvinistic divines made no objection when Messrs. Moody and Sankey were in Scotland. All of the American ministers referred to were educated men, and pastors or missionaries, not one of them belonging to the class stigmatized in quotations in J. P.'s article as "revival men." And the wild excitement and unsound teaching at meetings held by unlettered Methodist exhorters were quite as distasteful to them as they could be to Mr. Proudfoot himself, who, though honestly seeking to understand the whole subject, seems utterly to have failed to discriminate between them and the genuine work of *Presbyterian revivals*, the converts at which, for a whole generation, were the working force of many of the most active churches.

CANADA FREE CHURCH TESTIMONY.

At a meeting of the "Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Canada," held at Toronto in July, 1844, a committee before appointed to confer with a deputation from the "Niagara Presbytery of Upper Canada" in reference to union, made a report which contained the following emphatic language:—

"The Committee beg leave to report that, after much friendly communing and inquiry, as to the principles and procedure of the Presbytery, they are enabled to state that that body consists of seven ministers, having the charge of fifteen congregations; that they hold, in common with ourselves, the Westminster Confession of Faith as their standards; and as a Presbytery, maintain and uphold its doctrines in what is usually termed the Calvinistic sense, holding fast by the great cardinal doctrines of the Divine Sovereignty, the decrees of election, and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, as distinguished from the views which, on account of their extreme character, are usually styled Antinomian and Arminian."

Messrs. Buell and Marsh were not members of the Niagara Presbytery at the time this certificate was given, but their impress was upon it, and they certainly were not more American in feeling, or more New School in doctrine or practice, or in any way more unsound, than were Rev. Dr. Blanchard and Rev. Mr.

* This was the same "revival meeting" in reference to which "Rev. Mr. B." gave a "full account of the manner in which he acted," to Rev. William Proudfoot, December 11th, 1832, as appears by an extract from Mr. P.'s journal in the communication published by his son in THE PRESBYTERIAN of September 6th, 1878. The well-authenticated facts are not in accord with the impressions naturally left on the mind by reading the extract referred to. There was no church organization and there were no elders until after Mr. B. left, and the statement is now made on the authority of one of the original elders, now living, that neither then nor at any other time while American ministers officiated, were the elders "shut out" on any Presbyterian sacramental occasion in Grimsby. Other extracts from Mr. P.'s journal may be as conclusively answered, but not now.