

gether with due regard to the needs and demands of each separate department. There are other cases in which the advice of such a general committee might be valuable in the extreme, even to the separate committees, and be exceedingly important to the best interests of their work, but on these we cannot touch now. They will readily occur to the minds of the brethren. Finally, it may be said, in answer to many questions, that the overture does not especially contemplate the giving of any but advisory powers to the general committee. There is a general clause at the end of the overture, such as lawyers use at the end of certain documents in Chancery, under which the Assembly might, if it deemed advisable, delegate to this committee certain *executive* powers to deal with emergent cases arising, for instance, between meetings of Assembly. When Dr. Robertson explained to the Assembly recently how he had called Dr. Warden to assume the office rendered vacant by the death of Dr. Reid, it was quite evident that the majority in the Assembly felt that he had technically exceeded his authority, and they only condoned his action because all felt that he had done the best thing that could have been done in the interests of the Church. A less courageous man than Dr. Robertson, feeling that once the Assembly is dissolved its Moderator is *functus officio*, would have hesitated, and a hesitation allowing a vacancy in the agent's office to continue would have seriously affected the interests of the Church.

Other emergent cases might be quoted in which the existence of some executive power between meetings of Assemblies might be in the highest degree valuable in the interests of the Church, but whether the Assembly might give to the proposed general committee some such power, the overture does not definitely ask. Its approval by Presbyteries would be simply an approval of a committee with advisory powers, but the Assembly might consider the other part under the general clause.

R. G. MACBETH.

Winnipeg, August, 1896.

JOHN GALT.*

BY W. G. JORDAN, B.A.

These are two handsome volumes of Galt's stories now reissued by Messrs. Blackwood. "The Provost" was first published in 1822, and "The Last of the Lairds" in 1826. There was an edition of Galt's works by the same firm in 1866, and now in 1896 such of them as appear to be of greatest importance appear in a new and attractive dress. I cannot claim to be either a Scotchman or a Canadian, and therefore I do not feel any special shame, but simply a general literary ignorance in confessing that when these two volumes came to hand the name of John Galt was unknown to me. However, I am sorry to say that I have found people in the same ignorance who had not a like excuse. Galt ought to be known to Canadians as the father of Sir A. T. Galt, and on account of his connection with the Canada Company, while Scotchmen should honor him as one who has written Scotch stories that have lived for the greater part of a century and are still full of instruction. He may have been overshadowed by the great success and the world-wide fame of Sir Walter Scott, but that is no reason why he should be forgotten.

His biographer, Dr. Moir, also a writer of Scotch stories, closes the memoir ("Annals of the Parish," edition 1866) with these words: "The career of Galt is now closed, and in his latter years he might well sigh over the unwilling attitude of base mankind." But his is among the bright names of his country, and will stand out to after times as one of the landmarks of the age in which he lived. Then shall the wandering emigrants whom he located have become a flourishing nation, holding his name in

honour from generation to generation; and then it shall be found that his happier works are not only valuable chronicles of obsolete manners, but that they embalm the very idiom in which they are written." This is the language of love but it is not at all exaggeration. The name of Galt seems to be fixed pretty firmly into the history of Canada; and that in these days when we are flooded with Scotch stories it should be thought advisable to issue a new edition of Galt's works, is in itself a testimony to his literary worth. We need only think of the vast number of books which never reach a second edition to realize the significance of this latter fact. We cannot now attempt either a full memoir of Galt or an extensive review of his works, but considering his connection with Canada and his relation to the literary life of Scotland this short notice may not be out of place.

John Galt was born at Irvine in Ayrshire, May 2nd, 1779. He seems as a child to have been of a somewhat feeble and sensitive constitution, fond of stories and given to rhyming. His education consisted partly of private lessons received at home, and partly of schooling first at Irvine grammar school and afterwards at Greenock. As a young man he was placed in the Custom House at Greenock, and later entered the mercantile office of Messrs. J. Miller & Co. Although regular in his attendance at the desk, he devoted his leisure hours to antiquarian studies and literary efforts in prose and verse.

In 1804 he determined to try his fortunes in London and formed there a commercial connection which, through no fault of his, turned out very badly. After this we find him travelling on the continent, meeting with Lord Byron, and in various ways increasing his knowledge of life and literature. He considered many enterprises and finally settled down to a life of literary activity. His first great success seems to have been the "Ayrshire Lezatees," which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*; the scores of letters which composed this story gained great popularity, and were thought at first to be from the pen of "The Great Unknown." We are told that Mr. Blackwood at once saw and appreciated Mr. Galt's peculiar powers and prevailed upon him to work the rich original veins which he had opened. This led to the publication of "The Annals of the Parish," "The Provost," "Sir Andrew Wylie," and other works too numerous to mention.

In February, 1827, he writes from Quebec: "A copy of the 'Laird' having come to the castle from the New York publisher, Lady Dalhousie lent it to me." "It would seem by the New York papers that the work has taken there." And in August of the same year he writes from Guelph, U.C., and shows himself to be busy founding an academy, and doing many things of a practical nature. We must not attempt to discuss Galt's relations to the Canada Company and his work in this Province. Some think that, as a matter of course, a man of letters must be impractical, doomed to make a muddle of business and to fall in his management of men. According to his biographer, Galt made great exertions, and his energies were wisely directed for the benefit of settlers and the interests of the Company, but at last he fell a victim to disloyalty and intrigue. Mr. McTaggart, Superintendent of the Rideau Canal works, is quoted as saying: "Mr. Galt deserves great credit for the invention and management of the Company. In this he has shown a genius that is rarely excelled. He organized the whole management of business, and displayed all that tact and diplomacy which his superior talents qualify him for in such an eminent degree;" and so on at great length, and with varied illustrations. Mr. Crockett says: "Galt is describing his own antithesis, for he was no 'Michael Wiley,' but a man of hot temper, rough tongue and somewhat overbearing, rather than conciliatory disposition, as the directors of the Canada Company had reason to know." "Such scribbles were but 'bairn's plaiks' to a man who had subdued unmapped empires of virgin soil, and striven unashamed with wild Indians and wilder directors of Canada companies." From Mr. Crockett's man of hot temper, and directors wilder than Indians, what but confusion could arise? However, whatever may have been the exact state of the case, we cannot help a strong feeling of sorrow when we find this able man back again in London bankrupt and almost broken hearted. Before he left Guelph the inhabitants assembled and presented an address in recognition of his valuable services, signed by 144 heads of families. Ten years later, after much suffering, he died and was interred in the family grave within the new burying ground at Greenock. "After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

It is late in the day to review the writings of John Galt, but in connection with the republication of these two stories a few words may be said concerning his position in Scot-

tish literature. He was a voluminous writer; at the close of the second volume of his autobiography he gives a list of all that he can remember of his published works. Many of them are now forgotten, but a sufficient number survives to make the fortune, in a literary sense, of even an extraordinary writer of fiction. Mr. Crockett opens his introduction with the remark that "If Galt's critics did not assure him when he produced 'The Provost' that he was writing himself out, they were untrue to the ancient traditions of their calling." In this we suspect there is one word for Galt and two for Mr. Crockett; the critics do not occupy themselves much with Galt now, but some of them, rightly or wrongly, do think that Mr. Crockett is in danger of writing too fast to do justice to himself, and in this they at least pay Mr. Crockett the compliment of supposing him to have a lofty ideal of literature as a vocation.

Galt did not regard his writings as novels, and yet there are many of them that cannot be placed in any other class. "The Entail" is a powerful story; it is more than a sketch of Scottish life and character: in delineation of its principal personage it shows us the working of a master passion in a subtle style worthy of the greatest novelists. "The Annals of the Parish" and "The Provost" are no more novels than Mr. Watson's "Bonnie Briar Bush" is a novel. But it is difficult to say exactly what they are; they were not literal history, but they are stories true to life, they do not belong to the realms which Scott made so peculiarly his own; they have not the deep pathos and poetic insight of Barrie's "Wind in the Willows," and they have none of the "idealism" which lingers around some of Ian MacLaren's most attractive pictures. Galt may be described as a "realist" or "naturalist," but there is nothing coarse about his delineations of Scottish life. If there is not hovering around his scenes "the light which never was on sea or land," neither is there the false, artificial glare which is the chief attraction of so many modern stories. Galt's parish is not a collection of men of genius, critical, cynical or mystical, but a number of people of average abilities and of ordinary taste. Mr. Balwhidder the clergyman was appointed by the patron and forced upon the parish, but he gradually makes headway against difficulties and wins an influential position by his good judgment and "moderation" as well as his sober piety. He is a man for whom we must feel respect, though he does not kindle our spiritual enthusiasm. The story of his life, told by himself, brings before us a Scotch parish at the close of the last century, and shows in that small theatre the increasing conflict between the old and the new. While it is not a book that yields the highest inspiration, Galt's "Annals of the Parish" is well worth reading when so much of this kind of literature runs into "the falsehood of extremes." Scott's clergymen had been so unsatisfactory to Presbyterians that Micah Balwhidder—doctor as he was sometimes called, though not of that degree—"was thought to be an improvement; it is not likely that Dr. Langtry would call him 'saintly,' but there is in his character much that is noble and strong. If we wish to have a similar story told from the civic standpoint we need only turn to 'The Provost'—a book in which James Pawkie tells in short, simple chapters, how he got on in the world, serving his town and country at the same time as himself, careful not to do anything actually dishonest but not very sensitive on the question of perquisites. Here we have a "canny" Scotchman who, if he had been of Johnson's opinion that "the best prospect in Scotland was the high road to England," would probably have become Lord Mayor of London. He was content with a smaller sphere, but displays all the qualities of a "politic" statesman or cunning diplomatist. His story takes us back to the days of smuggling, the press gang, meal mobs and other things which belong to "the good old days." This a book of worldly wisdom, and James Pawkie is as wise as a serpent if not always as harmless as a dove. In reading his autobiography we long for higher principles and loftier ideals, but we have to admit that, as a man of the eighteenth century, he rendered efficient service to the community in which his lot was cast.

"The Last of the Lairds," is a story of a different order; it is more artificial and contains more of caricature and burlesque. There is still a sad attraction about the old laird, the last member of a decaying race, and even his discourses on political economy, though in danger of becoming wearisome, are, on the whole, amusing. We conclude then that in these days when so many attempts are made in current literature to portray Scottish life and character, those who have leisure for such studies may profitably read a few of the more important works of John Galt and consider his contributions to that great subject.

Teacher and Scholar.

BY REV. A. J. MARTIN, TORONTO.

Sept. 20 1896. } DESTRUCTIVE VICES. } Prov. xvi. 22-33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Prov. xvi. 25.

MEMORY VERSE.—Prov. xvi. 22-33.

CATECHISM.—Q. 81.

HOME READINGS.—M. Prov. xvi. 22-33.

T. James iii. 1-18. W. Matt. xii. 22-37. Th.

I. Prov. iii. 13-26. F. Prov. viii. 1-21. S. Prov. vii.

22-30. Sab. Prov. ix. 1-18.

What the "destructive vices" are which the International Lesson Committee discovered in this portion of the Word, does not appear very obvious yet undoubtedly a careful examination of the text will show that the root, at least, of all vice is faithfully warned against. One of the most striking things in that familiar chapter, the fifty-third of Isaiah, is the confession "we have turned every one to his own way"—a confession which indicates that the choice of *our own way* is the sum and substance of all wrong-doing. So here the same thought is wrought out. First of all, the right way is commended, then the wrong way is condemned and the right way again enforced.

I. The Right Way Commended and Enforced.—This way is summed up in a single word, the way of "understanding." When we recall the opening chapters of this book where the invitations of wisdom and folly are dwelt upon, and especially that wonderful characterization of wisdom given us in the eighth chapter, it helps us to understand what the wise man means here by "understanding." We read elsewhere that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom," so that the way of understanding is the way of God. We enter upon that way by surrendering ourselves to Him and henceforth learning wisdom from Him. The way which begins in the fear of the Lord, then, is the way of understanding. This way is commended because of the comfort and consolation the possession of "understanding" brings—it is a "well-spring of life unto him that hath it," while the folly of the fool is declared to prove a scourge to its possessor. The chief benefit dwelt upon is the effect which "understanding" will have upon our words, causing them to be pleasant, because springing from a heart and lips filled with heavenly wisdom; words such as these cannot put prove a help to both body and soul. Then passing along to the 31st verse we find other benefits promised as springing from the way of understanding. There is length of days—"The hoary head is a crown of glory—it shall be found in the way of righteousness." How often the wise man insists upon the fact that bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. There is the attainment of a character truly great: "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city," and best of all, there is the assurance of the overruling providence of God watching over us, so that even the whole disposing of the lot is of the Lord. Surely there is a strong case made out for the "way of understanding."

II. The Wrong Way Condemned.—But though the advantages of the right way seem so obvious, it is not the way which seemeth good unto a man. "We love to choose and see the way"—and, alas, the end thereof is the ways of death. To "our own way" our appetites urge us. This seems to be the force of verse 26. "The desire of him that laboreth, laboreth for himself" (i. e. for self-gratification), "his mouth craveth it of him," like the mouth of a hungry man for food. Yet the end is "the ways of death." For note the downward progress—the ungodly man, the froward man, the violent man, the man determined to bring evil to pass (meditation and lips compressed with determination). The ungodly man loves evil for its own sake, but his evil is self-contained, so to speak. The froward man lets his own evil actions work harm to others. It is worthy of note that again it is the influence of the wrong way, upon our words which is dwelt upon. Let us not forget the words of One who said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words shalt thou be condemned." The violent man goes a step farther and entices others to do evil, leading them into a "way which is not good." But the climax is reached when a man is described as so wholly given over to wrong-doing that he "shuts his eyes to devise froward things," and "compressing his lips" brings evil to pass. There is no promise in this way. The end thereof is the ways of death, no hoary head, no self-subjugation, no enjoyment of the watchful care of the Eternal. Who of us would not choose the "way of understanding" rather than "the way which seemeth right to ourselves?" Yet remember, that just because the wrong way does so appeal to the natural heart, we have need of God's grace else we shall never be found walking in the right way, the way that leadeth upward to God, rather than downward to death. Let us earnestly seek that grace, since it will never be denied to any who seek with all his heart.

* "The Provost" and "The Last of the Lairds" by John Galt. Published by Wm. Blackwood & Sons. With introduction by S. R. Crockett.