

THE REV. ROBERT IRVINE.

In our last we briefly noticed the translation, to Toronto, of Mr. Irvine, from St. John, New Brunswick. Our limits precluded the insertion of the following letter, from "AN ELDER of the Reformed Presbyterian Church," which we copy out of the *Halifax Presbyterian Witness*:

Mr. Irvine, we are happy to say, is labouring with acceptance, in this city. His congregation have procured an eligible site for a church, and will soon take steps for its erection.

To the Editor of the *Presbyterian Witness*.
ST. JOHN, N. B., May 31st., 1852.

DEAR SIR,—

It is with extreme regret that I inform you that the connection heretofore existing between the Rev. Robert Irvine, Minister of the St. John Presbyterian Church in this city, and his congregation, is dissolved. Although aware that such a step had for some time been in contemplation, yet I had hoped that he might have seen it to consist with his duty, to change his purpose. In this, however, I was disappointed. The Presbytery met on Friday the 25th inst., for the purpose of presenting him with a Call to Toronto, which he accepted, and seldom, if ever, in this city, was there such a large assemblage of people congregated together at a Presbytery. The whole proceedings were marked with the utmost decorum, while regret and sorrow were visible on almost every countenance, but particularly on those of his own congregation to whom he has become greatly endeared by eight years' faithful and indefatigable labour, not only in his public ministrations in the sanctuary, but also in the discharge of the many kind offices (too frequently neglected but) inseparable from the solemn relation existing between a faithful minister and his people.—It is not too much to say, that probably no minister was ever more endeared to a people, than the Rev. Robert Irvine was to the people of his charge. In his removal from this city, Presbyterianism, yea the cause of universal truth, has lost a fearless and efficient advocate. His manly, candid, and faithful exposure of errors during his residence in this city, has (as might be expected) procured for him a share of that ire and wicked opposition which fell largely to the lot of his Divine Master—while his clear, lucid, and talented advocacy of the truth under all circumstances, has endeared him to every lover of truth and of right principles. An incontrovertible evidence of his moral worth, is furnished, by the universal esteem in which he is held in the best and most enlightened circles of society, while, by his kind and frank intercourse with the very humblest of his own flock, he has lived, and will long live in their hearts warmest affections; this being the case, you will not think it strange to be informed that a Petition, bearing six hundred and ninety-four signatures, was presented to the Presbytery by his congregation, praying for the continuation of his ministrations amongst them. I do most sincerely sympathize with his congregation.—I fear that it will be long before a man is found who will fill his place in every respect—for he is emphatically a working man—Sabbath-Schools—Bible Class—visiting the sick—week-day preaching, &c., all had his unremitting attention in their proper seasons, without suffering one duty to jostle out another, and the fruits of these incessant labours are abundantly evident. In 1844, the Sabbath-School connected with the congregation, numbered only about 27 children—now it has increased to upwards of 400 pupils, and above 50 Teachers. At that time, the Bible Class did not exceed 12 Adults, now from 120 to 130 are in regular attendance.

In conclusion, permit me to say, that this sincere and merited Tribute to his value as a minister of Christ, and as a member of society, is from the pen of one who is neither a member of

his Church nor of his Presbytery, and would be cheerfully endorsed by hundreds who have no ecclesiastical connection with him.

DR. RAFFLES' EXPERIENCE IN CONTROVERSY.

In his address in the English Congregational Union, setting forth the necessity of personal efforts to continue infidelity, Dr. Raffle relates an item of his own experience. He says:

"I quite agree with my friend, Dr. Massie, as to the desirableness of entering the field of controversy with these persons. But unless a man has some tact and skill and ready wit, unless he can give a Roland for an Oliver, he had better leave it alone. Some years ago, while a Universalist was giving a course of lectures in Liverpool, he (the lecturer) tried to prove that there was no Devil, no Trinity, no Divinity of Christ, no atonement, and in short, nothing which the Bible says there is.

"One morning after he had been delivering one of these lectures, I happened to be in a stage coach, going to a town some distance off, to speak at a Bible meeting. I was alone in the coach for a little while; presently three young men entered and took their seats. One of them was a hard-mouthed youth, who spoke in a strong, rough tone of voice, and laid down the law with great authority. His companions seemed to look upon him with great respect, and pay much deference to his opinions. We had not proceeded far, when he said, 'Did you hear such an one last night?' 'No,' said one of his companions, 'what was he preaching about?' 'Oh, he did for the devil in grand style.' 'Did for the devil?' said the young man, 'how do you mean?'

'Why, he showed there was no devil, to be sure.' 'Ah,' said one, 'but I think that's sooner said than done.' 'What, do you believe in the devil?' asked the first speaker. The young man thus questioned, looked at me in amazement, and then at his companions, and said, 'What, don't we all believe in the devil?' 'No,' said the confident young man, 'I don't believe in the devil, or any such stuff; neither does any man who pretends to a grain of reason or common sense; I believe only in a wise and powerful God Almighty.'

"Well, thinks I to myself, here am I among three young men; and I sit still and say nothing; I certainly must speak. Take care what you are about, thinks I to myself; such fellows as these are not to be trifled with; if you don't mind they will trip you up, and it will be worse for the cause you wish to serve. Whilst I was thus casting about in my mind, I thought my time for speaking had gone by, and my conscience condemned me. I determined, however, that if the subject should be started again, come what would, I would cast myself on the Divine guidance and direction—for I felt it was one of the cases in which I might do so—and put in a word.

"Well, sure enough, I did not wait long for an opportunity. A reference was made to the Bible, when the remark was again heard, 'I don't believe in the devil, hell torments, nor any such stuff, nor do any men who pretend to a grain of reason or common sense.' I looked at him and said, 'Sir, I pretend to a grain of reason and common sense, and yet I do believe in the existence of the devil, or Satan. I believe that there is a place of punishment for the wicked, and that punishment will be eternal; now, sir, I call upon you as a gentleman, no doubt possessing many grains of reason and common sense, to say why you do not believe these things?'

"I thus threw the *onus probandi* upon him.—His friends looked mighty pleased, and seemed greatly to enjoy the idea of the coming conflict. He did not seem quite so well satisfied, but took the measure of me from top to toe, and seemed revolving the matter in his mind. At length he said, 'why, sir, I don't believe it, because it is ut-

terly contrary to reason and common sense.'—'But,' said I, 'that is no argument, remember; do you believe the Bible?' 'Yes, sir, I do; I am not a Deist.' 'I am very glad to hear you say so; now we have some grounds to go upon. Is there such a word in the Bible as devil and Satan?' 'Yes sir.' 'And pray, sir, what do those words mean?' He did not like them at all, but presently said, 'They mean a great many things.' 'Then it will be easy for you to tell me one that comes first to mind.' He looked very blank; at last he said 'The words very often mean the grave.' 'Grave,' said I, 'we'll try it, sir. In the Book of Job you read, 'There was a day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and the grave came also among them.' He was very grave, indeed, and his companions roared with laughter. 'It does not mean grave there,' said he. 'Well, as you have been rather unsuccessful at first, you had better try again.' 'It sometimes means an evil principle within us,' he replied. He is coming nearer to the mark now, thought I; and I said, 'Well we'll try that. You read in the Gospel by Matthew, that our blessed Lord was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the evil principle within him. Do you believe that Jesus Christ had an evil principle within him, such as you and I have, sir?' 'No, sir, I don't.' 'Then that won't do; give me another.' But he was not able to stand that; and he looked at me as if he would have murdered me, and roared out 'I did not speak to you, sir.' I told him that he spoke to every man who had a grain of reason and common sense, and appealed to his friends whether I had a right to claim that character; and amid great laughter they declared it was evident I had too many grains for him. And there we sat till we had finished the argument.

This suffices as an illustration of a practical mode of dealing with such men. Almost everything, under God, depends upon a wise and judicious commencement; and I believe that ninety-nine per cent of your infidelity is like this young man's, and that one breath of Scripture and common sense will blow it all away."

THE UNCONVERTED.

An impenitent man cannot, by an act of his will, change his own heart. But he is capable of thinking of his condition and prospects as a lost sinner; of his ingratitude and criminality in having lived in a course of rebellion against God, whose laws are all reasonable, all holy, just, and good; who has been a Benefactor to him all his days. He can think of the merciful interposition of Jesus Christ to save the lost, and his own guilt in rejecting him, and despising the tender invitations and solemn warnings of the Gospel. He can learn from his own experience, compared with the teachings of the Bible, that there is no peace to the wicked—that the pleasures of sin are but for a moment, and are followed by the penalties which conscience most terribly inflicts. Sinners can see that they have heretofore sought for comfort in "refuges of lies;" that "waters have overflowed their hiding places;" that all their resources from earth have failed them. They can devote hours every day to reading the Scriptures, the precious revelations which they contain of man's duty and destiny, the character, mission, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ—of his glory and fulness, his suitableness as a Saviour, to their necessities, his kindness, his infinite mercy, his delight in saving men—his willingness to save all that come unto him. They can meditate on these things in hours of solitude, and even when employed in their daily avocations. They can try to pray, and under the attempt gain new and affecting discoveries of their spiritual necessities, their dependence, their utter helplessness, helpless if left to themselves. While their thoughts are thus engaged, the Holy Spirit may interpose, and apply these truths to their deep conviction, making them more and more sensible of their need of