

Our Contributors.

PRINCIPAL MACVICAR ON NEGLECTED FORCES.

BY KNOXONIAN.

In the current number of the *Presbyterian College Journal*, of Montreal, there is a strong and suggestive paper by Principal MacVicar, on "Neglected Forces," or "fountains of power for good which are practically neglected by Christian workers of various classes." The forces discussed are "The Word and the Spirit of God," "The Legitimate Use of the Press," and "The Ministry of Young Converts."

It is needless to say that the Principal handles his forces with the hand of a master. On the third force he is particularly good, and all the better because he says a few things that many Presbyterians of a certain type will not agree with. A paper that everybody agrees with is usually a very useless paper. What the Church needs most is a stirring up, and you never stir up either a man or a Church by dealing out prosy platitudes to which every dunce says ditto.

Principal MacVicar is of course quite aware that it is easy to err in making too much of the ministry of young converts, and he candidly acknowledges the fact. In a few vigorous sentences he sums up the chief dangers that are likely to be encountered by putting young converts in the foreground. The convert may be injured, and the cause of Christ may also be injured in various ways. Still the Principal thinks—and in so thinking, thousands of most faithful working Presbyterians will agree with him—that the Presbyterian Church is not in any particular danger from putting young converts to the front. Repression is the policy from which Presbyterians are most likely to suffer. But let the Principal speak for himself:

But after all, the opposite evil is probably the one about which as Presbyterians we have cause to be solicitous. Under our system, one way or another and according to established use and wont, we have wonderful repressive power. We can, with our venerable and staid Sessions, Presbyteries and other ecclesiastical courts, keep back and keep down the most aspiring and ambitious youth. The fathers and brethren will, in many touching ways, make him feel his ignorance and smallness.

Yes we can, Doctor. Our repressive power is something marvellous. In many congregations the repressive power is far greater than the progressive or aggressive. The only power that equals the repressive in these congregations is the retrogressive. In the estimation of some people we used to know keeping back sin, and keeping down the devil, was apparently a small matter compared with keeping back and down the rising generation. One of the "touching" ways of doing this when we were young was telling young men to "tarry at Jericho until their beards grew." It required great Bible knowledge, rich religious experience, ripe spiritual culture, to make a statement of that kind to a young man, but there were spiritual giants in these early days who were always equal to the duty.

The beauty of the repressive system is seen in the fact that it works quite as well against a youth when he is trying to do right as when he is doing something which richly merits a snubbing. He may be doing what he can to build a new church, or a new manse, or to raise the pastor's salary, or to improve the psalmody, or to make the Church more comfortable; in fact he may be doing or trying to do any kind of good work, but he must be snubbed and sat upon and insulted simply because he tries to do a little good before his beard has become as long as a goat's.

We could give some examples of the repressive system that would make the blood of every Presbyterian boil, who wishes to see the Church hold her own and the children of Presbyterians to remain and be useful in the Presbyterian Church. Matters are, however, greatly improving in this regard. Repression that was tolerated years ago would not be endured now in any kind of congregations except those whose leaders make a speciality of groaning and cursing the "present age." Many Sessions encourage the young in doing every kind of work that they can be reasonably expected to do. Congregational meetings usually say "the tools for the man that can use them" and appoint good men to office apart from considerations of age. There is a good medium between the folly that would put the management of a congregation entirely in the hands of inexperienced

youth, and the hide-bound conservatism that insultingly represses every youthful attempt to do good.

On the bad effects of the repressive system, Principal MacVicar uses these weighty words:

And surely the young are not made temples of the Holy Ghost to no purpose. God dwells in them and walks in them for glorious ends, not to make them idlers but co-workers with Himself. He gives them talents not to be buried but to be used and accounted for, the one and the two, as well as the five. The neglect or misuse of these is dangerous and weakening to the possessors of them and to all with whom they are spiritually related. To keep young Christians idle at the outset is to deprive the Church of the freshness of their vigour, and possibly to impair and destroy their power of action. Many are kept so long under instruction, silent receptacles of good lessons, that they become dumb, unable to open their mouths in prayer or in witness-bearing for the Master, even when His name and cause are being openly blasphemed.

And this is the reason, the Principal alleges, why so many men who can reason with great skill and subtlety on business and politics are speechless when it is a matter of thanking God for His mercies, or asking protection and guidance or cheering the disconsolate, or teaching the ignorant, or pleading with some prodigal to return to his Father. Yes, good men, Christian men, men whose lives are as pure as the life of any minister in the Church—men whose sense of honour is a good deal keener than that of some ministers—men whose homes are as well ordered as the home of any minister in the Church—men of this kind can be found able to discuss any reasonable topic with marked ability—able to speak well on the platform or in parliament, and yet unable to take part in the prayer meeting or even conduct family worship without a book of forms. And who is to blame if such men are more effective in the world than in the Church? Not the men certainly. The system that failed to train them and the men that *didn't* fail to keep them back and down in their youth are mainly responsible for their loss of power. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of the best men in the Presbyterian Church of Canada decline to enter the eldership, and the main reason why they refuse to take ordination vows is because they cannot, or think they cannot, pray aloud in the prayer meeting or in the sick room. Again we ask, Who is responsible for this loss of power?

But the mine opened by the Principal will stand more working at some future day.

NOTES OF TRAVEL IN THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND.

I begin with Bristol, one of the oldest towns in England, and, in many respects, very interesting. It is situated in a deep valley, but has outgrown its old site, and has extended itself into the two counties of Gloucester and Somerset. It is one of the few places in England which forms a county of itself. Since 1836, however, the sees of Bristol and Gloucester have been united, but an Act of Parliament has been passed which will restore to Bristol the undivided see of which it was then deprived. Many remains of Roman villas and camps in Gloucester and Somerset show that the Romans were well acquainted with these counties. The two form the limit of the invasion of England by the Saxons to the south and west. In Somerset took place the final contest between Alfred and the Danes. There is presumptive evidence that Bristol held an important place during the Roman, Saxon and Danish times. Its position at the junction of the Avon and the Froome, as well as the coins still existing, which had been struck in Bristol, point to this also. During the invasion of Ireland, in the reign of Henry II., the city of Dublin was made over to Bristol by the King as a dependency, indicating that it was then an important city. The large contributions to the national fleet made by Bristol proves that it was then the second city of the Empire. Macaulay, in his account of the state of England soon after the Restoration, mentions Bristol as only second to London. It was at that time confined within its walls. After 1654 the city began to extend beyond the walls, and since then it has continued to climb the hills by which it is surrounded, so that at present the area covered by dwelling houses is more than double what it was fifty years ago. The population has made a similar increase. In 1801 it was about 50,000; in 1881 it had risen to 206,000, and in 1887, including the suburbs, it was 250,000. The tonnage of shipping entering the port during the last fifty years has increased three-

fold. But before saying more, let me tell something of the beautiful suburb of

CLIFTON,

from which I write. It is on the south-west border of Gloucestershire, and covers the sides and top of a carboniferous limestone hill, 300 feet above Bristol. In the summer evenings the Downs—230 acres in extent, and the adjoining Durham Downs—440 acres in extent—supply pleasure grounds not only for the residents of Clifton, but for those of Bristol also. Here they can wander in the shade of trees, and listen to excellent music almost every evening. Another source of amusement is to sit and watch the movements of ships and steamers of all classes which pass up and down the Avon, lying in a deep gorge many hundred feet below. This, however, can only take place when the tide flows up from the Bristol Channel and fills the bed. The stream winds greatly in its course to the Severn or Bristol Channel, some miles below, and has Avonmouth on the right and Portishead on the left.

On the opposite side of the deep gorge from the Clifton Downs are the Leigh Woods, which cover the banks for about a mile. This, with the

SUSPENSION BRIDGE,

which connects the two counties, and the sun setting in the distance, leaving its reflections on land and sky, afford a prospect delightful in the extreme. The Suspension Bridge, designed by I. K. Brunel, commenced in 1831, but not finished until 1864, is regarded as the strongest and handsomest suspension bridge in the world. Its length between the abutments is about 627 feet, and its height above high water 245 feet.

The view is varied by the constant passing of trains on both sides of the Avon, which run in and out of short tunnels, carrying goods and passengers to Portishead on the Somerset side, or to the large vessels which lie in the harbour of Avonmouth, being unable to ascend the river with its mud banks and dangerous curves. At low water the Avon is but a tiny rivulet, flowing through huge masses of mud which are said to emit ozone to the people on the heights, many of whom are children flying kites, ladies reading the latest novels or resting in Bath chairs, and clergymen, young and old, in their conventional dress, and as numerous here as the Roman Catholic priests once were in the streets of Rome. I conclude as I began by saying that Clifton is a charming place. Its climate is mild and equable, and its air bracing, though up to two weeks ago rather hot to be quite enjoyable.

PRESBYTERIANISM

had a place in Bristol as early as the year 1660; but no minister is mentioned till 1672, when Charles II. granted a license, in pursuance of the indulgence to Protestant dissenters yielded to Mr. John Weeks, of the "Presbyterian persuasion." He became a teacher of the congregation "allowed by us," says the King, "in a room in the house of John Lloyd, lying on St. James' Back in the city of Bristol." The original license still hangs in the vestry of the Congregational Church in Clifton, which is the reason of my noticing it here. The Mr. John Weeks mentioned above had been an educated and ordained minister of the English Church in Dorset, but ejected in 1662. He had at one time Mr. Edmund Calamy (afterward the learned Dr. Calamy) as an assistant.

There is at present a very handsome Presbyterian Church on the site of St. James' Churchyard, Bristol, in which weekly meets a good congregation—mostly Scotch or descendants of Scotch. The pastor, Dr. W. Millar Nicolson, came here from Jersey, where he had been for four years. Previously he had been Free Church minister at Linlithgow, Scotland. He is a highly-cultured man, and apparently well suited for an English congregation.

Returning to

BRISTOL

let me say it is famous for many things, only a few of which I can here enumerate. I begin with

FAMOUS VOYAGES.

First. From this port Sebastian Cabot, sailed in 1497 for America. He was the first to discover that portion of the continent now called the United States, and to secure its colonization by the English. His ship, the *Matthew*, left on the 2nd of May, and returned on 6th August.

Second. Dampier, a British privateer, brought