

## THE REV. RALPH ROBB.

*From the Halifax Presbyterian Witness.*

It is but a short time since we were called upon to record a sore trial to our Church in this Province, in the death of the amiable and accomplished Professor Mackenzie. Again the hand of Lord has been stretched forth, and the sister Synod has occasion to mourn the loss of one of her ablest and most devoted Ministers. The Rev. RALPH ROBB, of Hamilton, C. W., whom many of our readers knew well, as the Minister of St. John's Church, Halifax, has been summoned from his labours in the vineyard below, to receive his everlasting reward. This is an event which we are sure will be felt as a very sore bereavement, not only by the members and adherents of the Church at whose altars he ministered, but by all who knew him, to be an able and a fearless champion of Gospel truth. Indeed the loss of such a man cannot well be over-estimated, especially at such a time, when the seeds of every error are thrown broad cast on the field, threatening the very existence of the form and the faith of sound words.

Mr. Robb's character as a preacher is well known to most in this place. He was universally admitted to be an able and efficient minister of the New Testament. It was impossible to listen to his solid expositions of sacred truth, so pregnant with the Theology of the olden time, without feeling that the people under his charge enjoyed peculiar privileges, and that if faithful to themselves they could not fail to gain deeper and sounder views of divine things, than are generally current among the mass of professing Christians in these lands. To the other less public duties of his office he gave much of his time. He took an especial charge of the young, and there are many among us who can testify to his success as a teacher of youth. By means of Bible Classes, both male and female, and evening lectures during the week, he laboured indefatigably to implant and to foster sound principles, in the minds of his people. Nor is it to be doubted that a large measure of success attended these efforts. No congregation in the Colonies has more fully sustained the character of a Free Church congregation, in devising and doing liberal things for the maintenance of their principles, than that in Halifax, of which he was formerly the pastor. None will more cordially testify to the faithfulness of the workman who was engaged in laying the foundation, than the able and respected Minister whose work it now is to build thereon. In Hamilton, the scene of Mr. Robb's subsequent labours, a large and well-conditioned congregation was formed to his hand, which we need not say, did not fall away under his care; on the contrary, we believe, that under his ministry it continued steadily to increase, and is now, perhaps, one of the most flourishing in that Province.

In addition to the duties of the pastoral office, Mr. Robb had intrusted to him, by his brethren in Canada, a large share in the man management of the general affairs of the Church, for which his accurate business habits admirably fitted him; while their high estimate of his character and Theological attainments was still further evinced, by their committing to his charge the students preparing for the ministry, previous to the arrival of Dr. Willis as permanent Professor. Thus, it is evident, that looking at this breach which an all-wise Providence has made in the ranks of our ministry, in the light of a public loss, it is one which must be severely felt. It will not be easy to find a successor, who shall at once fill so well the pulpit in Hamilton, and so efficiently a seat in Presbyterian and Synod. But He who hath smitten will bind up, He who hath made, we doubt not, will heal the breach in his own time and way.

As a friend, and in private life, Mr. Robb was greatly beloved. His conversation was ever interesting and instructive, and never in any tabernacle of clay have we witnessed a flow of soul so

full and joyous. Whatever were his troubles and perplexities, the entrance of a friend with whom he was on terms of intimacy, brought sunshine to his countenance and gladness to his heart. Indeed, by such cords, he was drawn almost irresistibly. The writer of this notice remembers once calling upon him in company with a friend, on the afternoon of a Thursday, when he was about to draw his chair to the table to prepare for his evening lecture. Our design was no more than to look in, in passing, as we were bent upon a long walk. There were then, however, fresh and stirring topics afloat, which were easily started, but not so soon disposed of. After a brief struggle between strong inclination and a sense of duty, the latter gave way, and he accompanied us, and having done every justice to Lord Aberdeen and his bill, we returned to give him time, not for study, but to make the necessary alterations in his toilet, before meeting the congregation. After service we were somewhat sharply admonished, as the occasion of what he thought a discreditable and unprofitable appearance on his part. This, however, was but his own opinion, and apparent to none but himself. Mr. Robb, however, though thus "showing himself friendly," knew something of what it was to be evil spoken of, nor is this remarkable, and perhaps scarcely to be regretted, as he might not else have escaped the woe denounced against those of whom "all men speak well." Now that the grave has closed over him, of this we are confident, that his death will be most deeply felt, and his memory most fondly cherished, by those who enjoyed the best opportunities for estimating his character and worth.

## THE PAPIST SECESSION MEETING.

Messrs. Editors:—The lower saloon of the Chinese Museum, Philadelphia, presented a strange sight on Sabbath afternoon, 7th inst. A secession meeting had been advertised a few days previously. Upon inquiry, I found that about sixty-two heads of families, belonging to a German Roman Catholic church in Spruce street, were about to bid an affectionate and solemn farewell to their aged mother. I reached the place of meeting a few minutes after three o'clock, and found the room nearly full; all the seats were occupied, and a large number of interested spectators were compelled to stand. A platform had been erected. I noticed but two persons on it—one, a noble looking specimen of the German nation, who was afterwards introduced as a converted Roman Catholic priest; the other was also a converted Roman Catholic priest, an Italian by birth, but he could speak both German and English quite fluently. He was just closing an address to his German auditors, and soon afterwards commenced a most animated and eloquent English harangue. His choice of words was remarkably good, and his thoughts were well arranged and appropriate. His German idiom seemed to add greatly to the effect of his speech. He displayed logic, sarcasm, pathos, contempt, and withal a strong desire to glorify his blessed Master, in the movement about to be made. Several times the audience seemed to be carried away by the old man's eloquence, and, forgetting that it was God's holy day, they applauded him. He promptly rebuked this, and besought the people to abstain from it in future. His speech was a masterly exposition of the Romish delusions under which they had lived all their lives. He gave eight reasons for seceding from the Romish hierarchy. 1. Because it robs us of freedom of conscience. 2. It robs us of the Bible. 3. It tells us that a man in Italy holds the keys of heaven. 4. The priests tyrannize over us. 5. It enjoins celibacy, and the Bible teaches a contrary doctrine. 6. It holds the doctrine of purgatory. 7. It enforces auricular confession, and daily experience teaches us that this is a school of corruption. 8. It commands us to worship saints, and to bow down to images. He then

enumerated the doctrines which this congregation now professes; these agree with those held by all evangelical churches. In conclusion, he exhorted the seceders to be faithful and to stand fast. Their movement would excite enmities, but let us return good for evil. Let this be a bloodless victory. Let us hold fast to the Bible, and we may be sure that while the American flag contains a star, God's word shall not be taken from us. "Forms," said he, "we have none; we have had them, and they have deadened us." He then introduced the other priest as the pastor of the new congregation, and after a short address from the latter, the formal secession took place. The Italian priest requested the seceders to arise, and in token of their approbation, to respond audibly at the close of certain declarations which he was about to read. They did so. It seemed to be a work in which their hearts were engaged. He then laid down his book, and our attention was called to an open Bible and four lighted wax candles on the table. He took a candle in his hand, and said, "My brethren, when we were walking in darkness, because the priest had concealed the light of God's word under a bushel, we asked for light; they gave us wax candles, and besought us to be silent. We have now taken the Bible to be our light. We need no wax candles in daylight." Suiting the action to the word, he extinguished the lights.

A handsome collection was taken up to defray the expenses to which the new congregation will be subjected. They now worship in a building on the corner of Sixth and Callowhill streets, and they intend soon to erect a suitable house of worship. Here, then, is a new, but a small garden, which should arrest the attention of the Protestant Christian. Let his prayer be, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out, Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

E. R. R.

—Presbyterian.

## MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

"Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest."

INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF DR. WITHERSPOON. —Dr. Witherspoon, when first invited to accept the Presidency of the College of New Jersey, declined, though with great reluctance on some accounts. When the invitation was renewed, he accepted the appointment; and being asked why he emigrated to America to take charge of so unimportant an institution as the College was at that time, he replied, that his chief motive was to assist in raising up ministers in this new and destitute country.

God, in his providence, blessed the great and good man in accomplishing the object in view. Dr. Witherspoon, while President of the College, performed the duties of Professor of Theology, and assisted in training many of the able ministers of the olden times. During his Presidency, a remarkable revival of religion occurred in the College, which was the means, under God, of converting a large number of the students, and of bringing many into the ministry. In the class of 1773, numbering twenty-nine students, twenty-three of them entered the ministry. Thus was the object of his emigration to America sanctified of the Spirit, and acknowledged in the most signal and glorious manner.

We have two remarks to make on this historical incident: 1. If such a man as Dr. Witherspoon made education for the ministry a leading object of his life, and if he underwent so great self-denial to attain it, how strongly does his example invite all who love our Lord Jesus Christ to advance this great cause in their own personal history! 2. The same Providence which blessed Dr. Witherspoon, has blessed others in their labours to train up Christian ministers, and encourages all to do something in this department of evangelical service.