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REV. WILLIAM CAVEN, D.D.

The name of the Rev. Principal Caven is no unworthy associate of those of the other eminent men who have from time to time filled the office of President of the Ontario Teachers' Association. Like most, if not all, of them, he is in the best sense of the word a self-made man, having reached his present high position by dint of long-continued and severe mental application. A school teacher himself in his early years, and the son of a school teacher, it was in accord with the fitness of things that after twelve years of professorial work, in which he has greatly distinguished himself, he should be chosen to fill a chair which has been occupied by such

eminent teachers as Professor Wilson, Professor Young, and Professor Goldwin Smith. Principal Caven was born in Wigtownshire, Scotland, in 1830, his father being a member of one of the sects which were afterwards consolidated to form the United Presbyterian Church. On his mother's side he is connected with the Covenanters, now more commonly known as the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. His early education, a tolerably thorough one, was received in his father's school prior to the emigration of the family to Canada in 1847. Almost immediately afterwards, Mr. Caven commenced to study with a view to entering the ministry of his own church, while his father continued his active connection with the work of education both as a teacher and a superintendent of schools. The best collegiate institutions were then in a very rudimentary condition, and the denomination to which he belonged

laboured under the disadvantage of being without any. By dint of hard labour, and with such aid as he could secure from ordinary ministers of the church appointed for that purpose, he succeeded in completing his theological course, and was licensed in 1852 as a regular Minister of the Gospel under the auspices of the United Presbyterian Church, after having spent some time in the work of common school teaching.

At the early age of twenty-one he was inducted into the pastorate of the congregation at St. Mary's, near which place his family had settled, and where they still reside. For the comparatively long period of thirteen years he continued in this charge, and his success in the pastoral work during that time was an earnest of the still more striking success which awaited him in his present sphere

of labour. The work of self-culture was never laid aside on account of the demands made on his time, as is too frequently the case with professional men, and in 1865 his scholastic attainments were recognized by the Canada Presbyterian Church, which invited him to fill the chair of Exegetical Theology and Biblical criticism in Knox College, then recently vacated by Professor Young. That position he has held ever since with great ability, his teaching being characterized as much by fearless candour as by evangelical orthodoxy. The department of theology entrusted to his charge is one for which he is peculiarly adapted. It is the one in and around which the battle of controversy rages with most fierceness and acrimony, and never was the war carried on with more vigour on both sides than at the present time. The destructive criticism of

the schools, appealing as it does to human reason and the facts of history, has to be fairly encountered by every teacher of Biblical criticism whose aim is to enable his students to give a reason for the faith that is in them. The Canon of Scripture has to be defended against assaults from a variety of quarters, while every page of ecclesiastical history has to be studied with a view to finding out what the lines of attack against Evangelical Christianity have been in the past, and how they must be met in the future. By occupation as well as taste, therefore, Prof. Caven has been impelled to continue his work of self-culture until he has reached his present honourable position as a scholar and divine. During the past seven or eight years Dr. Caven has discharged the duties of Principal of the College as well as Professor of Exegetics, his management of the institution being as successful as his professorial work. Although for the pur-



poses of this sketch we have most to do with him in his capacity of teacher, it will not be out of place to refer to Principal Caven's earnest sympathy with every movement calculated to reform society and elevate the masses. He has ever taken a deep interest in the educational system of this Province, and it may safely be predicted that that interest will be increased rather than diminished as the result of his election to the Presidency of the Provincial Teachers' Association. It is one of the peculiar excellencies of that society, that by electing prominent persons to the honourable position of President, it tends to bring them into closer and more active connection with the work of practical education, and for this reason it seems desirable that the practice of selecting such men—a practice seldom hitherto departed from—should be maintained.