

Our Contributors.

WHY SO MUCH TALK ABOUT THE DOUBTFUL?

BY KNOXIAN.

There are two hundred and twenty Presbyteries in the American Presbyterian Church, and, for about two years, there has been more talking and writing about the Presbytery of New York, than about the two hundred and nineteen Presbyteries outside of that city. Why? Was it because the Presbytery of New York excelled all the others in doing the Master's work? No. It was because the Presbytery of New York had a heresy case.

There are about seven thousand ministers in the same Church. For more than two years public attention has been centred on Professor Charles A. Briggs, of Union Seminary. It has been Briggs in the newspapers, Briggs in the Presbyteries, and Briggs in three General Assemblies. The Presbyterians over there have had Briggs at breakfast, Briggs at lunch, Briggs at dinner, and Briggs in the evening. If reports are correct, a goodly number of them have something for or against Briggs, for sermon on Sabbath.

What did Professor Charles A. Briggs say or do, that won for him so much distinction among his seven thousand brethren? Did he preach a sermon that threw the best efforts of Chalmers or Guthrie hopelessly in the shade? Not he. Who, outside of New York, ever heard of Professor Briggs as a preacher? Did he make a good oration, that in future ages will take the place of the oration of Demosthenes on the crown? Did he devise some effectual plan for closing the saloons in New York city? Did he draw up a municipal law that keeps criminals off the bench, gives the citizens good local government, and stops municipal stealing? No, he did not do any of these things. Had he done one, or all, the world would not know much about him, but, as he wrote a heterodox inaugural address, his is one of the best-known names in America. In popularity, or notoriety, if you will, the name Briggs, is as familiar as Cleveland, or Lincoln, or Washington.

Why is that so? Mainly because even Presbyterians have a perverse, rooted habit of thinking and speaking a hundred times as much about one man who does or says something wrong or doubtful, as about a thousand men who are faithfully doing their duty.

Professor Briggs is not the only man in the American Church, who can read Hebrew. He is not, by any means, the only man who understands the Higher Criticism, so far as it can be understood? Truth to say, he is not the only minister over there, who could write a dangerous inaugural. Why, in the name of common sense, make so much fuss about him. Simply because he was tried for heresy, and people will go wild about anybody that has a trial in any kind of a court. It does not, by any means, need to be an ecclesiastical court, or an indictment for heresy. There are other courts, and other indictments, in which the public take a keen interest; and there are reports of trials of a very different kind, that are read with even more interest than the reports of a heresy trial. We shall not enlarge.

The American Presbyterian Church has had some great and sainted men. Why not speak more about the Alexanders, and Milers, and Hodges, and less about Briggs and Smith. A careful study of Dr. Samuel Miller's "Thoughts on Public Prayer," might do some ministers quite as much good as a reading of Briggs' famous inaugural. Dr. J. W. Alexander's "Thoughts on Preaching" are much better literature for a preacher than the reports of the Briggs trial. Systematic study of Hodge's great work is of far more use to a minister than any amount of fugitive literature on the Briggs' case. If we must read Union Seminary

literature, why not take a turn at Shedd. An hour a day, spent by a pastor on Shedd's "Homiletics," might be of more value to a congregation than a year's reading on Criticism, higher or lower.

There are forty-six Presbyteries in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the whole Church has its eye fixed on the Presbytery of Montreal. Why? Simply because that Presbytery is supposed to have a heresy case on hand. An American, whose name used to be well known, said that he was perfectly willing to say that the negro was his brother, but he was not prepared to admit that the coloured man was his uncle and his grandfather, and his cousin, and every other relation. A heresy trial may be very important, but it is not preaching, and pastoral visitation, and Home Missions, and Foreign Missions, and Augmentation, and French Evangelization, and Theological Education, and everything else. The Montreal Presbytery is one of the best we have, but the forty-five that have no heresy trial are trying to do a little something for the Church, as well as the Presbytery that takes its name from our commercial capital. Right sure are we, that the Presbytery of Montreal does not hanker after any special attention at the present time. Some of them have had pestering enough during the last year, to do them for a long time to come.

Professor John Campbell is not the only member of the Montreal Presbytery, who amounts to anything, or has accomplished anything. The Professor is, in certain lines, the most learned man we have; he is a genial, gentlemanly, man. We have always considered him a conspicuously honourable, straightforward, manly man. But positively, there is no reason why the entire Church should gaze on Professor Campbell, either with admiration or horror. Some years ago—we need not say exactly when—we heard a well-known Toronto minister—we need scarcely give his name—in the blandest tones assure a gazing audience, that the "horns had not begun to come." It is to be hoped that Professor Campbell will not feel called upon to give a similar assurance to anybody.

If it is really necessary to talk about Montreal College at the present time, why not say something about the marvellous progress it has made, the liberality of the Montreal Presbyterians in endowing it, the strength and efficiency of its teaching staff, the large numbers of ministers it has trained, and the other hundred and one good features of the institution.

If the Montreal ministry must be discussed, why not discuss MacVicar, Warden, Scrimger, and all the other strong men that are not being tried for saying things? Why not discuss the Redpaths, and McKays, and follow their example in giving? Why not discuss David Maurice, and build a wing to Knox or Queen's? Oh yes, there are plenty of good things in Montreal to discuss and imitate, if we want to see them.

The plain truth of the matter is this: there is so much of the old Adam in most of us, that we prefer discussing doubtful things to discussing good things.

FRAGMENTARY NOTES.

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE—ITS SURROUNDINGS, CHURCHES, ETC.

This ancient town is distant from Toronto about 35 miles, and thanks to the enterprise of Toronto's citizens it can be reached in about two hours, by a line of steamboats which are probably not surpassed by any on the continent; and which leave six times daily. Niagara is situated on Lake Ontario at the mouth of the splendid river which bears the same name, and which from its great natural beauty attracts thousands of tourists every year.

As a result of the war the town was destroyed by fire in 1813, and for many years past it has been considered by outsiders to be a rather half-dead-and-alive place. The streets which were broad

were pasture for cattle on which they thrived well. Trade had fallen off, and many of its warmest friends thought that the good old town was doomed to decay altogether; but its natural resources were large, being in one of the finest fruit-growing districts in the Dominion, and its natural beauty famed and appreciated, the tide took a favourable turn, and within a few years public attention has been turned to Niagara as a summer resort and a district where fruit can be cultivated to great advantage.

The Queen's Royal Hotel has always been very popular and in addition to this other hotels have been started; several cottages have been built, which are occupied by visitors.

A few days ago I boarded the fine steamer Chicora, with a few friends, and after a pleasant run found myself within the precincts of the famous Niagara-on-the-Lake, as it is now called. The visitor cannot fail to notice the rapid improvements which have taken place. Several large and handsome residences have been erected, and many of the old and ungainly ones have been renovated and treated to a fresh coat of paint, which adds very much to their appearance. Among others I may mention that of Mr. Charles Hunter, which was completed this year, and taken possession of this spring. In addition to this very handsome dwelling house, Mr. Hunter has a fine orchard, well stocked with fruit trees, and beautiful grounds well kept and tastefully planted with shrubs; and beautiful sweet-smelling roses of every class and colour.

CHURCHES.

There is ample accommodation for the citizens and visitors in the various churches, which in the summer are well attended. St. Andrew's, Presbyterian, is a historic church here. Although the church and manse are rather far removed from the centre of the town, the spire of the church is the first object to attract the attention of the passengers as they approach the shore. The first congregation was organized in 1794, nearly a century ago, and had for its minister the Rev. Mr. Dunn, who came from Scotland, and who supplied the Stamford congregation also.

Mr. Dunn, having changed his theological views, resigned the charge and entered on mercantile pursuits, and was lost in a storm on Lake Ontario about ten years after. The next minister was Rev. John Young, formerly of Montreal, who remained a short time and soon after removed to Lunenburg, N.S., but subsequently settled in Truro, N.S., that strong Presbyterian centre, where he finished his course. In 1804, the Government gave a grant of land to the Niagara congregation, when a church capable of holding 500 persons was built and supplied by the Rev. John Burns, who gave service once a month; until, as stated before, the town was destroyed by fire. In 1815, Mr. Burns resumed his labours, and in addition to discharging his ministerial functions, taught a public school, and died in 1824. The next minister was Rev. Thomas Creen, a popular Irishman, and a man of considerable ability, but who, yielding to the dictates of conscience, joined the English Church and accepted reordination from the Anglican Bishop of Quebec, who appointed him to a mission in Niagara at a salary of £200 sterling. It seems strange that an Irish Presbyterian minister would submit to reordination at the hands of a bishop of the English Church, thus admitting that ordination by Presbytery, or by a plurality of elders, was not according to Apostolic practice. If I mistake not, the Anglican Church does recognize ordination by the Roman Catholic Church. This, of course, I do not find fault with, but it does seem strange that Presbyterian ordination should be completely ignored. The Rev. Mr. Johnston, also from Ireland, was the next minister, who only remained a short time, and was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Fraser, who in a short time, left for a church in Lanark. The next minister was the Rev. Robt. McGill, who in 1845 responded to a call from St. Paul's church, Montreal,

and was succeeded by the Rev. John Cruikshank, who returned to Scotland. The next minister was the Rev. J. B. Mowat, D.D., now Professor Mowat, of Queen's University, and brother of Sir Oliver Mowat, and who, after a ministry of eight years, was appointed to the chair of Apologetics in Queen's University, and who ranks among the soundest and ablest theologians of the day. Dr. Mowat was succeeded in Niagara by the Rev. Charles Campbell, now of Toronto, who came from Scotland, and who, during his pastorate, made many warm friends in Niagara and throughout the county of Lincoln. The next minister was the Rev. William Cleland, now of Toronto, a man of varied accomplishments and ripe scholarship, whose contributions to the press are well known and appreciated. He is also the author of an able work on the History of the Irish Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Cleland is "a son of the soil" and an ardent lover of his native land. Although set aside from active duty, he takes a lively interest in public questions, and has strong sympathies with the Unionist party in the General Assembly in Ireland, in their opposition to Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill.

The next minister was the Rev. Mr. Bell, now of Newmarket, who sustained the good work so long carried on by his predecessors, and the present minister is Rev. Mr. Smith, who is very popular in the neighbourhood, and who is doing faithful work. The present is the eleventh of the ministers who have done more or less duty in Niagara Presbyterian church.

The Anglican church, which is known as St. Marks, is well taken care of by the Ven. Archdeacon McMurray, who by a long and faithful ministry has earned the respect and esteem of the whole community, and who has been ably assisted by his amiable wife.

Niagara is a very popular place to hold conventions, and during the summer season there are various gatherings, comprising religious, educational and scientific, and the place seems well adapted for such conventions. K.

Toronto, July 12th, 1893.

A MISSIONARY TOUR.

For the purpose of this tour let us leave Toronto by the railway traversing the continent to Vancouver, and thereby passing through our mission stations in the Northwest Territories and British Columbia, which are in charge of the Rev. A. J. McLeod, Rev. Mr. Flett, Rev. Mr. Winchester, and a number of other assistants. From Vancouver, we sail across the Pacific in one of those large railway steamers, bound for Yokohama in Japan. Arriving there, we cross the Yellow Sea, landing in about seven days at Chefoo, China. Remaining for a short time with the several missionaries of the American Board stationed at Chefoo, we then board yet another steamer, bringing us to Tsien-tsin, where we are entertained by Mr. Bostwick, the agent to whom is entrusted all mail parcels, etc., of our Canadian missionaries. Desiring to push on, we embark from Tsien-tsin, in houseboats, propelled by men walking along the banks. On reaching Lui Ching, our destination, the novel journey by houseboat is at an end. Chu Wang, in Honan, is to be our first resting-place, and to reach it we are obliged to resort to carts drawn by mules. These carts are not to say the least, made after the fashion of Rotten Row carriages, neither are they as comfortable as the modern dog-cart. Is it to be wondered at then, that sweet is our rest when we reach Chu Wang. Great, too, is our joy when we meet here and remain a few days with our missionaries. Journeying still further inland to Hsin Chen, we are greeted by Dr. and Mrs. Smith, Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie, Miss McIntosh and Dr. L. Graham. After visiting these various mission stations and enjoying the many sights, we return to the coast and embark for Formosa. Tam-sul, in Formosa, is the station where Dr. and Mrs. McKay, and Mr. and Mrs. Gault are labouring so earnestly. Though the