

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE CELEBRATIONS AT WOLFVILLE.

(Continued.)

OUR FUTURE.

BY REV. D. M. WELTON, A. M.

In the history of the Baptists of these provinces, this day must henceforth hold a memorable place. Could the departed mingle with us on this occasion, and behold to what large and fair proportions the structure has risen, whose foundation they laid in prayer and faith:—could they see the things which we see, and hear the things which we hear, they would doubtless be overwhelmed with wonder and praise. "But blessed are our eyes, for they see, and our ears, for they hear."

To day our educational, and, we might say denominational heart beats high with faith and hope, and gladness, and its pulsations are felt to the extremities of the body. To day, many eyes and hearts are turned to this place, as the Jerusalem where our fathers met to lay the foundation of our educational enterprise, and whither we, their sons and survivors have come up, to give thanks for the wonders God has wrought.

A grateful review of the past may be regarded as the chief object of this celebration. And surely a consideration of the progress which has marked our denomination, and the enterprises in which it has been engaged during the past quarter of a century, should stir our hearts with the profoundest gratitude to the "Father of mercies," and lead us, here, and now, to set up an altar in his name. But while a review of the past may be the principal, it is yet not the only object of this gathering. Our work to-day is prospective, as well as retrospective. The inspiration of this hour is drawn from the future, as well as from the past. If we did not believe that a future is ours, we should be indifferent concerning the past:—we should deride but little pleasure from thinking of efforts and achievements ending with the present. But because the past supplies legitimate data on which to base our expectations for the future:—because in it we discover the semination of principles, and the inauguration of schemes which, under the divine blessing, shall gloriously thrive and flourish in days to come, therefore we love to linger upon its experiences—its discouragements and successes—its trials and triumphs. Our work, like our souls, is immortal. We meet to-day, not for the purpose of saying it is done, and of digging for ourselves a grave; but in order to lay bare our yet infant energies to influences revivifying and strengthening, that our denomination may reach the full manhood of its powers, and employ them with increasing success, for God and humanity, till the end of time. To day history becomes a ground of prophecy, and hope springs fragrant from memory.

The time at our disposal will only allow us briefly to consider two or three of the many reasons which encourage us to look hopefully towards the future, and to merely indicate the course of action necessary, under God, to make the future that which it is desirable it should be.

Among the grounds on which we may legitimately build our hopes for the future, it will not be disputed that a large place may be assigned to

(1) THE PROGRESS OF THE PAST.

Without reviewing that progress in detail, which would be quite unnecessary after what has been said already, but noting only the measure and motion of its pace, we may discover in it no small ground of encouragement. Looking for instance at the growth of the denomination as exhibited in a comparison of its present numerical strength with what it was fifty years ago, what insusceptibility we should be guilty of not to be inspired with confidence and hope. At that time there were only nine Baptist Churches in Nova Scotia, with a membership of about as many hundreds. Now there are one hundred and forty-six churches with a membership of sixteen thousand. Up to forty-three years ago, one Association was deemed sufficient for all New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, at which time a division took place, and each province had one. Fourteen years ago, the one Association of Nova Scotia was divided into three, and now these have severally grown to dimensions which suggest the expediency of a subdivision. The addition to our churches in this province during last year, was nearly equal to their aggregate membership half a century ago. "A hundred years ago there was but one Baptist man in

Nova Scotia," so says the chronicler* of our history. Now the number of persons holding our sentiments is about seventy thousand, or twenty one per cent of the entire population; and they occupy no inferior position in wealth, intelligence, and influence. Here then we have, not an arithmetical, but a geometrical ratio of increase. And if the children of this world shall, from their past successes, compute the measure of their future gains, and that too, when their calculation rests chiefly upon what political economists denominate the doctrine of chance, shall not we who have espoused a mission, in the shaping of whose ultimate issues, chance can have no place:—a mission harmonizing, as we believe, with the mind and will of Him who has purposed to give the victory to his people,—a purpose subordinating all events, whether favorable or adverse, and all creatures, whether defiant or devout, to its accomplishment:—shall not we accept the progress of the past as a pledge furnished by the Almighty himself of still more marvellous success in the future, and gird ourselves afresh for the battle.

If from the growth that has marked our cause generally considered, we turn to the peculiar enterprises of the denomination, and from among them, select the educational, that from which this gathering chiefly borrows its spirit and tone, we shall be furnished with no less encouraging data, as we look into the future. Twenty-five years ago, we were indeed a little folk in this respect. We knocked at the doors of other institutions of learning, but were refused admission. The keepers of those institutions deemed us a people too small and unimportant to allow that our acceptance would be a gain, or our rejection a loss. But our smallness was exaggerated. We were not so little as was supposed. We profited from opposition, as the palm tree flourishes the more from pressure. The wave that threatened to engulf us, lifted us triumphant on its bosom. Among us "there were giants in those days,"—men standing high above surrounding prejudices, as mountains lift their heads above the mists,—men keenly perceiving the compatibility of learning with piety, and its vital relation to denominational growth and greatness,—men disposed to "attempt great things for God, and to expect great things from Him." These met in an upper room, and, invoking the blessing of Israel's God, they initiated a movement that has become marvellous in our eyes; they planted the tree whose branches afford so refreshing a shade to day, whose fruit is so pleasant to our taste, and the leaves of which have already been for the "healing of the nations."

Independently of the numbers who have pursued partial courses at Acadia College, during the past twenty-five years two hundred and eleven students have entered in the regular way by matriculation. Of these, some wear the highest official distinction which it is in the power of our province to confer. Some are shining in the legal and medical professions. Some honorably fill the editorial, and some the Professorial chair. To one has been committed the shaping of our general educational interests. The scientific research of another has attracted the notice of the most eminent naturalist on this continent, and made him the sharer of his investigations. Many are worthily devoting themselves to mercantile and agricultural pursuits. Thirty-four of the number are ordained ministers, "workmen that need not to be ashamed," whose stations luminously dot these provinces. One lifts his voice among Indian jungles, and publishes to benighted Burmans the glad tidings of mercy.

To compute the influence for good, direct and indirect, which is now being exerted by these;—to calculate the benefit that has flowed from our educational institutions since their commencement, would be impossible. The nearest approach to such estimate would probably be reached by imagining what and where we should have been had they never been founded. The truth is, all the world over, the common information of society—the information that distinguishes enlightened from ignorant and savage communities—that exalts England above Africa, flows largely from Colleges and Universities—is the fine and diffusive radiance of Academic culture—the distillation proceeding from the alembic of the scholar's brain. The growth of the educational sentiment since first entertained among us, is most interesting to contemplate. The leaving of his hamlet for College by one youth, has induced some of his comrades to follow, and many others to sympathize with him in his literary spirit. The opinions of many touching the importance of thorough mental training, in order to the best and most successful

accomplishment of the business of life, have been entirely revolutionized, so that at the present time, instead of being indifferent or even hostile to the welfare of our institutions, they deserve to be reckoned among their warmest and staunchest friends.

And now, with the results which have already been reached—results whose cost in money alone may be put down at not less than one hundred thousand dollars, saying nothing of the effort and struggle which have associated with its collection, and with the carrying forward of the cause for which it has been given;—results, however, expressing themselves in valuable unincumbered College buildings and in a productive Endowment Fund of thirty-five thousand dollars, and in the greatly advanced state of the denomination compared with what it was when these efforts commenced; to which might be added the manifest tokens of the Divine approval vouchsafed in the almost annual showers of grace that have descended upon the College and Academy, so that the youth who have resorted thither for secular training have been made wise unto salvation, and gone out perhaps, as missionaries of the cross:—if now, with these results before our eyes, the question should be asked, shall we abandon this glorious enterprise, and bring all our efforts to a close? What reply would it receive? Would not all those who have enjoyed the advantages of these institutions, and whose success in life may be largely traced to the fact, say No? Would not those mothers who look to them as the instrumentality by which their babes whom they dandle to day, shall become, as they believe the greatest men in the world—would not they say, No? Would not those parents who have seen their sons graduate with honor, say No? Would not the Fathers who are with us still, who rejoiced at the birth of "the child of providence," and who to day with us, sing "jubilate deo," in the celebration of its twenty-fifth birth-day—would not they say, No? Would not the thousands and tens of thousands of friends and supporters of the College scattered up and down these provinces, pronounce this negative with the united thunder of their strength, exclaiming, Acadia live for ever! What we have done, shows what we may do, and what we may do, is what, by the help of God, we will do. A review of the past shall be our trumpet call, to higher aims and hopes, to larger and more united action for the future.

If another ground of hope were sought for, it might be found in

(2) THE SCRIPTURAL CHARACTER OF OUR PRINCIPLES.

Here, no less than in the progress of the past, we discover an incitement to future endeavour, and a guarantee of future success.

We have no disposition unduly to parade our sentiments or ourselves. But "we speak that we do know," when we assert that among evangelical denominations Baptists are the most evangelic: among Protestant sects, they are the most protestant. The Book of the Acts contains the first chapter of our ecclesiastical history. Our first missionaries to the heathen went out from Antioch just eighteen hundred and twenty years ago, in the persons of Paul and Barnabas: while in the great work of modern missions, Baptists fill the place of pioneers. In the fundamental truths, for example, of the exclusive spirituality of the church, the universal priesthood of believers, the sufficiency of the New Testament as a rule of faith and practice, and the absolute separation of church and state, we claim more nearly than any others to approach to the purity and simplicity of apostolic christianity. In a preeminent sense it may be said of these truths, that they are "now disturbing the repose of ritual and formal christianity everywhere," and are destined, ere long, we believe, to "make the circuit of the earth." When they shall be universally adopted, then, and not till then, will the churches "put on their beautiful garments." Here, then, in a firm and consistent adherence to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as enunciated in the New Testament, we take our stand, in the action we propose to ourselves in days to come. Ours may be the boldness, the determination, and the confidence of those on whose side is the right. Moving in the line and direction of the divine purpose, we know that we shall be conducted to sure and glorious victory. More than any people under heaven, Baptists may claim the promise,—"The people that do know their God, shall be strong and do exploits."

(3) THE RESOURCES OF THE PROVINCE.

We should not, perhaps, omit to allude in this connection, to the ground of encouragement furnished in what we believe will be the favorable bearing upon our future growth and

advancement, of the unfolding and development of the natural and individual resources of the Province. The geographical position of Nova Scotia, as well as her natural wealth, is indicative of the proud position she is destined to occupy. Pushing her breast out into the Atlantic, she seems to be extending her hand to welcome the peoples of the old world to her shores. The God of nature seems to have intended her to be the artery of communication between the two hemispheres, and the golden viniculum of their union. Her agricultural capabilities are unrivaled. Her shores swarm with fish. She is beginning to build ships for the world, and the amount of tonnage now owned by her people, in proportion to their number, exceeds even that of Great Britain. Her numerous and capacious harbors afford safe and ample anchorage for all the navies afloat. Her timber, and granite, and gypsum, and lime, and lead, and coal, and iron, and copper, and silver, and gold, and pearls, make her almost incomparably rich, and are attracting to her the tide of emigration, and foreign capital and enterprise. It may be predicted that at no very distant day her population will be decimally increased, so that for every hundred thousand of inhabitants, she shall have a million. Then her surface will be braided with the iron rail and the telegraphic wire, and her whole self will flash, one of the brightest gems on the English crown.

But if in this prospect of material prosperity we discover a sign of promise, so does it furnish us with a summons to duty. To seek the consecration of growing wealth and influence, to the cause of God;—to provide a supply of spiritual labor equal to the increasing demand:—to strengthen feeble churches, and embrace every opening that shall offer for the planting of new ones;—to harness, in one word, to the chariot of religion, all the forces of that multiplying natural prosperity which we anticipate: this, among other things, will be our duty and our concern; if the future shall be as bright and progressive as we hope and desire.

(Conclusion next week.)

To the Editor of the Christian Messenger,

DEAR SIR,—A correspondent of the *Christian Messenger* of June 1st, over the signature R. L. W., writes, in a gentlemanly and respectful style, respecting a former communication of mine and seems to demand an answer from me. He says he does not know what I mean by the term "Coalitionist." I wish him to understand that I mean I would have the people coalesce, unite and agree to choose and put the most suitable men into the Legislature, by uniting to form one undivided body. For party is party, under whatever name it may assume. Not unfrequently are the most unprincipled, artful and deceptive men made choice of to support their party. When there happens to be a change of Government, they put out some of the best and most efficient men from office, and substitute some inexperienced and perhaps imbecile person because he was a favorite or perhaps a relative, in his place.

The old Government as it stood in the time of Governor Wentworth, was something like what I call a Coalition Government, the best men in the right place, and that by the united voice of the people. Until we return to something somewhat similar, will not our Government continue to be a mere faction? as has been too much the case during those party squabbles since then.

I know as well as my friend R. L. W. about the pledges of government, with regard to railways, Dalhousie, &c. Did the country—that is the great body of the people—ever ask for or were they ever consulted, or give their consent to such obnoxious acts, and is it not high time those overt acts were rectified or repealed, the general voice of the people heard and their requests, as far as agreeable to reason, answered.

With regard to the subject of roads and bridges I did not deny that a large share was given for the present year, perhaps to save appearances, and prevent complaint on this score, but what will be done for the future? When the building of the Pictou Railway is in full operation in connexion with the annual grants to Dalhousie, will it not drain the province to its very vitals. Where then are the means to be procured for the roads, and bridges, and other necessary purposes? I know of but one way. Will not the alternative be to tax the people?

I hope the people will reasonably and rationally take those matters into serious consideration.

Yours truly,

Horton, June 8th, 1864.

S. F.

As grace begins in God's love to us, so it ends in our love to Him.