

Register 14th July 07.

THE LATE REV. DR. D. PATON.

CLERIC AND EDUCATIONIST.

A CHARACTER SKETCH.

"Be content to do the best you can to benefit your contemporaries, and never mind about work that will live. It is the wrong standpoint for a man to strive to accomplish literary work that will go on down the ages when the hand that wrote it has long crumbled into dust. The question should not be so much of working for posterity as of living for to-day." That simple sentence, uttered long ago by the Rev. Dr. David Paton, who passed away at an early hour this morning, explains the character of the man, and the secret by which he retained for more than 29 years the pastorate of Chalmers Presbyterian Church. He lived for the duty that lay nearest to his hand, to accomplish to the best of his ability the duties of his charge; and, by his unostentatious manner, his ready sympathy, and kindly charity, won the hearts of the people among whom he laboured. His bright and ever-genial personality gained him friends everywhere, and his cultured thought and wide information were ever placed at disposal for the public good. Dr. Paton was never an orator, but his addresses were always acceptable, and he never wasted words, nor spoke for the mere pleasure of speaking. He possessed, as one said, "the calm of assured strength, and it was evident that he had learned the magic secret which placed him above the frets and fumes of daily life that wear out the lives of ordinary mortals." In his pulpit and platform utterances his bearing was dignified and his utterances were suited to his audience. Simple he could be on occasion, or profound; but he never paraded his learning. He was a constant reader of the best masters of literature, especially in the realm of theology; and the resultant effect upon himself was that his discourses were as fresh on the last day of his public ministry as on the first, and always gave evidence of careful thought and due preparation. He was never moved by the conflicting discussions on theological questions, and he preached, as he believed, that Christianity, based on the cardinal truths of the Old and New Testaments, was potent to destroy the evils that beset the community, and to implant the seed of good whose fruitage would make for the higher life of the individual and the State. Dr. Paton was an ardent believer in the extension of education as a means to the uplifting of the people. He gave the concerns of the Adelaide University his best consideration, and in his connection with the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery insisted that the cultivation of a love for the beautiful and the curious, no less than an appreciation of the practical and the utilitarian, was of the highest importance in the development of the Commonwealth and its separate States. He was a man of quiet habits, but no great philanthropic movement appealed to him in vain for such assistance as he was able to render. No man ever yet occupied so large a space in the world's activities that his place could not be filled; but, though successors may be appointed in the various spheres in which Dr. Paton moved, and though his work may be carried on by others, it will be a long time before the man whose loss is now deplored shall be forgotten in connection with the objects to which he directed his attention and energies.

—Early Life and Student Days.—

Dr. Paton was born at Dunfermline, Scotland, in 1841, and for the formation of his sturdy character owed much to the intelligence of his artisan father and the piety of a devoted stepmother. He received his schooling chiefly at Commercial Academy. He entered the University of Glasgow in 1860, and after passing through a course of classics, mental and moral philosophy, mathematics, and physics, graduated M.A. in 1864. Of his teachers the veteran Lord Kelvin still survives, and one of his book treasures was a prize for work done in his laboratory, with the signature of that eminent physicist attached, of whom the militant Huxley said, "Gentler knight there never drew a lance." In 1864 Dr. Paton was constituted a life member of the council

of the Glasgow University, so that he had the right of voting for an M.P. for the academic constituency of Glasgow and Aberdeen. From 1864 to 1868 he attended theological classes at the "Hall" of the Free Church in the western metropolis of Scotland. In 1868 he graduated in divinity (B.D.) at the university, one of the two first in the Free Church who took that degree, the other being the Rev. J. Sommerville, son of the late Rev. Dr. Sommerville, a widely known evangelist. During nearly the whole of his student career Dr. Paton had the inestimable advantage of the friendship and influence of the Rev. Dr. Walter C. Smith, of Free Tron Church, Glasgow, and it is impossible to exaggerate the lifelong benefit of that connection. Having been duly licensed by the Free Presbytery of Glasgow, he first preached for two or three months at Cardross, on the Clyde, and then occupied the station of Garelochhead for about two years. For a few weeks he acted as assistant to the Rev. Dr. Roxburgh, in Glasgow, and was ultimately called to Dalton, Dumfriesshire, about five miles from Carlyle's birthplace, where he remained from 1872 to 1877.

—Life in Australia.—

Having accepted an invitation to Chalmers Church, one of several put before him while he was in the rural charge named, he came to Australia, and landed at the Semaphore on September 29, 1877. He preached his first sermon in the new pastorate on October 7 of that year. In 1878 he was admitted M.A. (ad eundem gradum) University of Adelaide. In 1879 he was appointed to succeed the Rev. P. MacLaren as Professor of Hebrew, Old Testament history, and theology in Union College, and afterwards added the subjects of Biblical criticism and humanities. The institution was dissolved in 1887. In 1886 Dr. Paton received the degree of D.D. from Glasgow University, when the subject of his thesis was "The relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament." He had been a member of the Adelaide University Council since 1886, and at different times had acted as co-examiner with the professors in mental and moral science. He was Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly of South Australia in 1888 and 1902, and of the Federal Assembly of Australia in Melbourne in 1896. He had also been a member of the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery for 20 years. During the whole of his long pastorate he had only once until lately been laid aside with illness, and on that occasion for only three weeks. Recently his church granted him a six months' release from work in the hope that his health might be restored by the rest, and the Public Library Board also gave him special leave of absence. In 1877 Dr. Paton married Isa Ann McGhie, daughter of Mr. John Robson, of Lochnaben, Dumfriesshire. The widow survives him, and there are two sons and a daughter (each B.Sc. of Adelaide), and one son is also B.A. of Cambridge University.

—Chalmers Church and the Succession of Pastors.—

The Rev. Ralph Drummond, of Fifeshire, was the pioneer of the Presbyterian Church in South Australia. He belonged to that section of the church known as the United Presbyterians of Scotland. For lack of better accommodation he held services in his own home in Angus street in 1839, which eventuated in the erection of a church in Gouzer street some years later. This was, for two years, the only Presbyterian Church in Adelaide. In 1841 the Established Church of Scotland sent out the Rev. W. Haining to South Australia. He was cordially welcomed by the representatives of the various religious bodies already established. The Church of England on North terrace put its place of worship at his disposal, and the Congregational Church followed suit. A small building belonging to the Wesleyan body in Hindley street shortly became vacant. This was hired, and was the cradle of the Grenfell Street Church (where Cowra Chambers now stands), which was opened in 1844. While these churches were peacefully making progress the Established Church in Scotland was passing through the same phase that had been experienced by the Established Church of England long years before, and a large number of the strongest and best of its adherents found they could no longer conscientiously subscribe to much of its creed and practice. This dissatisfaction culminated in 1843, when 500 clergymen abandoned their livings and faced the world, stripped of all its counts worthy at the bidding of conscience. The outcome of this movement, headed by the historic Dr. Chalmers, was the beginning of the Free Church of Scotland. This in turn sent out a representative to Adelaide in the Rev. J. Gardner, who commenced work in St. Paul's (Anglican) schoolroom, Pulteney street, in 1849, then in the Freemasons' Hall, Pirie street, and in the Exchange Hall, King William street. On July 6, 1851, the congregation moved to

the church erected for its accommodation in North terrace, named after Dr. Chalmers, which still continues to be known as Chalmers Church.

In 1865 the Presbyterian Churches in South Australia adopted a common basis for their services. After the Rev. John Gardner left to go to Launceston (Tas.) the Rev. John Davidson succeeded him in 1870. The wife of this minister was a daughter of Hugh Miller, celebrated as one of the most brilliant writers of English. Originally a mason, Hugh Miller won his way to fame by his keen observation of geological phenomena and the singularly lucid manner in which he made his discoveries known. In 1874 Mr. Davidson was designated Professor of English Language and Literature in the newly formed Adelaide University by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Walter Watson Hughes, who gave £20,000 as an endowment to the chairs of English language and classics, but reserved to himself the right to name the first occupant of each chair. On resigning the pastorate to the Rev. Dr. Paton Mr. Davidson was presented with an address, and the Chief Justice presided over the valedictory meeting. Mr. Davidson remained one of the elders of the church till he died in July, 1881.

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Professor Ennis and Mr. Harold Parsons, who has accepted a position in connection with the teaching staff of the Conservatorium of Music, will arrive in Adelaide by the P. & O. mail steamer Mooltan next week.

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THE LATE DR. PATON.

The death of the Rev. David Paton, D.D., the popular and esteemed minister of Chalmers Presbyterian Church, North-terrace, which was announced in "The Advertiser" on Thursday, was not unexpected. He had been dangerously ill for several months, and his medical advisers for some time had given up hope of his recovery. He passed away very quietly at 2.30 a.m. on Thursday, and so closed a life which had been full of usefulness and piety. Few Adelaide clergymen were better known than Dr. Paton, who had been a prominent personage in ecclesiastical circles in this city for nearly 30 years, and none of them was more highly respected either within the ranks of his own denomination or beyond its borders. He was an earnest, unassuming man, but his influence was widely felt, and it may truly be said that the world was made better because of his presence in it. Dr. Paton had lived for years at the manse on North-terrace, where he was always accessible to those who sought his help or advice, and it was there that he died.

Dr. Paton, who was in all his nature a thorough Scotchman, was born in Dunfermline, Fifeshire, on March 19, 1841. He received his schooling chiefly at the Commercial Academy, where he was specially indebted to two masters, Mr. Andrew Macdonald, who taught him to articulate with distinctness, and Mr. William Arthur, who did much by his example to lay the foundation of the student's character. He entered the University of Glasgow in 1860, and after passing through a course of classics, mental and moral philosophy, mathematics, and physics, he obtained the M.A. degree in 1864. One of his teachers was the veteran, Lord Kelvin, and the University prize which he valued most was a book in which the eminent physicist inscribed his name and indicated that the award was for work done in the laboratory. In the same year Dr. Paton was made a life member of the council of the Glasgow University, so that he had the right of voting for a member of the House of Commons for the academic constituency of Glasgow and Aberdeen. Between the years 1864 and 1868 he attended the theological classes of the Free Church in the western metropolis of Scotland, and the knowledge he acquired during those four years enabled him to pass the examination for the Bachelor of Divinity degree at Glasgow University. He was one of the two first students of the Free Church to take the degree, the other being the Rev. J. Sommerville.