

"An Old Communion Sabbath."

"An old Zorra boy," who wields the pen of a ready writer and knows whereof he writes, is contributing a series of interesting papers to the Woodstock Sentinel-Review, on "Pioneer Life in Zorra." We can vouch that his description of "the old Communion Sabbath" is true to the life, because in our boyhood days we attended just such gatherings in West Gwillimbury, Eldon and Mariposa, as well as at Beaverton, in our native township of Thruash. Many of our aged readers will peruse this sketch with mingled feelings; while to the young it should not be without interest, as truthfully portraying scenes that would now be impossible to witness anywhere in Canada.—Editor.

*"There, there on eagle wings we soar,
And time and sense seem all no more,
And Heaven comes down our souls to
greet,
And glory crowns the mercy seat."*

Christopher North speaks of the Scottish Sabbath as a day upon which the sun rose more solemnly, yet not less sweetly than on other days with a profound stillness pervading both earth and skies. Such was the Communion Sabbath in Zorra on the occasion before us. A brilliant Canadian sun cast light and shadow on field and forest, while above was the dark blue sky, with here and there a fleecy cloud. For hours before the time of meeting from far and near, worshippers might be seen gathering to the little log church, many of them travelling ten or twelve miles. It was a time of much prayer in the congregation, and it was no uncommon thing for the church-goer to see, here and there, persons emerging from the woods, where they had spent the whole morning in wrestling with God for His blessing upon the communion services. Let no one belittle such prayer. To-day the British people all over the world are sounding the praises of General Gordon, and doing themselves honor by erecting a monument to his name. Perhaps a braver man never breathed God's air. But whence his faith, his courage, his heroism? He was what he was because of secret prayer. During each morning of his first sojourn in the Soudan there was one-half hour when there lay outside his tent a handkerchief and the whole camp knew the significance of that small token, and most religiously was it respected by all, whatever was their color, creed or business. No foot dared to enter the tent so guarded. No message, however pressing, was carried in. Whatever it was, life or death, it had to wait till the guardian signal was removed. Every one knew that God and Gordon were alone in there together. In more senses than one the pioneers were strong men, because they were men of prayer. Some came to the church in ox-teams, but most on foot, and up to the time of worship they darkened the roads as they still kept coming. And now the church is crowded from end to end with thoughtful earnest worshippers. Perhaps the majority of those present are men, but the women are there in large numbers. They sit as families, the mother in one

end of the pew, the father in the other, with the children in the order of their ages between—a happy contrast to what we too frequently see in our churches today, father and mother in a centre pew, the boys in the gallery, and the girls somewhere else. While, of course, the greater number are residents of the township, many are there from such places as East and West Williams, Efrid, Mosa, Gwillimbury, etc. Looking around the congregation, you can discern almost everywhere that physical robustness and vigor, and that energy and force of character, that have always distinguished the best class of Scottish peasantry. The old women wear the white mitch with a black ribbon tied around, the young women are plainly dressed, but for neatness and good looks would compare favorably with those of any congregation similarly situated to-day. Regular living, plenty of sleep, fresh air, plain diet, and wholesome exercise will do more for their health and beauty than all the advertised nostrums of our day. These men and women love their church, and they are ready to make any sacrifice to attend its ordinances. Around the pulpit, and in front of it, were seated the elders. We give their names: Robert Matheson, George MacKay, John MacKay, Hector Ross, Alex. Matheson, Alex. Rose, Wm. MacKay, and Alex. Munro. The preacher was the Rev. D. MacKenzie, and seldom did he preach with more fervor and power than on this occasion. The Psalm sung was the one hundred and sixteenth:

*"I love the Lord because my voice
And prayer he did hear,
I, while I live will call on Him
Who bowed to me His ear."*

It is needless to say there was no choir or organ. The singing was not artistic, but it was hearty and congregational, unlike too much of the singing of to-day, where all is done by a choir and an organ, while the congregation remains as voiceless as an asylum of mutes or a grave-yard of the dead. The prayers were specific, appropriate, fervent, and unctuous. The text was Cor. 1, 8-9—"Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." Every eye was upon the preacher as he dwelt (1) on what Christ was, "he was rich"; (2) what he became, "he became poor"; (3) why this wonderful change, "for your sakes." With clearness and effectiveness the preacher described Christ as the sinner's substitute. "For your sakes he left the glory he had with the Father from all eternity; for your sakes he lay in the manger, suffered hunger, thirst, weariness and persecution. For your sakes he spoke wonderful words and wrought wonderful miracles. For your sakes he endured the mock trial, the scourging, the agony and the crucifixion." Then there was an invitation given to all poor and sorrowing ones to come and, through his poverty, receive

the riches of divine grace. "You are poor in the things of this world," said the preacher, "but to-day you may become millionaires in grace." A part of the twenty-six Paraphrase is sung:

*"Ho! ye that thirst, approach the spring
Where living waters flow;
Free to that sacred fountain all
Without a price may go."*

After this there was the "fencing of the Table." This was a distinctively Highland custom, and has now fallen into disuse. But whether its disuse is conducive to better church membership or to a higher type of religion generally is very doubtful. It is quite possible that in unskilled hands the "fencing of the Table" might discourage weak believers, and it might considerably diminish the list of church members; but would it diminish the read strength and efficiency of the church? If it diminished, the quantity would it not improve the quality? "But what was this fencing?" says one of my young readers. At the old communion, the communicants did not, as to-day, sit in their pews while they partook of the bread and wine. There was a long table extending through the centre of the church, from one end to the other. This was covered with a snowy white linen cloth. And before the communicants were invited to surround this table, the fencing took place. First the minister warmly invited all true believers to the table. "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, abundantly, O beloved." Then unworthy communicants are solemnly warned. The holiness of God's law is declared, and its application to the thoughts of the hearts as well as the outward life. "This is a holy ordinance and only those who are living holy lives have a right to it. Any living in sin who approach this table are guilty as Ananias and Sapphira were, of lying unto God. All such we solemnly debar from the table of the Lord. This bread and wine are not for you. Some of you know the sins you indulge; perhaps it is the profanation of the holy Sabbath, "doing your own ways, finding your own pleasures, speaking your own words." Some of you may be guilty of swearing or lying, or dishonesty or drinking, or uncleanness. If you take your place at this table, you will eat and drink unworthily; and in the name of the Lord Jesus, the great King and Head of His church, I solemnly debar you. Remember he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself. But all you who truly love the Saviour, and are seeking to serve Him come and welcome."

Slowly, one by one, the communicants leave their pews and take their seats at the table. Evidently the feelings in the minds of some are those of dread rather than of affection; and the minister occasionally remonstrates with them for their slowness in coming forward, reminding them that they are not coming