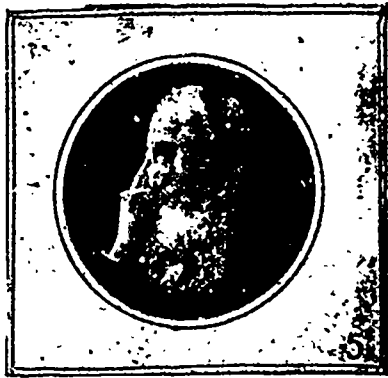


CANADIAN PULPIT.

No. 44.

Outlines of discourse preached in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Niagara, on the 19th of October, 1894, on the occasion of the Centennial Celebration of the organization of the congregation there in 1794; by Rev. William Gregg, D.D., Professor of Church History in Knox College.

TEXT "Remember the days of old," Deut. xxxii: 7.—These words form part of the Song of Moses in which he recounts God's dealings with his church in ancient times. They suggest the propriety of reviewing the history of the church in later times, as well as in the days of old.



REV. WILLIAM GREGG, D.D.

I propose, therefore, in connection with this Centennial Celebration, to sketch the history, especially the earlier history, of the Presbyterian Church in these provinces, hoping that by the blessing of God, a brief retrospect may serve to awaken gratitude for the past and inspire confidence for the future. During yesterday's meetings, the most important particulars

were narrated respecting the Church in Niagara and its neighborhood. It seems proper that a more extensive field should now be reviewed. I intend, therefore, to call your attention to some particulars in the history of our Church throughout these western provinces of the Dominion. I would like also to say something respecting our Church in the Maritime Provinces; respecting, for example the Nova Scotia Colony of the Huguenots, who were the first Presbyterians in British North America; respecting the Dutch Reformed who were also Presbyterians, and over whom a pastor was ordained in 1770, respecting the Presbyteries of Truro and Pictou formed in 1786 and 1795, which represented the branches of the Secession Church, usually called the Burghers, and the anti-Burghers, and respecting the union of these Presbyteries along with representatives of the Church of Scotland, in 1817. But I think it better to confine my review mainly to these Western Provinces.

The capture of the City of Quebec in 1759, was the crowning epoch in the series of events by which, in the providence of God, the provinces which constitute the Dominion came into possession of the British Government. At this time the Province of Quebec which then included the Province of Ontario, contained a population of about 70,000 of European origin. There were besides upwards of 7,000 converted Indians. Almost all these, of both origins were Roman Catholics. There were only a few hundred Protestants. In one of his despatches, General Murray describes the French Roman Catholics as frugal, industrious, moral and devout, but very ignorant. Of the Protestants he says, "They were the most immoral collection of men I ever knew." Very poor therefore at this time were the prospects of Protestantism.

Soon after the capture of Quebec a Presbyterian congregation was organized in the city. It met for worship in an apartment in the *Jeux de Paume* College. Its first pastor—the first Presbyterian minister in these western provinces was the Rev. George Henry. He was a minister of the Church of Scotland, had been a military chaplain, and is said to have been present at the capture of Quebec. He died in 1795. He is described as a good and faithful minister of the gospel. It may be stated that two years previous to his death Dr. Jacob Mountain was appointed Bishop of Quebec. He was the first bishop of the Church of England in the western provinces, which had previously formed part of the diocese of the Bishop of Nova Scotia.

The first Presbyterian minister of Montreal was the Rev. John Bethune. He had officiated as chaplain of the Royal Militia during the revolutionary war, had been imprisoned, and after his release had suffered great distress. In 1786 he came to Montreal, and there organized a congregation, to which he ministered till the following year, when he removed to Williamstown, in the County of Glengary, where he continued to labor as a good and faithful

minister till his death in 1815. One of his sons became Dean of Montreal, and another Bishop of Toronto; one of his great-grandsons is at present Presbyterian minister of Beaverton, in this province. He was succeeded in Montreal, by the Rev. John Young, who in 1802 removed to Niagara. After Mr. Young's removal, application to become minister of the vacant charge was made by Mr. John Strachan, then conducting a classical school in Kingston, but Mr. James Somerville, who occupied a similar position in Quebec, was chosen as pastor of the Montreal congregation. Mr. Strachan afterwards took orders in the Church of England, became Archdeacon and then Bishop of Toronto, a member of the Legislative and Executive Councils and President of King's College. For more than half a century he took a prominent part in the educational, ecclesiastical and political affairs of Canada, the history of which would probably have been very different from what it is, had he been elected pastor of the Presbyterian congregation of Montreal.

In the year 1791, the old Province of Quebec was divided into the two provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, now Ontario and Quebec. At this time, the population of Lower Canada numbered about 140,000, and of Upper Canada 20,000. In Upper Canada there was scarcely a town or village except Kingston and Newark, now Niagara; Newark was the seat of government. Mr. Bethune was then the only Presbyterian minister in the Upper province. The next who came to it was the Rev. Jabez Colver, who had been invited to come by General Simcoe, and who was settled in the County of Norfolk, where he labored with great fidelity till his death in 1818. After Mr. Colver, came the Rev. Robert Dunn, whose organization of the Church in Niagara in 1794 we now commemorate. He remained pastor for only two years and then retired from the ministry of the gospel. Two other Presbyterian ministers came to the province before the year 1800, both from the Dutch Reformed Church of the United States. One of these was the Rev. John L. Broefflo who came in 1795. He labored faithfully in the Counties of Stormont and Dundas till his death in 1815. The other was the Rev. Robert McDowall who came to the province in 1798, and who labored chiefly in the townships bordering on the Bay of Quinte, where his memory is still cherished as that of a faithful and laborious pastor, and who died in 1841. In the earlier years of his ministry, the ministers of the Methodist Church were not permitted to unite in marriage, even the members of their own congregation, and, on this account, the services of Mr. McDowall were called into requisition by Methodists as well as Presbyterians. The number of marriages celebrated by him, up to 1836, is estimated at 1,100.

In the year 1800, there were altogether only four Presbyterian ministers in Upper Canada, namely, Messrs. Bethune, Colver, Broefflo and McDowall. The number of Methodist ministers was six, of Baptist ministers four, and of Church of England ministers three. The three Church of England ministers were Messrs. Stuart of Kingston, Langhorn of Ernestown, and Addison, who became chaplain of the Parliament which met at Newark, now Niagara.

In 1802, as has already been mentioned, the Rev. John Young, who had succeeded Mr. Bethune in Montreal, became minister of the Church in Niagara but remained only two years. He afterwards went to Nova Scotia, where he died in 1826. He was succeeded in Niagara by the Rev. John Burns, during whose incumbency the church and town of Niagara were burned by the Americans in the war of 1812-1815. He himself was taken prisoner, but was permitted to preach to his captors. After his release, he resumed his labors in Niagara and neighborhood. He is described as an earnest, scholarly and effective preacher. He died in 1822. His eldest son was the late Judge Robert Easton Burns, who was named after the Rev. Robert Easton, of Montreal. Both ministers had belonged to one of the Secession Churches of Scotland.

The same year, 1802, in which Mr. Young came to Newark there was settled in the Niagara peninsula another Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Daniel W. Eastman, who was a native of the State of New York. Long-continued, faithful and effective were his pastoral and missionary labors which were carried on, oftentimes amidst great difficulties and perils. He died in 1865. During the closing years of his life, he was compelled to retire from regular pulpit labors on account of failing eyesight; yet continued to preach occasionally even after he became entirely blind. Like Mr. McDowall he was frequently called upon to marry Methodists and others as well as Presbyterians. He is said to have married 3,000 couples during the course of his ministry. One of his grandsons is now minister of the Presbyterian congregation in Oshawa.