

From Halifax.

ABOUT REV. ROBERT DAVIS AND THE REV. RICHARD PRESTON.

"O may God prevent R. Davis and Black Preston from making any disturbance. O may the Prince of Peace be in our midst."—Extract from Edward Manning's journal, written June, 1828, a few days before the memorable Association at Horton, at which the Granville Street Church was received, and Horton Academy founded. That Association was large even to overflowing. Rev. Charles Tupper, who preached the Association sermon, says in his journal, that all the people could not get into the meeting house; and "an overflow meeting was held in the orchard." The patriarch Manning had his thoughts on this meeting of the Association, then only a few days in the future when he made the entry in his journal. The disturbance he refers to was one he greatly feared would take place in that Association.

Richard Preston was a black man, an ex-slave and a man of a good degree of natural eloquence, such as is sometimes possessed by men of his color. Robert Davis was a young man who had been a soldier. He left the army and became a Baptist minister.

John Burton arrived in Halifax from England in 1792. He was then a pedit-Baptist preacher. He went to Knowlton, New Jersey, in 1793, and returned in 1794, a regularly ordained Baptist minister.

His heart went out for the colored people of Halifax city and its neighborhood. His work among them was greatly blessed. He organized a church; collected money in Halifax and in the United States and built a meeting house. In 1814 and 1815 as a result of the revolutionary war a large number of colored people from the Southern States came to Halifax, and thus the numbers already there, were largely increased. Mr. Burton labored hard among them, both in the city and in the country. He was their minister, their father and protector. Difficulties that would otherwise have been settled in courts of law, were settled before him. He was highly esteemed by the public men of Halifax and greatly beloved by the colored people.

In 1828 he was an old man. His life had been largely sacrificed for the people of color. On the premises where his meeting house stood, he had a dwelling house, where he spent the greater part of his public life in Halifax. At this time, when he was full of years and at peace with his flock, the ex-slave, Richard Preston, came on to the ground in company with this noted Robert Davis. They preached to the colored people both in the city and in the country. Never had this people been so moved and excited as they were under the preaching of these two men—one white and the other black. Under the temptation of their popularity they forgot what was due to Father Burton. They "pleased the young people and the old people and the people of middle age. The larger part of Mr. Burton's flock forsok him, and became the disciples of "Black Preston and R. Davis." The autumn and winter previous to the June, in which Edward Manning made the entry in his journal, had been one of division, excitement and trouble in the colored church at Halifax. The leading men in the Granville Street church, organized in September 1827 sympathized with Mr. Burton and gave him their moral and material support. This course called down on their heads the wrath of "Black Preston and R. Davis." Mr. Manning was aware of this. He expected the two men would appear on the ground at the Association "all fit for a fight." Davis did not disappoint him. No record is found of the presence of "Black Preston." Mr. Manning understood Robert Davis. He belonged to the class of church "smashers" who are ambitious for large game. Some hunters are satisfied with the fox or the lynx; others again despise small creatures such as these; nothing less than a Bengal tiger, an African lion, a Rocky mountain bear or an elephant in the jungles, can inspire their passion and gratify their ambition. Such is one class of ministers, a very small class, thank God, so far as Baptist clergymen are concerned, who knock churches to pieces, and pass on leaving the slow and difficult task of reconstruction to their brethren in the sacred office. R. Davis was a distinguished member of this species of the genus preacher. In that conflict of which he was the creator, he was immensely gratified. It is seldom that a fighter of this sort faces such distinguished and formidable opponents—Crawley, Nutting, the Johnstons, Ferguson, the fathers in the denomination, and the whole Baptist Association. R. Davis was in his element. He was one of that class of young ministers, unhappily not extinct, who boast that they do not fear those who have taken the place of great leaders; do not quail before majorities. So soon as the discreet young Charles Tupper had finished preaching the association sermon R. Davis slipped up into the wingless pulpit, and began to harrangue the congregation on the merits of his case, and the danger to the Baptists of admitting to their ranks the Granville street church; and later, when a motion was before the body to receive the church into the association, he opposed it with all the force of what Dr. Crawley called his "rude eloquence." The Association had for a moderator a skillful Scotsman—the Rev. James Munro. The

discretion of the moderator and of the whole body suppressed the fighting young minister; and thus was answered the prayer of Father Manning.

If any of the present generation of ministers should find churches being cleft asunder, as by a wedge, by means of the course they feel conscientious in taking, as did R. Davis, in the matter of the Burton church; or if, in being true to their convictions, a bit of dynamite is put under the ecclesiastical structure, which when ignited, will make of it many instead of two pieces, as does the wedge, let them think of "R. Davis and Black Preston."

What obligation was upon them to consider the case of the old Father Burton, who for more than a quarter of a century had been the tender and successful shepherd of the flock? Black Preston's impassioned eloquence, and R. Davis' fiery fighting ability swept the major part of the flock from the care of the infirm, genial patriarch. What means the two meeting houses at Preston, the two at Hammond's Plains, so near each other? "Black Preston and R. Davis" did it. What man's the loss of the property on Barrington street, where the Burton church stood? Credit R. Davis and Black Preston with that loss. Had they not scattered the flock, the meeting-house would have been retained. They abandoned it, to follow "R. Davis and Black Preston," and lost it. It passed into other hands by length of possession; and was never paid for by those who thus came into its possession. The church on Cornwallis street needs it to-day, but it is out of reach.

What meant those two church buildings almost side by side in Sackville, N. B.? What meant the two churches there, instead of one, and all the entailed trouble and loss, known as late as the days of D. G. McDonald and W. E. Hall, pastors? Give fighting R. Davis the credit of this. Black Preston did not help him.

If one of the military type of mind now in the ministry, is inclined to fight for the right, at the expense of confession or schism in the church, let him take a calm review of his spiritual ancestors, "R. Davis and Black Preston, and this penchant for exerting his rights, irrespective of consequences may be moderated. There is no fragrance in such names.

"Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God." REPORTER.

India Letter.

You have all heard of the Savara people who live upon the hills. You have also heard of the

SAVARA MISSION

that was organized two years ago. It is a young enterprise but full of promise. It is, strictly speaking, a Telugu mission to the Savaras. Our eight Telugu churches appoint a Board to carry on this mission work. For the present the missionary conference also appoints some members on the Board. There are four Telugu men and three Canadians on the Board. We hope that our Telugu people will rise to the opportunity and respond to the call to such an extent that this mission will be distinctively their own effort. When they become able to carry it altogether without advice or help from the missionaries we shall gladly withdraw and leave the field entirely to them. The great need that we have felt was a wise and consecrated pioneer missionary for this work from among the Telugus. We hoped that one of our best young men would offer, but were disappointed. The interest seemed to flag during the past year. However a new interest was awakened when we met in conference in January. Mr. Powell, of the American mission, urged that something more be done for these hill people. Miss D. Prazer thrilled us all by an account of the way she was led to take such a deep interest in the Savaras. She urged the Telugu Christians to assume this new responsibility and not expect the people of Canada to do it. Then she offered Rs 1000 per year toward this work. She is not a Telugu but India is her native land and she is a member of one of our Telugu churches. Several of our Telugu brothers were deeply moved but no one volunteered to go as a missionary to the Savaras. Bro. Hardy offered to go, and was eager to undertake this difficult task. But he could not be spared at present from Polkonda; and our Savara Board could hardly assume his support. Besides this we have grown to feel that perhaps it is God's will for the Telugus to supply the men and money for this work. As our home Board is burdened with debt already, and cannot seem to grapple successfully with the work it has already in hand, it seems useless to look to the homeland for either men or money for the Savara mission. Some three months ago Bro. Subraidu and other Telugu preachers made a

SAVARA TOUR.

They were smitten with hill fever. Bro. Subraidu was so ill that he thought he might not recover. But the fire burned in his heart as well as the fever in his body. He was tremendously concerned about these poor Savaras. Even while still lying ill with fever he yearned to go back and try it again. He rallied from the attack of fever and is now quite well again. Lately our hearts were rejoiced to hear that he had offered himself to the Savara Board as the

TELGU MISSIONARY TO THE SAVARAS.

Of course he met with a good deal of opposition from even his friends. He is one of our very best Telugu preachers, and doubtless his friends felt, as the friends of bright Canadian men often feel, that he was too good a man to send to the Savaras.

"IS YOUR HEAD CRACKED?"

was one of the questions asked him. Another was: "Have you no sense?" At last seeing that he was determined to go, one of his friends said: "Why not throw your wife and children in the well before you go?" Praise God for this missionary volunteer among the Telugus. He will be a representative of the eight Telugu churches and they will be urged to unite in supporting him. He has quite a family. The family will live in Tekkali for the present, and he will return to see them now and again as his work may permit. To the people of this land a distance of a hundred miles takes one to a "far country." They dread to go far from home, and are a very timid people. Hence it requires as much grace for one of these brothers to undertake a work like this as for a Canadian to come all the way from Canada.

Bro. Subraidu will meet with many trials and difficulties. Will you not pray often for him that his faith and courage fail not. His wife has acted nobly. At first she rebelled against the Lord's call. But now her heart seems to be greatly moved, and she gladly joins her husband in these new experiences. Pray also for her.

Next week I shall tell you of his ordination which took place last week.

W. V. HIGGINS.

Tekkali, April 3rd, 1901.

ORDINATION AT CHICACOLE.

At the call of the Chicacole church delegates assembled for the purpose of setting apart Bro. B. Subraidu as a missionary to the Savaras. Two delegates came, from each of the following churches: Bimili, Bobbili, Vizianagram, Tekkali, Palkonda, Parlakimedi, Apulamparas.

This ordination service was one of more than usual interest. Bro. Subraidu, who is one of our choicest young men among the Telugus, has been greatly stirred concerning the matter of evangelizing the Savaras. Feeling that necessity is laid upon him, and that he must preach the gospel among these hill people, he now goes forth as a representative of our Telugu churches—their missionary.

The delegates assembled in Chicacole on the 29th of March. Two were appointed on the council by the Chicacole church, and five missionaries (Messrs. Gullison, Corey and Higgins, with Misses Clark and Archibald) represented the home churches. The council organized by making Bro. Gullison, Moderator, and Bro. P. David, Clerk. In the morning the writer led a devotional meeting and gave an address on "Ordination." This was followed by Bro. Subraidu's examination. This was very thorough, and related to his conversion, call to the ministry in general, and to the Savara work in particular, his view of Christian doctrine, etc. The council was thoroughly satisfied and advised the church to proceed with the ordination. In the afternoon the following program was carried out:

Devotional service—led by Bro. P. David.

Charge to the Candidate and Right Hand of Fellowship—by Bro. Corey.

Charge to the churches (whom he will represent, and who will support him)—by Bro. Somalingam.

Ordination prayer—by Bro. Veeracharyulu.

Benediction—by Bro. Subraidu.

Lest our Telugu Christians should misunderstand the meaning and purpose of the ordination service it was explained to them that they must not suppose that our brother would now be qualified to perform any priestly functions. The ordination did not qualify him to do anything whatever. It was merely a recognition of qualifications which we believe he has already—and which the Lord, not man, has conferred upon him. Chief among these qualifications is the ability to preach the gospel. The ordination enables him to go forth to this new work with the seal of approval which the churches give him. It was made clear that the ordination did not qualify him to administer ordinances. Lest our Telugu people should fancy that only an ordained man can administer the ordinances, Bro. Subraidu has been baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper in the Chicacole church and with the authority of that church, for a couple of years, though unordained. To assume that only ordained men can properly administer the ordinances is, we think an unscriptural assumption—is sacerdotalism from which we would jealously guard our Telugu converts. The question of the use of the title "Reverend" was also discussed. It is too large a subject to enter into just now, but suffice it to say that however harmless or useful or appropriate the title may be in Canada, some of us are extremely doubtful as to the wisdom of adopting it in India. We all know what the title means in the Church of Rome and in the Church of England. It smacks of the priesthood, tends to emphasize the division of Christians into Clergy and Laity, has no warrant in Scripture, etc., etc. Most all of our Canadian Baptist Missionaries prefer to drop the title so far as we are concerned. Our Mission Report is conspicuous by the absence of all titles.

In the recent ordination, Bro. Subraidu was not given the title "Reverend." He does not favor the use of it, and did not want it. Now as to his work. As a fully ordained minister in our denomination he will assume the responsibilities of this new work to which we feel that God has called him and set him apart. Will all who read this remember to pray for this Telugu brother and his family. He will need much health, patience, love and wisdom in this new field. The Lord can supply it all.

W. V. HIGGINS.

Tekkali, April 6th, 1901.