

restored by the Act of VI. Wm. IV. Cap. 9 in 1836, which placed them on the same level as other churches. This was the year in which our first church building was erected, as shown by the inscription in our oldest Church Bible.

It is thus clear why the Brantford Church registers only begin in 1841, although the records of the Sunday School and the inscription in the Church Bible run much further back—to 1836 and 1828. We were not legally entitled to keep church registers, nor were our ministers entitled to marry, baptize and bury in 1825 or 1826, when the Brantford Church was first founded here on the Congregational model by Mr. Wilkes, his large family, his relatives, and others who had moved up here from York (Toronto) and continued the work Mr. Wilkes began there in that village or town in 1820 where he and Mr. Fenton preached and he and his family conducted a Sunday School as they had done in Birmingham, England, before coming out. The Brantford church, like the church of the Pilgrim Fathers, had a temporary stopping place at Muddy York on the shore of Lake Ontario, as the Pilgrims had many temporary homes on the shores of the Atlantic, but it was the same body of worshippers which ultimately fixed the permanent home for their Independent Church in this settlement in the bush by the ford over the Great River.

It is only since the long series of reforms carried by Mr. Gladstone after the election of 1868, such as the Education Act of 1870 which introduced Board Schools into England, the opening of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge to Nonconformists, the opening of commissions in the army and navy to ordinary qualified citizens, the abolition of purchase in the army, the opening of the civil service to open competition in August 1870, the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, etc., that Nonconformists have reached a position of equality in the distribution of power and place in England. The writer well remembers the storm which took place in the town he lived in when a Nonconformist Mayor was elected to be head of the borough, the first since Oliver Cromwell's time, who had then smashed the Red Castle hanging over the town and installed a Quaker, Thomas Lloyd, as Mayor, and a famous Independent preacher, Vavasour Powell, as a chaplain to his forces at the castle. When an Independent Mayor was elected about 1870, and dared to invite the Council to worship with him on Mayor's Sunday at his usual place of worship, the Town Clerk locked up the emblems of office, and refused to let the Maces be profaned by a visit to a Dissenting Chapel. Another storm followed in the same county shortly after when the Liberal Lord Lieutenant placed the first Nonconformists on the County Bench of Magistrates. On this ground the late Marquis of Londonderry, as Lord Castlereagh, broke the long truce which had existed between the Whig and Tory landowners under the limited suffrage of that day, and the Compact which gave the Boroughs to the Whigs and the County to the Tories, and unsuccessfully attacked the Borough seat held by the brother of the Liberal Lord Lieutenant, Lord Sudeley. The father of the same Liberal peer some years before gave shelter to the father of a well-known Brantford Baptist who was evicted from his farm by the Rector of a parish in Gloucestershire, England, because he refused as a conscientious Baptist to have his little son christened in infancy by the Rector.

Nonconformists were the Gibeonites of England before Mr. Gladstone's day, hewers of wood and drawers of water to the Whigs and Tories of the Anglican Church. They paid heavy tithes as farmers to a church they never entered. They had no share in the government of the parish schools, not even in those which were hurriedly built about 1870 to prevent the occupation of the vacant ground by an elected School