

in British North America. At that day, when the population of the whole of Canada did not exceed that of Montreal—when John Wesley was preaching with almost youthful vigour in the three Kingdoms, and Charles was penning his incomparable hymns, and Fletcher was shedding upon the parish of Madeley the unction of heaven, and the marvellous Asbury was still in early prime, a few there were in the homes of this city who, calling themselves Methodists, "feared the Lord and thought upon His name."

How this small society, on whose behalf Dr. Coke appealed to the "pious and benevolent" of Great Britain and Ireland, ebbed and flowed during the next seventeen years we know not. The eighteenth century had closed its eventful volume before we next hear of it.

In the year 1802, the Rev. Joseph Sawyer, a minister in connection with the New York Conference, and at that time stationed on the Bay of Quinte, visited Montreal. The object of this devout Evangelist—whose name is still sweet in the Churches, and who had, a short time previously, been made the honoured instrument of the conversion of the subsequently distinguished Nathan Bangs—was to ascertain if a minister could be prudently stationed in this city. He found a few who received him cordially, and assisted him in obtaining a place for preaching. A small society of seven was organized, the acuteness of the number proving that, in the absence of proper ministerial oversight, not much progress, if any, had been made during the seventeen years of its existence.

1803 was a memorable year in the history of Lower Canada. Slavery still existed to some extent in the Province. About 300 negroes were in bondage in the districts of Montreal, Three Rivers, and Quebec, but by the decision of Chief Justice Osgoode, delivered at the place just named, slavery was declared to be inconsistent with the laws of the country. By this Act Canada placed herself on this momentous question, a whole generation in advance of England. This red letter year was also memorable, Methodistically, in Montreal, having for the first time in its history a stationed minister—the Rev. Samuel Merwin, who is said to have been more than usually eloquent—and appearing as a regular appointment on the minutes of the New York Conference. Mr. Merwin, having obtained a supply for Montreal, spent six weeks in Quebec; but not finding sufficient inducement to continue his visit, returned to his charge in this city.

In 1804 the Rev. Martin Ruter was appointed to Montreal, which is reported that year as having 12 members. In 1805 the number returned was 20, but no Minister's name appeared on the minutes. It is probable, however, that as the Rev. Samuel Coate was the Presiding Elder of the Upper and Lower Canada District both these years, that he occasionally spent the Sabbath in Montreal, while attending to the onerous duties of his extensive charge. The want of a regular



THE WESTERN METHODIST CHURCH.

Engraved by J. H. Walker for the Montreal Gazette.

Minister might be some what in filled by a zealous layman, Mr. Richard McGinness, who, at this time, took an active part in the affairs of the infant church. With the exception of three months spent in Quebec, the Rev. Nathan Bangs,—then in his 27th year, and full of saintly fervour, which burned with undimmed brightness to the close of a long, useful and honourable life,—laboured the next two years in Montreal. At the close of the first year, the young Minister found that his expenses had exceeded his income by \$49. Montreal had not then earned its well sustained reputation for liberality. At the commencement of the second year Mr. Bangs hired a room, and with some success, but many difficulties pursued his pastoral labours. Reviewing this period, he says "the Society was small and I had to grapple with many embarrassments; but God supported me through them all, and now half a century later, I still praise Him for all His goodness to me then."

About this time, one Sabbath day, two men strolling along Little St. James Street, heard the

sound of Christian Psalmody proceeding from one of its rooms. They listened, and eventually went in. The whole service so deeply impressed them, that before leaving, they voluntarily connected themselves with the small, but devout number, in whose hallowed sanctuary they had so unexpectedly found themselves. One of them, Mr. Thompson, has left behind him a number of respectable descendants, who reside principally in this city and its neighbourhood; the other, Mr. Fraser, lived to patriarchal years, and only recently passed away, being, at the time of his decease, the oldest member of the church of his early choice.

In 1805 the small society of 20 members projected the erection of a church, with a dwelling for the Minister, but it was not until two years later that the project assumed a practical form. Possibly some at that day might counsel delay, and denounce the contemplated erections as visionary; and not without reason. A small society, unable with comfort to meet the moderate stipend of its Minister, was certainly not placed in the most promising position for the speedy construction of a church and parsonage. Mr. Coate, however, obtained subscriptions in the Upper Province and the United States, and afterwards went to England where he was largely assisted. Montreal did then, in the person of its presiding elder, what scores of struggling churches have done since, from Gaape to Saratoga, in reference to Montreal. And nobly has she responded to the demands made upon her, in no case during the 57 years of her subsequent history has she "forgotten the heart of a stranger."

The projects, so liberal-ly devised, were shortly after executed, and in 1808 a small stone church in Little St. Joseph Street (now St. Sulpice) was formally dedicated to the worship of Almighty God. This first substantial product of Methodist enterprise still remains on the same side of the street as the French Church, and in close proximity to it. The only individual now living who imity to it. The only individual now living who

subscribed to this building, and who remembers the ministry of Dr. Bangs, is John Torrance, Esq., who came to Montreal in 1807, and who still survives amongst us, in the possession of "a green old age." Dr. Bangs was re-appointed to Montreal in 1812 by the American Conference, but the breaking out of the war prevented his coming; and had it not been for the Rev. Thomas Burch, a British subject, magnanimously volunteering to fill the vacancy, this city, with its 52 members, would have been unapprehended for the whole of that untoward period. As it was 1813 presented a vacancy, which, combined with the feeling of national antagonism, fostered by the war, led to an application being made to the Wesleyan Conference in England for a ministerial supply. This application was favourably responded to. The Rev. Messrs. Richard Williams and John Strong, ministers successively in charge, were warmly

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