

(For Dominion Presbyterian)

Pioneer Life in Zorra.

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There has just issued from the press of Wm. Briggs, Toronto, an attractive volume, bearing the above title and written by the Rev. W. A. McKay D.D., of Chalmers' Church, Woodstock, Ont., himself an old Zorra boy. The introduction is by the Hon. G. W. Ross, Minister of Education for Ontario. The first page contains a portrait of the author's mother, with a dedication which speaks volumes for the two whom it concerns. "To my mother, one of the early Zorra pioneers, who has given five sons to the Christian ministry; and who now, in the eighty-sixth year of age, is enjoying the calm evening of a beautiful Christian life, this book is affectionately inscribed by the author."

Zorra, as every Canadian should know, is the name of two townships, east and west, in Oxford County, Ontario, settled about 1830 by Highlanders driven chiefly from Sutherlandshire to make way for "sheep pastures and sporting grounds," for the nobility. Zorra has given over seventy of her sons to the Christian ministry, conspicuous among whom is McKay, of Formosa.

This book, which is beautifully illustrated, is sure to prove of more than local interest, as it gives us a peep into the ways and days of the early settlers of our great Dominion. Indeed in this part of Canada almost the same hardships had to be endured in common and similar were the joys that were shared in. The school system was not so far advanced then as to shape us all in the same mould, hence the country generally, and Zorra in particular, abounded in "characters," and Dr. McKay's facile pen has well described them. Chapters are given on such topics as: The Home Life of the Pioneer; The Sabbath; "Gangin' tae the Kirk," conversations overheard on the way through the forest, "The Men's Day" (the quaint and characteristic speeches of the "Men" are here reproduced with phonographic accuracy); The Catechising, Zorra in the Rebellion of '37, A Funeral Among the Pioneers, Pioneer Ghosts, Witches and Goblins, Schools and Schoolmasters, Pioneer Methodism in Zorra, etc. The author has a way of taking the reader direct to the scenes he portrays; now tugging, tired at the logging bee, now throwing away dull care and dancing with the buxom lassies who are to-day our dignified grandmothers, or again he has us back to the log Kirk listening to that grand old man, Donald McKenzie, or we are trembling under the fire of the eloquent and godly John Fraser. The book has not a dull page. It bristles with humor and is tender in its pathos. It contains most interesting biographical sketches of the great preachers of the day, and there were giants in those days—Donald McKenzie, Lachlan McPherson, John Ross, of Brucefield; Daniel Allan, John Fraser, and Daniel Gordon, men well known throughout the Highland settlements of the Eastern Townships, Glengarry and Western Ontario. By the production of such a work, Dr. McKay has placed posterity under a debt for the faithful reproduction of tender memories, of days of hardship, not without their joys, lived by a sturdy and God-fearing generation, rapidly passing away.

Here an extract or two may be interesting:

Sandy McKinnon's wife, Peggy, had long been dying. Some of Sandy's cronies came to the house and were sitting in the kitchen in the dark, "There was only a cruize in the hoose that had the creech an' wick in't . . . an' what think ye Sandy did? He just took the cruize oot o' Peggy's room an' put it on the kitchen table, that he an' his cronies might see the smoke curlin' up frae their pipes. Then Sandy gaed back tae his wife's room tae see if she wantid anything.

An' Peggy, glowerin', scoulded him. 'Ah, Sandy, ye'll no gie a pair body a licht tae dee wi!' "Dee! dee! is that 'what ye say Peggy? I'll gie ye the licht. An' runnin' tae the kitchen he took the cruize in his twa hands, an' plantin' it down wi' a bang on the wee table at the front o' Peggy's bed, said, "There, dee, noo."

The minister was sometimes hard in his catechisings. Donald went for such examination in order to have his child baptized, but failed. "On his way home he met another going to the minister on the same errand.

"Ah," said Donald, "the minister was hard on me the day. She canna get no baptism." "And what, for no?" said his neighbor. "What did he ask you?"

"Why he axed me how many commandments there are."

"And why did ye no say ten?"

"Ten, ten," cried Donald, "she tried him wi' a hun' (hundred) and he was no satisfied, ye needna try him wi' ten."

The minister was catechising in one of the houses, where the neighbors had assembled for the purpose.

"Catherine McIntosh" said the elder, "will you tell us what is effectual calling?"

At once in a clear, sweet voice that could be heard distinctly by everyone in the house, came the answer: "Effectual calling is the work of God's spirit," etc.

"This," said the minister "is a great question and contains a complete account of the scheme of human redemption. And now, let me see how many here can bear personal testimony to these blessed truths. . . Is there no one who can bear clear personal testimony to the truth of his effectual calling?"

Slowly a young man rose from his seat. His frame shook with emotion. His voice trembled, and tears filled his eyes, while he repeated the answer thus.

"Effectual calling is the work of God's spirit, whereby He hath convinced me of my sin and misery, enlightened my mind in the knowledge of Christ, and renewed my will and persuaded and enabled me to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to me in the Gospel."

While the young man was speaking there was a solemn silence, and as he sat down there was an audible sigh of praise, with here and there an expression of "Thank God." The lad had a genuine spiritual experience and he told it.

St. Catharines.

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English River Church.

At Riverfield, on the banks of the easy flowing English river, in the county of Chateauguay, in the garden of this province, stands one of the neatest and most substantial churches of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. A few of the leading facts and more important events in this flourishing church may not be uninteresting nor unworthy of preservation to many of the readers of the Dominion Presbyterian.

Its history is one that leads back to the troublous times of the Disruption, when so many of the sturdy sons of Scottish birth, stood strongly and courageously for those principles, which, to them, were dearer than life itself. The old English River Church was a frame building, erected about half a mile from the site of the present structure, and dedicated to the worship of God in 1846.

Its first settled minister was the Rev. Mr. Troop, 1850-1853. He was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Milne, who labored from 1854-1858. The Rev. Alex Young was the next pastor, his ministry extending from 1860-1866. In May, 1867 the Rev. C. M. MacKeracher was inducted as minister of the congregation. It was then deemed advisable to proceed with the erection of a new, and more commodious church building, the same to be constructed

of stone, to seat 300 persons, at a cost of \$4,000. A new site was secured and through the earnest and indefatigable efforts of the Rev. Mr. MacKeracher, the corner stone of the new church was laid with appropriate ceremonies on the 24th day of June, 1869.

In the corner stone were placed a copy of the Montreal Witness, Home and Foreign Missionary Record, communion roll of church, name of builder, British-American Good Templar constitution, and by-laws of Knox Church Sunday-school Association, Montreal, portrait of Rev. Dr. Irvine and a Spanish, French, German, British, Canadian and American coin, and the autographs of the following who took part in the ceremony of laying the stone: Rev. Charles M. MacKeracher, pastor, Rev. J. C. Muir, D.D., St. Andrew's, Georgetown; Rev. Alex. Young, St. Joseph Street Church, Montreal; Rev. Robert Irvine, D.D., Knox Church, Montreal; Rev. W. C. Clarke, St. Paul's, Ormstown.

On Sabbath, November 5th, 1871, the church being completed, it was solemnly dedicated to the worship of God, and the congregation entered upon a new phase of service and spiritual progress. Under its scholarly and faithful pastor the congregation grew in numbers, and every branch of work showed an encouraging and healthy growth.

In 1896 the building, through constant use, was found to stand greatly in need of repairs, and with as hearty a spirit as characterized the builders their sons and daughters, now constituting a large part of the membership of the church, gave of their money, and their labors to the work of renovation. At a cost of \$1,435 (labor of congregation inclusive), the church was repaired and beautified, funaces of the latest mode were set up, the platform was carpeted, and a new pulpit and three beautiful chairs placed thereon, the whole free of debt.

The first service held in the renovated building was of a sad and pathetic character. The pastor was not permitted, in the providence of God, to rejoice with the people in the reopening of the church, for he was suddenly called away to his eternal rest after a pastorate of 29 years. The memorial service was conducted on Sabbath, August 9th, by the Rev. Dr. Amaron, of St. John's Church, Montreal. The formal re-dedication was held on August 16th, the services being conducted by the Rev. A. J. Mowat, of Erskine Church, Montreal.

On the 31st day of March, 1897, the people having chosen as pastor, the Rev. J. W. McLeod, he was inducted as pastor of the united congregation of English River and Howick. It having been decided that the globe should be sold and a manse built, steps were at once taken toward the erection of a building. A site, central to the whole congregation was secured on the bank of the river opposite the church building. The committee having secured the services of Mr. R. H. Crawford, of Huntingdon, architect and builder, plans were prepared and the present beautiful building was erected at a cost of \$3,570; \$705 being received from the sale of church property, \$2,415 by subscription, and \$450 estimate of work done by congregation, the whole being now free of debt.

On the 2nd of November, 1897, the manse being completed, it was formally opened, the occasion being graced by the presence of Rev. Dr. McVicar, of Montreal, and other clergymen.

The church continues to show progress in all departments of spiritual work, while contributions to missionary and benevolent institutions have proportionately increased.

The Jews are popularly supposed to be impervious to Gospel appeals, and yet there are reported to be more than 100,000 of them who have forsaken Judaism and embraced Christianity, while more than six hundred Jewish preachers in Europe and America are holding up Christ to the Hebrew race.