

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

SOME OLD PRESBYTERIAN DOCUMENTS.

MR. EDITOR.—During the year which I have devoted mainly to the study of Pioneer Presbyterian History, many curious and interesting documents have come under my observation, some of which I shall be able to deposit for preservation in Knox College library, and a few of which I will copy or refer to in this communication. On the whole the most interesting is a written volume containing Christian experiences of Rev. Jabez Collver, and an account of some of the wonderful "spiritual manifestations" which were "made known" to him in his early life in New Jersey. These were recorded with his own hand when, at the age of eighty-four years, he was closing a ministry in Norfolk county, Ontario, extending through "a quarter of a century." This book will be more particularly noticed hereafter, with extracts, in connection with a sketch of the author's life and most eventful pioneer labours.

First in point of antiquity, and second on my list, is the following church certificate, printed in "old style" type, the signatures and the words in *Italics* being written in the blanks:—

THESE do certify, that the bearer *John McGlashan* an unmarried man resided in the Low Church parish of Paisley more than two years preceding the date hereof during which time he behaved himself soberly and honestly, free of public scandal or ground of church censure known to this session, he was a communicant.

Attested, at Paisley, the 12th day of January Seventeen Hundred and Ninety-five years, COLIN GILLIES, Minister, WILLIAM BELL, Session Clerk.

Mr. McGlashan was father to Rev. Alexander McGlashan and Rev. Leonard McGlashan, who were brought up in Pelham Township, Lincoln County, and have "gone home," leaving many ripened fruits of their ministry, especially on the Niagara Peninsula. A large circle of staunch Presbyterian descendants still remain in Pelham.

Next in order of antiquity are the proceedings of "a meeting of the inhabitants of the town of Niagara, Subscribers to the funds for rebuilding the Presbyterian church in Niagara," "held in the school house on the fifth inst," which I find printed in the Niagara "Gleaner" of the date of June 17th, 1819. The old church building had been destroyed by the Americans, "in consequence of its being occupied by His Majesty's army during the late war." Rev. Charles James Cook, a Baptist clergyman, presided, and, with others, the following resolutions "were unanimously passed."

Resolved, 1st, That this meeting deeply deplores the distress created by the late unnatural and calamitous war; and fully sympathises with their fellow inhabitants and fellow sufferers; the fruits of whose industry, skill and prudence, were all swept away by the late annihilating "besom of destruction," the late war; particularly so upon the recollection, that even their consecrated temple, which they had dedicated to Heaven, was erased to the Earth, and trodden under foot by the invaders of their country.

2. That this meeting, notwithstanding the magnitude of their own personal and individual losses, sincerely regret, that they have even so long neglected this first and greatest, and most important of all their duties, the raising up again of the House and dwelling place of their GOD; fully assured that they can expect but little prosperity and happiness in their own habitations, while the habitation of Heaven remains trodden under their feet.

3. That this meeting feels it to be their duty and the duty of every inhabitant of this town and its vicinity, to exert their utmost abilities in supplying the means to erect again their temple of holiness, and to build up again a house for Him, who in ages past, was "the Lord God of Israel" only; but whom, now, with the mingled emotions of gratitude and delight, they are enabled to name THE LORD GOD OF NIAGARA—THE LORD GOD OF THE CANADAS—THE LORD GOD OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD.

4. That this meeting, for the accomplishment of this most holy object, respectfully request the following gentlemen to be a building committee, viz., The Rev. CHARLES JAMES COOK, RALFE CLENCH, ESQ., ANDREW HERON, ESQ., JOHN BREAKENRIDGE, ESQ.,

JOHN CROOKS, ESQ., GEORGE YOUNG, ESQ., and MR. WILLIAM D. MILLER. The said John Crooks, Esq., to be Treasurer; and Mr. William D. Miller, Secretary of this Society, and four of whom, to be a quorum.

9. That a humble memorial be presented to His Excellency Sir Peregrine Maitland, the Lieut.-Governor of this Province, praying the aid of his enlightened wisdom and ardent piety, from whom everything may be expected which is practicable, to assist the energies of this Society in their difficult undertaking.

The punctuation, Italics, capital letters, etc., are given above precisely as printed in the "Gleaner" more than half a century ago. In the same number of that paper, among the advertisements of articles for sale, appeared the following:—

A SERMON delivered in ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH Quebec; by the late ALEXANDER SPARK, D. D. on the 7th of March 1819, the day of his Death. Also a FUNERAL SERMON preached on the occasion, the 14th March 1819.

Who can furnish a copy of the pamphlet containing these sermons? It was sold, and probably published, at Niagara, by Andrew Heron, whose son Andrew now lives in Toronto.

As an indication of the manner in which pioneer preachers were paid, and of the luxuriousness of their living, the following characteristic subscription paper will be read with interest:—

PELHAM, February 24th 1823.

We the subscribers do agree to pay Mr. Eastman forty bushels of good merchantable wheat for the purpose of having the gospel preached for one year once a month, and the wheat to be delivered at the house of John B Comforts on or before the twenty-fifth day of January next.

Although this subscription reads for "good merchantable wheat," two columns are made, by ruled lines, below, one of which has the letter W. and the other the letter C at the top, indicating that corn, as well as wheat, was "legal tender" for preaching in those days. Twenty five bushels were subscribed under the letter W, and fourteen under the letter C, while one subscription was for "six shillings New York currency" probably about the market value of a bushel of wheat. If Mr Eastman was paid in the same proportion for his services in other places, his salary for one year amounted to four times forty bushels of grain, or, probably, one hundred and twenty dollar cash. Another subscription, three years later, required his attendance "once every three weeks," for one year, to "assist and instruct us to worship our Creator," and it promised, for such service, thirty seven bushels of wheat and ten shillings in Provincial currency.

Here, in an improvised leather cover, is a series of sermons, printed and written, which were preached by the Rev Robert McDowall date not recorded. They elucidate the doctrine of predestination so forcibly as to give no doubt of the preacher's orthodoxy as a Calvinist. I hold these, as a loan from Rev. Peter Duncan, of Colborne, to whom I am indebted for a number of favours. Who can, and will, send me the complete series, for Knox College library? And here is an original letter or report, addressed by Mr. McDowall, under date of January 18th 1839, to Rev. Henry Gordon, who, probably, was moderator of Kingston Presbytery. It is a valuable historical document, and though it bears evidence of having been culled by other historical tyros, it is not yet exhausted. It was kindly sent me by Rev. Thomas Alexander, now of Mount Pleasant, but formerly a member and clerk of that Presbytery.

The Rev. Robert McGill, then of Niagara, in a letter published in 1841, writing of a number of churches in the Niagara Peninsula, said, "Prejudices have been fostered in their minds against the Church of Scotland on very absurd grounds." The fact of the existence of such prejudice, whatever the grounds, is illustrated in the title deed of the church property of Grimsby, now before me, in which I find the following clause.

—"Providing always, and these presents are upon this express condition, that the said church so erected, or to be erected, upon the said parcel of land, shall, at all times hereafter, be supplied solely either with Ministers of the United Presbytery of Upper Canada, from Europe, or from the United States of America, wholly excluding all ministers of the Established Kirk of Scotland."

The venerable representative elder of the church at Barton, Mr. David Hesse, contributes four foolscap pages of memoranda made at an early day, by his

father, who emigrated from New Jersey to Canada before 1790. Under the head of "marriages," he says: "For the first few years, [before the advent of ministers] the parties left Barton in the night, went in a boat to The Forty [Grimsby] to Judge Pettit, and returned the same day. Also, the captain and half-pay officers married some. Advertised at some tavern or store three weeks."

And this leads naturally to the following document, the original of which is before me, and which explains itself:—

PELHAM, Oct. 9th, 1843.

Unto the Honourable the Legislative Council of the Province of Canada, in Parliament assembled, at Kingston.

The petition of the undersigned, of Pelham, Niagara District, humbly sheweth, that your petitioner, having resided in the Province nearly three years and a half, is the pastor of the Presbyterian church in Pelham, N. D., and being an alien, is not qualified to celebrate the marriage covenant. Now, therefore, your petitioner humbly prays that a law may be passed during the present session of the Legislature, to naturalize him. And your petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

ABIJAH BLANCHARD, D. D.

I might continue, at great length, this enumeration of curiosities in my Presbyterian historical museum, but this must do for one article. After the custom of many of the pioneer preachers, with whom I am, just now, "keeping company," I will proceed to close with a few

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

which, though they may not indicate a very close relationship to the preceding discourse, may, nevertheless, be not entirely peculiar in that respect, while they will serve just as well my present purpose.

1. The subject of Pioneer Presbyterian History demands immediate attention, if we would save the fragments which are not already wholly lost. During the past few years, fire has destroyed many valuable documents, and disease and death have clouded the memories or closed the lips of many important witnesses. Stephen Blackston, a beloved ruling elder, who formerly resided in Barton, in this Province, and from whom I have received interesting and valuable letters, was found dead in his bed, in Illinois, on the morning of the recent fifth of December. Though eighty-four years and seventeen days old, he was, to the last, active in the service of the Master whom he learned to know and love, nearly half a century ago, in his Canada home. He retired the night of December fourth, in apparent good health, and with an engagement to go with his pastor the next day to administer the sacrament to an invalid Christian. This engagement was not kept, and his last historical letter has been written. On the same day Rev. Alexander Lewis, from whom I was just about to seek information, "fell asleep" at Mono Mills, Ontario, aged eighty-eight years. I am expecting valuable aid from his library, but the living witness is witnessing on high.

2. I cannot travel personally over all the Dominion to gather documents, make extracts from Journals, and otherwise gather information. I cannot sit down quietly by his fireside in Barrie, with the venerable Rev. Samuel Porter, and talk over the last days of the United Synod; nor can I personally search among the papers of the late Rev. William Smart, at Belleville, for the history of the early days of the United Presbytery. I cannot personally call upon the Rev. Henry Gordon, at Gananoque, nor upon the surviving relatives of the veteran pioneers, William Bell, Robert McDowall, Robert Boyd, William Jenkins, William Proudfoot, John McKenzie, John Gemmill, Thomas Christie, John Machar, James Harris, and others whose names will be readily recalled; but the information they might now be able to furnish ought not, therefore, to be lost to the Church and to the world. Somebody at each place can look up the items and documents and report to me. Will somebody do it?

3. My work will, so far as practicable, cover the entire Dominion, and it will necessarily occupy much time. I desire, as I proceed, to devote a newspaper article to each separately organized movement, which helped to lay the foundations of Presbyterianism in any part of Canada. I design to notice many of the churches, and, so far as I can be furnished the necessary information, I will be glad to assist in perpetuating the memories of the self-sacrificing labours of the individual pioneers.