

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

BRIEF SKETCH OF THE HISTORY AND PROGRESS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN TORONTO.

A PAPER READ BY THE REV. WILLIAM REID, D.D., BEFORE THE PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION, 15TH FEB, 1884.

Toronto, the name of the fair and flourishing city in which we dwell, is an old name. It occurs for the first time, as we learn from Dr. Scadding's interesting volume "Toronto of Old," in an official document addressed by the French Governor to the minister of the day in 1686. The word in Indian is said to mean "Place of Meeting," although, according to others it means "Fulness or Abundance." It appears to have been first applied to the district lying between the present site of Toronto or the mouth of the Humber, and the south eastern part of Lake Huron, now known as the Georgian Bay. The Indians and early voyageurs and traders came by water as far as this part of Lake Ontario, and thence made a portage to Lake Simcoe, and so inward to Lake Huron. In time the name was appropriated to this more southern end of the trail, where a fort was erected by the French about 1752, called "Fort Rouillé," but which came to be more generally known as "Fort Toronto." The site of this fort is now marked by a cairn on the lake shore, just to the west of the exhibition grounds. The favourable position of the place seems to have been perceived at an early period by those who visited it. Major Rogers, who was sent very shortly after the conquest in 1759 to explore the country and take possession of posts, speaks of it as "a most convenient place for a factory." Soon traders and others established themselves at Toronto, and business to a considerable extent was carried on.

The first capital or seat of government for Upper Canada was Niagara, or Newark, at the mouth of the Niagara River; but in 1795 the seat of government was removed by Governor Simcoe to Toronto, the name of which place had been changed to "York," in compliment to the Duke of York, the second son of King George III. I have heard that the place was known at one time by the name of Dublin; but I have not learned whether that name had any official sanction or recognition. The first parliament buildings were erected where the old gaol stands, but they were burnt by the Americans in 1813. They were rebuilt in 1818, but were again burnt, this time by accident, in 1824. They were afterwards removed westward to the site still occupied by them. For many of these particulars I acknowledge my obligation to "Toronto of Old."

From the Scotch names of many of the early settlers in Toronto, we may believe that not a few of them were Presbyterians; but we have but scanty information in regard to any movements for the establishment of a Presbyterian Church. The Rev. Robert McDowall, who was sent as a missionary to Canada by the classis of Albany, in connection with the Dutch Reformed Church in 1798, and who preached for many years along the northern shores of Lake Ontario, no doubt held services from time to time in York, as it was then called, and continued to be called till 1834, when it was incorporated as the city of Toronto. In 1810 the Rev. John Beattie, also sent by the Dutch Reformed Church, organized a Presbyterian congregation, but he seems to have left the place shortly after. Probably troubles connected with the war led to his leaving and to the disorganization of the congregation. Having mentioned the name of Mr. McDowall, I may mention that after itinerating for some time, he settled at Fredericksburgh, on the Bay of Quinte, although he continued through life to labour mainly as a missionary in destitute localities. He was present at my induction in January, 1840, and died a few years afterwards at an advanced age. He is to be regarded as one of the principal pioneers of Presbyterianism in Upper Canada.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ERECTED. REV. JAMES HARRIS.

The first Presbyterian minister who laboured permanently in Toronto, was the Rev. James Harris, who began his labours in 1820. He was a licentiate of the Presbytery of Monaghan, Ireland. His church, a small brick building, stood where Knox Church now stands, on a site given by Jesse Ketchum, whose name is perpetuated not only by his generous gifts to the Presbyterian Church, but by the liberal

things which he devised in connection with the Bible and Tract Societies, and the Sabbath and Public schools of Toronto.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH.

Ten years later, in 1830, St. Andrew's Church, in connection with the Church of Scotland, was built at the corner of Church and Adelaide streets. The Hon. William Morris, father of our townsman, the Hon. Alexander Morris was a prime-mover in the erection of the church, and the organization of the congregation. At the first meeting of those interested in the erection of St. Andrew's church, the Hon. Francis Hincks presided, and Mr. W. Lyon McKensie was secretary. It is worthy of notice that the grand-father of the Hon. Alexander Morris was connected with the organization of the first Presbyterian Church in Brockville, and was appointed president of the Consistory, the congregation at the time belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church. The same Mr. Morris took also a prominent part in the organization of a Presbyterian Church in Montreal.

The first pastor of St. Andrew's Church was the Rev. William Rintoul, of the Church of Scotland, but who had been the minister of a Presbyterian church at Maryport, in England. Mr. Rintoul officiated at the opening of the church on the 19th June, 1831, and on the 30th October, of the same year, dispensed the sacrament of the Lord's supper for the first time, to 112 members. He held the position from 1831 till 1834, when he resigned. For a time he was Superintendent of Missions, afterwards he was settled in Streetsville, whence he removed to Toronto to take part in the work of instruction in Knox College. His last charge was the pastorate of St. Gabriel Street Church, Montreal. He died while on a missionary tour, at Trois Pistoles in September 1852. He was a diligent student, a faithful and devoted missionary and minister, and a truly good man, revered and loved by all who knew him.

In 1835 the Rev. W. T. Leach, now Archdeacon Leach, of Montreal, and vice-president of McGill College, was inducted as minister of St. Andrew's Church. In 1842 Mr. Leach resigned the charge of the congregation and removed to York Mills. He soon made another change, withdrew from the Presbyterian Church, and sought and obtained admission to orders in the Church of England. On the 6th Nov, 1842, the Rev. John Barclay, M.A., (now Dr. Barclay), from Scotland, was inducted into the pastoral charge of St. Andrew's Church. On his resignation, he was succeeded in 1870 by the present pastor, the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, B.D., previously of Peterboro'. On the 3rd Feb, 1874, the congregation resolved that it was expedient to leave the old building and remove to a site which they owned on King street at the corner of Simcoe street. There they erected the commodious, substantial and beautiful edifice now occupied by them. The new church was opened on the 13th Feb, 1876. It is now filled by a large, influential and liberal congregation.

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. REV. J. JENNINGS.

In 1838 a congregation was formed in connection with the Secession Church in Scotland, afterwards known as the United Presbyterian. The first minister was the Rev. John Jennings, under whose ministry the congregation grew in numbers and influence. After worshipping in various places in succession, they erected a church in Bay street, which for many years was occupied by the congregation. Failing health compelled Dr. Jennings to resign the charge of the congregation in 1874. His death occurred on the 25th February, 1876. Dr. Jennings was greatly beloved by the members of his own congregation, and by others. He was a liberal-minded and large-hearted man, and a laborious and faithful minister. On the 20th July, 1875 the Rev. John Smith, formerly of Bowmanville, was inducted as minister of the congregation. In July, 1879, the congregation removed to a more suitable locality, and a more commodious building at the head of Simcoe street, to which the name of Erskine Church was given. The calamity which recently befell the pastor and congregation, in the destruction by fire, of their beautiful place of worship, has awakened deep sympathy in the hearts not only of their Presbyterian brethren, but of members of other congregations. It is hoped that before many months they will again be enabled to worship in a sanctuary equally commodious and handsome.

We have thus noticed the rise of three Presbyterian

congregations in Toronto, that of Mr. Harris, dating from 1820; St. Andrew's church, 1830; United Presbyterian Church, 1828.

KNOX CHURCH.

In 1844, following the changes which had taken place in Scotland in the preceding year, a division took place in the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland; and in Toronto a number of the members of St. Andrew's Church, having separated from that congregation, united with the church under the pastoral charge of Mr. Harris, and took, as a united congregation, the name of Knox Church. The first pastor of the united charge was the Rev. Robert Burns, D.D., formerly of St. George's Church, Paisley, Scotland. To accommodate the increased congregation, an addition was made to the original small brick church; but that structure having been destroyed by fire, the congregation erected the present church, which was opened in 1848. At the time of its erection, it was regarded as one of the best proportioned and most commodious churches in the city. The pastorate of Dr. Burns extended to 1856, when he was appointed to a chair in Knox College. His death occurred in 1869. His labours in various departments were very great. His missionary tours extended to all parts of the older Provinces of the Dominion. But his name is still so well known, and his memory so fresh in the minds of many, that it is not necessary to enlarge. In no future history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada can the name of Dr. Burns be ignored. The Rev. James Harris, pastor of the original congregation, lived for a number of years, and took a deep interest in the congregation of Knox Church, acting as a member of the session. He died on the 5th Sept., 1873. He was a good man, sound in the faith, and, at the same time, ever anxious to follow those things which make for peace.

Knox Church was vacant from 1856 to 1858. On the 10th September, of the latter year, the Rev. Alexander Topp, D.D., for a number of years minister in Elgin, and afterwards minister of Roxburgh Free Church, Edinburgh, was inducted as minister of Knox Church. In the course of his ministry, the congregation greatly increased, and additions, at a large cost, were made to the building, for the better accommodation of the Sabbath school, and for the more efficient carrying on of the spiritual work of the congregation. Shortly after returning from Scotland, in the autumn of 1879, Dr. Topp was suddenly removed by death, to the great grief of the congregation, of the entire Presbyterian Church, and of the community generally. The zeal and the wisdom with which he promoted the cause of Presbyterian union, and the services which he rendered to the Church at large, endeared him to all his brethren and to all who knew him, while his fidelity and devotedness as a pastor, made every family belonging to his congregation feel that they had lost a friend when Dr. Topp was removed. In the course of a few months, the vacancy caused by the death of Dr. Topp, was filled by the induction of the present pastor, Rev. H. M. Parsons, formerly of Buffalo, N. Y. He was inducted on the 15th April, 1880. During his pastorate the congregation has increased, and it is to be hoped that he may long be spared to carry on the work of God in the city.

COOKE'S CHURCH.

For some years, no addition was made to the number of Presbyterian congregations in the city; but from 1851 and onward, new congregations were from time to time organized. The first that was formed, after those already mentioned, was Cooke's Church. It was organized in 1851, the original members being mostly from Knox Church. The congregation worshipped for several years in a chapel on George St., a little south of Duchess St., which had been at one time occupied by a congregation of British Methodists. In July, 1858, the building on Queen Street still occupied by the congregation was opened for public worship. The first minister of the congregation was the Rev. Dr. Robt. Irvine, originally from Ireland, but more recently from St. John, N.B. Dr. Irvine's ministry in Toronto extended from 1852 till 1854, when he was translated to Knox Church, Hamilton. Dr. Irvine was subsequently minister of Knox Church, Montreal, whence he removed to Georgia, United States, where he died a few years ago. The successor of Dr. Irvine was the Rev. Andrew Marshall, who, after a brief ministry, in the course of which he greatly endeared himself to the congregation by his deep piety, his earnest preaching and his affectionate fidelity as a