

## Rev. Robert Wallace.

## AN AUTOBIOGRAPH.

These reminiscences date from the year 1838, when I began the work of preparation for the ministry under Dr. Rao, then Principal of the Hamilton High School. In this I was preceded by the Rev. Angus McColl, who was the first Canadian student for the Presbyterian Church. In 1841 I studied under the care of Rev. William Rintoul, of Streetsville, who remained ever after a constant and kind friend. In March, 1842, I entered Queen's College, Kingston, and there I spent three sessions in attendance on lectures until the organization of the Free Church in April, 1843. Mr. Thomas Wardrope, now so well known throughout the Church as the Rev. Dr. Wardrope, having been appointed Principal of the Grammar School in Byton, now Ottawa, I was invited by the Rev. Professor Campbell, of Kingston, to act as assistant to the late Rev. Dr. Bain in the preparatory department of Queen's November, 1844, when Knox College opened in Toronto, I entered and took my last session in theology. During the session as was then, and has continued to be the custom, I preached almost every Sabbath in some place within reach of the city, receiving as remuneration, but not always, only my expenses. Since then things have changed in this respect.

In 1845, at the close of the college session, at the request of the Rev. Mr. Rintoul I engaged for over a year in mission work, preaching and organizing mission stations, and collecting for him statistics of all whom I found sympathizing with the Free Church. In this way I traversed the whole country from Kingston to Goderich, travelling on horseback over the roughest of roads, occasionally swimming my horse across a swollen stream, covering in all about 10,000 miles. In places the only road was a trail through the bush marked by a blaze on the trees. The homes then were the old log houses, now well-nigh unknown, often shanties unplastered, the chinks between the logs filled up with wood and moss, and when the snow was falling and the night stormy, letting in the snow upon the bed, with coverings sometimes so scanty that sleep was impossible owing to the cold. I preached during this time, often from seven to ten times a week, sermons of the length, then common enough, of an hour or so, and the meeting places were rude schoolhouses, barns, or when both of these failed, in the open air, perhaps with a waggon for a pulpit. These journeys began often early in the morning and continued until late at night, with scanty fare also, many a time, even though it was the best the people could give, involved excessive toil with much exposure. Calls came to me during this period, but feeling it a duty to finish this mission which I had undertaken, these I declined, until at length my kind friend, Mr. Rintoul, seeing that the work was proving too much for me, in the trying conditions of these days, advised my acceptance of the next call which I should receive. This I did and was ordained and inducted into the pastoral charge of Keene and Otonabee on July 16th, 1846.

At that time fever and ague was a very common form of disease, and for this kind of sickness Keene and Otonabee was a very unfavorable settlement. In my reduced state of health and strength I soon caught the fever, and became so ill with it and continued to be, that my doctor warned me that if I did not withdraw from that district, and from work for a time, death would be the result. The Presbytery accordingly accepted my resignation in 1847, and for five months I was entirely laid aside. My salary at this time was the handsome sum of \$400, with a horse to keep out of it as well as myself. And as illustrative of the income of country ministers at that time I may just here mention that for the first eleven years of my ministry this was the average salary, and for some twenty years it was not more than \$510. In spite of these hindrances to my work it was honored and blessed of God to the ingathering of souls, and for God's blessing given in this way, I became fully assured of my call to the ministry of the gospel, a condition of mind I had longed for. The promise had been made good, that His word should not return to Him void, and to this I have ever since in all my ministry clung. Fearing that my state of health would not allow of my returning to the ministry, I had inducements offered me at this time to enter into mercantile business, but having been assured of my call to God's work in the ministry, I felt it my duty to decline all such offers.

Having to some extent recovered my health, in 1848 Mr. Rintoul sent me to Niagara, as a place free from malaria, to take charge of the Free Church there which had then two stations. I was next sent to Ingersoll to preach, and called and settled there in January, 1849, as pastor of Knox Church. The church contained only twenty members, most of them but a short time out from Scotland and poor. Again, the salary was the usual \$400 with a church to seat, which was done largely at my own expense. Here on this extravagant salary I was married to Miss Mary Ann

Barker, and two children were born, a son and daughter, the former being now the Rev. Professor Wallace, M. A., of Victoria College, Toronto.

God was pleased to bless my ministry in Ingersoll. In 1858 the church was found to be too small and the people of their own accord set about the erection of a new and larger one. In 1859 the twenty members had grown into a hundred and twenty. About this time I began to suffer from trouble in my throat, and after ten weeks spent at Olifton Springs, I was advised to try a voyage to Britain and a complete change for some time. The way was providentially opened up for my doing this by my appointment to visit Britain as agent for the French-Canadian Missionary Society. After collecting about \$4,000 in Canada for this society, I left for the old country, and arrived in Glasgow in July 1860. Here I received great kindness at the hands of Mr. Bryce, the Glasgow member of the Toronto firm of Bryce & McMurich. Seeing my weak state of health, and my throat trouble, he generously, at his own expense, sent me to the Malvern Water Cure, where, under Dr. Gully, I so far recovered strength, and returned to Edinburgh. But here my throat still troubled me, Sir J. Y. Simpson, the world-famed physician, ordered me to the hilly country about Braemar, where in six weeks I fully recovered.

My visit to Britain happened at a most unfortunate time for the object I had in view. Famine in India, a massacre by Kurds of Christians in Syria, and many thousands of unemployed weavers at home were making large and crying demands upon British Christians. I succeeded, however, in collecting some \$5,000. This work, both in Britain and Canada, I found to be exceedingly laborious, necessitating an immense correspondence and innumerable calls early and late. I again therefore looked to my chosen work, a pastorate and preaching the gospel, and in July 1862 I was settled in the pastoral charge of Drummondville and Thorold, where I remained until September, 1867, when I was called to and settled in West Church, Toronto. This charge, my last, when I entered upon it, was small and the people mostly in humble circumstances. The congregation grew in numbers and prospered in worldly circumstances, so that my salary which had been when I entered upon it but \$800 per annum, increased with its growth until in 1888 it became \$2,000.

From the time I first went to Kingston as a student, I had always taken a deep interest and an active part in Sabbath schools, and West Toronto inviting this kind of work, the Sabbath school there grew until it became, it was said, the largest in connection with the Presbyterian body in Canada. To this and faithful pastoral visitation among my people I attribute, under the blessing of God, the continuous and steady growth of West Church. At the request of the session I expounded at the Wednesday evening prayer meeting the Scripture lesson for the school on the following Sabbath, and this practice I kept up for twenty years, while the teachers remained after the meeting to study the lesson by themselves. This labor was blessed with abundant fruitage. Up to October, 1887, one hundred and forty new members had been received into the fellowship of the Church. About this time, at the request of the session, a series of special religious services were held which was kept up for several weeks and these, followed by constant pastoral visitation and personal dealing, resulted in the addition in one year of two hundred and seventy-five to the fellowship of the Church. But this incessant work, accompanied by sleeplessness, brought on symptoms of disease which became ultimately so threatening that in obedience to medical advice my resignation was presented to the Presbytery of Toronto, and accepted in April, 1890. During the twenty-three years of this pastorate the membership had grown to seven hundred and sixty, while in wealth and material resources the congregation had advanced tenfold. To God be all the glory that I have not labored in vain.

This narrative is drawn up in the hope that it may prove an encouragement to many a minister who is now bearing the burden and heat of the day. It is still my delight from time to time, as God gives opportunity to preach His glorious gospel, and especially among those to whom in former years and in earlier pastorates it was my privilege to break the bread of life. The spread of the principles of Temperance has always been in my estimation of such help in the building up of the Church of Christ, that from the first it has been to me a duty and privilege to labor zealously on its behalf both by voice and pen, so which many letters printed in the newspapers and pamphlets published, which have had a large circulation, bear abundant evidence.

During my ministry I received 3,500 into Church fellowship. The jubilee of my entrance upon the ministry was celebrated in West Church, Toronto, on September 15th, by a public meeting which filled the church, and amid the warm congratulations of many friends, old and new, whom to me it was a very great pleasure to meet. The Rev. Dr. Gregg, an old and honored friend, presided, and among those who took part on the occasion were the Rev. W. S. Ball, Rev. Prof. MacLaren, Rev. Prof. Wallace, of Victoria Methodist College; Rev. Dr. Parsons, Rev. Messrs. Wm. Patterson, J. A. Turnbull, W. G. Wallace, and Rev. Principal Caven, D. D., the Rev. Drs. Blackstock and Parker of the Methodist Church, and Messrs. R. S. Gourlay, elder, and John Laidlaw. I would close these reminiscences in the language of the Psalmist, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life."