



THE OLD CHURCH, NIAGARA.

OUR PARISHES AND CHURCHES.

No. 41—ST. MARK'S CHURCH, NIAGARA, ONT.

WHETHER viewed in the light of natural scenery or historic interest few places more readily invite attention than the somewhat ancient town of Niagara. All the way from the great cataract of that name to the mouth of the river, scenery lofty, sublime and lovely, stands out prominently to view; but the town itself is small, having lost golden opportunities that were seized upon by other places of more enterprise and worldly wisdom. Once it was the seat of Government and the chief military station of Upper Canada. Now it is not even a county town, and but traces only of a quondam greatness are to be seen. Here, at the close of the last century lived Governor Simcoe and his estimable lady, so well known as his efficient co adjutor in a great deal of his official work. Here was held the first Upper Canadian Legislature, and here were the headquarters of those who, with General Brock, stood up manfully for the defence of Canada. To the magnificent harbor hard by came troops of United Empire Loyalists at the time of the American Revolution, preferring to start life afresh rather than live under an alien flag, and peopled the Niagara district, which ever since has been noted for the patriotism of its inhabitants. It was here that they, in their first Parliament, enacted a law abolishing slavery,—Canada thus being the first country in the world to possess the honor of passing such a Christian-like enactment, becoming at once the refuge for many a poor slave, chased by bloodhounds, from the Republic which the Loyalists had left.

Here in the year 1792 was laid the foundation of St. Mark's Church, and the Rev. Robert Addison was appointed missionary, and subsequently

Rector of the parish, by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which about that time was so wisely established. The register of the parish has been carefully kept from the beginning, and by it we are enabled to judge of the heterogeneous population, English, Irish, Scotch, French, Indians and Loyalists from "America," that went to make the town in early days. We find the names here of Col. John Butler, regarded by the Americans with feelings of horror, and of the descendants of Theyendinagea, or the famous Capt. Brant, and of his sister, intermarried with some of the best of the English people.

"Brant and Butler!" says an eloquent writer in the *Buffalo Courier*, "What an ominous conjunction of names—baleful names—redolent of the blood of Wyoming and Cherry Valley; of shuddering revolutionary horrors! Not a mother along the frontier settlements but turned pale and gathered her babe closer to her bosom at the sound of those hated names, for they called up visions of savage massacre, midnight skies redened with the glare of burning homesteads, and captivities hopeless and more terrible than death. The Tories, Rangers and Royal Greens were deemed more cruel and remorseless in those days than their barbarous allies." Recent investigations, however, have shown that many of the hard things attributed to Col. Butler by American writers were unfair exaggerations.

The earliest record of burial in St. Mark's is taken from a rude tombstone, now in the vestibule of the church, is thus written and spelled:—

LENARD BLANCK

Deceased 5d August 1782

In 1797 there is the following entry: "February 5, Moses, Phebe (married), negro slaves of Mr. Secretary Jarvis." "Oct. 28, 1801 (burial), 'Poor Old Trumper,' Capt. Pilkington's gardner." "April 29, 1802, 'Cutnose Johnson, a Mohawk chief.'" Such are the entries found, interspersed among the names of Colonels, Captains and other great ones of the parish. For example, "May 3d, 1805 (baptism), Eliza Anna Maria Vigoureux, d. of Captain Henry, royal engineers, and Eliza; godfather, Rev. Louis Vigoureux; godmothers, Dowager Lady Spencer and Anna Maria Vigoureux."

During the war of 1812 the Americans held the town of Niagara for a short time, and the graveyard of St. Mark's and even the sacred edifice itself bear traces of their sacriligious touch. On some of the large flat tombstones may be seen the marks of their weapons as they used them for a bench in preparing their rations, or for various