

REQUIRED READING, S. S. R. U.

STORIES FROM CANADIAN HISTORY.

BY THE EDITOR.*

"THE PROTRACTED MEETING."



THE day after the Quarterly Meeting, Elder Ryan drove to his home—if home it could be called, where he spent not one-tenth of his time—at the Twenty Mile Creek, Neville, who travelled thus far with him, thought nothing of the twenty miles walk to the Holms, where he had left his horse.

One of his plans for the spiritual welfare of his scattered flock, was the holding of a series of protracted meetings at the various settlements. One of these was held at the wooden school-house of the little hamlet at Queenston. An old pensioner of the Revolutionary War had gathered a few children together and taught them their Catechism, and as much of "the three R's" as he knew. He was a staunch Churchman but had a friendly feeling to the Methodists, because Mr. Wesley had been himself a member of the Established Church.

The meeting awakened a deep and wide-spread interest. The awful scenes of carnage and death, of which the little village and its immediate vicinity had been the theatre, seemed to have brought the realities of another world more vividly before the moral consciousness of the community. Moreover there were few families that had not lost some friend or acquaintance, or perchance—

A nearer
Once still, and a dearer
One yet than all other.

Under these chastening influences many hearts were peculiarly open to the reception of divine truth. The gracious invitations of the Gospel, and the warnings and admonitions of the Law, were alike faithfully and affectionately urged by the young preacher. It was a characteristic of the preaching of the times that it had in it a strong back bone of doctrine. It was very different from the boneless jelly-fish-like preaching we sometimes hear,—vague and indefinite, without a single clear conception from beginning to end.

A very profound impression was made by one sermon especially, on a subject on which Neville seldom preached, but which on this occasion was strangely impressed upon his mind. The text was that sublime Scripture and its context: "And I saw a great white throne and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."

The solemn impression of the sermon was greatly deepened by the singing, to a weird wailing sort of tune, of the hymn which followed. The hymn, whose majesty of imagery—a majesty

*This sketch is taken from a volume by the Editor, entitled, "Neville Trueman, the Pioneer Preacher—a story of the War of 1812," pp. 244, price 75 cents. Wm. Briggs, Toronto, Publisher.

derived from the Scriptures themselves—and whose resonant cadence gave it much of the character, in English, of the sublime *Dies Ire*, in Latin, was as follows:—

"The chariot! the chariot!—its wheels roll in fire,
As the Lord cometh down in the pomp of His ire;
Lo! self-moving, it drives on its pathway of cloud,
And the heavens with the glory of God-head are bowed.

"The trumpet! the trumpet! the dead all have heard,
Lo! the depths of the stone-covered charnel are stirred!
From the sea, from the earth, from the south, from the north,
All the vast generations of men are come forth.

"The judgment! the judgment!—the thrones are all set,
Where the Lamb and the white-vested elders are met!
There all flesh is at once in the sight of the Lord,
And the doom of eternity hangs on His word."

A picket of soldiers was billited in the village, several of whom attended the meeting ostensibly for the purpose of making game of the "Yankee preacher." But such was the intense earnestness of the man and the spiritual power that attended his message, that all attempts to "make game" of the services were soon abandoned, and not a few who "came to mock remained to pray."

A deep seriousness pervaded the entire neighbourhood. The usual winter amusements and dancing parties were, to a great extent forgone—and even the utilitarian paring bees in the great farm kitchen were shorn of much of the fun and frolic and divinings of the future by means of apple-peelings thrown over the left shoulders, or apple-seeds roasted on the hearth. The present was felt to be too sad, and the future too full of foreboding to encourage fore-readings of the book of fate. The great revival was the subject of fireside conversation at many hearths, and of deep questionings in many hearts. Some of the most notorious ill-livers of the neighbourhood had experienced the emancipating spell of the Truth that maketh free, and were no longer the slaves of vice and drunkenness.

Katharine Drayton pondered these things in her heart. She was conscious of many good impulses, and her life had been marked by many generous and noble traits. But she felt in her inmost soul that these alone would not suffice. She could not from her heart repeat the words which she often sang in the congregation with her lips,—

"Jesus, thy Blood and Righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

"Behold shall I stand in thy great day,
For who ought to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame."

Still she felt an aching yearning of her soul for a perfect sympathy that she had never known since her mother died. Often as a little child, in some childish grief or trouble, she had flung herself on that loving mother's bosom and wept out her sorrow there. And now, with her burden of the dreadful war impending like a hideous nightmare on her soul; with her constant

foreboding and solicitude for her brother, so thoughtless—nay reckless in his daring—a yearning for his soul's immortal welfare, if he should be stricken down untimely, even more than for his body, she felt a deep soul-longing for—she knew not what—but for some support and succour for her faltering spirit. She knew not that it was the wooing of the Celestial Bridegroom for the young love of her soul; that it was the voice of her Heavenly Father, saying, "Daughter, give me thy heart."

One night, heavy with a weight of care, and full of vague yet terrible apprehensions of the future, she flung herself upon her pillow and bursting into tears, sobbed out the pitiful cry, "O mother, mother! see thy sorrowing child." As she lay sorrowing on the pillow, she seemed to hear a voice of ineffable sweetness, whispering to her soul the words of a familiar Scripture: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort thee."

The holy words inspired a sense of hope and confidence in her soul, and led her to lift up her heart in prayer to that loving Saviour who hath promised to send the Comforter to them that mourn. As she knelt in prayer in her little chamber, the moonlight flooding with radiance her white-robed form like the exquisite picture described in Keats' *St. Agnes' Eve*, and poured out her sweet soul to God, she felt the sweet assurance of acceptance filling her heart as the Master said once more: "Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are all forgiven thee."

She felt, however, that if she would experience the fulness of that Divine comfort she must not seek to hide it in her heart, but confess it before men. And from this she experienced an involuntary shrinking. Her nature was one susceptible of great depth and tenderness of feeling, but it was also one constitutionally reserved and sensitive. She knew, moreover, that such an act as joining the Methodists would be exceedingly distasteful to her father, whom she loved with a deep and impassioned affection. He had made the Methodist preachers welcome to his house with the characteristic hospitality of a Virginia gentleman, and because he respected their character and work; but he himself retained his allegiance to the Church of England, which he seemed to think identified with his fealty to the King.

Almost unconsciously the thought of Captain Villiers obtruded itself into Katharine's mind, not without some misgivings as to his opinion of the course which she felt to be her duty. Not that for a moment she entertained the thought of any right on his part to influence her performance of duty, or of any purpose on hers to be influenced by him.

Accompanied by her brother Zenas, Kate, on the next evening, attended the protracted meeting. The school-house was crowded. Towards the close of the service those who had, since the last meeting, accepted the yoke of Christ, were asked to confess Him. "That," thought Kate, "means me; but how can I do it!" She had never even dreamt of speaking in public. It seemed impossible. But she heard the words sounding in her ears, "Whosoever will confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven." Necessity seemed

laid upon her; yet she shrank from the ordeal.

At this moment a pure, sweet, contralto voice began to sing with great fervour of expression, which gave assurance of the deep feeling with which the words were uttered, a hymn of rather uncouth rhythm, with an oft-repeated refrain, which, however, thrilled many a heart. It ran as follows:—

"Come ye that love the Lord,
Unto me, unto me;
Come, ye that love the Lord,
Unto me;
I've something good to say
About the narrow way,
For Christ the other day
Saved my soul, saved my soul—
For Christ the other day saved my soul.

"He gave me first to see
What I was, what I was;
He gave me first to see
What I was.
He gave me first to see
My guilt and misery
And then He set me free.
Bless His name, bless His name,
And then He set me free, bless His name!"

As if constrained by a spell-like influence, Kate rose to her feet, and in a modest but clear and concise manner made her confession of filial trust in the Saviour, and of conscious adoption as His child. When this young and timid girl had thus taken up the cross of confession, others were emboldened to follow her example. One after another paid their tributes of thanksgiving, while at intervals glad songs of praise welled forth from grateful hearts. Some of these, great favourites at the time are now almost unknown. A general characteristic of these songs was a simple refrain, first sung as a solo, but gradually taken up by one after another, till a grand chorus rose and swelled like the organ chant of the winds among the neighbouring pines. One of these, sung to an exultant measure, ran thus:—

"O brothers, will you meet us
On Canaan's heavenly shore?
O brothers, will you meet us
Where parting is no more?"

CHORUS.

"Then we'll march around Jerusalem,
We'll march around Jerusalem,
We'll march around Jerusalem,
When we arrive at home.

Another, of touching pathos—with tears, as it were, in every line, and often bringing tears of grateful emotion to many an eye, sung as it was to a sweet plaintive prayer—ran thus:—

"Saw ye my Saviour? Saw ye my Saviour?
Saw ye my Saviour and God?
Oh! He died on Calvary,
To atone for you and me,
And to purchase our pardon with blood.

"There interceding, there interceding?
Pleading that sinners might live—
Crying, 'Father! I have died!
Oh! behold my hands and side!
O forgive them, I pray Thee, forgive.'"

Another, of similar strain, thus set forth in a sort of recitative the story of the resurrection of our Lord—

"Oh, they crucified my Saviour,
They crucified my Saviour,
They crucified my Saviour,
And they nailed Him to the cross.

"Then Joseph begged His body, etc.,
And he laid it in the tomb.

"Oh, the grave it could not hold Him, etc.
For He burst the bars of death.