

New Glasgow; and James Croil, Esq., Editor of the *Presbyterian Record*, Montreal. The original documents are in our hands:—

EXTRACT FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE LATE JOHN MACKAY, ESQ., THE VENERABLE STIPENDIARY MAGISTRATE OF NEW GLASGOW, N. S.

"The first clergyman of the Church of Scotland that preached in Pictou was Mr. FLETCHER, a young man who called here on his way to Canada. I was then a young man, but the impression on my mind to this day is, that he was the most impressive preacher I have ever heard. He was so different in his manner from the formal, stiff preaching we were accustomed to, that the impression he made on his hearers continued, on most, probably through life. He preached for four Sabbaths in this County: once in a Tent on the Intervale near where the Albion Mines Foundry is now; once at East Branch; once at West Branch; and once at Mount Thom. And considering the sparse population of the County then, he was followed by an immense number of hearers. The last sermon he preached here was at Mount Thom. The people of McLellan's Mountain (myself among them) went all the way there to hear him. It was nothing to walk ten or fifteen miles to hear a sermon in those days!

Such popularity gave great offence to our resident clergymen. Mr. McGregor first tried to get Mr. Fletcher to join his own Body, and this being declined by the young man, every means was used to annoy him. He was literally persecuted during his short stay; the most unworthy methods being resorted to with the view of injuring his character. The day on which Mr. Fletcher preached at "Squire McKay's Intervale" Mr. McGregor was from home; but Mr. McCulloch vacated his own church at Pictou, and preached in Mr. McGregor's church, to prevent the people going to hear Mr. Fletcher. The people nevertheless did go to hear him, and left Mr. McCulloch to preach to almost empty seats."

The next document explains itself. It is an historical letter to the same Mr. MacKay:—

LETTER OF JAMES CROIL, ESQ., EDITOR.

"MORRISBURGH, ONTARIO,  
19th March, 1869.

JOHN MCKAY, ESQ.:

My dear Sir,—You wrote me in October last requesting me to furnish you with further particulars respecting the Rev. Alexander Fletcher whose name occurs in my Historical Report, page 75, under the heading of Martintown. The reference which you made to a clergyman of the same name, who, to your own knowledge, had officiated for a short time in Pictou, "some time between the years 1816 and 1819," interested me very much, and led me to make enquiries from different parties who were likely to know something of Mr. Fletcher's history. I may here state that the information given in the said printed Report was derived from an aged member of the congregation of Martintown, whose memory was admitted to be not very exact, but whose statement appears now, in the light of indubitable evidence, to have been in the main correct. For a long time I was baffled in my enquiries, and had given up hope of eliciting any additional details: this winter, however, I

happened to be in Plantagenet, and was informed by the Rev. Thomas Scott, the Presbyterian Minister of the Township, that a brother of the late Mr. Fletcher is still alive and is a member of Mr. Scott's congregation. I had not time to call upon him, but Mr. Scott kindly undertook to visit him and obtain the information desired. Of this person Mr. Scott writes: "Mr. Kenneth Fletcher is now 81 years of age; he is blind and very infirm, but, being a genuine Christian, bears his affliction with resignation. He came with his brother to Nova Scotia, and then accompanied him to Canada. He has a distinct recollection of having seen Mr. MacKay, and desires now to be mentioned to him."

Mr. Kenneth's statement is to the following effect:—"The Rev. Alexander Fletcher was a native of the Isle of Skye: he studied two years at the University of Glasgow, and completed his theological education at that of Edinburgh. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and very soon thereafter came out to Nova Scotia. He preached on four Sabbaths in Pictou, and was the first minister of the Church of Scotland who officiated in that part of the country. Being dissatisfied with the state of things in Nova Scotia, he resolved to proceed to Canada, and settled at Williamstown in Glen-garry. After a short residence there he removed to Martintown, where he was ordained in the year 1820 by 'the Presbytery of the Canadas.'"—This ecclesiastical Court was composed chiefly of Ministers of the Associate (Secession) Church of Scotland, and was dissolved two years after its formation; soon after which "the United Synod of Upper Canada" was constituted.—Mr. Somerville of St. Gabriel's, Montreal, Mr. Bell of Perth, and Mr. McDowell of Fredericksburg, were present at Mr. Fletcher's ordination; the two last named Ministers having been members of the Associate (Secession) Church of Scotland, accounts sufficiently for the impression remaining on the mind of my informant, who described Mr. Fletcher as having been "a Minister of the Secession Church of Scotland." Mr. Fletcher remained *free* years in Martintown, and, demitting the charge in 1825, he removed to his brother's residence in Plantagenet, where, besides preaching, he found employment in teaching a few young men the Classics—his pupils boarding in his brother's house with him. After a time he discontinued teaching and again devoted himself to the work of the ministry in Cumberland and in Lochaber, until a short time before his death, which occurred in Plantagenet in 1836, at the early age of 45 years.

I have no doubt that you and some others in Nova Scotia will derive pleasure from perusing these additional memories of one of your early pioneer Ministers. For myself, I cannot thank you sufficiently for having put me on the track of investigation by which an interesting item of historic information has been rescued from oblivion.

I hope you have not forgotten my request to jot down all that you know personally, or may be able to obtain from reliable sources, of the early history of your Church in Nova Scotia. Although circumstances have hitherto prevented me from attempting to sketch the history of the Church of Scotland in the Lower Provinces, I have not abandoned the intention of doing so at some future time, when fuller details shall be in my possession, and when I may have more leisure time to put into shape what I already have.

I remain, my dear Sir,  
Yours sincerely,  
JAMES CROIL."

MCKAY, N. S.

1869