

# REPRESENTATIVE MEN OF CANADIAN METHODISM

## III. Tuffey and Neal, Soldier Preachers

LITERARY TOPIC FOR JULY. LESSON, 2 TIMOTHY 2.

FREDERICK E. MALOTT.

THE story of the early days of Methodism in Canada reads like a romance. If some Charles Reade or Walter Scott or a second Francis Parkman were to arise in Canada, he could find no more fitting theme for an historical romance than the lives of the men who braved the dangers and privations of the wilderness a century and a quarter ago that they might mission these new British Provinces. The work of the Jesuit missionaries in penetrating the pathless forest and navigating, in canoes, the lakes and streams of an unknown land, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in their zeal for their Church, was no more heroic than the labors of the early Methodist preachers who blazed roads in the trackless woods that they might reach the settlers' huts and minister to their spiritual needs.

Methodism has made too little of her heroes. Heroes these men were. Many of them were military men. They knew the meaning of danger. They had jeopardized their lives for king and country on many a battlefield; and, when, for the sake of Christ and for the souls of men, they again took their lives in their hands and braved the dangers of the wilderness, they were no less heroic.

Military men have played their part more than once as pioneer preachers of the Gospel. Britain, it is believed, received the Gospel first through the soldiers of the Roman Legion which came in succession to occupy the southern portion of the Island, in the course of the first Christian century. Methodism was planted at Gibraltar and other points in the old world by soldiers. These men were often lay itinerants, who had been employed by John Wesley, but being drafted into the army, had found a new field of labor. Inseparably associated with the name of Philip Embury is that of Captain Webb, a British soldier, who did valiant service for Christ in the early days of Methodism in New York. To two godly soldiers is due the honor of planting Methodism in the Canadas.

Lower Canada first heard Methodist preaching in 1780 from a Mr. Tuffey, who was a commissary of the 44th Regiment, stationed at Quebec in that year. It required no small degree of moral courage to undertake this task. The population was largely Roman Catholic. The few Protestants who had come to Canada since the British conquest were nearly all members of the Anglican Church. The men of the regiment stationed at Quebec were not noted for godliness. But Tuffey was true to his Methodist teachings. He believed in the power of personal testimony, and, while his regiment was stationed at Quebec he continued to preach the Gospel of God's grace to all who would listen to him. We know very little of the results of his work, and next to nothing of his later life. He will ever be remembered, however, as the Pioneer Methodist Preacher of the Province of Quebec.

Six years after Tuffey began to preach at Quebec another British soldier planted Methodism in Upper Canada and began a long and useful career as a pioneer preacher of that Province. To appreciate the work of the pioneers of Methodism in Canada we must call to mind the conditions of those early days. In these days of advanced development, when the poorest laboring man has luxuries undreamed of by the pioneers of Ontario; in these days when we have churches at our very doors, and when every mail brings to us periodicals that would have been priceless to our forefathers; we need to remind ourselves, more frequently than we do, that others have labored and we have entered into their labors.

A train ride from Montreal to Windsor is not unlike a train ride from London to Edinburgh, so rapid has been the progress of Ontario. Scores of thriving towns and villages are passed. Well-tilled fields and well-kept farm buildings meet the view on every hand; but, a century ago, all was different. A few scattered settlements along the north shore of Lake Ontario, in the Niagara peninsula and along the Thames and the Detroit river contained the entire white

population of what was then known as Upper Canada. Roads were almost unknown. With the exception of Cataract, Fort York, Queenstown, Niagara and Amherstburg, no settlement had yet sprung up that was worthy of the name of town or even village. By means of blazed forest paths, scattered settlers were able to communicate with one another. These early settlers were mostly U. E. Loyalists who had suffered the loss of all temporal possessions, as a result of allegiance to their king. The annals of these early days contain many a tale of privation and suffering of which we, in our later times, know nothing from experience. Food was scarce, clothing was dear and almost impossible to get; dangers stood thick on every hand. The wolf was at every man's door in a literal as well as a metaphorical sense. The Indians though generally friendly, were not always safe neighbors. Books were few, periodicals were practically unknown. Of churches there were none, except in the largest settlements. Such were the conditions a little more than a century ago. But God was raising up men who should go into this trackless wilderness for the love they bore to Him to build for Him a church for His glory. He has never left Himself without witnesses.

In the year 1750, just eleven years after the first Methodist Church was built in England, there was born in South Carolina a boy who was destined to become the Pioneer Methodist Preacher of Ontario. This boy was George Neal. His people were of Irish descent and of Loyalist leanings. On coming to years of manhood George Neal entered the British Army. Already the rumblings of revolt were beginning to be heard in the American colonies. During the Revolutionary war Neal served his king faithfully. As a recognition of bravery he was raised to the rank of Major, while serving in South Carolina and Georgia. At the close of the war he left the army and turned his attention to teaching. While engaged in this work, in the schools of Georgia, he was converted to God under the preaching of Rev. Hope Hull. With his conversion came the conviction that he was called to preach. He relates a vision of a flaming sword, inscribed with the name of Wesley, and says that this vision deepened his conviction that he was called to be a Soldier of the Cross. Accepted by the Methodist Church, he began his labors in his native land; but his strong British sentiment inclined him toward Canada.

Nova Scotia was the field that first attracted Neal. He was prepared to go to this Maritime Province; but, missing the boat he had intended to take, he changed his plans and set out for an overland journey to the Niagara frontier, where he crossed into Canada at Queenston on the 7th of October, 1786. Almost immediately upon his arrival he began to preach. He was not allowed, however, to continue his labors unmolested. The authorities were, at this time, all members of the Established Church, and the British officer at Queenston forbade him to hold meetings on pain of having to leave the Province. Neal was prepared to resist this prohibition, but it was not necessary, for within a few days the officer died and his successor seems to have been more liberal in his views.

Major Neal now became a true itinerant. With untiring zeal he travelled from settlement to settlement, sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, preaching wherever he could get an audience. The place of meeting was now a log shanty, and now a barn. The people were so hungry to hear the gospel that in spite of wooden benches and bare walls the place of worship was almost always filled. Many a humble home in those early days became the spiritual birthplace of men and women who afterwards did valiant service for the Church. Among those who responded early to Major Neal's preaching was Christian Warner, who, in turn, became a preacher and labored successfully for many years in the Niagara district. Here we have an example of how wide is the influence of one man. Major Neal preaches and Christian