

Miscellaneous.

EARLY METHODISM IN TORONTO.

BY JOHN CARROLL.

"Little York" in its earliest history, like most other incipient villages in a new country, made up as they always are, more or less, of adventurers and those cut loose from the restraints of christian civilization which characterize the most of older places, was a very wicked place, familiarly known as "Rogues' Harbor."

This is indicated by Dr. Scadding's valuable memorials; and this accords with this writer's own early recollection of it, who has known it since 1814. It is true it was then a time of war, when ordinary restraints are always more or less relaxed; but even with this allowance, the place was deplorably irreligious and immoral: profaneness, drunkenness, reveling, and quarrelling were noticeable characteristics. Up to 1818, there was only one place of worship, and that a very humble one, which was that of the then so-called Church of England. It was principally frequented by the more aristocratic classes, who mostly possessed what little show of religion there was, which was principally confined to the forms of public worship on Sunday.

As for the great majority of the rest, they had no worship and no Sabbath. The "Home District," which included York, was a Methodist circuit so early as 1804; and from the best information we can get, the itinerant preachers called in their fortnightly rounds, and preached an occasional sermon at least. A family of Palatines, by the name of Detlor, and Dr. Thomas Stoyles, who then kept a tavern, extended hospitality to them. The preaching was in the assembly room of Stoyles' Tavern. The preachers on the Yonge Street and Ancaster Circuits in 1817-18, just before the first Meeting-house was built, took up Sabbath preaching on Sunday afternoons, not far from where the chapel was erected. These preachers were David Youmans, David Culp, and James Jackson. Once, while the service was going forward, the preacher's horse, tied to the fence hard by, was plastered with filth by some obscene young men, who took that method of showing their hatred to religion.

In 1818 the church was opened, and regular preaching was established. It stood on the south side of King street, about midway between Yonge and Bay streets, just west of a narrow street, or lane, now called Jordan street, after Jordan Post; a street in the rear takes its name from Melinda, his wife. If any of the distinguished Methodist visitors at the General Conference, wish to identify the spot where Peal, Ferguson, Ryan, Case, Harmon, Whitehead, and other worthies proclaimed the truth of God in early days, they may by these landmarks identify it. The first sermon was preached by Rev. David Culp, the second by Rev. James Jackson.

The Rev. Dr. Scadding, in his "Collections and Recollections of Toronto of Old," has some interesting facts and some amusing mistakes relative to this first chapel. He is right as to its situation; and probably right as to its size, as he had the testimony of a carpenter who knew it well. But Mr. Petch was scarcely one of the builders of the first part erected, the frame of which was put up by some Methodist from the country east of the town, and finished by Mr. Hemphill, a demonstrative Methodist from beyond the Credit westward. Mr. Robert Petch was then in York, a young man, and may possibly have been one of the work-hands. Mr. John Ross was the contractor for erecting the new addition, which was put up during the pastorate of the Rev. William Ryerson, in 1827, as also a parsonage on the rear end of the lot, facing on Jordan street, which Mr. R. occupied before leaving the circuit. The dimensions of the church, as given by Dr. Scadding, were "40 by 40 feet," and "40 by 60" feet as enlarged. Twenty feet we know to have been the length of the "addition." But the good Doctor is widely at sea when he says it had "two doors, one for each sex." There was but one door, which was double, and opened both ways, that is to say, right and left. There was a center aisle, and the men and women did sit apart; but the men did not sit on the right hand of one entering the building, and the women "on the left," but directly the reverse. The ladies turned to the right on entering, and the gentlemen to the left. The space at each side of the pulpit was filled with short seats, placed north and south, leaving a narrow aisle across the church, from east to west, just in front of the pulpit. The Society, nearly all and always sat on those short seats; and if a brother or sister took a seat farther down towards the door, he, or she, was suspected of a tendency to backslide.

It is needless to say, that the type of Methodism planted in connection with the "Old Framed Meeting-House" was the Methodist Episcopal, and the preachers who ministered there were connected with the Genesee Annual Conference. In the year 1813, the first advent of British Wesleyan Missionaries took place in Lower Canada; thence they gradually extended their way westward, occupying successively Cornwall and Johnstown, Kingston and Bay of Quinte, and Niagara and vicinity. In 1818, the Rev. Henry Pope was appointed to Niagara, and on his way upwards from Cornwall, he preached in York, during the month of March of that year. "On the 30th of April, 1820, he removed from the Niagara Circuit to Toronto," where he continued about a year, during which time a Society was formed in connection with the British Conference, which was largely made up by a draft from the first formed or "American Society," as, for distinction sake, it was called. There is a narrow street, first known as "Market Lane," running between King street and Wellington street, now called Colborne street, then only partially built upon. On the north side of that street, about midway between the Market and Church street, a little before the time of which we write, a building was erected side-wise to the road: the lower part was used as a school; and the upper part, to which access was gained by a flight of stairs on the outside of the building at the east end, was furnished as a Masonic lodge-room. In that the British Missionaries preached and held other meetings during the period of their stay.

Acrimonious discussion was the result of these two altars so nearly alike facing each other; nor was the general gain to the cause of Methodism commensurate to the trouble and outlay. For, about the close of the missionary sojourn, the two Societies numbered very few more members than the one Society had numbered before the commencement of separate operations. Happily the united action of the American and British General Conferences of 1820, ended this anomalous state of things in the following year, which arrangement lasted till 1832. At this point we close the article on early Methodism in Toronto. If we should return to the subject, we hope to furnish livelier and more spiritual details.

Power of Peace Principles.

[The following beautiful story is told to illustrate the unconquerable power of peace principles. The little town mentioned got along very well without a military department.]

I have read of a certain regiment ordered to march into a small town, (in the Tyrol, I think) and take it. It chanced that the place was settled by a colony who believed in the gospel of Christ, and proved their faith by works. A courier from a neighboring village informed them that troops were advancing to take the town. They quietly answered: "If they will take it, they must."

Soldiers soon came riding in, with colors flying and fifes piping shrill defiance. They looked round for an enemy, and saw the farmer at his plough, the blacksmith at his anvil, and the women at their churns and spinning-wheels. Babies crowded to hear the music, and boys ran out to see the pretty trainers, with feathers and bright buttons—"the harlequins of the nineteenth century." Of course none of these were in a proper position to be shot at.

"Where is your soldiers!" they asked. "We have none," was the reply. "But we have come to take the town." "Well, friends, it lies before you." "But is there nobody to fight?" "No; we are all Christians."

Here was an emergency altogether unprovided for by military schools. This was a sort of resistance which no bullet could hit; a fortress perfectly bomb-proof, the commander was perfectly perplexed.

"If there is nobody to fight with, of course we cannot fight," said he. "It is impossible to take such a town as this."

So he ordered the horses' heads to be turned about, and the human animals were carried out of the village as guileless as when they entered, and, perchance, somewhat wiser.—Selected.

Dress Plainly.

Some one has given the following reasons why people should dress plainly on Sunday. These reasons are as valid any other day in the week: It would lessen the burden of many who now find it hard to maintain their place in society. It would lessen the force of temptations which often lead men to barter honesty and honor for display. If there was less strife in dress at church, people in moderate circumstances would be more inclined to attend. Universal moderation in dress at church would improve the worship by the removal of many wandering thoughts. It would enable all classes of people to attend church in unfavorable weather. It would lessen, on the part of the rich, the temptation to vanity. It would lessen, on the part of the poor, the temptation to be envious and malicious. It would save valuable time on the Sabbath. It would relieve our means from a serious pressure, and thus enable us to do more for good enterprises.—Mother's Magazine.

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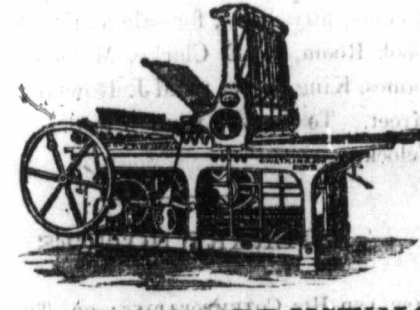
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