

THE CANADIAN CHURCH MAGAZINE

• • AND MISSION NEWS • •

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada.

Vol. IV.

HAMILTON, ONT., NOVEMBER, 1890.

No. 53.

HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

No. 53—REMINISCENCES OF THE SECOND BISHOP OF QUEBEC.



At the close of the last century it pleased God to raise up in the Church of England two men eminently endowed with a missionary spirit—Henry Martyn and Charles James Stewart.*

An anecdote which is recorded of him in his younger days, though trifling in itself, is eminently characteristic of the benevolent and earnest spirit which guided him in after-life. The condition of negro slaves in the West Indies, to which public attention had been previously drawn by the writings of Granville Sharpe, Bishop Porteous, and Clarkson, was fully brought before the British Parliament by Wilberforce in 1789. The hostile feelings of the friends and adversaries of the slave trade, were kept at a high pitch of excitement, by the annual renewal in Parliament of the motion for its abolition. Men in every rank of society took their side. Mr. Stewart, at that time an undergraduate at Oxford, was not slow to feel the cruel injustice of the traffic, and to bear his humble testimony against it. In conjunction with a sympathizing friend, he determined to forego altogether the use of sugar, the product of slave labor, and steadfastly kept to his resolution, in spite of the ridicule which it entailed on him at the time. The undergraduates of succeeding generations are taught to form a better estimate of the character of Stewart: a tablet, which has been placed in Corpus Christi College,

Oxford, now serves to commemorate the name and the devoted labors of the despised student.

At the age of twenty years, Stewart was elected to a fellowship in the aristocratic college of All Souls; and in 1799, after taking the degree of Master of Arts, he was presented by his cousin, the Earl of Aboyne, to the united rectories of Orton Longueville and Botolph Bridge, not far from Peterborough. He continued to hold this preferment (valued at 322*l.* per annum) for eight years, till he went to Canada.

In 1807 Mr. Stewart offered himself as a missionary to Canada at a time when the missionary spirit was at a very low ebb in the English Church.

An ordinary person in Mr. Stewart's position, would have been unlikely to conceive the design of proceeding thither as an evangelist. Such a course was contrary to all the settled ways of the world, for a man of noble birth and connections, possessing independent property, just entered on the prime of life, whose lot had been apparently peculiarly exempt from any endurance of hardships; first in the bosom of an aristocratic home, next in the refinement of a university, lastly in the pleasures and retirement of a small rural parish, from whence he could look abroad and thank God for his seclusion from the distant evils of his day, which a contemporary (Bishop Wilson, of Calcutta) thus depicts:



BISHOP STEWART AND THE SUNDAY LABORER.

“There was the storm of the French Revolution still raging—an open renunciation of Christianity just made in a great nation—Europe rent asunder with war which seemed farther than ever from a close; the Church feeble and full of apprehension; the ministers of the state and the legislature overwhelmed with schemes of defence abroad and regulation at home; the minds of thoughtful men portending calamities; untold difficulties thickening around,”

*Hon. Charles James Stewart, fifth son of the seventh Earl of Galway, in time second Bishop of Quebec. See CANADIAN CHURCH MAGAZINE AND MISSION NEWS, Vol. II., p. 169 (August 1838.)