

## The Christian Helper.

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"Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." II. Cor. 1: 24.

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ORILLIA BAPTIST CHAPEL.

The above engraving appears in accordance with the promise made in our last issue.

The Orillia Chapel was completed, and dedicated to Divine worship on Lord's Day, 3rd of March last, the dedication services being conducted by Rev. Dr. Davidson, Secretary of the Convention, and Rev. Joseph D. King, of Toronto. We gave a brief account of the opening services at the time.

The dimensions of the building are 44 x 64 feet, and it is composed of red brick, with white brick facings. The interior arrangements are very complete, comprising two vestries, prayer room, and a large gallery. The whole building can be utilized for large congregations and affords a seating capacity for 532 persons. There is also a basement 15 x 40 with kitchen, furnace-room, &c. The cost of the chapel was about \$6,000 on which there is still a debt, unprovided for, of \$800.

### Sketch of Baptist Efforts in the Town.

The present flourishing Baptist church is of recent organization, being little more than five years old; but like that still

younger and equally vigorous body of baptized believers in the neighbouring town of Barrie, it is founded on the ruins of former efforts.

In the Annual Report of the Baptist Missionary Convention West, for 1860—the earliest to which, at the present moment, we have access—is an account of the labours of the Rev. John Finch, who had that year been ordained and appointed missionary on the field in which Orillia was included. The report says:—

"He (Bro. Finch) is the only man whom we maintain in the County of Simcoe, and the only resident Baptist minister in the county, large as it is. He is a laborious and indefatigable worker. He preaches in the town of Orillia and in the township, at the village of Marchmont, besides sustaining regular appointments at Claphams, Victoria, and Innisfil. There is a church in Orillia and one in Innisfil, both young and feeble numbering in all 27 members [16 in Orillia.]"

In the Convention Report of the following year we find the Missionary reporting regular appointments at eight stations, and gratifying prosperity over the whole field, particularly in Orillia. But Bro. Finch soon found that in supplying eight stations, extending over four large townships, he had been attempting too much for the good either of himself or the cause. In his report to the Convention in October, 1863, he says:—

"The Orillia church is making but little progress. One brother has left for British Columbia, again reducing the number of the few, who are mostly all very poor, having no place of their own to meet in and very poor prospects of getting any. . . . I think if my labours were more concentrated more good might be effected; and feeling that my strength will not admit of such continued travelling much longer, it appears to me it would be best to resign the Orillia church and confine my labours to a smaller field round Innisfil."

This intention was immediately carried into effect; and from that time the old Orillia church gradually dwindled away until it lost all visibility. True, we find in the *Canadian Baptist Register*, year after year, reported in the "list of churches with their membership and ministers," with ominous monotony

"ORILLIA—13—VACANT;"

but nevertheless the Orillia church, while having a name to live, *was dead*.

Such was the state of matters when, late in 1873, the Lord put it into the hearts of a few brethren to make an effort to start anew a Baptist cause in that beautiful

town. These brethren met in the house of Brother Henry Dancy, on Colborne St., and organized themselves into a regular Baptist church. The new church was duly "recognized" on the 27th of September, 1873—just ten years after the cause had been given up by Elder Finch. The church had, at its organization, fourteen members, eight male and six female. Shortly afterwards, in the good providence of God, Rev. E. D. Sherman was led to visit the church, and having preached for two Sabbaths, received a unanimous call to the pastorate. He entered on his stated ministry in Orillia the last Lord's Day in November, 1873. At this time the outlook was anything but encouraging. Five other Denominations were firmly established in the town, and the whole region around was destitute of healthful Baptist influence. The members of the Orillia church were for the most part poor in this world's goods, and the church owned not a particle of property—not even a pulpit Bible or a hymn book. But six months had scarcely passed before, with the blessing of God upon the efforts of pastor and people, a splendid half-acre lot was purchased at a bargain and paid for. This lot is now worth \$1,000. It has a frontage on West street of 115 feet.

The progress of the new Baptist movement was "marked, learned," but very indigested by some of the other Denominations in the town, and a great baptismal controversy soon began—a war having for its aim the extermination of the Baptists. But it didn't work the way it was intended to do. The contest was keen; reinforcements were sent for on both sides; Professor Torrance (then pastor of Yorkville church) had a hand in the fray, and after four months of hot conflict, Bro. Sherman and he were able to say "the victory is ours."

The Convention Report following this controversy (see *Register* 1876, page 28,) contains the following allusion:—

"The combined onslaught made by the Pædo-Baptists only resulted in calling the special attention of the community to Bible truth; and although the controversy on this question of baptism was keen, yet the missionary writes: 'Allowing our enemies to be the judges, the victory is ours.' Judging from the results it would seem that this opinion is well founded, for Bro. Sherman reports no fewer than 35 baptisms, the largest number reported by any missionary for the year."