

## THE FIRST COLONIAL MISSIONARY.

The church, of which the Rev. Richard Fritz was pastor, had been succeeded in London by the church organized by the Rev. Robert Browne, and this, in its turn, had been succeeded by the church organized, in 1692, by the Rev. John Greenwood, who was out of prison on bail. Francis Johnston became the pastor-elect of this church, but the members were soon scattered or imprisoned, and Johnston ministered to as many as possible in jail. The father of Mr. Johnston, who was Mayor of Richmond, in Yorkshire, petitioned the Lord Treasurer of England in behalf of his sons, Francis and George, whom he had educated at Cambridge, at considerable expense, and who were kept close prisoners, the one in the Clink and the other in the Fleet Street Prison; but his petition was unsuccessful.

The Independents in the London prisons united, with their brother exiles in Holland, in a petition to the Lords of Her Majesty's Privy Council, for permission to establish themselves in the Colonies. In this petition (see Waddington's "Hidden Church,") they pray:—

"And also, whereas means are now offered for our being in a foreign and far country, which lieth to the west from hence in the Province of Canada, where, by the Providence of the Almighty, and Her Majesty's most gracious favour, we may not only worship God, as we are in conscience persuaded by His Word, but also do unto Her Majesty and our country great good service."

This petition did not meet with favour, and was not answered by the Privy Councillors; but the petition of Mr. Johnston's father having been strongly recommended by influential persons, favour was shown, this favour consisting in the banishment of Francis Johnston and four of his companions to Newfoundland, in Her Majesty's then Province of Canada, instead of being put to death as were Penry, Barrowe, and Greenwood. St. John's was then a fishing station, and a number of persons were there living; and to that settlement were Johnston and his companions sent. The Church of England having already been established by law in the place, and a chaplain being on the ground, Mr. Johnston was unable to exercise his ministry publicly in promulgation of the Gospel. He met, however, with the brethren who accompanied him from London, and some others who gathered round him while he expounded to them the word of life. And thus, in St. John's, Newfoundland, the pastor of the London Independent Church, exercised his ministry, having around him four of the brethren, with others, quietly gathered at St. John's. The authorities, or those who exercised control upon the island, checked any attempt to preach publicly to the people; but Johnston used his opportunities as far as circumstances would permit in showing men the way of salvation.

The influence of Johnston's father again saved him, and in a short time he obtained permission to leave the island; and soon after he was in Amsterdam, in Holland, where he ministered to the Independent Church established by the English exiles, part of whom had been connected with the church in London of which he had been the pastor.

Doubtless, Mr. Johnson may have mourned over the loss of time during the brief period of his exile in Newfoundland; but the higher power by which men's lives are regulated, may have had a work even there for accomplishment by his instrumentality. And having performed his work in the name of his Master, that work could not fail of results for his Master's glory.

No person knows the full results of the teachings of Mr. Johnston in the brief period of his exile. Was there seed sown at the time which resulted in fruit two hundred years later? Was there any connection between the seed-sowing there and the gathering of the materials for a Congregational Church in Newfoundland in the latter part of the eighteenth century? Who can tell? Perhaps, as Dr. Waddington says of the cause in London, "a slender stem" may have remained "in which there was vitality no power on earth could destroy," although "the