

The Wesleyan,

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SMITH'S HISTORY OF METHODISM IN EASTERN BRITISH AMERICA.

Black, after his return from Newfoundland, in the autumn of 1791, remained a short time at Halifax, where his presence was much needed. The remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit's influences, which had accompanied his labors in Newfoundland, had formed a new era in his ministerial life. Such triumphs are to the Christian, not unfrequently, the forerunners of trial, calculated to test his faith to its utmost capacity. It so fell out in Black's case. Happily for himself, and for the interests of the church in Halifax, the spirit of self-consecration and strong faith, in which he had left the shores of Newfoundland, prepared him to meet the trial which awaited him on his arrival in Nova Scotia, with calmness and energy. During his absence, unbecoming conduct on the part of Marchinton, the most wealthy and influential man among the Methodists at Halifax, had led to his exclusion from the church. His ownership of the commodious building in which Black and other ministers had preached for several years, afforded him an opportunity of gratifying an unhallowed determination to involve the society in all possible perplexity. 'He attempted,' wrote a leading member, 'to raise himself above all discipline, and therefore fell. Oh, the deceitfulness of riches; how they blind the understanding and harden the conscience! By this event we are deprived of a public place for worship, and for the present are obliged to hold our meetings in a private house. But the Lord is with us, and we find his fall the cause of others being established. The society are unanimous respecting the necessity of his being expelled.' Black, upon his return, remonstrated seriously and affectionately with Marchinton, but in vain. He continued unshaken in his determination neither to rent nor to sell the building, for the accommodation of the Methodists.

The cloud, which at this period overhung the little church in Halifax, and seemed in the view of some to be charged with elements of destruction, broke in blessings upon it. The fiery trial, instead of paralyzing the energies of the membership, strengthened and developed them, to an extent wholly unexpected. The necessity for the erection of a place of worship having become absolute, the usual preparatory steps were soon taken. The promptness and generosity of the response, from those to whom the subscription list was first presented, dispelled the doubts of the more timid, and authorized the adoption of immediate measures for the erection of a new church. The names of many prominent citizens of Halifax appear on the list of subscribers. The spirit in which some of these responded to the call added to the value of their contributions. A note, which accompanied a subscription of three guineas, forwarded by Richard John Uniacke, Esq., afterwards Attorney-General of the Province, and father of the late Rev. R. F. Uniacke, Rector of St. George's, Halifax, has been preserved. 'The experience which we have had in this community,' wrote Mr. Uniacke, 'of the good effects produced by the assembling of persons of your persuasion for the purpose of public worship, gives me good hopes, from the zeal manifested by many in support thereof, that its good effects will be further felt; and that in time it may extend itself so far into the country parts as to produce a return of that decency and decorum, so necessary to be observed on all solemn occasions, which, I am sorry to say, in so many instances in the country parts of this province, has been sadly violated by the mistaken methods pursued by ignorant persons, whose errors arose from an overheated imagination, and the want of improved teachers to lead them to moderate their passions, and to instruct them that the true worship of a Supreme Being does not require the neglect of the established duties of civil society.'

Driven from their former place of worship, the leaders, meanwhile, made the best possible provision for the emergency, by hiring the theatre.

Early in the spring of 1792, arrangements were made for the erection of the new church. Alexander Anderson, Joseph Anderson, his brother, John Wisdom, Peter Smith, master-blockmaker at the Naval Yard, and Samuel Sellon, were appointed trustees. Three of these were connected with the Dockyard. Samuel Sellon was a nephew of Walter Sellon, the accomplished Episcopal divine, and staunch friend of Wesley, whose theology he vigorously defended against the attacks of the brothers, Sir Richard, and Rowland Hill. The nephew, a native of Halifax, was surveyor of lumber at the Dockyard. Respect for Black, to whom he had been introduced, led him to listen to him. He soon received 'the truth in the love thereof,' and withdrew from the Episcopalians, among whom he had been trained, to unite with the Methodists. His deep piety, and his cheerful, pleasing countenance, which even severe suffering could not change, made him extensively useful. At the breaking up of the Dockyard establishment in 1819, a pension was granted him. Highly respected to the end, he died in 1851 at Liverpool.

Duncan McColl, after Bishop's departure from St. John, proceeded up the river. At Fredericton he found a society of thirteen members, which increased, during his stay, to thirty-three. On his way down the river, he formed two other societies, one of fifty-four, and the other of fourteen members. Upon his arrival at St. John, he found the work in a prosperous state under the care of William Grandin. To permit Grandin to accomplish a long-cherished purpose to visit Prince Edward Island, he remained in the city seven weeks. Upon his return to St. Stephen, he found a letter from Black, who was about to proceed to the General Conference at Baltimore, placing the work in the city, and along the river St. John, under his care; but upon his arrival in the city, he found James Mann settled there for the winter. He therefore proceeded up the river, to Long Island, where he found that 'Antinomianism' had made sad havoc with the societies formed by himself in the spring. He remained among them three weeks, and then left them in a 'deplorable state.'

At Mougerville, near Sheffield, McColl had an encounter with a party of enthusiasts, whose conduct is still a matter of tradition among the elder residents of that part of New Brunswick. 'During the winter of 1791,' says McColl, 'while brother Bishop was preaching on the east and west sides of the river St. John, a precious work broke out among the people. But these were a people who professed to be awakened to a true sense of religion, under the ministry of Mr. Henry Aline, a number of years past. Some of them were well informed; their morals also were good. They were highly esteemed by other Christians. The generality of them fell in with Mr. Bishop and the work, and proved faithful. But unhappily, five and twenty of them fell under the influence of pride, and began to pretend to pre-eminence in the Spirit's power and experience. They separated from the rest, and became extravagant indeed. They soon undertook to prophesy, and to speak with new tongues, and to work miracles. They called multitudes together, to hear their new language, and to witness the miracles about to be performed by two of their number. By the time I got up they were fully engaged. They sometimes broke into other public meetings, and scattered the congregations. I had several times conversed with the ringleader of them, but they always kept within bounds while with me. This rather surprised many, for I always spoke plainly to them. However, an old gentleman who was the father and grandfather of a number of them, being a Presbyterian, and a steady, good man, opposed them much, and sent word to me that, as he was old and unable to attend public worship, he wished me to preach an evening sermon at his house, where a good congregation could be accommodated. I appointed a meeting there on Sunday evening, and found four rooms well filled; and among others, Mr. and Mrs. P., the latter of whom was the old gentleman's daughter, together with more of the party. So soon as I finished my sermon, Mrs. P., who was a very stout woman, arose and took me by the collar, saying, 'Where hast thou gleaned to-day?' She kept knocking with her fist upon my breast, and repeating, 'Where hast thou gleaned to-day?' and a number of such questions. I spoke a little to her and her party, for some others began to act in a similar manner. I observed some half-pay officers of my acquaintance, who saw what was going on, get together, and commence pushing through the crowd towards me: they appeared much offended, and were about to use rough means against these unhappy people. I turned to them, and said, 'Captain R., if you have any respect for religion, for me, or for the congregation, come no further. I shall not suffer any harm by these people. Let me talk to them, and I will dismiss the meeting as usual.' The officers took my advice, and the others sat down. They found, after a while, that they were left alone. They went on from bad to worse, until the authorities took them up, and put two of the leaders in prison, where they were kept for several months. They then denied the truth of all religion, and became a very gay and dressy people. Several years after this, as I was down at the Sheffield meeting-house, I saw a crowd of them coming to hear me in the afternoon, and that was the last I saw of them, for they soon dispersed, sold their good farms, and moved up the river. This delusion had a bad effect, for although the people left them to themselves, they took up the thoughts and conversation so as to divert the minds of others from better employment. I have only touched on their conduct. Were I to give a full history of their extravagances, I would astonish my readers. These were not the poor, or the uneducated, but people in good standing in the world. And some before this were considered to be sincere Christians. If tradition may be depended upon, McColl has indeed, touched lightly upon the 'extravagances' of this deluded people. Some, it is said, went crawling about like wild beasts; and some rode about on the backs of others. 'And the devil rode us both,' said one of the parties concerned, some years after, in reply to an unwelcome allusion to some of the disgraceful scenes of that period.

THE 'SWEETNESS AND LIGHT OF RITUALISM.'

We are accustomed to associate Ritualism with certain partly pitiful, partly ridiculous—modes of religious worship. Postures of the body and adornments thereof, offering of incense and mediæval surroundings, rise up in our minds as we pronounce the word. But Ritualism is decidedly a superstition, and, like all superstitions, it is alike unintelligent and cruel. It thinks it is doing God service, while it is doing cruel wrong to man. In illustration of this, we give the following:—

In a number of *The Christian Review* just come to hand, we read:—

'The Ritualistic party in the Church of England seem to carry it with a high hand. Here is one of their doings: A working man recently died in or near Bedford. During the course of his illness, he was visited by the Curate of St. Paul's. The reverend gentleman discovered that a good many years ago this man's wife left him, and seven years afterward's he married another woman, believing his first wife to be dead,—as indeed, the law, if appealed to under the circumstances, would have pronounced her, so far as the marriage vow is concerned. The result was that the Rev. Mr. Smith refused to officiate at the funeral, and, when asked to do so, took the opportunity of stating his conviction "that the man had gone to hell." The case, we learn, has produced a profound sensation in the neighborhood of Bedford.

From the June number of the *Christian Treasury* we take the following:—

'A happy couple in Wiltshire, in humble life, recently had their family enlarged by the addition of twins; but in a few days one of the babies sickened and died, and alarming symptoms foretold the speedy departure of the other. In these distressing circumstances the parents sent for the clergyman of the parish, in order that the dead little ones might be fitted for the kingdom of heaven. On his arrival a sad state of things was disclosed. He, of course, soon made the living child "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," but what to do with the dead child was past his comprehension. The distressed mother first entreated him to let a few drops of the "holy water" fall upon the dead child's face, but that could not be; then she prayed that, as they were both born together, so in case of the second death, they might both be buried in the same coffin, or at least in the same grave. This very natural wish did not harmonize with the theology of the Wiltshire parson, and so it was not granted. The second child died, the funeral was arranged, the two coffins were brought forth, but only one of the babies was committed to the earth in the "sure and certain hope of the resurrection of eternal life;" and when the distressed parents enquired where the other child was to be interred, the reply was to the effect that the other child must be buried at night in unconsecrated ground, without service or ceremony, as it had not been baptized. Here, however, a new chapter opened, for the mother declared that the buried child was the unbaptized one, and that, being now committed in "sure and certain hope," he was safe; while she claimed Christian burial for the other on the ground of his having been made a "member of Christ," etc. In this dilemma, the parson in no measured terms denounced the woman as a cheat, and charged her with cheating God, cheating the Church, and cheating him also. The reply was a nonplus. "I am very sorry," sobbed the mother, "if I have done wrong: "I did not wish to cheat God nor the Church, but I confess I had no scruples about cheating the devil."—*Witness.*

OUR ENGLISH LETTER.

THE PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL.

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—The recent great gathering of Presbyterian representatives at Edinburgh was a notable event. In number about 2000, and representing over 20,000 congregations scattered all over the world, it was a time of much rejoicing. Our honored brethren may well be excused for the intense enthusiasm displayed as well as for the eulogies which were heaped upon their favorite mode of Church government. The object of the association was to represent the unity of the Presbyterian Churches throughout the world in faith and discipline, to discuss questions in which all Presbyterians are deeply interested, and to devise means for the further propagation of the Redeemer's kingdom. No attempt was made to blend into one grand organism the various churches into which Presbyterianism, as well as Methodism, is at present divided. The difficulty of providing even a creed which all could unhesitatingly accept was fully admitted. Yet the vast aggregate of churches which were represented are substantially one, are doing good work for the cause of Christ, and are truly loyal to the Redeemer who is the Head over all things. It is proposed to make this Conference Triennial in its gatherings, and that its future meetings be held in different places and important centres. I need scarcely add that the United States and our own Canada were fully and ably represented in the Council.

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

is the name of the charity which educates quite a little host of Bluecoat Boys. A very sad affair has recently taken place, which is greatly agitating the public mind, has been discussed in Parliament, and for the full investigation of which, a select committee has been appointed. A little boy who had been in disgrace for some minor offence, ran away from the school and complained bitterly of the treatment to which he had been subjected at the hands of his monitor. Compelled to return and submit to the discipline of the school, while waiting for the sentence of the Head Master, the poor unhappy lad committed suicide. It is premature to offer any opinion upon the sad event, or upon the government of so famous an institution. There is one admitted source of weakness and mischief. The Head Masters are not resident, and very much of the oversight of the school out of study hours, devolved upon older boys, who are disposed to rule affairs with a high hand, and have far too much entrusted to them. The "Matrons" are kind women, but have no power to protect the weaker or more timid lads, and the Beadles and Wardens enforce a sort of quasi-military discipline. The complaints are numerous and loud. The able men upon the Committee have an important task entrusted to them, and a fine old institution, which since King Edward VIth., day has done good educational work, is upon its trial.

GROCER'S LICENSES

or the sale of wines, &c., not to be drunk upon the premises, were first used in the expectation that people would be drawn away from public houses and purchase their liquors in a quiet respectable way. The public houses have had no diminution of their unhallowed traffic, more liquor is being used, and the facility with which it can be obtained along with the family groceries has led to a decided increase of intemperate habits in respectable families, and notably it is feared among the women of England. A mass of evidence bearing upon this matter has been made public, and a very strong agitation is at work for the entire repeal of this part of the licensing law. This will be a work of formidable difficulty. The publicans would not object, in the hope that more custom would flow in their channel, but in England, and I suppose everywhere, it is a tremendous task to upset vested rights so-called, and deprive the Government of a source of revenue, even if it be collected at the risk of the demoralisation of the people.

THE BRISTOL CONFERENCE

is the present theme in Methodism, the first draft of stations is issued, and in a day or two, the Conference will open in due form. It is not in my power to be present this year, and my reports will be second hand. There will be material for narrative and comment although I am not there to see and hear,