

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY.
No. VI.

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PIONEER INCIDENTS AND EXPERIENCES.

While waiting for some details, and for the connection of some severed links in the history of the life and labours of Father Eastman, the writer has concluded to give to his readers some of the incidents and experiences of pioneer Presbyterian missionaries, gleaned from original note books or recent correspondence. These, he hopes will not prove uninteresting, though they may not be, to any considerable extent, historically or statistically instructive.

A GLOOMY "DUTCH DOMINIE."

John Beattie, though born of Scottish parents, and brought up among the Scotch Presbyterian Churches in Washington County, New York, in due time, became an ordained minister, or dominie, of the "Low Dutch Reformed Church in North America." On the fourteenth day of May, 1810, he started from his Long Island home for a five months missionary pilgrimage through Upper Canada. From the original note book, with daily entries in his own handwriting, (kindly furnished by his surviving children,) some incidents of his wilderness journeyings have been gleaned. He was a full week on his passage, by sloop, from New York to Albany, and while delayed by unfavorable winds, he wrote as follows: "Under this adverse providence, during these four days, I have had some gloomy reflections—a long journey before me—an entire stranger in the land to which I was sent—a wilderness to pass through before I reach missionary ground—my horse, in the meantime, oppressed by standing still on board, and starving for want of provisions. These considerations combined depressed my spirits and rendered these four days gloomy. But, notwithstanding these things, I still enjoyed one consolation—I trusted that God, who called me to the mission work, would conduct me safely through."

PREACHING IN A BORROWED COAT.

Of Sunday, May 20th, Mr. Beattie wrote. "This morning being clear and pleasant, two of the passengers together with myself agreed to take the boat belonging to the sloop and go ashore. We walked in company (for what we called recreation) two miles back into the country, to a log tavern, and there, while drinking some ale by way of refreshment [temperance societies not then organized on Long Island] I inquired if there was a church in the town. The tavern-keeper informed me that there was, that the Rev. Mr. Westervelt was their minister, but that they had no preaching this day, in consequence of their being united with the congregation of Coeyman's, where it was his turn to preach to-day." Having ascertained the distance to Coeyman's to be eight miles, and, having engaged a horse to ride there, he changed coats with one of his companions who had one more "suitable for a clergyman when in church a good fit except the sleeves, which were a little too long." When he arrived, "Mr. Westervelt, a thick fat man, had entered upon the application of his subject, and having finished his discourse, he came down from the pulpit, and very politely asked me to preach in the afternoon. I agreed on condition that the intermission should be only fifteen minutes, and that I should leave church immediately after preaching, in order that I might be back at three o'clock, when the tide would serve for the sloop to proceed on her way to Albany. He published it to the congregation and then dismissed them. We retired, took some refreshments and returned to the church in fifteen minutes. I preached, took my leave of Mr. Westervelt, and rode full speed back to the log tavern, where I left the horse and ran down to the shore which was two miles distant. When I arrived there the vessel had got under way, but was in sight. I cried aloud. They heard me, and my two companions came with a boat and brought me on board. We arrived this evening in sight of Albany."

BAD ROADS AND LODGINGS.

Friday, June 1st. "This day I travelled thirty-three miles over one of the worst roads that it is possible for the human mind to form any conception of—frequently wading through the water and mud up to my horse's knees, and often to her belly—at other times

climbing over roots, stumps and logs—sometimes toiling over causeways made of rough logs (which are the most horrid bridges I have ever seen) some of them being a half mile in length. But all this is nothing when compared to the inhabitants of the Desert—the mosquitos. These West Indian stinging gnats were the occasion of more misery to me than all the rest of my difficulties combined. After my fatigue through the day, I stood in need of a comfortable place to lodge in over night; but such a place is not to be found in this wilderness, and I was under the necessity of putting up at Mr. Vroman's tavern. This man lives in the best house within ten or fifteen miles of him, an old, weather-worn log house, covered with bark—a dismal inn to the weary traveller. Here, for want of a bed and bedstead, I made the floor my bed, but, instead of sleeping, I was under the necessity of defending myself of maintaining an arduous contest with an innumerable multitude of little nocturnal beasts which inhabited the place."

Mr. Beattie was not yet in Canada, but on his way there through the "Black River Country." The next day, June 2nd, he rode twenty miles to breakfast, under a mosquito escort, and at about one o'clock reached Ogdensburgh, in sight of his missionary field.

WORSE ROADS IN CANADA.

Having spent the night of the 10th July under the hospitable roof of Mr. Reynolds, in Yonge, in the County of Leeds, Mr. Beattie started, very early on the 11th, westward. His journal says: "Soon after leaving Mr. Reynolds I entered into what is called the six mile woods, and here the Black River road in the State of New York was immediately called up in memory only that this road, in some respects, is worse than that, though the causeways are not so long nor is the mud so deep. Almost entirely new-cut through the woods, it is, in some places, scarcely anything more than a narrow foot path. Being entirely alone in a strange land, and utterly unacquainted with the road, this was a dreary wilderness to me." He reached Gananoque before dinner, stopped with a Mr. Howland, and preached at his house in the evening to a small but attentive audience, many of his hearers been deeply affected.

KINGSTON SIXTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO.

Thursday, July 12th.—"Soon after I left Mr. Howland's, my horse lost one of her shoes, and before I arrived at Kingston she was so lame that she could scarcely mark the ground with that foot. At Kingston, I put up over night at the hotel kept by Mr. Walker, where I received the best of treatment and accommodations. There is a garrison in this place occupied by about three hundred soldiers, and also a court house and two churches, the one Episcopal and the other a Roman Catholic Chapel, which is, as yet, in an unfinished state. There are a few fine two storey buildings of stone; the rest are principally small and make but a mean appearance. The streets are very irregular and the buildings scattered. The morals of the people are said to be very much corrupted, and there is little or no religion in the place."

A month or so later, Mr. Beattie had visited the two previously established Reformed Dutch Churches north of York, and organized the first church of the Presbyterian order in that then prospective commercial city.

A PRESBYTERY ON A LOG.

Rev. Duncan McMillan, of Komoka; Rev. Charles Jones, pastor of Edwards' Church, Saxonville, Mass., and Rev. James Rogers, of Redwood Falls, Minnesota, are, doubtless, the only surviving members of the United Synod. On their return from a meeting of Synod at Prescott, in June, 1833, Rev. Messrs. Robert McDowall, Peter Ferguson, Andrew Bell and Duncan McMillan, were deputed, as representatives of the York Presbytery, to call at Demorestville, and ordain Mr. Rogers to the work of the ministry, and to "install him in charge of the church and congregation in Demorestville, Hollowell and Hillier." In a recent letter, Mr. McMillan tells the story of Presbyterian experience as follows:

"We left Kingston, I think, on Wednesday, the 11th day of June, 1833, in the afternoon, by a small boat which made a trip every other day to the carrying place, at the head of the Bay of Quinte, returning on the intermediate days, and calling, both ways, at the different landing places on the two sides of the Bay. As the boat travelled but slowly, we landed far in the night at a wharf a few miles from Demorestville. After ascending to the general level, we saw a

public house not far off and directed our course towards it. On coming to the door, we knocked long without a response, but, at last, the landlord, opening it a little, asked, in a gruff voice: 'Who are you that are troubling us at this unreasonable hour?' While we were in the act of telling him our story in reply to his question, he slammed the door in our face, saying, 'Get away from here' or something worse. This was a serious disappointment, as there was no other public house there, and Mr. McDowall had his daughter with him. But there was no help for it, and so, wrapping ourselves in our extra clothing, we sat down on a friendly log near by, I hope in the spirit of meekness, to muse over our lonely condition—the gentlemen forgetting their own grievances, in their tender sympathy with their lady companion thus exposed to the chill air of the night. We sat, or walked, counting the hours and longing for the morning, till dawn of day, when a gentleman whose comfortable looking house stood not far off, saw us from his window, and recognizing Mr. McDowall, came promptly to our relief. He warmly invited us to his house and hospitably entertained us while we remained, expressing indignant condemnation of the tavern keeper for his rude treatment of us. He said he was the means of getting him his license, to enable him to support his family, but, being a magistrate, he would now take it from him. I remember we put in some plea in his behalf, being unwilling to be the occasion of his being deprived of his means of livelihood. Mr. Soams, for that was our benefactor's name, drove us, after breakfast, to Demorestville, and, after service, brought us back to his house."

MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS DISAPPOINTED.

"But," continues Mr. McMillan, "this did not end our disappointments and trouble. The boat we came up with was to return to Kingston, as usual, on Thursday evening, and it was understood that she was to call at the same wharf to take us back, that we might find our way from Kingston to York by one of the lake boats. But, to our no small annoyance, we saw her keeping close to the opposite shore of the Bay, regardless alike of previous understanding and our signals of distress, and passing on without us. We were, therefore, obliged to remain with our good friend, Mr. Soams, till the boat was returning on her next trip, on Saturday. The consequence was that there were unexplained disappointments in our western congregations, as we were unable to get home to meet them on the following Sabbath." The conduct of the captain was not approved by the owner, who instructed the purser to pass the party back to Kingston free. Mr. McMillan concludes his reminiscence as follows. "It is pleasant to call to remembrance acts of Christian kindness with which one may have met in the distant past. Many names more familiar to me than that of Mr. Soams have long since passed from my memory, but his has kept its place there amidst all vicissitudes, and I am sure that he has not missed his reward."

AN UNCOMFORTABLE EMIGRATION.

Of the members of the Niagara "Presbytery of Upper Canada" in service before the Rebellion, four are now living, viz.: Rev. Samuel Sessions, at St. Johns, Michigan, Rev. Joseph Marr, at Harrisburgh, Penn.; Rev. R. H. Close, at Elmira, N.Y., and Rev. Charles E. Furman, D.D., at Rochester, N.Y. In December, 1835, at what seemed to be the call of duty, Mr. Furman left a pleasant and comfortable settlement at Clarkson, N.Y., and took his way to Hamilton. His journey to his new field of labour is thus described. "On my way to Hamilton with my family, I was entertained and helped on my journey by a Mr. Davis, of St. David's [a son-in-law of Rev. D. W. Eastman], and by Mr. Oliver Phelps, an elder and everything else, to and for, and in, the church at St. Catharines, so far as material support was concerned. I left his home Saturday afternoon, and was till midnight reaching my destination. Clouds above us, mud beneath us, rain and wintry atmosphere around us, in an open waggon with three little girls, the oldest lacking a few days of five years of age! Looking back from present facilities of travel, it seems marvellous that we all survived, especially remembering that the youngest of the three seemed deadly sick on the way, with what proved to be chicken pox. When I reached Hamilton I had no home, no house had been provided for me, and I felt the change severely. During the two years I remained there, I often had need of many things, and would