

A HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE THREE RIVERS BAPTIST CHURCH, P. E. I.

Read before the P. E. I. Baptist Association and published by request of that body.

To Elder Alexander Crawford belongs the honor of organizing the Baptist church of Three Rivers, in the year 1812. He was the first man that ever administered baptism by immersion on P. E. Island. He was a native of the Isle of Arran, on the coast of Scotland, and one of the Haldane missionaries.

In 1809, he emigrated to Yarmouth, N. S. From Yarmouth, in October, 1811, Elder Crawford came to the Island, and in that year organized a church at Lot 48, and during the next year, 1812, organized a church at Three Rivers—a section of the Island then newly settled, principally by Scottish Highlanders.

The church, in faith and practice, was called Scotch Baptist. It was Arminian in doctrine. They held laymen were qualified to administer the ordinances of the gospel; they observed the Lord's Supper every Lord's day; they did not wear their members' names on their hats; they were open communists, but, on the latter point, the church was not unanimously agreed, as will presently appear.

It seems that, for a number of years, the Baptists were the only organized society of Christians existing in all the district known as Three Rivers. About 1823, Mr. Bulpit, a Methodist preacher, visited the place. After his visit, he locally remained, as Pastor McCully settled as the first Presbyterian minister of Georgetown. Having all the land to himself, it might be expected that the Baptists would have gone in and possessed it. They did so to a certain extent, but not to the extent of their opportunity; and the church always showed that tendency to disorganization characteristic of the Haldane churches.

In 1811 a young man arrived on the Island and began teaching school in a school house which stood near the meeting house. He had been converted when a young man in Scotland. His religion was of an austere type. He had had a long and severe struggle under conviction of sin before he came to the light and liberty of the Christian life, and he seemed to have carried the impress of that struggle ever after.

In 1814 the church was received into the Nova Scotia Association. It had been organized in 1812. There were several revivals in it in the years that followed. Ministers from Nova Scotia used to come to visit it from time to time. Rev. Dr. Tupper visited it several times. In 1840 he and Mr. Shaw had a revival in which between thirty and forty, chiefly elderly persons, professed religion. Next year there was a revival under Shaw and A. V. Dimock, when about sixty, chiefly young persons, were baptized.

In 1841 he attended a meeting at Lot 49 at which Rev. J. Knox presided. Mr. Dimock has left the following on record: "Mr. Knox came to this place about a year ago. He brought with him highly satisfactory testimonials as to his learning, talents and piety. From several clergy men and others of different denominations both in Scotland and England.

Mr. Knox had, within a short time, arrived at the conviction that the principles of the Baptists were in accordance with the Bible, and on this occasion he avowed his determination to adhere to those doctrines which distinguish us as a body. Having stated his reasons for desiring to connect himself with the Baptist denomination, and these being very satisfactory, he was baptized by Rev. B. Scott. On August 30, in accordance with a vote of the church at Lot 49, Rev. J. Knox was set apart to the work of the ministry, and in accordance with the resolution of the church to which we belong. "That in 1841. In 1844 Mr. Knox, writing to Mr. Benedict, the Baptist historian, says: "We want plone

tion to this date, we have no sure means of judging, but the fact that it was recognized at this date seems to indicate that it had got into a low state.

The church lauded the ordination of Mr. Shaw with great joy. In intellectual attainments and natural endowments he was far above mediocrity. His gravity added dignity to his presence and acted as a charm to the minds of a people who were more ready to try things by law than by love. But the younger people, who had perceived the defects of his school discipline, did not always cherish comfortable thoughts of him. He would sometimes preach a sermon two or three hours long, and yet the people would not be wearied. In his preaching his voice was low and majestic, and he would at times be distinctly heard half a mile away. His labors in the gospel were abundant. Besides having the charge of the church at Three Rivers, he was also pastor of the East Point church. He would call on over a large portion of Cape Breton where he made several missionary tours.

Deacon Scott, of East Point, gives the following description of Mr. Shaw's work on the Island: "From Summerside to East Point he preached wherever he could get a congregation, and that when he had to travel on foot, wading rivers and climbing cliffs along the shores, and making his way through the forest when there was no road, he was on the trees where the path could hardly be followed. In coming to East Point once he lost his way between Souris and the West River and was all night in the woods. Next morning, when he came to a settlement about by the water, he called at a house for something to eat, and they had nothing that they could give him but a drink of milk. On the strength of this he came to West River."

He had very high Calvinistic views. Not long before his death he told the writer that in his younger days he had made a mistake, not in holding Calvinism, but in the prominence he gave it in his preaching at the expense of other doctrines. He should have proclaimed Arminianism. When he came to Three Rivers he found the people holding Arminian views. He began to preach Calvinism to them, letting no opportunity slip to improve on their reason. The people were so taken with him that they would respectfully listen to anything he might affirm and accept it, though they could not comprehend it. They wanted to be Christians by law, while he taught them that they should be Christians by grace. They all honored the man; some believed his doctrine; some did not wholly believe it, yet kept quiet, and probably a number did not trouble themselves about it. But after a time church troubles arose and Mr. Shaw was on the unpopular side, and then the great bulk of his hearers cast out his name as evil, and to complete the work threw his doctrine after it.

In the palmy days of Mr. Shaw's pastorate, the church was seemingly flourishing. It had several intelligent and excellent Christian men in its membership, although, in the light of after events, there were some whose light would not be long kindled. Deacons Neil Shaw and Robert Dewar were choice men. There were also Hector Johnston, John McNeill, and some other good and true men both intellectually and spiritually.

It was a missionary church, for about the year 1818 the three Rivers and East Point churches formed a missionary society, and the sum of £25 was raised for sending the gospel to destitute parts of the Island. In 1845 the churches of the Island formed a missionary society, of which Rev. Shaw was president. This society was dissolved in 1846 and a new one formed, of which Dea. Neil Shaw was one of the vice-presidents. Sometimes the pastor would make a missionary tour of an extended duration, and during his absence the brethren would carry on the meetings, for some of them were no mean preachers. I have a pleasant remembrance of a discourse delivered by one of Mr. Shaw's deacons when he was a young boy at Uggie. But I cannot find that a regular church prayer meeting was sustained at any time during its early history.

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and well educated man; without this cannot succeed. Above all we want Baptist books—books on our own principles." But whether it was for want of piety, well educated men, or for want of Baptist books on Baptist principles, or for other reasons, Baptist success retired at the advent of Mr. Knox. The probability is that "there was strife among them who should be the greatest." I mean among the ministers, and they could not pull together in the same boat. Mr. Shaw was before this by acclamation, put as the head, and Mr. Knox would likely prefer to be the first man in a village than the last man in a town, and the other ministers each had his champion. They all professed to be very jealous of Baptist principles. In the contest, however, the weight of the denomination went against Mr. Knox, and Mr. Knox went against the denomination principles and all. For, in the year 1845—the year following the ordination of Mr. Benedict—we find this order of things: Mr. Shaw and the church were not in good accord. In a case of discipline Mr. Shaw had at first espoused the cause of the party that was afterwards found guilty; but, as the case proceeded, he formed a line along the water's edge. The administrator asked the first person in the line the question, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God?" The man answered in the affirmative, and the administrator asked the second person the same question, and he also answered in the affirmative. When Mr. Shaw came back from Cape Breton, a number who had been baptized received into the church. Mr. Shaw, as pastor, refused to give them the hand of fellowship, because they had not been examined and passed by the church before their baptism. In this, and other matters, the majority was against him, but he would not yield. They then excluded him from the church. But a minority clung to him. Some who did not like him still followed him, because they did not favor the new doctrine brought in by Mr. Knox, but in the course of some time, one after another dropped into the ranks of the majority, until out of a membership of about two hundred, only about forty followed Mr. Shaw.

Rev. A. A. McLeod, Baptist missionary in Coananda, India, was baptized. Also Miss Adella Horton, a member of the Presbyterian church at Murray Harbor, was baptized, and through her the attention of our denomination was directed to what is now known as the Murray River field, and the founding of the Murray River church was the result.

Denominational lines were now tightened at Montague, and the want of a Baptist meeting house was sorely felt. The project of building was forthwith started. There were great zeal and great haste brought into action in the matter, but prudence and discretion were not much consulted. The revival did not aid a great deal of permanent strength to the church, and the building of the brick meeting house made its burdens heavier in many respects. Then a dispute arose between the members residing near the old meeting house in the one part, and those residing at Montague, about where the meetings should be held. The church, by vote, had decided to make Montague its head quarters, where all regular meetings of the church should be held, and that Sunday school meetings should be held at Brudenell as often as convenient. Rev. Mr. Shaw and others in Brudenell would not submit to this, but held meetings by themselves in the old house at the same place as the regular meetings were held at Montague. In September, 1877, Revs. A. Chipman, Malcolm Ross and James L. DeWolfe having been appointed by the association to visit the church with a view to bringing the disagreement to a close, a meeting was held at Montague and submitted terms of peace to the church. The nature of these terms is not on record, but I recollect that, though hard, they were reasonable. The church by a vote of two to one rejected them, and the consequence was the permanent alienation of Mr. Shaw and his friends. Two years afterward (1877) Mr. Shaw died. For over forty years in the church his word was law (and often good law), partly because he could do it so well, partly because the people would have it so; and now from the present standpoint of this case, the action of the church in this case does not look well.

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Every pastor who attended the World's Fair, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of his church. What added brightness would the sermon possess if illustrated from the thousand and one things to be seen and heard at the great Fair. Each church should have at least one person to attend the Fair, and who in all the church could do this so well as the pastor. What better could a church do than to see that their pastor goes to the World's Fair, that it may give to them, not in a lecture, but by illustration, what he saw and heard. Let me illustrate: In one corner of the vast arena is the art galleries. As you enter from the rotunda into the clear, yet subdued, light of the Canadian gallery, you find a foreclosed of the mortgage, a painting by G. A. Reed, of Toronto. An outline description of this wonderful work of art given in the Montreal Witness, is a sample of the thousand and one signs from which your "wide-awake" pastor could draw lessons that would tell for truth and righteousness. Here it is: A leafless tree is seen through the window. The simple, white ash curtains, drawn a little aside, reveal the wintry landscape. Beneath the window on a bench stands a wooden water pail with the long-handled dipper floating in it. Seated on the bench beside the pail is a graceful girl in simple attire. On her hand lies in her lap, the other is reaching out on the window sill. Her eyes are downcast and her whole attitude is that of quiet suspense. At the right of the bench is a common chair. In front of the chair stands the tall form of the man who has come to formally announce the foreclosure of the mortgage. His hat and his position as he stands partly in front of the window throw his face in the shadow, while he refers to the papers in his hand. Directly in front of him is the hearth-room—the old wooden cradle—and in it lies a sleeping infant with its face toward the window. The flushed and rounded cheek, the noble brow, the golden hair, the newly formed head, the peaceful sleep, the easy position, it lies tucked in with a home-made, colored blanket, and the wonderful effect of the light on child, cover, cradle and rug show the genius of the artist.

At the right of the cradle with her arms resting on its head, in a low, back-to-back rocking chair sits grandma with her eyes toward the window. The light falls on her silver hair, black cap, and the folds of her shawl. She is bent by age and looks as thousands of grandmas have looked when they are sitting in a low rocking chair in those of their loved ones. A low wooden bench in front of the cradle completes the right side of the picture. Passing

from the centre to the left we see leaning on the elder sister's knee a little girl with her thumb in her mouth looking up inquiringly into the man's face. On a shelf, back of the girl, stands a pitcher containing dried grasses, and a few trinkets. In the corner is the tall clock. In front of it, propped up, in a chair and protected by a blanket, is the sick husband, father and son. His face is turned toward the front of the picture. His right arm leans on a small, square table neatly covered by a worn cloth, upon which stands a vial of medicine and a cup of nourishment. Opposite him on the front side of the table, with his face toward the window, stands a chubby, two-year-old boy. He has left his little cart and is on tiptoe trying to peer over the corner of the table at the man. At his left, with her right arm holding his little elbow, and her head bowed on her arm on the table, sits THE WIFE AND MOTHER. Over her head is the mantel with its dishes and lamp and picture. In the foreground, to offset the wooden bench, is a large basket of work. These are the merest outlines of this touching and attractive picture. The arrangement of the effect of light and shadow is marvelous. The picture will live in the hearts of those who look upon it, and having in it the wondrous story of human endeavor, defeat, submission and love, it is destined to immortality. Happy about the artist, be who uses his God-given talents to touch the hearts of humanity.

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The Nova Scotia Association, of which the church was a member, declared in favor of Mr. Shaw's party as being still the church, and as still a minister in the denomination. Some how Mr. Shaw's party could not be dispossessed of the meeting house. To get possession of it the other party gathered a crowd and moved the house on to the land of one of their friends. Mr. Shaw, by the use of his legal powers that were, and to avoid being prosecuted at law it was agreed to go shares about the house, each party to have the use of it "week about." But it was forced possession, and Mr. Shaw did not like it. He was expelled and subjected to annoyance in their meetings. After a few months the house was burnt to the ground on a Saturday night. After that each party built a house of its own and the separation was complete. It may be said here that the wall between the denomination on the Island and in Nova Scotia tried to prevent this split, but to no avail. Rev. Mr. Osgood, after viewing the state of affairs, preached a sermon from Leviticus 14: 10: "It is a severe plague as it were a plague in the house."

Every pastor who attended the World's Fair, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of his church. What added brightness would the sermon possess if illustrated from the thousand and one things to be seen and heard at the great Fair. Each church should have at least one person to attend the Fair, and who in all the church could do this so well as the pastor. What better could a church do than to see that their pastor goes to the World's Fair, that it may give to them, not in a lecture, but by illustration, what he saw and heard. Let me illustrate: In one corner of the vast arena is the art galleries. As you enter from the rotunda into the clear, yet subdued, light of the Canadian gallery, you find a foreclosed of the mortgage, a painting by G. A. Reed, of Toronto. An outline description of this wonderful work of art given in the Montreal Witness, is a sample of the thousand and one signs from which your "wide-awake" pastor could draw lessons that would tell for truth and righteousness. Here it is: A leafless tree is seen through the window. The simple, white ash curtains, drawn a little aside, reveal the wintry landscape. Beneath the window on a bench stands a wooden water pail with the long-handled dipper floating in it. Seated on the bench beside the pail is a graceful girl in simple attire. On her hand lies in her lap, the other is reaching out on the window sill. Her eyes are downcast and her whole attitude is that of quiet suspense. At the right of the bench is a common chair. In front of the chair stands the tall form of the man who has come to formally announce the foreclosure of the mortgage. His hat and his position as he stands partly in front of the window throw his face in the shadow, while he refers to the papers in his hand. Directly in front of him is the hearth-room—the old wooden cradle—and in it lies a sleeping infant with its face toward the window. The flushed and rounded cheek, the noble brow, the golden hair, the newly formed head, the peaceful sleep, the easy position, it lies tucked in with a home-made, colored blanket, and the wonderful effect of the light on child, cover, cradle and rug show the genius of the artist.

At the right of the cradle with her arms resting on its head, in a low, back-to-back rocking chair sits grandma with her eyes toward the window. The light falls on her silver hair, black cap, and the folds of her shawl. She is bent by age and looks as thousands of grandmas have looked when they are sitting in a low rocking chair in those of their loved ones. A low wooden bench in front of the cradle completes the right side of the picture. Passing

from the centre to the left we see leaning on the elder sister's knee a little girl with her thumb in her mouth looking up inquiringly into the man's face. On a shelf, back of the girl, stands a pitcher containing dried grasses, and a few trinkets. In the corner is the tall clock. In front of it, propped up, in a chair and protected by a blanket, is the sick husband, father and son. His face is turned toward the front of the picture. His right arm leans on a small, square table neatly covered by a worn cloth, upon which stands a vial of medicine and a cup of nourishment. Opposite him on the front side of the table, with his face toward the window, stands a chubby, two-year-old boy. He has left his little cart and is on tiptoe trying to peer over the corner of the table at the man. At his left, with her right arm holding his little elbow, and her head bowed on her arm on the table, sits THE WIFE AND MOTHER. Over her head is the mantel with its dishes and lamp and picture. In the foreground, to offset the wooden bench, is a large basket of work. These are the merest outlines of this touching and attractive picture. The arrangement of the effect of light and shadow is marvelous. The picture will live in the hearts of those who look upon it, and having in it the wondrous story of human endeavor, defeat, submission and love, it is destined to immortality. Happy about the artist, be who uses his God-given talents to touch the hearts of humanity.

Brethren, send your pastor to "The World's Columbian Exposition." "Not in it." "Bad Copy." "I've read" said an editor to a writer in the New York Times, "hundreds of rolled manuscripts, and I never yet have found one I cared to print. I have decided to reject them, and the consequence was the permanent alienation of Mr. Shaw and his friends. Two years afterward (1877) Mr. Shaw died. For over forty years in the church his word was law (and often good law), partly because he could do it so well, partly because the people would have it so; and now from the present standpoint of this case, the action of the church in this case does not look well.

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Rev. A. A. McLeod, Baptist missionary in Coananda, India, was baptized. Also Miss Adella Horton, a member of the Presbyterian church at Murray Harbor, was baptized, and through her the attention of our denomination was directed to what is now known as the Murray River field, and the founding of the Murray River church was the result.

Denominational lines were now tightened at Montague, and the want of a Baptist meeting house was sorely felt. The project of building was forthwith started. There were great zeal and great haste brought into action in the matter, but prudence and discretion were not much consulted. The revival did not aid a great deal of permanent strength to the church, and the building of the brick meeting house made its burdens heavier in many respects. Then a dispute arose between the members residing near the old meeting house in the one part, and those residing at Montague, about where the meetings should be held. The church, by vote, had decided to make Montague its head quarters, where all regular meetings of the church should be held, and that Sunday school meetings should be held at Brudenell as often as convenient. Rev. Mr. Shaw and others in Brudenell would not submit to this, but held meetings by themselves in the old house at the same place as the regular meetings were held at Montague. In September, 1877, Revs. A. Chipman, Malcolm Ross and James L. DeWolfe having been appointed by the association to visit the church with a view to bringing the disagreement to a close, a meeting was held at Montague and submitted terms of peace to the church. The nature of these terms is not on record, but I recollect that, though hard, they were reasonable. The church by a vote of two to one rejected them, and the consequence was the permanent alienation of Mr. Shaw and his friends. Two years afterward (1877) Mr. Shaw died. For over forty years in the church his word was law (and often good law), partly because he could do it so well, partly because the people would have it so; and now from the present standpoint of this case, the action of the church in this case does not look well.

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