

The Upper Stewiacke Baptist Church.

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For some years the late John O. Archibald was Clerk of the Baptist church of Upper Stewiacke, and he has left a small record-book which gives glimpses of the time from 1843, or a little before, until 1868. Aside from this our information has to be gathered, apart from published accounts of Associations and Conventions, mostly from private diaries and the memories of those long identified with the church's interests. As a rule church clerks do not estimate highly enough the passing events in their churches nor sufficiently magnify their office. But where less material is found than was hoped for, it behooves him who takes it in hand to make the best use of it he can. A humble bit of history is it that we now have to relate, although not on that account either uninteresting or unprofitable.

It was with the sainted Abram Newcomb that the Baptists of Upper Stewiacke had their origin. Prior to his settlement in that valley this worthy man resided in Cornwallis, being there a member of the Presbyterian flock under the pastoral care of Rev. Hugh Graham. In the year 1800, Mr. Graham was inducted as pastor of the Presbyterian church of Upper Stewiacke, and probably in 1804 Mr. Newcomb followed him to the same locality. A while thereafter the denominational views of Mr. Newcomb underwent a change, so that from that onward he was known as a Baptist. In the "Autobiographical Sketches," published in 1865, by Rev. Charles Tupper, D. D., there is an interesting entry which links itself with what we now have to deal with. On his way from Amherst to Halifax and Cornwallis, in February 1819, the second year after his ordination at Canard, Mr. Tupper visited this part of the province. "Meeting," he says, "with our late excellent brother, Abram Newcomb, and being invited by him to visit his place and preach in his house, I complied with the invitation. This was said to be the first time that any Baptist minister ever preached in that place. A small room was amply sufficient to contain the congregation. Brother Newcomb was then the only Baptist living in that region. He is reported to have been so strongly attached to Mr. Graham, a Presbyterian minister who resided in Cornwallis, that he removed with him to Upper Stewiacke." In an address delivered in 1880, by the late Rev. D. W. C. Dimock, at the Hundredth Anniversary of Stewiacke's Settlement, the speaker stated that Mr. Newcomb "was baptized by Rev. James Munroe, who was at that time pastor of the Baptist congregation at Onslow." But Mr. Munroe's pastorate began there in this same year, 1819, so that if both parts of Mr. Dimock's statement are correct, Dr. Tupper's coming to this region must have followed almost immediately upon Mr. Newcomb's baptism. It is told us by Mr. Newcomb's only surviving child, Mr. Elsie Newcomb, one of the oldest members of the Baptist church at Amherst, that his father was, at leaving the Presbyterians, accounted by the people around him to have disowned himself and his family by this action. But times have changed, and it is no dishonor to be a Baptist in that quarter today. As to the subsequent feeling existing between Mr. Graham and Mr. Newcomb, Dr. Tupper has this to say, and we are pleased to note it: "These men, however, possessing true piety, and entertaining sentiments of mutual esteem, though separated in some measure, happily maintained their friendly and Christian intercourse through life." It is related that Rev. Dr. Smith, Mr. Graham's successor, used these words in making mention before his people of Mr. Newcomb's demise: "We little thought that he would have to announce the death of that good man so soon." The date of his going was Oct. 7th, 1837. It is written in the little minute-book referred to, that "the removal of one whose praise was truly in the church, whose upright life before the world, and whose Christian deportment fully evinced the truth of his profession, was deeply distressing." On his tomb-stone it is inscribed: "For some time deacon of the Presbyterian and afterwards of the Baptist church. He was a consistent, well-informed Christian, a pillar in the church, an ardent lover of the truth and a believer in its final triumph." His wife survived him a little more than two years. Their home was on the farm now occupied by their grandson, Deacon James A. Cox. There were born to them five boys and seven girls. When the first of the children died, the youngest was then about fifty years of age. The living son states that in the earlier days his father frequently rode to Onslow, about twenty-five miles, there to attend religious services.

It was in 1809 that the Onslow Baptist church was organized. As an off-shoot, the church in lower Stewiacke was formed, Nov. 1832, by the Scotchman, Rev. James Munroe, who was still pastor at Onslow, most of the fifteen constituent members bearing thence their letters of dismission. Then again the church at Upper Stewiacke was an off-shoot from the one in Lower Stewiacke, Mr. Monroe rendering assistance to both for a while. For some time the former appears to have been but an outstation of the latter. Then we find, in the hand-writing of John G. Archibald, dated Feb. 1842, this record: "The members composing the church were so scattered

that it was thought expedient, and for the securing of better order, to have the church set off in two sections. Accordingly, by unanimous vote, it was agreed to do so; and the division was to embrace Lower Stewiacke and Brookfield in one section, and Upper Stewiacke and Musquodoboit in the other." But the Upper Stewiacke section was not constituted a separate body until January 25th, 1851. In April of 1842, two men, Noah Bentley and Daniel C. Archibald, who married daughters of Abram Newcomb, were chosen as deacons, men who honorably filled the office until their death, the former having been called away in 1855, and the latter abiding until 1888.

Among the first to have oversight of the little band was Rev. George Richardson, who came from Ireland to Canada about 1820. In the minutes of the Nova Scotia Association, his name appears as pastor of the "Stewiacke" church in 1835, '36, '37 and '38. Afterwards Rev. D. W. C. Dimock, in charge of Truro and Onslow, was engaged for one-fourth his time. Then came his brother, Rev. A. V. Dimock—two esteemed sons of Father Joseph Dimock. In 1850, Rev. D. W. C. began a second period of service. January 20th, 1845, the missionary elect to Burmah Rev. R. E. Burpee, preached a missionary sermon in the Baptist meeting-house. The early accounts also give the names of Rev. Abram Stronach, and Rev. Charles J. Burnett, and still later, of Rev. David McKee, Rev. David Lawson and Rev. T. H. Porter. Dr. Tupper touched the place again in 1849.

In a minute of the Conference meeting of July, 1846, sympathy is expressed for one of their members, Daniel Tupper, at the death of his wife, who is referred to as "a worthy member." These persons were the grandparents, on the mother's side, of the Francis brothers, born and brought up in Upper Stewiacke, six of whom are at present in the Baptist ministry, viz., Edward, pastor of a Free Baptist or Christian Congregation at Hill, New Hampshire; William, assistant pastor of the First Baptist church of Minneapolis, Minnesota; Matthew, now an evangelist in Kansas; James, pastor of Second Avenue Baptist church, New York City; George, pastor at Westfield, New Jersey; and Eben, a student at Crozer Baptist Theological Seminary, and supplying a church at Wilmington, Maryland. Their mother married a Presbyterian and became a Presbyterian herself; but these sons, clever and useful men, reverted to the faith of their grandparents.

It is worth noting that in July, 1853, this little body ventured to entertain the Nova Scotia Eastern Association. Many thought the experiment to be a wild one, but it was afterwards declared in public print: "The appointment was all right; the kindness and hospitality of the Presbyterian community was above praise." An impression of the country and people was given in the following terms: "The widening meadows, intersected with cooling streams and decorated with graceful elms, presented a view bordering on the beautiful; while the taste and design of many of the new buildings gave unmistakable proof that the people of Upper Stewiacke are not deficient in that proper taste which every community needs in order to be raised to a proper height of domestic and social enjoyment, as well as religious intelligence." In his reference to the natural beauty of the region, this writer, whoever he was, makes it evident that he had no weakness in the direction of extravagant statement. It is said by another: "The Lord's Day is observed with much sacred propriety by the people, affording a striking contrast to the Western parts of the Province." Dr. Silas T. Rand was secretary of the Association, and Dr. Crawley was a prominent figure in its sessions. An address was delivered in Gaelic by Ronald McDonald, on behalf of his Romanist countrymen in Cape Breton, Hugh Ross acting as interpreter. Among "Reports" was one on "Tobacco," which closed in this fashion: "Resolved, therefore, that this Association kindly solicit from our brethren their tobacco money to be appropriated to the cause of Christ." It would be interesting to know how far this was effective. If things were put right by "Resolutions" how very far ahead would we be to-day!

This church had an affliction in 1858 by the painful removal of deacon James Bentley, the father of Charles N. Bentley, now a teacher in Boston, and deacon of the Baptist church at Chelsea, whose summer vacations at his old home have been spiritually helpful. The father, at stepping from a train in Halifax, was almost instantly killed. His brother Samuel, who did not long survive him, was then a pastor in Halifax.

It was in this same year, 1858, that the work of my sainted father, Rev. Obed Chute, there commenced. Not as an entire stranger did he then remove to those parts, for eight years previous thereto he was married to one of the grand-daughters of Mr. Newcomb. Educated at Acadia College and Colby University, (then Waterville College) and afterwards giving special study to the French language at Grand Ligne, he inaugurated, in promising manner, missionary endeavor among the Acadian French, and saw erected through his own influence, a fine Mission House in Yarmouth County. But instead of the course along which he hoped to go, there were in store for him disappointment and suffering.

Owing to the serious throat trouble that seized him, and never left him, he was obliged to abandon the post where he feign would have continued and seek an inland residence. Thus did it come about, in the ways of Providence, that our family have had their abode in the vicinity that this sketch has to do with. According to the wish of the Baptists of the place, my father rendered them, in the ensuing years of his life, such service as his health would allow. From 1865 to 1867, Rev. Alfred Chipman gave part of his time to the field, working in best harmony with his senior in the ministry. From the pen of another, the long-time residence of my father in Upper Stewiacke, from June 1858 to February, 1894, and the character of his ministrations, would warrant more than a passing allusion. As Dr. Saunders wrote just after the aged man's translation: "He had a great and grateful soul and was sublime in his retirement. He kept abreast of the progress made by his denomination and the world to the end of his suffering, uncomplaining life. In him the community had before it an object lesson in Christian manhood." Benignant and gracious, if I may myself utter a word of filial appreciation, was the prolonged ministry of my God-fearing parents in the Stewiacke Valley. I will not say more than this by way of characterizing their united labors: I cannot say less.

Intimation may appropriately be added, however, touching the cordiality which existed between my father and the neighboring Presbyterian ministers. Twenty-eight years before his coming there, Rev. James Smith, D. D., opened his ministry with the Presbyterian congregation; and side by side, as immediate neighbors, these two men lived in fullest concord and friendliness for thirteen years, or until 1871, when the venerable Doctor was bidden to his reward. They had a good deal in common, not only being alike studious, both having special linguistic gifts, but knowing that central unity which springs of faith in a common Redeemer. It is delightful to recall the geniality and mutual respect which prevailed between them, exemplifying, as they did in their lives, the truth of what Jeremiah Burroughs would have his brethren write upon their study doors: "Variety of opinions, and unity of those that hold them, may stand together." Between my father and Rev. Edward Grant also, the relations were most agreeable for the entire period of Mr. Grant's long pastorate which followed Dr. Smith's. At looking upon the old home of our foretime neighbors, the Smiths, around which cluster so many pleasing and sacred memories, and remembering that of their large family, but two remain, and they are elsewhere, we have forcible reminder that scenes below soon change and are quitted. Every old fireside, in sooth, publishes the self-same lesson:

"Man cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not."

(Concluded next week.)

An Abandoned Advantage

By what right does the preacher of the gospel claim the attention of men? Because he has eloquence, learning, convictions? Because he deems himself called of God to that service, or because men have called him? None nor all of these are a sufficient warrant for his teaching man in positive terms what they ought to be and to do. It is because, in addition to some of the qualifications named, he has a message from God to men. This consciousness gives boldness and force to his utterances, and is a great subjective advantage.

Do all preachers of the gospel rest their claim to a hearing upon this ground? Many, perhaps most, of them do; but they do not always avail themselves of the advantage thus afforded them. For example, a good, orthodox preacher announces as his text the words of Christ, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint," and lays out his discourse on the following lines: He who made the universe is almighty, all-wise and good. He is able to control the forces he has sent forth, and, having a fatherly heart, he will control them in the interests of his children, especially if they obey the instinct he has implanted in them, the instinct of prayer, and call upon him for help. Prayer, therefore, has a place in the divine administration. Furthermore, whatever argument there is in favor of praying at all, is a sufficient reason why men should continue to pray and not faint. Delay in the answer to prayer is not denial. The love and wisdom of God are present in the delay as much as in the answer. Delay may be occasioned by the lack of preparation to receive the blessing sought. It may be due to preparations the Lord is making; as Browning says, "God takes time." Whatever the cause, known or unknown, the only thing to do is to keep right on praying.

In such a discourse, while many good and true things are said, and while the argument is clear and sound, there is no reference to any other passage of Scripture, and no exposition or application of the parable which Christ introduces to illustrate and impress the duty of perseverance in prayer. In short, the text might have been taken as well from any other book as the Bible. There was no accent of divine authority in the sermon, no "Thus saith the Lord." And the inference might have been legitimately drawn that the doctrine of importunity in prayer rests on rational grounds alone, and if no good reason could be produced in its favor the teaching is unsupported and not binding. There is a good deal of that kind of preaching, and it appears to be increasing.—Christian Herald.