

the legal right of such unauthorized organization was questioned, and the act was construed as disloyal, the outbreak of *dissent*, or as covering political views and designs, threatening alike the peace of society and the supremacy of "The Church" and the State. The address of the Presbytery to the Governor-General anticipated wisely the charges to be preferred, and this address of Synod to the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada comes down to us as a historic part of the controversy, which continued many years, with changing phases according to changing circumstances. The members of Synod, especially Mr. Smart, entered warmly into the controversy, through the press, maintaining that "the Presbyterian Church was of all churches the most consistently loyal to the King and British Constitution, and the most to be depended on in time of need, as the names and deeds of the heroes of the late war declared." The opposition did no harm, but, by bringing these pioneer preachers, and their work, into public notice, contributed not a little to the success and progress of their mission.

#### "THE CHRISTIAN HERALD."

Soon after the formation of the Synod in 1820, a monthly magazine called the "Christian Herald," was started as its official organ, with Messrs. McDowall and Smart as the editors, and Hugh Thomson, of Kingston, as publisher. It was a failure pecuniarily, only reaching its third number, and leaving an indebtedness to the publisher for which he held the editors personally responsible, and the settlement of which was an unpleasant element in an ecclesiastical trial sixteen years later, as will hereafter appear in a historical sketch of the "United Synod." Those "three numbers" have been diligently searched for, but, thus far, in vain.

#### THE NEW PRESBYTERIES.

The dates of organization of the one Presbytery in Lower Canada, and of the three Presbyteries in Upper Canada, as provided at the meeting in Martintown in 1818, and the names of the ministers comprising them are not known. A year's diligent search and inquiry has not brought to light a single book of records, or any continuous authentic history in reference to them. It is known that the Lower Canada Presbytery had a brief feeble existence, which was brought to a premature close by the removal of ministers, and by the estrangement between Mr. Easton and his brethren, which has before been referred to. In July, 1823, the Presbytery of Cornwall had but two meetings, and the Presbytery of York but one. The Presbytery of Brockville, with a more thorough organization, had "had a meeting once every three months; and to them applications for supply of sermon, etc., from the *upper part of the province* had generally been made." Geographical boundaries of Presbyteries had not been very well defined, and were often disregarded. This was not so much, however, as has been supposed,\* because of any lack of courtesy between the Presbyteries, or their ministers, as from the peculiar state of the wilderness country, the great distances to be travelled to attend meetings, often through long stretches of unbroken forest, and especially the greater aptitude of some men than others for systematic organization. The Presbytery of Brockville seems to have had a few men who were willing to do the required work, at least in Upper Canada, and the other Presbyteries had been willing to let them do it, to such an extent, indeed, that, if it were said that three of the Presbyteries at this date were practically abandoned, leaving the work altogether to the Presbytery of Brockville, the statement would probably be practically true. And yet all four of the Presbyteries had "a name to live," each with its individual membership roll, which appears to have included some who had given in their adherence by letter when unable to be personally present. No distinct evidence has been found that either of the Presbyteries except that of Brockville ever licensed or ordained ministers, though it seems probable that David Evans at St. Therese, and John Merlin, at Hemmingford, were ordained by the Lower Canada Presbytery. The Presbytery of Brockville licensed Thos. Green, June 29th, 1820, and sent him to the church at

\* Mr. Henderson has been quoted as representing these Presbyteries as "acting in a very strange and irregular manner towards each other, as if they had been independent bodies." Mr. Henderson's information, as he says, was derived from a letter received from Mr. Bell in 1825, the allusions of which, however, seem not to have been to the action of Presbyteries toward each other, but to irregular action within the Presbytery of Brockville, by the brethren of "bad reports," which led to the organic dissolution of Presbyteries and Synod, as elsewhere explained.

Niagara in the summer of 1822, and "solemnly deposed him of his authority to preach the gospel," January 13th, 1823, he having seceded to the Church of England. They ordained Robert Bond as pastor at Prescott, February 2nd, 1821; James Harris at York, July 10th, 1823; and James Boyle at Osnabruck, September 30th, 1823; and the names of others appear, from time to time, who it is probable were licensed or ordained by that body.

#### MINISTERS AND CHURCHES IN 1823.

Rev. Wm. Bell, in his valuable "Letters from Perth," written in 1823, gives the number of Presbyterian congregations in the Lower Province *with which he was acquainted* as eight, with five ministers, three of whom, not named—evidently Dr. Harkness at Quebec, Mr. Somerville at Montreal, and Mr. Henderson at St. Andrews—had "not yet connected themselves with the Synod, and had taken no part in these proceedings. He seems to have counted Mr. Easton at Montreal, and Mr. Glen at Terre-Bonne, as still members of Synod from Lower Canada, though the former had probably ceased active membership, and the latter had recently removed to Richmond in the Upper Province. It would, probably, also be right to add the names of Mr. Evans and Mr. Merlin, with their congregations, as among those with which Mr. Bell was *not* acquainted, and as probably on the roll of the Lower Canada Presbytery. "In the Upper Province," says Mr. Bell, "there are eighteen ministers, and thirty congregations" of the Presbyterian order, with four ministers not yet connected with Synod. Three of these four were, doubtless, Mr. McLauren at Lochiel, Mr. McKenzie at Williamstown, and Mr. Barclay at Kingston. It is not clear as to who was the fourth. We may, therefore, make up a roll of ministers and congregations identified with the Synod or with one of the Presbyteries at that date, as follows, with the chance of only one mistake in names of ministers: "*McMartin's Mills*," or *Martintown*, Alexander Fletcher; *Cornwall*, *Osnabruck* and *Williamsburgh*, Joseph Johnstone; *Prescott*, Robert Boyd; *Brockville*, William Smart; *Perth*, William Bell; *Lanark*, John Gemmill; *Beckwith*, George Buchanan; *Richmond*, Andrew Glen; *Ernesttown*, *Fredericksburgh* and *Adolphustown*, Robert McDowall; *Markham*, William Jenkins; *York*, James Harris; *Niagara*, another Mr. Johnstone (lately arrived from Ireland); *Stamford*, Abner Wright; *St. Catharines*, Daniel W. Eastman; *Talbot Settlement*, C. D. Schermerhorn. To the number of congregations thus connected Mr. Bell might have added at least six on the Niagara Peninsula, all under Mr. Eastman's care, three of them—Gainsborough, Clinton and Louth—having been formally organized as early as 1809. If a roll were to be made for Lower Canada, it would include as vacant the congregations at *Lachine*, *River du Chien* and *Terre-bonne*, with Mr. Easton at *St. Peter's street*, *Montreal*, and probably Mr. Evans at *St. Therese*, and Mr. Merlin at *Hemmingford*. But Lower Canada could not be properly said to have at that date any living Presbytery, or any responsible relation to any church court.

#### DURATION OF THE SYNOD.

In one of Mr. Bell's "letters," he wrote: "The Synod, up to June, 1823, has had only three meetings." Organized at Cornwall February 3rd, 1820, it met at Perth, June 28th of the same year, and again at Brockville, February 1st, 1821, and no trace has been found of a meeting after June 1823. Almost from the beginning, the work of the Synod, as well as that of all the Presbyteries in Upper Canada, was laid upon the Presbytery of Brockville, and that body was the Synod *de facto*, as, in May 1820, it assumed to be *de jure*, as will soon hereafter appear. If but one Presbytery continued to hold meetings and to exercise Presbyterial authority, the need of a supervising Synod, composed usually wholly of the members of the Presbytery, was not apparent. Besides, the members of the Presbyteries of York and Cornwall were *de facto* members of the one acting Presbytery of Brockville. There was in fact but one body acting as Presbytery and Synod for all Upper Canada.

#### "TROUBLE IN THE CAMP."

In 1812 "bad reports" began to be circulated about two or three of the brethren. They do not appear to have been practical temperate men, and one was said, besides other infirmities, to have been morally incapable of paying over moneys which had come into his hands for Presbytery or Synod. At a meeting of Presbytery at Prescott, June 24th, 1822, these "bad

reports" were considered, and measures were taken to "labour" with the brethren named. While this was still in progress, these men rallied their forces at Prescott, May 8th, 1823, and by a majority vote of *Presbytery* proceeded to remove Mr. Bell, in his absence, from the position of treasurer to the *Synod*, and to appoint one of themselves in his place. Of course discipline, under such circumstances was impossible, whatever the offence. Sometime during the summer of 1824, it was reported that one of these ministers "remained in Brockville several days drunk, to the great annoyance of Brother Smart." Mr. Smart, accordingly summoned a meeting of Presbytery to consider the matter, but the action taken has not been preserved. In reference to this meeting Mr. Bell wrote to Mr. Henderson: "Would you believe that Mr. — was a member of this conclave? I, also, was invited, but did not go. I reminded them, however, in a letter to Mr. — that he that was without sin ought to cast the first stone at him." The accused probably controlled the court, and the result was, doubtless, like that in the case of the Dutchman who was acquitted of the charge of theft, though the evidence against him was abundant and undisputed, *because ten of the jury had part of the stolen hog.*

#### A NEW PRESBYTERY.

In a letter to Mr. Henderson, dated February 26th, 1825, Mr. Bell told him about the troubles and added:

"You know already that Mr. Smart joined me in an intimation to Messrs. — and — that I would hold no further communication with them unless the stains thrown upon their characters could be removed. Notwithstanding this, he did sit with them in meetings of Presbytery when he found it convenient. This induced me to withdraw myself from that quarter altogether and from a Presbytery of the ministers in this district. Mr. G., however, proved such a firebrand that we could not go on with him, and a second proved to be another —. Indeed, since I came to this country, I have often been led to exclaim, "How frail is man!" If I had not known that ministers were men, I would, assuredly, have learned it here."

This new Presbytery, called THE PRESBYTERY OF PERTH, was formed at Beckwith, December 24th, 1823. It met at Perth, March 9th, 1824, at Beckwith June 8th, and again at Perth, September 13th or 24th of the same year. At this meeting, which was, probably, the last held, Mr. Bell read letters he had received from Mr. Glen, and the answer he had returned. Mr. G. had asked that his name might be erased from the roll, and it was done accordingly.

#### ABOUT UNION WITH "THE KIRK."

Mr. Bell, though of the Secession, was brought up in the Church of Scotland, and his desire for a union with the ministers of that Church in Canada, where it could be accomplished with due regard to the rights and liberty of all concerned, was expressed at an early day. He was disappointed that they did not come into the union at Montreal, and sincerely regretted the divisions which so greatly entangled the pioneer ministers in the work of establishing Presbyterianism in these two colonies. While the troubles referred to were causing great anxiety, and before the organization of the Presbytery of Perth, Mr. B. wrote as follows:

"What new arrangements had been made respecting the Presbytery I know not; but it is evident that something must be done before it can be of much service to the cause of religion. Mr. Morris, our worthy representative in the Provincial Parliament, thinks that, in order to remove all difficulties on the subject, we had better connect ourselves with the Church of Scotland. He even had an interview last summer with Dr. Mears, Chairman of the Committee on Canadian affairs at Edinburgh, in order to ascertain whether there would be any serious obstacle in the way. The Doctor said he thought we all belonged to the Church of Scotland; and, under this impression, he had sent out to — last year, circulars to be addressed to every one of us, requesting us to make a report of the state of our respective congregations, etc., etc. Mr. Morris told him he was quite sure that nothing of this kind had been received by either Mr. Smart or me, or he would have heard of it. He further explained the nature and designs of the faction in this country who arrogate to themselves the name of the Church of Scotland; and concluded by expressing a hope that the General Assembly would enter into no arrangement which should not embrace the whole of the Presbyterians in the two provinces. He thinks that what he stated made some impression on the Committee, and placed the subject in a new point of view. And no wonder, for all their previous information had been derived from those who profess to belong to the *real, real kirk*, and who wish to exclude all others if they can."

So early did the Presbyterian ministers in this wilderness country come to misunderstand and misrepresent each other! So early were the dissensions and divisions in Scotland brought across the Atlantic! Something more than a year after, referring to the sentences here quoted, Mr. Bell wrote: