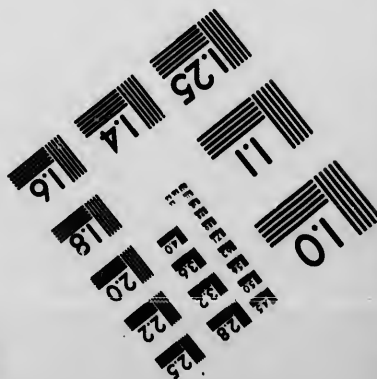
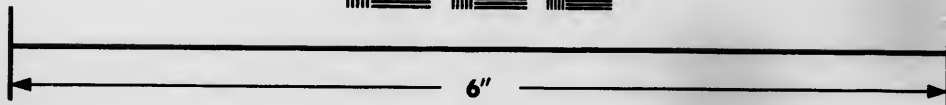
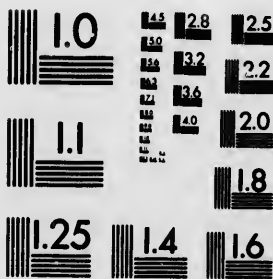


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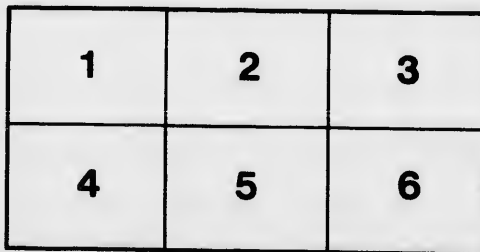
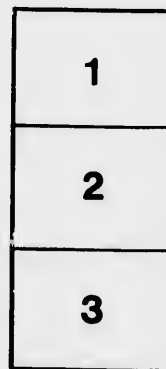
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From the

PRE

rk, March 22

EXTRACTS
From the Journal of the Reverend Matthew Miller,
MISSIONARY UNDER THE SYNOD
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA,
IN COMMUNION WITH THE
Church of Scotland.

No. II.

rk, March 22nd, 1833.

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EXTRACTS, &c.



On Sabbath the 9th Sept. I preached at Cobourg in the forenoon. The congregation met us on the former Sabbath, in a school house, as the Methodists would permit us to meet in their chapel on account of their requiring it themselves for a meeting. The school-house was crowded to excess, but still it did not accommodate all who desired admittance, though there might be 150 persons in it. These were the most part natives of Scotland. There seems no reason to doubt that were the minister of our church settled at Cobourg he would soon have a large congregation. The people appear to be impressed with a sense of the value of gospel ordinances and the number of professed presbyterians is already very considerable and the town is rapidly on the increase; all that is necessary is merely to plant a Presbyterian Church and without doubt by the blessing of God it will flourish. This is true of many places in the province besides Cobourg. Presbyterians abound in all quarters, a number of churches actually constituted, bears a small proportion to those which should be so; and, were presbyterians only aroused to see it their duty to organise themselves into societies, and use becoming exertions to obtain regular pastors among them, they entertain no apprehensions about success.

In the afternoon of the same day I preached as formerly in Colborne. There was no falling off but rather an increase in the congregation, I had reason to believe in the minds of the people had been in some degree excited, and a spirit of inquiry in several cases produced during my stay among them. I saw here an illustration of the fact that there is nothing like preaching the truth boldly, even where it may be expected to give offence. It excites people to think, which the preaching of smooth agreeable sermons will never do, and even though they may be offended and say they will not come to hear such a preacher, still they do come notwithstanding, and good is produced.

I have found decided Calvinists in various places particularly among the descendants of the Dutch but many of those with whom I conversed used very unguarded and indeed erroneous language upon the subject—the terms in which they meant to denote will amounting in fact to a denial of free agency. I have sometimes found individuals of a serious turn of mind, a good deal perplexed with such subjects, and it has struck me in hearing them speak of sermons which they had heard upon them, how very defective in their ministrations of the gospel ought to be, in guarding their language against mistakes particularly on topics of this kind, and in all the views which they give of the Divine sovereignty, keeping prominently in the foreground the entire responsibility of man.

On the afternoon of Monday the 24th Sept. I reached Gananoque 25 miles from Kingston. Here I expressed a desire to preach but found that a Methodist Preacher had anticipated me and was to address the people that evening. But through Mr. Donald's interposition he offered to let me take part of the service, and consequently to embrace every opportunity of preaching the gospel, no matter what the place or what the circumstances, I delivered a discourse to the people; one Methodist Preacher taking the preceding part of the service and another the subsequent. A mode of proceeding would appear somewhat out of order at home but in the peculiar circumstances of this country, I thought myself rather fortunate, in having an opportunity of preaching the doctrine of justification by faith alone without the works of law to such an Assembly as that before me. The Methodist Preacher who closed the service spent about three quarters of an hour in telling us his experience—how wretched a man he was once, addicted to all kinds of sinful pleasures and how entirely his character was now changed.

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The commencement of this part of the service was to me novel and rather scenic as a Preacher in advancing to take the place in the pulpit which I was resigning, sung as he approached, a few verses beginning in a somewhat extemporaneous strain.

And now my friends I do you pray,
To listen to what I am going to say.

In what followed he was joined by some of the congregation.

Our countrymen in the Bathurst District are perhaps better supplied with ministers in any other part of the province, and yet there are whole townships where they have no opportunity of hearing the word of life. One lady who had been ninety years in the country, told me she just heard sermon twice in the year, and then she had to go fifty miles for the purpose.

On Sabbath, Oct. 21st, I preached in a private house about the middle of Beckwith. My audience composed for the most part of highlanders amounted to about 250 persons. I have never seen a more attentive congregation. They seemed almost to hang upon the lips of the preacher.

In the afternoon of the same day, I preached in the centre of Ramsay to about 200 people, and had every reason to be gratified with the apparent attention of my audience. The size of the congregation, especially considering that the place is nearly 60 miles back from the St. Lawrence shewed the eagerness of the people to hear the preaching of the gospel. It may be said indeed, that the way in which a preacher is received in these back townships, is apt to prove a snare to him, for the people put such a value on his services and testify in so many ways the high esteem in which they hold him, that unless he keeps a strict watch over himself he will be apt to forget that he is but a poor and feeble creature, whose very best attempts at serving Christ are mean and inadequate, and to fancy himself "some great one." The people of this township have got a considerable sum subscribed for the support of a minister, for whom they are about sending to Scotland. They intend also to procure a glebe and build a house for him, so that he is likely to be comfortable in temporal things.

On the following day, I preached in Pakenham according to previous appointment. About forty persons were present. I have seldom found a larger congregation than this during the day, except on Sabbaths. The people are busy with their work, and though they may have no reason to expect to have another opportunity of hearing the gospel preached for six months to come, still they seem in general unwilling for the sake of the gospel to lose half a day's work. It is true, they often lose a day cheerfully for the sake of objects which they would not themselves say, were of any great importance. Considering the gospel to be a thing neither of profit nor of pleasure, they will attend the preaching of it, only when there is nothing else to occupy them. This I fear is true of a large proportion of the people, in most parts of the country, and nothing can more forcibly shew the necessity of bringing the gospel to such a people, without waiting till they send for it, of almost forcing it upon them instead of delaying till they invite it to their doors—of providing and bringing into action among them the external apparatus of the gospel and not leaving it to themselves to send for it when they finally are ready to receive it. There is much more encouragement however, and a much better prospect of success, in sending the gospel to such persons than there is in sending it to the heathen; for setting aside the facilities afforded by similarity of language, manners and habits, the diversity of which in the case of the heathen, renders the mission to them so expensive and so difficult; there is for the most part in the townships of Canada a body of men who are willing to become coadjutors in the cause, and who in fact with a little assistance are able to support a gospel ministry, which may not only be the means of edifying their own souls, but may bring the tidings of salvation home to the hearts and consciences of that larger portion of the community, who, if left to themselves would never be brought within hearing of the "joyful sound." Individuals thus anxious to provide spiritual instruction both for themselves and for their more careless brethren, ought surely to be encouraged, and if even heathens, who are not only regardless of the gospel, but full of the most hostile feelings against it, are yet held to be fit subjects of christian benevolence, how much more impressive is the call "come over and help us" which proceeds from those, who have not only the claim of close brother-

hood to urge upon us, but the still stronger argument that they are doing what they can to help themselves.

The people of Beckwith have sent home to Scotland an application for a Minister with engagements for his support. When I was in the township, workmen were employed in putting a roof upon a neat stone church, built for the Service of the Church of Scotland. The people have also provided a glebe and intend building a house as soon as they hear of a Minister coming out to them. They are a warm hearted people and disposed to receive a minister with much kindness.

Leaving York on Wednesday, I reached Ancaster on Thursday forenoon. Here I had expected to meet the Rev. Mr. Sheed, and enjoy the benefit of that knowledge of the country to the westward, which his frequent journeyings through it had enabled him to obtain. I found, however, on my arrival, that he whom I came to seek was there no longer: an unwearied traveller in the cause of the Gospel; his last journey was now over—his spirit had gone to its rest, and I arrived just in time to assist in conveying his body to the tomb. He had been looking forward with much satisfaction to the prospect of preaching in a church which his people had nearly completed for him, but the first audience that met in it were the mourners who attended his funeral.—This was one out of several affecting lessons which I had lately received of the uncertain tenure by which we hold the present life, and it seemed as though it spoke in that still but most impressive voice, "Work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work"—The people assembled at the funeral and were addressed by Mr. McGill before committing the body to the grave, and the weeping eyes which were frequent through the assembly, were a well merited tribute both to the touching pathos of the speaker, and to the warm and generous nature of him over whose dead body he spoke.

The Presbyterians of Ancaster and neighbourhood are thus left without a Minister, but the exertions they are already making to obtain a successor to their late pastor, and the great liberality they have shown in making provision for his support, may well justify the hope that the vacancy will soon be supplied.

During the course of this week, I was informed of the death of a woman, the mother of a family whom I had seen a few days before at Mr. Sheed's funeral, where indeed, by exposure, she had caught the illness of which she died.

I was invited to attend her funeral, and embraced the opportunity of addressing the people who were assembled on the occasion.

Riding with the funeral company to the church yard, I entered into conversation with the person who rode along side of me. I found he was a fellow-countryman though he had been so long in Canada, and had caught so completely the American tone, that had he not told me, I should not have supposed that he was not a native of the country. I chose such topics of conversation as seemed suited to the serious occasion which had brought us together. He bore this well enough for a little and tried to answer discreetly, though I felt there was that peculiar civil callousness about him, which seems greatly to prevail, particularly among the older settlers. On his telling me he was 70 years of age, I endeavoured to press home upon him the necessity of personal preparation for that eternity into which he must expect so soon to be ushered. This he received, apparently with great indifference, and with an air that seemed to say, "I have still too much of the stamina of life in me to be apprehensive about a dying day." So true is it, that time serves only to harden the heart, and that in proportion as eternity really approaches; it seems to recede farther and farther from the view. Thus the lapso of years instead of making a man more disposed to serious religious thought, appears to have the effect of rendering him less so.

On Sabbath, December 23d, I preached at Dundas, West Flamborough, and Ancaster. The congregation at Dundas was the largest they said, ever seen there. It consisted of upwards of 150 persons, but they belonged to three or four different religious bodies. How unhappy are those religious divisions, and yet how recklessly do people rush into them, separating from each other on account of matters which neither party considers essential to salvation. This shews a sad want of brotherly love, or in other words, of the true spirit of the gospel. How easily could the people of almost

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every township support a gospel ministry, were there a disposition to unite among those who hold essentially the same principles. But no wonder it is often felt so difficult a matter when society is torn to pieces by party differences, and when, therefore, as a matter of course, true religion is at so low an ebb.

On Tuesday, December 25th, I left Ancaster and proceeded westward into the London District. After travelling about eighty miles, I reached the village of London. In proceeding so many miles in Scotland, through a populous district, and along one of the great thoroughfares of the country, it is probable that one would see, in the frequently recurring village churches, evidences of the religious character of the population. But how melancholy did the vacancy appear in this part of Canada which is generally well settled, and renowned for the fertility of its soil, when, through so large an extent of country, not a single building was visible from the highway, to tell the passing traveller, that the settlers were not unmindful of the God of all their mercies. People may, indeed, speak of the heathen, and it is well that we should feel compassion for their spiritual destitution; but really in passing through scenes like this, one seems to be surrounded by the very atmosphere of heathenism * * * Open Sabbath profanation is common, and, above all, profane swearing, and that too, of the most horrid kind prevails to a dreadful extent. This unhappily is equally true of many other parts of Canada besides the London District.

While preaching in the 3rd concession of London, I was much pleased with the attention of the people, and afterwards with the value which in conversation they appeared to set upon the preaching of the gospel. I spoke to one very old man from Nova Scotia, who had been apparently an attentive and delighted listener to my discourse, though I found that he had not understood a word of it, from not knowing any tongue but the Gaelic. Though we could not converse together, there was something in the pleased and animated expression of his countenance, which seemed to speak more forcibly than words could have done his joy when it was said to him "Go up unto the house of God."

The township of Lobo, settled mostly by highlanders, affords a lamentable proof of the evil consequences of that neglect which has been shewn towards our countrymen in Canada. As ignorant, and I fear it must be added fanatical teachers, have arisen amongst themselves and seduced them from the sound profession, which in their native land they had made.

* * * * *

There are a number of ministers in the province who preach in the Gaelic language. I still I found various townships where highlanders abound, entirely destitute of the preaching of the gospel. Of these there are in the Bathurst District, Macnab and Ckwith; in the Home District, Vaughan, West Gwillimbury, Thorah & Eldon; in the London District, Zorra, Nissouri, London, Lobo, Williams, Yarmouth, Southwold, Inwich and Mosa.

***** I returned to the village in the evening after a fruitless attempt to find out a place where the congregation had been summoned to meet, or rather after discovering that the direction given me had served only to lead me astray. This was the first time I had failed in meeting an appointment, and I felt keenly the disappointment it must have occasioned to the people. However, it subsequently appeared as if there was something providential in the matter, for during the evening, as I was sitting alone in the inn, two gentlemen came into the room, having understood that I was a preacher and mentioned that a large congregation had been met in the village for nearly an hour, waiting the arrival of the person who was to address them, but who, probably from the state of the roads, had been unable to get forward. They then requested me in the name of the congregation to supply his place, which I cheerfully did.—About 200 people were assembled—a mixed multitude as I understood, belonging to no particular body, though the person who had called them together was a methodist preacher. They formed an attentive audience, and I trust were profited by what they heard. There was not much of those sighs and groans and ejaculations, which amongst certain classes in this country appear to be not unfrequently employed to supply the

place of inward devotion. It happened here I believe, as in many other places, that I was the first preacher of the Church of Scotland whom the people had ever heard, and it was the more fortunate that a way was opened up to me to preach on this occasion. There are many presbyterians in the village and neighbourhood and some individuals have it in view to get a Presbyterian Church established there.

Sitting afterwards in my bed-room, which was heated by a stove in the partition between it and the public room of the inn, I overheard a young man in the latter apartment impugning the credibility of the scriptures. He made one or two threadbare remarks, which he intended for objections, at the same time assuring the company, that he was a person who took the liberty of thinking for himself. It seemed too that he had read that there was some peculiarity in the shape of the negro, and shewing his knowledge of anatomy, by using one of its technical terms, he pronounced that the negro was not a descendant of Adam. He let the party know also, that he was a geologist, and in this character condescended to believe that there had once been a deluge, because, as he said in some places the fallen trees were lying all one way; but at the same time he declared it impossible that it could have been produced in the way the scriptures relate. The young man appeared to be an Englishman lately arrived in the country, which might account for his thus unguardedly exposing himself: for had he been a little acquainted with the people, he would have been aware that they have in general shrewdness enough to see through pretensions like his.

On Friday evening I preached in the Township of West Oxford to 150 people.— I was much gratified by the appearance of such an audience; as I have seldom obtained one so large upon a week day; and surely where so great desire exists for the preaching of the gospel, some effort should be made to put it within reach of the people. On the day of my arrival in the neighbouring township of Zorah, mostly settled by highlanders, a meeting of the settlers was held and nearly £60 subscribed on the spot, towards the annual stipend of a minister, for whom they were about sending to the Church of Scotland. A few days afterwards, I learned that they had sent off their application in due form. It would be well if presbyterians generally, throughout the country, would bear in mind that the same law holds in regard to obtaining ministers, which regulates most other things, that the success corresponds with the exertions put forth.

During the few days I remained in the village I saw occasionally a young man, who was believed to be fast sinking under some incurable disease. I was entirely ignorant of the state of his mind in regard to the solemn circumstances in which he knew himself placed, and indeed, all that I had learned respecting him was, that he was born of Scottish parents in a part of this country, where he had had little opportunity of obtaining religious instruction. Standing by his bed, I began to address him in a style suited to his present situation, comparing the body under the successive attacks of disease to a besieged citadel, which may hold out against many a battering of the enemy, but is gradually weakened by such renewed assault and obliged at last to surrender at discretion. I was proceeding to remind him that this was what he, and all of us had to expect, when I received a signal from his brother to speak with him outside of the door. On my meeting him there, he told me he did not want to have him spoken to upon such subjects—that he was troubled enough about them already, and that the alarm he was in at the prospect of death, had made him a great deal worse. I endeavoured to shew him the cruelty of risking the eternal loss of his brother's soul for the sake of the chance of rendering some small benefit to his body, and warned him of the deep responsibility he was incurring in forbidding communication with his brother upon the subject; declaring at the same time that I would not oppose him in the matter, but would consider his prohibition to speak as an intimation sent me in the course of providence to desist. He then began to plead the orders of the surgeon, that no one should be permitted to speak to his brother on the subject which alarmed him so much. I then put it to himself, to decide, whether it would be justifiable in him, to comply with the orders of the surgeon in this respect. But our conversation was interrupted by a person from within, who said that the sick man wanted to hear me speak. It seemed that the few words I addressed to him before, though spoken without any idea of

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their peculiar application to him, and suggested merely by the topic of the day, came closely home to his own case, for the disease under which he appeared to be sinking had repeatedly assailed him before, and been progressively prostrating his constitution. On my speaking to him again, he appeared to be in great alarm—death seemed to be indeed to him the king of terrors; with violent emotion he started up in his bed, tossed the bed clothes from him and in an extremity of agony called upon God to have mercy upon his soul, I tried to lead his mind to Christ as a giver of peace to the guilty conscience, and read to him such parts of the word of God as seemed adapted to excite in him confidence towards God, as waiting to be gracious, even to the chief of sinners. All, however, appeared to give him no comfort—his anguish of soul was unabated, and the same intense and passionate exclamations for mercy, continued at intervals to burst from him. I was oppressed under a sense of my own powerlessness and inability to help him, and felt the full force of the truth that it requires a power more than that of man to convey real peace to the troubled conscience. After praying with him I left him, but was gone scarcely half an hour when I received a message to return. On doing so, I found him in the same state as before, or, if possible, still more alarmed. The brother who had formerly interrupted me in speaking, now asked me to stop with them over night. I conversed with the sufferer as before, and read to him from the scriptures, but all in vain, for his soul refused to be comforted. After I had been some time with him he entreated me not to leave him till I had brought him into a better state. I told him that I could not help him, but that he must look to God who was willing as well as mighty to save. I was obliged to leave him in the evening, but promised to call in the morning—he then said, that he should never see the morning, upon which, I told him I did not think him quite so far gone as that, but hoped he might yet live to obtain lasting peace, and comfort to his soul. It struck me that the prospect of continued life thus in some degree held out to him, did more to soothe his mind than any thing else I had addressed to him, I visited him several times afterwards during the few days I remained in the neighbourhood, but he continued in the same state as when I first saw him. I have not heard of him since. This melancholy case affords a practical comment on the impressive language of wisdom in Prov. I. 24—31. "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof—I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof, therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

