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Historical Items

AND

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

OF



Methodism in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia,

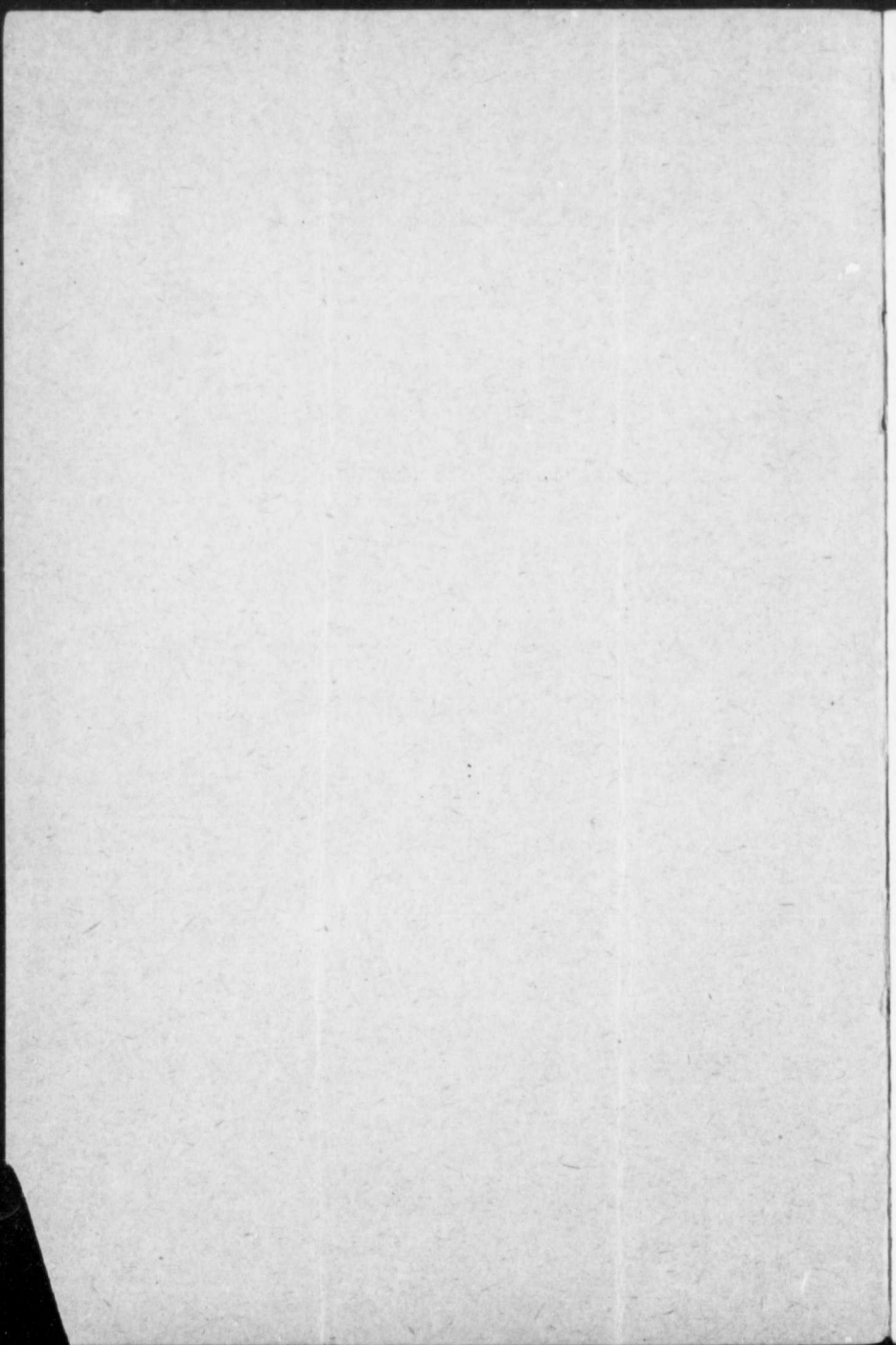


BY

REV. G. O. HUESTIS.

1902 :

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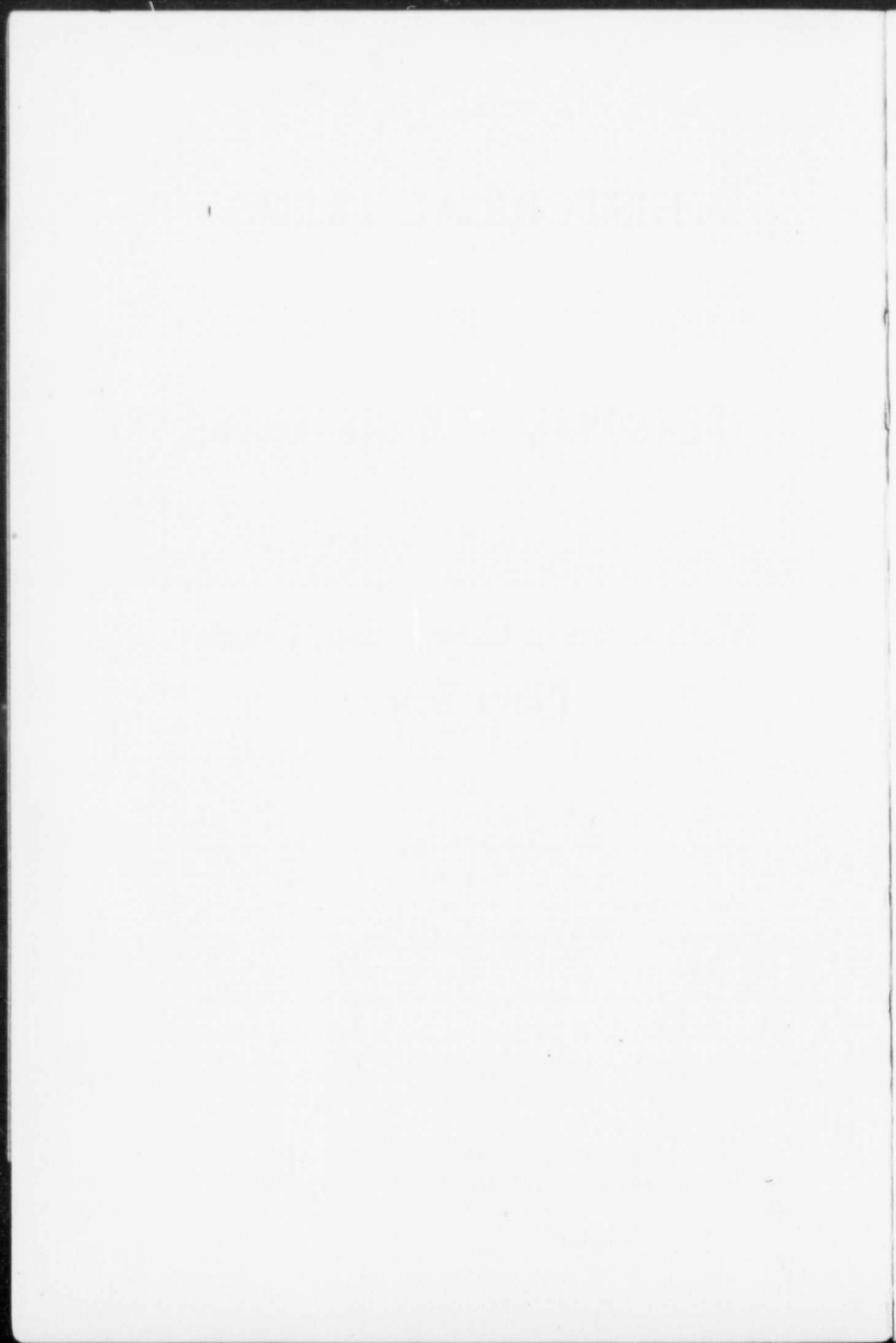
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CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NOVA SCOTIA.



Historical Items and Personal Reminiscences of Methodism in
Cumberland, the Banner County in Nova Scotia,

BY A NATIVE,

THE REV. G. O. HUESTIS.



THIS northern part of Nova Scotia first received its name, Cumberland, in 1759. In that year the Province was divided into five Counties, Annapolis, Kings, Cumberland, Lunenburg and Halifax. Cumberland, at that time, included a portion of New Brunswick, now called Westmoreland. This union was severed twenty-five years afterwards. The name indicates an undoubted nationality, the best on earth. And probably no other county in the Province welcomed so many English emigrants. Thus the highest, purest and noblest style of refined civilization was stamped upon it at the right time, insuring just such desirable results as have been subsequently realized.

This County for patriotism, loyalty, intelligence, good morals, and all right kinds of progressiveness is certainly equal, if not in advance of all others. This statement may be regarded by some as an undue estimation of the land of my nativity. Not so. I have travelled through and preached in every one of the

eighteen counties of the Province, and therefore give an unbiased opinion.

Just twenty years after the reception of its name Cumberland received Methodism. This came to its centre, then Chignecto, six years after called Amherst. It was a strange providence, over-ruling the wrath and errors of man for the advancement of Christ's kingdom that prepared the way for the introduction of Methodism in this Province.

The expulsion of the French, who would not take the oath of allegiance in 1775, led to a proclamation, and invitation to the other Colonies of Britain in America, as well as to England, to send people to fill the vacancies occasioned by their departure. A response came, first from New England, in 1760, when a large number arrived. A few years after emigrants came from Old England. Among them, between the years 1772 and 1775, a goodly number were Methodists from Yorkshire, the most Methodistic shire in England. Nearly one-fourth of the whole membership in the United Kingdom were then there. Here are the names of some of the families arriving, chiefly in 1775:—Wells, Dixon, Black, Trueman, Oxley, Donkin, Dobson, Weldon, Fawcett, Chapman and Keilor. Some of these brought with them the essential elements of Methodism, not in their luggage, but in their hearts. They found in the new country not a sound or sign of a Methodist or any other religion, except an English Church, with the Rev. John Eagleson as Pastor. But they soon had religious services after the Methodistic pattern. Kitchens were consecrated as places of prayer, and the Master was just as sure to be there "in the midst" when they

met in his name, as in the consecrated Church. Methodists cannot live long and grow in grace without prayer. The first Methodist prayer meetings in the Dominion of Canada were established in the place now called Amherst, in the County of Cumberland.

There was one among the new comers who was well prepared to conduct such meetings. He had been a class leader in England. He had received a special blessing from his chief Pastor, John Wesley, just before leaving Yorkshire. Kneeling beside Mr. Wells and his wife, with a hand on each head, the Servant of God solemnly implored the blessing of God upon their Westward enterprise. There was not a preacher among them, but the evolution of one was just at hand. Ministers generally get life and begin to grow at prayer meetings. They produce more genuine ones than colleges. These meetings continued for some months with occasional intervals, when a remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit was realized. It was the first, and perhaps one of the most powerful revivals of religion ever known in the Province. As Methodism began with a revival, and is perpetuated in the same way, I believe the correct date of its introduction to any place is when souls are being converted. Hence, early in the year 1779 it was introduced into Cumberland. The number of conversions I know not, but within one year's time two hundred persons were meeting in class.

Among the first of the converts was that of William Black, a young man nineteen years of age, who came from Yorkshire with his parents four years before. He soon became very useful in the meetings for prayer and exhortation, but did not give himself

up to the work of preaching till he became of age, two years after his conversion. He had a good experience, as all ministers have, who are Divinely inclined to the ministry. It may do us good in this our day, when true conversions are not very numerous to learn from his own words something about the nature and feature of his religious experience. Deliverance came at a prayer meeting held at the house of George Oxley. "We continued singing and praying about two hours when it pleased the Lord to reveal his ability and willingness to save me; so that I could cast my soul upon Him, while our friends were singing—

' My pardon I claim,
For a sinner I am,
A sinner believing in Jesus' name.'

I could then claim my interest in His blood, and lay hold of Him as the hope set before me. 'The Lord my righteousness.' Instantly my burden dropped off; my guilt was washed away; my condemnation removed, a sweet peace and gladness were diffused abroad in my soul." That is a good specimen of what the Methodist understands by conversion. All are not alike in every particular, but the result, peace with God and a comfortable assurance of His love are always the same. When he began preaching in 1781, the Lord abundantly blessed his labours in the conviction and conversion of souls.

Thus was Methodism introduced into Cumberland County at least three years before anywhere else, in what is now the Dominion of Canada. Newfoundland alone was a few years in advance. Nor was there any organized Methodism in Boston. This

Cumberland young man was the first to preach there and form a society in 1784, when he was on his way to the Christmas Conference of Methodists in the States, meeting at Baltimore, at which the M. E. Church was organized, and Mr. Black received ordination from Dr. Coke and Bishop Asbury. He also obtained preachers to help in carrying on the work in Nova Scotia.

With the exception of Newfoundland, Cumberland, then the first Circuit, had the first revival, the first preacher, and a little afterwards the first local preacher, John Black, and the first church opening at Sackville, 1790. All these things took place while John Wesley was yet living. From two to three years afterwards Methodism was introduced into Windsor, Halifax, Shelburne and Liverpool. There may have been in other places individual Methodists, but except one, Benjamin Chappell, at Charlottetown, who came from London in 1775, we have no record; yes, there was another still earlier in Newport, near Windsor, John Smith, in 1773. He and his wife had been many years members of society, most devoted, excellent Christians. For some years he raised the tunes in Mr. Wesley's services, who, whenever he saw occasion would say, "A little faster, brother."

His musical talent was inherited by his descendants, who rendered the Methodist choir at Windsor, fifty years ago the most popular in our Conference.

From 1784 to 1800 Methodism rapidly increased throughout the Maritime Provinces, largely through the labors of preachers from the States. Those stationed on the Cumberland Circuit besides Black were Mann, Early, Cooper, Grandin, Fidler, Whitehead.

In 1800 Black attended the English Conference at London, and with Dr. Coke's cordial assistance obtained four ministers to occupy the fields under his charge. There were then only five in the provinces. The names of those who came from England were Bennett, J. Marsden, Lowrey, Olivant. Marsden's first station was Cumberland. The next there was Bennett, then Bamford in 1806. I have not a complete list of others, who occupied it, till 1824, when the name was dropped from the circuits in Nova Scotia. In 1825, in the English Missionary Reports, the name of Westmoreland, which included Sackville, first appears; also Parrsboro and Maccan. Strange to say, at this time the place called Amherst, which had been a preaching place on the Cumberland circuit from the first, had now neither church nor organized class. Shortly after this, the minutes say, Parrsboro and Amherst, then Amherst and Parrsboro, on this part of what had been the Cumberland circuit till 1825, the following ministers were stationed:—M. Richey, W. Smith, T. H. Davies, William Webb, William Wilson. From Mr. Wilson's day—1844, Amherst became the head of a circuit, as well as Parrsboro.

In the meantime the cause was prospering in the Eastern portion of the County. No visit had been made from Cumberland circuit, as far east as Wallace, then called Remshag, until eleven years after Mr. Black began to preach. The first was by Mr. Grandin, 1791. A band of Loyalists who came to Westmoreland in 1783, obtaining lands at Wallace settled there the next year. For eight years they saw not the face or heard not the sound of a preacher's voice, until Mr. Grandin arrived. He was not expected, and no

preparations made for his reception. But they were soon made. It had been arranged to have a dance party at the house of Thomas Huestis, the writer's grandfather. But it was postponed, and the preacher allowed to interest the hearts more than the other exercise could have done the feet of the people. The sermon was well received, especially because there was no denunciation of the anticipated amusement. The next sermon at Stephen Canfield's, across the harbor, was of a more arousing and alarming nature, attended with awakening, convincing and converting power. It was the beginning of a gracious revival, without which Methodism cannot be introduced into any community. It was the seed from which was evolved a circuit, which has produced abundant fruit to the glory of God. Methodism came there to stay, and for fifty years afterwards was the only church in that part of the county.

The next visit to Remshag (Wallace) was in 1804, by Mr. Marsden, who had much success in leading sinners to the Saviour. His visit extended to Malegash. He went farther, crossed the harbor of Tatamagouche on the ice, and preached to the Huguenots who had emigrated from France and its border. The next year, 1805, a Chapel was commenced, which (to use modern style of speech) was about ten years in evolution before completion.

Most of the preaching for the next ten years, was by John Black, of River Philip, the first local preacher in the county. He was a brother of the first Methodist preacher. Often have I heard the older Methodists of Wallace speak with pleasure of the

welcome visits of this earnest and devoted man of God.

In 1816, Thomas Payne became the first stationed preacher at Wallace, which henceforth was the name of the circuit. The following is a list of the names of the preachers on the circuit from that time :—

1818—R. Crane.	1856—R. A. Temple.
1819—G. Miller.	1859—Wm. Allen.
1821—J. Snowball.	1862—R. E. Crane.
1823—M. Richey.	1865—G. Johnson.
1826—T. H. Davies.	1868—T. W. Smith.
1829—T. Bamford.	1871—R. Wasson.
1831—J. Hennegar.	1874—A. D. Morton.
1833—T. Padman.	1880—J. A. Mosher.
1835—T. H. Davies.	1883—J. Tweedy.
1837—J. Buckley.	1886—A. D. Morton.
1839—J. V. Jost.	1889—G. F. Day.
1842—B. Clarke.	1893—W. F. Outerbridge.
1843—W. Wilson.	1896—J. Astbury.
1847—W. Beals.	1898—J. W. Sheperdson.
1850—R. Smith.	1901—J. B. Heal.
1853—Wm. McCarty.	

There are now eight circuits within the area comprised in the old Wallace circuits in 1846. There were only five then in the county. There are now seventeen.

As this old Wallace circuit was my birthplace in 1821, I am able to speak more particularly of it than of any other in the county. Though forty-three years in active service, I never occupied a circuit in my native land, though often requested to do so. The following is a list of the chief Methodist families in that part of Cumberland :—Canfield, Huestis, Bigney, Stevens, Fulton, Teed, Treen, Tuttle, Betts, Wells, Peers, Oxley and Hurd.

I have designated this the Banner County, chiefly because it has produced more preachers of the gospel than any other in the Provinces. Probably a greater number than any other place with the same population in the Dominion of Canada.

Here is a list of the dates and names of those who were sent forth into the ministry. Some of these were not born in the County, though sent from the Wallace circuit, as it was in 1846 :—

<i>Date.</i>	<i>Ministers' Names.</i>	<i>Place.</i>
1842.	Christopher Lockhart.....	Parrsboro.
1846.	George Oxley Huestis.....	Wallace.
1846.	John Prince.....	born at Moncton.
1850.	George W. Tuttle.....	Wallace Bay.
1851.	Alexander Black.....	Amherst.
1853.	James Burns.....	River John.
1856.	Alexander Nicolson.....	Wallace.
1856.	Stephen T. Teed.....	Wallace.
1857.	John Read.....	Nappan.
1858.	Stephen F. Huestis.....	Wallace.
1858.	Alexander Tuttle.....	Wallace.
1861.	John G. Bigney.....	River John.
1861.	John Johnson.....	Wallace.
1863.	Jotham McFulton.....	Wallace.
1865.	Wilson W. Lodge.....	Parrsboro.
1867.	William H. Burns.....	River John.
1867.	George M. Tuttle.....	Wallace Bay.
1868.	Levi T. Johnson.....	Wallace.
1869.	William Woods, Probationer..	Wallace.
1870.	Silas C. Fulton.....	Wallace.
1870.	William J. Frazer, Probationer,	Wallace.
1870.	W. H. Ibitson.....	Amherst.
1871.	Joseph M. Fisher.....	Wallace.
1871.	John M. Betts.....	Wallace.
1872.	William Brown.....	Parrsboro.
1872.	George M. Campbell.....	Wallace.
1873.	Hiram Davis.....	Amherst.

<i>Date.</i>	<i>Ministers' Names.</i>	<i>Place.</i>
1873.	Charles W. Swallow.....	Wallace.
1873.	Thomas W. Atkinson.....	Cumberland.
1873.	D. W. Johnson.....	River John.
1875.	W. A. Black.....	Amherst.
	George F. Johnson.....	Wallace.
1877.	Starr Black.....	Amherst.
1877.	Jos. S. David, Probationer....	Wallace.
1877.	G. A. Huestis, Probationer...	Wallace.
1878.	G. W. F. Glendenning....	Amherst.
1878.	J. E. Donkin.....	Amherst.
1878.	W. H. Langille.....	River John.
1879.	La Mert Stevens.....	Wallace.
1884.	R. S. Stevens.....	Wallace.
1885.	Benjamin E. Bond.....	River Phillip.
1891.	Robert M. Browne.....	Wallace.
1897.	Aubrey S. Tuttle.....	Pugwash.

In 1800 the membership was in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick 874. Only 90 of these were in Cumberland. Fifty years after, 1850, the number was 720, half a century after, 1900, the membership was 2828. This is 628 more than any other district or county in the Province, so that Cumberland is justly entitled to the designation "Banner County of Methodism."

May I ask the indulgence of my readers to some personal reminiscences, which take me back three-fourths of a century. These, as is well known, lose not their vividness in old age.

About the time the Methodists began their career in the Province, so did the Presbyterians. I believe there were two or three preachers before Mr. McGregor came to Pictou, 1784. In 1847 I was at the funeral of Rev. John Brown, of Masstown, who was the first in that part of Colchester, and heard the Rev.

R. Baxter preach an excellent and suitable sermon from the words. "I have fought a good fight, etc.," My acquaintance then began with the very excellent and devoted Dr. McCulloch, of Truro, and the Rev. Mr. Crow, of Maitland, Hants County. In this way I learned to esteem and love my Presbyterian brethren—it may be, some of them more than others. Some ten years after the Methodists, the Baptist commenced religious operations. I believe three of their earliest ministers were Harris Harding, of Yarmouth; Theodore, his brother, of Wolfville, and Edward Manning, of Cornwallis. With two of these I had a slight acquaintance. I was at the death-bed side of Mr. Manning, on Canard street, Cornwallis, in 1849. He was in just such a state as we love to see people when dying. With Mr. T. Harding I was more familiar. He was a very interesting old man, and seemed to have a very warm feeling for the Methodists. And no wonder—fifty-five years before our first interview, he was a Methodist preacher himself. Yes, in 1794, he was stationed at Horton, the next year he left us, because he saw that we did not wish our ministers to preach Calvinistic doctrine. We did not think his dismissal from our ministry was a falling from grace. For there are, and have been just as good christians on the wrong, as well as on the right side of Arminianism. He was a most successful minister, in winning souls for Christ. Though differing in some externals, I admire and appreciate the evangelism of this people, who now outnumber the Methodists in the Province.

**The Chronology of Methodism in Various Parts
of the World.**

- 1738—First, in England, when John Wesley obtained the witness of the Spirit that he was a child of God.
- 1747—Entered Ireland, by a lay preacher named Williams.
- 1751—In Scotland by Mr. Wesley.
- 1758—In Antigua by a layman, Nathaniel Gilbert, who was converted while on a visit to England, by hearing Wesley preach. Returned in 1760, commenced exhorting and preaching, converts soon multiplied, till 1786, when visited by Dr. Coke there were more than 1,000 members in Society.
- 1765—Methodism introduced in Newfoundland by Lawrence Coughlan, sent out by John Wesley.
- 1766—To America, New York and Maryland by the Palatines from Ireland.
- 1779—By Emigrants to Nova Scotia from Yorkshire, England.
- 1792—To Sierra Leone, Africa, by several shiploads of colored people from Birch Town, Shelburne, Nova Scotia, among whom were many Methodists.
- 1810—Australia, by a converted convict sent to Botany Bay, who held prayer meetings till many converts petitioned the English conference for a minister, who was sent in 1815.
- 1814—The East Indies, by a band of preachers with Dr. Coke, who died before arriving there.

- 1815—South Africa, by Barnabas Shaw, who was not allowed to preach at the Cape, but went among savages in the interior. The Methodists are very numerous now, in that county, one town alone (Durban,) containing 17 English Churches, and the Methodists 16.
- 1791—First class formed in Canada at Adolphus Town.
- 1792—First chapel opened in Nova Scotia at Halifax.
- 1834—Death of Rev. Wm. Black, first preacher in Nova Scotia.

EXPERIMENTAL METHODISM.

It comes to the heart, and dwells nowhere else,
 God's home, only house, in the Earth ;
 With marvelous vigor, sin's power expels,
 The spiritual nature's new birth.

Humanity's wondrous, mysterious change,
 Which nature can never effect ;
 Making all things new, to the world ever strange,
 Once profligate, now the elect.

We know its approach, as we know the wind blows,
 Yet it silently comes, like the dew ;
 To the sorrowful mind, bringing joyous repose,
 With the opening heavens in view.

Restoring the sight, the Redeemer to see,
 Awakening good hope in the soul,
 From the bondage of sin, giving sweet liberty,
 Over evil a wondrous control.

Repeats Abba Father, as never before,
 Discovers no wrath on His brow ;
 Has power to love, has learned to adore,
 A duty neglected till now.

The upward ascent to life's aspect is given,
 He grovels no longer in dust ;
 A converse, and citizenship henceforth in Heaven,
 A treasure there, never to rust.

Without it no entrance to glory above,
 No home in the glorified place,
 Would you see it, or feel it—the essence is *Love*,
 The outcome, and glory of grace.

After fourscore years experience, I cheerfully give this encomium of my native county. I might say much more, in this panegyric strain, but hesitate, lest I grow into excessive laudation. Perhaps a gentle intimation of its defects, and faultiness would be more appropriate. But I forbear, exclaiming, as did one of Old England, "Cumberland, with all thy faults, I love thee still." It is probable I have just seen the last Conference I shall see in Amherst. A better one, in a better place is in view. The Rev. Mark Trafton's words express my mind to-day :—

"Where are the scenes of childhood's truth?
 Where are the cherished hopes of youth?
 Where are the friends that we loved so long?
 Where are the ties we thought so strong?
 Where are the plans of manhood's years?
 Where the seed so steeped in tears?
 Where the promise made to the ear?
 Where the voices which bade us cheer?
 Now alone, on our way we plod,
 All is a dream but our faith in God."

GOOD, AND EVIL ABOUNDING.

Which, Evil, or Good, more abundant?
 I speak of this Planet of ours,
 Not its furniture, but God's vicegerent,
 Invested with heavenly powers.

The Human, the greatest of Creatures,
 Who only knows evil and good ;
 Retaining yet marvelous features,
 The natural image of God.

But, gone from the spiritual nature,
 The lineaments, moral, Divine,
 Of righteousness wholly divested,
 Till grace, all its powers refine.

Then only is goodness abundant,
 Much more, than when evil had sway,
 This heritage has the believer,
 Whose sin is all taken away.

But alas ! how few those believers !
 Whose faith by their works is made known,
 I would fain ascertain just the number,
 But find that it cannot be done.

O, help me to solve it, Elijah,
 You thought, in your day, Saints were few,
 " I did, but how soon *seven thousand* "
 Came suddenly right into view !

Undoubtedly yet, there's a remnant,
 To many unseen, and unknown ;
 God knows who are His to a unit,
 Though united with others, alone.

The definite number just given,
 Declareth God's people are few !
 This answer presenteth a problem,
 We wish we could prove it untrue.

The forces at work are unequal,
 Omnipotent only is one ;
 The weakest, at present seems strongest,
 Which shortly will be overthrown.

No force, either party employeth,
 In the human for good or for evil ;
 Man willingly yields, or resisteth,
 Submission to God, or the devil.

The thunders of Law, men are hearing,
 " Thou shalt not," yet dare to transgress ;
 And the voice of deliverance soundeth,
 Inviting to Heaven's caress.

Endued with a power superior,
 Destroying the vitals of sin ;
 This power and love are a kingdom,
 Existing on Earth, but within,

If the infinite wrought by coercion,
 In bringing men under his sway,
 Not one of his offspring would perish,
 Or wander from duty away.

If the chains of the devil were broken,
 And unlimited power were his,
 No sinner would ever find mercy,
 Or see the God-Man as he is.

Why then is God's power reserved ?
 Why not his *will* done here below ?
 Because in the Human, there's *Free-will*.
 Refusing the Lord's will to do.

Here then is the cause and the secret,
 Of prevalent folly and sin,
 Repent, and believe in the Saviour,
 Then, will thy Millennium begin.

FOURSCORE.

Though anticipative creatures,
 On the past we love to look,
 Its events stand out before us,
 Like the pages of a book,
 Early scenes around us gather,
 For their impress on the mind,
 Is move vivid and distinctive,
 As we leave them far behind.

Home is sweet, but never sweeter,
 Than it was in days of yore,
 Youth's enjoyments were abundant,
 But how quickly spent the store !
 From the tree of knowledge gathering,
 Life's realities soon came,
 Ardent toiling for a living,
 Failed to check ambition's flame.

But abounding mental vigor,
 And a genuine gospel hope,
 Winged the soul with earnest effort,
 With all hindrances to cope,
 Found no time to waste in sowing,
 Wild oats for the harvest time ;
 Kept by grace from paths declining,
 To the lurid realms of crime.

Alpine heights of knowledge gaining,
 Higher yet, resolved to gain ;
 Not by college influences,
 Ardently desired in vain ;
 Many pleasing elevations,
 Met my warm aspiring thought ;
 With much effort came so slowly,
 Nevermore to be forgot.

I would not recall the morning,
 Or the brilliant noon of life,
 For the afternoon is pleasant,
 Less unrest, ambition, strife ;

Joy of sharing with another,
 Maketh earthly comforts rife,
 Many always are imparted,
 In a Heaven-provided wife.

Though ambition earthward fadeth,
 Hope of glory firmer seems,
 Calmer, sweeter thoughts come gently,
 Soul repose, and fewer dreams.
 Substance more than shadow pleaseth,
 Less of false, more of the true ;
 Everything does not grow older,
 Sameness oftentimes is new.

Long anticipated trials,
 Of old age, seem distant yet,
 But their gentle intimations,
 Daily, I cannot forget.
 Though the shadows Eastward lengthen,
 In the right direction 'tis,
 Golden sun-set always cometh,
 E'er the endless morn of bliss.

Blessed foretaste of the future,
 Sweet remembrances of the past,
 Waken mingled joy and gladness,
 That the evening comes so fast,
 Life on earth is still worth living,
 Much enjoyment yet remains,
 Chiefly in the moral nature,
 Where the blessed Saviour reigns.

Earth seems less, and Heaven greater,
 As we near the eventide ;
 What a company are waiting
 For us on the other side,
 Early friends have crossed the river,
 Others linger by my side,
 Faith anticipates re-union,
 In the " Home beyond the tide."

