

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
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HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 8, 1860.

WHOLE SERIES.
VOL. XXIV. No. 32.

Poetry.

The National Anthem,

As sung by the gallery of about 3,500 children on the Grand Parade at Halifax, on the occasion of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales passing, in procession, after landing on Monday, July 30th, 1860.

I.
God save our gracious Queen!
Long live our noble Queen!
God save the Queen!
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us:
God save the Queen!

II.
Welcome! our Royal guest;
Welcome! from ev'ry breast,
From ev'ry tongue;
From hearts both warm and true,
Hearts that beat high for you,
Loudly our welcome due
To thee be sung!

III.
Prince of a lofty line,
The virtues all be thine
Which grace our Queen!
To her we pay through thee,
Love, Faith and Loyalty
Homage which fits the free;
God save the Queen!

Nova Scotia Church History.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Baptists of Nova Scotia.

PERIOD II.

From A. D. 1784 to A. D. 1800.

LETTER XV.

DAVID GEORGE.—HIS EARLY HISTORY.—HIS CONVERSION.—REMOVAL TO NOVA SCOTIA.—SETTLEMENT AT SHELBURNE.—HIS LABOURS AND TRIALS THERE.—AT RAGGED ISLAND.—AT ST. JOHN.—AT FREDERICTON.—AT PRESTON.—EMIGRATION TO SIERRA LEONE.—VISIT TO ENGLAND. JOHN CRAIG'S EFFORTS AT SHELBURNE.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

I have reserved till now the account of David George and the coloured church at Shelburne. It is an interesting episode in our history.

David George was born a slave in Virginia about the year 1742. The severity of his master was so great that, he ran away, and found shelter for a time among the Indians. But he was discovered and reduced to slavery again, repeatedly changing masters, as from necessity or otherwise they sold him. All that time he was under bondage to sin, "a thoughtless, wicked man." His deliverance was effected by the instrumentality of Cyrus, a man of his own colour, whose conversations were blessed to his enlightenment and subsequent conversion.

No sooner was he converted than he began to pray and exhort in public. His abilities were acknowledged and his zeal honoured. Other coloured preachers encouraged him, particularly George Lisle, who afterwards became pastor of a church in Jamaica. Feeling that his illiteracy stood in the way of his usefulness, he determined to remove that obstacle, bought a spelling-book, obtained the assistance of "some little white children," and after a short time was able to read the bible for himself. These events occurred before the American war. Society then fell into a very disorganized state, and every man "did that which was right in his own eyes," for the ordinary bonds were snapt asunder. David had his share of the trials of the times. But he gained his liberty; by what means, I know not, though it may be inferred that he rendered service to the royal cause. He preached during the war in many places, and was successful in winning souls to Christ.

On the evacuation of Charleston by the British, in 1782, he and many other coloured persons were taken to Halifax. In the following June he removed to Shelburne. I shall here copy his own narrative:—

"As no way was open for me to preach to my own colour, I got leave to go to Shelburne (150 miles or more, I suppose, by sea), in the suite of General Patterson, leaving my wife and children, for a while, behind. Numbers of my own colour were here, but I found the white people were against me. I began to

sing the first night, in the woods, at a camp, for there were no houses then built; they were just clearing and preparing to erect a town. The black people came far and near, it was so new to them. I kept on so every night in the week, and appointed a meeting for the first Lord's day, in a valley, between two hills close by the river, and a great number of white and black people came, and I was so overjoyed with having an opportunity once more of preaching the word of God, that after I had given out the hymn I could not speak for tears. In the afternoon we met again, in the same place, and I had great liberty from the Lord. We had a meeting now every evening, and those poor creatures who had never heard the gospel before, listened to me very attentively; but the white people, the justices and all, were in an uproar, and said that I might go out into the woods, for I should not stay there. I ought to except one white man, who knew me at Savannah, and who said I should have his lot to live upon as long as I would, and build a house if I pleased. I then cut down poles, stripped-bark, and made a smart hut, and the people came flocking to the preaching every evening for a month, as though they had come for their supper. Then Governor Parr came from Halifax, brought my wife and children, gave me six months provision for my family, and a quarter of an acre of land to cultivate for our subsistence. It was a spot where there was plenty of water, and which I had before secretly wished for, as I knew it would be convenient for baptizing at any time. The weather being severe and the ground covered with snow, we raised a platform of poles for the hearers to stand upon, but there was nothing over their heads. Continuing to attend, they desired to have a meeting-house built. We had then a day of hearing what the Lord had done; and I and my wife heard their experiences, and I received four of my own colour—brother Sampson, brother John, sister Ofee, and sister Dinah. The first time I baptized here was a little before Christmas, in the creek which ran through my lot. I preached to a great number of people on the occasion, who behaved very well. I now formed the church with us six, and administered the Lord's supper in the meeting-house before it was finished. They went, on with the building, and we appointed a time every other week to hear experiences. A few months after, I baptized nine more, and the congregation very much increased. The worldly blacks, as well as the members of the church, assisted in cutting timber in the woods, and in getting shingles, and we used to give a few coppers to buy nails. We were increasing all the winter, and baptized almost every month, and administered the Lord's supper first of all once in two months; but the frame of the meeting-house was not all up, nor had we covered it with shingles, till about the middle of summer, and then it had no pulpit, seats, nor flooring. About this time, Mr. William Taylor and his wife, two Baptists, who came from London to Shelburne, heard of me. Mrs. Taylor came to my house, when I was so poor that I had not any money to buy potatoes for seed, and was so good as to give my children somewhat, and me money enough to buy a bushel of potatoes, which one produced thirty-five bushels. The church was now grown to about fifty members."

These occurrences may be referred to the early part of the year 1784. David George's history for the next eight years, as given by himself when he visited England shortly after his settlement at Sierra Leone, wants the distinctness of dates. All I can gather from it is that he laboured on amidst frequent annoyances and even open persecution, emboldened by the success which attended his ministry. At one time, a white person, William Holmes, "who, with Deborah his wife, had been converted by reading the scriptures," fetched him to Jones's Harbour, about twenty miles from Shelburne, to preach in that place. He went from thence "to a town they called Liverpool, inhabited by white people," when he found many persons who had been baptized by Mr. T. H. Chipman. He says that "Mr. Jessie Dexture preached to them, but was not their pastor." Mr. Payzant had not then removed to Liverpool. David remarks—"I preached there; the christians were all alive, and we had a little heaven together." When

he returned to Shelburne, Mr. Holmes and his wife accompanied him, and were baptized. "Their relations, who lived in the town, were very angry, raised a mob, and endeavoured to hinder their being baptized. Mr. Holmes' sister especially laid hold of her hair to keep her from going down into the water, but the justices commanded peace, and said she should be baptized, as she herself desired it. Then they were all quiet."

Still more violent proceedings followed. They are thus narrated:—"Soon after this the persecution increased, and became so great that it did not seem possible to preach, and I thought I must leave Shelburne. Several of the black people had houses on my lot; but forty or fifty disbanded soldiers were employed, who came with the tackle of ships, and turned my dwelling house and every one of their houses quite over; and the meeting-house they would have burned down, had not the ringleader of the mob himself prevented it. But I continued preaching in it, they came one night and stood before the pulpit, and swore how they would treat me if I preached again. But I stayed and preached, and the next day they came and beat me with sticks, and drove me into a swamp. I returned in the evening, and took my wife and children over the river to Birtown, where some black people were settled, and there seemed a greater prospect of doing good than at Shelburne."

While he was absent from Shelburne he preached "from house to house," and baptized about twenty persons. On his return he took possession again of the meeting-house, and lived as well as preached in it, his own dwelling having been destroyed by the rioters. One of Satan's agents, "a sort of tavern-keeper," had used the meeting-house for some time as a grog-shop, saying, "The old negro wanted to make a heaven of this place, but I'll make a hell of it." No doubt he did. The nearest approach to hell upon earth is to be found in a grogery. But the malicious purpose was baffled, for the building became once more "a house of God," and there was "a considerable revival of religion."

In 1788, David George went to Ragged Island, where there were "some white people who desired to hear the word." There also the Lord blessed him. "One white sister," he states, "was converted there while I was preaching concerning the disciples who left all and followed Christ. She came up afterwards, gave her experience to our church, and was baptized, and two black sisters with her. Then her other sister gave in her experience, and joined us without baptism, to which she would have submitted, had not her family cruelly hindered her; but she was the only one in our society who was not baptized."

When Harris Harding was at Shelburne in 1791 he went to David George's meeting. "Yesterday morning," he says, in a letter dated Aug. 20th. "I attended David's meeting, where as soon as I came I found about twenty or thirty, 'made white in the blood of the Lamb,' singing hosannas to the Son of David. Several of them were frequently obliged to stop and rejoice. Soon after, David began prayer, but was so overcome with joy that he also was obliged to stop, and turned to me with many tears like brooks running down his cheeks, desiring me to call upon that name that was like ointment poured down upon the assembly. My soul was upon Mount Zion, and I saw that whosoever worked righteousness was accepted by Him."

In 1792, David George was requested to go to St. John, N. B., where there were some coloured persons who wished to be baptized. His statement is as follows:—"By this time the christians at St. John, about 200 miles from Shelburne, over the Bay of Fundy, in New Brunswick, had heard of me and wished me to visit them. Part of the first Saturday I was there was spent in hearing the experiences of the black people; four were approved, some of whom had been converted in Virginia; a fortnight after, I baptized them in the river, on the Lord's day. Numerous spectators, white and black, were present, who behaved very well. But on Monday many of the inhabitants made a disturbance, declaring that nobody should preach there again without a license from the Governor. He lived at Fredericton, about a hundred miles from thence, up St. John river. I

went off in the packet to him. Colonel Allen, who knew me in Charleston, lived but a few miles from the Governor, and introduced me to him, upon which his secretary gave me a license."

The following is a copy of that singular document:—

"Secretary's Office, Fredericton,
17th July, 1792.

"I do hereby certify, that David George, a free negro man, has permission from his Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, to instruct the black people in the knowledge, and exhort them to the practice of the Christian religion.

JON. ODELL, Secretary."

He left Peter Richards at St. John, to exhort the people, and afterwards sent Sampson Colbart, one of his "elders," to remain there. "He was a loving brother, and the Lord had endowed him with great gifts, when the experience of nine or ten had been related there, they sent for me to come and baptize them. I went by water to Halifax, and walked from thence to Horton, about 80 miles from Annapolis, and not far from New Brunswick. There is a large church at Horton; I think the largest in Nova Scotia. They are all Baptists. * * * We spent one Sabbath together, and all day long was a day to be remembered. * * * This second time of my being at St. John, I staid preaching about a fortnight, and baptized ten people. Our going down into the water seemed to be a pleasing sight to the whole town, white people and black." He went to Fredericton again and baptized three persons there.

In the fall of the year he was sent for to Preston, near Halifax. "Five converted persons," he states, "who lived there, desired to be baptized and join the church. I baptized them, and administered the Lord's Supper to them at Preston, and left brother Hector Peters, one of my elders, with them. In returning to Shelburne, with almost thirty passengers, we were blown off into the sea, and lost our course. I had no blanket to cover me, and got frost-bitten in both my legs up to my knees, and was so ill when I came towards land that I could not walk. The church met me at the river side and carried me home. Afterwards, when I could walk a little, I wanted to speak of the Lord's goodness, and the people made me a wooden sledge, and drew me to meeting. In the spring of the year I could walk again, but have never been strong since."

His labours in Nova Scotia were now drawing to a close. In the fall of 1794 proposals were made to the coloured people to remove to Sierra Leone, where a Colony was then in course of settlement. Most of the Baptists agreed to go, and David George accompanied them. The few who declined returned to the States. The emigrants were collected at Halifax, where they remained three or four weeks. David was busy all the time. He "preached from house to house," and delivered his farewell sermon in "Mr. Marchington's meeting-house."

One more extract from his narrative may be given. Having stated that they were seven weeks on the voyage, David adds:—"There was great joy to see the land. The high mountain at some distance from Freetown, where we now live, appeared like a cloud to us. I preached the first Lord's-day—it was a blessed time—under a sail, and so I did for several weeks after. We then erected a hovel for a meeting-house, which is made of posts put into the ground, and poles over our heads, which are covered with grass. While I was preaching under the sails sister Patty Webb and Lucy Lawrence were converted, and they, with old sister Peggy, brother Bill Taylor, and brother Sampson Hayward, who were awakened before they came this voyage, have since been baptized in the river."

He had not been long at Sierra Leone when he felt a strong desire to go to England and "see the Baptist brethren" there. His wishes were gratified. By the kindness of friends a passage was secured, and he spent some time in England. When he was in London he related his history to Dr. Rippon and the Rev. Samuel Pearce of Birmingham. Dr. Rippon inserted it in his "Baptist Register," from which it was copied into Benedict's "History of the Baptists;" but the second edition of that work contains no notice of David George.

Messrs. Jacob Grigg and James Rodway