

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
VOL. V. No. 5.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1860.

WHOLE SERIES.
VOL. XXIV. No. 5.

Poetry.

Lessons from Nature.

BY CHARLES WEST THOMSON.

I look on the valley, the lake and the hill,
All bright in the glory of day;
And thoughts of that better land over me thrill,
Where pastures are green, and the waters are still;
I would seek it. Lord, show me the way!

I mark where the flocks are reposing in sleep,
Or mid the mild underwood stray;
Alas! what am I but a wandering sheep,
Which He, the good Shepherd, in mercy did keep
From becoming the wolf's easy prey?

I see the gay herbage in garden and glade,—
Though it perish, my hope is secure;
For thus I remember the promise is made,
"Though the grass and the flowers may wither
and fade,
The word of our God shall endure."

As the mild, gentle zephyrs at evening begin
In fragrance around me to play,
They tell with what wooings the spirit would win
Stray souls from the mazes of folly and sin,
To wisdom's pure peaceable way.

And when daylight is pass'd and the night-watchers
burn,
Their bright tapers above, I endeavor
From their clear emanations this lesson to learn,
That they who shall many to righteousness turn,
Shall shine as the stars do—for ever.

Though darkness be spread over Nature's fair
face,
And hang like a pall in the air,
I know there's a region of glory and grace
Where God and the Lamb are the light of the
place,
And no night shall ever be there.

But when day again dawns upon meadow and
grove,
Giving beauty and freshness to earth,
It reminds me of him who, in mercy and love,
Came forth, like the sun, from his greatness above,
To give to lost man a new birth.

As hour after hour speeds swiftly away,
Which no wisdom can ever renew,
My heart whisper gently, that life is a day,
And that I, with my might, should perform
while I may
Whatever my hands find to do.

The brook murmurs by me with flowers on its
brink,
Even now as these measures I pour;
And as I behold its clear waters, I think
Of those pure streams of joy which the blessed
shall drink,
Where they hunger and thirst never more.

And the wild wood, which waving before me I
see,
Spreading shade o'er its leaf-covered sod,
Is an emblem, thought faint, of that glorious tree,
Which in verdure unfolding forever shall be
In the midst of the Eden of God.

Then hail to the valley, the lake and the hill,
In nature's delightful array!
Not in vain have I look'd on your beauties if
still
With such pleasant fancies my soul you shall fill
As shall teach me to watch and to pray.

Nova Scotia Church History.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Baptists of Nova Scotia.

PERIOD I.

From A. D. 1760 to A. D. 1784.

(Continued.)

LETTER II.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

As my present business is with Nova Scotia only, I can merely allude to another transaction which took place in 1763. The Rev. Nathan Mason, with a number of his people, emigrated from South Swansea, Mass., and settled at Sackville, N. B. After a few years he returned to his own country, and the Baptist interest in that neighbourhood dwindled away. It was not revived till about the commencement of the present century.

The case, as regards Nova Scotia, stands thus:—In 1760 the first Baptists settled here. Others avowed their agreement with them and were baptized; but there was no Baptist Church till after the appearance of Henry

Alline as a preacher. The New England settlers were mostly Congregationalists, and carried on worship under that name and profession, having lost nothing by their removal but the power of taxing and imprisoning Separatists. If persons holding Baptist principles were willing to join them, there was no objection. For many years their churches were composed of Baptists and Congregationalists. While Mr. Sutton remained here, he preached and baptized; the Dimocks and Mr. Moulton did the same; but separate action as Baptists was deferred till a more favourable conjuncture of circumstances. It is easier to state this fact than to account for or to justify it.

It was not till the autumn of 1778 that a Baptist church was formed. There was a Congregational church at Falmouth and Newport, and another at Cornwallis, with which Horton was probably connected. The Baptist brethren in the latter place at length desired a separate organization. It is not stated by whom they were baptized; they might be the survivors of those who were brought to the knowledge of the truth by Mr. Moulton. Mr. Nicholas Pearson, an English Baptist, having settled among them and preached acceptably, they concluded that the time was come for the formation of a church. A difficulty, however, presented itself:—there were but five of them, and they thought that a church should not be constituted of a smaller number than seven. They had not read Tertullian's saying—"Where there are three, there is a church"—and if they had, perhaps they would not have received it. But as there were several candidates for baptism the difficulty was soon removed. They were baptized, and the church was formed on the 19th of October, 1778. Mr. Pearson was chosen Pastor, and Mr. Benjamin Kinsman, deacon, and clerk of the church. Application was made to the church at Falmouth and Newport "for counsel and assistance in ordination." The meeting for that purpose took place on the fifth of November. The ordination sermon was preached by Mr. Henry Alline, himself an unordained minister. The act of ordination was performed by Benjamin Kinsman, the deacon-elect. He addressed Mr. Pearson as follows:—

"You on whose head we now lay our hands, having received a call from this church of Christ, and having accepted the same—we do now solemnly charge you, in the presence of God, of angels, and men, that you do willingly and faithfully execute the office whereunto you are called. 'Preach the word; be instant, in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine'; together with administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper; with visiting and watching over the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseer; making the word of God the rule of your life, as far as God by his grace and Spirit shall enable you. 'Study to shew yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.' 'Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. Thus hoping and praying that you may have all that grace and assistance that you need, to walk in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless, as becomes his house for ever; and that you may have many seals of your ministry in the day of Christ's appearing."

Benjamin Kinsman was then set apart to the office of deacon. The newly ordained pastor "gave him his charge" in these words:—

"You, on whose head we now lay our hands, having received a call from the church of Christ to the office of a deacon, and having accepted the same,—we do now solemnly charge you in the presence of God, angels, and men, that you do faithfully and willingly execute the office whereunto you are called;—defending the faith, visiting and praying with the sick, knowing the state of the poor of the flock, providing for and attending upon the Lord's table, together with the care of the treasury, and whatsoever the glory of God and the necessities of the church shall call you to, as far as God by his grace and Spirit shall enable you;—hoping and praying that

you may have all that grace and assistance that you need, to walk in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless, as becomes his house for ever."

As this was the first transaction of the kind that had taken place in Nova Scotia, the formalities now commonly observed could not be regarded, in the then existing state of the denomination. There were no other Baptist churches to be invited, and no Baptist ministers to lay hands on their brother. The Dimocks were at Newport, but neither of them was ordained. It is not unlikely that they were present, as members of the delegation from Falmouth and Newport, though it does not appear on the record.

The church thus constituted was composed of ten members. Their names were,—Nicholas Pearson, Benjamin Sanford, John Clark, Peter Bishop, Silas Weales, Benjamin Kinsman, Daniel Huntly, John Coaldwell, Esther Pearson, and Hannah Kinsman. Ten others were added to them during the year. The first was Peter Wickwire, who was baptized ten days after Mr. Pearson's ordination. He was followed the next Lord's day by Jerusha Hammond, Frederick Babcock, Susannah Palmeter, and Mary Loomer; and on the fifth of December, Thomas Handley Chipman, Deborah Newcomb, Hannah Loveless, Huldah Woodworth, and Joseph Morton were baptized. Mr. Chipman, as you know, became afterwards famous as a Baptist minister in this province.

The Articles adopted by the church were similar to those at that time in use in the Baptist churches of New England, and expressed, substantially, the same views as are embodied in our "Declaration of faith and practice." I observe that particular stress was laid on some points, which it may be proper to mention:—

"6. That at all times the door of the church shall stand open to every meet member, and at the same time to be carefully kept against such as cannot give satisfactory evidence of a work of grace upon their hearts, whereby they are united to Jesus Christ."

"11. We believe it to be duty for every head of a family to pray in and with them morning and evening."

"13. We believe it to be our indispensable duty to contribute toward the support of the gospel, and all other necessary charges that may arise in the church, according to our several abilities."

This church, like the Congregational church in the same district, was designated "the church at Horton and Cornwallis," and met alternately in those townships. Its boundaries were not well defined; perhaps it would be more correct to say that it had none, but extended as far as any of its members lived. Accordingly we find that church meetings were sometimes held in Wilmot, in one direction, and in Newport, in the other.

At a meeting held in the former township an important change was made in the constitution of the church. At first, close communion was practised, and when application was made (Feb., 6th 1779) by the Congregationalists of Cornwallis for a "sister communion," the church "was not agreed to grant them their request at present." But at a church-meeting held in Wilmot, Oct., 7th 1780, at which time ten persons were received for baptism, "a vote was passed by the church for the Congregational brethren which are sound in the faith to sit down with us at the Lord's table occasionally, and that the mode of baptism is no bar of communion." The effect of this resolution was to give Congregationalists the privilege of "occasional" communion. They did not become members of the church. The resolution remained in force nearly thirty years.

In closing this part of the narrative I may notice the seriousness and care with which this infant church acted in the matter of discipline. The year after its formation two of the members fell into sin. Prompt action was taken, and the offenders immediately placed under suspension, one of them was subsequently restored, on satisfactory proof of repentance; but the other was expelled. A solemn address to him, which appears to have been given by the pastor at a church meeting, is recorded in the church book. It closes thus:—Your sin, committed in secret, is now brought to light. Having found you out it brings you to public scorn and contempt be-

fore your fellow-creatures, and hath made you ripe for the ordinance of excommunication;—and in behalf of this church, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I excommunicate ———— from our community, testifying that we disown him as a brother in Christ, and that he is no more to us than 'a heathen man or a publican.'

The church at its formation consisted of ten persons. At the time of Henry Alline's death, to which this first period of the history extends, the additions had amounted to eighty. Making allowance for exclusions and deaths, that may be taken as the number of members. Such was the strength of the Baptist Denomination in Nova Scotia, in February, 1784; that is, in an organized state. There were many baptized persons in Newport and Cornwallis, who were still in communion with Congregational churches. Thomas Handly Chipman was ordained in Annapolis Co., in 1782, and the churches to which he ministered were of the same mixed character. Henry Alline's Journal contains numerous references to the "disputes about water baptism," both in Cornwallis and Annapolis. Mr. Chipman it cannot be doubted, baptized converts. There was a growing number of baptized believers, and they were destined, ultimately, to become the predominant party.

Shubael Dimock, whose baptism by his son Daniel has been mentioned, died May 24th, 1781, aged seventy-three. Some interesting particulars respecting him are found in a brief memoir, written by the venerable Joseph Dimock, and published in the Baptist Missionary Magazine for September, 1836. I will give you two or three extracts.

"He had a particular gift in prayer and exhortation. The holy freedom with which he poured out his soul, at the feet of the Saviour was such a tide of holy breathing, as often drew all who engaged with him into the same heavenly stream: * * * I recollect to have heard the Rev. Henry Alline once say to my father, 'Come, Brother Dimock, let us go and spend the evening with Father D. I want to hear him pray. I often think, I never heard any person pray who looks so directly into heaven, and leads others with him as he does. I sometimes have felt so small, I never wanted to think of myself or hear myself again. I expect we shall not hear him much more on these shores of time, for he will soon get home.'"

"When he became too feeble to leave his own house, he had meetings appointed there. He often used to address the Congregation, sitting in his arm-chair, so warmly and affectionately, that they would be melted to tears. His addresses were generally made of solemn appeals from the word of God to the conscience, on the turpitude of sin,—the unreasonableness of neglecting religion,—the shortness of time,—the vast concerns of eternity,—the sweetness and sure support of religion to the believer."

The following passage is taken from a diary, kept during the last few months of his life:—"This morning I awoke about the dawn of day; my meditations of divine things were sweet. 'Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.' The harmony of the divine attributes in the economy of redemption so overcame my soul—so captivated my mind, that wonder, love, praise and joy overwhelmed me. I knew my time was short, and I hoped very short. My enraptured soul could say with more assurance than ever, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' He was the gift of the Father for me, and to me; he hath given himself to redeem me from the curse; and the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, hath revealed him in his mediatorial office. O what love! what wisdom, power, and sweetness! 'And he is mine! yes, he is mine.' Could I call all the world, all kingdoms, honor, wealth, power, pleasure, my possessions,—oh, how contemptible!

'I'd part with all the joys of sense,
To gaze upon thy throne;
Pleasures spring thence, forever thence,
Unspeakable, unknown.'

"My cough, raising blood, and shortness of breath, are pleasant omens to me of my departure being at hand. Yet I feel willing to wait my heavenly Father's time."

"On the afternoon before his death, all his children and their partners, except his son Shubael, were providentially at his house to see him; and about two o'clock, as he was