

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

By Rev. Charles Tupper, D. D.

CHAPTER V.

LABORS WHILE AN EVANGELIST.

(No. 8.)

In writing this Sketch it is not my intention to imitate those biographers who present the bright side of the picture only; but rather to follow the preferable course of the inspired writers, who, in giving us memoirs of others or of themselves, present faithful statements of imperfections and errors, for beacons of caution, as well as of commendable deeds as examples for imitation.

Toward the close of the year 1818, being upwards of twenty-four years of age, having deliberately and prayerfully determined to accept a call to the pastoral office, and so to become in some measure stationary, and believing the divine testimony, "It is not good that the man should be alone," the subject of marriage became with me a serious practical question.

Upon mature consideration several principles, deemed by me important, became firmly established in my mind. To each of them I have invariably adhered. The reader is respectfully requested to consider seriously whether they are not worthy of general adoption. They are embodied in the three following resolutions:—

1. Never to intimate, by word or deed, peculiar affection to any female, unless it was my determination, in case of her compliance, to make her my wife. For either man or woman to tantalize one of the other sex by attempting to gain her or his special regard without a sincere intention of marriage, is evidently great wickedness, and extreme cruelty.

2. Not to interfere with the marriage of others. Doubtless it is allowable for parents, if they see their children in danger of contracting imprudent and unhappy alliances, to give them kind and judicious admonitions. Ministers must decline to solemnize clandestine and unlawful marriages. Moreover, any person may properly give a candid answer to an inquiry respecting an individual with whom he or she is acquainted. But enough was known to me at that time of the pernicious results which often flow from what in common parlance is called 'making or breaking matches,' to establish in me a fixed resolution to avoid both.

3. Never to make a promise prior to actual marriage. In numberless instances such promises—often made inconsiderately by the young—have involved both parties in very great trouble.

Where no promise is made, a change of mind can be no sufficient cause of complaint. If both parties retain mutual and unabated affection, when they come to the altar of Hymen, under no constraint, each will know that the other is not impelled thither through the fear of prosecution: Such a marriage will be almost certain to be a happy one. Some inconsiderate females may be disposed to scout the idea of this principle; but its universal adoption would obviously prove an inestimable benefit to many of the fair sex. In numerous instances unsuspecting young women have been persuaded to consider a promise of marriage as equivalent to marriage itself. They have then either been abandoned in disgrace and wretchedness, without any regard paid to promises, vows, or imprecations, or else married with evident reluctance, and consequently rendered miserable for life.

Entertaining the views, and having formed the resolutions, now stated, when I became acquainted with a lady whom I justly regarded as possessing the qualifications requisite to render her an agreeable and useful companion, and to whom I felt a peculiar attachment, the considerations that she was four years and a half older than myself, had six children, and was destitute of worldly property, did not seem to me obstacles sufficient to deter me from proposing to her a marriage union. Some persons, apprehensive of this advised me against it. I replied that I would listen respectfully to all the advice that might be given me; but, as I never interfered with others in this matter, I should take my own course.

Accordingly, having become fully decided in my choice and purpose, I frankly communicated my mind to the object of my special regard. It appears to me due to the memory of that candid and excellent woman to say, that she responded with equal frankness, and expressed her cordial approval of my views with reference to this whole subject. As our mutual affection—happily continued to the close of her life—underwent no change or diminution during the season that elapsed prior to the time that was proposed for the solemnization, on the 3rd day of December, 1818, I was united in marriage with Mr. John Low's widow, whose maiden name was Miriam Lockhart, of Parrsborough.

Public reforms, especially in matters which few men have sufficient moral courage to touch, are usually effected by slow degrees. It is hoped, however, that some of the improvements now recommended by precept and example, may receive serious attention, and be adopted at least by a few persons. Unquestionably human happiness will be proportionally increased.

For the Christian Messenger.

Rev. W. S. McKenzie.

Dear Brother Selden,—

In your account of the Convention of last year, you mentioned particularly bro. McKenzie of Providence, R. I., formerly of Nova Scotia, as having interested the people much by his public addresses, and particularly in giving an account of his earthly struggles to obtain an education. I had known that excellent brother when a boy, and remembered when he first professed religion, in the year 1842, but I had seen but little of him since. Your notice of him, however, and several communications from his pen in the Christian Visitor, awakened a desire to become better acquainted with him. So I wrote to him, and received a deeply interesting letter in reply. With the belief that this letter is well adapted to edify the pious portion of your readers, and particularly to encourage our young brethren who are panting to engage in the work of the christian ministry, but who seem to see no opening for the obtaining of an education, without which they are convinced, as they well may be, that they cannot succeed, I have obtained our brother's permission to send it to the Christian Messenger.

Some allusions in the letter may be briefly explained. The season of religious awakening in Liverpool, at the time referred to (1842), can by me never be forgotten. It was one of the most remarkable eras of my life. I had been a professor of religion for about ten years, during about nine of which I had been endeavoring to preach—but until that time, I had never known by experience what the full assurance of hope was. I passed through a scene one afternoon

alone in the old meeting house, and another afterwards in my study, the same day, that I can no more forget than Abraham could forget the time when a "deep sleep and a horror of great darkness fell upon him," as the "sun went down," "and behold a burning lamp and a smoking furnace passed between the pieces," or than Jacob could forget the night when he "saw God face to face, and had power with him and prevailed." Had I been caught up to the third heavens, either in the body or out of it, I could not have been more certain that I was there, than I was then and there that my sins were all forgiven, and that I should be in heaven to all eternity. The transition from darkness to light was sudden, and my joy was unspeakable and full of glory," accompanied with the certainty that I was not, and could not be, deceived. But I will not at this time give all the particulars. On that never-to-be-forgotten evening an awfully solemn and impressive meeting was held in the old Baptist chapel. I did not attend it. I was too much excited, too near heaven, to be fit for any thing but prayer. I had often read the announcement that "the Spirit maketh intercession for us with unutterable groanings." But that evening I knew what is the meaning of that passage. Had the Shekinah—the bright cloud of glory, filled the room, I could not have been any more conscious than I was of the divine presence. Had I seen Jehovah face to face, and heard his voice, I could not have been any more conscious that we were conversing together. Bro. Vidito preached that evening, and, as I was informed, some forty or fifty persons were awakened. Whether bro. McK. was in the number or not, I cannot say, but these are some of the scenes referred to in his letter.

Hantsport, Aug. 20th.

S. T. RAND.

Providence, May 15th, 1865.

REV. S. T. RAND.

My Dear Father in Christ,—Such as you claim to be, and such I am very willing to grant that you are. Your letter which reached me last week was not more surprising than gratifying, I have the most distinct recollection of you and Mrs. Rand. Your faces are vividly daguerrotyped upon my mind; none of those whom I remember among the friends of childhood are more distinctly in my mind. I cannot forget the memorable work of Divine grace to which you refer, and with which you were so intimately connected. The particular incident which you mention in respect to my crossing that venerable and pious Deacon in the exercise of prayer does not occur to me. You must have remembered it from the fact that it aroused your sense of decorum, and therefore impressed itself deeply upon your mind. When I go back to those early and eventful days in my history all seems like a dream when one awaketh. It scarcely appears at this distance of time to be a reality. But it was a reality, a strange and, in some respects, a truly marvellous reality, I remember little else besides the circumstances associated with my religious life, I remember when you were married, I received a piece of wedding cake at the door, I believe I fired off some pop-guns in the way of celebrating the event of your nuptials, I remember that I considered you a most wonderful preacher. It was not often I went near, what I then regarded and proclaimed to be, as little else than a floating pest house. You know the dear old sanctuary was on the shore, and that the tide often came up all around it, requiring the courage of a Baptist to make an attempt to enter it. But I did occasionally make my way to the outer door, and sometimes ascended into the gallery. In any other meeting house, and under the preaching of any other minister I could either sleep, read a book or trifle with boys around me, but when within the sound of your clarion tones and under the sharp, piercing eyes that glanced upon me through those glasses it was utterly impossible for me to be otherwise than attentive. You were accustomed to speak so directly to the point, and tell sinners what they were, and what they were to expect, in such plain, pointed, pungent, burning and sometimes awfully awakening language, that I for one, among the guilty sinners, could not but listen, though I might not believe and tremble. No Sir, I can never forget the Rev. S. T. Rand, pastor of the Baptist Church in Liverpool, nor that astonishing outpouring of the Holy Spirit, when I was slain by the law of God and made alive by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, I do not wonder that such a work was wrought in that town, now you have disclosed to me some of the secrets of your experience just prior to the beginning of that Revival. I am filled with adoring gratitude in view of the fact that the great and infinite God when listening to your groaning, when beholding the anguish and struggles of your soul for his favor to rest upon that town, should stoop to think of me, and to give me, a poor, rude, sinful boy, to you as a part of the wonderful answer to your agonizing prayers. Ah, I must go back. He could not then have given me a converted soul, to you as an answer to your pleadings, if he had not first, away back in the eternal ages given me to his Son in the glorious Covenant of Redemption, as a part of the fruits of that Son's travail of souls.

"Oh to grace how great a debtor, Daily I'm constrained to be."

Then those other favorite lines,

"Jesus sought me when a stranger, &c." You know them.

When I go back to my early history, and trace it along to the present moment, how clearly and signally does the hand of God appear. Surely I, for one, have been led by a way that I knew not. In those days to which your letter has transferred my thoughts, days which I love to recall, I had many thoughts, emotions, desires, aspirations in a word experiences, which no one knew any thing about, nor yet suspected. I walked alone. A strange future, all misty, mysterious and yet at times somewhat definite and distinct, stretched out before my interior vision, I waited and watched, wistfully I peered out into that cloud-wreathed future not exactly anxious, or troubled as to what I would become and what I would do, but feeling a calm assurance that a mighty Hand had hold of me, and would surely conduct me forward to the destined end of my being. For years I kept silent, somewhat of a study to my friends, a sort of enigma. Now and then some one would jocosely utter prophecies over me. But I was in no mood to relish any jokes as to my future. Life seemed intensely real and awfully solemn. Divine things stood before my mind with a distinctness and grandeur that made me sober, if not melancholy. For the first two years after uniting with the Church I was in almost constant distress in reference to the character of the hope I was indulging as a christian. Hour after hour did I spend away off in the woods, praying, and studying the word of God. The sermons I heard always filled me with doubts and fears respecting my spiritual condition, but I could get no sermons that pointed me to Christ, that revealed to me just the relation in which the Redeemer stood to God and to man. Generalities, vague statements, glittering and moving appeals did not reach the craving of my mind after something definite, distinct, solid and settled in regard to religion. But after a while, through many terrible struggles, I reached the sure ground of trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was in the woods. It was at the break of day one Sabbath in Spring. The glory of the Lord shone round about me. But I must arrest the story.

I had from the first a burning desire to preach the gospel. I dare not make the awful thought known to any one. You had left the town soon after the great Revival. Like Jacob you wrestled, got the blessing, but you know Jacob was crippled, I have a faint recollection that in some way you, too, were crippled. You were gone. A very worthy man of God, Mr. Dickie, filled your place. He was the first man, I think, who wrestled my secret from the inner chamber of my soul. I was very shy. I was for going ahead and saying nothing. An education, I felt I must have. How was I to get it? No money, no influential friends. I was an apprentice, bound for seven years. A cruel task-master was over me. I used to think he was all animal, without anything in the shape of intellect or conscience, and can't rid myself of that conviction now. He had no sympathy with either my religion or my aspirations. But I managed to buy myself out of his grasp. I soon found my way, somehow, to a place called Wolfville. I was studying. Did any one ask me for what? I was mum. For about two years I plodded along. I will not stop to say how, at our Institution in Wolfville. Before I left there I got my tongue loose. I attempted to preach. By a series of singular circumstances, but providential, no doubt, I was led on till I reached this country. Entered Harvard University at Cambridge, that sink of Unitarianism and Infidelity, which, to my mind, are nearly akin in spirit and results. Graduated in 1855. Went to the Theological School at Newtown. Preached a little over one year in a place called Abington in Mass. In the mean-time married, subsequently settled in Andover, Mass. I spent about three years there. Rev. M. H. Bixby, pastor of the Friendship St. Baptist Church in this city, who was a returned missionary from Burmah, felt that he must re-enter the foreign field, and open that mission among the Shans, but could not make up his mind to do so until he had secured me to take this church. I came. Have been here going on five years. Recently tried to get away so that I could come back into the British Provinces, but failed to get the ties that bind me to this Church severed. Harvard gave me two degrees, A. B. and A. M. And last summer Brown University gave me the honorary A. M. I have two children, one a boy 7 years of age, the other a girl nearly 5. I am what is here called an old School Calvinist in Theology. In my preaching I succeed in making some sinners angry and some saints joyful. My poor labors have been blessed to some extent. But alas, I often mourn forth the cry of the Prophet, "Who hath believed our report?"

But why should I intrude this outline of my history upon your notice? Answer. You say that I am one of your spiritual children, born through the travail of your soul about 23 years ago. Then here I have sufficient reason for bringing myself so fully to your notice, by conducting you in long leaps and strides, over the history of those 23 years, during which time you have nearly lost the track of me. By that pleasant detective, Harding, you have at last got at me, and now you must consent to be bored by this long letter. I am vain enough to think that you will not consider it a bore, but will find some gratification in learning a little of my career.

Still you are at work among the poor Aborigines. I often think of you in connection with the man whose name is fragrant among all christians. I mean Brainerd. Similar was his work to yours. You are planting. May you live to reap. But do not faint, if you reap not. The harvest may ripen and be reaped over your grave. But they that sow and they that reap shall rejoice together at last. Blessed whether it be sowing or reaping. You with a glowing confidence of a crown waiting from on high, I know not how