

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

A Tour in Newfoundland.

II.

My previous article placed me in St. John's, the capital of England's oldest colony. As I trod the streets, viewed the old buildings that escaped the ravages of the great fire in 1846, and gazed upon nature's scene and majesty in rugged grandeur around me, I was forcibly and fondly reminded of the days of my youth when I looked with awe upon the same scene, and wondered, whence it came, why it was, and to what this outward world led. My first lessons in thought were taken here. The first school I entered was in this city, and the teacher who inspired me with reverence and affection, was remembered kindly, as the old school was espied far removed from its former position, and devoted to less noble uses. In a future number I will refer more particularly to St. John's.

There being no opening at the time to preach in any of the churches of the city, I resolved, in accordance with the advice of friends, to proceed without delay to Harbour Grace, and devote a week or two to labour in that town. Accordingly on Thursday morning, Aug. 14, I left in a public conveyance for Portugal Cove, whence a small steamer conveys passengers across Conception Bay to towns and villages on its northern shores. A pleasant drive of nine miles over a good road brought us to the Cove; the road skirts for a considerable distance what is, or used to be called the 20 Mile Pond or Lake.

Portugal Cove is interesting, though a wild, rough looking place; from the heights one gets a fine view of the Bay. Belle Island, high and beautiful, is right before you, and Kelly's Island to the left, distant about two miles. Fishing is the principal occupation of the inhabitants,—in which even the women sometimes engage, as was seen at this time. The population is about 700; there are three churches,—Catholic, Episcopal and Methodist, each of these denominations has also a school under its control, supported in part at least by the government. About noon the *Lady Glover* made her appearance, and having taken the passengers on board steamed out for the other side of the Bay. We had a pleasant run, and in less than two hours entered the port of Harbour Grace, a safe, pretty harbour, with a population of about 6000 on its shores. Business appeared very dull. Large Sealing steamers were lying idle at the wharfs, there being then no profitable employment for them either at home or from American ports.

I stepped on shore almost an entire stranger, knowing very slightly only one person in the place; however I sought him at once, and was soon comfortably located in the pleasant home of Messrs. John & N. Jillard, merchants of long standing and repute in the town, by whom I was hospitably entertained while in this part of Newfoundland. All these friends and the members of their family could do, was done to render my visit pleasant and useful; and I feel very grateful for their kindness and attention. I soon became acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Ross, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in the place, a position he has occupied for over 20 years. I am indebted to this worthy minister for the use of his pulpit on Sabbath the 17th of August, when for the first time I had the privilege of preaching the Gospel in this part of the Island. The congregation was highly intelligent and appreciative. There is room, however, for a larger congregation, and need of more spiritual power to gather in people to hear the gospel which Mr. Ross preaches so clearly and well. I preached in the same church on the following Sabbath, my last discourse in that town to a deeply attentive congregation, and learned afterwards that the service was thought to be very profitable. To Mr. Ross I am much obliged for fraternal attention and kindness. The other churches at Harbour Grace are Roman Catholic, Episcopal, and Methodist.

The Roman Catholic is the largest; here is the residence of Rev. Dr. Carfagnini, Bishop of the diocese of Harbour Grace, which includes a large part of the Island. Serious disagreement exists between the Bishop and influential mem-

bers of his flock, who clamour for freedom and independence in the management of local affairs than his Lordship from Italy is disposed to grant. It is a very difficult thing in this age, even under the shadow of the great Hierarchy, to repress mental activity, independent opinion and movement; even persons who may have in good faith sworn allegiance to spiritual rulers, so called, are sometimes constrained to make a stand against them when dogmas are pressed to an extreme. But resistance at almost any point to a system of ecclesiastical tyranny is a hopeful sign, as it indicates the working of intelligence, of conscience it may be, and of manly independence. The Catholic Cathedral is a fine large building, but the dome only is finished. How a people by no means wealthy can erect and maintain such costly edifices as this and those at St. John's owned by the same denomination would probably be found a problem insoluble in practice in Protestant communities generally; but Catholic rules in such cases a power which Protestant churches neither can use, nor desire to use,—that of churchly pressure and Hierarchical compulsion. Nevertheless, possibly, more good is done than we are always willing to admit.

There are two Episcopal Churches here, but whether the fact betokens spiritual vigour and health may perhaps, in this, as in some other cases, be doubted. Of an enforced union, or of an enforced division, it is often difficult to say which is productive of more good, or more evil.

The Methodists have a large church and congregation in Harbour Grace, and were at the time favored with a delegation, consisting of Rev. Dr. Douglas and Rev. M. Allen, from the Methodist Church of Canada, to raise funds to pay off the debt (\$70,000) incurred by the Executive Committee in carrying forward the missionary enterprises of the body. The delegation appropriately called the contemplated fund—*A Relief and Extension Fund*—one not merely to pay off debt, but to furnish means to prosecute Methodist mission work as far and fast as possible. Rev. Dr. Douglas is President of General Conference, was formerly a foreign missionary in a tropical climate, contracted disease there and is now a cripple, being unable to feed himself. He made a good missionary speech, shewing the great blessings conferred on the world through Christianity, though he appeared somewhat excessive in his glorification of Methodism, and rather boastful of numbers and the future of his denomination.—Whether the opinion of Prof. Goldwin Smith, that the Methodist will be the denomination of the future, will prove true, or not, the Wesleyan brethren are labouring hard to make it true.

But the church of the Millennium will not, in my opinion, be an exact copy of any existing denomination; the church of that glorious aion, or age, will have cast off the excrescences and dead lumber which had been accumulating more or less under the imperfect modes of operation adopted or used by different denominations to maintain and propagate Christianity. A great transformation must take place, it is believed, in the spirit, plans and activities of any existing denomination to make it the church of the Millennium.—What a crashing and demolition of discordant, irradial creeds must take place ere the simple and divine creed of christianity—the *New Testament*—is raised as it will be in the Millennial age, to complete supremacy everywhere and in all things in the church militant.

However, it is consistent and right for those who believe their system of doctrine, polity and procedure corresponds most nearly to the gospel in its entirety to do all in their power to extend and propagate their views in the world. The denomination that will not work must stagnate and die out. It was thought that the Methodists of Harbour Grace made on the whole a generous response to the appeal of Dr. Douglas.

Missionary debts and church debts are an incubus on both, and should be thrown off as soon as possible. Well may it be asked of managers who thus pile up debt in a holy cause. "Who hath required this at your hands?" "Bring no more vain oblations."

The Messrs. Jillard and family very kindly organized an excursion for my gratification to Heart's Content, and on the 20th Aug, we set out for that cele-

brated locality. Good horses and careful drivers were provided, and the journey 13 miles was performed in about three hours. We passed through the pleasant town of Carboneer about 3 miles further down the Bay; our drive was very interesting—the longest I ever had in Newfoundland, through scenery rugged and desolate, yet grand—hills, mountains, streams, barrens, bogs and lakes coming into view as we passed along. The land was for the most part denuded of trees by fire and storms. Heart's Content is in Trinity Bay, has a fine, deep harbour scooped out in a good sheltered position; it was here the *Great Eastern* landed the Submarine Telegraph Cable by which Europe and America are brought within speaking distance of each other, and through which it may be said, life in its variations circulates from the one to the other. The town is pretty, and has two churches, the Episcopal and Wesleyan; but its great attraction is the Atlantic Telegraph office. Soon our company, ladies and gentlemen, found the way to the office and the gentlemen in charge conducted us through the rooms, and showed us the working of the wonderful and complicated mechanism by which news is sent and received from the East and West. Every contingency is provided for, and tests can be applied by which the exact location of a break in the Cable can be ascertained. There are two modes in use here of reading of the messages sent from the other side of the Atlantic nearly 2000 miles distant, that by a flash of light to the right or to left, and of greater or less extent in order to express the different letters required; the officer on duty closely watches every flash and tells off the message as it comes. The other method is that of writing in a peculiar alphabet on paper prepared for the purpose, the motion required being given by an ingenious apparatus, having a syphon connected with an ink-stand, from which a delicate stream of ink is propelled on to the paper so as to form the letter of the message which can be read off and kept for reference. This is the *Reporter* method, and is now in common use at Heart's Content. Mr. Tripp, the gentlemanly operator in charge asked the operator in Valencia, Ireland, to send me an Alphabet, and in a very short time the electric current coming under the Atlantic dashed off the strange hieroglyphics at Heart's Content. I retain it as a great curiosity. I could not help feeling that the Submarine Telegraph is one of the miracles of Science, and is, no doubt, one of the links in the chain of causes which operate towards the enlightenment and progress of society, the peace and unification of the nations, the consummation of God's purposes, the triumph of Christianity and the happiness of redeemed humanity. My visit to Heart's Content and the Atlantic Cable will be long remembered with great interest and pleasure. We had a fine journey back and reached Harbour Grace about 9 o'clock, P. M., and fully enjoyed the entertainment awaiting us. During my stay in this town I had many opportunities of conversing with people on spiritual things and commending them to the grace and word of the Lord. On the morning of Aug. 27th, with many thanks for their kindness and earnest wishes for their spiritual welfare and that of the people of Harbour Grace, I took leave of these friends, and embarked on board the *Lady Glover* and in about two hours reached Portugal Cove, and thence enjoyed a very agreeable drive to St. John's, where I had arranged to preach in the Congregational Church on the following Lord's Day.

Yours truly,  
GEORGE ARMSTRONG.  
St. John, N. B., Feb. 5, 1880.

For the Christian Messenger.  
"Caution to Baptists."

Mr. Editor,—

I observe in the *Wesleyan* of Jan. 30th, an article in which my name is freely used, and to which it is necessary to make some reply.

The article professes to be from the Trustees of the Port George Methodist Church, through their Secretary James H. Miller; and my "Caution to Baptists" in the *Messenger* of Jan. 7th, is the object of attack.

The final conclusion of said Trustees is thus stated. "Hence we charge Rev. J. H. Robbins with bearing false witness against his neighbor—as we honestly

believe—in his article of 'Encouragement and Caution to Baptists' in the following particulars, if he apply his remarks to Port George."

Please notice the indefiniteness of the "charge," with two modifying clauses, first "—as we honestly believe—" making the whole matter a mere expression of opinion. Second, "if he apply his remarks" to Port George, which is purely hypothetical. After filling more than two columns with an indiscriminate medley of italics and dishonest use of quotation marks, trying to make a case, they are afraid to state a positive charge, but commit themselves to a mere hypothetical expression of personal opinions. Whoever wrote that article tried to use "Sophistry" but had not ability to conceal it.

The "particulars" in which I am charged, in the opinion of the Trustees, with bearing false witness are—

"1st. As to the manner of obtaining deeds.

"2nd. As to violating pledges given to other denominations.

"3rd. As to shutting Baptist ministers out of Methodist Churches as soon as God gives them converts.

"4th. As to a sister of another denomination draining off a mill pond on the Sabbath day to prevent the Sacrament of Baptism."

First. About the "Deed." The Trustees ask, "Does Mr. Robbins mean to say that the Port George Methodist Deed was obtained by sophistry?" Then they proceed to prove that Mr. Alexander McInnis and Jane his wife were not overcome by sophistry in giving said deed.

My remarks in reference to the Port George house was this, "When the Baptists put their money into the house a verbal pledge was given"—"by the Methodist minister"—"that the house should be free for the use of all denominations except Roman Catholics, when not occupied by the Methodists." A plain admission that it was a Methodist house in which Baptists were induced, by the promise of privilege, to buy pews. I never thought of 'sophistry' in reference to the Port George Deed, until I read the attempted defence of the Trustees. They draw attention from the main point and direct it to the giver of the Deed. Subsequently they say, "The Sexton defended his act," of shutting out the Baptists "in the qualifying clause of the Deed." This does look as though there were "sophistry" somewhere. Guilt sometimes exposes itself.

My caution about "Deeds," was in reference to "Union houses," and the caution is worthy of heed. Take the advice of "E" in the *Messenger* of Jan. 14th, and have the matter properly adjusted at the beginning, "For the children of this world are in this generation wiser than the children of light."

"2nd. As to violating pledges, &c. This applies to P. G. and there is no "false witness" about it either. The purport of the "pledge" was given in my former article and quoted above. The Trustees have not denied it. That pledge did not specify "once a month," or any other limitation, except "when not occupied by the Methodists."

I am accused of "unwarrantable liberty, and claiming "unlimited sway" of "the building." Please notice the facts and judge for yourselves.

When I first came on this field (June 1879) I inquired of the people at Port George, if it were necessary for me to make request for the house, I was informed that it was not, as the Baptists had always enjoyed the privilege promised them and the same privilege would certainly continue. I preached once a month in the house, until Oct. 22nd, when I commenced extra meetings, holding from two to four meetings a week for six weeks. (The house was "comfortably prepared" for us at our own expense). In making appointments I frequently stated that I did not wish to interfere with any others, and if at any time the house was wanted even after my appointments were made, I would withdraw them. Yet I am charged with claiming "unlimited privileges." We took no more "privilege" than was originally promised, and when we were shut out, and the act partially sustained by Minister and Trustees, I still maintain it was "a violation of the original pledge."

Baptists own about one third of the pews, but, the number of pews, or

amount of money does not affect the principle. It remains the same whether Baptists own two pews or twenty.

The Trustees state at the time of the first Baptism, "Rev. Mr. Robbins preached one of his characteristic sermons on immersion as the only mode of Baptism."

And again, "On both occasions his remarks on the mode of Baptism were to the judgement of other denominations exceedingly uncharitable and severe, charging others with disobedience as to the great command; applying to them Jas. ii. 10, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in this one point of immersion is guilty of all—that is, guilty of every sin of omission and commission—'guilty of all'."

Please notice the facts. After the first occasion of Baptism (Nov. 17) I preached in the evening on the general subject of "obedience." On the thought "Obedience in all respects," I simply quoted the passage from James, making application to no particular act of disobedience. Later in the discourse among other specified acts of obedience, I mentioned Baptism; stating that the scriptural mode was that in which the ordinance had been administered in the afternoon.

If our Methodist friends, with troubled consciences, make the above application of the passage to themselves, they are at liberty to do so, but they must themselves bear the responsibility of the application.

On the second occasion of Baptism (Dec. 7), I made no reference whatever to the mode of baptism—not one word.

In neither sermon, or any other, were there any "uncharitable attacks" or "severe remarks," touching any denomination. This statement of the case is certainly plain. The evident cause of the opposition was not any remarks of mine, but jealousy, as it showed itself at a very early stage of the meeting.

The paragraph concerning the "Sunday School," is equally far from the truth. There were many children who did not attend the school of Mr. Woodworth, the Adventist minister in the place, consequently a school was organized in which Methodists and Baptists united, without any interference with Mr. W's. School, as his was in another building, at a different hour and continued after the other school was formed.

I do not know what is meant by the "New Version Bible Class." The paragraph is like many others, not worthy of notice.

"3rd. As to shutting Baptist ministers out of Methodist Churches as soon as God gives them converts."

Great use is made of the words "as soon as God gave us converts." Any common intelligence can see the comparative sense, in reference to time, in which the words "as soon as" are used. The fact stands as at first stated "As soon as God gave us converts, and I baptized them in the right way." (I did it on the occasion, Nov. 17th and Dec. 7th.) "We were shut out."

The Trustees tell us it was "on the sole authority of the Sexton." The Sexton saying, "he had the highest authority for doing so," the Sexton meaning the qualifying clause in the Deed, and Rev. Mr. Robbins understanding him to mean either the minister of the circuit or the Trustees of the Church."

The facts are these; when I went to my next appointment, after the second Baptism, I found no admittance; and inquired of the Sexton if he had received instruction from Rev. Mr. Smith, the Methodist minister, not to let me into the Meeting house, and he assured me that he had, telling me also a partial reason given by Rev. Mr. Smith for so doing. This conversation was also heard by a witness. Subsequently Rev. Mr. Smith assured me that he had passed no words with either Sexton or Trustees in reference to the matter.

With this simple statement of the facts, I leave the public to judge whether the Baptists were "shut out" or not, and to form their own opinion on whose authority it was done.

A week later the resolution of the Trustees was placed in my hand. (I have since been told that the "reconstruction took place after the resolution was passed.) That resolution was not satisfactory, for the reasons before given, and as the Sunday School was positively