

The Baptists of Yarmouth, N. S.

REV. J. H. SAUNDERS.

No. 1.

Although scarcely heard of in Yarmouth at the beginning of the last century, Baptists have a large place in the history of this country.

As a piece of history the rise and progress of our churches in this Province is a profitable study for all Christian people. While the history of the Baptists of Yarmouth is quite like that of the body in the Maritime Provinces, generally, it has features quite its own of a most interesting type; demanding the careful attention of the present generation.

The first permanent settlement of Yarmouth by our fathers began in 1761, who came chiefly from the New England colonies. As a class they had not much of wealth or classic culture to bring with them, yet like all people they in migrating did not leave their religion, such as it was, behind them. Probably they were of the standing order of their day. It may be that the contentions of the Separatists, who under the influence of Whitfield demanded freer and more pronounced spiritual life, had left religious impressions which found opportunity for fuller expression in this new country.

Commencing life as these people did in a new country, for nearly the period of a generation they were without church privileges or schools. Their circumstances demanded patient, continuous toil and economy to keep the wolf of hunger from the door. These are the conditions which produce, if they succeed, a self-reliant independent people—a people not most easily brought under religious control, or kept there.

It was not till about 1767 that they had a settled pastor, and were organized for church services. An honest purpose to worship God and secure the blessings of His grace for their household appears in every line of their records. In the meantime the dissipation of their day found large place in their domestic habits. To these their poverty and thrift alike contributed. A religion the chief force of which was a form of godliness, did but little to hold in check vices, which led on to the destruction of morals. There was but little in it to give an open vision of sin, or to awaken the conscience to the impending ruin of the sinner.

The practice of the church at that time was to coalesce with the dissipation of its surroundings, to make church ordinances, services, and ceremonials to take the place of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This appears to have been the religious condition of Yarmouth in the closing years of the eighteenth century.

In 1781-82 Henry Alline, a religious zealot of a peculiar type, who was a native of this province, and who for a few years had been evangelizing in the eastern counties of this province, and in New Brunswick, visited Yarmouth. He found the religious condition of the people such as to fire his zeal, and give fresh emphasis to the commission he held to preach the gospel of the new birth and the new life to them. As he was quite outside the religious order of things, he was forbidden the few places of worship in the county, while not many people would allow him the hospitality of their firesides. But he was a John the Baptist sent to prepare the way for the better religious life of the people of Yarmouth. Like John the Baptist and like the angel visitors to Sodom he saw the impending ruin. Like these he lifted up his voice in warning. To the people he was as one who dreamed, or a crazy fanatic. His anxiety and zeal for the immediate conversion of sinners was to these people a zeal without knowledge. His words of warning were wild declamations without foundation in reason or fact. His manner of public worship was to the formalists of his day disorderly and without the decency of true worshippers.

Doubtless there was much in the work of Mr. Alline and his coadjutors that was decidedly human. He was only separated from the people, to whom he came with the gospel message, by the fact that he had experienced religion, and they had not. Between them there was really a great gulf fixed. He for years had groaned under the burden of his sins. He had clear and keen convictions of sin, of its awful character and consequences, of the fearful final doom of the sinner, if unforgiven. Christ had appeared for his deliverance. He had given him peace and rest and hope, had taken him out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set his feet upon a rock, and established his goings, and put a new song in his mouth even praises to our God. His joy was great, his love and loyalty to God sought for expression, his love for lost sinners was unbounded, the height of his ambition to seek and save the lost ones. With this revelation of Christ's love to him came, as to Paul, the command to preach the gospel. He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. To Henry Alline all this was real and reasonable. And who shall say that he was not right, or that the facts were not on his side in the contentions he carried into every place he visited. Was it not true that he was a wiser and better man for his clear vision of sin, and the certainty of his eternal ruin without the pardoning mercy of God? Was it not

meet that he should be glad and rejoice in the forgiving love of God to him a sinner, and to all repentant sinners? Was he not within the facts of the case when he declared that unrepentant sinners in the church were in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity, and as verily the slaves of sin and hell, as unrepentant sinners outside of church organizations of his day or our day? What proof have we that he was not right? Or rather have we not abundant proof that he was right and sane?

His enthusiasm was put in evidence of his religious insanity; but was not his message worthy of this enthusiasm? Nor was his enthusiasm at his best more excessive than that of the devotees of vice and passion of his day, or even of our day? We have strong proof of the correctness of his preaching in the fact that many believed his words, and were made the better for believing. He had the power to win souls to Christ and His service, and who can say that this power was not of God? In his three short visits to Yarmouth in 1781-82, Henry Alline gathered a few converts, and made religious impressions upon the people, the fruitage of which is being gathered by us to-day.

In 1790 Harris Harding, a convert of the New-Light religion, as it was then called, of which, in this province, Henry Alline was the acknowledged leader, visited Yarmouth, for the first time, and took up the work Mr. Alline had begun. From time to time Thos. H. Chipman, Jos. Dimock and others visited the township for the like purpose, and were successful in winning converts. In 1797 Mr. Harding settled here and entered upon a pastorate that continued till 1854. Mr. Harding was a worthy successor of Mr. Alline. On the one hand he met all the opposition, scorn, contempt, and persecution of his predecessors, while on the other hand his coming in the name of his Master was hailed with joy by the few converts who had been asking God to do this very thing for them.

Mr. Harding's training and equipment for this work was not altogether as that of the apostle to the gentiles; but in its suitability for his appointed work it was pre-eminently fitting.

Mr. Harding was a converted man. He was endowed with a good share of mother wit, he was tactful. His early occupations and associations had given him a wide knowledge of the ways of the world. He was of easy and pleasing address, and companionable. His literary attainments were quite in advance of the people to whom he ministered, they lived in his heart's best affections, and their spiritual welfare, shaped and guided the most intense purposes of his life. It was not surprising, therefore, that his preaching bore immediate fruit. The history of Mr. Alline's labors were repeated in Mr. Harding's. No place of worship was open to him. He met with strong opposition from leaders of religious enterprises. His followers were a poor and despised people.

A Mr. Rogers at Chebogue opened his house for him, and a Mrs. Strickland subsequently invited him to her home in Chebogue. A place in the village of Yarmouth, where opposition to him was most pronounced, was secured for his ministrations; and everywhere God wrought the wonders of conversion by him. These were stirring religious times. Men and women came to hear him, some to mock who went away to pray. People who before they heard the gospel from him thought themselves all right, but went out with keen convictions of sin, and with eyes wide open to their doom even the doom of the damned. In looking back to these times, what are we as Baptists to think of them?

Was Mr. Harding mistaken as to his commission? Had God sent him to Yarmouth? Was he astray in the doctrine he preached of the love of God for the impenitent sinner, whose eternal death and hell were certain but for the grace of God? Indeed did not his commission demand that the very best of men and women could only be saved from perishing as exceptions. Except a man be born from above he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned! Have we any other doctrine for our day that is in authority? Or have we a people to whom these doctrines are not applicable, to whom this gospel should not be preached?

Mr. Harding's preaching wrought very rapid changes in the public mind, and by the Spirit of God, strange and before unknown experiences in all the converts.

Nor should this be thought phenomenal. It must be a marvellous experience for a sinner to pass from death to life, to be born again, or to be in the enjoyment of spiritual life, to be in Christ Jesus a new creation, in which old things have passed away, and all things have become new. It must be a wonderful experience to be convinced of sin by the Spirit's light let in upon the dark, sin-cursed heart. It must be a painful experience to repent, i. e., to change our mind, to change our views of God and his Kingdom, to make a radical change in our life's purposes and work. Is it not strange if all this can come to us in the absence of emotions indescribable? No wonder Father Harding's converts shouted for joy. No wonder that those under conviction for sin prayed in agony. No wonder that they who rejoiced in redeeming love prayed in agony for the unsaved. So like the Pentecost was this that its origin is not doubtful. Is it not rather strange that these experiences are not voiced in our churches with more emphasis to-day?

Is it possible that this way the only Scriptural way of salvation, is being entered upon now, and our church rolls enlarged, in the absence of these soul stirring experiences? Have the Baptist churches of Yarmouth attained to that perfect and intelligent form of religious expression and worship which veils all these emotions, and so shuts them from the public gaze, as to leave the world in doubt as to their existence? Can this be done to the advantage of spiritual life in the soul, or in the spiritual interest of the unsaved?

In other words, is it possible that our Baptist churches of to-day have lapsed, by gradual approaches, to nearly the same low spiritual levels of the religious formalists of one hundred years ago? Let us compare.

The Womanhood of the Queen.

BY H. F. ADAMS.

No. 2.

The Queen's womanhood may be justly called the sovereignty of her character. As a mother she sought to train her children as she had been trained. And we have all learned that two things are absolutely necessary to the proper training of children. (1) We must be rightly trained ourselves. (2) We must know something of child nature. The Queen was rich in both these qualifications. One of the finest conceptions of child culture is given in her own words, taken from a letter to her eldest daughter. "I am quite clear that she should be taught to have great reverence for God and religion, but that she should have the feeling of devotion to love, which our heavenly Father encourages his earthly children to have for Him; and not one of fear and trembling. And that the thought of death and an after-life should not be presented in an alarming and forbidding view. And that she should be taught to know as yet no difference of creeds; and not to think she can pray only on her knees, or those who do not kneel are less fervent and devout in their prayers."

And this from a letter from this daughter to her Queen-mother is very refreshing in this day of loudness and display and pride of position. "What you say about the education of our girls, I entirely agree with, and I strive to bring them up totally free from pride of their position, which is nothing save what their personal worth can make it. I read it (the Queen's letter) to the governess, thinking how good it would be for her to hear your opinion. . . . I feel so entirely as you do on the difference of rank, and how all important it is for princes and princesses to know that they are nothing better or above others, save through their own merit, and that they only have the double duty of living for others, and being an example good and modest. This I hope my children will grow up to be."

The Queen's idea of womanhood was not to be a mere ornamental creature of society, nevertheless she was persistent in acquiring knowledge of art, science, and government. Not for the sake of being accomplished, but that through these attainments she might be a better, braver, nobler woman. She was a fine musician, an accomplished painter, was versed in constitutional law, and could converse in six languages. She began to learn Hindostani after she was 50, and did so. But the Queen's womanhood comprehended the more domestic arts as well. For in the Swiss cottage on the grounds at Osborne her boys learned carpentering, while the princesses studied culinary art in a model kitchen and dairy; and they entertained their parents at luncheon prepared by their own hands. Also made dishes for the poor.

Also in the matter of dress, though on formal occasions the Queen had to wear the magnificent robes and regalia of her position, yet generally she preferred to dress quietly. Strong, brave, pure womanhood needs not the splendor of courtly robes to commend it. It is most beautiful when unadorned. So the Queen was not more loved for what she was, than she was admired for what she wore.

The beauty of her great womanly character will shine clearer and brighter, while robes and crowns will fade and perish with the passing years. It is truly marvellous to learn what a mighty power this great woman exercised in the councils of the State. How many harsh communications her premiers had prepared for foreign governments were changed and softened so as to prevent war. When Lord Palmerston demanded the release of Mason and Slidell from the custody of the United States, his stern language would have embroiled the two nations in war had the despatch gone forward. But the Queen changed the whole tenor of the despatch so that these adventurers were released without humiliating the American government. When the Emperor of the French proposed to England to recognize the Confederacy in the American civil war, Lord John Russell's cabinet inclined to do so. The American ambassador in London, Charles Francis Adams, hearing of it was greatly disturbed, and without the premier's consent hastened to Windsor. Requesting an audience with the Queen he succeeded, and addressing her said: "If there is any foundation for this information which I have received, I appeal to Your Majesty to prevent so great a wrong, and an action which will result in universal war, for I can assure Your Majesty that the American people are prepared to fight the whole world rather than give up the Union." To this the Queen replied: "Mr. Adams, give yourself no concern. My government will not recognize the Confederacy."

These are samples of many instances of this woman's gentle influence. The great womanly heart of Victoria was revealed in thousands of cases, of which I give you two. When the eminent Dr. John Tullock, Principal of St. Andrews University died (a man whom the Queen loved to hear preach) Her Majesty wrote to his widow, from which letter we call this:—

"My heart bleeds for you—the dear worthy companion of that noble, exalted man, so highly gifted and large-hearted, and so brave, whose life is crushed by the greatest loss which can befall a woman. To me the loss of