

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Extracts from Central Association Letters.

(Continued.)

LAHAVÉ CHURCH (Pastor, Rev. B. Taylor.) reports itself not in a thriving condition.

THE WINDSOR PLAINS BAPTIST CHURCH, (colored.)—included in the mission of Rev. D. G. Shaw,—gratefully acknowledges both temporal and spiritual prosperity.

BRIDGEWATER BAPTIST CHURCH (Pastor, Rev. S. March) says: "During the past year our church has not enjoyed those refreshing seasons with which some sections have been blest; still, we have much cause for thankfulness. Our prayer-meetings are kept up on the Sabbath-day during our pastor's absence as well as on the Wednesday evening of each week, and monthly Conference meetings are regularly sustained in three different branches of the church. Our beloved pastor has endeared himself to the people of his charge by his faithful labors and kind acts. We trust he may long be permitted to sow the good seed in this portion of his Master's vineyard, and that the seed thus sown may be watered by Divine grace, and produce an abundant harvest."

"We regret exceedingly that the sum contributed by us this year, is not as large as on some former occasions, but it will be remembered that there are but few to support a minister, and that in order to do this more effectually, we have, through strenuous efforts, lately succeeded in purchasing a commodious parsonage house, a large portion of the purchase money for which still remains unpaid. The interest of which lies as a heavy incubus upon us. We have, however, succeeded in defraying some considerable expenses in connection with this undertaking. We desire to express our gratitude to kind friends in Halifax, Milton and Liverpool, &c., who generously responded to our agents' call and rendered timely aid. We would still solicit further favors, as we are a feeble church, striving in the midst of much opposition and many difficulties, to gain a permanent hold in our country. Our trust is in God, and we feel assured that he will never leave nor forsake us."

LENEXBURG BAPTIST CHURCH, (Pastor, Rev. L. B. Gates,) laments the want of religious interest in both the church and vicinity.

THE FIFTH CORNWALLIS CHURCH, CANNING, (Pastor, Rev. D. Freeman,) says: "During the past year we have enjoyed many of the precious means of grace and much of the Divine blessing. In Poreaux, where a revival occurred a year ago, the divine influence has continued to the present. In Canning, also, during a recent revival, three were baptized, and others were pressing Zionward. We feel an interest in all the religious enterprises of our denomination, and hope in future to be able to show this interest by increased support. We are glad that our educational institutions are diffusing sanctified learning, and believe that they are becoming more and more dear to the hearts of our people."

BAPTIST CHURCH AT TANCOK (no pastor) states: "During the past year we have been without ministerial labor, with the exception of some short visits. The Rev. D. Shaw spent a short time with us. Bro. Foster spent some time with us last summer, and also made us a short visit last winter and is now with us."

FIRST HAMMONDS PLAINS BAPTIST CHURCH (Pastor, Rev. R. R. Philp.) says: "In our last annual letter we were able, through God's grace, to report an increase to our numbers. It is now our painful duty to report a decrease. While our young converts have given us no pain, some of our older members have caused us a good deal of uneasiness, and we have been compelled to use discipline. Our congregations are large and we hope for better days."

NEWPORT EAST BAPTIST CHURCH (Pastor, Rev. J. Bancroft.) sends a long letter, containing much excellent exhortation, but no facts about itself, except the statistics, which will be found in the Minutes.

HANTSFORD BAPTIST CHURCH (Pastor, Rev. Wm. Burton.) reports: "Since our last letter was addressed to you, we have recalled the Rev. Wm. Burton to the pastoral charge of the church. Death has removed many of our valuable members as well as several of our prosperous citizens, thereby we mourn."

THE THIRD CORNWALLIS BAPTIST CHURCH (Pastor, Rev. James Parker.) reports large and attentive congregations.

For the Christian Messenger.

Memoir of the Rev. John Whidden of Antigonish, N. S.

The Rev. JOHN WHIDDEN departed this life on Tuesday morning, at 3 o'clock, on the 19th July, A. D., 1864. He was born in Sewickie, Colchester Co., Nov. 21, 1791; consequently he died in the 73rd year of his age. He was married to Miss Harriet Symonds, December 30, 1816, by whom he had eleven children; two died when young, three sons and six daughters survived, and all married but one. He removed from Sewickie to Antigonish in somewhat the early part of his life, and continued there until his demise. He had naturally a good constitution, and laboured diligently in the cultivation of a new farm, the erecting of necessary buildings and a corn mill. He also built a place for public worship, principally at his own expense—on his own land. He also set apart a place for the interment of the dead, about 40 years since, the ownership of which, as I am informed, has been satisfactorily arranged in his last will, for the benefit of the Baptist Church there. Notwithstanding his expenditures, in his kindness to the poor, his constant hospitality to persons of all denominations of Christians, and his unwonted acts of benevolence in sustaining the cause of God where he resided, he nevertheless through the kind providence of God, accumulated a considerable amount of property, which is now left for the benefit of his family.

He was brought up by Presbyterian parents; consequently imbibed their principles and continued therein until, by God's sovereignty, brought under the saving influences of the Holy Spirit, and led to a discovery of his condition as a sinner before God. When, in that state, he sought for counsel from those he thought best adapted to relieve his deeply burdened mind, but sought in vain, until the Lord was pleased, by His own word and Spirit, to lead him to a believing view of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only foundation of hope. When he trusted alone in Christ's blood for cleansing and His righteousness for justification, his burden of sin was removed, and happiness followed,—he became a new creature in Christ Jesus, old things passed away and all things became new,—he loved God and his commandments, he prayerfully sought the path of duty, and it pleased God to make it plain before him. Finding that true believers in Christ only were the scriptural subjects of baptism, and immersion the only scriptural mode, he was therefore immersed upon the profession of his faith in Christ, in November, A. D., 1821. From the time of this happy change from the power of sin and Satan to God, he felt desirous of labouring for the benefit of others. God was pleased to bless his labours of love, and souls were converted to a knowledge of the truth. He gathered around him a number of such, though most of them were poor in this world, yet they were rich in faith. Although he was then limited in his temporal circumstances, and necessarily laboured hard for the support of his family and those committed to his care, yet he devoted his leisure moments to promote the cause of God,—preaching the gospel of Christ, especially on the Sabbath, and in sympathizing with those in affliction. Hence the number gradually increased who loved the Saviour, although never numerous, of the same faith and order with himself,—in that locality. During the above period a number of Baptist ministers resorted there from time to time, and in October, 1832, organised a Baptist Church. Brother Whidden was ordained to the sacred ministry by the church, aided by the late Revs. E. Manning, Theodore S. Harding, and Richard McLearn. He continued to labour for Christ, not only in his place of residence, but occasionally in several places in the Eastern part of this Province. We trust that numbers have been converted to God through his instrumentality. Having taken a severe cold the first week in January last, he only preached occasionally until within about three weeks of his last severe illness. His advantages of literary and theological training were limited, and he felt a desire for more extended learning, but his circumstances in life requiring him to labor for the benefit of his large family, and his somewhat advanced age prohibited his obtaining a regular course of study, but after his ordination to the sacred ministry, he came to the Horton Academy for the purpose of securing what he so ardently longed for; but on account of his age, &c., the difficulties seemed to be insurmountable, and he tarried but a short time. His leisure time at home, however, he devoted to the study of that grand source of all true knowledge—the Holy Bible,—and obtained the

Baptist Comprehensive Commentary, Barnes's Notes, and many other valuable books. It was evident from many facts that he very diligently studied them, in order to render his ministry more effectual. It is, however, reasonable to suppose that under all the circumstances above named, he was not as well qualified as he might have been under more favorable circumstances, or that his ministrations would bear a just comparison with many others whose advantages surpassed his. Yet it is undeniable that he was somewhat extensively useful in the promotion of God's declarative glory and in his indefatigable labors of love.

Although the writer of this memoir had not seen Mr. Whidden for thirty-four years, yet being then at his house, with him and his beloved family, for several weeks, he had some opportunity of intimate acquaintance with him. He was a man of deep heart-felt piety, and earnest zeal for God's cause. The remembrance of this has never been erased from the writer's memory, but from other reliable sources, and more especially from his late visit, he obtained a further knowledge of him, proving that Mr. W. possessed deep spirituality of mind, great sympathy for those in affliction of body or mind. It mattered not of what denomination they were, nor what were their circumstances in life. Being so imbued with the Holy Spirit's influence, he loved those who bore the image of Christ, and exemplified true religion in their every day life, no matter who they were. Whenever he doubted the piety of those to whom he had access, no matter what their standing in society, he would exercise faithfulness to them, but at the same time with the greatest christian kindness. He thereby gained the good will and affection of very many persons, not only where he resided, but from other places who visited him. At his dwelling they always received the kindest attention and hospitality. Although a decided Calvinistic Baptist, yet he never concealed nor compromised his sentiments to promote union with any; still very many loved, revered and respected him. There seemed to be a remarkable providence, that although near 200 miles apart in our places of residence, and at my advanced age, that in my late journey to the eastern part of this province, on the Sabbath of the 10th July last, I should be within twenty-two miles of Brother Whidden's residence, and that he, on the Friday before, should have been confined to his bed of death. Having heard of my being there, he expressed an anxious desire to see me. His son came that morning to convey me thence. After preaching, I arrived there at six o'clock, P. M. I cannot but admire the wisdom and goodness of God in this marked providence. Neither can I express the joy at our meeting each other on this occasion, after an absence of thirty-four years. I cannot give a full and accurate account of what transpired during the time I was present with him; suffice it to say, that on the whole it surpassed in interest any circumstance of the kind that I have ever witnessed. The manifestation of respect, regard and sympathy that was exercised towards him and for him, by all denominations, and all classes of society there, and many from other parts, was most remarkable. Four Presbyterian ministers visited him; one of them resided at Antigonish, who visited him daily; no one could manifest more Christian concern. The Catholic Bishop and one Priest, four Baptist ministers, and laymen in great numbers came to visit him. Such expressions of regret in view of his departure, such indications of countenance and weeping, even from those unconnected with him by earthly or denominational ties, and more especially shall I say of the Catholics, to whom he had shown much kindness, I never before saw. It was truly affecting to witness it. Nothing could more manifest the christian influence he had exerted in his every day life, or afford more ample testimony in favour of his piety and devotion to the cause of God and the souls of his fellow-men. What a memorial of him will be cherished, now that he lies silent in the grave. During his last illness he retained the use of his senses, with the exception of three short intervals. He was fully sensible of his near approach to death, although patient and submissive under his sufferings, yet he was joyful and triumphant in view of his departure. No shadow of a doubt passed over his mind; he possessed an assured hope of eternal life through Christ Jesus, and longed to depart and be with him. Death had no terrors, and his peace flowed like a river. He enjoyed with sweet delight the exercises of reading God's word, singing and prayer three times in each day, which had been the usual practice in his family for many years past, and was observed when persons came to visit him all through his illness.

When actually dying he requested singing, and directed what to sing. In the frequent conversations I had with him, I was more than usually gratified in witnessing his deep sense of the evil nature, effects, and consequences of sin, of his own unworthiness, and of the matchless grace of God in saving one so exceedingly undeserving of the least of all his mercies. His humility was very apparent on all occasions. I could but admire his soundness of belief in the distinguishing doctrines of the cross of Christ, and the solemn obligations believers were under to glorify God in all that they have, and are; of the final punishment of all who die in impenitence, and of the eternal glorification of all the truly pious. I cannot attempt to communicate any of the choice sayings that dropped from his lips while conversing with him, nor his appropriate remarks to nearly all who visited him, suffice it to say that they were peculiarly interesting. It appeared to me that they were calculated, under God, to produce a lasting impression on the minds of those to whom they were made, and I could not but hope and pray that many would hereafter call the Saviour blessed, through what he had said to them while on his dying bed.

I might here remark that Mr. Whidden's widowed daughter, who, in God's providence, arrived from New York in time to be with her beloved father during his last illness, enquired of him what communications she should make from him to her two sisters in New York, and one son in the Western States. He replied, "Go and look at such a volume of Barnes's Notes, and on such a page, and you will find what will express all I wish you to say to them." While there, I took a copy of the extract, as follows, viz: "5. Piety is the chief thing needed. Other things will perish. We shall soon die. All that we can gain, we must leave. But the soul will live. There is a judgment seat; there is a heaven; there is a hell. And all that is needful to prepare us to die, and to make us happy for ever, is to be a friend of Jesus, and to listen to his teaching. 6th. Piety is the chief ornament in a female. It sweetens every other virtue; adorns every other grace; gives new loveliness to the tenderness, mildness and grace of the female character. Nothing more lovely than a female sitting at the feet of the meek and lowly Jesus, like Mary; nothing more unlovely than entire absorption in the affairs of the world, like Martha. The most lovely female is she who bath in the Spirit of Jesus. The least amiable, she who neglects her soul; who is proud, gay, thoughtless, envious, and unlike the meek and lowly Redeemer. At His feet is peace, purity, joy. Every where else an alluring and wicked world steals the affections, and renders us vain, gay, wicked, proud, and unwilling to die."—Barnes's Notes on the 41st and 42nd verses of the 10th chapter of the Gospel by Luke.

On the Sabbath preceding dear Brother Whidden's demise, his daughter and her husband, Brother Thomas King, who reside in Antigonish, were both baptized by the Rev. A. Chipman, and added to the church there. This pleasing circumstance was a cause of happiness to Brother Whidden.

He has left behind him a widow and nine children, all married but two, one of them is now a widow. Six of them were present during his last illness and death,—who mourn over their loss, at the same time have much cause to rejoice in view of his eternal felicity.

The funeral took place on the afternoon of the day after his departure, and was numerously attended. At the dwelling-house, before interment, Rev. Mr. Downie, Presbyterian minister, prayed; Rev. Mr. Eagles, Baptist minister, prayed at the grave; from thence we repaired to the Presbyterian Meeting-house, which was kindly tendered on the occasion, the Baptist House being too small to convene the audience. The writer preached on the occasion from Col. iii. 3, 4. The congregation was large, deeply solemn and attentive. Revs. Albert F. Porter and Manson A. Bigelow were present also.

Thus we find that another of our aged Baptist ministers has been removed from his sphere of usefulness in this life, to eternal felicity in heaven,—the only one who has died in the past year. Who of the survivors in the sacred ministry amongst us, will next follow, we know not. May each one of us, who survive the departed, feel the importance of working like their Divine Master, when he said: "I must work the work of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work."

Communicated by REV. WM. CHIPMAN.
Pleasant Valley, Cornwallis,
August 20th, 1864.

Have you found mercy? show mercy.