

## OLD TIME REVIVALS.

We often hear references made about "Old time revivals," "Old time power" and "Old time religion," and such like expressions.

While spending a few days with friends in Bangor, Maine, we made a very pleasant visit of a few hours with two lady relatives of Mrs. Baker. We were attracted by some old books in their bookcases, some of them being ladies' journals of 1867, containing fashion plates of ladies' dresses which were of extreme contrast with the close fitting, scanty garbs of the present day. And expressing our deep interest in old books, especially religious books, we were given a small volume containing **A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND LABOURS OF REV. CLEMENT PHINNEY,**

Born Aug. 16th, 1780, written in 1851, by Rev. D. M. Graham, pastor of the first Free Will Baptist Church, New York.

And as The Reformed Baptists are descendants from the same spiritual ancestors we at once became interested, and decided we would give our readers a chapter from this little book. The incidents related are dated 1824, as follows:

The Free-will Baptist denomination may be regarded as having had its origin in the great religious awakening that occurred under the labors of Wesley and Whitefield. The last sermon ever delivered by the latter (in 1770) was blessed to the conversion of a sail-maker, Benjamin Randall, the acknowledged founder of the denomination. At first, he joined "the Standing Order," as the Congregationalists were then called in New England; but owing to a difference of opinion in regard to baptism, he soon after joined the Calvinistic Baptists, among whom he was licensed as a preacher. Possessed of strong practical common sense, and a judgment unwarped by the theological training of those times, it was, of course, impossible for him to adopt the high toned Calvinism then prevailing in the two denominations with which he had been, thus far, associated. Besides, it was, altogether uncongenial with his heart, warmed by the "brotherly love" of a life-giving gospel, to refuse to commune with acknowledged Christians, simply from a difference of opinion in regard to baptism. Hence, in 1780, he was led to form a Free-Communion Baptist Church, holding to the freedom of human will. Hence sprung the nick-name Free-will Baptists, and the denomination designated by it.

Soon after the foundation of the denomination, came those times in which the freedom of the State, then so lately achieved in our country, began to react upon the church, breaking down, to some extent, religious aristocracies, and detracting somewhat from the currency of the ideas upon which they were founded. Old men, who had been through the revolution, fought over their battles for independence and equality as they sat in their easy chairs, surrounded by their children and their grand-children. Irregulars in the church as well as in the State gained strength, and, at length, a recognition of their rights from the old establishments.

This reaction of the American Revolu-

tion upon the church is a subject of importance to all, and its peculiar influence upon us as a denomination is certainly not enough considered by ourselves. On other pages, if life be spared, we hope to give more attention to the topics here indicated.

The origin of the denomination being such, and in such times, it will readily appear to one, upon reflection, that it was at first peculiarly exposed to various hurtful eccentricities, and especially to the enthusiasm of the religious feelings. Of the truth of this remark, we have already given some painful examples. But these evils, having their origin mostly in the feelings, more speedily pass away than does the influence of false dogmas. The denomination owing its origin in so great a degree, as we have intimated, to the anti-nomianism then prevailing in the old denominations, it was but human to attribute that spiritual death to wrong causes, for instance, to an educated and well paid ministry. Would that this instance were a mere supposition. Still further, it would be quite in accordance with what usually takes place in all religious secessions, if these false ideas took a stronger hold of the minds of the seceders, by reason of the arrogant bearing assumed by the conservatives toward those whom they regarded as erring brethren.

These remarks may seem, to some, quite out of the way in tracing the life of Mr. Phinney, but we can learn little as we ought to learn, of the spirit and usefulness of a man, unless we keep in mind some of the principal circumstances, in the midst of which he is compelled to act. We must remember that Mr. Phinney was constantly exposed to over-action, in the direction of that kind of religious excitement which owes its origin too little to the genuine convictions of the intellect, and furthermore, that he had constantly to contend against the influence of the false ideas already mentioned. Not only are these things necessary to a proper view of his life, but it may be worthy of remark, that he who would be very serviceable to any new denomination, especially as a preacher, needs to study well its origin, and to discern clearly the leading ideas it is struggling to develop and organize. It is only thus, that he can learn its peculiar exposures to evil, present deficiencies, and, what is still more important, how to remedy such deficiencies, without introducing something worse.

The following sketch of a Quarterly Meeting, which one of our oldest ministers, who was present, relates, illustrates one point above named. The meeting occurred during that part of Mr. Phinney's life, of which we write in this chapter. It was holden in a Congregationalist meeting house at L. On the morning appointed, the house was filled to overflowing; for Quarterly Meetings in those times attracted people from great distances, and great and good were their spiritual influences. Elder Z. Leach presided on this occasion. He entered the pulpit and invited some other preachers to take a place with him. One after another refused from mere embarrassment. Perhaps they had never been in a pulpit; for we must try to

keep in mind the true state of things. Mr. Phinney accepted the invitation. As he started he began to sing. So did he sing, with the spirit and the understanding, that scarce one restrained his tears. So the meeting began. In the afternoon the minister, in whose church the meeting was held, was in the pulpit. When Elder Leach was about to enter it to open the afternoon session, the man of the pulpit would not suffer it. Elder Leach then took his stand on the lower part of the stairs leading to the pulpit. But the other, as if fully conscious of belonging to "the standing order," with his long cane, pushed the irregular away entirely from the pulpit and all pertaining to it. To this unchristian course it was well that those who had the charge of the meeting opposed a spirit so strikingly in contrast, that the cause of arrogance lost much, while that of reform gained not a little. The common people, who, for the most part, hear the truth gladly, were so disgusted with their minister, that they soon permitted him to find a field of labor more congenial to his feelings.

It can but excite the sense of the ludicrous, to think of a minister, in such circumstances, posting himself in the pulpit, armed, not with the brotherly love and spiritual graces conferred by the gospel, but with a huge cane, to guard his sanctum from the contamination of the uninitiated; as though he would say, "True my people have voted to let these fellows have the house for their Quarterly Meeting, but not the pulpit; this sacred spot is mine, and guard it I will." As straws are said to show which way the wind blows, so this apparently trifling incident may indicate the intolerance with which the fathers of the denomination had to contend. Since, despite many weaknesses and errors, we have at last, through God's blessings, won a respectable standing among our sister denominations, it may be well for us thus to glance at the past. It certainly will, if thus we may improve; if we may learn never to manifest an arrogant spirit toward beginners in such a religious course as their conscience may indicate, however different that may be from ours.

We may not pass without alluding in this connection to the pleasure we experienced in being permitted to witness, only a year or two ago, a very different scene from that above described. It occurred, too, near the same place. At a session of the Maine Western Yearly Meeting, a corresponding messenger from the Association of Congregationalists of the State was received. The object of the correspondence thus begun is to promote brotherly love among Christians of different names. May it continue, till among all who profess to be followers of Christ, substance shall be more cared for than shadow.

(To be continued next issue)

"We never get beyond the need of watchfulness. We cannot climb so high that there is no danger of our falling; but the higher we get, the more serious are the consequences of a fall. With every step up, we should be more wary, more prayerful, that our steps may be guided right."