SERMON.

Song of the Open Road.

By Dr. Nehemiah Boynton.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., Jan. 14.—Dr. Nehemiah Boynton, preached on "The Songs of the Open Road." Dr. Boynton took as his text Philippines 11:12 and 13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Dr. Boynton said:

Paul was a great, buoyant, out-in-the open spirit. He had windows on all four sides of his "earthly house of this tabernacle," and he was familiar with the landscape looking in all directions. He permitted no single dimensions of life to measure for him the significance of the growing wonder of existence. He saw "clearly and he saw whole." Little rivers were not without their charm for him, but the beckoning sea, where go the ships, "where winds blow, waves dash," was as truly for him home sweet home. He could domesticate himself in a dungeon and with his pen, his manuscripts and his books spirit himself away from the midnight blackness of his trials and troubles to a "land in which it seemed always afternoon." Oh, the emancipation of a breezy, bristling book! What rest to the weary workman! What freedom to the shut in and enslaved! What liberty to the captives and opening of prisones to them that are bound! Paul was a sailor, breasting fearlessly the mountain high billows; he was a soldier fighting the good fight of faith: he was a scholar, transfusing with his own veins the life blood of the master spirits, living luxuriously upon the thoughts of the mighty and quieting his spirit with the sweet cadence of their poetry and song.

No book lovers' library could have a more appreciative patron than Paul, who could quote from the masters of the Greeks, "as certain of your own poets has said," and who much as he desired Timothy in distant Troas to bring him his forgotten cloak to keep his body warm, even more urgently requested "the books, and especially the parchments," to keep his soul aflame!

Fancy Paul, with his literary tastes, in a modern library, feasting his soul upon some compelling volume which clothes the truths of the ages in the attire of present day attractiveness. He chances to open a volume of Whitman and reads his "Song of the Open Road." As he proceds you can see in his flashing eye the greeting of an unexpected recognition:

Afoot and lighthearted I take to the open road;
Healthy, free, the world before me.
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose;
Henceforth I ask not good fortune; I myself am good fortune;
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing.
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content, I travel the open road.

"Here is a kinsman of mine," he is saying to himself; "a distant relative, not all of whose writing I can approve, to be sure, but this song of the open road contains ideas which are precious to me and which many times I have voiced. This rippling, swinging song is my work out 'your own salvation' set to music. It is another way of saying to the men of the twentieth century what I said to the men of my own time." If this can in any sense be real it is surely worth our while to search for the companion truth in the text and in the song, while attempting their collaboration.

As a first venture in this endeavor we may observe that the shop for working out one's own salvation is upon the open road.

Just look at the open road itself. Here it is so broad, well built, macadamized; to travel it is a luxury of existence; but there it narrows and winds; still it is open, only it leads "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent," and the traveller will require strong thews and a stout heart. What a commanding prospect from these lofty heights! What a cold, damp chill in that low, forbidding ravine!

"Thou wilt show me the path of life," exclaimed the inspired bard, in the ecstasy of his confidence. What did he see? The same "long, brown" road, on which our eyes rest at this very moment. The open road, with its twists and turns, its steep hills, its winding trails through the meadows, with here a modest forget-me-not and there a flaming passion flower, and yonder no flower at all, nothing but sage brush—the open road is the path of life and the only path of life for every one of us.

Just see the throngs upon the road! The man without a country is jostling the man with a hoe. Here is the man from Glengarry, also from China, Italy, Poland. One of our city kindergartens counts children of twenty-one different nationalities. Kim is passing Tiny Tim and Tiny Tim waves his crutch in glee. Fagin and Bishop Welcome have just looked each other in the eye. There goes hunger, lean and gaunt, and there, would you believe it, is Epicurus himself. The laughter of innocence and the leer of iniquity mingle in the common din and roar! A wedding party has just been stopped to allow a funeral procession to pass; nothing escapes the open road. Here are churches and schools, factories and shops, hospitals and asylums, jails and every possible sort and kind of institution. Honesty and shame use the same sidewalk! The feet of goodwill and evil purpose, confident success, disheartening failure, courageous endeavor, press the same flagstones. Here upon this open road, if at all, you must work out your own salvation. In the midst of this thoroughfare you must show the world how a man was made to walk. It is of no avail to retire within your home, close the door and draw the shutters. The influence of the street will sift in like the dust through closed windows. A closed carriage will not deliver your soul. "I am part of all that I have met," said a wise man of yesterday. So are you! Only by meeting life upon the open road can you either find your soul or save it.

Working out your own salvation is no clever trick; it is no prize to be awarded to an artful dodger; it is no compensation bestowed upon a slick spirit, welcoming any compromise, "just for a feather to stick in his hat." Working out your own salvation is taking the open road, with its ups and downs, attractions, honors, compelling these to minister by denial, by discipline, by devotion, to the aspiring passion for the great, strong, full, rich, deep life, which the soul of every man craves. The fountains whose cool waters refresh the soul are all of them situated along the open road, which is the only path of life. The early Christians described salvation as "the way." The way is the open road.

Evidently the traveler upon the open road is in need of a sufficient motive. He cannot simply travel with any hope of his working out his own salvation. Paul insists upon what he calls "fear and trembling" as an essential infusing spirit.

The difference between people is not so much in residence, in position, ability, opportunity or even education as it is in motive. A sufficient motive will make "e'm servile labors shine," but the lack of it transforms the seats of the mighty into camp stools, and the Napoleons of finance into skeletons in armor!

Just look at the multitude upon the open road! Can you find a single one unburdened? Are not they all alike in this, that every one must bear his own burden? Do not the very people who try to underwrite, hypothecate and by all devices dismiss their burden, add to it by the deal?

That man, the one who looks so sullen and resentful, employed an expert to handle his affairs for him, but so far from being relieved he is finding his trials just begun. That lady, the one with the pale cheek and blue glasses, could no longer endure the limitation of a small, snug, house, so she built a fine, large one, and now she is a victim of the new disease called "Americanitis," a nervous affection induced by troubles with servants! There is not a single soul on the road, from the baby screaming with colic to the Croesus whose life is being crushed out of him by the weight of his gold, which is not a burden bearer! And the burden grows heavier all the time, too! The difference between these people is not the presence or absence of a burden, for they are all "heavy ladened," but it is the quality and magnitude of the motive they can summon! Whether life with a pack on one's back is worth living or not, depends not on the size of the pack, but on the strength of the underguiding spirit.

This is the confession of the song:

Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go.
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,
I am filled with them and I will fill them in return.

"Delicious burdens!" "Nonsense!" No, not nonsense; the very truth of God! Delicious, because being filled with them, I can fill them in return! They yield to a sufficient motive and instead of being my heavy impediments, become my hope-giving inspiration! Capitalize your burden! Make it yield compound interest! Precisely this is what Paul means by working out your own salvation with fear and trembling; he exhorts to no craven, boot-licking spirit. He was no coward! He takes fear and trembling up into the high places, he raises them to the throne of power, till fear becomes the incentive of a giant inspiration and trembling the expectation of a quivering hope. Such fear and trembling is the very essence of fidelity, of courage and of heroism.

There are multitudes of folk upon the open road who are like the vain idols described by the Psalmist. "They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not."

They bring to the thoroughfare partial rather than complete equipment; they content themselves with mediocrity; willingly they indulge illusions; their consciences have been so courteously trained that they no longer speak in the stern tones of stinging rebuke; so long as life is soft, warm, fuzzy, they ask no more.

This challenge from the song would evoke only a smile of incredulity:

Listen! I will be honest with you,
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new prizes.

Really, they cannot offer a good excuse for living! They merely exist! But there are other multitudes upon the road whose eyes are not holden and who see the vision beatific; their ears are not stopped; they hear the ringing summons; their feet and hands are busy in eager service; their heart is warm, tender and throbbing with the impulses of a generous sympathy. Life for them is a fine, high and inspiring chance. It is the chance for salvation, service, character. Everything is interesting and they are inspired to constant watching and endeavor by the stimulating fear that they may miss some golden opportunity, disappoint some confident expectation or be unadvantaged by some royal occasion for strengthening their reserves. To harness one's fears and make them haul the chariot of one's supreme life joyous is indeed to work out one's own salvation! Burdens become delicious when one has learned how to make them the common carriers of the mighty determinations and aspirations of the soul. Burdens are the raw material from which, in working out your own salvation with fear and trembling, benedictions are made.

The "rough new prizes," not the "old smooth prizes," have engaging attraction for those who can summon the mightier motive and make the journey along the open road no drear pilgrimage, but a royal processional of delicious burden bearing!

While thus our journeyman is trudging along the open road, burden, fear, trembling and all, let us notice the gracious fact that he is not alone, but has ever the traveler's attendant. One can hardly refrain from a sharp quarrel with Wordsworth because he makes the journey of youth through life a recessional. To be sure, he allows that as the youth travels rally farther from the east he still is nature's priest.

And by the vision splendid,
Is on his way attended.

But he declares that with approaching manhood the vision departs:

At length the man perceives it die away
And fade into the light of common day.

The true man, who is working out his own salvation, perceives no such thing! The poetry is beautiful, but the theology is scandalous! The "vision splendid" becomes more and more splendid as the earnest soul "sees into the life of things."

One story of the open road strikes the true, clear note in declaring regarding the road:

s.
I believe you are not all that is here;
I believe that much unseen is also here.

It declares that there are great companions; that we belong to them and that they, too, are on the road.

Paul is more concretely correct than either when he declares that "God is working in you"; He is the author of every vision splendid for youth and man. He is the great Companion; He is the traveller's attendant and is continually on the road! The great and pitiable tragedy of life is that men do not, and will not, really believe in a God Who finds them upon the open road! One of the most stimulating of modern writers upon theism remarks in a preface: "The undivineness of the natural, and the unnaturalness of the divine is the great heresy of popular thought respecting religion." For the majority of people God is somewhere, to be sure; but not near enough to share the vicissitudes of the open road and be really and absolutely a traveller's companion! Then He is no God for men, nor can He meet men in the deep necessities of their souls, for these all arise in their experiences along the road. Paul has another presuasion. "He is working in you" is his declaration.

Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson was upon one occasion making a steamer journey to visit an island reserved for those afflicted with leprosy. As a fellow traveller she noticed a Sister of Charity who had been assigned to life long duty at this hard and distressing field among the lepers and, who, though not unwilling to fulfill the service, could not refrain from tears at the thought of her inevitable separation from all her loved ones. Bending kindly and gently over her, Mrs. Stevenson said: "Do not weep. God is with you and God will be waiting to welcome you there!" "It seemed to comfort the sister," remarked Mrs. Stevenson.

I should think it would! It has comforted me, this finding God waiting for me on the open road, this assurance born of a thousand experiences that I have a travelling companion. Even the Almighty God Himself, who, so far from being above the ordinaries of life, uses these as material for building in me a character which is one day to be a miniature of His own perfection! Do you know that yourself? That is salvation!

We argue and debate. We recite our creeds. We say our long prayers. But does the reality of the traveller's companion grow as the glad and passionate assurance of our lives, giving dignity and purpose and hope to the open road? While every common bush flames with God, do we see it and take off our shoes, or, like "the rest," do we simply "sit by and pluck blackberries?"

I tell you, you do not understand the open road unless you know that your travelling companion, your God, is working in you as you journey along.

Another word remains to be uttered relating to the youth and the goal. This open road is no merry-go-round; it does not end like a squirrel track, up a tree; it leads somewhere; it has direction; it is purposeful.

The song declares:

The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

Paul explicitly defines it as the good pleasure of God!

One of Mrs. Browning's characters is represented as having made most earnest endeavors to find the meaning of life through all the initiatives of work, of sport, of learning, of fellowship and to have miserably failed because at the heart of all was personal selfishness. Finally the error and sin of it all being evident there was genuine repentance and a fine resolution.

——having tried all other ways,
Just to try God's.

It was the open sesame; it always is; God's "good pleasure" is the goal of the road, not distant, far away, remote, but near, tangible, present.

Once resolve upon the abandonment of your selfish will, "just to try God's," and you are already at the goal; every experience, every trial, every conquest, every experience, every trial, every conquest, every step will in itself be recognized as a goal. Some one wrote of the Pilgrim Fathers, "They found God going along with them." So will you, and the shining goals which stretch away in the distance will be found to be but the reflection of the light of His countenance, who, standing by your side, shares alike the desperateness of your struggles and the joy of your growing victories.

This is what the Master meant when He sent His ringing invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

This is what Paul means when he urges his impassioned plea that we work out our own salvation "under the eye and beneath the strength of God."

This is what the song of the open road means in those closing and appealing lines with their long reach after the soul:

Camerades, I give you my hand,
I give you my love more precious than money;
I give you myself before preaching or law;
Will you give me yourself? Will you come travel with me?
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

THIS DEPARTMENT IS CONDUCTED BY THE W. C. T. U.

Tuesday of this week was the day appointed for the annual meeting of the St. John Women's Christian Temperance Union. The day was so stormy that the meeting was too small to transact much business. As the president, Mrs. Dearborn, is about to leave the city for a few months and it was the wish of the society to re-elect her, this was done, and the election of other officers and superintendents of departments was left for an adjourned meeting to be held on Tuesday, Jan. 30, or on Feb. 6th, as decided by the executive.

This annual meeting causes us to recall the fact that the St. John W. C. T. U. was organized 28 years ago. An interesting account of its inception was given at a public meeting held ten years after, by Mrs. Turnbull, and to this I am indebted for the substance of this article.

As it leads us to compare the work of the W. C. T. U. at that time and at the present it will be of interest to those who were in one way or another associated with the pioneer work of the society and those who have any knowledge of its present activities. And in this and another article we may be able to consider whether, as has been claimed by some, the W. C. T. U. has outlived its usefulness, or whether its change of operation is not largely due to different age in which it finds itself.

As will be seen when the St. John W. C. T. U. was organized, the state of the city was such that the authorities found it necessary to close all places in which intoxicating liquor was sold, and no doubt they lent their influence strongly to any society that would assist in a temperance reform. In these days, then, the W. C. T. U. exercised a direct and perhaps somewhat aggressive influence. Working in conjunction with those whose aim it appears to have been to check the sale of liquor it had the sympathy of the large majority of the citizens. This was 28 years ago. Gradually through these years we have come to a stage where apparently the authorities and the citizens are content with the temperance principles of the city. The saloons and barrooms are of their own appointing and the amount of liquor consumed is but a question of dollars and cents. But if so it perhaps appears to many the need of prohibition has passed away, if the "destroyer" is relegated to his legitimate sphere of action; if it is no longer necessary for women to visit the poor in prison or to minister to the wants of the women who are confined there for months; if those responsibilities have been properly placed—then certain as this report shows that this in part was the work assumed by the W. C. T. U. of 1877, that the society of 1906 has not the same line of work. However, a report from 1896 to 1897 which will be given later will show wherein this difference lies.

What holds good in this society will probably apply to almost every society in the provinces.

Mrs. Turnbull says, in her report read Jan. 19, 1888:

The Women's Christian Temperance Union of St. John has reached its first decade, a point from which one naturally passes to retrospect. Time will not admit of recalling much that would be interesting, but it may be well at this, the beginning of a new year and a new era in our history, to take a backward glance before becoming too much absorbed in the future. The beginning of the W. C. T. Union is closely connected with an epoch, which will ever be memorable in the history of St. John, for the city lay in ashes with a large proportion of its inhabitants dwelling, not in tents, but in the more modern shanty. Rich and poor were drawn closely together by that tender bond of sympathy, mutual suffering, and Christians were awakened to a deeper sense of their responsibility concerning their neighbors. In that great emergency women came to the rescue, and the "Ladies' Relief Committee" was formed. No one stopped to ask the question, is this woman's work, or woman's sphere? It was not a time for questions nor for ceremony. It was a time for action. Women could not sit still in their homes with so many other women homeless; so many little children naked and hungry, crying for bread. The women of other cities and from country homes were sending boxes of clothing and generous hampers from their family stores, and the women of St. John organized themselves into a committee for the distribution of those stores. Many, for the first time in their lives, were brought into actual contact with suffering, and in womanly hearts were stirred fountains of human sympathy, "whose waters never more shall rest."

Some there were who could not forget. With the arrest of thought came the knowledge that a greater evil than the destructive flame was threatening the city — a destroyer not only of homes, but of those who make the home. Directly after the fire, to add to the suffering a spirit of lawlessness and debauchery seemed to prevail, and then it was found necessary to close every liquor shop and barroom, so for a time the poor remnant of St. John was a prohibition city. The question would naturally be suggested to the thoughtful mind: If this evil can be stopped for a few weeks, why not for always? Why should one man be permitted by the law to supply to another which would surely lead to his destruction and to the misery of all connected with him? Why must our children cry for bread and our homes be left unto us desolate, in order that some might live in luxury and that "the city revenue may be kept up?"

Imagine if you can a mother's feelings at the thought that the city must be lighted and its sidewalks paved at the cost of her children's blood, for that is the meaning of it. The city cannot afford to lose the revenue from the saloons. It does not require much logic to realize the awful danger that is threatening every mother's boy in the city of St. John Is it any wonder that Christian women could not again settle down to a state of indifference after once learning that the law could restrain the enemy of their homes? And if the law would not, what could be done? Believing in a prayer hearing and prayer answering God these women went to Him and in His name was organized the Women's Christian Temperance Union of St. John. And now after a lapse of 10 years we can still turn with fullest confidence to our motto saying, "If God be for us who can be against us?"

The report goes on to speak of the different departments of work, which were the same as now with the addition of two, the white cross and the kitchen garden. "Through the kindness of the editors of the Sun a temperance column is kept supplied through the union." As there seems to be some little misunderstanding among the unions in regard to the column, it may be well to state here that this column has been open to the use of the unions free of charge since that time until the present, nearly twenty-five years. Of the kitchen garden Mrs. Turnbull says:

"In November, the superintendent of juvenile work engaged a teacher from New Jersey to instruct a normal class of ladies in kitchen garden work, the union undertaking the expenses. The little girls are instructed in all branches of household work except cooking, which belongs to a more advanced course. The work is performed systematically, accompanied by music and bright little songs, the idea being to make children love work as well as play, and to make them good housekeepers, so that homes may be brightened and temptations overcome. For those who may be called to service, this teaching will be invaluable, enabling them to command high wages for skilled labor and to be a blessing to housekeepers."

This then would seem to have been the first free kindergarten in the city. Mention is made of a meeting held in the Y. M. C. A. for the purpose of considering the establishment of an industrial school. A paper was read by Mrs. Scott and a petition to the municipality of the city for the establishment of a reformatory was read by Mrs. Stockton. The petition was signed by all present and left with Mrs. Stockton to be forwarded at the meeting of the council.

No doubt our new organ, Canada's White Ribbon Bulletin, has been received and read by a number who read The Column. We will all agree, I think, that its first appearance is very pleasing. To those who have not seen it we will say that it is in book form containing 12 pages. The first four pages contain letters from the provincial presidents. One from our own president gracefully introduces the New Brunswick union to the readers, and it is hoped the unions will make it possible for her to have something new and bright for each issue. The paper throughout contains matter which is both interesting and instructive. A condensed report of the dominion convention will be found convenient for reference. The type is clear and the paper of good quality. The price, twenty-five cents a year, makes it within reach of every white ribboner in the provinces.

The Fredericton W. C. T. U. officers elected last week were:

Mrs. Wm. Saunders, president.
Miss Jane Sampson, rec. sec.
Miss M. M. Kilburn, cor. sec.
Mrs. H. Chestnut, treasurer.
Mrs. Geo. Gilman, auditor.
Mrs. Carrie Robinson, 1st vice-president.
Mrs. Wm. McKinnon, 2nd vice-president.
Mrs. (Rev.) J. B. Rogers, 3rd vice-president.
Mrs. Annie Massie, 4th vice-president.
Mrs. John Kilburn, 5th vice-president.

For the last two weeks there has been no column. Hereafter it will appear regularly on Thursday unless due notice is given.

BARNESVILLE, N. B., Jan. 10.—The Barnesville W. C. T. U. met at the home of Mrs. Wm. Curry on Tuesday evening, 9th instant. The Bible lesson was from the 13th chap of 2nd Cor. A very interesting reading upon the leading thought contained in the chapter was given by Mr. Curry, one of our hon. members, and after a few comments, prayer was engaged in by the leader. Our meeting was poorly attended, but we trust God's blessing will rest upon our feeble efforts. A report was given of some help sent to the Frances Willard home, also two comfort bags sent to the sailors' mission, also two parcels of good reading matter. After the meeting closed, a sumptuous treat was provided by the kind hostess and daughter. Our next meeting will be to observe the annual day of prayer, meeting to be held at the home of Mrs Lawson, on the evening of Tuesday, Jan. 16th. Scripture lesson: Mat. 26: 36-46. Business topic, Press Work of our Union and of the work at large. May God's richest blessing attend the efforts being put forth to battle for the right.

BRIG ATALANTA ASHORE AT ROCKLAND

J. Willard Smith received a brief despatch last night stating that the brig Atalanta had gone ashore near Rockland. The Atalanta, which is 320 tons, is commanded by Capt. Covert. She sailed from St. John four or five days ago with a cargo of laths from Stetson, Cutler & Co., for New York. The Atalanta is owned in Bermuda and Mr. Smith is the agent in St. John. No particulars of the damage done have been received.

NEW ENGLAND SHOCKED AT HORRIBLE CRIME

Farmer Believed to Have Murdered His Family of Seven and Then Set Fire to the House—He Afterwards Committed Suicide at Sister's Home

PEMBROKE, N. H., Jan. 17.—What the authorities consider as the most appalling tragedy ever recorded in New Hampshire, was enacted in North Pembroke today. Following the destruction of the farm buildings of Chas. F. Ayer and the disappearance of seven members of Ayer's household this forenoon, and the suicide of Ayer late this afternoon at the home of his sister in the town of Chichester, six miles distant, the announcement was made tonight by Thos. F. Clifford, county solicitor of Merrimack county, that there was little doubt that the seven persons had been murdered and the farm house set on fire.

The theory of the county authorities is that Ayer was the murderer, but up to a late hour they had been unable to find any evidence to indicate the methods employed to wipe out the family. Whether the victims were shot or killed by other means, cannot be told until the medical referee has made an examination of the remains of the victims. Up to a late hour, but two of the charred fragments of the victims had been recovered, although persons who visited the scene of the fire thought that they observed two other trunks in the blazing ruins.

The victims of the tragedy were:

Chas. F. Ayer, aged 43, killed himself by shooting.
Mrs. Addie Ayer, his wife.
Mrs. Isaac Lakeman, Ayer's mother-in-law.
Flossie Ayer, aged 12.
Alfred Ayer, aged 10.
Bernice Ayer, aged 6.
Andrew Ayer, aged 4; and a girl baby, all children of the Ayers.

County Solicitor Clifford after investigating the fire as far as was possible tonight, stated that Ayer had undoubtedly murdered the entire family and later set fire to the house. The fire occurred about nine o'clock this forenoon. Before the flames were noticed by neighbors, who lived some distance from the farm, Ayer drove to the home of his sister, Mrs. George Bailey, who lives on the Northwood turnpike in the town of Chichester, about six miles northeast of his home. Ayer arrived at his sister's house just after 10 o'clock and had dinner. He remained at Mrs. Bailey's place during the afternoon. At four o'clock William Fowler, one of Ayer's nearest neighbors, went to the Bailey place and informed Ayer that his buildings had been burned. Ayer manifested some agitation, but made no statement as to what he would do. Instead he drew a revolver and pointing it at his right temple, fired, and fell unconscious. As soon as the members of the household recovered from the shock they sent for a physician, but nothing could be done to save the man's life and he expired tonight.

The selectmen of the town of Pembroke were notified of the tragic ending and their chairman, Mr. Johnson, immediately communicated with the authorities at Concord. A peculiar incident in connection with the affair was the discovery of the fire by Henry J. Lakeman, while at work in the carriage factory of the Abbott-Downing Co. in Concord, a distance of five miles across country. Lakeman is a son of one of the women who perished in the fire, and was a brother-in-law of Ayer.

The Ayer place was located on a high hill and the smoke was distinctly seen in Concord. Lakeman thought that the fire might be on the Ayer farm, which for many years had been occupied by the Lakeman family and as soon as he received confirmation of his fears from the county officials there he went to North Pembroke. As soon as Lakeman arrived at the ruins he made a careful investigation and found two bodies, both in the ell of the farmhouse. Both were so disfigured that identification was impossible. The remains of one person was that of an adult and the other that of a child. The ruins of the main house were so hot at a late hour tonight that the authorities decided to abandon an attempt to inspect the debris until daylight tomorrow.

At first there was no suspicion that murder had been committed, but when news that Ayer had shot himself was received the sheriff at Concord, George A. Kimball, was notified and he, together with Chief of Police James E. Rand of Concord, County Solicitor Clifford and other officials hastened to the scene.

The officials learned that none of the occupants of the Ayer house, with the exception of Ayer himself, had been seen by the neighbors since Monday night. The nearest neighbor, however, Edward Glidden, who is a brother of Mrs. Lakeman, Ayer's mother-in-law, lives several hundred yards distant.

Glidden states that he saw a light in the house at 11 o'clock last night. Persons who passed the Ayer farm before the fire this morning say that the curtains of the house were drawn, an unusual circumstance, and that there were no signs of life about the premises.

Glidden says that about 9 a. m. he saw a team drive out of the yard with a single occupant. He thought that the driver was Ayer, although Glidden said tonight that he was not absolutely certain on this point. Shortly after the team left the premises smoke was seen to issue from the farm house, and within a quarter of an hour the building was ablaze throughout. The flames extended from the main house to an ell, and apparently from the ell to a shed and barn. Most of the able-bodied men who live in that section are absent from home during the day time, and at the time of the fire there was no one at the farm houses near the scene except old and infirm men and women and children. Two or three of the old men went to the fire, but when they reached the scene the flames had attained such headway that no one could enter the house or make an attempt to rescue those who were supposed to be in the dwelling. The contents of the barn and shel, as well as everything in the farm house, were destroyed.

The Ayer place is located in a section so remote from the centre of the town that it was late in the afternoon before the authorities knew of the tragedy. Even then they did not realize the possibility of a crime until the receipt of the news that Ayer had shot himself. Henry Lakeman reached the ruins during the afternoon and at dark the Concord officials took up an investigation.

From what they could learn in the darkness, they think it probable that the inmates of the house died several hours before the fire was seeen. The report that curtains had not been raised in the morning led to the theory that the seven members of the household were killed sometime before daylight, possibly many hours before.

Whether the victims were shot or killed by other means, could not be learned tonight, but there is no doubt in the mind of the county officials but that a horrible crime was committed.

Ayer had not been held in high esteem by his neighbors since he moved to North Pembroke from Epsom, about three years ago. Ayer's father-in-law, Isaac Lakeman died just before his removal. The Lakemans had occupied the farm for many years. The Ayer family had not been in prosperous circumstances in Epsom, and Mrs. Lakeman, who was administratrix of the estate, invited him to live with her and take charge of the farm. Subsequently the property was sold to Lafayette Lakeman for $2,300. Lafayette, however, had not taken possession of the place. Ayer, it appears, did not favor the change and is said to have urged his mother-in-law before the sale to divide the property among her children.

Soon after his marriage to Mrs. Lakeman's daughter, Ayer found himself in straitened circumstances and was obliged to rely upon his wife's relatives for support. He was a well educated man, and possessed many talents, but he seldom engaged in any regular occupation. Since his removal to North Pembroke, he had received aid from the town. His children were unable to attend school regularly on account of a lack of clothing.

The neighbors state that while they know of differences of opinion which have occurred in the family regarding the settlement of Isaac Lakeman's estate, they have no knowledge of any violent quarrels such as would lead to murder. One of the theories advanced is that the sale of the property and the dispute concerning it led to the tragedy, but a number of the townspeople are of the opinion that Ayer became suddenly demented and killed the entire family.

It was learned at a late hour tonight that when Ayer arrived at the home of Mrs. George Bailey, his sister, he said to her husband; "It's all up with me, George."

When Bailey asked his brother-in-law what he meant Ayer replied: "Oh, I had trouble."

He refused to make an explanation. The Baileys say that his manner was somewhat strange from the time of his arrival up to the receipt of the news by the family of the fire. After Ayer shot himself he remained in an unconscious condition until his death, which occurred about 9 o'clock tonight.

The county authorities and selectmen will continue the investigation tomorrow morning and an attempt will be made to determine the exact cause of the deaths of the seven inmates of the Ayer farm house.

Persons who visited the scene of the fire tonight thought they observed two additional trunks of bodies in the smouldering ruins, but the heat was so intense that it was impossible to make a further investigation in the uncertain light.

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