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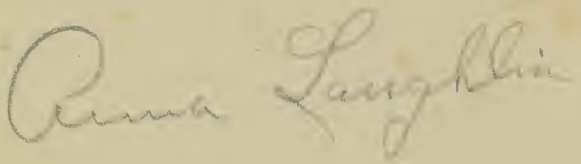

In Memoriam.

Life of Stephen Bliss.

REV. SAMUEL C. BALDRIDGE.

CINCINNATI:
ELM STREET PRINTING COMPANY, 176 AND 178 ELM STREET.
1871.

SKETCHES

OF THE

LIFE AND TIMES

OF THE

REV. STEPHEN BLISS, A. M.

WITH

NOTICES OF HIS CO-LABORERS:

REV. ISAAC BENNET,
REV. B. F. SPILMAN,
REV. JOHN SILLIMAN,
REV. JOSEPH BUTLER,
REV. SAMUEL T. SCOTT, Etc.

BY

REV. SAMUEL C. BALDRIDGE.

CINCINNATI:
ELM STREET PRINTING COMPANY, 176 & 178 ELM STREET.
1870.

To the Ministers and Churches

OF THE

"SYNOD OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS,"

THIS CONTRIBUTION

TO THE HISTORY OF THE FATHERS AND FOUNDERS

OF

PRESBYTERIANISM IN ILLINOIS,

IS

Reverently Dedicated.

Θεω μονω δοξα.

Apologetical Preface.

THIS little book owes its origin to the fact, that when the author was assigned to his place of service by the "Lord of the vineyard," he found it to be one of the most ancient seats of Presbyterianism in Illinois. As his life settled down to the pastoral work, and the noise and flutter of his intrusion died away, and the quiet voices of the place began to make themselves heard, he found himself haunted with stories and legends of a long-gone past. The good and gifted had lived their quiet and useful lives here. Of course, in such a region the table and fireside talk of the parishioners was filled with the airs and floating echos from days and scenes gone by. All the interest, however, seemed to concenter and intermingle with one life that had been enacted here. Is it wonderful that in such a field, he should have finally been beguiled to writing out the simple annals of the place?

The material for these pages has been derived, for the most part, from three sources.

1st. The Diaries of Mr. Bliss and Mr. May. These are very meager. Their chief use has been to suggest inquiries, and fix dates. Events only alluded to there, have been found, on investigation, to have historical importance.

2d. Letters. For old letters dating as far back as 1807, I am indebted to Mrs. Mary A. Dutton, Glover, Vt., a daughter of Sarah Bliss, afterwards Mrs. Alonzo Dutton.

3d. The recollections of living persons. This has been a gratifying and perplexing source of information. The narratives but seldom perfectly harmonized, and were often contradictory. Pages of reminiscences have been cast aside because depending on only one memory. There has been diligence to put down nothing but what was corroborated by the testimony of several of our aged citizens. It is scarcely probable, however, that the surviving witnesses of many of the scenes herein detailed, will, in every case be satisfied, so much depends on the standpoint of the reader. They may miss circumstances, lights and shadows, that give quite a different hue and air to the event, as they remember it. But I have been faithful to the best light I had.

And now, that my task is ended, I feel like assuring the reader that it has been the work only of leisure hours, in the course of a somewhat hard wrought ministry.

"I left no calling for this idle trade."

It has been a work of love and delight to gather up some of the fast fading facts and scenes in the history of the noble and neglected district of Illinois with which my sympathies and life have been identified. And now in fervent love to my generation, I bring this contribution to the history of the former days, and lay it reverently down before their eyes.

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UNMOORED.

CHAPTER I.

A. D. 1787 TO 1818.

THE Rev. Stephen Bliss, A. M., was born in Lebanon, New Hampshire, March 27, 1787. He was the fourth child of Stephen and Sarah Bliss. His parents were poor, his father being a small farmer at the time of his son's birth, with a cottage in the village, where the family resided.

Like Newton, Hannah More, Dr. Thomas Scott, and multitudes of those whose lives have blessed and adorned society, this good man arose from obscurity. No "evidence of the truth o Christianity," should so commend the religion of Jesus to the *poor* as this fact, that it has gathered the vast majority of those who have been eminent for their virtues and usefulness, whose lives have "shone as lights in the world," from among their ranks.

Before the development of her manufactures, the villages and rural districts of New England were poor. Wealth and luxury were unknown. Frugality, simplicity, economy, characterized the habits of the people. Of all its villages, Lebanon was one of the quietest, and Deacon Bliss' one of the humblest of its homes. But the fortunes of the devout family seemed to have decayed still further, for when the younger Bliss first appears upon the scene as a student at Dr. Wood's, his father had removed to Glover, Vermont, near the Canada line. Here we find them, in 1808, living in a "log hut" that had to be providently daubed up each autumn to ward off the piercing winds of winter. The family at that time consisted of the parents, two sisters, Sarah and Anna, and five brothers, Benjamin who like Stephen was aspiring after an education, and John, who spent much of his time at Lebanon, and was even then threatened with a decline, Stephen, Luther, and Ziba. Of these sons, Stephen was the third. He often illustrated the cheerful disposition of his father, by relating that whenever any work was to be done, the father was sure to wittily call for his three oldest, or his three youngest sons, which would of course always include him. Luther died of consumption in 1811. Ziba Bliss, the eldest son, owned the farm on which the "log

hut" stood, and lived within call, with his young family. The family thus consisted in fact of only four, the parents, and the two daughters.

But if it were an humble household, it was one of rare excellence. Judging by the old and crumpled letters that emanated from it, and still exist, we can perceive an air of piety, of simplicity, of pinching economy, but all brightened by intelligence, affection, and perfect housewifery. It was doubtless just such a home as Puritanism delighted to set *its poor* in, small, cleanly, scantily furnished, but full of homebred comforts, with a few soul-full books and the well-read Bible as the household oracle. They were not *destitute*, but one of the sisters wrote pleasantly to her brother, when in Middlebury College, "property does not appear to stick to a Bliss' hands." It was a struggle among them all, to raise enough on the little farm and in the gardens to subsist on during the year. Sometimes the scanty soil yielded an abundant harvest, but if the rains did not fall on the stony fields just at the right season, their potatoes and pumpkins and corn were all ready to wither. It was a hard-wrought, anxious life they led.

But what was sadder far was the hereditary scourge of consumption in the family. The health of the aged parents had been early broken

by it, although they still lingered on. Ziba was often laid by with the constitutional disorder for months, and even Anna and Sarah in their lovely youth as they were, did not escape alarming symptoms. As each winter came on with its heavy snows, its long and piercing frosts, its wild Canada storms, the family would almost expect to be separated before the summer again smiled. At last, one day in October, 1814, they heard that John was gone, and the next year, 1815, poor Ben was brought home from Middlebury, struck down in the midst of his generous struggles and aspirations. He lingered in a long and painful decline, sinking in spite of the anxieties and assiduous attentions of his heart-broken friends, and finally expired on the 5th of August. "The prospects of our family are certainly very gloomy," wrote poor Anna to her brother, but tenderly added, "if so many friends depart, those who remain must cling closer to each other; we must see that father and mother want for nothing." So united in filial piety,

> "Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing,
> Onward through life they go."

Another fact in the home-life, is so significant that it should not be overlooked in estimating the temper and spirit of the family. All this time the young sisters were trying to educate

themselves. If their poverty, or at least the care of their aged parents, forbade their enjoying the advantages of a literary training, they still aspired after what was wise and good, in culture and character. They had their school-books and hours of study. When Benjamin was sick, he beguiled his affliction with this "labor of love." "Brother Ben teaches us when his cough permits," Sarah wrote in the early spring of 1815. Propped up on his couch the dying student spent his fading life helping the sisters on in the arduous work of self-culture, until his strength was gone. Really that "old log hut," as Anna calls it—not sneeringly—was the scene of rarely noble, heroic lives. These must have been "*God's poor*"—rich in mind, and truth, and aspirations.

Such was the home atmosphere in which Mr. Bliss grew up. As he approached manhood, a most efficient friend was raised up to help him on his course. This was the Rev. Samuel Wood, D. D., the pastor of the Congregational Church in Boscaween, New Hampshire, who took such an interest in his modest but aspiring nephew, that he invited him to his house.

This gentleman, Dr. Wood, with whom the reader will grow familiar in the following pages, was a scholar and divine of much note. He preached to the one church of Boscaween for

forty-five years, and his talents and virtue may be inferred.* He was greatly honored and esteemed as an educator. He was accustomed to receive lads and young men into his family to instruct. Many of them after graduating in some of the Literary Institutions around, would return to their old preceptor to study "Divinity." It was thus a token of good, when this eminent and godly man invited young Bliss to the parsonage at Boscaween. From this time on, Dr. Wood's house became his home. Here he fitted himself for the Junior Class, and in 1810 he entered Middlebury College, then under the Presidency of Dr. Henry Davis. In 1812 he graduated, with a high standing for scholarship, and his fond dream of a liberal education was realized. Having long before determined on the ministry, he returned to Dr. Wood's, and entered on the study of Theology. Thus two years were passed.

At last, in 1814, having finished his preparation, he applied to the Hopkinton Association for license to preach the Gospel. At the examination that followed, he was rejected on account of alleged defective views of the person, and conse-

*Several of his students became very noted afterward, as the two Websters, Ezekiel and Daniel, Dr. Worcester, the Lexicographer, etc.

quently of the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was prepared to say that Jesus was truly the "Son of God," even the "Eternal Son," but he could not say that "He was the God, of whom He was the Son." The association, jealous for the glory of their Lord, and "knowing that the days were evil," thought they discerned the "Arian horror" lurking beneath his language, and advised him to stop and re-examine his views.

We need to pause a moment over this mortifying event. "Was Mr. Bliss an Arian at this time?" We think not. He speaks in his letters to his friends of the "*divine* merits of the Redeemer." Dr. Wood (whose Church in 1815 in the midst of a great revival, voted that no one could be received into the fellowship of the Church unless they believed in the *Trinity* of the adorable Godhead), we find, defended him, and indorsed his sentiments as scriptural. We have no intimation throughout all his correspondence, and the records that survive of his whole life, that his views of Jesus Christ were ever even seriously modified, and yet he taught all through his ministry "redemption through our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." This was the key-note of his prayers, his hopes and his personal trust for salvation.

Why then this rebuke? It seems to have sprung from confusion of views, in the minds of both parties. From what appears above, the candidate intended to deny that God the Father, and God the Son, were the *same person.* But the Association understood him as asserting that the Son was not the *same* in *substance* with the Father, equal in power and glory. Hence the decision.

But those were days of change and bewilderment. Plausible errors were beginning to pervade the New England churches. They crept in under the guise of more "liberal opinions." Philosophy came in to explain the mysteries of revelation, and take away the "offense of the cross." In many pulpits the old and serious truths of the Puritan theology, concerning man's ruin and the divine remedy brought to light in the Gospel—the remedy for his guilt in the imputed righteousness of the glorious Emmanuel, and the remedy for his depravity in the imparted righteousness of the Holy Ghost—gradually became less and less familiar. Their places were insidiously supplied by glowing eulogies of virtue, homilies on morals, and curious speculations in divinity. Thus the "Negative Theology" at first supplanted, and then endeavored to subvert, the distinctive doctrines of salvation

in New England. The character of the preaching at the beginning of this century, that paved the way for the havoc that followed, may be inferred from a compliment paid the Rev. Abiel Abbot, D. D., pastor for many years of the Congregational Church of Haverhill, Massachusetts, and afterward of Beverly, by one of his parishioners. "I have sat under the preaching of my pastor for sixteen years, and I do not yet know what are his articles of faith." So the truth perished. Under this state of things, "the trumpets giving an uncertain sound," we can not wonder that an air of confusion and uncertainty, respecting the vital truths of Christianity, should pervade the churches, and the way be opened for plausible and subversive errors. Living in such a time as that, and "having the Gospel in charge to commit unto faithful men, who would be able also to instruct others," we are not surprised at their sensitiveness, nor their jealousy of all that savored of the rising heresy.

The course of the Association took him completely by surprise. However pure the motive, it seems evident that the decision of the Association was hasty. Ten years later, without one word of explanation from Mr. Bliss, but on a statement by Dr. Wood of the misapprehensions that had led to the decision, they reversed it, and gave him the license he had once sought at their hands.

Ah me! what gentleness, meekness, patience, should reign among God's servants, as well as love and zeal for the truth. But the decision hedged up his way. He at once gave up all thought of the ministry. In his perplexity he cast about him for some employment that would occupy his time until the Divine will concerning him should be unvailed. Just then George May, an old college mate, and a young man of pleasing manners and admirable spirit, and whom we more than suspect to have been tenderly attached to one of the fair sisters at Glover, came by on his way home from Middlebury College, where he had just graduated. Bliss was easily persuaded to accompany him, and by October the two friends started out to look for some worthy opening for teaching. Each was fully prepared for doing good service. The point aimed for was famous Plymouth, Massachusetts, but with the enthusiasm of young tourists, they were ready to turn out of the way to view any curiosity in nature or art, or any scene made interesting in history. At length they reached Plymouth, where May's relatives resided. The town had been terribly wasted during the war, but the natural seenery remained. They hunted up the veritable "rock on which their ancestors had first set foot in the New World, and standing

on it" gazed out on the sea, over which the Pilgrims came in 1620, with the seeds of a free State and a free Church in their holy faith.

But no satisfactory situation presented itself. New England was full of teachers. A seminary was offered Bliss at Plymouth, but under conditions that made it undesirable. And so the two friends, never more to be long separated in this world, started out together again. They traveled until they reached the Hudson River, and here May found a school at Watervliet, and Bliss one among the wealthy Dutch at Greenbush. At the close of his engagement here he entered the academy at Milton. This was a more desirable position. He was associated with his friend and classmate, Ashley Sampson, a gentleman of talents and liberal education, who afterward rose to eminence as a lawyer and jurist in New York. The school was an important one. Among the students was one who became distinguished as a divine, an educator, and author—the late Rev. James Wood, D. D., Moderator of the General Assembly at Newark, 1864.*

In the autumn of 1816 he received a flattering overture from the citizens of Utica, far up the

* In 1838, when the storm was raging that divided the Presbyterian Church, a copy of Dr. Wood's compilation, "Old and New Theology," fell into his old preceptor's hands, and was of great benefit to him.

Mohawk valley. He had now made a reputation as a teacher, and during his connection with this academy it rose to considerable popularity. His time was given to the advanced classes and higher branches exclusively, and an assistant teacher took the care of the rest. About one hundred students were under his tuition. It was a position that taxed and developed his scholarship. In addition to the duties of a teacher, he read to his students a course of lectures on topics in ethics and theology. Many of them still survive, and are, at least, specimens of exact and excellent English. While thus employed he had the honor to receive the degree of Master of Arts from Hamilton College.

His position now was honorable, useful, and pleasant. Utica was a town remarkable for intelligence, and for the enterprise and refinement of its people. The missionary spirit prevailed, uniting the churches in a holy fellowship of effort for Christ's cause. A female benevolent and missionary society, numbering three or four hundred, met often for counsel and prayer in the academy. His religious privileges, too, were richly enjoyed and improved. A small volume still remains, containing the outlines of sermons preached by his pastor, and others, during his residence in the beautiful town.

But the charms of his position nor its honors could keep back the decay that haunted his system. He found the confinement and the close application required by his duties rapidly exhausting his health. In the spring of 1819 he felt it absolutely necessary to lay down his burdens, and vacate the school-room. In the month of May he took a horseback tour to Lake Ontario; lodged with some friends at Sackett's Harbor, and endeavored to regain his strength by a thorough recreation. He spent his days on the water rowing or floating or fishing in the coves and bays of the lovely inland sea, or in hunting or loitering among the wooded hills and headlands of the shore. In the midst of this busy idleness he soon found himself improving. Before the month was out, by far too soon, he went back to Utica and resumed his place. It was not long before his health again began to sink, and he became convinced that this flattering and delightful scene was not the sphere in which Providence would have him labor. He had written to his father in the early spring that his thoughts had been turned to the Southwest, where land was fertile and cheap, and the climate mild, and that he sometimes desired to explore the country to see if he could not find a more congenial home for all the family. As the sum-

mer advanced he resolved on this tour. On breaking the matter to May, he found him ready and eager for the adventure, and their plans were soon matured.

When this became known among his friends, it raised a storm of expostulation; especially the affectionate household in Glover were beside themselves with apprehension. He had already been absent for more than three years; that they had not seen his face, and all the family were now gone, but the aged parents, and the two sisters and Ziba. We can readily understand what a pang shot through their hearts at the thought of losing Stephen.

This circumstance had one very agreeable result: it called out a correspondence that discovers to us more fully the sterling qualities of mind and heart possessed by these young ladies. Time had now matured them, and a lovely maturity it was. The atmosphere of piety, of good sense, of taste, and independence, in which they had grown up, and the care of their brothers for their improvement, and of their uncle, the venerable Dr. Wood, we find have not been lost. Anna is the principal correspondent. She is pensive, and prone to reverie. Her letters are marked with good sense, purity, tenderness, and a perpetual refrain of thoughtfulness. Sarah is

too busy to write often, but when she does she exhibits all of Anna's sisterly love, spiced with a broad and winning humor all her own. In those days postage was expensive; but the sisters were proud of their grave and scholarly brother, and after his removal to the West, plied him well with home news, home affections, anxieties, joys, griefs, hopes, and fears. Like all female correspondence, it is a perfect sun-picture of the little world from which it emanated. Love and confidence are in every line.

Looking through these old, brown, torn letters into that family circle, we learn to esteem the inmates of the old log hut, as lovely characters. The picture of each of the fair Puritans, that rises to the fancy, as we muse on these vestiges that still survive of the once tidy, quiet, rustic cottage, reminds us of Wordsworth's fine lines:

> "A being breathing thoughtful breath,
> The reason firm, the temperate will,
> Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
> A perfect woman, nobly planned,
> To warn, to comfort, and command;
> And yet a spirit, still and bright,
> With something of an angel light."
>
> *Poems of the Imagination.*

In this quiet, saintly home, it awakened a flood of tenderness, that "Stephen" was resolved to adventure his life in the West. To them it was

a far-off land, much further than it is in these days of railroads. The stories that had reached them of the Mississippi Valley were stories of savage warfare, the feats of land pirates, and horse-thieves, and cut-throats, and the bloody vengeance of the regulators. With them, the news of the rich soil and pleasant climate went for nothing. Could these compensate for the reign of crime in that bloody and lawless land, and the fatal sicknesses that devoured its inhabitants? For this son and brother to depart for that land was to them the saddest of all separations. Anna urged duty, and Sarah plied him with her wit and tenderness. Even his venerable father appealed to his filial love. But he answered their importunities, by assuring them that the danger of violence was exaggerated, and by asking them how it would promote their happiness more for him to remain near them, to die early like his brothers, than for him to endeavor to prolong his life and labors by seeking a milder climate. Dr. Wood told him to "do whatever he felt that Providence called him to do." Mr. Bliss had weighed all, and decided.

By September the farewells were all past, and he and Mr. May were started. Their traveling equipage consisted of a one-horse wagon, small and light, and that was quite smothered up with

baggage by the time they had put on a very meager outfit for their long tour. Like Abram, they "went out," literally "not knowing whither they went." As they turned their faces West,

> "The world was all before them where to choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide."

So firm, indeed, seems to have been the confidence of these pilgrims that "their steps would be directed," that they traveled on day after day, having no definite plan as to whither, nor even how far they should go, but only seeking an agreeable location, cheap land, and milder air.

Unmoored, gentle reader, were they not? And who could guess in what nook the floating bark would drop anchor again and rest.

The Lodge in the Wilderness.

"Like a picture it seemed of the primitive, pastoral ages,
Fresh with the youth of the world."

CHAPTER II.

THE LODGE IN THE WILDERNESS.

A. D. 1818 TO 1821.

GOING west they reached the lake at Buffalo, and stopped several days to rest, and a party went over to see Niagara, "the roaring wonder of the world," as Mr. Bliss speaks of it. Thence along the lake shore they journeyed until they came to Cleveland; and there, starting out into the wilderness, they traveled for weeks through almost unbroken forests, traversing the States of Ohio and Indiana until they came to Vincennes. Here they crossed the Wabash River, and keeping on still to the southwest they came to Decker's Prairie, in Illinois, fifteen miles from Vincennes. Beguiled by the beauty of the country, they halted, to inspect it more narrowly. The landscape, as it first met their gaze, from the lofty point where they emerged from the forest on the Vincennes road, was worthy of their admiration. The

prairie stretched out before them like a waving meadow to the woods all around. Four or five cabins widely scattered, and some of them almost hidden by the enormous growth of wild grass, sent up their thin wreaths of curling smoke into the calm peaceful air. The forests that skirted this vast sea of flowers and verdure all around, stood gay with their robes of bright autumn leaves. It was October; all the birds of song were gone long before, and not a voice seemed to disturb the quiet of the scene or break the perfect repose of nature. How different this to the broken and stony landscapes to which their eyes had been familiar. There was something in it that filled their sense of sylvan beauty. They stopped to inquire respecting the healthfulness of the region, the soil and water, etc., and in five days they purchased the tract of land that occupied the center of the romantic scene.* "I have traveled somewhat further than I contemplated

*Why the proprietors selected the sandy site, with an eddy of stagnant water in the river in front, and a sour and sickly slough but a little way off to the west, we know not, without it was the enticement of that "fatal spring." The Indians encamped in the neighborhood, warned them that no one could live there: "Papoos die there, squaws die there, Injin die, white man die." But the friendly warning was neglected. The deadly disasters of Palmyra almost ruined Southeast Illinois for a generation. It gave a malignant character to the country, that checked and turned aside the tide of emigration from the East.

before I came in sight of the '*good land*'" Mr. Bliss wrote back delightedly to his father, away in bleak Glover, "but I feel amply compensated for the fatigue and expense of a long journey." Thus soon and to the satisfaction of the voyagers, was the bark moored in peace and the voyage ended.

It will be of interest to glance at the state of things that then existed in this land of their adoption.

Illinois had just then been admitted into the Union as a State. The principal towns were Kaskaskia, Shawneetown, Vandalia, Palestine, etc. Palmyra (founded in 1814, long since "deserted") was then the rising village of Edward's County. It was the county-seat and contained a post-office, the only one in a large scope of country, two stores, a tavern, a double log-cabin where the courts were held, and an indefinite number of grog-shops for the comfort and convenience of the villagers. A bank was opened here, too, in the heyday of its prosperity. The location, however, proved to be so fatally sickly that the site was finally abandoned. The place where the busy village once stood, and flatboats and barges, and keelboats and the various kinds of vessels that then navigated these waters, unloading their burden of travelers, adventurers

and emigrants, goods and stores of all kinds for the growing settlements, is now a cornfield. The spring of water that supplied the village in large measure, flows out of the river bank still, with as bright a current as of old, although most of the villagers who once drank of it are lying in their graves on a sandy knoll not far off, and all the scene is as silent as it was before they came with their vain bustle.

Mt. Carmel, below the rapids, had just been laid out. Here and there through the county there were settlements, generally with a block-house or palisade some place near at hand, to protect the settlers from the Indians, who still appeared occasionally in roving bands. Some men had been killed in the "bottoms of Coffee Creek," in a foray of the savages, in the early spring of 1816.

The bold and adventurous spirit of the pioneer was thus still needed, and found scope for exercise. Luxury, elegance, culture, such as our two friends had been familiar with in the East, were unknown. As to society, the people were hardy, and simple in their habits; and as to the country, the whole land was unsubdued, and nature was run riot in wild luxuriance in prairie and forest. "The soil is as fertile as the 'intervals' in New England, and the growth of vegetation is something wonderful," writes Mr. Bliss.

But what a change time and Providence had wrought. We are to see these men entering a mode of life of the rudest description possible. It would seem that the field of their future lives was not only assigned them, but they were plunged into the very depths of its privations, roughness, and rusticity, that they might learn the real necessity that there was for their coming, and the work to which God had appointed them.

The scenes to which the reader is now invited are thoroughly pioneer. He will have glimpses of the occupations, customs, and manner of life of these early times; and what was true in this field, is also true still in large part, in all the frontier settlements, so that the picture may be of service in assisting the reader to understand better the hardships endured by those who are subduing the wilderness, and are now actually toiling at the front of civilization.

The proprietor of whom they had purchased could not vacate his cabin at once, and it became necessary for them to provide a shelter for themselves. November 2 they began their preparations to build an addition that they could occupy during the winter. The main cabin stood with the gables east and west, and the door fronting the south. Along before the door were six aged

oaks, whose branches hung quite over the lowly home, and just a few feet south of this row of rugged and noble trees, and under their shadow still, was the well, with its sweep and oaken bucket. The structure proposed to be built now, was a "lean-to" connected with this cabin. It was put up with saplings, split and notched so that the halves would lie on their edge. The upper ends of the rafters rested against the east end of the cabin. The top of their roof would therefore be only as high as the eaves of the other building, and their eave was but little above their heads. By the 29th they had so far completed it, as to sit down with great satisfaction by their own fireside. December 8 they left their boarding place, and moved, with their little all, into their bachelor's hall, and went to housekeeping. But we must not be deceived by this language. It was a very natural, primitive establishment indeed. More than a month after this, we find Mr. May busy making stools for seats, and some days later still putting down a floor. The "lean-to" was to them kitchen, sitting-room, bed-chamber, wareroom, larder; answering for all uses, noble and vile. As the winter advanced, the room filled up with a thrifty medley of everything. The rafters over their heads became ornamented with deer skins and

other pelts that had fallen into their hands, hung there to dry. Here and there were hams and flitches of bacon, and strings of sausages, etc., swung up to receive the benefit of the smoke, that too often failed to get out of the home-made chimney, and that floated and lurked in the upper vacancies under the roof. The scene almost recalls that fine creation of fancy, the lodge of the exiled Douglass in Loch Katrine's romantic isle:

> "All around, the walls to grace,
> Hung trophies of the fight or chase:
> Here grins the wolf as when he died,
> And there the wildcat's brindled hide,
> The frontlet of the elk adorns;
> And deer skins, dapple, dun, and white,
> With otter's furs and seal's unite
> In rude and uncouth tapestry all,
> To garnish forth the sylvan hall."
>
> *Lady of the Lake. Canto I.*

In this temporary "lodge" they spent their first winter—the days passed in the outdoor work of the farmer, the evenings in chatting with neighbors who called in, and in writing letters to far-away friends, and in laying plans for the future. With a good conscience within, and their surroundings so novel, romantic and interesting, we do not wonder to find their days "going by pleasantly."

It was evident, too, that they had found a milder climate. There was much rain and but little snow, and a vast deal of mud, all of which was new to them in the winter. And one warm and sunny week in January, as mild and ethereal as a New England May, they noticed birds singing on the trees and fences around. They note this feature of their new home with evident satisfaction, and the whole air of their journals, now scrupulously kept for each day, is that of interest and enjoyment.

As the spring opened, they made all preparations to carry out some of their plans of usefulness. It would have been singular if they had not bestirred themselves, they were so plied with urgent admonitions from their friends in the East. And so one lovely Sabbath morning, April 11, having invited in the children of the families around, they opened in the cabin a *Sabbath-school.** That day there were twenty scholars in attendance. Within a few weeks the number

* The old proprietor was gone now, and the main cabin was empty. Here they put benches for the Sabbath-school, with an aisle down the middle of the room. The males, young and old, occupied one side, and the females the other, after the custom of the country. The school opened at 9 o'clock; at 12 o'clock there was a recess of an hour, when the company picnicked under the trees, and sang together, for Mr. May was one of the chief singers. At 1 o'clock P. M., the school was called again, and the exercises did not close until 4 o'clock. There were sometimes sixty pupils present, so well received was this effort for the public good.

had risen to forty, and still further increased during the summer. They spent the whole day, morning and afternoon, in the school, teaching the classes, explaining the Scriptures, interspersing the exercises with hymns and prayers for the Divine blessing. After fifty-one years that Sabbath-school still flourishes, with growing interest and efficiency for good.

Thus was opened by their coming this first "well in the wilderness."

Was this the first Sabbath-school in Illinois? In 1846 the Rev. Thomas Lippincott stated in a historical sermon before the Presbytery of Alton, that "so far as he was aware, he opened the first Sabbath-school, in his own house, in 1819." On informing him of Messrs. Bliss and May's school, started April 11 of that year, he replied "that he could not say positively what time in the year he opened his school, but beyond doubt he would be compelled to share the honor with these sainted servants of God."

As time passed on Mr. Bliss was followed into his rustic retreat by the expostulations of his unsatisfied New England friends. Gentle Anna says: "We are afraid that you are gone so far now, that we shall never see you again in this world." Witty Sarah wanted to know if he was "near enough to the end of the world to satisfy

him yet," rails at his new house, his bachelor's establishment and farmer's gear, etc., and winds up by gravely assuring him that he was certainly doomed to celibacy, for no New England girl would follow his fortunes to such a distance. To all this he only responded with tidings of his returning health, of the beautiful climate, of the fertile soil, and of the Sabbath-school of more than fifty scholars, parents and children, that he and Mr. May had gathered. In a later letter he answers her continuous raillery in something like her own strain, by assuring her that he was become a royal cook, and his housekeeping was by no means to be sneered at, that if she would but do him the honor of a visit, he would regale her with puddings made of "upland rice" of his own raising, and roasted haunches of venison, and turkeys fresh from the forests, etc. From all which it seems that the young men spread their table, like the patriarchs, with the simple gifts of nature.

His venerable father, in a graver strain, expresses his surprise that he and May should have expended so much time and money in fitting themselves for usefulness, and then go off to the ends of the country and turn out to be nothing but farmers. Mr. Bliss responded that, as honorable and useful as the avocation of the farmer

was, it was not the life-long object of his ardent desires; that his way to the ministry had been hedged up, and when he engaged in what he esteemed the next most useful employment, the instruction of youth, his health had broken down; that thus his present position was contrary to all his plans, and wholly providential; that he felt that he was in the path of duty, because there was such a field of Christian labor before him, and his health and strength were returning in the open-air active life on the farm; that he accepted cheerfully the manifest will of Providence, assured that he was placed here for some purpose that would be revealed in due time.

All the year wore on prosperously. The farm produced abundantly, the Sabbath-school flourished, and everything seemed to smile.

1820. But the next year was unfortunate. Their crops were cut short by a drought, and the ingenious May was laid aside in great measure by inflammatory rheumatism. It appears that Mr. Bliss had intended to visit the East during the summer. But as the time approached he found it impossible. His friend was disabled by his agonizing illness, the expenses of his outfit for farming had made any further heavy expense just then out of the question, and no money could be realized from sales either of stock or

produce, even if there had been any for the market. In a letter to Anna, at midsummer, he bemoans his disappointment, and explains the reasons. But as the year advances we discover a growing uneasiness. His mind was evidently lingering with a tender tenacity over the recollections of New England friends. He wrote more frequently. In July he even goes so far as to hint to his father that keeping bachelor's hall had sadly lost its charms.

Mr. Campbell, in his own tender way, sings of Adam in Paradise before the creation of Eve, that—

> "Man the hermit sighed, till woman smiled;"

and if Love could breathe his disquietude and perturbations amidst scenes of such satisfying beauty and peace, what uneasiness may we not suppose him to have wrought in the rude low cabin in the heart of the wilderness.

> "Still slowly passed the melancholy day,
> And still the stranger wist not where to stay;
> The world was sad."

Of course this state of things could not always continue. By October his mind was made up. In June the impossible thing of raising one hundred or two hundred dollars stood in the way of his visit to the East, but by October this barrier had entirely vanished. Ingenuity and resolution

can accomplish wonders. Friday evening, October 6, he made a rude knapsack, and on Monday morning, a bright, auspicious morning, bidding his old friend and companion a hearty good-by, he started for his far away home on foot. Trudging on, with varying adventures, he accomplished the journey of 1,200 miles in fifty days, and arrived at Boscaween in good health and the best spirits.* On the seventh of the following April he was himself happily married to Miss Elizabeth Worcester, at Dr. Wood's. His venerable uncle united them, and gave them a patriarch's blessing. By the last day of April they were started in a two-horse wagon for their home in the Far West, and after a journey o eight weeks they reached the little cabin under the oaks. "I am really rejoiced," writes Mr. Bliss to his father, "after passing over so much rough country, to see the prairie again; it looks more pleasant than ever."

Mr. May, who had passed a solitary winter in the cabin, was ready to give them a cordial wel-

* Dec. 22, the anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, a New England Thanksgiving, he spent with his venerable parents and his sisters at home. After four years' absence we may readily believe that it was a joyful thanksgiving in the old devout family. January 9 there was a wedding in the household, and a greeting of old friends brought together by the joyful occasion. His sister Anna was married to Dr. David Ingraham, of Hartford, Ct. So pleasantly the holidays and the boisterous winter passed.

come. They came to their home, like Ruth and Naomi, in the sweetest pastoral in the world, "at the beginning of barley harvest." The two old friends went out into the fields together, and the remainder of the year passed with them busied in agricultural interests.

The tall fair wife was of old Puritan lineage. In 1638 or 1640, the Rev. Wm. Worcester came from England and was settled pastor of a Congregational Church in Salisbury, Massachusetts. From him has descended a very numerous and widely extended family.

The Rev. Noah Worcester, D. D., the father of Mrs. Bliss, was born in Hollis, New Hampshire, Nov. 25, 1758. During the Revolutionary War the family were fiery patriots. At sixteen years of age he was a fifer in the army. He took part in the memorable battle of Bunker's Hill, and afterward of Bennington. After the war he settled, in 1782, at Thornton, New Hampshire, and pursued a course of self-instruction in the arts and sciences, and divinity, while supporting himself by shoemaking and instructing youth. In 1786 he was licensed to preach, and the next year he was settled as pastor over the Congregational Church in Thornton. Here he remained for twenty years. In 1791 he received the honorary degree of Master of Arts from Dartmouth

College, and that of Doctor of Divinity from Harvard in 1818. He was remarkable for intellectual industry, and for his profound and speculative turn of mind. He was an indefatigable student and a voluminous author. He departed, in his later years, almost entirely from the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. He died at Brighton, Massachusetts, Oct. 31, 1837. Two of his sons graduated at Harvard, and became eminent as scholars, but following in the footsteps of their father's mystic and subtile speculations, they both at last became Swedenborgians. Betsy, his sixth daughter, born Feb. 27, 1789, had been taken when a child by Dr. Wood, and raised and educated in his devout and industrious household.

A brother of her father, Jesse Worcester, Esq., born at the old homestead at Hollis, and who afterward inherited it, was the father of a family of fifteen children, many of whom became distinguished as scholars. Joseph Emerson Worcester, LL. D., the lexicographer, was his second son. This was another of the students of Dr. Wood who became eminent.

Such was the noble line of intellectual men, patriots, scholars and divines, from which she sprung.

In the family of Dr. Wood she had enjoyed

rare privileges, social, mental, and spiritual. But in the midst of all this intellectual strength, elevation, and culture, the whole household economy was intensely simple and practical. Surrounded by domestic plenty, she was yet trained to habits of industry, frugality, and carefulness—"to lay her hands to the spindle, and to hold the distaff." She was, too, diligently instructed in the truths and precepts of religion. Mrs. Wood, "a model among women," as some of the students of her noble husband called her, used to say that she thought that Betsy had experienced religion at twelve years of age. Thus had she been qualified, in sterling graces of character, and in her domestic views and habits, to fit her exactly for the place she was to fill. "A good wife is from the Lord." In this case we see this Divine interest exemplified. The very spirit of domestic peace, and comfort, and piety, prudence and courage to toil and hope and wait in the service of life, were wedded to him with his comely and pious wife.

The new family was a most devout and godly one, after the noblest Puritan type, from the day that the new pair established themselves in the humble cabin.

It became, too, the scene of the busiest thrift. The homely virtues of common sense, fore-

thought, economy, and industry, reigned supreme. "Waste not, want not," was not written on the cabin door, but the motto was adopted and stringently adhered to within. The house was a *very* humble one. Standing on the doorstep you could stretch up and touch the eaves. But the intelligence and piety, and perfect housewifery, made it a cheerful and tidy one. It was full of comforts. The outfit was all of homespun. Mrs. Wood, at the marriage of these, toward both of whom she felt the interest of a mother, generously supplied them with cotton, linen, and woolen goods of all kinds, manufactured in her own household, and many of them by her own hands.

Such honor does Puritanism place upon useful industry.

The Church in the Wilderness.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS.

A. D. 1821, 1822.

NOW that we have seen the lowly household set up, let us notice the moral and religious condition of the country around.

There was a Predestinarian Baptist Society near, that maintained preaching once a month, and occasional prayer-meetings. It contained some excellent and pious families.

In another direction a very zealous Methodist class had begun its fervent course. The circuit-rider, the pioneer at once of religion and civilization, had penetrated to this field and begun his blessed work. The "New Lights" were also operating in the regions to the south and west. But the preaching, by whomsoever, was at long intervals, and was rude in the extreme. In these degenerate days we can scarcely credit the accounts that survive of the boisterous feats o some of those early laborers. Before announcing the text they would coolly lay aside both coat

and vest, loose their throats, roll up their sleeves, and then enter upon a strain of exhortation, growing more and more vociferous as they proceeded, and the gestures more violent, until the preacher became apparently quite frantic; writhing, screaming, stamping, leaping, foaming, like the olden Pithia; and all this was kept up during the time allotted for public worship, or until the body, as was sometimes the case, refused to longer do its part in the orgies. On the occasion of a funeral, the roar of the preacher's voice was often heard by some young men who were digging the grave in a wood one mile and a half distant from the scenes of the parson's toils. Before we condemn this too harshly, we must remember that the times are changed. This was the only preaching that there was. Better this than nothing; and if the manner were rude, it was according to the tastes of the rough and hardy auditory that filled the benches.

But wickedness prevailed. The churches were "little flocks." Morally everything was new, rough, wild, unsettled. Sabbath breaking, intemperance, and idleness, the usual vices of pioneer life, abounded. The adventurous spirit of those who live on the borders of civilization, reigned unbridled. There were many worthy families, and the worst doubtless had some good

traits, but the majority held the amenities and restraints of more established society in utter contempt. It cost scarcely any time or labor to raise enough from the fresh soil to supply their simple wants, and the rest of the time was spent in visiting, in hunting, or in neighborhood frolics and pastimes.

In this state of things any call was sure to bring out great crowds. "Militia musters" were annual days of concourse. The people flocked together from all quarters, some to the military drill, more to see and hear the novel and exciting occurrences, and many to profit by the drinking, horse-racing, gambling, and general dissipation that characterized the day. Of course the martial spirit of the occasion begot a quick indignation of all slights, insults and fancied wrongs in the noodles of the tipsy throng, and no end of manly kicks, blows, fights, and other heroic measures followed. So at house-raisings, log-rollings, elections, harvest-times, the Fourth of July, Christmas holidays, horse-races, weddings, balls—almost anything, was made the occasion of a general gathering, and then a merry-make would follow, and all sorts of feats of strength and agility, jokes, pranks and tricks were looked for and abounded; the madcap frolic made still more to their liking by the ever present aid of "mirth-provoking whisky."

The charm of those early days was the abounding sociability. "People used to be so friendly," is the universal impression that remains of the pioneer times. It is a problem how to preserve the hospitality, the generous spirit of social confidence and good will that mark pioneer life, amidst the progress of the country and the improvement of society.

Mr. Bliss had some acquaintance with this state of affairs before, but the gentle Puritan bride at first quite lost heart. Indeed, circumstances had conspired to apparently unfit her for these new scenes.

Her closing years at Boscaween had been spent amidst the joys of a most wonderful revival. The gracious season must have been quite a "Pentecost." So long before as February, 1820, Anna Bliss, who had gone over to her uncle's to share in the blessing, wrote to her brother "that the attention to religion exceeded anything she had ever heard of before." In the following November, Dr. Wood, the pastor so honored of God, says that "seven-eighths of the people had professed to have obtained a good hope."

In January, 1821, he wrote again that the work still continued: "God seems to be gathering up the fragments, that nothing should be lost. The revival is general. The old and young, rich and

poor, share together in praising and glorifying their God." Such delightful scenes of spiritual life had at once fitted and unfitted her for the hardness and the desolation into which she found herself precipitated. Her soul was enlightened in gospel truth by them, her spiritual affections quickened, and she was established in the Christian graces, and moreover had the standard of a "church in earnest" in her mind, to which her plans and prayers and hopes would constantly recur.

Doubtless through her life the memory of those last days at Boscaween animated and rejoiced her. But on the other hand, the sad *contrast* could not but depress her soul. It would be like a grating discord after a sweetly attuned harmony. This, it seems, was the first feeling.

When the day appointed for preaching came, the family all attended. They entered a long, low, dingy building, constructed of hewn logs, and covered with clap-boards. The smoky and cobwebbed joices swayed down in the middle by their own weight, stretched from side to side, with some loose boards thrown over them. This was the best house for public worship in all the coun try around. But the simplicity of the sanctuary doubtless accorded with the views of these Puritans. Were they not the descendants of those

men who so abhorred the guilty splendors of Popery and Phariseeism, as to break the painted windows, and knock down the statues of the saints in the semi-popish churches and cathedrals of England in the days of Cromwell? We know not, but we strongly suspicion that they were disposed to feel quite at home in the plain and humble conventicle in which they were called to worship.

But we can imagine the surprise and dismay of the tall, fair Puritan, fresh from the hallowed scenes of Boscaween, as she witnessed the performance that followed. The house, to be sure, was plain enough to suit their tastes; but alas! no Howe, nor Baxter, nor Owen, nor Flavel, was in the pulpit. As she saw the parson take off his coat, by way of preparation, and then listened to the noisy, extemporaneous harangue, that grew more and more deafening every moment, the preacher raving from one side of the house to the other, roaring and stamping, brandishing his fists and streaming with perspiration, with little or nothing to edify or comfort in it all, she would be well-nigh shocked at the incongruity of the spectacle. "Dear sister," she wrote to Anna Bliss, "I often think of the happy days we have passed together in the enjoyment of those privileges which I find I have left behind.

I am at a loss as to the path of duty. Most of the times when I have attended meeting here, I have returned with regret that I have spent my time to so little purpose. Then I stay at home, until fearing that the example may have a bad influence, I go again, and return as little satisfied as before. Thus I live. Pray for your affectionate sister." The jarring discord, we see, quite unnerved her.

But Mr. Bliss speaks despondingly, too, of the barren and unedifying religious meetings. He seems to have thought that the light was well-nigh darkness. He was no more than fairly settled, until the religious destitution of the field began to confront him. He cast about him for help. He craved an interest in the prayers of his friends in New England. He suggests to them whether it was the "better way" for the churches in the East to expend their sympathies, means and missionary efforts on foreign fields to such an extent, while vast and fertile regions of our own country, fast filling up with a teeming population, were left to such mournful neglect. He prayed them to send out an evangelist. But such prayers are in vain. If we are God's children, he assigns us a mission, and we may be sure he will not raise up any other one to fulfill it. If our ears do not heed the voice, they must

be opened; if the back is not bent for the burden, it must needs be. It is one great element of power in "the gospel of the grace of God" that it begets in the heart a clear and explicit wish, as definite as the love of life itself, to fulfill our course with joy, and the ministry that we have received of the Lord Jesus, whatever that may be. Mr. Bliss learned what his life-work was by and by, and that no help was to be sent to take it out of his hands. How he learned it the story will unvail in due time.

But the need of a minister who could "feed the people with knowledge and with understanding," pressed the hearts of these saintly friends. As the time passed this destitution grew more grievous. O for the means of grace that they had so slightly appreciated, so abused in the past, the ordinances that impart to the worshiper, to soul and mind and heart, the "truth and grace that came by Jesus Christ."

In the meantime the American Board of Foreign Missions was urging upon all Protestant lands that grand and holy movement, the "monthly concert of prayer for the conversion of the world." The appeal touched a chord in the hearts of the three exiles. One evening in November (the 5th) they invited in their neighbors and spent a season in imploring God to extend

the triumphs of his mercy over all the earth, and to send the light and comforts of the gospel to them who sat in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death. We can readily imagine how fervently they would pray for such objects. The next month they held another meeting, and so on for years, until at last it was changed into a weekly "prayer-meeting," that still continues, a praise and a blessing in the church that grew out of it. Thus another "well in the wilderness" was opened.

But happy changes were at hand. Before going on to detail these, an incident closely connected with them must be noticed. About the time that Mr. Bliss and his companion were coming across the country, as before related, Cyrus Danforth, Esq., from the neighborhood of the beautiful Cayuga Lake, New York, was descending the Ohio River in a keel boat, with his family and a party of relatives, seeking a new home. The point for which he aimed was Terre Haute, Indiana. By the time, however, he had come to the mouth of the Wabash River, the summer was so far advanced and the waters so low that he could only reach the foot of the Grand Rapids, and fearing to stay on the river during the sickly season, he took his family out some seven miles or so to an airy, open prairie, to await the rise of the stream.

Thus by one of those quiet but decisive events by which Providence chooses our lot, this gentleman's home was established on Barney's prairie, five miles southwest of Mr. Bliss'. He was so pleased with the appearance of the country on seeing it that he concluded to go no farther, and settled. He was an ardent Presbyterian, and a man of intelligence and property. Both of these families had thus been settled in their wilderness homes more than three years, and both had been earnestly praying and looking for an evangelist and asking to be directed aright.

God, who never despises the prayer for light and guidance of those who would trust and serve him, suddenly brought them a friend and counselor. The striking providence that directed him to their doors is too instructive to be overlooked.

In 1818 a young man was graduated at Dartmouth College named David Choate Proctor. In 1821 he finished his course in divinity at Andover Theological Seminary. As soon as he was licensed to preach, he was sent out to the West as an itinerant missionary by the "Connecticut Missionary Association." Reaching Indianapolis late in the autumn, and finding the church there vacant, he engaged to supply them until spring. As soon as the severity of the winter was passed

he pushed on for Missouri, the field of labor to which he had been commissioned. He crossed the country on horseback in the spring of 1822. About the first of March, on his way, he ferried the Wabash River late one evening, and found lodging at a little village of cabins, on the west bank, called Mt. Carmel.

In the morning, on preparing to start on his journey, his horse was discovered to be lame. Unable to travel, he was compelled to delay. Faithful to the errand on which he was going, he began to inquire into the religious condition of the country, and among other things he was told of two Presbyterian families, settled, one seven and the other twelve miles north, on the prairies. He set out as soon as possible to find them. Pushing on through thickets and woods and patches of prairie land, he at last came to a scanty settlement, and alighting at one of the cabins he knocked. The door was opened by a comely young girl, with the intelligence of other scenes sparkling in her eyes and mantling over her face. He was satisfied at once. Without stopping to make any inquiries, he stalked right in, shaking hands with all he met, and exclaiming, "I feel perfectly at home here. I am on Presbyterian ground, I know." His enthusiasm was cordially reciprocated. As he told his holy

errand, their sympathies flowed together, and they rejoiced in the wonderful goodness of God, by whose providence they had thus met in this "solitary place."

The next morning (March 2) they all set out, Mr. and Mrs. Danforth and Mrs. Winters (a sister of Mrs. D.) and the Rev. Mr. Proctor, for Mr. Bliss'. We can fancy the scene at the meeting of these brethren—their surprise and delight. If they could have looked forward for forty-four years and seen the results of that interview under the oaks, they would have rejoiced still more. They dined together bravely that day. They mingled their enjoyment of the simple cheer made ready for them by the "neat-handed" hostess with many a burst of heartfelt gratitude to God, and tales of past adventures, present straits, and plans, hopes and dreams of the future. Four men surrounded that little table spread in the wilderness, and three of them were graduates and the fourth was wise-hearted beyond his generation and "mighty in the Scriptures." By the hands of such men did Presbyterianism propose to lift her fair and ancient banner in this remote field.

Sabbath morning they met with a large congregation at a school-house near Mr. Danforth's, and Mr. Proctor preached. Mr. May says that his

theme was "Human Depravity, and the Gospel Remedy." On Tuesday he preached again at the school-house, and the five friends, Mr. Bliss and Mr. Danforth, and their wives, and Mr. May, were organized into a church, styled the "First Presbyterian Church in Edwards County." Mr. Bliss and Mr. May were elected ruling elders, and Mr. Danforth, deacon.

Wednesday evening Mr. Proctor preached in the cabin to a congregation as large as could be crowded into it. Sabbath morning he preached at the school-house again, on the Scripture doctrine of "Justification by Faith," and on Monday evening, the 11th, he preached at the cabin, the last sermon to the little flock he had gathered, on the Spirituality of God. John iv. 24. The next morning he took his leave of the brethren and departed.

So they were left again, but not as they had been found. They were now bound together by the new tie of church fellowship, and the vows of God were upon them. The sublime work for which the Church of God exists in this world was committed now to their hands to promote in a wide and needy field. But who would lead them? Who could supply them with the means of grace? "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." These considerations were now added

to all the motives that existed before for faithfulness and devout energy, and the elders were "pressed in spirit" under a sense of their new responsibility for the welfare of the cause of Christ.

The Preparation.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PREPARATION.

A. D. 1822 TO 1824.

PROVIDENCES are a means of grace to the righteous. The circumstances that surround them are the furnace in which grace purifies them, or the sacred asylum in which they are nursed in the lap of rest and devotion, like Elijah at the brook Cherith, or Paul in Arabia, until they are prepared for the further service that awaits them, or the river of God, that bears them on its mighty current to new scenes of duty and effort. The true prayer for grace is always answered, and providences, dark or bright, are often made the messengers to bring us the divinest blessings. Thus, the prayer unto the Lord, "increase our faith," is often being fulfilled by the disciples being brought into straits, where the real vanity of earthly helps or comforts is seen, and God's unrealized promises come out,

like the stars, to shine with beams of purest luster. So, if the spirit of obedience be in the heart, and the sigh after usefulness, the opportunity shall not long be wanting. The Lord of all the earth will open the door before us, not possibly the one we should have selected, but the one he sees best. But what if we hesitate to enter? Alas, how much rebellion there is in our hearts after we thought them subdued! Then comes the school of providence to instruct and direct. The by-paths are hedged up, the busy life yields no fruit, sorrows fall, and storms seem to lurk in the air, until we turn our feet to the way of his commandments; and lo! "we find rest to our souls." If the harbor is open, and the bark still loiters out on the sea, then the winds begin to blow until she escapes into port.

In the period on which we enter now, we shall have but little to do with the indoor life of the prairie cabin. We shall stand without, and behold how God deals with them who are willing to be his servants, but who falter at the service he demands. We shall hear the voices that called to the calm and philosophical inmates, and see the winds ruffling up the quiet leaves of the aged oaks above them.

We have seen how these brethren were interested in the Sabbath-school work, before the com-

ing of Mr. Proctor. After his departure they were openly committed to the promotion of religion, and new vows enlisted them in the service of Christ. And then, they were alone. Far or near, they knew of no church of like faith and order, with which they could take counsel, or join in employing a minister. Whatever was to be done in the wide field before them, there were but few to do, and all the responsibility in the case was narrowed down to their hands, and could not be shifted. Providence thus conspired with grace to arouse them to duty, and it is pleasant to find that they girded themselves seriously to the work. The Sabbath-school and monthly concert were carried on. But the thought that they were fulfilling all the missions of a church by these instrumentalities was not to be entertained. They determined to institute Sabbath services, "reading meetings," as they called them. June 9th they met, for the first time, in this exercise, in the log school-house in the prairie south of Mr. Bliss', the dingy "conventicle" described above. Mr. Bliss read a sermon, each one "had a psalm, or a word of instruction," and all joined together in prayers. This service, that had in it the elements of great usefulness, was designed to supply their lack of the ministry of the word, until God should hear their cries and send them a pastor.

How admirably was this! If the ruling elders in vacant churches all felt thus, felt that this was implied in the vows of their holy office, and would seek to edify, comfort, and encourage "all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them bishops, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood," how soon would the "desolate places be inhabited," and the spring of future prosperity be set open, with a full, unwasting flow.

The right motive, we see, was at work in their breasts, a quiet, very quiet, but unquenchable interest, nay, in their calm way, zeal, but no readiness, as yet, on the part of Mr. Bliss, the scholar, the divinity student, the man on whom God had poured such light and grace, to enter on the work himself of preaching the gospel. The vessel is still loitering, with its precious freight, around the mouth of the harbor, but the winds begin to blow more heavily.

Only a few weeks had passed after they had *settled* upon this humble service, when they were met with a stunning stroke. One day in July, a withering sultry day, the faithful May was unable to go out into the fields. The symptoms were those of fever. Nothing serious was apprehended at first; but two or three days after we find Mr. Bliss leaving his outdoor work to watch day and

night by the bedside of his suffering friend. A physician was called in, and for a few days he seemed to rally under the treatment; but on Saturday afternoon, August 3d, the fever returned with great violence and he sank rapidly. Sabbath evening, a cool and peaceful evening, at 9 o'clock, he departed this life. So at last the two friends were separated!

How strange it seems to go back and look in on this quiet tragedy in the hushed cabin, to stand by this sick bed at midsummer and hear the farewells and weep tears of unutterable sadness as the noble spirit takes its flight; and then to awake to the fact that the memory of this blighted life is faded almost utterly from the earth. All the eyes that wept over his untimely death have forgotten their tears. The hearts that knew the loveliness of his character and spirit, have all withdrawn long ago from this weary sphere.

The impression of his undeveloped life on this noisy world is not perished, for moral influence once exerted is immortal, but obscured: like a mediæval hymn of glory written in palimpsest, that has been overwritten again and again by later hands, with ballad, or idle tale, or story of kings and courts. But as it is with all the righteous, "his record is on high," and the memory of

his worth and virtues still lingers around any story of those early days, like the perfume of unseen flowers.

On Monday he was buried in a family graveyard, on a farm belonging to Thomas Banks. This worthy man had been accustomed to hold religious meetings at his house from a very early day. When the two pilgrims came, in 1818, there they first went to "pay their vows." And now, that one of them was gone, it seemed fitting that his grave should be made hard by the hallowed place where he had first greeted "brethren in Christ," in this strange land, and joined in the public worship of God.

The history of this private burial ground is the common one. When the churchyard, near by, was opened, it ceased to be used as a place of interment, and fell more and more into neglect and dilapidation. Nothing, alas! could be more lonely nor forlorn than this scene is now. The rest of the field has been cultivated to some extent in these long years, but the plowshare could not cut through the turf over these graves, and the thorns and brambles have the spot all to themselves. It is a wild thicket, a place for boding owls.

As the wanderer steals silently around the decayed plantation, he sees the long, tangled

wands of the blackberry, the wild rose, the witch-hazle, and the tall yellow tufts of the prairie grass, beckon and sway in the air over the tombs. Will some "Old Mortality" ever come to peer into the lonely copse, and hunt up the forgotten names and history of the sleepers buried there?

Mournfully the stricken friends returned to their homes. What sad news must go back to Glover and Plymouth! Vain now were all the little gifts and tokens of love that Mr. and Mrs. Bliss had brought their sainted friend from the East. Vain the plans and hopes that had clustered around his contemplated trip in the fall to wed his affianced bride. All was over now, the fair dream vanished, the almost finished sanctuary of mortal love in ashes!

The first effect of this sad breach was to depress and discourage the survivors. The "reading meetings" were suspended, at least for the present. The vanity of human life seems to have been felt so keenly in this providence that the arousing call to diligence and energy during the brief day, they were not yet prepared to heed.

A few days later a most unmistakable but singular intimation of the Divine will was given him. In the previous January, his venerable kinsman, Dr. Wood, had written him that he had brought his case before the association again, that

all the members were ready to do anything that they could to put him into the ministry; that if he would signify his belief in the "eternal existence and real divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ ('which I told them,' says the Doctor, 'I was confident that you had always believed'), he could procure him a full license to preach the gospel, if he desired it, and a 'license' could do him no hurt." Mr. Bliss hesitated to take this decisive step, and while he hesitated the Hopkinton Association met. The Doctor, who knew his cautious nephew well, made such a statement of the case that a full license was granted and the aged patriarch had the pleasure of transmitting it to his son in the gospel, with the assurance in his own mind that sooner or later it would lead to much good. It reached him August 19th, just two weeks after the burial of his faithful friend. It did not decide him, but the call did seem very clear to his ear. He had thought so, however, once before, and then when he had essayed to enter the ministry he had been stopped on the threshold, and now he would take counsel of no flattering appearances.

But the winds are blowing and filling the sails.

Toward the close of September he was surprised one day to hear that there was to be Presbyterian preaching on Sabbath (the 22d), at a

place about seven miles to the north of him. He had known of no brethren so near. But the rumor kept brooding in the country-side, and on the day appointed he started out in quest of the promised pleasure. He found the report true. A minister was there and a company of most hospitable brethren to greet him. The acquaintances formed that day were very important in their influence over his future career. The minister was the Rev. Samuel Thornton Scott, of Vincennes, a laborer of long experience in the frontier and a man of excellent spirit. The brethren were a group of families from Kentucky, the Dennisons from near Lexington, Kentucky, and the Buckanans from Gallatin County. But few of them were at that time in the Church, but among them he afterward labored and gathered many souls.

Thus God cheered his conscientious servant and opened the way for his timorous steps. Under it all we can discover that he was quickened. Instead of closing the Sabbath-school as before in the fall, he carried it on all winter. Another blended Sabbath-school and prayer-meeting he organized in the Danforth School-house the next spring. We find him also visiting the sick during the summer of 1823.

But no apparent progress was made. God was

pleased to give him no fruit of all his labors. He had certainly made full proof of each of these methods of doing good service yet adopted. He had wrought now four years in the Sabbath-school, and for nearly two in the monthly concert and other forms of social meetings; but, so far as he knew, not one soul had been converted nor one name added to the Church. He had used but "side efforts," and all his faithfulness could not make them fill the place of the one great means for promoting religion. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."* All other means, as highly as we may prize them and as diligently as we may employ them, will be found subsidiary to a "preached gospel." When "God's word distills as the dew" in the sanctuary, then every part of the divine service—the prayer-meeting, the Sabbath-school, the Bible-class — is full of refreshment, each sweetly supplementing the other, and all helping together toward the happy result. But, "how shall they hear without a preacher?" Mr. Bliss knew all this before, but after his experience he began to feel its solemn power as a personal argument for him to do what he could in the "gospe ministry" in the destitute field around him.

The winds have blown steadily, and in the

*1 Cor. i. 21.

midst of the gale we are permitted to see the prow of the bark turning at last toward the harbor.

August 3d, just one year from the death of the sainted May, at the Danforth School-house, surrounded by the teachers in the Sabbath-school, many of the scholars, and all of his brethren in the Lord, he stood up to begin his ministry. It is like this humble man in his brief record of this interesting event to exclaim, "Oh! my barrenness." But whatever his own feelings were the brethren were greatly cheered. They discerned in the modest, carefully meditated sermon, the promise of his future usefulness. "It was a *good* sermon," said a venerable elder thirty years afterward, with a subdued emphasis on the adjective "good." "What do you mean when you say it was good?" "It was plain and edifying."

August 3d, 1823, he assumed the duties of the ministry as a licentiate of the Hopkinton Association. Was he a pastor? Technically he was not, and yet in fact he was. He settled by the wish of the congregation in the charge of the Church and thus remained until his death.

From this auspicious day the harvest began. Two persons connected with the Church that afternoon, the first additions. These were Thomas Gould, Esq., and his wife, who had come into the

country in 1816 from Ohio. This gentleman was shortly after elected a ruling elder, and served the Church in that office until his death at a venerable age in 1854. From this time forth until the close of Mr. Bliss' ministry there was but one year when the Church did not receive from one to twenty-four additions. Such honor does God put upon the *preaching* of his word, and so vital is it in the promotion of his work of mercy in this world.

Thus, at last, at the ripe age of thirty-six years, this cautious man, pressed forward as we have seen by gracious motives within, and providences around him, entered the sacred office. But the reader must know that it was only hesitatingly and as an experiment. He was testing the call that seemed to appeal to him from every side, whither indeed it could be the call of God.

Having undertaken this work, it seems to have been his earnest purpose to make full proof of his capability for usefulness. The next Sabbath morning he preached again in the Danforth School-house, and not long after at Mr. Gould's residence, seven miles to the southeast, nestled among the magnificent forests of the Wabash River, and then later still at the dingy school-house near his home. So the Puritan wife was permitted at last to see a true successor of Ro-

maine and Flavel preaching Christ, and faith in his blood, in the rude "conventicle."

1824. At the opening of the next spring he visited the venerable "Father Scott," on the occasion of a communion season in his Church. This truly excellent man was still toiling on in his field with rare devotion and energy. He had come to Vincennes in 1803, when General Harrison was Governor of the Territory of Indiana. He had been reared in Kentucky, educated at Transylvania Academy, and studied Divinity with Dr. James Blythe. He was a faithful laborer, and in the course of a few years had gathered three congregations, to whom he preached until the end of his career.

This meeting was held in the bounds of the Indiana Church (which had been founded in 1802 by Samuel B. Robinson, of Kentucky), five miles north of Vincennes. Long before, Mr. Scott had erected a rude platform in the woods, and supplied a plentiful amount of rustic benches, and thither his fervent spirit had gathered the people for religious worship. Here in this sequestered, sylvan sanctuary, God had been pleased to show his faithful servant his glory in times of spiritual blessings, and the whole romantic scene was sacred. Mr. Scott was fond of these open-air meetings. He had been in this field

now for twenty years, and had cultivated this simple service from feeble beginnings to a state of very considerable popular interest. Mr. Bliss says that at the meeting in question the congregations sometimes numbered more than a thousand hearers. This is more surprising when we remember that the city of Vincennes was then but a trifling Catholic village, a French trading post. The throng must have gathered from a long distance around. Such fruit of confidence and affection had Father Scott's life produced.

No one can tell the good that has been accomplished in the long years by these open-air meetings The truth then preached to the great congregation was really sown far and wide through the land, errors were confuted, and multitudes received instruction in divine things that would not otherwise have been reached. These free, familiar meetings, in the silent summer woods, were the precious seed-time to the souls of the scattered adventurous frontiersmen.

The system of preaching in the open air, established by the Saviour himself and followed by His apostles, has fallen into sad neglect in modern times. Here and there a few of the most zealous of God's servants—such as some of the reformers on the Continent and Scotland, Wesley and Whitfield in England; Howell Harris, of

Wales—have borne witness to its expediency and efficacy by their fearless and cordial adoption of it. But these are rare and isolated cases The rule in the Presbyterian Church is more and more a settled departure from the primitive mode of missionary operation. The work of an Evangelist is falling out of use as a means of reaching the masses. Whereas, all this time there is one trait in the popular character that places the people within the reach of this means, who would otherwise neglect the gospel message, and that is their *love of eloquence!* It distinguishes the masses. On the frontiers it is especially conspicuous. People go great distances to hear new or favorite preachers. This feature should be considered and devoutly provided for by the friends of Jesus. In new countries many things are unfavorable to the preaching of the gospel; the thin settlements, the poor roads, the lack of religious ties, the free adventurous character of the pioneers; but these disadvantages are more than offset by their natural love of eloquence. A meeting to which any importance is attached, will attract the people, far and near, and if the preachers are worthy of the occasion, the impression upon the restless and undecided throng will be salutary and abiding. These open-air meetings wisely conducted, not as a holiday picnic

but a time of fasting, prayer, and most fervent evangelistic labors in destitute regions, were among the means adopted by the fathers of Presbyterianism in New Jersey, Western Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and throughout the South, and with the happiest results. "Field preaching" was the chief great agency used in that great revival of religion which saved England from Infidelity and Popery—the revival under Whitfield and the Wesleys. And to come down to the present generation, the revival in Ireland in 1859 was the direct result of this evangelistic system of labor. In 1851 the Presbyterian Synod of Belfast, moved by the religious destitution existing in the land, instituted the first organized effort of modern times (so far as we can learn), to carry the gospel to the masses who would not, or could not, enter the house of God, by preaching to them in their haunts in the open air. God blessed the work so abundantly that all the other Synods were induced to take it up. Year by year the number of ministers engaged in it increased, and the number of towns, villages and hamlets visited and the services held. This thorough system of "field preaching" went on with growing tokens of good, until, in 1859, God's Spirit crowned the effort with a "Pentecostal" blessing in "the great revival in Ireland," which extended over almost every part of the land.

It certainly is to be noticed with joy and gratitude how this thought of reaching the masses with the gospel is so rising among the Churches. None scarcely are satisfied now with the quiet routine of ordinances in the sanctuary; they must needs go out into the streets and lanes of the city, and the highways and hedges, and bring in the neglected and the outcast. Street preaching, field preaching, open-air meetings, are the growth of a new and fervent zeal for the salvation of the forgotten masses. The poor and the unfortunate and the fallen will not come into the—not to speak of magnificent temples where they are neither expected nor their presence desired—staid and orderly sanctuary, where all is silent, grave, wise, restrained. They are reminded too strongly of their misfortunes. The motive may not be right, but it operates, and has in all ages of the Church kept multitudes beyond the pale of mercy. Now the conviction isbeginning to arouse the Churches that we are verily our brother's keeper, and the office of the missionary and evangelist is beginning to assume its rightful importance in Christian work.

Father Scott had thus labored, not only as a pastor but as a missionary in all the region around, and to crown and supplement his other efforts he had held each year a protracted meet-

ing at a convenient place for the surrounding settlements. The "stand" referred to was built in the woods. These familiar services were continued during the life of this venerated veteran.

In the autumn (Sept. 18th) Mr. Scott repaid the visit and a communion season occurred of much interest. Eight persons were added to the Church on examination, and twelve children were baptized. It was the first Presbyterian communion meeting ever held in the country, and curiosity ran high. The concourse on Sabbath was very great and the service was held at a "New Light" camp ground one-half mile south of the present village of Friendsville.

It was said above that Mr. Bliss' pulpit labors were only an experiment in his own estimation, a test of his capacity for usefulness in the ministry. The result seemed to him so unsatisfactory that at this date he was quite undecided, if not positively inclined to lay down the work. We infer this from the fact that at this meeting he was solemnly ordained and set apart to the office of ruling elder in Wabash Church, to which he had been elected at its organization. In a letter to his father explaining his course he says: "I have so little time for reflection on account of the worldly labors required to support my family in this new country, and being compelled by the

law of custom to speak extemporaneously, I fear that I have been but of little use as a minister" So the grave and conscientious man halted as to his duty. His standard of ministerial character and qualification was very exalted, and his feelings were humble. His views of the solemnity of the sacred office, of its responsibilities, and of the piety and talent necessary to make a "workman needing not to be ashamed," all tended to increase his hesitancy. "Who is sufficient for these things," was his ever-recurring sigh.

Modesty is so rare and amiable a grace in character that it does seem but a sorry business to appear to decry it, but still it must be said that it may be a sad hindrance to the *truly* humble and conscientious, when not counterbalanced by some bolder trait, or by an overcoming faith. Like Moses and Jeremiah, Mr. Bliss was ready to plead with God his personal inadequacy for the work. Could he, so slow of speech, so slow of faith, so calm, so unheroic in temperament, could he expect any success in the ministry? Could *he* influence the bold and hardy pioneer? The question seemed to him to answer itself. Once he was ready to take on him the sacred office, but now, a self-acquaintance, born of mature experience, made him ready to tremble at his temerity.

Just while he was indulging this estimate of

himself, God was pleased to give him a discovery of his influence among his fellow-citizens.

The eighteen months that preceded the fall elections of 1824, was a period of the wildest political excitement throughout the State. The question submitted to the people by the legislature of 1823, was the calling of a convention to so alter the Constitution of the State as to admit African slavery. As has always been the case, the bitterest passions were evoked by the contest over this institution. Edwards County was full of the tumult of the furious struggle. Local questions too materially increased the heat of the conflict. Toward the close of the summer, one day, a company of gentlemen waited on this good man as he was toiling out in the sultry fields, with the astounding news that the opponents of the convention had fixed on him as their candidate for the State Legislature. They requested him to allow his name to be used. They found it necessary to remind him of the sacredness of the principles involved in this election, and to suggest to him that he was so widely and favorably known, that if *he* would but consent "to run," it was the almost universal impression that the anti-slavery party would succeed. Well, verily! was he to believe his ears when he heard honorable and intelligent men talking to him in this

strain? He expostulated with them as to their generous delusion respecting him. He knew the state of affairs so well that he was sure they were egregiously mistaken. But they were quite ready to put the soundness of their estimate of things to the test, if he would but give his consent. The result of the interview was that the deputation gained their point. A few weeks before the election, as was the custom in those days, Mr. Bliss' name was announced. This was the only part he took in the canvass. He remained at home, receiving many visitors to be sure, for the feeling in his favor was enthusiastic, but interesting himself in the peaceful duties of his farm and his ministry. By and by the day came, and he had to hear, almost with a pang of regret, that he was elected to the State Senate by a flattering majority. Alas! what now of all his dreams of the obscurity and seclusion that befitted his humble talents and qualifications? What if his opinions of the sphere of his duty must all be reviewed now from this new and bewildering standpoint?

You can not argue with modesty, but if the truly humble and conscientious discover that their humility has unwittingly beguiled them into inactivity, has kept the bark at anchor, rising and falling on the idle waves when it should

have been speeding on its voyage, then the rare, strange spell is broken.

That winter Mr. Bliss was in Vandalia, the capital of the State, until the 20th of January, when he returned again to his home, at the adjournment of the legislature. All doubt as to his duty was now gone. His whole air of indecision had vanished, and in its place was a firm, humble, peaceful consecration of himself to the work of the ministry. Having reached a satisfactory conclusion in his own mind, he "set his hand to the plow and never looked back." God had used the *last* argument that was needed, and the *preparation* was ended.

A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V.

A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST.

A. D. 1825 TO 1829.

IN April, after his return from the first session of the legislature, he crossed the Wabash River, on his way to Washington, Indiana, where the Presbytery of Salem, Synod of Kentucky, was to meet.* His elders, Danforth and Gould, were in the company. They spent the night on the way with Father Scott, just east of Vincennes, and the next day they rode on refreshed in spirit by the interview to the Presbytery. Mr. Bliss presented his credentials from the Hopkinton Association, and after the usual examination was received as a licentiate under their care, and the name of the Church changed to Wabash Presbyterian Church, and it was enrolled among the Churches of the Presbytery. How many prayers were now answered, and fervent hopes realized!

* "The Synod of Indiana" was constituted May 29, 1826.

Here he made the acquaintance of many noble and earnest workers. It was before the days of the *missionary societies*, unless we except a few feeble organizations in some of the Eastern States. The whole work of domestic missions was then but illy understood, and the soldier of Jesus, who was bold enough to brave the dangers of the West, had to go to warfare, well-nigh at his own charges. As was natural too, the godly men sent out from the East as "itinerants," to whom we of the Mississippi Valley owe so much, followed the trail of emigration from New England, and up to this time the mass of that emigration had crowded along the lake shores and up toward the North. In August, 1822, some ardent friends of Christ, in Southern Indiana, met at Livonia, the seat of the long pastoral and missionary labors of the excellent Wm. W. Martin. Ministers and laymen were in the fervent circle. They came to plead with God for the field where their lot was cast, and to take counsel together. The result of the interview was the formation of an association called the "Indiana Missionary Society." The design was to introduce missionaries and pastors into the young and growing State, organize Churches, and establish the institutions of religion. It accomplished much toward the attainment of each of these objects.

In 1826, when the American Home Missionary Society was organized, this became auxiliary to the national institution.

At this meeting of Presbytery the Rev. Alexander Williamson was also taken under their care as a licentiate. The "pleasure of the Lord was prospering in their hands."

Immediately on his reception he engaged with the "Indiana Missionary Society," to supply two of the vacancies of the Presbytery, one Sabbath each month, until the next stated meeting. They were both east of the Wabash River. One was Carlisle, forty miles distant from his home, and the other sixty, near Fort Harrison.* The Sabbaths not occupied thus, he spent in labors in his own congregation. His usual custom was to leave home on Friday afternoon in time to reach Mr. Scott's, where he would spend the evening. On Saturday morning he would push on to some Presbyterian family settled in the wilderness, and preach at night, and then on Sabbath morning ride on and meet the congregation he was to serve, and hold from one to three services during the day.

These journeys were made on horseback, for the roads were but bridle paths through the woods and prairies; sometimes he would strike

* Terre Haute.

the trail of a wagon track cut through the boundless forests that separated the scanty settlements. We will not pause now to see the toils, hazards, and adventures of this wilderness work for Christ, but leave it for a future page.

At the next stated meeting of Presbytery, which occurred at Vincennes, August the 4th, he was ordained to the full work of the ministry, as an Evangelist. The Rev. John M. Dickey preached the ordination sermon, and the Rev. Isaac Reed, his old classmate and fellow-graduate in Middlebury College in 1812, gave the charge to the Evangelist. How interesting must the event have been to these old friends? Just here their long divergent paths crossed in this world, like ships that sometimes meet on the boundless wastes of the sea, only to greet each other, and then stand away, each on its own course.

Mr. Reed was a restless, indefatigable missionary. He performed prodigies of labor as an "itinerant." He ended his career at Olney, Illinois, January 15, 1858. On the contrary, Mr. Bliss was a peaceful pastor all his days.

On returning home he laid off the field of his labors. Taking the Presbyterian families which had settled about equally distant from him, William Dennison, six miles north, Thomas Gould, Esq., six miles east, and Mr. Danforth, six miles

southwest, and his own community, as the providential centers for his missionary efforts, he prepared himself for his work.

Within the region covered by these appointments, he labored until the close of his life. How was he supported as a minister?

His family consisted at that time of four persons—himself, Mrs. Bliss, a son, Samuel Wood, three years old, and a daughter, Delia, an infant. Sometimes a girl was received into the household to assist Mrs. Bliss in her dairy business, and sometimes he took a lad from the congregation as a pupil. And then he kept open house, in the spirit of genuine hospitality, and entertained many guests.

The means of livelihood upon which he could depend were two.

1. His farm.

2. The contributions of the Church.

As to his farm, the soil was fertile, and produced abundantly. "All the face of the country here is as rich as the 'interva's' among your New England hills." But then the market was poor. The prices were so low that nothing that he raised would pay for its transportation, or "bring as much as it actually cost him." But thanks to their Yankee training there was one article that was an exception. Mrs. Bliss was a

famous *cheese maker*. Her manufacture brought, a ready sale and the highest price. The farm embraced but twenty-eight acres under actual cultivation, but the prairie all around was open and covered with rank luxuriant grass, and formed a natural pasture of the richest description, and just adapted to his wants. His cattle and sheep cost him little besides his personal oversight. This was his principal source of support. He kept twelve dairy cows, and Mrs. Bliss, with the aid of a "young girl, who helped about as much as she hindered," made this year 1,782 pounds of cheese, all of which was sold in Vincennes. "Betsy," Mr. Bliss wrote back fondly to his parents, "Betsy has almost sustained one missionary during the past year!"

Was that not a busy life? Think of this as superadded to the daily routine of a faithful wife, mother and friend! But alas! for the fair, earnest-hearted toiler, these exertions were exhausting, as we shall see. Love for Jesus, love for his cause, love for her household, wrought mightily on her heart, and she toiled on, weary and worn, but beguiled by the ardor of her feelings, far beyond her strength. If this were a solitary case we might pass it by with a sigh, but to know that this life is repeated in the household of almost every domestic missionary in this land,

clothes it with a sad and solemn interest. Indeed this wearing, wasting toil seems to be demanded by the spirit and genius of these last times of every Christian worker. Not many professors, alas! need any caution on this point, but the most precious, the grandest souls enlisted for Jesus do.

The truly pious in every age have been animated with "zeal for the Lord of hosts," but the hearts most sweetly attuned, the spirits that are winged with love and fervor, borne away by their holy enthusiasm, are in danger of *cutting short* their time of usefulness by over-exertion. Life has its laws that ought not to be ignored, for they are God the Creator's. Humanity is a deathless soul incarnated in a dying body, and when the soul with its powers of thought, and affection, and will, becomes instinct with the infinite truths and motives of Christianity, it breathes so high and holy an ardor as to be in danger of driving on the poor clod to which it is allied, with a violence that will soon wear out its frail energies. Who will say that McCheyne, and David Nelson, and Summerfield, and Larned, and Elizabeth Ann Judson—alas! how the list grows, of the bright and shining spirits consumed by their burning fervor—who will say that they did not forget too much the solemn

duty of *rest* for the worn-down powers of the body? As we contemplate such devoted lives, cut short in the morning of their brilliant course, the question presses the heart—Is this best? Is it most for God's glory for us to work, physically or intellectually, up to the measure of our strength, and then under the stress of ever so devout motives, to press on still, taxing farther the straining nerves, the weary brain, the palpitating heart, the aching muscle? If the tense and stinging bow-string snaps, will some one have to answer for heavenly laws violated? Not less love and labor in Jesus' service, but more repose and devotion, the "peace of God ruling the minds and heart," is what is needed in this frantic age.

But this consuming love for Jesus is so rare, and it comes so much nearer to the service befitting such a Savior, that the pious of all lands can not, and would not, withhold the poor meed of their admiration and applause. How glorious in the eyes of all the saints shine these lives of self-forgotten love! How contagious for good! Who would extinguish from the household of faith, the precious memory of Lady Huntingdon, Harriet Newell, Mary Lyons? And here in this lonely cabin in the frontiers, was enacted a life of strenuous toil, that was instinct with the same spirit.

In speaking of the farm, we must not overlook the farm-house and its surroun lings. Here everything was simple and economical to the last degree, and yet plenty reigned. But it was a plenty that their own forethought and industry produced. Mr. Bliss gave his personal attention to his stock. He took great interest in it. He records duly the increase among the flocks and herds. Everything was in its place, and well cared for, around his stables and sheep-cots. "Scarcely anything of his ever died," says one of the young men, who was for some time in his family. Poultry abounded. To the south of the door, and not many feet away, was a row of bee-hives, just within the orchard fence. The soothing hum of the quiet bee house completes the picture of peace and innocent plenty that this humble home presented.

When Mr. Bliss fully undertook the ministry, he adjusted his worldly labors so as to secure the most leisure for reading and meditation. He was exceedingly regular in his habits, and methodical, and "lived by rule." The day was given to his farming interests, and the evenings and mornings to study. His reflections during the day, when engaged in his daily work, would then be jotted down in brief outline. Saturday was generally a day of rest and preparation for the Sabbath.

So he lived, a thoughtful student-farmer, a sadly secularized pastor.

The Church, meanwhile, had increased from five to seventeen members. Among the number, the reader already knows, there were some men of unusual intelligence and judgment. After canvassing the matter among themselves, they met, in a congregational meeting, at the house of the faithful pastor, to determine respecting their duty toward him. As the result of their deliberations, $123.00 was subscribed toward his support.

This was his second means of living.

This paper, with the signatures, is still extant, brown with age, dingy and tattered with handling, but an interesting relic of the enlightened views, and the zeal of his co-laborers, in those early days.

From the time that Mr. Bliss received ordination, he took rank among the most prominent preachers of the Presbytery. He had unusual advantages. He was of mature age, being thirty-eight years old, a Senator in the Legislature of Illinois, with a mind cultivated by a liberal education, a large experience, and much contact with men. His address was manly and pleasing, his conversation was peculiarly engaging. To all this was added such evident piety and sim-

plicity of character, as endeared him to his brethren. He was manifestly quite unconscious of his talents and influence, "a very humble, godly man."* One would know at a glance, in coming in contact with him, that he was a Christian gentleman. But he was "a gentleman of the old school." There was a something about his manners that did not repress cheerfulness, but forbade all familiarity. No one thought of ever addressing him in the free and easy style of the frontiers. No one ever forgot the bearing of courtesy that his presence suggested, and, somehow, unconsciously enforced.

Having enlisted in the work of the ministry, he was very much engaged. His appointments at each of the four preaching places were a month apart. The preaching was, therefore, not to be the only agency relied on. Mr. Bliss sought to enlist the *people* in various plans for the general good.

In March, 1825, he moved in the establishment of the County Bible Society, writing out a constitution by which to organize. For years he held annual meetings, some place in the bounds of his congregation, to animate the friends of the Bible cause, lifted collections, transmitted funds, received boxes of books, and kept the attention

*Rev. S. R. Alexander, Vincennes, Indiana.

of the people alive to this great Protestant interest.

In 1830 the Society resolved to supply every destitute family in the county with a copy of the Sacred Scriptures. In this blessed work his zeal was illustrated. He went from house to house, over a large part of the territory, distributing them with his own hands. It may explain still farther what was said of the moral state of the field, to add, that, in this work there were more than one hundred families discovered, in this small and thinly-settled county, without a complete copy of the Scriptures.

That was the day for organizing every one that was willing to do Christian work, into voluntary societies, and Mr. Bliss was full of the charitable scheme. In this same spring of 1825, he began to agitate the organization of a County Sabbath-School Society. He succeeded so well in enlisting the friends of this noble cause in various parts of the country, and in all the Churches, that his benevolent plan went into operation during the summer. Up to this date there had been but two Sabbath-schools in the county — one in Wabash Church and one in Mount Carmel. By 1831 there were five more schools under the care of this Society, with about 350 pupils, and 750 volumes of the Sunday-School Union's publications in their libraries.

In the early days covered by this part of the narrative, the vice of intemperance abounded. It was one of the most serious barriers to the progress of religion and good morals. There were still-houses here and there over the country, and each of them was, of course, a center of idleness, profanity and vice. There hunters and adventurers of all kinds gathered to drink and tell wondrous tales, and the idle and the curious to hear them. Saturday was the great day of the week. Then these haunts presented a busy scene. Ardent spirits flowed freely. Jumping, wrestling, horse racing, gambling and fighting, were the business of the day.

But not only in these places, but everywhere, the use of intoxicating liquor prevailed. It belonged to the sacred rites of hospitality to set it before every guest. In harvest time it was brought forth prodigally. The custom prevailed for the men in each neighborhood to exchange work in cutting their scanty grain-fields—that is, they would all meet and "reap" the ripest wheat first, and then go on to the next, and so on, until all the harvesting in the neighborhood was finished. Thus the harvesting was transformed into a "merry-make," as far as its toils could be, a long holiday of jokes, and fun, and drinking. The reapers reaped up from one side

of the field, and bound their sheaves back, and then were expected to help themselves to the whisky and water that they always found waiting them in the grateful shade. At house-raisings, log-rollings, etc., it was also furnished bountifully, and the hilarious labors of the day were always followed by a roistering frolic, or a dance that held on through the livelong night. Thus all their social habits tended to foster the practice of drinking and its kindred vices.

After grieving over this state of things for some time, and finding the evil on the increase, in 1829 the pastor and session felt called upon to take their stand against it. During the progress of a communion season, the exercises of which were held in Mr. Bliss' *barn*, a temperance society was formed, on the total abstinence principle, and thirty names were enrolled, embracing all the members of Wabash Church, so far as known. Temperance principles, once introduced, were soon adopted among all religious people, and made their way irresistibly. In the course of a few years the general use of ardent spirits disappeared from the public gatherings, weddings, and even the holiday frolics.

So this good soldier of Jesus Christ toiled on, and laid hold of every agency that promised to assist in promoting the principles of truth and

righteousness. Slowly the Church won its way In 1830 the membership in the whole field of his labors amounted to twenty-nine.

But why did this "vineyard" grow fruitful so slowly? Several circumstances conspired. The members were very much scattered, and their moral power was sadly dissipated by this fact. And then the inhabitants were, for the most part, of that hardy and adventurous type who escape from the ties and restraints of established society in the older States, to seek freedom on the frontiers. "The religion they covet," says Mr. Bliss, "if religion they must have, is not such as requires regularity, strictness or system, or such as probes the heart, enlightens the mind, or closely confines the conscience." As this was the only type of religion that satisfied his serious convictions, or that he could, with a clear conscience, preach to others, of course the Church would make its way but slowly under his leadership. Sowing would go before reaping in such a field.

And then, lastly, the peculiar style of Mr. Bliss' preaching deserves notice. It was clear, slow, calm, grave and dignified. It was well calculated to edify the hearers, but not to arouse them. There was little or no passion, no heat, no declamation, almost nothing to attract the unthinking. He was utterly wanting in the

energy of feeling, the fervor and glow of mind that fuses down his auditory into one common sympathy with the orator, and moves all before it with the rush of its glorious enthusiasm. He could explain with the clearness of a demonstration, the truths he wished to present, and there was a deep and honest interest, and often a spiritual fervor and unction in his sermons, that was inexpressibly delightful to his pious hearers, but all was quiet. The multitude was not attracted by his ministry. Under his labors the growth of religious sentiment was slow, but it should be added, that it was abiding. What was gained was almost never lost.

This *good soldier*, his victories had never to be struggled for and won again!

Wilderness Work for Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

WILDERNESS WORK FOR CHRIST.

A. D. 1824, Etc.

WHAT *was, and is now, a missionary's life* in our home field? Like all other earnest lives, a scene of blended shadows and sunbeams. There is enough of exposure, toil, neglect, and hopeless effort in it to make it utterly intolerable to one whose heart is not aflame with the benevolence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But with this, it is a life of real comfort and pleasure. The shadiest, wildest places in the path are blithe with chastened joys.

The reader will see this best, by looking in on random days, in the history of two or three "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," or following them, as they go forth "enduring hardness."

In December, 1823, a young licentiate—Benjamin Franklin Spilman — came into the field over which the reader is to ramble in this chapter. This good man was the son of Benjamin and Nancy (Rice) Spilman, and was born in Gar-

rard County, Kentucky, August 17, 1796 His parents were from Virginia, and emigrated to Kentucky among the early pioneers.

A glimpse of his life will be appropriate before we hurry on in the narrative. He graduated at Jefferson College, Pennsylvania, in 1821, and studied theology with the Rev. Dr. G. Wilson, of Chillicothe Ohio. He was licensed by the Chillicothe Presbytery in 1823, and ordained and installed pastor of Sharon Church, Illinois, by the Muhlenburgh Presbytery in 1824. Here he labored, dividing his time among the counties bordering on the Ohio and Wabash rivers, for two years, when he became an itinerant missionary in Middle and Southern Illinois. In this work he labored for *seventeen years*. But at last his health began to give way, and the people o Shawneetown, where he had organized a Church in 1826, prevailed upon him to settle among them He was installed pastor of the Church in April, 1842 Two years afterward he removed to Chester, Illinois, but in 1851 he returned to Shawneetown and remained with his old congregation until his peaceful departure, in the midst of a blessed revival of religion, May 3, 1859.

He married, in 1826, Miss Ann Cannon, Cannonsburgh, Pennsylvania, who died in 1835. He married, in 1840, Miss Mary P. Potter, who, with two children, survives him.

Mr. Spilman was a hard-working missionary. For thirty-six years he labored faithfully for the spiritual welfare of his adopted State. Possessing a robust constitution, a warm heart, and a holy zeal in the cause of Christ, he was never idle, and seldom sick. His influence for good will long be felt in Southern Illinois.*

This worthy man met Mr. Bliss first in a sacramental meeting in Sharon Church, August 19, 1827. From that day forward the two became intimately associated in the arduous preparatory work that fell to their lot. Together they traversed a large part of what is now the Presbytery of Saline. They held communions in the infant Churches, and visited Presbyterian families settled here and there through the wilderness, and cheered them to undertake for the promotion of God's glory. For this work the rugged and stalwart Kentuckian, blunt and familiar in his manners, was far better qualified than our polished and quiet New Englander. But the two supplemented each other, and were everywhere welcomed. The cordial intimacy between them was very useful to themselves and the Churches.

Beyond the Wabash River dwelt all of Mr. Bliss' brethren of Salem Presbytery. During the five years that followed his ordination, he

* Wilson's Presbyterian Historical Almanac, 1860.

often crossed over and joined some of them in a missionary tour among the vacancies and destitutions of that field. Thus he became identified in spirit and measures for doing good with the saintly Scott and Martin, and their fellow-laborers.

Midway between these beloved brethren beyond the river and the Spilmans (Benjamin Franklin and younger brother, Thomas A., ordained October 13, 1828), who itinerated far and near, in the vast territory, to the south and west, the humble cabin, soothed by the whispering oaks, became a kind of sacred rendezvous. Father Scott, until his lamented death in 1827, and afterward Rev. Truman Perrin, Principal of the Presbyterian Seminary at Vincennes, frequently came down to join in communion-meetings and enjoy the society of their modest but gifted brother. And sometimes the genial Spilman, out on some long and lonely missionary tour, would drop in to lodge, and riot in the good cheer of this cosiest of all homes. The wide, rustic fireplace, with its flashing hospitable joys, lit up no happier scenes than when these friends thus met.

But these interesting occasions were, of course, at long intervals. The routine of missionary life went on unbroken.

No description will give so true an impression

of his every-day life as a few extracts from the old, faded diary. This meager journal was only designed as "a memorandum of the weather and worldly affairs." It is bald and brief, giving no expression to his feelings, as the hackneyed and threadbare events dragged themselves along. The reader must tax his own imagination to clothe the scenes with the colors and the air of life. We will open "the short and simple annals" at random.

May 17, 1826.—Weather very warm. Ground the tools and made some bar-posts.

May 18th.—Weather very warm. In the evening thunder. Went to Mt. Carmel. Sent $50.00 to American Bible Society for another box of Bibles, etc.

May 19th.—Making post and rail fence. A plowing up the orchard, which had been planted and replanted, the corn having all been eaten off by the army-worms, which almost cover the face of the ground.

May 21st.—Sabbath. Pleasant. Meeting in the school-house.

May 22d.—Morning cloudy. Furrowing ground in the orchard in the afternoon. Planting it the third time.

May 23d.—Some cloudy. Making bee-house and bee-hives. A—— plowing up my other corn fields, the worms having taken the corn.

May 24th.—Warm. Some thunder. Showers at a distance. At work in garden, and making bee-hives.

May 25th.—Afternoon raining. Attended the meeting of the "Sabbath-School Society" at the court-house.

Thus the current of his busy, quiet life flows on from page to page.

> "Something attempted, something done,
> Is witnessed by each setting sun."

We will turn now to his modest record of some missionary labors:

November 17, 1825.—Thursday cold and blustering. Some snow. Started early on a missionary tour. Rode twenty miles to Mr. Scott's. He then rode with me eleven miles to Mr. S.'s, where I preached in the evening.

November 18th.—Froze hard last night. Rode to Washington seven miles. Mr. Scott preached in the afternoon. Rode two miles and preached in the evening.

November 19th.—Weather more moderate. Returned to Washington and preached at midday. Rode out seven miles and preached in the evening, and baptized two children.

November 20th.—Weather pleasant. Attended the communion season in Washington. Mr. Scott preached. We administered the Lord's Supper, and three children were baptized.

November 2, 1827.—Cloudy. Started after breakfast, in company with Brother Perrin, to visit a Church on the West of the Little Wabash. Rode fifteen miles to Esquire M——'s, where we dined. Six miles farther we reached the river. The rest of the afternoon, and the evening until 9 o'clock, was spent traversing the bottoms, endeavoring to thread our way out to the prairie. The afternoon was cloudy, and the path separated into stray tracks as we proceeded, where the travelers before us had straggled around in the deep woods to escape quagmires As night set in, the sky was still obscured, and we had to wander on without anything to guide us in the desired direction. The wolves howled hideously around us. To crown all, Mr. P—— was taken sick, and after trying to go on for some time, with frequent stops, we finally unsaddled our horses and encamped for the night. Having obtained a little rest, we again pursued our course, and, by the direction of a kind Providence, we arrived at a safe habitation.

November 3d.—Cloudy. Rode two miles to the place of meeting, where we met Brothers B. F. and T. A. Spilman. I preached in the forenoon, Mr. Perrin in the afternoon, and I again in the evening.

November 4th.—Cloudy. A most interesting

communion season. Brother Spilman preached in the morning, and Brother Perrin in the evening.

November 5th.—Cloudy. Preached at 8 o'clock in the forenoon to a solemn audience. An affecting parting season in the afternoon. Returned within fifteen miles of home, etc.

Let us turn over the faded diary to a record of the old-time journeys to Presbytery and Synod, etc. The leisurely and sociable horseback trips, the tedium of the way through the vast, primeval woods that then covered Southern Indiana, beguiled by the company of long-separated brethren, will doubtless be quite a contrast with these times of the telegraph and express trains. Sometimes, however, there were dangers and exposures that took away much of the charm from the journey. For a glimpse of the hardships of this service his adventures in April, 1827, will serve as a specimen:

April 8, 1827.—Sabbath. Cloudy. Preached at Mr. Buchanan's. After meeting went to Vincennes in company with Mr. Crane, ruling elder.

April 9th.—Heavy rain last night and much thunder. Rode in the rain all the forenoon in company with Messrs. Scott and C——. Creeks high. Arrived at Mr. White's, near "Turman's Creek."

April 10th.—Pleasant. Rode to Terre Haute. Preached in the evening.

April 11th.—Rode to "Big Raccoon Creek."

April 12th.—Tremendous rain last night. High wind during the day. Spent the day searching for a passage across the creek in vain.

April 13th.—After much traveling we found a ford and crossed, and arrived at night at the place of meeting.

April 14th.—Failed of a meeting of Presbytery, a quorum not being present. Attended meeting preparatory to a communion.

April 15th.—The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered. Mr. Scott preached. After meeting rode a few miles toward home.

April 16th.—Pleasant. Swam our horses across the creek, while we crossed with our baggage in a canoe. Rode to Honey-Creek Prairie. Preached in the evening.

April 17th.—Pleasant. Rode to Turman's Creek. Preached in the evening at Mr. White's.

April 18th.—Rode to Mr. Scott's, and on the 19th returned home. Wabash very high, etc.

For a more cheerful picture we turn to the fall meeting of the Presbytery and Synod for the same year:

October 5th.—Forenoon picking cotton; afternoon attended meeting at Esquire Gould's. Mr. Spilman preached.

October 6th.—Meeting at Mr. Danforth's. Mr. Spilman preached at 11 o'clock, and also again in the evening at my house.

October 7th.—Attended a communion season at Mr. Danforth's. Present, Brothers Scott, Spilman and Perrin.

October 8th.—A rainy day. Attended the annual meeting of the Bible Society.

October 9th.—Some rain during the day. Started with Brother Spilman for Presbytery and Synod. Rode to Mr. Scott's.

October 10th.—Cloudy. Proceeded in company with Messrs. Scott, Perrin, Spilman and Gould for Bloomington, where the Presbytery is to meet. Rode thirty-five miles.

October 11th.—Rode about forty miles over a very hilly country.

October 12th.—Pleasant. Rode eight miles to Bloomington. The Presbytery constituted.

October 13th.—Spent the day in Presbyterial business.

October 14th.—Attended the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In the evening a missionary sermon by Mr. Spilman.

October 15th.—Presbytery met in the morning, finished the business, and adjourned. In the afternoon rode twenty-five miles.

October 16th.—Rode twenty-seven miles to Salem.

October 17th.—Attended the meeting of the "Indiana Missionary Association."

October 18th.—The Synod was "constituted," and then, after its adjournment, follows the account of the long trip homeward.

This proved to be the parting interview with one of their genial company. In December the veteran missionary, the holy man of God, the Rev. Samuel T. Scott, entered into his heavenly rest.

The next meeting of Synod was held at Vincennes, October 6, 1828. The dingy old "diary" says of it:

October 19, 1828.—Sabbath. Pleasant. The most interesting meeting I have ever witnessed in the Western country. Sixty-three persons came forward to connect themselves with the Church, etc.

How sweetly the words of Rev. xiv. 13, come to the soul as we read this statement: "Blessed are the the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." The influence of a righteous life survives the life itself, and continues to bear its fruits of holiness. Sometimes after the sun has set he succeeds in flushing the quiet clouds and mellow sky, and the evening air, with a splendor

that surpasses the brilliancy of his noontide strength. Even so a holy radiance follows a truly saintly life, and covers the scenes it blessed with the beams of its departing glory. "No one of God's children ever dieth unto himself."

It has been said that Mr. Bliss' means of living, while engaged in the work of the ministry, were his farm and the contributions of his congregation. In 1828 the American Home Missionary Society began to contribute something to keep him in this field. This aid was continued for three years, and then, at his own request, was withheld.

During this period it became his duty, as a missionary, to report his labors every quarter to the Rev. Absalom Peters, Corresponding Secretary of the Society. Some of these, copied carelessly on loose leaves, still survive. We will close this glimpse of his "wilderness work for Christ" with an extract from one of these "reports:"

"August 13, 1831.—During my last quarter I have been called from home more than usual, to attend to the interests of the Church in other parts of the State. * * * * * I have spent two Sabbaths in Coles County, one at a point eighty, and the other more than one hundred miles north of this. It is a fertile tract of

country on the head waters of the Embarrass and Little Wabash rivers. The settlements have been mostly made within three years, in or near points of timber that put out into arms of the 'Grand Prairie.' At the most distant congregation I organized a Church, consisting of seventeen members, with a prospect of soon doubling in members, by the immigration of Presbyterian families in the autumn * Ordained elders, and administered infant baptism. Found there, in a little log cabin, a theological student. He spends a part of his time cultivating a field of corn, to procure sustenance for himself and wife and two small children, and the other part in theological studies. Having gone through several parts of trial, before a Presbytery in Kentucky, he is in hopes of receiving license this fall or in the spring.†

"Next I attended a 'four-days' meeting' in a congregation about twenty-five or thirty miles south of that point just mentioned. Here was a Church of about twenty members, organized last autumn.‡ Administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, baptized one adult and fourteen children. Thirteen were received into the communion of the Church; several others are indulg-

* Oakland, Presbytery of Palestine.

† Samuel C. Ashmore.

‡ Pleasant Prairie.

ing a hope of pardoned sin, who will probably soon unite; and several are anxiously inquiring the way of salvation.

"The meetings on Saturday and Sabbath were holden in the open air, under a thick, shady grove, on the bank of a little clear stream of water, which issued from a spring in the edge of a prairie. What added peculiar interest to this meeting was the fact that it was held on the very ground which once was the favorite spot for encampment of the Kickapoo tribe of Indians, in their hunting excursions. The grove, which had long echoed the wild yell of the savage, now resounded with the voice of prayer and praise offered up to the only living and true God. Here, in a literal sense, was spread in the wilderness the table of the Lord. Here was a Christian assembly, listening with intensity of soul to the truths of the gospel, the unvarnished story of the unparalleled sufferings of the Son of God for the redemption of the immortal soul; here, we trust, children were consecrated to God by believing parents; Christians were invigorated and encouraged in their journey toward the heavenly Canaan; souls which had long been captives in the chains of Satan, emancipated and brought to enjoy the liberty and the privileges of the 'sons of God.' These are some of the luxuries of the

missionary in the wilderness. One such meeting is an ample compensation for years of travel, toil and privation.

"I assisted also in organizing a County Bible Society under favorable auspices. I think that the Bible cause received, indirectly, an impetus from the conduct of two public characters, who pretend to preach the gospel, who had previously spent considerable time and pains in the county publicly denouncing Bible Societies, Sabbath-Schools, and Missionary Societies, as creatures of the devil, etc. This, in a civilized community, of course produced a reaction, and excited the friends of these different causes to greater zeal."

Now we will turn to the tattered diary and follow the missionary to his home:

July 26, 1831—Tuesday. Started for home. Rode five miles to Muddy Point. Fifteen miles to the first cabin—all the way through the open prairie. Flies very numerous. Horse covered with bushes. Having waited until night, on account of flies, set off in company with a traveler. Twenty miles to the next cabin. Arrived about midnight. Got feed for horse. Slept a little while on the floor.

July 27th.—Rode fifteen miles to breakfast. Flies wonderfully plenty. At the risk of a horse's life to travel. In the evening arrived at home,

forty miles. Through the mercy of God found my family in usual health.

And as we part with him on the threshold of his home, who will not breathe the benediction, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Beautiful Lives.

CHAPTER VII.

BEAUTIFUL LIVES.

A. D. 1830, etc.

JUST at this period the work was strengthened by the introduction of some pious English families. Up to this time, among the many settlers that were taking up the vacant lands, there were some Presbyterians who had located for the most part in Barney's Prairie. The society in the vicinity of Mr. Bliss' had remained as described above. To the south of him, and only half a mile from the saintly home under the oaks, was a race-course, busy with its boisterous throng each Saturday and its deadly influences. We can readily understand with what pleasure he saw a thrifty, stanch, intelligent Englishman, of good property and enlarged views, come and settle near him.

The chain of providences that led to this circumstance was this:

In 1816 a wealthy merchant of Wellenborough,

England, became enamored with the project of purchasing lands in America, and sent over his son to select and buy. A providence directed him to the region covered by our story. He entered an immense tract, part of it for speculation and part of it for a gentleman's country-seat and demesne. After indulging the pleasing day-dream of his "estates in America" for a number of years, and making some discoveries of the nature of landed property in the frontiers, a division of it was finally made among the relatives he had induced to emigrate. This was Adam Corrie, Esq.

In 1829 a younger brother, in the Honiton lace trade, at St. Neots, in ——, being unsettled in his business by adverse providences, determined to emigrate. Immediately closing up his affairs, he embarked for America and reached Decker's Prairie by August. He came to settle and entered on the business contemplated with characteristic vigor. He purchased the farms of four of the old settlers, the patriarchs of a large circle of relatives, friends and retainers, who being thus dislodged moved off in a body further west.

Robert Corrie was a Scotchman by birth and training, and by temperament ardent, restless, and irrepressible. He was born on the old an-

cestral estates in the vale of the Solway, and fished and floated all his boyhood well-nigh on the bays and nooks of the neighboring ocean, and sighed for sea-salmon to the end of his days. He was educated at Dumfries. While there he enjoyed a privilege in which any Scotchman would have gloried. Robert Burns used to come over on Saturday frequently to breakfast with the principal, an old and genial friend. These were grand occasions for the boys, who never forgot the songs and the wondrous talk they heard as they all lingered and lingered around the table. The impression made by these scenes was never erased. The name of Robert Burns never failed to fire his imagination and memory, and set the eyes to glowing even in old age. When he came away from his native land, he brought a trifling tuft of grass from the Poet's grave, and treasured the frail and faded memento until it dropped little by little to dust. In his old age it was his custom to sit with "dear auld Robin's" poems on one side of his chair, and the Bible on the other, and to read out of each alternately; but before the end came even "Robin" was laid away.

At the time he settled, as above detailed, he was not a "communicating member," but he had a Scotchman's pride and love of the Presbyterian

Church. To him, it was the Church of his fathers, the Church of the martyrs, and fully possessed his heart. In these preferences he was by no means as meek as his brethren. Nothing irritated him so soon, or more hopelessly upset his equanimity, than to come in contact with the misrepresentations of the faith and order of the Church, that he found everywhere afloat around him. Whoever it might be that uttered one in his hearing, or wherever, the offender was sure to be set right on the spot or demolished with some sarcasm. His views of the energy and enterprise becoming a Christian partook of his nature.

Mrs. Sarah (Herbert) Corrie, his wife, was a woman of rare excellence. Born in Olney, the daughter of a Dissenter, she was converted under the preaching of Christopher Anderson. It was a noble epoch when she grew up to womanhood, and she was in the midst of the stir of awakening life. Newton and Scott, although gone then, had preached in Olney so long as to leave the contagion of their exalted piety. Cowper was living at Weston Underwood until she was thirteen years old. Wilberforce, the philanthropist, was in the midst of his career. Robert Hall and Andrew Fuller and Leigh Richmond were in their glorious prime. The missionary

spirit was awakening among the Churches as in the "years of ancient times." Edmund Burke and Pitt and Fox were in the British Parliament. The spirit of a new and better life was breathing in Church and State, arousing great thoughts and great men. Sarah Herbert was possessed of a mind to be touched and thrilled with the lofty inspiration of the time; so she grew up. When she reached America, with her husband, she was in the noontide of her life. Such was the wife and mother in the new household. Her mental capacity was equal to any duty that life might bring. Her comprehension of things was bold and satisfying, her views independent, her memory "clear as a brook in June," her resolution inflexible when once decided, her affections ardent, her disposition gentle and benevolent, her piety of a thoughtful and childlike spirit, fired with the mental glow and elevation of Anderson's and Robert Hall's and Fuller's eloquence. Her thirst for knowledge was insatiable. History, biography, books of travel, the English poets, the works of the elder divines—as Baxter, Flavel, Cecil, Bunyan, Newton, Scott, etc., the "modern essayists," missionary periodicals, weekly papers, one American (secular) and one British (religious), with their able expositions of all current questions, these, with her well-read Bible,

more precious than all—formed the sterling aliment on which her mind fed with intensest delight, and on which it daily grew in beauty, brilliancy, and wisdom.

From the time that these two had fairly established themselves their house became the scene of most agreeable resort. The cultivated, the thoughtful, the enterprising, the pious, in all the country around, found there an open door and genial company. The outset was plain and practical, as became an English home transplanted to these scenes, but the social entertainment was such as was not often to be met within a "farm-house" in any land. Mrs. Corrie had the happy art of calling up themes congenial to the company, as though spontaneously, around the fireside or the hospitable board. The conversation would be kept out of unpleasant eddies until the sparkling current began to flow, and then there would, somehow, such an air of intellectual exhilaration pervade the company; such practical and common-sense views of things be suggested, that all felt at ease and free to contribute to the interview. In the animated scene our impatient, restive Scotchman presided as the landlord in true English guise, and by his side was his gifted wife, with her deep, busy, bonnie eyes, intelligence and benignity speaking in her face, and the law of kindness on her lips.

Those spirited and racy days have not been forgotten. The picture survives in the memory of friends, who so often have,

"Formed the circle round the ingle wide."

Mr. Corrie sitting in his cozy corner, fidgety with the warmth of his feelings, blurting out some vehement joke, or telling, with moistened eyes, some tale of wrong, or want, or wrangling, with some neighbor, across the fireplace, on some rustic issue, while his faithful dog sits by on his haunches, watching his master's eye: Mrs. Corrie, meanwhile, wholly enlisted in the profitable entertainment of the company, busy talking or listening, watching each pause in the conversation to introduce, with an unobtrusive grace and tact, some higher and more thoughtful theme.

But to the family the sweetest time of all the day was the early evening before the candles were lit. The cares of the busy day being closed up, every living thing about the farm safely "housed and tended," all anxiety was duly dismissed, and the members of the household gathered in the family room. Perhaps the success or failures of the day would be discussed with many a wise proverb or pungent joke interspersed; or perhaps a simple story of an adventure of some of them in corn-field, or harvest, or fallows, or,

perchance, in hunting or fishing, it mattered not, it was made the occasion by the parents of suggesting grave and sober lessons wrung from experience. Anything free and real to introduce the evening. Gradually the conversation would rise. Anecdotes would be introduced, stories of the great and good, scraps of personal history, and by and by, very likely, some interesting and profitable question would suggest itself to their minds, and ere they were aware of it, the animated company would find their interest enlisted in it. Then love and wisdom reigned. All was made to conduce to truth, sobriety, good sense and virtue. How happily the hours would fly over them! In due time candles would be lit, and books and papers introduced; and later still, when the hour came for the family to separate, "the big ha' Bible" would be laid on the table, and all be reverently ended with prayer.

"From scenes like these Old Scotia's grandeur springs."

This fine, old-time household, sheltered by the gentle hand of Providence, remained unbroken clear down to 1864, when it was suddenly dissolved by the peaceful departure of the sainted parents. They "were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

This portrait of domestic life, upon which the reader has looked, in its main features was not unfrequent among the better class of English settlers, of the past generation, in Southeastern Illinois. Their long meals, spiced with more or less vigorous "table-talk," their summer twilight and winter evening gatherings of the family, at the close of each day, for the sole purpose of a familiar interview, formed a standing feature of their domestic life. The conversation in which they delighted sprung out of their experiences, their observations of life and men, the opinions derived from books and study; and then each landlord was quite likely to have some favorite hobby, on which he was accustomed to expatiate at large. All this, in their social habits, made their houses remarkable for intelligence and hospitality.

Is the art of conversation dying out? This question, often asked, has received different answers, according to the standard adopted. If by conversation is meant a superficial and romancing chattiness, a style that savors in its best expression more of gossip than anything better, and that is a display of the lighter qualities of the mind and spirits, and the chief end of which is pastime, then, certainly, it is rather improving than otherwise. But if it be conceived of as the

play of the nobler elements of judgment, taste and sensibility, pervaded by a delight in the good, and the true, and the beautiful, as fetching its finest inspirations from so lofty a source as this: the art by which a company discusses whatever theme rises to their attention, with the glow of social sympathy, the enlistment of thought and feeling, imagination, humor, all animated by the mental collision, and each one contributing his raciest reflections; this, that is equally removed from frivolous gossip on the one hand, and heated wrangling on the other; this interchange of intellectual convictions, in a broad and genial atmosphere of social and mental enjoyment, it is feared is disappearing from some households, where once it prevailed. Indeed it can not exist where there is not intelligence and a vigorous mental life; and it can not survive from one generation to another unless there is leisure, books, and the means of intellectual culture and a social stimulus, all of which are conditions that rarely obtain long in our new and unsettled society. But what a charm this feature of their habits lent to the homes of the early English settlers! In Mr. Corrie's household the members anticipated the evening interview with genuine interest. It was rarely that some neighbor was not in the fireside circle. If any old friend was

on the roads, within reach, at nightfall, he was sure to find his way to the open, hospitable door. The children sat by to hear the vigorous and entertaining talk, the burden of which was sure to be something improving. And so, better than by any other means—though other means were not lacking—they were educated.

Following them, in 1832, there came another family from England. They were very poor in this world's goods, but passing rich in faith and good works. Thomas Beesley, the husband and father, was a village blacksmith in Bedfordshire, and on reaching Decker's Prairie he bought a little patch of land, and set up a "smithy." They were members of the Baptist Church in England, of a pure, simple piety and love to all the saints, and well instructed in the Scriptures. They at once identified themselves with the cause of religion. They went with "joyful haste" into the prayer-meeting and the Sabbath-school.

At first afflictions befell them. There was sickness in the family, and losses of various kinds; and, to crown all, one day the "smithy" took fire and burned down, and all was to begin again. "They were cast down but not destroyed." Had not God said: "Trust in the Lord and do good, and thou shalt dwell in the land, and verily, thou shalt be fed?" Mr. Beesley was apt to de-

spond, but his saintly wife was sure that the "promises were yea in Christ Jesus, and in him Amen;" and so they cheered themselves and staid on the faithfulness of God. And they were not left to be ashamed of their confidence.

This devout and happy pair were separated in 1851 by the death of Mr. Beesley. Mrs. Beesley was graciously preserved to bless her family and the pious friends with the holy cheerfulness of her counsels and example until October, 1865.

Her saintly life was a lovely illustration of piety. As to temporal affairs, her experience was one of poverty and discipline for much of her days, but all had been so sanctified that there was no vestige of her trials left in her character, but a sweet resignation to a loved and precious Savior, and a cheerfulness that sprang from too deep a fountain of peace for the storms of this world to seriously disturb. Her purity of soul, humility, contentment, benevolence, her love for Jesus, and enjoyment of the comforts of his grace, spoke out of her gentle face. The gospel was indeed and in truth "good news" to her. She was slender and delicately formed, a lady in spirit and manners by nature, and a most precious child of grace. Often have her pious friends felt that if some one adequate to the task could have been found—the poet-hand, for

example, that depicted the character and life of Elizabeth Walbridge—to draw the spiritual portrait of this lovely saint, what a model of piety, what a legacy to the righteous in every land and age would be the life of GOOD ALICIA BEESLEY.

The next year, at midsummer (1833), Adam Shepard, Esq., came from New Hampshire and entered a tract of land adjoining Mr. Bliss' farm, and made his home, as it proved, for life. This gentleman was a scholar, too, a graduate of Middlebury College, in the class of 1826. His father, Col. Morrill Shepard, of Canterbury, New Hampshire, had bestowed on this son every advantage. His education began when he was but twelve years old, at the Pemberton Academy. After graduating he spent one year in teaching in the valley of Virginia, and then returned to New England, where he commenced the study of law with Ezekiel Webster. After the untimely death of that talented man (who fell dead while pleading an important case at Concord, New Hampshire), he pursued his studies with the Hon. Mr. Nesmith, of Franklin, New Hampshire.

Such was the man who reached Mr. Bliss, with his young wife, late in the afternoon of July 6th, 1833. Mr. and Mrs. Bliss welcomed them cordially. They were united by various ties. Mr.

Shepard had been prepared for college by the venerable Dr. Wood, and was a member of his family at the very time that Mr. Bliss, like

"The young Lochinvar came out of the West,"

as we have told before, seeking his bride. Mrs. Shepard was a native of Boscaween, trained under Dr. Wood's pastoral care all the early part of her life, hopefully converted in her girlhood under his ministry. She had thus grown up in the bosom of a most devout community. She and Mrs. Bliss had been companions in other days, and were familiar with the same friends and associates.

So help was sent from far, and the social transformation went on.

An Old-Time Meeting of Presbytery.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OLD-TIME MEETING OF PRESBYTERY.

October 9, 1830.

IN this part of the narrative the order of events has not been rigidly adhered to. The design has been to so group them together as to show the growth of Mr. Bliss' usefulness, and the progress of religion in the field committed to him. And so a notable event in the old-time memories of the country-side has been unwittingly passed over by the reader—the meeting of the Center Presbytery, Synod of Indiana, at Mr. Bliss' residence, October 9th, 1830.

The long-gone scene lives still in the memory of the few, the very few, survivors who once took part in it; and the authentic account of its transactions, doubtless, exists, sleeping somewhere, mute and forgotten, in the old "records." But there was one feature of its business that gives that session of Presbytery an historical importance. We shall learn, too, much that may interest the curious and the devout of those times

and men. Let us endeavor, therefore, to reproduce the scene as it once appeared.

The "Center Presbytery of Illinois" was constituted by the Synod of Indiana in 1829. It embraced the State. The second "fall meeting" was held on Decker's Prairie. "The brethren came from fifty to three hundred miles to attend it." Among them were men of conspicuous talent and energy. Rev. John Millot Ellis, the founder of Illinois College, Jacksonville, Illinois; Rev. J. M. Sturtevant, D. D., its honored President; Rev. Theron Baldwin, "Secretary of the Society for Promoting Collegiate and Theological Education at the West;" and other honored names are found on the roll.

Our hard-wrought missionary, B. F. Spilman, was chosen Moderator, and John McDonald, A. M., long pastor of Pleasant Prairie, was the Temporary Clerk. There were fourteen ministers present.

The meeting was held at Mr. Bliss' residence, as stated above. During the summer he had built a new house. The family occupied the L, and the main part of the building was left without partitions, and formed an open hall eighteen by thirty-six feet, that was filled with temporary seats for this occasion. Here the Presbytery held its sessions. Here the brethren preached

the word, and the people pressed to hear. Curiosity was excited by the appearance of so many strangers. And then everything was favorable. It was lovely, ripe October, the heat of summer assuaged, the weather superb. To the farmers it was a time of leisure—the long rural holiday that comes after wheat-sowing. And so, of course, the meetings were crowded day and night. The venerable Mr. Lippincott says: "Our services were not without the divine presence. At times the silence and solemnity were awful." We may safely infer from this remark that the exercises were often very interesting, for the congregations were motley throngs. Wabash Church numbered but twenty-nine, counting every member within a radius of ten miles of the pastor's house. Professing Christians of every name must have made up but a small part of the crowds that filled the house and all the grounds around. The bold and reckless character of the mass of them may be inferred from what has been said of the general state of society. So that when we hear that the "silence and solemnity of the meetings were sometimes awful," we conclude at once that God gave his blessed truth an able advocacy and a noble hearing.

But the gem had a wild and rustic setting. Around them, as they looked out of the open

windows, was nothing in view but the wide prairie, covered with its enormous autumn growth of grass and weeds, gay now with brilliant, coarse flowers; the natural pasture for herds of cattle and deer, the lurking-place for hares, foxes, wolves, wildcats, panthers, catamounts and bears. This last-named animal was not numerous, but was sometimes met with on the small watercourses and in unfrequented places, and the knowledge of their existence gave a spice of danger to an evening stroll along any of the lonely paths that led through the high grass to the neighboring cabins. Their rest at night was disturbed by the cries of birds and prowling beasts of prey, and in the morning they were roused up betimes by the piping quails, or the wild call of the turkeys and prairie fowls, and the howling wolves in the rank wilderness around them.

But they had before them, too, an emblem of the changes and progress of the country that were to be expected in the teeming future. Under the "aged oaks" yet stood the lowly, primitive cabin, with the "lean-to" that Mr. Bliss and the sainted May had built for themselves in 1818. This, whitewashed as of old, and fitted up by one of the neatest and most practical housekeepers in the world, was the cozy

cubiculum where Mr. Bliss lodged all of his guests.

But just a few feet to the west, where the rustling leaves of the oaks threw their shadows on the porch, was the "*new house*," a commodious and substantial frame. The lesson taught by this scene was one that the Presbytery urgently felt. Their present work was one of preparation. If all now was strong, rough, untamed, yet a little while to come and the State would be filled with population, enterprise and wealth. They were sitting at the springs of future greatness, and needed wisdom, grace and zeal for their work.

The historical interest of this meeting of Presbytery centers around the far-sighted measures then taken to promote the Sabbath-school cause in their field. *Sabbath-School Missions in the State of Illinois, their efficiency for good, their necessity;* this was the theme around which all the life of the meeting clustered.

Much had been attempted under the auspices of the "American Sunday-School Union," but a thorough and systematic endeavor to fill the rising State with Sabbath-schools and Sabbath-school libraries and influences, *originated* in this meeting of the Center Presbytery of Illinois. There was present, to promote this, a young and

gifted minister, in his fervent prime, the Rev. Artemas Bullard. The interesting providence by which this noble spirit was brought among them, is thus narrated by the Rev. Thomas Lippincott himself an actor in the scene. It is valuable as an illustration of that glorious Providence that rules in all things, however trivial they may seem, and makes them to "work together for good to them that love God."

"Our course," says he, "from Vandalia through the 'Grand Prairie,' led us to cross the Vincennes and St. Louis road, at Maysville, then little, if anything, more than a tavern. We, *i. e.*, nearly all the Presbytery from the west side of the State, arrived at the inn just at nightfall, and proceeded to secure lodgings. Whilst attending to our horses it was rumored that a minister from Massachusetts on his way to the w st part of the State, had arrived just before us, and was then in the house. I believe something was said with regard to his mission. 'Let us take him with us,' was the spontaneous and universal thought. An interview and explanation resulted in his accompanying us the next day, and then in a cordial understanding that his 'Sunday-School Mission' was recognized as sent of God. We were delighted with him, and, I believe, the pleasure was mutual."

The purpose of Mr. Bullard's mission is stated with so much simplicity by Mr. Bliss in his "Report to the Home Missionary Board," prepared after the rising of Presbytery, that we can do no better than quote from it. We readily see that the presence of this gifted man had "filled their mouths with laughter, and their tongues with singing."

"Our sorrow and grief," says Mr. Bliss, referring to their previous discouragement respecting the training of the youth of the country, "were suddenly turned into joy, hope and high expectation by propositions made by Mr. Bullard, 'Corresponding Secretary of the Massachusetts Sabbath-School Union,' at our recent meeting of Presbytery. That 'State Union' proposes to take Illinois under its fostering care, as it respects Sabbath-school operations, appropriate funds to establish a general 'depository' of Sabbath-school books for the supply of the State, constantly employ a traveling agent or agents to carry the Sabbath school system into effect, as far as practicable. What is particularly needed in this country, they propose to enter largely into the 'emigration scheme.' Mr. Bullard is now engaged traversing the State, to ascertain the existing wants as to Sabbath-school teachers. The object is when those wants are defi-

nitely ascertained, to search out and encourage pious lay members of Churches, in the older States (male and female), to emigrate to this country and settle down, in their respective occupations, with special reference to Sabbath-school, and other benevolent operations."

Mr. Bullard laid all this far-seeing scheme open before the Presbytery. He urged them, ministers and laymen, to arouse and bestir themselves. "How did the presence, the addresses, the conversation of that brother cheer us," says Mr. Lippincott; "we thanked God and took courage." The definite plan, the tangible help, the hopeful spirit of the enthusiastic missionary, were like an inspiration in their counsels. The brethren enlisted anew in the Sabbath-school work. Agents were sent forth, who traversed the State, preaching and lecturing on the godly training of the young, and organizing Sabbath-schools. A mighty impetus was given to this cause, so vital to the well-being of Church and State. "The East," says one, "has more than fulfilled all her promises to the Christian workers in Illinois."*

* Mr. Bullard settled afterward at St. Louis, as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of that city. He was eminent as a preacher and scholar, and was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity. While yet in the prime of his strength, honors and usefulness, he was cut down in the

But is it not a curious fact that this arousing call to diligence, in this most potent of all missions, should have sounded out over the State from so quiet a work and amidst such humble surroundings? How broad and bright a stream has risen from this lowly fountain! The impetuous current has had many a check, and sometimes has almost ceased to flow, but in this generation we are permitted to behold it rising with a grander tide than ever before. To the devout men—ministers and laymen—who now see the great State filled with Evangelical Churches, with their Schools, their Bible, Tract, Temperance and Missionary Agencies, every means for maintaining and promoting our Protestant religion, this humble name—Wabash Church—should wear a hallowed charm. There the words of cheer were spoken, the help proffered, the councils formed, and the decisive steps taken, that, in the long years, have led to it all. This is the cool, sequestered source from which arose, amidst the prayers and praises of devout men,

terrible disaster at the opening of the Pacific Railroad. An excursion train went out in honor of the occasion, freighted with a holiday troup of the most enterprising citizens, many of them with their families. In crossing the Gasconade bridge the structure gave way, and the cars were hurled, one after another, with crushing ruin, into the river. Among the killed was this gifted man of God.

in October, 1830, this "stream that is making glad the City of God."*

Before leaving this part of the narrative it will be well for us to advert to the interest and zeal that was felt at this period by the Eastern Churches in the promotion of religion in the West.

Dr. B. B. Wisner says that a marked impulse and direction were given to this interest—nay, that the "American Home Missionary Society" arose out of the holy enthusiasm awakened at the ordination of one of these very men, the Rev. John Millot Ellis.

This beloved disciple, while a student at Andover, in 1825, was much exercised in mind as to what part of the field, home or foreign, he should devote himself. "Now," he writes to his father, "the question is, how and where can I spend the short period of my life most for the good of the Church, most for the glory of Him who redeemed

* The names of the members of Presbytery present were Revs. B. F. Spilman, Shawneetown; John M. Ellis, Julian M. Sturtevant, Theron Baldwin, all of Jacksonville; Solomon Hardy, Greenville; John Mathews, Kaskaskia; Thomas A. Spilman, Hillsboro; John Brick, near Jacksonville; Thomas Lippincott, Edwardsville; John Herrick, Carrollton; Stephen Bliss, Centerville; John McDonald, Benoni Y. Messenger, Cyrus L. Watson. Rev. Artemas Bullard, corresponding member.

us to God by his blood? Our Western country, with a population of three millions, and increasing so fast as to double it four years, is very destitute of established institutions of the gospel; and yet it will, in a very few years, have the governing voice in our national counsels; and then what will become of our happy country—this heritage left to us by our pious ancestry, and which piety alone can preserve? * * * But increase the *moral power of America* and we shall do much for effecting the conversion of the heathen. I am persuaded that I have the prospect of contributing to the success of the gospel in India more effectually by laboring in this country, than by going there in person; and this, partly in view of my own situation, and partly in view of the importance of increasing America's moral power, in raising up friends to missions for the conversion of the world."

This was no common spirit that could thus survey the world and stand ready to cast his life wherever the Lord should indicate. When the question was settled he hastened to set about his work. The next day after his graduation at Andover he was ordained by a "council" in the "Old South Church," Boston. Dr. Wisner says: "This ordination, taking place the next day after the anniversary at Andover, was attended by

persons interested in the prosperity of Zion from various parts of the country. Several of these persons from Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and South Carolina, met providentially at my house the next day and had their attention called to the desirableness and expediency of forming a "National Domestic Missionary Society." After discussion, it was their unanimous opinion that the formation of such a Society was desirable and practicable. And so a meeting was resolved on, to be held in Boston, June, 1826, to advise respecting it, and in the May following the "American Home Missionary Society" was instituted in the Brick Church, New York.

From this time forward the home missionary spirit fostered by the Society rapidly developed in the Eastern and Middle States. Mr. Ellis entered Illinois in the fall of 1825. There he found but three Presbyterian ministers: B. F. Spilman, John Brick and Mr. Bliss. His fervent soul was stirred as he saw the open door for present usefulness, and the boundless prospects of the future, and the supineness of the Churches. He breathed a holy ardor in his work. The story of his incessant, joyful, fruitful labors, and his glowing appeals published in the Society's public journals, tended mightily to arouse the attention and sympathy of pious people and direct their gaze to the

wondrous West. As intelligence concerning the field increased, the cordial interest of the Churches increased.

Still another motive that was influencing extensively in the East was a true Christian patriotism. This is hinted at in Ellis' letter to his father. "The western country, now destitute of the established institutions of the gospel, would soon have the governing voice in the national councils, and then what would become of the heritage of liberty left us by our pious ancestry, and *that piety alone could preserve?*" This sentiment began to animate society all through New England. It was dwelt on in the religious literature of the times; "Christianity is essential to our political safety." The interest this would give to the work of evangelizing the West, in its nascent youth, can be readily perceived. It enlisted statesmen and patriots of every class as it gained currency. For if there was one lesson that the Puritans had learned in generations of bloody struggles for human rights, it was that there can be no *constitutional liberty* preserved, where the religion of Jesus is not, and a Protestant civilization. This must become Emmanuel's land, this great Republic, if it were to remain free.

Quickened by these motives they undertook to

plant the institutions of religion all through the growing West. Their missionaries, many of them men of truly Apostolical spirit, did wondrous service for God, in establishing Churches throughout Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri, promoting the Bible, Sabbath-school, and Temperance causes, and in starting every good influence among the communities they reached.

Standing in the midst of this gallant band of laborers now organized as the Center Presbytery of Illinois, and gathered at Mr. Bliss', we can look out over their vast field, and see what "God had wrought." The Presbyterian Churches in Illinois were on the line of the Wabash River on the east, and the Mississippi on the west, and were separated by the vast prairies in the middle of the State. They were at first but slightly acquainted with each other, and were under the care of different Presbyteries. Those in the west were included in the Presbytery of Missouri, which was constituted December 18, 1817. The First Church in that region was the "Shoal Creek," organized March 10, 1819.

In the valley of the Wabash the work began earlier. In 1810 or 1811 the Rev. James McGready, of the Muhlenburg Presbytery, Kentucky, made missionary tours into Southern Indiana, and having penetrated into Illinois as

far as White County, to a settlement of emigrants from the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky, he organized there the "Sharon Church" in 1816. This is the oldest Presbyterian, and so far as known the oldest Protestant, Church in the State.

Golconda was organized in 1819. These all belonged to the Muhlenburg Presbytery, Synod of Kentucky, until 1827, when the Ohio River was made the boundary between that Synod and the newly constituted Synod of Indiana.

In 1823, by order of the Synod of Kentucky, all the Churches in Indiana, north of a line drawn due west from the mouth of the Kentucky River, were constituted into Salem Presbytery.

In 1824 the Churches in Illinois, north of a line drawn due West from the mouth of White River, were incorporated into that Presbytery. This was the first ecclesiastical connection that these Missionary Churches had ever enjoyed, viz: Wabash, and Paris, and Newhope, in Edgar County.

In 1825 the Salem Presbytery was divided, and Wabash Presbytery was constituted in the western part and Madison in the eastern. Of course Mr. Bliss by this became a member of Wabash Presbytery.

May 29, 1826, the General Assembly constituted the Presbyteries of Salem, Wabash, Madison and Missouri into the "Synod of Indiana."

The Presbytery of Missouri, here mentioned, embraced all of Missouri, and almost all of Illinois, as we have seen. In 1825 there were, besides those in the Wabash Valley, eight or ten Churches in the State, but not one resident Presbyterian minister. All the noble men who had organized them, and supplied them up to this date, had been sent out chiefly by the "Massachusetts" and "Connecticut Missionary Societies," as itinerants. But just at this period, 1825, they so changed their policy, that afterward the missionaries were to be "planted down with the Churches." Under this plan so many ministers settled in the State, that in 1828 the Synod of Indiana erected the new "Center Presbytery of Illinois," embracing the whole State.

The last meeting of this court the reader has looked upon. By the next year, 1831, the Presbytery, having increased by new arrivals to twenty, was divided into three: "Illinois," "Kaskaskia," "Sangamon," and these, together with "Missouri Presbytery," were constituted into the "Synod of Illinois."

This old-time meeting of Presbytery, where

every minister almost in the State was gathered,* has formed a quiet *landing-place* in the narrative, on which we could stand and "look before and after," and see the general flow of events in those times.

But the fruitful interview soon closed, and the company separated. How keenly our honored pastor must have felt, now with new force, that the "harvest truly was plenteous, and the laborers were few! His nearest neighbor in the ministry was B. F. Spilman, sixty miles away, and all the rest were from one hundred and fifty to three hundred.

But God was sending help. There was a young licentiate itinerating at this time within the regions to the south and west, who for some reason was not present at Presbytery, but who, like Stephen, was "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." To him the reader must now be introduced.

*The only ministers known to have been absent from this meeting of Presbytery, who were then in the State, were the Rev. J. G. Bergen, of Springfield, and Isaac Bennet, Licentiate.

Rev. Isaac Bennet, A. M.

CHAPTER IX.

REV. ISAAC BENNET, A. M.—A PREFATORY SKETCH.

A. D. 1829—1856.

ONE freezing night in March, 1831, a licentiate, the Rev. Isaac Bennet, called at Mr. Bliss' and lodged. As this was a notable event in Mr. Bliss' life, we will now devote a considerable space to this interesting guest.

Mr. Bennet was a native of Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

He graduated at Jefferson College, in 1827, with the highest honors of his class. He was a member of the first class in the Western Theological Seminary, and was licensed by the Addison Association, at Monkton, Vermont, June 4, 1829. Just at this point in his history, God interposed, we know not with what motive, to turn his heart to the West. August 3, 1829, he was commissioned by the "Assembly's Board of Domestic Missions," to the Churches of Carmi and Sharon, in White County, Illinois. Here he labored for

about six months, and then dissatisfied, for some reason, with the field, he started out on a missionary tour toward the West and Northwest. "The gospel for the destitute," seems even then to have been as a fire in his bones. In "the regions beyond" we lose sight of him, until in 1830, when he appears, by the records of the Pleasant Prairie Church, in Coles County, to have visited them and preached with great acceptance. In August (31), 1830, that Church was organized by Rev. B. F. Spilman. Mr. Bennet cast in his lot with the good people and settled, that is, after his style. What this was will be duly explained. It was on a missionary excursion from this place that "he lighted upon" Mr. Bliss' "and tarried there all night, because the sun was set." Mr. Bennet told his story, and the hearts of the two good men were "knit together" at once. Long and fervently had the lonely pastor prayed for a fellow-helper in his field, and now the Lord had sent this brother, in his early manhood, "mighty in the Scriptures," bold, honest, fervent, and "full of the spirit of wisdom." He felt all this, and was cheered as he looked on his guest. Mr. Bennet tarried the next day and the next, the attachment becoming more cordial between them. Indeed from this time forth they were united as father and son "in the gospel."

For years, the two went abroad in extended evangelistic labors, visiting the Churches, holding communion-meetings, comforting and edifying the saints in love. The Lord blessed the efforts in many cases with signal marks of his favor. The fallow ground had long been broken and the seed of truth sown in faith, and all seemed ready for a day of ingathering. And these men were well fitted to co-operate in these labors. One had qualities that exactly supplemented the other. They were as Paul and Barnabas among the Apostles. Father Bliss was the "good man," ready to comfort believers, always peaceful, steadfast, affable. Mr. Bennet was "ready to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," his soul brimming with ardor, his mind logical, deep, and full, and glowing with a steady flame of unquenchable love to God and his cause. But, unlike Mr. Bliss, he could not, at least at first, be said to be socially agreeable. There was too much solemnity and sad earnestness about him. What if pleasantries would tend to disturb his own sense of eternal things and to dissipate it in the minds of others. He could not satisfactorily draw the line between cheerfulness and levity, and so he shunned them both. Acts vi. 4 literally described him. "He gave himself continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

Solemn, grave, almost severe, he would not suffer himself, for many years, to be drawn into a conversation except upon religious subjects. And so, as with all really earnest men, his influence was positive. "Lewd fellows of the baser sort" abhorred him, the sinner in his sins dreaded him, but the penitent looked to him for counsel, and the truly godly delighted to see him come to their doors. The general feeling toward him is illustrated by the confession of a very devout man and long a ruling elder. "I would have gone a half mile around, rather than have met him in a lane, or been alone with him in a room; but one morning under heavy conviction of sin, I went out to the well where he washing himself, knowing that he would speak to me about my soul. His counsels just met my case. O, how I loved him as he talked to me." "How awful goodness is," some one says, but when we have a disposition to love it, nothing is so lovely. Such did the young licentiate prove to be.

In the spring of 1831, he "pitched his moving tent" with the congregation of Pleasant Prairie. "As to his settling in this place," says a venerable ruling elder, "he never did truly *settle* here. He was too much of a missionary for that."* He

*Zeno Campbell, Esq. Mr. Bennet boarded with this gentleman during the two years that he had charge of the "Pleasant Prairie Church."

was unmarried, and in consequence of the extreme simplicity of his character and habits, quite free from earthly cares. Of an earnest and self-sacrificing spirit, his only business seemed to be to "please the Lord in all things." His zeal knew no bounds. He built him a modest study of poles in the shade of a grove, within hail of the house where he boarded. Here he pondered, praised and prayed. From this rustic seclusion he would issue to do wonderful service for his Lord. Here he retired to recruit his worn-down energies. Thus two years were spent. Over all the territory, now covered by the Presbytery of Palestine, he ran on the heavenly errand.

April 13, 1833, at the spring meeting of the Presbytery of Kaskaskia, held in the village of Palestine, Illinois, he was ordained to the full work of the ministry, as an Evangelist. This event was esteemed to be one of public interest. It made a great stir among the Churches, and indeed among religious people generally, as far as Mr. Bennet was known. He was the greatest preacher, taken as a preacher, that had ever appeared in this part of the country, and the impression he had made was worthy of his talents. In his quiet diary, Mr. Bliss says of that long-gone event.

"April 13—Saturday, cool and frosty; Presby-

tery proceeded to ordain Mr. Bennet; exercises solemn and interesting; crowded assembly."

It is like this modest man, to never hint the fact that he was the Moderator of Presbytery, and so, of course, had a conspicuous part in the solemnities. Rev. B. F. Spilman preached the sermon, and Wm. K. Stewart gave the charge.

At this time he became acquainted with one of Mr. Bliss' elders, who lived in that wing of the Church which was in Lawrence County. From him he received a cordial invitation to visit that region, and shortly after he did so, and was pleased with the appearance of the country and the people, and thought he perceived "a wide and effectual door" of usefulness set open before him.

In a few months he entered the field permanently.

In 1835 thirty members of Wabash Church were dismissed and regularly constituted as Pisgah Presbyterian Church, and he was engaged to supply them. Here, for the following sixteen years he labored, doing prodigies of ministerial service. July 6, 1836, he was married to Miss Caroline Buckanan—a lovely, modest, discreet girl—"a lamb out of the fold." Mr. Bliss performed the ceremony and then went over with the wedding party to the new parsonage that Mr. Bennet had built, much of it with his own hands,

and there assisted in dedicating it solemnly to God, "with the word and prayer."

In 1851 he removed to Canton, and was stated supply of that Church at the time of his decease, June 16, 1856.

As to anything further concerning the life and character of this eminent servant of God, the reader will be gratified by the sketches from two gentlemen who were personally acquainted with him, that will be found on subsequent pages.

Two or three features of interest, which are not mentioned by these writers, will close this prefatory sketch.

In appearance, Mr. Bennet was tall and slender, but muscular. He could endure a vast amount of fatigue. Nature had not honored him with the facile and winning face that becomes the real orator that he was. The aspect of his features was contemplative, and when lit up with the inspiration of some noble theme, they wore a benignant glow, but ordinarily they were somber, almost harsh. His complexion was dark—unusually so for a European. Indeed, the Rev. John McDonald, who succeeded him in the Pleasant Prairie Church, says that he told that he was of Turkish extraction. We happened to know that in some branch of his lineage he was also French. His eyebrows were black and

heavy, and quite met over his nose. This gave him a peculiarly severe aspect when "moved with indignation." When there were disorders in the congregation that prevented the people from hearing, or levity, or improprieties of any kind, he knew how to *frown* a black and awful rebuke that withered the offender.

But what he will longest be remembered for by some was his excessive sensitiveness to the crying of infants. In those good old times it was the custom for mothers to take their children to meeting. All was well if they kept still, but if they grew restive in the smothering atmosphere of the dense throng, there was a sad state of affairs followed. Whenever the glowing preacher might be in his flight, the first shrill note of the blatant urchin would utterly disconcert him, and bring him down blank and confused. Nothing further could be done until the nuisance was abated. Such was the logical structure of his mind, that his thoughts followed each other in a close connection, each springing out of those preceding it. If the current were broken, he was hopelessly embarrassed. Hence, his sensitiveness. When there was a fretting child, or whispering, or indecorum in the congregation, it was his custom to pause and administer some word of counsel or reproof.

He taught the solemnity of the Divine worship. To his soul a sanctuary was a Bethel, and he breathed out, as he entered it, the adoring language of Jacob at Luz, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." So thoroughly was he imbued with this sentiment, that his very presence made a hallowed and solemn atmosphere. It felt like a sacred place wherever Mr. Bennet was preaching, whether in a pulpit or on the floor of some log school-house, or on a rude platform under the shelter of the summer trees.

His method of sermonizing was peculiar and instructive. It partook more of the nature of devotional meditation on the Divine Word. A text would be selected in the morning for pious reflection. During the day his mind would be occupied as a refrain in the midst of other cares, with an analysis of the passage, and an eliciting of its voices of instruction, or reproof, or comfort, or admonition, or promise. As he went on in this work he applied it all for his own quickening penitence, or hope. He studied first of all for himself. Thus his sermons were eminently experimental. All, from first to last, was a "voice of the heart." "He knew whereof he affirmed." He knew the truth, authority, efficacy and grace of what he taught, from an inward conviction

and experience of it all. This method of sermonizing made him an amazingly full and searching preacher. He was "mighty in the Scriptures," as has been said.

Another result was, that his store of sermons was never exhausted. He made them faster than he preached them. In 1851, at the time he removed from the scene of his long missionary labors in Southern Illinois, he remarked, that "after twenty-two years of service, he had more than one hundred sermons that he had never preached."

Rev. Mr. Lilly, in his valuable sketch, speaks of Mr. Bennet's peculiarities. A glimpse of his life at Pleasant Prairie will best illustrate these, and the sterling qualities, too, that he possessed.

When he first began to preach statedly at Pleasant Prairie, he "boarded around" familiarly among the families. All lived in cabins with but one comfortable room. Children—"the heritage of the Lord," but sad foes to Mr. Bennet's philosophical composure—abounded. By way of escape, in the morning it was his custom, when the weather permitted, to fill his pocket with the crusts from the breakfast-table, and then with his Greek Testament to retire to the woods, and nothing more would be seen of him until night. As the weather got colder he built a hut of poles

in the grove near the churchyard, and where the Church was afterward built. His hut was divided into two compartments. Into one of these he moved his worldly goods, consisting of a few soul-full books, a bed, a stool and chair, and his saddle and bridle. Into the other he led his faithful horse. A pole was left out of the partition at the hight of the trough, and through this opening he would bountifully feed and commune with his sagacious servant.

For this horse he had a sincere attachment. He was the only companion of the saintly Evangelist in his long missionary journeys, sharing his "perils in the wilderness," in floods, by hunger and thirst, by cold and heat. His gait and form became indissolubly associated with his experiences and labors as a missionary. Poor "Jack," his mute friend, he came to feel a sincere interest in, as an humble fellow-helper.

Once when he was leaving his field for a visit to his friends in the East, he gave Jack into the hands of one of his elders, with many a grave warning against abusing him, and bit of advice as to taking care of him. "If he dies before I come back, *bury* him. In his lowly sphere he has served the Lord's cause too long and faithfully for us to let his body fall a prey to ravening birds and beasts." Was not this something of Oriental's doting affection for his courser?

He was not social in his habits in the beginning of his ministry. He shunned the society of females. Once, when one of his most cordial friends, and one that admired him beyond measure, had invited in some of her most devout neighbors to spend the day with her, she sent over at dinner time to invite him to dine with them. Mr. Bennet came with a very grave and dissatisfied air. He had scarcely got into the house, when he accosted her in something like these words: "Mrs. ——, I have submitted to this useless disturbance for this time, but let it never happen again." And it never did.

Shortly after the organization of the Church—August 31, 1830—he began to stir in the matter of a meeting-house. All were poor, but God had said, "Build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." Haggai i. 8. Mr. Bennet drew up the subscription, and started it by pledging twelve days' work and one-third of the expenses. All the timbers were hewed in the woods—the weather-boarding was of spilt white-oak boards shaved. The flooring they whip-sawed. Not a fragment about it was bought but the nails. It was some time before it was furnished with a pulpit, because there was no lumber at hand. Mr. Bennet was architect and in large part builder of the interest-

ing structure. From the "square" it is ceiled up the rafters a little way, and then across, and thus the form of the ceiling acted as a sounding board, and every whisper of the preacher was reflected from every point. This vaulted form also gives the room, which is indeed but twenty-four by thirty feet, quite a lofty and spacious appearance. This old building, weather-beaten, dilapidated, moss-grown, but holding up against storms and decays, with a tenacity that shows how honestly it was put together at first, still stands. It is situated in the bosom of a grove. At the deserted doors a ravine runs diagonally, and just behind it is the churchyard. The prayers and praises of the hearts, long silenced, seem to linger around the rent and broken walls. Ah, what hallowed scenes have been witnessed here! How many have here been fitted for a useful life and the paradise of the saints on high!

The congregation has many years ago left this first tabernacle, like Israel, for a temple better fitted to accommodate the growing throng of worshipers that come to the solemn feasts.

Mr. Bennet's labors were of a character to remain and produce fruit more and more abundantly through the long, long years. Such a preacher as he could not but "paint for eternity."

Rev. Isaac Bennet, A. M.

CHAPTER X.

REV. ISAAC BENNET, A. M.

Contributed by Rev. Wm. A. Fleming.

THE following sketch of this eminent soldier of Jesus Christ is by Rev. Wm. A. Fleming. It gives many facts in his history to the close of his life, and is occupied chiefly with the final years of his ministry, as stated supply of the Church at Canton, Illinois.

The late Rev. Isaac Bennet, of Canton, Illinois, was, at the time of his decease, supposed to be about fifty-two or fifty three years of age. The precise time of his birth is not known. He made a public profession of religion at the age of twenty, but he always supposed he experienced a change of heart at twelve. Immediately upon his uniting with the Church he commenced a course of studies preparatory to entering the gospel ministry. He graduated in 1827 at Jefferson College, Pennsylvania, with the highest honors of his class. His "valedictory" was found after his death among his scanty papers, for he left

little in manuscript form behind him. We could wish that he had left more. The sadly-pleasing task of friendly reminiscence would have been rendered comparatively easy. As it is, the data as respects his early life are very meager. He was a member of the *first class* formed in the "Western Theological Seminary." He remained there, however, but one year. He lived in the family of the Rev. E. P. Swift, D. D., and studied theology (with two or three others) under his direction. He left Allegheny about the time the Seminary was *formally* opened, in consequence of some difficulties in his mind about subscribing to the form of matriculation proposed by Dr. J. J. Janeway. He went to Philadelphia and studied for some months.* He was afterward licensed to preach the gospel, by the Addison Association, at Monkton, Vermont, June 4, 1829. How long a time he spent in New England is not known, nor the causes which led him back again from the *far East* to the (then) *far West.* That he had at first some proclivities toward certain tenets of the New England Theology can not be doubted. The manner of his licensure, and the testimony of Dr. Swift, confirm this fact. But it was only for a short season that he wavered. He was ordained by the Presbytery

* Dr Livingston.

of Kaskaskia as an Evangelist, at a meeting held in Palestine, April 13, 1833; and, during the whole course of his laborious ministry, of over twenty-seven years in that vast prairie State, he was an "Old-School Presbyterian" of the straitest sect—the uncompromising, yet judicious foe of new measures and new theology. He, himself, traced his establishment in the orthodox faith to the reading of "Dickinson's Five Points."* In the early years of his ministry he traveled extensively, as a missionary, in the southern portion of the State, then a wilderness. He organized numerous Churches, and supported himself, in large part, while preaching to them. He was, throughout his life, more or less of an itinerant. He loved the work, and he did not abandon his "little circuit," as he called it, until compelled to do so, a few months before his death, on account of the disease in his throat. This spirit of consecration is illustrated by an incident that recurs to my mind. He was returning from Presbytery, in company with myself and one of his ruling elders. He inquired about the merits of McCosh's, "The Divine Government." I replied

* Dr. Swift informed me afterward that Mr. Bennet had some leanings toward Hopkinsonianism. But my impression is that he did not preach long before altering his views, from reading Dickinson, as referred to. The remark respecting the "Five Points" was made to myself in a bookstore in Peoria

favorably. He then added, with a half-suppressed sigh, "Well, it does not matter particularly. I think I will not buy it," adding, "My *study-days* are nearly over; it is now *work*, *work*, *work*." I looked at his frail tabernacle and thought (but did not say), "It will not be work, work, very long with good Bro. Bennet." And so it proved.

To return again to the narrative. His disease was bronchitis; and he had been admonished several times within the last two or three years that it was necessary for him to take care of his throat. But so ardent was his desire to "be about his Father's business," that he *would* preach as long as his strength lasted, on week-day and Sabbath, in town and country. Only the second Sabbath before his death he preached twice, and attended to a Bible-class.

That very evening he was seized with a violent attack of his disease, and continued to sink beneath it until death brought a blessed release from his pains.

He was delirious during most of his last illness. But in his wildest mood but *one theme* dwelt upon his tongue—*the religion of Jesus*. He preached, it is said, two whole sermons during those irrational hours. Blessed employment even in delirium! He had, however, a few lucid hours, and then he spent his breath in speaking words of comfort to

his agonized wife and weeping children, and in dictating messages to his dear people, especially to the impenitent in his congregation.

Once, as a heavenly smile lit up his countenance, he said: "I see a bright angel coming to convey me home!" But soon a cloud passed over that bright face. Like that great and good man, Dr. Thomas Scott, he was in darkness. Satan buffeted him, and arrayed "a black catalogue of sins against him." But that cloud dispersed, and once more he triumphed in Christ. He could say, "I *know* that the blood of Jesus cleanseth *me from all sin.* I have *tried* to fight the good fight. I think I have finished my course and kept the faith; and I *believe* there is a crown of righteousness laid up for me."

But, although he spoke thus assuredly, he nevertheless esteemed himself as vile and hell-deserving; "a sinner saved by grace."

When his disconsolate companion suggested to him that she desired to have his funeral sermon preached from Psalm xxxvii. 37, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace," he smiled, and said, "What preach on *such* a text for such a worthless one as I?"*

* I preached his funeral sermon from that text to a very large congregation, June 17, 1856. I took the view that "per-

The deceased was, we believe, in more than the ordinary acceptation of the term, "a good man," "a holy man of God." He lived to do good. Like his divine Master, whom he so long and faithfully served, "he went about doing good." A pious widow once remarked concerning him, that she never knew him to make a *strictly social visit.** He seemed always intent upon some spiritual benefit to the household which entertained him. We never recollect to have sat at table with him without hearing something that we could recollect with profit.

As illustrative of this trait in his character, we subjoin the following incidents. The reader must remember, though, how much Mr. Bennet's solemn *manner* would increase the impressiveness of these remarks, and that this can not be communicated. Here is the rose, but the perfume has exhaled, we fear.

Once his wife was apologizing, as housewives often do unnecessarily, about her table. He said, solemnly, "When we have exhausted God's goodness here before us it will be time enough to complain."

fect" meant "whole, complete, beautifully consistent;" and in this sense it was very appropriate to the character and life of the departed "brother in the Lord."

* Mrs. Page, relict of the Rev. David Page, of Canton, Illinois.

At another time a friend remarked, with reference to some perplexing scene he had just passed through, "Tribulation does not always work patience." "No," he replied, "that is true; it too often works *fretfulness* in us all."

Once again, as I bade him good-by after having preached for him two or three sermons, he thanked me most cordially. I replied, "We serve *each other* and the Master pays us." "Yes," said he, and I shall never forget his look, as he still held my horse's rein; "yes, and if we are only so happy as to get one smile of approbation from the Master on that day it will repay us a thousand fold for every trial and hardship here!" He paused a moment, and then continued, "Our congregations do not always do their duty toward us, but perhaps at the great day it will be found that no small part of the blame has been with ourselves." This from him, though not so meant, was a rebuke to *me*.

One more incident occurs to me, illustrating his habit of turning every event into an opportunity to speak for Jesus. He had baptized my oldest child, a son. He came into the room to say farewell to the mother. As he took her hand he said, "Mrs. Fleming, that child has begun an existence that *will never end*. When the stars go out in night and the world is burned up, that

soul will live on—*live on* as long as God lives. It is a great responsibility! The Lord give you grace to meet it!" With another cordial grasp of the hand he silently retired, overcome with his feelings.

He was also a man of "integrity and uprightness," "one that feared God and eschewed evil." He was remarkably simple-hearted and unsophisticated in his intercourse with the world, and was therefore easily imposed upon by designing men. As one of the ruling elders in his Church said of him, "He had but little worldly wisdom."* But, withal, he was fearless and faithful in rebuking wrong-doing, wherever he thought that the honor of religion and the dictates of prudence required it.

Once Bro. Bennet crossed the Illinois River on his way to an appointment. He was benighted, and found it impossible to proceed in the swampy state of the "bottoms." To add to the exposure, it became suddenly intensely cold. It grew so late that he supposed he could not recross the ferry. He made up his mind to "camp out," and finding an old shed, he put his horse in it, and tearing his saddle-blanket in two, he tied up his feet and prepared himself to tramp about all night to keep warm. He, however, found

* Mr. J. Blackadore.

that this was too perilous an experiment to persist in, and determined, at all hazards, to attempt to regain the river and recross. He finally succeeded, though in constant danger, in the darkness, of swamping. With great difficulty he prevailed on the ferrymen to take him over. But it was dreadful boating. The rope almost froze to their hands. He assisted, however, and they got safely over. The boatmen, who were very wicked men, swore dreadfully—"enough to sink the boat," in the estimation of their passenger. He said nothing until they were landed, and had warmed themselves at the nearest hotel. He then paid them for their trouble, remarking, at the same time, in his peculiarly solemn way, "My friends, I have suffered a great deal more this evening than you have (and he gave a brief account of what he had passed through), and I did not find it necessary to swear a single oath; and, I think you would have got on just as well for *this world*, and a *great deal better for the world to come*, if you, too, had not taken God's name in vain." The men were awe-struck and silent.

He had a large heart, and it spoke out in deeds of love and kindness. But these were not paraded to the view of all men. Perchance some did not discover the hidden depths that glowed beneath an exterior at once grave and placid.

There was never coldness, never sternness; but those who saw him only occasionally might have thought him slightly unapproachable. It was not so. A more instructive, entertaining, and sometimes even jovial companion could rarely be found. One who knew him well said to me, in substance, that his conversation, when in company on a journey, was worth volumes. And yet he did most of his studying on horseback. "His was that knowledge that lieth deep in the heart of a man," and happy was he who had "understanding" enough to "draw it out." Prov. xx. 5.

He was a critical student of the Bible. He was no speculator or theorizer. He once told me that in the study of "The Revelations" he got along very well until he came to about the middle of the eleventh chapter, where *history* ceases to run parallel with the prophecy. After that he did not choose to speculate or interpret, but to *wait*. His study of the Scriptures was the solace of his life. In his work as an Evangelist, he was accustomed to carry a few books with him in his saddle-bags, such as a Greek Testament, pocket concordance, and a dictionary, and study as he rode along.

In his early ministry he was remarkably successful. It is said that the first ten or fifteen years of his life were an almost constant scene of

revival. Scarcely a sermon was preached which was not followed by immediate visible fruits in the conviction and conversion of sinners. In his later life he labored under great discouragements. Although he continued to preach with the same faithfulness and fervency as ever, he was not allowed to see much present fruit. He sometimes almost sank under this trial of his faith. But he never long forgot that his God had said, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy!" And truly, if ever any man "sowed beside all waters" it was he. He was "in labors more abundant than we all." So that at the age of fifty the younger brethren called him "Father Bennet," he seemed so old in faith and good works.

He was emphatically "in journeyings often." We heard him once say that he had traveled on horseback alone a distance equal to that around the world.* "In perils of waters," he has swam

* He did not make that remark boastfully, but incidentally, when drawing a comparison between horseback and buggy-riding. Boastfulness he never indulged in. The nearest approach to it I ever heard him make was a remark about punctuality in appointments. He said (it was designed to benefit his young brother): "When I preached in the southern part of the State, where I had appointments at long intervals, the people always counted on my coming; sometimes owing to bad roads, etc., I would be a few minutes too late. Some would suggest, 'I guess the preacher will not be here to-day.' 'Yes,

the swollen stream, side by side with his noble horse; "in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils in the city;" doubtless if all were known; "in perils in the wilderness" we all know. He has encamped alone through the live-long night, amid the howlings of hungry wolves. "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst." He has munched a cold, hard ear of corn after a day's abstinence, while his horse grazed on the prairie. "In fastings often," necessitous fastings as well as religious. "In cold and nakedness." We need not add further to this inspired description, which, it is not believed, will apply with more literal force to any "ambassador of Christ" since Paul encountered these "perils."

As a Presbyter the deceased was more than esteemed and respected; he was looked up to as an advisor and counselor. Grave, sedate, judicious, intelligent, discriminating as he was, he seldom spoke (never long) in Presbytery. His voice was almost never heard in *debate*. Yet when he deemed it his duty to speak, or when called by the voice of the Presbytery to do so, he spoke to the point. His remarks were brief, clear, decisive; generally settling the question.

he will,' another would say; 'it is Bennet to-day; he never fails!'"

One scene—his last appearance on the floor of Presbytery—will not soon be forgotten. Being unwell, he retired from the Church. On re-entering the house he was observed to be exceedingly pale and feeble. A discussion arose during his absence, about the necessity or propriety of opening and closing each meeting of session with prayer; some contending that it was not always necessary to constitute thus formally when there was almost nothing to be done. He arose to say, "Brethren, I did not hear all of this discussion. I was obliged to retire, feeling quite indisposed; and I found myself a few moments ago *lying upon my back outside of the Church.* It will be necessary for me to ask leave of absence. It may be my *final leave.* Let me, therefore, beseech you, brethren, not to remove *any of the ancient landmarks.* If it be a meeting simply to dismiss a member, or to appoint one of your number to go to Presbytery, *open and close* that meeting with prayer. Ask God to direct you in *everything*, and especially send not a sheep away from your fold without asking God to guide him in his wanderings." This was about what he said. It is scarcely necessary to add that the "Sessional Records," containing the omission, were unanimously "excepted to."

The examination of candidates on experi-

mental religion, and their *motives* for seeking the ministry, were almost invariably put upon him, if he were present; and frequently, also, the examination in theology. In both of these the central question was, "What think ye of Christ?"

As a preacher, this good brother stood pre-eminent in those qualities which ought to distinguish an "ambassador of Christ." His preaching was plain, direct, practical, solid, doctrinal, instructive. His *solemn earnestness*, his unfeigned humility, his deep-felt *unction*, made his preaching exceeding impressive with any true hearer of the Word. He always seemed to be standing on the brink of time, looking out into eternity, anticipating the Judgment scene; and, with a realization of the soul's priceless worth, and Christ's infinite worthiness, pleading with, beseeching men to be "reconciled to God."

He preached Christ; he preached *nothing else*. In this age of new things, new doctrines, and new revelations (Spiritualism, Harmonial Philosophy, "*et id omne genus*"), he never turned aside from his great mission to preach any "other gospel." His soul abhorred all such perversions of the aim and purpose of a Christian minister. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema. Maranatha." This he would tell men with all the boldness and the earnest-

ness of a Paul. But it should be added that he never anathematized either individuals or societies of men because they did not believe and teach as he did.

"Father Bennet" was not, in any sense, a politician. I do not know that he often, or even ever, voted. Although eminently conservative (in its best sense) both in religion and politics, no one who knew him can doubt for a moment where he would have stood, had he lived through the eventful years of the late Southern rebellion. He, however, with other honored brethren and fathers, co-presbyters, "was taken away from the evil to come."

The following anecdote will recall several traits in the character of this simple-minded, earnest servant of Christ. Perfect naturalness was his delight. "He did not like trammels" or "extra gear" of any kind on himself or his horse. He had a set of harness made in the simplest mode, expressly to save time, buckles and leather. Once he was helping me to put on my "fly-net." Said he, "Brother Fleming, it is said a 'lie will travel a mile, while truth is putting on her sandals.' I think I could travel *more* than a mile while you are putting on your "fly-net." One item I have not mentioned that I think deserves notice. I mean his marked cor-

diality, when, for the first time, meeting a young and new member of Presbytery. He did not *patronize*, but fraternized and sympathized at once with the youngest that came into the body. I first met him at Macomb, Illinois, during a meeting of the old "Synod of Illinois." His familiar, brotherly, affectionate address surprised and delighted me. I was but fresh from the Seminary, and did not expect the greeting his warm heart accorded me.

The following extracts from a letter of the Rev. John McDonald, who succeeded Mr. Bennet at "Pleasant Prairie," contains still further testimony concerning his personal and ministerial character:

"My personal acquaintance with this dear brother in the Lord commenced in 1835, and continued eight or ten years. It was made at sacramental meetings and meetings of Presbytery, at which interesting occasions we were frequently brought together.

"Bro. Bennet was a most excellent man, and a first-rate practical preacher. His subjects were generally 'repentance, faith, or godliness,' which he explained and enforced in the most earnest and apostolical manner; and his labors were seldom without some apparent fruit. He was most indefatigable in his ministrations, enduring all

sorts of privations and fatigue incident to ranging widely, and mingling freely with those enduring the hardships of settling a new country.

"He was not fond of judicial business, but was always present at Presbytery and took his part.

"He was a man of strong peculiarities, and yet it is not easy to say in just what they consisted. Perhaps they may be summed up in the brief statement, that he was largely Oriental in constitution and character. He has told that he was of Turkish ancestry.

"What he did was with his might. Whatever was before his mind seemed to occupy his whole mental horizon. Hence he was easily imposed on, and was not an accurate judge of character, but almost always erred on the favorable side.

"Dear brother, I have given you a very imperfect sketch of one of the most faithful and self-denying men with whom I was ever acquainted," etc.

This estimate from so close and accurate a judge of men as "Father McDonald," is especially valuable.

The following letter from Dr. E. P. Swift to Mr. Fleming, corroborates some important facts in his life:

"Rev. and Dear Brother,—From the initials attached to a brief account of the late Rev. Isaac

Bennet, contained in the *Presbyterian*, I am led to suppose that you are the writer; and if so, I desire, for one, to thank you for the interesting statement you have furnished. I am anxious to know something more definitely about the last pastoral charge and closing days of that excellent man. For one year after leaving college, at least, Mr. Bennet lived in my family, and studied theology (with two or three other brethren) under my direction, and left us about the time the Western Theological Seminary was formally opened, in consequence of some difficulty in his mind about subscribing to the form of matriculation proposed by Dr. Janeway. He went to Philadelphia and studied there some months before he applied for licensure in Vermont. As a pupil and a member of my family, I became greatly interested in that truly excellent and beloved servant of Christ. I esteemed him as one of the most devoted young men I ever knew, and feel that our Church has few such men to lose. I am anxious to know about his family, his last charge, and whether (as the sketch in the *Presbyterian* seems to intimate) there is in prospective preparation a more extended account of his life; whether he has left among his papers any material for such a work, etc.

"If your leisure will allow you to give me a

brief statement, or put me in the way of obtaining it, I shall feel very much obliged to your kindness. I desire it purely as a matter of private friendship, and it is prompted by the wish one feels to know all about a dear friend whom we shall see no more."

Rev. Isaac Bennet, A. M.

CHAPTER XI.

REV. ISAAC BENNET, A. M.

Contributed by Rev. R. H. Lilly, A. M.

REV. ISAAC BENNET was a man of such powers of mind, determination of will, and singleness of aim, as would have made him a noted man in any field of labor in any part of the world, in any period of the Church's history. But in him the gold—not the iron of the prophet's image—was so mingled with the clay—the purest and noblest elements of Christian character with, at least, the innocent weaknesses of human nature, that any true sketch of him will seem abnormal to those who did not know him, and prove unsatisfactory to some of those who knew him best. So high was his aim, so decided his opinions and course of life, and so wanting was he in attention to the innocent and pleasant conventionalities of society, that while some held him as the chief of modern saints, others, reproved by his teachings and his holy life, seemed to hate him for his sanctity; while not a few outsiders laughed

heartily at his odd whims and ways, as they chose to call them, but were warm in their feelings toward him, ready to supply his wants, and quick to vindicate his integrity, as a man and minister, against all impugners.

Premising these things as needful to be borne in mind, in order to a right understanding of what follows, and coming to particulars, we remark:

1. That his character, as a minister, seemed to be as complete an embodiment of the apostle's injunction (1 Tim. iv. 15) as we have ever seen, "Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear of all." The sense of the last clause seeming to be that the benefits of the gospel ministry might appear —be abundant and permanent—in the hearts and lives of all them to whom it came; the former parts indicating the total absorbing of the mind by these great themes, and the entire consecration of soul to them, in order to secure the desired success. During his ministry of about twenty years in our part of the State, Mr. Bennet, I presume, never expressed a desire, nor cherished a wish, to be anything but a preacher. Any thoughts of agency, authorship, farming, lecturing or teaching, etc., to which his brethren, in many cases, felt compelled to resort rather than leave

their fields of labor, were repudiated by him and abhorrent to him, although he might be tolerant of their adoption in case of his weaker brethren. He had a faith in God that, called as he was to preach the gospel, he would be enabled to fulfill his high commission, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Nor was his faith vain, for at the end of his ministry among us he could say with a fullness of meaning I never heard from any other lips, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified!" as in 1 Cor. ii. 2, says the great apostle.

2. He was a very able minister of the New Testament, as connected with, and unfolding and completing the things of the Old Testament. Giving himself wholly to these things, meditating on them, and studying to show himself approved to God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, the word of God, not in the letter only, but also in the spirit, dwelt in him very richly. This richness in the knowledge of the Word was seen in all his pulpit ministrations, and in all his abundant conversations with men of all characters and conditions in life. No one is likely to remember any point of doctrine or duty presented by him which was not enforced by the

pertinent application of some portion of holy writ, directly asserting or properly implying the same. Other brethren were more terrible in their denunciations of the "wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"—more conscience-stirring in their warm appeals to the impenitent, and more beseechingly-winning in inviting the "weary and heavy-laden" to "come to Jesus Christ, to find rest" in him; but Mr. Bennet's great excellence was in shedding the bright light of the pertinent Scripture texts on all the subjects that he handled. Borne out by the direct statements and proper inferences of the Word, Mr. Bennet had the high honor of holding forth, in many localities where they had been unknown or greatly misrepresented, all the great distinguishing and fundamental doctrines of our holy religion.

3. Mr. Bennet's labors were *very abundant* for a long period of years. In respect to all his compeers he could truly say, "But I labored more abundantly than you all." Yet he would delight to add, in an humble, thankful spirit, what is further said by the apostle, "Yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me," as in 2 Cor. xv. 10. Thus aided he was "more abundant in labors than they all." Those labors

were in preaching the Word, family visitations, catechising the children, and personal conversation with all sorts of men, in all stages of moral character.

Take an illustration. After a hard day's ride he reached the school-house, at which he was to preach at night. A pious family, with several children, some of them nearly grown up, gladly received him, and after a frugal meal, hastily eaten, they went to the place of meeting. Mrs. Smith took two candles—she had no snuffers, and forgot her scissors. One was set on the table by Mr. Bennet, and the other was fastened to the casing of a window on the opposite side of the house, by inserting the blade of Mr. Jones' penknife through the lower part of it and then into the wood. (This one had to be taken down before the service was over.) About twenty were present, eight of these being of one family. By the help of a Methodist brother the hymn, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" etc., was sung after a fashion. Then followed the reading of a few verses of Scripture and a long prayer, in which two of the audience could say amen in their hearts to its petitions. Then followed the sermon, a full hour and a quarter long as to its solid body. But the good brother was full of matter, and one or two listened attentively.

instead of quitting when he seemed to come to the right place, he said: "One more thought." Then after ten minutes spent in looking at it, "another thought" came up for consideration by the impatient audience. Then "an inference" was required to complete the subject; and then, with a pretty long "finally," the discourse was ended. But not Bro. Bennet's labors for the day. At family prayers he talked some, and learned from their answers to him that John, seventeen years of age, and Mary, of fifteen, were both seriously concerned for their souls' salvation. So after prayers he took John by the hand and said, affectionately, "I wish to talk with you after the people are abed;" and to Mary, "I should like a word with you, too, about loving Jesus, my Master." Their conversation did not end until after one o'clock.

Sometimes long circuits were made in going to and returning from Presbytery, with ten or twelve appointments spread over a couple of weeks. On other occasions he visited the places at which he had preached before. Then, again, he made circuits into new missionary fields, seeking out the lost sheep in the wilderness, but always ready to preach, or talk, or pray, reprove, warn, teach, counsel, advise, or comfort, as the case might be—always about his great Master's

work. Knowing what others did, and that Mr. Bennet did far more than they, I do not think his sermons—and they were generally good long ones at that—could have been less than one hundred and seventy a year for twenty years; and that his travels in the Master's service, mostly on horseback, were not less than three thousand miles a year.

4. Mr. Bennet was one of the most *unselfish* of men. This is seen by considerations such as follow: He was never known to insist on his right as a preacher of the gospel, to "live of the gospel," for even so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. Like Paul, he felt a necessity laid on him to preach the gospel, and that a woe would rest on him if he did not. So, for long years of time, and over a large field of labor, "he made the gospel of Christ without charge" to them that had a part in his labors.

He many times refused the voluntary offerings made to him, on the ground that he was more able to do without them than other persons were to give them. At other times, to meet necessities that seemed imperative, he accepted of small contributions. Even from Churches to which he preached regularly, he received but a small compensation.

While doing the full work of a Missionary Evangelist, we believe he always refused the aid of the Board of Missions. One or two of his earliest years may have been exceptions to this.

The manner in which he used his patrimony. Of the amount of this I know nothing. He lived mainly on it for many years. Other parts he loaned out to poor men struggling to secure homes for their families; in this way risking his principal, while he received little or no interest on his means. This living on his own resources, and loaning out part to help the deserving poor, was at a time, too, in Illinois, when millions of acres of land that have since sold for twenty, fifty, one hundred, or even two hundred dollars per acre, near the cities and villages could be had for one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, I never heard of his entering but forty acres, which was to make him a homestead among the people to whom he ministered. Other brethren may have given away as much as Mr. Bennet—some of them certainly spent much more of their private means in sustaining their families whilst they preached the gospel, availing themselves of such means of helping themselves as the providence of God then placed within their reach; but none of them ever saved so little of what they had as did Mr. Bennet in his unselfishness. The

rightfulness of their course and the wisdom of his are not here matters of consideration. That Mr. Bennet lived a life of great voluntary humiliation and poverty for the gospel's sake, is not to be denied or doubted by those who knew him best.

5. Mr. Bennet was "instant in season and out of season" to do his Master's work. A hard day's ride would bring us at night to the place where Presbytery was to meet. No brother was able or willing to preach. We could, in our helpless, wearied exhaustion, always fall back on Bro. Bennet, and he would esteem it a pleasure, in bodily weakness and faintness, to preach Christ to the little company and the tired brethren. Others of us could speak on religious matters to dying men when all was favorable. But Bro. Bennet was always ready. The stranger casually met on the way, the inmates of the house into which the storm drove us, the family on which we might call for dinner, rest, and horse-feed, all alike were at once engaged in religious conversation, and their consciences appealed to in approval of the condemnation that God's word utters against the guilty.

6. Mr. Bennet's habits of study deserve consideration. His custom was to take a daily text or portion of Scripture for especial meditation. This

he continued to turn over in his mind until he arrived at what seemed to be its leading idea or meaning intended by the good Spirit. Then his custom was to stop, take out his writing material, and commit the leading thoughts to paper. For years after he could tell what was in those papers without looking at them. Sometimes he stood at the carpenter's bench, sometimes he was busy on his farm, or was riding from house to house in family visitations, or was traveling on his long missionary tours—it was all the same, nothing hindered, the intellectual labor went on until an outline was made of the thoughts contained in the select passage of Scripture. So his sermons, lectures, exhortations, practical thoughts, etc., were reduced to outline form. The writing out, when it was done in full, was after the public delivery of his thoughts, and, if practicable, before the glow of excitement occasioned by delivery passed away. Physical employment was thus no hindrance to his studies. Indeed he considered it a help after protracted preaching, duties and labors. I have no one in my acquaintance who had equal command over his thoughts, or who, without interfering with his mental operations, could so successfully carry on manual labor employments.

7. As a preacher, Mr. Bennet's manner was

that of solemn deliberation, inclined to monotony in utterance and a diffuseness of style, running, at times, into a tiresome prolixity. The matter was always more interesting to his attentive hearers than the manner, but in this his discourses were very unequal in quality. He was in the habit, in his common home ministrations, of going fully into a subject, and occupying several sermons in doing so. At sacramental meetings, when assisting a brother, or at Presbytery, on the Sabbath day, he had a very happy faculty of leaving out the less important parts of his subjects, and condensing the remainder into a sermon not over the ordinary length for him. These were his truly great sermons—grand in outline, noble in theme, rich in matter, and in their delivery he sometimes became animated and impressive, and asserted his right to a place among the most doctrinal preachers of his day.

But he was altogether too logical to be popular with the masses. Common people will take pleasure in listening to an orderly unfolding and methodical statement of the matter to be considered in a sermon, but their attention begins to flag and their minds to tire in looking at the plans, and they soon weary if one goes on to add thought to thought, idea to idea, and inference to inference, with certain assurance that they are

all connected logically with the subject, and flow rightly out of it. Something in the shape of warm and pungent application to the conscience suits them better, whether or no it be very logically related to the matter under consideration.

Griefs and Comforts.

CHAPTER XII.

GRIEFS AND COMFORTS.

A. D. 1837—1839.

THE period dating from the coming of Mr. Bennet, until 1839, may be reckoned as the "vintage" of Mr. Bliss' ministerial life. He associated his faithful brother with him in extended missionary labors, in which much good was accomplished. The Churches scattered over the field were blessed with times of refreshing; new Churches were organized, and new laborers introduced. Wabash Church received eighty accessions to her membership, almost all of them by examination, within this period.

But amidst the "joys of harvest," a long anticipated stroke fell upon the little circle at the parsonage. In the fall of 1836, Mrs. Bliss began to sink under the ravages of consumption. Two years before he had despaired of her life, but she recovered sufficiently "to look well to her household." But now the symptoms returned with a violence that could not be misunderstood. The

slow incurable decay was evidently fixed in her system. It is a gratifying feature of consumption that it does not cloud the mind. While it is consuming the strength, it imparts to the disposition a preternatural tenderness. All the rigorous winter of 1836 and 1837, the pale and saintly wife and mother was fading day by day. Each one of the family — parents and children — knew that beyond a doubt they would be separated at the coming of the spring. So the hour of parting drew near. Like Elijah and Elisha, the "two pilgrims," she went on to the scene of her glorious translation. At length, on the twenty-first of May, at three and one-half o'clock in the morning, this devoted wife, mother, friend, rested sweetly and forever. Never, perhaps, in this world has God granted to a child of his a more peaceful departure.

On Monday occurred the funeral. The Rev. Mr. Bennet came down from Pisgah and preached a soul-full sermon to the great congregation gathered by the sad occasion. Prov. xiv. 32: "The righteous hath hope in his death," was his theme. To him the providence was instinct with a mournful and sacred pathos, and the great preacher rose above himself.

Mrs. Bliss was of strict Puritan training, and her views and feelings were profound, steadfast,

and undemonstrative. There were no evanescent ecstasies, no overflowing tides of emotion in her experience. This would have been incongruous with her nature. The great feature of her spiritual character was a blessed and constant peace. She had early in her life committed herself to the Lord and found him gracious, and there she ended her quest. The twenty-third Psalm—a favorite passage of God's word—expressed her confidence in his grace and providence. Almost every Sabbath evening her children remembered to have heard her singing in her own mild, devout way Dr. Watts' version of the ninety-second Psalm.

"Sweet is the work my God, my king,
To praise thy name, give thanks and sing,
To show thy love by morning light,
And talk of all thy truth at night."

The serious spirit of the song, its undertone of fervent pathos and hope, the contrast drawn in it between the character and destiny of the righteous and the wicked, all seemed suited to the temper of her piety.

Her experiences of religion were all pervaded by a childlike confidence in Christ, in the efficacy of his atonement and intercession, in the faithfulness of his promises, in his wisdom, power and ove, and so her days were filled with a sweet com-

posure. She drew near to her end with unclouded serenity and comfort. She quietly made every preparation for it. After she was gone, they found her shroud, face-cloth, and every part of this mournful attire wrapped together and laid carefully away in a private drawer. "Death, the last enemy, was destroyed."

Mr. Lippincott, who was entertained at Mr. Bliss' during the Presbytery in October, 1830, thus speaks about his devout wife:

"I should not do justice to my own feelings, if I were to make no allusion to Mrs. Bliss whom I only saw on that occasion. The impression she made on me, and I believe on all the brethren, was such as to furnish many a pleasant thought in after years. The daughter of a distinguished man, whose character she justly revered, while she deplored his speculative errors, she seemed to us a beautiful specimen of the better type of New England women. Bright, cheerful, amiable in her manners, she bore the impress of an intelligent cultivated mind, imbued with the Christian spirit. Many a wish was expressed that she was where we could enjoy more of her society in the pioneer work."

Her departure was beautifully fitting in its time. It was just in that happy season of the year when the world is exchanging the clouds

and snows of winter for the hope and virgin loveliness of spring, and in that hour in the day when the silence and gloom of night are giving way before the twittering jocund chorus and the kindling dawn of a morning in May. The tattered "diary" says:

May 21—Sabbath.—A mild and pleasant day but solemn indeed; a day in which my affectionate partner was taken from me. She left this world at three and one-half o'clock this morning, to spend a glorious Sabbath in the presence of her God."

In another sense still did God honor her in the time of her death.

Her grave was the first one opened in the churchyard of Wabash. It had been customary for each family to bury their dead, in a private burial ground on their own farm, but a public one had been talked of although it was not yet located. The members of Mr. Bliss' charge had also determined to build a meeting-house, but its site was not altogether agreed upon either. The death of so important a person as Mrs. Bliss called for an immediate decision, at least respecting the site of the churchyard. Her interment fixed al and made a holy ground. How touching and saintly a "consecration!"

Thus at fifty years of age Mr. Bliss was left to

pursue the remainder of his pilgrimage alone. May, and now "Betsy," who had joined their lives with him long ago, were fallen at his side. But this last death made him feel utterly his present loneliness. "My days are solitary" is the sigh inscribed in his private diary.

It is characteristic of him, that after the long-drawn tragedy was ended, he turned immediately to the duties of his ministry. He expected to find a solace not in morbid, brooding melancholy, but in the service of God.

"Light is *sown* for the *righteous*." The very next Sabbath he joined his brethren, Spilman and Bennet, in a communion meeting in Edwards County.

The old "diary" says:

Sabbath pleasant; a deeply interesting sacramental season. Three were added to the Church by profession of their faith, and two infants were baptized. Much evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

So God "sent" his smitten servant "help out of the sanctuary, and strengthened him out of Zion." We are now to witness the sudden blossoming of the field that he had laid out his life for—the spiritual successes with which God *comforted* him.

The place referred to just above, where he met

Messrs. Spilman and Bennet, was the Shiloh Presbyterian Church, in Edwards County, seventeen miles to the southwest of his residence. Here had settled, a few years before, a colony of New Englanders. Starting out from Massachusetts, they had first purchased themselves a vast tract of land among the healthy mountain valleys of Western Virginia. Some of the early battles of the "Great Rebellion" were fought on land that they once owned. After they had paid for and to a good degree improved their purchase, their title was contested by some interested parties, and proved to be invalid, and their smiling homes were snatched away from them. Made penniless by this fraud, these good people set out again, but this time toward the far West, and eventually settled in one of the fairest prairies of Edwards County.

This community, thus clustering together, was one of unusual piety and intelligence, of the exact morals and simple faith of their "pilgrim fathers," and of their honest and noble type of Christian character. In January, 1833, they engaged Mr. Bliss to preach for them, and in 1835 a Church was organized among them — the "Shiloh Presbyterian Church." By 1838 they were able to employ and settle a pastor—the Rev. Joseph Butler, A. M., of New York.

The Church afterward became Congregational but it has been especially useful.

Another point at which there seemed then the promise of blessed success was Mt. Carmel. This was the county town and a place of rising importance.

When our earnest missionaries came in October, 1835, they found a number of families of Presbyterian preferences, and some members. But under the new impetus given to business by the public workers then in progress, the town rapidly filled up. In this state of things the numbers and influence of the Presbyterians so increased, that in 1838 they erected a substantial brick building, the finest Church in town, and indeed at that time in the Presbytery of Kaskaskia. In May, 1839, a Church was organized, with eleven members. Late in the year they secured the services of the Rev. Robert H. Lilly, of the Synod of Kentucky, who was regularly installed June 13, 1840. The membership speedily rose to forty.

Thus by a sudden efflorescence was his once waste and lonely field become bright with the promise of good. Every missionary point around that he had occupied was grown into a Church, with a settled minister. His faithful brother, the Rev. Isaac Bennet, at Pisgah, the Rev. Mr. Lilly at Mt. Carmel, and the Rev. Mr. Butler at

Shiloh. "God had not forgotten to be gracious."

But this was not all. In the early spring of 1837 the people of his own charge began to agitate the matter of building a Church. For thirteen years now, since Mr. Bliss began his ministerial labors, there had been no settled place of preaching in the bounds of the congregation. Sometimes the meetings were held in some school-house, sometimes at the residence of one of the ruling elders, a few times in Mr. Bliss' barn, and often in the open air in the shade of some grove when the weather was fine. But Pisgah had built a log meeting-house, and Mt. Carmel was "rising up" to build, and "Wabash," the "mother of them all," could not but be provoked to "good works." And then Adam Corrie, Esq., of Senwich, Scotland, being apprised by his brother, Robert Corrie, of the spirit stirring in the congregation, made them an offer of one hundred and twenty-five dollars if they would arise and build. So at last it was determined to erect a sanctuary. Then came the usual difficulties in locating the site. Different views and interests conflicted. But the asperity of feeling could not rise high, because of one pathetic fact—the hallowed grave of Mrs. Bliss. All felt that *that* had decided the location of the

churchyard, and the sacred associations of the place where they expected to lay the ashes of their dead made it the fitting spot on which to build the house of God. By and by a neat and plain frame building went up among the trees of the young woods, in the fall of 1838. Mr. Bennet, a famous church builder, wrought on the new sanctuary. He was permitted to build the old-fashioned pulpit after his own ideal. The rostrum on which the preacher's feet stood was somewhat higher than the heads of his congregation. This was panted a lead color, and the railing on each end and in front white. The room was wainscoted with poplar, with a vaulted ceiling, and is very agreeable both to the preacher and hearer as an auditory.

Without one taint of ornament, cornice, or frieze, it still stands a place of quiet and sacredness, sheltered by its trees, with the prairie once a wilderness, but now filled with farms and cottages stretching out in pastoral beauty to the south and west, and the churchyard silent and holy, sleeping near by.

It is not often that one life is thus honored. Fifteen years of ministerial service only passed, when Mr. Bliss was permitted to see four Churches gathered, and three ministers, beside himself, laboring efficiently in what was once his own charge. What was the secret of his success?

It may seal the lesson of this life to linger over the interesting question. We will therefore put down here the features of his ministry as they exist in the recollections of his congregation and of the few of his parishioners and discriminating hearers who still survive. Speaking, therefore, from this authority, we would say that his success *did not* arise from any superior *brilliancy* of *mind*. He was almost totally devoid of imagination. He was sober, plain, and practical in all his views and feelings. His mind was incapable of flight. He never astonished his hearers with bursts of impassioned oratory, or ingenious speculations.

Nor from any persuasive *eloquence*. He was slow and sedate in the delivery of his sermons. He spoke always with deliberation, with the air of one who was weighing his words before he uttered them. He is remembered as more interesting and animated in conversation than in the pulpit. As to the matter of his discourses, he seemed more intent on speaking to his hearers "all the words of this life," than he was of entertaining them. There was actually nothing to amuse when he preached, but he "fed the people with knowledge and with understanding."

Nor from his *lowering* the *standard* of *godliness*, and hiding the "offense of the cross" in his

work. His influence in his office was very sacred. There was a clear appeal made to his audience in the most dispassionate manner to "yield themselves unto God," but they were also solemnly reminded to weigh the matter well, and count the cost. This feature was eminent in his ministry. Indeed, the "means of grace" in the hands of this pastor and his session was a very deliberate and dignified business. "Their moderation was known of all men." Nothing disturbed their equanimity. If all were spiritual death, or if God were "raining righteousness upon the people," the even tenor of church affairs went on. Sometimes when a large number of "candidates have been propounded for membership in the Church" (to borrow the stately language of the session book), the session would not "be satisfied" until after several adjourned meetings and protracted examinations. This practice severely sifted the "converts," and rarely ever were a number of "candidates" finally introduced, until the session were thus satisfied of the purity of their motives and the sincerity of their determination to serve the Lord. It was indeed a rather formidable thing to "come before" this grave and dignified session.

The features of Mr. Bliss' ministerial character, that secured his success, were:

1. Eminent personal piety. No one ever doubted this who knew him. But his religious character was remarkable for its calm, cheerful, and constant tone. As a minister, as a friend, at home, in the streets, in the fields, in the pulpit—everywhere—he was always the same. Apparently free from the usual alternations of joy and gloom in his religious experience, he was remarkably peaceful and uniform. All traditions unite in saying that his life was wonderful for its consistent piety. His godly course was like the rivers of the North that retain the freshness of their wholesome waters—their clear, living purity—throughout their flow to the ocean. Wherever any one approached him, they found the quiet vigorous current of his love to God and man running just the same. He manifestly day by day "walked with God." This characteristic of his piety made his influence very steadfast, and always right, and so powerful for good.

2. His promptness and faithfulness as a minister were a prominent feature in his life. Enough has been said to give some impression of him as a preacher, but his industry in his office is worthy of a particular mention. He was actually, when not prostrated with sickness, never idle. He performed a great deal of ministerial work, but his habits were very methodical. Everything was

done in its time and consequently was done quietly and without confusion. What he accomplished, he accomplished without much wear or tear of body or mind. It was thoroughly and faithfully done, but with such forethought, system, and deliberation as made all seem easy. As the time came for him to start on a missionary trip, it found all things ready out doors and in, and when the time came for his return, his horse would be at the gate at the appointed hour. All was order, plan, prudence about him. With some persons this quiet routine would soon have sunk into stagnation, but with him the motive was too pure, the purpose too earnest, the piety and love for souls too fervent.

His life was one of faithfulness and peace. It is easy to perceive the moral power of such a steadfast, reliable character. His people reposed a perfect confidence in him. The world looked on and admired.

3. His excellent social qualities. Reference has been made to his genial spirit and conversational powers. His intelligence, good sense, and vivacity of mind, coupled with his gentlemanly manners and choice language, would really have adorned almost any sphere. But such was his unfeigned humility, goodness, and interest in men, that he lavished all at the cabin firesides of his seques-

tered flock. His pastoral charge was his world. It was not too much in his estimation—it was not enough—*all* that *he* could do for the welfare and progress of his people. His quiet, unobtrusive, *social* influence was very useful to his charge. He did not visit any family often in the year, but when he did at all, it was an afternoon or evening never to be forgotten. Such new thoughts, such outlooks from their little, hackneyed selves, such better, broader views of life and duty, such kindly feelings toward all men, were awakened by the quiet, suggestive interview, as made it a delight.

2. Another secret of his usefulness was his pre-eminence as a *good citizen.* Manly, upright, unassuming, courteous, with a heart alive to the public good, the influence of his life was wholly on the side of good order, intelligence, temperance, industry, enterprise, and progress. He was a model "*American citizen.*"*

5. Immigration, too, conduced a very considerable part to the success mentioned. As the country improved, some Presbyterian families came in with the new population.

*In his duties as a citizen, however, his modesty appears again. Like many clergymen of his generation, he *seldom* or *never* voted at the elections. Whether right or wrong to his conscience it was the only safe way to keep aloof from earthly passions and entanglements.

These "points" on which we have dwelt in Mr. Bliss' ministeral character, the world will scarcely consent to call "shining points," without they are associated with more brilliant qualities. Even the Church is in danger of coming to feel that consistent piety, faithfulness, a genial sympathy and love of souls, and sober wisdom in every relation of life, are scarcely enough in the character of the minister. The shining light of genius, irradiating and glorifying all, is *essential!*

Is it not well for us to stop in this quiet shady nook, this old parsonage, and recall some homely truth?

1. Serve God with the gifts you have. Mr. Bliss was calm and philosophical, altogether wanting in a contagious enthusiasm the heroic spirit that can undertake what others can scarcely dream of, the power to enlist and enthrall others, and even laggart souls in schemes for good, and carry all on to success. How quiet is this parson's life, how slow moving, how undemonstrative. But he was the Lord's. What he *had*, he *brought*, and God was well pleased with the offering.

2. Wisdom and grace *only*, are essential to success in the ministry. In the pulpit, the splendors of genius, at best, can only shine on the basis of

these sober and fundamental qualities of ministerial character, and they are worse—a thousand times worse—than worthless without them.

3. All who should seek the ministry are not "gifted," but all such can *cultivate* those quiet graces of heart and life, that God will approve and bless in his servant.

4. The Churches should beware how they overlook "ungifted" worth in the ministry. Multitudes of true ministers whose lives God has made a blessing, he has been pleased to endow with graces, but not with shining "gifts." If genius has been sanctified and gone forth through the world like "an angel of light," arousing nations, filling all hearts with new thoughts, fears, and hopes, as in Paul, and Luther, and Whitfield—let God be glorified. But why despise the "hidings of his power?" He has not made many grand rivers for the continent, but ten thousand times ten thousand chiming rills and babbling brooks feed the face of the earth with greenness.

Alas, for modest worth.

> "We trample grass and prize the flowers of May,
> But grass will live when flowers have passed away."

New Faces.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEW FACES.

A. D. 1836.

Sketches of Rev. John Silliman and Rev. Joseph Butler.

SO far as is known by the writer Sharon Presbyterian Church is the oldest Protestant Church in Illinois. It was organized by the Rev. James McGready, in 1816, as before detailed. It was made up of emigrants from Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, etc. It embraced some of the finest families in Southeastern Illinois at the time of which we now speak, and was a noble field for expansive missionary work. Father Bliss had visited them. Rev. B. F. Spilman, their pastor in 1823, still delighted to go up and break the bread of life to them. But in 1836 an experienced minister and enterprising man came to settle among them. This was the Rev. John Silliman.

Concerning the long-finished course of this servant of God, the following letter from his daughter—Mrs. A. A. M. Leffler, the wife of the Rev. Blackburn Leffler, Richview, Illinois—will afford the reader a melancholy pleasure:

"Rev. and Dear Sir,—It is but little information I can give you personally, as I was quite a child at the time of my father's death. But I have some facts communicated by friends at the South which are interesting, and I now communicate them to you.

"Rev. John Silliman was born in Rowan County, North Carolina, August 13, 1786.

"His parents were John and Isabella Silliman, Scotch Covenanters. They were persons of most exemplary piety and considerable learning; so so much so that they fitted their five sons for college without sending them to school. My father was their fourth son, and was considerably over twenty years old when his attention was directed to the gospel ministry. But these years were not lost. His father had one of the finest libraries in the land; and living in easy circumstances, his sons had opportunities for improving their minds that few others had. I remember to have heard my father say that the knowledge he gained in the years he spent at home, among those leather-bound books, after he

attained his majority, was of incalculable benefit to him in his ministerial life. When he graduated we can none of us remember. His diploma, with many valuable papers of his own, was burned, with the home of his childhood, about the year 1818 or 1819.

"He studied theology with Dr. John H. Rice, of Virginia, and was licensed and ordained by East Hanover Presbytery, at Prince Edward, Virginia, and was one year a co-pastor with the Rev. Matthew Lyle.

"In 1818 he was married (Dr. A. Alexander officiating) to Julia E., daughter of Major Samuel Spencer, of Charlotte County, Virginia. His choice of a wife proved most happy, as her ardent piety, cultivated mind, and most pleasing manners, rendered her a most acceptable, beloved pastor's wife—'a help meet for him.'

"At the time of his marriage he had in his possession a 'call' to the Church in Morgantown, North Carolina, and in January, 1819, was installed pastor, and continued their pastor until the fall of 1836, the time of his removal to Illinois. During his pastorate of seventeen years, he received into the Church over six hundred persons on examination, besides those received in the outposts or missionary stations among the mountains.

"During the two years that my father lived in Illinois he received many urgent solicitations to return and take charge of the Church in Morgantown again, and at the time of his death he had accepted a unanimous call to return and take the pastoral work in his old charge. He was beloved by that dear people as few pastors are privileged to be. When my mother visited the place, with her children, nine months after the death of her husband, she was much moved to find a great part of the Church in deep mourning for their beloved pastor.

"Love to God and love to men pervaded his whole nature. But I will forbear to speak of his characteristics.

"He sweetly fell asleep November 3, 1838, aged fifty-two years and three months.

"Respectfully yours,

"A. A. M. LEFFLER.

"*Richview, Illinois*, April 7, 1870."

He and his amiable partner, and several of their children, now rest in the old churchyard at Sharon. His headstone bears the following inscription:

"In memory of
Rev. JOHN SILLIMAN, Presbyterian Clergyman,
Departed this life November 3, 1838.
Aged 52 years."

"Let his grave be where the western sunbeams rest,
When they promise a glorious morrow;
An emblem of hope that the righteous are bless'd,
When they rise free of all cause of sorrow."

Before closing this sketch it may be well to add a few traditions that survive in the field of his brief labors in Illinois. The aged people of Sharon Church remember him as very social and hospitable; as a preacher, doctrinal and rather lengthy in his sermons; as a citizen, full of enterprise and schemes for the improvement and progress of the country. He bought a farm of eighty acres when he came, and soon had up a new house. In 1837 he taught a select school. He furnished the capital for setting up a "carding machine." "He was full of business," is the expressive recollection of him. Alas! that such a man should be cut down in his prime! is the first "sigh in the heart," as we recall his sudden departure.

In the spring of the year that Mr. Silliman died another laborer entered the field—the Rev. Joseph Butler. Of this arduous servant of Christ it is not becoming to speak too warmly, for, happily, he still survives in a vigorous old age, at Pauselin, Minnesota. But any sketch of the progress of religion in the field of Mr. Bliss' missionary labors that would leave out any mention

of Mr. Butler would be defective and untrue. In his case there is no lack of material to interest the reader. Of Mr. Bliss nothing is remembered but his wisdom and his Christian courtesy; of Mr. Butler no end of vehement apothegms and anecdotes of his peculiar manners and spirit—some of them pungent enough for any palate.

Rev. Joseph Butler, A. M., was born on the shore of Lake Champlain in 1799. He was hopefully converted at eight years of age. He was educated at Middlebury College; was licensed to preach the gospel by a Congregational Association at Montpelier in 1825, and was ordained to the full work of the ministry by Champlain Presbytery in 1827. In 1836 he came West, and, after spending some time in the Synod of Indiana, in 1838 he crossed the border and came to Mr. Bliss'.

Mr. Bliss received his New England brother with heartfelt gratitude to God. No time was lost in introducing him to the Church in Edwards County, which welcomed him joyfully. He was immediately employed as a Stated Supply, and here he lived and labored, with but little interval, for twenty-three years.

The new missionary proved to be a Puritan of the most unmanageable type, but a most indefatigable worker. Possessed of a strong and

stalwart frame and zealous spirit, he itinerated with the most restless energy and devotion. "His driving was like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi," etc. (2 Kings ix. 20.) And sun or storm, drought or flood, it made not the slightest difference with him, apparently; he was almost always on the road. His fervent mind seemed busy always with some scheme for promoting religion. He seemed scarcely to know what it was for the bow to be even relaxed.

But with his consuming zeal he lacked *tenderness.* He had no such apprehension of Jesus as made his own soul rejoice, and, consequently, he could not make his hearers. He knew how to preach the Scripture doctrines of depravity and guilt. He could sometimes make his audience tremble under a discovery that he could give them of their ruin; and he could explain to them the nature and necessity of the work of God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, in the merciful salvation of sinners; but there was one element wanting in his preaching—he could not *persuade.* He dwelt on the innermost gospel truths with a masterly clearness and comprehension, and most impressive solemnity, and he almost always drove his auditory to some sort of attention to them, but could not *draw* them by the sweet allurements of *love.* His bold and searching sermons,

actually exterminating all false hopes in every candid hearer, needed to be followed by gentler accents in order to their happier effects. Hence he was more successful as an evangelist than as a pastor.

The first revival that could be called general in Wabash congregation was under his zealous labors in 1851. It followed a thoroughly awful sermon on the characteristic text, Rev. vi. 15–17. That evening everything seemed to harmonize with the preacher's mood. The dark, wainscoted walls looked gloomy enough. The candles burned dull and dim around, almost extinguished in their own snuff. Mr. Butler's whole manner was more than ever solemn. In his deep and heavy voice he announced a *prayer-meeting*—a great multitude would be there—the prayers would be terribly in earnest, and would be for destruction. These were the simple heads. He depicted the scene until every eye beheld it, and then he suddenly closed with a most arousing application. God was pleased to greatly assist his servant, and to direct the piercing arrows. "The slain of the Lord were many." Multitudes date their blessed hopes to that communion season.

His zeal has been referred to, but the words convey but a meager impression of the reality.

The reader will learn more from an incident or two.

During the meeting referred to, he and the Rev. P. W. Thompson, then Stated Supply of the Church, and some of the ruling elders, went from house to house, "warning every man, and teaching every man." There was one cabin in the woods where they were never able to find the family at home. Mr. Butler shrewdly suspected that they avoided him by adroitly slipping out at the back door while he was knocking at the front. His zeal was not to be thus thwarted. One rainy day that they were in that part of the congregation he made bold to so arrange the party that at the same time some should be rapping at both doors. That day the family were at home. Mr. Butler, perfectly pure in his intentions and seeking only their good, sat down at once and expounded unto them the way of the Lord with most searching solemnity and fervor.

He believed in impulses and sudden suggestions being often of divine origin, and as often as possible endeavored to follow them. He has been known in passing along the road, even in strange parts of the country, to stop his horse on seeing some one working in the field, alight, mount over the fence, and walk across, and solemnly accost him with some searching question as to

whether he had made his peace with God, and sometimes with happy results.

This conscientious regard for mental suggestions often led him to courses otherwise very singular. Anything that crossed his mind in the shape of a duty, if it had a smack of self-denial or danger in it, was almost sure to be obeyed. If he was "missionating," this peculiarity in his views was morally certain to take him into any stream that crossed his road if it were swollen, or to hurry him out into any storm that might arise.

Two "New Englanders," residing in Albion, six miles from Mr. Butler's residence, and who knew him well, were sitting before their fire one stormy day. A wintry tempest of rain and sleet, borne on a bitter northwest wind, was beating on the streets, and freezing as it fell. "It is such a dreadful day," one said to the other; "I wonder if Butler will not come into town;" and, at the word, happening to lift up their eyes, to their infinite merriment they espied Mr. Butler alighting at the gate. They received him at the door with bursts of incontrollable laughter. "We were looking for you, Mr. Butler; it is such a storm!" But Mr. Butler was not discomposed, nor his gravity ruffled in the least; he was acting conscientiously.

But he was most laborious and self-denying in his labors for Christ, and his eccentricities were forgiven by the most of religious people for the sake of his evident zeal and pious fervor. But they marred his usefulness.

In his labors he was particular to minister to the poor. Whoever had to be neglected they were not. He has often turned out of his way, and rode weary miles to visit and converse with some forlorn and destitute family, from the expectation that others would overlook and neglect them. All over the field of his career there are those in every communion who trace their saving impressions of eternal things to his efforts both in and out of the pulpit; and we might add with perfect truth, both "*in* season and *out* of season."

Gleanings of the Vintage.

CHAPTER XIV.

GLEANINGS OF THE VINTAGE.

A. D. 1837—1847.

FROM the time of Mrs. Bliss' death, his usual missionary work went on. His hands were filled with the accustomed Sabbath services, the monthly concert, the prayer-meetings, the Bible cause, and kindred interests. He wrought on the farm too as health and strength and his parochial duties permitted. He received his friends with the same affable and genial hospitality that had always characterized him. He *seemed* to be the quiet, courteous, and wise-hearted sage that he was before, seldom alluding to the loss he had sustained, except in the privacy of the most hallowed friendship, and then never to repine, but to justify the ways of God.

And yet, although *apparently* the same, cheerful with the peace of perfect confidence in God, as

"Too wise to err, too good to be unkind,"

still, all who knew him best, felt that there was a *change*. He was chastened, and still more subdued. Afflictions always either harden and sour the character, and chill the finer feelings of our nature, or develop them. To Mr. Bliss they were as the "fining pot to silver." He was always a man of deliberation, of cool and sober judgment, of true refinement, but to this was added now an evident but indefinable tenderness. It was not revealed by any change in his manner; it was *felt* in the tone of his spirit, and it endeared him still more to his people, especially to those suffering under the strokes of God's discipline. Every one who knew him, had admired, revered, and loved him. God had kept his faithful servant, to a remarkable degree, from "the strife of tongues." But still there was much about him, as a thoroughly educated gentleman, much of the refinement of mind, the purity and elevation of language, the dignity of manners—the result of a life of cultivation—that not all of his neighbors, nor even his congregation, could appreciate. But they could all now feel that he was in affliction, and this constituted still another bond of attachment. The more thoughtful from all the country side delighted to call at his house, to sit at his broad, quiet, beaming fireside and hear him talk. It was so unworldly a

scene, so hallowed, so cheerful, that it wore an indescribable charm for them. And then his wise conversation, the fruit of so much experience and reflection, was felt to be steeped in the very spirit of kindness and truth.

Mr. Lilly refers to this aspect of Mr. Bliss' life in his personal recollections of him.

But his preaching, also, became deeper, gentler, more submissive. "He never could be a *great* preacher," he used to say pleasantly, "his life had been too uniform and quiet." While this might have been true as regards that stormy eloquence that compels the world's attention, yet the verdict of his generation was, that he was eminently wise, prudent, and experimental in the pulpit. There was always a cloudless simplicity in his expositions of divine truth, and his language was so choice that his most critical hearers recognized it as even elegant, but for the last few years of his labors, there was added, to what had before been excellent, an unwonted tone of tenderness. It did not betray itself as was said before in tears, or any passion in delivery, for he was as calm and collected as before, but every soul in sorrow among his congregations *felt* it. He had always been "gentle among his people, even as a nurse cherisheth her children," but now there was a refrain in his sermons that the

ear of the mourner discerned. Thus God made him to be a "beloved Barnabas," a "son of consolation." The current of his tastes and studies seemed to set toward the comforts that God furnishes in his Word forhis suffering saints. *He* saw that these shed a steady ray on the night that invests the momentous realities of life and death. In these he rejoiced. He grew perfectly familiar with the solution that the gospel brings, of the mysteries of time and eternity. The house of mourning was congruous with his feelings, and wore no gloom. The spectacle of a corpse—a pale wreck of humanity, stranded forever—might revive his tenderness, but it recalled too the precious balm he had found in sorrow, in the religion of Jesus Christ. He "was able to comfort them that were in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God."

But in 1839 his health become so infirm that it was thought best for him to intermit his pastoral labors. The symptoms of consumption began to manifest themselves again. He had enjoyed a reprieve of more than twenty years from this decay that haunted his system, and the Lord had given him fourteen years useful labors in the ministry, so that it was without repining that he saw the shadows of evening at last beginning to

fall. Mr. Butler was called in to supply the Church one Sabbath in the month, for the year, as a colleague; the session stipulating, however, that Mr. Bliss was to moderate their meetings and superintend the affairs of the Church.

From this time forth his regular ministerial work was broken up by his increasing imfirmities. He was able to preach at intervals, for a longer or shorter period, but God was "weakening his strength in the way."

His infirmities were aggravated by a trip that he took to Cincinnati in May, 1845. He was the clerical delegate to the General Assembly from the Palestine Presbytery.* The interest, the excitement, the change of diet and habits and the slight, unavoidable exposures at this bright, but critical period of the year for a consumptive, proved too much for his strength. He reached

*This session of the General Assembly is memorable for the resolutions concerning slavery, by which the solemn testimony of the Presbyterian Church, announced in 1818, was understood to be modified before the pro-slavery spirit that was then blowing over this nation. It is characteristic of Mr. Bliss, of his firmness, his independence, his scrupulous conscientiousness, that he was *one* of the *thirteen* who voted against them. About this great evil his convictions were mature, his opposition firm, and his fears amounted to an expectation that God would terribly reward us for it as a nation.

The vote stood, yeas 168, nays 13, excused 4.

his home in June by way of Evansville, quite prostrated. During the remainder of the year he preached but little. Indeed, for much of the time he was confined to the house, and often for weeks together, for more or less of each day, to his bed.

But if the abundant "vintage" of his life was passed, yet, as it is with all the righteous, "gleaning grapes were left in it, as in the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries remain in the top of the uppermost bough, and four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof."

When laid aside from the ministry his value as a counselor became better understood. When his tall and venerated form ceased to be often seen abroad, his wisdom and benevolence began to be appreciated more than ever. God gave his faithful servant a blessed influence in his decline. "Although the outward man was perishing, the inward man was renewed day by day;" and his conversation was suitably rich, spiritual, and animated. A venerable elder says of the time, in July and August when he was entirely secluded on account of inflammatory sore eyes, and a hectic fever, that it was a "real feast to sit in his darkened room and hear him converse." His close observation, his large experience, his learning, his meekness, his piety, and unfailing cheerful-

ness, all combined to make his society inestimable. But every one in perplexity—inquirers after the way of life, doubting professors, his brethren of session, the elders of the churches around, his fellow-presbyters, physicians, lawyers—all delighted to take counsel at his lips. In his advice he was very faithful. It is scarcely probable that he gave satisfaction in every case, yet his opinions on the doubtful point generally settled the question. His method of giving advice was wise and eminently gentlemanly. His anxiety was to suggest the general principles on which the decision *should be* based. This he could, for the most part, do in such a quiet, clear, unbiased manner as made the interview delightful.

An excellent man relates that he fell into trouble with a neighbor concerning a private matter of some consequence to both of the families. There was what seemed to be an irreconcilable difference of judgment. In spite of every effort, ill-feelings were beginning to show themselves. Nothing was said of it abroad, but how could it be adjusted ? After pondering it long and seriously, and finding the case involved in greater perplexity, he at last betook himself to "Father Bliss." He did not at once introduce the question, and the brethren fell into a conversation. Mr. Bliss was as plain, wise, practical man, and

cheerful as ever, and somehow, to the anxious ear of his friend, the conversation unconsciously took a turn that exactly suited his wants. He listened with the intensest satisfaction. At sunset, he took leave of his venerable friend without having so much as broached the difficulty that brought him. The interview had suggested to him the path of duty, and given him all that he wanted.

Another method by which he prolonged his active usefulness, was by privately instructing his children and a few youths who came to study with them. The brief record in the diary of many summer afternoons of 1846, is simply:

"July—, Monday —, P. M.—Domestic school."

These words are all the vestige that he has left in his private journal of the interesting fact that, for some time before the close of his life, he was accustomed to receive young men and women into his family to instruct. For this he never received any money. He furnished them boarding and tuition for what they could assist in the household or on the farm. He thus fitted a number of the youth of his congregation and his own children for useful lives. That he did what he could in this work is not probable. Alas! it is almost certain that he did not. To us, who see how eagerly he entered into every means to promote the intelligence and piety of his congre-

gations, it does appear surprising that he suffered himself to be discouraged in this; for it seems that when he first entered the field he was accustomed to spend his winters in teaching. His schools were made up by subscription; and such was his interest in the cause of education that in order to encourage the attendance of the children and youth, he would engage to take in pay for their tuition not money only, but a pig, or calf, deer skin, or tallow, corn, beeswax—anything, in short, that he might but start them in ever so limited but true an education. After Mr. Shepard came he gave this business into his hands. But that he contemplated something more definite in the way of Christian education seems probable from the fact that when he finished his house he divided a part of it into small rooms for the accommodation of students. But Mrs. Bliss' death and his subsequent failing health appear to have intimidated him. No tangible enterprise was ever actually undertaken. But if he had but resolutely set himself to educate while he missionated in those early times; if, when nothing better could be done, he had made the "aged oaks" that nodded over his house his "academy," as did Dr. John McMillan, at first, and taught the youth, from the rustic cottages around, once or twice a day, or two or three days in the

week; or if this thorough scholar and gentleman had raised a parish schoolhouse hard by the old white meeting-house in 1839, no one can estimate the increased good that his quiet life had accomplished.

It is to be regretted that this potent method of laying hold upon the deepest springs of society, for the purpose of purifying and sanctifying them, is generally so little acted on by our domestic missionaries. Every minister on the frontier, by furnishing text books and facilities for study to the more thoughtful and aspiring youth of his congregation, would often immeasurably promote and perpetuate his usefulness. He would sow the seeds at once of piety and mental and social progress. This was the practice in the days of the illustrious fathers. Hard by the rude parsonage William Tennent built a ruder schoolhouse, and the brightest boys in the neighborhood came in to study every winter, and some of them, smitten with the love of books, lingered all the year round. This is but the old story of Dr. Samuel Doak, of Tennessee, and Dr. John Finley Crowe, of Hanover, Indiana, and Dr. McMillan, of Western Pennsylvania, and a long list of worthies, whose names and influence for good will never perish out of this republic. This is the secret of the wondrous power while living, and

the blessed memory that still blossoms in beauty and fragrance in all Christian lands of Columba, of the saintly Isle of Iona.

If our home missionaries, eager to serve their generation, would go out, with Providence for their guide, choose their field, however remote or obscure, and then, as a part of their pastoral work, open a rustic school and invite in scholars, "the wilderness and the solitary place would," far sooner, "be glad for them, and they see the beauty of the Lord and the excellency of our God." Isa. xxxv. 1, 2.

One incident must be recorded that occurred in these days of the gleaning. Two of Mr. Bliss' elders, who had first encouraged him to enter the ministry, and had stood by him, and grown old with him in its labors, were with him still—Danforth and Gould. At one of the last communions in Wabash Church, when they all met, the aged friends were together in the silent grove, spending the afternoon of Saturday in holy communions with one another, and in talking over the affairs of the Church and the interests that God had committed to them. With them was a younger but a zealous elder, Charles E. McNair. Their "hearts burned within" them as the hallowed interview went on. "I promised God," said Mr. Danforth, "that if he would spare my life and

give me comfortable success in temporal things, that I would build a house of worship for the glory of his name, in the neighborhood where I live. And now I am getting old, and I have not much time left to fulfill my vow. What I am to do I must do quickly." And so the solemn vow was divulged, and the brethren talked the matter over tenderly. Their hearts flowed together. They took it to God in prayer, praising him for the love that he had shed abroad in their hearts for his cause and people, asking for grace and wisdom to fulfill their purpose. Was that not a noble scene; those aged men knelt together in the secret pavilion of the summer woods, communing with God, and dedicating themselves anew and forever to his glory?

So the Friendsville Church originated.

To this glimpse of him in his long and incurable decline will be subjoined an *estimate* of his character and labors by the Rev. Mr. Lilly. It is very valuable as coming from one long acquainted with him, and a close and acute observer. I here record my sense of obligation to this gentleman for his valuable assistance, and for his interest in the object of my labors. All who know him regret that he did not seriously address himself to the task assigned him by the Presbytery of Palestine, of composing a history

of the ministers and churches in the field of the Presbytery from the commencement of Presbyterian missions in the valley of the Wabash River. The work would have been done with characteristic ability, simplicity, and historical sagacity.

Final Estimate.

CHAPTER XV.

FINAL ESTIMATE.

Contributed by Rev. R. H. Lilley, A. M.

DEAR BRO. BALDRIDGE—Saturday was the first day for six weeks that I have been able to sit up and write all day. You have the results. At night I felt that I had about as much to say about Bro. Bliss as I had in the morning when I began. I think that no right view of Bro. Bliss' character and labors can be presented that leaves out of view the fact that, from first to last, his lot was cast among people who, for the most part, either rejected the divinity and atonement of Christ, the personality and operations of the Holy Spirit, or God's election of his people to salvation and their final perseverance; and that, as a wise master-builder, God used him to gather a people ordained to good works, by the simple presentation of the "truth as it is in Jesus," without noise, strife or debate.

I met Mr. Bliss for the first time in the early

part of November, 1839, at his own house on Decker's Prairie, and living only ten or twelve miles off for several years afterward, we were sometimes at each other's houses and attended sacramental meetings, mutually assisting each other; and we continued to meet in Presbytery so long as he was able to attend. Besides his statements respecting his past life, most of the facts in relation to his history, which I gathered at different times, were learned from Mr. Cyrus Danforth, Senr., Thomas Gould, Esq., Mr. Winters, living in Palestine, 1845–50, Thomas Buchanan, Esq., of Lawrence County, Rev. Messrs. Isaac Bennett and Joseph Butler, and Mr. Samuel Bliss, for some years past a worthy and useful ruling elder in the Church to which his father preached so long. Among the impressions made on my mind respecting him may be mentioned:

1. His extreme tenderness of affection. Mrs. Bliss had been over two years dead; but when he spoke of her his eyes filled up, and his utterance almost failed. He showed me the little cabin in which they had lived, and took me to the thicket of sapplings and underbrush, where she had been buried. The sympathy of all who knew her was fully extended to him in view of the great loss he had sustained. I do not think he ever recovered wholly from the shock to his feelings occasioned by her death.

2. His great modesty. After he was licensed to preach he went over and attended sacramental meetings near Vincennes, held, I think, by Rev. Mr. Scott. After a time or two, a friend who was with him, made it known that he was licensed, and he was called out to take part in the services. But I do not think he at any time ever did anything to put himself forward, only yielding to the extreme urgency of the case, in the performance of public services, in the presence of his brethren, at the meetings of Presbytery and other public occasions.

3. I always considered Bro. Bliss' natural abilities above that which God has seen fit to bestow on the generality of his servants in the ministry for the edification of the Church. But his mental powers were so well balanced, blended and harmonized, that whilst some of his brethren may have excelled him in particular things, his ministrations were freed from noticeable defects that belonged to the services which most of them rendered in the Master's cause.

4. His literary education was good, being a graduate of Middlebury College, in Vermont, and attaining, as I think I have heard, to the first honors of his class. He always showed in his conversation the advantages of literary culture, as well as in his public ministrations.

5. His perseverance was very great. His health failing in the East whilst prosecuting his studies for the ministry, he turned Westward. What influences guided his choice of a home, or by what method he traveled to Illinois, we never learned. But, after spending a year or two, having built his cabin, and made his home on Decker's Prairie, he went back to New England for his wife, a Miss Worcester, belonging to a family quite distinguished in the literary and theological world, and destined herself to pre-eminent distinction in her new position. Money was scarce then, and traveling by stage, when there was one, was very expensive, so, as Mr. Winters told me, he walked all the way back to get his wife. Having chosen his home, and entered on the work given him of God to accomplish in the preaching of the gospel, he continued to walk in the same path to the day of his death—to labor, as God gave him strength, in the same work.

6. His doctrine, after his license, was, we think, what may be called the old-fashioned New England theology. When he applied for license to the Hopkinton Association of New Hampshire, he was refused on the ground that his views of the divinity of Jesus Christ were erroneous or defective. He was afterward licensed by the Association, and ordained by the Presbytery

of Salem, if I have been rightly informed. With strong predilections for New England and her institutions, he adhered to the Old School in the division of 1837 and 1838, but always retained an unabated attachment to, and strong confidence in, our New School brethren of his acquaintance. And to the day of his death the benefactions of his people to the cause of missions was made mainly, if not wholly, through the so called American Institutions.

7. His preaching. To the great mass of people his manner was tame and unimpulsive. With feeble health, fatigued with labor, small audiences, and many outward discouragements, in the warm days of summer, speaking to men not very much advanced in intellectual culture, we see on all sides some reason to believe the complaint, that he could not always keep them awake during the sermon. The matter of Mr. Bliss' sermons was good, more the result of his own meditations on divine truth than the presentation of the strong points of systematic or controversial theology, as brought out by others. The main charms of his preaching were for the more pious, intelligent and thoughtful of his people. Without feeling at the time that there was anything of special weight in his Sabbath sermon, during the week their thoughts often

reverted to it; it dwelt in their minds; they talked it over among themselves; gradually their minds were enlightened in the truth; their affections were enkindled, and their resolutions for well-doing were strengthened and made effective in good works, adorning the doctrines of their Savior, God. His preaching was thus permanently effective over this class of his hearers, who always found food for their souls in God's service. In Bro. Bliss' ministrations God's doctrine might be said to drop as the rain, and to distill as the dew, as the small rain on the tender herb, and as the showers that water the earth.

8. His great kindness. Mr. Bliss' manner never failed to satisfy his brethren, and all others engaged in good-doing, that he was their most sincere friend and ardent well-wisher. A warm welcome greeted every one who came in the name of Christ. He always encouraged the settlement of ministers in those Churches that sprang up in parts of his own field, and rejoiced in any measure of liberality shown in their support, and gave most hearty thanks to God for every token of divine favor granted to their labors. More than twenty years ago we heard Judge Constable, in a public address, make mention of the patriarchal hospitality extended to

him as a lecturer in behalf of the Washingtonian temperance principles by Bro. Bliss, and he augured good success to the scheme from the prayers of so good a man. Every one in darkness and doubt had an adviser; every one in sorrow had a sympathizing friend; and every one laboring in a good cause had a helper and well-wisher in Mr. Bliss; and his kind manner gave assurance of it to them all.

9. His extensive usefulness. That he was useful, *extensively* and *permanently* so, is the testimony of all God's people in the region where his lot was cast. In the good effected we are led to look at his soundness in the doctrines of Christ and his life-labors, instant in season and out of season, to preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified, as the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation to all his believing people. That Bro. Bliss did so preach Christ in his ministry; that many believed on him to salvation, was testified to by those who have died in the faith of God's elect, and is witnessed still by those whose lives adorn the holy doctrines of their Savior God with the fruits of righteousness "the things that accompany salvation." God has ever blessed, and ever will bless, the prayerful, patient, faithful preaching of his own word of truth, to the salvation of men. But, in the

midst of a crooked and perverse generation, where the tongue of heresy could contradict every statement of truth uttered, God had another testimony. He enabled Bro. Bliss not only by an innocent and blameless life, but by the resistless logic of a sanctified heart and holy walking, mightily to convince the gainsayers, and to show to all the exceeding greatness of the power at work in the saints here, that being made holy, they may be made happy in heaven. In the great conflict waged by error against truth on that field, it is easy to imagine many a one led away from the hearing of the truth, by the loud and confident boastings of the advocates of some "wind of doctrine," quietly led back when the mind had spent its force, by his own reflections on Bro. Bliss' life of consistent holiness, who was in the end led to embrace the same truth, and strive, in his measure, after the same power of holiness.

If it be necessary to have a good report of them that are without, in order to enter the ministry, the value of that report to the ministers, who would be truly useful, continues to increase as time passes on. This good report God gave to Bro. Bliss in a wonderful manner. Of his honesty, sincerity, piety, there seemed no room to doubt among those who trampled under foot the

doctrines of Christ's divinity, the personality and work of the Eternal Spirit, or the choosing by God of all his people through faith unto a most certain and glorious eternal life.

10. "What shall we eat and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" is a question which missionaries in the West have had often to ask with anxiety, and which God has seen fit to answer in a great variety of ways, as they have been called to use different means to supply their wants. As to Bro. Bliss we have had but little in the way of fact, hint or conjecture. When he came West and took up or entered land some forty-five or forty six years ago, and made improvements on it before his marriage, it seems he must have had some means in his hands. Old Mr. Winters said that Miss Worcester's folks were well off; that they started back in a wagon, with two horses, and loaded with such good things as they should need out West. This all seems natural enough and in harmony with the subsequent facts in the history of the family. They took up land, made improvements, and had to live, when Bro. Bliss was too feeble to work much, and his wages, as a teacher, must have been small, and the people to whom he preached too poor and too few to help him much. But he was a man of thrift himself,

brought up among a people industrious, painstaking and economical, and knew how all manner of work about the farm or house ought to be done. And Mrs. Bliss left a name for industry, economy, and skillful housewifery, not surpassed by any woman that ever lived in that part of Illinois.

The case then takes this shape: Their little means were laid out in lands and improvements, and used to live on till their land was made available by cultivation; and that then, for many years, by painstaking care, rigid economy, and hard labor. Mr. and Mrs. Bliss did the main part toward supporting one missionary, who was not building upon another man's foundation, or taking a line of things made ready to his hand, but who stretched beyond the mission stations on the Wabash, westward into Illinois, and though weak in body, was strong in the faith once delivered to the saints; that with tears went forth sowing, according to the measure of his strength, the seed of God's word, and who was allowed of God to live long enough to see some precious sheaves of the first fruits gathered into the garner.

We might speak of the extensive hospitality of Bro. Bliss; of his wisdom as a counseler; as the ready friend of all that glorified God in the way

of elevating the human race; of the good he did among his neighbors by introducing improvements in agriculture, and allowing them to use his farm-tools and barn, when he sometimes wished they were well enough off to have such things themselves; of his success in training his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But we will pass all these things and indulge in two or three remarks.

1. Had Bro. Bliss, in view of a hard, unpromising field of labor, not yielding him a support, made an exchange, removing to some other place and beginning anew, it is not at all likely he ever would have done one-quarter of the good he did in his life, or at his death have left a name and memory so refreshing to all the saints of God, and an influence around him so potent for good for long years after his lamented death. He staid and cultivated one field till the Master called him home.

2. A great deal is said in our day about the need of great physical stamina in men called to pioneer missionary stations, and a capacity to endure hardness, as a good soldier is not likely to be overestimated; but God does sometimes choose men, whose bodily presence is weak, and use that chastened weakness to soften down the asperities of men in uncultivated rudeness or em-

bittered opposition. Bro. Bliss had but little strength, yet we think it will be hard to find any other pioneer missionary who left a name of sweeter savor, or of stronger influence for good in the circle of his acquaintance.

3. Many feel now that no missionary can teach, or farm, or labor, working with his hands, without degrading his office or impairing his usefulness. But God may put a man, when the strength gained in the cultivation of the soil, may be needed to perform the labor of the Sabbath, and show that in gentle moderation, to a mind of strongly meditative cast, such toil may not materially interfere with the "getting up" of a sermon for the Sabbath. But Bro. Bliss may have had to labor too much at times, but God blessed him still as a servant, and abundantly owned his work of faith and labor of love.

Farewells.

CHAPTER XVI.

FAREWELLS.

A. D. 1847.

BUT the end wore on apace. The mortal faintings and weaknesses that betoken the exhaustion of the energies of life, under pulmonary diseases, began to prevail against him.

For years he had abandoned all work in the fields, his leisure hours for recreation and exercise being spent in his garden. Here he might be found with hoe, or rake, or water-pot in hand, during all the season, busily employed, with the flush of a gentle interest on his pale face. It may be esteemed of importance by some readers to know that this spot was filled with a noble array of culinary vegetables and of fruit-bearing shrubs, such as the currant and gooseberry, all scrupulously cultivated, and all the best of their kind, but that not one idle flower was suffered in the thrifty paradise. Potatoes, beans, etc., were not to be displaced under his hand for rose-tree

tulips and mignonettes. If he had possessed means to lavish, we seriously suppose that these would have remained unthought of. The practical was all he coveted. The reader will remember that it was said that Mr. Bliss was not distinguished for imagination, and this is an illustration. He seems to have had no "pool of poetry" in his nature.

> "A primrose by the river's brim,
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more."

But a turnip or a cantaloupe was. Do you think that this must have made his life very dull and threadbare? He had other "store of joys."

As the autumn of 1847 passed he felt that "his departure was near at hand." With perfect composure he arranged his worldly affairs, and disposed of all his property by a will; $100 was bequeathed to the trustees of the Church, to be paid to his successor in the pastoral work, in annual instaliments.

In November he was shut up in his chamber. First the fields, then the garden, and now the open air and the chilly but gorgeous landscape were deserted and withdrawn from the world; the rest of his days were spent in the hush and contemplation of the sick-room. The stream of his busy, quiet life was now fallen into a silent pool, where it must soon stagnate.

"Tell us something of your father's last days," is often asked of Mr. Bliss' children, and the simple answer uniformly is, "There was nothing striking nor remarkable. It was all so quiet and cheerful that it was more like a preparation for a plesant journey than anything more solemn." His chamber was a place to which his devout friends loved to resort, and he conversed freely when his failing strength permitted; but there was nothing angular, odd or dazzling in his remarks to fasten them in the memory. All was subdued, devout common sense. What can be recalled after the lapse of twenty-three years, is chiefly remarkable for its wisdom and cheerful piety.

> "The chamber where the good man meets his fate
> Is privileged above the common walks of life,
> Quite on the verge of heaven."

And such was this, a scene of unfeigned faith and living hope. With a ripe and rich experience in a full age he was coming to his end, "like as a shock of corn cometh in his season." Grace shone in his presence and conversation. To an elder he said: "I lie here and think of God, of his glory and grace, and anticipate the time when I shall behold "Him as he is," until I am perfectly exhausted with my feelings, and almost ready to expire."

He often quoted the language of David: "As for me I shall behold his face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness;" and then would add, "That nothing short of this would satisfy—nothing less than the likeness of God;" for this he said he longed, hungered and thirsted.

"Often," says his son, Samuel Wood Bliss, "during his last sickness he spoke to me of the pleasure, the privilege and the necessity of *prayer;* and once, in particular, he said to us both, my sister and myself, 'If you would ever do any good, or be anything more than common *professors*, you must be *much in prayer*—much at the throne of grace.'"

He frequently called his children in and conversed long and particularly with them respecting the duties of life and the conduct of their worldly business, so as at once to secure the approbation of God and a good measure of success. Sometimes when the interview had been exclusively of wordly affairs, at the close he would mention it, and say, "I hope you will not think that I estimate these things very highly. I do not; but they have their importance."

He often repeated, with great satisfaction, passages of the hymn, entitled "All is well."

"What's this that steals upon my frame?
Is it death?
That soon will quench this vital flame?
Is it death?

"If this be death I soon shall be
From every pain and sorrow free;
I shall the King of glory see:
All is well, all is well!

* * * * * * * * *

"There's not a cloud that doth arise,
To hide my Savior from my eyes.
I soon shall mount above the skies:
All is well, all is well!"

His soul must have triumphed to be in harmony with these exultant sentiments. It gave him particular pleasure when any one came in who could sing the hymn. He could not sing himself, this cheerful gift had been denied him, but his soul was refreshed by the inspiring lay. He often answered to those who inquired concerning his condition, with this buoyant refrain, "All is well."

Toward the last he remarked to one—I suppose Mrs. D., "I am passing through the valley of the shadow of death; but where is the darkness?"

At length the communion meeting, generally

celebrated in midwinter in Wabash Church, opened. Mr. Butler was present to conduct it. The interest, the excitement of the sacred occasion, could not but reach him in his seclusion and tell on his sensitive nerves. On Sabbath Mr. Bennet was present, and the meeting was peculiarly tender and solemn. All day the people knew that their faithful pastor and friend was sinking. In the afternoon, one standing by his bedside, put his hand under the covers and felt his feet. Mr. Bliss noticed it and questioned him. "They are cold," was the subdued answer. "That is favorable," was the immediate response, with a gentle smile.

Once, during the night, he was heard to breathe the words, "Farewell, my children, my friends, and wicked world!"

On Monday morning there had not been time for the family to finish the morning meal and gather in their father's room for the accustomed prayers, when his summons came. The sun was just risen upon the earth when this holy man of God quietly, sweetly, as "God giveth his beloved sleep," entered into his "everlasting rest."

Thus his "longings" were satisfied.