

OLIVE TREES

A Monthly Journal devoted to Missionary Work in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.

No.

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10.

QUESTIONS OF THE HOUR.

*ARE WE LIVING "IN HIS STEPS" ?

Miss Ina Faris.

There is a question which comprehends all others, which has to do not only with our existence here, but which determines our eternal destiny. In what way to treat the body; in what way to treat the mind; in what manner to treat the soul; in brief, how to live completely? Since this is the great thing needful for us to learn in order that we may use all our faculties to the greatest advantage of ourselves and others and for the honor and glory of our Creator, it is a question which should call forth our deepest thought, and it behooves us to consider it not in a vague half-conscious way, but carefully, methodically, prayerfully.

We all have our ideals either in reality or imagination; but there is only one whom we can safely imitate at all times and under all circumstances, because He alone was a living example of perfection. As sea-sands are made beautiful by their bearing the seal of the motion of the waters, so we may say that our lives are beautiful just in proportion as they have been cleansed and purified by the blood which flowed on Calvary, and consequently just in proportion as they bear the image of Him who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. This is our high calling.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." The Psalmist says; "Righteousness shall go before Him and shall set us in the way of His steps." We may easily walk in that way if we will; for although it is a narrow road, it is also a straight one, since our perfect example has gone before, making the crooked places straight, and smoothing the rough places in our pathway.

Practical righteousness is what we as Christian Endeavorers need, if we would cope with existing evils. If we confess a good creed and yet live selfish and worldly lives, we most certainly are not loyal to Christ; our hearts are not responsive to the Master's love; we are not living in His steps. "Occupy till I come" is a commission the fulfillment of which requires us to walk in the steps of the Master, and one which brings with it opportunities and responsibilities greater by far than our short-sighted experience recognizes and more wonderful than our weak faith grasps. The commission is universal, and yet there are places in the Master's kingdom unoccupied and undeveloped, possessions waiting for those who have character, wisdom and skill, ready by inheritance and by preparation to take possession of the heritage of promise.

In this connection we must recognize the fact, "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest

* Read at the Young People's Convention of Iowa Presbytery, at Morning Sun, Ia., August 15, 1899, and published by request.

MONOGRAPHS.

MISSIONARIES OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH TO THE LOWER PROVINCES OF CANADA.

JAMES REID LAWSON.

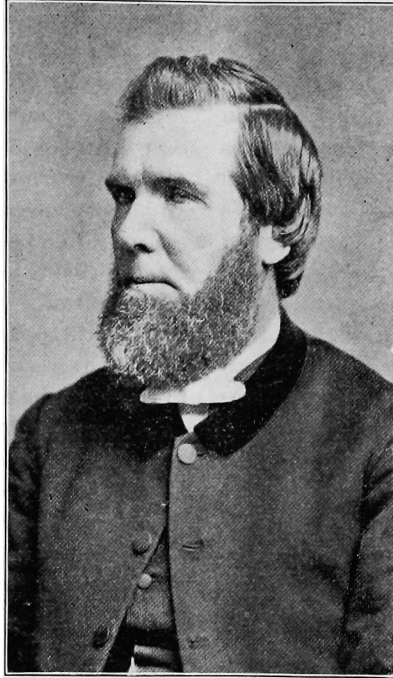
The settlement of Mr. Stavely in St. John, N. B., in 1841 (see *OLIVE TREES* for August, p. 248) was a great blessing to the congregation there. His hands, however, were full of work. Indeed, so pressing were the demands of pastoral duties on his time and labor that he was unable to visit regularly, much less supply with preaching, destitute localities in the country where the services of a minister were eagerly sought for. Soon his appeals were united with those of Mr. Sommerville in Nova Scotia for more laborers. In its report to the Synod of 1842, the Board of Directors says: "Mr. Stavely strongly urges the expediency and necessity of sending out as soon as possible an additional missionary to itinerate among a number of places where his labors would be gladly received and highly appreciated; and he states it as his firm conviction that one or two active missionaries, thus employed, would soon obtain adequate support, and would, under the divine blessing, be instrumental in advancing the cause of the Covenanted Reformation in the Colonies. Persuaded of the importance of strengthening the hands of our missionaries and of entering with vigor upon favorable openings that are presented, we would cordially rejoice in the tender of the service of any devoted young men, suitably qualified for this Mission, and we entertain the confidence that the Church would willingly furnish the means of sending them to the Colonies and for aiding them in ministering the Bread of Life to a scattered and destitute people." There was no response for years.

The young man whom the Redeemer was preparing to go to their assistance was James Reid Lawson, then a student in the seminary at Paisley, and having only recently completed his literary course. Mr. Lawson was born in Rathfriland, Ireland, May 23, 1820, and like many others who have risen to eminence in the service of Christ, enjoyed careful training in a Christian home. From his godly parents, James and Elizabeth Reid Lawson, he seems to have inherited the gentleness combined with devotion to truth that distinguished his whole ministry and was so constantly commended to the young under his pastoral oversight. In his quiet and impressive presentation of the Gospel was heard the voice of Elizabeth Reid.

Mr. Lawson received his early education in local schools and graduated from the Belfast Academical Institution in 1841. His theological studies were pursued under the instruction of Dr. Andrew Symington, the beauty of whose character made upon the mind and heart of the young student an ineffaceable impression. Not only did he recognize in his great teacher a communion with God which made his very presence a vital force in the community, but carried away a thirst for that daily contact with the unseen and spiritual which gave the beloved professor such power over men. On returning from Scotland he was licensed to preach the Gospel March 4, 1845, and soon afterwards offered himself as a missionary to the Lower Provinces of Canada. I cannot lay my hand on any published account of the services connected with his ordination to this field, but a letter from Mr. Lawson, addressed to Rev. William Sommerville, under date December 15, 1845, reports that he was set apart to the work of the minis-

try *sine cura* by the Southern Presbytery in Ireland, on the 11th of September of the same year, and arrived in St. John on the 5th of November after a pleasant voyage of one month, and a certificate to this effect was subsequently forwarded to the Presbytery of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and was accepted at its spring meeting in May, 1847.

Soon after his arrival Mr. Lawson visited South Stream, now Barnesville, a flourishing settlement about twenty miles from St. John. At that time it was a veritable wilderness, but beautiful in its rugged scenery. Forest-covered hills, well-watered intervals or meadows, not then brought fully under cultivation, and not far away the lovely Loch Lomond with its wooded banks, and



had emigrated to New Brunswick twenty years before, but only two Covenanters. Among these early settlers was George Dobson, a British soldier, who had received from the Government a grant of land in that part of the Province. A Presbyterian

by birth and attachment he gave to this society, in 1838, an acre of land for a "Presbyterian Meeting House forever, in consideration of five shillings and the further consideration of having a pew in the Meeting House." This deed was made to six trustees, who subsequently secured a minister, Rev. Charles Atkinson, a representative of the Church of Scotland, whose services seem to have been very acceptable for a term of years. But for some reason, that happily has not

Yours Affectionately,
James Reed Lawson

for eight miles skirted by a carriage road to the city, made the place an ideal home or retreat for one who wished to commune with Nature. In that vicinity he found a society of Presbyterian families, with few exceptions from the North of Ireland, who

found its way into history, he fell out with a leading trustee with whose family he boarded and was told that he could not occupy the pulpit any longer. It was a novel way of dissolving the pastoral relation, but Mr. Atkinson, after holding open

air services in the churchyard for one Sabbath, accepted the situation and left the place.

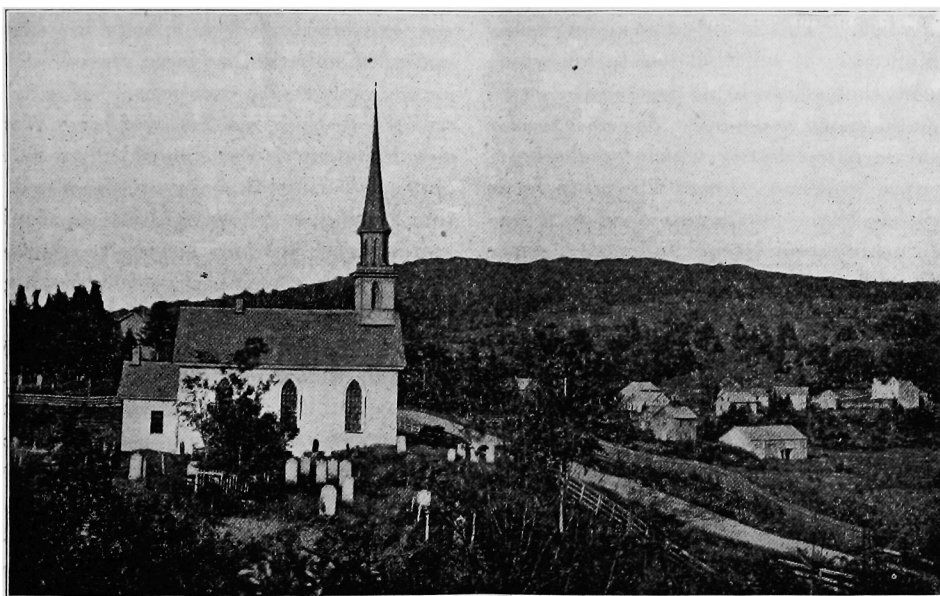
His successor was Mr. Lawson, whose preaching captivated all hearts, and the people invited him to make his home among them and become their pastor. At a meeting of the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Presbytery, held in St. John, April 12, 1846, the following minute was entered on the Records: "A call to Rev. J. R. Lawson from South Stream requiring his services for three years and promising an annual support of £60 currency is laid on the table of the Presbytery. It is proposed and agreed to that Mr. Lawson be the stated supply of South Stream in compliance with the stipulation of the invitation, and that he, with Mr. Stavely, be a committee to take this case under particular consideration and to deal with the applicants for communion according to the good order of the Church." This was the origin of the Reformed Presbyterian congregation of Barnesville. As I learned in the summer from Mrs. McElhenny, an aged member of the St. John Church, who was born at South Stream, a daughter of Mr. Dobson, Mr. Sommerville, of Nova Scotia, had visited that locality many years before the Presbyterians had formed themselves into a society, preaching in barns and private houses, and seeking always to advance the cause of truth. And her statement is confirmed by a sentence in the *Monitor and Missionary Chronicle* for October, 1847, where Mr. Lawson refers to a visit from "Our dear Brother Sommerville . . . whose services are particularly acceptable to the people of my charge, having first planted the standard of our Covenanted testimony in this destitute locality." But now for the first time there was a regularly organized congregation. The members of the old society were received into fellowship only on accepting the testimony of the

Reformed Presbyterian Church. The trustees gave a quit claim deed of the property to the "Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland, represented by the Reformed Presbytery of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, so that a house of worship may be kept and maintained thereon," and a few years afterward the present neat building was erected and paid for through the personal exertions of Mr. Lawson.

The early communions in Barnesville, or South Stream, seem to have been occasions of great encouragement. In a letter to Dr. Houston, convener of the Missionary Directors, the pastor speaks of the Lord's Supper being administered to thirty-six communicants on the last Sabbath of November, 1846, and adds: "It was, I trust, a time of refreshing to all, but particularly to some of the aged members, who had in days gone by frequently sat down at the table of the Lord in the land of their fathers, but who, through the infirmities of age, combined with the destitution of gospel ordinances, had given up all hopes of being privileged to sit down at a table provided in the wilderness, and to commemorate their Saviour's dying love in consistency with their own consciences and the good order of the Presbyterian Church. And I have also reason to believe that many who came merely to mock at our solemn services, went away deeply impressed with the solemnities of the scene and prepared to admit that God was amongst us of a truth." In another letter, written in August of the following year, he says: "Twelve more have been admitted to fellowship upon profession of their faith in Christ and recognition of our subordinate standards. Our little 'church in the wilderness' thus consists of forty-four actual members, of whom I take pleasure in reporting that they have hitherto evinced the sincerity of their profession by endeavoring to walk in all the command-

ments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." In May, 1849, he refers to Mr. Stavely as "having assisted at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper on the past Sabbath. Fifty communicants sat down at a table prepared in the wilderness. We had a peculiarly refreshing season, when ministers, elders, and people realized, I trust, the preciousness of the promise, which constituted the subject of the action sermon, 'In this mountain shall the Lord of

for the last time, as well as the young who were just giving themselves to Him in formal covenant and assuming, with much solicitude, perhaps, the obligations of discipleship. The same spirit reveals itself in the closing paragraph of a letter to Ireland: "I commit myself and my labors to Him whose I am, and whom I wish to serve, and solicit the continuance of your prayers, and the prayers of all the members of the church at home, for myself and the little



SOUTH STREAM OR BARNESVILLE R. P. CHURCH.

Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.'" These sacramental seasons were very precious to the pastor, who saw in them spiritual quickening and growth. A firm believer in the efficacy of prayer, he was frequently overheard, while in the closet, pleading for the members of his congregation and family by name, and at the communion table he always asked God, as we have been told, to remember in a very special manner those who were there

flock committed to my charge, that the beauty of the Lord our God may be upon us, and that by the blessing of God's Spirit accompanying His own Word 'the little flock may become a thousand and the small one a strong nation.'

Mr. Lawson's labors were not confined to one locality. For many years he preached three times every second Sabbath—in the morning at Barnesville, in the afternoon at Tynemouth Creek, twelve miles distant, and in the evening at Quaco, a village five miles further on. Other places that he

visited once a month were Black River and Jemseg, a settlement some forty miles distant whose spiritual destitution excited his special sympathies. "The great majority," he wrote to the Directors of the Mission, in 1847, "are Scottish Presbyterians. They have erected a comfortable place of worship, in which they assemble every Lord's Day, engage in devotional exercises, and hear a sermon read by one of their number. For a lengthened period they had not heard the sound of a minister's voice." This is only one among many similar cases of spiritual destitution which present themselves in all parts of the Province and which call loudly for the exercise of the Christian charity, which "seeketh not her own," but the "things which are Jesus Christ's." The journey to this place was often made under great difficulties, especially in the winter months, the roads so blocked with snowdrifts and the country so thinly inhabited that he not unfrequently lost his way and perhaps would find himself at last in some lumbermen's camp in the woods.

After roughing it for ten years as a pioneer missionary in New Brunswick, Mr. Lawson accepted a call from the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation in Boston, Mass., was installed pastor Nov. 20, 1856, and labored there for eleven months. About that time he received a very unanimous invitation from Third New York, then one of the largest and most influential pastorates connected with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the city. But on returning to the Province and being present at a meeting of the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Presbytery, May, 1858, he signified his readiness to accept a call made out in his favor by his old congregation in Barnesville some months before, and again became its stated pastor. And from that date, till failing health compelled his resignation, April 12, 1882, he continued to labor

there. And during his active ministry he had the joy of welcoming one hundred and fifty-six to full privileges in the Church of Jesus Christ.

This faithful servant of Christ was loyal to the church of his fathers. He never faltered in the belief that its distinctive principles would ultimately triumph. Though often "perplexed," he was never "in despair." "The truth," he would say, "is mighty and must prevail. Though present appearances by no means warrant the expectation of a speedy increase of church members, that is no reason why we should relax our exertions." Not a few will recall these as his words: "We are accomplishing no mean object, if we are only preparing the way of the Lord for the more general recognition of despised truths, if we are only sowing the seeds of right principles, which, by the blessing of God, will spring up in future times and bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of God; if we are only diffusing throughout the community a knowledge of those truths for which our fathers contended, and which, though they may be now despised, will be not only theoretically but practically recognized when the 'kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ.'"

Not only in the pulpit and on the platform, but through the press he sought to magnify the Lord. His published discourses on "The Millennium," "The Elective Franchise, or Why Covenanters Do Not Vote at Municipal or Parliamentary Elections," and "The Character of Joseph, or the Young Man's Model," are fair specimens of the themes on which he loved to dwell. In the spring of 1880 he started a periodical, the *Monthly Advocate*, which he conducted for fifteen months, or until the loss of health forced him to retire from its editorial management. In this enterprise he had associated with himself two highly

esteemed elders of the St. John Congregation, R. A. H. Morrow as publisher, and Thomas Maclellan, known to the public only as Junior Editor, who, after his retirement, continued its issue to the close of the second year. A paragraph or two from his "Introductory Remarks" in the initial number will make clear the aim and spirit of the magazine: "The present is an age when the press is employed to a melancholy extent in the interests of skepticism, superstition, and practical licentiousness. The adversary of truth and righteousness knows the value of types, and in these last days he is pressing them into his service as in no past period. Noxious literature of every kind and in every form is coming in like a flood to enfeeble the mind, to debase the conscience, and to corrupt the heart and life. Even within the precincts of the Christian Church doctrinal errors are advocated and promulgated that tend to sap the foundations of the Christian faith. Modes of worship are adopted that are utterly destitute of Scriptural warrant, and a practical conformity to the world is tolerated and defended that mars her beauty, weakens her influence, and drags her down from her proper moral elevation to the world's low level. The nations of the world have not yet, fully, cordially, practically, fallen in with the Divine decree that has constituted the Mediator the King of Zion and 'Head over all things to the Church.' In such a condition of things it is believed by the projectors of the magazine that there is need for it as a small contribution to the wholesome religious literature of the day. . .

"Speaking the truth in love' will ever be its motto. The advancement of the cause of truth and righteousness will ever be its exclusive aim, and 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,' it will be *The Monthly Advocate* of these things."

And must not "speaking the truth in love" be the motto of everyone who would be successful in the advocacy of unpopular principles?

In a private letter Mr. Morrow thus describes the character and life of his friend: "Whilst he made no compromise with the enemy he always spoke the truth in love. His influence for good was great, and those who differed from him in opinion, in matters of religion and otherwise respected him for his candor and firmness to the principles he advocated and exemplified in his life. His attention to the children of the congregation and those of the neighborhood with whom he came in contact was one chief source of his success as a pastor. His exposition of Scripture truth in the Sabbath School Bible Class was lucid and convincing. His chief desire in all his labor was that his Divine Master might be glorified through his instrumentality and that souls might be saved. He was emphatically a man of faith and prayer, and endeavored to sow beside all waters, assured that God would not allow the good seed of His Word to perish. When visiting or traveling he generally carried some Gospel message in the form of a tract, which he judiciously introduced as he had opportunity."

Mr. Stavely, too, who was very intimately associated with him during his ministry in the Province, bears this testimony in a tribute to his memory that appeared in the *Irish Covenanter* for September, 1891: "He was soon and favorably known on account of the unobtrusive excellencies of his Christian disposition, the matter and method of his pulpit discourses, and his ability in unfolding the mysteries of the kingdom of God. He was, indeed, a spiritual workman, that needed not to be ashamed, for he rightly divided the word of truth, and the people heard him gladly."

"His different publications show that he was able and willing with the pen of a

ready writer to explain and defend the practical application of such cardinal doctrines as relate to the mediatorial authority and crown rights of the King of Zion and His exclusive headship over the Church and over the Nations. . . .

"Although Mr. Lawson was ever ready to advocate the position and principles of that Church of which he was an honored minister, he was free from all sectarian jealousy. It is well known to those acquainted with his character that he lived in the most friendly intercourse with those around him and was always willing cordially to co-operate with the pious and good of different Christian denominations in their legitimate efforts to advance the declarative glory of God in the world. He thus sought to promote, as opportunity offered, the temporal, spiritual, and eternal welfare of his fellowmen and the best interests of his adopted country."

After nearly ten years of enforced inactivity, to which he bowed submissively because it was the will of the Lord, death came to the release of this good man. On the 4th of July, 1891, aged 71 years, he passed quietly away, leaving a widow, formerly Miss Margaret Hastings, of St. John, to whom he was married July 1, 1851, and nine children—two sons and seven daughters, who are all in the communion of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, but one, a physician on the island of Grand Manan, N. B. Though nearly two decades have gone since he ceased to preach and his voice is no longer heard, his presence is still real and influential in the hallowed scenes of his earthly ministry.

JULY 4TH, 1891, 10.30 P. M.

Lines written on the occasion of the death of James Reid Lawson.

The allotted mark of time is past
And one year more was given

Before death's cold and withering blast
Released his soul for Heaven.

A beautiful summer day had closed
And another week near ended,
Nature refreshed with dew reposed
As its pearly drops descended.

The Holy Sabbath of rest was near,
A day which he did love;
But ere its hallowed hours appear
His spirit had gone above.

Gone to join the ransomed throng,
"In the blood of the Lamb" made white,
And sing redemption's precious song
Around the Throne of God so bright.

Peaceful and calm as the summer night
He slept the sleep of death;
Trusting in the God of might,
He drew his final breath.

We mourn our sad, sad loss,
But we know to him 'tis gain;
For all things earthy were as dross
That so with Christ he should remain.

"Well done," we hear the Master say,
"A faithful servant thou hast been;"
Enter the joys of Heaven to-day
Which mortal eye hath never seen.

Blessed are they in Christ that die,
Yea, saith the spirit's silent voice.
They do not labor, grieve or sigh,
But in God's presence do rejoice.

The battle's fought; the victory's gained;
Life's race is nobly run;
The crown of righteousness obtained
By faith in God's eternal Son.

We laid his body down to rest
'Neath the shadow of the church,
Where saints by him were often blest
And sinners led to search.

MISSIONARY FACTS.

On the 3d of May, 1899, Dr. Nelson, Bishop of Georgia, delivered a masterly sermon on Christian Missions, in which he