

OLIVE TREES

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9.

QUESTIONS OF THE HOUR.

DR. JOHN G. PATON; HIS THREE BURDENS AND HOW WE MAY HELP TO LIFT THEM.

Margaret W. Leitch.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

Those who have had the privilege of listening to this honored servant of God since he came to the United States have had their hearts stirred with a new love for the Master and a more earnest desire to advance the coming of His Kingdom.

There are *three ways* in which we can at this time help to promote the cause of Christ, through helping to lift the *three burdens* which press most heavily on the heart of this great-hearted missionary hero.

The *first* of these burdens is the need of five or six additional missionaries for the New Hebrides Islands and their support.

Already in the New Hebrides of the South Sea Islands, consisting of 30 islands with a population of about 80,000, the mission has been extended to 22 islands. The Bible in part or in whole has been translated and printed, and is now read in 22 different languages, and about 18,000 natives have become professing Christians, while the remaining population of from 40,000 to 60,000 heathen now eagerly plead for the missionaries to give them the Gospel. The present urgent need is

for five or six more missionaries to occupy strategic centres and thus make known the Gospel throughout the whole group which is white to the harvest.

As Australia cannot do more for the present, owing to the financial depression in that country, Dr. Paton is forced to appeal to other Christians and Churches for help in this most urgent necessity.

In the resolution passed by the Foreign Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, by whom Dr. Paton is “commended to the cordial sympathy and help of the Churches and Christian people in America, Canada and the three Kingdoms, and all others to whom he may have access,” the following statement is made: “Dr. Paton has not only consecrated all his talents and treasure to the work, but also two sons, both of whom are laboring with signal success on the islands. The work is urgent, and beyond the power of the churches engaged in it to overtake adequately. And the Presbyterian Church of Victoria and its Foreign Mission Committee are pledged that funds entrusted to Dr. Paton should be carefully handled and judiciously spent on the work of the New Hebrides Mission.”

Are there not, among the large number of consecrated young men and women in this country, some who would lay this need before the Lord asking Him if He is calling them to offer for this work? Perhaps

MONOGRAPHS.

REFORMED PRESBYTERIANISM IN THE LOWER PROVINCES OF CANADA.

IN OLIVE TREES for 1899 there appeared brief sketches of the five ministers who were sent, in the first half of the nineteenth century, to the Lower Provinces of Canada as representatives of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland. To these men, under God, belongs exclusively the honor of planting the principles of the Second Reformation in that part of America. As the record of their life-work clearly shows they labored with great fidelity in the face of many difficulties and, without the appliances and assistance necessary to successful missionary operations, accomplished results far-reaching and permanent.

In September, 1847, Alexander Charles Stuart, who was formerly connected with the Eastern Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Ireland and had completed his theological course at the Hall of the Original Secession Church in Edinburgh, Scotland, under the famous Dr. Thomas McCree, applied to the Presbytery of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia for licensure. This application was made, in his own words, "on the ground of principle, convinced that the principles of your church are most agreeable to the Word of God." After hearing the usual pieces of trial and examining the candidate on the usual subjects, Presbytery agreed to license him to preach the gospel. But that action was only taken, as the Minutes declare, "in consideration of his excellent certificates as to moral character and satisfactory credentials as to having passed through a regular collegiate curriculum, and in connection with the hope that his attention to mental culture and the study of the

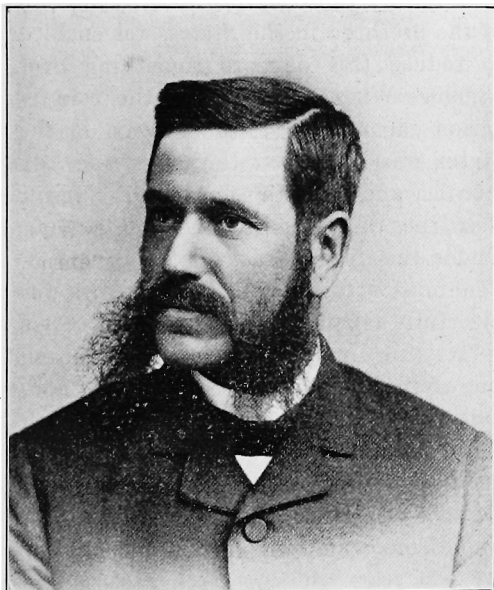
Divine Word would promote aptness to teach and ultimately fully sustain us in a step that the present exigencies of the Church seemed to demand." For two or three years Mr. Stuart preached in New Brunswick but his services not proving satisfactory, either to the Presbytery or to the people, he went to the United States. The future movements of this brother, who was ordained to the work of the ministry and installed pastor of a congregation in Ontario, Canada, in 1853, by the Montreal Presbytery of the United Presbyterian Church, are not necessary to complete this narrative.

In 1861, Robert M., eldest son of the eminent Rev. Wm. Sommerville, who had graduated from the Queen's University in Ireland in 1860 and had been licensed to preach by the Eastern Presbytery, January 3, 1861, accepted a call from the united congregations of Horton and Cornwallis, as "assistant and successor" to his father. He was ordained and installed October 16, of the same year. But, as he did little more than preach on the Sabbath, the government inspection of public schools in Kings Co., N. S., engaging his whole attention for at least seven years, from 1866 to November, 1873, when he resigned and removed to the United States, he cannot be regarded as having been at that time a factor of any importance in the work of the ministry.

These two brethren are named simply that the story may be complete. Their assistance was merely nominal and only serves to bring out more clearly that the progress of Reformed Presbyterianism in the Lower Provinces of Canada, up to June, 1879, when the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Presbytery was transferred to the American Synod, was due in a large

measure to the labors, often lonely and always self-denying, of the pioneer missionaries from Ireland.

On the 25th of August, 1881, nearly three years after the death of the late Rev. Wm. Sommerville, Thomas McFall, graduate of Geneva College in 1875 and licentiate of Pittsburgh Presbytery in 1879, was ordained and installed pastor of the congregation of Horton and Cornwallis. A young man, without any practical experience in pastoral work, and called to succeed a man of varied experiences during



a pastorate of forty-seven years, greatly beloved, and very decided in his views on certain points on which men, even of the same faith, do not always think alike, Mr. McFall soon found that his new position demanded tact and prudence, not only to prevent friction, but the withdrawal of some members, if not whole families, from the communion of the Church. Only a few individuals, however, went away, and those not because of any want of attachment to the new minister, but largely owing to their own idiosyncrasies. Dur-

ing a pastorate of nineteen years he has received seventy-four into the fellowship of the Church. And, after deducting thirty-four who have entered into rest, twenty-five certified to sister churches, conspicuously those in Boston, Mass., to whose numerical strength the Nova Scotia congregations have always been large contributors, and twelve or thirteen not walking orderly, he is now able to report a membership of eighty-two in Cornwallis, the Horton branch, which returned only fifteen in 1882, the year after his settlement, having now only a nominal hold on the Church.

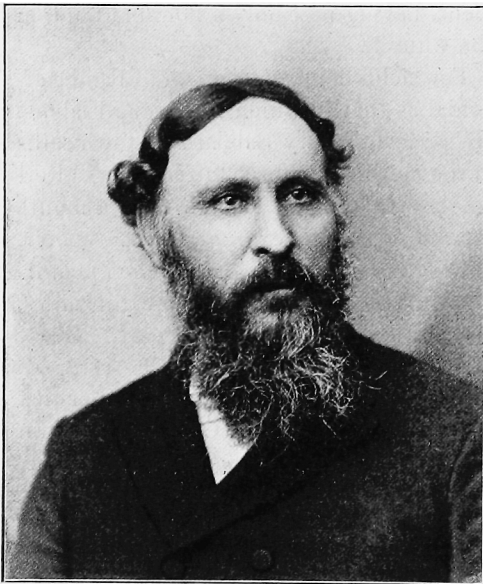
Few fields demand so much toil and self-denial as that in which Mr. McFall labors. He preaches every Sabbath at Cornwallis in the morning, Church Street every alternate afternoon, and Horton* **once a month** in the evening, except during winter, driving, to meet these monthly appointments, a distance of twenty-eight miles, and returning home on Monday. Every third Sabbath, in addition to the 11 A. M. service in Cornwallis, he goes to Berwick at 3 P. M., and Forest Glen, a mountain out-station formerly connected with the Wilmot Congregation, when the late Rev. R. Stewart was pastor there, at 7:30 P. M., except from December to April when the nights are so dark that he cannot drive fast enough to reach the place in time for evening service. This also involves a journey of twenty-eight miles. The fourth Sabbath, when he only preaches twice, is comparatively a day of rest. Ministers who have visited Nova Scotia will unite with me in bearing witness to the fidelity with which Mr. McFall discharges his duties. No pastor is more beloved in the homes of his people. Even in families of other denominations he is, especially in the hour of sorrow, a welcome visitor.

On the 4th of August, 1882, or nearly

*Horton is now given up.

three years after the resignation of Rev. A. M. Stavely, A. J. McFarland was installed pastor of the congregation in St. John, N. B., and remained in that relationship till December 20, 1894. At the time of his settlement there were forty-nine communicants and, when he resigned, there were sixty-two.

In reply to a request for some incidents of interest during his pastorate, Dr. McFarland has kindly sent me the following account of the payment of the debt on the



church property, which is worthy of preservation:

"When I went to St. John I found a large number of churches newly erected to take the places of those that had been destroyed in the great fire of 1877. The Covenanter Church was in the fire-swept district. Our people had sold the old lot and purchased another in a more central location, on the corner of Peel and Carleton Streets. This lot was 40x90 feet. On it I found, when I went to St. John, a brick building 40x60 feet, two stories high. The lower part was finished, so that

public services could be held at the time of my first visit in January, 1882. During this and the following year the upper part of the church was finished, and a three-story manse, 30x40 feet, was also erected at the rear of the church on the unoccupied portion of the lot. The lot adjoining the church property, 50x90 feet, was purchased so that the church building should be free from danger of being darkened by buildings that might be erected too close on that side. In this way there was incurred a debt of over \$11,000.

"In 1884 the congregation, by the aid of the brethren in the States, was enabled to reduce this debt to something over \$8,000. When the crisis to the congregation came in 1887, the Church in the States was canvassed thoroughly for six months, and with the encouraging result that the debt was reduced to \$2,700. Under this load it seemed the congregation must struggle, and the burden was cheerfully taken up.

"At this time, Mrs. Rachel Stevenson, one of the members of the congregation, concerned for the welfare of the Church more than for her own, undertook, with the help of Elder R. A. H. Morrow, to find her brother, James Mitchell, in New Zealand, from whom she had not heard for thirteen years. Their search was successful. In his change of location the correspondence between him and his sister had been broken up. He was as glad to hear from her, as she was to find him. At her suggestion, and in answer to his own request, a full statement of the financial trouble of the congregation of St. John was sent to him, and in about eight weeks there came from him the following letter:

Hawera, N. Z., Oct. 31, 1888.

Rev. A. J. McFarland:

Dear Sir—I received your letter on the 16th of October in answer to my letter asking for a full account of your church difficulties. You have given a satisfactory

explanation, and I am very glad to be of some service in being able to lend a helping hand for so worthy an object.

I am also glad to hear that Mrs. Stevenson, my sister, has the friendship and sympathy of yourself and congregation. Undoubtedly your church and congregation have had many ups and downs, and have had to contend with many difficulties, which makes the object more worthy of the support of any right thinking person. Enclosed you will therefore find a draft for \$2,700, or in English money £562 10s. By advice of my banker I am sending this draft differently to the way I sent the one to my sister, which you will see on looking over the draft. Hoping this will find you and my sister in good health, and that this donation of mine will wipe away all your debts, is the earnest wish of your devoted friend,

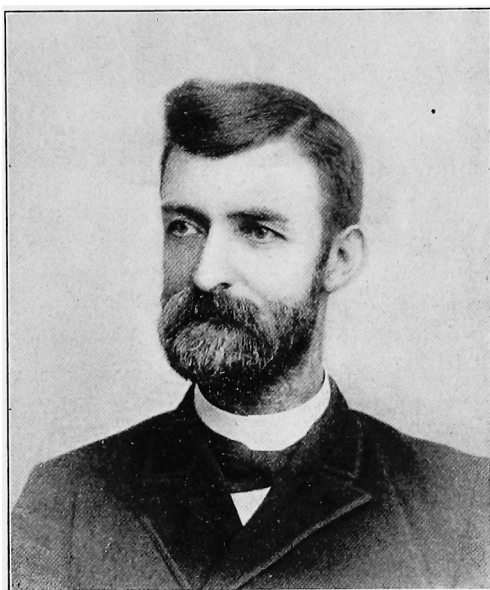
JAMES MITCHELL.

"The 'earnest wish' of our far-away benefactor was fully realized. In a very short time the mortgage was lifted, and the congregation sang the one hundred and twenty-sixth Psalm in expression of their joy and gratitude for the wonderful deliverance."

In the opinion of Dr. McFarland the outlook for Reformed Presbyterianism at this time was fully as good as that of any church in St. John. "We were," he writes, "the only congregation of those whose churches had been destroyed by the great fire, that was clear of debt. And most, if not all the churches that were out of the path of the fire were more or less in debt. In the twelve years of my sojourn in St. John nearly all the older members had passed away, and a number of families had moved away. But the standing of the congregation in the city for liberality 'was,' as a pastor of another congregation said to me, 'easily first.' It was also first in its interest in reform work, such as National Reform, Temperance, Anti-Secrecy and Municipal Reform. Though comparatively few in number, the members and adherents of the little Covenanter Church in St. John exerted an influence for good

in the city that was not exceeded by any equal number of any other church. In the year 1892, four years after the debt was cleared away, the amount contributed by the congregation for all purposes was \$2,700, or nearly \$45 per member."

The same year that Mr. McFarland was settled in St. John, Rev. James R. Lawson, the beloved pastor of the congregation at Barnesville, about twenty miles from the city, was forced by failing health to resign. The vacant pulpit was supplied with more or less regularity by licentiates



from the United States till May 26, 1887, when Thomas Patton, who had been preaching there, under the direction of the Central Board of Missions, for six months, was, in response to a very hearty and harmonious call, ordained and installed as pastor. The call was a surprise to Mr. Patton, and was only accepted after mature and prayerful consideration. At that time, as official statistics show, there were fifty-three in the communion of the church, and, when the pastoral relationship was dissolved on September 28, 1891, there were sixty-five, a large net increase

when the number of deaths during this brief pastorate is taken into account.

In a private letter, Mr. Patton speaks in the highest terms of the people. "Weak, financially," he writes, "they struggled to meet their obligations as few congregations do. It was not because of lack of support that the pastor resigned, but owing to the failure of Mrs. Patton's health. Barnesville had its full share of good earnest Christians. The faithful and devoted ministry of Rev. J. R. Lawson was evident in the sturdy piety of the people."



After the resignation of Mr. Patton the congregation at Barnesville was without the oversight of a minister for nearly seven years, and its membership was reduced to thirty-six. On the 27th of May, 1898, W. T. K. Thompson was installed pastor. The previous day he had been ordained and installed pastor of St. John congregation, which had been without the services of a minister for nearly four years, and he found there only thirty-one communicants, with a number of adherents.

These two organizations united in calling Mr. Thompson, agreeing to contribute towards his salary in proportion to the amount of time given to each congregation. At first he tried preaching in Barnesville in the morning and St. John in the evening, but this arrangement did not prove satisfactory. His present plan is to preach every alternate Sabbath in each place from May 1 to the end of the year, and the rest of the time is given exclusively to St. John. On the days when there is no preaching the people come together for prayer and praise, and some one reads a sermon. In this way meetings were kept up all the time they were without pastoral oversight. As Mr. Thompson writes: "It is only a repetition of the conduct of the 'Society People' in the early days of our Church. It held them together then and it seems to have done the same in these cases."

It is easy to realize the many difficulties and discouragements that this young pastor has to contend with, and yet he is laboring with great diligence and not without some measure of success. His work is uphill all the time.

If these congregations are to recover the lost positions of influence in the communities where they are located and were once and for many years vital forces, each one must have its own pastor. And surely the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America has some responsibility in this matter.

MISSIONARY LIFE ON TANNA.

Through the kindness of Dr. John G. Paton we are able to give our readers the following extract from the journal of his son, Rev. Frank H. L. Paton, missionary on West Tanna, which he received in July and which is dated April 30, 1900:

When the steamer came it was Sabbath. A heavy sea was running, the glass was