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Geo. Peck  
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# EARLY METHODISM

WITHIN THE

BOUNDS OF THE OLD GENESEE CONFERENCE

FROM 1788 TO 1828;

OR,

THE FIRST FORTY YEARS OF WESLEYAN EVANGELISM  
IN NORTHERN PENNSYLVANIA, CENTRAL AND  
WESTERN NEW YORK, AND CANADA.

CONTAINING

SKETCHES OF INTERESTING LOCALITIES, EXCITING SCENES,  
AND PROMINENT ACTORS.

1788  
By GEORGE PECK, D.D.

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## P R E F A C E.

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METHODISM is one of the great facts of modern civilization, and its vital elements are brought out in its practical results, and particularly in the examples of its actors, great and small. The history of Methodism in one age or place is its history in all ages and places, with the exception of the slight variation which is effected by time.

New facts, or old ones revived, may increase the vividness of the impression, or vary the lights and shades of the picture, but they create nothing, change nothing essential to the system. They are media through which the system may be studied, and are only valuable as they make the principles which they represent more tangible and practical.

It is a benefit to the world to wrest facts from oblivion, and give them a permanent record, if the facts give force to great principles, and if they are so set forth and clothed as to facilitate their study. The merit of a historian consists in diligence in the collection of facts, and in the judgment with which they are painted and arranged. The picture must be both truthful and captivating; without the first quality a false impression is made, and without the second no impression at all.

In the present work the object has been to rescue from oblivion important facts relating to a distinct period and a particular locality, but which have a significance in relation to the character of a great system of principles and instrumentalities. Every new fact, and every new variety of facts, gives increased vigor and completeness to the system, and helps the impression. In an effort to aid this result the writer has labored with a diligence which a profound conviction of its importance is calculated to inspire. He loves the institutions of Methodism, and has been led to the conclusion that their study in their original freshness is important to this age.

There may be seen in early Methodism some adventitious circumstances which have passed away, and which ought not to be revived; but, at the same time, there are vital elements of the system, which are essential to its identity and efficiency, which are seen to great advantage in the history of our fathers. The thorough study of its early developments and struggles may greatly aid us in preserving it in its integrity and purity.

The author frankly confesses that he has an admiration of *primitive Methodism*, both in Europe and America, and especially as it existed in the interior, in the backwoods among the pioneers of the country, and as maintained by the old pioneer preachers. To him there is a charm about it superior to romance. The moral sublimity of the scenes which transpired in those good old times transcends in stirring interest the highest flights of the imagination in its fictitious creations.

The real importance of early Methodism arises from the fact that it was the dawning of a glorious day, the beginning of a great work of God, the opening of a portion of the divine plan for the renovation and salvation of the world. Viewed in this light, the author has found his inspiration in his theme. The labor has been severe but pleasant, and the results which he has reached are far more satisfactory to his own mind than was anticipated at the commencement.

The process of constructing original history is synthetical, that of collecting facts or fragments, and, by a philosophical method, uniting them in one harmonious whole. The diligence necessary in collecting the facts, the study in understanding them, and the practical wisdom in construing them, constitute the real difficulty in the way of success.

Whether the present volume is a success or a failure the author now leaves to the judgment of an enlightened public. He has received important aid from a large number of friends, and to these he tenders his most cordial thanks. They are too numerous to be named, and he would not be invidious by naming some and neglecting others equally worthy of mention. He has intended to give due credit for whatever has been contributed to the volume by others, and whatever he has copied.

With this explanation the volume is sent forth, with the fervent prayer that the blessings of God may attend it and crown it with success.

GEORGE PECK,

SCRANTON, PA., March 27, 1860.



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# EARLY METHODISM.

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## BOOK I.

SOUTHERN DIVISION OF THE HISTORY, 1788-1810.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### ORIGIN OF METHODISM.

METHODISM is the name of that form of evangelical religion which sprung up under the labors of the Wesleys and Whitefield during the former part of the eighteenth century.

The first society or class was organized in the year 1739. This was the commencement of a movement which has resulted in a revival of primitive Christianity throughout Protestant Christendom, and its establishment in many pagan countries. Methodism is essentially aggressive, and one of the laws of its being is progress. It had its origin in the University of Oxford, but the island of Great Britain could not long contain its energizing spirit. It passed over the Irish Channel, and penetrated the deep gloom of that land which for centuries had been stultified by the incubus of Romish and High-Church formalism.

Having achieved miracles in England and Ireland, Methodism crossed the Atlantic and commenced its operations in America. PHILIP EMBURY, an Irish local preacher, commenced preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the city of



New York in the year 1766. A small society was organized by Embury, and their meetings were held in "a rigging loft" in William-street, until John-street Church was erected in the year 1768.

ROBERT STRAWBRIDGE, another Irish local preacher, emigrated to America, and opened his mission as a preacher of the Gospel in Frederic county, Maryland, about the same time that Embury commenced his labors in New York. From these two points the work of revival spread, east, west, north, and south, until the whole country was in a blaze. The doctrines of sudden conversion, of the witness of the Spirit, of a present, a free, and a full salvation, preached with the earnestness of conviction, and the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, arrested the attention of the slumbering multitudes, and awakened into activity the backslidden and lukewarm Churches. This activity in some instances exhibited itself in the way of countenance and co-operation, and in others in the form of alarm and deadly hostility. There was no compromise offered; it was either submission and fealty to the cause of God and his truth, or war, by "the sword of the Spirit," until the last foe should fall.

The old Puritans of "the standing order" in the Eastern States protested against the intrusions of the "strollers" upon their "parishes," and the High-Churchmen of the south shook their heads and vociferated, "Fanaticism! wild fire!" The dead Churches were stirred up, but at first it was like the rattling of dead men's bones. "There was a noise and a shaking," while, by the instrumentality of a few pious preachers, God was bringing "bone to its bone," and was about to raise up "an exceeding great army." The movement was an earthquake which shook the mountains and broke up old foundations, and a fire which fused the masses and prepared them for a recasting—a transformation into a new form of spiritual life. The instrumentality was humble, but the influence which attended it was mighty. The simple truth, drawn from the word of God, wielded in the un-

studied eloquence of sanctified feeling, mightily broke down the barriers of prejudice and melted hard hearts. Multitudes came together crying out, "These that turn the world upside down have come hither also." Sinners wept and prayed, and there was a great shout of triumph among the followers of the new light both in city and in country.

The work in America was reinforced from time to time, by missionaries of Mr. Wesley's appointment, until the Revolutionary war disturbed the relations of the two countries. Francis Asbury was one of these missionaries; and although several of them returned to England upon the breaking out of hostilities, he stood at his post until the fearful struggle was over, and then identified himself for life with the country of his adoption.

In 1782 the independence of the United States was acknowledged by the government of Great Britain, and peace established between the two countries; and in 1784, at the "Christmas Conference" the "Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States" was duly organized. Thomas Coke, LL.D., a presbyter of the Church of England, received from Mr. Wesley letters of episcopal authority, and came to this country for the purpose of meeting a pressing necessity of the Methodist people, affording them an ordained ministry, who in an orderly manner could administer the holy sacraments and feed their flocks with the bread of life. For this they had often sent over their earnest prayers to Mr. Wesley, whom they regarded, under God, as their spiritual father.

Mr. Wesley preferred the episcopal form of Church government, but, from a careful study of the fathers and the records of the primitive Church, had been led to abandon the idea of *apostolical succession*, and to adopt that of an *official* episcopacy, constituted by the presbytery, or body of elders. The primitive bishop he considered as *primus inter pares*, or first among equals, and not of a separate and independent order by divine right. He said he considered himself "as scriptural a bishop as there was in En-



gland." He accordingly gave the sanction of his authority, so far as it could go, to the origination of an episcopacy for the Methodist societies in America. Dr. Coke called a conference of the preachers, December 25, 1784, and that conference formally received him as their bishop, and elected Francis Asbury as joint superintendent. Asbury maintained his right to the episcopal office upon the following grounds: "1. Divine authority; 2. Seniority in America; 3. The election of the General Conference; 4. Ordination by Thomas Coke, William Philip Otterbien, German Presbyterian minister, Richard Whatcoat, Thomas Vasey; 5. The signs of an apostle."

Mr. Wesley's plan of Church organization and the action of the "Christmas Conference" gave great satisfaction to the Methodist people throughout the country, albeit they gave huge offense to High-Churchmen both in England and America. Under the new regimen the word of God mightily grew and prevailed, and many of the saved were added to the Church. It had now been eighteen years since Philip Embury first commenced preaching in New York, and "the numbers in society" are set down at 83 preachers and 14,988 members.

The economy and discipline of Methodism had come into being upon what, by ecclesiastical writers, is called "the exigency of necessity," but had already grown into a system. The fundamental principle of this system is *an itinerant ministry*. It is from this standpoint only that the ecclesiastical polity of Methodism can be seen to advantage, or its consistency, symmetry, and efficiency be properly appreciated. Following out this plan, the Methodist preachers spread themselves over the country. — entering every open door, penetrating the forests, and traversing the frontier settlements—carrying the Gospel of salvation to every hamlet, until nearly every nook and corner had been penetrated by the light of salvation.

The two points from which the light of Methodism radiated were in the neighborhoods of the Hudson and of the

Chesapeake; but the rays soon met and commingled on the banks of the Delaware, the Susquehanna, the Mohawk, the St. Lawrence, and the northern lakes. About four years after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church a ray of the new light fell into the Wyoming Valley, and kindled up a flame there which still burns, and we trust will continue to blaze higher and higher until the glorious millennium. The particulars of the work in Wyoming will be the next thing in order.

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## CHAPTER II.

### WYOMING.

THE Wyoming Valley being a principal point whence the Methodist movement emanated which spread over northern Pennsylvania and western New York, it may be proper to devote some attention to this celebrated locality prior to a delineation of the origin and progress of Methodism throughout those regions.

*Wyoming* is a corruption of *Maughwauwame*. The name is composed of *maughwau* large, and *wame* plains, THE LARGE PLAINS.\*

This name was doubtless originally applied exclusively to the valley which lies on the Susquehanna, in the county of Luzerne, state of Pennsylvania. This is a beautiful vale lying northeast and southwest, about twenty-one miles by three. In history, however, the name is used for a far more extended territory, included in a tract granted by the crown of Great Britain to a Connecticut company, and by them purchased from the Indians.

Wyoming was once a favorite haunt of the aboriginal inhabitants, but had come to be regarded as a distant and

\* See Wyoming: its History, stirring Incidents, and romantic Adventures, by the author, pp. 9, 10.



secluded region, not being near the great towns and headquarters of the Iroquois, or the Six Confederate Nations, by whom it was claimed.

The Delawares, having fallen to the condition of a subordinate tribe, were ordered to leave the country on the Delaware and take possession of Wyoming, where they were found when the whites first visited the country.

#### COUNT ZINZENDORF VISITS WYOMING.

Count Zinzendorf visited Wyoming in 1742, and is supposed to have been the first white man who set foot upon this secluded spot. It is situated fifty miles beyond the site of Bethlehem, the Moravian town, which is now of world-wide renown, but was then just commenced. The way to it lay across the Blue Mountains and through a trackless wilderness. The enterprise was a most hazardous one; but missionary zeal was adequate to the undertaking. All that the Moravian missionaries as yet knew of Wyoming was what they learned from friendly Indians, and the sum of the whole matter was, that it was inhabited by a tribe of pagan Indians, who were banished from the great world to a small but beautiful vale upon the Susquehanna, where they lived in the practice of their blind superstitions. The count had crossed the ocean to preach the Gospel to the poor Indians, and no labor or danger was sufficient to turn him aside from his purpose. He applied to Conrad Weiser, a celebrated Indian agent and interpreter, to accompany him as a guide. Weiser was too much engaged to allow him to comply with the count's request, but furnished him with letters to a missionary by the name of Mack, who, together with his wife, who could speak the language of the Delawares, proceeded immediately with him upon his perilous mission.

The Indians were much alarmed on the arrival of the strangers, who pitched their tents on the bank of the river, a little below their town. The purpose of the visit being made known, the chiefs assembled in council to take the subject into consideration. They were not able to under-



stand how it was that a man should cross the great water, and make a journey over the mountains into the wilderness, merely to instruct the Delawares, and that he should do all this without compensation. With them the more probable solution of the enterprise was a scheme for the conquest of the Indians and the possession of their lands. It was consequently gravely determined to assassinate the party, and to do it privately, lest the knowledge of the transaction should bring on them the vengeance of the English, who were settling the country below the mountains.

Zinzendorf was alone in his tent, seated upon a bundle of dry weeds, engaged in writing, when the assassins approached to execute their bloody commission. It was night, and the cool air of September had rendered a small fire necessary to his comfort. A blanket hung upon pins was the only guard to the entrance of his tent. The warmth of his fire had brought out a large rattlesnake, which lay in the weeds, and to enjoy its influence the reptile had crawled through the tent and passed over one of the count's legs unobserved. At this moment the Indians stealthily approached the tent, and peeping in at a slight opening of the curtain, saw the venerable man, too deeply engaged in thought to notice their approach, or the venomous reptile which lay before him. The savages were filled with amazement, and hastily returning to the town, they informed their companions that the *Great Spirit* protected the white man, for they had found him with no door but a blanket, and had seen a large rattlesnake crawl over his legs without attempting to injure him. This circumstance, together with the influence of Conrad Wieser, who soon came on in person to the count's aid, had great influence with the Indians, and probably had no inconsiderable hand in inducing many of them afterward to embrace Christianity. The count, after having spent twenty days at Wyoming, returned to Bethlehem.

## MORAVIAN MISSIONS AMONG THE DELAWARES.

The Moravians made considerable efforts to bring the Indians of Wyoming under the influence of the Gospel. There were large numbers of Delawares in the valley, their principal town being situated not far below the site now occupied by the borough of Wilkesbarre. Some hundreds of these native children of the forest received the rite of baptism, and exhibited the fruit of a change of heart. At Wyalusing, a number of Christian Indians had united together, without a pastor, for purposes of Christian fellowship.

The Rev. Daniel Zeizburger came to their aid, and took them under his pastoral supervision. Under his direction the settlement soon exhibited signs of a state of great prosperity. Lands were cleared and fenced, and homes arose for the poor scattered people. Grain, cattle, horses, and poultry were introduced, and schools opened for the education of the children. A church was erected, and a bell sounded from its tower to call the people to the worship of the living God.\*

At Sheshequin, there was a large settlement of Indians, many of whom embraced Christianity under the labors of Rothe, the missionary, who was a most pious and zealous laborer in the cause of Indian enlightenment; one of a noble band of self-sacrificing men whose labors will be rewarded at the resurrection of the just.

For six years the congregations at Wyalusing and Sheshequin continued to enjoy peace and prosperity, but causes finally combined to render their circumstances unhappy. The Six Nations had sold their lands to the Connecticut people. White men persisted in tempting them with spirituous liquors, and the Delawares on the Ohio were anxious

\* This town was situated below the mouth of Wyalusing Creek, in the neighborhood of what is called Brown Town. Their burying place was on the bank of the river, and as the bank was carried away by the stream, the bones of the dead could be seen not many years since.



that they should emigrate and join them. Hence, after deliberate consultation with Zeizburger and Heckwalder at Wyalusing in 1770, the final decision to remove was adopted, and the succeeding year about two hundred and fifty Indians, in two parties, set out for Ohio. One party, chiefly consisting of men, with eighty oxen and other stock in proportion, went through the wilderness, suffering great privations and hardships. Another party, with the women and children, descended the river in canoes, spent a day at Wyoming, shed a tear over the graves of their departed friends, and then left their beloved Susquehanna to return no more forever. They went to the West to be cruelly massacred by a band of wicked and fanatical Indian-killers near the close of the Revolutionary war. The story of their cruel fate is told by the historians of the country.

The war spirit which took possession of the Indians put an end to the work of religion and civilization among them, and the ground which had been sanctified by prayer and praise was subsequently stained with human gore. But for the war between France and England, and that between England and the colonies, the aborigines of this country might, with comparatively little labor, have been reclaimed from the habits of savage life and their heathen superstitions; but being prevailed upon to take "the war path," their conversion was then out of the question, and ever since has appeared to be almost a forlorn hope. War in its influence upon all classes is degrading and demoralizing, and that it should have this tendency in its influence upon the savage heart is by no means strange.

#### SETTLEMENT AND BLOODY WARS OF WYOMING.

In 1750 the New England people first visited Wyoming, and in 1753 they sent out a party to make a map of the country, preparatory to making a settlement there. The proprietors of Pennsylvania also obtained a royal grant of the same territory, and purchased it of the Indians, which originated conflicting claims to the ownership of the soil be-



tween the Connecticut and the Pennsylvania people, each being supported by their respective governments. The two parties of immigrants came into stern collision upon the soil, and hence arose "the Pennamite and Yankee wars." These wars were bloody, demoralizing, and in all respects most disastrous. The difficulties between the two classes of settlers commenced in 1769, and were finally terminated in 1799, after a continuance of thirty years.\*

In the mean time the war broke out between the colonies and the mother country. The Indians were enlisted on the side of Great Britain, and made the most fearful demonstrations of their savage temper, and their barbarous modes of warfare upon the frontier settlements. Wyoming drank deeply of the cup of vengeance. The famous Indian battle on the 3d of July, 1778, in which three hundred patriots met upon the battle field nearly a thousand British, tories, and Indians, under the command of Colonel John Butler, and were all, excepting about sixty, shot down or cruelly massacred in cool blood, nearly annihilated the settlement. On that fatal day widows and orphans were made in great numbers, and shrieks and groans and sighs were sent up to heaven from the ill-starred valley like the sound of many waters. The remnants of the settlement, consisting mostly of women and children, attended by a few old men and boys, fled to the wilderness, and there some perished with hunger and fatigue in "the shades of death;"† while many, almost by a miracle, succeeded in reaching the settlements at the east, and finally found their way to New England. The remnants of many of the families which were broken to pieces and scattered by the unequal and sanguinary conflict upon the plains soon returned to their beloved Wyoming, and then became permanently settled. They were, however, constantly harassed by bands of the merciless sav-

\* See Wyoming, etc., by the author.

† A dense pine forest in the mountain, about ten miles east of the valley, and so named from the fact that there death released several of the fugitives from their toils and sorrows on the first night after their flight.

ages, who robbed, killed, and made prisoners, as opportunity served. Strange scenes mark the whole history of Wyoming from the period of its first settlement to the termination of the civil war.

#### PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF WYOMING.

Wyoming was a battle-field, both between the whites and Indians, and the Connecticut and Pennsylvania people, because it was considered a prize worth contending for. The Yankees, who had left their rocky hills behind them, and found in the western wilderness a sort of paradise, were slow in making up their minds to abandon the fertile soil of THE GREAT PLAIN. Having had a taste of the wheat, the corn, the fish, the wild game, and wild fruits of Wyoming, they clung to it with a death grasp, and as often as they were driven across the eastern mountains they gathered strength, and returned in the face of the most fearful hardships, and even of death itself. Such was the luxuriance of the soil, and such the resources of the mountains and rivers, that the hardy and industrious settlers, after having been again and again robbed of their last penny, and left with scarcely rags enough to cover their nakedness, as often, in a very short period and with a few brave struggles, arose to a condition of competency and comfort.\* It was no barren soil for which such contests were waged, and which suffered so many wasting desolations without being deserted by its inhabitants.

When the Yankee power in Wyoming had become too strong to be subdued, and the people of Pennsylvania, by a potent public sentiment, had forced their law-makers to listen to sober counsels, and the greedy land-jobbers to relax their grasp, compromises were enacted which settled the disturbed elements of society, and ushered in a period of peace and great prosperity: Industry was quickened, the country was cleared up, the population was increased,

\* See the "Stories and Personal Experiences of Mrs. Myers and Mrs. Bedford," Wyoming, etc., pp. 133-220.



and Wyoming was a beautiful, quiet, prosperous, and happy rural district. It soon needed a market, and a turnpike road was constructed across the Pocono to Easton, on the Delaware. Hither the farmers brought their wheat, a distance of sixty miles, in the summer on heavy wagons, and in winter on sleds. Here they procured their groceries, cloths, etc. The river was also a channel of commerce, but its navigation was difficult and dangerous, and was only attempted by a few of the most hardy and enterprising adventurers. Still Wyoming was far away from the great business world, nestled in the mountains in isolation and solitude.

The spirit of modern improvement finally brought about a great change in the condition of things. Now the North Branch Canal and the railroads bring it into close neighborly associations with New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and the Great West. The whistle of the locomotive and the thunder of the cars have broken the stillness and gloom of the past, and a new era has dawned upon this beautiful land.

Beneath the surface, at unequal depths, in the valleys of Wyoming and the Lackawanna lies an unbroken basin of anthracite coal of the finest quality and in inexhaustible quantity. Many veins of different thicknesses are now penetrated, and the coal and iron business gives character to the commerce of the country. Now all is astir where but a few years since all was as still and silent as the house of death. Agriculture is still a profitable business here; it is, however, but a small interest in comparison with that of the coal and iron. Where the crops which were raised by the farmers once sought a distant and cheap market, vast amounts of flour, pork, and beef, from Western New York, Michigan, Illinois, and Ohio, are now consumed. Wyoming is now and must continue to be a great mining district; but it differs from nearly all the other mining districts in the world, in that it possesses a luxuriant soil, and is capable of sustaining a dense population from its own resources.



## CHAPTER III.

WYOMING, NORTHUMBERLAND, AND TIOGA CIRCUITS,  
1788-1792.

## ORIGIN OF METHODISM IN WYOMING.

THE revolutionary storm had blown over, and its blighting moral influence was now to be encountered by the Christian minds of the country. Morals and religion had suffered fearfully everywhere, but perhaps nowhere more than in Wyoming.

The elements of which society was to be constructed, and reduced to a settled and stable condition in Wyoming, may well be imagined. The impoverishing and demoralizing effects of the war with Great Britain, aggravated by the employment of the savages, who once owned the soil, and considered themselves in some sense as robbed of their natural birthright, and the still more desolating influences of a civil war, afforded no very flattering promises of the formation of a moral and orderly community. Parties were there who had met in the field of deadly conflict, and in whose bosoms still rankled the most terrible hatred. The relics of the army were sprinkled through the community; and some of these, both male and female, had imbibed habits which are common to the camp, and were not likely, upon the return of peace, easily to change their moral hue. Old grudges, and the universal anxiety for the comforts of life and the quiet of home, now would be supposed adverse to the immediate organization of the institutions of religion. Old Parson Johnson, a Congregationalist, was in Wilkesbarre, having survived the perils of the wars, and there had been occasional religious services held in different places; but there was no general religious movement in Wyoming

until the year 1788, five years after the termination of the Revolutionary war, and ten years subsequent to the fatal 3d of July, when the soil was stained with the hearts' blood of the little patriot band of her first settlers.

In 1784, as we have seen, the Methodist Episcopal Church was duly organized at the "Christmas Conference." Methodism had been propagated in Maryland, Delaware, New York, and Pennsylvania. It had commenced to work like leaven in the meal, and was seen taking root in many remote settlements and sparsely settled districts along the Hudson, the Delaware, and the Susquehanna. As the enterprising were crowding into the famous and beautiful Valley of Wyoming, Methodism crossed the mountains and commenced its work in *Kingston*. Here the first Methodist meetings were held, and here it was that Methodism, as a form of Christianity and an element of religious power, commenced its triumphs in Wyoming.

The commencement of Methodism in Wyoming was not the fruit of missionary labor, or of the regular preaching of an authorized ministry, but of the efforts of a mere layman, and he was a humble mechanic.

ANNING OWEN came to Wyoming from New England with the daring spirits who emigrated after the commencement of the Revolutionary war. He was one of the handful of courageous men who were defeated and scattered by an overwhelming force under the command of Colonel John Butler. In the battle he was by the side of his brother-in-law, Benjamin Carpenter. He stood the fire of the enemy, and answered it, shot after shot, in such quick succession that the barrel of his gun became burning hot. "My gun is so hot that I cannot hold it," exclaimed the brave patriot soldier. "Do the best you can then," was the reply of his friend. A shot or two more, and the day was lost. Owen and Carpenter fled to the river, and secreted themselves under cover of a large grape-vine which hung from the branches of a tree and lay in the water. Roger Searl, a lad, followed them, and the three lay in safety until the darkness



of the night enabled them to gain the fort. They were a portion of the small number who escaped with their lives from the bloody encounter without swimming the river. The place of their concealment was near the mouth of Shoemaker's Creek. While there fearful sights of barbarous cruelty in the river above pained their eyes and stung their souls to agony. They saw through the leaves Windecker, the tory, tomahawk Shoemaker and set his body afloat, and the mangled corpse of their friend and neighbor passed quietly by them, carried slowly down into the eddy by the current.

In the account which Mr. Owen often subsequently gave of his escape, he stated that, when upon the run, he expected every moment to be shot or tomahawked, and the terrible thought of being sent into eternity unprepared filled his soul with horror. He then resolved if he should be killed that he would fall on his face and spend his last breath in prayer to God for mercy. He prayed as he ran, and when he lay in the water his every breath was occupied with the silent but earnest prayer, "God have mercy on my soul!" There and then it was that he gave his heart to God, and vowed to be his forever. He was spared, and did not, as thousands do, forget the vows he made in the hour of his distress.

Mr. Owen returned to the East with the fugitives, but he was a changed man. He considered his deliverance from death as little short of a miracle, and that in it there was a wise and gracious design, which had reference to his eternal well-being. He was now a man of prayer, possessed a tender conscience, and indulged a trembling hope in Christ.

In this condition Mr. Owen became acquainted with the Methodists. Their earnest and powerful preaching, and the doctrines which they taught, met in his heart a ready response. He was of an ardent temperament, and was never in favor of half-way measures in anything. He soon drank in the spirit of the early Methodists, and was as full of enthusiasm as any of them. His religious experience became more deep and thorough, and his evidence of sins forgiven



more clear and satisfactory. He now rejoiced greatly in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free, and panted to be useful. The language of his inmost soul was :

“ O that the world might taste and see  
The riches of his grace !  
The arms of love that compass me  
Would all mankind embrace.”

In this state of mind Mr. Owen returned to Wyoming and settled among his old companions in tribulation. He was a blacksmith, and he commenced, as he supposed, hammering out his fortune between Kingston village and Fortyfort, at the point where the highway crosses Toby's Creek. There still stands the humble frame house which he built, and which his family occupied for many years.

Mr. Owen had no sooner become settled in Wyoming than he commenced conversation with his neighbors upon the subject of religion, and began with many tears to tell them what great things God had done for his soul. His words were as coals of fire upon the heads and the hearts of those he addressed, and he soon found a deep sympathy with his ideas and feelings was abroad and rapidly extending. He appointed prayer-meetings in his own house. The people were melted down under his prayers, his exhortations, and singing. He was invited to appoint meetings at other places in the neighborhood, and he listened to the call. A revival of religion broke out at Ross Hill, about a mile from his residence, and just across the line which separates the townships of Kingston and Plymouth. Great power attended the simple, earnest efforts of the blacksmith, and souls were converted to God. He studied the openings of Providence, and tried in all things to follow the divine light. He was regarded by the young converts as their spiritual father, and to him they looked for advice and comfort.

Mr. Owen, now considering himself providentially called upon to provide, at least temporarily, for the spiritual wants of his flock, formed them into a class. Most of the members of the little band residing in the neighborhood of Ross Hill,

that point became the center of operations. This class was called the Ross Hill class until the old order of things passed away.

There is still lingering upon the shores of time one member of this class—the first Methodist class formed within the bounds of our territory—and that is Mrs. DEBORAH BEDFORD. This “mother in Israel” has ever been a uniform and consistent Christian and an unflinching Methodist, and it is especially fortunate that she has been spared to leave behind her a record of the origin of Methodism in the Wyoming Valley. She is one of the number who have traveled with the Church from early youth to extreme old age without ever having the slightest stain upon her Christian character, or exhibiting the least evidence of backsliding, or even of wavering, in her Christian course. She has been a member of the Church for *seventy-two years*, and for *forty-two years* of this period it has been our happiness to enjoy her acquaintance and her personal friendship. She is now in the full exercise of her intellectual faculties, often attends divine service, and is patiently waiting for her Lord to say, It is enough; come up higher.

Mrs. Bedford says she joined the class at Ross Hill in 1788, in the fall; and she thinks Mr. Owen commenced meetings and formed the class in the spring of the same year. The little band were for the time well content to regard as their spiritual guide the man who had first raised the standard of the cross in their midst, and been the means, under God, of their conversion. He had not been constituted in the regular way either preacher, exhorter, or class-leader; and yet he exercised the functions of all these offices, under the sanction of Providence, and to the great satisfaction and edification of the little Church in the wilderness.

Mr. Owen proceeded for a while under his extraordinary commission, but finally began to be seriously exercised in mind upon the subject of the ministry.

Benjamin Carpenter, Esq., had become a member of Mr.



Owen's class, and was laboring under similar impressions. Upon comparing notes, they concluded to settle the question by opening the Bible and following the lead of the first passage which presented itself. Squire Carpenter handed the Bible to Mr. Owen, and upon opening it, the first sentence his eyes fell upon was: "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." Squire Carpenter said, "I cannot." Mr. Owen said, "I will." The thing with him was settled, and he then began to meditate upon the measures necessary to carry into effect his resolution. He visited some point at the East, where Methodism had a local habitation and a name, and on returning, at a meeting of his society, he said: "I have received a regular license to preach, and now have full power to proceed in the work."

Upon an examination of the old Minutes, it will be seen that Wyoming was not recognized until 1791—three years after the organization of the first class.

Upon being asked what they did for preaching all this time, Mrs. Bedford answered: "O, Father Owen hammered away for us, and we did very well. We were all happy in God, and were not so very particular."

This lady gives the following list of the Ross Hill class: Anning Owen and wife, Mr. Gray and wife, Abram Adams, Stephen Baker and wife, Mrs. Wooley, and Nancy Wooley. Subsequently came in Mrs. Ruth Pierce, Alice and Hannah Pierce, Samuel Carver and his father, and Joseph Brown, Captain Ebenezer Parish and wife, and Darius Williams and wife.

In conversation subsequently to giving this list, Mrs. Bedford said the Pierce members did not join until some time after she did. Four or five years must have elapsed, as from other data it seems well settled that Aunt Ruth Pierce did not become a member of the class until 1792.

The account of Mrs. Bedford's conversion, in her own simple and appropriate language, is as follows: "I joined the class in the sixteenth year of my age. I had been under concern of mind from May, I think, to September. I was

alone when I was awakened, and was then keeping house for my father at Pittston,\* where he and my uncle were building a forge. I was singing the two following lines :

‘O may it all my powers engage,  
To do my Master’s will.’

The inquiry came home to me, ‘Do you strive to do your Master’s will?’ I was then flung into the greatest agony of mind; I walked the floor and wrung my hands, and then fell upon my knees and cried for mercy; but I felt as if there was no mercy for me. Then I opened the Bible, and that condemned me. I continued between hope and despair for five months. It was on Thursday night, in prayer-meeting in Kingston, that the Lord set my soul at liberty. The meeting was a very solemn one, and when the last prayer was finished my burden rolled off, and my soul was filled with love, light, and power; it seemed as if the walls of the house praised God. The change was soon discovered in my countenance. Sister Owen asked me the state of my mind, and I expressed my feelings as well as I could. Glory to God for all he did for my soul that night! This is my experience as well as I can tell it.” The pious reader will say, And that is *well* enough; no one need tell a better experience, or tell it in more appropriate and eloquent language.

Mrs. Bedford gives the following account of the progress of the work. She says: “When Mr. Owen and Mr. Gray moved in, they, with Mr. Adams, immediately set up prayer-meetings and class-meetings, and the Lord poured out his Spirit upon us. Saints rejoiced and praised God, and sinners fell on the floor and cried for mercy, and few were able to keep their seats. These meetings were held on Sundays, Sunday evenings, and Thursday nights. This disturbed the enemy’s camp, and raised persecution against us, and our names were cast out as evil; but the more they persecuted us the more the Lord blessed us.

“The first minister that was sent among us was Mr.

\* The place was near the Lackawanna station, on the railroad.



Mills, the next was Mr. Lovel. They came from Newburgh circuit.

NATHANIEL B. MILLS had the honor of being the first Methodist itinerant who found his way over the mountains into the classic vale of Wyoming. In the fall of 1824, when the writer was in charge of the Susquehanna district, this veteran soldier of the cross visited Wilkesbarre, on the occasion of a quarterly meeting, with the venerable Henry Smith, who then had charge of the Northumberland district, Baltimore Conference. This was a great treat to us all. Father Mills then informed us that he was the first itinerant Methodist preacher who visited Wyoming, and, both in public and in private, gave stirring accounts of the incidents of that visit. This was in 1789, when he traveled Newburgh circuit. Joseph Lovel traveled on Newburgh circuit in 1790, and he was the next preacher who visited the valley. These early missions to Wyoming were not protracted or often repeated. Of Mr. Lovel Mrs. Bedford says: "He preached but a few times and then went away."

At this period there were no conference lines. The "elder" had a certain number of circuits in charge, and the preachers attended conference as directed by Bishop Asbury. In 1790 "Thomas Morrell, elder," embraced within his district New York, Elizabethtown, Long Island, New Rochelle, and Newburgh.

The next conference held its session in New York, May 26, 1791. At that conference James Campbell was appointed to Wyoming, and Robert Cloud was elder. His district embraced Newburgh, Wyoming, New York, New Rochelle, and Long Island. We know little of his labors on the district: one of his quarterly meetings, however, is recollected.

Mrs. Bedford says: "Our first quarterly meeting was held at Ross Hill in a barn. I think Mr. Cloud was our presiding elder. We had a very solemn meeting; the Lord was truly with us. The Lord now added daily to his Church. I had been taught that it was a dreadful thing to

partake of the sacrament unworthily. I cried to the Lord, that if it was my duty to keep away I might be enabled to do so. I said, Lord, I am not worthy. The answer was, Go in my name. I stepped from seat to seat until I came to the last; I then knelt down and partook. I felt sweet peace and consolation, and went home rejoicing that the Lord assisted me to discharge my duty."

According to the Minutes, Robert Cloud was continued in charge of the same district in 1792. He however only traveled on the district a small portion of the year, and in 1793 he stands among such as were "under a location through bodily weakness or family concerns."

#### ORIGIN OF METHODISM IN NORTHUMBERLAND CIRCUIT.

Northumberland circuit appears on the Minutes in 1791, the year in which Wyoming makes its first appearance; but the Methodist movement in Wyoming commenced two years earlier than in the valleys below. The following account of the inauguration of the movement in Northumberland is taken from a "Summary History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the West Branch Valley, by A. H. M'Henry," being an appendix to the "History of the West Branch Valley of the Susquehanna, by J. F. Meginness." Mr. M'Henry says: "As regards the Methodist Church, the first authentic information of their efforts to promote the Gospel in this region is from the Minutes of the conference held at Baltimore, May 6, 1791. A new circuit, with others in different parts, called Northumberland, was formed, and two preachers appointed, namely: Richard Parrott and Lewis Browning. The country had previously been explored by the former without receiving or asking any compensation for his services or expenses. This circuit, from the time of its formation till 1806, extended over the following territory: From Wilkesbarre,\* down the valley of the North Branch to Northumberland,

\* From Wilkesbarre to Brier Creek the territory belonged to Wyoming circuit.



through the West Branch, including White Deer, Hole Valley, and up the Bald Eagle, about four miles above Millsburgh, and the same distance up Spring Creek from Bellefonte to Penn's Valley, near and south of Potter's Fort; thence by the old horse-path to Buffalo Valley and Northumberland.

"Each preacher traveled around this circuit in four weeks, preaching every day, except where the distance was too great, as from Penn's to Buffalo Valleys, thus supplying each appointment once in two weeks. During the first part of the year 1791 there was no regular preaching place from Northumberland to Lycoming Creek; the latter was at the house of Arad Sutton. This house, or a part of it, is yet standing on the east bank of the Lycoming Creek, on the main road from Williamsport to Jersey Shore, and is now owned by Oliver Watson, Esq., of the former place. At this place was formed the first society above Northumberland. After a lapse of sixty-five years, it would not be expected to find many of the members of that society living; yet two still survive, namely, Letitia Williams, of Montoursville, aged eighty-two years and one month; and Rebecca Smith, of Lycoming township, aged ninety-four and a half years. She came to Lycoming in 1774. Mrs. Williams did not join the society till about 1795.

"The names of the members of the first class are given entire, as follows: James Bailey, leader; Rhoda Bailey, Amariah Sutton, Martha Sutton, John Sutton, Dorothy Sutton, Harman Updegraff, Eric Updegraff, Susanna Updegraff, Hannah Sutton,\* Rebecca Smith, living; Alexander Smith, Ebenezer Still, Letitia Williams, living.

"Soon after the organization of this class, societies were formed at various other points. At Larry's Creek was one of the earliest above, or perhaps, at a yet earlier time, Antis's, on Bald Eagle.

"In the month of August, 1806, a camp-meeting was held on Chillisquaqua Creek, half a mile from the river. This was the first camp-meeting held in this section of the state."

\* Died April, 1855, in Indiana, aged ninety-four years and four months.

There was a meeting-house at Sutton's, of which we hear much in the accounts of the old preachers. A log meeting-house was at Antis's, where there was a great revival of religion in the days of George Harmon's presiding eldership on the Susquehanna district.

In 1792 William Colbert and James Campbell stand on the Minutes connected with Northumberland circuit. Colbert has left a journal of his travels, to which we shall make frequent allusions as we proceed.

Thomas Ware succeeded Robert Cloud in charge of the district. In his published autobiography, Mr. Ware says: "In the spring of 1792 I was appointed to Staten Island, where I labored a short time with much satisfaction and some success, and then took charge of the Susquehanna district."

Previous to Mr. Campbell's coming to Wyoming circuit the work of God had spread extensively through the valley. It had run from Ross Hill to the upper part of Kingston, had gone down to Plymouth, and had extended across the river to Hanover and Newport.

Mrs. Bedford was the daughter of James Sutton, Esq., and he had removed to Pittston, and in connection with his father-in-law, Dr. W. Hooker Smith, had erected a forge. Mrs. Bedford says: "Mr. Campbell preached at my father's once in two weeks; my mother, myself, and two of the workmen were all that were in the class. It was like preaching to the walls. Pittston was, at that time, a very hardened place, and great prejudice was raised against us."

In 1791, the year Mr. Campbell took charge of Wyoming circuit, *one hundred members* are reported, and, as near as can be ascertained, fifty of those belonged to the Ross Hill class. Such was the success of the blacksmith preacher, and the earnest men and women who came up to his help, during the first three years of their labors without regular pastoral supervision.

In 1792 William Hardesty stands connected with Wyoming circuit, but we can find no traces of his labors, and survivors do not recollect him. It is probable he never



came to the circuit. Mrs. Bedford says: "Anthony Turck followed Mr. Campbell." Mr. Turck was admitted on trial the following year, and it is probable he was employed this year by the elder.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### WYOMING, TIOGA, AND SENECA CIRCUITS, 1792-1800.

#### ORIGIN OF METHODISM IN TIOGA.

About this period a current of emigration moved northward, and several Methodist families from Wyoming, and further south, settled in the Tioga country. These sheep scattered through the wilderness, called for the aid and supervision of regular pastors. These emigrations led to the organization of Tioga circuit.

At Tioga was once the residence of "Queen Esther." Here she bore rule, and here she celebrated idolatrous rites. Her dumb gods were here found among the ashes of her temple, which was consumed by fire at the command of Col. Hartley in 1778. She was a half-breed, partially educated, partially civilized, and partially Christianized; still the savage and the heathen were prevailing elements in her character.\*

Wyalusing and Sheshequin constituted the scenes of a serious experiment, on the part of the Moravian missionaries, to civilize and Christianize a body of Delaware Indians. All that prayer, self-denying labor, and pious example could do for the poor Indian was done here. Eternity alone will reveal the sacrifices and sufferings of those self-denying servants of Jesus Christ in the cause of Indian improvement. They deserved to succeed—they doubtless did succeed in fitting a few of the poor children of the forest for heaven; but the demon of war arrested them in the midst of their godlike labors, and the star of hope went down in darkness.

\* See Queen Esther's Rock, Wyoming, p. 234.

In 1792 the name of John Hill stands connected with Tioga. No circuit having distinct bounds had as yet been formed there. Tioga was a mission of indefinite extent, designed to embrace the new settlements from Wyalusing north and west wherever they might be found nestled in the dense and lofty forests.

It is not certain that Hill entered this new field during the year, but it was entered and cultivated by another, who made for himself a history as a pioneer preacher. This was WILLIAM COLBERT. In the Minutes Mr. Colbert stands connected this year with Northumberland circuit; but fortunately he has left a diary, which contains a record of his travels and labors during his life, and we have been so fortunate as to obtain it. For this favor we are indebted to Miss Elizabeth Colbert, his daughter, who is its owner, and keeps it as a sacred relic.

We shall find Mr. Colbert at the General Conference of 1792 in the city of Baltimore, and then shall follow him to the wilds of Tioga.

*Thursday, Nov. 1.* General Conference of the bishops, elders, and deacons of the M. E. Church met in Baltimore. The rules of the house were drawn up to-day, and few debates about them.

*Friday, 2.* It was moved in the General Conference to-day that the power of the bishop should be so far abridged that in case a preacher could make it appear that the bishop in his appointment had injured him, by appealing from the bishop to the conference, the bishop [if the conference should sustain the appeal] should give him an appointment elsewhere, which was seconded and ably defended by O'Kelley, Ivey, Hull, Garrettson, and Swift; and opposed by Reed, Willis, Morrell, Everett, and others.

*Saturday, 3.* The day spent in debate about the appeal.

*Sunday, 4.* Dr. Coke preached a delightful sermon from Rom. viii, 16. In the afternoon O'Kelley preached on Luke xvii, 5. The power of the Lord attended the word. At night Willis preached on Psalm xcv, 10, 11.



*Monday, 5.* The day spent in debate about the appeal. It was put to vote, but was not carried. This so grieved O'Kelley that he withdrew from the connection.

*Tuesday, 6.* The conference undertook the revisal of the form of Discipline as concerns the duties of elders, deacons, and preachers. I attended conference from Wednesday, 7, to Thursday, 15, except Thursday forenoon. On Wednesday, 14, James Thomas and I were ordained elders, and I was appointed to fill the station of Wyoming and Tioga."

#### MR. COLBERT'S MISSION TO TIOGA.

Mr. Colbert set off upon his northern trip without delay, taking Northumberland in his way. His brief stay at this place he thus notices :

*Monday, 26.* Rode to Northumberland, and lodged at William Bonham's, who was not at home. I was treated kindly by the family.

*Tuesday, 27.* Spent the day in getting ready for my journey. Preached at night on Matt. xviii, 3.

*Wednesday, 28.* Spent a little time in reading the life of that good man, Mr. Brainerd. At night met a class. I am not as much engaged in religious exercises as I ought to be. Too much of my precious time slips away unimproved. O that I may be more engaged in the work of God than ever!"

What a lesson we have here! Mr. Colbert stops with his old friends to prepare for his journey to the frontier settlements. He is upon a toilsome and hazardous journey, but he thinks not of rest. He spends but two whole days in the place, and one evening he preaches; the next day he reads the Life of Brainerd and meets a class, and then sits down and writes in his diary that he is "not as much engaged in religious exercises as he ought to be!"

We will now give the reader some specimens of the travels of a pioneer Methodist preacher through the center of the present Wyoming Conference :

*Thursday, 29.* Rode from Northumberland to Joseph

Ogden's, at Fishing Creek. Fell in company with Mr. Morgan at Mahoning Creek, where I had to pay a quarter of a dollar for their riding my horse over the creek; what I could have done myself.

*"Friday, 30.* Spends the day with his old friends, Robert Owen and Widow Salmon.

*"Saturday, Dec. 1.* I bid farewell to my kind old friends at Ogden's, and set off for Tioga. Called at Isaac Holways, at Berwick. Rode to Salem, and lodged at Amos Park's. These are truly friendly people. The woman has had a Christian experience. I am happy that I found them. I called at one Cortwright's, about a mile back, who, I believe, when they found I was a Methodist preacher, did not want me to stay with them. They readily directed me to Park's, and I as cheerfully went.\*

*"Sunday, 2.* I have had one of the worst roads from Salem to Nanticoke, in Wyoming, where I, for the second time, heard a Presbyterian minister preach. His name is Gray. He spoke from 2 Cor. iv, 17. He preached at Shobel Bidlack's. He spoke well. I lodged at Aaron Hunt's. Three beds were brought out and laid on the floor; I had one of them.

*"Monday, 3.* This morning set off for Tioga; got to Lackawanna in the afternoon, where I fed my horse at Baldwin's tavern, on the bank of the Susquehanna. I traveled on, thinking that when I got to Dalytown I would get some refreshment for myself; but I was so unfortunate as to wander into an uninhabited wilderness, till the gloomy wings of starless and moonless night began to cover me. I was miles from the habitation of any human being, in the cold month of December, surrounded by howling, ravening wolves and greedy bears. Inferring from several chunks [extinguished firebrands] lying by a brook that some solitary traveler must have taken up his lodging here, and that there could be no house near, I turned my horse about and

\*Brother L. Grant says they subsequently became good Methodists, and were very hospitable.



measured back my weary steps the rough and solitary way I came. And through the merciful providence of God I returned to the settlement and got a night's quarters at one Scott's, where I thought myself well off in getting a little Indian bread and butter for my supper. After some religious conversation, and prayer with the family, I lay down in a filthy cabin to take a little rest, after a day of hard toil. May the Lord enable me, with true Christian patience and magnanimity of soul, to endure all the hardships incident to a traveling life among the hideous mountains before me!

*"Tuesday, 4.* Paid one and sixpence for my accommodations—the man was moderate in his charge—and being impatient to see Dalytown, I set off without my breakfast. But O perplexing! I missed my way again; and after traveling up a lofty mountain found the road wound around down the river, and it brought me in sight of the house I left. I then attempted to keep the river side, but this was impracticable, so I had to turn back again, glad enough to get out of the narrows. This morning breakfasted on a frozen turnip. I called at a house, wanting something for me and my horse, but the uncomfortable reply, 'No bread,' again was heard. However, here I got something for my horse, and at a house a little distance off I got something for my almost half starved self, at the moderate price of a fivepenny bit. So strengthened and refreshed, I crossed a towering mountain to Dalytown, that long desired place. But how am I mistaken! Instead of finding a tavern here, where man and horse might be refreshed, the ideal Dalytown vanished, and the real one—a smoky log cabin or two—heaves in view.\* I lodged at old Mr. Jones's. The old man I met by the way; the old woman and a girl were at home. I spent the evening very agreeably with them, reading the Life of John Haime. May I never murmur at a few hardships in such a work!

\* This place was on the east side of the Susquehanna, below Gardner's Ferry.

*Wednesday, 5.* A day or two of rest would have been very agreeable to me; but as the old woman expressed much satisfaction at the favorableness of the day to the traveler, I bid her farewell, with thanks, and reached Teague's Hill [now called Russel Hill, between Tunkhannock and Meshoppen] a miserable place indeed, kept by one Mulson. It was almost sunset when I got there; the next house was about six miles off, and a very gloomy way to it; so on the dirty top of Teague's Hill I have to stay, with two hunters, a young woman, and the man and his wife. I took up my lodging on some bed clothes, with my head in the chimney corner.

*Thursday 6.* Rejoicing at the return of the morning, I paid two and sixpence for my accommodations, and set off on my journey. It is really hard times with me. I had to sell one of Wesley's funeral sermons for sixpence that I should have had elevenpence for, to help pay my reckoning. I rode six miles before I got anything for my poor horse. At Wigdon's, at Meshoppen, I called for something for my horse, and some smoky dirty corn was brought. But as for myself, I thought I would wait a little longer before I would eat in such a filthy place. I talked to the filthy woman, who was sitting over the ashes with three or four dirty children in the chimney-corner, about the salvation of her soul. She was kind; she took nothing for what I had; so I proceeded on my journey, and arrived at Gideon Baldwin's, the lowest [farthest south] house on my Tioga circuit. They received me kindly, and got me something to eat. I have traveled over hills and mountains without breakfast or dinner."

Baldwin's was at the mouth of the Wyalusing. The distance which our traveler toiled on "over hills and mountains without breakfast or dinner," must have been about twenty-five miles, a long way, considering the state of the roads, for a man to travel fasting. The reader will remark that Mr. Colbert was always much annoyed by filthy people and filthy lodgings. He was of a respectable family,



and was raised in an old country where the comforts of life were abundant and society was comparatively refined. One must have some little experience in frontier life to be able to appreciate the sacrifices which such a man would make in associating with wild hunters, dirty and ragged men, women, and children! Then to think of setting out upon such a journey without money, having to sell a pamphlet worth *eleven cents* for *sixpence* to pay his lodging bill, and feeling so poor over the loss of *fivepence* as to sit down and mourn over it. Ah! "hard times," sure enough. What but a strong sense of duty would have kept a man in any kind of heart through such "times" as these? But our itinerant now has some relief. He has reached his field of labor; he meets with a kind reception and finds comfortable quarters. We will now follow him around his circuit:

"*Friday, 7.* I rested myself at my good old friend Baldwin's; read my Bible, and the experience of several of the preachers.

"*Saturday, 8.* Spent reading the Bible and Preacher's Experience, and in the evening lectured on the 5th of Matt., twelve verses.

"*Sunday, 9.* I preached at Guy Wells's on Acts iii, 19. Old Mr. Stafford, a Baptist preacher, was present. When I had done he preached on Sol. Songs ii, 10. He told the people that Christ had done all, and they had nothing to do.

"*Monday, 10.* Preached to a few people up Wyalusing Creek at one Pierce's. He and his wife have their names on our class-paper down the creek at Baldwin's, but are not well enough acquainted with Methodism to like class-meetings. But the woman can give as satisfactory an account of her conversion as I ever heard. And what a pity! she is one of those that believe in the impossibility of a final fall after a real conversion. I returned to Baldwin's. This man's heart and house are open to all who come.

"*Tuesday, 11.* I rode from Baldwin's to Burney's. I was

happy in singing the praises of God. I preached on Matt. v, 6, and sung the fifty-sixth hymn of our collection. Rode with C. M. to our old friend B.'s. Here I could not enjoy myself; the people are shamefully dirty.

"*Wednesday, 12.* I preached at Elijah Townsend's on Rev. xxii, 17. In this place Satan had been sowing the seeds of discord in the society. I expect to have trouble with this people. After preaching I rode with C. M. to Nathan Brown's, across Breakneck Hill, a horrid precipice.

"*Thursday, 13.* I preached to a few people at Nathan Brown's, some of whom were Baptists, on Matt. v, 4. This is the most comfortable house I have been in since I left Northumberland. Nathan Brown and his wife are very kind people.

"*Friday, 14.* Rode from Nathan Brown's, in New Sheshequin, to Daniel M'Dowel's, in Chemung, York state, where I was well used. I preached at night on 2 Cor. xiii, 5. I had not freedom in speaking. The land here is excellent, and is not so hemmed in with mountains as it is lower down the river; it is on the Tioga River.

"*Saturday, 15.* Rode to Mr. Seeley's, up Seeley's Creek, and spoke at night on the second paragraph of the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. This is a very thick settlement, and the land is excellent.

"*Sunday, 16.* From old Mr. Seeley's I rode to John Konkle's, at Newtown Point. He received me very kindly. I went with him and heard Mr. Parks preach on Rev. iii, 20. Mr. Parks was very friendly; he wanted me to preach for him, but this I refused to do. At night I preached at Lough's tavern, at Newtown Point, on Matt. v, 6. Part of my congregation were drunk. Lord, give me humility and watchfulness.

"*Monday, 17.* I crossed the Tioga River, and, much to my satisfaction, I found my friend Vandervoort and his family, with whom I was acquainted when I traveled in Northumberland circuit. I dined with them, prayed with them, and parted with them. I rode to old Mr. Kress's and



preached at night on 1 Cor. vi, 19, 20, with freedom. I see and feel my want of more zeal and love.

"*Tuesday*, 18. I preached at Nathan Brown's on 2 Cor. xiii, 5. Wretch that I am! I ought to be thankful for the freedom I sometimes have in speaking. If I should be an instrument in the hands of God of saving any it will be a great blessing, should I even be lost myself; but no blessing to me.

"*Wednesday*, 19. I rode from Nathan Brown's to Breakneck Hill, where I crossed the river to one Mr. Foster's, to be satisfied whether or not I had an appointment there, and found I had none. A Mr. Blackman took me over the river, who was honest enough to tell me he never liked the Methodist doctrine. I asked him why? He said he did not like their preaching that a man could fall from grace; and as to perfection there was no such thing in the world, and that none could live without sin. I asked him if anything unclean could enter into the kingdom of heaven. I also told him it was written: 'Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' But as he would fly from one thing to another, I thought it was not worth while to talk with him. I hope I dealt honestly with him in what I did say before I left him.

"After I got over Breakneck Hill I overtook an old man with a keg of whisky on his back. I could not leave him without telling him of the evil of whisky drinking. I thought he was drunk, but he received what I said kindly. At night I exhorted at friend Townsend's with freedom.

"*Thursday*, 20. I preached at Brother Rice's, in Shuffield's Flats, on 1 Thess. v, 17. I felt freedom in speaking. I rode through the Narrows on the Susquehanna. Here are excellent stones to build with, and yet the people live in miserable cabins, some of them without chimnies. If you speak to them about being more decent, they will plead that they are in a new country and have many difficulties to encounter.\* I feel the need of watching and prayer.

\* What they said was true, and a very fair justification.

"*Friday, 21.* Spent part of the day reading and writing, and in the evening met the class in Shuffield's Flats, the first class I have met in the circuit. I read to them the Rules, desiring to know whether they want to continue in society. Preached at a friendly man's house by the name of Alexander, on 1 Cor. vi, 19, 20. I have, thank God! reason to hope that general satisfaction was given.

"*Saturday, 22.* Agreeably to the request of a friend, I spent this day visiting. If we visit to edification it is well. I wish all my visits were more so. It was with some difficulty I got along the Narrows with Brother Rice to Gideon Baldwin's at Wyalusing."

Mr. Colbert had now encompassed a two weeks' circuit and come back to the place of beginning. The incidents which he records are not striking or extraordinary, but his Journal shows the points which were first visited by the Methodist itinerants as they pushed their way to the north; it also illustrates the condition of the country and the character of the people. The simple narration of facts which we have copied furnishes a multitude of subjects for reflection, but we leave them for the present as we found them. On his second round Mr. Colbert visits several new places which in after times became famous in the history of Methodism, and introduces names which obtained some considerable notoriety.

He says: "*Thursday, 25.* I left friend Baldwin's oppressed in spirit, under a sense of my unprofitableness. It was very late when I got to Burney's, and some of the people had gone away. I endeavored to preach to those who stayed on Heb. iii, 14. After I had done, a poor unhappy son of Belial came in to abuse me. Mrs. Burney reproved him. I left Burney's and crossed the river to old Mr. Cole's. Here I wanted to regulate the society, but found them very refractory. Old Mr. Cole's daughter Mary is the wife of the man that abused me at Burney's; she is a great enthusiast, and has a turn for poetry."

The locality is not far from the present village of Tow-



anda. This "old Mr. Cole" was the father of Rev. Elisha Cole, who once traveled and preached in the state of Delaware, lived long on the paternal inheritance, was extensively known as a local preacher, and by everybody called "Father Cole." We often enjoyed his hospitalities when we traveled the Susquehanna district in 1824-5. And there we found "Mary," the "great enthusiast," who had "a turn for poetry" in the days of Mr. Colbert, now a confirmed maniac. Her husband's name was Culverson. Of him we have little knowledge; nothing indeed which would redeem him from the stigma fixed upon his character in Mr. Colbert's Journal. Domestic trouble, so far as we remember, drove his wife into madness, and for many years "Aunt Molly" was both an object of pity and a source of amusement. She lived in a cabin a few rods from her brother's dwelling, dressed fantastically, planned and cultivated her garden according to no model on earth, sang hymns and quoted Scripture almost without bounds, and with her wit and drollery would convulse an old Connecticut deacon with laughter. When "the elder" came "Aunt Molly" was always on hand. Sometimes she had to be told that the elder was tired and she must "go home." This always displeased her, and called forth a storm of crazy eloquence of which "Elisha" was most naturally the butt. On one such occasion she screamed out: "The devil rules and reigns here. I tell you, elder, you had better flee as Lot did out of Sodom." In one of her rambles Judge Gore, to frighten her, threatened to put her in jail. She returned home in a great rage, and proceeded to overhaul all her garments and rip out all the *gores*. She ever after maintained that the *gores* were all from the devil, and she would have none of them about her. Her well-thumbed old pocket Bible she carried in a pocket in her dress on her side, which was just of the capacity necessary to contain the precious treasure.

"Wednesday, January 2, 1793," Mr. Colbert "preached at one Foster's, at Sugar Creek."

Under date of January 14, Mr. Colbert tells us that he "received a letter from a man living at Awaga, [Owego,] in which he was requested to come there and preach."

On the same day he was invited to the house of a Mr. Martin, son of a Presbyterian minister, who seemed to be under awakening, but was much in the dark. Mr. Colbert gave him an earnest exhortation, which probably was not lost.

Mr. Colbert visited "Old Sheshequin," and preached "at Captain Clark's" \* on "Wednesday, 16th of January." He remarks: "The woman of this house put me in mind of Martha. I had not much satisfaction in preaching; attention was wanting. After meeting in came Squire Murray, a great Universalist, a believer in eternal justification. I believe he is an ungodly man. He says he was once a public speaker among the Baptists, and thought Christ died for only a part of mankind, and that none of those for whom Christ died could perish; and now he says he believes that Christ died for all, and that none will be lost. I felt sorry that I spent so much time in arguing with him."

"Friday, 25. It was with difficulty that I got through the Narrows on account of the ice. I preached at one Bennett's, near Mahontowango, with freedom, on 1 Cor. vi, 19, 20. If any good is done, to God be all the glory. These people are very willing to hear. This locality is now known as Nichols, where live the Shoemakers and Coryells, and has for many years been famous for Methodism."

Mr. Colbert suffered much, and passed through many perils from the necessity he was in of constantly crossing the Susquehanna without bridges or ferries. In January and February he makes the following entries in his diary:

"Thursday, January 31. I rode the river to Mr. Townsend's. This is a very cold day and night.

\* Here Henry B. Bascom was awakened and converted at a meeting held by Rev. L. Grant in 1811. We heard Bascom say, in 1836, that Grant was his spiritual father.



*Friday, February 1.* I crossed the river on the ice; called at old Mr. Cole's.

*Saturday, 2.* I preached at Brother Rice's with much satisfaction, and for the benefit of others gave an account of the work of God with myself. I intended to go to Wyalusing, and made an attempt to cross on the ice; but my horse fell in up to his neck, and I declined going."

We know right well what all this means. To "ride the river" means to ford it on horseback. This is no very pleasant undertaking in midwinter. To cross on newly-formed ice is generally dangerous, and to have your horse under you "go down up to his neck" is terrible. These scenes were so common in olden times that they excited little attention. The people who cross the turbulent Susquehanna upon the elegant and permanent bridges which now span its waters every few miles, know but little of what their fathers endured fifty years ago. Traveling a circuit along this river in 1793 was labor indeed. Much later than this period there was something more than mere romance in the life of a traveling preacher "in the Susquehanna country," as we have reason to know from actual experience.

Superstition and a love of the marvelous are prominent features of backwoods life. While at Newtown, Mr. Colbert makes the following entry in his Journal:

"In this place they talk of very strange things, such as hearing groans. One says he saw an apparition, but will not tell who it was or what it said to him.

*Monday, 11.* I spent a little time with Dr. Park, who is very friendly to me. He told me a remarkable dream of Judge Miller's daughter, which was, as well as I can recollect, as follows: That a young man, who was killed with the handle of a pitchfork, came to her to inform her that there is a hell, which it is said her father's family did not believe. Mr. Park says groans have been heard in the day time, while the people were sitting by the fire, and while the young woman was relating her dream; but I do not understand that it has any effect upon them."

So true is it that "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one should arise from the dead." It seems that the people believed in the supernatural character of these strange things, yet no moral impression followed them. Pretended apparitions and "spiritual manifestations" are usually barren of valuable moral results. We have known a few instances in which extraordinary *dreams* have been followed by thorough conviction and conversion.

Mr. Colbert records another struggle with the ice and water on the Susquehanna.

"*Wednesday, 13.* I visited two families, apparently well-disposed, in my way from Chemung to Nathan Brown's. I thank God that I was not killed or crippled coming through the Narrows between Tioga Point and New Shesh-equin. It snowed hard, and my horse balling made the riding very unpleasant on the best of roads; but when I came to where the water flowing from the precipice was frozen and covered with snow it became intolerable. So I had to dismount, and was driven to the dangerous alternative of going on the ice on the side of the river. The ice broke into large pieces as I led my horse, and let me down into the water more than knee deep. I had to exert myself to keep my horse from plunging on me. By a kind Providence I was enabled to mount him and he took me through. By the time I was well out my surtout was frozen as stiff as a horn, but I felt no cold. I soon rode to Nathan Brown's, and was not sorry that the people did not come to preaching this dismal night, after I had had such a distressing journey."

One of the usual accompaniments of a religious meeting in former times was the crying of children. This is not unfrequently the case even now in the rural districts. This was a part of the arrangements which Mr. Colbert could not endure. Those who remember him speak of this feature in his character. In his diary we have frequent allusions to the inconvenience which he was subjected to from this cause. One instance will suffice as a specimen :



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"*Sunday, 17.* I preached at Guy Wells's. Soon after I read my text I knew not but I should be obliged to sit down and say nothing, as there were so many noisy children present; but their noise abated, and I made out, through the assistance of God, to speak with satisfaction. By what I hear I suppose the people in these parts think I have a very weak head, because I cannot preach when there are a number of children about me bawling louder than I can speak."

It certainly requires a *strong head*, or no ordinary strength of nerve and will, to preach under such circumstances. Nothing but compassion for mothers, who must carry crying babies to meeting or never go themselves, can reconcile any preacher to the screaming of children in the house of God. Sometimes the thing appears in a form that nobody should be expected to endure. When the child screams amain, and resists, with kicks and blows, every effort to pacify it, and the mother seems to be in no wise embarrassed, nor to think of anybody or anything but the *poor baby* and its troubles, and the attention of the whole house is directed to the scene of confusion, the preacher may as well pause and order the nuisance removed.

Mr. Colbert came to Tioga without money, and it does not appear that his finances were materially improved while he labored there. The following entries in his diary bear upon the subject:

"*Sunday, March 31.* I preached at Wyalusing. Four weeks ago I gave out for a public collection in this place to be made to-day, but very few came to meeting. My friend Baldwin spoke of the collection, but nobody said anything in reply. So I came off without anything, and I can truly say that I shall be happy if this was all that I have to trouble me in this circuit.

"*Sunday, April 7.* I preached at Newtown Point. In the afternoon I preached at Squire Hammond's, and here collected 21s. 3d.

"*Tuesday, 9.* I preached at Kress's, and in the evening

in the school-house at Chemung. In this place I collected 4s. 10d. It may be that I have done preaching in Tioga."

The whole amount of Mr. Colbert's receipts during his four months of hard labor on Tioga circuit was *three dollars and fourteen cents!* yet he utters not one word of complaint.

MR. WARE VISITS TIOGA, AND MR. COLBERT RETURNS TO  
WYOMING.

On the 11th of April Mr. Colbert met the Rev. Thomas Ware at Townsend's. He had come on in the capacity of "elder." He attended a quarterly meeting, administered the sacrament, preached several edifying discourses, and then took Mr. Colbert with him to Wyoming. Here is Mr. Colbert's account of the journey down the river:

"*Monday, 15.* Brother Ware and I arose early and got into a boat at New Sheshequin, going down the river, which ran through the mountains at all points of the compass till dark, when we stopped at a cabin by the river side. Here we could get no straw to sleep on; however, Brother Ware fixed himself on a chest, with a bunch of tow for his pillow, and I suppose thought himself well off. For my part, I had to get the hay out of the boat for my bed, which a passenger begged part of.

"*Tuesday, 16.* At about twelve o'clock we landed in Wilkesbarre, the seat of justice for Luzerne county. It was very pleasant coming down Susquehanna this morning. We dined at old friend Mann's, then rode to Richard Inman's.

"I have been four months and eight days in Tioga circuit, one of the most disagreeable places for traveling I was ever in, among a refractory sort of people. I lived hard and labored hard, but I fear did but little good. *I joined but three in society while I was there;* but I think there is a prospect of good being done. May the labors of my successor be blessed more than mine have been!" What a tale of woes! and yet the man's heart is whole within him.

"*Wednesday, 17.* Brother Ware left me; he is a man I have a very high opinion of. Now I have the charge of



Wyoming circuit. May the Lord give me wisdom, grace, and patience, that I may deal with these people as one who has the worth of souls at heart."

"*Saturday, 20.* I have seen twenty-nine years this day. Amid many difficulties and dangers I have been preserved by the providence of God. O that the remainder of my days may be spent to his glory! I dined with three of our Methodist sisters in a mill. A birth-day festival! Rode to Wilkesbarre, called at my old friend Mann's, where I am very kindly received. Wanting my boots mended, I carried them to the prison, under the court-house, to a prisoner, as there was no shoemaker in town, and paid him double what he asked for mending them, as he was a poor prisoner.

"*Sunday, 21.* This morning the prison was evacuated, and only one of my boots mended; he probably had not time to mend both. I preached in the Court-house in the morning on Mark vi, 12, and in the afternoon at Richard Inman's on 2 Cor. xiii, 5.

"*Friday, 26.* I rode to brother Owen's.

"*Saturday, 27.* Rode to one Jackson's, (Philip Jackson,) whose wife is in society; he was once in himself." He lived on what is now called the Fisher Gay place, on which the monument stands.

"*Sunday, 28.* I preached at Rosecrantz's, on Matt. vii, 21-23. In the afternoon at Captain Parish's." Rosecrantz lived where "the old Red House," or the "Captain Breese House," now stands, on the bluff near the Wyoming depot, and Captain Parish lived on Ross Hill. At night he preached at Captain Ransom's, in Shawney, where he enters the following in his diary: "Mrs. Ransom is a daughter of afflictions; she was desirous of having preaching and being baptized with her four children. I thank God I have been enabled to speak with freedom to-day."

"*Wednesday, May 8.* Rode to Lackawanna Forge, and preached at James Sutton's on 1 Cor. vi, 19, 20. Here I met with a disputing Calvinist. Sister Sutton and her daughter, [Mrs. Bedford, our most intelligent living witness

of the events of those times,] appear to be very clever women. Our friend Sutton has not joined the Society, but appears to be a man of a very excellent spirit."

On the Sabbath he preached at Rosecrantz's, Captain Parish's and Shawney. Hence he proceeded to Briar Creek; preached, and found pleasant quarters with Thomas Bowman.\* Thursday he came back to Parks's, in Salem. Here he notes his condition of mind:

"I knew not how I could preach, but I thought I would try and do as well as I could. I did, and the Lord be praised. I don't know that I have seen the word attended with more power since I left Maryland. My text was Amos xi, 12. Though the life of a traveling preacher is very laborious and fatiguing it is what I glory in.

"*Sunday, 19.* I preached at the meeting-house, and in the afternoon at Wilkesbarre. I fear these are a hardened people."

"The meeting-house"—"*our* meeting-house," as he sometimes calls it—was a small house erected by the Methodists and their friends on Hanover Green. A larger house, built for the exclusive occupancy of the Presbyterians, stood near by, and both rotted down without ever being finished. They were still standing, but in a ruinous condition, when we came to Wyoming, in 1818. Unfinished as was this "meeting-house," we infer from Mr. Colbert's Journal that it was regularly occupied as a preaching place. Bishop Asbury preached in it when he visited Wyoming.

When Mr. Colbert next came to Capouse he "preached to a few people at Brother How's; met a small class; the Lord was present; lodged at Joseph Waller's." How's and Waller's were his regular places for preaching and lodging his term through.

\*Thomas and Christian Bowman were brothers; both local preachers; lived in the same neighborhood. Christian came into the country in 1792, and Thomas in 1793; each always kept a prophet's chamber, and, until they built a church, provided a chapel in their dwellings, or rather turned their houses into chapels, as often as required by the exigencies of the work, to the interests of which they were both ardently devoted.



About this time Anning Owen began to take a position with his brethren as a preacher. On the 7th of June Mr. Colbert notes that he "set off with Brother Owen for Northumberland Quarterly Meeting. On our way Brother Owen preached at Shawney, at Captain Ransom's. I exhorted after him." When they arrived at the place of the meeting "Alward White was preaching; Brother Owen exhorted after him. At night Brother Owen preached," and "on Sabbath evening Brother Owen preached again." The Wyoming blacksmith had his full share of prominence and responsibility on this occasion, especially considering that he was as yet a mere local preacher.

In June Mr. Colbert experienced another change in his field of labor. He says: "*Monday, 10.* I am now on my way around Northumberland circuit." For several months he continued to pass regularly around "Northumberland and Wyoming." The Northumberland circuit at this time seems to have embraced the whole country from the Susquehanna to the Alleghany Mountains, including the Bald Eagle and Juniata countries, Penn's Valley, Buffalo Valley, and the settlements on the West Branch, penetrating in the wilderness as far north as Loyalsocks. This was an ample field, but it was thoroughly explored by the hardy itinerant, who for his labor received little or nothing more of pecuniary compensation than simple sustenance. And the men who were engaged in this toilsome and self-denying work literally "had no certain dwelling-place." They no sooner had formed a few acquaintances than they were ordered to another field—a few "rounds" only, and they were off, hundreds of miles, to some new and strange country.

## BISHOP ASBURY VISITS WYOMING.

1793. This year constitutes an interesting era in the history of the work of God in our territory. Five years had passed since the organization of the first class at Ross Hill; one hundred and seventy-seven members had been enrolled, and two circuits regularly formed, and supplied

with preachers. The work had now assumed a sufficient amount of importance to attract the attention of Bishop Asbury, and to demand a personal visit from that apostolic man. Accordingly, on a journey from Maryland to New York the latter part of June and the fore part of July, he was in Wyoming and vicinity. The following is the notice of this visit in the bishop's Journal—characteristic enough:

*"Thursday, (June) 27,* was to me a day of trial. We set out late toward Northumberland; night coming on, we stopped at Penn's Creek. Next morning we went to Northumberland to breakfast. It has a little chapel, that serves as a school-house, belonging to the Methodists. We have a few kind, respectable friends, whose circumstances are comfortable. I gave them a sermon on John xiv, 6, and in the afternoon paid Sunbury a visit. The people here are almost all Dutch. I was enabled to speak alarming words on Acts iv, 12.

*"July 2.* After preaching on 'the grace of God appearing to all men,' we wrought up the hills and narrows to Wyoming. We stopped at a poor house; nevertheless they were rich enough to sell us half a bushel of oats, and had sense enough to make us pay well for them. We reached Mr. P——'s about eleven o'clock. I found riding in the night caused a return of my rheumatic complaint through my breast and shoulders. But all is well; the Lord is with us.

*"Thursday, 4,* being the anniversary of American independence, there was a great noise among the sinners. A few of us went down to Shawney, called a few people from their work, and found it good for us to be there.

*"Sunday, 7.* The Lord has spoken in awful peals of thunder. O what havoc was made here fifteen years ago! Most of the inhabitants were either cut off or driven away. The people might have clothed themselves in sackcloth and ashes on the third, if in white and glory on the fourth of July. The inhabitants here are very wicked; but I feel as if the



Lord would return. I hope Brothers F., I., and P.\* will be owned of the Lord. The man at whose house I was to preach made a frolic the day before; it was said he sent a mile across the river to one of his neighbors, taking him from his work, and telling him he was about to bleed to death. This falsity was invented, I suppose, to incline the man to come. The people would not come to his house; I had to walk a mile through burning heat to preach.† I was severely exercised in mind, hardly knowing where to go to get a quiet, clean place to lie down.

"*Monday, 8.* I took the wilderness, through the mountains, up the Lackawanna, on the Twelve Mile Swamp; this place is famous for dirt and lofty hemlock. We lodged in the middle of the swamp, at S——'s, and made out better than we expected."

Here the good bishop left our territory, crossed the Delaware, and went through New Jersey to New York. This must have been a fearful jaunt in that early period.

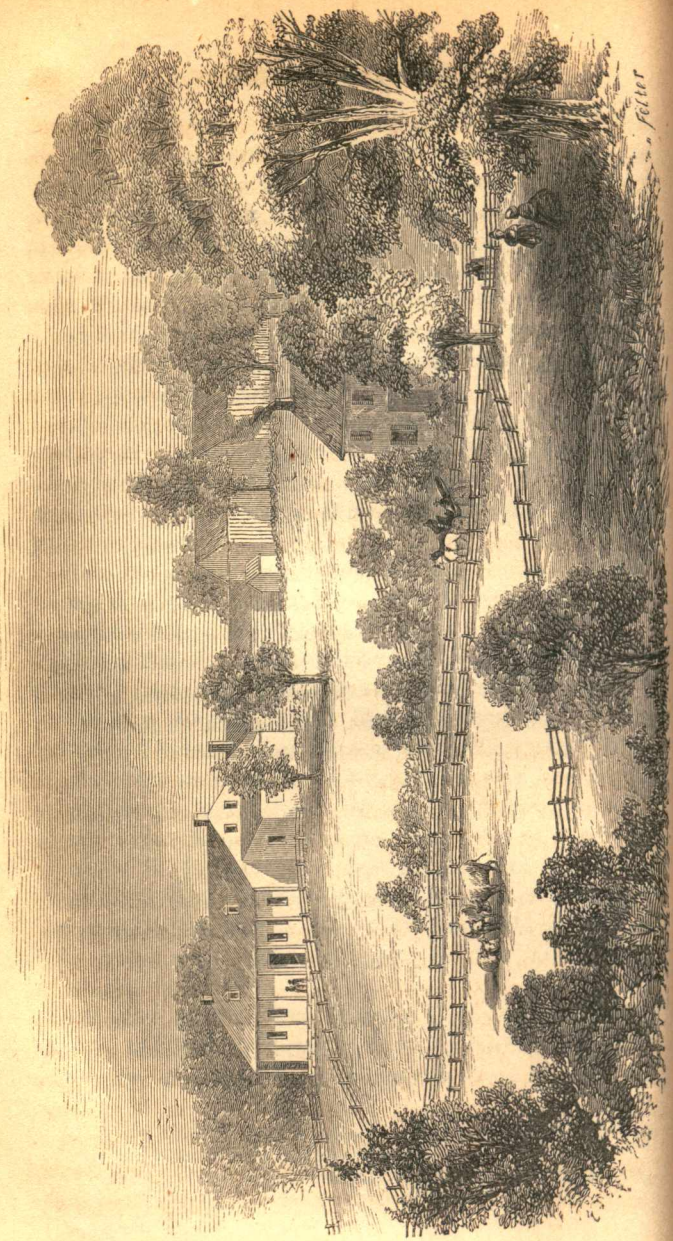
Bishop Asbury's visit to Wyoming occurred during Mr. Colbert's pastorship, and is thus recorded in his diary:

"*Sunday, June 30.* I met Bishop Asbury in Northumberland. I found him up stairs at Widow Taggart's. When I entered the room he spoke to me in a way I never was spoken to by him before; he was very agreeable. At eleven o'clock he preached in the meeting-house, and in the afternoon at Sunbury. At night Brother Hill preached in Northumberland. I was very much rejoiced at seeing four preachers in this part of the world; but I had my feelings hurt very much before I went to bed at William Bonham's.

"*Monday, July 1.* This morning I set out with Bishop Asbury and Brother Henry Hill for Joseph Ogden's, Fishing Creek. I directed them the way to friend Ogden's, and

\* Probably Frisby, Inman, and Parish. If this "hope" was realized, eternity only can reveal the fact and its extent.

† This walk was from Richard Inman's, in Buttonwood, to the meeting-house on Hanover Green. See Mr. Colbert's diary.



Miller



went to Catawissa and preached to a congregation of decent people in a mill. Isaiah Hines invited me to drink tea with him. I accepted the invitation, and in the afternoon rode on to Joseph Ogden's, where Bishop Asbury preached at night. Brother Hill exhorted, and I sung and prayed; and seeing the people unwilling to leave the house, I spoke to them a short time. I never saw them so wrought upon before.

"*Tuesday, 2.* We left friend Ogden's, called and prayed with old Mother Salmons, and went on to Berwick. Bishop Asbury preached to a considerable congregation at Isaac Hall's, after which we proceeded on to Captain Parish's, at Ross Hill, Wyoming. It was late before we got there, along the most disagreeable road. I had the pleasure of killing two rattlesnakes. I never saw one alive before.

"*Wednesday, 3.* Bishop Asbury preached at Captain Parish's. The discourse was made a blessing to me.

"*Thursday, 4,* spent at Captain Parish's. We have had a heavy thunderstorm.

"*Friday, 5.* Went with the bishop to Captain Satterthwaites, where I expected he would have preached; but the people would not attend at the captain's house, as there was drinking and revelry there yesterday. The people met at Rosecrantz's, but the captain was so affronted that he would not attend. This afternoon we had another thunderstorm.

"*Saturday, 6.* We came to Wilkesbarre. The bishop preached to a small congregation in the court-house. We went home with Richard Inman.

"*Sunday, 7.* At the meeting-house, by the request of the bishop, I exhorted, sung, prayed, and read the first lesson for the day. Brother Hill sung, prayed, and read the second lesson, after which the bishop preached, and after him Brother Owen and Brother Hill exhorted. In the afternoon the bishop and Brother Hill preached in the court-house at Wilkesbarre. The people have had four sermons preached to them to-day in this house."

On Monday, 8, Bishop Asbury went on his way east, and Mr. Colbert resumed his course of appointments.

The writer has had the good fortune to secure an autograph letter from the bishop to the Rev. Thomas Morrell, dated "Wyoming, July 3, 1793." For this he is indebted to the kindness of the Rev. Francis A. Morrell, of the New Jersey Conference. It was obtained and laid by as a mere relic, but it now has a historical importance which was not foreseen at the time it was obtained. The following is the letter:

"MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,—Every occurrence gives an opportunity of information. These frontier circuits here suffer the want of my presence to see the state of matters. That very person who was Hammetting\* is greatly concerned as a mercenary(?) in this circuit; no wonder he should let loose. I am, and hope I shall be a terror to evil-doers, especially ministers. Will you, the next letter you have an occasion to write to John Dickins, direct said Dickins to desire Daniel Hitt, on the Pittsburgh circuit, to take the earliest opportunity to let Valentine Cook, upon the Clarksburgh circuit, know to come and meet me at the Baltimore Conference, October 20, 1793. I have found a vast body of Dutch on Northumberland circuit, and the said Cook can preach in Dutch. Had I known it at Conference I would have stationed him there. I believe there are several young men who will do as well on Clarksburgh as he. I am convinced I ought to station preachers all the year; and it appears not right to take all the preachers away. There are such disorders it gives a great opening to men, devils, and sin. Our poor preachers keep Lent a great part of the year here. Our towns and cities, at least our conferences, ought not to let them starve for clothing. I have had a pretty long campaign in the backwoods ever since March. I judge it will be best for half the preachers from Albany, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Jersey to attend

\* Following the lead of Mr. Hammett, who seceded in the South.



at York Conference, that we may keep the work going on. I think we must absolutely never let the preachers wholly leave their circuits; this is what was never suffered in England for fear of havoc. It is pressing times in America."

"Thine as ever,

F. ASBURY."

There are personal allusions, both in the Journal and the letter, which it is difficult, at this distance of time, to settle, and indeed it is not important to settle them. The most important fact brought out in the letter is that the bishop judged a certain grade of talent necessary to meet the demands of "these frontier circuits," which, as yet, had not been upon the ground, and he took measures immediately to meet the emergency. He rightly judged that the work had "suffered the want of his presence to see the state of matters," and he provided to bring on the needed help from the conference to assemble at Baltimore in the following autumn. The letter is dated July 3, 1793, and the conference sat October 20 of the same year. At this conference a new district was constituted, consisting of only four charges, Northumberland, Tioga, Wyoming, and Seneca Lake, and *Valentine Cook* was appointed to the charge of it. This was a wise and salutary arrangement. Cook was exactly the man for that particular kind of work which this new country required, and he had few quarterly meetings, and consequently ample time to act the part of a missionary, and prepare the way for the organization of new circuits.

MR. COLBERT CLOSES HIS LABORS ON WYOMING AND NORTHUMBERLAND, GOES TO THE NORTH, AND THEN LEAVES OUR FIELD.

July 20, in an account of a quarterly meeting at Aaron Hunt's, at Nanticoke, Mr. Colbert says: "Brother Campbell preached with liberty and power. Brother Owen and I spoke after him. The Lord was present at night; Brother Owen preached, several of the friends prayed, and the windows of heaven were opened. An old Presbyterian by the

name of Moore, who came about thirty miles up the river to this quarterly meeting, was in raptures of joy, seeing so many people engaged with God.

"*Sunday, 21.* This was a glorious morning; in the love-feast we had a feast of love. Brother J. Campbell preached, Brother Owen exhorted, and I preached after him. For the first time in my life I administered the Lord's Supper. This meeting was held in Widow Bidlack's barn. The Lord confines not himself to the heavens, or to temples built expressly for the purposes of religious worship, but is found by all his faithful followers in whatever place he is sought with sincerity."

Barns, for many years after this, were common places for the holding of quarterly meetings. Many a barn, like that of Widow Bidlack's in the case above referred to, has been sanctified by the presence and power of God, and been the spiritual birthplace of precious souls. Quarterly meetings were just beginning to be considered great occasions in the interior, and to exert a great influence on the public mind. The people came from afar to attend them, and returned home full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. The one noticed by Mr. Colbert was one of a series of these means of grace, which, within the course of a few years, were largely concerned in the permanent establishment of Methodism in Wyoming and its surroundings.

"*Wednesday, Aug. 7.* I was prevented from going to Berwick to-day to preach, and stayed at Christian Bowman's. It was truly delightful to see the people going from house to house and joining in the blessed exercise of singing and prayer. O that this may be the beginning of the best of days among them! From what has been said, I have some reason to hope that my visit among this people, since I left Tioga, has been rendered a blessing, and if so, may I have a heart to ascribe all the glory to God, from whom all good comes."

On the 11th of June, 1792, when Mr. Colbert was traveling Northumberland circuit, he first visited Christian Bow-



man. He says he "preached in the woods to a few people that came out." In some notes on Mr. Colbert's journal, furnished us by Jesse Bowman, Esq., it is stated that "Christian Bowman had moved into the neighborhood from Northampton County, Pa., four miles below the Water Gap on the Delaware, and with his family, located at the place here mentioned. He arrived in April previous. It was almost an unbroken wilderness; he was one of the first pioneers. Here he erected a tent as a temporary shelter, while preparing and gathering materials for the new log house. There was then no house or other building in which to preach, and this sermon, preached under the tent, was the first ever delivered in the neighborhood." Henceforth "Briar Creek" was a place quite famous for Methodism.

"*Saturday*, 10, I spent in reading my Bible, and the Life and Death of Thomas Walsh.

"*Sunday*, 11, I preached at Aaron Hunt's, and in the afternoon in the court-house at Wilkesbarre. Made a public collection, and got 13s. 5d. Lawyer Catlin, formerly an opposer of the Methodists, invited me home with him, and treated me kindly.

"I received a friendly letter to-day from Miss Christiana Johnson, a young woman, I believe, of good sense, and of an excellent spirit. What she has in friendship addressed to me in verse, I shall, for my own satisfaction, here insert verbatim:

'You, sir, have ventured thus to come  
A wild and craggy road,  
Willingly left your former home  
To visit our abode.

'I hope your labor 'll not be spent  
In vain along our shores;  
Nor you have reason to repent  
You came within our doors.

'And may your path with flowers be spread,  
While through the woods you rove;  
May you with joy the carpet tread  
Throughout the Luzerne grove.

' May Heaven grant you sweet repast—  
Religion all your theme;  
Make each day happier than the last  
Along the winding stream.

' And when these borders you do leave,  
And can no longer stay,  
May you a laurel crown receive  
That never fades away.' ”

We have copied these lines as illustrative of the times. Miss Johnson was a daughter of “old priest Johnson,” as he is called by the old people who remember him. He was a Presbyterian minister, who came into the country with the early Yankee settlers, was in Forty Fort on the day of the battle, and went to John Butler’s headquarters, with others, with a flag of truce, and assisted in negotiating the capitulation. He settled in Wilkesbarre, and some of his descendants are there still. The daughter, who wrote the above lines, became a Methodist, married a Methodist, and died in the Methodist faith and in the communion of the Methodist Church. Her conversion to Methodism affords undoubted evidence that, as a distinct form of Christianity, it had already attained considerable influence over the public mind in Wyoming. We have copied Miss Christiana’s rhymes to Mr. Colbert, not because there is much of the spirit of the Muses in them, but as a specimen of the literature and sentiment of that early period of the history of our country. Like the old patriotic ballads, it is valuable as a specimen of home-made poetry, as well as an evidence of ardent piety and generous hospitality.

Monday, August 12, Mr. Colbert makes the first mention of Benjamin Bidlack. He simply says: “I visited our brother Benjamin Bidlack in Shawney, who lies very ill.”

THORNTON FLEMING—A TOUR TO THE LAKE COUNTRY.

In September of this year Mr. Colbert met “the long expected Thornton Fleming” in Northumberland. This



devoted minister, it seems, went to the northern frontier, on a sort of exploring expedition, in advance of his appointment as "elder" in that hard field, which position he occupies on the Minutes for the following year. He passes up the North Branch of the Susquehanna in company with Mr. Colbert, preaching at Berwick, Salem, Nanticoke, Wilkesbarre, and Kingston. These two primitive missionaries met at Northumberland on the 10th of September, and parted at Abram Goodwin's, in Kingston, on the 24th of the same month. Upon parting, Mr. Colbert remarks: "This morning Brother Fleming took his leave of me. He is gone to explore the dreary regions of Tioga." He penetrated the north far beyond "the gloomy regions of Tioga," into the lake country, where new settlements were scattered through the wilderness, the hardy settlers sharing the country with the aboriginal inhabitants, whose neighborhood was not always the most pleasant or safe. We shall have occasion to speak further of this man and his labors hereafter.

October 26, Mr. Colbert notices his first meeting with his "new colleague, Brother Turck." He remarks that he "preached a long but entertaining metaphorical sermon from Isa. xxi, 5. Brother Paynter and I exhorted after him." He proceeds:

"*Sunday, 27.* This morning held a love-feast; preached at Squire Myers's. Brother Paynter preached on Matthew x, 32, 33. After him I preached from Luke xxii, 19, and administered the Lord's Supper; Brother Owen assisted. Brothers Paynter and Turck exhorted powerfully." The scene of the labors here recorded lay but a few rods from the site of the Methodist Church and the Wyoming Conference Seminary in Kingston. The place is now occupied by the descendants of the man Mr. Colbert frequently mentions, and calls "my friend Abram Goodwin."

Mr. Colbert now followed Mr. Fleming to the north. He says:

"*Thursday, 29.* I took my leave of Brother Turck, and

set out on my journey for the dreary and ice-glazed mountains of Tioga; came as far as Abram Goodwin's."

Mr. Colbert met with his old friends in Tioga, who greeted him with joy. Here he found "Brother James Smith, a good young Irishman, who was on his way to the lakes." This man was long a member of the Philadelphia Conference, and was familiarly called "Irish Jimmy."

Finding Mr. Fleming at New Sheshequin, and there assisting him at a quarterly meeting, Mr. Colbert then made an excursion out between the Seneca and Cayuga Lakes. The following account of his visit to Geneva is curious and interesting. "Geneva," he says, "is a beautifully situated little town on the northwest corner of the Seneca Lake. I went to Mr. Anning's, as I was directed by Brother Depew, an acquaintance of Mr. Anning; Mr. Anning was not at home, and I felt that *I* was not at home. But I felt that I durst not leave the town before I had preached if I could get any place to preach in. I asked Mrs. Anning if she was willing to let me preach in her house; she consented, though with a little reluctance; and considering the little pains taken to notify the people, I had a large congregation for the place. I was, thank God! enabled to preach with a degree of life and power. The people behaved as well as I could expect, considering all things, and spoke to me in that friendly manner that people who behave themselves with decency in a strange country ought to be spoken to.

"*Thursday, November 19.* Brothers Smith, \*Cole, and myself were well used at Mr. Manning's, where we lodged last night. This morning Mrs. Jennings, the tavern-keeper's wife, invited us to breakfast. I found the people very friendly and agreeable. By the time I rode from Geneva to the ferry on Cayuga Lake I was very hungry. I stopped at the house on the west side of the lake and asked for something to eat, but they told me they had no bread. A pot of potatoes being on the fire, I was glad to get some of them. But, to my great satisfaction, while I was sitting by the potato pot a man came in with a bag of wheat flour on



his back. I now procured some bread to eat and some to take with me, and it was well I did, for when I crossed the lake to Captain Harris's, where I lodged and took supper, they had no bread." So it was then, in a country where the people now live on the finest of the wheat, and all have an abundance. In 1793 bread was scarce, and in some cases not to be obtained. We will follow our pioneer preacher a little farther.

"*Wednesday, 20.* From Harris's Ferry I rode up the east side of the Cayuga Lake, through an Indian settlement, to a small place called Scipio. I stopped at the Widow Franklin's, and had preaching appointed at early candle-light at Squire Phelps's. The people would not attend until an arbitration was ended, so that I became impatient waiting for them and was about going away, but was persuaded to wait a little longer, which I consented to do. When the people began to come in I commenced singing. After singing and prayer I had a house full, to whom I preached from Rom. v, 19. The people were attentive until the last prayer, when by the time I was on my knees they began to pour out of doors as though tumbling over each other. I knew not what to make of it, but when I got up I was enabled to account for the confusion, a house next door but one being wrapped in flames.

"*Thursday, 21.* Rode to William Goodwin's.

"*Friday, 22.* I preached at Mr. Atwater's, and baptized a child for Mr. Konkle. At night preached at Robert M'Dowall's, at the head of the Cayuga Lake," now Ithaca.\*

"*Saturday, 23.* I had a very cold night's lodging last

\* We have read with great interest "Methodism in Ithaca," by the late lamented Rev. C. D. Burritt. His general accuracy all must admit; but on some points his materials did not furnish him with precise information. He truly makes William Colbert the first Methodist preacher who preached in what is now Ithaca. The year 1793 is right, but it was not "on a pleasant morning in the month of June," but on Friday evening, the 22d of November; that the event occurred. Mr. Colbert was not the "junior preacher on Northumberland circuit," but the preacher in charge on Wyoming. It is true that Mrs. M'Dowall "soon became a Methodist," and "the first in Ithaca," as Mr. Burritt informs us.

night. I got very little sleep, so that I was obliged to rise early, especially as I had a long ride before me of more than thirty miles without an inhabitant to Andrew Alden's at Owaga, [Owego,] on the northeast branch of the Susquehanna. I was fortunate in finding two fires on the road this cold morning.

"*Sunday, 24.* Felt unwell last night, but through mercy was enabled to preach with a degree of life and power at Andrew Alden's."

Mr. Colbert now commenced his return journey. From Owego he came to his friend Nathan Brown's at New Sheshequin; thence to his "old friend Baldwin's at Wyalusing," where he met "Brother Fleming." On Thursday, November 28, he came to Mason Alden's at Meshoppen. Thence down to Wyoming he met with several incidents of a somewhat novel character, which he records.

"*Friday, 29.* Rode from Meshoppen to Tunkhannock, where I met with Sister Sutton, who lives in Lackawanna, and Mrs. Benedict, a Baptist sister. As we were in a wilderness we had victuals with us, and with a deal of satisfaction we all three sat down upon a rock in the woods and ate our dinner. We then crossed a mountain over to Lackawanna. The timbers on the top of this mountain were bent over the road with ice, but on the side of the mountain we saw no ice. We traveled until night came on, and very dark it was. I was under fearful apprehensions of having to lodge in the woods, but fortunately we got to Dr. Smith's, Sister Sutton's father.\*

\* We read this adventure to Mrs. Bedford, upon which her countenance brightened up, and she remarked: "I recollect it well; but he has left out a part of the story. When it became so dark that they were obliged to trust entirely to their horses, Mr. Colbert being in advance, his horse refused to go on. He spurred the animal, but he would not advance another step. Whereupon he dismounted, and laying hold of a shrub, he reached forward his feet until he found he was upon the verge of a precipice. They changed their course and escaped being dashed to pieces. They were upon the brink of a perpendicular ledge of several hundred feet in height." It will be recollected that Mrs. Bedford is a daughter of Mrs. Sutton.



"*Saturday, 30.* This morning I felt no freedom to call the family together for prayers, and came away without saying anything about it to them. I rode to Brother Waters's, where I met with Brother Turck."

It was at Dr. William Hooker Smith's that Mr. Colbert lodged. The doctor was reported a skeptic, and would not be likely to propose prayers; but he was a gentleman, and, had his guest proposed it, would not have objected. Whether the course pursued by Mr. Colbert was the best one may admit of some question; still it was the one which most men would be likely to take under similar circumstances.

On December 2 Mr. Colbert is at Stephen Baker's, in Kingston, where he preached, and "Brother Turck formed four bands." Baker lived on the old road between Forty Fort and Wilkesbarre, on what is now called the Church place. This was thenceforth a place of resort and rest for the preachers, and frequently a preaching place.

#### VALENTINE COOK COMMENCES HIS LABORS IN WYOMING.

A new actor now comes upon the stage. It is the famous Valentine Cook. Mr. Colbert takes the following notice of his coming and of the commencement of his labors:

"*Thursday, 5.* I met with Brother Cook at Anning Owen's. He informed me that I was appointed to Montgomery circuit, on the western shore of Maryland, the place of my nativity. After my rough tour into the lake country I felt very willing to spend the winter in Wyoming; but a journey of more than one hundred and fifty miles to the southward lies before me.

"*Friday, 6.* I heard Brother Cook preach at Shawney. He is an excellent preacher and an excellent man. I parted with him and went on with Brother Turck to Andrew Blanchard's.

"*Saturday, 7.* Rode to Berwick. The Lord has done great things since I was here. A notorious backslider has

been healed, a sinner brought to the knowledge of the truth, and some are groaning for redemption in the blood of Jesus; and the Lord be praised, I am happy with them.

"*Sunday, 8.* I preached at Berwick, joined a class of children, and rode to Christian Bowman's. This has been a happy day with me."

Here we part with Mr. Colbert for the present, but shall find him going over the same ground hereafter.

It had been only a little more than one year since he first went to Tioga. During this period he had ranged through the vast territory embraced within Tioga, Wyoming, Northumberland, and the lakes with the greatest zeal and diligence, nursing the feeble societies and proclaiming salvation to the perishing with encouraging prospects, but without any marked success. His seemed to be the work of preparing the way; others entered into his labors.

Valentine Cook had the reputation of a man of learning, and no one doubted that he was a man of decided talents. He was "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," and his sermons took the citadel of the heart by storm. The people in multitudes flocked to hear him, and the power of God attended his preaching in a wonderful manner. When the writer of these pages first came to Wyoming, in 1818, there were many people scattered through the circuit who were converted by his instrumentality, and who regarded him as almost an angel. There are still lingering upon the shore a number who remember him well, although most of them were mere children when his powerful voice echoed among the valleys and mountains of Northern Pennsylvania and Southern New York. Among the anecdotes which we recollect to have heard of the effects of his powerful sermons was one concerning a certain Presbyterian deacon. The deacon went out with the multitude to hear the great Methodist preacher. He preached in a grove, and the mass of people waved and fell before his tremendous oratory like the trees of the forest before a terrible tempest. The good deacon began to feel nervous; he thought he



would fly, but found his limbs not strong enough to carry him away. He held up by a tree until the excitement had in a manner subsided, and then returned home, resolved fully never to put himself in the way of such strange influences again. "Why," said he to his good wife, "if I had undertaken to get away I should certainly have fallen my whole length on the ground." Under the impression, or pretending to be, that a sort of charm or witchery attended Mr. Cook's preaching, he could never be prevailed upon to hear him again.

## ANTHONY TURCK.

ANTHONY TURCK labored in the Wyoming circuit this year with Mr. Colbert, and being a decided character deserves something more than a passing notice. Mrs. Bedford says: "Father Turck was a German, a plain rough man; was much engaged."

The late Calvin Wadamus, of Plymouth, was converted this year under the labors of Valentine Cook, and he was a great admirer of "Daddy Turck." In giving some account of him to the writer, years ago, he finished by saying: "O, he would clap his hands, and lift up his chair and dash it down on the floor, and call for the power until he made everything move—yes, he would." The writer has heard the name of "Father Turck" mentioned with great affection and reverence by the old Methodists since his earliest recollections.

The Rev. Charles Giles, in his "Pioneer," gives an account of a quarterly meeting in Burlington, Otsego county, New York, and in that account has a brief sentence in relation to this old school Methodist preacher, which illustrates the strong points in his character. He says: "In the afternoon of the same day also a mighty excitement was felt throughout the whole assembly; careless sinners became alarmed, and, though the rain poured down without, they rushed in haste into the pitiless shower. Elder Turck, one of the rough hewers of those days, cried out to them thus:

‘Sinners ! you are chained ; if you run from the power of God the devil will have you.’ ”

After laboring in his Master’s vineyard for ten years he was called to his reward. The following brief account of his character and death appears in the Minutes for 1803 :

“Anthony Turck, of Low Dutch descent, a native of New York state ; he was received into the traveling connection in 1793 ; a holy and devout man, indefatigable and successful in his labors, subject to great afflictions and trials ; he expressed some time before and in his last illness an increasing sweetness in communion with God. His death sickness was short and severe ; but notwithstanding, he gave to them that attended him great marks of patience, resignation, and victory in death. He departed this life March 13, 1803, in Freehold circuit, Monmouth county, New Jersey.”

This year James Thomas stands connected with Tioga, and a new circuit appears upon the Minutes, called Seneca Lake, and James Smith is the preacher. The work now rapidly extended among the new settlements east of the Cayuga and between the Cayuga and Seneca Lakes.

In 1794 JAMES PAYNTER traveled the Wyoming circuit. This man was somewhat advanced in life ; was a good preacher, and was both acceptable and useful. Mrs. Bedford says : “He was a man of few words out of the pulpit ; was always exceedingly grave.”

Christian and Thomas Bowman had invited the preachers to establish a regular appointment at Briar Creek, whither Father Paynter was directing his course in one of his regular rounds, but being overtaken by the darkness of the night, he found himself lost in the woods. He lifted up his voice and made the woods ring. He was within the hearing of the hospitable domicile of Thomas Bowman, who promptly lighted a handful of pine splinters, and set off for the purpose of relieving the weary and perplexed itinerant. Great was the preacher’s joy when he saw the light approaching, and heard the well-known voice of his friend. He could



now moralize upon the importance of his own mission, that of guiding the poor lost wanderer from the wilderness of this world to his home in heaven.

Mr. Paynter traded his horse in Berwick, and was imposed upon with a refractory, tricky horse, which threw and badly bruised him. He was perhaps fifty years old at the time. The man who defrauded him that summer lost a very valuable horse by a fall on a harrow, which was considered by many a providential retribution. Sometimes the providence of God visits wicked men in a way to bring their sins to their remembrance, and to cover them with disgrace.

#### THE WORK AT THE NORTH.

The work progressed rapidly at the north this year. Mr. Burritt says : " This year Mr. Alexander, the grandfather of Rev. Manly Tooker, came into the country from Pennsylvania, and settled near the spot now occupied by the village of Lansingville, thirteen miles north of Ithaca. He had been an attendant upon the Episcopal Church, but his daughter, who afterward became Mrs. Tooker, and who still survives,\* was received into the Methodist society, and baptized by Anning Owen while yet in Pennsylvania, so that she was properly the first lay member of the Methodist Episcopal Church who came into that region. Not long after their arrival Miss Alexander heard in some way that there was to be a Methodist preacher at what is now called Ithaca on a certain Sabbath. Filled with zeal, she was so successful as to persuade quite a number of persons to set out with her on the Sabbath morning for the meeting. Nineteen, we are told, made this novel journey in a flatboat from the starting-place to the southeast corner of the lake, and from thence on foot, creeping as they best could through the bushes, for there were no roads in those days. When they arrived they were greatly disappointed in learning that the preacher, who was no other than Valentine Cook, had just concluded ; but soon rejoiced by obtaining a promise from him to

\* She has since gone to rest.

preach to them in half an hour. In the mean time Mr. Cook, with a few others, walked away from the gathering to the cabin of Mr. Hinepaw, where he sat down to rest. While there he was offered some bread and butter as a refreshment, which he declined; but soon after observing a child eagerly devouring some of the same, he fell to exhorting those present to have the same appetite for spiritual things. When their sermon was concluded the company started for their homes, but were not able to reach them that night. We are told that they tarried on the west side of the lake, and finished the journey on Monday.

"The preaching was in the M'Dowell house, which was the stopping-place of the weary itinerant. Toward the close of the year Alward White was sent on the circuit, but does not seem to have preached regularly in Ithaca, at least not till the latter months of the conference year, while instead we hear of John Broadhead and Cornelius Mars, called by some 'thundering Mars,' on account of his manner of preaching. How Broadhead came to be in the region we cannot discover, as his name on the Minutes is set to Northumberland circuit; but probably he was sent north by his presiding elder for an especial work.\* The name of Mars does not appear on the Minutes at all.

"At the same time Thornton Fleming was appointed presiding elder of a district composed of Tioga and Seneca circuits and Nova Scotia, which latter part he probably visited but once, as we hear of him often in this region. Valentine Cook, however, continued to be elder over most of his former charge, and visited Ithaca quite often in company with Fleming.

"Broadhead began to manifest, even then, the great pulpit abilities for which he afterward became so noted. With a large commanding person, and a clear, sonorous voice, he captivated all hearts, and sinners trembled as he

\* It is more likely that he had not yet entered upon his duties on Northumberland. The conference at which he received his appointment to the charge sat in October, and this was his first year.



described the awful scenes of the approaching judgment. Thus from Sinai he hurled the thunderbolts of divine denunciation and startled the slumbering conscience; but this was not all his power, for he could speak from Zion too, and with touching tenderness portray the sad and solemn scenes of Calvary, while with irresistible power he pressed the weeping mourner to the Saviour. Under such preaching occurred the first revival in Ithaca, for four or five were soon converted, and ere long a class of eighteen formed, whose names were as follows: Mrs. M'Dowall, Peter Vanorman and wife, George Sager and his mother, William and Richard Pangburn, Elias De Pew, Abram and Mary Smith, Catherine Hinepaw, Mr. Jackson and Rachel, his daughter, Dr. Simons, Garrett Shoemaker and wife, and Cornelius Shoemaker and his wife. Most of this number lived two or three miles out of the settlement, but all met for class and preaching at M'Dowall's."

The following account of the introduction of Methodism into Benton, Yates Co., N. Y., and the beautiful story of two brave girls walking thirty-five miles through the woods to attend a quarterly meeting, is taken from an article by Dr. F. G. Hibbard, published in the Northern Christian Advocate. There was a heroism in those good old times which is not now in the Church; or perhaps we should say, does not manifest itself in the same way. Circumstances have changed, and so have the manners and habits of the people.

"The first society was organized in the fall of 1793, and consisted of ten members, namely: Ezra Cole, Sabra Cole, Eliphalet Hull, Huldah Hull, Mathew Cole, Delia Cole, George Wheeler, Martha Wheeler, Sarah Buel, Lois Cole. Most of these have fallen asleep; but Sarah Buel, Martha Wheeler, and Delia Cole, now Delia Pettit, still remain to witness the power and grace of God to this generation also. While their public assemblages were generally accommodated in the private house of Brother Wheeler, their quarterly meetings were moved about to accommodate

circumstances. The second and third quarterly meetings held in Benton, and probably the second and third in the Genesee country, as it was then called, were held in the house of Eliphalet Hull, then residing on Flat-street, about two miles from Benton Center. But humble as was their external condition, and devoid of that prestige which attracts a worldly mind, they lived in the freedom and power of the Gospel; and few as they were, they kept the rules of Discipline. At their love-feasts, for the greater retirement, and to preserve the primitive Methodist order of closed doors, they assembled in an upper room, where from the entire circuit twenty or thirty persons might be found convened. Brother Hull was their first class-leader. He was a faithful and stable man, a noted singer and a happy Christian, and his labors and example were blessed to the Church.

"It may well be imagined that going to quarterly meeting in those days was no luxury to the flesh, however refreshing to the spirit. From variable distances within a hundred miles the people met, traversing Indian paths, and guided by 'blazed trees' through a wilderness roamed by the panther, the wolf, the bear, the deer, not to speak of the coy and treacherous reptile. Still, as early as 1794 many new roads were laid out, and the hand of civilization began to show itself in various public improvements. This year also the county of Steuben was created from the southern district of old Ontario.

"The town of Bath, Steuben county, began to be settled in 1793, in the midst of a vast wilderness; and in 1796 that section for eight miles around contained above eight hundred souls. Among its first sturdy occupants was John Chambers. He had experienced religion, and himself, wife, and two daughters, Anna and Polly, had been members of the Church, before coming to Bath. These, with an elder brother, composed the family.

"In the month of May, 1795, a quarterly meeting was to be held in Benton, and Anna and Polly, the former sixteen



years and the latter fourteen, ardent in their first love, and hungry for the word of life, entreated permission to attend. The distance was about thirty-five miles; but as boats then plied up and down the Crooked Lake about twenty miles of the way, and with their brother to attend them, it was deemed practicable, and parental consent was obtained for the journey. The brother and sisters were to meet at the head of the lake and embark together. Full of buoyant hope, the girls set out upon their journey and reached the place of rendezvous in time, but to their inexpressible grief and disappointment, all the boats had left on their downward trip. This was an unexpected calamity. What should they do? Brother had not yet arrived, and for a while they stood perplexed, whelmed in sorrow. Their hearts were fixed on the quarterly meeting, and they had but too eagerly anticipated once more hearing the words of life, and mingling their souls and voices with the humble, worshipping band. To return home, and thus defeat all their anxious hopes, was more than they could endure.

"No preaching had yet been had in Bath. Yet to proceed by land, and on foot, seemed a rash and insuperable undertaking. A forest stretched before them of over twenty miles in length, through which but an imperfect path lay, and as yet but one wagon had ventured through—an achievement much talked of in those days. In the middle of this forest was a log tavern, a 'half way house,' the only human dwelling that cheered the long and lonely distance. Wild animals and reptiles yet disputed the right of soil against the invading foot of civilization, and the equally wild Indian yet strolled along his ancient lakes and hunting grounds, reluctant to leave them forever for the distant West. Besides, brother had not arrived, and if they ventured on foot at all, his protecting arm seemed necessary. Yet, after weighing all these circumstances in tearful and prayerful anxiety, they concluded they were able to endure the fatigue, and their desire for the word of God prevailed; they resolved to start for the quarterly meeting. Their brother

they knew would follow, and perhaps soon overtake them.

"The day was wasting, and they had not a moment to lose. A friend instructed them to keep the lake in sight all the way, and they would not lose their path, and with these slender prospects they set out for the meeting. The sun was already fast dipping the western sky, and the shadows of evening began to fall around, before our travelers reached the half-way house. Tears and doubts would sometimes rise, and at length the fearful possibility of having to pass the night in the open forest, exposed to the prowling wolf or the stealthy panther, flashed across the mind. The younger, girl-like, wept, but the elder resolutely encouraged her drooping spirit and they urged their weary way forward. On they went, through tangled shrub, and fen, and fallen trees, praying, fearing, hoping. At length, just at the setting in of night, the rude though welcome 'lodging-place in the wilderness for wayfaring men' appeared in sight. Their spirits now revive. They approach, and enter with many apologies for their forlorn and unprotected appearance, explain to the good landlady the object of their journey, and that they are daughters of Mr. Chambers, of Bath, and their brother is expected to overtake them. The lady welcomed them in, informed them she knew their brother, as he had traveled that road, and assured them they should be hospitably entertained and protected."

"Scarcely had her kind words allayed the embarrassment and fears of our young heroines when the brother himself arrived, out of breath, with his coat on his arm, in great agitation. As he opened the door and saw his sisters he sprang forward and clasped them in his arms, exclaiming, 'O my sisters, I never expected to see you again! I supposed you were lost.' They soon, however, composed themselves to rest, and in the morning our three pilgrims resumed their journey with renovated spirits. At the foot of the lake they crossed the outlet on floating logs and fallen trees, and arrived in good season at the humble log



house of Robert Chism, a Methodist residing at the north part of the present village of Penn Yan, where the house of Dr. Judd now stands. Here they were cordially received, and joined in the services of a watch-night. Valentine Cook, the presiding elder, was there. Next morning they journeyed on to Benton, four miles farther, and enjoyed the long anticipated quarterly meeting. These two sisters are still alive. They are both widows: the elder is the widow of the late Brother Briggs, of Milo, Yates county, and the other the widow of the late Mr. Nichols, of the same place: both having lived faithful to God through a long life, are now patiently waiting in joyful hope of that 'better country, which is the heavenly.'"

## GREAT QUARTERLY MEETINGS ON WYOMING CIRCUIT, 1795.

A quarterly meeting was held this year at Amos Parks's, in Salem, of which Mrs. Bedford has glowing recollections. In relation to it she says: "I received information from Ross Hill that there was to be a quarterly meeting this side of Berwick, and I was urged to go. It was late in the fall, and a light snow fell the night before. Darius Williams, Captain Parish and his wife, Sophia Gallop, (long known subsequently as Aunt Via Smith,) and I made up the company. Below Plymouth it was all woods, with no road; we were on horseback and followed a mere foot-path. We put up on Saturday night with a Methodist family this side of the place of the meeting, but arrived on Sabbath morning in time for the love-feast. I have forgotten who was the presiding elder,\* but Mr. Jewell was on the circuit at that time.†

\* It was Valentine Cook.

† Joseph Jewell was received on trial in 1795, and it seems probable that he was employed by the elder in 1794. Mrs. Anna Briggs, of Milo Center, says she was converted when Joseph Jewell was upon the circuit, at a quarterly meeting in the meeting-house below Buttonwood, and that Alward White succeeded Mr. Jewell. Mrs. Briggs's maiden name was Chambers, and she joined the class at Philip Jackson's. Mrs. Briggs's story, which we took from her lips, proves our theory with regard to Jewell's appointment to Wyoming. Valentine Cook was undoubtedly the presiding elder on the occasion of which Mrs. Bedford speaks.

"Mr. Parks, his wife, and daughter Nancy, were members. We had a truly interesting season, and we were subsequently informed that many were added to the Church as the fruit of the meeting. The next day we returned home, and Ashbel Waller and his wife accompanied us. Snow and rain together were falling, just enough to make it uncomfortable; but we enjoyed so much of the presence of God that we considered this but a small matter. The Lord was truly with us.

"When we came to the creek it was so swollen that it seemed impassable. We all sat for a moment upon our horses crying to God to help us. At length Darius Williams threw up his arms toward heaven, and cried out, 'The Lord will carry us through.' The men then rode through and we followed them. We crossed the angry stream without harm.

"That night we all stayed at Darius Williams's and had a prayer-meeting. Sister Waller had been under doubts and fears, but that night they were all removed, and she shouted 'Glory to God!' Her husband fell upon the floor, crying, 'Glory! glory to God!' and praised the Lord with all his might for what he had done for his wife, and for the manifestation of his power among us, for it was truly great."

Another of Mr. Cook's great quarterly meetings was held in the upper part of Kingston in 1795. This was the third year of Mr. Cook's labors on the district which included Wyoming circuit, and was still more successful than either of the preceding. Alward White was stationed on the circuit, and was very useful. His quarterly meeting still lingers in the memory of some who were led to the place by their pious mothers, they themselves being children. Mrs. Bedford's account of this meeting is as follows: "There was a quarterly meeting held in Kingston, at Philip Jackson's. He then lived on the place now owned and occupied by Fisher Gay. Valentine Cook was the presiding elder, and Alward White was the circuit preacher. The quarterly conference was held up stairs. We heard them



shouting and praising the Lord. My mother, Betsey Dennison, Polly Dennison, Clara Pierce, Polly Pierce, and myself went into an adjoining room and looked in, when we saw them all lying on the floor. The one near the door said, 'Sisters, come in.' We went into the room, and as soon as we entered the place we all fell, so wonderfully was the power of God manifested on that occasion. James Carpenter, who was not then a professor of religion, came into the first room, and we asked him to come in, but he would not. He told us afterward that he did not dare to come into the room, for he knew that if he had stepped over the threshold of the door he would have fallen.

"The next morning in the love-feast it seemed as if all the members, both preachers and people, were filled with the love and power of God. After love-feast Elder Cook preached a most powerful sermon, and Brother White gave out an earnest and moving exhortation. The work now went on rapidly and spread far and wide."

In those days quarterly conferences were not mere meetings of business, but were occasions of searching examinations and fervent prayer; and the official members often came from them, like Moses from the mount, reflecting the divine glory. No wonder that at a quarterly conference where all were overwhelmed with adoring wonder, the work of God should receive a new impulse.

#### BLACK WALNUT—ELDER STURTEVANT.

Mrs. Bedford says: "My father then lived in Exeter, and I was able to go to other places to meeting often. About this time I visited my brother William, who lived above Black Walnut Bottom, now known by the name of Lacyville. He had experienced religion, and had gathered a class of about a dozen persons. I found them very happy in religion. Old Elder Sturtevant, a Baptist minister, had given out an appointment on a particular Sunday to preach to both Methodists and Baptists. His object was to unite them together as one people. I told some of our brethren

that I thought we should get a drubbing that day, and that we must cry to the Lord for help, for we should need it. The elder took for his text John x, 1: 'Verily I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.' Then he told us the way to come in at the door was to believe and be baptized by immersion. He gave us quite a long discourse on the subject.

"After the sermon was finished my brother went out and opened his hymn book, when we all gathered around him. Sister Young, one of the members of our Church, came to me crying bitterly, and saying: 'Elder Sturtevant wanted us to be united as one people, but he has now shut up the door.' Then I said to her: 'This reminds me of the war between the Pennamites and Yankees. The Pennamites told our people that if they would lay down their arms they would be one. Our men laid down their arms, when the Pennamites took them up, and bound our men and sent them to jail.' Then I shouted, 'Glory to God! they can neither bind us nor send us to jail.' My brother sang an appropriate hymn, when we went into the house and stood up and sang another hymn. The Lord showed who his people were that day. There was a good many of Elder Sturtevant's people who stayed with us, and appeared very friendly, but seemed rather gloomy. Then we went into another room and held a class-meeting. After singing and prayer we arose and told our experience—such power and love as was manifested. The experiences were told with such clearness that it was evident that the work was of God. My brother spoke to the members of the Baptist Church who were present. They said that they had once enjoyed religion, but now did not as they wished to. He then spoke to Mr. Agard, a Baptist minister, and he told pretty much the same story; but he encouraged us to go on, as he thought we were right."



## REVIVAL IN WILKESBARRE.

This year there was an outpouring of the Spirit in the borough of Wilkesbarre, and many were converted. Some of those who were the subjects of the work were hard cases, but they were thoroughly renovated, and made bright Christians—steady and useful members of the Church—who died as they lived, in the faith of the Gospel. But the work was not confined to this class; it entered some of the best families, and shook the strong foundations of infidelity. Three ladies of character were the subjects of the work; two of them were prevented from uniting with the society by the prejudices and opposition of their husbands; but the third, Mrs. Duane, fought her way through, and identified herself with the little despised company. She was the widow of Timothy Pierce, who was killed in the Indian battle; and she was subsequently married to Mr. Duane, who at the time was skeptically inclined, and was a bitter persecutor of the Methodists. We are happy to learn from Mrs. Denison, of Kingston, a daughter of Benjamin Carpenter, whose name has been mentioned before, that Duane was converted toward the close of his life “up the river,” and expressed himself as “only wishing to live that he might tell the world that there is a reality in religion.” This information is refreshing; but history must be just, and for that reason we have made mention of his early opposition to Methodism.

This man, Duane, had the reputation of laying a plan to fumigate the little company of Methodists with brimstone, and drive them from their humble sanctuary. From what we had heard of this feat, many years ago, when the persons who came down from those times were numerous, we always supposed it was successful; but it may be presumed that Mrs. Bedford gives us the true version of the story. It is as follows:

“When the great revival was in Wilkesbarre, Elder Cook and Brother White were the preachers. One night, when

Elder Cook was preaching, a number of persons agreed to smoke them out with brimstone matches. These matches were made by winding a cloth, or paper, around a stick, and rolling it in melted brimstone. Their plan was to light these matches and throw them down the chimney. The person who was appointed to carry out the project went upon the roof, and lit his matches, and from some cause let go his hold and slid down the roof, and came to the ground matches in hand in the midst of his companions. The fumes of the burning brimstone almost stifled them, and they had to run for life. It did not molest the meeting, for the worshipers knew nothing about it until the persons concerned in the scheme told of it themselves, when it made a great deal of amusement for both saints and sinners."

The conference year 1795 closed Mr. Cook's labors on what—after the district had a name—was called Susquehanna district. The parting scene at Ross Hill we shall give hereafter, from a cotemporary witness. As Mr. Cook returned no more to this field, this will be the appropriate place to notice more particularly his history and character.

#### SKETCH OF VALENTINE COOK.

Valentine Cook was one of the extraordinary men raised up in this country to form the character of society while our civil and ecclesiastical institutions were in their infancy. God never wants agencies for the accomplishment of his great designs. He selects instruments and adapts them to the ends which he proposes to accomplish. The history of the church is replete with evidences of this truth; and in the history of Methodism, more eminently than in that of any other form of Christianity, does it appear that the special providence of God was concerned in calling and qualifying ministers during the early and more critical period of its existence.

Cook was in all respects a most extraordinary man, and was exactly suited to meet a pressing demand at many



points, and particularly upon the frontier. He was born in Pennsylvania, and brought up in Western Virginia. He was early addicted to hunting and conversing with nature in her deep solitudes; and by wandering, and often lodging in the woods, he acquired a boldness and a hardness of muscle which fitted him for a life of privation and endurance. While a lad he exhibited strong evidence of an active and vigorous mind. He read, he thought, he studied. The Bible was his principal book, but not the only one. He became concerned for his soul, and was led to Christ for salvation by the Methodist preachers. He was opposed and jeered by his father and friends, but adhered to his "new religion," as it was called, with such tenacity, that his father finally became convinced that his son had a conscience in the matter that should not be forced from its chosen channel. Young Cook was thankful for the liberty which his father gave him, of serving God in his own way without molestation, but was not contented with being left to himself. He now commenced offensive operations. He greatly longed for the salvation of his friends. He proposed to set up *family prayers*. This was readily conceded, for God had already heard him in heaven, and begun to work upon the heart of his father.

The extraordinary endowments of young Cook were soon so developed as to convince all that he was destined to a high sphere of usefulness. Cokesbury College had just commenced its short but brilliant history, and here the young man was sent to gain a competent education to qualify him for the great work of the ministry to which he felt himself called. He left the college probably in 1787, and immediately commenced his labors as an exhorter, and to his great joy soon saw much fruit of his earnest appeals.

Mr. Cook was admitted into the traveling connection in 1788, and traveled Calvert circuit; in 1789 he traveled Gloucester; in 1790, Lancaster; in 1791, Berkeley; in 1792 he stands on the Minutes connected with Pittsburgh, but was laboring on Clarksburgh when Bishop Asbury called him

away to Wyoming and the northern frontier. The next year, 1793, he was ordained elder, and was put in charge of a district.

We have given some sketches of his labors upon this new field, to which, as Mr. Asbury rightly judged, he was especially adapted.

The spirit in which he prosecuted his labors in the new and uncultivated regions of the north, and some of the hardships which he endured, may be gathered from an original letter, published in the *Northern Christian Advocate* for August 25, 1858. Many thanks are due to the brother who rescued this letter from oblivion. We give his brief, but pertinent introduction to the letter in connection with the letter itself:

"DEAR BROTHER HIBBARD,—I have succeeded in transcribing from the mutilated original the following letter. I think I have every word. We learn from it something of the hardships of *Life in the Itinerancy* in this section sixty-four years ago, and that the sin of dram-drinking was not looked upon with indifference even at that day.

"Very truly yours, MYRON COLE.

"BENTON CENTER, April 5, 1858."

"TO JAMES SMITH, PREACHER IN THE LAKES CIRCUIT.

"VERY DEAR BROTHER,—These hints may enable you to form some idea of my circumstances. I have now walked near sixty or seventy miles, and am within ten miles of the head of the lakes, at Mr. Weiburn's, who I somewhat expect will lend me a beast, as I am obliged to leave my horse with but small hopes of his recovery. Yesterday I walked upward of thirty miles in mud and water, being wet all day without; yet heaven was within. Glory to God! I had three tempters to encounter, the devil, the *mosquitoes*, and my horse; and the rain and my wet clothes were my element, and God my comforter, and victory my white horse. Hitherto, O Lord, hast thou been my helper, and I trust thou wilt save to the end.



"Brother Fleming is to take my appointments through Tioga. I mean to overtake him if possible, and get him to attend the quarterly meetings downward in my stead, and so return to the Lakes circuit in a few weeks, all which I shall have to do afoot if I can't get a horse. You can fix your circuit as you think best, but only appoint for yourself till I come myself, or send one. If Brother Fleming's horse should not be recovered I shall have to go on. My trials are furious, but I am not discouraged. I hope you'll pray for me. It would be necessary when you meet the classes to examine closely and urge union, and give a close exhortation at the end of the meeting, enforcing and pressing the several duties of the members. That class-leader at Appleton (not Brother Baily) has been intoxicated. I would not admit him, even on trial, without verbal obligations that he will not drink another drop, excepting in cases of medicine, and that himself shall not be physician in the case. If you can get a class, it would be well to make Brother Baily leader. I thought the Discipline would stir them. Satan is not willing they should be Methodists, for he knows their sins will get no rest among us.

"I am, as ever, sincerely and affectionately in Christ,

"VALENTINE COOK.

"May 24, 1794."

What language could be framed into the form of a eulogy by the greatest master of rhetoric, which would give a better idea of a great soul, than the simple, unstudied, and unadorned tale given in this letter. Such was the man, and such his work.

His fervent prayers, his powerful sermons, his great meekness and charity, and his profound knowledge of men and things, carried a mighty influence, and made deep and abiding impressions. All felt that a great man had made his appearance in the humble garb of a Methodist preacher. His work was to save souls. He took no reward for his services; his friends at the south replenished his wardrobe

as occasion required. Having completed his three years of hard work among the mountains and valleys of the wild Susquehanna and the northern lakes, he recrossed the Alleghanies, where he served two years as "elder," and in 1798 he was sent as a missionary to Kentucky. During this year he was married to Miss Abigail Slaughter.

The excessive labors of Mr. Cook had now so wrought upon his physical constitution that he was no longer able to endure the hardships of the heavy charges of that period, and in 1799 he located, and stands so reported in the Minutes for 1800.

During the subsequent part of his life he was generally engaged in teaching in academies, for which he was eminently qualified. Still he preached Christ with unabated zeal and great success.

Dr. Stevenson, Mr. Cook's biographer, says :

"He finally removed to Logan county, Kentucky, where he permanently settled his rapidly increasing family on a small farm some three miles north of Russellville. Here he remained to the day of his death, teaching, sometimes in town, and at other times in his own immediate neighborhood. In all these different positions and relations he shared to the fullest possible extent the respect and confidence of the people as an able, devoted, and self-sacrificing minister of the Gospel; while as a teacher he was regarded as among the most competent and successful in the country. He had the honor of numbering among his pupils some who have subsequently been distinguished as eminent physicians, lawyers, and statesmen."

"But," says the doctor, "the preaching of the Gospel, as the instrument ordained of God for the accomplishment of human salvation, was his one great work. However he may have been employed, whether at the handles of his plow, in the schoolroom, workshop, or presiding over the interests of a college, the winning of souls to Christ by the proclamation of his truth was the all-absorbing theme of his meditations, the great cardinal object to which his thoughts



and efforts were constantly directed. At all times and in every place, he was ready to preach Jesus and him crucified. By day and by night, during the week, as well as on the holy Sabbath, he was ever ready to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to a perishing world. To him the place was nothing. Whenever the people were assembled and willing to hear, whether in the church, the court-house, the school-room, or the market-place, in the palaces of the rich and the hovels of the poor, to the slaves in their quarters as well as to the vast multitudes on the camp-ground, he was never found unprepared to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. No ordinary circumstances could prevent the full and faithful discharge of his duty in this respect. His movements were never affected by the inclemency of the season. Through summer's heat and winter's cold, mid falling rains and driving snows, he was always at his appointments, holding forth in strains of melting sweetness the Gospel of the grace of God. The conversion of sinners, whether poor or rich, learned or illiterate, bond or free, was the all-engrossing subject of his thoughts and the all-controlling intent of his life. His word, whether in the pulpit, the class-room, the prayer-meeting, or the social circle, at all times and in every place was 'quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow.' Wherever his lot was cast he was the instrument of bringing many to the knowledge of the truth. Through his instrumentality the ignorant were enlightened, the unbelieving convinced, the careless awakened, and weeping penitents pointed to 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' Like his blessed Master, he was constantly 'going about doing good.' The ministry and membership of the Church everywhere felt the potency of his example, and in many instances were led to put on the armor anew for the battle.

"Prayer-meetings were established, classes revived, societies raised up, and new Churches organized wherever his

labors were employed or his influence felt. There are hundreds, and perhaps thousands, still living throughout the great West, who, under God, are indebted to the instrumentality of Valentine Cook for all their hopes of immortality and eternal life.

"We will not be surprised at this when it is recollected that few men ever read the Holy Scriptures with so much anxious solicitude to understand, practice, and proclaim to 'a world of sinners lost' the whole counsel of God. The Bible was his constant companion, at home and abroad, in public and in private. Other books he read as opportunity served and occasion required, but the Bible he read every day. Whether found in his private study, the school-room, the field, or the forest, he always had the precious volume at command. He was often observed poring over its sacred pages when traveling on horseback as well as on foot. So thoroughly was he posted in the teaching of the inspired penmen that no passage could be called for that he was not able to repeat, or to which he could not turn in a few moments. Of him it may in truth be said he was 'mighty in the Scriptures.' In the pulpit he usually announced the book, chapter, and verse of his quotations; and when he deemed it necessary, as he sometimes did, for the establishment of an important position or doctrine, it was truly astonishing with what facility he could call up his proofs from all the different parts of the inspired volume."

Many instances which illustrate his wonderful power as a preacher have been related to us by those who heard him while he labored in this territory. Often opposers were struck dumb and sometimes fell to the ground. These circumstances gave rise to an idea that he had the power of enchantment, and that it was dangerous to come near him. The venerable Charles Harris, still living, informed us that he had received such impressions, but still resolved to go, and hear and see for himself. He attended a meeting at Col. Dennison's, and on entering the house Mr. Cook



and Alward White, who was then on the circuit, were singing. He soon began to feel a strange tremor pass over him. "There," said he to himself, "the witchery is coming." But he was too brave to run, and he supported himself through for that time. An instance related by his biographer had many parallels in our field. It is as follows:

"At a camp-meeting held in Southern Kentucky, while Mr. Cook was preaching on these words: 'Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee,' a gentleman arose in the congregation and exclaimed, under great excitement: 'Stop! stop till I can get out of this place!' Mr. Cook immediately paused, and said, 'Let us pray for that man.' The gentleman started from his place, but just as he reached the outskirts of the assembly he sank to the earth and began to cry aloud for mercy."

Mr. Cook's great power lay in the simplicity and force of his language, the earnestness of his spirit, his powerful sympathy, and his firm hold on God. No one ever complained that the language of this great man was above his comprehension; no one listened to his glowing eloquence without feeling that he uttered the deep convictions of his own mind; none doubted that he was moved by love for the souls of men in his self-sacrificing labors. All who heard him felt that he came freshly charged with a commission from heaven, and that God was in the words he uttered. Such were his habits of communion with God that his manners appeared to the uninitiated wholly inexplicable. Mrs. Bedford says that on one occasion, as a company were returning from a great meeting in Kingston, Mr. Cook rode on before them. He entered the Narrows between Kingston and Exeter, and was soon out of sight. A turn in the road brought him into view, when he was reeling from side to side like a drunken man. His hands were sometimes clasped, and at others raised toward heaven, and his eyes directed upward. The old lady's ex-

planation was the true one. "He was just as happy as he could be, and thought no one saw him but his Saviour, with whom he was holding sweet communion." This manner of the good man while traveling the highway actually led to the slanderous remark of an enemy that "the old d—I was drunk." "Ah," added Mrs. B., after giving the solution, "he was not drunk, but was filled with the Holy Ghost."

Upon the peculiarities of Mr. Cook his biographer says: "Valentine Cook had his peculiarities, and we might add, his eccentricities also. Being almost constantly absorbed in thought, and, withal, having a mind so constituted that when directed to any particular subject he seemed to lose sight in a great measure of everything else, he was generally regarded as an absent-minded man. It was related of him that, soon after his marriage, his wife accompanied him to one of his appointments. After preaching an excellent sermon he mounted his horse and rode back to the residence of his father-in-law, where they were then living. When he entered the hall-door Mrs. Slaughter very naturally asked him what had become of his wife. He was deeply mortified, and immediately started back in pursuit of her. When they met, perceiving that her feelings were very much wounded, he burst into tears, and made every explanation that the nature of the case would admit, assuring her that for the future he would try to do better, which he no doubt did; but to little or no purpose: the like occurrences marked his whole history, notwithstanding his oft-repeated efforts to divest himself of the liability.

"He was frequently known to leave his horse tied up in the woods, or safely housed in the stable of some friend where he had preached, and walk all the way home, never once thinking of his horse, until interrogated on the subject by his wife or children. On one occasion he started for an appointment some six or eight miles from his residence. When but a short distance from the chapel at which he was



to preach he turned aside into the barrens, as was his custom, for the purpose of spending a while in private devotion. On remounting his horse and returning to the road he unwittingly took the wrong end, and was jogging along toward home, humming a favorite tune, when met by some of his friends who were going to hear him preach. 'Well, brethren,' said the old gentleman, very pleasantly, 'are you not going the wrong way?' They thought not. 'We are going to Bibb's Chapel to hear you preach, and this is certainly the right road.' He appeared much astonished, but yielding the point he turned about and accompanied them to the church, being much more inclined than any of the company to laugh at his blunder.

"During the earthquakes, or 'shakes,' as they were commonly called, with which many portions of the Western country were visited in 1811 and 1812, on a dark and stormy night, when the earth was rocking and reeling to and fro like a drunken man, Mr. Cook is said to have sprung from his bed and started to the door. His wife, fearing that he was about to leave the room, exclaimed: 'O my dear husband! you are not going to leave me, I hope?' He replied: 'If my Lord is coming I can wait for no one.'"

Mrs. Bedford gives an instance of his absence of mind not quite so strange as the above instances, but still of the same class. He had left an oil cloth cloak with her to be lined, and some other articles of clothing were also deposited with her at the same time. When he was at her father's house for the last time Mrs. Sutton said to her daughter, now Mrs. Bedford, "We will see whether Brother Cook will think of his clothes." They waited until he had bid them adieu, and given them his blessing, when he was reminded of his cloak, etc. He seemed to awake as from a dream, and thanked his kind friends for their care of his interests, and taking the articles he turned his face toward the south, and they saw him no more.

Bishop Morris says of Mr. Cook that "he was emphat-

ically a man of prayer and faith, and, like Enoch, walked with God. Perhaps no man of modern times was more deeply imbued with the spirit of grace, had more experience in 'the deep things of God,' or felt more deadness to the world than Valentine Cook. One consequence was, he sometimes betrayed absence of mind in commonplace matters. Indeed, when he retired for secret devotion, just before public service, his friends had to watch him, or he would pray till after the time appointed for him to commence preaching."

"While Brother Cook was remarkable for solemnity, both of appearance and deportment, there was, in his natural composition, a spice of eccentricity sufficient to attract attention, but not to destroy his ministerial influence. On one occasion he commenced his public discourse in a country place thus: 'As I was riding along the road to-day I saw a man walk out into his field with a yoke under his arm; by the motion of the stick he brought up two bullocks, and placed the yoke upon them. At another place I saw an ass standing by a corn-crib, waiting for his daily provender.' Then he read for his text, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.' Isa. i, 3. He was a ready man, had a fruitful mind, and, no doubt, what he had seen on the way suggested the subject of his discourse."

Another of his characteristics was a fondness for music. Dr. Stevenson says:

"Mr. Cook was remarkably fond of music, instrumental as well as vocal. He was a good singer himself, and wherever he went encouraged the young people especially to learn to sing, never forgetting the apostolic injunction, 'with the Spirit, and with the understanding also.' He used to say that he never felt fully prepared for preaching until he heard a good old-fashioned hymn, or evangelical song well sung. While he lived in the towns of Kentucky he would sometimes sit for hours at his window by night, listening with the most intense delight to the soft and mel-



low strains of the flute and violin, or to the more shrill and piercing notes of the clarionet. When he resided in the vicinity of Russellville, the young men of the town, knowing his fondness for music, were in the habit of giving him serenades at late hours of the night. On such occasions they always received a cordial welcome, and were more than remunerated for their trouble by his fatherly counsels, which were usually given in a manner so very impressive as never to be erased from their memory. Incidents and anecdotes related by this venerable apostle of Methodism are still recited with peculiar interest by some who participated in those nocturnal visitations. But of Mr. Cook's peculiarities we have said enough, perhaps too much, although a volume might be filled with such matter."

Mr. Cook, when he had become venerable for age, and considering his end near, desired to make a tour to the East and visit the scenes of his former labors. In the autumn of 1820 he carried out that project. He mounted his horse in the spirit of the ancient Methodist chivalry, which fired the souls of Wesley and Asbury, and which so strongly marked his character and movements when he entered the Wyoming Valley, nearly thirty years before. Well mounted, and equipped with his saddle-bags and pocket Bible, no young itinerant ever left home with a lighter heart than did he.

As he commenced this mission the old adversary resolved to prevent his success, and, as the good man subsequently related the affair to the Rev. Dr. Drake, proceeded upon a well-considered plan, but after all was unsuccessful. Here is the story :

"The day I left Uniontown and commenced the ascent of the Alleghany Mountains, the devil came to me and said : 'You are one of the most learned men of the Methodist Church ; your fame has already reached the eastern cities. If you will change your manner in the pulpit a little, make your discourses more erudite, your style more florid, your manner less earnest and boisterous, you will be admired by

the learned; the papers will be filled with your praise. New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore will throng the churches where you preach.' 'Ah, Satan, is that you?' said the venerable man, as he reined up his horse to a standstill; "'I will go not one step farther unless you leave.' Leaving the road a few hundred yards, I found the bottom of a deep ravine, where I thought myself safe from observation; I dismounted, tied my horse, fell on my knees, head to the ground, (the snow was about six inches deep.) I had been there but a few minutes when the devil again accosted me, and said: 'You look for all the world like a bear; (his dress was a black overcoat with long cape;) some hunter will soon see you and shoot you.' I sprang up and looked in every direction for the hunter, but saw no one. 'Ah, Satan, that's you again. Let them shoot, I will not leave till you leave.'"

"Here he wrestled for a long time; here he got the victory. Satan was bruised beneath his feet; angels came and ministered to him. He went on his way rejoicing, resolved to 'preach the preaching' which his Master bade him, without any reference to self-aggrandizement."

He passed through Lexington, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh. His biographer says:

"From Pittsburgh he went on to New York, Philadelphia, and from thence to Baltimore, where he remained during the principal part of the winter, preaching to the vast crowds that flocked to hear him. A gracious revival followed his labors. Scores and hundreds were awakened, and converted to God through his instrumentality."

In this trip he did not visit Wyoming, as so great a distance out of the direct course which he had marked out would have added too much to the labor of his journey.

He was in the city of Baltimore during the session of the Conference of 1821. Of his appearance and labors on that occasion we have received the following particulars from the Rev. Gideon Lanning, then a member of the Baltimore Conference, who was present:



"In 1821 or 1822 Rev. V. Cook visited several places of his early ministry, and came to Baltimore while the Conference was in session. His appearing among us was fraught with as much interest as was that of the coming of Titus. It was announced that he would preach at 3 P.M., and the large church on Eutaw-street was filled with anxious hearers, many of whom were preachers, and several of them companions of his early toils. At the appointed hour he appeared in the pulpit, a venerable stalwart figure, 'clothed with humility,' with a countenance beaming with benignity. Read his hymn in an artless manner; singing over, he began to pray, and soon prayed 'the heavenly blessing down;' gave out his text, 'Whereas I was once blind I now see.' Every eye was fixed upon him, and soon suffused with tears; the heart was thrilled, and began to melt. By seeing and hearing this man of God, I obtained a clearer view of that Scripture, 'full of faith and the Holy Ghost,' than I had ever received before. From that conference I went to a charge in Virginia. I had heard of a great revival on a part of that circuit a few months before. On my arrival they told me how it was brought about: Valentine Cook had been there visiting, and he preached to the people, and went from house to house talking to them about 'Jesus,' and persuading them to become Christians."

Mr. Cook was kind-hearted and loved peace, but he was not the man to desert his colors in the hour of peril. He was a clear-headed man, a master of logic, and when truth was assailed by the abettors of error he was on hand for a brave defense. He had two controversies in the course of his life which are considered as having exerted a decided and wide-spread influence upon the cause of Methodism in the West. One was before he came to Wyoming, and the other was subsequently. The first was with a minister of the Scotch Seceders, upon the issues between the Calvinists and Arminians; and the second was with a Baptist minister on the subject of baptism. His argument on baptism is published in an Appendix with his Memoirs, and is in some

respects original, and in its main points quite conclusive.

The debate, if such it should be called, with the Scotch divine was a singular affair. His assailant had probably been aroused by the popularity of the young itinerant, and sent out a challenge to all the world, that is, *a part* of the world, that part embracing Mr. Cook and all the rest of the Arminians. Mr. Cook felt himself called upon to meet the champion in the open field, and an appointment was accordingly made for a public debate. The champion came on with a great flourish of trumpets. On finding the congregation, who had assembled in the woods, impatiently waiting, he gave them this apology: "I'm here in ample time to give the youngster a dose from which he'll not soon recover." Upon eying the plain, unpretending Methodist preacher, he exclaimed, with rude and haughty mien: "What! is this the young man who has had the impertinence to assail the doctrines of grace?" "No, sir," replied Mr. Cook, "I have never assailed the doctrines of grace, though I have entered my protest against the prominent peculiarities of the Calvinistic system."

The haughty Scotchman would enter into no arrangements to secure fair play in the fight, but was bent upon killing off the stripling, and then leaving the field with glory. He accordingly proceeded with a furious tirade against Wesley and his system for two hours, when he took his seat completely exhausted.

Mr. Cook opened his part of the act with a fervent prayer, after which he commenced his defense with some trepidation. As he proceeded, however, his confidence improved. His defense of Wesley and his followers took hold of the mind of the vast crowd before him, and such was the evident effect upon them that the learned divine could not contain himself, and springing to his feet he vociferated: "Wolf! wolf! wolf in sheep's clothing!" But his writhing and bawling were of no avail. Mr. Cook proceeded, and the people listened. His voice improved in compass, and his



argument rose in brilliancy and power, until the old platform shook and seemed crumbling to atoms. The poor old dominie could endure the pelting of the storm no longer, and hastily arose, and with what voice he had left, bawled out: "Follow me, follow me, and leave the babbler to himself." It was a failure. Only two or three followed the learned parson, while the dense crowd remained and listened with astonishment to the almost superhuman eloquence and overwhelming demonstrations of the young orator. The people were upon their feet, and with strained eyes and open mouths gave breathless attention to the discourse to its close; and when Mr. Cook took his seat the crowd were in tears, and for some little time remained motionless. It was a perfect triumph; the fame of the young preacher spread far and wide, and his praise was in the mouth of all, not excepting the orthodox of 'auld lang syne.' One demanded, "Did you ever hear such a man?" "Never," was the answer. One stern old Covenanter was, however, proof against all the influences of the occasion. As he was returning from the novel scene he heard so many expressions of admiration of the young preacher that his pious horror broke loose: "Sirs," said he, "I perceive that ye are in great danger of being led captive by the de'il at his will. Ha'e ye never read how that Satan can transform himself into an angel o' light, that he may, if it were possible, deceive the very elect? I tell ye, sirs, he's a dangerous mon, and the less ye ha'e to do wi' him the better for us a'." Well done, Davey Dean; that's orthodox!

The facts of the above sketch were reported by Bishop Roberts, who was present, and are found in Dr. Stevenson's book. In relation to the results of this singular and interesting encounter the doctor remarks: "It is well known to those who are acquainted with the early history of Methodism in Western Pennsylvania, that this controversy was the means of opening to her ministry a 'great and effectual door' of usefulness. From that day forward the Methodist Church, in all that mountain range of country, has been rapidly

advancing in numbers and influence. The truth of this remark could be readily established by the testimony of many living witnesses were it deemed necessary."

Mr. Cook had for some time labored under an impression that he should soon be called to his reward, but it was not with him a matter of painful concern. His end was befitting such a life as he had lived, and such a character as he had sustained. The account given by his biographer is as follows:

"A short time previous to his death he attended a camp-meeting some eight or ten miles from home. As usual, he labored with great zeal and success. He preached on the Sabbath to a vast crowd, from these words: 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' 2 Corinthians iv, 17. After a solemn and very impressive pause, he lifted his eyes to heaven and said: 'What! our *afflictions* work for us a *weight of glory!*—a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!*' and added, 'I believe it with all my heart, because thou, O God, hast revealed it in this blessed volume.' The effect upon the congregation is said to have been very remarkable, and the discourse throughout has been represented as among the most able and effective that he ever delivered. This was the last sermon he preached, as I was informed by his weeping widow a few months after his death.

"On his return home from this meeting he was violently attacked with bilious fever. His case from the first was considered doubtful, and finally hopeless. Conscious of his approaching dissolution, he called his wife and children to his bedside, and after taking a last earthly leave of his family, he committed them, with many expressions of confidence, to the guidance and protection of Almighty Goodness. When asked by one of his neighbors, a few moments before his death, how he felt, he answered, 'I scarcely know;' and then added, 'When I think of Jesus, and of living with him forever, I am so filled with the love of God that I scarcely know whether I am in the body or out of



the body.' These were the last words that ever fell from his lips. He died as he had lived, 'strong in faith, giving glory to God.'"

We have no date of the death of Mr. Cook, or account of his age when he left the world. These are matters of comparatively small moment, still we wonder that his biographer has omitted what is so usually found in connection with every life and death which is worthy of a record. Bishop Morris, not very confidently, gives, what must be near the truth, the date of Mr. Cook's death some time in the year 1823. His age, it is probable, was not far from sixty.

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## CHAPTER V.

### RESULTS — CHARACTERS.

VALENTINE Cook had gone, but the fruit of his labors, and that of his predecessors and coadjutors, remained. The first class, as we have seen, was organized by Anning Owen, at Ross Hill, in 1788. Captain Ebenezer Parish was appointed leader. He was the first Methodist class-leader in Wyoming, and for several years did good service to the Church. His house was the regular preaching place, and he had the honor of entertaining Bishop Asbury the first time he visited the valley. He was fond of company, and was finally betrayed by his old habits, and made shipwreck of the faith. Apostasies are severe trials to the Church even now, in her strength; but how much greater must the afflictions which she endured from such sources have been when she was feeble.

A class had been formed in the upper part of the settlement, perhaps in the latter part of the year 1792. Abram Goodwin, Benjamin and Gilbert Carpenter, a German by the name of Rosecrantz, Stephen Jenkins, Philip Jackson,

and others, are mentioned as prominent members. Jenkins, it is believed, was leader of this class. Rosecrantz's house and Jackson's house were famous in those days as meeting places, sanctified by the presence and power of God and the conversion of souls.

Darius Williams succeeded Captain Parish as leader of the class at Ross Hill. He was one of the most splendid singers we ever listened to. He became a mighty exhorter, was long a local preacher, and although his zeal was somewhat fitful, yet his general course was onward and his influence salutary.

Abel Pierce, Esq., settled in Kingston before the war on the ancient river bank, a little higher than the town of Wilkesbarre; the place is now occupied by the heirs of Pierce Butler, Esq. He was exceedingly eccentric, and his wife, if possible, more so than himself. She lived long after the death of her companion, and was called "Aunt Ruth," and when she became quite old, "Grandmother Pierce." Mrs. Pierce became an early convert to Methodism. She was naturally full of humor, and not destitute of pride and self-conceit. She heard so much about the Methodists that she thought it worth her while to see what they were made of. She supposed, of course, they were a pack of fanatical fools who might furnish her with a little amusement. Upon learning that a Methodist preacher was at a Mr. Buck's, who lived near by, she called to look at him. According to her own account, she entered the room where he was with a haughty air, feeling nothing but contempt for the strange being upon whom she came to gaze. But no sooner did she set her eyes upon him than she was struck with the solemnity and heavenly sweetness of his countenance.\* She immediately sunk down, in her own estimation, into the character of a poor miserable sinner, and left the house with her head drooping and her heart aching. She was soon a decided Methodist, and her house ever after was a most pleasant home for the preachers.

\* The preacher was the Rev. Wm. Colbert.



"Grandmother Pierce" was at all the meetings in Wilkesbarre and Kingston when the writer traveled the Wyoming circuit, in 1818-19, and then she was the life of every circle she entered. She was independent, frank, earnest, kind-hearted, sociable, and not a little eccentric. When old and wrinkled she had all the fire of youth running through her veins. Her wit and her drollery made her a most desirable appendage of all the social circles, whether composed of the old or the young. She had a sharp, squealing voice, without the least tinge of the graces of modulation or regard for the critical ear. She was a sort of licensed character, saying just what she pleased and as she pleased without giving offense. Her irony was sometimes exceedingly cutting, and yet its victim would laugh heartily at the manner of it, while it really cut to the quick. Like the old Roman Catholic martyr, Sir Thomas More, she kept up the same habit of uttering witty and queer sayings to the last—just as full of them upon her deathbed as ever. But it must not be inferred that this unique old lady was entirely made up of the qualities above attributed to her; her wit and humor were seasoned with good common sense, kindness of heart, and the spirit of religion. She understood the persons with whom she was dealing, and the circumstances by which she was surrounded. She was never out of time, never ungraceful, because she had the art of making it understood that she had no mean, selfish ends to answer; that she had a generous, large heart in her; that she feared her God and loved everybody; but that she was her own model, and cared not a fig whether it was like anything else in the wide world or not.

The following singular instance is illustrative of her independence: One Sabbath day, after the morning service in Wilkesbarre, she went to Mr. Joseph Slocum's, to dine with the preacher. An English gentleman and lady were boarding at Mr. Slocum's. The lady took occasion to make several contemptuous remarks in relation to the Methodists. The preacher was young, and Aunt Ruth felt a

sympathy for him. It would have been ungallant for him to enter the list against the lady; and Mrs. Slocum, though deeply grieved, reserved her resentment for a private interview. Aunt Ruth was bound by no law of politeness to ignore the insult, and she squealed out, "Take care! you hurt! you hurt!" This was all that was said at the time.

It was not long before the lady visited Mrs. Pierce, with several ladies of Wilkesbarre. She was received with common politeness, and proceeded to enjoy the afternoon, not failing, however, to show her high sense of the greatness of Old England, and her own superiority to everybody else. Tea came on in due time, and "Aunt Ruth," as usual, was the principal object of interest and attraction. She kept things in motion, and often convulsed the whole circle with laughter by her wit and humor. Tea being over, she called her ladyship aside and said to her: "Now you may go home." The lady blushed, and seemed rather inclined to resent the insult; but there was the little old woman standing before her like an iron pillar, unmoved by passion, with her piercing eye upon her, and manifesting a remarkable indifference to the consequences. The lady quailed and left. She knew there was for her no redress, and she took the rebuke in silence, and, it may be hoped, profited by it.

Her utterances, voice, and action, altogether, were a perfect remedy for hypochondria. The most sober-sided old mope would be flung into a fit of laughter by her singular associations, and the manner in which they were hashed up and given out, before he had time to fortify himself against her irresistible and always victorious sallies. The beauty of the whole was that she never made an effort to be witty, nor seemed to be aware that she was so considered. She never laughed at her own fun. It was always an explosion of home combustibles, the outbreking of an exuberance of original and strange associations.

Her religious exercises partook largely of her natural



manner, but were considerably modified by strong religious feelings. She was not remarkably gifted in speaking or in prayer, but she was always on hand. She spoke in every love-feast, she prayed in every prayer-meeting; but would often stop abruptly, without anything like a closing sentence. She sometimes talked and exhorted in her prayers, and not unfrequently prayed in her exhortations. It was all the same; whatever she did for God was done with a heart and will which kindled up the fire of sympathy all around her.

One of her speeches in love-feast was this, and little or nothing else: "The devil tempts me, he tempts me, he tempts; but I say I won't, I won't, I won't!"

She had a strength of nerve that under some circumstances would have fitted her for a heroine. Once, on coming to Forty Fort to love-feast, she was thrown from her carriage and dislocated her shoulder, or elbow; but, nothing daunted, on she came to the church. The pain in her arm was so severe that she retired to a house hard by and had her joint adjusted by a surgeon, and then returned to the love-feast and made her speech, as though nothing had happened. This remarkable woman died in great peace at her residence in Kingston.

One of her daughters married Lord Butler, Esq., son of Colonel Zebulon Butler, and her great grandchildren now constitute a large and influential circle. Methodism owes much to the Pierce family, but principally to the female portion of it.

There were two sisters of Squire Pierce—the husband of the venerable lady whose character has been briefly sketched above—Alice and Hannah, who were among the earliest Methodists. These ladies lived in "single blessedness" to the close of life. They kept house by themselves on the west bank of "Butler's Creek," a short distance below their brother's residence. Their plain, neat dwelling was often the place of resort for the little band of praying men and women in the infancy of the Church. It was within the

bounds of the Ross Hill class, and took its turn in accommodating the "prayer-meeting." These maiden ladies were perfect specimens of the old style Methodist women: earnest in spirit, always present at the means of grace, free and generous in their efforts to sustain the preachers, plain as a pipe-stem, known and read of all as Methodists by the simplicity of their apparel.

Mrs. Duane, already noticed, had two daughters, Clara and Polly, who were also members of the society. Clara married the Rev. Alward White, late a member of the Philadelphia Conference, who traveled Wyoming circuit in the years 1795 and 1796.

BENJAMIN BIDLACK was converted some time during the year 1793, as Mr. Colbert speaks of him as a "brother" in July of that year. He had been a Revolutionary soldier, and had contracted the habit of drinking to intoxication. He was fond of company, and full of fun and frolic. He, however, had many noble qualities, and among the rest a reverence for religion, and a fondness for the place of public worship, where he sometimes made his appearance under the influence of liquor, although he never made disturbance in the congregation. He sometimes sang with great gusto, and even "raised the tune," when he could scarcely stand without holding upon something.

Anthony Turck was a rough-and-tumble preacher. He was a Dutchman, full of zeal, and bold as a lion. At one of his meetings "Ben Bidlack," as he was called, presented himself unusually sober, but with a bottle of rum in his pocket, the neck of the bottle sticking out. The seats being full, Bidlack stood up by the door with his arms folded, and seemed to listen with great attention.

It was not long before the preacher turned upon the drunkard with unmitigated severity. He made him out a fool and a brute; yea, worse than a decent sort of beast. He would plunge into the mire and wallow like a hog, the most filthy of all animals; he would curse, swear, and blaspheme the God who made him; he would carry the *hell fire*,



which all but made a devil of him, in his pocket to the house of God. This was fearfully personal, and gave great alarm to some of the congregation, who knew Bidlack well.

Aunt Ruth Pierce, who then was in her first love, as she often told the story, was frightened, for she thought of nothing short of a battle between the preacher and the insulted old soldier. She thought if the preacher resisted, which was a possible thing, for he was a man of pluck, that he would be worsted, and in any event would be flogged within an inch of his life. She was nervous, more so than usual, and that was quite unnecessary, until the preacher finished his discourse, when, to her utter astonishment, Bidlack seemed to sneak away like a coward. Ah! Bidlack was whipped. Instead of resenting the attack, he went home stung with remorse; and it was soon remarked that "Ben Bidlack had become a Methodist." He had indeed become a penitent, and, with his characteristic frankness and courage, he publicly declared his heartfelt sorrow for his former course of life, and his firm purpose of amendment. After weeks of anguish he experienced the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. He hastened to proclaim to the world that he had found the Saviour. He had a heart full of sympathy, and his powerful voice found full scope in his earnest exhortations, fervent prayers, and in singing the songs of Zion. He lived in Newport, but he soon visited the brethren in different parts of the valley at their meetings, and great numbers of his old companions in folly came out to hear him. Upon hearing him deliver an exhortation Aunt Ruth Pierce predicted that he "would make a preacher," and so he did. We purpose to give the reader a full report of his labors and character hereafter.

COLONEL DENISON and his lady and three daughters became members of the Methodist Church. Colonel Denison and Betsey Sills were the first couple married in Wyoming, and the colonel commanded the left wing of the patriot

forces on the occasion of "the Indian battle." He was a man of great influence in the country, of which sufficient proof was given by the responsible positions which he was called by his fellow-citizens to fill.

He was a kind-hearted and ardently pious man. His house was open to the weary itinerants, and too much could scarcely be done by the family for their comfort. All the preachers made it a place of rest and refreshment, while several at different times were quartered there as a regular boarding place. The colonel died in great peace. His excellent lady survived him several years, and then followed him to the abodes of the blessed. The venerable Asbury was there several times entertained, as we learn both from his journal and the testimony of members of the family still living.

The sons, Lazarus and George, were highly respectable gentlemen, the former a farmer, who lived and died on the old homestead; the other a lawyer of great power and influence in the state. He was a member of Congress in 1820, and made a strong speech against the admission of Missouri into the Union as a slave state. These gentlemen were both cherished friends of the Methodists, although neither of them made a profession of religion.

ASHBEL WALLER lived in Carytown, two miles below Wilkesbarre. He was an earnest Methodist; became a local preacher, and was very useful. His labors during these early times through the valley were very much blessed. He was one of the principal instruments of establishing Methodism in Plymouth, as we are told by Mrs. Pringle, a daughter of Benjamin Harvey, who has a distinct recollection of the man and his labors. He early removed to the Holland Purchase in Western New York.

JAMES SUTTON, Esq., the father of Mrs. Bedford, his wife, one son, and three daughters, united early with the Methodist society. Mr. Sutton was a man of large heart, simple manners, uniform life—a respectable and influential citizen. Mrs. Sutton was an active, sociable, pleasant little body,



good company for young people as long as she lived. She was a lady of great force of character and great devotion to the cause of religion. She was an earnest and consistent Methodist, and was never more happy than when providing comforts for the Methodist preachers in her own neat and quiet house. The daughters were all ladies of excellent character and great respectability. Mrs. Bedford gives the following account of her family :

“My father originally belonged to the Society of Friends, and always led an exemplary life. He became a Methodist, and in consequence of his godly conversation he suffered the most violent persecutions from the enemies of religion. Under the severe trials arising from these bitter hostilities he was accustomed to smile and remark : ‘This is my consolation: the day is coming when I shall meet my enemies before a just God; then it will be known who is right and who is wrong.’ When he lay upon his death-bed he enjoyed all his mental faculties, and with the greatest composure of mind, and with unshaken confidence in his God, spoke of going home to rest. He died in his own house, in Exeter, in the eighty-first year of his age.”

The persecutions of which Mrs. B. speaks subsided long before Mr. Sutton died, and he lived in peace with all the world, and was much respected by all classes for many years before he went to his great reward.

“My mother,” says Mrs. B., “survived my father ten years, and died after a sickness of only eight days. Her last sickness was very severe, but she had no Christian friend to converse with upon the state of her mind at the time. I could get but little information concerning her feelings on her death-bed from the young people who attended her, but I trust she has gone home to her Father’s kingdom. She died at Exeter in the eighty-sixth year of her age.”

Mrs. Sutton continued to occupy the old mansion during her lifetime, usually attended by some of her grandchildren. She was frequently importuned by her son Samuel, settled near by, to leave the old house and live with him; but she

steadily refused to do this, having made up her mind to remain in the place where she had lived so long and so happily with the companion of her youth, until God should permit their pure spirits to be reunited in heaven. As for society, she had little that was congenial except occasional visits from her children or grandchildren, the Methodist preachers, or some of her old Christian associates from other places. Hence the comparative solitude in which she met the final struggle. As to her preparation for death, that will not for a moment be doubted by any one who had the happiness of her acquaintance. The writer knew her long and well, and he will never forget the last time he saw her. It was at a quarterly meeting in the old church at Forty Fort. During the love-feast she occupied a pew near the pulpit, and when she commenced speaking she stepped out into the aisle, and soon became so animated that she walked back and forth and shouted aloud the praises of the Lord. Her testimony made a powerful impression, and while she was speaking her clear, shrill voice was often nearly drowned by the shouts and loud weeping which filled the house. She must then have been about eighty years of age.

Mrs. Sutton was the daughter of Dr. Hooker Smith, one of the great men of the Revolutionary times. And she herself belonged to a noble race of matrons, who endured their full share of the toils and sacrifices of the glorious fight with the dense forests, the wild beasts, and the wild Indians, and the dastardly Tories, which resulted in the fruitful fields, quiet houses, flourishing schools, colleges, and churches, and the free institutions which now constitute America the glory of all lands.

The old Sutton house was situated in a gorge of the west mountain, in the side of a steep hill, about twelve miles above Forty Fort. A mountain torrent rushes through the gorge, upon which Squire Sutton erected a grist-mill. He had a taste for "milling," and for a large portion of his life he was engaged in that business. The spot was secluded, just at the head of a considerable narrows on the winding



Susquehanna. In that immediate neighborhood the population was spare, and the people a delving, hardy race. Forty-two years ago, when the writer first visited that spot, the scenery was exceedingly wild and picturesque. Up the creek you saw a deep chasm cut through rocks, and shaded with trees and shrubs, the most perfect specimen of gloom and solitude. Across the river the chain of mountains which follows the river, now advancing to the very edge, and again receding, and leaving a rich bottom, and ever varying in form and height, presents a most wild and poetic view.

Here it was that "Father and Mother Sutton" passed half a century together, entertained two generations of Methodist preachers, received visits from distinguished guests, dispensed charities to the poor, and kept up an altar for the worship of Jehovah. Here the venerable Asbury found a home to his liking, of which he gives ample evidence in his Journal.

One of the daughters, Polly, married Putnam Catlin, Esq., a gentleman of the bar, who then followed his profession in Wilkesbarre. He spent many years of his life in Susquehanna county, residing at different times in Brooklyn, Montrose, and Great Bend. Mrs. Catlin was a plain, modest, but sensible lady. Her husband was fond of show, she was the reverse; but they lived in great harmony. The Methodist preachers were ever welcome at Mr. Catlin's well-furnished house and table. Mrs. Bedford says: "My sister, Polly Catlin, died at her son-in-law's, in Delta, N. Y., in the seventy-fourth year of her age. On her death-bed, when she was told that she could not live until night, she was perfectly composed, adding, 'Christ is mine and I am his.' Mr. Catlin once told me that he should have been led to doubt the reality of religion but for her exemplary life." She was the mother of a numerous family, and among her sons is George Catlin, Esq., the celebrated artist, known to the whole world.

"My sister, Sallie Sterling," says Mrs. Bedford, "experienced religion, I think, not long before her death. The

Methodists were her people, but she experienced some difficulties in enjoying an intimate connection with them. When she was dying her husband sat behind and supported her. 'How good it is,' said she, 'on a death-bed to have a God to go to.' Major Sterling fainted, and had to be helped out of the room.

"My brother William died in the Lake country. He died suddenly while traveling the road. He expired but a few minutes after talking with a friend, to all appearance in perfect health. I afterward learned from his son that he held out faithful to the end."

The Carver family contributed largely to the influence and establishment of Methodism in Wyoming. Samuel Carver became a most acceptable and useful local preacher. He was a sensible, industrious, earnest man: his life was without reproach, and he won souls to Christ.

The Rev. NOAH WADHAMS was a Congregationalist minister, and a graduate of Princeton. He settled in Plymouth after his sons had been there some time. He had previously been settled as pastor at the East. When he came to Wyoming he was soon baptized with the spirit of Methodism, and commenced preaching here and there wherever he found an opening. He joined the Methodist Church, and was a local preacher. He spent his latter years in preaching and laboring with great zeal and acceptability for the promotion of the interests of the societies. His son Moses was a simple-hearted, earnest Christian, and was appointed class-leader after Mr. Coleman died. His widow still survives. Mr. Wadhams having died while yet a young man, his widow was married to Josiah Wright, Esq., of Plymouth.

CALVIN WADHAMS, of Plymouth, was the son of the minister just noticed, and was converted under the labors of Valentine Cook. He contributed largely to the erection of a building called "the Academy," adapted both to the purposes of a school and of religious worship. The upper story was seated, and fitted up with a pulpit and an altar, and was the only church in Plymouth for, perhaps, fifty



years. Mr. Wadhams's house was ever open to the preachers, and was often filled full on quarterly-meeting occasions. His first wife was a pious lady, and a few years after her death he was married to the Widow Lucas. She lived with her first husband on Ross Hill, and there became a Methodist at an early period in the history of that society.

Calvin Wadhams amassed a large property, which was mostly inherited by his only son, Samuel Wadhams, Esq., who now occupies the paternal residence. Methodism has been cherished in the family down to the fourth generation, and is still a vital element in the whole circle.

The first family in Plymouth brought thoroughly under the influence of Methodism was the Coleman family. Mr. Jeremiah Coleman, his wife and two daughters, lived and died exemplary and influential members of the Church. Mr. Coleman had a comfortable home, to which he invited the preachers, and that was no small part of the "material aid" so necessary during the early history of the Church. Mr. Coleman was the first class-leader in Plymouth. His two daughters, Mrs. Hodge and Mrs. Holley, were active members of the Church, and made up a part of one of the most admirable circles of pious women that we ever became acquainted with, in 1818 and several years subsequently. They were glowing lights in the Church of God to the end.

Mrs. Wooley is spoken of by Mrs. Bedford as one of the first Methodists with whom she became acquainted. She is still remembered in different neighborhoods. She was poor as to this world's goods, a portion of the time dependent upon the kindness of friends for a home. On the occasion of the Ice Flood she was carried away by the flood, in her house, from "Butler's Creek," on the Kingston Flats. The ice forming a dam in "Tobey's Eddy," her house came to a stand just above that point, surrounded by mountains of ice. She commenced a pilgrimage toward the nearest point of land. The cakes of ice lay jammed together in wild confusion, presenting anything but an even surface. She could not walk; her only mode of locomotion was by

creeping on her hands and knees. She struggled along, passing over the sharp edges of the large cakes of ice, ascending and descending enormous piles, until she had worn out her hands, and traces of blood marked her path. To save her wounded and bleeding hands she took off her shoes and put her hands into them, and thus protecting her gashed fingers, palms, and wrists, she wound her weary way for half a mile, when she once more set her feet on terra firma. "Aunt Wooley" held on her way to a goodly old age, and died in peace in a small house in Wilkesbarre.

Mrs. Huldah Cary, the widow of COMFORT CARY, is still living with her son-in-law, Mr. Corwell, in Brooklyn, Pa. Her maiden name was Weeks. She had three brothers killed in the Indian battle, and her father, an old man, was left in charge of three young widows and twelve grandchildren! She was then five years of age. She returned to New England with her father, where she remained until the Indian troubles were over, and then came again to Wyoming, where she was married in 1789, and lived until her husband died and she was old. She gives the following account of the origin of the classes in Wilkesbarre, Hanover, and Newport:

"Anning Owen preached in Hanover, and formed a class there in 1790. Ashbel and Joseph Waller, John How, and Abram Adams were the first men who joined the class. Ashbel Waller was the first class-leader; he became a local preacher, and then Abram Adams took charge of the class. Old Mrs. Waller was a member of the first class."

We saw this old saint, under most interesting circumstances, in Windsor, N. Y., in 1816. We were a mere stripling, it being the first year of our itinerancy. On coming into the place we were told that a lady, by the name of Canfield, was at Captain Waller's and wished us to call. We called and found Mother Canfield, a school mate of our father and mother in Danbury, Conn., and a friend and neighbor in Middlefield, N. Y., in our boyish days. Here we found "Grandmother Waller," we think, about ninety



years of age, who kept her bed constantly, and had done so for many years. Captain Waller at this time was a Baptist, but "Grandmother" was a Methodist, dyed in the wool. She fired up, and talked of the good old times and the good old preachers with great animation. We knew not the localities nor the persons she referred to, and were not prepared to enter into her feelings so fully as we could have done a few years subsequently, when they became familiar to us as household words. She seemed wholly given up to God, and perfectly happy. She had not heard a Methodist sermon for years, and no ado but we must preach for her. Accordingly an appointment was announced, and in the evening the neighbors gathered in, and we took our position behind a chair at the door of her room, and preached a consolatory discourse, which seemed to the dear old creature like water to the thirsty soul. She waved her hands, often responded, and, although with a feeble voice, shouted "Glory to God!" Not long after this she departed in great peace.

Methodism had a few adherents in Wilkesbarre before Valentine Cook came into the country. Mr. Colbert, in the month of April, put up with "old friend Mann," with whom he found comfortable quarters whenever he visited the place. Mr. Mann's, we presume, was the first house in the county seat which was opened to the Methodist preachers, and it was here that Valentine Cook proclaimed the Gospel to those who came to hear, whether from motives of curiosity or for higher and better reasons. When he first preached there he was threatened with mob violence. When Duane's party undertook to smoke him out with brimstone, after the meeting was concluded he took his horse and rode to Hanover for quarters. Mrs. Cary says Cook was called "the greatest preacher that ever was; a very learned man too."

At this time Mrs. Cary, with her husband, lived in Carytown. Mr. Cary and his wife experienced religion just before Cook left the district in 1796. In March of that year they attended one of Mr. Cook's quarterly meetings

on Ross Hill ; it was held in the house of Aaron Dean. She says : " We came to the river at Wilkesbarre, and the ice ran so thick that the ferryman refused to ferry us over, but he told us we might have the boat if we would risk the undertaking. There were fifteen of us, and we pushed out ; we were driven down far below the landing place, but we finally reached the shore in safety. We had a glorious meeting." Mr. Cook preached his last sermon in the valley on Ross Hill on Acts xx, from verse 17 to the close of the chapter. Mrs. Cary says her husband went over to hear him, and said it was the most wonderful sermon he ever heard. All were melted down, and sighs, groans, and sobs filled the house. The people wept, the preacher wept ; and after the sermon a hearty squeeze of the hand of the man of God, with a convulsive utterance of " Farewell," was responded to in a most dignified, affectionate manner by the preacher. " Farewell, brother, farewell, sister ; God bless you ; be faithful ; we shall meet in heaven." The text was applicable. He left, and they of the valley saw his face no more.

Mr. Cary removed from Carytown to Hanover in 1791. Azel Dana, father of Hon. Amasa Dana, of Ithaca, N. Y., Mrs. Cary says, was the first class-leader in Wilkesbarre. When he died, which she thinks was in 1804, her husband, Comfort Cary, was appointed leader. He lived four miles from town ; but it was nothing in those days for a class-leader to walk much farther than that, two or three times every week, to meet the class and attend prayer-meetings.

At about the time Mr. Owen formed the class in Hanover, he also formed one in Newport, four miles below. The Smiths (Martin and Jonathan) and the Reederes were the first who joined the class in Newport. Benjamin Bidlack lived in a little log-cabin in Newport, near where Lee's Mills now stand. The classes in Hanover and Newport were probably organized in 1792 ; it may be a year or two earlier.

Michael H. R. Wilson stands connected with Tioga, and Hamilton Jefferson and Anning Owen with Seneca.



In 1796 the numbers stood thus : Wyoming, 221 ; Tioga, 138 ; Seneca, 215.

This year Alward White was returned to Wyoming circuit, and this year he was married to Miss Clara Pierce located, and removed to Maryland. He had traveled four years : the first year on Pittsburgh circuit, the second on Seneca Lake, and the third and fourth on Wyoming. He was a man of an excellent spirit, was estimated a good preacher, and was quite successful in our territory. He visited Wyoming some time in 1825, and preached in Wilkesbarre. His presence brought back old recollections to the minds of many who were then living. The following brief memoir of him is found in the Minutes for 1833 :

“ALWARD WHITE. In the early part of his life he devoted himself to the service of God. In 1793 he commenced his itinerant career, but after traveling four years he located and lived in the city of Baltimore. In 1819 he was readmitted as a member of the Philadelphia Conference, and continued in this work until his death. He was an acceptable preacher, modest and unassuming in his manners, and firm in his friendships. He died in peace at his residence in Greenborough, Md., November 23, 1832.”

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## CHAPTER VI.

### PROGRESS OF THE WORK, 1797-1800.

1797. This year, for the first time, the elders who had charge of a number of circuits are denominated *presiding* elders, and Thomas Ware was appointed to the charge of the district embracing Philadelphia and Wilmington, and the country northward to the lakes.

Mr. Ware was a calm, modest man, and contrasted rather unfavorably with the great man who preceded him. He was pleasant and instructive in the family, and soon found

his way to the hearts of the people; but he had not the power over men, the commanding eloquence and the overwhelming pathos of Valentine Cook. Such was the marked difference between the two, that the more zealous part of the Methodist membership could scarcely withhold expressions of disappointment, and some of them did not do it. On his first appearance at a quarterly meeting in Kingston, Mr. Ware preached on Saturday; and in the prayer-meeting in the evening Darius Williams, who was then all in a blaze, used the following language in his prayer: "O Lord, bless our new elder and give him more religion, or he will be trod down in the gate;" to which many responded "amen." The elder bore the implied reproof in silence, doubtless knowing how to appreciate all such indications. He was by no means deficient either in religion or talents, but his sermons were not the tornadoes to which the people had been accustomed. If a presiding elder did not break down everything before him, he did not, in their estimation, magnify his office.

This year ROGER BENTON was the preacher on Wyoming circuit. Mrs. Bedford says "he was a short, thickset man, and a smart preacher." In relation to this man, the Rev. Gideon Lanning bears the following testimony: "He was "one of the early preachers in Wyoming Valley; was one of the most modest, meek, and uniformly consistent men I ever knew. He had a stentorian voice, and was an excellent preacher; but about 1803, having had a severe fit of sickness, he resumed his labors too soon upon his circuit, and greatly injured his voice, so that in 1805 he located. He married and settled on a farm near Newark, N. Y., where he lived until within a few years, when he died in great peace, having always enjoyed the esteem and confidence of his neighbors and of the Church. A better man I never knew."

James Stokes was on Tioga, and Anning Owen and Johnson Dunham were on Seneca circuit. The numbers this year advanced on Seneca, and declined on Wyoming and Tioga.



## REV. WILLIAM COLBERT IN OUR FIELD AGAIN.

In April, 1797, Mr. Colbert makes his appearance again in our territory, pen in hand, jotting down the names of places and persons, and the circumstances which he thinks worthy of note. He enters the valley of Wyoming from the east, and after traveling for a while on Wyoming circuit, he again visits Tioga and the Lake country.

The itinerancy was not at this time so systematic and regular an institution as at present. This year Colbert appears on the Minutes in connection with the Chester circuit, and in 1798 with Wyoming; but, from his journal, it appears that he continued on Bristol circuit, where he had labored in 1796, until he left for Wyoming.

We shall copy freely from Mr. Colbert's journal, particularly while he is at the north, not so much for the sake of the incidents which it contains, as for the purpose of fixing lines, names, and dates which are important to subsequent history.

*"Thursday, April 6.* I set off this morning from John Alexander's for Wyoming. Got as far as Prescott's tavern—a very disagreeable ride. Here I found such a disagreeable company that I omitted proposing to go to prayer in the family.

*"Friday, 7.* Rode through the rain—through 'the shades of death'—passed the Susquehanna, and got once more to Darius Williams's, in Wyoming, where I found my good old colleague, Elisha Cole.

*"Saturday, 8.* I preached at a quarterly meeting extra, held at Darius Williams's; Alward White and Elisha Cole exhorted. We lodged at Aaron Dean's.

*"Sunday, 9.* This morning we had a happy love-feast. Elisha Cole preached from Acts xxii, 19; Alward White gave an exhortation after him; and I preached from Luke xxii, 19, and administered the Lord's Supper. At night Elisha Cole preached at the school-house, near Colonel Denison's. I sung and prayed after him, and lodged, with

Michael Roby Hines Wilson, a young invalid preacher,\* at Colonel Denison's. I have felt well among my brethren in Wyoming.

"*Monday, 10*, I spent at Colonel Denison's, for I felt the want of rest." And a good place it was to rest.

"*Tuesday 11*. I crossed the river and preached at Burger's. While I was speaking, a sick young man came in and desired liberty to lie down. After I had preached, and spoken to the class, I spoke to him, and found him of deistical principles. I crossed the river again, drank tea at Mr. Smith's, and lodged at Squire Carpenter's. His family used me with great kindness. Since I was in this country the Lord has taken from them a daughter who had not been long married; but happy for her that she embraced religion while in health. She was a delightful singer, and I trust she has gone to sing on high.†

"*Wednesday, 12*. Rode from Carpenter's to my old friend Rosecrantz's, where I used formerly to preach, and from Rosecrantz's to Darius Williams's. From Williams's I walked a little distance to a friend's by the name of Pierce, and while I was conversing with Sister Pierce,‡ who should walk up but David Downing, from the state of Delaware, who was moving, with his wife and seven children, having seventy or eighty miles of the worst road yet to go. It is well if this is not the beginning of sorrows with these people.

"*Thursday, 13*. At night preached at Jeremiah Coleman's and met a class. Here the friends are lively.

"*Friday, 14*. Preached at Ashbel Waller's, and spent the afternoon and part of the evening in reading "The Shipwreck," an elegant poem, by William Falconer.

"*Saturday, 15*. Got through "The Shipwreck" and preached

\* He was engaged in marriage to Elizabeth Denison, but he went to his great reward before the union was consummated; and Miss Elizabeth was subsequently married to Colonel Elijah Shoemaker.

† She was married to Jacob Bradford, Esq., who subsequently married Deborah Sutton, one of our most valuable contributors.

‡ Aunt Ruth Pierce.



at old Mother Hide's, in Hanover, and returned to Ashbel Waller's.

"*Sunday, 16.* Preached in the Court-house in Wilkesbarre to an attentive congregation, some of whom, I suppose, were deists. I felt myself for some time at a loss for a subject to address these people on. I wanted to preach pointedly against deism, but was afraid I should not do justice to such an important subject; and as it seemed probable that a great part of them professed to believe the Bible, I spoke to them accordingly, and concluded with a word of caution to the deists."

Mr. Colbert had been told, what was a fact, that several of the leading spirits in the town were disciples of Elihu Palmer, known as "Blind Palmer," author of a dangerous book entitled "The Principles of Nature." Many years ago we read the copy of this book, which belonged to Dr. William Hooker Smith's library. This work, together with the "Age of Reason," was circulated and read by the *men* of Wilkesbarre, but not by the *women*. A brother of Blind Palmer lived in Wilkesbarre; he was a lawyer and a man of influence, and took a leading part in the infidel circle. The old leaven of infidelity, we fear, has never been wholly exterminated from the old town, although it has ceased to exercise much public influence. We say the women of the ancient borough of Wilkesbarre adhered to Christianity. So it was, and hence the notorious fact that the leading men of the town opposed Methodism, and some of them persecuted the Methodists, while their wives were brought under its influence and rendered it most effective support. A number of those would have united with the little despised community had a positive interdict not been laid upon them by their husbands.

Mr. Colbert proceeds: "Dined at the Widow Johnson's; crossed the river and preached at the school-house, near Colonel Denison's, and lodged at Colonel Denison's."

"*Monday, 17.* Preached at Benjamin Carpenter's, and lodged at ——. These are kind people, but the chil-

dren are so noisy there is no satisfaction to be had in the place.

"*Tuesday, 18.* Rode to Benjamin Carpenter's. The weather too inclement to travel. My time was too short to accomplish my business if I had stayed; and then no weather a man can live in ought to stop him, that is, when he can do no good by remaining.

"*Wednesday, 19.* Rode from Carpenter's to James Rice's. Attended a prayer-meeting at friend Smith's at night, and found myself in my element.

"*Thursday, 20.* Rode from James Rice's to Amos Parks's, in Salem. A glorious change has taken place in this family since I was here. Mrs. Parks, who used to be dead and Calvinistic, is now alive, and several of the children converted.

"*Friday, 21.* Rode from Amos Parks's to Christian Bowman's, where I met with a very kind reception, and at night we had a prayer-meeting.

"*Saturday, 22.* Richard Sneath met me at Christian Bowman's, where is held a quarterly meeting. Brother Sneath preached. David Davies gave an exhortation. I then preached, and Ashbel Waller gave an exhortation. At night we held a prayer-meeting at Thomas Bowman's. I have had strange feelings to-day, but hope I shall be enabled by grace to overcome my soul's enemy.

"*Sunday, 23.* We had a happy love-feast, after which Richard Sneath preached. Ashbel Waller preached after him. I preached after Waller, and administered the Lord's Supper. In the afternoon I rode with Richard Sneath to my old friend Ogden's and preached."

Mr. Colbert continued in the Northumberland circuit for more than two weeks, visiting its principal appointments, when he turned toward the north.

"*Saturday, May 6.* Dined at John Salmon's, prayed at Robert Owen's and the Widow Salmon's, and rode on to Christian Bowman's. Thus have I bid adieu to Fishing Creek once more.



"From much-loved friends whene'er I part,  
A pensive sadness fills my heart;  
Past scenes my fancy wanders o'er,  
And sighs to think they are no more."

"*Sunday, 7.* Spent the forenoon at Christian Bowman's. I felt unhappy in mind. I preached at three o'clock, with liberty. William Brandon gave an exhortation, and with him I lodged at my old friend Isaac Holloway's, where I suppose we spent half the night in conversation.

"*Monday, 8.* I preached at Berwick, though with little freedom. Brother Brandon spake after me. Rode on to Amos Parks's, in Salem, where we had a meeting, and spent the evening very agreeably.

"*Tuesday, 9.* We rode from Salem to Andrew Blanchard's, and thence to Jeremiah Coleman's, in Shawney.

"*Wednesday, 10.* We rode from Coleman's to Colonel Denison's. Dined with Alward White and Michael R. H. Wilson; and I rode on to James Sutton's. Thus have I got on the frontiers of Wyoming once more, on my way to Tioga. Hard times I now expect."

MR. COLBERT VISITS TIOGA AND SENECA.

"*Thursday, 11.* I have had a long and tiresome ride over the Luzerne Mountains, from Sutton's to Humphrey Brown's tavern, a disagreeable place. I had to lodge in a room with three or four vile wretches. As the company of such abominable beings is so disagreeable here on earth, what care ought to be taken to escape hell, where they are much worse.

"*Friday, 12.* Rode from Brown's to my old friend Cole's, where I believe they were glad to see me. O how much better it is for me to be here than where I was last night!

"*Saturday, 13.* Rode from Cole's to my friend Green's, at Sheshequin. Dined and rode on to Daniel M'Dowall's, at Chemung. I have severe exercises of mind.

"*Sunday, 14.* Preached at my old friend Kress's, and

administered the Lord's Supper. Here the children were so noisy that I have not had much satisfaction in preaching.

"*Monday, 15.* Rode from Kress's to John Dow's, at the head of the Seneca Lake, where I was kindly received and well used.

"*Tuesday, 16.* Rode through a wilderness of about eighteen miles, on the east side of the Seneca Lake, in company with a very venerable man by the name of Landers, who parted with me before I got to Squire Parker's, in Jerusalem, Ontario county, N. Y. I was well received and kindly used by the Squire, who is a great admirer of the works of Baron Emanuel Swedenborg.

"*Wednesday, 17.* Spent at Squire Parker's, who gave me an account of the dealings of the Lord with him. The account of his conversion is Scriptural and rational. After his conversion he joined the New Lights, with whom he continued some time before he went into the army; and it is very strange that when he returned from the army he was drawn off, with a number more, by Jemima Wilkerson, a very extraordinary woman, who styled herself the Universal Friend. She says that the soul that once inhabited her body is now in heaven, and that the soul of Jesus Christ now dwells in her. The Squire has now left her, and, I suppose, has become a disciple of Swedenborg, but is very friendly to the Methodists.

"*Thursday, 18.* I spent at Squire Parker's, and felt much indisposed in body and mind.

"*Friday, 19.* Rode from Parker's to Wheeler's and Hull's, and thence to David Benton's. From Benton's we went to hear a Mr. Irish, a Baptist, preach. He appeared to be in earnest. He is a Calvinist, and pleases a great number of the people in this country, though I do not consider him the greatest preacher I ever heard.

"*Saturday, 20.* Began our quarterly meeting in Seneca circuit, at David Benton's. Hamilton Jefferson preached an excellent sermon. I preached after him, and Anning Owen



preached after me. We had reason to be thankful for as much of the presence of the Lord as was with us.

"*Sunday, 21.* This morning the Lord was with us in the love-feast in David Benton's house. Public preaching was in the house. I preached with little satisfaction, *on account of the disagreeable noise of children* and the restlessness of some of the congregation. Anning Owen preached with liberty, and Hamilton Jefferson from Sol. Song, ii, 11, 12. I thought it was a little curious that he should preach from, 'Lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone,' when there was an appearance of a great rain within a quarter of an hour of us. We closed divine service for this day with the administration of the Lord's Supper.

"*Monday, 22.* I spent with Hamilton Jefferson at James Parshall's. These people are very kind.

"*Tuesday, 23.* We spent at Caleb Andrews's. I read some in the Bible and in Watt's Lyric Poems.

"*Wednesday, 24.* We dined with Cornelius Morris, once a member of our Church and a preacher, but now not with us, though he loves us. May the Lord bring him back! We lodged at David Benton's.

"*Thursday, 25.* We spent at our friends Carpenter's and Wedon's. My reading has been the Bible and Watson's Apology.

"*Friday, 26.* The morning clear and cold. We have had a long ride; crossing the Cayuga Lake at Harris's Ferry, we proceeded to Asa Bailey's, in Scipio; our conversation was upon subjects of an interesting nature.

"*Saturday, 27.* The day has been very unfavorable for our quarterly meeting, which we held at Samuel Phelps's, an uncomfortable place. We had a storm of wind, rain, lightning, and thunder. I preached from 1 Cor. vi, 19, 20, and Hamilton Jefferson from 1 Cor. xiii, 13. I find our good friends in these parts are very talkative. We were kindly entertained at Squire Sherwood's.

"*Sunday, 28.* This morning our love-feast was open, and some of our friends spoke, much to my satisfaction. Ham-

ilton Jefferson preached, and I preached after him with freedom.

"*Monday, 29.* Wind from the north and cold. We rode from Squire Sherwood's to Asa Bailey's.

"*Tuesday, 30.* My friend Jefferson left me. I finished Watson's Apology for the Bible, went with my friends Bailey, his wife, and Sister Holden, to Mr. Edey's, where I endeavored to explain the nature of our doctrine and discipline. I drank tea at Mr. Mead's, and returned home with my friends.

"*Wednesday, 31.* Rode to Samuel Phelps's and Squire Sherwood's, where I spent part of my time, with some satisfaction, reading Stackhouse's Body of Divinity.

"*Thursday, June 1.* A very sharp frost this morning. I preached at Samuel Phelps's, and at night held a prayer-meeting. I am apprehensive the enemy is meditating the ruin of the society in this place.

"*Friday, 2.* I preached at a school-house near Asa Bailey's, and also at Asa Jackson's.

"*Saturday, 3.* I rode from Jackson's, on the Owaseo Lake, to Captain John Grover's and preached. While I was here a Baptist man came in, much elated, informing the old people that their son Thomas had given in his experience at their covenant meeting, and his mother expressed a great willingness that he should be baptized.

"*Sunday, 4.* I preached at a school-house near Captain Edward Wheeler's. After preaching I had a long parley with Captain Wheeler, who chose to withdraw from society because I would not give my consent for him to neglect his own meetings to hear other preachers. Another also, whose name is on the class paper, got up and went home. In the afternoon, on my way to Mr. Olmsted's, I saw a number of people gathered to hear Mr. Irish, among whom were some of our Methodists. One of them I had been acquainted with four or five years. I asked him if he was going to our meeting, and he told me he was if Elder Irish did not come. I rode to my appointment and had the



greater part of the Baptist preacher's congregation. I found them an inattentive set.

"*Monday, 5.* On my way to Mr. Buck's, at his request I called at Mr. Atwell's, who yesterday told me he wanted to ask me some questions. I soon found him an unreasonable fatalist, and not worth disputing with, so I left him. I preached at Captain Buck's, and in the afternoon at Mr. Thompson's.

"*Tuesday, 6.* I preached at Mr. Bennet's; there has been a great fall of rain to-day.

"*Wednesday, 7.* I have had a very disagreeable ride from Bennet's, to where a few women had gathered for preaching, but was called off, before I began, to a woman in the neighborhood who was sick, therefore I neither preached, prayed, nor exhorted, but chose to ride until ten o'clock at night in preference to staying in the filth among children, cattle, hogs, and, no doubt, an army of fleas.

"*Thursday, 8.* Preached at David Benton's. I felt confined in speaking.

"*Friday, 9.* Dined at Ezra Cole's and preached at Abram Voke's. The people behaved well, and were very conformable in worship. The weather has been warm these two days.

"*Saturday, 10.* Rode from Ezra Cole's to Squire Parker's. The day very warm and a thunder shower.

"*Sunday, 11.* Preached at Townsend's school-house with a degree of freedom, and in the afternoon at Squire Parker's. I have great cause to be thankful that though I am sometimes so distressed that life is a burden, I feel some relief after preaching. I have had large congregations to-day.

"*March, 12.* Dined at Mr. Lawrence's, and rode on to the Crooked Lake to my old friend Townsend's. I believe they were glad to see me, and I enjoyed myself well among them.

"*Tuesday, 13.* On my way from Elisha Townsend's to Michael Pearce's, in a very lonesome place far from any

house, I was overtaken by a thunder-storm which was truly alarming. The wind was blowing, the lightning blazing, the thunder roaring, and the rain so pouring down that I could not see to escape the timber that might be falling around me. I was wet enough when I reached my appointment, and found it hard to get a dry corner to stand and preach in. Here we have several blind people members of our society. Blindness, it seems, is hereditary with the family.

"*Wednesday, 14.* Rode to Joel Moore's, through Canandaigua, a large town for so new a country, near a lake of the same name. Its situation is delightful. I preached at Moore's.

"*Thursday, 15.* Preached at Thomas Spencer's with a degree of freedom. I was much hurt with the behavior of some of the congregation, standing and staring me in the face in time of prayer.

"*Friday, 16.* We have had a powerful fall of rain to-day, which detained me at Thomas Spencer's until after twelve o'clock. I rode to Joel Gillét's. We have seen a remarkable light at the north to-night.

"*Saturday, 17.* I preached at Sharon Booth's. Several stayed in class-meeting, some of them Baptists, and one old lady, a Presbyterian. This old lady had never heard that God had foreordained that a certain number should be unconditionally saved, and the rest unconditionally lost, though nothing is held forth more plainly in the Confession of Faith. And it is evident that the Baptists are ashamed of their confession of faith, for none of those who have lately joined say they have seen it.

"*Sunday, 18.* Rode from Joel Gillet's to Major Swift's. I was very near getting lost in the woods by taking a path that led to a sugar camp. When I got to Swift's none attended in consequence of a powerful fall of rain. I dined and rode on to Deacon Reeves's. These northern people are remarkable for titles. In consequence of sickness at Deacon Reeves's, I stopped at Deacon Foster's and tried to preach there. Here I saw several persons I had been acquainted with on the Susquehanna between four and five



years ago. Deacon Foster is a very talkative man, but I hope he has religion. He used me very kindly. I do not feel well. I believe it is because I am so much exposed to the weather.

"*Monday, 19.* I have had a long and tedious ride through the shade of lofty trees to Prince Gruger's, and preached, but not with much satisfaction.

"*Tuesday, 20.* Rode to Mr. Reynolds's, on the east side of the Cayuga Lake. The impious deportment of a man I was under the disagreeable necessity of lodging with made me feel very uneasy in my mind.

"*Wednesday, 21.* I have had a very muddy ride to William Winter's, and preached with a degree of satisfaction and met a class. It has been remarkably cold these three days past.

"*Thursday, 22.* Had a very wet and dirty ride to Samuel Wybern's, where I preached.

"*Friday, 23.* Had a very disagreeable ride through the bushes to Dyer Smith's. There has been a powerful fall of rain this morning. Our friend Smith, his wife, a brother, and three children, live in a little log pen, covered with split pieces of wood. I found but two people that came to meeting, a man and his wife by the name of Buck. I read to them the fifth chapter of Matthew, sung and prayed with them. In this place I dined, and enjoyed myself very well. I would rather be in a pen with the clean and decent, than in a palace with the filthy. I rode on to Richard Goodwin's, on the Cayuga Lake. These are clean people. I spent part of the evening with old Richard Goodwin. I believe he is a good man.

"*Saturday, 24.* I rode from Richard Goodwin's to Robert M'Dowall's, at the head of Cayuga Lake, and from M'Dowall's to William Goodwin's, and a very disagreeable ride I have had of it through the mud. A man needs to have a good constitution and a large stock of patience to travel this circuit. May the Lord bless me with the latter!

"*Sunday, 25.* Last night I went to bed with a chill, suc-

ceeded by a fever, and was very unwell all night. I believe the cause is being so much exposed to the great rains which have fallen since I came into this part of the world. The people called to hear preaching in the forenoon. I did not feel able to sit up, but wishing them to hear something, in the name of the Lord I made an attempt to preach, but found myself unable, and had to lie down, desiring the friends to hold a prayer-meeting. After several of them had prayed I made a second attempt, and was enabled to preach and meet two classes. In the afternoon I rode to Robert Alexander's, and found Alward White preaching. I gave an exhortation after him, and have reason to be thankful that I feel better than I did in the morning.

*"Monday, 26.* Rode to Alward White's, where I was severely attacked with pains in my limbs, chills, and fever. I feel the want of more grace."

The chills and fever followed Mr. Colbert for several weeks, much longer than would have been the case could he have laid by in comfortable quarters and been well cared for but a short time. He, however, must travel and preach when he could stand up. Fever and ague was a common affliction in the lake country in those days, even with those who had to endure much less exposure to the wind and weather than fell to the lot of Mr. Colbert. No one who has ever been afflicted with this disease, even under ordinary circumstances, will wonder that the good man found it necessary to pray for "more grace." To suffer "every other day" from a severe chill, followed by a burning fever, and to be obliged, in addition to this, to endure "long rides through the mud, where one cannot go out of a walk, exposed to heavy rains, bad food, dirty houses, and sleepless nights, in consequence of swarms of fleas," was quite too much for anybody with only an ordinary stock of grace and patience. "But," Mr. Colbert remarks, "these are light things, and scarcely worthy of being put in the catalogue of what is suffered for Christ and the good of souls." True,



very true; and that, as our itinerant adds, "in this country many might do better," is also true.

There is a word, however, to be said for the first settlers of our country. No one who has not tried pioneer life knows the difficulty of building comfortable houses, such as will secure the inmates from the storms and the cold, making good roads, keeping clean, and conquering the swarms of insects which infest the woods. A few old people who now live in the country visited by Mr. Colbert can appreciate his complaints, and feel a sympathy for him in his troubles; while the great majority who now inhabit that garden of America once called "the lake country," would be likely to consider his groanings as the fretting of a fastidious old bachelor, who could be pleased with nothing.

As to the unhealthiness of "the lake country," we had an opportunity of forming a judgment, although we were at a distance. We were raised among the hills of Otsego, N. Y., on the turnpike leading from Albany to the lakes. Multitudes of emigrants from New England thronged this road; and not a few of those who went out West in the spring strong and healthy, returned in the fall pale and emaciated, preferring to enjoy health among the rocks of New England rather than to shake, and burn, and suffer from headache for half of the time in the fertile country bounding the Cayuga and Seneca. Miasmatic diseases passed away from this country with the dense forests and the stagnant pools, and it has now long been as healthy as any portion of the world.

The brave hearts that stood it out, and buffeted the dangers and difficulties of the country when it was a frontier, must have the Gospel, and our old itinerants were the men to carry it to them. They could shake and burn one day, and encounter the storm and mud, and preach in open, comfortless log "pens" the next, for the sake of Christ and souls. So did the heroic Colbert.

We have given enough of Mr Colbert's Journal to show the extent and character of Seneca circuit in 1797. He was

sent to this field to do missionary work for a few months. The labor was hard, the sacrifices great, and as to the *pay*, he says nothing about it. The probability is that he received little more than his board and the keeping of his horse. Upon closing his labors upon the circuit he makes the following record :

"I have traveled from the 20th of May to the 12th of September on Seneca circuit, in Ontario and Onondaga counties, in the State of New York, among the lakes Canandaigua, Honeoye, and Crooked Lake, west and southwest, and Cayuga, Owasco, and Skaneateles, east and northeast of the Seneca Lake. The inhabitants are principally immigrants from the New England States, the older settlements in the State of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and, toward the Honeoye, some are from Maryland. Hamilton Jefferson has been my colleague, a man high in the esteem of many of the people. The people generally have been raised under a Calvinistic ministry ; some of them pretend to some knowledge of experimental religion, of which I will not say they are totally ignorant, but I am afraid but few of them enjoy it. The Calvinistic is a system of dangerous tendency. Some who joined us appear to be much alive to God. In many places the people are extremely ignorant, and in others they are well informed.

"The face of the country is beautiful, the land very fertile, and the cattle grow to an enormous size. I have been credibly informed that four hundred bushels of wheat have been raised from eight bushels of seed. The sugar tree grows very large. The water is bad to wash, and disagreeable to drink. Truly I can say that since I have been in this country my life has been one continual scene of toil."

The field was a hard one, and, for a time, not very productive. During Mr. Colbert's nearly four months' labor in Seneca circuit, it is remarkable that he "joined in society" only a very few ; and we are inclined to think these had nearly all been members in other places. This fact is



partly to be accounted for in the character of the materials he had to deal with. Old-fashioned Calvinism was interwoven in the very texture of the thoughts and feelings of the people. God's eternal decrees, imputed righteousness, the impossibility of falling from grace, and the necessary continuance of sin in believers, was the sum of their theology; and to talk these doctrines up was the sum total of the religion of too many of them.

Comparing Mr. Colbert's report of the state of things in this country now, and that which he gives of a visit in the fall of 1792, we can see considerable advance. He found hospitality everywhere, and was entertained by the best families in the country. Societies had been formed in many places, and the circuit now extended from Skaneateles Lake to the Canandaigua, covering all the intermediate settlements; but in the only villages mentioned by Mr. Colbert, Geneva and Canandaigua, there was no regular appointment established at this period. The heaven was working but very slowly, and the preachers were obliged literally to walk by faith, not by sight.

Mr. Colbert, in company with several of the preachers, set out for conference. He attended a quarterly meeting at Henry Salsbury's, near Towanda, thence passed down the river to Blackwalnut, where he preached in the Baptist meeting-house, and lodged with old Elder Sturtevant, who had married a Methodist lady for a second wife, and had become quite changed from what he was when the Methodists first made their appearance in Blackwalnut. The company next stopped at Squire Sutton's, where they found hospitality and comfort. The next point was Squire Carpenter's, where they had another quarterly meeting, at which there was, as usual, a large supply of sermons and exhortations, and they had a good time.

"Monday, September 25," Mr. Colbert "preached at Wilkesbarre, though not with much freedom, and lodged at the Widow Johnson's." This was the widow of "Priest Johnson," who, it seems, had considerable regard for the

Methodists, and opened her doors for the accommodation of the preachers. Then the company proceeded to Philadelphia, and thence to Duck Creek, in Maryland, to the conference.

In the Minutes for 1798 Mr. Colbert stands connected with Wyoming circuit. From October, 1797, to August, 1798, he had traveled Strasburgh circuit. He entered the Wyoming Valley once more, and attended a quarterly meeting at Darius Williams's, in Kingston, August 18 and 19, Thomas Ware presiding. Mr. Colbert's journal during this conference year, which closed June 8, 1799, is very brief; simply making note of the places he visited, the texts he preached from, and taking a mere glance at a few circumstances which fell under his notice. He traveled Wyoming and Northumberland circuits with John Lackey and John Leach, he probably having the charge of both circuits.

Things in Wyoming seem not to have changed much from the time Mr. Colbert left in 1793. Some changes in the names of the persons with whom he lodged, and at whose houses he preached, indicate slight alterations in the condition or local habitation of the people, and an accession of members, or at least of friends. He now stops at Benjamin Reeder's, in Newport; at Elijah Imman's, in Buttonwood or Hanover; at Daniel Taylor's, in Capouse or Providence; and preached at Squire Carpenter's instead of Rosecrantz's, in the upper part of Kingston. Preaches at Jesse Gardner's, on the Plains; at Eden Rugger's, in Bedford; at William George's, in Wilkesbarre. "Here," he says, "Mrs. Holenback was kind enough to invite me to lodge at her house, as our friend George is a poor man. She appears to be a Christian woman, and treated me with much civility." Benjamin Bidlack and Darius Williams appear in the character of exhorters at quarterly meetings. Samuel Holley's, in Shawney, is the principal stopping place, and Mrs. Holley and Mrs. Hodge, daughters of Jeremiah Coleman, are prominent members, attending the preacher to other ap-



pointments, and traveling a distance to attend quarterly meetings.

1799. This year a different arrangement of the districts connects the northern portion of our field with Albany and the country on the Mohawk, William M'Lenahan being presiding elder. Cayuga and Oneida are connected; the former probably taking from Seneca circuit the territory east of the Cayuga lake. The circuits are supplied thus:

Seneca—Jonathan Bateman.

Tioga—John Leach and David Dunham.

Wyoming and Northumberland—James Moore, Benjamin Bidlack, and David Stevens.

James Moore was an Irishman, a man of good preaching abilities and no little shrewdness. He was plain, but neat in his dress, and precise in his manners. He was not a little pestered with an application for assistance, in procuring license to preach, by Nathan Parish, brother to the captain of whom we have spoken. Mr. Moore did not believe Parish called to the work, but in order to dispose of the case in the best manner, he proposed to hear him preach a trial sermon. To this Parish readily consented. The appointment was made, and Mr. Moore prayed most earnestly for the would-be preacher; but he did not pray in the ordinary way that God would help him, but he prayed God to *confound* him. Parish tried hard but could do nothing. He sat down utterly vanquished, and gave up the idea of his call until long after this. He was for some cause separated from the Methodist Church, and became a Universalist; then occasionally he had the preaching fever, and sometimes tried his hand at talking up "the Abrahamic faith." Then Jimmy Moore was not present to pray *against* him and he succeeded better, but never very well.

Benjamin Bidlack was among the people who had known him from the time of his return from the army, and they all believed in the reality of his conversion, and as to his preaching abilities they were universally conceded. He was a mighty exhorter; he sung and prayed gloriously, and God

blessed his labors. Under one of his sermons at Wilkesbarre, perhaps the first one he delivered there, a miserable woman who had been in the army must needs go and hear "Ben. Badlock" \* preach. The old soldier wielded the sword of the Spirit like a mighty man of war, and the Magdalene was cut to the heart. She finally found peace, and lived long in the Church without reproach, and at last died in hope. We often met her in class in 1818-19, and we had the story of her conversion from Father Bidlack after her death.

This year a class of forty members was formed at Charles Harris's, over the Kingston mountain. Previously Gilbert Carpenter had commenced his labors as a local preacher, and had a regular appointment there. He was much in earnest, and God gave him success.

Charles Harris, the first-fruits of Methodism in that locality, is now, in 1859, ninety-two years of age. At this advanced age he is hale and strong, his memory clear, and his soul happy in God. He gave us the following account of the commencement of the work under the labors of "Uncle Gill Carpenter," as he was familiarly called: "Reuben Williams, my brother-in-law, and I were awakened at about the same time, but he came into the liberty first, and was as bold as a lion. He said we must have a prayer-meeting, and accordingly one was appointed at my house. When the time came only a few were present. My brother-in-law told me I must begin the meeting. At first I knew not what to do, but finally concluded I must try; and I read the hymn beginning,

'Show pity, Lord, O Lord forgive.'

It was a melting time; my mother was present and was awakened. Our next meeting was at Williams's. This was Uncle Gill's appointment, but being a rainy day and but few present, we had a prayer-meeting. My mother was deeply distressed, and made a prayer exactly as fol-

\* This was the ancient method of pronouncing his name.



lows: 'Lord, have mercy on me, for I am poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Amen.' The work went on. Samuel Carver was the leader."

"Father Harris" lives in the same place still, and there it was that we took down his recollections of former times. "The Harris appointment" remains to the present time, and there many have been born into the kingdom of Christ. The old patriarch still remains with his children around him, all zealous for God and the Church. He is patiently waiting the Master's summons; but we hope may yet live for several years, for his life is no burden either to himself or any one else. Father Harris is a *happy old man*, with perhaps as little to regret in the retrospect as any other man living.

The following is an account (by Rev. L. Cole) of an encounter of Father Harris with two Presbyterian ministers: "When Father Harris and Mrs. Horton were both young in religion, two ministers were at the house of Squire Hollister. They sent for Mr. Harris and Mrs. Horton. One of them asked the latter if she loved God; she answered, 'Yes.' 'Would you love God if you knew he would send you to hell?' She was puzzled at this, and did not answer. They then asked Mr. Harris, 'Do you love God?' 'Yes.' 'Why do you love God?' Ans. 'Because he first loved me.' Min. 'Mr. Harris, would you love God if you knew he would send you to hell?' Ans. 'No.' 'Now,' said Mr. Harris, 'I want to ask you a question. Do souls in hell love God?' Ans. 'No.' 'How then can sinners in the way to hell love God if they do not love God in hell.' The clergymen were puzzled by the young Methodist convert, and he was permitted to rejoice in the full assurance of faith without further molestation by those bigoted and persecuting parsons, who seemed to wish to trouble Methodist converts."

David Stevens was the first traveling preacher who visited "the Harris neighborhood." He was admitted on trial in 1795, and continued to travel within the bounds of the

Baltimore Conference until 1825. He died December 15 of that year, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, frequently saying to those who attended him, "My peace flows like a river." He was a faithful laborer, and was an instrument in the hands of God in the conversion of many souls.

1800. This year "Northumberland and Wyoming" are attached to the southern district, and Joseph Everett is presiding elder. The preachers are Ephraim Chambers, Edward Larkin, and Asa Smith. Chambers was a very large man and a strong preacher. He is represented by those who remember him as a man in advanced life, being quite gray, and having a commanding voice and manner. His preaching created a great sensation throughout the country, and was attended with great good. The word of God mightily grew and prevailed this year throughout the circuit. The progress of the work was manifested more in an increased interest in the religious services, and particularly in the preaching of the word, than in additions to the societies.

This year was distinguished by the erection of the first meeting-house in Wilkesbarre, the seat of justice for Luzerne county. The church was built by a general subscription without specification as to what denomination should have the control of it. After it was inclosed Ephraim Chambers preached a funeral sermon in the new church, which occasioned some wag to observe, "That will be a Methodist church, you'll see." This was not a prophecy, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, but it turned out to be true some years afterward.



## CHAPTER VII.

## METHODISM IN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT, 1801-1810.

THIS year the districts are named for the first time. This is called the Philadelphia district, James Everett, presiding elder. Ephraim Chambers and Anning Owen were stationed on Wyoming circuit in 1801. Owen had been preaching in this field for at least ten years, and yet he was appointed by the bishop to labor another year upon the same ground. Indeed, he had been hammering upon the consciences of the people of Wyoming, as an exhorter or preacher, ever since the summer of 1788, and either the people did not consider him worn out or they were not consulted in the appointment.

This year "Elder Chambers" began to reap the fruits of the labor of the preceding year in the awakening and conversion of souls. A revival broke out on the Plains. Roger Searle was baptized in the winter by immersion, a hole being cut through the ice in order to accomplish it. This was a great novelty in the country.

Mrs. Wright says the personal appearance of Mr. Chambers was prepossessing, and he was called by common consent "The great gun of the Gospel." He had powerful lungs, and used them to advantage; he was very shrewd and devotedly pious. He was once preaching to a large congregation in a grove at Shickshinney; a man by the name of Silas Jackson climbed up into a tree. Mr. Chambers as he proceeded in his discourse fired up, as he was wont to do, and thundered forth, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." "Well, then," says Jackson, "if that be the case I'll come down," and suiting the action to the words descended, to the no small amusement of the congregation. Mr. Chambers was conscious of the responsi-

bilities resting upon him as an ambassador of Christ. In passing Tilberry's Ledge, about five miles below this place, he was once heard to groan out in the anguish of his spirit: "Who knows but that some poor sinners will call upon this mountain to hide them from the presence of Him that sitteth upon the throne."\*

A class was formed on the Tunkhannock, at Fancher's. A class was also formed at Hopbottom, consisting of four persons, namely: Jacob Tukesberry and wife, Silas Servis, and Mrs. Saunders.

1802. This year is distinguished for the division of the work into conferences. Northumberland and Wyoming circuits are embraced within the Philadelphia district, Philadelphia Conference. Thomas Ware is the presiding elder, and Ephraim Chambers and William Brandon are the preachers on Wyoming circuit.

The latter part of this conference year we begin to find footprints in the form of quarterly conference records. We have been favored by Samuel Wadhams, Esq., with the loan of a book which he found in the desk of his father, the late Calvin Wadhams, containing the following title-page: "Steward's Book for Wyoming circuit; Ashbel Waller, moved away; Darius Williams, Christian Bowman, Moses Wadhams, deceased."

These names are erased by horizontal lines; then below stands the following: "Stewards: Darius Williams, Calvin Wadhams, Solomon Chapin."

The first record is of a quarterly meeting held at Ross Hill March 26 and 27, 1803.

The column of receipts contains the following credits: Wilkesbarre, \$2 93; Plains, \$1 70; Pittston, \$0 50; Providence, \$0 40; Little Beach Woods, —; Great Beach Woods, —; Staunton Settlement, —; Tunkhannock Creek, —; Atherton's, —; Exeter, \$1 11; Kingston, \$4 37½; Carver's, \$1 37½; Ross Hill, \$2 02; Plymouth,

\* Letter from Rev. Leonard Cole on the Origin of Methodism in Plymouth.



\$2 50; Briar Creek, \$0 50; Salem, —; Newport, \$3 48; Nanticoke, \$1 48; Public Collection, \$10 46; Public Collection, \$3 38.

The following are the disbursements: Ephraim Chambers—expenses, \$3 00; quarterage, \$9 10; \$1 13. William Brandon—expenses, \$2 25; quarterage, \$18 20; \$2 25.

1803. The Philadelphia Conference held its session for this year in May. A new district appears on the Minutes this year called Susquehanna, James Smith, presiding elder. The preachers were James Polemus and Hugh M'Curdy. The old people say that M'Curdy was a Philadelphian, and soon became "homesick," and left, no more to return\* to the circuit. Thomas Dunn came on in his place, and was admitted on trial at the next conference.

It is said that Smith was both popular and useful. When he first made his appearance in Wyoming he met with an amusing reception. The quarterly meeting was in a barn, and what was unusual in those times, the presiding elder arrived late. He came to Mr. Coleman's and found the house left in charge of a little girl. He asked the child if there was meeting in the place that day. The answer was, "Yes, sir; but it will be of no use for you to go, for they do not let sinners in."

Polemus was popular and useful. He is represented as a great exhorter. His appeals were often overwhelming, and revivals followed him wherever he went. Crandall Wilcox, Nathaniel Crandall, and others on the Plains, were the fruit of his labors.

Dunn was a young man, and sometimes put on airs. At Jacob Tukesberry's a large bowl of mush was set on the table. Dunn, gazing at it, asked, "How do you eat that?" Mr. Tukesberry was occasionally inclined to indulge in a little dry humor, and he answered, "With your fork." If

\* He remained until the second quarterly meeting. See Steward's Book.

the question was seriously put, the young man was not much wiser for the answer; if it was ironical, as is probable, he received as good as he sent.

The finances of this year foot up as follows: First quarter, \$32 78; second quarter, it is noted that "the several societies paid to the stewards money which paid the preachers off—the minutes were lost;" third quarter, there was received and paid \$49 95; the fourth quarter, \$41 72. Supposing the receipts of the second quarter to have amounted to about the average of \$45, the whole receipts of the year would be \$169 45.

According to this estimate, \$169 45 was all that was paid for the support of the presiding elder and two preachers, and to defray their traveling expenses.

There is nothing recorded in this book but the financial matters: it is valuable, however, as evidence of the extent of the circuit, and the comparative strength of the different appointments. Taking the contributions as a basis of estimate, Wilkesbarre takes rank among the weaker appointments. The same fact appears for years. Kingston, Ross Hill, Newport, Plymouth, and Big Beech Wood,\* give more than the county town. This only illustrates a general fact, and that is, that Methodism took root first, and was most rapidly developed in the rural districts. It was by making a lodgment in the country, among the farmers, and commencing operations in private houses and school-houses, that Methodism first acquired notoriety and influence, and by shedding light upon the towns from all sides, it finally made itself felt among the more polished classes. We have before seen that there were strong elements of opposition in Wilkesbarre to be conquered. Those elements made desperate resistance, and only yielded to persevering efforts.

\* We could find no explanation of a distinction made in the old Wyoming Stewards' Book between "Big Beech Woods" and "Little Beech Woods," until we asked the venerable George Harmon where those localities were. His answer was, that Big Beech Woods was the Dutch settlement in Canaan, and Little Beech Woods was near Hopbottom—probably Springville Hollow.



Since Mr. Colbert traveled Wyoming, in 1798-9, the circuit had been considerably enlarged, now extending up the Tunkhannock to Fancher's—into the Beech Woods in Susquehanna and Wayne counties.

1804. This year the Susquehanna district stands in connection with the Baltimore Conference with the same presiding elder, James Smith, in charge. Morris Howe and Robert Burch were the preachers. The presiding elder and the preachers were well received, being each in his way above mediocrity. Smith we have met with before, in the lake country, in Colbert's Journal. He was called Irish Jemmy from the time of his becoming a preacher. He was regarded as a good preacher, but a little queer. Howe was a great exhorter, and Burch, they say, was a very sociable man, and a good preacher. We have seen all these men; with the last we became very well acquainted. Howe's pathetic strains, and Smith and Burch's Irish wit, are spoken of by the few who remain of the Methodists of that day with no little interest.

1805. This year Anning Owen is presiding elder on the Susquehanna district, and James Paynter and Joseph Carson are the preachers on Wyoming circuit. Of Father Paynter we have before spoken. He had traveled on Wyoming circuit in 1794, and was remembered and loved as a devout and holy man. Carson was a young man, having been received this year on trial. He was full of zeal, and was the means of a great awakening and the conversion of many souls. Father Harris says: "Ann and Aner Carver and Phebe Alerton were awakened under a sermon which he preached on 'The harvest is past and the summer is ended.'" The latter said: "If Brother Carson would preach that sermon all around the circuit every body would be converted." Ann Carver married a Mulison, and is still living. We heard her speak in love-feast on Sabbath, June 5, 1859. She is the only survivor of the old generation of Carvers.

"The great and first revival in this section of country, extending throughout Brier Creek, Roaring Creek, Hunting-ton, and the intermediate and adjacent country, including hundreds of increase, commenced in the third story of Thomas Bowman's stone house, Brier Creek, still standing. The room included the entire upper story. It was a quarterly meeting, September, 1805. The room was always crowded and packed full; Anning Owen, presiding elder, James Paynter and Joseph Carson, circuit preachers. Christopher Frye, from Lycoming circuit, was very efficient at that revival; he was a fine-looking, large man, and an excellent preacher."—*Jesse Bowman*.

1806. Christopher Frye and Alfred Griffith are the preachers on Wyoming circuit this year.

The following curious incidents are related by Dr. Nadal, in a sketch of Mr. Griffith given in the Ladies Repository:

"In 1806 the subject of our sketch was received into the Baltimore Conference and appointed to Wyoming circuit, with Christopher Frye as his colleague. The circuit, like all others in that day, was large, and the fare poor and coarse enough. The only drink they had besides water was coffee (?) made of buckwheat bread. The process of making this drink was to hold a piece of buckwheat bread, called a slap-jack, in the fire in the tongs till completely charred, and then to boil it in an iron pot. The liquor thus obtained sweetened with maple sugar, received from Mr. Griffith the name of "slap-jack coffee," and by this designation came to be generally known. As to eating, from early in June till autumn, except when on the Flats, they had not a morsel of meat of any kind.\* Poultry could not be raised, nor pigs, nor sheep, for as soon as anything of the sort made its ap-

\* One unacquainted with the country embraced in Wyoming circuit would scarcely have a correct idea of it from this representation. At this time the circuit had been so extended as to embrace several new settlements in Susquehanna and Wayne counties, then called the Big and Little Beech Woods and the Swamp. Here were the poverty, the "slap-jack



pearance it was carried off by the foxes, the bears, the panthers, or the wolves. If now and then a man was found bold enough to attempt to keep a hog, the pen was built just at the front door of the cabin; and if he owned a calf it was brought up and tied behind the house every night, and the guns kept loaded, and at hand, to drive off or kill the invading panther or wolf. As they rested at night on their bear-skins or deer-skins, they frequently heard around them the wailing scream of the panther or the howl of the wolf; and the sight of the bear was more common than that of a pig or a lamb.

"The sleeping was as poor in some instances as the eating and drinking. About fifty miles from the Flats lived a humble family by the name of Cramer, consisting of husband and wife, with one son, Abram. Their house was both stopping place and church for our young itinerant, who had for his bed, when he remained over night with them, the frame of an old loom, across whose beams were laid slats, and on the slats a bear-skin or two. These, with a pair of clean sheets, which were kept exclusively for the preachers, and a few superincumbent duds, constituted the sleeping apparatus. Abe, as he was familiarly called, was the preacher's bed-fellow, and on one occasion, when Mr. Griffith had just committed himself to his room and bear-skins for the night, and lay waiting for young Abram, who was a stalwart boy of twenty, he happened to cast his eye in one corner of the room, or rather of the barn, that room being the only one, when a sight met him at once puzzling and grotesque. There was good mother Cramer, with her boy, Abe, before her, who stood, with lamblike docility, while the old lady pinned around him a snow-white sheet, which reached from the chin to the ground, making him look, his decidedly human head

coffee" and "no meat." "The Flats" is the Wyoming Valley. Twelve appointments out of eighteen were located on the river, where the people lived comfortably in 1806, and never heard of such a thing as "slap-jack coffee."

being excepted, for all the world like a veritable ghost. 'Why, mother,' said the young preacher, 'what on earth are you doing to Abe? Are you making a ghost of him?'

"'No, child,' replied the inventive housewife, 'no, but Abe isn't fit to sleep with a preacher unless he is wrapped up in some such way as this.'

"At one of his appointments the young preacher was met by an Irishman, by the name of Matthew Bortree, who had been a Methodist in his native country, but having emigrated to this country, and settled where he enjoyed no religious advantages, he had become cold and backslidden. But the Holy Spirit again visited him, and he became deeply anxious to retrieve his spiritual losses, and the object of his present visit was to get the promise of the preachers to visit his settlement, and establish there an appointment. The settlement was of about twenty years' standing, and yet a sermon had never been heard, nor a minister of the gospel seen in it.

"Upon consultation between the preachers it was agreed that Mr. Griffith should make the first visit to the new field, and preach the Gospel in the regions beyond to people who had never heard its joyful proclamation. The time was fixed, and a young man was to be sent to meet the preacher at Kramer's, and conduct him through the great wilderness called the 'Big Beech Woods' to Bortree's house. In pursuance of his engagement, at the proper time Mr. Griffith started for Kramer's, rode all day without eating a morsel, and reached the friendly cabin about nightfall, having come about fifty miles. Of course he was weary and hungry. Mother Kramer said she was glad to see him, but sorry he had come, for she had nothing, nothing at all to give him to eat. Mr. Griffith said he was sorry too, for he was very hungry; couldn't Mother Kramer possibly find something that a man could eat? The good woman promised to try, and upon rumaging among some broken crockery she found a dry crust of bread, which, added to a very



small fish which Abe had that day caught in the branch, and which she immediately cooked, was the supper and dinner of the young preacher, after a ride of fifty miles and preaching twice.

"The fish and the bread, which Providence made sufficient without a miracle, being found, the good woman drew out a wash-tub and placed a board over it for a table, on which in the moiety of a plate she arrayed the dinner, and before which she placed a three-legged stool; she invited the preacher to eat, adding, as she concluded her invitation, 'There's your dinner; it's all I have; if I had more you should have it. But if you are a good man it's good enough for you, and if not it's too good.'

By daybreak the next morning the father and Abe had returned from the mill, whither they had gone to replenish their exhausted larder, and the young itinerant had, considering time and place, a good breakfast, plenty of corn bread, washed down with slap-jack coffee, that and nothing else.

"The next evening he and his guide arrived at the settlement, and were met by seventy or eighty persons, all anxious to see that strange sight, a preacher. He put up with Bortree, and no sooner was he in the house than they insisted he should preach the same evening. He consented and while he preached the people gazed and wondered; not one present, perhaps, except Bortree, had ever before been witness of such a scene. The next day he preached morning, afternoon, and night. After the second service he was approached by a great rough fellow by the name of Bill Clemens, who asked him what he meant by the Methodist Episcopal Church. The answer was given by reading from the Discipline the General Rules and the articles of faith. Clemens, with ill-suppressed indications of feeling, remarked that if that was all he would not object to becoming a Methodist himself. The appointment was regularly kept up, and when winter set in the seriousness marked from the first had grown into deep penitence, and there was a repe-

tition of those scenes of revival which had been witnessed in so many parts of the county. The young preacher could but observe that these people, who had never beheld a revival, had never even read of one when converted, wept, rejoiced, shouted, just as he had seen so many do in his native state; and before conference every man and woman, and every child over fourteen years old in the whole settlement, had professed religion and joined the Church, with a single exception, and he was a whisky seller. Even this man's wife was brought in. The reformation, however, took from him his occupation, and cursing the neighborhood into heaps he left for parts unknown. Matthew Bortree became a local preacher, and Bill Clemens a class-leader, and on the spot where Bortree's house stood now stands, as we are informed, a fine church."

Frye was a large man, had a great voice, and a fiery soul. Mrs. Fanny Cary says: "He was a great preacher, and a great exhorter. He would pray, and sing, and get happy; and the people would hang around him. Great revivals followed him."

Father Harris says when Frye first came on to the circuit, he was much tried with shouting and jumping; but on a certain occasion, in his old log house, he saw him get happy and jump so high that his head came into contact with a shelf nailed under the beams. Of course he said no more against shouting and jumping. He further says that some of the lawyers of Wilkesbarre said he was a fool to be a Methodist preacher, as he was fit for a statesman or any other professional character. As Mr. Frye was a very stout man, when he came on the circuit rumor said that "if the rowdies did not take care he would take them by the neck and throw them out doors;" to which they replied that "if he did not take care he would get fried." He, of course, however, was very conciliatory, and he secured the respect of all classes.

Mrs. Garland, daughter of Jacob Tukesbury, now living in Hopbottom, gives the following account of Mr. Frye



labors in that place: "There was quite an accession to the Church this year. Frye was as rough as a meat-ax. From the commencement the meetings had been held in my father's kitchen. My grandfather at first was a persecutor. My mother had been a Presbyterian, and when she prayed it was in a low tone of voice. My grandfather would often say to her, when in prayer: 'Pray louder, I want to hear you.' On one occasion when Frye was preaching, grandfather began to weep. Mother asked Frye, after preaching, to let him come into class-meeting. Frye had not noticed the evidence of deep emotion in grandfather, and he answered her very roughly: 'You know he is an old persecutor, and what do you want him in class-meeting for?' 'I believe,' said my mother, 'he is under conviction, for I saw him weep.' 'O,' replied Frye, 'I wish your charity bag was not quite so large.' My mother, nothing daunted, brought the old gentleman in, broken-hearted, and weeping like a child. Mrs. Saunders had never before professed religion. But when she saw mother leading grandfather into class-meeting she started on herself, and as she entered the door she began to shout. All seemed to catch the spirit, and such a shout I never heard from so small a company.

"John Stull, a German, was under conviction, but his wife opposed him. On a certain occasion there was considerable noise made; he became angry, and said he did not want to go to heaven in that way. This was a sad point in his history, for he became a contemner of religion and religious people; and many years after, when he was an old man, he declared he had never had any feeling on the subject of religion since that time. Old Mr. Foster Horton, in general, was a fine man, but was occasionally overcome with drink. When he got over it he would confess, and promise amendment. On one of these occasions old Mr. Stull said he had got Horton off into the devil's church three times, but he guessed the Lord would get him after all. Horton finally died happy.

Nicholas Horton was a class-leader and steward, and he

was a great stickler for *order* in worship. Richard Saunders was a poor, simple young man, having just sense enough to enter into the religious sympathies of the times, but not enough to know that he could not pray to edification in public. His prayers were so simple and incoherent that they occasioned much merriment among the outsiders.\* Nicholas Horton told Richard that he must not pray any more in meeting, for his praying was so weak and blundering that he tried the brethren. Poor Richard laid this deeply at heart, and shed many tears over it. He knew not how to get along, feeling it his duty to pray, and wishing not to give offense. He finally concluded that as God could do all things, he would go to him and ask him to learn him how to pray better. When Uncle Bagley was coming to meeting on Sunday morning he heard a human voice in the woods. The tones were solemn and plaintive. He stole up near, and found it was Richard. He listened, and heard, often repeated, these words: 'O Jesus, do learn me how to pray! brethren tried with me, I pray so! O Lord! O Lord! O Lord! do learn me to pray!' Uncle Bagley came to meeting and told the tale, weeping, and they all agreed to let Richard pray as well as he could. The restriction was taken off, much to the comfort of the poor, simple creature, and he went on as usual, probably presuming that God had answered prayer and taught him to pray. Richard Saunders died very happy."

After Nicholas Horton Mr. Eaton, who lived in Springville Hollow, six miles distant, was class-leader. Next to him Jacob Tukesbury occupied the place, which he continued to do until Edward Paine came into the place, in 1810.

\* We once heard Richard pray. His prayer consisted in broken utterances: "O Lord! O Lord! O Lord! O help! O help! O come! O come! O Lord! O Lord! O Lord!" The close was the one, we were told, which he uniformly used: "Forever cend, amen!" When his prayer was thus formally closed he was as happy as a king. He shouted "glory!" and bounded like a sporting lamb on the green-sward, overflowing with life and delightful emotions.



In a communication from Rev. William Round, we are informed that Mrs. Polly Potter says she thinks Frye was the first Methodist preacher who preached in *Gibson*. This was during the year now under review, when Frye and Griffith traveled on Wyoming circuit. Margaret Bennet and George Williams were the first Methodists in Gibson. Williams came to the place in 1809, and Mrs. Bennet the year before. There was then no class there. Williams joined the class at Mount Pleasant, and Mrs. Bennet first joined the Baptists, and subsequently the Methodists, at Hopbottom. They had both been Methodists at the East. These two persons were pillars in the little Church in Gibson when we traveled the Bridgewater circuit in 1819. The first Methodist sermon was preached at the house of a Mr. Brundage, a Baptist, on what is now called the Thomas place, near where the church now stands.

The preachers of that period found their way to the people, however deeply buried in the dense forests, without waiting to be invited. They preached and lodged at the houses of Baptists, Presbyterians, and all others who would receive them.

1807. This year, in the months of June and July, Bishop Asbury made a tour through the country, from the Hudson up the Mohawk, on to the lake country, and thence south down the Susquehanna. Through the whole route he touches Mr. Colbert's old points, and finds many of the same hearts and hands open to supply his wants which ministered to the early pioneer. Having reached "Daniel Dorsey's," and preached in the region round about, he set his face toward Tioga. We give here several extracts from his Journal:

"*Thursday, July 9.* At Kress's. We set out, dining at Doan's, and came to Catrine, at the head of Seneca Lake, thirty miles; the swamps, sloughs, ruts, and stumps made it awful moving. We lodged at Baldwin's tavern.

"*Friday, 10.* We directed our route through New Town, upon the east branch of the Susquehanna, [now Elmira, on the Chemung, a branch of the Susquehanna, but not "

east branch,"] to Shonemang, [Chemung;] rested a while at Jacob Crosse's, and then passed the narrows of the river, continuing on by Shepherd's mill to Taylor's tavern. It was ten o'clock, and I was fearful of driving further in the dark.

"*Saturday, 11,* brought us to the camp-meeting on Squire Light's ground. We found it had been in operation two days. God is in the camp, and with us. Since the last Sabbath we have traveled one hundred and twenty miles; and with good roads and even ground we might have made three hundred miles in the same time. The heights of the Susquehanna are stupendous; the bottom-lands very fertile; but this river runs through a country of unpleasing aspect, morally and physically. Rude, irregular, uncultivated is the ground; wild, ignorant, and wicked are the people. They have not been wearied by my labors; except the neighborhood of Lancaster, and by what I may once have done in a visit to Wyoming, they are strangers to them. I am now on my first journey of toil and suffering through Genesee and Tioga. I preached on the camp-ground from Matt. xviii, 2. Some sots were a little disorderly, but the greater part of the congregation were very attentive. Weak as I was I did not spare myself, my subject, or my hearers. It may be I spoke to one thousand people.

"*Sunday, 12.* My subject was 2 Cor. v, 20. My congregation may have doubled in numbers to-day, and there were no troublesome drunkards. I feel as if God would own this meeting now, and continue to own it many days, in various families and places. I ordained five worthy men, local preachers, namely, Daniel Wilcox, John B. Hudson, Samuel Emmitt, John M'Caine, and Nathaniel Lewis, to the office of deacon. Had I not made this visit these men might have waited a long time, or taken a long ride to find me. In the afternoon, Sabbath, there was an uproar among the people. Some intoxicated young men seated themselves by the women, and refused to move until compelled. They fought those men who came to take them away; and



when the presiding elder interfered they struck at him, and one of the guards also, who was helping by order of the constables. There were magistrates, such as they were, to cry peace. The Owego gentry fled away, cackling falsehood, like wild geese. One Kemp, chief bully, arrested A. Owen on Monday morning for the sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, and fighting of this Kemp and his crew. The presiding elder was charged with having struck Kemp, and then running away. Nor was the poor bishop spared; he too had been fighting. It was well for him that he was not on the ground at the time. I was quiet in my room.

*"Monday, 13.* We rode to Tioga, and Brother Shipper gave us our dinner. A ride of sixteen miles brought us to Mineer's, where we lodged. Tioga Point, at the junction of Chemung and the river, is a pleasant spot.

*"Tuesday, 14.* We came six miles to Judge Gore's. Here I preached upon John vii, 17. When we set out on Wednesday we found we were obliged to take the carriage over a precipice by hand. The road to the ferry was rough; and behold, the boat was gone, and the bank caved and washed away. A lock upon the wheel, and the assistance of a strap, enabled us to pass the sulkey down by hand. Major Gaylor, at Wyalusing, lodged us well and freely.

*"Thursday, 16.* We came eleven miles to breakfast at Sturtevant's; and eleven miles more brought us to Hunt's Ferry. After dining at Vosburg's, free and kind, we went on to Newton Smith's, ten miles further. I ordained my host a deacon in his own house.

*"Friday, 17.* To Sutton's, ten miles; the house neat as a palace, and we were entertained like kings by a king and queen. It was no small consolation to lie down on a clean floor after all we had suffered from dirt and its consequences. Once more I am at Wyoming. We have worried through and clambered over one hundred miles of the rough roads of wild Susquehanna. O the precipitous banks,

winding narrows, rocks, sideling hills, obstructed paths, and fords scarcely fordable, ruts, stumps, and gulleys!

"*Sunday, 19.* I went to the woods and preached, and ordained Christian and Thomas Bowman deacons. Before I got through my discourse the rain came on, and I made a brief finish; the people were attentive. In the afternoon the preachers and many of the people went to a barn; there were showers of rain and thunder while service was performing. My first visit to Wyoming was in great toil and to little purpose. I am afraid I shall have no better success now.

"*Monday, 20.* We set out on a turnpike road, but O dreadful! I came sliding down a dug road precipice, dark and deep, but safe. About nine o'clock we made Mr. Merwin's tavern; and here were drink, and smoke, and waggoners, *but we closed with prayer.* We came along early on Tuesday through the Wind Gap, seventeen miles, to Heller's and breakfasted."

The service in Wyoming, directed by the bishop, is well remembered by several persons who were present. "The woods" was the grove by the old Forty Fort church. This was the year that church was built, and the timber was lying about at the time Bishop Asbury was there. A stand was prepared for the preachers under the shade. When the bishop kneeled to pray it began to sprinkle, and Wm. Butler kneeled by his side and held an umbrella over him. Before he had finished his sermon sharp lightning flashed and terrible thunder roared. Many were alarmed and fled, but the good bishop was calm as a summer evening. A little girl who was brought by her mother to hear the bishop was frightened by the thunder and lightning; observing the calmness of the good man, she thought "it is religion that makes him so fearless amid the storm." The impressions which she received on that occasion never left her until she found the Saviour. That little girl is now a lady far down the vale of years, but still lives to tell the story of that interesting day.

The bishop's description of the roads would be no exag-



eration if it had been written a dozen years afterward when we came down from the north to Wyoming. As to the complaints which are made by Mr. Colbert and Bishop Asbury of the domestic habits of the people with respect to comforts, cleanliness, and the like, let it be understood that those complaints came from two *bachelors*, who could scarcely appreciate the difficulties in the way of keeping clean among burnt logs and stumps, and especially of keeping a large group of children in a perfectly tidy condition. The poor mothers who raise numerous families in the woods, among smoldering log-heaps and burning brush, are entitled to a little consideration. We plead for the early settlers, and must modestly protest against the too summary condemnation of our worthy fathers and mothers, because occasionally they were not able to keep the rich and adhesive soil always, and all of it, under the soles of their feet. They had not relapsed into barbarism, although "dirt and all its consequences" were often inconveniently present in their log-cabins. We speak from personal knowledge, and make this defense in downright good faith, albeit we used to have our senses shocked occasionally with certain unseemly things of which such great complaint is often heard coming down from the olden times.

The bishop seems to have no adequate idea of the importance of his first visit to Wyoming. He wrongly judges that it was "to little purpose." We have already seen that the plans which he conceived on the ground, in 1793, resulted in a great awakening, and that the fruits of the labors of that great man, Valentine Cook, whom he sent for from Wyoming, were both abundant and permanent. It is well, perhaps, that we do not always know how much we are doing.

This year Gideon Draper and William Butler are the preachers upon Wyoming circuit. This was the first year of Butler's itinerancy. He was a devoted young man, and, as one who remembers him well says, "he preached only to save souls, and was much beloved."

The meeting-house at Forty Fort was so far completed this year as to be occupied for divine service, and it was arranged that the Methodists and Presbyterians should occupy it alternately. There was a great revival in the circuit, which resulted in the addition of one hundred members.

#### CANAAN CIRCUIT FORMED.

Before Bishop Asbury left Wyoming he directed Gideon Draper to spend his time, for the remainder of the year, on what was subsequently called Canaan circuit, but what was then called "the Mission." Mr. Draper immediately crossed Cobb's Mountain and entered upon his work. Daniel Hitt, who traveled this year with Bishop Asbury, left the bishop at Kingston, and passed on with Mr. Draper through the swamp toward New York.\*

Mr. Draper first called at Major Woodbridge's, in what is now Salem, Wayne county. He was in his mill; it was a log mill; and when Mr. Draper opened to him his business the major was somewhat reserved, but treated him with becoming courtesy. Mr. D. proposed to preach the next Sabbath, and the major did not object. He invited Mr. Draper to partake of the hospitalities of his house, but said nothing about his having a regular appointment in the place until after the Sabbath, when he heard him preach three times. The people flocked out to hear the missionary, and gave great attention to the word. Indeed, at the very first there were evident indications of a divine influence at work upon the hearts of the people.

Major Woodbridge was a Presbyterian of many years standing, although in no wise bigoted. He was a man of intelligence, of character, and of influence. He was a little slow to pledge himself for the support of the new sect, but he lent an ear, and proceeded as he saw the light. Having heard Mr. Draper, and seen the interest which was awakened among the people, he had no doubt but that God was

\* The account of Mr. Draper's labors on the mission were received from him at his house in Clifton, New York, November, 1859.



in the movement, and he promised him his most cordial support. He invited Mr. Draper to establish regular preaching at his house, and gave him every facility in his work.

He gave him a letter of introduction to Squire Chapman, at Pawpack, and caused an appointment to be sent on in advance. On his way Mr. Draper preached in the Irish Settlement, in Newfoundland, now Sterling. Here was settled a number of Irish Methodist families which had been formed into a class under Frye and Griffith.

As Mr. Draper proceeded from the Irish settlement to Squire Chapman's he overtook two young men; one of them was quite talkative, and finally said he was going to Squire Chapman's to hear one Draper preach. He had heard that Draper had raised the devil at Woodbridge's, but he did not believe he could do anything at Chapman's. He was going to hear what the fellow had to say for himself. Well, said Mr. Draper, I am going there too, and we will go in company and see how he makes out. The fellow was completely thrown from his guard by Mr. Draper's manner. They talked on like old cronies, the young man not failing in every way to show his contempt for the Methodists and his respect for the stranger, who, although he had the appearance of a gentleman, was as sociable and as good a fellow as could be scared up anywhere in the woods.

They came within sight of the house where the Methodist meeting was to be held, and there were horses tied to the fence, and people standing around the house, everything, indeed, indicating a large gathering. Mr. Draper's new friend insisted on taking charge of his horse, and followed him into the house, and seated himself near by him. The people were talking about the preacher, and doubting whether he would come. Mr. Draper was seated near a rough partition, and heard Mrs. Chapman, from the other side, express regret to her husband that the appointment had been given out.

When the time arrived Mr. Draper arose, taking his hymn book and small Bible from his pocket, and remarked that he supposed it was time to begin the meeting. Everybody

was surprised, but no one so much as the young man who had unwittingly taken the preacher under his patronage. The congregation was quiet and respectful at first, but before the discourse was concluded many wept, and a universal interest was excited.

At the conclusion of the service Mr. Draper informed the people that he was a missionary, and if any of them wished to have their children baptized he would attend to it at their houses the next day. Accordingly, the day following he went from house to house, teaching and baptizing. The parents wept, the children stared, and some of them were badly frightened.

Squire Chapman gladly consented to the proposition for another appointment, and gave Mr. Draper letters of introduction to his friends.

Mr. Draper appointed a love-feast to be held in Major Woodbridge's barn. They admitted all who wished to come in, and the barn was full. There were only three or four to speak, but they spoke over and over. Major Woodbridge, his wife, and a Dutch woman, were all that Mr. D. had to help him. The Dutch woman became boisterous, and the major was a little alarmed, and came to Mr. D. and asked him if that would not do harm. Mr. D. told him he rather thought not, and his friend seemed content.

Many were awakened, and the meeting continued until late at night. An old raftsman, seventy years of age, was awakened and converted. Mr. D. told the major to take the names of all who wished to join the society, and he must lead the meetings. Twenty-two persons gave him their names, and he was regularly installed as a *class-leader* in the Methodist Church almost before he was aware of it.

A revival followed the first meeting at Squire Chapman's, and a class was formed there. The Squire was appointed leader, and the young fellow whose acquaintance the preacher made by the way, on his first visit, was converted, and Mr. D. appointed him assistant leader.

Major Woodbridge and Squire Chapman were both pious



Presbyterians, who had long been lamenting the comparative heathenism of the country, and praying for relief. They wisely judged that Methodism was just the thing for the times, and became fully enlisted in its aggressive movements. They were widely known, and with their endorsement Mr. D. everywhere had access to the best families.

Mr. D. next went to the Delaware, bearing a letter of introduction to a Dr. Pew, who was a man of means, and had built a stone church for the accommodation of his neighbors who wished to attend divine service. He was kindly received, and continued there a week. He crossed the Delaware and preached. From this point he sent on an appointment to Bethany by Sheriff Woodward. Dr. Pew was now his friend and gave him his influence. It was in the winter that he visited Bethany, and sixteen sleigh loads followed him to the county seat.

At Bethany he found that an old Baptist elder had warned the people against him as "an English spy" and "a horse-thief." A large congregation assembled in the court-house to hear him. He referred to the slanderous report, and, calling the slanderer by name, wished to know if he were present. Upon being told that he was not there, he gave a satisfactory account of himself, and left another appointment. The next day he called upon the old elder and gave him his choice, either to take back what he had said, or to sustain a prosecution. He wisely chose the former, and thus the matter ended.

The intelligence of the conversion to Methodism of Major Woodbridge and Squire Chapman, and many other Presbyterians, had gone back to New England, and a decided effort was set on foot to retake the ground. Missionaries were dispatched to these newly settled regions to teach the people the orthodox doctrines of the "old standing order," and to reclaim apostates from Calvinism. Some of these missionaries were not the men for the work, and their labors had no other effect than to confirm the converts to Methodism in their new faith. Mr. D. gives a few illustrations of this :

He came to Mount Pleasant, and was met at the door by the landlady, who knew him, and told that a Presbyterian minister was there. He went in and found the gentleman in the midst of a story of converting a Methodist preacher at Chenango. When Mr. H. had concluded his story Mr. Draper said a few words, at which he took huge offense, and, upon hearing some one address Mr. D. by name, he added, "Draper? I have heard of him; he is more of a knave than a fool." The two missionaries were obliged to sleep in the same bed. Mr. H. was furious, and went to bed in a towering passion. Mr. D. teased him, and he became so boisterous that some boys, who listened on the outside of the house, reported that he cursed and swore at Draper.

In the morning Mr. D. asked Mr. H. where he was going. "I am going to Squire Chapman's, he is a Presbyterian," was the answer. Mr. D. rejoined, "I am going there too; he was once a Presbyterian, but he has joined the Methodists." Mr. D. met the missionary both at Squire Chapman's and Major Woodbridge's, and the gentleman wholly failed to bring back any one of the many who had left the Calvinistic for the Methodist faith.

Mr. D. met the Rev. Seth Williston\* at Oquago. He was a missionary, but a man of an entirely different stamp from Mr. H. He treated Mr. D. with courtesy, but made fight against his Arminianism. At Oquago Mr. W. warned the people against believing in "absolute perfection." Mr. D. told him he knew of nobody who believed in that doctrine.

They rode together to Hopbottom, where Mr. W. preached, and Mr. D. exhorted after him. Under the exhortation some of the Methodists shouted, which seemed to put Mr. W. into a state of great uneasiness, and he tried to escape from the room, but Mr. D. so managed as to block up the only way out. The next day Mr. W. accused Mr.

\*The man who had the controversy with Dr. Bangs, which first brought the doctor before the public as an author,



D. of shutting him in, and compelling him to hear the Methodists bawl. It was done, however, with great good-nature, and Mr. D. did not deny the charge.

These collisions were by no means uncommon in those early times. They had their evil consequences, and yet were not wholly barren of good results. They had the effect to draw the lines between truth and error, and to promote study and investigation. They sharpened the wits of the old preachers, and compelled them to turn their attention occasionally to polemics, which, as a general thing, resulted in the confirmation of the people in the Methodist faith.

1808. This year Anning Owen leaves the Susquehanna district, and James Herron is appointed in his place. James Reiley and Henry Monteith are the preachers on Wyoming circuit. Reiley was a fleshy man, a very good preacher, and well received.\* Monteith was a tall man, with very large eyes, and a good preacher. He usually entered the houses where he made his visits with the apostolical salutation, "Peace be on this house."

A. Owen was this year appointed to the Lycoming circuit, and G. Draper to Canaan.

This year the preachers received each his full allowance of \$80. There was a "surplus of \$16 83½ sent on to conference by Brother C. Frye."

We have noticed that a class was formed in Salem during the preceding year. We have before us a communication from Anson Goodrich, of that place, dated March 13, 1857, in which we have valuable additional information with regard to the origin of Methodism in Salem and some other places, which we will now give the reader. He says:

"Ephraim Bidwell and Dorcas his wife came from Connecticut and settled in this town—then Canaan—in the year 1800. They were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It was by an invitation from Mr. Bidwell that year, or the following, that two preachers, Chambers and

\* He died September 28, 1841.

Polemus, preached several times; the opinion is that they came from Susquehanna." They came from Wyoming; Chambers probably in 1801 or 1802, and Polemus in 1803. Mr. Goodrich continues:

"I recollect hearing Mr. Owen, Christopher Frye, and Alfred Griffith preach in barns, dwelling-houses, and a log school-house, in fact the only school-house in what is now Salem. Mr. Owen was presiding elder, and held the first quarterly meeting which was ever witnessed by the people here, in Major Woodbridge's barn. The major was a staunch Calvinist, and manifested much opposition to the fanatics, as they were called, upon their first making their appearance in the country.

"About this time the Rev. Seth Williston came here as a missionary, and manifested much opposition to the preachers' coming, and the people hearing them. Before there was a class here Father Owen had a conference meeting, as there were two or three Presbyterian friends here, asking them as to the state of their minds. A Mr. Kimbal was present, who had previously declared to Father Owen that he was a disciple of Thomas Paine. Mr. Owen, supposing that the Lord had reached his heart, asked him the state of his mind. He arose and said: 'I neither fear God, man, nor the devil.' 'God have mercy upon your poor soul,' replied Father Owen; to which Kimbal responded, 'Amen.' The wretched man lived and died without hope; but his father experienced religion in 1806 or 1807, in the eighty-sixth year of his age, and connected himself with the Methodist Episcopal Church in Palmyra, and died, at the age of ninety-two, happy in God.

"The first class was formed in 1807, under Gideon Draper and William Butler. Major Woodbridge's prejudices were removed when he saw evidence that God was in the work, and he connected himself with the Methodist Episcopal Church, and was appointed the first class-leader, and continued to hold that office until his death, in 1811 or 1812, having been for forty years a member of the Presbyterian



Church. His children not being Methodists, employed me to go to Kingston after the Rev. Mr. Hoyt, to preach his funeral sermon. I traveled in the night over Cobb's mountain, and returned with him the next day.

"The following persons were members of the first class formed in Salem in 1807: Theodore Woodbridge, Ephraim and Dorcas Bidwell, Harris and Ruey Hamlin, Ruey Hamlin, (now Mrs. Baldwin, of Minnesota,) Michael Mitchel and wife, Catharine Hamlin, (now Mrs. Lee, of Canaan,) Irena Potter, Dorcas Miller, Charles and Ann Goodrich, Charles Goodrich, Jr., Timothy and Betsy Holister, Josiah and Eunice Curtis, Gideon and Ann Curtis, Fitch H. Curtis, William Cobb, Salmon and Sally Jones, Joseph Miller, William and Ann Dayton, Sanford and Laminta Wright, Jeremiah and Ruth Osgood, Edmund and Rebecca Nicholson, and Oliver Hamlin. Five of the above are now living in Salem; their ages are from sixty-six to ninety-six. The remainder, excepting Mrs. Baldwin and Mrs. Lee, have gone to their heavenly rest."

The old stewards' book for Canaan circuit, commencing with August 14, 1808, is now before us. Thomas Elliott is here recognized as one of the preachers on the circuit, and receives quarterage and traveling expenses. He stands on the Minutes this year connected with Tioga circuit. He was probably brought on to help fill up the work, as the circuit extended over a large territory, embracing many new settlements at a considerable distance from each other.

A great religious interest prevailed this year on Northumberland circuit, and the meeting-room, in the second story of Thomas Bowman's house, in Brier Creek, became too contracted for the accommodation of the people, particularly on quarterly meeting occasions. The necessities of the work called for an extraordinary effort on the part of the Methodist people to build a church.

"The stone church at Brier Creek was erected in 1808; Thomas Curran and John Rhodes, late of Milton, deceased, were the preachers on the Northumberland circuit. This

was the first Methodist Episcopal church building used by the Methodist denomination exclusively anywhere on the Susquehanna River, between the Wyoming Valley and the 'Sutton Church,'\* two miles above Williamsport, near Lycoming Creek.

"The stone church at Brier Creek was the rallying point for the Methodist people from Milton, Lewisburgh, Northumberland, Wyoming Valley and the surrounding country. At quarterly meetings, held at Christian and Thomas Bowman's, before the church was built, people came thirty-five miles, men and women, on horseback. From Wyoming Valley: Ann Denison, Sarah Brown, Sarah Harvey, (afterward wife of Rev. George Lane,) Eunice Wakeman, niece of Mrs. Joseph Wright, a young woman of *extraordinary* mind and talents."

1809. Gideon Draper is presiding elder on the Susquehanna district this year.† George Lane and Abram Denison are the preachers on Wyoming circuit.

This year the first camp-meeting was held in Luzerne county. It was located near the head of Wyoming Valley, was a large meeting, and attended with great good. Mrs. Fanny Cary was at the meeting, and says it was as large a camp-meeting as she has ever attended since. People were there from fifty miles around.

Mrs. Cary also speaks with great animation of a quarterly meeting held this year at the meeting-house at Forty Fort. There was a great crowd present at the meeting on Saturday. Hopbottom, Canaan, and Salem, in Wayne county; Black Walnut, Wyalusing, Huntington, Berwick, Brier Creek, and Northumberland, each contributed its share. It was feared that accommodations could not be provided for so many. After all had been quartered in the neighborhood that could

\* The latter went to decay, was inclosed in a field, and finally fell to pieces. The small grave-yard marks the spot.

† Herron was unpopular, and objections to his continuance were made to Bishop Asbury by B. Bidlack and W. B. Lacey, and he was superseded.



be, Darius Williams mounted his horse and rode up, singing, with great spirit and power :

" I'm happy, I'm happy ; O wondrous account !  
My joys are immortal ; I stand on the mount,  
I gaze on my treasure and long to be there,  
With angels, my kindred, and Jesus my dear."

When he had concluded the verse he said : " I've got a house that will hold forty, and a heart that will hold a hundred ; all who want places follow me ! " and as he rode off a large train followed him. As the company arrived his good wife had half a barrel of potpie smoking, which she had cooked in a large iron kettle. The potpie, and other things on the same scale, supplied the company with a plentiful dinner. The table was cleared away, and then came on the singing, and praying, and shouting. The sound of that old-fashioned quarterly prayer-meeting rolled up the side of Ross Hill and sent its echo across the river, and was re-echoed from the Wilkesbarre mountain. It was a holy season and a glorious triumph. Late in the evening the men went to their lodgings in the barn, singing and shouting, and the women spread down beds on the floor, and when sufficiently free from excitement fell asleep. On Sabbath morning the love-feast was one of the old sort. Speaking, rejoicing, singing, and shouting—each occupied a place. The whole mass was in a blaze, and great and amazing was the triumph of the happy and entranced multitude. That was one of the good old times never to be forgotten.

It would seem, from the records of the old stewards' book, that after the quarterly meeting in December, 1809, George Lane retired from the labors of the circuit ; for in March, 1810, Samuel Carver receives traveling expenses and quarterage for one quarter. The record is in G. Lane's handwriting, and nothing is charged to him. The remnant of the year, from March to July, the time of the first session of the Genesee Conference, Lane's place was supplied by Loring Grant, who had been traveling on Northumberland circuit.

This year Canaan circuit is embraced within the Schuylkill district; William Hunter, presiding elder, Anning Owen and James Quail, preachers. Quail is represented as "a young man eminent for his piety, and diligent in his ministerial duties." He died in the Lord, June, 1816.

1810. This year is distinguished by the

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE GENESEE CONFERENCE.

Bishop Asbury had for some time regarded the western part of the state of New York as a promising field for Methodism, and the center of a prospective conference. From 1796 to 1812 the bishops had "authority to appoint other yearly conferences, if a sufficient number of new circuits be anywhere found for that purpose." It was in the exercise of this discretion that Bishops Asbury and M'Kendree had appointed the Genesee Conference. The work had so extended in the northern part of Pennsylvania, the western part of New York, and in the two provinces of Canada, that a new conference, which would make the eighth, was now loudly called for. The preachers were obliged to go from the shores of Lake Erie and from Canada to Philadelphia, on horseback, to conference. This conference holding its sessions in March or April, the roads were of course nearly impassable, and the preachers were necessarily kept from their circuits for a long time. These circumstances made it necessary that some relief should be sought, and the means of relief was wisely judged of by the bishops.

The measure, however, was severely criticised. It was censured as harsh and tyrannical; it being assumed that a handful of men were separated from the cities, and almost from the blessings of civilized society, and that they would be left to suffer and starve without the means of relief. The objectors had very inadequate ideas of the resources of the country covered by the new conference, and the rapidity with which an intelligent population was crowding into it from almost all parts of the world. Our pioneer bishop, however, understood the question well, much better



than those who considered themselves competent critics of his proceedings.

The conference assembled in Lyons, in an old storehouse lately occupied as a corn-barn, belonging to Judge Dorsey, on the 20th of July. In his Journal the bishop briefly notes: "*Wednesday*. I arrived this evening at Daniel Dorsey's. *Friday*. Conference began to-day. *Sabbath, 22*. Preached at the encampment. *Wednesday*. Conference ended; great order and dispatch in business; stationed sixty-three preachers."

The preachers on Wyoming circuit are Thomas Wright and Elijah Metcalf. Mrs. Cary thinks Wright left before his year expired; and Father Bidlack took his place. By all we can learn, Wright made but a feeble impression. We have no record of this year after the session of the Genesee Conference in the old stewards' book, and a hiatus of four years occurs in the records of the circuit between the old book and the one which follows it.

The preachers this year on Canaan circuit are George Harmon and Samuel Thompson. In an interview with our venerable friend Harmon, at his own house in Camillus, N. Y., November 29, 1859, we received from him the following particulars in relation to Canaan circuit, and his labors in that field during the conference year of 1810:

The turnpike from the Great Bend to Newburgh was then in process of construction. The preachers on Canaan circuit then crossed the Delaware, and preached at Cocheton, Cross's, Hurd's Settlement, or White Lake, Liberty, and Mamakating Hollow, at Smith's; crossed the Shawangunk Mountain, and preached at Higgins's and at Squire Stoddard's; recrossed the mountain, and preached at Carpenter's Point. These appointments required the preachers to travel extensively over Sullivan and Orange counties in the state of New York.

At Carpenter's Point, now Port Jervis, Mr. Harmon crossed the Delaware and visited Milford. On his first visit to that place he inquired for "the most respectable

family in town." He was directed to a particular house, to which he proceeded and introduced himself. He was politely received and invited to preach there. A good congregation assembled. At the close of his discourse Mr. Harmon informed the people that he should pass through the place once in four weeks, and if they wished it he would preach for them on one condition, and that was that they would provide him with respectable lodgings and keep his horse. The condition was accepted, and the contract closed. He preached there through the year, but after a while the people so far deviated from the bargain as to take up a collection for him. On the old stewards' book the place stands credited with \$2 25 at the final settlement, June 18, 1811.

Mr. Harmon formed a class at Cherry Ridge; he was invited by the wife of Dr. Collins to go home with her and put up at her house. When Dr. Collins came home Mrs. Collins said to him: "I have invited Mr. Harmon to put up with us, and I hope you will not insult him."

To which the doctor dryly responded: "When the king is absent the queen makes the laws."

"Well, then," said Mr. Harmon, "I hope the king will not abrogate what the queen has done in this case."

"No, indeed, sir," answered the doctor.

Mr. Harmon preached at Cherry Ridge, in the presence of a Presbyterian missionary, on the text, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die."

The gentleman thought that the drift of the discourse was against the doctrine of the infallible perseverance of the saints. Upon being invited by Mr. Harmon to speak he arose, and proceeded to remark that grace in the soul is compared to leaven in meal, and leaven is a new principle independent of the meal. When he had finished his analogical argument, Mr. Harmon arose and addressed an old lady who was present thus: "Mother, can you make leaven without meal?"



"Well," said the old lady, "I think it would be poor stuff."

"Well, mother," Mr. Harmon proceeded, "what becomes of your bread when it is made?"

"We eat it when it is good," she answered; "but when it is sour or becomes moldy we give it to the hogs."

The missionary did not undertake to mend up his figure.

Mr. Harmon formed a class at Bethany, and appointed Joseph Miller leader. He was sheriff of the county, and a man of respectability. Before he left the place Mr. Harmon was informed that the Baptists had sent for an elder, and intended to break up the class. He sent a local preacher to fill his appointments, and remained a week. The elder did not come, but left Mr. Harmon to himself, and he had a fine revival, and received into the society a number more.

Mr. Harmon formed a class at the mouth of the Lackawaxen; most of the persons were of the name of Barnes. He also formed a class at Kent's Settlement, four or five miles west of Belmont.

The preachers of the circuit each received \$49 98 and their traveling expenses.

Let the present race of preachers survey the territory, think of the roads as they then were, and of the accommodations, and look at the scanty pittance which the preachers received, and ask themselves if the contrast presents no occasion for gratitude and contentment. Here is embraced the whole of the present Honesdale district, consisting of seventeen charges, besides portions of Wyoming, Wyalusing, and Binghamton districts, and a portion of New York and New Jersey Conferences. This is the extent of Canaan circuit in 1810. The roads cannot be conceived of now. We know what they were ten years later; and then, O Sorrows of Werter! mud! rocks! stumps and roots! pole bridges and *no* bridges! To travel these roads in hunger, cold, nakedness, and weariness, and often to lodge in open cabins, among dirt and insects, and receive *almost*

*fifty dollars* in the course of the year. This was the itinerancy in 1810 in the Genesee Conference.

An old slander, often uttered within the period of our recollection, was, that the Methodist preachers were a poor lazy set of men, going about and getting their living out of the people rather than to work and earn it. This malicious falsehood was refuted by the labors and sacrifices of the brave and self-denying old preachers every day and every hour. Follow these men around their large circuits; eat with them, sleep with them, preach with them, pray with them, suffer with them, and weep with them, and then say if in a worldly point of view their lot is an enviable one.

They had their enjoyments, but they were not such as earth affords. They were of a higher origin; they were the joys of the heavenly communion; the joys of hope, of faith, of charity; of being "poor, yet making many rich;" of "having nothing, yet possessing all things." A noble class of men were our fathers; may their zeal and sacrificing spirit never die out of the Church! We of the present generation, cannot suffer as they did; but we can emulate their zeal and devotion to the cause of God, and the best interests of humanity. These elements of ministerial character are to-day as necessary as in the days of old.