

## CHAPTER X.

1844–1846.

CANADA.<sup>1</sup>

OUR North American colonies had something like a hereditary claim on the services of Mr. Burns. It has been the lot of two of his near relatives to be engaged for a series of years in the service of the church in that important and thriving province of the British crown. His uncle, Dr. George Burns, of the Free Church at Corstorphine, was in 1817 called to be the first minister of the Church of Scotland in the city of St. John, New Brunswick, and, with a short interval, he laboured in that important sphere for the period of fourteen years; while another uncle, Dr. Robert Burns, formerly of Paisley, was for fifteen years secretary to the Glasgow Society for sending out Ministers and Teachers to the Colonies of British North America, and was himself for a quarter of a century employed, first as pastor, and afterwards as theological professor, at Toronto, in Canada West. The latter having arrived at Montreal in the spring of 1844 as one of the first deputies of the young, fresh, and already renowned Free Church of Scotland, the question was at once put to him, "Have you brought your nephew with you?" In fact, the revivals in Scotland were more spoken of in Canada than in Scotland itself, and the Free Church deputy carried home with him earnest commissions from the good people of Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, and almost everywhere, for the presence and labours of Mr. Burns, and others of similar spirit. Written communications to the Colonial Committee at Edinburgh had also preceded him; and when he reached Scotland in June of that year, he found that the proposal to visit Canada had been made to Mr. Burns, and that proposal having been seconded by the full information now

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter was kindly prepared by the late Rev. Robert Burns, D.D., professor of theology in Knox's College, Toronto, than whom none knew the field of labour better, or had done more to advance the work of Christ throughout its length and breadth. It is given with only such revision as the revered author would himself have given to it had he been spared to impart to it his final touch. Besides him, and chiefly through him, I am indebted also to the following friends who have assisted in furnishing the materials on which the narrative is based, viz. Rev. Alexr. Cameron, of the Free Church, Ardersier, formerly of Canada; Mr. Hector Macpherson, lay missionary at St. Martin's, Perthshire, formerly band-major of the 93d Sutherland Highlanders; Rev. Daniel Clark, of Indian Lands, Glengarry, Canada; Mr. Donald Catanach, of Lochiel, and his sister, Mrs. Kelly; Rev. Alexr. N. Somerville, of Anderston Free Church, Glasgow; Sergeant Long, formerly of the 93d, now of the Gymnasium, Glasgow; Mr. James Hosack, merchant, Quebec; the Rev. John Clugston, formerly of that city, now of Stewarton; Mr. William Macintosh, now of Belleville, C. W.; Rev. Farquhar M'Rae of Knockbain; Mrs. M'Nider, formerly of Montreal, now of Vincent Street, Edinburgh; Messrs. James Court, John Dougal, Thos. Allan, James Orr, R. M'Corkle, Montreal, and Farnham.

given him, all difficulties were removed, and in the course of a few weeks Mr. Burns embarked in the brig *Mary* for Montreal, a free passage to and from Canada having been guaranteed to him by the generous Christian proprietors of the vessel. Mr. Burns sailed from Greenock to Montreal on the 10th August, 1844, and reached Montreal on Thursday, September 26th, of the same year. In this connection the names of Mr. James R. Orr, merchant in Montreal, and of Captain Kelso, the commander and proprietor of the vessel, deserve honourable mention. With the first of these gentlemen Mr. Burns stayed during the greater part of his residence in Montreal; and the names of both are associated with the first propitious dawning of the Free Church era in Canada.

The following extracts from his journal will show the feelings with which he approached this new sphere of labour, and the spirit in which he entered on it:—

“In every circumstance, even to the least, I have seen infinite grace towards me on this occasion. The ship in which I am is an excellent one. As there is no cabin passenger but myself, I have the cabin as quiet as my own study could be, and a state-room in which to meet with God. The means provided for me by the Lord have so exactly met my wants, that I go forth truly ‘without purse,’ having only two shillings remaining in the world; and yet I am infinitely rich, ‘having nothing, and yet possessing all things.’ I trust I shall be enabled not only to pray much, but also to study more deeply the divine word, and prepare more regularly for the profitable discharge of my awful trust . . . I have got some beginning made among the crew. To-night we had fine weather, and met on deck for worship. It was sweet and solemn, the voice of prayer and praise blending with the winds in the midst of the mighty deep. Oh that I may be prepared for glorifying God fully in my body and spirit, which are his!” On another occasion he says: “Today we have been becalmed, and I feel the retirement sweet. I think I can say through grace that God’s presence or absence alone distinguishes places to me. But ah! I am yet untried. I know but little of what is in me as yet, and still less of the depth of his redeeming love. . . . I have sometimes had glimpses both of the depth of sin and of redeeming love; still, I will need very special teaching if I am to be of use in the western world. . . .

“*September 2, 1844.*—This morning beautifully clear; a gentle north-east breeze, wafting us to our desired haven, brought us in sight of American land, after a delightful run of twenty-three days. . . . Our seasons of divine worship have been increasingly pleasant of late, although I see no mark of a divine work of grace in anyone around me. Part of my daily work has been to teach the ship-boys to read. One of them is an interesting black from Africa. Oh that my heart were enlarged in pleading for the ingathering of all nations to Emmanuel!”

On September 10th he reached Quebec, and in his journal we find the following characteristic notice:—"In God's great mercy we arrived here yesterday, after a delightful passage of thirty-six days. As it was the day of holy rest, I did not go ashore, but had worship on board, and spoke on the twenty-second chapter of Revelation. In the evening I was put on shore, and after looking a little at the aspect of the town, I took up my position alone, and yet not alone, at the market-place, close to the river, and began to repeat the fifty-fifth of Isaiah. A crowd of Canadians and of British sailors soon gathered, who at first seemed mute with astonishment, but soon showed me that the offence of the cross had not ceased by their mocking and threatened violence. However, I got a good opportunity of witness-bearing for God and his Christ; and when I left them had some interesting conversation with some individuals who followed me. When I came down again, at half-past eight, to the place where the ship's boat was to meet me, I got into conversation with a company of young sailors, two of whom remembered well having heard me at Newcastle at the quay and in the corn-market. Some of our poor soldiers and sailors were going about intoxicated. Though it were only to reach these two classes of degraded men, it would be to me a reward for crossing the great ocean. Who knoweth what may be the fruit of this evening's testimony among the wondering crowd! . . . I have had on board the ship a time for solemn observation of the character and ways of the unconverted, which I trust will be profitable. The only book I have had with me beside the book of God is Owen on the *Glory of Christ*, which I find precious indeed. I have had some seasons of great nearness to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and have found his word full of power and refreshment."

On reaching Montreal he at once found himself in the midst both of new and of old friends. The faces of the old soldiers whom he had known at Aberdeen and at Dundee must have been a sight peculiarly pleasant to him, and a happy omen for the future:—

"When we came into the harbour two Christian gentlemen, Mr. Orr and Mr. M'Kay, came on board, and before leaving my little cabin we had sweet communion at the mercy-seat together. I live with Mr. and Mrs. Orr, a godly couple from Greenock, in a delightful situation at the head of the town. Truly goodness and mercy are heaped on me. . . . Before leaving Scotland I observed that the 93d Regiment, the depot of which I laboured among at Aberdeen in autumn, 1840, had removed from Kingston to Montreal, and I trusted that somehow I might get in among them; but what was my joy and wonder to be told that there were about thirty godly men among sergeants and privates who have a hired room near the barracks in which some of them teach a daily school for poor children gathered from the streets, as well as a Sabbath-school, and in which they meet for social prayer every Friday from six to half-past eight. This is the Sutherland regiment, of which in its early days the Rev. Ronald Bayne, an eminent man of God—afterwards at Inverness, and then at Elgin—was chaplain; and that enjoyed until

lately the command of Colonel M'Gregor, a distinguished Christian officer, now at the head of the constabulary force of Dublin. . . . I had hardly arrived when I was told they were looking with desire to my coming, and that they wished me to attend their prayer-meeting, and to preach to them next Sabbath. I accordingly went last night, in company with two pious Scotchmen. . . . When we got to the place I found such a scene as I never before saw: a room crowded with soldiers, wives, and children, who were met not to hear a man speak, but to wait upon Jehovah, as their custom was. It put me in mind of the centurion of old. I enjoyed the meeting exceedingly, speaking upon Moses at the burning bush. One of the soldiers prayed, as well as Mr. M'Intosh and myself. In the soldier's prayer I was struck by the petition that they might cherish such expectations of good through my instrumentality as were warranted by his word, and were according to his mind. They seemed all to feel too that nothing but the presence of God himself would be of any avail. I found it very affecting to them and me to allude to the church of our fathers in the furnace, and to the people of Ross and Sutherland, from among whom the regiment was at first raised. . . .

*"Tuesday, September 24th.—Sabbath* was a good day, sufficient to remind me of September 22d, 1839, the day of the second communion at Kilsyth. At half-past nine A.M. I preached on the quay, on the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and his purging the temple—congregation large and fixed. At eleven I preached in Mr. Wilks's church (Congregational) from the words, 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.' At half-past one P.M. I addressed the 93d Regiment in Mr. Esson's church—very fixed in their attention—more so than I have seen soldiers before. At seven I again preached in Mr. Esson's to a full church, on 'If any man will come after me,' &c., and was much aided.

*"Saturday, December 14th.—*During the present week my work has gone on as before, but in addition my conflicts in soul about it have been deeper than before, and several new doors have been opened. (1.) Two hundred and fifty of the 71st Regiment have come to the cavalry barracks, whom I visited on Tuesday and Friday, and whom I am to see again on Tuesday, if the Lord will. It seems very remarkable that the 93d and 71st Regiments are the only ones whose depots I visited in Scotland, and that the whole of the 93d and so many of the 71st should now be here. I have met with a number of the 71st whom I knew well in Dundee, and this prepares my way among them. (2.) I have got liberty and more than liberty from the commanding officer of the 89th (Irish) Regiment to meet with the men in their schoolroom from week to week. This seemed so unlikely, as he is said to be a Romanist, that I had given up thoughts of applying, but one of the men in the hospital wanted me to ask a favour for him, and this gave me an introduction. (3.) We have got most wonderfully the use of a large room exactly opposite the French church for holding meetings in, both in French and English—all for nothing—the owner being a friend of the gospel—a hearer of Dr. Carruthers the Independent, whose church met for a long time in this very place. This seems a remarkable arrangement, as it is the very best place in the city for reaching the people."

When the Free Church was opened at Côte Street, Montreal, the soldiers of the 93d had a distinct service allotted to them in the afternoon. On the arrival of Mr. Burns this service devolved on him; but besides preaching to the entire regiment on the Sabbath, he preached twice during the week in one of the largest rooms in the barracks; and he went frequently to the regi-

mental hospital to address the sick and speak to the patients personally. Such was the high estimation in which he was held by soldiers both of that and of other regiments and of different denominations, that on several occasions when men of the regiment were sick, Englishmen and Irishmen, Episcopalians and Roman Catholics, have sent to him earnest messages soliciting his visits and his prayers. To quote the words of Mr. Hector Macpherson, then sergeant-major of the band of the regiment (now a lay-missionary at St. Martin's, Perthshire): "I shall never forget the first sermon he preached on the first Sabbath after his arrival. He gave out in the usual way the 32d Psalm to be sung, and had read the first four lines, when he began to unfold the feelings and experience of a penitent believer, in a way, to me at least, never opened up before nor since, and which was to my afflicted spirit as good news from a far land. It was like oil and wine to my afflicted spirit. It was also greatly blessed to others of my fellow-soldiers. The man of God continued to address us in much freedom of heart and of power for three hours, concluding somewhat abruptly, but with words which indicated a spirit of winning affection to every one: 'I see your time is up, but I hope to have farther opportunities of addressing you,' and solemnly pronounced the apostolic benediction."

The many opportunities of hearing Mr. B., enjoyed by the men of the 93d Regiment, were eagerly improved by them; and the following description of the bearing of his preaching upon them, and which has been drawn by one of themselves, then a non-commissioned officer, is singularly graphic:—"I have known the Rev. W. C. B. to send this famous regiment, these heroes of Balaclava, home to their barracks, after hearing him preach, every man of them less or more affected; not a high word, or breath, or whisper heard among them; each man looking more serious than his comrade; awe-struck, 'like men that dreamed they were;' and when at home, dismissed from parade, they could not dismiss their fears. Out of thirty men, the subdivision of a company under my charge, living in the same room, only five were bold enough that Sunday evening to go out to their usual haunts; and these must go afraid, as if by stealth, their consciences so troubled them; the other twenty-five, each with Bible in hand, bemoaning himself. Now, looking at the whole regiment from what took place in this *one* room of it, you may be able to judge of Mr. B.'s powers as an ambassador of Christ with clear credentials!"

While in the city of Montreal, and freely proclaiming the riches of grace in churches, and barrack-rooms, and hospitals, Mr. Burns found the field too narrow; and he went out to the highways, and streets, and squares of the city which was the especial scene of his apostolic labours. For the first two or three nights there was little opposition, but the majority of his hearers being Roman Catholics, the priests were made aware of what was going on and

became alarmed, and violent opposition was the issue. He never indeed used the word Popery, nor any term directly marking the system, or calculated to give needless offence; but his finger, it would seem, touched the sore parts of the malady; and the effect was just as of old, when the men that turned the world upside down were assailing the strongholds of heathen superstition and sin. He writes in his journal:—

*“Tuesday, September 24th.—*Evening at seven in open air in *Place d’Armes*, in the centre of the city, in front of the great Romish cathedral. The proposal of this tried some spirits among us. When I went a considerable number had assembled, and among them a band of the 93d. I had a fine opportunity, and felt the power of the living God with us. Towards the end our enemies made a commotion. The mayor of the city, a Roman Catholic, came to stop me, but was restrained by God. As we retired about half-past nine we were mobbed, chiefly as usual through the excessive fears of friends seeking to guard me from violence. The mayor offered his protection, but I said to the people in his presence, ‘No one will harm me—it is my own friends who are creating groundless alarm. I would ask all to go quietly home, and if anyone is my enemy he will give me his arm and we will go together.’ They quietly moved away. I put my hand on my white neckcloth and moved on unknown to the multitude. If the kingdom of Satan is to be disturbed here, this is but the shadow of what will yet come, and then shall many be offended. . . .

*“Friday, September 27th.—*At half-past five in *Place d’Armes*, awfully mocked and pelted, though with nothing deadly, yet got much truth delivered both while here and after going to an adjoining street, where a gentleman walking with me was struck on the back. While in the *Place d’Armes*, one of the magistrates, evidently, I think, a Romanist, came and ordered me to remove, threatening me with the exercise of his power if I did not. I said I was doing no harm, and would continue, and that he might take me to prison if he pleased; I was ready. He shrunk away and left me to go on. I feel that standing thus in the breach, though it may have no other effect, invigorates my own faith, lifts a testimony honouring to God, and sets me on a high vantage-ground in preaching in the churches. . . .

*“Saturday, September 28th.—*This evening I was again in the field about six o’clock. A great number assembled, and, in contrast with the previous night, they seemed to have ears given them to hear. This continued for some time, but afterwards they began to throw gravel, &c., and to jostle me in the crowd. Little evil might have come of this, had not some who befriended me as a Scotchman sought to save me from danger; and thus my back being turned the crowd rushed on me, and I got away without my hat and one of the tails of my coat containing a handkerchief and Bible. Their enmity was so great that I believe the Bible was torn to pieces as well as the rest, the hat only being recovered. I got into a shop, where many who trembled for me would have had me to remain, but I was quite above all fear, and went out again alone among the people, and got much opportunity of declaring the truth on the way home. Surely these displays of enmity are a token that the Prince of darkness is in some degree afraid!”

These furious onsets are described by eye-witnesses as having been most terrible, and as having more than once threatened serious consequences.

Thus, on one occasion, that evidently referred to in one of the above extracts, his coat was torn, his hat was knocked off and trampled on the ground; and his pocket-Bible, his constant companion, torn from his hand. On the other, a stone thrown with violence inflicted a severe wound on his cheek, and it bled freely. A few of the 93d rushed through the crowd, and one in anxiety said, "What's this? what's this?" Smiling, he replied, "Never mind, it's only a few scars in the Master's service." He was carried into the medical chamber of Dr. Macnider, near at hand, when that beloved Christian physician skilfully sewed up the wound. He came forth speedily as if nothing had taken place; and looking round calmly from his reassumed position, he exclaimed in the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles:—"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Another hot day of battle is thus vividly described by the Rev. William Arnot, of the Free High Church, Edinburgh, who happened to be in Montreal at the same time, and who himself bravely joined him on the forlorn hope. "Once," he writes, "I went with him to the Haymarket Square, where he meant to preach in English. I went somewhat anxious for his safety, with intent to help him if need should arise. A circle soon gathered. He began to preach. More assembled outside—thicker and thicker the girdle grew, but the roughest were outside. William and I stood alone in the middle of the ring, hedged very closely in, but the gentlest nearest us. Where they stood at first, they remained. No possibility of movement. Noise and throwing of dirt increased. When he became somewhat wearied I now and then took up the address, and the change of voice operated a little in our favour for getting a hearing. One Irish voice from the outside interrupted William at one time, shouting clear over all the din, 'The devil's dead.' A great laugh followed. When it hushed, William struck in with a plaintive voice, tinged almost with the sarcastic, 'Ah! then, you are a poor fatherless child!' This raised a laugh in his favour, and under cover of it he was enabled to proceed for a while. We were besmeared with mud, thrown from the outer circles, but not hurt.

"The violent opposition of the Irish, however, eventually drove him off. He desisted, as the first missionaries did, when the persecution became violent, and went to another city."

At length the hostile Romanist mayor was replaced in his office by another of different spirit—an excellent Protestant gentleman, of the Wesleyan body, who lent the full weight of his authority and moral support to the cause of order and of peace. Appearing seasonably at one of the meetings where tumultuous disturbances were apprehended, he speedily succeeded in calming the storm, and the assembly soon dispersed without injury to anyone. Thereafter he waited on Mr. Burns for consultation on the case. As soon as he had stated the object of his visit, said Mr. Burns, "Let us pray;" when as they knelt together he touched the mayor on the shoulder and said,

“You’ll pray.” He did pray, asking the divine direction, and a blessing on the labours of Mr. Burns, and left him with the single request that he would send him notice when and where he would next preach.

The city of Montreal was only one, though perhaps the most important scene of Mr. Burns’ Canadian labours. His mission was to the whole dominion of Canada, which may be considered now as including, or as designed to include, all the dependencies of the British crown in North America. In 1844 the name embraced only two branches of one province, Canada East and Canada West; the former being now termed the province of Quebec, and the latter that of Ontario. Lower Canada was then, as it had been for ages and still is, settled by French Canadians, speaking the French language, and subject to debasing superstition and a dominant priestcraft. The whole land groans under the tyrannical sway of perhaps the most wealthy and powerful hierarchy under the dominion of the see of Rome. We have no doubt that in seeing their splendid palaces, their magnificent cathedrals, colleges, and convents; in seeing the lovely land almost wholly “given to idolatry,” the spirit of Mr. Burns was greatly stirred within him. Hence the interest he took, all the time he was in Canada, in the state of the poor “habitants,” the benighted French Canadian Roman Catholics; and hence the avidity and the success with which, as we shall presently see, he revived his knowledge of the French language, so as to be able, in a comparatively short space of time, to speak intelligibly and fluently in the French tongue.

Canada West, or Ontario as it is now called, may be termed a Protestant country, inhabited too no doubt by many Roman Catholics especially from Ireland, and by not a few settlers from Germany and the United States; but unquestionably the English and the Scottish elements greatly preponderate. The leading Protestant denominations are, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists. Of these, the first three are each nearly equal in point of numbers, amounting to not much less than one million in all. The population of the whole “Dominion,” including Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, is estimated at four millions. Prior to the era of the Disruption in 1843, the state of our countrymen in Canada was anything but promising. The framework of a Presbyterian church was indeed set up, and a number of pious ministers had been from time to time sent out both by the Establishment and the Secession; and the annals of the early Presbyterian church are adorned with a few noble names. Generally speaking, however, the system was cold, formal, and stiff; and spiritual religion in the line of Scottish Presbyterianism was low. The Disruption wrought wonders for Canada. Many pious men in the cities and in the land generally sighed for a change; and the arrival of deputies from the Free Church in regular succession for five years, formed quite a new era in the religious history of the province.

No Protestant missionary can be useful to any great extent in “Lower Canada” who is not able to converse and to preach in the French language; and Mr. Burns very soon felt the necessity of revising his attainments in that direction. So successful was he in this, that he not only addressed the “habitants” regularly in their own language, but, seemingly with the view of acquiring still greater facility in the use of it, he wrote a large proportion of his Canadian journal in the French language. As a specimen of his manner of dealing with his French auditors, and the admirable tact with which he met occasional cases of argument and appeal, we select the following letter addressed to friends in Scotland from a place at some distance from Montreal:—

*“Farnham, Lower Canada, April 21st, 1845.—MY DEAR FRIENDS,—*When I last wrote to Mr. Milne about a month ago, I was at the French Canadian Missionary House at St. Ré, twenty-three miles from where I now am. I returned to Montreal shortly after, and had the great pleasure of receiving on my arrival your welcome letter. I desire to thank you for your great kindness in ministering to my temporal wants, but much more, as you yourselves say, for seeking to bear me on your hearts at a throne of grace. My temporal wants are few, and Canada can easily supply them all; but my spiritual necessities are very great, and I dwell indeed in a dry and parched land, where no water is; yet I cannot deny that I find by experience that the God of Israel is everywhere present with his poor people, and that his presence is not excluded from the recesses of a Canadian forest. I could not but remark that your season for specially remembering me was very nearly one when I needed very special support, and when I saw the Lord very clearly leading me in a path that I knew not. On the second day after I received your letter (28th March) I again left Montreal, with the view of visiting some desolate settlements of Protestants (chiefly Scotch and Irish) in the quarter where I still am, and also desiring to find some opening among the poor French Canadians, who are the principal inhabitants here and around. One of my fellow-travellers was a young Canadian student at the French college of St. Hyacinthe, with whom I had some conversation. He said if I were at their college they would soon convince me that I was in error. The opening was too favourable to be neglected, and I said that if I was in the neighbourhood I would certainly call upon him. In consequence of this the following Wednesday (April 2d) I set out for Yamaska, the seat of the college. The thaw here was so rapid at that time that the most of the bridges were swept away by the breaking up of the ice, which till then, as you may suppose, had formed so strong a covering, that the heaviest waggons could pass and repass upon the rivers. In consequence, I found that the stage could not proceed, and that I must either go on foot or return. I felt it my duty to go on; and though the distance was considerable (eighteen miles) in deep roads, I easily made it out, and reached the college on Thursday at seven o’clock. I must also mention a circumstance which happened by the way, which was remarkable when connected with what it led to. When I was about half-way I was a little fatigued, and was wishing to find some house where I might rest a little; but the houses were all French, and I saw no appearance of a public inn. However, the Lord directed me. Beside the road I saw a sheep which had got into a muddy ditch, and seemed to be unable to get out. I of course laid hold of it and pulled it out, thinking of the parable of Jesus. The

people in the nearest house came out, and we got into conversation about the lost sheep in the gospel. I asked them if there was any house where I could refresh myself; they invited me in with them. I told them on entering who I was; that if they wished it I might pass on, or if otherwise, that I might speak to them the more freely. They did not object to receive me as a Protestant and a Scotch minister of the gospel, and when we began to converse about the nature of my religion as compared with theirs, they were so engaged that it was difficult to get away from them, after remaining with them a full hour and a half. They asked me to remain during the night, as they said that with such roads I could not reach my destination. However, as I was obliged to return from Yamaska the following day (Friday) in order to fulfil another engagement, I resolved to go forward, and bade them adieu. I got easily forward, being supported by a strong sense of duty, and by the presence, I trust, of the great Master himself, and on arriving called for the young man I have alluded to. He seemed more careless than before, and was evidently afraid to show to any of those around him any mark of anxiety. He said, 'If you wish to see any of the priests I will let them know.' 'No,' I replied; 'I have no such desire on my own account, as I have no doubt that they are in deadly error, and that this book (the Bible) contains the truth of God. It is for your benefit that I am come, and if you have any desire to be instructed, you must ask them to converse on the subject *in your presence*. He hesitated at this, but said, 'If you be here tomorrow, you may call at twelve o'clock, when it will be more convenient than now.' I spent the night in a French inn, and the object of my visit becoming known, occasioned doubtless a good deal of conversation, and led in particular two strangers to ask me to converse with them on the subject. At the hour appointed I went to the college, and found the young man of the same mind as before. However, he said, 'I will go and see what the priests say.' He returned after some time to tell me that they absolutely refused to speak with me on these things unless I met them entirely alone. Of course I had no wish for this, as it might have been turned to a bad purpose; and after warning a number of the young men of the awful danger of allowing themselves to be blindly led by those who feared the light, I came away, and set out on my journey. These young men told me they were not allowed to see the Bible, although not younger than seventeen. As I came along the street in front of the French church, thinking that I had seen the end of my visit, to my surprise I met the man in whose house I had been the previous day, and whom some business had brought to the village. On learning the result of my visit to the college, he said, 'Come, we will go to the curé (parish priest) and converse with him.' I told him, I was willing, provided he understood that it was on his account that we went. He entered, and after a little returned and invited me in. I there met three priests and a number of their poor parishioners, and after explaining the circumstances which led to our meeting, we had a solemn and interesting interview for some time, during which I had an opportunity of stating some important truths which may yet be blessed, and of bringing before them the question of their own personal salvation. I have indeed cause to wonder at the strength given me on this occasion, and also, that though our intercourse was altogether in a foreign tongue, I felt scarcely more difficulty than in English. Since that time I have been preaching among the Protestants exclusively, although now and then I find an opportunity of meeting a few Canadians. Their spiritual sleep is indeed deep, and such as no power but that of God can break, even so far as to lead them to hear the truth. Their leaders cause them to err, and the poor people love to have it so. I have seen nothing very remarkable of a spiritual nature among our countrymen since I came to Canada, but our meetings are often very sol-

em, and during these past days I have seen as much appearance of impression as since I came to this land. It is my intention to return soon to Montreal for a time, and it may be that when this reaches you I shall be attempting again to reach the multitude there in the open air, and that in both languages. You will then see what need we have of your prayers. My heart is often among you, and I do often plead for your salvation, and the advancement of Immanuel's glory in you. I close these lines with the words I spoke on here yesterday evening: 'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'

"May these glorious ends be accomplished in you and me to his name's glory! Commending you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified, I am ever yours in the bonds of the gospel,—W. C. BURNS."

After a second visit of a few days to Quebec, where it will be remembered he first opened his commission as a herald of the cross on American ground, he was invited to visit Leeds and the Gaelic district of Inverness settlements, about fifty miles from the city. It was on this occasion he revived his knowledge of the Gaelic language, already somewhat familiar to him from his visits to the Highlands of Perthshire; and the raftsmen who were his fellow-voyagers on the St. Lawrence were valuable assistants to him in this work, while he imparted to them the rich treasures of evangelical truth. The settlers at Inverness heard from his lips the glorious gospel in the language most familiar to them, and the blessed results were deep and lasting. When Mr. Clark of Quebec and Dr. Burns of Toronto visited the same place in 1863 they found a fresh revival of religion, specially marked by distinct memorials of the earlier labours of Mr. Burns. The visit of these gentlemen was in the midst of harvest; but the labourers, eager to hear, found two hours at midday, besides two hours in the evening, to wait on the preaching of the Word.

In regard to the attainments of Mr. Burns in the language of the settlers, we have been favoured with the following testimony of the Rev. Mr. M'Rae, of Knockbain, one of our ablest Gaelic scholars.<sup>2</sup> Mr. M. is speaking of a visit to Brodick, in the Isle of Arran, in 1847, when Mr. B. was his fellow-labourer:—"As I was always at hand to address the people in Gaelic, he made less use of that language than otherwise he might have done. But on one occasion he read a psalm in Gaelic, and commented upon it, when many of the people remarked that they understood him better than they did Mr. —, a minister who had been recently preaching to them. On several oc-

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<sup>2</sup> Letter dated 12th December, 1868.

casions, when addressing the people in English, he introduced Gaelic words and phrases, and pointed out their expressiveness and beauty. For instance, speaking of the term '*adoption*,' he said, 'In your own beautiful language it is *uchd-mhachd, bosom-sonship*:' and again commenting on 2 Corinthians v. 20: 'I beseech you in Christ's stead,' he said, 'In your own language it is very striking, as *uchd Chriosd, out of Christ's bosom*,' as if the preacher were a voice from Christ's own heart inviting perishing sinners. Mr. B.'s knowledge of Gaelic was wonderful, considering the short time he had devoted to the study of it." "He pronounced the Gaelic with astonishing accuracy, showing a mastery over the very shibboleths of the language." "The copy of the Gaelic Scriptures which he used he had received from a soldier in a Highland regiment, and he manifestly regarded it as a valuable memento."

The following notices from an intelligent correspondent afford some interesting glimpses of his labours elsewhere:

"At Williamstown, where the church was denied him by the minister and session, the innkeeper readily allowed Mr. Burns to preach under his roof, to a very respectable audience of attentive listeners. At Lochiel he stood in a waggon by the roadside and freely proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation, one of his hearers, against his wishes, holding an umbrella over his head to protect him from the scorching rays of a Canadian sun.

"In the afternoon he preached in a barn, from Psalm xvii. 8, which sermon was blessed for the conversion of one individual, who is now one of the principal elders of the Free Church there.

"In Kenyon he preached in English, but many of the Gaelic people waited to hear him. A pious old woman, who understood no English, was asked why she remained. She replied, 'I thought it would be a privilege to be included in that dear minister's *prayers*. And another thing did me good: he seemed to dwell particularly on one word, spoken in such sweet tones, it sent a glow to my heart—the word 'salvation;' what does that mean?'

"During the communion services at Indian Lands, where his labours on a previous visit had been blessed to many, he preached for several successive days to crowds of eager listeners, who with one accord declared they had never heard such glorious truths. In addressing the communicants, one of his persuasive remarks was, 'If you cannot come in by the saint's door, oh! come in by the sinner's!' A poor idiot who had been present remained after the congregation dispersed, and walked around the small tent (where Mr. Burns still lingered, engaged in prayer), several times, exclaiming, 'You touch my heart, you touch my heart.' Mr. B.'s attention was attracted to him; one of the people told him not to mind the man, he was a fool. 'Ay, ay, one of Christ's fools, perhaps,' which rebuked the man. Learning that there was a small colony of French Canadians several miles distant, he immedi-

ately decided upon visiting them, and having first addressed the English people of the place, in a grist-mill, he then preached to the French quite fluently in their own language. They listened as if spell-bound. He afterwards conversed with them individually in fluent French, and they united in saying, 'He was the best priest they ever heard speaking.'

In moving from place to place on his evangelistic tours in the country districts, Mr. Burns did not often avail himself of the conveyances readily provided by friends, but if at all practicable would invariably travel on foot, so as to avail himself of the opportunities afforded in this way of speaking a word in season and out of season to groups of labourers working in the fields, or anyone whom he happened to meet travelling on the highway. It is only those who have been in Canada that can know how trying, and therefore how rare such foot travelling must be, owing to the extremes of heat and cold, and the rude state of the roads. When going on long journeys, and obliged to sail on the lakes, it was his constant practice to preach on board the steamers to all who might be disposed to hear him. On these occasions he more particularly addressed himself to the deck passengers, usually composed of emigrants and persons of the labouring and of the poorer classes. The calm and peaceful surface of the expanding lakes, and the even flow of the mighty rivers, greatly favoured such evangelistic efforts. The more intelligent and respectable managers on such conveyances encouraged these efforts by granting a free passage; and there cannot be a doubt that such unrequited and humble methods of doing good have been frequently owned by a blessing from on high. If Mr. Burns was known afterwards in China as "the man of the book," he was equally so known in Canada, as well as in his native land.

The following short sketch taken from his journal may give some idea of the variety and extent of his labours as a missionary in Canada West, while it embraces also places visited by him within the line of East or Lower Canada. "I have preached at St. Eustache, Lachute, St. Andrews, Hawkesbury, L'Original, and Vankleekhill, and yesterday evening I preached twice in French, but these meetings have not been large.— *Cornwall, Saturday, July 26th, 1845.* In the course of these last weeks I have preached often in English and in French, at Lochiel, Indian Lands, Kenyon, Roxbury, Finch, Martintown, Williamstown, Lancaster, &c. I have had nine little French meetings since the last date. In general they were well disposed to listen to the word. Some of our English meetings have been very large and serious; but alas! the spiritual deadness of this country is very great. It became at last necessary for me to bear a distinct testimony to the principles of the Free Church. The report of the proceedings of the Assembly of that church are interesting. Their prosperity in an external point of view is very remarkable. May their spiritual prosperity be in proportion. There was formerly at Mar-

tintown near this, a true minister of Jesus Christ named Connel, who appears to have been the means of saving many souls. He died ten years ago, but his memory is blessed, as is that of all the just. After having preached at Cornwall, and further down on the shores of the St. Lawrence, I crossed the Salmon river to Dundee, quite near New York state, and from that place I preached as I went along towards Montreal, where I arrived last Thursday; having visited on my way Fort Covington, in New York state, La Riviere De Loup, Lake Strove, Huntingdon, St. Michael's, Durham, North Georgetown. Sometimes I have been a little encouraged, but in general spiritual religion, which alone saves the human soul, appears to be very rare. Nevertheless I have met with some people who seem to love the Lord. Yesterday I tried again to preach out of doors, but with little success. They stoned and pelted me with mud, but by the grace of God I escaped danger. One poor man in the crowd recognized me as the person whom he had seen beaten at Dublin near the custom-house. Although a Romanist, he appeared yesterday much disposed to listen to the word, and his testimony in my favour will be undoubtedly useful among his countrymen."

After a fortnight's labour at Bytown, now the city of Ottawa, where Mr. Wardrope, the excellent minister there, had been recently settled, he visited Bristol, Perth, Lanark, Dalhousie, Beckwith, Smith's Falls, Carleton Place, St. Andrews, Brockville, Prescott, and Kingston. At this last place he remained some weeks, and besides supplying the Free Church there, he preached seven times to the soldiers of the 71st Regiment whom he had formerly seen. The principal officer gave him liberty to do so, and this he devoutly notices as a proof of encouragement from God. He preached also in the country all around, particularly Gananoque, Glenburnie, and two other places; meeting everywhere with encouragement more or less. He visited also Cobourg, Belleville, and other places adjacent, such as Demorestville, Picton, and Napanee. When at Kingston he received through Dr. Begg, who had come out as a deputy from the Free Church, a letter inviting him to visit France. The impression on his mind by this circumstance is thus noted in his journal:—"Perhaps the Lord intends to call me thither, to bear testimony to his truth. May his will be done! Nevertheless, I must go to the upper part of this province; to London, for example, and its vicinity." He then adverts to his visits to, and missionary labours at, Fredericksburg, Peterborough, Ottonabee, Port Hope, Clarke, Newcastle, Toronto, Niagara, Streetsville, and Esquesing; "preaching," as he says, "everywhere the word of God which liveth and endureth for ever." "At Toronto," he says, "I had much pleasure in meeting with the young men who are at college preparing for the work of the ministry. There are some among them who seem to be true Christians; and they are all making satisfactory progress in their studies."

In the summer of 1846 he visited a considerable portion of the western territory, preaching at Oakville, Wellington Square, Hamilton, London, St. Thomas, Williams, Lobo, Southwold, Dunwich, Aldbro, Mora, Eckford, Chatham, Amherstburgh near the boundary line, Detroit in the United States, and Port Sarnia, meeting everywhere with encouragement. At Amherstburgh, he preached to a congregation of blacks, formerly slaves, who interested him much. At Sarnia he preached by means of an interpreter to an interesting assembly of American Indians, who are under the instructions of the Methodist missionaries; and, as might have been expected, the meeting and exercises were very solemn and edifying. Two months' labours were bestowed on Imperial, Woodstock, Beechville, Bradford, Lower Stratford, &c. In 1846 most of the places visited by Mr. Burns in Canada West were as yet unsupplied either with Free Churches or ministers; and his labours and varied ministrations were singularly blessed of God, as means of uniting and quickening the members. Among the ministers whom he found settled in those parts, we notice the names of Messrs. Wardrope, Graham, and Macalester, all of whom often spoke of the great refreshing and spiritual edification enjoyed by them and their people from his visits. Of the labours also of the Free Church deputies, particularly Dr. Bonar, Mr. Arnot, Mr. Somerville, and Mr. Munro, he speaks with great interest. These were the ministers who had the charge of the "Free Church" congregation at Cote Street, Montreal, during his residence in Canada, and each of them appreciated the value of his labours, and readily took part with him in them.

Among the varied testimonies we have received to the good effects of the visit of Mr. Burns to Canada, one of the most valuable is that of the Rev. Alexander Cameron of Ardersier, whose opportunities of information were peculiarly favourable. "It was my lot," says he, "shortly after the return of Mr. Burns from Canada, to labour among the Highlanders of Glengarry for some years until health failed. I found the people in a very interesting state of mind,—many of them cherishing a tenderness of conscience and a brokenness of spirit, and thirsting eagerly for the Word of life. Some of all ages were in this condition, but especially young men and young women. The crowds that congregated on the Sabbaths at Lochiel, the most central station at which I preached, were sometimes very great. In the district of Glengarry, where there are now seven or eight ministers, there was then only one, Mr. Daniel Clark of Indian Lands, and myself; consequently the people came from all quarters, travelling five, ten, or even twenty miles and upwards. Many of them started on the Saturday so as to be forward in time for the morning service. The poor Roman Catholics observing all this, thought the heads of their Protestant neighbours were turned. In one sense it was easy to preach to these thirsty souls, for the word of God was precious in those days. It was the same wherever I went; no matter where sermon was inti-

mated to be preached in any school-room or district, the place would be crowded, even although such meetings were continued in different places nearly the whole week, as sometimes happened in winter; and often a few of the more ardent spirits would attend all these meetings, travelling from place to place for this purpose. The face of things began gradually but steadily to change. Old customs and inveterate habits were one by one abandoned. Balls and merry-makings and New Year's festivals, so frequent in that country, were fast disappearing. Some of the leaders in such things with their own hands cast their fiddles and bagpipes into the fire; and instead of the sounds of revelry the voice of praise and spiritual melody began to be heard in their dwellings. Zion was meanwhile putting on her beautiful garments. Communion seasons were now more like those in old Ferintosh than the former scanty gatherings in the 'backwoods.' This state of things I ascribe chiefly under God to the labours of Mr. Burns. Doubtless many other able and excellent men, especially some from the Free Church at home, laboured faithfully, and I believe successfully, in Glengarry; but the visit of Mr. Burns in my estimation was the crowning visit, and the impression produced by his preaching and his godly demeanour was deep, pervasive, and abiding. The great day alone shall fully declare it."

The following testimony in regard to the spirit of his mind when engaged in missionary labour in the district of Glengarry is well deserving of record. It is from the communication of a Christian minister who had long laboured on the same spot, and although specially illustrative of Mr. Burns' character in connection with that locality, its leading features are more or less reflected from all the scenes of his labours. "He appeared to have continually in view an impression that he should do something for God, for his own soul, for the souls of others, and for eternity. His conversation was that of a man of extensive information, who knew how to apply it effectually to the best of purposes. His disposition was amiable, his feelings were tender; combined with a clear judgment, great firmness, caution and patience, qualities essential to dealing properly with unreasonable persons and with difficult questions. He did not consider that he had a warrant to proceed in any sacred duty without a consciousness of having the divine presence. I have sometimes seen him on this point in very great perplexity, earnestly wishing and praying for a special message direct from Heaven, and doubtful which was duty, to proceed or to keep silence: like Moses who prayed, 'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence!'"

The following sketch under the hand of an intelligent office-bearer of our church in Glengarry, at whose house Mr. Burns sojourned, and by whom he was conducted on his missionary way, may illustrate the obstacles which stand in the way of itinerating labour in Canada, and the manner in which they were met and conquered by Mr. Burns. "A furious snow-storm having

come on, he was detained for a week; and the state of the roads prevented any public meetings being held; but he improved the time by conversing on matters pertaining to the kingdom with our household, including farm-servants, among whom were several French Canadians. We found him remarkably agreeable and sociable as a guest, entertaining us with incidents relative to his labours in Ireland, and those parts of Scotland where revivals have taken place. The recital of incidents connected with such themes always caused his countenance to beam with a heavenly joy. Much of his time also was spent in retirement and over his Bible, which he often carried to the table at meal times, referring to it whenever a pause in the conversation gave him an opportunity. Having an appointment to preach in the Congregational chapel, Indian Lands, so soon as the snow-storm subsided, he and I made a desperate effort to fulfil the engagement. Taking a powerful team of horses and a strong sleigh, we found the roads in an almost impassable state; the horses floundering in the snow, which in some places almost hid them from our view; and in other places they were incapable of moving forward one step, till I got out and made a track before them. In remarking on the state of the roads I happened to say, 'This is awful!' but was instantly checked by my dear fellow-traveller saying, 'Oh! my dear sir, there is nothing awful but the wrath of God.' Although travelling at the rate of only one mile an hour, we arrived at our destination in due time, where we found a goodly number assembled; and he delivered an impressive sermon, taking for illustration things that he had noticed along our route, such as the clearances in the forest, with the other usual symptoms of progress in the settlements."

References having been more than once made to the services of the deputies from the Free Church to Canada, it may not be unsuitable to insert the following notices from one of the friends who have contributed materials for this chapter:—"When I arrived in Montreal, in 1842, the spiritual condition of the three congregations was deplorably low, and, with very few exceptions, it was so throughout the country. But I make special reference to Montreal, where there were a very few—like the gleanings of the vintage—who were longing and waiting for the salvation of Zion. These few were led to unite in prayer to the exalted Head of the Church to hasten his coming by whom he would; and *he* was graciously pleased to hear their cry, and send his servants. The first was Dr. Burns of Paisley, whose first sermon was from Revelation i. 17, 18. To some this sermon was the fulfilment of the promise, 'When the poor and the needy seek water,' &c. I think Dr. Burns was followed by Mr. John Bonar (afterwards Dr. Bonar), full of love, and meekness, and wisdom, and undaunted courage. He was pre-eminently honoured of God in gathering and uniting the scattered sheep, and in organizing the Côte Street congregation, and, indeed, of advancing the interests of the church throughout the whole province. In his arrival was beautifully seen

the majestic goings forth of Him who is wonderful in counsel. Mr. Bonar was succeeded by other eminent servants of God, whose special mission was to supply the Côte Street congregation, which was *then* the great centre of the Free Church in Canada." Among these may be specially noted Mr. Arnot, then of Glasgow, now of the Free High Church, Edinburgh; Mr. Somerville of Anderston, Glasgow; Mr. Munro of Rutherglen; Mr. Mac-naughton of Paisley, now of Belfast; Mr. Buchanan of Bothwell; Mr. Bremner of Glasgow; Professor King, now of Halifax, Nova Scotia; Mr. J. C. Burns of Kirkliston; Dr. Begg of Edinburgh; Mr. Paterson of Tranent; the late Mr. Miller of Dundee, and afterwards of Newcastle; Mr. Cobban of Braemar;—who, during periods more or less extended, laboured in the cities, and occasionally in the rural districts, to the edifying of multitudes of hearers, and to the effect of laying firm and deep the foundations of what in its character as a "united church" may now with perfect propriety be called the "Free Presbyterian Church of Canada."

Mr. Burns returned to Scotland after about two years of incessant labour in Canada in the same vessel in which he had before sailed for the West, arriving in Glasgow on the 15th September, 1846. He was still in vigorous health, yet showing but too evident traces of the exhausting and peculiarly trying scenes which he had passed through. The clear tones of a voice of more than ordinary compass and power were gone; his mind and spirit were worn and jaded; and he had already begun to acquire a certain *aged* look which he never afterwards wholly lost. He had indeed emphatically "endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and he bore the marks of it more or less to his grave.