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# **EARLY METHODISM**

## **Within The Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference From 1788 - 1828 (Excerpts)**

By

*George Peck*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

**Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World**

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Excerpts From:

**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

**By George Peck**

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Sketches of Interesting Localities, Exciting Scenes and Prominent Actors

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#### **LORENZO DOW**

The eccentric Lorenzo Dow had got well under way as a marvel of a preacher. He commenced traveling and preaching in 1798, being then but eighteen years of age. He was appointed to Cambridge circuit with Timothy Dewey. In 1799 he was appointed to Essex, but soon left his circuit under a strong impression that he had a special mission to Ireland. Away he went across the ocean, and for some time attracted considerable attention in Ireland and England. He was dropped by the conference, and never again connected himself with the itinerancy in the regular way, but traveled and preached independently, being responsible to no ecclesiastical body. Still Dow was a Methodist in doctrine and in feeling, and often rendered valuable service to the Methodist Episcopal Church in various ways.

When Mr. Colbert heard him at the union meeting it had not been long since his return from Europe, and he was now rambling up and down the country and attracting vast crowds of earnest and astonished listeners. He often preached with great power, and was the means of many awakenings and conversions. He was zealous, shrewd, often witty, evangelical, bold, and eccentric. He was an original. There was never but one Lorenzo Dow. He found a congenial spirit in "Peggy," whom he married, and who traveled with him over the continent, sharing, as far as possible, in his labors and privations. He spent years in the south among the planters and the slaves, but rested at no point for any considerable time. He often traveled through our territory, preaching as he went to vast multitudes. We heard him for the first time in Cazenovia, in 1816. He stood in the piazza of the old Madison County House, on the second story, and addressed thousands who stood on the green. He drove his own carriage, rode sometimes at the rate of forty or fifty miles a day, and preached four or five times. He passed on west about four weeks previously, and addressed all who could be hurried together without previous notice, and left an appointment for a particular day and hour on his return, which he promptly met, and then disappeared. Of course horse-flesh suffered sadly under Dow's hands. On being once rebuked by a friend for a want of mercy to his beast, he replied: "Souls are worth more than old horses."

He was stoop-shouldered, a confirmed asthmatic, breathing and speaking apparently with great difficulty. His voice was harsh, being worn threadbare by constant use; his shoulders moving convulsively up and down, as he worked his vocal organs as laboriously as a man would work at a dry pump, although with a little more success. He never shaved; his hair hung negligently down his back and over his shoulders in long, undressed twists. He seemed to have as little to do with soap and water as with a razor. All this helped to make up a character such as no one had ever seen before.

Lorenzo was a brave polemic. He assailed the isms with unmerciful severity. In many of his sermons he undertook a complete refutation of Atheism, Deism, Universalism, and Calvinism. He

figured considerably as a writer. We have before us a copy of his "Polemical works: New York, printed and sold by J. C. Totten, 9 Bowery, 1814;" a 12mo. of 300 pages. His Journals, and those of his wife "Peggy," are quite voluminous. His writings have passed through various editions, and have been extensively circulated and read. Most of them are quite readable; some of them instructive. His mode of reasoning may be seen in his "Chain of five Links, two Hooks, and a Swivel." He often reasons consecutively and logically, and not infrequently deals in aphorisms and sarcasms, which are more telling upon common minds than the severest logic. "A double L does not spell a part;" and, "You can and you can't, you shall and you shan't; you'll be damned if you do, and you'll be damned if you don't," announced and reiterated in the hearing of thousands, were often more terrible blows inflicted upon the Calvinistic doctrines of limited atonement and the decree of reprobation than the most learned and ingenious reasoning.

Dow held himself bound by no conventional laws of society. He feared nobody, and cared for nothing beyond the simple claims of conscience. He was just as likely to open his batteries against Calvinism in a Presbyterian church as anywhere else. The fear of man was not a snare to this singular character; nor was he very much restrained by the common laws of courtesy. He seemed to take it for granted, that when he was invited to a pulpit he entered it, by common consent, eccentricities and all.

He was deeply interested in New England politics at the time the question of Church and State was agitated, and contributed his full share in the reduction of "the standing order" to a level with other denominations. He often rallied vast assemblies, and held them for three, and even four hours together, upon the impolicy and the vices of religious establishments, or the support of a particular denomination by law, and the support of the ministry by taxation. In those discourses the most terrible facts came out without the least mitigation -- such as selling a poor man's cow at public auction to pay the minister. And there was no use in the murmurs of dissatisfaction. The more "the galled jade winced" the heavier the burden was heaped upon his back. It was Lorenzo Dow, and there was no use in saying a word. Every effort in the way of trying to sustain the old order of things really, as he used to say, only made a bad matter worse.

Dow performed many curious antics, which were published in the papers and rehearsed everywhere until they became familiar as household words. As a specimen, the story of his raising the devil may suffice. Dow put up at a tavern in the South, and soon discovered that the landlord was absent from home, and that there was an unusual intimacy between the landlady and a gentleman visitor. The landlord returned in the evening, as it would seem, unexpectedly, and put his good lady and her friend into a panic. Under the directions of the lady the terrified visitor jumped into an empty hogshead and the lady covered him with cotton. The landlord came in half drunk, but was most affectionately received by his good wife. Upon finding Dow in his house he very unceremoniously demanded that he should raise the devil for him, alleging that he had often heard that he could do it. Dow declined, but the landlord insisted. "You will be frightened when you see him," said Dow. "No I shan't," added the brave man. "Well," said Dow, "if I must raise the devil I must;" and taking the candle in his hand, he said, "Follow me." Passing into the back room, and coming up to the hogshead, he adroitly lighted the cotton with the candle, and, sure enough, up came the devil enveloped in a blaze! Not a word did his satanic majesty say, but instantly disappeared. The fellow was completely deceived, and the next day went before a magistrate and made oath that Dow really

raised the devil in his house, and he saw him. The matter being likely to call for a repetition of the miracle, and it not being probable that he would meet with the concurrence of the same favorable circumstances, Dow was obliged to make a public explanation.

Dow's last special mission was to expose the Jesuits. He lectured long and loud upon the wiles of the disciples of Loyola; showed up their eternal intermeddling with politics, and their designs upon the free institutions of this country. He expounded the prophecies, quoted history, poured out a flood of invective, and warned the nation most solemnly of the perils which were impending. On his way to Washington, for the purpose of enlightening and awakening the government upon the subject, he passed through Wyoming [not the modern state -- DVM]. He delivered several powerful discourses in the old church in Kingston, and passed on south. In one of his discourses he said the Jesuits were watching him, and would kill him if they dare, but knowing that if he should be missing they would be suspected, they dare not molest him. He went on to Washington, and there died suddenly a few weeks after this. Some surmised that he was poisoned by the Jesuits; whether this was so, or whether he died of an organic affection of the heart, or from some other cause, we know not.

Lorenzo Dow was a strange specimen of humanity. He was called, and often called himself, "crazy Dow." He was not a lunatic, nor was he a monomaniac; for if he was insane on one point he was equally so on many. He was so eccentric as to border on insanity in everything. His conduct could not with justice be judged of by the ordinary laws of social or conventional propriety. Upon the whole, we always had a very high opinion of his piety and his integrity. He was a strange, good man -- a man of rare natural endowments, but with an intellect of so peculiar a cast as to constitute him a great oddity, and in some respects an enigma. In his day he did much good and some harm. His influence upon the mind of the public fairly entitles him to a place in the history of the Church and of the times in which he lived.

Mr. Colbert makes another entry in his diary in relation to Dow. From Squire Pray's he went to Paris Hill, where he held a quarterly meeting, at Barak Cooley's. On Sunday he says: "For public preaching we repaired to the woods, where Lorenzo Dow delivered a discourse, without taking a text; of three hours and twenty minutes in length, in which he said much against Calvinism, and what was much to the purpose. Many of the Calvinists complain, but they cannot confute his arguments. When He had done I administered the Lord's Supper, I suppose, to more than a hundred.

## EARLY METHODISM

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**ANNING OWEN**

This famous pioneer preacher was the apostle of Methodism in Wyoming. We have seen that he was in the Indian battle in Wyoming, in 1778, and that he was then for the first time brought to a fixed determination to seek the salvation of his soul. In the memoir of him in the Minutes for 1814, it is said that "he was a native of the state of New York," and that "he experienced the pardoning love of God in the early part of his life, and soon after attached himself to the Congregational Church." He may have been a member of the Congregational Church from early life for aught we know, but we have received the most reliable proof that in the relation of his Christian experience he always dated his convictions and conversion at the time of the battle.

Mrs. Garland, of Brooklyn, Pa., says that she heard Father Owen tell his experience in love-feast, when he was presiding elder; and it was on this wise: "When the retreat commenced on the battle-field he thought he should almost certainly be killed, and should go straight to hell. He began to pray, and determined that, should he be shot, he would fall on his face, and his last breath should be spent in calling upon God for mercy. He secreted himself under a grape-vine on the margin of the river, and there he gave his heart to God, and had never taken back the pledge. He found peace to his soul before he left the place, being there several hours." The story was told with so much feeling that it produced a wonderful effect upon those who were present. Sally Owen, his daughter, jumped and shouted.

Mrs. Fanny Cary says: Once in a love-feast Roger Searle spoke. "Ah, Brother Searle," said Father Owen, "we both had like to have gone to hell together from under the grape-vine." \* [\* Searle had been in the battle, and lay near Owen in the water on that memorable occasion.]

Mr. Owen became acquainted with the Methodists at the East, whither the New England people who escaped the rifle and tomahawk fled after the fatal third of July, 1778. He returned to Kingston in 1787 or '88, put up a cabin for the accommodation of his family, and commenced working at his trade as a blacksmith. He at the same time commenced conversing with his neighbors upon the subject of religion, and finding some who were religiously inclined, he proposed to them to come to his house and join him in a prayer-meeting. This was the commencement of the movement which we have previously sketched.

In due time Owen became a local preacher, and was ordained a deacon before he commenced traveling. He was admitted on trial in 1795, but we find him connected with no charge on the Minutes of this year. He undoubtedly had an appointment, and it not appearing is an error in the Minutes. The series of appointments which Mr. Owen filled, and which we shall proceed to give,

is the best possible illustration of his character. They show him to have been a man of great self-denial and of indomitable perseverance.

In 1796 and 1797 he traveled Seneca circuit. This circuit was then in a new country, and far from his home. The next year, 1798, he traveled Albany circuit, on the Hudson. In 1799 he was stationed on Flanders circuit, in New Jersey. In 1800 he is upon Bristol circuit, near Philadelphia. He had occupied these extreme points for five years, and had not removed his family; of course was nearly all the time from home. His next appointment affords him some relief. In 1801 he is appointed to labor on Wyoming circuit. In 1802 he goes to Northumberland. This is not very far away; but in 1803 he goes to Strasburgh and Chester, in Chesapeake district, in the state of Delaware. In 1804 he is on Dauphin circuit, near Harrisburgh. During the three years succeeding he is presiding elder on Susquehanna district. He now could make comparatively frequent visits at his humble cottage in Kingston, but not long to remain. In 1808 he is appointed to Lycoming circuit, among the hemlock and spruce swamps of Center county. In 1809 he is on Canaan circuit, made up of small settlements at distant points to he traversed over bridle paths and most horrible roads.

All this time Mr. Owen's family had lived in a comparatively comfortable little house, which he built himself; still standing in Kingston, where industry and economy presided. Mrs. Owen, a neat little body, and her daughters, took in work when they could get it, and earned a great part of their living. Mrs. Owen, as is now remembered, often came to Mrs. Myers's with yarn which she had spun for her, and carried home necessities, which she received in compensation for her labor. She wore a plain, clean dress a check apron, a white neckerchief; and a strap cap, all beautifully clean and smoothly ironed. Her conversation and manners were plain, simple, modest, and pious. Such was the woman that Mr. Owen felt himself called to leave in charge of his affairs for weeks and months together, with the privilege of earning much of her own living, and providing for and directing her children.

In 1810 Mr. Owen is appointed to Cayuga circuit; and now; for the first time, he removed his family. In 1811 he is on Seneca circuit; and in 1812 New Amsterdam, a portion of the old Holland Purchase mission, constitutes the scene of his labors. With this year his effective labors terminate.\* [\* Mr. Draper says that Mr. Owen did not take charge of New Amsterdam, but after attending a few quarterly meetings for him, while he was at the South on business, he retired to his place in Ulysses.] He had a strong will and iron nerves, but nothing can stand intense and protracted friction. He had seen more than threescore years. During all these years, after he reached his majority, his motto was, Work! work! work! this world is no place for rest. His face was wrinkled, his head bald, and what of his hair remained was as white as show. The concluding paragraph of the memoir in the Minutes of this brave old soldier of the cross is as follows:

"Anning Owen labored faithfully, and endured much hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and has been rendered a great blessing to many souls. In 1813, in consequence of bodily debility, he received a superannuated relation, in which he remained till he expired at his own house, in the town of Ulysses, Cayuga county, in the state of New York, in the month of April, 1814, of the prevalent epidemic. His wife also, about twelve hours after his decease, followed him to the world of spirit. He died in the sixty-third year of his age. He manifested great patience and resignation in the midst of his affliction; his confidence remained firm till his latest struggle. He was entirely willing to leave



the world, and, without doubt, died in peace, and is now receiving the reward of his labors. Surely the last end of the good man is peace."

Mr. Owen was a man of an earnest spirit. He labored with all his might. He had a great voice, and he did not spare it. He thundered forth the terrors of the law in such tremendous tones, and prayed with such energy and power that he was often called "bawling Owen." It was not all voice, however. He was a man of great religious sympathy, and of mighty faith. Under his preaching sinners trembled, and sometimes fell to the ground like dead men.

There was, indeed, a certain want of polish and delicacy of expression about the old blacksmith which often gave huge offense, but which sometimes was telling, and cowed opposers. An eye and ear witness related to us, many years since, a somewhat characteristic assault upon a man of note in Wayne county. He was a land agent, and a zealous Presbyterian. The preacher aimed a blow at "land-jobbers." They were, he said, like a land-jobber of old, who offered to give away all the kingdoms of the earth, when the poor devil had not a foot of land in the world. The gentleman was uneasy under the sarcasm, but kept his propriety until a terrible bolt fell upon the head of "the Presbyterians;" then he arose and said: "It is too bad, and I cannot endure it." "Sit down, sir!" thundered the preacher. The enraged hearer took his seat and held his peace for a few minutes, when another shaft brought him to his feet again. "I won't endure such insults," said he. "To be called an eagle-eyed Presbyterian and a blue-skin by you, sir, is more than I will put up with!" "If you are not silent until I get through, sir," said the preacher, "I will complain of you to a magistrate and have you taken care of" The gentleman sat down, and concluded there was no better way than to stand the storm, as he was too proud to flee.

The following illustrations of Owen's character are from a communication from Mr. Anson Goodrich, of Salem, Wayne county. He says: "Father Owen was a zealous, good man, very eccentric, and at times quite eloquent. I never listened to the man who would excel him in preaching the terrors of the law against the workers of iniquity. In the winter of 1806 I was sent to school at Wilkesbarre. A quarterly meeting was held in the courthouse. On Saturday evening there was a ball held at a public house, so near that the sound of the violin could be distinctly heard. The old gentleman prayed most fervently that the Lord would 'shake the company over hell, and put a stop to that hog-gut and horse-hair squeaking.' The next morning, when he was preaching from the text, 'He that believeth not shall be damned,' the boys put some brimstone under the back log in the south fireplace, and were waiting on tip-toe to see the result. When the effluvia was perceptible by the knowing ones, the preacher exclaimed with a voice like thunder: 'Unless you repent and are converted you will all be damned!' And with his strong voice raised to its highest pitch, and with a stamp of his foot on the floor, and bringing his fist down upon the judge's desk, he roared out: 'Sinners, don't you smell hell?'

"The old gentleman seemed in his element when he was debating the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation. On one occasion, when he was preaching at Major Woodbridge's, the Rev. Seth Williston was present by the major's invitation. The text was: 'Who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.' He urged that Christ died for all, not a part, as some men preach, and labor to make people believe. These hirelings, wolves in sheep's clothing, would find it as difficult to make men believe such palpable nonsense as to make a horse-nail out of cold iron. They find the sheep in the mud, pull the fleece off and then say, 'Poor sheep, poor sheep!' After

the sermon Father Owen said: 'Brother Williston, will you close by prayer?' 'No,' was the response. Mr. Williston retired to an adjoining room, and told the major he believed Mr. Owen to be a deceived man upon hearing which, the next day, Father Owen replied: 'Tell Mr. Williston, if it is so it was decreed from all eternity.'"

Mr. Owen was a shrewd man, and sometimes quite witty. In one of his sermons he was rallying the worldlings. "A man," said he, "who is seeking happiness in the world, is just like a cat chasing her own tail; she is often just on the point of catching it, but it flies away, and she never quite gets hold of it." Some rowdies in Huntington once shaved his horse's tail. In the morning he came out with his saddle-bags upon his arm, to mount his trusty beast standing by the bars; and observing the poor animal's degradation, after a moment's surprise he threw his saddle-bags across the saddle with an amusing expression of submission to the insult, and a disposition to make the best of a hard fate, and a mixing of the pious and the ludicrous, which was not uncommon with him; "Glory to God!" said he, "he is not like Samson, for he is as strong as ever." As a matter of course, his indignant host fell into a fit of laughter, and exchanged his purposes of retribution on the perpetrators of the indignity for admiration of the patience and good-humor of his insulted but worthy guest.

Mr. Owen was a ready man. It did not take him long to prepare a sermon under almost any circumstances. Mrs. Bedford relates a singular instance in point. He had an appointment at her father's house, but did not arrive until the people had waited for a long time, and were about to leave. He came in, and in a hurried manner sung and prayed, and opening the large family Bible which lay upon the stand before him, he read for his text the first words which he saw, and went on with his discourse. After the meeting was closed and the people had retired, Mrs. Sutton said: "Brother Owen, how came you to take your text from the Apocrypha, to-day?" "The Apocrypha!" exclaimed he in surprise; "the book of Ezra is not in the Apocrypha." "No, indeed," says Mrs. Sutton; "but you took your text from the first book of Esdras." "Did I, indeed?" said he; "well, sister, say nothing about it; the people will not know the difference."

The old soldier sometimes made chance shots which did great execution. On one occasion he fell in with a gentleman, like himself; traveling on horseback, to whom, as was his custom on almost all occasions, he broached the subject of religion. He found the stranger to be skeptical, and he entered into an argument with him upon the claims of revelation. So far as he could judge, his reasoning produced no impression upon the mind of the gentleman. They came to a fork in the road where they bade each other a civil adieu. The itinerant preacher, as though seized by some sudden inspiration, turned hastily about and called out: "See here, my friend, I have two more things to say to you which I wish you not to forget." "What are they?" demanded the stranger. "Hell is hot and eternity is long!" was the answer. Several years elapsed, and the interview with the stranger had passed from the mind of Mr. Owen, when after meeting, perhaps a quarterly meeting, he was accosted by a gentleman, who referred to the conversation by the way and asked him if he did not remember it, adding: 'Those two things which you wished me not to forget fastened themselves upon my mind, and I never got rid of them until I sought and found the Saviour.' He had then been for years a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and had desired to meet with the man who had so mysteriously been the instrument of his conversion, not knowing who he was or where he could be found.

Anning Owen was a plain, blunt man, sometimes unceremonious and rude, but always conscientious and zealous for God and the truth. He feared neither men nor devils: he spared no vice, no error, nor had he much respect for the feelings of those who abetted either. A Presbyterian of high character and standing, who often listened to him in the days of his vigor, remarked to us a few days since:

Mr. Owen was down on the isms. He had a passage in almost every prayer against them. It was this: 'O Lord, put a stop to Mohammedanism, Judaism, Heathenism, Atheism, Deism, Universalism, Calvinism, and all other Devilisms.' "

It was evident that our Presbyterian friend considered Mr. Owen's classification of the isms somewhat defective, still the passage from the prayer was quoted with great good-nature. The fact is, Owen was rather a licensed character, scarcely held amenable to the common laws of taste and social propriety. He had a standard of his own, and cared very little whether it was approved by others or not. His mission was to reprove the vices, errors, and follies of mankind, and to turn sinners to God; and he was successful. Whether his measures were the best that could have been adopted is not now the question; that he was an instrument of much good is historically true. That he had admirable qualifications for the rugged work of a pioneer preacher, is not a debatable question. The wisdom of God is manifested in no part of the history of the Church more strikingly than in the selection and the adaptation of the agencies which were employed in the establishment of Methodism in Europe and America; and the history of the Methodist movement in the interior does not furnish an exception to this rule.

Mr. Owen had a wonderful command over his feelings. He encountered some domestic afflictions. His only son sickened and died; his name was Benjamin, and he was as dear to him as the youngest son of Jacob, by the same name, was to him. Mr. Owen preached the funeral sermon of this beloved and only son. His beloved Sally was taken sick when he was on one of his distant circuits. He was sent for and came, but Sally was in her shroud. He was not disappointed, for, as he alleged, as he was pursuing his way at night he saw Sally arrayed in a clean white robe, and heard heavenly music. This he took for a warning that she was no more among the living. He preached her funeral sermon, and while he spoke of her conversion and pious life, and of the vision which he had on the way, the great tears rolled from his eyes in quick succession. His sunburnt and wrinkled face, and his snow-white locks, associated with the tenderness of his expressions, together with a sight of the cold clay of the lovely girl, wrung tears from all eyes, and left impressions which time could never efface. It was the predominance of the religious sentiment in Mr. Owen, and not the want of natural sympathy, which forced him into a position which in another would hardly be excused.

The following sketches, from an able pen, will furnish a suitable conclusion to the portrait which we have attempted. They are copied from articles on "The Wyoming Valley," in the Northern Christian Advocate, by the Rev. David Holmes:

"Physically, Anning Owen was a little above the ordinary size, with a dark complexion, piercing eye, athletic in appearance, and in fact possessed of a constitution capable of great endurance. His mental character, though good, was not strongly marked with any extraordinary feature. Justice requires us to say, however, that he possessed a sound mind, discriminating judgment, united with

great firmness and decision of character. Convinced he was right, and his purpose once formed, nor men nor devils could turn him aside. Physically and intellectually, he was by natural constitution just the man for a Methodist preacher in the day in which he lived.

"His literary acquirements were small. Unblest with early advantages, and having commenced his ministry at an advanced period of life, it could not be expected he would distinguish himself in the departments of science. Besides this, the nature of the work in those days threw almost insuperable difficulties in the way of this kind of improvement. The circuits were often hundreds of miles in extent and the roads almost impassable; the rides were long, and nearly every day in the week filled with an appointment. Under these circumstances the acquisition of literature was scarcely to be thought of; and yet such a man as Owen could never be at loss for adequate means of communication with the people. He regarded the Gospel as perfect in itself; not needing the embellishments of rhetoric or the tinsel of human learning to make it efficacious; and if he might not draw materials from scientific sources, yet he had a resort which never failed him, namely, the Bible, common sense, and a knowledge of human nature. His figures were natural, not fantastic; not the unreal creations of a wild and unchained imagination, but chosen from real life, and adapted to impress the mind of every grade of hearers. His speech was not with 'enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power.'

"The zeal of Owen was limited only by his ability. He seemed never to forget that his appropriate business was to save souls;

'To cry, Behold the Lamb!'

hence wherever he went, whether in the populous town or 'in the country waste,' in public or in private, he was in quest of souls for whom the Saviour died; and if perseverance in exhortation, entreaty, warning, supplication, and prayer could prevail, he never failed of the object.

"His warnings and reproofs were sometimes delivered with a bluntness that would no doubt offend the delicate ear in these days of refinement and fastidiousness; yet the fruits often illustrated the saying of the wise man: 'A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.' "

Anning Owen was a man of mighty faith and persevering prayer. It is said by those who knew him when presiding elder, that the people always expected conversions at his quarterly meetings. He made his appeals direct to the heart, and if he saw the sinner affected under his preaching, he was sure to seek him when his sermon was ended, and seldom left him until happily converted to God. Often has he spent most of the night in prayer for the conversion of a single soul.

Owen was greatly fond of singing, and sung much himself; not that kind of singing which sacrifices piety and sense to mere sound, but spiritual singing, that which makes "melody in the heart to the Lord." His voice was strong and flexible, and distinguished for its richness and melody. There

was one hymn which more ,than any other he delighted to sing. It was called "The Band of Music," and commences

"O how charming!  
O how charming!"

This hymn he sung at camp-meetings and quarterly meetings, in love-feasts, prayer-meetings, and class-meetings; he sung it on horseback as he traversed the wilderness in quest of souls, and on the day of his death his last strength was employed in singing

"O how charming!  
O how charming!"

his voice failed, and an angelic hand bore him away to unite in the "music" of heaven.

## EARLY METHODISM

### **Within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference From 1788 to 1828** Sketches of Interesting Localities, Exciting Scenes and Prominent Actors

By **George Peck**

#### **WILLIAM COLBERT**

William Colbert was a man of deep and ardent piety. His love for God and his fellow-creatures was the controlling principle of his life. His zeal was a steady flame. No labor or hazard turned him aside from the path of duty. He counted not his own life dear to him so that he might finish his course with joy. He traveled in all extremities of weather, and endured the greatest privations in his Master's service. He preached incessantly, and suffered no interest of the Church committed to his trust to languish for want of attention.

In this country Mr. Colbert was properly a missionary, and his work was missionary work. He broke up as much new ground as any other man of his period, and then the itinerant work mostly consisted in surveying and opening new fields of labor. Of what he passed through as a pioneer preacher we of the present generation can form but an imperfect estimate. In making up the account we must not merely take the measure of his labors in new fields, but we must consider who he was and what obstacles presented themselves in his vast and numerous fields of missionary toil.

Mr. Colbert was a native of Maryland, and had been accustomed to the comforts and luxuries of refined society. The contrast between the comfortable and elegant homes of Maryland and Delaware and the log-cabins and the stinted and homely fare of the New England settlers in Western New York, was so great as to shock the sensibilities of his nature, and fill him with disgust and loathing. When he wanted retirement, to be compelled to sit down among a troop of noisy children, and, at his quarterly meetings, to be crowded to suffocation at his lodging places by a flood of company, to such a mind as that of Mr. Colbert was more disagreeable than the terrors and gloom of a howling wilderness. The poor cookery, cold houses, dirt, and insects of a new country were to him real evils, for he had not been accustomed to such things. These, with a thousand and one unmentionable troubles, our missionary endured for the sake of Christ and the love of souls. In labors he was abundant. In journeys, exposure, frequent preaching, persevering, earnest efforts to extend the reign of Christ and save souls, he had few equals and perhaps no superior.

In his missionary tours in Tioga and the lake country in 1792 and 1793, his want of that immediate success which attended many of the old pioneers must have been exceedingly trying to his faith and patience. He labored four months in Tioga and only "joined three persons in society." Everywhere there seemed to be a stolid indifference to religion (early Methodism); the only symptom of any interest on the subject of Methodism often was sharp opposition. There were exceptions to this condition of things, noble exceptions, but they were mere exceptions. Some of the better class of settlers received him to the hospitality of their hearths; but even these, while they treated the messenger with respect, rejected the message. Still he held on, bore himself nobly, having confidence that the seed which he was scattering would not all fail to vegetate; and after nine years of absence

he returned to his old field of labor to find many green spots which were sterile when first visited by him. The hard blows which had been struck had caused the solid rocks to crumble, and the way was now comparatively plain. What strength of will, what plodding industry, what patient endurance, what hope, what far reaching faith were necessary during those hard old times, when Colbert first climbed the mountains of the Susquehanna and waded the swamps among the lakes! And all these he had.

Mr. Colbert was a good preacher, sound in doctrine, clear in method, plain and practical, cogent in reasoning, and earnest in his appeals. His object was not so much to shine as to do good.

He was a true-hearted Methodist. The New England theology, with which he came into frequent contact, was an abomination to him. The rules of the Discipline he tried to keep, and not mend. But he was no bigot; his arms of charity embraced all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

The diary from which we have so largely quoted shows that our missionary was a student. He read the best books, as his scanty time and opportunities allowed, and profited by them. His keeping a diary, and keeping it up to the end of his long life, as we are told he did, is an evidence of his literary taste, methodical habits, and indomitable perseverance. The facts of this diary, simple and unstudied as it is, are a legacy to his family and to the Church beyond price. He was rather under size, well developed in physical form, neat in person, somewhat sensitive, and always doing something.

Mr. Jesse Bowman, of Brier Creek, Pa., recollects the subject of this sketch perfectly, and has furnished us the following note of some of his peculiarities "Mr. Colbert was a small, slender man, about one hundred and twenty five pounds, not more; wore buckskin breeches, or small clothes, which he furbished up and repaired with yellow ochre, with which he was always supplied."

From a letter which Mr. Colbert wrote to Judge Dorsey, bearing date March, 1805, we learn that he was married to Miss Elizabeth Stroud on Nov. 1, 1804. From this time Stroudsburg, Monroe county, Pa., was Mr. Colbert's home. He located in 1811, was received again into the Philadelphia Conference in 1826, but did not do effective service. He lived much respected until 1833, when he was called to his great reward. His body reposes in the old graveyard in Stroudsburg, there to await the sound of the last trumpet.

## EARLY METHODISM

### **Within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference From 1788 to 1828** Sketches of Interesting Localities, Exciting Scenes and Prominent Actors

By **George Peck**

#### **BENONI HARRIS**

Among the men of small talents, and yet of great piety and marked character, who took a part in the labors of the itinerancy in our field, is the man whose name stands at the head of this section. Benoni was shabbily dressed, and was too simple to meet the taste even of those times of comparative simplicity. His exceedingly plain manners and his eccentricities mortified the preachers, and sometimes offended the people, and at the conference of 1810 a concerted effort was made to get rid of the poor little fellow, which proved successful. A record on the Journal of that year says: "Benoni Harris was charged with improprieties relative to dress, and a singular method of preaching, and he was advised to locate." This advice he followed, and the conference raised a collection of fifteen dollars for his benefit.

Thus closed six years in the itinerancy of one of the best, and yet the most singular men who ever entered it. He was a very short man, not more, we should think, than five feet. He traveled Otsego circuit in 1805 and 1806, and we recollect him well. Short as he was, he was loud. When fairly under way he would put his hands to his ears and then dash them down, and stamp with his feet till he made things jar.

His stamping propensities once resulted in a most ludicrous scene. He was preaching in a sap bush, and, having no stage provided, he took his position upon the head of a hogshead. He preached and stamped until his foundation gave way, and down went the little man into the hogshead! The people laughed, but supposed the scene would soon be changed, when the eccentric little preacher should take another position. But how was their amusement increased when he went on with his sermon without the interruption of a sentence! his bald head just in sight, and his hands first flung up above his head, and then taking hold of the chime of the hogshead! When his sermon was concluded he was assisted out of his awkward pulpit, and, after a powerful prayer, he dismissed the people.

His amens were astounding, sometimes even to the earnest old Methodists, but often much more so to the wicked. The turnpike from Albany to Cooperstown was constructed during the time of his traveling Otsego. It passed our father's house where Benoni often called. One morning he rode on west, and a gang of "the turnpikers" were moving along in the same direction. He was wretchedly mounted, and made anything but a respectable appearance. A wag of the company bantered him to trade horses, but he made no reply. They jeered him incessantly, while he did not appear to hear them, or even to know they were there. Finally one of them sung out, "Lord bless Brother Harris." Then he broke silence, and his response was "A-men," with a voice of thunder. The whole gang were taken down. They paused and let "Brother Harris" pass on without further molestation, which he did



without uttering another word, or turning to see what had become of his troublesome traveling companions.

In those days we were from eight to ten years of age, and Benoni was about our height, but considerably heavier. We saw him baptize, by immersion, in Red Creek two full grown young men, one of them Benjamin G. Paddock, and a young lady, and there we marveled at his physical strength, for he did the work manfully.

We were often deeply impressed under his earnest sermons, but were prodigiously mortified at his slovenly appearance, the rack of bones which he rode, and his saddle and bridle, which in sundry places were tied up with tow strings. He was as happy as a king amid all the horrors of poverty, dirt, and rags. He was a good man, without economy. He died in peace, and now needs no sympathy.

In justice to the memory of Benoni Harris, it ought to be said that, notwithstanding his shabby appearance and his oddities, he sometimes made a successful dash into the enemy's camp. He once called upon a vile opposer, and asked the privilege of praying in his house. At first he received abuse, and was peremptorily ordered to leave the house. But he kindly and earnestly expostulated with the enraged man, when, perhaps, his smallness of stature and his childlike simplicity were his only protection from personal violence. He knelt and prayed while the fellow swore. His prayer concluded, he asked him to go that evening and hear him preach. The proposition was rejected with cursing and bitterness. Nothing daunted, the little meek poverty-stricken saint says: "You will go, I know you will, and you will be converted." The enraged infidel was utterly surprised that any human being could hear such abuse with such patience, and half dumb with astonishment, and from a desire to get rid of his unwelcome visitor, he promised to attend meeting, and Benoni left. His friend was at meeting in good time, and received extra attention from the preacher. The result was that before the meeting closed the infidel was on his knees. He was soundly converted and became a strong and influential Methodist.

Benoni made several efforts to regain his standing in the conference, but the body was inexorable. He bore his disappointments with Christian meekness, and continued during the rest of his life to labor in the capacity of a local preacher, and received many marks of affection from the people, whose kind consideration kept him fed and clothed; and this was all he cared for, so far as temporal interests are concerned.

## EARLY METHODISM

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By **George Peck**

**JONATHAN NEWMAN**

Our earliest recollections are associated with the objects and aspects of newly settled country. Our native town was partially settled before the Revolutionary war, and the settlers shared a common fate with that of their neighbors in Cherry Valley, when this portion of the country was overrun by the Indians and Tories. The portion of the inhabitants not able to bear arms fled in dismay; some were cruelly murdered, women and children were made prisoners, houses were consumed by fire, and the infant settlements were wholly laid waste.

After the acknowledgment of American independence by the mother country, the scattered inhabitants returned to their desolated homes, and erected dwellings, such as they could, and set out anew to live. When a boy we often listened to tales of suffering and bloodshed from the people, male and female, who were actors and sufferers in those troublous times. Our first recollections reach back to the period when most of them were still living in their log-cabins. There were only some three or four exceptions in the neighborhood, and two of these were public houses. The settlements were small and widely separated, the roads were terrible, and, of course, the people poor.

This was the state of things when the Methodist preachers first visited the frontier settlements in Otsego county, state of New York. Of the sufferings and privations which these men had to endure, the present generation can have but a very imperfect idea. Their very existence depended upon the immediate impression which they made upon the minds of the rustic population; for they came with no other claims for shelter and food but those which were to be inferred from their divine commission to bring to the hungry sheep of the wilderness the spiritual food which they needed, and with which none as yet had supplied them. God opened the heart of many a Lydia, and almost miraculously supplied the wants of his faithful, self-denying servants.

The leading characteristics of the first preachers in the interior of this state were simplicity of manners, ardent piety, untiring perseverance, and a zeal for God which manifested itself by a vehemence of manner, both in prayer and preaching, which many in these days would consider downright rant or fanaticism. We do not say this was the case with all. There were some who were eminently sons of consolation; but the thunderer was the ruling spirit of those times.

The opposition with which they had to contend was fierce and often foolish. We recollect an anecdote related to us by Mr. Garrettson, who was the "elder" under whose supervision the first preachers were sent "out West" in 1791, which will illustrate the case. He was traveling on horseback, on a visitation to some portion of his district, when he fell in with a man traveling in the same way, who, after a little conversation, sung out, with earnestness, 'Have you heard the news?'

"What news, sir?" asked Mr. Garrettson.

"Why, sir, the king of England has sent over a parcel of spies that they call Methodists, and they are ransacking the whole country; you can scarcely go amiss of them."

"My friend," answered Mr. Garrettson, "these men are not spies sent from the king of England, they are the servants of the Most High, sent by him to warn sinners to flee the wrath to come, and I am one of them." He then began to belabor the stranger in old-fashioned Methodist preachers' style, when the exhortation proving too warm for him, he put whip to his horse and made off.

The Methodist preachers of those early times, as a class, were fine-looking men. With few exceptions they were not meanly dressed, and were respectably mounted. The people loved them, and were ever ready to share with them their small resources. These means might now be considered scarcely sufficient to keep soul and body together. To travel and labor night and day for six months or a year, and only receive four or five dollars in money, would be thought an absolutely desperate case in these times of abundant supplies and all sacrifices. This, however, was often done in those early times.

The manners and habits of the first preachers who visited our paternal residence made a deep and an abiding impression upon our memory and heart. They came to pray, to sing, and to exhort both parents and children to love the Saviour. Their religious exercises in the family were marked by solemnity and earnestness, and they always left a blessing behind them. Their sermons consisted mostly in strong appeals to the conscience, and often produced the most marvelous results.

One of the first two preachers stationed on Otsego circuit was Jonathan Newman, a man of marked character. He was received on trial and stationed on this circuit in 1791, with Philip Wager, and reappointed in 1792, in connection with James Covel. In 1793 he traveled on the Herkimer circuit with David Bartine. In 1794 he was stationed in Albany circuit with the same, and "Thomas Woolsey was to change with Jonathan Newman in six months." In 1795 his name stands among those are under a location through weakness of body or family concerns." There are thirty-two names in this list this year. In 1796 his name does not appear, but he probably occupied the same relation, and in the following year he is on the Herkimer circuit again. In 1798 he is on Chenango; 1799, Mohawk; 1800, Delaware; 1801, Oneida and Cayuga; 1802, his name is wanting; 1803, Herkimer; in 1804 he is again "under a location through weakness of body or family concerns," the latter we presume was the cause. After this his name does not appear, and he probably from this time became permanently located.

His location, we believe, was more the result of domestic embarrassments than a preference for secular occupations. He had a numerous family and an afflicted, nervous wife. It was difficult for him to remove his family; besides, if our impressions are correct, and they are derived from the conversations of those who knew the facts, his children greatly needed the constant supervision of a father. The long absences from home to which a traveling preacher of that period was subjected, were not always consistent with the demands made upon him by the state of his household.

"Father Newman," as he was called, entered into business, but, we believe, was not very successful. His residence was somewhere on the head waters of the Susquehanna, we believe in Otsego, but precisely where, we never knew. He became the proprietor of a 'carding machine,' and drove a small trade in various articles, which often called him to Albany; and in his way he always made our paternal residence his stopping-place. We recollect with what mortification we often assisted in providing for the three skeleton horses which he usually drove before an old lumber-wagon, loaded with diverse sorts of merchandise. Our love for the old apostle, however, never declined, and we were always much gratified with his visits, especially when he arrived on a Saturday afternoon and preached on Sunday.

In 1810 or 1812 the old gentleman applied for readmission into the conference, but, on account of the state of his domestic concerns, his application was rejected. This act so grieved and disaffected him that he left the Church, and united with the people called Christians. Of course he wholly lost his influence with the Methodists; and although he several times preached in our neighborhood, while in connection with that society, we never heard him preach an entire sermon. Once we ventured to eavesdrop, for a short time, while he was preaching of an evening in the school-house hard by. We recollect that his drift was to show the evils of the division of the Church into sects and prove, or rather predict, that "the separating walls would all soon be abolished, and that the small stars would all be united, and would constitute one glorious sun, which should warm and illuminate the whole earth."

Our childish heart grieved over Father Newman, and we recollect once to have ventured to express to a preacher our disapprobation of the act of the conference, by which he was tried, as the result proved, beyond his strength. We were, however, much comforted to learn, about the period of the commencement of our itinerant career, that our old favorite had renounced the peculiar notions of the "Unitarian Christians," and returned to the Methodist Episcopal Church, in whose bosom he spent the remnant of his days. We saw a small tract which he published, in which he asked "the pardon of God and man" for being the means of bringing that erratic sect into that part of the country. If he was oversensitive, and seriously erred in leaving the Church of his early choice, he made such amends as he could for the error he had committed, and by that means regained the confidence of his brethren.

Jonathan Newman was a man of about five feet eight or ten inches, of heavy build, and inclined to corpulence; dark complexion, with a mild black eye. His voice was heavy and clear, capable of an immense compass. He spoke deliberately, and when in his highest strains was not heard with pain or uneasiness. When he was fairly under way he slightly drew one corner of his mouth in the direction of his ear, and rolled out peal after peal like the roaring of distant thunder.

He was listened to with great attention, and often his pathos so told upon the heart that a commotion was raised around him which would nearly drown his stentorian accents. Sometimes he preached unreasonably long. We recollect hearing our beloved and now sainted father give an animated account of a sermon delivered by Father Newman at a quarterly meeting. He preached on beyond the proper time for closing, and yet seemed to be waxing warmer and warmer, louder and louder, when the presiding elder, who sat behind him upon the stand, gently pulled the skirt of his coat as a signal for him to close. This act seemed to unchain the tempest which raged within him,

and had been long struggling for a free and full utterance. He turned around, and thundered out: "Let my coat alone; I am determined to give the people a faithful and solemn warning before I sit down;" and on he careered for half an hour longer.

The first sermon of which we have any recollection was preached by Jonathan Newman in the first house of which memory now takes cognizance, the old log-house, not where we were born, but in which we spent the earliest period of early childhood which leaves permanent traces in the memory. The text of that sermon is to be found in Ezra i, 9, and consists in these words: "Nine and twenty knives." What use was made of the text we have not the slightest idea, but we recollect that the sermon was matter of conversation in the family and the region round about for years, and it was thought a most masterly production. Whether he used his knives to cut up "the old evil one," dissect infidelity, to prune the garden of the Lord, to pierce the heart, or for all these purposes, we cannot now tell; but there was evidence enough that they were neither suffered to be idle nor used in play, but were made to serve a purpose which was connected intimately with the destinies of many. Indeed, he flung them in so skillful a manner directly into the hearts of the people, that terrible paroxysms of godly sorrow were produced.

This sermon must have been preached when we were in the neighborhood of four years of age, and yet our recollection of the position and manner of the speaker, and the squeezing which we received by the crowd, while sitting in "the little chair" by the side of our dear "mamma," is perfectly fresh and distinct. The remark is often made, that we have very little idea of the power we have over the minds of children, and especially of the permanence of the impressions which we make upon their young hearts. This fact in our own early history is an instance of the truth and importance of a remark which has become trite, and is not sufficiently appreciated.

The following has been communicated by a friend:

"Jonathan Newman was born in the city of New York in the year 1770. He left his father at the early age of sixteen, and went and learned the tailor's trade, at which he continued to work until after the close of the Revolution, with the exception of three years that he was in the American ranks and served as a regular soldier. Soon after he was ordained by the New York Conference, and continued to travel and preach until he located at Hartwick, Otsego county. He was very much esteemed by his friends and brethren, and honored by all who knew him, for the love and attachment that he manifested toward the cause of Christ, and particularly for the untiring zeal and steadfast integrity that he exhibited to the world.

"As the facilities for a traveling minister in those days were very limited, he labored under a great disadvantage. Ofttimes was he obliged to travel by marked trees through the woods, and to endure all kinds of weather, as the country was new and thinly settled. He often had to retreat to some old tree to shelter himself from the raging storms and tempest. Notwithstanding all of this his heart swelled with devotion toward God, who directed his steps through the wilderness of life, and sustained him by his infinite power and goodness. Thus he continued his philanthropic course until old age and domestic requisitions put an end to his traveling, which was a cause of much grief to him the remainder of his days. After he had been located a number of years, he was seized with a fatal disease, called the black jaundice, which confined him to his bed but six weeks before it deprived

him of life. He had his senses until the last, and appeared to be calm and composed, willing to die, and with but a faint struggle he resigned his spirit. Thus ended the days of a venerable father and a useful minister of Christ.

"He was buried near Hartwick village, on Otego Creek. He has a beautiful marble monument erected at his grave which was purchased by the Church and his neighbors."

## EARLY METHODISM

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By **George Peck**

#### **TIMOTHY DEWEY**

Of the birth and early history of Mr. Dewey we know nothing. Of his death we learned from one of his sons, in 1850, that he had departed in peace a few months before. We shall here attempt a sketch of his character, and furnish reminiscences which will shed some light upon it.

Timothy Dewey commenced his labors as a traveling preacher in 1795, and located in 1804. He traveled on Redding, Pittsfield, Cambridge, New Rochelle, Vershire, Granville, and Pompey circuits. As a traveling preacher he labored with great zeal, and with equal success. In 1798 he was stationed on Cambridge circuit with the celebrated Lorenzo Dow. and between the two there existed an intimate friendship ever after. His location. is a matter which is involved in some mystery, and was far from being satisfactory to himself. We have a few shreds of the story in our memory, derived from him, which amount to this: Bishop Asbury wished him to take an appointment at the south, but he was not willing to be removed to that part of the work; indeed, the health of his family rendered it morally impossible for him to comply, and the bishop was told that Brother Dewey would prefer a location to such an appointment as was proposed. But that he did not wish or expect to locate at that conference is perfectly evident from the whole tone of the letter which he wrote to Mr. Colbert, just before the session of the conference, and which we have copied from his journal. For the same reasons which he gives in that letter for not attending the conference, he certainly could not remove a great distance. The unyielding Asbury acted upon one of his settled maxims--" We wish men to labor where we say, and not where they may choose;" and, quite unexpected to himself; Mr. Dewey learned that he was returned located on the Minutes. He was grieved, as he had reason to be; and although to the end of life he was proof against all temptation to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church, yet he never could be prevailed upon again to enter the traveling ranks.

For many years Mr. Dewey resided upon the great northern turnpike, between Chittenango and Manlius. His house having been built for a barn, was neither elegant nor convenient. Subsequently he lived in a comfortable cottage in Pompey Hollow, but removed from that place further west before he finished his course. His companion was rendered a perfectly helpless cripple by rheumatism, and heavily tasked the inexhaustible kindness and patience of one of the most affectionate husbands that ever lived. He lifted and carried her as though she had been an infant, and a portion of the time, when she was being moved, her joints cracked, and her frame seemed to rattle like a mass of dry bones in a sack.

Mr. Dewey was not remarkable for his ability as a financier, or skill in getting money, and was consequently poor as to the things of this world. He farmed on a small scale, but had he not been affectionately remembered by the good brethren among whom he occasionally labored, the necessities of his family would scarcely have been met. The health of Mrs. Dewey necessarily

confined her husband much at home; but he often made excursions through the country, and remained for several weeks at a time, filling some opening, or attending to some special call of the Church.

Our acquaintance with Timothy Dewey commenced soon after we entered the ministry, and then he was becoming venerable for age, and was called Elder, or Elder Dewey. His power in the pulpit was then famous, and he was considered a man of rare attainments both in theology and upon general subjects.

Our quarterly meetings were then not entirely modernized, but were still considerable occasions. The people of a large circuit would come together, often from a distance of twenty or thirty miles. On Saturday, at eleven o'clock, the congregation would be large, and on the Sabbath would sometimes number thousands. Two sermons in succession were often preached, both on Saturday and Sabbath. One sermon never made up the complement without an earnest exhortation or two by some preacher or preachers present. Elder Dewey often made his appearance at these quarterly meetings, and preached "a great sermon;" always containing some rare exposition of scripture, or some pregnant passages which stirred up the souls of the people, and furnished a theme of conversation for months and years. Sometimes he made choice of a text which seemed to ordinary minds inexplicable -- a text which they never had heard preached from, and which, when announced, they would naturally think, if they did not whisper, "What in the world will he make out of that text?" He once preached a sermon at a quarterly meeting at Utica, upon Hosea vii, 9: "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." "Gray hairs," said the preacher, "are an evidence of decline." There is a theme, thought every one, as quick as a flash. The decline of Christians was the topic of the sermon. O how he pointed out the "gray hairs !" Every one felt that he had some of them, and felt the fact to lament and mourn over it. Notwithstanding religious decline or backsliding was a perfectly familiar topic, in this instance it was so marked with "gray hairs" that it assumed the character of novelty, and a powerful impression was made. The illustrations and general course of remark were all in the preacher's own peculiar style. His analogies were all rare and striking, and "the sermon on gray hairs" was long a theme of remark among the people of that region.

Father Dewey was a man of eccentricities, and being firm to the very verge of obstinacy, he was incurable. His course was often strange, and apparently absurd; but when admonished of the fact it would appear that it had been a matter of reflection. Sometimes his reasons would be at hand, and at others the querist would be given to understand that he was meddling with what did not belong to him.

He had thoroughly studied all the difficult and controverted questions of theology, and would frequently grapple with them in his sermons with the strength of a giant; but it was not always that curious inquirers received from him satisfactory answers. A good sister once wanted her doubts resolved upon the difficult subject of God's fore knowledge. She asked the old sage "if God did not for know all things." "I don't know what God foreknows," was all the answer he could obtain.

Infidelity and the various erroneous dogmas afloat often received at the hand of this powerful thinker the most withering rebukes, and the most triumphant refutations. He brought to his aid philosophy, history, criticism, and logic; and woe to the opponent who stood in his way. Indeed, we



believe few ever openly assailed him. It was quite enough for an errorist to see his foundation torn up and scattered to the four winds of heaven in one of his great sermons, without coming into personal conflict with him. He seldom preached without giving evidence that he was not only a sound, well-read divine, but that he was both a historian and a philosopher. Often when he did not happen to be known did he take the people by surprise. He was a plain man, even careless as to his personal appearance, and at first sight might be taken for an old plow-jogger. When he took the stand he made no great promise to the stranger. But when his text was announced, perhaps something that no one had ever thought of making the foundation of a discourse, the question most natural was: "Is that some foolish old man who does not know what he is about, or is it some wonder, some great man from a distance who has not had time to change his linen? Who can it be?" In a few minutes he would stand out head and shoulders above all around him. The people would see the preachers straining their eyes and smiling as though they were listening to one of the old apostles just arisen from the dead. And as he warmed up the doubt would be dispelled, and all who had ever heard a description of him would be likely to say to themselves: "That must be Elder Dewey, or somebody very much like him." Those who had no knowledge of him at all would wonder where such a plain old man ever gathered up such a fund of knowledge, and how he had qualified himself to criticise the critics, and to stand up as an original thinker amid the greatest scholars and authors of both ancient and modern times. To those who knew the man all this was plain. He was a man of strong powers of mind, a profound thinker, an acute reasoner, and a great reader.

Father Dewey often made bold and unsparing assaults upon errors in manner and slight departures from what he considered the better mode of doing things. We once heard him at a camp-meeting undertake to modify the shouting, and some other exercises which in those days often accompanied it. It gave a terrible shock to a class of ranters present, but did not reform them. The preacher only expected to put upon their guard those who had not been carried wholly into the whirlpool of fanaticism, and save them from the danger, and in this he succeeded.

When we were stationed in Utica our people had some trouble about the singing. Some were for a choir in the gallery, while others wanted old-fashioned congregational singing. The two parties, in advance, had exerted themselves to secure the ear of the old patriarch, well knowing that he would be very likely to undertake settlement of the controversy by a bold stroke when he should take the pulpit. He heard them without giving any opinion, perhaps simply remarking: "This singing is a troublesome business." When he took the pulpit on Sabbath morning he announced for his text: "Man shall not live by bread alone." His position upon the text was taken on this wise: "People are prone to magnify some one thing, and often a very immaterial thing too, into everything, to make it all and in all. That is their 'bread,' and they want nothing but 'bread.' Sometimes it is this; and sometimes that, and sometimes the other thing. Sometimes it is a learned ministry, sometimes an eloquent ministry, and at other times plain, old-fashioned preaching; sometimes fine churches, and at others plain, small churches; sometimes singing in the gallery, and at others singing on the lower floor; but 'man shall not live by bread alone.'" All saw his position at once and anticipated the result. That result was, that both parties took a severe castigation for magnifying a small matter beyond due bounds; neither from that time looked to Father Dewey for sympathy, and the controversy abated.

At camp-meeting Father Dewey was in his glory. He needed the stimulus of a great occasion to spring his powers into vigorous action. He had a splendid voice for the open air: it had strength and compass, it was grave and manly, and as clear as the sound of a trumpet. When the lion in him became fully aroused his mighty soul needed no better avenue to the ears of the people than the wonderful vocal power with which the God of nature had endowed him. His mighty sentences would peal through the forest far beyond the bounds of a large encampment, and often arrest the attention of groups of strollers, who were beyond the circle of tents seeking their own amusement. On one occasion he rose upon the stand to address a vast concourse, which the presiding elder had labored long and in vain to persuade to become quietly seated. The old gentleman rose and slowly advanced to the front of the stand, and without the least apparent excitement or straining of voice; he roared out: "What is the matter why all this restlessness? What are you after? You wander about as if you knew not wherefore you had come together." He then commenced reading his hymn, and in a few minutes all were quietly seated.

We recollect attending three camp-meetings during the summers of 1816 and 1817 where Father Dewey was the great man. One was at Plymouth, on Lebanon circuit; one in Truxton; Cortland circuit; and the other on Broome circuit, six miles above Binghamton. At the meeting in Truxton he preached two or three powerful sermons, which did great execution. One of these sermons was preceded by a prayer which commenced in this wise: "Lord, have mercy upon wicked Presbyterians, hypocritical Baptists, and backslidden Methodists." This language gave great offense to some of the parties concerned, and was made a matter of no little complaining. The sermon which followed was based upon a portion of the epistles to "the seven churches of Asia."

At the Broome meeting he preached four sermons, every one of which was characterized by a holy unction, and made deep and lasting impressions. On Sabbath afternoon he was specially assisted. The sun shone directly in his face, and he perspired freely while he thundered and lightened, and almost made the earth tremble beneath his feet. Near the close of his sermon a young man in the congregation fell upon the ground, and struggled as if in the agonies of death. A prayermeeting was commenced around him, and after a short period of deep distress he was happily converted. Thence forward to the close of the meet the work progressed powerfully, and many were brought into the liberty of the Gospel.

During this meeting a young man, who had just commenced experimenting upon his preaching propensities, was put up to preach. He undertook to preach a great and learned sermon, but made a total failure. What was particularly vexatious was that he seemed to think he was doing wonders. The preachers manifested great uneasiness, and some of them left the stand. When he had concluded his talk, having exhausted an hour and thirty or forty minutes, he came into the preachers' tent and asked "what was the matter" with a certain preacher who seemed to be particularly fidgety. "It is no wonder at all that he was uneasy," answered Father Dewey, "for you made awful work of it." The poor fellow just then shrank down into his natural dimensions and immediately evaporated, and we have not heard one word about him from that day to this. We hope he outlived the shock, and finally found his appropriate place in the Church.

At the camp-meeting at Plymouth there was no move among the people for several days; the devil seemed to dispute the ground inch by inch. A host of disorderly, noisy people were constantly

prowling about the ground, and it seemed impossible to secure their attention. The faint-hearted were ready to despond, and the faith of the Church seemed weak. This was the very time when the soul of Father Dewey would be likely to be aroused, and then he would enter the arena girded with strength. On an evening when the ground was thronged with careless, disorderly people, the venerable man took the stand, and after a powerful prayer, one which waked up and melted the hearts of Christians, he gave out for his text these words of the prophet Amos: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." It was soon evident that the old warrior had taken up his heavy battle-ax and was about to use it to purpose. After a few introductory remarks he began to ply the consciences of sinners with the terrors of God's law, and to shake over them the rod of divine justice. His earnestness increased; his powerful voice pealed through the forest, sentence after sentence, in an ascending scale, both as to earnestness of manner and weight of expression, until his great soul seemed to be in a perfect tempest of excitement, and his warnings came down upon the people like tumbling rocks precipitated from the hill-top by an earthquake. We were in the congregation, at some distance from the stand. The preachers in the stand were weeping and crying aloud, while the devout among the people were following closely in the wake.

At the height of his career the preacher paused for a moment and then broke out: "O sinner! sinner! are you determined to take hell by storm? Can you brave the vengeance of a righteous God? Can you dwell in devouring fire? Can you stand everlasting burnings? Is your flesh iron, and are your bones brass, that you dare to plunge into hell fire?" By this time the preacher had become profoundly sympathetic, and his mighty voice had softened down into tremulous tones of tenderness. The people, saints and sinners, together wept and sobbed.

The venerable man called on the prayer-meeting before he sat down, and we moved up toward the altar, whither the broken-hearted were making their way in great numbers. Near the altar we noticed a young man, greatly agitated, holding to a limb of a tree, and reeling to and fro like a drunken man. He said nothing, but continued for some time holding fast to the limb. Finally he broke his hold and came to the ground. He was removed to the altar, where many were seeking salvation. That night was our triumph; many were born into the kingdom of Christ who will praise God in eternity for Father Dewey's sermon.

The disturbers were either converted or frightened from the ground, for by ten o'clock in the evening not a careless, disorderly person could be seen.

The next morning we noticed a young man among the converts whom we knew; it was the same who held himself up by the limb; although we did not learn that fact until years afterward. This same young man has been for many years a member of the New York Conference

The Rev. Timothy Dewey was a portly man of perhaps five feet seven inches in height, dark complexion, black eyes, coal black hair, which hung in heavy curls upon his shoulders. He was a great and good man, although not a little eccentric and occasionally intractable. He was ardently pious, a true-hearted Methodist, never moved by temptations to forsake the Church, although these were numerous and often urgent. He was flung out of his appropriate sphere when he was located, and this was a great loss to the Church and a source of serious embarrassment to him. Still he labored

on to the close of a long life to promote the glory of God and the interests of the Church of his early choice, and he turned many to righteousness who will deck his crown in the day of his rejoicing.

## EARLY METHODISM

### **Within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference From 1788 to 1828** Sketches of Interesting Localities, Exciting Scenes and Prominent Actors

By **George Peck**

#### **BENJAMIN BIDLACK**

The Methodist preachers who planted the Gospel standard in the interior of this state were the pioneers of the country, and many of them officers or soldiers of the Revolutionary army. They were consequently men of nerve, and capable of great endurance. Were we to give our readers a catalogue of the appointments filled by the subject of this sketch, with only such an idea of their distances from each other and the extent of territory they covered as we might be able to furnish, without first giving some idea of his physical abilities, the facts would now scarcely be credited. Before we proceed to any details of his labors and character, we will take a bird's-eye view of his history previous to his entering upon the work of the ministry.

Benjamin Bidlack was of New England origin, and came with his father to the Valley of Wyoming in 1777. The history of his family is identified with the romantic period of the history of that far-famed valley. The father, when quite advanced in years, was captain of a company of old men, organized for the defense of their homes, while their sons entered the regular service, and were called away to other points of danger. He was surprised by a company of Indians, and suffered a distressing captivity, which only terminated with the war. One son was made prisoner on Long Island, and "was starved to death by the British." Another was captain of a company in "the Indian battle" in Wyoming, and fell at the head of his company, only eight of the whole number surviving that fearful tragedy.

Benjamin was seven years in the service. He was at Boston when Washington assembled his forces to oppose Gage; at Trenton at the taking of the Hessians; at Yorktown at the surrender of Cornwallis; and in the camp at Newburgh when the army was disbanded. We have heard the old gentleman relate with the greatest interest the events which occurred on those great occasions under his own observation, and of which the historian has taken no note. When the Hessians were captured, he said General Washington passed along the lines of the little half-frozen army, the day being excessively cold, and exhorted the men not to drink to intoxication. His language was in this wise: "My brave fellows, God has given us the victory, but the enemy is close at hand in force; should you become helpless through drink, you will almost certainly fall into their hands." This warning he repeated over and over as he passed on from one point to another.

At Yorktown the French were ready to open upon the enemy first, and were impatient to commence, but Washington held them in. When the order was issued it seemed as if the heavens and earth were coming together. There was an incessant thundering and blazing night and day, the flame from the mouth of the cannon being so bright and constant that at any moment of the night you could see to pick up a pin. The British general called for a parley, but not being ready to comply with the

terms of the American commander, " Now," said he, "give it to them hotter than ever," and the thunder of the cannon began again to shake the solid ground. The surrender soon succeeded.

He gave us an account of the encampment at Newburgh, building the road across the marsh, erecting "the temple of liberty," the debates on the subject of disbanding the army, "the Armstrong letters," the religious services on Sunday, the "splendid singing" they had on those occasions, and the like. After all the many deliverances from death, he came near being killed by an accident just at the close of the war. At this time he drove a team, and upon throwing a bomb from the wagon it ignited, and sent the fragments like hail about his ears. This event made a deep impression on his mind. He truly concluded that the hand of God was concerned in his safety from the stroke of the deadly missile which came within a hair's breadth of him on every side.

When peace with the mother country was concluded, he returned to the lovely Valley of Wyoming, as he hoped, to live in quiet, and to give succor to his aged sire in the decline of life. But, alas! he came to this spot, rendered so beautiful and lovely by the hand of nature's God, to see further exhibitions of the malignity of the human heart. "The Pennamite and Yankee war," a fierce and even bloody conflict between the Connecticut and Pennsylvania settlers for the title of the soil, was then renewed, and young Bidlack was what the Pennsylvanians called a "wild Yankee." He was not disposed to engage in the fray; for although he was as good a soldier as ever breathed, he had a kind heart, and, of course, hated this unnatural war. He engaged in business, and made a trip in a boat down the Susquehanna to Sunbury, about the distance of fifty miles. Here he was seized by the Pennsylvania party and put in jail.

He was a jovial fellow, and manifested so much good nature, and was so fine a singer, that a company from the neighborhood frequently assembled in the evening to hear him sing songs. On one occasion he told them that he had a favorite song they had never heard; it was "The Old Swaggering Man;" but he could not sing it without more room, and he must have a staff in his hand, as the effect depended much on the action. Nothing suspicious, they gave him a cudgel, and allowed him liberty to make his sallies into the hall. All at once, as he commenced his chorus, "Here goes the old swaggering man," he darted out of the door, and in a trice was out of their reach, out-distancing the fleetest of them. The next day he was safe at home, and was never more disturbed.

Bidlack having a most splendid voice, and being full of fun and frolic, was not infrequently the center and life of sporting and drinking parties. Still he had religious notions and religious feelings, and, wild and wicked as he was, he would go to the Methodist meetings and lead the singing; sometimes, indeed, when he was scarcely in a condition to do it with becoming gravity.

At length he was awakened and converted to God, and henceforth he "sowed" no more "wild oats." He soon began to exhort his neighbors to flee from the wrath to come, and to sing the songs of Zion with a heart and a power that moved the feelings while it charmed the ear. "Ben Bidlack has become a Methodist preacher," rang through the country, and stirred up a mighty commotion.

The circumstances of his conversion have been given in another connection. His first circuit embraced his own neighborhood, and even the jail from which, but a few years before, he had

escaped, shouting, "Here goes the old swaggering man." The appointment at least shows the state of the public mind in relation to him where he was best known, and is very much to his credit.

Mr. Bidlack was married, and, we think, had three children when he commenced traveling. During his effective relation to the conference he had sixteen appointments, standing in the following order: Wyoming, Seneca, Delaware, Ulster, Herkimer, Mohawk, Otsego, Chenango, Pompey, Seneca, Lyons, Shamokin, Northumberland, and Lycoming. Look at his removes. One year he goes from Wyoming to the Seneca Lake, and the next from that to the Delaware! This was itinerancy in deed and in truth. Any one who can recollect what was the condition of the roads forty years back, in the regions in which he traveled, and through which he removed his family, can in some measure appreciate the labors which he performed.

Mr. Bidlack was removed every year during his itinerancy, with the exception of three. His first wife died, and he married the widow of Lawrence Myers, Esq., of Kingston, Wyoming, Pa.

In 1804 Mr. Bidlack was stationed on Otsego circuit, with John P. Weaver. It was during this year that we first saw him, and we well recollect the time, place, and circumstances. We were seven years of age, and had hold of the hand of our natural guardian.

In 1811 he located, but after an experiment of three years, he found worldly occupations incompatible with that freedom of soul and extent of spiritual enjoyment which he prized above rubies. Accordingly he again proffered himself to the conference in 1815, and did effective work for four years. Infirmities now accumulating upon him, he received a superannuated relation to the conference, and continued in this relation until his death.

At the period when we had our first sight of Mr. Bidlack was a venerable looking man, and his bearing and conversation impressed us with a high degree of reverence for him. He removed his family to our neighborhood, in Middlefield, and occupied a parsonage, which was built, perhaps, for his special accommodation. But such a parsonage as it was! The location was in a field, at a distance from any road, in a most isolated and unfrequented locality. At the east were stretched out fields, and a few farm-houses were visible at the distance of one and two miles. At the west lay a deep gorge, in a steep slope of the hill, across which was the old "graveyard," or rather a number of graves, with a dilapidated post and rail fence around it; at the south a deep dell, covered with a growth of large white pine and hemlock trees, through which murmurs "Red Creek;" and at the north and northwest two houses, the nearest of which was within a quarter of a mile.

The reader may wish to know what sort of a house was this same parsonage. It was made of large pine logs, slightly hewed on the inside, with the openings between them "chinked," and plastered with mud. It was roofed with boards and slabs, and, we should think, was about fourteen by sixteen feet. Here stayed the preacher's family, alone, during his long absences upon his circuit. He had three daughters, with whom we became somewhat acquainted, meeting them at school and at meeting.

Mr. Bidlack was now in the pride of his strength. He stood something over six feet, erect, with a full, prominent chest, broad shoulders, and powerful limbs. His black hair, slightly sprinkled with gray, hung upon his shoulders, and his large, open features bore an expression of gravity and

benignity, mingled with cheerfulness, which at once prepossessed one in his favor. His voice was powerful and harmonious. So far back as our first knowledge of him, his tones seemed to have lost some of their melody, and to have acquired a little roughness from excessive preaching in the open air, in barns and in other places but ill securing the speaker against currents of air. Naturally his voice was the very soul of music, and much of its melody remained until he was very far advanced in life.

Benjamin Bidlack was an effective preacher, though not a profound thinker. His sermons were fine specimens of native eloquence, and were often attended with great power. One of his favorite discourses -- at least it was a favorite with his hearers -- was upon the words: "They that turn the world upside down have come hither also." In laying out his discourse on this text he proceeded: "First, I shall show that the world was made right side up. Secondly, That it has been turned wrong side up. And thirdly, That it is now to be turned upside down; then it will be right side up again." Here he had the main doctrines of every old-fashioned Methodist sermon directly in his way. First, man was created holy; secondly, he has fallen; and thirdly, he is redeemed by Christ, and must be regenerated by the Holy Ghost; then came the exhortation to sinners to "repeat and be converted."

The sermons of Mr. Bidlack were plain expositions of Scripture, and manifested a thorough knowledge of the Bible, and considerable acquaintance with the writings of Wesley and Fletcher. He was sometimes argumentative, always earnest, and not infrequently truly pathetic. We have heard him preach most excellent, not to say great sermons. He often came out in his happiest style at camp-meetings and at conference, when it seemed that the circumstances by which he was surrounded affected him somewhat, as did the sound of the battle when he fought for the liberties of his country. He was respectably read in theology and history, although his early opportunities did not afford him the means of even a thorough English education. On one occasion it was his lot to follow a very finished speaker, and the natural impression upon his mind was, that there would be a great contrast between the elegant diction of the brother who had just taken his seat, and his old-fashioned, plain style of speaking; he, however, flung off all embarrassments, and set himself right with the audience by dryly remarking: "I don't understand grammar as you fix it now-a-days; but I suppose I can tell you some plain truth, in plain language." His "plain truth " took, and the old-fashioned preacher soon felt that he was appreciated by his hearers.

"Father Bidlack," for such we shall style him hereafter, was upon the superannuated list for twenty-five years; and during most of this period he was able to preach frequently, and he took a lively interest in all the movements of the Church. He preached a great many funeral sermons, and often these discourses were the very soul of sympathy. His words of comfort to the bereaved mother, when called to part with her idolized babe, were "as ointment poured forth." These occasions laid hold of his heart-strings, and often wrung from his eyes a flood of tears. But while he felt at his heart's core and wept, his tremulous voice fell upon the ear and the heart of grief as soothingly as angel whispers. "Dear, bereaved mother," he would say, "the Saviour says, 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' O you will meet and embrace your dear babe on the other side of Jordan. Don't mourn that your loved one has become a cherub, is glorified in heaven, and is in the arms of Jesus."

It has often been said of Bishop Asbury that "he was mighty in prayer." The same might be said of Father Bidlack; but it can be said more emphatically that he was mighty in praise. His "Glory to God!" had in it a power which was unusual. There are many still alive who recollect a most unearthly



scene which occurred at a camp-meeting near Rice's, in what is now called Truxville, in the summer of 1825. The saving power of God was eminently present from the very commencement to the close of the meeting. The first service was crowned with the conversion of souls; and while the tents were being taken down, and the people were dispersing, scores were engaged in prayer before the stand, and more than a score were earnestly seeking salvation. At a particular stage of this meeting Father Bidlack became almost entranced. Many of his neighbors and acquaintances, young and old, had been converted, and the work was rushing on with the power and sublimity of a tornado. The veteran soldier of the cross had won so many battles, and now seeing the cross waving in triumph over such masses, with a prospect of still moving on in its conquests indefinitely, he felt that it was a fit occasion for exultation. With his staff in his hand he moved out of his tent, and walked across the ground, apparently unconscious of the presence of any human being, shouting aloud: "Glory to God! Glory to God in the highest!" The noise of prayer and praise arising from hundreds, seemed for the moment to settle down to a murmur; all listening with unspeakable pleasure to the solemn thundering tones of praise and triumph of the old hero of the cross. Tears flowed, hearts throbbed, then again burst forth a volley of praise from the multitude, which almost made the foundations of the neighboring mountains tremble. It was a solemn, a glorious, a holy, and a heavenly scene; such a scene as we scarcely hope to witness again upon this earth. O it was a green spot in the history of many, very many, either now living on earth or glorified in heaven! It was a scene worth crossing oceans, worth a life of toil and suffering to witness. Tears of gratitude flow while faithful memory recalls it, and the pen is attempting, but in a feeble way, to transfer the impression to the minds of others.

At the time of the session of the Oneida Conference, in Wilkesbarre, in 1843, Father Bidlack was in second childhood. He wished to see the conference once more, and was, by his son, brought to the church and conducted in. We met him at the door, and supported him while he proceeded the altar. He took the bishop's hand, but the fire of his eye had departed: instead of joyous greeting, there was little expression, his countenance, and his eyes exhibited a vacant stare. His hearing was imperfect; and his head becoming dizzy, he was soon obliged to retire. "The strong men bow themselves, and all the daughters of music are brought low."

The few last years of the life of our subject were years of suffering and comparative inactivity. He was afflicted with a cancer in his nose, which made gradual progress until it became a source of much pain, and it is probable that it finally shortened his days. He died in peace on November 27, 1845, in the eighty-seventh year of his age. Here our story ends, where ends the history of all human beings. The patriot, the Christian, and the Methodist preacher, after a long life of severe discipline, during which he won laurels from his country, and gained stars for his crown in the day of his rejoicing, finally triumphed over the terrors of the grave, and went to his great reward.

## EARLY METHODISM

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By **George Peck**

#### **NATHANIEL LEWIS AND JOE SMITH**

Nathaniel Lewis, a local deacon, was rough as a mountain crag, but deeply pious. He could read his Bible, and fathom the human heart, particularly its developments among backwoodsmen. He was fearless, shrewd, and often witty. His labors were incessant and widely extended. Rev. F. Goodell says: "Obtaining information of a place where there had been no religious worship, some distance from his place of residence, he visited the place. He went from house to house inviting the people to come out to meeting. He took for his text: 'Ye uncircumcised in heart and ear, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.' Many were pricked in the heart, a great revival followed, and seventy souls, who were happily converted to God, dated their conviction from that sermon."

In the year 1812 there was a great scarcity of provisions in the neighborhood. On one Sabbath morning Mr. Lewis was reading his Bible preparatory to preaching, when a deer came near his house. He laid down his Bible, and taking down his gun shot the deer, dressed it, and divided the meat among his neighbors. He was called to an account before the Church for a breach of the Sabbath. He pleaded not guilty. He asked the brethren who were gravely remonstrating with him: "What do you suppose the Lord sent that deer into my field for?" "Well, I suppose it was to try you," one gravely answered. "No it wasn't," replied the accused, "for the Lord knows that when he sends blessings to me I don't wait till the next day before I take them." They finally let him pass without even a confession.

He was once preaching to a congregation who were disposed to behave disorderly. He bore it for a while, and then came out upon them with an entirely novel reproof. "You are," said he, "a hogmatical set." One of his fellow local preachers happening to be present, after the service was over, and they had retired, gently hinted that he had committed an error in the use of the novel word.

"What do you mean?" demanded the old preacher.

"Why," answered his friend, "hogmatical is not a proper word."

"Yes it is," replied the preacher; "you have heard of the word dogmatical, I suppose?"

"O yes, but--"

"Well," interrupted the old fox, "you can shame a dog, but a hog you can't."

The explanation, of course, ended the controversy. This same "Uncle Nat Lewis" was a most useful preacher, and the instrument of the awakening and conversion of many souls.

Joe Smith, the Mormon prophet, married a niece of Mr. Lewis. After the story of the golden Bible and the miracle-working spectacles had come out, Joe undertook to make a convert of "Uncle Nat." The old gentleman heard his tale with due gravity, and then proceeded: "Joseph, can anybody else translate strange languages by the help of them spectacles?"

"O yes!" was the answer.

"Well now," said Mr. Lewis, "I've got Clarke's Commentary, and it contains a great many strange languages; now, if you will let me try the spectacles, and if by looking through them I can translate these strange tongues into English, then I'll be one of your disciples."

This was a poser, and the only way Joe had to escape from "Uncle Nat's" net was to get away and run.

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#### **EBENEZER WHITE**

1812. This year Ebenezer White and Ralph Lanning were appointed to Otsego circuit. Mr. White had the reputation of a revivalist of the old stamp. It was said that he always had revivals, but it was not by clap-trap, or eccentricities, or even protracted meetings, for they were not then known, that he produced revivals; but by the old apostolic Methodist method of preaching the truth in simplicity and earnestness, and everywhere breathing the spirit of holiness.

When Father White came on the tone of religious fervor began to rise immediately. The old devout members in the Middlefield class talked of his first sermon as a feast of fat things. The sermon was on a week-day afternoon, and few of the young people heard it; but the earnest conversation about it on the part of the Church members created an interest in their minds and a desire to hear the great preacher.

On his second or third round Mr. White visited the house of Mr. Peck, the class-leader. While Betsy was combing his long black hair, and the younger members of the family were timidly skulking in corners, where they might hear what was said without being observed, the apostolic man began to catechise the class-leader.

"How many of your children have been converted, brother?"

"Only the one combing your hair, among those who live at home," was the answer.

"Do you pray in your family?"

"I do."

"Do you pray for your children?"

"I try."

"Have you given them to God in baptism?"

"Only that part of them born in Connecticut"

"Why have you not had the others baptized?"

The answer was simple and straightforward. "After coming to this country I lived for some years in a careless way, and thought but little about it, and now some of them are growing up in sin and are not fit subjects of baptism." Sundry of the children felt, That means me. After some godly council to parents and children, which the occasion demanded, and a fervent prayer, the venerable man departed; but the words he had spoken were like nails fastened in a sure place.

Soon after the new preacher had left Mr. Peck's house, Polly, a little girl of about eleven years, came to her mother in tears and asked her if she was "too wicked to be baptized." The answer was: "If you wish to be baptized, and will repent of your sins, and pray for mercy, and try to be good, Father White will baptize you." The dear child began to read the Bible, and weep and pray in secret. Andrew, about thirteen, conversing with his sister, caught her spirit and followed her example. The next Sabbath evening in the prayer-meeting the two children knelt and wept aloud. They were commended to God in the prayers of the members of the Church, and received comfort to their wounded hearts. A conversation with Andrew on the next day melted our hard heart, and we became deeply penitent.

From this beginning the work spread, and the children of the Methodist families shared largely, in the reviving influence. When Father White came around the next time we were all ready for the baptism. He preached a glorious sermon on Heb. xi, 24: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," etc. After the sermon a large number of adults and infants were baptized, and all who desired were received on probation in the Church. We, children of Methodist parents, Blairs, McAllums, Greens, Pecks, and Ricters, were a class by ourselves, and a happy company were we.

The fire spread over the circuit. The same mode of visiting which we have described was pursued elsewhere with the same success, and an army of recruits was gathered into the Church before the first quarterly meeting for the year. That quarterly meeting was in a barn in Minden, in the month of December, and a warm time it was in the old barn, although it was severely cold without. On the stage were William Case, Ebenezer White, Ralph Lanning, and Jonathan Huestis, all now safely landed on the blessed shore.

Whenever Father White came round we had a pentecost. He drew large congregations, and great power attended his ministrations; and by the members of the Church, young and old, he was almost idolized.

This conference year, in the month of May, Ebenezer White finished his course. He died suddenly of a prevailing disease, and literally "ceased at once to work and live." Those who had been brought to God during the year felt themselves almost orphans, and were ready to exclaim like Elisha when Elijah went to heaven in a chariot of fire: "My father! my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." This man held so prominent a position in the Genesee Conference, and exerted so wide an influence in the Church, that something more than a passing notice is necessary to do justice to his memory.

Ebenezer White was one of the first class of Methodist preachers raised in the interior. Although he died at the age of forty-two, such was the gravity of his character, and his paternal solicitude for

the lambs of the flock, that for some years previous to his death he was called by all classes "Father White".

Mr. White was a native of Blanford, Massachusetts, and was born May 18, 1770. He was converted to God, and became a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the twenty-fourth year of his age, soon after the first entrance of the Methodist preachers into the field which we are endeavoring to explore. We believe he was a man of family before he was converted; and although he soon began to feel the burden of souls hanging upon his heart, manifested gifts for public speaking, and received license first to exhort and then to preach, yet he did not enter upon the work of an itinerant preacher until he had officiated in a local capacity for several years. The prospect of a meager support for a growing family, the necessity of being absent from home nearly all the year round, or of removing from circuit to circuit, and then finding no parsonage, were difficulties which staggered his faith, and called for very serious deliberation before he could consent to devote himself wholly to the work of the ministry.

He felt the woe of Paul upon him; but when he felt the sympathies of a husband and a father, saw his reluctant companion shrinking from the heavy responsibilities of training up her children and meeting their wants, with the small aid which a traveling preacher could afford in those days, he was ready to say, "Lord send by whom thou wilt send, but not by me." He sought to satisfy his conscience by preaching on the Sabbath, and laboring with his hands through the week to supply the wants of his family. This course, however, he came finally to see was not in the order of God. As a chastisement for disobedience to the call of duty, as he ever supposed and often said, he received an injury in his thigh by the fall of a tree from which he never fully recovered. While writhing under the pain of a fractured limb, but more deeply distressed in his conscience under a sense of the divine displeasure, he made a solemn vow to God, that if he would raise him up he would devote himself wholly to the work of saving souls.

The Lord mercifully heard the prayer of his servant, and so far restored him that he was able to enter upon the active duties of a traveling preacher. In 1802 he was admitted on trial, and stationed on Mohawk and Herkimer circuits, with Benjamin Bidlack and John Husselkus. This field can now scarcely be defined, but we suppose it must have embraced nearly the entire Mohawk Valley, with considerable territory south and north.

Mr. White's residence was some three miles north of Cazenovia. Here he left his wife and children when he went to his first circuit, and it is believed that he never removed them. Having made for his family the best provision possible under the circumstances, he committed them to the care of a gracious Providence, and went to his field of labor with the utmost cheerfulness. It may be proper here to give a list of his circuits, that it may be seen what fields he cultivated. His first circuit was Herkimer and Mohawk, the second Chenango, the two following years Pompey; this charge embraced his residence. His fifth appointment was Scipio, sixth and seventh Westmoreland, eighth Herkimer, as a supernumerary; ninth and tenth Chenango, and eleventh Otsego.

From this view of his appointments it will be seen that Mr. White traveled over the whole territory of the present Oneida Conference, and was on the largest portion of it two years. All this was done in eleven years, and without removing his family.

According to our information Mrs. White was a feeble and timid woman. We saw her once some time after her husband's death. We believe it was her choice to remain at her humble but comfortable cottage with her little ones, and endure the long absences of her husband, rather than run the hazard of an almost annual removal. It was a hard lot, but she endured it with the fortitude of a Christian. She was often asked by her little ones, "Why does papa go away, and leave us so much?" On one occasion she replied: "Ask him, and perhaps he will tell you." Accordingly, when he was about to depart, the little things came around him with countenances full of solicitude and sobbed out: "Papa, why do you go away and leave us and poor mamma alone so much?" The man of God paused, and calling them all around him, he proceeded to give them a formal explanation. Said he: "The people in this world are most of them wicked, and if they die in their wickedness they will go to the bad place. God has called me to preach the Gospel to them and get them converted, so that they may go to heaven. It is a dreadful thing for people to sin against God and be lost. O would you not be sorry to have all the poor sinners cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and remain there forever?"

This talk brought about an entire change in the feelings of the little group, one after another saying: "Papa, you may go and preach to the wicked people, and get them converted, and we will stay home with mamma, and will be good, and say our prayers when we go to bed and when we get up. Mamma prays for you very much when you are gone." The apostolic man, always able to command his feelings, was nearly overcome this time; but he rallied and bid the little circle good-by, and went on his way with new zeal. After several weeks' absence he returned, and when he rode up to the door of his house the first salutation from the little band was: "O papa has come! Papa, have you get any sinners converted this time?" What a reception was this! What a question! This eminent servant of God gave this beautiful incident in love-feast the last year of his life. And after repeating the question with which he was met by his little children, being much affected; he added: "Thank God I could tell them that sinners had been converted."

Ebenezer White, in his time, was a great man and a great Christian. As a Christian he is exactly described in these words of the apostle: "Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." His spirit and presence, saying nothing of his burning words, constituted the severest reproof to impenitent sinners and lukewarm professors. Religion with him was a serious business, and an earnest and hearty manifestation of the life of God in the soul. To the casual observer his piety might seem characterized by an excess of gravity; but those who were favored with a near approach to him, whether old or young, rich or poor, would receive a quite contrary impression. His heart was tender, his spirit kind, and his manners familiar and conciliatory. He often did reprove delinquents with great plainness of speech; but the weak and the wounded, the youthful and inexperienced, always found in him a sympathizing friend.

His prayers were the most perfect specimens of simple, earnest, and believing pleadings with God that can be imagined. They were always pertinent, and seemed to reach every particular case. He was always in the spirit of prayer, his mouth always filled with appropriate words, ready to speak to God without circumlocution, and almost without introduction. On one occasion, when the presiding elder, Rev. William Case, was opening love-feast by prayer, his feelings became so excited that he paused and gave vent to his tears. All hearts were melted and mingled in holy sympathy. A moment elapsed and the voice of Father White was heard. He took up the train of thought where Mr. Case left it, and

proceeded for several minutes in the most earnest and devoted strain of supplication; then, on closing a sentence, he paused, and Mr. Case resumed the thread of the prayer and closed. There was a most glorious unity in the prayer, for there was really but one prayer made, although the two took a part in it.

Father White was a most excellent preacher. His sermons were luminous expositions of divine truth, faithful warnings, or encouraging invitations, according to the circumstances and wants of his audience. His manner was solemn and impressive. An unction attended his discourses which told upon the hearts of all, and brought crowds to hear him. Perhaps he was as striking an instance as modern times have furnished of the real attractions of an earnest spirit, united with good sense, in giving utterance to the simple truths of the Bible. The worst reprobates would hang upon his lips in breathless silence while he poured upon them a tide of rebukes and warnings.

If there was anything in his sermons which seemed to contemplate awakening in his hearers feelings of curiosity or a love of novelty, it was his frequent use of metaphors and allegories. His taste inclined him to discuss the types and figures of the Old Testament. He studied them thoroughly, and constructed sermons upon them which produced wonderful impressions and excited a world of remark. A key to this tendency of mind, and the great ability with which it was managed, was given us by Father Bidlack. These men were kindred spirits and intimate friends. We once observed to Father Bidlack that Ebenezer White was great on the types. The old gentleman answered: "Yes, and well he might be, for he committed to memory the whole of McEwen's book on the types, so that I believe he could repeat it all verbatim." Here he doubtless found the substratum of his great sermons on Moses, Joseph, the good Samaritan, and several portions of Solomon's Song which were such mighty instruments of good, and are still in the grateful recollections of some who linger upon the shores of time.

Perhaps this may be set down as an instance of the influence of one book. One book thoroughly mastered may form a character, and even make a man of mark. A man who has thoroughly mastered one great book, and made its great thoughts his own, will really know more, and possess higher qualifications for usefulness than the one who has galloped through a hundred volumes without receiving a definite impression from one of them.

In labors Mr. White was more abundant. He seldom disappointed a congregation, and often taxed his strength severely by attending to extra calls where he saw openings for usefulness. Excessive labors and, exposure frequently caused inflammation in his diseased limb, which not infrequently made it necessary for him to preach standing upon his knees, on a pillow in a chair, and sometimes sitting. On such occasions he would seem to preach with the same freedom and as much power as when He was in the best possible condition for his work.

In addition to his daily sermons, meeting classes, visiting, and long rides, he found time to attend to the children. He formed them into classes for catechetical instruction, using that excellent little primer, the Scripture Catechism. He had an uncommon sympathy with children, and was able not only to adapt his instructions to their understandings, but to make them attractive. He could completely possess himself of the heart of a child, and his familiar illustrations were among the last things ever to be forgotten.



Father White was far removed from all tendency to rant or extravagance in his language, yet he often shouted aloud the praises of God. Brother G. Lane once related to us the fact, that, after asking a blessing at table, Mr. White became so filled with the Spirit that he could neither eat nor restrain his feelings; and hence he employed himself in what was to him far more agreeable than his necessary food, walking the floor and giving glory and praise to God.

Rev. William Jewett related to us an incident illustrative of the depth of Mr. White's religious feelings. While on Chenango circuit he preached in a neighborhood of Baptists, who were much opposed to what was often called "the Methodist power." phrase refers to that loss of the power of voluntary motion which was common among the Methodists of those days. They said, however, that "if Elder White should have the power we would believe in it." When he was preaching in that place on a certain occasion he became powerfully excited, and was seized with a strange sensation, which pervaded his whole system. He felt confident that he should soon fall prostrate upon the floor, and he shrank from the idea as being calculated to injure his influence, and consequently to restrict his usefulness. He paused for moment and then ejaculated: "Stay thy hand, O God!" The nervous tremor subsided, but darkness succeeded, and he was sorely embarrassed through the rest of his sermon. His subsequent opinion was that he ought to have left God to work in his own way, whatever the consequences might have been. This is an incident similar to one recorded of Mr. Fletcher, followed by similar impressions.

Ebenezer White died on the 9th of May, 1813, at the house of Abram Lippert Hartwick. Three days before his departure he preached a powerful sermon from Hebrews iv, 9: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

The next quarterly meeting after the death of the venerable White took place at Middlefield, in McAllum's barn. Rev. Charles Giles then preached a funeral sermon on the occasion, of great power, from Rev xv, 3: "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!" It was a time of weeping, of mingled sorrow and joy. Mr. Giles had traveled with Father White four years, and well knew his worth. Rev. Seth Mattison published an elegy on the occasion, which, in sweet poetic strains, celebrated the virtues and the triumphs of the great and good man.

The late Rev. Abner Chase says of Mr. White: "He was unquestionably one of the most used men ever connected with the Genesee Conference. Holiness was his theme in public and in private. But he was not one of those who profess and talk of holiness, and then disgrace or contradict their profession by irritability and peevishness, or by trifling and vain conversation, or by exalting themselves and denouncing others. He was humble, gentle, and of a meek and quite spirit; and his profession of holiness as not in word and tongue only, but was most forcibly proclaimed by his spirit and life. His manners were plain, yet dignified; his style in preaching was chaste, manly, and solemn. He aimed to inform the judgment and win the heart; and probably few have succeeded better in accomplishing this object."

Much more to the same purpose may be found in the "Pioneer," by R. Charles Giles. Abner Chase and Charles Giles both were Ebenezer White's junior colleagues in 1811 on Chenango circuit.

## EARLY METHODISM

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By **George Peck**

#### **ONEIDA DISTRICT IN 1817**

The following is an account of the work of God on the district in 1817:

"In September last we held a camp-meeting on Litchfield circuit; the season being cold and rainy, rendered our situation in the tented wilderness very unpleasant; but these gloomy circumstances did not impede the work of grace: both preachers and people were zealously affected in the good cause from day to day. At the close of the meeting about one hundred souls were found who professed to know that their sins were forgiven. Indeed, all our camp-meetings have been attended with glorious consequences: hundreds are now rejoicing that they ever saw those consecrated groves, where they were awakened to see their vileness, and where they first felt the renovating power of grace.

"In the revivals on Black River circuit the preachers have added three hundred members to the Church this year; and it is worthy of notice, that one of the subjects who has a place among them is a young man both deaf and dumb, who had a very remarkable view of the glory of heaven and the misery of hell, which he communicated to me and to others by certain expressive signs. He appeared very happy and devoted to God. Another subject of this work was a man who had been a long time in despair: for several years he had wholly neglected his temporal concerns, but in the revival his bands were broken, and his soul released from the power of sin and Satan. On a memorable evening succeeding a quarterly meeting on Westmoreland circuit, twenty-three souls were brought into the kingdom of grace. To God be all the glory!

"At a certain time on Otsego circuit an effort was made to illustrate and enforce this text: 'As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.' The assembly was large and very attentive, and while the discourse was coming to a close there was a wonderful move among them: the Spirit of God was evidently working on the hearts of the people. After the exercise was closed, as we were descending the pulpit stairs, I saw an aged man coming toward the altar with an anxious appearance; as I moved toward him he grasped my hand and earnestly inquired, 'Is there any mercy for such a sinner as I am?' I pointed to the Bible which lay on the desk, and assured him that it contained many promises for sinners; then with greater earnestness he seized my hand with both of his and said: 'Is it possible that such an old sinner can find mercy!' I continued to show him that God would save all who come to him through Jesus Christ. This moving event caused many in the congregation to wait. The aged penitent stood there in a state of bodily and mental agitation till he was requested to kneel at the altar. Then the congregation was invited to attend to the opening of a season of prayer in behalf of the subject at the altar. The exercise commenced immediately, and while our prayers were being offered for the aged sinner, others felt the same convincing influence of the Holy Spirit, and began to cry for mercy likewise; soon the mingled voices of prayer and lamentation filled the house. The scene was truly affecting. While some lay helpless under the

overpowering operations of the Holy Spirit, others stood weeping around them; parents and children, husbands and wives were mingled in the scene; they were mourning and rejoicing, singing and shouting, but fortunately there was no confusion in the house, no one was there to oppose. Jehovah reigned and wrought, and all was right and all was good.

"From the time of the commencement of this work, which was about three o'clock in the afternoon, there was no cessation till eleven o'clock that night. Eight souls were converted, still some went away sorrowing under the burden of their sins; soon afterward they came into the kingdom of grace rejoicing. Some where converted that day were triflers in the morning. How wonderful are the works of God!

"One thousand members have been added to the Church this year on our district, but in consequence of numerous removals to the western country, the Minutes will show an increase of only seven hundred and forty."

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#### **A TRIP TO QUARTERLY MEETING IN OLDEN TIMES**

"In the spring of 1814 my father attended a quarterly meeting at Painted Post, in the northern part of Pennsylvania. His next was eighty miles distant, and the streams were so high that it was impossible for him to go the usual route across the wilderness.

"Should he remain where he was, or make an attempt to attend the quarterly meeting?

"Very proper inquiries, but somewhat difficult to answer, for the best of reasons -- he did not know how he should get to it. He pondered the matter some time without arriving at any conclusion.

"He, however, had his horse made ready for a start, and mounting him, rode to Tioga Point, where he met with Brother Minier, who was going down the river with lumber. He invited my father to go down with him on his raft.

"Accordingly he embarked with his horse and baggage. The raft was pushed out into the stream, and they were fairly on their way, floating with the swift current down the majestic Susquehanna in a very short space of time, sweeping now under the shadows of the trees along the shore, which were just putting on their spring dress, and anon over the broad, glassy surface, where the bright sunlight was reflected most dazzlingly on the water.

"The majestic river, through its whole course, is accompanied by ranges of hills and mountains, which renders the scenery grand, wild, and majestic to an extraordinary degree; for the abrupt and lofty precipices plainly indicate where the pent-up waters have forced their way through the rocky barriers. For several miles the chafed and troubled stream literally fills the narrow chasm which, in the northern part of Luzerne county, constitutes the valley of the Susquehanna, there not being space sufficient for the track of the wild deer along the sides of the steep declivities. Then the highlands fall off from their abruptness, and recede to a greater distance, so that the valley is broader; and islands more beautiful than any in the world here and there divide the unruffled stream.

"The Susquehanna has been called a most beautiful summer river; but when swollen by winter torrents there are no bounds to its furious raging. In the depth of winter it freezes over from its rise to its mouth; and as snow falls to a great depth on the mountains among which it winds its devious course, when the spring thaws come on the ice is broken up, and sweeps everything before it to destruction. Fences, and bridges, and even buildings are carried away by these sudden breakings up; the trees along its banks are often cut asunder by the immense sheets of ice. Rafts are often exposed to great danger by the swift current, and by encountering breakers and shoals.

"The first night the company landed at a place that is now called Skinner's Eddy. At that time there were a few log-houses scattered about, and a tavern. The ax-bearing pioneer was reclaiming the wilderness round about.

"There were so many companies got in before them that it was near midnight before their turn came to eat supper. It was rather scanty fare, for the table had been cleared, and the landlady said her cupboard had been gleaned of every thing eatable -- that she had done the best she could for them.

"There was a woman at the house that knew my father; she had seen him at quarterly meeting; she placed a large arm-chair in the corner by the fire, and told him to take that, for there was no bed to be had. They were all taken up before their company came in. The floor was covered with men stretched out on buffalo skins and overcoats; and it took some time to adjust bodies and limbs so as to afford to each one some faint chance of securing slumber.

"My father passed the night most restlessly in his armchair, in the midst of a score or two of most musical nasal organs, and in the morning embarked again on the rapid river; and in appreciation of the scenery, doubly beautiful in the early morning, he forgot the discomfort of the night.

"The second night they landed at a settlement not far from Wilkesbarre. They were more fortunate this time, and got in before the greater part of the raftsmen, and had an early supper and a plentiful one. The hostess was a Dutch woman, and she was very suspicious of the Yankees. There had been so many tricks played upon her by the raftsmen that she watched them closely, and would not allow them to leave the table until they had paid for their supper.

"When it came the turn for our party to eat my father asked a blessing, and when they had finished their supper Brother Minier, who was a local preacher, returned thanks. The hostess looked perfectly astonished. She said nothing to them about paying before they left the table. They got the beds that night and slept well.

"In the morning when they settled their bill she said if all the raftsmen that stopped there behaved as well as their company she would have but little trouble. How true it is that there is never anything lost by acknowledging Him who is the protector of our lives everywhere and in all places. Prayer has its influence upon the roughest people, and softens many difficulties, and smooths many rough places.

"The fourth day they reached Northumberland. Here the noble river receives the water of its sister stream, the west branch, and after the union continues its course southward. Here my father left the raft. In going on shore they nearly met with an accident. The shore was so crowded as to make it difficult to land. Their raft got jammed between two others that were in motion, and such a cracking as the ribs of their raft made proved the sense she felt of injury. Luckily one of the rafts hauled off; or they would have been crushed most certainly.

"The next morning my father mounted his horse and rode on to his quarterly meeting, which was forty miles distant. On his way he overtook a man, a Dutchman, and they rode on some distance

together, chatting very pleasantly. They passed a church just as they were entering a quiet little village. My father inquired of him what church it was.

"It is a Lutheran church," he replied.

"Is there no order of Christians here but Lutherans?" he inquired again.

"Yes, dere is some Presbyterians and some Methodis."

"Ah, are there many Methodists about here?"

"Not a great many; dese Methodis are a pad beople. Is dare any of dem up where you come from?"

"Yes, a good many; but what makes them such a bad people?"

"Why, dey tells lies; dey say dey can live mitout sin, but they can't, dough."

"If they say they can, when they cannot, they must be a very bad people, sure enough. But what do you say to such a passage of Scripture," quoting it.

"If I furstood de English I would meet you dare."

My father quoted another passage.

"I tell you I don't furstand de English; I can read only de Dutch. I say dase Methodis are a pad beople, dey quarrels mit everybody dey meets along de road. I am a Luteran, and you are a Methodis, and I an't going to tell you what I be, so dare, now."

"He whipped up his horse and rode on, and left his Methodist friend to pursue his journey alone.

"His quarterly meeting was on Lycoming circuit. It was held in a barn, and the meeting was highly favored of the Lord. In those days there was seldom a quarterly meeting held where there were not souls converted. The Methodists would attend from every part of the circuit. Twenty, or thirty, and even fifty miles was not so far off but they would make an effort to attend, and look upon it as a great privilege to go to quarterly meeting. They would come on horseback through the woods, and from the settlements and towns in their great old-fashioned wagons, drawn by oxen very often, and crowded full; sometimes they would come down the river in canoes. They came with their hearts alive to God, and every one was ambitious of excelling in getting nearest to, and in doing most for God and truth.

"Consequently many sinners were converted before the meeting closed. Such exhortations and prayers, such shouting, for old-fashioned Methodists would shout. Their thorough enjoyment, their genuine tokens of holy delight, their ready responses, always expressed in a hearty manner, bore the preacher onward to success. To preach tamely before such an audience would be an impossibility.

No Christian could slumber in such a vivifying atmosphere, no aspirations become weary, no ardor grow cold.

"During the preaching on the Sabbath there was such a peal of shouts broke out from the audience, that a schoolteacher, seated in the bay-loft, who had lately come into the place, and who thought himself a little above par, was so startled that he sprang from his seat, and down he came, heels over head, right in the midst of the congregation, knocking several off their seats, and raising quite a commotion. This frightened the fellow still more.

"Where's my hat -- my hat," said he; but no hat appeared, and he made a bound for the door.

"Lord have mercy on him, and alarm him to some purpose," cried a good old gray-headed brother.

"Amen," rang out from a score of voices.

"At this the poor fellow was so frightened that he fell prostrate, and they had to carry him out.

"The meeting proceeded with its usual interest; the interruption was only for a minute or two, and the preachers in those days were so accustomed to interruptions and criticisms, expressing gratification or displeasure in very decided terms that it seldom confused them. Such expressions as, 'That's the truth,' 'I believe it,' 'It's so;' and occasionally, 'I don't believe that,' would echo from some part of the audience.

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#### **PROVIDENTIAL ESCAPE**

"It was in the gloomy month of November that my father was on his way to attend a quarterly meeting in the northern part of his district. He expected to have reached Dr. Grant's, on the hills, some three or four miles from Oxford, before night. He was a stranger, and unacquainted with the country. Night was closing in, and he was riding slowly along through the thick forest, scarcely knowing what direction to take. At length he came to where several wood roads branched off in different directions. He stopped and cast an inquiring and eager gaze around, but he saw no alternative except to make choice of one of the roads and go on; but he soon found that he had missed his way.

"This is abominable," said he, as he pulled the reins to stop his tired beast; "I should be quite unwilling to make a supper for some hungry wolf or bear; it would be a most inglorious end to my journey; but perhaps there are no such prowlers here, and at all events it is a straight path; I can try it a mile or two, and if I see or hear nothing of the house I am in quest of I can return and try another road; it must be somewhere in this region; I'm sure I can't be far from it, so come on, my tired dapple."

"It was very dark, and he could only ride slowly, and with great caution, as the stumps of the trees often stood many feet high and much impeded his progress. He descended a tedious hill and crossed a stream of water; and after going on some distance farther, his horse came to a fell stop, and he could not urge him on. He got off his back to find out what the difficulty was, and he found, by feeling round, that a tree lay right across the path, and that his horse was completely wedged in among the limbs. He began to be seriously alarmed, and for a minute he was at a loss to know what to do, when the thought struck him that he would climb a tree, perhaps by so doing he might discover some signs of human beings. But suddenly a bright light shone through the underwood at no great distance. He threw the bridle around a limb, and springing over the tree, made his way toward it, and saw, to his delight, a comfortable-looking log house. He stepped quickly to the door and knocked.

"Come in," said a voice, and the traveler entered.

"Will you give me shelter for the night, sir," said he; "I think I must have lost my way, and my horse is worn out with this day's travel?"

"With pleasure, sir," was the reply.

"Upon inquiry he found to his joy that it was the house of Dr. Grant's son, and that the old gentleman lived near by. He procured a light, and Mr. Grant went with him for his horse, which was



getting very restive, for the rain was falling fast. It was with some difficulty they got the horse loose, and around the fallen tree, which had filled up the pathway entirely. Mr. Grant told the wearied preacher to go immediately to his father's, and he would take care of the tired beast.

"Soon after he had taken a seat by the comfortable fire Dr. Grant began asking him about the road, how far he had traveled, etc., etc. The preacher told him his route through the forest.

"Why," said the doctor, "you have come several miles out of the way. How did you get across the creek?"

"I crossed on the bridge," he replied.

"It can't be possible," said Dr. Grant. "That is an old foot bridge that has not been thought safe for a man to pass on for a long time."

"Well," said the preacher, "my horse brought me safe across. I did not know but it was a good bridge, for it was so dark that I could not see my horse's head, and I let him take his own course."

"How in the world your horse brought you safely across that old rotten stringpiece is certainly mysterious, The hand of Providence was most certainly in it, brother" said Dr. Grant.

"Mrs. Grant set out her table, and placed upon it the plain fare of the new country. The weary, hungry traveling preacher thought he never made a more delicious meal. This kind family eagerly exerted themselves to make him forget the dangers and discomforts of his journey, and taste the sweet solace of the hospitable hearth. It is easy to forget discomforts, or only so to remember them as to make them enhance the zest of brighter things that follow."

At the session of the Genesee Conference in 1814, Mr. Harmon says: "Bishop McKendree wished me to procure a horse for him, old Gray having seen his best days. I succeeded in getting a very valuable young horse, but he had never been properly broke to the saddle. As I had to accompany the bishop through my district, he wished me to take charge of his young horse and break him. Accordingly we made a pack-horse of my beast and I mounted the colt. He was a little headstrong at first, but a day's labor on the road sobered him down so that he became a very pleasant saddle-horse.

"After we had traveled about a week in company, the bishop insisted on mounting the colt. I tried to dissuade him, but it was in vain. He would have his own way, so we exchanged horses. He mounted the colt and seemed pleased with him. We had, however, traveled but a few miles when the colt took fright at the old gentleman's big white hat, as he took it in his hand, and threw him upon a pile of stones. The bishop received an injury in one of his hips from which he never fully recovered. I immediately went for assistance: I hired a one-horse lumber-wagon, and with a rope made a swing bed, and drove about ten miles to a very convenient place with a good Dutch Methodist family. I remained with him about a week and then left him in the care of the family. This was at the place known as the Warrior's Mark, in Pennsylvania, between Bellefonte and Pittsburgh."

In the journeyings of Bishops Asbury and McKendree through our territory many interesting incidents occurred which are remembered and related. Bishop Asbury was sometimes stern and almost testy. But he would, not infrequently, unbend himself and appear not only free in conversation but quite amusing.

He once came to Father Giles's, in Brookfield, through the rain, in company with Bishop McKendree and several presiding elders. George Harmon was the pilot. After leaving Saquoit Mr. Harmon called at a school-house for directions, and a young lady, the teacher, came to the door. In answer to his inquiries the lady told him that they must keep on down the river about four miles, and then turn to the right. They traveled on at least seven miles, and did not find the road which the young lady described. The bishop called out: "O George! George! you must look out for these girls, for I am quite sure one has deceived you this day!"

In due time the company reached "the preachers' home," and Bishop Asbury took his seat in an arm-chair, but soon hastily arose and called "Betsy," who had taken great pains to seat him on a fine cushion. "Here," said he, "you girl! what have you put pins in my chair for?" Half frightened out of her wits, Betsy said she was sorry indeed if there were pins in the cushion, she knew not how it had happened. She examined the cushion, and others examined it, and found no wicked pin sticking in it anywhere. The bishop took his seat again and was again disturbed. Upon farther examination he found the annoying little instrument was in the skirt of his coat, where he had put it himself to prevent it from being soiled by falling upon the sweaty side of his horse. "Where," said the bishop, "is that dear child I I must see her immediately!" Betsy was called, and she entered expecting another reproof for some cause, she could not tell what. But when she came the old gentleman said: 'O my dear child! will you please to forgive me for charging you with something which I did myself! That naughty pin was in my coat; I put it there myself and had forgotten to take it out. Pardon me, child, will you?' Betsy, who in her mind had accused the bishop with peevishness, and even rudeness, now returned, and with tears said to her mother: "What a blessed old man Bishop Asbury is! he has been asking my pardon."

After dinner Bishop McKendree sat in his chair with his fingers locked upon his breast in a meditative mood, while Bishop Asbury was walking the room interesting the preachers with stories. All at once he looked at Bishop McKendree, as though the difference between himself and his dignified colleague had just struck his mind. "I suppose," said he, "the people here will think that Bishop McKendree has a great deal more religion than I have, and so he has; but if I should be as sober as he is I should not live a month." The preachers laughed, while Bishop McKendree smiled, but made no reply.

On one occasion Bishop Asbury was traveling through the lake country with a company of preachers, among whom was Benjamin Bidlack, then a venerable, portly man. The company were to stop for refreshments at the house of a respectable Methodist. As they approached the place Bishop Asbury led the train. The gentleman saw them coming, and as he met the bishop he said: "You pass on, sir, and open the gate for the bishop;" and walking up to Father Bidlack he addressed him most respectfully: "Please alight, bishop, and I will order your horse to be taken care of and will bring in your saddlebags." By this time Bishop Asbury had sprung from his horse, opened the gate, and as the gentleman came along with his hand under the arm of the man whom he took for the

bishop, the man at the gate bowed respectfully saying, "Walk in bishop, I will see that all is right with your baggage." Father Bidlack did not object to an innocent joke and he preserved his gravity and acted the bishop until the merriment of some of the company broke over the barriers of strict etiquette and called for an explanation. The hospitable old gentleman at first was mortified at his mistake, but when he saw how it acted upon Bishop Asbury and amused the whole company he laughed as heartily as any of them.

Bishop Asbury was very infirm and yet performed a vast amount of labor. Although an invalid and a cripple, he rode thousands of miles on horseback over the most wretched roads, and often being subjected to the most wretched fare. From the Paris Conference, in 1811, he passed down through Pennsylvania, conducted by Gideon Draper through the Susquehanna district. He rode a pacing jade, carried his crutches, and when it rained he covered himself with a large cape of calf-skin, which extended below his knees. On the road between Oquaga and the Great Bend his leg became so painful that he stopped at a small log-house and bathed it with vinegar. They came to the Great Bend in the rain, and, as the bishop says in his Journal, "found shelter under the hospitable roof of Lawyer Catlin." Mr. Draper says: "Squire Catlin and his son literally took the bishop off from his horse and carried him into the house." The bishop lectured beautifully in the morning, to the admiration of his intelligent host, and greatly to the edification of all present. Indeed, in spite of his infirmities, he preached almost daily while passing so rapidly through the country.

Mr. Draper relates an interesting incident of the bishop at a conference in the city of Philadelphia. When the conference was about to adjourn the morning session the bishop remarked: "There will be no session of the conference this afternoon as I am to preach to the preachers' wives. When the hour arrived the preachers with their wives were present. In his discourse the venerable man drew a vivid picture of the privations and sufferings of the preachers. This of course deeply affected the ladies. He then turned to the peculiar trials and hardships of the preachers' wives, and took occasion to point out to the preachers the manner in which they should treat their wives. "It was," says Mr. Draper, "a melting time." The preachers and their wives, and all others present, wept freely, and the parties for whose benefit the discourse was designed resolved to be more brave and more patient under their peculiar trials.

## EARLY METHODISM

### **Within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference From 1788 to 1828** Sketches of Interesting Localities, Exciting Scenes and Prominent Actors

By **George Peck**

**JOSIAH KEYES**

Josiah Keyes was born in Canajoharie, New York, December 3, 1799. He was received on trial in the Genesee Conference in 1820. He was twice elected to the General Conference, and died April 22, 1836. When that body was in session in Cincinnati we learned that our dear friend had gone home. As he was about to leave the world he said: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

He was a man of an earnest spirit and unaffected piety, and was a successful preacher. The characteristics of his mind were marked by strength, patient investigation, and perseverance in application to study. He had an unconquerable thirst for knowledge, and in its attainment overcame great difficulties.

Soon after he commenced the work of the ministry he formed a resolution to study the dead languages. He only had the opportunity of occasional assistance in his course, and was placed from year to year upon laborious circuits. Under all these disadvantages he proceeded first to the study of Latin. Then he studied Greek and Hebrew through the Latin. It was not many years before he became familiar with the Greek Testament and the Hebrew Bible, and had read nearly all the Greek and Latin classics.

Our acquaintance with his character and habits commenced in 1825, while he was stationed at Owego. He always had his Greek Testament at hand, and when he visited in families every interval of conversation was improved in reading Greek or Hebrew.

After he had once fairly mastered a principle he never lost it. He remembered words, and quoted and used what he had read with great facility. His knowledge of the classics, and of the best writers in the English language, enabled him to enrich his discourses with rare and beautiful illustrations. Upon controverted questions he referred to the original, and here he never failed to show himself a scholar.

Josiah Keyes was a powerful preacher. When in his happiest moods he would enchain a congregation for two hours together, and produce the most powerful impressions. He held the office of presiding elder for several years, and in presence of the great crowds at his quarterly meetings he was sure to come out in his best style, and then his eloquence was often overwhelming.

The subject of our sketch was artless, frank, and ingenuous, and in childlike simplicity had few equals. We once heard him debate the question of capital punishment before a debating club. He doubted the justice and expediency of capital punishment; but, to accommodate matters he took the affirmative. He constructed an argument which was so overwhelmingly conclusive that he won the

decision converted his opponents, and converted himself. He afterward ingenuously confessed that he had changed his mind; that the argument which he had advanced had reacted upon himself and won him over to the side which he had taken, not from conviction, but merely to carry on the discussion, as there was no one willing to take that side. Lawyers and doctors were opposed to him, but he was victorious in the argument, and then yielded to the force of his own logic.

Our friend had his eccentricities, and they were of the class which are often found in hard students. He was absent-minded and careless of appearances. We have seen him walk in the middle of a dusty street when there was a clean walk on each side. His horse and equipage always looked neglected, often were in a most horrible plight. When on Owego station he visited Deacon Mersereau, who was notoriously peevish.

"Brother Keyes," said he, "why don't you grease your carriage?" Keyes laughingly replied:

"Why, does it need greasing?"

"Need greasing! 'I should think so, when it squeaks so loud that it can be heard half a mile." "Come along now," added the deacon, "and I'll help you. It's a burning shame for a Methodist preacher to drive such a carriage."

Mr. Keyes really took time to go through the operation, and was much surprised to find what was the real condition of the parts which are exposed to friction and need frequent lubrications.

Mr. Keyes was a tall and rather majestic figure, but his walk was ungainly, and his manners generally quite unstudied, sometimes uncouth. His voice was coarse and heavy, and his movements in the pulpit were measured and often ungraceful, but were not artificial. They were the natural workings of an engine of great power, a soul convulsed with an irresistible tide of excitement. He had a keen black eye, black hair, a bilious complexion, and a staid, thoughtful countenance. See him alone, driving on the highway, or walking the streets, and you would take him at once for a man of study, and almost wholly abstracted from the objects and scenes around him. Speak to him pleasantly and he would smile; tell him something amusing and he would laugh. He was a pleasant companion, a true friend, a lover of good men, a brother of the race.

A noble specimen of a man was Josiah Keyes; by nature a great man, by grace an eminent Christian. He was cut down in the zenith of his usefulness; his powerful physical frame was early worn out by the over action of his mighty soul. He died in consequence of a derangement of the functions of the liver, brought on by exposure and excessive labor. He lived long enough to make his mark upon the mind of the age, and actually did the work of many years during his brief career.

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**GEORGE EVANS**

George Evans was of Welsh extraction. He was born in Milford, Pike county, Pennsylvania, January 31, 1790. It may be said that he had no opportunities for education until he was converted, and that was when he was nineteen years of age. Until that period he ran wild, never having learned to read, or scarcely ever having worn a shoe.

Religion aroused his manhood, and he immediately betook himself to the means of improvement which were within his reach. It was soon made evident that under a rough exterior was concealed a diamond, which under proper circumstances might be made to shine and sparkle among the brightest gems of genius.

He commenced exhorting his fellows to turn to God, and at the same time made excellent progress in learning to read the Scriptures. He was licensed as a local preacher, and the first knowledge we had of him he lived in a log-cabin near Hunt's Ferry, on the Susquehanna. Here he toiled for a living, running small rafts of rails and posts down to Wyoming, and there carrying on a little trade with the farmers.

In the spring of 1819, at the time of the last quarterly meeting for the year, we were seated on the stoop of the old Myers house, at Forty Fort, in company with Marmaduke Pearce and Mr. Myers. A stalwart, ill-clad raftsmen came up the bank of the river with his collar open, and his coat upon his arm. His feet were partially protected by an old pair of shoes tied up with bark; he wore no stockings. He was sun-burned and unshaved, with a brown linen shirt and pants of the coarsest fabric. And what did this rough looking mountaineer do but walk up to the presiding elder and Squire Myers, hold out his brawny hand, and address each with as much confidence and familiarity as if he had been a lawyer just from the city. He took a seat and talked freely, and made not the slightest apology for his appearance. He had brought a raft into the eddy, and evidently had made his calculations to be at the quarterly' meeting. On our way to church Mr. Pearce touched us with his elbow, and in an under tone said, "I intend to set George to exhorting after me." The sermon as usual was short, and George was called up into the high old-style pulpit and told to exhort. Nothing daunted, he proceeded. He soon fired up, and his words told upon the hearts of the people. He was generally known, and no great surprise was expressed; but all were pleased, and many a hearty "Amen" and "Glory to God" cheered on the rustic exhorter until his soul was in a perfect blaze. His language was lofty, and the power of his eloquence was overwhelming. Mr. Pearce wept and laughed together, and shook with emotion through his entire frame.

Mr. Evans was employed by the presiding elder to travel on Tioga circuit in 1824, and in 1825 was admitted on trial. When his probation expired he failed to satisfy the committee of his

knowledge of the prescribed course of study, and came near being dropped. The next year he came up to conference well prepared and was received.

He traveled twenty-four years, and was generally returned a second year. His range, with the exception of two years, was through the Susquehanna district, and wherever he was appointed he was received with open arms.

He was a man of reading and study, and finally became a thorough theologian and considerable of a scholar. On great occasions he sometimes broke out in strains of eloquence which astonished everybody. At camp-meetings he often preached the great sermon, which was matter of animated conversation for years. At night on a campground, when the pale moon began to peer above the horizon, and the stars were seen twinkling through the leaves of the trees, he would make his highest flights. On one occasion the star-bespangled arch of heaven was "God's chandelier;" and on another, after the most brilliant description of God's handiwork in marshaling the hosts of heaven, "the star-studded canopy was but the under side of God's temple."

George Evans had a great fiery Welsh soul. When folly on a blaze the flames ascended high, and excited mighty sympathies in the hearts of his entranced hearers. His voice at first was a little husky, but when fully brought out was like the sound of a trumpet.

He died January 25, 1849. His last words were: "My heavenly Father knows best what world to have me in; I enjoy a blessed peace, a perfect reconciliation."

The following truthful character of our subject has been prepared by Rev. Asa Brooks, one of his old colleagues:

"His personal appearance was not imposing. His dress was always plain, and evidently of home manufacture, and he was a little careless how it was put on. He rode an old horse, over which was usually thrown the old-fashioned saddle-bags well filled with books and articles of clothing. And as he rode along strangers would have taken him for a root doctor rather than a Methodist preacher of modern date. But those who knew him would recognize in that homely attired man in the distance, jogging along slowly and steadily on 'Old Roan,' the respected and loved pastor of Windsor circuit.

"As a pastor he had but few equals. His visits were usually short, but he contrived in a brief interview to leave a good religious impression on the mind of each member of the family. He was instructive, and hence the religious impressions made were lasting, being based upon some important truth impressed upon the memory.

"Faithful dealing with souls over whom the Holy Ghost had made him overseer, was a rule which he never violated, though occasionally in the discharge of duty he gave offense. At one of his appointments the wife of the class-leader was notorious for her habit of backbiting. Whenever the preacher called at her house he was compelled to listen for an hour or more to a recital of the wicked deeds of her neighbors, not one of them escaping. On one of his visits Father Evans had been listening to her a while, and his righteous soul became exceedingly vexed, and stepping up to her he exclaimed in a voice of authority: 'Woman, stop stop! don't you know that your tongue is too long?'

I advise you to cut it off this moment. Why, it is so long that it reaches to every one in the neighborhood, and stings them like an adder.' This silenced her. She left the room and ever after refused to see him. But we heard no more of the woman's scandal, and the society had peace the remaining part of the year. During the year we labored together we had a precious revival; and though it was not convenient for him to be present much at the extra meetings, he did great service by his visits at the right time and place, and so framing his discourse on the Sabbath as to help on the good work. He would also manage so to bring into exercise the gifts of the Church and young converts as to make them very useful. To his skill as a pastor may be attributed in a great degree the prosperity of the Church during that year.

"He drew large congregations, no small share of which was composed of the most intelligent classes. It was no uncommon thing for members of other Churches to leave their own ministry to hear him when it was his turn to preach. His style was somewhat peculiar. He had a rare faculty of illustrating and rendering instructive his discourses by important principles in science; and it was this, no doubt, that made the intelligent so eager to hear him.

"There was also an adaptation in his theme and method of treatment which could not fail to make his discourses useful. At one appointment the Scottite excitement had broken into the society and drawn off some of the members for the Church, and others were disaffected. We held an extra meeting in the neighborhood, which the disaffected and seceding brethren attended. In his discourse at this meeting Father Evans compared the Church to a well regulated household, where the mother, ever watchful over the welfare of her children, arranged everything in the best order possible for their comfort. He said: 'Children sometimes think they know more than their mother, and want to have things their own way. Sometimes when the mother is absent they will change the position of every article of furniture, so that when she returns she will hardly know that she is in her own house.' And then he spoke of the folly and ingratitude of such a course. He then made the application of the comparison instituted in such a way as to bear directly on the disaffected members present. This was all done with such a spirit and in such a manner as not to offend, while at the same time it had its designed effect. We lost no more members that year at this appointment, and those who had left ceased almost entirely their opposition to the Church which had nourished and brought them up.

"Father Evans sometimes made a failure in preaching, but never except when he was preaching to a small congregation. He needed the stimulus of a large and intelligent audience to bring out his powers. We held several grove meetings, and multitudes gathered to them. On these occasions his eloquence was overwhelming, and the vast assembly would leave the spot in breathless silence, unbroken save by the sobs of the stricken penitent."



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#### **MARMADUKE PEARCE**

Marmaduke Pearce was of Irish extraction. His ancestors were Protestant soldiers, who entered Ireland from England with the army of Cromwell in 1649. Receiving confiscated lands in part pay for military services, a portion of the family settled near Enniskillen, in the province of Ulster. In 1690 his great-grandfather, in company with eight brothers, entered the army of William III., and fought shoulder to shoulder with Huguenots and English Blues against the Catholic king, James II., at the celebrated battle of the Boyne.

The subject of this sketch was born at Paoli, Chester county, Pa., August 18, 1776, and was baptized in St. Peter's Church by its first pastor, Rev. William Currie, June 15, 1777.

Born in the midst of the Revolution. in a country constantly overrun by English soldiers, and which did not recover from the ravages of war for many years after peace was declared, he received little scholastic education; but having a taste for books and study, he improved himself until he became qualified to teach a country school. He excelled in penmanship, and when quite a young man was employed by the proper authorities to transcribe the records of Chester county, which occupied him about one year.

About the year 1805 he engaged with General Benner, an extensive iron-master in Center county, Pa., in the capacity of a book-keeper.

About the year 1808 the Methodist preachers preached at Benner's iron-works, near Bellefonte, Center county, Pa., when he became convicted, and after seeking the Lord for six months, during which time he lost sixty pounds of flesh, he was converted to God.

Soon after his conversion he was deeply impressed with a belief that it was his duty to preach the Gospel, and with this impression came a proposition from citizens of Bellefonte to teach the academy in that village, and for said service they would pay his board and give him five hundred dollars per annum. Here was a trial of his faith and the genuineness of his call to preach Jesus: to become a poor Methodist preacher and wander about from place to place, without receiving perhaps fifty dollars a year, or to become the teacher of an academy, with a good salary, in a pleasant village. He resolved to take his stand on the walls of Zion and declare the unsearchable riches of Christ. His first efforts at exhortation were failures, and he frequently retired from the congregation to the woods ashamed and mortified, praying God to relieve him from the work. --S. Pearce, Esq.

His convictions of a call to the ministry were clear and satisfactory, but such was his natural timidity and desire for retirement from the public gaze, that he resisted the call until he became

convinced that disobedience would result in the loss of his soul. He received his first license to preach in June, 1811. The same year he was received on trial by the Genesee Conference, and appointed to the Holland Purchase; in 1812 to Tioga; in 1813 he was ordained deacon, and appointed to Wyoming; in 1814 he was appointed to Shamokin; in 1815 he was ordained elder, and appointed to the Susquehanna district, where he remained four years. In 1819 he had his appointment on Wyoming circuit; in 1820 Shamokin, in the Baltimore Conference; in 1821 Northumberland; in 1822, Chambersburgh; in 1823-4 Carlisle; in 1825 he was appointed to the Northumberland district, where he remained four years. In 1829 he was appointed to Baltimore circuit; in 1830-31 to Baltimore City; in 1832 to Northumberland circuit; in 1833 to Owego, Oneida Conference; in 1834 to Pittston; in 1835 he was connected with the Wyoming circuit as a supernumerary. In 1837 he became superannuated, and remained so until his death.

Mr. Pearce's manner in the pulpit was simple and unstudied. He talked straight on in the most unimpassioned manner. Every word meant something, and was in the right place. There was no effort for effect or display of learning. His object was to instruct and improve his hearers. When he grappled with a difficulty in criticism or in reasoning he did it with the strength and skill of a master, but always without any flourish of trumpets. Although in general his manner was quite dispassionate, he would, upon great occasions, soar to the higher regions of the pathetic and the sublime. When this was the case he would raise his voice and employ violent gestures. We have heard him roar like a lion, and seen him clap his hands and stamp his feet, and pour out a flood of tears. When he became thoroughly aroused, and his soul was set on fire and became overwhelmed with some sublime thought, or a tide of passion, his utterances produced amazing effects upon his audience. One burst of feeling, which might not last ten minutes, would raise a storm which would career on and, while he would sink into silent adoration, or seek relief from the pressure of excitement in tears.

Our subject was withering in his rebukes and sarcasms. A Baptist preacher in Bradford county, Pa., in 1818, published an offensive attack upon Arminians in connection with the minutes of an association. Mr. Pearce gave the author a most killing rebuke in a sort of fly-sheet, couched in plain Quaker language, and signed "Obadiah Broadbrim." The elder had unfortunately charged the Arminians with a spirit of persecution. Obadiah retorted his accusation upon him, and presented as many facts from ecclesiastical history to show where the spirit of intolerance and persecution had always been manifested in the controversy on "the five points," as could well be crowded into the same space. The paper was scattered broadcast over the country, and whether the redoubtable assailant of the Arminians was annihilated, or hid himself, we know not; but we believe he gave the persecuting Arminians no more trouble.

Mr. Pearce was very sensitive on questions of order and promptness. He would never wait for the tardy. We have known him to commence and conclude his service by the time the people had begun to come. At a quarterly meeting in Kingston he woefully disappointed a large congregation, on Saturday, at eleven o'clock, by this course. But he made ample amends by giving them a rich discourse at two P.M., at which the old church was full in due time, and a powerful sermon on Sunday. Anything out of order made him uncomfortable, and was sure to bring from him a scathing rebuke. Replies were useless; the utmost that the victims of his reproofs and sarcasms ever attempted was to charge him behind his back with "scolding."

Quite frequently Mr. Pearce suffered from hypochondria, but prayer or good company would always bring him relief. He sometimes, but not often, broke down in the pulpit, but he was sure to gain by the operation. Once at a camp-meeting, after he had become superannuated, he was put up to preach. He read his hymn, made a short prayer, and announced his text. He preached with great deliberation for a few minutes when a streak of the blues came over him, and suddenly he came to a pause, and, turning his back upon the audience, said, "I can't preach!" Picking up his hat he immediately left the ground. Thinking, and praying, and weeping over the matter through the night, early the next morning he made his appearance again on the campground. He found his way to the stand, and, addressing the presiding elder, he asked, "Will you let me try again?" O yes, certainly, Father Pearce," was the answer. He took the stand again and read the same hymn, knelt, and made about the same prayer, took the same text, commenced with the same introduction, but made a very different finish. This time he had a clear sea, and he made a successful voyage. His sermon was closed amid tears and shouting. Everybody rejoiced to see the old lion shake his mane and rush upon the prey, after being ensnared and well-nigh taken captive by his adversary.

Mr. Pearce was a companionable man; he loved his friends and enjoyed their society. He could tell a good story, and enjoyed true wit and humor; but no man could appear to him more unamiable than he in the presence of conceited fools. Such persons were sure to pronounce him "cross."

Marmaduke Pearce was both a man of genius and a man of study. As a preacher, he had few equals. His mighty mind would grasp the contents of a volume, and compress them into a sermon with such skill that the sermon would give a better view of the subject than the book. He loved the old English authors. With Butler, Sherlock, Tillotson, Taylor, Horsley, and many others of the same class, he was perfectly familiar. His memory had a tenacity which allowed nothing of importance to escape. He was a master of English style, and a most able critic in grammar, logic, and rhetoric. But he made no display of his learning. He sought the shade, wishing, as he once expressed himself, if he could not be little to be unknown. He was constitutionally diffident, and if this tendency sometimes betrayed him into a shrinking from great responsibilities, it still acted as a safeguard to strong passions and a mighty will.

Our brother was a man of earnest piety. He prayed without ceasing. He had a rugged nature to struggle with, but grace was adequate to the conquest which he sought. The latter portion of his life was marked with severe bodily afflictions and great spiritual conflicts. Toward the closing scene the enemy thrust hard at him. Infidelity, with its grim visage, came up to make a last desperate assault upon his faith. He had put to flight this cruel foe a thousand times, and he did not fail in the final conflict. After the struggle was over he said to his old friend, Rev. G. Lane: "Brother Lane, the Lord has given me the victory. Glory be to the Father! glory be to the Son! glory be to the Holy Ghost for the glorious deliverance he has wrought! Satan has desired to have me, that he might sift me as wheat. He has tried to destroy my faith in the Holy Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, the great atonement, and all the fundamental doctrines of our holy religion; but God has given me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Glory be to his name forever! How wonderful that such a being, so great, so wise, so holy, could condescend to hear the groanings and supplications of one so utterly unworthy of his notice!" When almost gone he whispered, "Happy! happy! happy!" and the last words which fell from his lips were, "Come quickly!" Thus died Marmaduke Pearce on August 11, 1852, aged seventy-six years and twenty-four days.

After his death a paper was found with his signature attached to it, dated July 1, 1852, giving particular directions in relation to his funeral and burial. And, should his sons see proper to put a tombstone over his grave, he wished the following to be put on it, "no one word more or less:"

"The mortal remains of Marmaduke Pearce lie beneath this stone; the immortal part lives where the weary are at rest. He was born in Wiltstown, Chester county, Pa., August 18, 1776, and died in 1852 on the 1st day of July

"Reader, prepare to meet thy God. M. PEARCE."

His three sons erected a stone by his grave, with the inscription upon it which he had prepared.

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**GEORGE GARY**

George Gary was born in Middlefield, Otsego county, N.Y. His mother died when he was an infant, and his father being a man of very intemperate habits, he was adopted and raised by an uncle in New England.

When Mr. Gary was a small boy he attended Methodist meetings, and there being an awaking among the people he became a subject of the gracious influence which was abroad. One evening, the meeting being in a private house, and the place much crowded, he took his seat on a pile of wood in the corner. As the meeting waxed warm his heart became deeply moved. As he often described his feelings, his little heart was as full of sorrow as it could hold, and he thought if some of the good people would only pray for him it would be a great favor; but he could not hope that they would notice a poor wicked little boy. Finally, some one seeing him weeping, asked him if he did not want the people to pray for him. "O," said he, "how glad I was of an opportunity to kneel down and be prayed for." He struggled for a while with unbelief and temptations, and then found relief.

The boy, George Gary, was soundly converted, and soon began, with many tears, to tell how great things God had done for him: There was a beauty and a pathos in the relations of his experience and his exhortations which excited universal admiration and produced deep impressions. He was encouraged by the preachers, and soon put up to exhort at quarterly meetings. His hair was very light, and he had a young appearance for his years, and his exhortations were a marvel.

In 1809 his name appears on the Minutes in connection with Barre circuit, Vermont district, New England Conference. He was then in his sixteenth year. In 1813 Mr. Gary was ordained elder and transferred to the Genesee Conference. In 1819 he was appointed presiding elder, and continued to hold that office for many years.

In 1843 the condition of our mission in Oregon was thought to demand the supervision of some person of financial ability and practical wisdom. Mr. Gary was applied to and consented to take the appointment, and took passage in a vessel and sailed around the Cape. He remained in Oregon four years, and then returned. He resumed his position in the Black River Conference, and served the Church with his usual ability.

Mr. Gary was a man of great shrewdness, and a profound judge of human character. He read men most accurately, and knew well how to approach them. He was cautious almost to the verge of timidity, and was seldom committed to an untenable position. He could plan a campaign, but did not much like to head it unless the ground was perfectly clear, and there was no doubt with regard to his men. He was a shrewd calculator of chances, and never overrated his prospects of success. He was

a wise counselor, a safe adviser, a firm friend, and an agreeable companion. He was pleasant in conversation, sometimes jocose, loved specimens of genuine wit and humor, and had a fund of these commodities to dispose of upon suitable occasions. He had a mean opinion of sour godliness, and believed it no sin to indulge in a good hearty laugh when in a select circle. Once he was taken to task by a brother minister, who never laughed, for his "light and trifling" manner. He heard the rebuke with due gravity, examined himself, and looked the whole matter through, and finally came to the conclusion that his friend had become "righteous overmuch," and that an excess of good cheer was quite as tolerable as monkish austerity and uncharitable judging.

In the pulpit George Gary was a strong man. Not that he always preached great sermons. He sometimes fell below himself, and when this was the case no one knew it better than he did; at others he was quite above himself, and he then created a great sensation. Usually he preached with much deliberation, and was simply instructive; but on great occasions his soul fired up and he was overwhelmingly eloquent. His fort was in the pathetic. When he became thoroughly moved his efforts were the very soul of passion. Persuasion, melting, overpowering eloquence, is the creature of passion, and we never witnessed a more perfect triumph in this line than was often achieved by our much loved friend when in the zenith of his ministerial life. On the camp ground thousands have melted under his burning words; saints shouted, and sinners stood aghast.

There was only one thing wanting in our subject to have placed him among the greatest men of his time, and that was the habits of a hard student. These he had not, although he was respectably read. He talked of men and books in a way to impress the uninitiated with the idea that he was a reader. But much of what he knew was gathered from conversations with scholars and readers. What he heard said he never forgot, and by a synthetical process which seemed natural, he put things of the same class together which were gathered from distant points and at different periods.

Mr. Gary stood high in the confidence of his brethren in his conference. He led the delegation in the General Conference of '52, the last one that he attended, and was there put forward by his friends as a candidate for the episcopacy. The Genesee, Oneida, and Black River Conferences gave him their suffrages for that office in the general ballot, although he never sought the nomination, and no one knows that he would have accepted the office if he had been elected.

His health was far from being what it had generally been when at the General Conference, and it continued to decline. At the conference of 1854 he asked for and received a superannuated relation. The remarks upon the occasion were truly affecting, and produced a profound sensation in the conference. He finished his course with joy on the 25th of March in the following year.

## EARLY METHODISM

### **Within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference From 1788 to 1828** Sketches of Interesting Localities, Exciting Scenes and Prominent Actors

By **George Peck**

#### **ELISHA BIBBINS**

Elisha Bibbins was born in Hampton, Washington county, N. Y., July 16, 1790, and died at Scranton, Pa., on the 6th of July, 1859, of disease of the heart, aged about sixty-nine years. He was converted November 8, 1805, under the labors of Rev. Bradley Silleck; was licensed to preach in January, 1812. and was admitted on trial in the Genesee Conference in July of the same year. He was for twelve years of his ministry in the effective ranks, three years a supernumerary, and, including the present year, thirty-two years a superannuated preacher. He, however, did much valuable service in the way of filling vacancies during the years of his superannuation. During this period he preached many sermons, and won many souls to Christ. The last twenty years of his life he spent in the state of Illinois. His strong attachments to his old friends, and a desire once more to visit the fields of his early toils, led him to form the resolution to be present at the session of the Wyoming Conference to be held in Newark Valley. This purpose he executed, although he was very feeble; so much so that perhaps prudence would have dictated his remaining at home in the bosom of his family.

He met his old friends and fellow laborers with the genial spirit, the same hearty "God speed" which characterized his early conference associations. He considered it his last visit, but still bade the brethren "farewell" without any indications of gloomy forebodings.

Soon after the close of the conference Dr. Everets, of Nichols, after a thorough examination of his case, informed him that there was every evidence that his heart was diseased, and he would die suddenly. The information did not startle him in the least, although it seemed to be new. His cheerfulness abated not for a moment, and he subsequently referred to this medical opinion as one well founded, but with no other remark than, "I am trying to be ready for the summons."

He traveled slowly, and with intervals of rest, with his friends, through Bradford county to Tunkhannock, where he spent the 4th of July. Here the blandness of his manners, and the freedom of his intercourse with the people, excited great admiration.

On the morning of the 5th, rather suddenly, he resolved that day to visit the writer at his home in Scranton. At eleven o'clock A.M. of that day he was seated in our study. During the afternoon he, spent the time in free and cheerful conversation. At a few minutes before ten o'clock he prayed with us and retired. The house was alarmed in the night by a call from his room. We hastened to him with a light, and found him in a violent paroxysm of coughing, and freely expectorating blood. He was in a severe chill, and expressed a desire to be where there was fire. We immediately removed him to our room, kindled a fire in the stove, and sent for a physician. Medical aid relieved his sufferings, and he seemed disposed to sleep. We staid by his side for a short time, and when we next noticed him, which was at early dawn, he had quietly fallen asleep in Jesus. He had not changed his position

in the least, and from every appearance died without the disturbance of a muscle. A post mortem examination verified the opinion of Dr. Everets; he died of ossification of the heart.

The Rev. Elisha Bibbins was a man of good natural abilities. His powers of perception were quick, and his reasoning faculties vigorous. His sensibilities were strong and well disciplined. He had a strong sense of the ludicrous. He readily formed unusual associations, and exhibited a striking tendency to wit and humor, a tendency which showed itself to the very last. He was "capable of the most biting sarcasm, but seldom indulged this dangerous faculty to the annoyance of his friends. His cuts were usually modified by so much good humor that they inflicted no pain. He was a man of great energy of character and great industry. He was always in earnest. It was this which gave almost overwhelming power to his sermons, exhortations, and prayers. He was a good theologian, but a better preacher. In his best moods and his highest flights he poured out a torrent of eloquence which would melt the very rocks. He was a good singer, and in his prime his singing had fire and power in it, and was often the means of awakening and conversion.

Many souls were brought to Christ by the instrumentality of this zealous and faithful minister of the Gospel. The fruit of his labor is thickly scattered over the fields which he occupied as a pastor or as a temporary laborer. Influential members of the Church, and ministers of high standing, now doing good service, acknowledge him as their spiritual father. The Rev. George Landon, on the occasion of his funeral, gave an interesting account of his awakening and conversion, and in the most affecting language claimed the man whose mortal remains lay before the desk as the means, under God, of that great change. So literally true is it that "he being dead yet speaks," in and through those "living epistles, known and read of all men," who were redeemed from sin and death through his instrumentality.

He was of medium size, well formed, with a prominent nose, a piercing but benignant eye, of a nervous temperament, and but for the excess of the sensitive in his nature might have done good service down to old age and enjoyed good health. But the sword was too sharp for the scabbard. The fire within consumed him. His great efforts in revivals early reduced a splendid physical organism to a wreck; still there was life in him, which manifested itself in efforts to do something for God and the world to the close of life.

His piety was sincere, deep, and earnest. He prayed without ceasing, and trusted in God. His religion was of the hopeful, cheerful cast. I have known him under great pressures, but never knew him to lose heart. In poverty and want, in sickness and sufferings, he was happy, often buoyant and even playful. He had a young soul in him, and was a brother and companion even to the children when he was old and gray-headed. He enjoyed himself, enjoyed the world, and enjoyed God, in spite of a hard lot and many adverse winds. He was a man of a thousand, a man of noble impulses, of a great soul, of a genial nature, of a lofty spirit, of a strong will, and of inexhaustible patience. As a husband, a father, a brother, and a friend, he occupies an elevation which few have reached. He rests from his toils and his works follow him.



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**GEORGE LANE**

Was born in the state of New York, not far from the Hudson, after his parents had set off from Massachusetts for the wilds of the Susquehanna, on the 13th of April, 1784. His father was the first white settler in Oquaga, Windsor, Broome county, New York.

The early history of George Lane was marked by the toils, hardships, and exposure common to the life of a boy in a new country. The common fate of all, old and young, then was hard work, coarse garments, simple food, often deficient in quantity, and few of the means and appliances of intellectual improvement. In those disadvantages he shared a common lot with his fellows. The Puritan morals, piety, books, and reading of his excellent mother exerted a strong moral influence upon his mind while very young; yet he lived in a state of impenitence until 1503, when the Methodist preachers began to make decided impressions upon the population scattered through the wilderness of Northern Pennsylvania and Southern New York.

During this year he was awakened under the preaching of James Herron, and received into the Church by Samuel Budd. He was admitted on trial in the Philadelphia Conference in 1805, and located in 1810; readmitted in 1819, and again located in 1825; and readmitted again in 1834. In 1836 he was elected assistant book agent, and for sixteen years served in this capacity, or that of principal agent. In 1852 he retired from active duties, and from this period experienced a physical decline, which enfeebled his mental powers. He died May 6, 1859.

His religious habits were so deeply imbedded in his nature that they never forsook him. He often asked a blessing at the table, and prayed with as much propriety as when in health. The day before his departure he prayed twice fervently and eloquently. He died suddenly in convulsions.

Our excellent old friend, for about the term of twelve years, was treasurer of the missionary society. In this latter capacity he was not content with merely keeping the funds, but was deeply interested and earnestly engaged in the means of procuring them.

When Mr. Lane took charge of the missionary treasury it was laboring under a heavy debt. The debt continued to increase from fifty to sixty thousand dollars. All the means which could be spared from the funds of the Book Concern were loaned to the society until the debt became unmanageable in that form. He applied to two of our most worthy and generous citizens to indorse the treasurer's notes in bank, but they declined. Such, however, was the confidence reposed in him at the banks, that one of the heaviest of these institutions gave him all the money he wanted upon his own individual security. He thus became responsible for more money than he was worth, and went on paying drafts and trusting in God. His good management and his graphic appeals through the Advocate in behalf

of the cause, were principally instrumental in bringing money into the treasury, until, after years of painful effort, the society was declared free from debt. Such was his concern for the missionary cause, and such the earnestness and consistency of his appeals in behalf of the treasury, that he was not infrequently entitled "The Father of the Missionary Society," and the society called "Brother Lane's pet." Having seen the society through a fearful crisis, he then favored extension, and zealously urged the duty of entering every open door.

Such is a mere outline of the official history of Rev. George Lane. What remains is a brief survey of his character as a Christian, as a minister, as the head of a family, as a business man, and as a member of civil society.

As a Christian our old friend and brother was conscientious, earnest, and uniform. He was emphatically a man of prayer. His communion with God was deep and constant. Whether in the pulpit, in the family, or in the closet, his prayers were characterized by deep agony of soul and firm confidence in God. His piety was a burning flame, which arose to heaven and shone out as widely as his name and his fame were known.

As a preacher he was thoroughly orthodox, systematic, and earnest. His sermons exhibited a thorough acquaintance with the Scriptures and with the human heart. In the palmy days of his itinerancy he was often overwhelmingly eloquent. Sometimes under his powerful appeals vast congregations were moved like the trees of the forest before a mighty wind. Many a stout-hearted sinner was broken down, and cried aloud for mercy under his all but irresistible appeals. His language was unstudied, but chaste, incorrect, simple, and forcible.

As a business man our friend was conscientious, prudent, industrious, economical, conciliatory, and persevering. These qualities made him successful as a merchant, and gave him the confidence of the Church and the public generally as a book agent and as missionary treasurer. Everybody considered him both prudent and honest; and hence it was often remarked, in all sorts of circles, "Brother Lane is a very safe man." Under his carefully considered measures the publishing house at 200 Mulberry-street rose from feebleness to strength, from comparatively small beginnings to gigantic proportions. He kept his own secrets, made little noise, but touched the springs which commanded the channels of business, and brought in a tide of success. His business intercourse in his office and at the conference was characterized by promptness, courtesy, forbearance, and dignity. He dealt with men as men, ever conceding to them the rights of men of honor and principle until they had evidently forfeited all claim to that character.

As a husband and father he was kind, liberal, and eminently religious. He provided well for his own household. Small attentions were not spared, great pains and large outlays, when called for, were not withheld. The education of his children, their comfortable settlement in a profession or a business, and the arrangements for the comforts of his home, were provided for without parsimony.

Socially our dear old friend was grave and dignified, and yet perfectly accessible. He was frank and free in his intercourse with men. He was a man of simple manners, chaste conversation, and a charitable spirit. He was a Christian gentleman at all times and in all places. No one could be long in his society without feeling for him something more than common respect; and Christians could

not long commune with his spirit without feeling the power of his sanctified sympathies and holy life. He was a most profitable companion and trustworthy friend. His hospitable dwelling was ever open, and all its comforts as free as air. He was emphatically "a good man, and full of faith and the Holy Ghost." He won many souls to Christ, and laid the Church under lasting obligations of gratitude.

After a most intimate acquaintance of more than forty years, with the Rev. George Lane, observing him under a great variety of circumstances, and some of them exceedingly difficult and trying, we can say, what we can say of only a few individuals, that we never saw in him anything to reprove, or anything which, all things considered, deserves to be characterized as a fault. We love to contemplate the history, both the inward and the outward life, of this holy man and eminent servant of Jesus Christ. He has a high seat in heaven. He "turned many to righteousness," and he "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever." He was, in deed and in truth, our friend for many long years -- we loved him -- and now that he has gone to heaven in a chariot of fire may his mantle fall upon his sons in the Gospel!