1879

Misc. Articles on Itinerancy

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http://hdl.handle.net/2144/1163

Boston University
An interesting

How in a word, fun

Richard

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Mr. Lee, in view of the low state of religion in New England, earnestly desired to proclaim the gospel news that “Jesus Christ tasted death for every man.”

At the conference in New York, 1789, Mr. Lee was sent as a missionary to form circuits in New England. He reached Connecticut June 17th, and went on to western Massachusetts and Rhode Island; visited Boston July, 1790. Circuits are formed so that in 1792 he is appointed elder of the New England district. At a conference in Lynn, August, 1793, he is appointed a missionary to the then called Province of Maine, which was sparsely and thinly settled, with but few settled ministers, and those near the sea board. On his way he arrived at Portsmouth September 8th, to fulfill an appointment, and find the court house shut against him, his voice from the steps of the house drew hundreds to fill the streets to hear the word of God. Monday, the 9th of September, he entered Maine, and to the last of October itinerated the sea board to Penobscot bay and up the river above Bangor, and returned. In January, 1794, he returned on the same route to Bangor, took the back settlements through to the Kennebec river to Waterville, and Hallowell, and Readfield, and up the Sandy river to Farmington.

He formed a circuit extending from Farmington to Hallowell and Monmouth, and called it Readfield circuit. Some of the new settlers had not heard preaching for years, and they listened to him gladly.

Mr. Lee and his colleagues were denounced from the pulpit as “wolves in sheep’s clothing,” “false prophets of later days,” etc. But the true gospel word did not return void, and has accomplished a blessed change in the theology of New England. “Unconditional election with probation” is not now seen, except in the shade.

Mr. Lee left his circuit for conference at Lynn July 26th; itinerated the field of his first labors in New England and returned to Maine on the 3d of November. December 1st we find him at Farmington. Proposing to visit a town farther back in the wilderness, he obtained a pilot who volunteered his services: some of the route being by marked trees, or, as Cartwright called them, “blazed trees.” It
began to storm, and snowed all day, but they pushed on to New Vineyard where he preached, and stayed at Daniel Lucie's. The second day took him to Captain Daggett's, in the north-east part of the town—the same who heard Mr. Lee on Boston Common four years before. Captain Daggett, with others, had emigrated to this wilderness from Martha's Vineyard. From there they traveled to the mouth of Sandy river, much of the way no road, following the line of marked trees, with snow ten inches deep. They passed one house about noon, where he preached Christ to the man and his wife, who had not heard a sermon for two years. Arriving at the junction of the Sandy and Kennebec rivers, he preached to the few settlers, and the next day ascended the Kennebec river to a settlement near Seven-Mile brook in Zitmanstown (probably now Anson or above there). The way traveled could not have been less than fifty miles.

We may look with admiration at the man whose abilities and eloquence earned his election and service as congressman in the United States congress; four times a delegate in the House of Representatives, and once in the Senate; an enthusiastic advocate of Christ and a living angel, standing at the post of duty, brought to Maine in 1829, meaning to dwell in the wilderness and preach. Christ, in the open air, that from house to house, sleeping in log cabins with coarse fare, and perhaps ascending the ladder to the loft quarters above. His own clothing added to his bed hardly sufficient to keep away the frost; so that he may take the rest and sleep so peacefully, and on rising finds the floor whitened with snow blown through the casement.

It is asked how this man could perform so much travel on horseback, whose stalwart proportions were not a little less than three hundred pounds, adding the saddle bags, vales, hooks, and sufficient clothing to meet storm and cold, a burden of over three hundred and fifty or perhaps nearer four hundred pounds. The waiter was informed that to avoid delays and the abuse of horses from "mercyless play," and save both his, one tired he took the other; and such was the attachment between them that the loose horse was not to be detained by roguery, but would show his teeth and heels if necessary to clear his path. When turned loose to graze, they showed their attachment to their master by coming to his hand at once when he gave a peculiar whistle.

HISTORY MR. LEE'S PILOT.

The history of the early fathers, with their labors and success is interesting to every Methodist student. Mr. Lee's pilot was Rev. John Thompson of Industry, who joined the first class formed in Maine, at Monmouth. Forty miles to class meeting! Spartan zeal, sure. (He was the father of the late Robert Thompson, of precious memory.) It was said of him that before his conversion he would leave his dinner at any time to meet an antagonist for a fist fight. He made his pitch some ten miles from settlements on Sandy river, near a beautiful sheet of water, made an opening, built a log house, made some arrangement for sugaring, left and returned the next March on snow shoes, over deep snow, and traveled the trail until sufficient supplies justified the introduction of a woman, who afterwards became a mother in Israel. She followed him through the dense woods on his snow shoe track, carrying her table fixings tied up in a handkerchief—wooden plates were not easily broken, neither were pewter cups and spoons, which the mothers always kept bright on the shelves supported by wooden pins in the logs. A few settlers soon became his neighbors. The lion becomes lamb-like; a new spirit dwells in his heart; it is "peace on earth and good will to man," flowing out in Christian sympathy. A neighbor is prostrate with sickness; the family are destitute, snow deep, no wood cut for the fire; day after day he visits them, cuts wood and draws it on a hand-sled to keep them warm, taking food for the family. A pleasurable incident gives a further view of the man; having company he asks to be excused—he must look after the sick—asks his wife to prepare food to carry. She says, "Husband, you have always gone with your hands full—let others help." No reply; but that his left hand may be ignorant of what the right hand is doing, a fish is taken under his closely-buttoned coat, and he pleasantly bids adieu to the friends and passes out; but the tail of the fish protrudes through the folds at the back of his coat, much to the amusement of the company.

We will add two acts of his benevolence that came under the writer's notice, and one of his statesmanship. The doctor said of a neighbor of his—a lady—that she had a white swelling on her knee, permanent and incurable. He thought differently, and that she might be relieved, and although over seventy, waded into a pond in October to dig roots for a poultice and by its application the tumor suppurat-
ed and the limb was restored. Secondly, Bro. Boardman said to Bro. Thompson, I have come four miles to look you in the face, but I have not heard a word of your sermon, notwithstanding your sharp voice. Having examined his ears, he said, I have business here next Tuesday; come, I think I can help you. After having spent two hours with syringe and soap obstructors were removed and his hearing restored. A dollar rings on the table, when he says: "I shall not take it. Give it to the circuit preacher. The Lord has given me all I need. It is a part of my mission to do good to the bodies as well as the souls of my fellow men. Thirdly, in the state election in 1831, the democrats and whigs were nearly on a balance in Somerset county. One party, believing Bro. Thompson the most sure to carry the election, he was nominated to the State Senate, and was elected, aged seventy-one years. I shall never forget my last interview with that man of God. At the door of the conference room in Bangor he said to me: "Come walk a little way with me: duty calls me home. I love that body of holy men. I know nearly all of the preachers; perhaps I have looked upon them for the last time; I go home to live better, that I may meet them all in Heaven—an awful disappointment to fail."

At camp meetings far and near his ringing voice was heard—a traveling local preacher.

In 1830 the writer was stationed on Norridgewoc circuit, and fifty were added to the church on trial. Of one conversion I shall give an account. I was stationed on Industry circuit in 1831, which embraced six towns. We had revival the whole year. I was greatly indebted to Father Thompson for counsel. He held up my hands. With probationers our net increase of members was one hundred and thirty-two. In about twenty months I baptized ninety-five by immersion and others by effusion. Of the number four became preachers—three, for aught I know, are now in pastoral work. There were many interesting personal incidents connected with these conversions, on both charges, of which we give one example. In the year 1830, in the town of Madison, as the writer was inviting sinners to the altar for prayers, a lady [daughter of Col. B., a Congregationalist] fell to the floor. Her two brothers carried her out into the open air, supposing she had fainted. She was tempted to let them rest with that impression, but it appeared to her that if she did not undeceive them, God would strike her dead. "It is the power of God; and not faintness; carry me in," she said. The third day she accepted Christ by faith joyfully. She purchased Wesley's Sermons and in reading them in her closet Christ's love was often overwhelming. Said she: "God knows what is needful to humble my proud heart. I often have ridiculed the Methodists; but now, to realize what Christ has suffered for me, as applied to my heart by the holy ghost, is oft more than this feeble frame can bear, and "I retained no strength." Can any one give a better solution of that peculiar exercise?"

When baptized with others in the Kennebec river, as she was about to step down the bank she said to her associates: "I do this for Christ's sake," and invited them to the joys of His salvation. As she was raised up to stand her hands were on the belt, and she raised her right hand with the expression: "Thanks be given to God for His unspeakable gift." Her strength was gone in an instant, and the heavy current caused her to swing me around to face the shore, but my hand being securely hold of the belt there was no danger, and she was safely and easily flouted to the margin, and with assistance was placed on her feet. When Daniel lost his strength by the overwhelming view he had of Christ, a hand touched him—he was restored. Her strength was restored while others were receiving baptism. It is with gratitude to God we record His saving power.

HOW DEACON L. SHOUTED.

Why the said old deacon shouted with heart and hand, we give the following narrative: At the extreme part of Industry circuit, Me., on Tuesday, in a beautiful sheet of water, several persons received baptism. At the supper table three of these and a lady whose principles of infidelity imbibed from a rich infidel brother made her prominent as one who made sport of the cross of Christ sat with us. At the end of the repast we proposed that all of us kneel in prayer. She knelt with us. In the evening for the first time in the vicinity we repaired to a large school house filled with people. She sat
near the centre. Believing her really awakened I took a subject in special reference to her case. The text was, “Lord, help me;” 1st, the sinner’s need and danger; 2d, source of help; 3d, conditions proposed; 4th, the manner of acceptance. At this stage of the discourse the gate to her opened and the water of life flowed with such power that it brought her to her feet. The preaching ceased while she testified to the power of God to save. The flood swept through the whole audience.

The sermon was finished. In a moment she was up again, with a countenance radiant with the light of Heaven and the glow of joy, inviting and exhorting all to come to Christ. It was as sudden and unexpected to the audience as the rocking and rending of an earthquake. The whole were deeply affected. Thirty-seven spoke in some thirty-two minutes. Penitence, confessions and resolutions were expressed by some; others with overflowing hearts told of their joy, as the tide of the meeting rose, and wave after wave swept over and, through us. It is impossible to describe the scene with its glory. The deacon sat by my side, and as the tide of joy rose and the interest of those who spoke increased, he spoke, first in a whisper: "This is the work of God!" soon audibly, "This is the work of God," and again added, "This is the work of God, bless the Lord." The one sitting by him supplemented each declaration with an emphatic amen. The gate to his heart was fully opened, and the water of life poured so powerfully that the whole machinery was set in motion; his hands flew together in unison with the glory of the heart—"Glory, glory, glory to God in the highest. This is the work of God." Bro. Pratt thought that the amen response kept him on the crested wave until he was so far above he could see and feel naught but the glory and the bliss of Heaven. But of one thing we were sure, that he had lost all prejudice against shouting, if he had any. His experience demonstrated the work of God by his being filled with the holy ghost. The fruits of that meeting were abiding. Sinners were awakened, souls converted, our borders enlarged, making Vann’s Mills a Sabbath appointment, and making a four weeks’ circuit instead of a three.

J. PENNIN.

*Daniel 11:5.
*For safety and convenience I always had a large belt around the waist of those baptized by immersion.
Itinerant Recollections.

Missing my way in the woods, I came late to my appointment with Mr. Fulsom's. He met me at his door to take my horse, and said: "The people are waiting." "I cannot preach, I am so faint and exhaust-ed—have had no supper. You must relieve me with a prayer meeting," he returned. Said he, "You must preach. There is a gentleman (a retired merchant) and lady here from beyond the woods. You must not disappoint them. They will make good Christians, if converted."

All sense of faintness vanished. The sermon closed to disputes for class. At a pause in giving notices, a man arose; as I proceeded he sat down. At the next pause he rose again; time was given. Said he: "I am a great sinner. I came here to ask your prayers. I seek salvation." His wife followed with the same request. Without discussion all were spoken to. The spirit of awakening extended to others, and some obtained mercy before we closed.

As the sermon closed, the ladies were invited to remain for the next day for more prayer. The lady called me brother. As I entered she was praising God, having just received an evidence of pardon. An hour was spent in the relation of Christian experience, and our voices were heard in prayer.

As I was about to mount my horse, I saw the gentleman approaching. Said he, "I have come for your advice. Next Monday I am to leave with a drove of cattle to supply our army at Houlon, with beef, on contract, and to take sixty oxen into the province of New Brunswick, also on contract, to supply a lumber company. I have suggested to my wife that I had better hire a man to take my place, and I stay and attend your meetings and secure my soul's salvation, if I lose half my drove." I said: "Sir, I can only give you this advice: Go to God, commit your soul and all to Him in the name of Christ to direct in this matter. He will make the path of duty plain."

As the sermon closed in the forenoon, he deliberately arose and said: "I and my wife have come desiring baptism if it can be given us on these conditions: As a man and a Christian, I pledge my honor that I will join some church to do good, after learning the doctrinal views, as I wish to unite with those that agree with me in sentiment. I wish to defer, as I have never investigated the views of others." They were baptized with eight others. He took a discipline and a Christian, manual. His wife whispered, "I am Methodist."

Eighteen weeks after he and his wife came to our quarterly meeting. They joined the society. He purchased Clark's commentary and Watson's theological institutes and dictionary, and other books to the amount of twenty-seven dollars.

He was found preaching Christ as he went on with his business. At the end of his contract with government he purchased mills and opened another store, and his house for meetings twice a week, and gathered together a class. During a prevailing epidemic, while caring for the sick, both took the disease, but she recovered. The Lord transferred him to Heaven in the prime of life, to live forever and shine as a star in the diadem of the Lord Jesus. Bro. Fulsom rightly judged that Benjamin Spaulding and wife would make good Christians. Here was decision and action worthy a record. To God be all the glory. Amen.

Rev. J. Perrin.