

## Impossible to be Well

It is impossible to be well, simply impossible, if the bowels are constipated. You must pay attention to the laws of nature, or suffer the consequences. Undigested material, waste products, poisonous substances, must be removed from the body at least once each day, or there will be trouble. A sluggish liver is responsible for an immense amount of suffering and serious disease. Ask your doctor about Ayer's Pills. He knows why they act directly on the liver. Trust him. J.C. Ayer & Co., Lowell, Mass.

## EARLY METHODISM IN WELDON.

PAPER PREPARED BY MRS. I. T. WILKINS AND READ AT THE M. E. CHURCH SUNDAY NIGHT.



MRS. IDA T. WILKINS.

THERE is no record of Methodism in this community in the years that are past and there are few living who know anything of its history. Sixty years ago there was only one Baptist church in a radius of twenty miles and not one of any other denomination except Methodist in the county, except, perhaps, some at or near Scotland Neck. The Kehukee or Hardshell Baptists had a strong following in the lower part of Halifax county, but there were none or at least no church organization of any kind in this section. It is said that no history has been preserved of the pioneers of the Cross who came as circuit riders travelling over miles of rough roads and under many hardships to this section to sow the seeds of the Gospel of Christ. Several years ago Dr. John E. Edwards, of the Virginia Conference, gave through the North Carolina Christian Advocate some very interesting reminiscences of his early ministry. In these he stated that his first charge was Roanoke circuit. That his home was in Warrenton, and that the circuit covered all of Halifax and most of Warren counties. These reminiscences would be interesting reading today but alas! they are not at hand, and so with all who were living at the time or could tell of the events as they occurred. They have passed away leaving no record of people or events. It is only of late years that any interest has been taken in such things and even our Conference Journal fails to record many names among the ministry which were familiar to my childhood ears. The Secretary admits this and calls on the public for information and corrections in his list of our honored dead.

Since this is true anything bearing on the subject will not be out of place at this time. In these early years Methodism took a high stand in this community. Every man of influence, who was a Christian at all, belonged to this Church and it was the custom whenever a church was established to leave one of these men as class leader or under shepherd of the flock, which it was impossible the preacher in charge should guard.

The church at New Hope is perhaps the oldest church in this community. We know really nothing of its early history, except that it was built as a result of camp-meetings held at "Old Piney Grove Church," which was somewhere in that vicinity. Here Mr. Edward Morecock, a gentleman of high Christian character, a soldier of 1812, and a man of great influence in the community, was class leader or superintendent. He was assisted in his religious work by Mrs. Andrew Joyner, a daughter of Willie Jones, of Halifax, and widow before her marriage to Col. Joyner, of Hutchings Burton, at one time Governor of North Carolina. Col. Joyner was a man of great influence, was president of the Seaboard railroad. For years a member of the Senate of North Carolina, he was promoter of the bill to establish in North Carolina a home for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind of the State. He was also president of the Roanoke Navigation Co. when they opened the canal, which is now the source of such wonderful power.

His wife, a lady of culture, refinement and wealth, was a veritable lady bountiful, visiting the sick, praying with them and ministering both to soul and body. Rev. R. O. Burton, then of the Virginia

Conference, married a daughter of Col. Andrew Joyner and as a pioneer of Methodism found strong allies in both Mr. Morecock and Mrs. Joyner. The church in Weldon was organized in 1846 with seven members. These were Captain James Simmons, Mr. T. H. Wyatt, Mrs. W. T. Whitfield, Mrs. Mary Allen, and three others, names unknown. The name of the preacher in charge is also unknown, but was in all probability R. O. Burton.

Capt. Simmons was then sheriff of the county, a man of such high integrity that he was elected continuously as long as he would keep the office and was much beloved by every one. He was appointed class leader of the infant church and served it long and well. The church was included in "Roanoke circuit" and the little building on the banks of the canal was soon erected for them to hold their services. This was a small wooden building, roughly built and rudely furnished, but it was the only church built in Weldon until along in the seventies when this building was erected in its stead.

My first recollection of the work of the Methodist preachers dates back to about the year 1851 when Rev. Jos. B. Mann was sent to this charge and soon won the love of the people by going from place to place throughout the circuit and holding cottage prayer meetings in different homes and planting seed which brought an abundant harvest of good.

Rev. Robert J. Carson was Presiding Elder about this time and he had supervision of a very large territory. His home was in Martin county. There were few railroads, so he would go from place to place in his private carriage, stopping in the homes of the people while on these rounds. He was a near relative of Mrs. W. H. Day, of Twilight, near Weldon, and would frequently visit her home. He was noted for his piety, warm hearted Christian character and was greatly beloved wherever known.

There were other men, one named Doggett, who brought a fair bride to the work and lived in Weldon while in charge of this circuit, whose names are not on our church register.

At the Conference held in Wilmington in 1855 Bishop Andrew presiding, Rev. John M. Andrews was sent to Roanoke circuit with Rev. M. J. Hunt as assistant. These were both holy men filled with zeal and religious fervor, their only mission to preach the Gospel and win souls for Christ. In the winter of 1855-6 they held a revival in Weldon which was far reaching in its results. Many were converted, the whole town aroused and hardened sinners impressed is never before.

It was said that some young men dissipated habits, while the meeting was in progress, met in their room at the hotel for the purpose of playing cards or gambling, as was the frequent custom of the day. One of the most reckless of the party proposed that they have a prayer meeting in mockery of the services then being held at the church. They all agreed and began to sing and pray imitating the preachers in word, tone and gesture. Before they closed they were so much impressed with their own wickedness that they went to church, the ringleaders were converted and one of them became a minister of the Gospel.

In August of 1856 these preachers held a camp meeting at Pierce's church at which over one hundred people were converted. Great preparation was made for the meeting. A large pavilion for preaching was built in the grove at the back of the church in the middle of a hollow square formed by wooden tents or houses built connected on three sides. Some of these tents had four and five rooms, with straw for floors, and frame work of wood on which beds were placed so that many could sleep in the same room. The kitchens and dining rooms were under shelters outside and hospitality was dispensed with a lavish hand. I remember one service at which there were fifteen preachers present. Some of them shining lights of the Virginia and North Carolina Conference, coming from Petersburg and other places at a distance, and great crowds flocked in to every service. Several people from Weldon owned and occupied these tents which were filled to overflowing with their families and friends. The others were built and occupied by the farmers of the community. This church had been partly built by Mr. Rice D. Pierce and was nurtured by his family for years. There were also many other fine families living in the neighborhood. This camp meeting was a historical event in that it changed the lives and characters of so many men. Among others Mr. W. T. Whitfield was converted at this meeting, became a member of the Weldon church and his life ever after was consistent and true. For years his house was the preacher's home, no matter



REV. R. O. BURTON, D. D.

Rev. R. O. Burton was at the time of this camp meeting in the prime of his life, was perhaps Presiding Elder and much interested in the success of the work. He was easily in the foremost ranks of his brethren and a commanding personality wherever he was placed. Proud of the Gospel of Methodism he bore its banners in triumph wherever he went. To his work and preaching was due to a great extent the great success of the meeting. Indeed the Methodists of Weldon and Roanoke circuit, as it was, owe to him a debt of gratitude that can never be paid, and a history of Methodism in Weldon could not be written and R. O. Burton left out. He gave them his ministerial services in every capacity, generally without hope or expectation of reward. He baptized their babies, married the young, buried the dead, and kept the Gospel fires burning in many a Methodist home in the dark days of the war which soon followed, and those almost as dark after its close.

In the year 1864, Rev. T. B. Kingsbury was preacher in charge and held a big revival at our little church. Dr. Burton did the preaching in the week, going to his work as Presiding Elder in time for the regular services on Sunday. He loved Methodism and he loved the church in Weldon and the Church loved him in return.



REV. J. M. RHODES.

Through his influence we enjoyed many rare privileges, one of these was to have Bishop John Early preach for us in November 1856 while on his way to Conference in Greensboro. He attracted a large crowd, as he was the first bishop ever heard in Weldon. Another was an opportunity to hear Bishop George F. Pierce in the following year. He was a man of such reputation that it was thought the little church would not hold the people, so arrangements were made for him to preach in the old hotel dining room. He did before an immense audience of charmed listeners.

In the year 1855 there came to Weldon Mrs. Cornelia Rickers for the purpose of conducting a pay school. No other building being available she opened school in the little Methodist church. She was a fine teacher, a member of the Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, but seeing the need she opened also a Methodist Sunday school, the first ever taught in Weldon. All who possibly could, from town and country, came to see what this new thing was. There was no man living here who would take the lead so she was her own superintendent, opening with Scripture lesson, singing and praying, in all of which she herself led. Her work in Weldon was fine and she met, as she deserved, very much success. It was my privilege to attend both these schools. There are only three other persons living in Weldon who did.

And now comes a period of reconstruction and revolution in

affairs, both temporal and spiritual. With many things to regret the Methodists of Weldon at the close of the war found themselves poor, disorganized and almost without faith or hope. With the congregation small and demoralized, the church badly out of repair, having been used for a hospital, the location undesirable, a few faithful women undertook to buy a lot and build a new church. They finally secured the present church lot and began to plan and work for the erection of the building.

About this time R. O. Burton was sent again to this work. He sold the old church building, as I have been told, for two car loads of lumber to be placed on the new lot. The women worked and he worked and planned and the church was built.

I am afraid some may think I am giving undue credit to R. O. Burton in this paper, but this is not my purpose. I am stating facts which stand for themselves.

The cornerstone was laid in 1873 by the members of the Grand Lodge of Masons. Dr. Burton made the address. Money was scarce and hard to get. The congregation small and poor and it was a long time before it was occupied. It was so long after the church was framed before it was covered in, part of the frame blew down in a storm. After the little church was sold the congregation worshipped in the old Literary Hall. This was in bad repair, no pulpit, no altar railing, no organ, and the people had no money. Dr. Burton had zeal and energy, however, and he borrowed chairs as many as possible and finished out with pieces of timber laid on blocks for seats. By constant effort he succeeded in getting a pulpit, an organ and seats by the 12th of Feb. 1876 when the church was dedicated by Dr. Charles F. Deems, of New York.

It required a long and desperate struggle to build the church and when it was to be dedicated there was a debt of five hundred dollars which was raised by subscription that day. Much of this was not paid and there were still many things needed which made matters more distressing to the congregation. At the end of the year Dr. Burton was made P. E. of the Raleigh district and Rev. Joseph Wheeler was sent to this circuit. He only preached twice, one Sunday in each month, was not popular with the people and Zion languished. Dr. Burton would often

among us and with the assistance of a very few faithful ones kept the watch fires burning on the altar of our church. When the little building was old and worn, with no lights except a few candles or small lamps, no bell, no organ, and a preacher only once a month, he would gather with a small remnant and hold prayer-meeting services. At this time Mr. Albert Mabry was Superintendent of the Sunday school and served until Capt. T. F. Anderson was appointed. Captain Anderson served faithfully for twenty years and it was with deep regret that his resignation was accepted.



CAPTAIN JAMES SIMMONS.

While there were many faithful women who labored and struggled through all these years there were none more constant and true than Mrs. Sallie E. Long and her beloved niece, Miss Mollie Alston. These were indeed "the salt of the earth," which had not lost its savor but their lives were such that a hallowed influence lingers still with those who were fortunate enough to come within its circle. I might add others to this band of noble women and men but time will not admit, so close this paper with the prayer that we who yet remain may be as faithful to our day and generation as those whose lives it has been our privilege to review.

## HALIFAX LETTER.

HALIFAX, N. C., Feb. 1.

Miss Nannie Gary has returned from a visit to friends in Petersburg.

Miss Nell Nelson has been spending some days at Roanoke Rapids with friends.

Mrs. N. L. Stedman and Miss Elizabeth returned Tuesday from Asheboro, where they have been spending several weeks.

Mr. E. C. Gregory, of Salisbury, came Monday to be present at the marriage of his sister, Miss Julia, to Mr. June Tillery.

Mrs. J. C. Butts was called to Rosemary Sunday on account of the illness of her mother, Mrs. Grizzard.

Mr. N. L. Stedman went to Richmond last week to see Dr. Register and reports his condition improved.

Mr. J. F. Coppedge, of Scotland Neck, is spending this week here with relatives.

Mrs. J. H. Bachelor, (formerly Miss Sallie Cullum), spent Monday with Mrs. W. F. Coppedge.

Mrs. George Sasser has returned to her home in Raleigh, after spending some time with her father, Col. Frank Faison.

Mrs. C. A. Turner, (formerly Miss Lena Brinkley,) is here to spend ten days with Mrs. C. H. Hale.

Miss Vera Lashure, who has been visiting Misses Leonora and Essie Howerton for some weeks, returned to her home in Pittsburg, Mass., Monday.

Mrs. E. J. Brown left last week for Elise, Moore county, to visit her brother, Rev. George T. Simmons, and will be gone perhaps two or three months.

W. F. C.

## CHILDREN TEETHING

MRS. WINSLOW'S SOOTHING SYRUP has been used for over 30 years by millions of mothers for their children while teething, with perfect success. It soothes the child, softens the gum, allays all pain; cures wind colic, and is the best remedy for Diarrhoea. Sold by druggists in every part of the world. Be sure and ask for "Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup," and take no other kind. Twenty-five cents a bottle.

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