

The recollections of a small boy by Charles E. Fairman. First Baptist Church of Fairfax, Vt. Aug. 29, 1938.

The Recollections of A Small Boy

By CHARLES E. FAIRMAN,

First Baptist Church of Fairfax, Vt., Aug. 28, 1938. (The memory of the just is blessed.—Prov. 10:7.)

On this Old Home Day I have selected a text, in which Memory is brought to your attention.

My earliest memories relating to this church are of its pastor, the Rev. L. A. Dunn, usually designated as Elder Dunn. It is possible that my memory of his visit at the home of my parents is stimulated by a little book with a marbled paper cover that I recall as fixing the visit of Elder Dunn, I afterward learned that this book contained the Articles of Faith of the Baptists, and this book was presented prior to the admission of my father and mother to the membership of this church. I do not recall their immersion, but a Miss Buzzell, the daughter of a Baptist minister, cared for me on that occasion, Miss Buzzell became the wife of Rev. Samuel H. Greene, for some forty years the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, of Washington, D. C. From Mrs. Greene I learned that she cared for me at the time of the immersion of my father and mother.

I joined the Sabbath School of this church at the age of four. My first lesson consisted of the recital of a few of the first verses of the Epistle of John. How it happened that this portion of scripture was selected I do not know, but of this I am certain, this book of John has always been a favorite with me, and its beauty and charm have not diminished. Miss Valeria Howard was the teacher of the class I was placed in. This was many years before the use of Uniform Sunday School Lessons in our little town. I recall on one occasion a supply teacher spoke of Republicans and Sinners, and it is probable that all the boys were from Republican homes. This error led to much suppressed merriment, and illustrates the fact that small boys note an error in quotation, although they may not challenge its accuracy.

At about the time of my admission to the Sunday School I joined the District School. The red school-house was located in a small lot to the south and west of this church, I celebrated my day of admission by spelling down the entire class on the word "adverb." I am free to confess that at that time I had no idea of the meaning of this word, but I chanced to belong to the class sometimes referred to as "natural spellers," with a facility of remembering without effort words I had seen.

In this red schoolhouse I met the Upham boys, sons of Dr. Upham the president of the New Hampton Institution, there were four Upham boys in this school, James, Henry, Benjamin, and Artemas. The Upham family moved to Boston, in the early 70's; James became a member of the editorial staff of the Youth's Companion, a well-known weekly paper for the young of sixty years ago —Ben became circulation manager of the same paper, Artemas, became a patent attorney, and of Henry I have no particular knowledge after their removal to Boston.

Of the Upham boys, Ben was about my age, and as sturdy a boy as I have ever known, I well remember his exhibition act, that of stamping on a Canada thistle with his bare feet until the thistle was reduced to a harmless pulp. James Upham was the author of the "Salute to the Flag," and also advocated through the columns of the Youth's Companion the campaign for placing a flag on every schoolhouse, possibly actuated by his memories of the red school-house of Fairfax, and inspired by the vision of uniting the school children in a patriotic movement.

I also became acquainted in this red schoolhouse with Donley C. Hawley, John Newton Dunn, and later Homer B. Hubbell was added to my list of boy friends. Don Hawley was an inveterate giggler, and could without apparent effort set a whole bench of boys in a titter. John Dunn was the swiftest runner of all the boys, and the removal of his parents to Pella, Iowa, where Elder Dunn became the President of a University, removed John from the small circle, Don Hawley after a college and medical course of study settled in Burlington, Vermont, as a physician, and died in that city. Homer Hubbell after graduating at Dartmouth College went to some Western State where he passed away some years ago.

I do not remember the departure of Elder Dunn for his trip to Palestine, but remember his return. This is probably due to recalling the many souvenir gifts from the Holy Land brought to members of this church. I recall his description of his fears when war was declared, and of his stating that he refused to arm himself when advised to do so by his dragoman, in order that they might protect themselves from bandits who might demand money as a fee permitting them to travel, Doctor Dunn gave as a reason that he would prefer to lose his life rather than to take the life of another, a reason that to my boyish mind did not meet with my approval.

At the time of the commencement of the Civil War, there were few if any daily papers in Fairfax, the desire for the news of this great conflict resulted in many subscriptions to the Burlington Free Press, this bundle of papers being brought from Georgia station by a boy on horseback in midforenoon, and distributed to the subscribers at the post office, while some good reader would read the latest news to a large number of eager listeners.

Of the enlistment and drilling of troops, their departure for the scene of the war, and the return of some to be laid to rest among their kin, and of women prepared lint and bandages for the field and hospital use. Money was raised for the use of the relief organizations and patriotism was one of the things dear to all Vermonters, the State sending about one in every nine of her entire population of men, women and children to the front, all of these are among my boyhood memories.

My recollection of the April night when news of the fall of Richmond reached our little town is very clear. The news was brought by Charles P. Luther, an employee in my father's shop, who was returning from a brief vacation.

Mr. Luther in passing through Burlington secured a copy of the Burlington Free Press containing an account of the fall of Richmond. Upon the stage from Georgia Depot he referred to the late news. Soon after reaching our home the paper was borrowed by a lawyer of our town and the news read in the post office, Fairfax, responded to the long-looked-for termination of the war. Church bells were rung, bonfires were lighted, and the Old Weight, an improvised cannon was adding its deafening roar to the tumult.

The boys and girls of the New Hampton Institute organized a torchlight parade using candles for torches and although the snow was deep and the sidewalks poorly cleaned of snow, these young people marched gayly through the snow and added a novel note to the celebration.

I feel that I should be lacking in loyalty if I failed to give full credit to our beloved New Hampton Institution, an educational factor in this part of the State, where young men and women were fitted to enter their second year in college, and in whose Theological Department many of the young men of seventy years ago were prepared for the ministry. I remember one, Rev. John Steele who from this school was called to the pastorate of the Baptist Church of Johnson, Vt.

Thus far I have failed to refer to the interior of this church. I remember very well this auditorium before its last remodeling, when our choir occupied a gallery at the east end of the church. The organ, a small pipe organ, was pumped with a lever very insecurely attached to the organ; this lever would at times slip off producing a full stop at a place not contemplated by the writer of the hymn. Of the choir I well recall the musical bass of Deacon Hotchkiss, the flute tenor of Wayland Shepardson, choir leader for over half a century. My father, Jude Fairman, and Benjamin Kenfield were among the bass singers. The earliest revival services held in this church, that I recall, were conducted by Rev. A. A. Earle, I also remember the Rev. Mr. Dewitt, these men were strong expounders of the gospel and the results of their preaching brought many accessions to the church. I remember on one occasion Elder Dunn immersed 28 candidates, blessed are the memories of

these great awakenings. One of my cherished mental pictures is that of the audience room of the New Hampton Institution; it is a memory of a graduation night and this fine room with its three galleries had been profusely decorated with twigs of cedar formed in patterns. On the rear of the stage, and across its entire width with a motto formed of cedar twigs: "LABOR OMNIA VINCIT" at the north side of the stage the board of trustees or governing body of the Institution were seated, among them was Rev. Alvah Sabin, his stalwart form and his abundant white hair forming a marked contrast to that of his associates; Soldier, Legislator, Minister, and Educator, blessed is the memory of such events.

Of the preaching services I can heartily recall that the sermons of Elder Dunn, always contained plenty of interesting material for the young folk. He had not forgotten that the success of the church depended upon his filling the vacancies from the ranks of the young people. When Rev. Ransom Dunn, a free-will Baptist and a brother of Elder Dunn, filled the pulpit, we were always interested, he was dramatic and sometimes startling in his manner of presenting gospel truths.

It was a dull day, however, when Elder Dunn was absent, and the service included the reading of one of Charles H. Spurgeon's sermons by Deacon Elias Bellus. Deacon Bellus was a fine reader and read in a clear manner and with a decided argumentative effect as though he felt that his audience was inclined to disbelieve the message. Years later I had the opportunity of hearing Mr. Spurgeon in his famous London Tabernacle, and afterward met Mr. Spurgeon in his study and spoke with him. I can never forget his wonderful eyes, his cordial hand grasp, and his manner of making you feel that you had greatly honored him by calling to see him.

On this occasion I had the opportunity of determining that a Spurgeon's sermon by Spurgeon, was vastly different from a Spurgeon's sermon read by Deacon Elias Bellus.

For the young people the two great events of the year were the annual Donation Supper and the annual Sunday School Picnic. At the Donation Supper the stewing of the oysters was superintended by Deacon Bishop and Sister Watson. They presided at the oyster stewing with a dignity and ownership of an impressive character. The food for the table was supplied by the sisters of the church and competition was brisk in the desire to produce the best cake for this event. It is recalled that on one occasion it was whispered about that it was a well-known fact that Sister X was known to put finely powdered coal in her cake in order to produce an effect of richness in color.

The Annual Sunday School Picnic was usually held in a maple grove on the south side of the road leading from the village to Sandersons Corners. This grove was a little nearer the village than the William Learned home. To this grove we marched in suitable formation. The banner of the Sunday School was carried at the head of the procession, the staff of the banner held by a boy selected for

this signal service, while the guide lines were held by two blushing girls very conscious of this honor. I recall on one occasion that Deacon Hotchkiss, wearing the sash of a marshal and mounted on a spirit horse, directed the movements of this small army of the members of the Sunday School. No doubt his fine appearance on this occasion created in the mind of more than one small boy a hope that he might some day fill such an exalted position.

The small boy has grown older and larger and it is hoped that with these changes he has not grown tiresome in the recital of these memories. Many changes have occurred, many familiar faces are absent.

For my old home town, I shall always retain pleasant memories and grateful affection, and while passing far along the sunset trail in the late afternoon of life, it is my wish, that this church, my first church home, may continue to carry on such work as it may find to do, and in this way continue the blessed memories of those who have gone before.

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