

CHAPTER XIV.

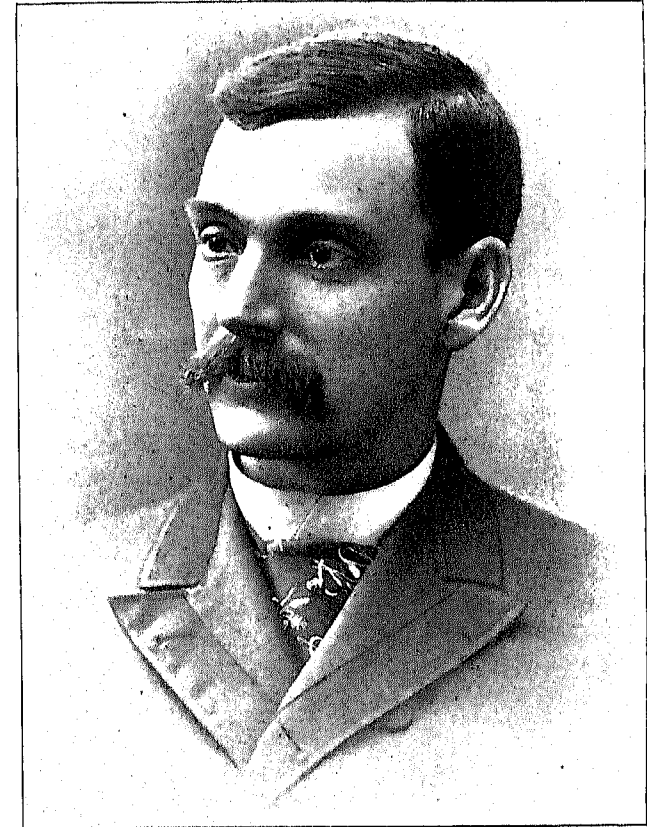
AGENTS OF THE DEVIL—SERVANTS OF THE LORD.

I was called upon shortly to preach in a Calvinistic neighborhood near the seat of Rapp's colony of Economists in Butler County, Pennsylvania. When I arrived at the neighborhood school-house I met a goodly company assembled to hear what had never been heard there, a Methodist sermon. I chose for my text the eleventh verse of the thirty Psalm, read the verse, closed the Bible, and preached a plain but practical sermon. The Presbyterians were delighted, some regarding it as wonderful that a man could preach such a discourse without notes, and especially with the Bible closed. The truth sanctified and applied by the Holy Ghost led several persons into a clear Christian experience, and many became my regular hearers and fast friends.

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While we were stationed at the beautiful little town of Freedom, in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, about three miles above the confluence of Big Beaver with the Ohio river, our home was blessed by the arrival of a little boy, our first born, whom we named for his grandfathers, John William. His birth occurred on the second day of June, 1851. His arrival was a matter of unusual moment to the young circuit rider and his wife, as may be expected, and was also hailed with satisfaction and delight by our members, all of whom took a greater interest in us on this account, if this were possible, and were exceedingly kind to us in our initial parentage.

Freedom was chiefly given over to the business of



JOHN WILLIAM FISHER.

steamboat building. While here I launched on one of the finest of the numerous craft built there for the river-trade, the "John J. Simons," a boat upon whose decks I subsequently, eleven years later, took a company of contrabands from the Southern armies of the Union to homes of liberty in Kansas and Nebraska.

Our first son, whose portrait is given, is engaged in mercantile pursuits—a dealer in coal. For many years he engaged in farming on the "home farm" in Atchison County, but subsequently engaged in other pursuits in the city of Atchison, of whose council he was one term a member, and where he was for several years secretary and treasurer of the Pomeroy Coal Company, with yards and offices at Atchison, Topeka and Lincoln, Nebraska. For many years he has been a devoted Christian and an active and efficient worker in the church and Sabbath school. In recent years he has been deprived of the pleasure of regular church work because away from home most of the time, but he still delights in the service and church of his God.

Having spent two years on this circuit I was returned to Ohio and put in charge of Lima circuit with "one to be supplied." The circuit had thirteen appointments, with a membership of nearly five hundred, scattered over a territory twenty miles wide by thirty miles long. This territory included the hot-bed of infidelity in Ohio. The noted "Come-out-ers," Abby Kelly, Foster, and H. C. Wright, had traveled the whole field, disseminating infidel doctrine, denouncing the church and the Bible, ministers, and the marriage contract as intolerable and to be repudiated. Abby Kelly, who had been a member of the Quaker church, was a woman of considerable intelligence and will, with fair address and force of char-

acter. She formed the center of attraction for a crowd of rude and irreligious people who composed her following. She and Foster traveled together, being entertained by those who, like themselves, held to very radical views relating to liberty from customs growing out of the marriage relation. But in some places public sentiment was so severely against the example of this free and easy way of evading the law of God and man that they finally formed a kind of "Hicksite-Quaker" copartnership, in the town of New Brighton, Pennsylvania, at the house of one Townsend, after which I believe they were recognized as man and wife, he being a kind of appendage or convenience, as is sometimes the case with strong-minded women and weak-minded men. Their teaching and example were subversive of morality and good order, because well suited to the baser passions of the human heart. Wright had been a local preacher in the Methodist Church, but left it and joined the ranks of the "Come-out-ers." The whole territory of the circuit of which I was placed in charge was poisoned with the false and vicious teaching of these people.

About the time I was sent to this circuit the Misses Fox, of Rochester, New York, began their spirit rappings—the origin of spiritualism in America—which was also a part of this infidelity. Abby Kelly and company had well prepared the way for this new theory and irreligion. Some incidents connected therewith will furnish a faint idea of the state of society under such influences.

Not far from Freedom, one of my appointments in Stark County, Ohio, there was an old log church, called Rucker's Church. It was arranged to hold in this house a convention of the infidels and sympath-

izers to consider what should be done relative to this new development called "Spirit Rappings" or Spiritualism. The appointment was made, the evening came, and with it a crowd of curiosity seekers. The old house was lighted in the rudest manner by the use of the light of past ages, tallow "dips" or candles. These were fastened here and there against the jambs of the windows by pocket-knives, while for front lights a board resting on the stand and window-sill supported several candles. Behind this were seated the leaders in the movement with a tall son of Anak, called Johnson, "the first letter of whose name" was "Jep." Acting as chairman, this young man was chief operator and held himself with much dignity. The company was a motley one, composed of railroad graders, "Come-out-ers," strong-minded old and young women, some of whom were dressed in bloomers, and young men with very long hair parted in the middle, easily and almost entirely covering the limited brains in their peanut-shaped craniums. Besides these there were numerous old moral cripples who had "come out" to the great relief of several churches. These, with a sprinkling of unbelievers, came to hear and see what the "Spirit had to knock." And they did.

The president began to state the object of the meeting to be the consideration of these new developments at Rochester, when a faint "Rap, Rap, Rap," was heard, as if immediately behind the president. At first all present were startled. Then came silence. By and by the president opened his astonished mouth to say that it was indeed mysterious; that they had met to consider this strange subject, and it appeared that the spirits were verily present; whereupon with greater vigor and emphasis than before the obtrud-

ing spirit gave its mystic "Rap, Rap, Rap," and all was again as silent as death. Checks were blanched, eyes flashed astonishment and surprise, knees quaked and smote together, all were amazed. Presently some one ventured to ask, "What do you want to communicate?" When, with greater vigor than before and much more deliberately and determinedly was heard the mystic "Rap, Rap, Rap," followed now by a most unearthly "Yeaow, Yeaow, Yeaow, Rap!" This brought the house to their feet and the president in gathering himself up overturned the board, upsetting every candle and extinguished most of the light. This served as a signal for a grand stampede, and out the door and through the windows went the astonished crowd, flying in every direction, some praying, others crying, while the Irish Catholics called on the "Howly Virgin" to pity Pat, and to forgive him for being at "sich a divil of a matin." One poor fellow who had recently been married, forgot his wife in his fright and ran as for his life. When he came back he found she had fainted for very fright, and was lying by the deserted house just recovering consciousness. When the truth was known the obtrusive spirit which had caused this confusion was none other than the materialized animus of an overgrown feline with a split stick on his tail which he used as a wrapper, and with which he had given a first-class "Spirit-rapping" seance, supplementing his efforts with the unearthly "Yeaow" which a Tom cat alone can give. Thus equipped and prepared for action some mischievous boys had dropped him through a broken window just behind the president's chair, to become the innocent cause of the sudden dissolution of the first and last spiritualistic gathering in all these parts.

The insolence of this class of people so outraged society that occasionally it had to be checked by law. There lived near Goshen Church two families named, respectively, Jenkins and Gibson, who, following the false teaching of the "Come-out-ers" and spiritualists, disregarded the sanctity of the marriage relation with such contempt that the civil authorities were compelled to interpose. They were brought in bloomers before Esquire Simeon Card, one of my class leaders, and were the first real spiritualists I had ever seen. I would they had been the last! The end was in disgrace and death—like Herod, they were eaten of worms.

We were compelled to meet these evils squarely and deal with them plainly from the pulpit. This sometimes led to public encounters. But truth, always mighty, prevailed, and the people were saved from the example of this heresy and ruin.

A very delightful occurrence took place while I was holding a protracted meeting at Marleborough. I was assisted by my old friend, Uncle Jimmie Armstrong. We held a meeting which was growing in interest, but which was much hindered by the clamor of want of union. There came to the neighborhood an itinerant Quaker preacher and his traveling companion, visiting the Quaker churches. It was announced that he would preach in the Friends' church at 11 o'clock a. m., and we were invited to attend the meeting. Uncle Jimmie, Brother John Swarts, and myself attended the services to hear a Quaker preacher for the first time. He preached a very orthodox sermon on the Resurrection of the Dead. I felt impressed with a desire to have him preach for

my congregation. I told Uncle Jimmie I was going to ask him to preach for us. He replied, "O, it's no use. He won't do it." But I said, "I'll see."

So I went up to the preacher and assuming as much of the plain language as I could command, I said, "I am a Methodist preacher. We are holding a protracted meeting in Marleborough and I would like to have thee preach for me tonight. We will give thee the hour, and thee can do as the spirit leads thee."

He replied very kindly, "I will be very glad to preach for thee."

Notice was given and an invitation extended to the congregation to attend. When the hour for services came the house could not contain those who were anxious to enjoy such a union service. The Quakers came in great numbers and sat with hats on, presenting a strange appearance in a Methodist church. I told the preacher we would dispense with singing until the sermon was over, the hour was his. He prayed and sat down. All was as quiet as the grave. Then he arose and quoted a text or two of Scripture as a starting point and proceeded to preach a very evangelical sermon. In the midst of one of the most eloquent passages, in which he referred in beautiful language to the peaceable nature of the coming Kingdom of the Blessed Messiah and its near approach, and expressed a desire that it might speedily come, I was carried away with his eloquence and fervor, and endorsing his expressed desire I said "Amen."

Unused to such responses he was surprised, and turning around to me, asked, "What did thee say, Brother?"

I was confused, but had presence of mind enough to say, "Go on, Brother, go on."

Said he, "What did thee say?" I replied, "I said Amen."

He righted up and went on. The congregation was greatly amused and I felt woefully embarrassed. The Preacher finished well without any more of my "Amens."

While he was closing his sermon my mind was at work on how best to utilize the occasion. I knew all the Quakers were abolitionists and I had a good subject. So I determined I would take them with guile.

I arose and said: "A strange thing has occurred in Marleborough tonight. The quiet Quakers and noisy Methodists have held a meeting together and all ye are witnesses it has been a glorious meeting. And now I am going to ask Uncle Jimmie to sing the first hymn."

I gave him a sign and he promptly arose, attracting every eye and stood while I remarked that any who did not wish to hear him could retire. Every one remained. Uncle Jimmie struck the tune known as "Exhortation," singing,

"O, for a thousand tongues to sing,  
 My great Redeemer's praise,  
 The glories of my God and King,  
 The triumphs of his grace."

He sang as only he could sing. Under an inspiration every heart was moved. The whole company was swayed by this grand old hymn and tune sung by this dusky son of Methodism, as by the magic of a master.

When he had sung the last line I invited all to join in prayer and called on Uncle Jimmie to lead. Such

a prayer had never been heard by that company, a prayer most eloquent and effective.

When it was over I stepped to the front of the altar to announce the appointments for the following evening, when the Quaker preacher came out of the pulpit and threw his arms around me and said audibly, "O, my brother, it is good to be here."

That meeting still lives and it will never be forgotten. Its far-reaching influence cannot be estimated.

This occurred in 1852 and in 1864, as I returned to Kansas from general conference at Philadelphia (of which body I was a member as a delegate from the Kansas conference) I met in the cars at Yellow Creek Station, Ohio, an itinerant Quaker preacher and his traveling companion. In the course of our journey I fell into conversation with them and learned that they were on a trip of visitation to the churches and were then going to Marlborough. I related to them the above incident, when they both rose to their feet and, grasping me warmly by the hand, exclaimed with unusual emotion for Quakers:

"Is it possible thee is the man that treated our Brother so kindly? We have heard him describe the singing and the singer, and the wonderful prayer, and the meeting, but we never expected to see the man that took such part in that interesting meeting."

They said that the relation of the incident pleased their friends very greatly. We had a joyful time talking over an incident of more than twelve years' standing. So far as I have been able to learn it was the first of the kind that occurred wherein Methodists and Quakers united in such a way to worship our common Savior and God.

At Mount Union, Stark County, one of my then appointments, there had been commenced a college three or four years previously, which is one of the many important institutions of Ohio. The president, Dr. O. N. Hartshorn, is a remarkable man, self-made in a striking sense, his whole life one of self-reliance. Coming up from obscurity and through poverty he has achieved wonders and assisted thousands of poor young men and women to the acquirement of an education and peculiarly fitted them for usefulness in life.

During my pastorate on the circuit I held four protracted meetings at this place, resulting in the conversion of more than one hundred of the students of the college. This was the beginning of active, open, effective Christian work in this locality, which was surrounded by infidel influences. In all these meetings I was heartily seconded and largely helped by all the professors, who continued to be a willing working band of Christian laborers. Every year since revivals have been enjoyed at this seat of Christian learning, resulting in the conversion of thousands of precious souls. The college is still sending men and women into every open field of usefulness. It was the first to adopt the co-education of the sexes, and from beginnings so small has gained upon popular sentiment until it has won its way to the front rank and today stands among the leading colleges of the West, owing much of its success to its decided religious caste and the faith and faithfulness of its faculty.

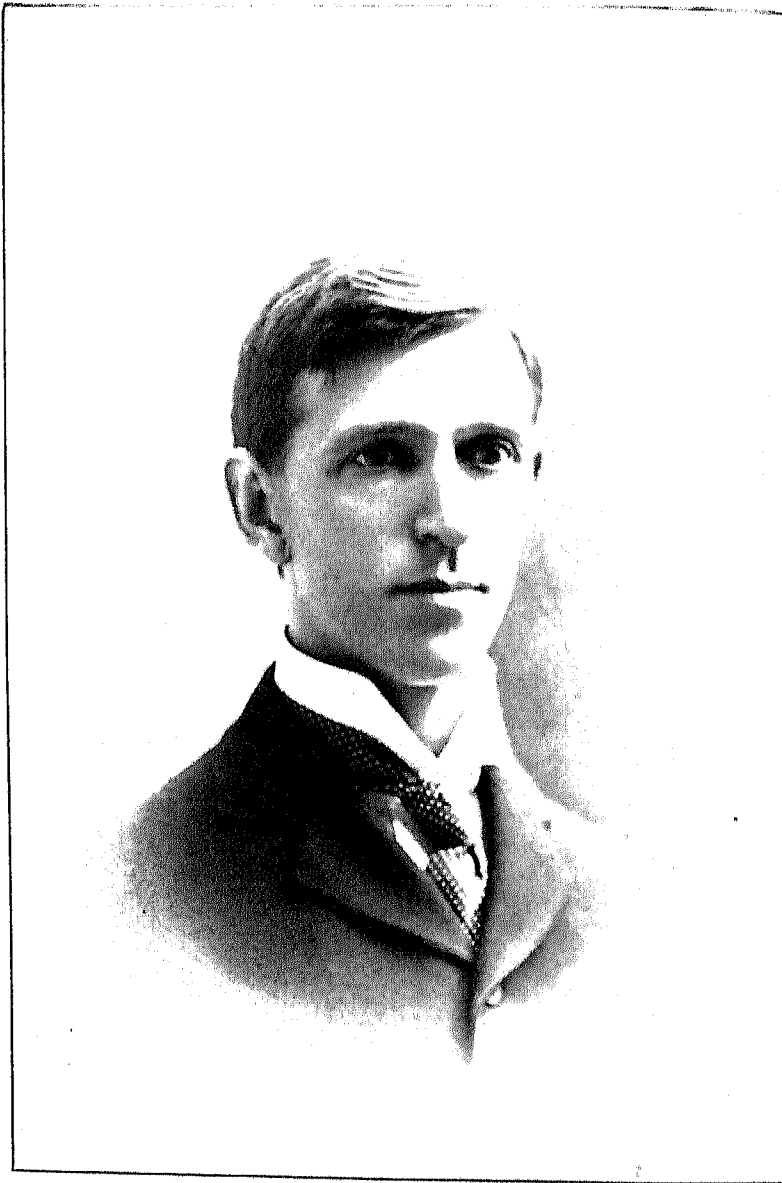
After more than twenty years absence from that field, ten of which were spent in Kansas, I returned to the Pittsburg conference and was made corresponding secretary of Mount Union College, in which relation I remained until called of the church and by the

Bishop to a field of vast moral importance. My early associations with this college as a religious instructor and helper so cemented my affections to the professors and institution that I still love to think, speak, pray, and write about them and its success.

When my time was up at Freedom we were assigned to a charge including North Benton, Mahoning County, Ohio. This was a pretty hamlet surrounded by well cultivated fields and beech and hickory forests. These abounded in game of various kinds, including flocks of wild turkeys. The circuit was thirty miles long and twenty miles wide, the parsonage being located at North Benton. Our removal was accomplished in part by rail and in part by wagon, and when we paid our teamsters our sole remaining funds in cash were three old fashioned copper cents. It was three months till quarterly meeting and we were among strangers. Furthermore, our larder was illy supplied with the necessaries of life. Such an experience would be accounted an unusual hardship even by a Methodist itinerant in these days, but it was not uncommon then.

When the situation became known to one of the stewards, Brother John Carter, he called to his aid Brother Henry Lewis and we were soon supplied, through their efforts and the kindly responses of the members of the local charge, with all that was necessary for our comfort.

There were thirteen appointments on this circuit, embracing, all told, about three hundred members. The people were unusually considerate of the needs of their pastor and his little family, and took excellent care of us all over the circuit. My work was success-



CHARLES EDMUND FISHER, M. D.

ful, it including thirteen protracted meetings during the first year and eleven the next.

Our second son, Charles Edmund, his second name being given him because of my love and admiration for Bishop Janes, was born during our residence in North Benton, on the seventh of March, 1853. I had been attending a special meeting sixteen miles from home and upon my return found the parsonage enlivened by the presence of this little black-eyed stranger. His coming greatly endeared us to the people, as he was the first new-comer ever arriving at the North Benton parsonage.

This son studied medicine, graduating at Detroit in 1872 and again in Cincinnati in 1875. He has also attended post-graduate study in New York and abroad, and has taken high rank in his profession. He early removed to Texas for his health, remaining there until 1893, when he removed to Chicago, where he now resides. He has been president of the Texas Homeopathic Medical Society, as also of the Southern Homeopathic Medical Association and, in 1895, of the American Institute of Homeopathy. It was my pleasure to attend the annual meeting of the latter body at Newport, Rhode Island, in June of last year, over which he presided. This doctor-son is editor of a prominent medical journal, the Medical Century, author of a standard work on Diseases of Children, and joint-author and editor of a large composite text-book of surgery. He has also served with distinction as a professor of surgery in one of Chicago's medical colleges.

At the close of my pastorate on the Limaville and Alliance circuit I was appointed to the Sewickly charge, in Pennsylvania. Here we spent a very

pleasant year with a good degree of success. We finished a neat church, which had been commenced by my predecessor, Rev. Albert G. Williams, and Bishop Simpson dedicated it in his inimitable style. A pompous brother was to preach at 3 p. m. He announced that he would "endeavor to follow the Bishop at a deferential distance," and he did follow at a very deferential distance, and without special endeavor, too, greatly to the innocent amusement of the people.

On this charge we held successful meetings at Hopkins Chapel, where several persons were converted. Here we beheld the unusual sight of a beautiful rainbow by moonlight.

At Blackburn Chapel we held a meeting of great good to the many who attended. One evening there were eight or nine adults kneeling as seekers of salvation at the altar. A spirit of solemn supplication prevailed. The pastor's wife passed along from one end of the altar to the other, encouraging the seekers, with appropriate quotations and promises, and in less than ten minutes the whole number by faith entered into a joyful Christian experience and testified to the power of Christ to save those who believe. I seldom if ever witnessed such remarkable unanimity in belief and such simultaneous believing and rejoicing.

Sewicklyville had for a long time prior to our coming, presented a striking example of "how great a fire a little matter kindleth." Two otherwise good men had had a financial transaction about which they had disagreed, and for years they had kept the church in perpetual turmoil, until I finally succeeded in getting them to arbitrate their difficulties—to find that it was all about sixty-two and a half cents.

At the close of one year in the Sewicklyville charge

I was removed to what proved to be the most pleasant station I ever filled, viz., McKeesport, Pa. This was a beautiful town at the junction of the Monongahela and Youghheogeny rivers. Dr. Isaac N. Baird was my presiding elder. During the first year I united with the resident ministers of other denominations in a course of fifteen lectures on the Evidences of Christianity. There was much intemperance prevalent and a strong band of infidels, thoroughly organized in a club. This club held regular meetings for the purpose of reading what they termed "The Infidels' Bible," viz., Payne's Age of Reason, and other similar books. The club was popular, and was exerting a widespread influence among the young men of the town and neighborhood. Our course of lectures was designed to offset this plausible plan of the enemy and save the young men from infidelity. There were in the Baptist pulpit Dr. Penny and Dr. Remington; in the Presbyterian pulpit Dr. Nathaniel West, a man of learning, who was the author of "The Analysis of the Bible," and in the reformed Presbyterian church a Mr. Wallace. These brethren gave their best time and thought to the preparation of their lectures. From the beginning the course was so popular that the largest church in the town was crowded, and at the close of the third lecture, which I had the responsibility of preparing and delivering, Mr. Isaac Wampler, the president of the infidel club, arose in the midst of the vast audience and moved the lecture just delivered (which was on the Insufficiency of the Light of Nature as a Rule of Moral Conduct, and the Necessity of a Divinely Authorized Revelation of God's Will) be requested for publication in pamphlet form, and that he and his friends would pledge the payment of the cost of publication. His motion was seconded

by another noted unbeliever, and put by Dr. West, in whose church the lecture was delivered, and unani- mously adopted. The lecture was published accord- ingly, and was the means of doing much good. The infidel club never held another meeting, and at the close of these lectures many who were recorded un- believers at the beginning became Christians, living and dying in the gospel of peace.

The churches had not only rest, but prosperity. Mr. Wampler became a member of the Presbyterian church, and Captain James Henderixson, Daniel Pol- lard, and other members of the club became members of the Methodist Episcopal church.

At Pine Run, some three miles above McKeesport, on the Monongahela river, we had a class of twelve members. With the efficient help and liberality of the class leader, Brother John O'Neal, I built a beauti- ful church, which was dedicated by Bishop Simpson. Our members here increased until the Society at the close of my pastorate, numbered eighty, with a flour- ishing Sabbath school.

During my pastorate here, on the 25th of May, 1856, our third son, Joseph Clarence, was born. He early became a devout and consistent Christian, and lived long enough to give great promise of useful- ness, but was cut off in the midst of his preparation for life work by a very short illness, at Olathe, Kansas, before he attained his eighteenth birthday.

Our home in McKeesport was a delightful one, and the people were exceedingly kind and considerate. The town was picturesque and lovely, its situation being at the confluence of two of Pennsylvania's beautiful rivers. We spent two of our most delight- ful years in gospel work in this charge.



JOSEPH CLARENCE FISHBR.