

IN MEMORIAM OF REVEREND WILLIAM J. HAY BROWN
BY SON DR. W. GORDON BROWN

They called the youngest of seven William, after one uncle who was a preacher, James after another; Hay was his mother's maiden name, and Brown - there were Brown's plenty about Brownsville, Ontario. Indeed, that village was named after grandfather, Brinton Payne Brown, who had, as a U.E. Loyalist, come with an ox-cart to the new Canada with its British flag. A minister's wife there thought they called the boy's father "By Naturè Brown, but it was really Benajah Brown! So his life began on the old farm in 1875. It was just two or three miles to "Rat College", they called the old red schoolhouse, to learn the three R8s, and only a few more to Tillsonburg to attend high school.

Before he could spell it out, Mother Brown read him Isiah 53, and explained that the suffering One endured it all for him. The picture broke the heart of the boy, then about seven, and he turned in faith to the children's Saviour.

In his last days we asked him, "How did you take up the ministry as your life's work?" Here is the story he told:

When I was a small boy, say twelve years of age, an old deacon, the father of of Roger Hawkins, one day in church laid his hand on my head as I stood in the aisle, and said, "This boy will some day be a minister," Then Mother used to talk to me about it, but I did not want it. I said I had an impediment in my speech; but I guess the impediment was in my heart! I had no deep Christian experience at that time.....I have felt sometimes that my pastors might have meant more to me than they did....But undoubtedly the call of God was upon me to preach the Gospel, and I just hewed my own way. I went back to the ninth concession of Dereham, got a school-house, went around the neighbourhood and told them there was going to be a preaching service, and invited them to come along. They came, and I got up and said: "My Brethren, we'll rise and sit down and sing number sixty six"! I preached my sermon first to the rats in the granary. My brother Ed. said it was pretty good!.....

Then Mother stood back of me, and I went in the fall to Woodstock College. Father was among the Brethren - I don't think there has ever been an atom of resentment in my heart over this matter - but he did not believe in educating his sons for the monistry. From Woodstock I went out and supplied during my college course. One summer I was assistant pastor at Springfield to my cousin G. B. Brown. I had had no training for that work, but we worked together and had a very good time.

They invited me back a second summer, and I went. Then later on I worked with my future father-in-law, Rev. J. B. Moore. That was at Blenheim, and they, if I am not mistaken, invited me back a second time. I had a good time there, too. I used to go from there to Shrewsbury to an afternoon appointment to preach for the colored people, and I loved them very much.

Then I graduated from Woodstock in 1895, and went to Kalamazoo, near Chicago, to school for a while. It was a Baptist school. My sister Claire and Her husband were living in Dundee, Michigan, and I was called there to a pastorate. From there I went to McMaster University for two years and part of a third. But, oh, I think of it with indignation: why did not some strong older man win my confidence and give me some sanctified advice about continuing my course? What foolishness that I did not get all that our schools had to offer!"(by this time in his story Father had become so tired that he had to leave off. We shall endeavour to sketch the sequel.

In 1902 Mr. Brown married Elizabeth Greenwood Moore, a high school teacher. her quiet strength was a moulding, steady influence back of his ministry, according to the text she often quoted, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength," The groom succeeded his father-in-law in the home church in Brownsville, - a most difficult thing to do. Then he moved to Brantford, Ontario, Shenstone Memorial and then only a Sunday School, but the Lord blessed the young pastor's efforts and in a short time a prospering church was established.

Hamilton called, and the young couple with their infant son moved to the larger city, Barton Street (later Immanuel) Baptist Church was in a rather bad way. In the East End of the city, they had been raising money by such methods as minstrel shows. Indeed, when Mr. Brown moved there, tickets had been sold for such a social; but he stood firm; he would have none of that: "Id you do not call in those tickets, I will not unpack my furniture," The tickets came back, and that first year the church gave more to missions than ever before, in addition to carrying home burdens.

In 1909 there was a church in West Toronto - the Junction was the old name - which, through an unfortunate division, was in a weakened condition. Would the Hamilton pastor undertake the job? Twenty three years later he was just resigning from Annette Street Baptist Church, and his influence, always on the side of Evangelical Christianity, had grown with the development of that section of Toronto.

How shall we estimate this pastorate of nearly a quarter of a century in a time of of short ministries? Rev. James W. Boyd is a true Timothy to his Paul. He is now pastor of Dovercourt Road Baptist Church, Toronto. Let him speak:

"I am deeply grateful for the privilege that has been accorded to me, of expressing, in this simple fitting way, my heartfelt tribute to my beloved Pastor, Rev. J.H. Brown. He exercised a large spiritual influence on my life. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh".