

FROM THE SCRAPBOOK
by Rev. Dr. William Randall
“Don’t Take the Preacher for Granted” 1869
Reprinted from The Harvey Lionews May 1997

I was thinking about an item for the May issue and suggested to Jocene Hall that I hoped to find an interesting story about some early Harvey wedding. She told me that she and Helen Craig in their research had come across some interesting material that might be of interest to me; of course I gladly accepted it.

So if someone in your family is looking ahead to a June wedding take heed to this item. I am going to title it, “Don't Take the Preacher for Granted.”

The following quotations from early Courier items, and typewritten copies of letters from John Taylor and the Honorable J. A Beckwith tell the story. (We have photocopies of the original letters.)

From Saint Croix Courier, March 25. 1869:

"Prosecution of a Magistrate For Illegal Solemnization of Matrimony - An obliging Correspondent from Harvey Settlement sends us a report of a singular case brought before Andrew Ross, Esq. J.P. on Monday, wherein W. G. Hatch, Esq., Councilor for York County Municipality is the accuser, and John Taylor Esq., J.P. is the accused. The complaint sets forth that 'John Taylor did on the 4th day of December last marry John Edmunds and Catherine Hay, be not being lawfully authorized to do so.' Councilor Hatch and J. Adams Walsh Esq., appeared for plaintiff, and J. Taylor Esq., in person, for Defendant. Several important witnesses were not present, and the case was adjourned in consequence until next Monday. Mr. Taylor in the meantime being held to bail upon recognizance in two securities of \$400 each. Some startling revelations are expected. It has created some excitement in the locality, and amongst prominent gentlemen present on Monday, our correspondent mentions the names of Messrs. Rutherford, Swan, R. Cockburn E. H. Burnston, C. F. Woodgate, S. Flood and H. Thompson."

Copied from handwritten letter dated Jan. 12, 1869:

"Tweedside, N.B., York Co. Jan. 12, 1869

Dear Sir (Private)

Some weeks ago I was called upon by John Hay to marry his sister Jane and John Edmonds, which I consented to do rather unwillingly and I would not have done it only for the very awkward and peculiar circumstances in which I found the Parties were situated and which I will explain to you:- The guests I was told had assembled, the cakes and pies and all the other et ceteras had been diligently prepared as it appeared and besides as you would say a little something in the shape of 'Heart-warm' had also been provided. But short-sighted unsuspecting mortals that they were they found that they had been (almost literally) 'reconing without their host'. Our clergyman Mr. Johnston is rarely ever from home and the Parties thought since they had got the License that he would be ready to wait upon them any time but when they went after him to their astonishment they found that he had gone to Prince William and would not be home for some days. So in their dilemma as I was Session Clerk and Chief Justice of the Parish and fearing the consequences it was concluded to try and get me to perform the Ceremony. Accordingly as I have said I consented and did the thing as correct as possible attending to the lawful

requirements. I think you will feel inclined to justify me in this and lest I have acted without sufficient authority, I shall be very much obliged if you will be pleased to see that provision is made against a similar occurrence hereafter by having me appointed a Commissioner for the Solemnizing of Marriage according to Chap. 106, Sec. 2 Revised Statutes, with as little din as possible. Write and say you will attend to this, and believe me. With much respect, Your Friend and Humble Servant, John Taylor"

From The Saint Croix Courier, May 27, 1869:

"Twice Married, - A Prosecution, and What Became of it - A rather romantic story comes to us from Manners Sutton in the County of York, which might form a good basis for a novelist and even in the columns of the COURIER may serve 'to point a moral or adorn a title.' It appears that on the 4th of December last two loving ones, a young man of about 25 summers, and a gushing damsel of thirty-five appeared before a Justice of the Peace to be made one flesh. The gentleman holding Her Majesty's Commission of the Peace did not, unfortunately, possess a commission authorizing him to solemnize matrimony. But was not 'marriage honorable in all,' and were not the fees tempting to a Justice of the Peace unduly exercised in favor of the 'root of all evil.' and was he not a good Presbyterian., an elder in the church and all that? And so the ceremony was duly--or rather, we should say, unduly--performed, and the four dollars safely stowed away in the magistrate's pocketbook. One dollar of this, our informant states, was subsequently paid back to the ardent bridegroom by the 1.P. for the privilege of dancing the first "set" with the bride.

In the meantime it got noised abroad in the settlement that the marriage was illegal, and a prosecution was threatened, whereupon the parties, at the instigation of the magistrate aforesaid, repaired to the minister of the parish who married them a second time "on the same license', on the 22nd of February. Now the question naturally arises, could the ceremony be performed twice by virtue of the same license, and under the circumstances, was the clergyman justified in marrying them at all, nearly three months having elapsed and a birth having occurred between the two ceremonies.

A certificate of the first marriage was filed and registered in Fredericton, but the second is not yet on record; our informant assures us that many other marriages have taken place in the same district which have not been recorded.

A prosecution of the magistrate was entered before a Justice of the Peace, at which evidence was adduced, and the presiding Justice took eight days to consider, but although nearly two months have elapsed, His Honor has not yet arrived at a decision.

We fear society is in rather a disorganized state in the parish of Manners-Sutton."

Note written by Hon. J. A. Beckwith on bottom of John Taylor's letter of Jan 12, 1869:
"Ans. Jan 16- You must have them married over again by a minister. Appn. for Comm. Will be laid before Council. JAB."

Note on same letter: "John Taylor for Appn. to Com. to Solemnize Marriages. 13 Feb 1869."