

The Shenston Family.

THE Midlands have sent several sturdy Baptists to London. Early in the eighteenth century Robert Shenston of Ford and John Shenston of Welton were pillars of orthodoxy. They were in touch with the Brittains and Stangers, and about the middle of the century, some of them migrated to the capital. John Brittain was at first a member of the General Baptist church in Horsleydown, evangelizing in Nine Elms and Battersea, but in 1756 he was ordained Elder of the ancient "Goodman's Fields" church, which to-day worships at Ilford. Over this he continued to preside till his death in 1794.

His sister married a Shenston, by whom she had a son William, who seems to have been born in 1743, and to have been a silk dyer. It is certain that in 1785 he became deacon at his uncle's church, and his son's biographer says that he remained in office more than thirty years. In 1793 he was on a committee to examine into trusts of General Baptist properties, and in 1799 was a manager of the General Baptist Fund.

William the deacon had two sons, both of whom became ministers, William Shenston born 1771, John Brittain Shenston born 29 January 1776. The latter often stated that John Brittain was his "uncle," but unless there were some other inter-marriage, the exact term should have been "great-uncle."

William junior did not join Church Lane, but was baptized at the Eagle Street Particular Baptist church in 1793, James Dore preaching. He was called to the ministry (not pastorate) in December 1796, and was soon asked to supply, at Little Alie Street, where he

was ordained in January 1798. There he remained as pastor till his death in June 1833, having added to the church no fewer than 680 people, having taken part in most denominational enterprises, and being highly respected.

John Brittain Shenston had a far more kaleidoscopic career. He was baptized 22 April 1792, and called to the ministry 14 August 1797, by his father's church, now under Dan Taylor as sole pastor. Across the Thames was the equally ancient church worshipping at Duke Street in the Park; which was excessively run down. The New Connexion came to the rescue of the eight women and two men left; on 23 April 1799 he was ordained pastor, Bissil of Wimeswold, James Taylor of Queenshead, Dan Taylor, Joseph Hobbs of Chatham, Edward Sexton of Chesham, James Taylor of London, taking part in the service. Next year he was notified to the General Body of Dissenting Ministers as approved by the London General Baptist ministers.

The church had been as careless of its material interests as of its spiritual, and in 1800 was turned out of the building and deprived of its records. A large room was therefore obtained by the New Connexion in Gravel Lane. But in 1809 the pastor followed the example of his predecessor and of his brother, becoming Calvinist; he therefore left.

In 1810 he applied to the Calvinistic Baptist Board and was admitted a member. But he seems to have held no office till in 1822 an open-communion church was formed at Crouch End, and called him to be pastor. According to his own statement it was at this time that his attention was called to the Sabbath. The fact is that a Charity available for Seventh-Day Baptists was almost derelict, and the trustees hardly knew what to do with it, as only three churches in England remained, and they applied to Chancery for

directions. Shenston began to attend the services conducted at Devonshire Square on Saturday by Robert Burnside; and when the latter resigned this Calvinistic Seventh-day church to become pastor of the endowed Arminian Seventh-day church, Shenston succeeded him, and published a pamphlet to prove that the Seventh-day weekly sabbath was the only sabbath given by God. Unheeding the question, publicly and vigorously stated, how he could continue at Crouch End, he moved his tiny church of two men and three women to the vestry of the Welsh church in Eldon Street, Finsbury. By error in i, 190, this action was attributed to his brother William.

When Burnside died, and the trustees advertised for a Seventh-day minister at Mill Yard, he applied for the third concurrent post. After some hesitation, the premises were offered to his Calvinistic church, and he took possession. But arbitration led him to withdraw in 1831. Seven years later, W. H. Black, a member from his old Arminian church in the Borough, joined his Calvinistic Seventh-day church, and proved a very kindred spirit. Shenston called him to the ministry, recommended him to Mill Yard, and ordained him there. Both men married, and Shenston baptized the brides in 1841, he being then sixty-five years old. He appointed Black his executor, and died in 1844, apparently leaving no children. His church consisted of one woman resident in London besides his widow, and one man in Cambridgeshire; by 1853 Mrs. Shenston was the church, and beneficiary of a trust. With her death in 1863 family and church alike died.