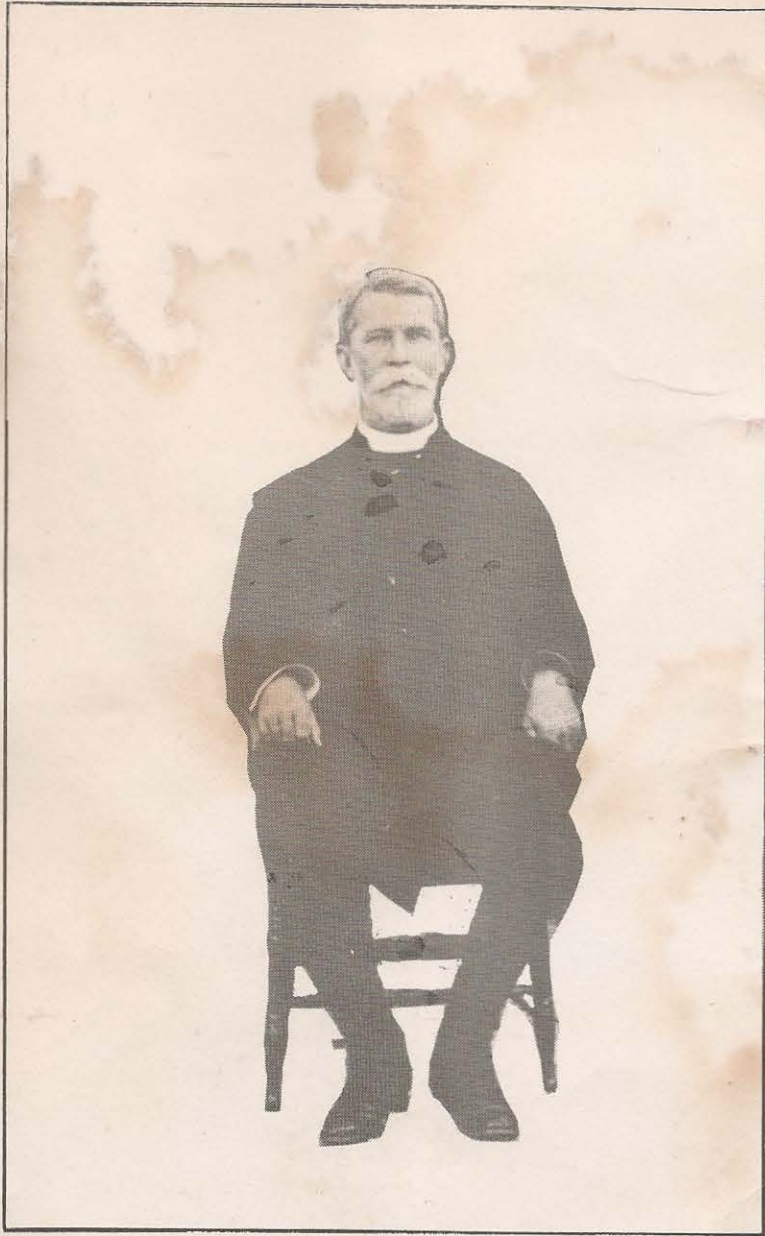


**ANTIGUA GRAMMAR  
SCHOOL**



One hundred years of  
service to Antigua  
1884 — 1984

Published by the Archives Committee  
in collaboration with Mr. Olva Flax



*Archdeacon Branch, founder and Headmaster of the Antigua  
Grammar School 1884 - 1927.*

It is difficult to say exactly when Grammar School education began in Antigua.. A Headmaster's Report for 1953 found in the Archives of the present School states;

"There is evidence of the existence of an Antigua Grammar School prior to the year 1837. Government Estimates for the year include a grant for the payment of the then Headmaster, the Revd. N. A. Phillips".

John Davy, M.D. F.R.S. Inspector General of Hospitals who resided in the West Indies from 1845-1848 recorded that

"at one of the meetings (of the House of Assembly) at which I was present, the subject brought forward was the public Grammar School, and the religious education to be given there. According to the original motion, it was to be restricted to the doctrine of the Church of England. These gentlemen (the three coloured members of the House of Assembly) moved as an amendment the substitution of "sound Christian teaching", so as to open it to the children of Dissenters, many of the rate-payers being such. But, forming a minority, their amendment was negatived".

By 1856 "this first Grammar School was no longer in existence. Revd. John Horsford, commenting on Dr. Davy's report, recorded that this Grammar School has since become extinct by reason of its forbidding exclusiveness and sectarian narrow-mindedness".

Certainly a school was started in 1861. An entry in the Bishop's Diary, dated September 2 reads as follows:

"A Grammar School was this day opened in the city of St. John's, Antigua, and the Revd. W. E. Paige B.A. appointed as Headmaster."

A note at the foot of the page reads:

"The number of scholars with whom the school opened was five. It was arranged that Boarders should be received after 1st January 1862".

The Institution labelled "The Antigua Classical and Commercial School" was to be conducted according to the principles of the Church of England and was under the Superintendence of the Bishop of the Diocese. Its finances were managed by a committee consisting of

- (1) The Bishop
- (2) The Archdeacon
- (3) 5 Laymen

The school was open to

"all children of whatever complexion or religious denomination who shall exhibit a certificate of marriage of their parents".

The life of this school appears to have been short. The Diary records that a public examination of the school was held in December 1862, 1863 and 1864. There is no such entry for 1865, although there is an entry for 19th September which states that the Bishop continued his visitation of St. John's Parish and examined schools at Rectory and Cathedral. One of these may have been the Grammar School. Then on 9th January, 1866 an entry reads "Transferred License (sic) of Revd. E. Paige to Curacy of All Saints chapel and District, Antigua."

The present Grammar school was opened on 16th April 1884 "in a house in the town of St. John's with 11 boys." The first Headmaster was the Revd. (later Archdeacon) Samuel Edmund Branch, who held the post until 1927.

During his 43 years of service to the school the Headmaster shaped and moulded a breed of men with sound Christian principles whose devotion to their school was evident in their work, their games, their other extra-circular activities and indeed in everything they did. The school's outstanding academic achievements were well-known and its place as a leading academic institution was assured when Arnold Branch took the first Leeward Islands' scholarship.

Boys came from all over the Caribbean to swell the ranks - Montserrat, St. Kitts, Nevis Dominica, St. Thomas, St. Croix, Tortola, Puerto Rico, St. Martin, Santo Domingo, Anguilla, St. Lucia, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Colon and elsewhere.



*An early Antigua Grammar School Scout Troop*

3

Nearly a century later the grandsons of some of the earliest pupils still recall the affection which their ancestors felt for their school and their Headmaster and still treasure the annual letters (some of which have been reproduced in the appendix to this document) written to the boys by the Head.

They came from throughout the region to study at the Antigua Grammar School; they went out to spread the principles to their Alma Mater throughout the far reaches of the then British Empire. An excerpt from the Headmaster's Report for 1917 is of interest:

"The School completed its thirty third year on April.. Since its foundation, 479 boys have been entered on the roll. The number on this term's roll (Trinity Term 1917 is 60. Fifty four have died, including six who have given their lives in this war for Duty, Country and God - Jack Percival, James Lake, Archie Hart, Malcolm Shepherd, Arthur Shepherd, Harry Holme. May God grant them rest, and perpetual light and peace!

Fifty eight others are serving with His Majesty's Forces in various places. Of these one is a prisoner (Frank Armstrong—). Seven have been severely wounded and are unfit for further military service (John Maginley, Alfred Goodwin, Ivan Garling, Charles Cox, Hal Baynes and probably Wilfred Branch and Ernest Smyth). Tom Farrar has been wounded in Mesopotamia and has won the Military Cross, Desmond Emery has won a similar honour for bravery in France, and Jim Hart has been wounded in France and recommended for a similar honour.

Twenty five are at work or at school in the British Isles; thirty five in Canada; forty in the United States; twelve in Africa, (South, West, East) and Egypt; three in Mexico; one each in India, China, Tonga, Fiji, and Mauritius; fifty six in the West Indies outside of the Leeward Islands; twenty in the Leeward Islands outside Antigua; and some ninety still in Antigua. I regret to say that I have no record of about twenty.

Among these past boys of the school there are Soldiers, Clergymen, Doctors, Lawyers, Planters, Merchants, Engineers, Chemists, Telegraphists, Government Officials and Business Clerks."

Perhaps the greatest honours won by the school were won for her by those who gave their lives for a noble cause in the two great Wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. Those were her heroes, those whose names have been recorded on the School's Cenotaph:

1914 - 1918

Francis Herbert Armstrong  
George Wheeler Armstrong  
James Harvey Bryson  
Douglas Hardtman Darling  
Archibald Murdoch Hart  
Henry James Frederick Holme  
Arthur Wesley Holmes a Court  
James Louis Englebert Rey Lake  
John Edgar Otto Malone  
Ian Donald Roy McDonald  
Wentworth Holman France Percival  
Kenrick Willoughby Shand  
Arthur Lindsay Moore Shepherd  
Richard Malcolm Shepherd

The school honoured its dead of World War II by naming its new classrooms after them:-

Vanier  
Purnell - Edwards  
Nugent  
Campbell  
Nanton

The early location of the school is not recorded; By the early part of this century the school had moved to its present site.

The synod of 1908 had for consideration a Grammar School which the Bishop in his charge described as one of the most important items before the synod. Details of the scheme are not given but the Bishop recorded various donations received from S.P.G. (£ 255) S.P.C.K. (£300) and C.F.S. (£200) among others, and the synod passed a resolution to purchase the "goodwill and proprietary rights", in the school from Archdeacon Branch. A formal agreement was entered

into on 24 December of the same year, and under its terms these rights passed to the Diocese on Archdeacon Branch's retirement in 1927.

Col. Branch, son of the Archdeacon, in a letter to the Bishop in November 1971 gives an interesting "aside" on the matter.

"I remember when Daddie told Mother he had bought the property, which previously had been the Poor House, she said, Edmund I always knew we would end up in the Poor House but I did not think it would be so soon."

According to Col. Branch the school building and most of the land were bought by the Founder in 1910 and were his personal property till his death. In the archives at Bishop's Lodge however, is an Agreement, dated 31st July 1909, between the Hon. Edmond Blackwell, Acting Colonial Secretary and the very Revd. Henry Young Shepherd Vicar General, for purchase of the property known as The Old Poor House for the sum of £800. There is also a Certificate of Title, issued on 22 January 1910 to the Diocesan Synod of Antigua in lieu of Crown Grant for the property known as The Old Poor House.

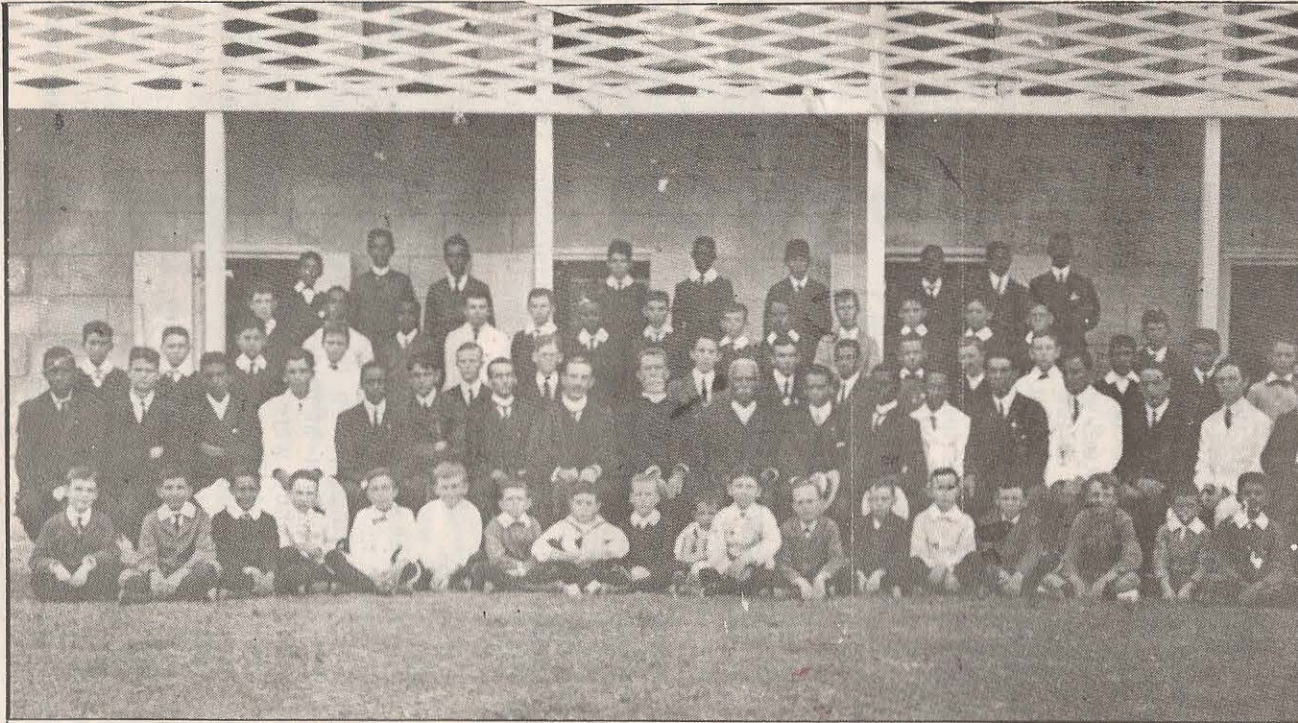
On the other hand, a letter from the Deputy Secretary of the Diocesan Council to the Minister of Social Services, dated 27 June, 1962, contains the following statements:-

"It must be remembered that the Antigua Grammar School was a private school given by will to the Diocese of Antigua under certain conditions"

The building, according to the Headmaster's report of 1953, was erected in 1738 for military purposes as part of the strengthening of the Antigua garrison against the French threat to the island. The date of change from garrison to almshouse is not known nor is the exact date when it began to house a school; but we may assume that the latter date was not later than 1909.

Various capital improvements were carried out at the school. Classrooms were added to the site, a Chapel was built. In November, 1939, the Synod and the Governing Body of the School entered into an agreement with Bishop Hand for a loan of £300 "to be used for some capital purpose in connection with the school".





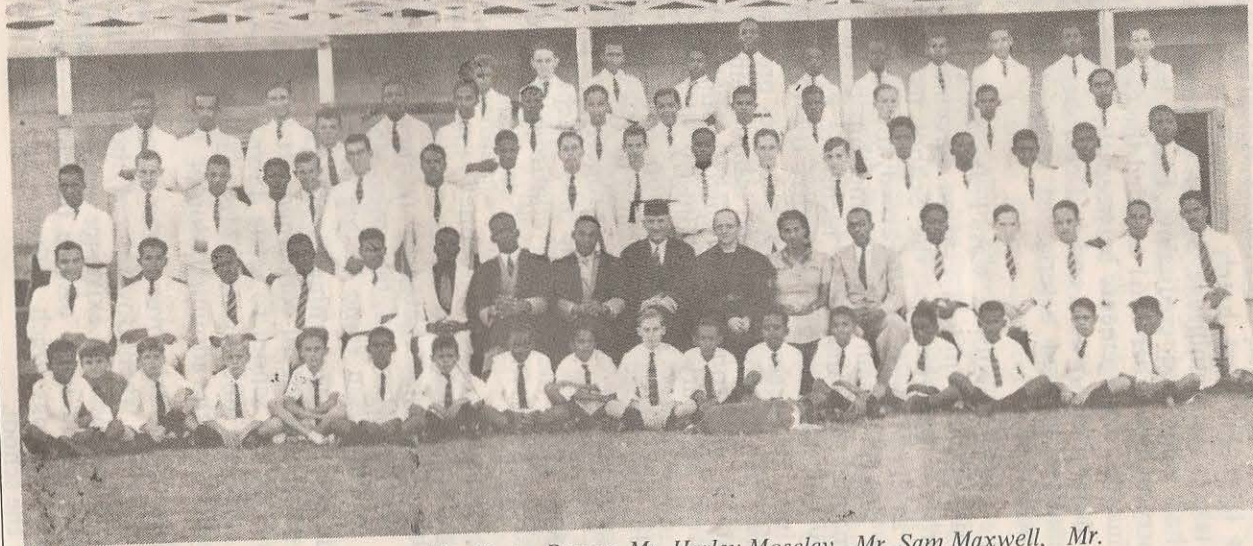
*The Headmaster, Staff and Students of the Antigua Grammar School circa 1910.*

Government appears to have taken in interest in the school from a very early date. An entry in the Bishop's Diary for 1886 suggests that the school was then in receipt of a Government Grant, for there was a settlement of the question of the continuance of the grant when the Headmaster agreed to exempt Catholic boys from attendance at school prayers. The School Accounts for 1928 show that a grant-in aid of £251.6.8 was received in respect of the year 1928-29. The amount of the grant varied from year to year, and while the records do not indicate the basis on which the grants were given, it seems likely that the grants were linked to the Agricultural Scholarships then provided by the Government. These scholarships ensured that boys of outstanding scholastic ability were not prevented from receiving a good education simply because their parents could not pay the fees.

The annual scholarships were however quite inadequate to meet the needs of the rising population and in 1943 and in subsequent years Government awarded five scholarships to the School.

The year 1956 was a significant one, because in that year the Headmaster's post became pensionable under the Government Pensions Act, and Government scholarships had reached the figure of 37. Thereafter, the Government's participation in the school increased rapidly, and by 1962 Government's financial support amounted to \$38,794.00, including the salaries of the Headmaster and the Graduate Staff.

This growth was attended by serious problems. In 1940 the 70 boys in the school represented middle and upper class homes. As time moved on boys were admitted from all levels of the society, bringing with them different standards, different mores, different attitudes to work, and the staff unaccustomed as they were to dealing with large numbers of children from different backgrounds, has a difficult task attempting to merge the entire lot together. Add to this the demands for increase incomes in the "new Antigua" as a result of Trade Union activity; add also the post-war problems of shortage of books and supplies; add finally the inability of the new breed of parents to pay large fees. The result was a school staggering under the weight of its combined problems, yet unable to do much to rid itself of them.



A. 45 144 Staff, seated in second row: Mr. Victor Brown, Mr. Harley Moseley, Mr. Sam Maxwell, Mr. Gilbert Auchinleck (Headmaster) Archdeacon Hilbourne, Miss Jackie Nanton (later Mrs. Georges). Mr. Arthur Sealy.

The handwriting was on the wall. In 1955 Government had established the Princess Margaret School and a few years later the first batch of students from that school had taken the Cambridge Senior Cambridge Examinations and had performed creditably. Elated by this success the Ministry in December 1961 notified the Governing Body that the financial arrangements between the Government and the Governing Body would end in December 1962. This bit of information initiated a series of negotiations which lasted until mid-1963.

The next milestones was 1 January, 1964, when the Diocesan Council entered into an agreement with the Government for hand-over of the School to the Government. So far as the property is concerned, the Agreement provided that it should remain in the ownership of the Diocese, but that maintenance and other recurrent expenses should be met by Government, and also that the Government would enter into an agreement "to put the premises in order, maintain them in good repair and insure them."

Another milestone was reached in June 1971 when the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education Health and Culture wrote to the Bishop enquiring about "the possibility of change of ownership of the school premises", and negotiated "the sale" of the property.

The penultimate milestone was reached on 14 December, 1972, when the Minister confirmed his acceptance of the final condition for transfer of ownership.

The transition, to put it briefly was not smooth. The teething pains which were to be expected at the change of ownership were exacerbated by frequent changes of Headmaster shortly after the take-over. In addition there appeared to have been some feeling of insecurity among the Staff, despite the Governments efforts to work things out to the satisfaction of all concerned. It took some considerable time for the school to settle down, with several Acting Heads, including one woman, Mrs. Cicely Lyn, assuming responsibility for the administration of the school.

Following the take-over of the school there was a major change of policy when Government abolished the system of fees which had been in existence since the inception of the school and placed upon parents the onus of providing their children's text books which hitherto had been the responsibility of the school.

The early seventies saw many changes in Antigua. A new Government was elected in 1971 and among their ideas was one to amalgamate the Antigua Grammar School and the Antigua Girls' High School. In due course little girls in blue uniforms walked the corridors which were once regarded as exclusively male territory and must now be considered part of the history of that school.

The experiment was short-lived. With the return of the former Government to power the experiment was abandoned and the Antigua Grammar School returned to its original function of providing education for boys.

The last milestone - payment of purchase price and transfer of property is still to be reached. In July 1973 the Diocesan Council requested Government to enter into a Sales Agreement and to pay interest at the current rate until payment was made. The reply came on January 1974 to the effect that payment of interest was "out of the question".

The first payment of \$5000 was made in January, 1976, and with the change of Government in the same year annual payments began to be made towards liquidating the debt.

Twelve years after the agreement was made the sale has not yet been completed, but the Diocese is in the process of negotiating with the Government for the purchase of a site for a new Education Complex, and it is anticipated that payment for this site will be made "by an exchange of cheques", to use the official language, that is, the Diocese will pay the Government for the land and at the same time the Government will pay to the Diocese the outstanding balance on the purchase price of the property. In this way the Church hopes to establish a continuing relationship with the Antigua Grammar School.

Second letter

Antigua Gram. School  
March 31. 1886

My very dear boys,

I want to thank you very much for your loving letter, & handsome presents on my birthday.

The chain is a great comfort to me in school. I hope it will not make me lazy; & that the remembrance of your gift will help me to be just & loving while I am in it.

Your other present has again linked me to you. Last year you chained my heart; this year you have linked my hands. With heart & hands bound to your service I ought to be earnest & whole-hearted in my work for you.

Your gifts, my dear boys, speak of your love, & they help to cheer me in "my dark times" of despondency. Just now I have been hearing some big shadows looming over my work. I have even been tempted to think that my work with you was over; that I had not done my best for you, or caring for

you as I ought to do; & that therefore I  
ought to give place to some one else. But  
the feeling is beginning to pass away, &  
this last act of your love makes me  
anxious to shake off the unwelcome thoughts  
that still remain, & to pledge myself to  
renewed efforts to work for you & our  
dear School.

Only believe that I live & work for  
you all, & trust me with your troubles  
& let me help you if I can. I want  
in return your love, your help, your sym-  
pathy, & your entire confidence.

May God remember you all for good.  
May He number you, without a single  
exception, among His Heavenly jewels  
for His Holy Name's sake.

Ever your loving friend  
S. E. Brauch

Wasters & R. Chittick.

*First Letter*

ANTIGUA, MARCH 27th, 1885.

TO THE BOYS OF THE ANTIGUA GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

My very dear Boys,

Your loving letter, and very handsome present, given me on my birthday, have made me very happy. I thank you very sincerely for them both, and especially for the feelings of affection which led you to think of me in such a kind way. I know of nothing which makes me happier than to be assured that you all love and pray for me, and I trust you will never cease to do so.

Tokens of affection are like angels' fingers, tearing aside the dark clouds and letting out the sunshine behind them, and I want you all to feel that whatever dark cloud there may have been in the past hanging over our much-loved school it has quite ~~past~~ away, and I feel that there is nothing but brightness and sunshine now everywhere.

There is a very beautiful and appropriate symbolism in your present which I should like you to think of. You remember that the Jewish High-Priest used to wear a breast plate with 12 stones, one for each tribe, on which were engraved the names of the 12 Tribes. Thus he always had the names of the Tribes written near to his heart whenever he approached GOD in prayer.

The chain which you have given me is worn on the left side over my heart; it has about 60 links, two for each of you, binding us together both for earth and Heaven. May our Heavenly Father grant that the symbolism may be realized! May we be always united together on earth in our aims, in our work, and in love; and not one of us be wanting hereafter when the jewels are arranged in the crown of CHRIST.

Once again thanking you all, my very dear boys, for your love and kindness, and with earnest prayers for you all that GOD would bless our school and all your lives.

Believe me ever

Your affectionate friend and Teacher

*S. E. Drauch*



ANTIGUA GRAMMAR SCHOOL,

March 25th, 1887.

My dear boys,

*This is now the third birthday that I have spent among you, and again for the third time I have to acknowledge very gratefully your loving remembrance of me.*

*I need not say how much I prize your present, and the love which prompted you to think of me. You must accept my hearty thanks, and be assured that if God spares my life, and continues to bless my work, I shall live and work many years for you and with you.*

*You have put me in a great difficulty by asking me to get some present that I should like. I wish you had chosen for me. In deciding, I want to get something that will really be a memento of you, and also something that you will like. If it were possible to get it I should like a large photograph of you all together more than anything else, or else an album with single photographs of each boy. You must let me know if you would like this, and then I will see whether it is practicable.*

*In conclusion, my dear boys, I would ask your prayers daily on my behalf that I may be faithful, loving and zealous, so that while I teach others I myself may be taught, and while I preach to others I may not myself be a castaway.*

*"My love be with you all in CHRIST JESUS."*

*Ever your affectionate friend and teacher*

S. E. BRANCH.