

MOLLY REID CHAPTER
D. A. R.
DERRY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Respectfully

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REV. MR. PARKER'S

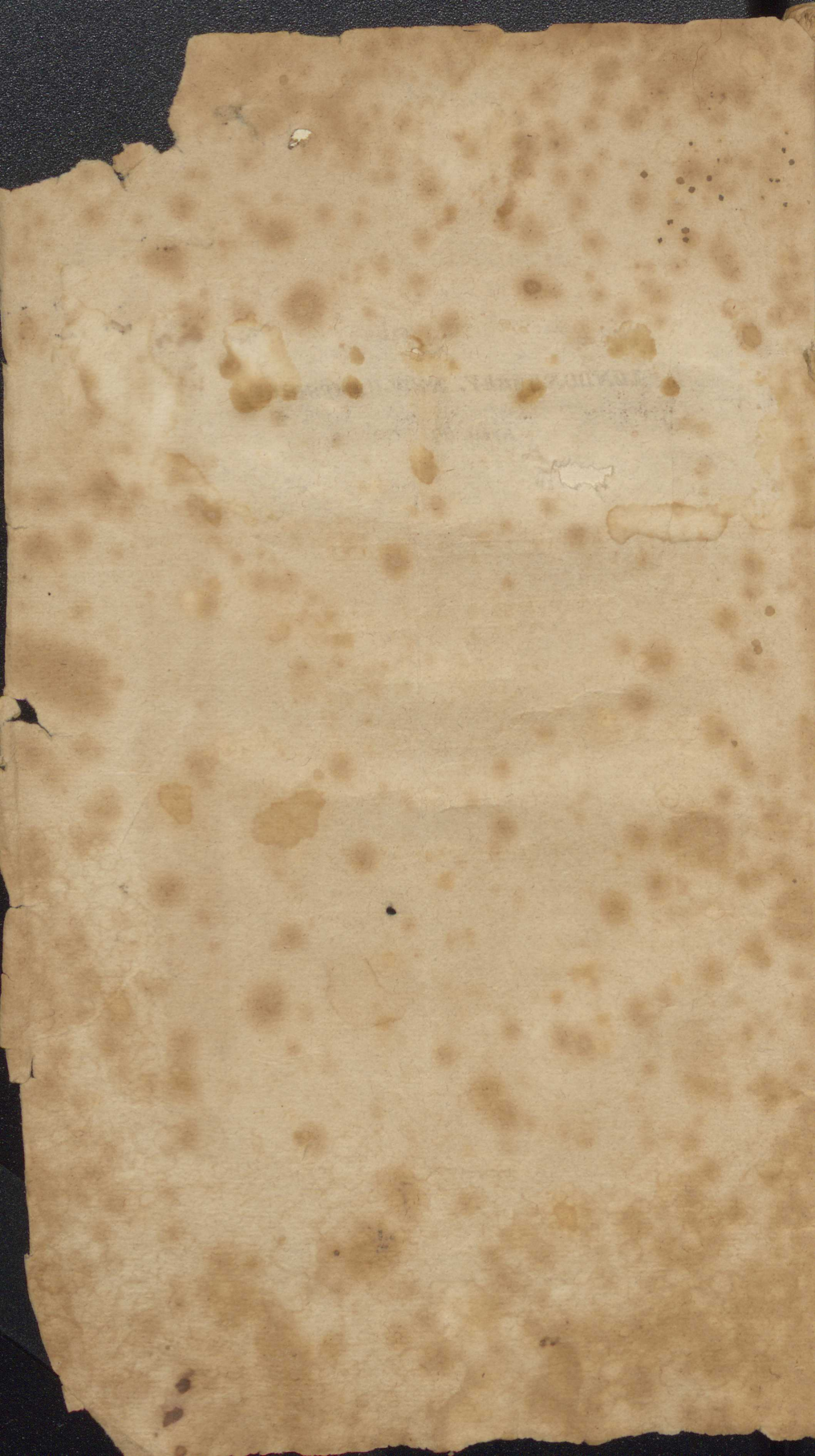
CENTURY SERMON,

COMMEMORATING

The first Settlement of Londonderry,

DELIVERED

APRIL 22, 1819.



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CENTURY SERMON,

DELIVERED

IN THE EAST-PARISH MEETING HOUSE,
LONDONDERRY, NEW-HAMPSHIRE,

APRIL 22, 1819,

IN COMMEMORATION OF

The first Settlement of the Town.

CONTAINING,

A SKETCH

OF

THE HISTORY OF THE TOWN

FROM

ITS EARLIEST SETTLEMENT.

BY EDWARD L. PARKER,
Pastor of the East-Parish in Londonderry.

PRINTED BY GEORGE HOUGH,
CONCORD,
1819.

SERMON.



DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 7.

Remember the days of old ; consider the years of many generations : ask thy father, and he will shew thee ; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

THE works of the Lord, and the dispensations of his providence, are great, and sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. They have, from age to age, employed the thoughts, and excited the gratitude and praise, of good men.

" I will remember," says one, " the works of the Lord : surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy works, and talk of thy doings."

In looking back to former ages, and recalling events which are past, we may not only greatly enlarge our minds, but find arguments to strengthen our faith in the divine government, and motives to greater zeal and fidelity in his service. Hence Moses, adverting to the wonders which the Lord had wrought for his people—to the many divine interpositions in their favour—to their deliverance from Egyptian servitude, and to their protection and support in the wilderness—directed the Israelites to apply, each to his father, and to the elders, for instruction concerning those things which existed in the days of old, and the years of preceding generations. " Remember," says he, " the days of old ; consider the years of many generations : ask

thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

What is here enjoined upon God's ancient people, may, with almost equal propriety, be urged upon us.

The duty of recalling and considering the past events of divine providence, in relation to ourselves and to our fathers, not only approves itself to reason, but is enforced by divine authority. On special occasions, it is peculiarly proper. Such an occasion now presents. One hundred years have rolled away, since your fathers first set foot upon this ground. One century ago, on this day, they pitched their tents in this place, then a dreary wilderness, the abode of savage beasts and uncivilized men.

Although nothing very peculiar has distinguished this town, in the commencement and progress of its settlement, from that of others; yet many of the events, which have here taken place, justly merit our consideration. These events, by being better known, will be more strongly felt.—Scenes in which our fathers were concerned, though common, impart an interest and excite a feeling in us. The association is natural and strong.—Impressed with these considerations, allow me to call your attention to a Sketch of the History of this town from its earliest settlement; and may it serve to excite in our hearts those feelings of gratitude and affection, so justly due to the God of our fathers.

The first settlers of this town were the descendants of a colony, which emigrated from Argylshire, in Scotland, and settled in the north of Ireland, in the province of Ulster, about the middle of the seventeenth century.* Adhering firmly to the doctrines and discipline of the Presbyterian church, they partook largely in the sufferings which were endured by the Protestants in that unhappy country, during the persecutions in the reign of Charles I. and James II, until William ascended the British throne. Although

* See Belknap's History of New-Hampshire.

by this revolution, and the subjugation of the Popish party, peace was restored to that Island, and a toleration of religious sentiments allowed; still the dissenters from the Church of England experienced many embarrassments. They were indeed permitted to maintain their own forms of worship unmolested; still they were compelled to aid in supporting a minister of the established religion. A tenth of their increase was rigorously exacted.—They also held their lands and tenements, by lease, and not as the proprietors of the soil.

Being thus burdened with rents and tythes, and ardently desiring the full enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, this people were led to contemplate a settlement in this land, where they might be free from these burdens. To this, we are informed, they were also greatly induced, by the favourable report which they received of this country, from one Holmes, a young man, son of a clergyman, who had been here. Influenced by his representations of the civil and religious privileges which were here enjoyed, his father, with three other Presbyterian ministers, James M'Gregore, William Cornwell, and William Boyd, with a large number of their congregations, resolved on a removal. Having converted their substance into money, they immediately embarked, in five ships, for America. About one hundred families arrived at Boston, August 4, 1718. Twenty families more, in one of the vessels, landed at Casco-Bay, now Portland. Among this latter number were the families who commenced this settlement.

On disembarking in this new country, in which they were to seek a residence for themselves and their descendants, they assembled on the shore, and united in solemn acts of devotion, and with peculiar sensations sang the 137th Psalm, in which, with the Jews by the rivers of Babylon, they could also say, as they remembered the land of their nativity, where they, with their fathers, had often worship-

ped, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

This company of emigrants immediately petitioned the General Court of Massachusetts for a tract of land suitable for a township. The Court readily granted their request, and gave them leave to select a settlement, six miles square, in any of the unappropriated lands to the eastward. After exploring the country along the eastern shore, and finding no place that suited them there, sixteen of the families hearing of this tract of land, then called Nutfield, and finding that it was not appropriated, determined here to take up their grant; while the others, who had embarked with them for America, dispersed themselves, on their arrival, into various parts of the country. They accordingly, as soon as the spring opened, left Casco-Bay, where they had suffered much during the winter, through scarcity of provisions and the want of suitable accommodations, and arrived at Haverhill on the second day of April, 1719.— Leaving here their families, the men immediately came up, examined the spot on which they were about to commence their settlement, and built a few huts near the brook, which they termed West-running Brook, and which still retains the name. Three remaining to guard their tents, the rest returned to Haverhill to bring on their families.

This company had no sooner selected a spot for a township, than, in order to secure the full enjoyment of gospel ordinances, which was one principal object of their removal, and also to promote their settlement, they presented a call to the Rev. James M'Gregore, under whose ministry some of them had sat in Ireland, now to become their Pastor. He was then at Dracut, where he had passed the winter, after his arrival, in preaching and instructing. For his support, they obligated themselves to pay him annually, besides the grant of certain lands, twenty shillings, currency in that day, out of every lot in the town. In compliance

with their request, he met them here, on their arrival, the eleventh day of April, O. S. 1719.

On meeting them for the first time after they had left their native Isle, in this then dreary and uncultivated spot, he made an affectionate and impressive address in view of their undertaking; reminding them of their gracious preservation while crossing the deep, and exhorting them to renewed confidence in God, and devotedness to his service. The next day, April 12th, he delivered, under a large oak, on the east side of the pond, the first discourse ever preached in this town, from the prophecy of Isaiah, xxxii. 2.—“And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Then for the first time did this wilderness and solitary place, over which the savage tribes had for centuries roamed, resound with the voice of prayer and praise, and echo to the sound of the gospel. This able, faithful, and spiritual minister of Christ, together with his flock, devoutly eyed and acknowledged the divine hand in their removal and settlement—adhering to the inspired direction, “In all thy ways, acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

From a manuscript of his, I find, that on embarking for this country, he preached to his people from those very appropriate words of Moses, when interceding with the Lord, in behalf of Israel, for his presence and protection in their march to the promised land, recorded, Exodus xxxiii. 15.—“And he said unto him, If *thy presence* go not with me, carry us not up hence.” Having illustrated the doctrinal sentiment suggested by the passage, that saints earnestly desire God’s presence with them in all their movements, he, in the application of his subject, notices the reasons of their removal to America.—That it was to avoid oppression and cruel bondage; to shun persecution and designed ruin; to withdraw from the communion of idolaters, and to have an

opportunity of worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience, and the rules of his inspired Word. This discourse, on leaving their native country, must have produced very solemn and suitable reflections.

Although Mr. M'Gregore met with them on their arrival here, and assisted them in selecting a spot most suitable on which to commence their settlement; yet he did not accept of their call, and take the pastoral charge of the people, until some time in May. On this occasion, he preached from Ezekiel xxxvii. 26.—“Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will plant them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore.” Having shewn from this passage, that it is the Lord who placeth a people in a land, multiplieth them therein, and placeth his sanctuary among them, and affords them the ordinances of religion; he devoutly reminded his brethren, in the improvement of his discourse, that they should acknowledge the providence of God in their settlements since they came into the world; that they should live by faith in what was before them; pray earnestly, that God would place and bless them—be firmly united one with another, and walk in the fear of God, and keep his charge.

I notice these discourses, delivered on occasions so interesting, not only as specimens of the piety and ability of their author, but also to shew that the removal and settlement of your fathers was a subject of devout and prayerful consideration; that they sought the divine guidance, and gratefully acknowledged the divine hand in all their deliverances and successes.

Those who first removed here, were, James M'Keen, John Barnett, Archibald Clendenin, John Mitchell, — Sterrett, James Anderson, Randel Alexander, James Gregg, James Clark, James Nesmith, Allen Anderson, Robert

Wier, John Morrison, Samuel Allison, Thomas Steele, and John Stuart. They were men principally in the middle age of life, robust, persevering, and adventurous; such as were well suited to encounter the toils, and endure the hardships and self-denials of commencing a new settlement.

Through habits of temperance and industry, and under the blessing of God, they attained to an advanced period of life. They lived to see many of their descendants settled around them; and the forest, into which they had penetrated, converted into a fruitful field. The mean age of thirteen, of whom we have any record, was 79 years; six of this number attained to nearly 90 years; while two surpassed it. The eldest of this company, John Morrison, lived to the age of 97 years. Their descendants were numerous. Many of them early removed from this town, and commenced settlements still farther west. A number of the towns in New-Hampshire, and some in Vermont, were principally planted by emigrants from this town. Of these sixteen families, we find descendants of twelve, still inhabitants of the town; and some of them, after the lapse of a hundred years, occupying the inheritances of their fathers, which have never been alienated.

They were a peculiarly industrious and frugal, yet public-spirited people, and proved a valuable acquisition to the province into which they had removed, contributing very considerably to its benefit, by their arts and their industry. They introduced the art of manufacturing linen of a superiour quality, the materials of which they brought with them. Their spinning-wheels, turned by the foot, and which are now of so general use, were the first that were brought into the country. They also introduced the culture of potatoes, which are now so highly valued and so extensively cultivated. Owing perhaps to the difference in their language, habits, and modes of life, from those of their English neighbours, prejudices were early and unreason-

ably imbibed by some against them, and many things relative to their manners and practices falsely reported. Their character as a people was perhaps as moral, as religious, and as respectable, as almost any other settlement commenced in New-England.

The settlers of this town were of Scotch origin, and retained the national trait, and are not, therefore, to be blended in their character with the original inhabitants of Ireland, who are of Celtic origin, and speak a dialect of the Celtic tongue, called Erse, or Gaelic. Between the native Irish, and the Scotch who settled in Ireland, there is almost as great a difference in character, as to religion, morals, intelligence, and dialect, as exists between them and the English.

The Scotch, as a nation, are by no means inferiour to their southern neighbours. Though in their manners plain, frugal, frank, and somewhat rough; yet they possess a greater vivacity, and quickness of parts—propensities more social, and stronger sensibilities of all kinds. They are distinguished for their hospitality, their valour, firmness, and fidelity. No people display more faithful and affectionate attachment to those who have conciliated their good will; and few nations have given more undeniable proofs of genius, adapted to scientifick and literary pursuits; or that have supported a higher degree of moral and political respectability.

Such were the national traits which characterized this company of strangers, and which have, in a good degree, been retained by their posterity. Many of their descendants, in the several professions, and the various walks of publick and private life, have sustained fair and excellent characters, and filled some of the highest offices, either literary, civil, or military, in the country. We may name those who sustained high military stations in the American army—who have been members of Congress—who have

presided in our Seminaries of Learning—who have filled seats in our Council and Senate—and who have sustained the Chief Magistracy of the State; besides a number of eminent and distinguished Ministers of the Gospel.

In order to enjoy the advantages of neighbourhood, and be thereby more secure against the assaults of the natives in case of hostilities, the first families, who arrived, planted themselves on either side of the brook before mentioned; and agreed that their home-lots should be but thirty perches broad, fronting the brook, and the same breadth to be continued on a south and north line until it made up sixty acres; thus forming what is termed the double range. The first season, they cultivated a field in common, and which is now known by the name of the Common-Field. Their buildings were of logs, and covered with bark. The first framed house erected in the town, was for the Rev. Mr. M'Gregore, and is yet standing in good repair.*

They were soon followed by many of their countrymen, who had emigrated with them to America, so that, before the close of the year, the number of families was considerably increased. Being industrious and frugal in their habits of life, and highly favoured with the institutions of the gospel, they very soon became a thriving, wealthy, and respectable settlement.

In securing a title to their lands, owing to the unsettled state of the country, they experienced some embarrassments. They at first supposed, that their township fell within the then Province of Massachusetts Bay, and therefore applied to the General Court for the confirmation of their former grant; but the Court declared that they were not under *their jurisdiction*. They therefore, in September, 1719, petitioned the Court of New-Hampshire for an act of incorporation, and town privileges. The Lieutenant-Governor declined making them a grant in the King's name,

* Now occupied by John Morrison, Esq.

as the land was then in dispute between the Crown and Allen's heirs; but by advice of Council, gave them a protection, and extended to them the benefit of the law; appointing James M'Keen, a man of probity, ability, and intelligence, and who appears to have been active and influential in the settlement of the town, a Justice of the Peace, and Robert Weir, a Sheriff.

Though they now enjoyed the protection of government, yet they were unwilling to possess themselves of lands, once the undisputed property of the aborigines, without a fair purchase of their right. "Being informed, that Col. John Wheelwright, of Wells, had the best Indian title to this tract of country, derived from his ancestors, and supposing this to be valid in a moral view, they followed the example of the first settlers of New-England, and deputed a committee, consisting of Rev. Mr. M'Gregore and Samuel Graves, to wait upon Col. Wheelwright, who obtained of him a deed of ten miles square, in virtue of a grant, dated May 17, 1629, and approved by the then existing Authorities, made to his grand-father, a minister of the gospel, and others named in said grant, by sundry Indian Sagimores, with the consent of the whole tribe of Indians between the rivers Merrimack and Piscataqua." In consideration of this deed, Col. Wheelwright and Governor Wentworth were to hold certain lots of land in the town.

The Government of New-Hampshire, apprized of the strength and benefit which the then Province would derive from this company of strangers, were particularly attentive to them, and did what they could to patronize and encourage them; particularly the Lieutenant-Governor, Wentworth, who thereby merited and received their gratitude and esteem, as appears from the following record, entered upon their town book:

"The people of Nutfield do acknowledge with gratitude the obligations they are under to the Hon. John Went-

worth, Esq. Lieutenant-Governour of New-Hampshire. They remember, with pleasure, that his Honour, on all occasions, shewed a great deal of civility and real kindness to them, being strangers in the country; and cherished the small beginnings of their settlement, and defended them from the encroachment and violence of such as, upon unjust grounds, would disturb their settlement; and always gave them a favourable ear, and easy access to the government; and procured justice for them, and established order, and promoted peace and good government amongst them; giving them always the most wholesome and seasonable advice, both with respect to the purity and liberty of the gospel, and the management of their secular concerns; and put arms and ammunition into their hands, to defend them from the fears and dangers of the Indians; and contributed liberally, by his influence and example, to the building of a house for the worship of God: so that, under God, we own him for the patron and guardian of our settlement, and erect this monument of gratitude to the name and family of WENTWORTH, to be had in the greatest veneration by the present generation, and the latest posterity."

Some persons in Haverhill and the adjoining towns, who claimed these lands by virtue of a deed of about twenty years date, from John, an Indian Sagimore, gave them at first some disturbance; but having obtained what they judged a superiour title, and enjoying the protection of government, they went on with their plantation, receiving frequent additions of their countrymen, as well as others.

It is related, that soon after they began their settlement, a party from Haverhill, headed by one Herriman, came up armed, in order *forcibly* to expel them. On making known their design, they were requested to desist, and wait until after the delivery of a lecture, upon which they were going to attend. The party consented. Soon the little company of settlers assembled around the trunk of a large

tree, which was used by Mr. M'Gregore as his pulpit. The assailants retiring at a short distance, observed their religious exercises; and, struck with the firm, resolute, and undaunted appearance of the people, their solemnity and devotion, and particularly with the eloquent and impressive discourse delivered on the occasion, they relinquished their hostile design; Herriman remarking to his company, "It is in vain for us to attempt to disturb this people; we shall not succeed; for God is evidently among them."

In June, 1722, the town was incorporated by the name of LONDONDERRY, from a city in the North of Ireland, in and near to which most of them had resided, and in which some of them had endured the hardship of a memorable siege, in contending for civil and religious liberty.

The conditions specified in the act of incorporation, and upon which it was granted, were the following—"That the proprietor of each share should build a house, settle a family, and cultivate three acres of ground, within four years; and that a meeting house should also be built during this period."

The charter made provision for a market-day each Wednesday, and for two fairs in the year, one to be holden in May, and the other in October. These fairs were of publick use and convenience, affording an opportunity to the inhabitants of this and the adjoining towns, for the exchange of commodities, and were conducted with order and propriety until the revolution. The state of society then changing—the country becoming more settled—stores being multiplied, and the means of communication with our sea-ports facilitated; they became of little or no use, were soon perverted, and have since proved a nuisance to the place, exhibiting scenes of vice and folly.

The inhabitants of the town had no sooner established themselves, and obtained a title to their lands, than they began, notwithstanding their embarrassed situation, such

was their regard to the institutions of the Gospel, to make arrangements for the erection of a house for publick worship, and more convenient enjoyment of Christian privileges. At a town meeting, so early as 1721, it was voted, that a meeting house, fifty feet in length, and forty-five feet in breadth, and so high as might be convenient for one set of galleries, should be built without delay. At the same time, a committee was chosen to carry on and finish the work, which they accordingly completed in 1722. It appears, that they were, in some measure, aided in the building of this house, by Governour Wentworth, and other benevolently disposed gentlemen in and near Portsmouth.

The first sacramental occasion was held in the spring of 1720, in the open field, at which thirty-two communicants were present. The first person born and baptized in this town, was Jonathan Morrison. The first person who deceased was John Clark, three years from the time of their settlement. Nearly as long a period elapsed before another instance of mortality occurred.

Your fathers were attentive, not only to the religious interests of themselves and families; but also to the means of education. In 1723, a school house was built upon this common—it was, however, of logs, and only sixteen feet long and twelve feet wide. In 1725, it was voted, that there should be a school in each quarter of the town for six months, if suitable instructors could be procured. The number of inhabitants rapidly increased. The church soon became numerous. At a communion season in 1723, there were 160 communicants—at the next spring communion, there were 230. The first Church Session, that was organized, consisted of the Rev. Mr. M'Gregore, Moderator—David Cargill, James McKeen, Samuel Moor, John Cochran, John Barnett, William Ayer, James Alexander, James Adams, Robert Wilson, and Robert Givan, Elders. James Reed was added in 1726.

In 1729, the town was called to experience a severe loss in the removal of the Rev. Mr. M'Gregore, their spiritual guide and father. He possessed a robust constitution, and had enjoyed a firm and uninterrupted state of health. He was never visited with sickness until seized with that which terminated his useful life. He was attacked with a violent fever, and survived but a few days. He died, on Wednesday, March 5, 1729, and was buried on the Saturday following, with very deep and general lamentation. The Rev. Mr. Phillips, of Andover, preached his funeral sermon, from Zech. i. 5—"Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" Although the settlement, before his death, had surmounted its principal difficulties, and been greatly increased; as at the last sacramental occasion, upon which he attended with his beloved flock, there were 375 communicants; still his removal was very sensibly felt and lamented by his people, who loved and revered him, and whose name and memory have been, and will continue, precious among their descendants. "He was," as Dr. Belknap justly observes, "a wise, affectionate, and faithful guide to them, both in civil and religious concerns." He was very active and influential in obtaining the grant of the township, and in securing its title.

It has been generally thought, that it was owing to a correspondence which he held with a French officer, then commanding in Canada, and with whom he had resided at the University in Scotland, that the Indians never molested this town—although the neighbouring settlements were repeatedly assaulted. From traditional remarks, as well as from a few manuscripts of his, which have been preserved, we are led to consider him a man of distinguished talents, both natural and acquired. He evidently possessed a powerful, vigorous, and discriminating mind. His religious sentiments were fully Calvinistick, and accorded with those which are expressed in the Summary composed by the

Westminster Divines. He was a man, not only of distinguished abilities, and evangelical sentiments, but of humble and ardent piety; peculiarly spiritual and experimental in his preaching. During his sickness, he maintained a firm, unshaken faith in the Saviour, and a lively hope of his interest in the promises of the Gospel. He remarked to his friends, in the immediate prospect of his death, that he trusted he had known Christ from the fourteenth year of his age. The Session, in noticing his removal, speak of his peaceful and triumphant death—"of his victoriously entering into the joy of his Lord." He was but 52 years of age at his decease. He left a widow and seven children. His personal appearance was commanding; his stature was tall and erect; his complexion dark; and his countenance expressive.

Immediately after the death of Mr. M'Gregore, they were supplied by the Rev. Matthew Clark, who having received ordination in Ireland, came over as a preacher to this country. At the request of the town and Session, he took the pastoral charge of the congregation; and, possessing distinguished literary acquirements, he also officiated as an instructor in some of the higher branches of education. When he came to this town, he was about 70 years of age. He had served as an officer in the army during the civil commotions in Ireland, and was active in the defence of the city of Londonderry during the memorable siege which it endured. After these troubles subsided, and peace was restored, he quit the military service, and commenced a preacher of the Gospel. He was eccentric in his manners, possessing a peculiar vein of humour; but a man of a strong mind—sound in the faith—decided and independent in his sentiments—and bold in the defence of what he judged to be correct in doctrine or practice. In his mode of living, he was singularly temperate. He wholly abstained from all kinds of flesh, and never ate of any thing which

had possessed animal life. He married, for his third wife, the widow of the Rev. Mr. M'Gregore, but did not long survive. He died the 25th of January, 1735, aged 76. His remains, at his particular request, were borne to the grave by those who had been his companions in arms.

As Mr. Clark was far advanced in life when he settled in this place, it was the determination of the town, when they invited him to take the pastoral charge, to obtain another Minister as soon as convenient, from Ireland, and who, should Mr. Clark be still able to officiate, would act as colleague. In 1732, the town appointed Mr. Robert Boys their commissioner, who, with the advice and in concurrence with the Rev. Mr. M'Bride, of Belemony, in Ireland, was empowered to invite a suitable, well qualified, and recommended Minister, to take the charge of them in the Lord—engaging to any one who should consent to come, £140 annually, besides the expense of transportation—and also, as a settlement, one half of a home-lot, and a hundred acre out-lot, as it was then termed.

In October, 1733, Mr. Boys returned from Ireland, with the Rev. Thomas Thompson, who, having accepted the invitation, had been ordained by the Presbytery of Tyron, and by that body amply recommended to this people. On his arrival, he was very cordially received by them as their Pastor. The Session, in behalf of the church and society, entered the following resolution and vote on their records in respect to him.

“The Session having seen and approved Mr. Thompson's testimonials, of not only his trials and ordination to be our Minister in the Lord, by the Presbytery of Tyron, together with a letter from said Presbytery, wherein they largely set forth their great satisfaction which they had, not only of his trials, but also of his Christian life and conversation, all which we heartily and cheerfully accept, and receive him to be our Minister in the Lord; promising, as God

shall enable us, to yield all due subjection and obedience to his ministry, and to respect him as an Ambassador of Jesus Christ, for his work sake."

Mr. Thompson was 29 years of age when he came to this country. He continued their Pastor but five years. He died, Sept. 22, 1738. He left a widow and one child. Though his ministry was short, and though not much has been preserved relative to him; yet, so far as I am able to collect, he was a man of promising talents and handsome accomplishments—easy, affable, and pleasant in his manners, and interesting as a publick speaker. At his decease, the town, from attachment to his family and respect to his memory, voted to bestow £70 towards the education of the infant son which he had left.

The settlement continuing to receive accessions of inhabitants from Ireland and elsewhere; and the more remote parts of the town having become in some degree settled so early as 1730; a petition was presented at a town meeting, by sundry persons in the north-westerly part, to be set off as a parish. The petition was at this time refused; but in 1735, the request being renewed, they obtained a vote in favour of becoming a distinct religious society. The line, then agreed upon, was the same as that which was afterwards observed and recognized by the General Court, in their act of incorporation.

It was not until February, 1739, that they were made a distinct Ecclesiastical society, and invested with parish privileges, by the General Court. About the time of their being thus set off, a meeting house was erected, on what is called the Hill, near to the old grave-yard in that society. Soon after, owing to some differences in the town and parish, another house for divine worship was erected, at what is termed the Aiken's Range.

In 1737, the Rev. David M'Gregore, son of the former Minister, (and who had received his literary and theological

education under the tuition of the Rev. Mr. Clark, his father's successor) took the pastoral charge of the West Parish. On account of some opposition in the town to his settlement, and the divisions occasioned by the erection of another meeting house in that society, forty families from the West Parish united with the East, and attended upon Mr. Davidson's ministry, while an equal number of families from this Parish, being particularly attached to Mr. M'Gregore, united with the West Parish, and attended his meeting.

During Mr. Thompson's ministry in this place, the church was very considerably enlarged. At a sacramental occasion, in 1734, only fifteen years after the settlement of the town, there were present, including those who attended from other towns, 700 communicants—the largest number, perhaps, that ever attended at once upon this ordinance in the town.

In 1736, the Session, which had been reduced by death, was increased by the addition of John Moor, sen. John Moor, jun. Peter Douglass, Thomas Steele, Alexander Rankin, and Ninian Cochran, who being chosen by the Session, and approved by the congregation, were ordained to the office of ruling Elders in the church of Christ.

At a meeting of this society, Oct. 1739, a committee were appointed, to unite with the Session, in presenting a call to Mr. William Davidson, who had supplied, for a short time, as a candidate, to settle with them in the work of the Gospel ministry—engaging to give him £160 as a settlement, and the same sum annually as his salary. He accepted of their invitation, and was ordained their Pastor. He married the widow of the Rev. Mr. Thompson. During Mr. Davidson's ministry, vacancies in the Session were supplied, from time to time, by the following gentlemen, viz. Abraham Holmes, John Alexander, Thomas Cochran, Moses Barnett, Hugh Wilson, John Moor, Samuel Morrison, James Alexander, Matthew Miller, Thomas Wilson, David Morri-

son, Peter Calhoon, Robert Moor, John Holmes, and David Patterson.

In 1741, an act to incorporate a new parish in the township of Londonderry, by the name of WINDHAM, passed in the General Assembly of the Province. In the beginning of 1747, the Rev. William Johnston was installed the Pastor of this religious society; and Nathaniel Hemphill, Samuel Kinkead, and John Kyle, were made ruling Elders.

In July, 1752, Mr. Johnston was dismissed from his pastoral charge; not, as it appears, on account of any disaffection among the people towards him, or of impropriety in his conduct; but for want of support. During his ministry, they had no house for publick worship. Their meetings, when the season would admit, were usually held in barns.

In 1753, a meeting house was erected in that parish, on the southerly side of Cabot's pond. The parish, on application, by their commissioner, to the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, for a Presbyterian Minister, obtained the Rev. John Kinkead, to whom a regular call being presented and accepted, he was installed over them, in October, 1760. He soon after made an addition to the eldership, of the following gentlemen, viz. Messrs. John Armstrong, Samuel Campbell, David Gregg, John Morrow, Samuel Morrison, Robert Hopkins, Gawin Armour, and John Tuffits. Though Mr. Kinkead possessed respectable talents and acquirements as a preacher of the Gospel, yet not maintaining a christian and ministerial deportment, being chargeable with immoralities, he soon lost the respect and confidence of his people, and was dismissed, in April, 1765.

Soon after his dismissal, the church and society presented a call to the Rev. Simon Williams, who was ordained their Pastor, in December, 1766, by the Boston Presbytery. He continued their Minister twenty-seven years, and deceased, November 10, 1793, aged 64. He was highly respect-

ed and esteemed by his people, and by the neighbouring Ministers and churches. He was eminent as a scholar. He opened a private academy, which was continued a number of years. Under his tuition, many young gentlemen were prepared for admission into College. Although during the latter part of his life, he was subject to a partial and occasional derangement of mind, as well as to bodily infirmities, he still continued in the discharge of the duties of his office, with few interruptions, until his death. He died beloved by the people of his charge, who readily cast the mantle of charity over his eccentricities and frailties. During his ministry, he ordained John Dinsmore, Robert Park, John Anderson, William Gregg, Samuel Morrison, Robert Dinsmore, and Alexander M'Coy, ruling Elders.

Immediately after the establishment of our Independence, Windham was made a distinct town, and invested with all the immunities of a free corporation. In 1798, a new meeting house, the one now occupied by the society, was erected. The town, after having remained destitute of a settled ministry nearly twelve years, invited the Rev. Samuel Harris to become their Pastor, who was ordained by the Londonderry Presbytery, in October, 1805. Since his settlement, David Gregg, James Davidson, and William Davidson, have been added to the Session.

The inhabitants of Windham, who are principally derived from the first planters of this town, have firmly adhered to the religious principles of their fathers—to the doctrines and forms of the Presbyterian church, as originally established in Scotland, and administered in this country. Not given to change, they have remained united, and firm supporters of religious institutions, and of Gospel order. Of the four Ministers, and twenty Elders, which, since their incorporation, have been ordained in that town, but one Minister and five Elders survive.

The extraordinary seriousness, and attention to religion, which, in 1741, so extensively prevailed in this country—pervading New-England and most of the American Colonies—extended into this town. The Rev. Mr. M'Gregore, having visited Boston, and some other places, during this period, and having witnessed striking displays of divine grace in the conviction and hopeful conversion of multitudes, returned to his people greatly enlivened and deeply impressed with the subject. Having related to his congregation what the Lord was thus doing in our land, in the out-pouring of his Spirit, he delivered a number of very impressive discourses, from those words of the Apostle, Eph. v. 14. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light." The word, thus solemnly and pungently dispensed, was blessed as the means of awakening many of his people to a deep and feeling sense of their guilt and danger. Meetings for religious conference and for prayer were frequent. Young people, in the different parts of his parish, statedly met by themselves for the same purpose. A happy addition was made to the church.

During this season of seriousness and religious attention, the celebrated Mr. Whitefield visited the town, and preached to a large collection of people in the open field.

The Session of the church, in the West Parish, during the Rev. Mr. M'Gregore's ministry, consisted of the following gentlemen: James M'Keen, James Leslie, James Clark, James Nesmith, James Lindsley, George Duncan, John Duncan, James Taggart, John Gregg, Robert Morrison, John Hunter, John M'Keen, Samuel Anderson, Samuel Fisher, John Aiken, and James Reed.

In 1769, this house, for divine worship, was built, and dedicated to the service of God.

The inhabitants of this town, from its settlement, have, perhaps, been as patriotick and as prompt in support of our liberties, civil and religious, as any body of citizens in

our country. On the declaration of the French war, in 1756, in which the infant Colonies, and especially New-England, were threatened with a total extirpation, and with all the cruelties of a savage foe, this town bore its part in their defence and protection. A number of men, under the command of Capt. John Moor, an active and enterprising officer, penetrated, with much difficulty and suffering, into Canada, and aided in the reduction of those Provinces, and their subjection to the British Crown, which put a period to the unceasing alarm and convulsion in which these Colonies were kept, by the regular and insidious attacks of the French on the one hand, and the solitary ambushments and midnight incursions of the natives on the other.

No sooner did hostilities commence between this country and Great-Britain, at Lexington, in 1775, in consequence of a new and oppressive system of policy adopted by that nation towards her Colonies, and which was repugnant to every independent sentiment and feeling of the Americans, than a company of volunteers from this town, under the command of the late General Reed, on the alarm being sounded, hastened to the scene of action, took part in the battle at Bunker's Hill, and thus determinately rallied round the standard of liberty, which had been reared amidst prospects the most gloomy and discouraging. And during the painful and protracted struggle for Independence which ensued, no town, probably, remained more firmly united in opposing the exorbitant claims of the British government—or afforded the American army a larger proportion of troops to assert our rights, and redress our wrongs. It not only furnished our country with some of her bravest and most experienced soldiers, but it gave birth to that distinguished commander, the veteran STARK, the last surviving General officer of the revolutionary army, who, with his heroick band, in the ever-memorable action at Bennington, arrested the progress of the British arms, and changed the aspect of the war.

May 30, 1777, deceased, the Rev. David M'Gregore, aged 58. He was greatly respected, and sincerely and deeply lamented, by the affectionate people of his charge. He stood high in the publick estimation, as a preacher and as a divine. His praise was in all the surrounding churches. Few, if any, then upon the stage, were considered his superiours. Though not favoured with a collegiate education, yet, under the private instruction of the Rev. Mr. Clark, and by his own assiduity and application in acquiring human, but especially divine knowledge, he became "a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," and was able at all times, and on all occasions, "to bring forth out of his treasure, things new and old," "rightly dividing the word, and giving to each one a portion in due season." He was well versed in the Scriptures, had a natural gift of elocution, and was a zealous and engaging preacher. His pulpit talents were perhaps superiour to those of his father. His voice was full and commanding—his delivery solemn and impressive—and his sentiments clear and evangelical. His house of worship was usually thronged. Many from neighbouring towns diligently attended upon his ministry.

He excelled not only as a preacher, but also as a Pastor—or in the discharge of parochial duties—especially that of catechising. These occasions, on which neighbourhoods, both parents and children, were collected for the purpose of catechetical instruction, were regarded by his people as particularly interesting and profitable. His powers of mind were strong and vigorous. He possessed a peculiar spirit of firmness and independence, which prevented him from shrinking from duty on account of apparent danger or difficulty.*

* The following fact has been frequently mentioned, as illustrating certain traits in his character. A gentleman in Portsmouth received a letter from an unknown hand, threatening to burn his buildings, unless a certain sum of money was left at a particular place on the road leading from Chester to

Mr. M'Gregore did not survive his usefulness. He continued in the faithful and acceptable discharge of the duties of his sacred office, until removed by death. The last Sabbath on which he preached, was a communion season. On this occasion, he manifested, during the former part of the publick exercises, his accustomed zeal and devotedness; at length, exhausted by the effort, he sank down in his desk, and was carried out of the assembly—He however so far revived, as to return to the place of worship, and address, in publick, his people, for the last time: he died the following Friday.

During his short confinement, his mind was calm and resigned. His faith in that Saviour, whom he had from time to time so fully exhibited in all his offices, was now his un-failing support. It disarmed death of its sting, and the grave of its terror. To one of his Elders, who visited him shortly before his death, he observed, referring to Christ, "I am now going, to see him as he is." Addressing some of his Christian brethren, in reference to the destitute

Portsmouth. The money was accordingly deposited, and a guard placed near, in order to arrest the person who should appear to receive it. Capt. John Mitchell, of this town, having occasion to travel that way in the night, alighted from his horse near the spot where the money was lodged. He was instantly arrested by the guard; and notwithstanding his protestations of innocency, he was immediately conveyed to Portsmouth, and committed to prison. Owing to the singular concurrence of circumstances, the publick sentiment was so generally and so strongly excited against him, that no respectable gentleman of the bar could be induced to become his advocate at his trial. Mr. M'Gregore, convinced of his innocency, and strongly interested in his behalf, on account of his unpleasant and painful situation, resolutely undertook to conduct his cause, and to defend his character; though at the hazard, in some measure, of his own reputation. He accordingly, by permission of the Court, took his seat at the bar: and though not particularly versed in forms of legal justice; yet, so powerful and convincing was his plea—with so much ability and address did he manage his defence—that he obtained the gentleman's acquittal, in opposition to the whole current of publick opinion. His innocency was afterwards satisfactorily made known—and the offender discovered.

situation in which they would soon be, he exhorted them to look in faith to the great Head of the church, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and repeatedly bore testimony to the truth and importance of those doctrines which, for more than forty years, had been the subject of his preaching, and which are termed, by way of distinction, *the Doctrines of Grace.*

Dr. Whittaker, of Salem, preached his funeral discourse, from those words of Elisha, on the removal of Elijah, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

Previously to the death of the Rev. Mr. M'Gregore, a new meeting house had been erected in the West Parish, the one now occupied by the society, in which he preached a certain part of the time. After his decease, they remained a few years destitute of a settled Minister.

In 1778, by an act of the General Assembly, the forty families which had been allowed to pass from one parish to the other, for the more satisfactory enjoyment of religious privileges, and which number had increased to nearly seventy, were confined to their respective bounds in maintaining the Gospel. A greater part of them, however, continued for a few years to worship as they had formerly done.

The West Parish having made trial of a number of candidates, was at length unanimous in the choice of the Rev. William Morrison, their late respected and beloved Pastor; to whom a call being presented, and sustained by the Associate Presbytery to which he belonged, he was ordained over that church and society, February 12, 1783.

Soon after Mr. Morrison's ordination, the Session, which then consisted of but few members, was, in 1783, enlarged by the addition of John Bell, John Pinkerton, Robert Thompson, Abel Plummer, James Aiken, Jonathan Griffin, Abraham Duncan, Thomas Patterson, and James Nesmith,

who were ordained and set apart to the office of ruling Elders in that church. The Session was afterwards increased by the addition of James Pinkerton, William Adams, David Brewster, John Fisher, and Jonathan Savary. Thomas Carlton and John Pinkerton have recently been added.

The Rev. William Davidson, who sustained the pastoral charge of this society, continued to officiate as their Minister more than half a century. He was ordained in 1740, and he died February 15, 1791, at the advanced age of 77. He was born in Ireland, in 1714; and was educated at the University in Scotland. He graduated in 1733. He was a Minister of an amiable character, possessing a peculiarly mild, friendly, and benevolent disposition. He was exemplary in his life and conversation, and devoted to the interests of his people. He did not perhaps excel as a theologian, or a publick speaker. His doctrinal views were not so clear and distinguishing; yet as a *Pastor*, he was diligent and affectionate. If he were not extolled for the brilliancy of his talents, or the powers of his mind, he was beloved and respected for the qualities of his heart, and the virtues of his life.

He did not in any degree entangle himself in the affairs of the world. Attentive to the duties of his office, and the calls of his parish, he left the management of his temporal concerns in a great degree to Mrs. Davidson, a lady well qualified to fill the station in which she was placed. He greatly studied to preserve the peace and harmony of his society. His disposition to oblige, led him frequently to remit his demands upon his parishioners when requested, never suffering any to be distressed in payment of their tax for his support.—He died sincerely beloved and respected by those among whom he had long laboured, and in whose service “his locks had whitened and his eyes grown dim.”

After the decease of Mr. Davidson, the society remained destitute of a settled ministry until May, 1795, when the

Rev. Jonathan Brown was ordained their Pastor, by the Londonderry Presbytery.

In 1800, John Nesmith, Daniel M'Keen, and John Taylor, were added to the Session of this church.

In October, 1804, the Rev. Mr. Brown was, at his request, dismissed from his pastoral charge.

In 1809, the Third or Congregational Parish in this town, which had been formed and organized after Mr. Brown's settlement, became united with the Presbyterian church and society, and were incorporated by an act of the Legislature, as the First Parish in Londonderry. In forming this union, so desirable, and so necessary to the peace and prosperity of the Parish, each society yielded a few of those peculiarities by which they were distinguished; and we are happy to find, that they have now become so blended and so united, that the distinctions, which formerly existed, appear to be wholly lost.

September 12, 1810, the *present* Pastor of this church and society was ordained. On the union of the two churches in this place, they proceeded to a new choice of Elders, agreeably to the articles of their Constitution. The following gentlemen were elected, and set apart to that office, viz. Daniel M'Keen, James Palmer, Charles Smith, John Burnham, John Crocker, James Moor, Andrew Moor, David Adams, John Dinsmore, Nathaniel Nourse, and James Gregg. Samuel Burnham, Matthew Clark, Jonathan Adams, Robert Morse, William Choate, James Choate, and John Humphrey, have been since added to the Session.

May, 1816, died, Elder John Pinkerton, a distinguished benefactor to the town. He had long been a useful, respectable, and influential citizen; active in supporting civil and religious order. By a long course of industry in business, he had accumulated a large estate. In the distribution of his property, he benevolently bestowed *eight thousand dollars* upon each of the two religious societies in this

town, for the support of the Gospel; and *thirteen thousand dollars*, as a fund for the support of an Academy. In consequence of these liberal donations, which will contribute so essentially to the interests of this people, as well as of his publick and private virtues, his name will be deservedly precious in this place, and be had in lasting and grateful remembrance.

March 9, 1818, died, the Rev. William Morrison, D. D. having been the Minister of the West Parish thirty-five years. He was born in Scotland, and came to this country while a young man, with a view to obtain an education for the ministry. Having completed his theological studies, under the direction of the Rev. Robert Annin, he was licensed to preach the Gospel. He was soon after employed to supply the West Parish as a candidate, where he was at length settled—and continued in the assiduous and acceptable discharge of the duties of the ministry until his death.

As you have all, my hearers, been personally acquainted with him—as you have frequently enjoyed his ministrations—as his appearance, his manner, and his gifts as a preacher, are now fresh in your minds—*especially* as his character was so ably and correctly drawn in the Discourse delivered at his interment—a more particular delineation will not be deemed necessary; neither perhaps will it be expected on this occasion. Though dead, he will, I trust, long survive in the affectionate remembrance of his bereaved people; and of the many societies which were favoured with his occasional labours.

NOTE.—As there may be some who have not been favoured with a perusal of the Sermon delivered by the Rev. Dr. DANA, at the funeral of the Rev. Dr. MORRISON, the following extract, containing his character, is annexed to *this Discourse*, on its publication.

“Addressing a congregation so signally favoured as to have enjoyed his publick instructions for a period of more than *thirty-five* years, I need not say, that they combined, in no common degree, the qualities which constitute the acceptable, the impressive and useful preacher. His sermons were purely and strictly evangelical; were luminous and instructive; faithful and searching; awfully alarming to the wicked; yet encouraging to the sincere, and tenderly consoling to the mourner in Zion. With remarkable force and fidelity did they display the genuine, unadulterated doctrines of the Gospel, with the distinguishing nature and evidences of vital and practical religion. Nor were his *prayers* less impressive than his sermons. Replete with reverence and affectionate devotion; the breathings of a soul apparently in near communion with its God; full, yet concise; adapted to occasions and circumstances; they could scarcely fail to solemnize and edify the hearers.

“His *manner*, in the sacred desk, was peculiar. It had something of patriarchal simplicity; something of apostolick gravity and authority. Yet it was mild, affectionate, and persuasive. It indicated a mind absorbed in heavenly things, deeply conscious of its awful charge, and anxiously intent to fasten eternal truths on the consciences and hearts of men.

“As a Pastor, he was faithful, assiduous, and tender; instant in season, and out of season; watching for souls, as one that must give account; and finding his delight in the discharge of the most laborious and exhausting duties of his office. How little did he spare himself, even in those closing years of life, in which his emaciated form proclaimed the ravages of disease; and infirmity, combined with age, seemed to demand repose! He was truly the *father* of his beloved people. He rejoiced in their joys, sympathized in their sorrows, adapted himself to their infirmities, and, without sacrificing dignity, or independence, or faithfulness,

became *all things to all men*, that he might promote their spiritual good.

“ But his cares and labours were by no means confined to his flock. The general interests of Zion, the peace and welfare of churches near and remote, engaged his feelings, and frequently employed his exertions. Few were so often resorted to, as counsellors in cases of difficulty; and few have been so successful in promoting the interests of peace and order. His deep knowledge of human nature, the quickness and accuracy of his perceptions, his sound judgment, his consummate prudence, his unaffected kindness, united with energy and independence, were eminently calculated to render him successful in mediating between contending parties, and becalming the agitated spirits of men.

“ As to his pulpit labours, they were widely extended indeed. In his days of health especially, they were so frequently sought by churches abroad, and so liberally afforded, that no small portion of his time and strength was exhausted in these free-will offerings.

“ He took an energetick and interested part in the variety of plans and institutions, to which the present age has given birth, for disseminating the Scriptures, for extending the knowledge of the Gospel, for promoting the power of godliness, and effecting a reformation of manners. Every design, connected with the glory of God, and the best interests of man, engaged his cordial concurrence, his active patronage, and his fervent prayers. He was much animated and delighted by the recent *signs of the times*. He considered the multiplied revivals of religion in our country, and the unexampled exertions of Christians on both sides of the Atlantick, to evangelize the heathen, as intelligible and decisive indications of the approach of the promised millennium.

“ If we follow him into the private walks of life, we perceive a character consistent and uniform, estimable and

lovely. His piety was strict without austerity, and fervent without enthusiasm. Religion in him was a pure and lambent flame, enlightening, comforting and attractive; but not dazzling, terrifying, nor consuming. If there was a trait in his character, conspicuous above the rest, it was *benevolence*—a benevolence which prompted him to unwearied and self-denying exertions in promoting the real happiness of his fellow-creatures; which inspired candour for their failings, and compassion for their distresses; which could forgive the injurious, and overcome evil with good.

“After this, it is scarcely needful to add, that in the social and domestick relations, he was signally exemplary and amiable; that he was a most affectionate husband, a most tender father, and a most faithful friend.

“No one who was familiarly acquainted with Dr. Morrison, could fail to observe in him a habitual serenity and cheerfulness of mind; a serenity, a cheerfulness, not the result of mere natural temperament, but obviously flowing from a lively confidence in the all-governing goodness and wisdom of God, and a habitual submission to his disposing will.

“But his life, precious, valued, exemplary as it was, must have a close. What thanks do we owe to the Sovereign Disposer, that it was protracted so long; and that it was consistent, graceful, and useful to the last! Especially ought we to be thankful that we have repeatedly heard him speak with such humble, cheerful composure of his approaching dissolution; and that now we have such consoling evidence, that to him death was unstinged, and the grave deprived of its victory.”

REFLECTIONS.

1. WHAT important and interesting changes have been produced, in relation to this town, during the CENTURY under review! Carry back your thoughts to the period of its

settlement—the time when the first planters erected their tents: How changed—how improved is now the scene! This day, 1719, the spot, on which we are assembled, was a wilderness. Where then was seen nothing but a rough uncultivated tract of country, filled with beasts of prey and wandering natives, are now presented to our view, on either hand, pastures covered with flocks, and fruitful fields waving from year to year with abundant harvests. Instead of the Indian wigwam, are now seen the habitations of civilized men—buildings for the instruction of our youth—and Temples for the worship of JEHOVAH.

How greatly superiour, my brethren, to those of your ancestors, are the circumstances in which you are placed! How much greater are the privileges and advantages which you enjoy! Contrast with your safety, ease, and affluence, their dangers, hardships, and self-denials. They, when they first penetrated into this place, were few in numbers, and strangers in a land not their own: You are the undisputed proprietors of the soil on which you live, and are now increased to nearly three thousand souls. They fared hardly, being compelled for a time to seek their provisions at a distance from their settlement: You have not only the conveniences, but many of the delicacies of life.

Through fear of the midnight incursions and the solitary attacks of the natives, not only were their families nightly garrisoned; but, in the cultivation of their fields, they held an implement of husbandry in one hand, and a weapon of defence in the other: You may sleep unmolested in your dwellings, and sit under your own vine and fruit-tree, having none to make you afraid. They were under great disadvantages for educating their children: You are highly privileged with the means of instruction.

At first, and for some time, there was but one school house in the town, and that built of logs: Now there are eighteen school districts, and the same number of school

houses, generally commodious and well built; also an Academy well endowed, in which our youth are taught the liberal arts and sciences. Your fathers at first worshipped together in the open field, in barns and private dwellings; You have now two large and convenient houses for publick worship.

In fine, you enjoy a pleasant and a healthy situation; you are richly favoured with the bounties of providence, and blessed with the full enjoyment of the Gospel and its institutions.

Surely, "your lines have fallen to you in a pleasant place—you have a goodly heritage." But remember, that these privileges and blessings were, under God, purchased for you by the toils and sufferings of your fathers—they laboured—they encountered dangers—they endured hardships, and submitted to privations. *You*, their descendants, "have entered into their labours."

2. In reviewing the Century now closed, we are called upon gratefully to notice many instances of the divine goodness towards the inhabitants of this town.

It was through a divine influence, and under the divine direction, that your fathers left the land of their nativity, to seek an asylum in these then newly discovered and unsubdued forests.

Had they remained in their subjugated isle, how enslaved, empoverished, unenlightened, and comparatively wretched, would *now* have been the situation of you their descendants! Contrast, for a moment, the moral, civil, and political condition, of the inhabitants of that country, with the privileges which you this day enjoy. The mass of people, including the middle and lower classes of society, there experience the greatest hardships and privations. They live in miserable huts, half naked, and scarcely provided with the common necessaries of life. Destitute, in a great degree, of the means of education and religious instruction,

they are immersed in ignorance, superstition, and vice; and exhibit, in too many instances, scenes of moral degradation, painful to the enlightened and benevolent mind.

In this situation, my friends, you might now have been, had not your fathers, influenced by an ardent and inextinguishable thirst for civil and religious liberty, and under the divine guidance, embarked for this country, fearlessly encountering the dangers of the ocean, and the perils of the wilderness, in order to find a settlement, remote from the shackles of slavery and the hand of oppression.

The divine goodness is also to be acknowledged in their selection of a spot for a township, and in their final establishment. He, whose direction they devoutly sought, inclined the existing Authorities to patronize and assist this company of adventurers, in surmounting the difficulties which they had to encounter. The designs and attempts of those who have disturbed them, were frustrated. They were permitted to remain in possession of their lands, a tract of country happily selected, and combining advantages equal, at least, if not superiour, to those of almost any other township in the State.

The signal preservation of this settlement, during the wars in which the Colonies were repeatedly involved for more than half a century, is also deserving of grateful notice. In consequence of an Indian war, which broke out soon after their arrival, they were imminently exposed to the depredations and cruelties of a savage foe, being remote from any other settlement which could have afforded them aid in case of an attack; yet, through a divine interposition, they were in no instance molested. While neighbouring towns were assaulted, and their sons and their daughters led into captivity—while in many places, “the labourer at his work, the slumberer in his bed, and the congregation at their worship, were attacked and destroyed”—the inhabitants of this town were never startled with the

sound of the war-whoop, or pierced with the groans of the wounded and the dying.

During the French war, proclaimed in 1756, in which the American Colonies suffered very considerably, and also during our struggle for Independence, the sufferings of *this* settlement, though it bore an active and proportionate part in the defence of our liberties, were light, compared with those of many other towns and sections of the country, which were actually invaded by the enemy. While their lands were laid waste, their houses plundered, their dwellings consumed, and the inhabitants harrassed with continual alarms, your fields never witnessed the clashing and roar of arms—were never crimsoned with the blood, or whitened with the bones of the slain. And what deserves particular and grateful notice is, that notwithstanding the town kept in actual service nearly a hundred men during the war of seven years, who were in many of the principal engagements which secured our Independence; yet, but *one* of its inhabitants was slain—Capt. David M'Clary, a distinguished officer, who fell at Bennington.

The settlers of this town were also greatly prospered in their civil and temporal concerns.—Blessed with unusual strength, and inured to habits of industry and frugality, they soon acquired not only a competency, but became possessed of good estates. In point of wealth and respectability, the town early ranked with almost the first in the State.

It is, however, in relation to the religious privileges which have here been enjoyed, that your gratitude to God should be particularly excited. From the very settlement of the place, to the present day, the publick ordinances of the Gospel have been supported, and uninterruptedly enjoyed. The town has at no time been destitute of a regularly ordained Minister, and a greater part of the time there has been one in either parish.

The form of doctrine, and of church government, received from your fathers, and which we conceive to be in all essential points agreeable to the word of God, have been preserved during the past Century uncorrupted. The churches and religious societies in this town, retain the same articles and the same mode of worship, which were originally adopted. Their walls have never been broken down, or defaced, by the incursions of the enemy.

It is indeed matter of thankfulness, that while many other towns, once united and respectable, have, during this period, been greatly agitated and rent; while many once flourishing churches have become almost extinct, and the regular administration of Gospel ordinances suspended, in consequence of the prevalence of errors and divisions in religious sentiments; this town, though large and populous, has remained generally united in support of those puritanical principles, and of that order, which were first introduced. Being early instructed in the essential truths of the Gospel, its inhabitants have not been carried about with every wind of doctrine, or the prevailing errors of the day. Our temples have never been deserted, or occupied by irregular teachers of religion.

It is also worthy of notice, that the Ministers, who have been settled in this town, have lived in peace and harmony with the people of their charge—generally united in religious sentiments, and mutual affection. The Pastors who have here deceased, continued in the acceptable discharge of the duties of their office, until their death; and have slept in quietness, surrounded with their beloved flocks. But one dismissal, and that by request, has taken place during the Century.

We may also notice, with grateful emotions, the ample provision which has been recently made for the permanent support of the Gospel in this place. These donations, while they will greatly contribute to the preservation of the

religious societies in the town from the incursions of other denominations, will also serve as an important means of perpetuating, in this place, through succeeding Centuries, the enjoyment of Gospel ordinances: so that, the future prospects of this people, as to their religious interests, are highly encouraging. And shall not the past and long experience, which we, and our fathers and elders, have had of the kindness and faithfulness of God, lead us to implore the continuance of his favour, that his blessing may still rest upon us, and upon our children, and our children's children, from generation to generation.

3. It becomes us, on this occasion, to inquire, whether we have not, in *some respects*, departed from the religious principles and habits of the original settlers of this town.

Although, during the Century now past, there has been a very great and important improvement in education and manners—though, as a people, you are doubtless more informed and refined than were your fathers—though some sentiments and practices, prevalent in their days, may have given place to others preferable in their nature and tendency; still we fear, that there is not among us, that Christian simplicity and spirituality—that attachment to the Gospel and its ordinances—which they evidently manifested.

The genuineness and strength of their religious principles, of their love and adherence to the pure doctrines and forms of the Gospel, were fully evidenced in the persecutions which they and their fathers endured in their native land, rather than conform to the corruptions of the Papal church. The same religious principle influenced them to seek an abode in this western world.

They were generally the professed followers of Christ. They here early erected a house for publick worship, and were uniform and punctual in their attendance upon divine institutions, notwithstanding the distance and roughness of the way which they had to travel. They loved the gates

of Zion—delighted to inquire in his temple, and hear from his word. The Sabbath was not to them a *weariness*, but a delight. “They were glad when it was said, Let us go into the house of the Lord.”

They were constant and devout observers of family worship. In almost every dwelling, was regularly heard the voice of prayer and of praise. In every family, there was an “altar consecrated to God, around which they stately and devoutly assembled to present their morning and evening sacrifice.

They also carefully observed the divine direction, “to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”—They not only brought them, from time to time, to a throne of Grace, and presented them, before God for his blessing; but they diligently and faithfully instructed them. Children were early taught that excellent Summary of Christian Doctrines and Duties, the *SHORTER CATECHISM*; and very many were enabled to repeat the *LARGE* also, with its Proofs and References.

They were also restrained from violating the rest of the Sabbath, by spending it in idleness or amusement. Neither were the publick streets thronged with travellers, prosecuting their worldly business; nor was any unnecessary labour allowed in the family; but a sacred stillness pervaded every dwelling, and reigned through the society. And it was this firm, united, and cordial attachment to the Gospel and its ordinances, manifested by your ancestors who commenced this settlement, which evidently laid the foundation of that degree of order and respectability, by which this town has been distinguished, and which we consider so essentially necessary to our temporal as well as spiritual interests.

Surely then, my friends, it becomes you, if you regard your own happiness, or the welfare of your children after you, to take heed to the divine counsel—“Thus saith the