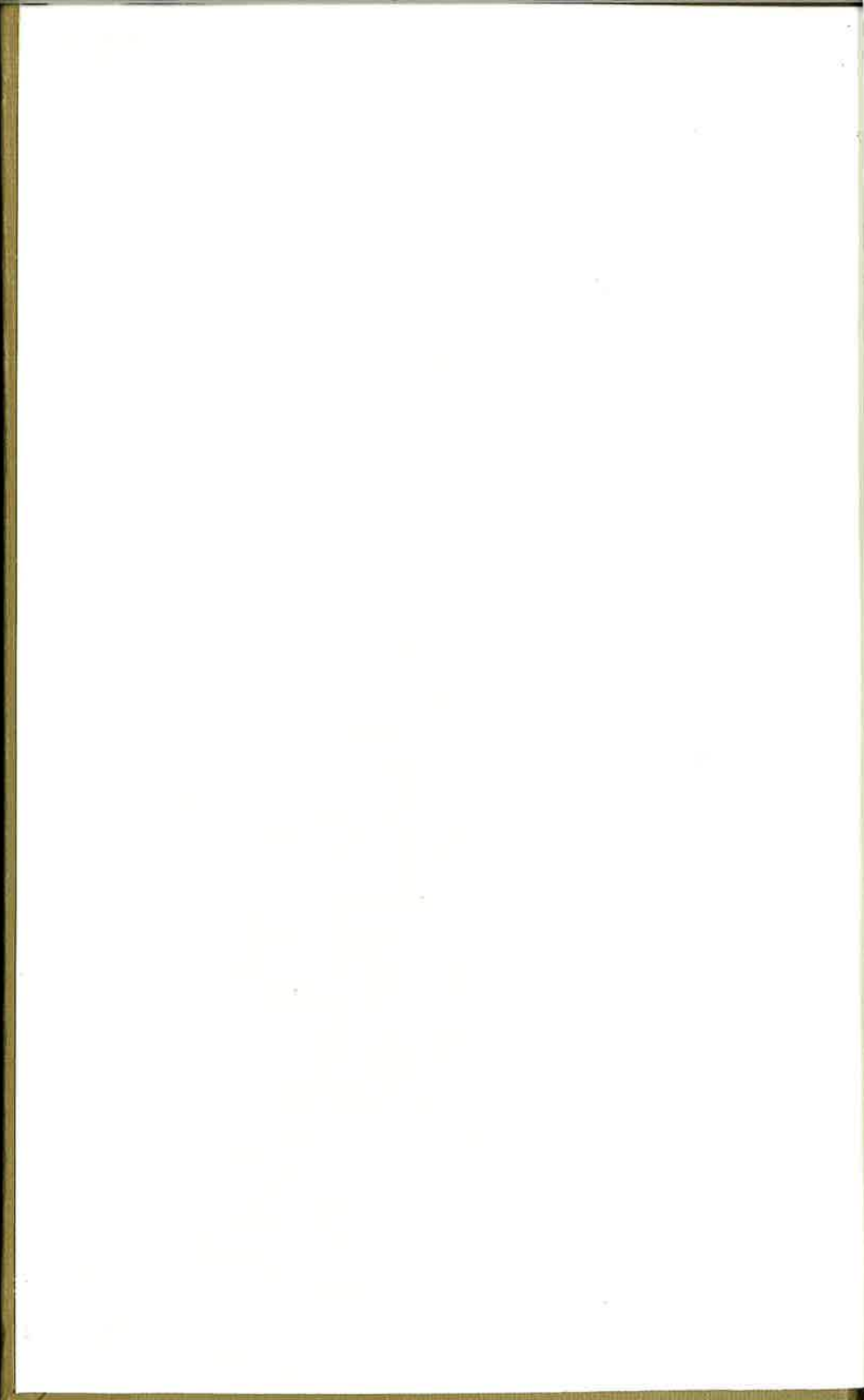
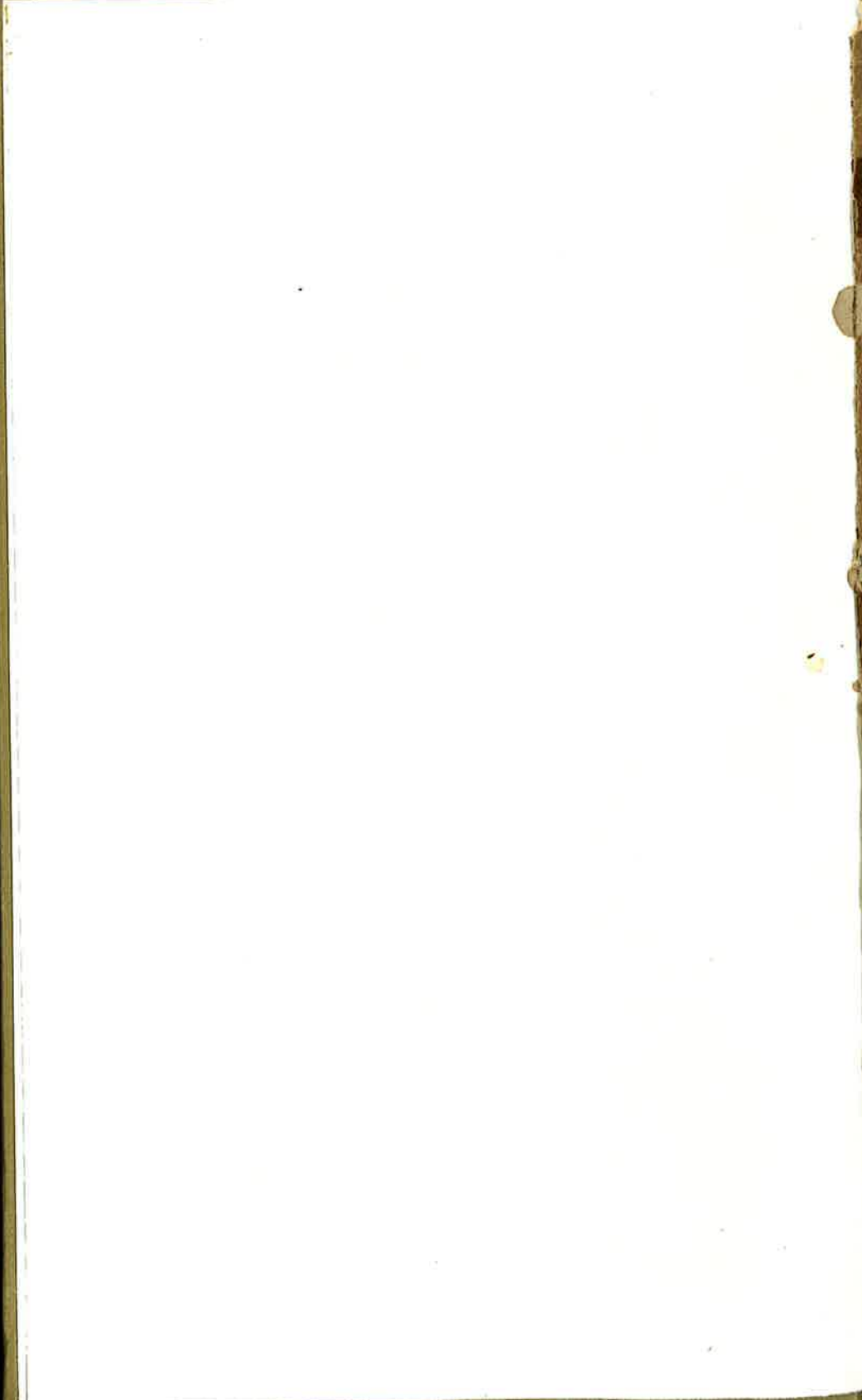


F
29
S1
D8







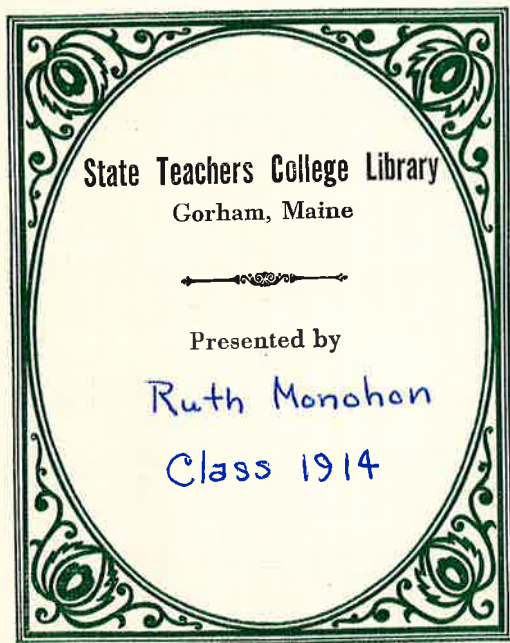
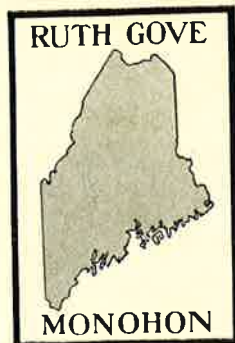
CENTENNIAL

OF THE

First Church in Saco.

Me. Coll.
F
29
S1D8

N. F. Cunningham Esq.
N. F. S.



Me. Coll.
F
29
SID8

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN SACO, OCT. 12, 1862.

ON THE

ONE HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

Organization of the First Church

IN SACO, ME.,

BY REV. EDWARD S. DWIGHT,

Sixth Pastor.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

S A C O :

WILLIAM NOYES, PRINTER,
1862.

AN ADDRESS

BY

JOHN W. FOSTER

OF THE
SOCIETY OF
MINISTERS
OF THE
METHODIST
CHURCH
IN
AMERICA
DELIVERED
AT
THE
ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
OF
THE
METHODIST
CHURCH
IN
AMERICA
AT
PHILADELPHIA
ON
THE
THIRD
DAY
OF
JUNE
1844

ADDRESS.

The service of this afternoon—the First Centennial of the Organization of this Church—is strongly suggestive of the youthfulness of our nation. In the villages of England, as the traveler, in quest of objects of interest, visits the churchyard, he needs no guide-book to tell him that the edifice, standing amid the ancient graves, with its stone walls mossy and weather-stained, and its time-worn carving, is a monument of some long past age; that there the villagers now sleeping around him, and probably their ancestors in many an earlier generation, were wont to gather for their simple worship. So everywhere on the continent of Europe. From out of the modern bustle arise everywhere the relics of a high antiquity, reminding him constantly that he is in the *old* world. But as we to-day look back only *one* hundred years, we recur to a point of time at which our nation itself—at this moment so great and powerful—had not as yet come to its birth. Only a few dependent Colonies, scarcely equal to the task of self-protection, lined the Atlantic coast, and cautiously extended their enterprise and jurisdiction a little way into the interior. The period exceeds by less than ten years the age of two of the still surviving members of this Church; and yet, as we glance around, what do we see that dates as far back as its beginning? Excepting nature's own permanent landmarks;—the beautiful river, old—for aught we know—as human history itself, hurrying from its mountain-sources, quietly gliding through the fertile intervalles, or rushing through rapids or down its long succession of picturesque falls—the shore, against which the Atlan-

tic has spent its strength through all time in vain—the general configuration of the country ;—excepting these creations of a higher power, what meets our sight to-day that is a hundred years old ? Of the works of man—nothing, save a few beams in here and there a solitary house. All that shows his handywork around us is of recent date. Ours is emphatically the *new* world. Our nation has not yet outlived its childhood. What, then,—if only God prosper us,—may not its manhood be !

But still, so short is the average length of human life, so rapid the changes over the face of society among us ; a retrospect of a century seems to carry us back far into olden time. The events, the social experiences and habits of a hundred years ago are almost as much out of our range of thought and life, as those belonging to the days of the Pilgrims, or to the times of the discovery of America. It may be that we unconsciously make ourselves our standard of comparison ; and to *us* a government that has lasted eighty years and more is venerable, and a church has become ancient that has seen a full century pass away.

At this point this First Church of Christ in Saco will have arrived to-morrow. It was regularly organized on the 13th day of October, 1762. In attempting a general review of its history, I labor under the embarrassment of being obliged to depend on exceedingly imperfect records ; while this deficiency is only in some small degree made good by information derived from other sources,—in regard especially to the first fifty years of its existence. I can therefore hope to tell little, which those of you who, as older residents, are familiar with the annals of the town, do not know already.*

The earliest permanent settlement of English Colonists within the limits of what is now the State of Maine appears to have been made in this County, probably in this immediate vicinity. The selection was determined, no doubt, chiefly by considerations of latitude and climate ; a previous

* Note A.

attempt at colonization upon the coast farther to the North East having been frustrated by the severe cold of the winter. The first settlers established themselves, at least temporarily, as early as 1616, at the mouth of the river, near the basin known to us as "The Pool," but to which they gave the name of "Winter Harbor." From that point the population of this part of the country took its rise. By gift of the British Crown, the ownership of the whole region through a broad extent of territory was vested in an English corporation, known as The Plymouth Company; under whose authority subordinate bodies of colonists secured local rights, and commenced settlements, at several points at about the same time; at York, Kittery and Berwick, to the South, and in Scarborough on the North. Formal possession of the locality upon the Southern bank of the river was not taken till 1630, when it was delivered with due form of law to *Richard Vines*, the trader who, fourteen years before, had resorted to Winter Harbor. Originally the whole section of territory immediately adjoining the river on both sides, for four miles along the coast in each direction, and extending eight miles into the interior, though conveyed to settlers under two distinct grants, was known by the common name of Saco; the designations of East and West Saco being sometimes used for convenience.

The occupation of the land this side of the river was not effected to any great extent until many years after the settlement of Lower Biddeford. The perils of those days of exposure to the attacks of hostile Indians made it absolutely necessary that the inhabitants should live near enough to a common centre, to be able to render each other mutual support. Only with the utmost caution could they venture to enlarge the sphere of their operations. On this account the greater part of the population were for a long time clustered in West Saco, now Biddeford, near the mouth of the river. It is there, consequently, that we are to look for the early development of the *religious* history of the town. And it is to

the credit of its first founders, that though they were not, like the Pilgrims in the Mayflower, exiles from their birth-land for conscience' sake, and from ecclesiastical tyranny, but simply commercial adventurers seeking to better their worldly fortunes, they were not content to remain long without the christian teaching to which they had been accustomed at home. A record dated in 1636, but six years after the first settlement, sets forth "the rate," or tax, "for the minister," which was assessed upon the different property-holders, to secure the preaching of the gospel. Whether this was the first tax of the kind is not now known. For a short time divine service was conducted by a minister of the Church of England, with which body the first settlers had generally been connected. But upon their submitting, a few years later, to the jurisdiction of the Colony of Massachusetts, and experiencing more and more its religious influence, they came to adopt its ecclesiastical forms and usages, and their later ministers were Congregational.

The honor of having established the first regular church organization does not, however, belong to this town, but to the town of York, the First Church in which place is the oldest in the State, dating its origin back as far as 1673. Subsequently, churches were gathered at Wells in 1701, at Berwick in 1702, at Kittery in 1714, and at Elliott in 1721. No church was formally organized in Saco till the 30th of April, 1730, (almost precisely a century after the first legal settlement,) when what is now the First or Lower Church in Biddeford was founded. A few years previously, the whole township on both sides of the river had been incorporated by the Legislature of Massachusetts under the general name of Biddeford, which name seems for a time to have superseded that of Saco. The meeting-house, intended for the accommodation of all the inhabitants, was a small edifice, measuring thirty-five feet by thirty,—not larger than a moderate-sized dwelling,—furnished with galleries, one of which was occupied by the men, the other by the women. As their

number increased, this building, which was probably erected about the year 1720, was found inadequate to their necessity; and for this reason, as we may conjecture, and perhaps also on account of its inconvenient location, the town voted about thirty years afterward, in 1752, to build another, upon the site where the meeting house in Lower Biddeford—that of the First Church—now stands.

But by this time a considerable number of families had established themselves on this side of the river, at various points along its shore above and below the falls, and in the neighborhood of Old Orchard. No bridge had as yet been built. The only way for travelers to cross the stream was by ferry. A circuitous road, a tedious ferriage, were serious obstacles to attendance upon public worship. When the proposition was made, therefore, and carried in the town-meeting, to build a new sanctuary, many of the settlers east of the river protested against a measure, a share of the burden of which they would be obliged to bear, without deriving corresponding advantage from its accomplishment. The reasonableness of their objections was so clear, that in the following year a new vote was passed, virtually reconsidering the previous one to build, and authorizing the inhabitants upon this side to constitute themselves into a distinct parish. Released by this vote from responsibility for the support of divine worship on the Western side, they proceeded at once to make arrangements for their own religious necessities. The frame of a new meeting-house, measuring fifty-four feet by forty, was speedily set up upon a lot of ground, containing four acres, now known as The Common, which had been given them for *this* purpose, “for a burying place, and for a school-house, and for no other use or end whatever,” by Sir William Pepperell, one of the largest land-owners of the settlement. It was completed, after many delays, about the year 1757, and was occupied by the parish as their house of worship for almost half a century. At first, religious services were held in it only occasionally. The pastor of the church,—(the only

church in the town,—) the Rev. Mr. Morrill, was permitted by vote to preach on this side of the river one-third of the time for a year ; and probably such an arrangement was continued for a somewhat longer period. It came to an end, however, in 1761, when the parish engaged the services of a young licentiate, *Mr. John Fairfield*, who preached to them for the first time on the 23d of August, and continued to occupy their pulpit in the same capacity, with occasional interruptions, for some fourteen months.

The tendency to a separation of interests between the inhabitants of the eastern and western divisions of the town, which had been for some time manifest, reached its consummation in June of the following year, 1762, when this Eastern half, now Saco, was set off by the Legislature of Massachusetts as a distinct township, by the name of *Pepperellborough*. That the public convenience was greatly promoted by this separation there can be no doubt. The population of the new town, however, was scanty and widely dispersed. Little of the appearance of a village was as yet to be seen. A new and more direct road had recently been laid out between the falls and Scarborough. The first bridge to the island—"Indian Island" it was sometimes called—had been built only a short time before. But upon what is now Main Street, the principal thoroughfare of the present town, not a single dwelling-house had been erected. Where the York Bank now stands, near the corner of Main and Water Streets, upon a slight elevation of ground which has since been cut away, stood then—and remained within the memory of one of the venerable surviving members of this Church—a block-house, known (like similar buildings elsewhere) as "Fort Hill ;" to which the citizens and their families were accustomed to resort for shelter at night, and upon sudden alarm, in the time of the Indian hostilities. Here and there, amid a few acres of cleared land, was to be seen a solitary farmhouse, rarely of more than a single story in height. In the neighborhood of the falls,—which the saw-mills, early erect-

ed, soon made the centre of trade,—a few mechanics, the miller, the cabinet-maker, the blacksmith, attended to the simple, every-day wants of the community; a few stores supplied them with such articles of foreign manufacture as they needed, in exchange for the produce of their own farms. The chief local trade was along the Ferry Road* and the present Boom Road, following the general course of the river up toward Hollis and Buxton. Of the various cross streets of the modern town scarcely one was opened. At the time of its incorporation not a single physician resided within the limits of Pepperellborough, nor a single professionally-educated lawyer for nearly forty years afterwards. The whole population, so far as can now be ascertained, did not greatly exceed one hundred families.

It was entirely in keeping with their New England spirit, that one of the first acts of the citizens of the new town, after its organization, had reference to the establishment of religious worship as a permanent institution among them. A vote was passed on the 7th of August, 1762, appointing a committee to invite Mr. John Fairfield to become their minister, offering him for a salary the sum of £80 "lawful," or \$266, "if"—it was rather amusingly added—"they could not agree for a less sum." By a later vote this amount was increased to \$444, to enable him to "provide himself with a parsonage."† Mr. Fairfield, who, as we have seen before, had already been ministering to them as their religious teacher for more than a year, accepted the invitation thus tendered to him. It now became desirable, the better to accomplish its great object, that a church of Christ should be regularly constituted here, over which he might be established in the pastoral office. It was rightly thought proper that a measure of this kind, having a bearing so serious on the interests of the community, should be accompanied with suitable religious observances. A day was therefore designated to be appropriately kept with reference to such an event; and the brief

* Note B.

† Note C.

record of the doings of that day—one hundred years ago to-morrow—I will read to you from the original church-record book, where it stands in the large, bold hand of the first Pastor.

On the 13th of October 1762—

a Church was gathered in Pepperellborough, that being a day set apart by the Inhabitants thereof as a day of Fasting and Prayer upon that solemn and important occasion.—

the Members of which are as follows—

TRISTRAM JORDAN.
AMOS CHASE.
ROBERT PATTERSON JUR
ANDREW BRADSTREET.
GERSHOM BILLINGS.

JOHN FAIRFIELD.
ROBERT PATTERSON.
ROBERT EDGCOMB.
SAMUEL BANKS.
MAGNUS RIDLIN.
THOMAS EDGCOMB.

The forms of those days were characterized by scriptural simplicity. There was no need of any priestly authority or sanction to give validity to this act. It was a voluntary mutual agreement between this company of christian believers ; minister and brethren covenanting with one another to walk together in conformity to the rules of Christ's household ; and as the consequence a new church arose here, resting on Him as its " chief corner-stone." Upon the next page of the record-book stands the original Church-Covenant, (no doubt drawn up by the same hand that has here written it down,) which—on an occasion like this—I think you will not only pardon but thank me for reading.

THE CHURCH COVENANT.

We whose names are hereunto subscribed, apprehending ourselves call'd of God into the Church State of the Gospel ; do—

first of all, confess ourselves unworthy to be so highly favored of the Lord, and admire that free and rich Grace of his which triumphs over so great Unworthiness : and then, with an humble Reliance on the Aids of Grace therein promised to them that in a Sense of their Inability to do any good thing of themselves, do humbly wait on him for all:—

—We now thankfully lay hold on his Covenant, and would choose the things that please him.—

—We declare our serious Belief of the Christian Religion, as it is contained in the sacred Scriptures, and with such a View thereof as the Confession of Faith in our Churches has exhibited, heartily resolving to

conform our Lives unto the Rules of that holy Religion as long as we live in the World.

—We give up ourselves to the Lord Jehovah, who is the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit, and avouch him this day to be our God, our Father, our Savior, our Leader, and receive him as our Portion forever.

—We give up ourselves unto the blessed Jesus, who is the Lord Jehovah, and adhere to him as the Head of his People in the Covenant of Grace, and rely on him as the Prophet, Priest and King of our Salvation.

—We acknowledge our everlasting Obligations to glorify our God in all the duties of a godly, sober and religious Life, and very particularly, in the duties of a Church State, and a Body of People associated for an Obedience to him in all the Ordinances of the Gospel, and thereupon depend upon his gracious Assistance for our faithful discharge of the Duties thus incumbent on us.—We desire and intend, and with dependance on divine Grace we engage to walk together as a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Faith and Order of the Gospel, so far as we shall have the same reveal'd to us, and that we will constantly attend upon the worship of God, the Sacraments of the new Testament, the discipline of his Kingdom, and all his holy Institutions in Communion with One Another, and watchfully avoiding sinful stumbling Blocks and Contentions, as becomes a People whom the Lord has bound up together in the Bundle of eternal Life: at the same time,—We do also present our Offspring with us unto the Lord, purposing with his help to do our part in the method of a religious Education, that they may be the Lord's. And all this—We do, flying to the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, for the pardon of our many Errors, and praying that the glorious Lord, who is the great Shepherd, would prepare and strengthen us for every good Work, to do his will continually, working in us always that which is well pleasing in his Sight, to whom be Glory forever and ever Amen.
(Signed as above.)

To this fundamental compact, by which the Church was now gathered and bound together, it is quite remarkable that there is not the signature of a single female member! Among the mothers and daughters then living in this town, not one appears to have been a professed disciple of Christ. The Church at its organization consisted of eleven *brethren* only, including its minister.

Of the subsequent doings of the Church in relation to the settlement of a Pastor, the first record is as follows:—

1762 Oct'r. 14. The Church gave John Fairfield a unanimous Call to the pastoral Care of them, in Concurrence with the Call of the Inhab-

itants of the district of Pepperellboro', of him, on 12 of August last, to the Work of the Gospel Ministry among them. And said John Fairfield accepting said Call;—

was On the 27th of Oct'r, 1763, Ordained to the pastoral Office and work of the Gospel-Ministry to the Church and People in Pepperellboro', by the following Churches, by solemn Prayer and the Imposition of the hands of their Pastors, (viz)

The Church in Biddeford, the 2d Church in Scarboro', the first and second Churches in Wells, the Church in Windham, the first Church in Falmouth, and the first Church in Boston.

Thus commenced a pastorate over the newly-constituted Church, which continued until April 2, 1798, a period of nearly thirty-six years. I remarked in the beginning upon the scantiness of the record. In April, 1763, the year following the Pastor's ordination, entry is made of the choice by the Church "of Brother Amos Chase as deacon;" and in June of the same year of the choice "of Brother Gershom Billings to the same office, in place of another who had declined the appointment." Again, in June, 1774, eleven years later, a similar notice is taken of the election "of Brother Samuel Scamman as deacon, in place of Mr. Billings, removed from town." And, excepting lists of persons admitted to the church, of baptisms, and marriages, this is *all* that remains to us, on the record, of the transactions of the Church under its earliest pastorate, and for more than a third of its past history.

Yet even from these lists of names something can be learned in regard to its condition. The most impressive fact they present is the very shortness of that list, which contains the names of those admitted—as it was called—"to full communion." The whole number of admissions to membership in the church during the first thirty-six years was but *nine*! In 1763, one; in 1764, two; in 1767, four; in 1772, one; and in 1777, one:—of whom six were females. And yet this record, that seems to argue such constant spiritual desolation, presents to us a state of things not altogether singular. It was a day of clouds and thick darkness in the churches through all our borders, during the entire period of that first pastor-

ate. Almost from its commencement to its close violent political agitations excited the popular mind throughout the country. At first, the sharp-eyed jealousy and rising spirit of opposition, with which the Colonies watched the encroachments of the home-government in England upon their chartered rights. Next, the long, anxious, exhausting struggle of the war for independence. Then, the scarcely less harassing and perilous state of disseverment and well-nigh of chaos that followed, until, under the skillful pilotage of the great patriots of that day, and the favor of the God of our fathers, the crisis was passed, and of the many separate Colonies was made the one great Union. And then, last of all, the task of getting the new government into working order, and balancing its various functions, amid the confusion of fierce party strifes, intensified by the excitement caused by the terrible revolution in France. With influences such as these operating to distract men's minds, how can we wonder that spiritual religion made slow progress in this and other communities? And other causes contributed to the same result. Ministers, there is reason to believe, shared in the spirit of the times. The preaching of the age was moral rather than religious; was smooth and scholarly rather than convincing and converting in its tendency. The doctrines of the gospel were but loosely held. The evangelical sentiment was undecided. There was a vagueness of belief, which left room for the creeping in unawares of those seeds of error, which sprang up and bore fruit in later years in wide-spread defection from the truth of Christ. That most mischievous form of church-relation, too, known as the "half-way covenant," was at the same time in full force—one of the shrewdest methods ever devised by well-meaning but mistaken men, for quieting the conscience with a deadly opiate without depriving the soul of its cherished sin. Dispensing with that one great demand, on which the gospel ever insists first of all, of a true and thorough change of heart from the world to God, it granted a sort of informal church-membership to parents wishing to offer their

children in baptism, upon their acknowledgment in a general way of their obligation to live a moral and religious life in obedience to the Scriptures. This it was easy for those brought up in New England homes to make, costing as it did no sacrifice of the affections of the heart, nor any serious change in the course of life. Accordingly we find that, while in those thirty-six years only nine persons professed to have come to God in this community as his repentant children, no less than two hundred and twenty entered within the enclosure of the church by this "other way;"—and of the different entries ninety-one (amounting to one hundred and eighty-two out of the two hundred and twenty persons) are of husband and wife, admitted together to this false and dangerous position. When the bare outward form of religion was at such a premium, it was scarcely to be expected that any general anxiety should be manifested to possess the reality.

Mr. Fairfield's ministry, after having continued for the long period I have mentioned, in undisturbed outward harmony between himself and his congregation, was terminated at length at his own reiterated request.* In April, 1798, the town released him from his responsibilities as their minister, although his pastoral relation to the Church was not dissolved until the following year, at the induction of his successor into office. Mr. Fairfield died in Biddeford, December 16, 1819, at the advanced age of eighty-three years.

In July the town made an unsuccessful application to Mr. Caleb Bradley, well known since that time in all this region, to occupy the vacant pastorate.† Their next invitation was given to *Mr. Elishu Whitcomb*, who for some months had been employed as their preacher, and by him was accepted. At this time the life of the Church was so nearly exhausted, that report has it that "only *three* male members could be found" to represent it; and *they*, on behalf of the Church, voted concurrence with the invitation of the town. Mr. Whitcomb was ordained in July, 1799. The Church-record

* Note D.

† Note E.

of his ministry is even more meagre than of that of his predecessor. It contains absolutely not *one* minute of the Church's history or doings—not even of his own ordination—from his settlement to his dismissal in 1810. *Nothing* remains but the Church-lists, and some of them apparently imperfect.

The selection of the new Pastor was, for the interests of the Church, most unfortunate. Judging him by his life, there is no reason to believe him to have ever been a partaker of that grace of God which he professed to preach to others. A man, it would seem, of good natural parts, and of much shrewd humor; in all the moral qualities that should characterize “a good minister of Jesus Christ” he appears to have been wholly lacking. The recollection of him, as tradition preserves it, is only painful. To his other deficiencies were superadded habits of indulgence in intoxicating drink, which at length became so notorious and disgraceful, that the Church were constrained virtually to demand his resignation. It was tendered in June, 1810. Friendly efforts to reclaim him from his intemperance were made at different times, but, proving of no avail, he was in the year following excommunicated from the church-fellowship. Subsequently he removed to the Eastern part of the State, and died there at length most miserably in his intoxication.

The history of the Church, while under his care, may be briefly told. Its external interests, being identified with those of the town, (which from the year 1805 has borne its present name,) were in a flourishing condition. In that year the sanctuary, recently destroyed by fire, was built, and dedicated in the ensuing February. At the time of its erection it was the most attractive church-edifice in the State,—as it was also perhaps the most costly. But the congregation dwindled more and more, till its scantiness, as compared with the magnitude of the building, became a mockery and a by-word. Religion, as a power in the community, was constantly losing ground. The town was fast becoming godless, and, as the natural consequence, vice flourished, and the peace was bro-

ken by frequent quarrels. Every good interest was at the lowest ebb.

The dismissal of the unworthy pastor was the first clear indication of the turning of the tide. Still more decisive evidence of a change for the better was furnished in the selection and settlement of his successor, a man as different in every way as possible. And here at length we come to a church-record, fit to be so called. It is note-worthy, too, as a sign of brighter days, that at this point the Church took the lead in the choice of their religious teacher, instead of waiting, as in former cases, for the previous action of the town. In September, 1810, they passed a vote expressive of their "satisfaction with the preaching of *Mr. Jonathan Cogswell*," and of their desire that he should be invited to become the minister of the town; in which desire the town concurring, Mr. Cogswell was ordained in October of the same year.

To him, more than to any other man who ever lived here, would seem to be due, under God, the credit of the moral improvement of this community. Not in any sense a brilliant man, not remarkable for intellectual force or power of impressive address, he was—what was far better—a humble, hearty christian, intent on doing good, and "making full proof of his ministry." Akin to his friend Payson in spirit, although inferior in pulpit talents, he came in the power of a blameless life, and an earnest belief of the "truth as it is in Jesus." The records abound in utterances of his devotion to, and joy in the success of, his work. He preached to save the souls of his hearers: faithful to warn, to rouse the sleeping conscience, to instruct those who were willing to be taught the way of salvation. The consequences natural under the circumstances speedily followed. A new awaking of spiritual life was soon apparent. A new interest invested the preaching of the gospel, and drew those who had before been indifferent to the house of prayer. Religion came to be in honor. And from time to time many who, as they hoped,

"had received power to become the children of God," united themselves in open fellowship with his professed servants. We hear no more of the "half-way covenant." Whether it was formally abandoned, or allowed to go silently into disuse, does not appear; but there is nothing to show that its principle was one with which the pastor had any sympathy. Under his ministry the Church acquired strength and character. During its continuance, with the increase of population, other religious Societies came into existence in the town—the Free-Will Baptist, whose worship was maintained at first in the Northern part of the township, as early as 1811: the Calvinistic Baptist, in 1827; and the Episcopal in the same year—in the course of which, also, the Unitarian Society was transferred from Biddeford, where it was originated, to Saco, and constituted the Second Parish. *This* Society retained its ancient connection with the town until 1825, when it was set off as the First Parish, in its present separate capacity.

After a most useful pastorate of eighteen years, Mr. Cogswell was compelled by the impaired state of his health to ask a release from the duties of his office, which was granted him in October, 1828. The later years of his residence here had been disturbed by an ungenerous assault upon his character, on charges, in regard to which a Council, on careful inquiry, completely cleared him. Aside from this, nothing occurred to disturb its tranquillity;—and when he removed from town, the high esteem of its inhabitants followed him.*

Before his departure he had the satisfaction of witnessing the unanimity of the Church in presenting, on his own motion, an invitation to *Rev. Samuel Johnson*, of Alna, to become his successor. Probably he had some agency in procuring Mr. Johnson's services, and he was happy in committing the people for whom he had labored so faithfully to the care of a man on whom he could safely rely. Mr. Johnson, having accepted the invitation, was installed in the following month, and held the pastoral office until July, 1835, a period

* Note F.

of six years and three quarters, when he was released at his own request, to become the Agent in this State of the Maine Missionary Society. His pastoral relation continued in form, until his successor's entrance upon his office. Of ready and popular talents, and friendly manners, he made himself very acceptable to his congregation, who parted with him finally, with regret, and only in deference to what seemed in his view the call of duty. Important additions were made to the numbers of the Church through his instrumentality. A vote upon record affirms that more than half its members, at the time of his dismissal, had been received during the less than seven years of his pastorate. Mr. Johnson's labors in his new sphere were suddenly terminated by his death, about a year after his removal from Saco.

In October, 1835, the Church voted to present a call to Rev. Nathan Munroe ; and, on the failure of this invitation, another vote was passed in January, 1836, inviting *Rev. Samuel Hopkins*, of Montpelier, Vt., to the vacant pastorate. Having communicated his assent, he was installed on the 17th of February, and held the office until the 5th of May, 1841, when the prostration of his strength induced him to ask his dismissal, for the purpose of trying the effect of a journey abroad. Upon his return in the following year, the Church, which had in the meantime remained without a settled minister, with great unanimity recalled him to his former post ; and he was re-installed on the 14th of December, 1842. This second term of service lasted till September 15th, 1844, when it was ended by his resignation, followed by the formal dissolution of his pastoral relation on the 26th of November. Mr. Hopkins served the Church, in all, a little more than seven years.

I need not hesitate to say, what I suppose is undoubtedly true, that, of the whole series of Pastors of this Church during the entire century, he was greatly the most admired, and the most generally popular. Vivid in his conceptions of truth, and strong, often striking, in his statement of it, of fertile im-

agination, quick and warm in his sympathies, and skilled to touch the feelings of others, he attracted hearers, and won ardent friends. Most reluctantly did the Society consent to his first departure ; most gladly was he welcomed back on his return. The affectionate interest, with which his old parishioners still remember him after an interval of nearly twenty years, bears impressive witness to the firm hold he had gained upon their regard.*

Of *my own* ministry, immediately ensuing, and continuing seven years and eight months—the longest pastorate since that of Mr. Cogswell—it of course becomes me to say no more than the connection of events may require. It commenced with my ordination on Christmas, 1844, and ended on the 17th of August, 1852, in consequence of my resignation for reasons that seemed to me imperative, notwithstanding the unanimous wish of the Church that it should be withdrawn. Introduced by my predecessor, and called in my inexperienced youth to stand in the place of a man of such ability, I shall always have occasion for grateful remembrance of the generous consideration shown toward me notwithstanding my deficiencies, and for regret only that my ministry was not more largely productive of immediate good fruits.

The facts that remain to be recounted of the Church's history for the century are within the fresh recollection of all of you, and may be speedily told. From the 17th of August, 1852, until near the close of 1854, it was without a pastor. In November, 1853, Mr. Jacob M. Manning, a recent graduate from Andover, was invited to assume that position, but returned a negative answer. In July of the year following a call was presented to *Rev. Francis B. Wheeler*, of Brandon, Vt., which was accepted, and he was installed, December 6th. His ministry of four years and a quarter was ended, March 2, 1859, by his dismissal to undertake another charge, (in Poughkeepsie, N. Y.)—very greatly to the regret of the

* Note G.

whole Church and Society, by whom he was warmly loved and esteemed.

In August, 1859, the Church offered the vacant pastorate to *Mr. Charles B. Rice*, of Conway, Mass., and he, having signified his acceptance of it, was ordained on the 6th of December, and continued in office till November 26, 1861, when he voluntarily resigned it, after a ministry of a little less than two years. In the first year of his pastorate, early on the morning of the second Sabbath in July, 1860, occurred the destruction by fire of the church-edifice, in which, for nearly two generations, the families of this Church and congregation had gathered for the worship of God. Endeared by life-long associations, the sadness of the day that witnessed its reduction to ashes will not be soon forgotten, even when its place shall have been more than made good by the more elegant structure now building on the same foundation.

For me, whose acquaintance with your last two Pastors was but casual and very slight, to undertake to characterize their respective ministries to you, who knew them well, would be as evidently improper and in bad taste, as it is unnecessary. I close, then, here, this imperfect outline of the personal history of the Pastors of this Church.* But it would be a serious omission, if I should neglect to recall to your remembrance the times of special gracious visitation, which the loving-kindness of the Lord has bestowed upon it.

The earliest of these, as I have intimated already, are to be found during the period of *Mr. Cogswell's* pastorate, which, as respects this community, was emphatically the time of the reformation. And yet in the strong reaction, which, under his faithful labors, set in from the prevailing irreligion of earlier days, the characteristic feature of improvement seems not to have been a transient awakening, producing great temporary excitement, and augmenting the Church by a sudden and large increase, so much as a more permanent religious interest—as if then for the first time the gospel came to the

* Note H.

people in its power, almost as a new revelation, of which they did not soon grow weary, and which gradually trained their spiritual nature for a higher life. For year after year were the accessions to the church-fellowship numerous; while the Pastor's record again and again bears grateful witness to the manifested presence of God in the place of prayer. The years 1831 and 1832, which to a wide extent were signalized elsewhere in New England by the displays of the divine grace, were memorable here also. At three successive communions in the former, fifty-eight persons were admitted to the church of Christ; and in the latter, thirty-one more. In 1838, there existed more than usual thoughtfulness in regard to religion, the fruit of which appeared in the addition at one time of twenty-three to the number of the Church. Subsequently to that date, there occurred no wide-spread and pervading seriousness in the community, nor did the Church increase by other than occasional accessions, until the year 1853, a year made memorable all over our Northern States by the unparalleled unanimity with which the public mind was directed to divine truth. The gracious God was pleased to visit this Church also, among a multitude of others, in power and great mercy. The Communion-Sabbaths of May and July of that year will long be remembered, when seventy-two on one occasion, and twenty-four on the other, openly confessed the Lord Jesus as the hope and the chosen portion of their souls.

Twice in its history has this Church been suddenly smitten with heavy calamity in its worldly interests. One of the instances I have already reminded you of—indeed the burning of the meeting-house is not forgotten by any of you long. The other is referred to by Mr. Johnson in the following entry in the records:

“Feb. 21, 1830. This day the assembly were called out of meeting in the afternoon, on account of the fire in the Factory, when the building with all its contents was consumed. The direct loss sustained by members of this Church and par-

ish was One Hundred and twenty-six thousand dollars."— Thereupon, shortly after, it was decided to "observe a day of fasting and prayer on account of this solemn visitation of Divine Providence, and to entreat that it may be followed by the outpouring of the Spirit." This disaster preceded by a short interval the revival of 1831. There may have been some connection between the two events.

Until 1823, the social meetings of the Church were held in school-houses and private dwellings. To obviate the frequent inconvenience of this arrangement, a few public-spirited citizens combined to build the first Vestry in that year, and it was thenceforth occupied by the Church until 1859, when the present far more attractive and commodious edifice was erected.

I ask your pardon for the length of these details. The story of a hundred years needs not often to be told, and may be thought worth relating with some minuteness. As you review them, the contrast between their beginning and their close—not so great as in some instances, it is true,—is still most encouraging.

"What change! through pathless wilds no more
The fierce and naked savage roams;
Sweet praise, along the cultured shore,
Breaks from ten thousand happy homes!"

Occasion for regret any one may find that a church so long established has not made larger growth; but occasion, too, for thankfulness, to any justly-considerate mind, that such actual increase is apparent,—that so much good fruit has been ripened and gathered into the garner of heaven, or hangs still on the bough, maturing for the Lord's future use. This history bears witness that God remembers this Church in love, and counts it "a vine of his own planting." He spares it to enter on a new century of christian duty. Is it

not that it may "shine" more brightly, "its light being come, and the glory of the Lord having risen upon it?"

A hundred years have gone, since the first Pastor and his ten brethren united to lay the foundations of this Church. They sleep now, most or all of them, "in unrecorded graves." But they "all live unto God" to-day, while we in this later age recount the incidents of their peaceful lives. When October, 1963, shall have come forth from the future, this Church may still be in existence, and its members may observe its second Centennial. What eye can now foresee the changes in the social condition of this community and of our nation, which that day may behold! But *we* shall not be here to take part in the commemoration. May the grace of heaven descend so abundantly on this Church in years to come, that the memories which that day shall recall shall be full of joy and thanksgiving! May ours be lives so animated and controlled by the spirit of heaven, that that day, dawning long after our departure from earthly scenes, shall greet us joyful sharers, with "the just made perfect," of the rewards of "the better land!"

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY

1000
1000

1000
1000

1000
1000

1000
1000

1000
1000

APPENDIX.

Note A.

It hardly needs to be said, that for very many of the facts mentioned in this Address I am indebted to the "History of Saco and Biddeford," by Mr. George Folsom; an author, whose careful researches into the early records of the two towns spare later investigators much of the labor, they must otherwise have performed. Parts of this Address, indeed, are but reproductions of his narrative in a new form. A few of the statements here made rest on the authority of "Greenleaf's Ecclesiastical Sketches of the Churches in Maine." Some items of interest I have gathered from our venerable fellow-citizen, Capt. Ichabod Jordan, now in the ninety-third year of his age.

Note B.

The Ferry Road, which for a time was the principal street in the settlement, was originally laid out, in the part nearest the Falls, somewhat closer to the river than the street that now bears the same name. Common Street, continued almost in a straight line, and entering the present Ferry road in the neighborhood of the Cemetery, would more accurately follow its course.

Note C.

It may be presumed that the larger sum voted for Mr. Fairfield's support was what was called in those days "a settlement"—i. e., a payment intended to meet the first expenses of the minister's family, in commencing housekeeping. Whether in this instance the "£80 lawful," offered to Mr. F. as his regular salary, was included in the more liberal amount afterwards voted, I am not aware that the records show. Probably, however, such was the fact.

Note D.

The following is Mr. Fairfield's letter, tendering to the town the resignation of his office,—as it stands upon the Town records:

"To the Inhabitants of the Town of Pepperellborough, in annual Town meeting assembled.

CHRISTIAN BRETHERN AND FRIENDS :

Thirty four years are elapsed, since I settled in the gospel-ministry among you, which term is nearly a ministerial life, upon an average of

such a life ;—I am now considerably advanced in life, and do not enjoy a very good state of health, [so] that I cannot as heretofore attend to ministerial services,—Besides, I have lived to see the Church of Christ in this place almost extinct—And to my great grief have for a number of years here been deprived of the enjoyment of the special ordinance of the Lord's Supper,* under which deprivation I can no longer rest :—And there is little if any apparent success attending my Ministry among you, evidenced by no additions made to the Church, and by the fewness of those who attend the public worship of God in this place, not to mention other evidence hereof :—And there is hope that the decayed Church in this Town will revive and increase in numbers and graces, and that the best Spiritual Interest of this whole people will be much better promoted by the ministry of another person standing up in my ministerial Lot among you, and ministering to you, than by my Ministry :—These things considered, it is my cordial desire, that my civil contract with you for a ministerial support may be dissolved. And I request your compliance with this my desire by your vote in this your Town meeting :—But notwithstanding, till you can provide yourselves another Minister, or during my continuance in the Town, I will at your request minister to you, as I may be able by divine aid. My best wishes attend you in temporal, but especially in spiritual respects, and I am your affectionate Minister,

JOHN FAIRFIELD."

Pepperellborough, Ap. 3, 1797.

NOTE E.

Few ministers in this region have gained a wider notoriety for eccentric humor than this well-known clergyman, recently deceased in Westbrook, at an advanced age. It may interest some readers to see his characteristic letter, refusing the invitation of the Town to become its minister. A somewhat novel reading of a passage of scripture will be noticed by the observant at the close of the second paragraph ; but I give it as it stands on the Town records.

"To the Inhabitants of the Town of Pepperellborough :

Great and important is the work of preaching the Gospel, and no one ought to undertake it, unless he intends to devote his whole time and talents for the purpose ; and a minister cannot devote his whole time and attention toward the good of the flock of which he has the charge, unless the flock make suitable provision for his support—For inspiration saith, "he that preacheth the gospel shall live by the gospel;" for it cannot be expected that a minister can labour three fourths of the time towards supporting himself and his family, and at the same time perform the duties which ought to be performed by a gospel-minister.

Caleb Bradley, through the medium of your *Committee*, has received a polite invitation to settle with you in the gospel ministry, and likewise has been informed of the sums of *money* you have voted for the support of the same—[\$500 as a "settlement," and a salary of \$350.]—He therefore takes this opportunity to return you his thanks for the candour, politeness and attention, you have manifested towards him, since he has

* A singular statement for a *pastor* to make, of which I am unable to give any explanation.

had the pleasure of residing among you,—and he likewise gives a negative answer, though he does it with somewhat reluctance, being compelled as it were by the express words of inspiration, for that says, “he that provideth not for himself, and his own household, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an Infidel.”

He does not doubt in the least but you intended to vote a sum of money which you supposed would be equal to a handsome support, but at the same time he begs leave to differ with you in judgment, (considering the expense of living,) for he considers the sums you have voted to be quite inadequate to a handsome support.

Notwithstanding he has answered you in the negative, yet he sincerely hopes you will not continue long in an unsettled state, etc. * * * “Finally, brethren, farewell, be perfect, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

CALEB BRADLEY.”

Pepperellborough, Sept. 2, 1798.

Note F.

Mr. Cogswell still survives in advanced years, spending the quiet evening of his days in New Brunswick, N. J.

Note G.

Since his resignation of the pastorate, Mr. Hopkins has removed to Northampton, Mass., and has occupied much of his time with literary labors. In 1852 he published a small volume of religious meditations, entitled “Lessons at the Cross.” A few years afterward he wrote “The Youth of the Old Dominion,” an imaginative sketch of the early days of Virginia. In 1859–61 he published his very valuable and thorough History, entitled “The Puritans and Queen Elizabeth,” in three vols., 8vo.

Note H.

The following is believed to be a complete list of the brethren of the Church, who have served it as its Deacons during the past century.

Amos Chase, Gershom Billings, Samuel Scamman, Francis Woods, James Gray, Richard C. Shannon, James Rumery, Joseph M. Hayes, James S. Goodwin, Seth Scamman, Philip Eastman, Dominicus Jordan, Charles C. Sawyer, Ivory Dame.

F
29

S1 D8

[illegible]

DEMCO





UNIV OF MAINE - GORHAM



3 1390 00347414 3

