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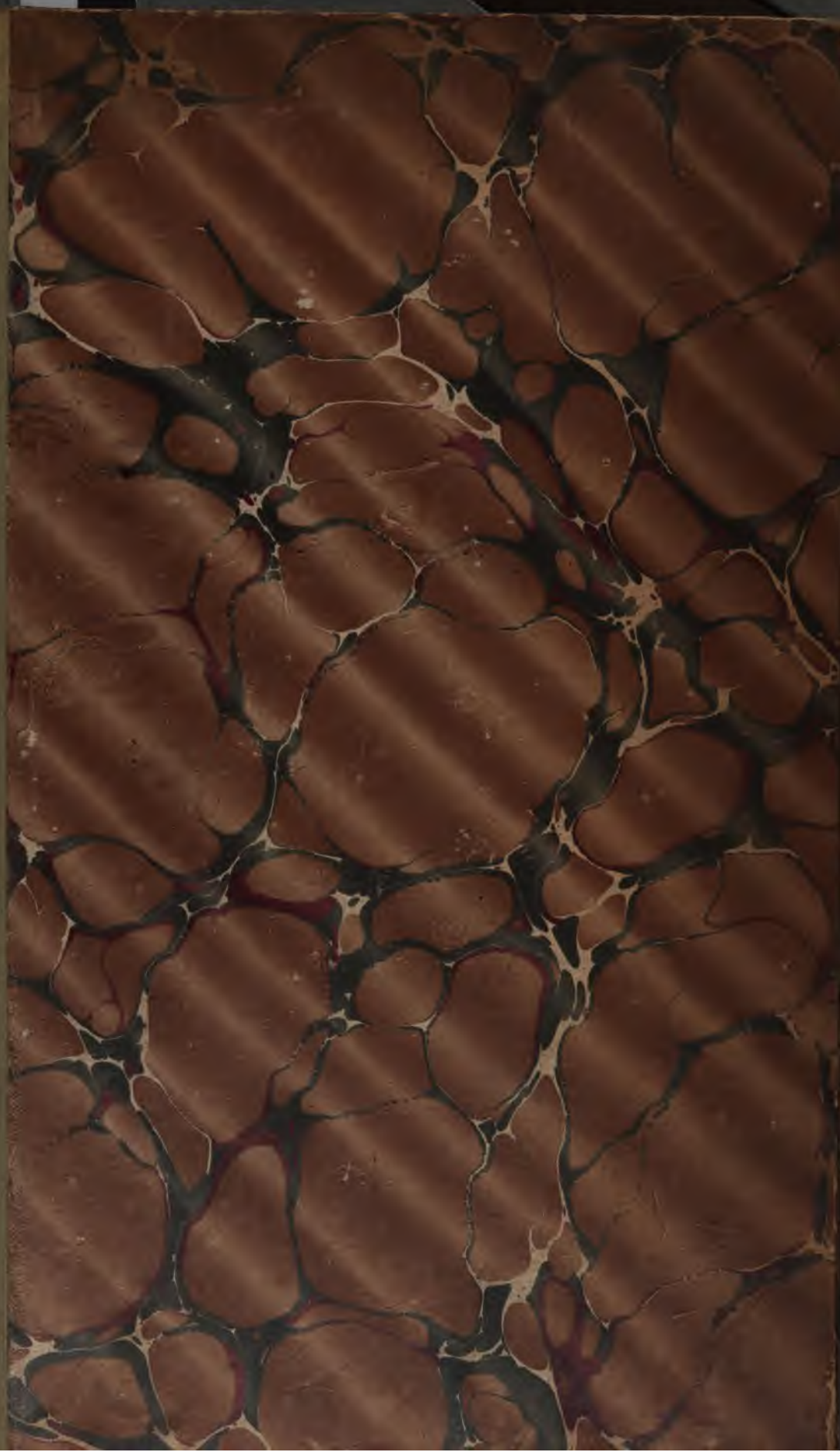
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A SKETCH
OF THE
CHARACTER AND LIFE-WORK
OF
REV. NATHANIEL BOUTON, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
CONCORD, N. H.,

1825 - 1867,

BY
JOHN BELL BOUTON,
(HIS SON.)

READ AT THE EVENING SERVICE OF THE CHURCH,

SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 1862.

BY
MRS. ARTHUR E. CLARKE.

(MARTHA CLEGG BOUTON, DAUGHTER OF NATHANIEL.)

REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE FIRST CHURCH.

1862.

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UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

REV. NATHANIEL BOUTON, D. D.

By John Bell Bouton.

THIS is a slight sketch, not a formal memoir, of Dr. Bouton. It only gives glimpses of him. I try to describe him from my personal recollections of the early part of his ministry. He was a many-sided man, sympathetic and helpful in all that affected the general welfare. I have chiefly dwelt on his supreme services as pastor and historian, alluding briefly to other matters, and leaving much to be inferred. It is an attempted portrayal of character by some striking examples. His special fitness and all-round ability appeared in his important work on the town school committee for fourteen years, and also as president of the Concord academy trustees. Later on he displayed the same rare qualities on a higher level, as trustee of Dartmouth college between 1840-'77. He was a warm friend of every philanthropic enterprise. His early and constant interest in the State Asylum for the Insane is a case in point. From 1867-'70 he was its chaplain. During the Civil War his fervid patriotism and intense energy, in words and acts, were powerful stimulants of public opinion to save the Union and abolish slavery. He had a shrewd prescience of benefits possible to the community from new and sound ideas of improvement and progress, and aided them as best he could. It is merely a question of multiplying illustrations. Only a few out of the many could be clearly

shown within the narrow limits of this paper.

In the language of *Waverley*, "'tis sixty years since." In going back to about 1840, as a starting point, I begin in the middle of my story expressly to make it short, while availing myself of a novel and interesting background. The scene is the Old North Church; the time Sunday morning in early June. The great open space in which the church stands is covered with grass studded with buttercups and daisies, and shadowed by giant elms in full leaf.

The sexton is ringing the heavy bell, "setting" it occasionally on its head and taking care that the rope does n't pull him off his feet. He looks through the doorway and sees a little procession rapidly approaching. Then he stops his jigs and flourishes and begins to toll. The sharp staccato notes seem to be saying, "time is up, now or never." Idlers lounging in the sunshine take the hint and enter the church by a liberal choice of three doors—the main one in front and two in the rear—a convenient arrangement for slipping in and out quite unobserved. The little procession consists of the minister, his wife, and such of his children as are able to walk the half mile from their house at his own gait, which is lively. He is a medium-sized man, spare and sinewy, with a clean-shaven face, reg-

ular features, piercing gray blue eyes, and shaggy eyebrows. Bismarck had a pair just like them. If they signify strength of will and tenacity of purpose, then they were not put on either face in vain. The minister wears a long, flowing, shiny surplice, beneath which may be seen a black suit, not very new, but neatly kept. His vest is cut clerical fashion, and the neck-cloth is a thick fold of white with no visible tie.

He springs, rather than walks, up the steps leading to the great double door which is invitingly wide open. He strides along the broad center aisle; and one feels that he would skip up the winding stairs which lead to his elevated pulpit but for the official dignity imposed on him. Meanwhile, the family march to the front left-hand pew. There they are in the full blaze of observation and try to look unconscious of it. The occupant of the pulpit from his high position commands a good view of the whole house. He is almost on a level with the galleries which slope steeply toward the roof. Exactly over his head is a huge sounding board, suspended from the ceiling by a thick iron rod. It makes one's flesh creep to think what would happen if this should fall! Many windows light up the interior so that he can peer into all the nooks and corners, which he proceeds to do. His swift glance takes in every face, old or young, the owner of which he can call by name, and give his pedigree if required. He unerringly detects a stranger. If the unknown is a man of intelligent appearance and attentive and within short range, he will think that a part of the sermon is preached at him point blank.

The house holds about 750 people. It has already thrown off swarms to the South and West Concord churches. They are both flourishing colonies from the parent hive. But there is still a goodly attendance. The floor pews are full and the galleries show few vacancies.

Now the bell has ceased to toll. The latest probable comer has arrived. The service begins. It differs but slightly from the order at present observed in many smaller churches of the same communion. The heart of the pastor shows in his face as he utters the short prayer. It is rapt and serious as of one who communes with God. His voice is tremulous and petitioning, but clear and well pitched and heard by everybody. He knows that a deaf old man is seated in the railed space immediately under the pulpit, this being a reservation for the aged and infirm, and that he is making an ear-shell of his right hand.

The hymns sung are from the old collection, in which Dodridge, Watts, Montgomery, and Cowper are the star lyricists. The tunes may be Mear, Balerna, Boylston, Greenville, Geneva, Coronation, and the like. Though now out-worn by use, both words and music have never been surpassed for devotional effect.

The tuning fork of the leader strikes the pitch like the magnified hum of a bumble-bee. He says "do, re, mi, sing," and his little band responds. The man with the bass viol makes wild dabs at the strings. Harvey Jewell, or perhaps it is McCutcheon conducting the music, lifts up his tenor voice. Scattered among the audience are scores of persons who know the hymns and tunes by heart.

They think themselves, and perhaps they are, as good singers as those behind the red baize curtains up there. About the second line they strike in with great power and are soon reinforced by hundreds more who think they can sing, but cannot.

The result is a "joyful noise" indeed. It is all the same to the minister. Never mind the discord, or the unbalanced parts! He hears only voices vehemently praising the Lord, and he knows they mean well. All defects have their compensation, and this scanty knowledge of music saves him from collisions with the choir. For the choir, as everybody knows, has the possibilities of a hornet's nest when molested by clergymen. A happy family indeed!

A scriptural reading follows, with a word of explanation injected, where one is really needed to shed light on some obscurity shared by the minister with his hearers. He assumes always that they know a little more than they really do. Then the long prayer; then a second hymn and the event, the sermon, is in order.

Deacon Morrill clears his throat and takes a lozenge. Richard Bradley (if he is not a deacon he ought to be) straightens himself in his seat and sets a conspicuous example of alert attention. There is a rustle all over the house as of skirts being adjusted, and a little clatter of footstools being comfortably fixed.

When all is quiet, and not till then, the minister rises to preach. His sermon is written and lies before him, spread out on the pages of a great open Bible. He gives out the text slowly, and in a very distinct voice. He repeats it. This is a piece of pure kindness for the benefit of young per-

sons who may be asked when they get home what the text was. His own children, however young, are expected to remember that much. But I regret to say that it sometimes evaporated on the way home.

No matter what the sermon is about. I am not here to repeat it to you. It is doctrinal, for sure, after the fashion of the period, which was set by the pews no less than by the pulpit. The people wanted no other kind; and to them no other kind was "just as good." And I am bound to say their demand was fully supplied. "Sound doctrine is the basis of sound piety" is the motto of the preacher who is discoursing this fine June morning in the Old North Church. For himself, he fully believes in it. Nobody doubts that. And whatever fate may overtake it in later skeptical days, it is now, in 1840, accepted without question by the audience. Evolution is not yet discovered. The higher criticism is unknown. The pastor and his flock are not plagued by problems which are soon to shake the foundations of belief.

The sermon, therefore, is not so much an argument to convince, as a restatement of points to refresh the memory. As currants in a bun, or raisins in a pudding, so it is stocked with Bible quotations. It rests on these and is buttressed and built up by them. Grant the plenary inspiration of the Bible, which had few challenges sixty years since, and lo! the doctrine is demonstrated whatever it is. And so text is heaped upon text and proof upon proof. Deacon Morrill coughs loudly as if in approval and takes another lozenge. Richard Bradley looks about him as if he saw an imaginary objector where none ex-

ists, and seems to say "that settles it." At intervals there is a mitigation of logical severity in the shape of fervent personal appeals; and there is much reverent dwelling on the abounding grace of God. With plenty of strong meat for men there is a reasonable provision of milk for babes and sucklings. The pastoral and the paternal are happily blended.

Sermons of the day are divided into parts, as firstly, secondly, thirdly, etc. These cease with "in conclusion," with perhaps "finally," succeeded possibly by "lastly." Till that signal is given audiences don't know where they are. There never is a fourteenthly. That is an invention of the humorists. And, so far from being an hour and a half long, which ancient chroniclers say used to be the regulation length, this sermon is not over thirty-five minutes. It is flexibly constructed, and can be let out or taken in as occasion requires.

The pastor manages his voice skilfully. It is loud and emphatic in the condemnation of sin. But it sinks to a whisper when he refers to "Sheol" by the equivalent of the old version. He does not conceal the terrors of the law, but he never shakes them like a stick at his congregation. He appeals to reason and not to fear, and to the heart more than to the conscience. And he does all this in plain English which everybody understands. There is no "fine writings," so called, and never a touch of pedantry. His gestures are few and simple, but his arm cuts the air quickly. Somehow, in all he says and does, he gives out the impression of fervent piety, transparent sincerity, and of a great reserve of nerve force, carefully bitted and curbed, to avoid excess in language

and action. And this is the true view of him—of which more hereafter.

This is but a rough presentment of my honored father, Rev. Nathaniel Bouton (he had not then received his Doctorate from Dartmouth college), as he appeared in the prime of life, and about the fifteenth year of his ministry.

The interval for lunch in summer on Sunday was an hour and a half. Some of the worshipers from a distance brought their doughnuts, cookies, and turnovers with them and regaled themselves in the church, or on the doorsteps, or on the grass under the elms, or in the graveyard, which was always a favorite resort. Many dropped in on their hospitable friends in the neighborhood, sure of welcome in those primitive days. But the great majority walked to their own homes for the midday "snack," and my father and his little troupe among them. With everybody it was less a meal than an appetizer. For the dinner of the day was set for three and a half to four o'clock, and that household was poor indeed which did not make a satisfying repast of it. Even now, looking back through an endless vista of *table d'hote* dinners, in clubland and elsewhere, under many skies, I do not recall the production of any *chef* comparable for downright relish with the square Sunday meal of my childhood. Attribute all you please to youthful appetite and ostrich-like digestion. I concede your point; and yet I maintain, against all comers, that the old-fashioned Sunday dinner was fit for a king—if the king was very hungry.

But in my encomiums on this feast, as it lies embalmed in my memory, I am losing the sequence of things.

poetic license and to treat it as part of my father's Sunday work about sixty years since. He was fully equal to its demands, had they been made upon him, for ten or fifteen years after that date, so vigorous were his body and mind, and so anxious was he to preach the gospel to every creature.

"A busy day," you say, "and how tired the poor man must have been!" Yet, he went to bed on Sunday less fatigued than any week day. It was, comparatively speaking, his day of rest. For, on Sunday, he snatched a respite from the incessant and distracting calls upon his time and patience from Monday to Saturday, inclusive. At the outset of his ministry he adopted a plan of rising with the sun, which means from four and a half to five o'clock in summer, and then to walk, or exercise in some way, for one hour. He also proposed to read the classics an hour a day, with dips into philosophy and poetry now and then. How long these heroic and beautiful resolutions remained unbroken, I cannot say. There are traditions that he used to go down to the river in the freshness of the morning for a swim; and it is quite likely that he often walked a mile or two before breakfast. But the cares of a household and his parochial duties soon gave him all the exercise he wanted. He sawed and split all the fire-wood for the house, from choice, with neatness and dispatch. In default of a hired man he could, and would, do the work of the barn; and the horse, the cow, and the pig never complained of his neglect.

The noble intention of rising with the sun was practically commuted to getting up at six o'clock. At that hour his loud rap and cheery voice

were invariably heard at the foot of the stairs. It was "Come children," and they came, the house being run on patriarchal principles. As for the classics in Greek and Latin, which he read with ease, they gathered dust on the shelves. Calmet's "Biblical Antiquities," "Cruden's Concordance," "Scott's Commentaries," and other "tools of the trade," so to speak, had the call with him. He kept up his knowledge of Hebrew, and sometimes, at morning prayers he would read sonorous passages in that tongue from the Psalmist or the Prophets. The language seemed to have a majestic roll as of distant echoes from the thunders of Sinai; and the children listened with awe and increased respect for their parent as he performed this feat. For philosophy he drew upon himself, and he needed plenty of it. He kept no record of engagements, but carried them all in his head, carefully pigeon-holed and labeled, and never forgotten.

They comprised special evening services on week days, district lectures, Bible classes, inquiry and prayer meetings, family conferences, and appointments with deacons and church committees. If one of his parishioners fell sick, he called on him; if dying, he stood by his bedside, and officiated at his funeral. As president of Concord academy and member of the town school board, he was active in promoting education. In every work of philanthropy and rational reform he was called to help and never refused. To every man and every scheme that promised benefit to Concord, he was "guide, philosopher, and friend." At the outset of his ministry the Old North was the only meeting-house, and so by sen-

iority, he was the dean of the clergy, and in every associated effort among them he was put to the front as spokesman. In the dedication of Congregational churches far and near, or the installation of pastors, he was expected to preach the sermon, or offer the right hand of fellowship, or otherwise assist in launching the enterprise.

There is a free masonry that draws antiquaries together; and it was not long before John Farmer and Jacob B. Moore, and Philip Carrigain and other kindred spirits found him out. They often called at his house and were glad to enlarge their own extensive stock of lore from the fund of queer information, which he was always picking up in his rides and walks about the parish and his examination of the oldest inhabitants. In return they would tell him of anything interesting they had seen or heard. It would nowadays be called "swapping stories." His thirst for this kind of knowledge was insatiable. He could put his finger on every old piece of furniture in Concord. He would spend hours deciphering the crabbed manuscript of ancient records. He was particularly strong in genealogies, and often able to supply missing links. He had the knack of putting this and that together and giving a moral certainty to shrewd conjecture. These gifts endeared him to the delightful "Dryasdusts" aforesaid, and qualified him, in after days, to write the "History of Concord," for which he had been unconsciously preparing for many years.

The New Hampshire Historical Society elected him a member, and he was its president for two years

and its corresponding secretary for thirty-four. A compartment called the "Bouton Papers," full of rare matter collected and presented by him, attests to-day his interest in that useful organization. The New Hampshire Antiquarian Society claimed him as a most serviceable friend. He was corresponding member of several historical societies out of the state—offices not wholly sinecures. He was trustee of the New Hampshire Missionary Society about twenty years, and president for six years; president of the Ministers' and Widows' Charitable Fund; director of the New Hampshire Bible Society, as also of the New Hampshire Educational Society; trustee for thirty-seven years of Dartmouth college, and secretary of the board; vice-president of the American Home Missionary Society; corporate member of the A. B. C. F. M., etc.

It is not too much to claim for my father the germinal thought of the Home Missionary Society. It sprang out of a conversation between him and other Andover Theological students early in 1825. They were talking about the supply of missions for new settlements in that *terra incognita*, the West. Like a flash came to his mind the idea "we need a National Missionary Society for this great work," and he said so. Pursuing the theme, he literally struck the keynote of it by taking a key from his pocket, tapping the wall with it, and exclaiming with great animation, "Why not strike a high key at once and say a National Domestic Missionary Society?" To this little seed can be traced the mighty tree.

If his children had known this fact

earlier perhaps they would have dropped more of their pennies into the box for Home Missions rather than that for Foreign Missions, which appealed to their youthful imaginations as the more remote and romantic of the two!

In the temperance reform he was a pioneer. As late as 1830, rum, brandy, gin, and wines were common drinks in every family. They were on tap in every store in town, and a special counter was provided with water, sugar, spoons, and toddy sticks, all handy. In private houses the decanters were temptingly arrayed on elegant sideboards. Farmers carried bottles of rum into the fields, and nothing could be planted or harvested without it. My father, in 1827, learned from personal inquiry that in a single year about 400 hogsheads, or 46,000 gallons, of ardent spirits (exclusive of wines) were sold in the town. Of this amount no less than 15,000 gallons were for home consumption, or four and one half gallons to every man, woman, and child in Concord.

No account was kept of the port and muscat wines also disposed of in large quantities. But these were less in request by heavy drinkers and did little harm compared with the powerful intoxicants. The same is true of home-made cider, of which farmers used to lay in anywhere from fifteen to sixty (and in one recorded instance 150) barrels a year. The new cider which used to taste so sweet and innocent to me as a boy, when sucked from the bung-hole with a straw, became hard and heady with age, and had a trick of fuddling those who drank it by the quart.

In his parochial rounds in those

early days, liquor was always offered to him as a matter of common courtesy, and as politely declined. It was the uniform custom at funerals to treat the mourners and pall-bearers and others before going to the grave and after their return. He could overlook this, as it was then a recognized usage in good society. But one day he attended the funeral of a drunkard who had fallen in the street on a sharp axe he was carrying, and had bled to death. This man had, at the time, a bottle of rum in his pocket. He was found dead by his brother who at once seized the bottle and drank up the rum. Here was an opening which the young pastor did not fail to improve. He turned his funeral remarks into a little lecture on intemperance and made it hot for the ears of the brother and his family and all others present who were soaking themselves in liquor.

Temperance reform made slow headway in Concord. But in 1836 it had gained so many friends that Dr. George B. Cheever of New York, author of the scathing Tract called "A Dream of Deacon Giles's Distillery," was invited to deliver a temperance address at the Old North on the annual Fast day. The rum interest turned out to hear the bold man who thus bearded the lion in his den, and was enraged by his withering exposure and denunciation.

That night there was a riotous outbreak in front of our house where Dr. Cheever was staying. A party of ruffians, fired up with their own liquor, wanted to wreak their vengeance on the doctor. They tried to break down the massive front door, but failed, though their clubs left

deep dents upon it which were visible as long as I can remember. Finding they could not force an entrance, and fearing arrest by the watchmen of the town, they retreated to the state house yard, where they burned the object of their hate in effigy. I do n't know what Dr. Cheever would have done if they had battered down the door and got at him, though, as he was a combative man, he probably would have shown fight. But, I am sure that my father would never have tamely allowed his castle to be stormed and his guest injured. He would have risked his own life in a desperate resistance. That meek and polite man would have received his assailants with the kitchen poker. He would have felt a very human thrill of pleasure, for the moment, in giving free vent to the high temper he was always so carefully keeping in, and in my opinion the fort would have been held.

The various references I have made to certain of your old-time pastor's temperamental qualities, or glaring defects as he penitently called them, require some explanation. A bare statement of the facts reflects great credit on him. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city," says the Good Book. He was, perhaps, the last person who would have been picked out by his Concord contemporaries as easily excited, disputatious, and contentious by nature. He was of French descent, six generations removed from John Bouton, a Huguenot who fled from persecution at home and sailed from England in the *Assurance*, arriving in Boston, December, 1635. He had the Gallic traits of quickness in thought and speech, courage verging on rashness, pugnacity under slight provocation,

and a passionate fondness for discussion.

A good outfit for a soldier or politician; but it would never do for a minister of the gospel. As far back as his student life at Andover, he determined to stifle these tormenting propensities, which he feared would unfit him for the ministry. He adopted a string of resolutions to the following effect, in brief: That he would not dispute with people. That he would carefully guard against positiveness of opinion, and also hasty, uncharitable, and censorious remarks, and never contradict anybody. That in his intercourse with others he would aim to treat them in the spirit of the apostle who said, "Let each esteem others better than himself." These are different ways of resolving the same thing, namely, that he would put his native touchiness, his love of mastery in argument, and his pride, under his feet. It was a lifelong struggle, but—I call all who knew him to witness—he won the victory.

But he did not think so. In his self-searching eyes he was to the close of his life blamable in not effectually crushing out this faulty part of him. Fifty years after he had framed these resolutions, he declared, "My sin in this regard is continually before me; I am not yet cured." But he was cured, so far as those who best knew him could judge. His own severe criticism on himself must be set down to his modesty. Rev. Dr. (afterwards Professor) Parker, who lived in close friendship with him for many years, was greatly surprised when these self-reproaches were first brought to his notice. He said, "Few would have thought this of that man so remarkable for self-poise and self-control. I

never knew him to be otherwise even under very trying circumstances." And all this time my father was sitting on the safety valve of his own explosiveness. If any person, in my hearing, is afflicted with quickness of temper and is keeping it chained in the dungeon of his own heart, he will join with me in a tribute of praise to Dr. Bouton for this conquest of his besetting infirmity.

At home, with his children, his requirements were reasonable and he expected them to be heeded. He was good-humored, affectionate, but not gushing, and was just and strict. He had a keen sense of the ludicrous, and when out of the harness, was easily amused. The care of one ewe lamb is very different from that of a flock of thirteen, who were born to him first and last. And there was no coddling. To compensate for any seeming lack of paternal affection, the boys were allowed a large outdoor freedom subject only to the summons of a bell at dark to call them in from the street. They could go barefoot if they liked, a blessed privilege in summer time. They could bathe in the Merrimack and take their chance of drowning. They could turn somersaults down the steep sand banks of Academy hill at the risk of breaking their necks. They could take part (though perhaps he did not know of this) in the frequent battles with snowballs between the juvenile armies of the North End and South End. They could hunt and fish, skate and slide, and in a general way, rough it to any extent without fussy interference from the head of the house. He had a theory about toughening them which was wise and good, and I thank him for it to this day.

On the whole I will say that we got a good deal of fun out of our early life in Concord. The minister of those days received free tickets to all the shows that came to town. If my father did not attend them the children surely did. I recall circuses, menageries, an oxyhydrogen microscope which showed eels in vinegar three feet long, and mites in cheese of peck measure dimensions, also the exhibition of a life-size manikin of papier mache which Dr. Lambert took apart, piece by piece, revealing the startling wonders of the human anatomy, likewise a balloon ascension, which was, for many days, the talk of the town, a height of 11,000 feet having been attained, and a landing made in Northfield, 16 miles distant, and, finally, I remember a baby steam engine which ran with a miniature train of cars on a circular track in the old town hall, before any railroad had been built to Concord.

We sometimes got our fun without going out of the house. I refer to marriages solemnized in the study, to which the children were always summoned, and which they greatly enjoyed. The sheepishness and trembling voice of the bridegroom, as he floundered through the ceremony, always amused them, while they wondered at the perfect composure of the bride. My father used to kiss her, "save in exceptional circumstances," as he would say with a twinkling eye. For all this he received one or two dollars, sometimes more if the groom had any more left after buying his wedding clothes and new furniture. The children, though inwardly much tickled, bore their part in these proceedings with great

decorum, for my father always gravely pointed to them when he said "in presence of these witnesses." They were well aware that the job could not be legally done without them, and they wondered why they got no money for their share in it.

In the sixty-seventh year of his age, and forty-second of his ministry, Dr. Bouton surprised his people by resigning. He fancied, what so far as I know no one else had discovered, that he was getting too old-fashioned, and that a younger man was wanted for his post. This idea taking possession of him became a duty, and from that he never shrank. He was still capable of writing and preaching two sermons a week with his old fluency and power. No pastor ever "turned the barrel," as he used to phrase it, less frequently than he. Every clergyman has his pet sermons, as every poet has his favorite poems. But it was rare indeed that some good old brother or sister, at the close of the service, could say to him, as he left the pulpit, "Thank you, Doctor, for preaching it again, I liked it so much twenty years ago!" As his body and mind were sound, so his zeal and enthusiasm were unabated. It was, perhaps, for these very reasons that he insisted on withdrawing in the full possession of his powers, fearing the decline which always begins at the zenith.

And so, on his own notion, he stepped down and out, retiring, in the language of the church council which released him, "with the undiminished confidence and affection of his people and the respect of the whole community." It was no bed of roses he had occupied. The position he

had held with such distinguished success had been from the beginning hard to fill. When, as a fresh graduate from Andover, he was invited to supply the pulpit seven weeks as a candidate, he hesitated, for he had heard, and it was true, that Concord was a difficult place, because it was the capital of the state, and there were many lawyers and educated men who were critical and not easy to suit. Several of his fellow students had tried for it and failed. But he took the risk and for seven weeks was kept on the anxious seat. With true Anglo-Saxon reserve and caution the old stagers, who listened stoically to his fourteen sermons, forbore to give him the slightest clue to their opinion about him. They were as non-committal as a bench of judges, and he felt that he was on trial indeed. When the probation was over, and he was leaving town, Deacon Wilkins was good enough to say to him that "Seven weeks was rather a short time for a candidatedship." And Samuel Fletcher, at whose house he was a guest during these ordeals, only asked for his address "in case the society should want to write to him." This studied coolness must have been a blow to the natural pride which any man may be pardoned for feeling who had been preaching ever since he was sixteen years old, while preparing for Yale and at the college and the seminary, and had achieved local fame as a lay evangelist and exhorter. But he had even then learned to beat down his pride, and, whatever he may have felt till the call came, he was outwardly patient and resigned. Once installed, he soon gained the confidence, affection, and support of

his flock which continued to the end. Happily for my father and for the state of New Hampshire he was not allowed to rust in retirement. There was a colossal work awaiting to be done at the state house; and, by universal agreement, he was the man to do it. This was the licking into shape and publication of the entire documentary history of New Hampshire, from the first settlement in 1623 to the adoption of the constitution in 1784. For this great task he was peculiarly fitted. In his youth he had been apprenticed to the printing trade and had learned it thoroughly and had never forgotten it. He could have made his living at the "case" any day. As proof-reader and corrector for the press, he was an expert; and used to say he could do that better than anything else; and he found a strange pleasure in the drudgery. Proof-sheets of Dr. Robinson's Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament, and also some of the output of the American Tract Society, passed through his hands. He had the detective's eye for misplaced commas, and the scent of a sleuth-hound in running down a mistake in name or date. He had written, or edited, and printed many things, notably his "History of Concord," a storehouse of original research; and he had done much for the Historical Society, as compiler and editor of its valuable publications. Now came the deserved reward and honor—so unexpectedly earned by long years of voluntary toil—in his appointment as state historian, an office created for him.

A guiding rule of his life was to do one thing at a time and into that he put his whole self. He had never

allowed his historical hobby to interfere, in the least, with his duty to the parish. Indeed, he made the former tributary to the latter by enlarging his sphere of knowledge and enriching his sermons. In entering on his new work he says he was "at first almost appalled by its magnitude"! Note the characteristic "almost"! No toil could really appal him; where he was hitched, there he pulled. He would have broken his back with pulling before giving up. To an easy-going person "appalling" exactly describes the task before him. All the materials were in manuscript, full of that strange spelling for which our esteemed ancestors were celebrated, and only rivaled in singularity by their erratic hand-writing.

Their pot-hooks and hangers were often made still more illegible by the poor ink they used, which had left but a sickly trace of itself. The paper was much defaced and torn, and—not the least of troubles—these precious documents were scattered about, nobody at first knew exactly where. Some of them were finally unearthed in the Athenæum at Portsmouth, the court house in Exeter, and the Boston state house. It was a wilderness, mostly unexplored, with mountains of rubbish which concealed many veins of pure gold. My father rolled up his sleeves and plunged into this chaos of elemental history with boyish delight. Every paper must be examined, copied *verbatim et literatim et punctuatim*, then classified according to period or subject, proof-read and published in annual volumes. This sort of thing lasted nearly eleven years, during which the indefatig-

able state historian turned out ten portly octavos of eight hundred or nine hundred pages each. These required twenty-two thousand pages of manuscript in clear copy, to which he had contributed four fifths with his own hand. And he had not lost a single day by ill health. I have been trying to test the quality of this gigantic work (the quantity speaks for itself); and for the purpose I have sunk the son in the critic. Inspecting it, then, with the cold eye of a veteran editor, I find it a truly remarkable piece of learned, painstaking, and accurate scholarship; a monument of unwearied industry and fidelity.

Once a preacher, always a preacher. His hard work at the state house did not seem to hurt him, at least for seven years. For about two thirds of the Sundays during that period, he preached, morning and afternoon, to supply pulpits in this vicinity and places more distant. Neither pastor nor sermon showed any falling off from the old, high standard. He still kept his grip on the attention of hearers. Young ministers have the advantage of their youth. But there is something about an aged minister, rich in spiritual experiences, tried and proved as a faithful servant of God for two generations, that commands a peculiar confidence and an affectionate respect. These touching marks of appreciation the venerable doctor never failed to receive.

The completion of the provincial records left him without any regular pursuit. Leisure was forced upon him for the first time in his life, and he did not like it. He could not adapt himself to the lack of stated occupa-

tion; and the inaction soon told on his health. The disease that mastered him has its learned name, which means, in plain language, a general decay of the bodily powers, evenly and all round. Of this my father died near the close of his seventy-eighth year. But I cannot help thinking he would have lived into the eighties if he had had more hard work to do.

During his illness, prayers were offered for him in churches of all the sects, including the Episcopal and Catholic. His death was felt as a personal loss by every minister in Concord, whatever his creed. Always liberal in his Orthodoxy, Dr. Bouton ripened and mellowed with the years. The city with whose growth and prosperity he had been so long identified and the state he had served so well, realized, when he was gone, the scarcity of that kind of man.

But it was not only for his sterling qualities as clergyman, philanthropist, and good citizen, that he was missed. For he was, in the literal sense of the word, a gentleman. He had a courteous bow, a kindly smile, a warm handshake, and a civil word, for everybody. He did not wait for some dire misfortune to overtake a friend or neighbor, before showing how sympathetic he could be. Everybody does that! He was equally ready with his congratulations on one's good health, or good luck, or some piece of work well done. That, alas! is the way of the few! This means that he was free from cynicism and envy—that he was an optimist and not a pessimist. It was his cheerful and hopeful view of things, and his charitable judg-

ment of human foibles, and his unaffected fondness of his fellow creatures, that inspired that habitual courtesy and kindness which made him so beloved as he walked these streets for fifty-three years.

The terms "old-fashioned" and "old school" are usually employed to under-rate new fashions and new schools. The French have an adage,—"The more a fashion changes, the more it is the same thing." That is as true of the superficial forms of Christianity as of a coat. In trifling outward aspects it changes. In all things essential it is the same familiar story—ever fresh. My father now seems an old-fashioned minister because he belonged to a past generation, and his theology was colored by

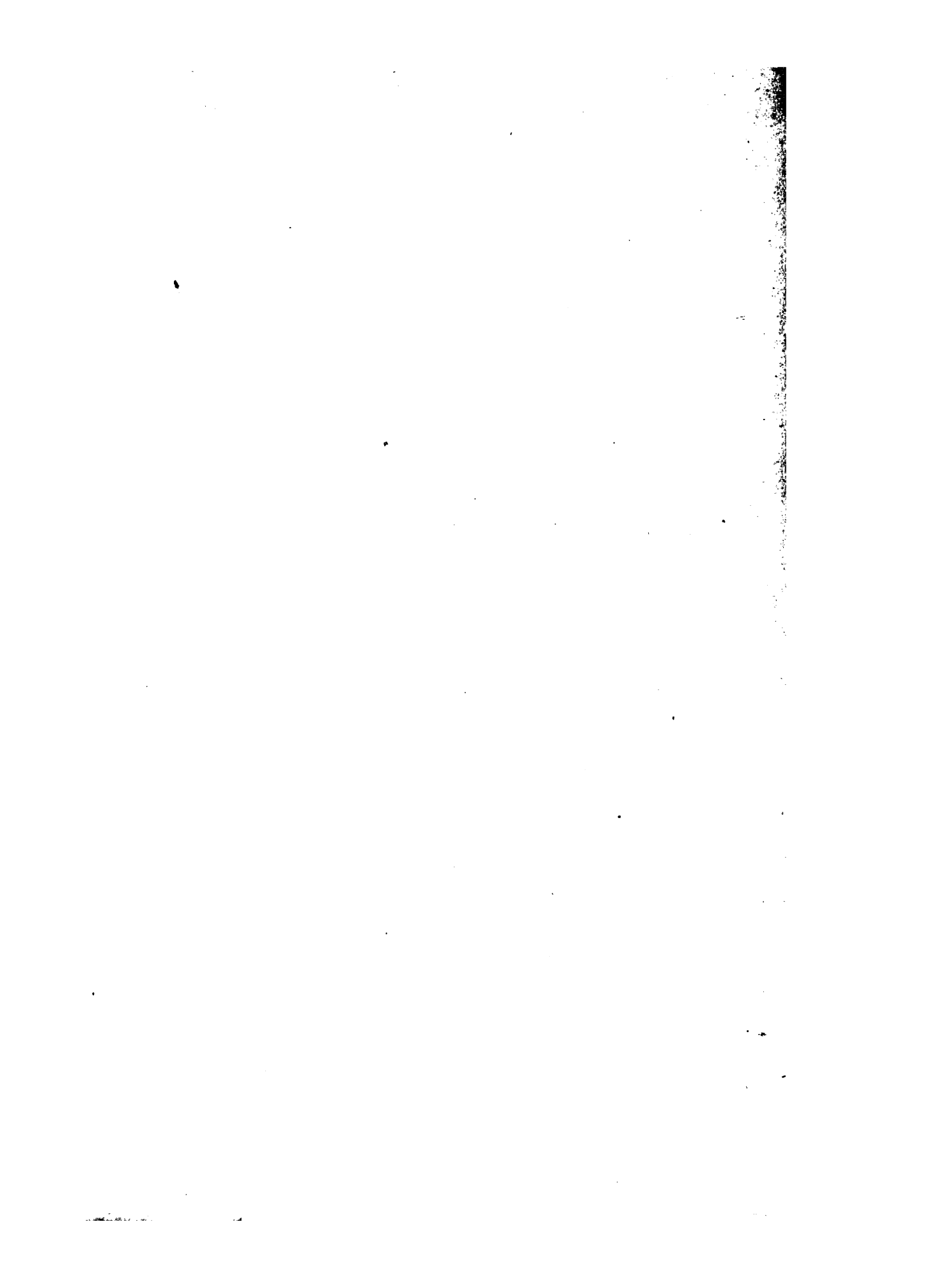
it—chameleon-like—but only skin deep. He would have laughed at the claim that any fashion of religious observance was the better for being old.

While reveling in the past as an antiquary, he had unlimited faith in the future as a Christian. He did not doubt that, in the shifting modes of creed and ceremony to come, the Master's work would still be well done by devoted pastors, according to their own lights and in their own ways. For nothing could shake his belief that Christianity is here to stay; and that, by its means, man is to be more and more fitted for his immortal life, and the world we live in to be made better and happier until the perfect day!



Tablet, in the First Congregational Church, in Memory of Rev. Dr. Bouton.

By His Children, 1901.







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