

The
FIRST CHURCH
IN PLYMOUTH

1606—1901

JOHN CUCKSON

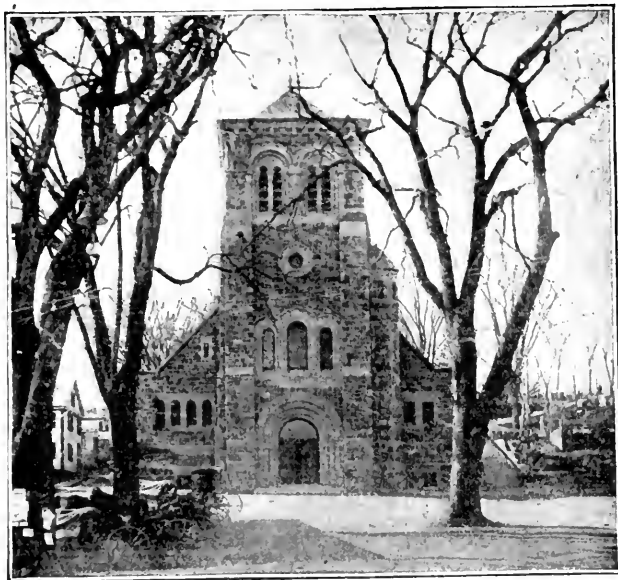
Library of the Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

Purchased by the
Mrs. Robert Lenox Kennedy Church History Fund.

Division

Section

A BRIEF HISTORY *of the* FIRST
CHURCH IN PLYMOUTH, *from*
1606 to 1901, *by* JOHN CUCKSON, *Minister.*



BOSTON
GEO. H. ELLIS Co., 272 CONGRESS STREET
1902

COPYRIGHT
BY JOHN CUCKSON
1902

GEO. H. ELLIS CO., PRINTERS, 272 CONGRESS ST., BOSTON

TO
MRS. WARREN B. POTTER,
OF BOSTON,

I dedicate these simple annals of a brave and sturdy race, in grateful
acknowledgment of her loyal and generous friendship.

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE	vi
INTRODUCTION	ix
I. HERESY AND SCHISM	1
II. THE SOJOURN IN HOLLAND	8
III. ACROSS THE ATLANTIC	19
IV. "THE WILD NEW ENGLAND SHORE"	29
V. KEEPING THE FAITH	35
VI. GAIN AND LOSS	44
VII. STAGNATION AND REVIVAL	57
VIII. CREED, OR NO CREED?	70
IX. BACK TO THE PAST	82
X. LIBERTY AND PROGRESS	103

Preface.

THE venerable religious society — the First Church of Christ in Plymouth, the church of the Pilgrims and their descendants — is approaching the tercentenary of its birth. That event will be interesting not only to the parish itself, but to the outside world, for the story of heroic adventure, fortitude, and endurance, of which this church is the permanent memorial, does not belong to one age, or to one country. It has become the treasured heritage of all congregations founded upon freedom and self-government. In order, therefore, that the present generation may become better acquainted with the way in which their sturdy forefathers walked, and the principles which guided them from the beginning, and from which the church has never swerved, I have thought the occasion opportune for the putting together in brief and handy form, and as much as possible apart from the general history of Plymouth Colony, the most important items in the religious story of the Pilgrims. The main ground has been well-covered by able and scholarly men, who have studied Pilgrim history in its general bearings, and nothing new can be added to the facts, which they have accumulated. All that is attempted here, is a modest summary from the larger histories, in the shape of a popular text-book for the use of the general reader, who has neither the leisure nor the inclination, to enter into a detailed study of the rarer and costlier

The First Church in Plymouth

volumes. The authorities which have been consulted are, *Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation 1606 to 1646*, *Young's Chronicles of the Pilgrims 1606 to 1624*, *Records of the First Church in Plymouth*, *Founders of New Plymouth* by Rev. Joseph Hunter, *Goodwin's Pilgrim Republic*, Hon. W. T. Davis's *Ancient Landmarks of Plymouth*, *The Dictionary of National Biography*. I have read many other books on the same subject, histories and records, but they were largely compilations from original sources, or special pleas in elucidation or defense, of some preconceived theories of Pilgrim theology or church polity.

All that is wanted is a narrative faithfully and briefly told, in which the facts are left to tell their own story ; and I shall be amply satisfied, if this little book, by its clearness and accuracy, leads some of its readers, to study more completely a bit of history as rich in characters and events, interesting, romantic, and heroic, as any in the annals of our race.

JOHN CUCKSON.

FAIR HAVENS, PLYMOUTH, MASS.

1902.

Introduction.

THE story of the genesis of the Pilgrim movement, its rise in England, the flight of its founders to Holland, the perilous voyage across the Atlantic, the founding of a new colony in America, in the depth of winter, and among hostile savages, the annals of persecution, suffering and death, constitute one of the most interesting and inspiring epics in the history of religion. It began at the opening of the seventeenth century. England had officially renounced the ecclesiastical authority of Pope Clement the Seventh and accepted that of Henry the Eighth. But, as the ideas, principles, habits of a nation, in religious matters, are not easily transplanted, the incipient Protestantism of the age was only a crude growth. The passage from the political theology of the Vatican, to the theological politics of Lambeth Palace, was but a short step, towards the complete enfranchisement of the individual mind and conscience, which is the logical result of the Protestant principle. People who had been disciplined for ages, to mistrust their own faculties in religious thinking, were slow to leave what seemed to them like safe anchorage, and to trust their souls to the unauthorized guidance of unconventional reformers, and their churches to the secular power. Many of them parted from the Papacy with reluctance, and clung to Episcopacy, which at that time, was the nearest approach to it, as to the

The First Church in Plymouth

outer line of freedom, beyond which was nothing but chaos. Others, like the Presbyterians, Brownists, Anabaptists, Independents, felt and acted more courageously, and moved, as if they were marching on a road with numerous hostelries, but with no rest for their feet, short of complete liberty for the individual conscience. The reigns of Mary and Elizabeth were spotted with all sorts of heresies and schisms, and it was not strange, therefore, that the bishops of Rome, and of the New Church of England, looked upon the Reformation in Europe, and the British Isles, as an ecclesiastical Frankenstein, over which they might lose control, to the lasting harm of the Christian religion. It appeared to them, in all its crude shapes, as a many-headed monster, which they were forced to combat, even unto death, and with whatever weapons they could command.

The translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular, and the slow dissemination of biblical knowledge among the people, had led independent and vigorous minds, to read and think for themselves, and to study the Bible without gloss or comment. They brought to this study, an eager thirst for the truth, and an unwarped judgment, which no creed could inspire. To know that they were privileged to read the sacred message themselves, and with such light as God had given them, and to feel that it was their supreme duty to stand firmly by their own convictions and the dictates of conscience, gave them that moral confidence in the divineness of their

Introduction

mission, which in larger measure filled the souls of Luther, Melancthon, Calvin and Knox, when they drank of the original waters of life, and took their faith undiluted from the gospels. There was a reality to their convictions, when they read the clear and simple language of the Scriptures, which did not come to them as they listened to the second-hand jargon of the creeds, and at last, they were satisfied, that the teachings of the New Testament, and of the early centuries of Christian history, were in a marked degree different from the conflicting and confusing dogmas of later ages. No wonder, then, that so many of them decided to renounce "the traditions of the elders," the mere husks of doctrinal controversy, and take their faith from the Gospels themselves, and their ecclesiastical polity from the book of Acts and St. Paul's Epistles. The Bible, as they understood it, thus became the charter of their religious belief, and in its exposition, they were satisfied that neither church nor priest held exclusive rights or privileges. Christianity as Christ and the Apostles taught it, with individual freedom of mind and conscience, and without coercion and persecution, became the watchword of thousands of sturdy Protestants, on whom the light of the Reformation was dawning. And, there never has been a great religious party of Anglo-Saxons, in any generation, who set the right of private judgment and the imperative duty of supreme loyalty to truth, more boldly in the forefront of their lives, and praised other things less in comparison with religion, than

The First Church in Plymouth

did our sturdy Pilgrim Fathers. False men and hypocrites crept into their ranks, but the grand old leaders, who were really conscientious and devout, and who suffered in dark days, have few equals, and no superiors, in any age of the world's history. The characteristic note of their piety was this, the sovereign importance which it attached to truth, to the secret and free intercourse of every living soul with God, and a perfect loyalty to God's will; a piety theirs, not of holy places or of sacred ritual, or of symbols that minister to the imagination — a piety personal, intimate, inward; which each man transacts with his Maker, entering alone, as they put it, into covenant with God, through Jesus Christ. It was that lonely communion of a man with God, in which authority demands and obedience yields, and with which no stranger is permitted to meddle, which made them great, and their lives, bereft of all else, still worth living. For that, they were prepared to suffer and endure; for that, they were contented like Abraham to follow the divine behest, going out, not knowing whither they went, singlehanded, if need be; at all cost, with loss of home and possessions, if so be, they might better acquit them like men, and honour their integrity. Theirs was a serious and masterful religion, not to be won except by brave effort, and not to be kept, but with suffering and loss. It was a religion that gripped men by their consciences, and laid on their souls the awful mandate of Heaven, and ruled them by the voice of God.

Introduction

But, it may be asked, did not this intensity of faith, lead many of them into narrowness and fanaticism? Were they not uncomfortable people to live with? In the midst of mendacity, frivolity, immorality, yes: but, surrounded by veracity, courage, virtue, no. The Pilgrim was unhappy himself, and the source of unhappiness to others, in the midst of conditions which aroused his moral indignation; but, he was contented and peaceful enough, in any environment, which harmonized with personal and public virtue. The stalwart fathers were not perfect. They lived without the light of modern science and learning. They did not, and could not, understand the Scriptures as they are understood in the twentieth century; they had not our helps to the right interpretation of the Bible; they did less than justice, many of them, to the natural beauties of Creation, and to the innocent felicities of life; they set the stern sovereignty of God above the Father's love; but to say this, is only to say, that they did their best in a bad time. Exaggerations, limitations, mistakes, cling to men in every age; but in spite of these, the great thing was, that they bore their testimony to the truth, and asserted their freedom, in an age, when men cared nothing for the one, and were doing their best to crush out the other. It did not occur to them to stop and parley with prudential considerations, or wait to see what loyalty to righteousness would cost them; but they heard the divine voice, and sought to make it the

The First Church in Plymouth

rule of their lives, preferring the life of heroic duty with all its hard experiences, to a useless enjoyment of social respectability or self-indulgence, in which there is no moral worth whatever.

There is also another point worth remembering. Our Pilgrim Fathers not only fled from persecution on account of their opinions, but also from the deadening and desolating influence of Sacerdotalism and ceremony. The creeds entered into the Book of Common Prayer. And religion among their contemporaries had degenerated into superstitious formality. Devotional liturgies rested upon a framework of dogma, in which they did not believe, and were full of phrases and ascriptions, they could not honestly repeat. It was to get rid of this, quite as much as to escape the tyranny of false opinion, that they reluctantly but resolutely forsook the Church, and worshipped apart in the cold shadow of despised dissent.

They were not sectaries delighting in separation. For a long period they hesitated to break away from the ancient church with its prestige and noble history. They refused to organize themselves or to ordain their own ministers, until nothing else was left for them to do. The love of union and fellowship was deep and strong within them, but they felt it must be union in the midst of diversity, the fellowship of minds which cannot think alike, and not the profligate sentimentalism which on the surface, but nowhere else, looks like a love-feast of sects.

Introduction

In this respect, we have much to learn from them. Our own age, which differs so widely from theirs, is yet, in the matter of religious fellowship on a broad and catholic basis, in much the same condition. If we imagine that the evils against which they contended have passed away, we imagine a vain thing. The old ecclesiastical spirit of intolerance and exclusion, though harmless as compared with what it was three centuries ago, is with us still. Except in comparatively few minds in every church, religion is a thing of sects and creeds, and the lines of separation on the score of opinion are strictly drawn. The spirit of the age is in advance of the churches, and rebukes bigotry every time it shows itself; but the barriers between one ecclesiastical sheepfold and another, are as high and as strong as ever, except in isolated spots. The tasks which engaged our spiritual forefathers are yet unfinished, and the duties which shaped the action of Robinson, Brewster, Bradford, and Winslow, have lost none of their imperativeness for this generation. Love and service have not yet supplanted dogma and exclusiveness, as the foundation of fellowship, although the teaching of Jesus was so clear and emphatic. And the duty is incumbent upon us, of seeing when the time arrives for a great approach and reconciliation of Protestant sects, that the terms shall be so inclusive and liberal, that every succeeding generation shall delight to add a new link to the chain.

In the meantime, much light and leading may be drawn from the character and experience of those,

The First Church in Plymouth

who in lonely exile, and comparative freedom from prejudice and meddlesome interference, laid the foundations, broad and deep, of the civil and religious liberty, upon which alone, an enlightened and durable civilization can be reared.

A BRIEF HISTORY *of the* FIRST CHURCH IN PLYMOUTH

CHAPTER I.

Heresy and Schism.

THE Protestant Reformation in England lacked cohesion and consistency. It did not follow any clearly defined lines, but was sporadic, breaking out here and there, in independent movements, which were not only unrelated, but often fiercely hostile to each other. One of these departures from the church established by law, began near the North East Coast, at the point where the three counties of York, Nottingham, and Lincoln, converged. The little towns of Gainsborough, Scrooby, and Austerfield, sheltered a group of scholarly, brave, zealous inquirers, who quietly and for conscience sake, nourished their liberty, and without knowing it, were fanning a flame, which was destined to become a beacon light of history. One John Smyth was at the head of a Brownist community at Gainsborough. William Bradford, religiously disposed from his early youth, was brooding intently on the signs of the times, at Austerfield. William Brewster relieved from the cares of diplomacy and court intrigue, was wrestling with the religious

The First Church in Plymouth

problems of his day, in the quiet retreat of Scrooby Manor. All of them were touched by the new light which was breaking upon the religion of *Scrooby* England, and were cherishing a more than *1606.* common interest, in the deep things of a nation's spiritual life, grave, devout men, concerned about the morals and manners of the age, and satisfied that the Church of Christ was drifting farther and farther from its Scriptural moorings. The National Church was Anti-Christ. It had erred from the true faith of the Gospels. Its bishops and ordained clergy were worldly. Its church members were too frequently wanton and evil-livers; and beliefs which should commend themselves to the minds and consciences of men, and ought not to be accepted in any other way, were being forced upon them by laws, temporal and spiritual. What could these men do? It was against their consciences to feign satisfaction with things as they were, and to make no protest. It was cowardly to consent to what was untrue, and criminal not to raise their voices in rebuke of wickedness in high places. Their own deep needs, and the spiritual hunger of those about them, made it necessary for them to meet together, whenever and wherever, they could safely do so, to worship in secret, like the persecuted Covenanters of Scotland and Huguenots of France. The views they held were heretical. The protests, they felt called upon to make against the teaching and ritual of the powerful churches of their day, laid them open to

fine and imprisonment. And, yet, the impulse to preach and to pray, and the obligation to prophesy, was irresistible. They could not be indifferent and would not be silent.

The leader in this daring movement was William Brewster (1560?-1644), who belonged to a good family, received an excellent education, and was for some time at Cambridge University. After leaving College, he, probably in 1584, entered the service of William Davison, ambassador, and afterwards Secretary of State to Queen Elizabeth. He was accounted a man of marked probity and practical sagacity, skilled in business affairs, and commanding the confidence of his employers. He accompanied Davison on a mission to the Netherlands in 1585, and remained in his service until 1587, when, as Bradford informs us, "he retired into the country," and at Scrooby Manor-House, where he resided, and had charge of the postal-service, he made the acquaintance of John Smyth, who was at the head of a Separatist community at Gainsborough (1602), and by whom he was greatly influenced, until he developed a strong personal interest in religion, and in "good preaching." Here in this historic house, which had sheltered Margaret, Queen of Scotland, Cardinal Wolsey, and Henry the Eighth, Brewster gathered about him, able and godly clergymen and laymen, lovers of freedom and haters of religious persecution, Puritans and Brownists, who found in their host an ardent and generous sympathizer. On the Lord's Day, we are told, that Brewster "en-

The First Church in Plymouth

tertaind with great love," this group of godly heretics, who without binding themselves to any formal creed or ritual, such as those by which the age was so grievously tormented, "joynd themselves, (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in ye fellowship of ye Gospel, to walke in all his ways, made known, or to be made known, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them."

It soon became obvious that the little community needed a preacher and pastor, and it fell to the lot of one Richard Clyfton, sometime Vicar of Marnham in Nottinghamshire, and later, Rector of Babworth, near Scrooby, to become the first shepherd of the flock. He was well known in that vicinity as a scholarly and godly man, beloved by people of varying belief, "a grave and reverend preacher." Though somewhat advanced in life, he was active and energetic, and had made himself greatly beloved, throughout the outlying towns and villages. The fact that he was a beneficed clergyman did not prevent him from affiliation with heretics, or others similarly situated, from being members or ministers of dissenting congregations. It is conjectured that John Robinson 1576?-1625, a graduate of Cambridge, and curate in the Established Church, a man of great natural gifts and scholarly attainments joined the Scrooby community in 1607. He became associated with Clyfton as teacher of religious doctrine, and with William Brewster, as ruling elder.

Heresy and Schism

The civil and ecclesiastical authorities were on the alert for heretics, and their attention was soon drawn to this little group of religious reformers. After the church had held together about a year, modestly exercising its independence, and doing a quiet religious work, in its own way, it was suddenly scattered by relentless persecution. Prelacy was bent upon restoring such men to its fold, or harrying them out of the land. There was no safety except in recantation, or in flight. They would not recant, and were forced to think of exile. Some set out for Holland, but the captain, in whose ship they had taken passage from Boston, betrayed them, and their leader William Brewster was imprisoned, and "bound over to the Court of Assize." In the summer of 1608, they were more fortunate. A Dutch skipper, awaiting a cargo at Hull, agreed to take them to Holland. They were to meet him at a spot on the coast between Hull and Grimsby, far enough away from any town. A small bark was engaged to take them to the appointed place, and at the time fixed they gathered on the shore, but owing to delay on the part of the vessel which was to carry them away, and difficulties with their own boat, the authorities were apprised of their escape, and while the men, women, children and cargo, were being embarked, they suddenly descried the approach of a great company, both on horse and on foot, with bills and guns and weapons who had arrived to prevent their escape. The fugitives were thrown into confusion. Some were on board the Dutch vessel, others were

The First Church in Plymouth

on shore, families were divided, their goods were confiscated, wives were separated from their husbands, and children from their parents. Those on board the ship asked to be put on shore again, dreading to be torn from those they loved, and to leave their families helpless and destitute, but the captain would not yield. He weighed anchor, spread sails, and amid tears and grief inexpressible, the once united and happy families were ruthlessly torn asunder. Their cup of misery was not even then quite full. They encountered a fearful storm at sea, in which they saw neither moon nor stars, and were driven towards the coast of Norway. For fourteen days they were in peril on the sea, often expecting every moment that the vessel would founder, distracted with fears, and crying unto the Lord to save them. Finally, after much anguish and suffering they arrived in Amsterdam. The fate of those that were left ashore was not less fearful. They fled from the soldiers, some making good their escape, and others, prevented by family ties, remaining to take care of the women and children. Many of them were apprehended, and hurried from one court to another, destitute, tormented, afflicted, until it was hard to know what to do with them. Women and children were homeless, friendless, forsaken, exposed to the cold, and fainting for lack of food. After their long misery, the sky cleared, and a way was opened for them, and in the end, as Bradford graphically tells us, "notwithstanding all these stormes of opposition, they all gatt over at length,

Heresy and Schism

some at one time and some at another, and some in one place and some in another, and mette together againe according to their desires, with no small rejoycing.”

CHAPTER II.

The Sojourn in Holland.

THE capital of the Netherlands afforded safe shelter for persecuted fugitives, who were sober, thrifty, peaceable and law-abiding. The Scrooby contingent did not, therefore, find themselves strangers in a strange land. Two Separatist communities from England *Amsterdam* were already settled there, one which *1608.* had fled from London in 1593, presided over by Francis Johnson, pastor, and Henry Ainsworth, teacher; and the other from Gainsborough, at the head of which was their old friend John Smyth. The former was a large and flourishing church, numbering three hundred communicants, the latter, which had existed there little more than a year, was not so strong. The fact, that Amsterdam since 1573, had harbored all sorts of heresies, and had become famous in prose and verse, as the breeding ground of schisms, was not favorable to the possibilities of unity and concord among the new settlers, who after separation and delay were at last united, with John Robinson and William Brewster at their head. The two existing congregations were not at peace among themselves. They were torn by controversies and dissensions in which the Scrooby Pilgrims had no part, but into which they might easily be drawn. It was therefore decided, that in the interests of the community, it

The Sojourn in Holland

would be better to retire from the scene of so much ungodly strife, and to seek a home elsewhere, more favorable to their religious development. On the 12th of February 1609, they obtained permission from the authorities of Leyden to settle there, and on the 1st of May they removed thither. Amsterdam was the centre of bustling commerce, while

Leyden Leyden, though possessing great manufacturing industries, especially, the spinning and weaving of cloth, was above all else academic. Its famous university opened in 1575, attracted students from foreign lands, and continued, through the fame of such professors as Lipsius, Vossius, Heinsius, Gronovius, Hemsterhuis, Ruhuken, Valckenaer, Scaliger, Descartes, and Boerhaave, to be an intellectual power in Europe. Here, the problems of learning, of philosophy, of theology, and biblical exegesis, were discussed with absolute freedom, and before an audience sufficiently large and interested, to produce at times unusual excitement.

When the Pilgrims arrived in Holland, they were without a pastor. Clyfton felt the infirmities of advancing years a sufficient obstacle to emigration.

John Robinson Still, John Robinson and William Brewster, who were the last of the original flock to reach Amsterdam, remained with them. The former

1609. was elected, and publicly ordained to be their minister, the latter was chosen as their elder. The society numbered about one hundred members, and

The First Church in Plymouth

steadily increased to three hundred. There were three deacons, two of whom, were John Carver and Samuel Fuller. After a while, they purchased a large dwelling, which in 1611 was used as pastor's residence and meeting-house. It stood under the shadow of the belfry tower of St. Peter's Church, and in the rear of it, twenty-one cottages were erected for poor emigrants.

The Pilgrims commended themselves by their devoutness and high character to the citizens of Leyden, who showed them great consideration, and would have emphasized this respect still more, but for the fear of offending England. The magistrates of the city were wont to contrast their peaceable demeanour with the strifes and quarrels of refugees from other nations. "These English" said they, "have lived among us now these twelve years, and yet we never had any suit or accusation come against any of them." They were of the type of citizens adding strength and quality to any community. Their pastor, was first and last a preacher and teacher, and concerned himself with his proper function, not turning aside to alien issues however tempting, but laboring incessantly to build up the lives of his flock, on the truths and principles of the Gospel, and in all the ways of pure and godly living. He was not contentious, except where the vital interests of sound doctrine were concerned, and when error was calculated to sap the foundation of public morals. Now, and then, as in the controversy on Arminianism he entered into scholastic

disputes. The old controversy between Arminius and Gomarus had been revived in Leyden, under new leaders. The two professors, Polyander and Episcopius, were in hot dispute on the nature of God's power and purpose in creation, and in human history. Polyander was the champion of Calvinism, which at the close of the 16th century was dominant in Holland; and Episcopius, the successor of Arminius in the chair of theology at Leyden, was the defender of the anti-Calvinistic school of opinion, which not only created the Remonstrant Church in Holland, but pervaded much of the neo-Protestantism of England.

The Calvinistic position on this question is set forth in Calvin's *Institutio Christianæ Religionis*, written in early manhood, but subject to constant revision in later life, and may be briefly stated.

1. Man was made in the image of God. Adam fell from this state, and involved the race in his fall.

2. Redemption from this state is by the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. But until a man is united to Christ, so as to partake of him, there is no salvation. Through faith, and by the secret and special operation of the Holy Spirit, the believer after repentance, and newness of life, receives assurance and justification. His sins are forgiven, he is accepted of God. This assurance rests upon the divine choice of man to salvation, and this falls back on God's eternal sovereign purpose whereby he has predestined some to eternal life, while the rest of

The First Church in Plymouth

mankind are predestined to condemnation and eternal death.

3. The external aids to union with Christ, are the church and its ordinances, especially the sacrament. The Church universal is the multitude gathered from all nations, who agree in one common faith; and wherever the word of God is sincerely preached, and the sacraments are duly administered, according to Christ's institute, there beyond doubt is a church of the living God.

The Arminian contention as stated by Simon Episcopus is as follows:—

1. The decree of God is, when it concerns his own actions absolute; but when it concerns man's, conditional, i. e., the decree relative to the Saviour to be appointed, and the salvation to be provided is absolute, but the decree relative to the persons saved or condemned is made to depend on the acts—belief and repentance in the one case, unbelief and impenitence in the other—of the persons themselves.

2. The Providence or government of God while sovereign is exercised in harmony with the nature of the creatures governed, i. e., the sovereignty of God is so exercised as to be compatible with the freedom of man.

3. Man is by original nature, through the assistance of divine grace, free, able to will and perform the right; but is in his fallen state, of and by himself, unable to do so; needs to be regenerated in all his powers before he can do what is good and pleasing to God.

The Sojourn in Holland

4. Divine grace originates, maintains and perfects all the good in man, so much so that he cannot, though regenerate, conceive, or will, or do any good thing without it.

5. The saints possess by the grace of the Holy Spirit, sufficient strength to persevere to the end in spite of sin and flesh, but may so decline from sound doctrine as to cause divine grace to be ineffectual.

6. Every believer may be certain or assured of his own salvation.

7. It is possible for a regenerate man to live without sin.*

This controversy, which in a variety of ways repeats itself in the later history of the Pilgrims, ended, as such debates usually end, with both sides claiming the victory. The exiles were proud of their champion, and were satisfied that he had come out of the conflict triumphantly, and had "non-plussed" his opponent; and others, who were not biassed as to the issue, freely admitted that Robinson had borne himself with courage, and courtesy, and skill, and learning, against one of the ablest disputants of the age. Indeed, he was in every respect a remarkable man, scholarly yet modest; liberal, yet free from the extravagant license of his age; religiously earnest and strenuous, yet destitute of anything like narrowness and bigotry; conservative as to the faith and principles of the New Testament, though averse to creeds and dogmas

* Britannica Encyclopædia Article Arminius Vol II.

The First Church in Plymouth

having no sure foundation in the Gospels, and properly belonging to later ages; clinging to the truth of the past, as it was held in his day, the commonly accepted Augustinian theology with Calvinistic emendations, but eager to keep himself, and the church over which he presided, open to the new light, which ever breaks forth from the word of God. His growth was not stunted, but progressive; and though he wrote many books and pamphlets, more or less critical, nothing that he ever wrote so completely expressed his mind and character, and revealed his true attitude towards the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, as the noble address to the departing Pilgrims, in which he warned them against stagnation of thought, and finality of belief, and the baneful tendency to build tabernacles on some mountain of theological speculation — one for Luther, one for Calvin, and one for Arminius. His mind was of the type which resists foreclosure, lies open to the light, and adjusts itself to whatever truth of nature or of life presents satisfactory credentials; which is always broad enough, to do justice to opinions, it cannot wholly share. Not owning allegiance to any stereotyped creed, he refused to set the seal of his authority upon any compendium of divinity, or final theological statement, however small, for the use of his followers; and so the Scrooby covenant, simple, positive, practical, undogmatic, remained, in Holland, and later in New England, the only compass by which the fathers guided themselves through

The Sojourn in Holland

the turbid waters of religious controversy, by which they were so frequently surrounded. It was the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice at Scrooby, at Amsterdam, at Leyden, at Plymouth, and is to this day, at the end of three centuries, an adequate bond of Christian fellowship.

It is impossible to do justice to the powerful influence of John Robinson upon the Pilgrims. He swayed the minds of men like Brewster, Bradford, Carver and Winslow, who in many respects were his equals, as with magic. He commanded their confidence and respect, while he was near them, and when the ocean divided him from them, they kept his name and character in un fading remembrance. The spirit and polity of the church in Plymouth owed its continued existence to him, and preserved its integrity during the first trying years of American exile, through his sagacious counsel, and against the subtle blandishments of the Adventurers in London, and the dislike and suspicion of the unmitred prelates of Salem. The Church was Separatist in Leyden, and remained Separatist and independent through its long struggle in the wilderness of New England. It stood alone, and held its own, maintaining friendly relations with kindred communities, but always jealously guarding its freedom, in all matters pertaining to the liberty of the individual conscience, and the absolute right of self-government.

And, in the annals of that time, when civil and religious liberty was only beginning to be under-

The First Church in Plymouth

stood, the temper and attitude of this little community and its pastor were remarkable. It is true that more than a hundred years before the Pilgrims sailed from Holland, Sir Thomas More had written his Utopia, or ideal of a State, in which he had declared that Utopus the founder, had made a law, that every man might be of whatever religion he pleased, and might endeavour to draw others to it, by force of argument, and by amicable and modest ways ; but those who used reproaches or violence in their attempts were to be condemned to banishment. Nevertheless, this view of religious toleration was looked upon in that age, as it is in many quarters even now, as altogether visionary and impracticable, and he who taught it, one of the serenest and most beautiful souls in history, was only like a voice crying in the wilderness. Not until the years 1644 and 1647 when John Milton issued his "Areopagitica, or speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing," and Jeremy Taylor published his "Liberty of Prophesying," more than twenty years after the Mayflower started on her eventful voyage, was there any attempt in England to set forth the true principles of civil and religious liberty. Yet, the exiles at Leyden were illustrating ideas and principles, learned in the hard school of persecution and suffering, to which later generations have added little, and from which they have had little to take away. It was enough for them, that they recognized the sufficiency of Scripture, the validity of reason and conscience under divine control, the

The Sojourn in Holland

spiritual authority of Jesus Christ, the plain teaching of the Gospels, and the necessity to salvation, of personal godliness. Practical loyalty to their great spiritual Head, was what concerned them most, and made them such rigid disciplinarians, in matters of conduct and character. Vice was the worst heresy with which they had to deal. They were less careful, all through their history, that their followers should agree or disagree with their views, than that they should walk justly and circumspectly, and live pure and upright lives. John Calvin set himself to purify the State, and establish the government of Geneva, upon a Christian basis, stamping out vice and crime, and ruling shameless iniquity with a rod of iron. And the Pilgrim Fathers thoroughly believed in the feasibility of a Christian Republic, in which pure living was, in the Apostolic sense, equivalent to sound doctrine, and personal righteousness the best proof of salvation.

This accounts, in large measure, for the comparative absence among them, of pitiful wrangling about words, which characterized so many of their contemporaries, and the concentration of their energy and enthusiasm upon the growth of Christian morals and manners, in their community. Sinners of the obdurate type always gave them the greatest trouble, and neither wealth, social status, nor any other consideration, could save such from their stern condemnation. All who wished to enter their society, or stay there, must not by their conduct or bearing,

The First Church in Plymouth

bring reproach upon the community. They were resolved, that the church should set the style of living for the world, and not the world for the church. "They came as near the primitive pattern of the first churches, as any other churches of these latter times, hath done, according to their rank and quality."*

* Bradford, First Church Records.

CHAPTER III.

Across the Atlantic.

THE English element in the Leyden Congregation, never seemed to outgrow the feeling, that though in the enjoyment of larger liberty, and security from cruel oppression, they were sojourners in a strange land. They hoped, almost against hope, that some change for the better would take place, either dynastic or ecclesiastical, which would enable them to return to their homes in England. But, the change never came, and as early as 1617, they contemplated emigration to America. Leyden did not provide as many opportunities for such work as they could do, as Amsterdam. Some were skilled mechanics, others quickly picked up handicrafts of one sort or another, but quite a number were unskilled, and at their wit's end to know how to earn a living.

The old world was everywhere, becoming too narrow and contracted for its teeming populations, and a refuge was needed from oppression and starvation. And, as the Pilgrims brooded over their hardships, and daily wrestled with the hard problem of existence, the vision of life in some distant colony under the British Crown, was not without its fascinations. They were strong, thrifty, daring, and, if only means of transportation could be found, the goodness of God and their own enterprise might be trusted to do the rest. Tidings had

The First Church in Plymouth

reached them, of the fitting out of commercial expeditions from England, to her various colonies, and their only hope seemed to lie, in being able to join one of these. They, therefore, sent John Carver and Robert Cushman to London, to negotiate a scheme, which had been carefully prepared, by which they might be transported to America. London was the centre of commercial enterprise, and adventurous companies were investing their wealth in opening up new fields of business, and laying the foundations of that commercial supremacy which was to put the world under tribute. They took with them a document, which was evidence of their loyalty and good faith, signed by John Robinson and William Brewster, setting forth in seven articles, the conditions to which they would pledge themselves, in starting out on the projected enterprise. Their purpose, at least in its inception was not purely religious. They had struggled with hopeless poverty long enough, and longed to improve their material condition, as the preliminary to higher and nobler things. They wanted to earn an honest competency for themselves and their children. Carver, and Brewster, soon found that in London they had to deal with men of the world, accustomed to drive hard bargains, into which heroic and benevolent motives did not enter. The Virginia Company, and other combinations, existed only for trade, and commerce, under charters of the Privy Council. They were composed of Merchant Adventurers, and as the

loan which the Pilgrims required for seven years, and were prepared to negotiate, was subject to grave risks, and depended upon the industry and thrift of the borrowers, it was accompanied with hard conditions. Necessity, however, knows no choice. The bargain was completed.

On the return of the emissaries, the members of the church at Leyden were invited to volunteer for the expedition, with the understanding, that if a majority agreed to go to America, their pastor would accompany them, but, otherwise, Brewster was to lead them to the Promised Land. To Robinson's regret, the majority did not approve of the expedition. Their hearts failed them, and it was left to a minority of the community, to win an exalted and enviable place in history.

The chosen company quickly set about making urgent plans for their departure. Some were in London, negotiating for a vessel and cargo, and all necessary equipments for the voyage. Others were busy at Leyden, securing another vessel to take them to England, and making such domestic arrangements as the occasion required. When everything was ready, the church set apart July 21st 1620, as a day of humiliation and prayer, and assembled in their meeting-house. John Robinson preached to them from the text, *Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Abava, that we might humble ourselves before God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. Ezra VIII. 21.*

The First Church in Plymouth

He also delivered an address, and among other wholesome instructions and exhortations, Winslow tells us, "he used these expressions, or to the same purpose :

"We are now ere long to part asunder and the Lord knoweth whether ever he should live to see our faces again. But whether the Lord had appointed it or not, he charged us before God and his blessed angels, to follow him no further than he followed Christ ; and if God should reveal anything to us by any other instrument of his, to be as ready to receive it, as ever we were to receive any truth by his ministry ; for he was very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word. He took occasion also miserably to bewail the state and condition of the Reformed Churches, who were come to a period in religion, and would go no further than the instruments of their Reformation. As, for example, the Lutherans, they could not be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw ; for whatever part of God's will he had further imparted and revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. And so also, saith he, you see the Calvinists, they stick where he left them ; a misery much to be lamented : for though they were precious shining lights in their times, yet God had not revealed his whole will to them ; and were they now living saith he, they would be as ready and willing to embrace further light as that they had received. Here also he put us in mind of our church covenant, at least that part of it whereby we

promise and covenant with God, and one with another, to receive whatever light or truth shall be made known to us from his written word; but withal, exhorted us to take heed what we received for truth, and well to examine it, and compare it, and weigh it, with other Scriptures of truth, before we received it. For, saith he, it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-christian darkness, and that full perfection of knowledge should break forth at once." *

On the following day the emigrants went on board the *Speedwell*, a small vessel which was to take them to England; and set sail from Delft-haven, parting sorrowfully with the fair city, which had given them such hospitable shelter, and with the dear friends from whom they were separating it might be for life, and started on their way with a prosperous wind, and a parting salute. "We gave them" writes Winslow "a volley of small shot, and three pieces of ordnance; and so lifting up our hands to each other, to the Lord our God, we departed and found his presence with us."

The *Speedwell* soon reached Southampton, where the *Mayflower* from London awaited her, with some of their company, and a trans-atlantic cargo on board.

Negotiations and arrangements with the Adventurers dragged slowly, and delayed the expedition, to the sore perplexity and regret of the Pilgrims. In the midst of this delay William Brewster received an official letter of farewell from John

* Hypocrisy Unmasked by Edward Winslow.

The First Church in Plymouth

Robinson to the departing company, full of wise counsel and encouragement, as to their civil and religious duties and obligations, and commending them to the providence of God.

On the 15th of August 1620, the *Mayflower* and *Speedwell* started on their voyage across the Atlantic. Whether the latter ship was unseaworthy, or her master's courage was not equal to the task, will never be known; but the craft leaked, put into Dartmouth and then into Plymouth for repairs, and was finally abandoned and sold. After the loss of a month of very precious time, the *Mayflower*, with Thomas Jones as captain, sailed alone on the 16th of September. She carried 102 passengers, and was bound for the Virginia Colony. At the outset, she was further delayed, by stress of weather, but eventually the winds were favorable, and she started out on her long and perilous voyage. These brave men and women

The Mayflower 1620. impelled by a grand ideal, which had hitherto led them from one city of refuge to another, broke away from earthly supports, and flung themselves with absolute confidence, on the guidance and protection of God. They knew not what fate awaited them, or on what shore they might be cast, but carried in their breasts the hope of a better country, in which they might be free, virtuous, and contented. No ship ever bore a costlier freight. The ocean never carried on its heaving, restless bosom a charge so loaded with the higher destinies of man-

Across the Atlantic

kind. Now in sunshine and then in cloud; one day scudding before a favouring breeze, and the next labouring in the trough of the sea; at this moment, cowed with fear, at that, exultant with hope; the exiles trusted themselves to the changeful winds and the treacherous deep, nourishing in their daring hearts, the unwritten charter of a government, founded upon law and liberty, and destined, though they knew it not, to afford shelter and protection to millions, who like themselves, should seek refuge from tyranny and starvation.

A voyage of sixty-seven days, more than twice the average length of a passage at that time, brought the *Mayflower* to Cape Cod. Two days afterwards,

Cape Cod November 20th 1620. anchor was cast in the quiet waters of Provincetown Harbour, and with gratitude to

Almighty God for safe deliverance from the perils of the sea, the Pilgrims, not forgetting the past, and not despairing of the future, turned their faces trustfully and bravely, to the difficulties and dangers, which awaited them in the unknown wilderness on shore. The night before setting foot on American soil, they met in the ship's cabin, to settle the preliminary problem of statesmanship, by signing a bond or agreement, to regulate

The Compact November 21st 1620. their government, and to hold them together in peace and good-will. On their own responsibility, they had come together years before as a separate church, undogmatic and

The First Church in Plymouth

self-governing, with officers and ordinances of their own free choice; and, now, they were to be welded into a civil commonwealth equally free, authoritative, democratic. The form of the Compact was as follows —

“ In y^e name of God, Amen. We whose names
“ are under-written, the loyall subjects of our dread
“ Sovereigne Lord, King James, by the grace of God,
“ of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, de-
“ fender of the faith, etc., having undertaken for the
“ glory of God, and advancement of the Christian
“ faith, and honour of our King and country, a
“ voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern
“ parts of Virginia, do, by these presents, solemnly
“ and mutually, in the presence of God, and one of
“ another, covenant and combine ourselves together
“ in a civil body politic, for our better ordering and
“ preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid ;
“ and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame
“ such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, con-
“ stitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall
“ by thought most meet and convenient for the
“ general good of the colony; unto which we
“ promise all due submission and obedience. In
“ witness where of we have hereunder subscribed
“ our names, at Cape Cod the 11th of November
“ (“ old style ”) in the year of the reign of our sover-
“ eign lord, King James, of England, France and
“ Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-
“ fourth, Anno Domini 1620

Across the Atlantic

Mr. John Carver	8	Mr. William Mullins	5
“ William Bradford	2	“ William White	5
“ Edward Winslow	5	“ Richard Warren	1
“ William Brewster	6	“ John Howland	
“ Isaac Allerton	6	“ Stephen Hopkins	8
Capt. Myles Standish	2	“ Edward Tilly	4
Mr. John Alden	1	“ John Tilly	3
“ Samuel Fuller	2	“ Francis Cook	2
“ Christopher Martin	4	“ Thomas Rogers	2
“ John Ridgdale	2	“ Thomas Tinker	3
“ Edward Fuller	3	“ Thomas Williams	1
“ John Turner	3	“ Gilbert Winslow	1
“ Francis Eaton	3	“ Edmund Margeson	1
“ James Chilton	3	“ Peter Brown	1
“ John Crackston	2	“ Richard Britteridge	1
“ John Billington	4	“ George Soule	
“ Moses Fletcher	1	“ Richard Clarke	1
“ John Godman	1	“ Richard Gardiner	1
“ Degory Priest	1	“ John Allerton	1
		“ Thomas English	1
		“ Edward Dotey	
		“ Edward Leister	

John Carver, a man godly and well-approved among them, was chosen the Governor of the Colony for that year. The embryo Commonwealth had thus completed its outfit. William Brewster, though unordained, and, therefore, not permitted to administer the communion, was able to conduct religious worship, teach doctrines, and give spiritual comfort to the sick and dying. Governor Carver stood guarantee for the sovereignty of law and order. Myles Standish was captain and military commander. Necessity had driven them to organize a church to meet the spiritual exigencies of

The First Church in Plymouth

their situation: and, now, necessity compelled them to enter into a civil compact, to protect them against the incipient rebellion, which in faint mutterings had been heard on the voyage, and which in all probability would express itself in louder tones ashore. The Pilgrims were not philosophers, or theorists, elaborating methods of civil and religious government according to any preconceived plans; but men with the statesman's special gift of meeting emergencies as they arise in the growth of a community. In doing this, they had chiefly their own wants to consider, and "so after they had provided a place for their goods, a common store, (which was long in unloading for want of boats, foulness of winter weather, and sickness of diverse) and begun some small cottages for their habitation, as time would admitte, they mette, and consulted of lawes and orders, both for their civill and military government, as y^e necessitie of their condition did require, still adding thereunto as urgent occasion in severall times, and as cases did require."

CHAPTER IV.

“The Wild New England Shore.”

AFTER several expeditions on the coast, in search of a suitable landing-place, and a final settlement, accompanied with grave danger, both on sea and land, the Pilgrims sounded Plymouth harbor, and discovered it was fit for shipping. They went inland for several miles, and found cornfields and running brooks. “Pines, walnuts, beech, ash, birch, hazel, holly, asp, saffras in abundance, and vines everywhere, cherry trees, plum trees,” flourished. “Many winter herbs, as strawberry leaves, sorrel, yarrow, carvel, brooklime, liverwort, water cresses, great store of leeks and onions, and an excellent strong kind of flax and hemp,” were abundant. Wild-fowl of various kinds frequented the shore; skate, cod, turbot, herring, mussels, crabs, and lobsters, abounded in the waters along the coast. The beautiful bay, with its islands and headlands, shone resplendent in its wintry sheen. Surely, this was a good place to dwell in, and it was natural enough, that the weather-beaten and weary wanderers should offer special Thanksgiving to the good God, who had worked such deliverance for them.

The early years of the settlement in Plymouth were largely taken up with the bare struggle for existence. The first winter was particularly trying,

The First Church in Plymouth

and between January and the end of March, no less than twenty-one of those who signed the Compact, succumbed to its severities. The poor exiles were encompassed with dangers. They had to protect themselves, as best they could, against the intense cold, the inclemencies of a hard winter, the ravages of disease, the wily attacks of treacherous Indians, and the machinations of the meaner sort among themselves. But, the new Church, and the embryo State, nursed in persecution, borne through storm and tempest, independent yet co-operant, were firmly established. They had survived every vicissitude, and their foundations were secure; and from this point onward, our history is concerned with the rise and development of organized religion in the Colony.

The first public building to be erected was a large house, twenty-feet square, which was used for storage and public worship; but shortly after its completion, it took fire, and

The Common House was burnt to the ground. In the month of April "whilst

January 1620. they were bussie with their seed," Governor Carver was taken suddenly ill, and died, leaving a widow who soon followed him. The death of the first Governor was a severe loss to the community. He was not only a deeply religious man, but had won their esteem and endeared himself to them, by long and patient service and sacrifice. He was sagacious, skilled in practical affairs, and upright in all his dealings. He was

“The Wild New England Shore”

succeeded in office by William Bradford, with Isaac Allerton, as assistant.

In the month of November 1621, the depleted ranks of the colonists were partly filled up by the unexpected arrival of the *Fortune*, and thirty-five persons were added to the plantation. The summer of 1622, saw the erection of the Fort. Bradford writes, “they builte a fort with good timber, both strong and comly, which was of good defence, made with a flatte rofe and batilments, on which their ordnance was mounted, and where they kepte constante watch, especially in time of danger. It served them also for a meeting-house, and was fitted accordingly for that use.”

Here on the summit of Burial Hill, the Pilgrims perpetuated the church founded in England under the ministration of Elder Brewster. The ecclesiastical polity of the church was copied, with slight modifications, from that provided by Guillaume Farel and John Calvin, for the Reformed Churches of France. The church universal consisted of those, of every nationality, who accepted the fundamentals of the Christian faith, preached from the Scriptures, and administered the sacraments.

The permanent officers of the church, were

1. The pastor, whose duty it was to preach, and to preside over the discipline of the church, to administer the sacraments, and to admonish and exhort the members.

2. A teacher, or teachers, who explained and in-

The First Church in Plymouth

terpreted the Scriptures, and inculcated the truth therein revealed, as it was made known to them from time to time.

3. Certain devout and experienced men, known as deacons, who were to attend to the material interests of the church, and to relieve the poor.

The election of the officers in the church was vested in the people, and those duly chosen and called, were ordained by the laying on of the hands of the pastors. The Sacraments were Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism was administered only to such infants, as whereof one parent, at the least, was of some church. The Lord's Supper was administered by a duly ordained clergyman to members of the church.

The Pilgrims had long felt, what Richard Baxter afterwards declared in 1680, that two things had wrought incalculable mischief to the church, firstly, insisting upon creed, and making more fundamentals than God ever made; and secondly, the imposition of creeds and statements upon unwilling and unbelieving minds. In these two respects, therefore, they departed from other churches, and laid down principles which gave them a unique position in their time—they had no creed, and repudiated persecution as the handmaid of piety.

For several years the Church at Plymouth was without a pastor. It lived upon the truths which John Robinson had taught, with such care and learning, and broke the bread of life in the way which exile had made so precious. On the Lord's day,

“The Wild New England Shore”

the people gathered in the meeting-house, sang the psalms, had the Scriptures read and explained, and joined in prayers, which flowed spontaneously from grateful hearts, and were born in the depth of an experience, which had made the goodness and mercy of God, and the blessings of his daily providence, the most real and vital of all convictions. They knew that they were the humble instruments of God for good, and that their successes and failures, joys and sorrows, losses and gains, were included in his immediate purpose, and were to be accepted without murmur or complaint.

Though far away from England, and apparently remote from interference, their ways and doings were reported to the British authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical, who worked through the Adventurers in London. The prelates of Episcopacy kept in touch with religious movements in the colonies, and were not slow to interfere, whenever and wherever, they felt called upon to do so. Bigotry has far-reaching tentacles, and upon the strength of reports, which came to them through commercial channels, the authorities in England complained of the laxity of religious life at Plymouth. It was alleged that the church was split up into factions, to which the colonists replied, that there was never any controversy or opposition among them, either public or private. It was charged that family duties were neglected on the Lord's day, to which the accused responded, that they allowed no such thing, but condemned it, both in themselves, and in others.

The First Church in Plymouth

They were denounced for neglect of both the Sacraments, to which they answered, "the more is our grief, that our pastor is kept from us, by whom we might enjoy them, for we used to have the Lord's Supper every Sabbath, and Baptism as often as there was occasion of children to baptize." Finally, it was urged against them, that their children were not catechised, or taught to read. This complaint was also false, "for diverse take pains with their owne as they can ; indeede we have no common schoole for want of a fitt person, or hitherto, means to maintain one ; though we desire now to begine."

CHAPTER V.

Keeping the Faith.

IT is obvious that behind the complaints as to the religion of the Colonists, was the hidden purpose to bring back the Separatists into full communion with Episcopacy. The epistles of pious concern, issued by the Adventurers, were soon followed by actions more transparent. One John Lyford, a clergyman, was sent over to shepherd the destitute flock. He was expected to ingratiate himself into the good opinion of the church, to disguise his purpose, and by coaxing, wheedling, or Jesuitical posing, to overcome the prejudices of the people against prelatic usages and customs. The Pilgrims, though wanting a settled minister, had not been accustomed to having one chosen for them, and looked upon the experiment with suspicion. Although John Lyford tried hard to hoodwink them, by simulating a respect and affection he did not feel, they would have none of him. Mortified by defeat, he sought to injure the church, in England, by secretly sending false reports of its condition, so as to provoke intervention. His letters were intercepted and his dissembling exposed. He remained in the Colony for some time, engaging in various intrigues and causing much annoyance; but his character had gone, and disappointed, and discredited, he finally left for Virginia, where he sickened and died.

The First Church in Plymouth

In the summer of 1625, Miles Standish went to London in the interests of the Colony. He could not have chosen a more inauspicious season for his mission, for at this time the country was in a state of commotion over the absolutism of Charles the First, and the tyranny of his prelates. Besides, the Plague was prevalent in the city. Business was practically suspended, and people were in no mood to consider Colonial affairs. He, therefore, returned without having accomplished his purpose. His arrival was received with joy, although he was the bearer of sad news. King James was dead. Prince Maurice, the head of the Dutch Government, during the residence of the Pilgrims in Leyden, had also passed away. Robert Cushman the tried and faithful friend of the Colonists had died at the early age of forty-five. And last, though not least, their beloved pastor John Robinson had gone to that rest which remained for the people of God. He was taken in the prime of manhood, at the age of forty-nine, afflicted with ague, and worn no doubt with anxieties and cares, incidental to his position, and induced in large measure by the Puritan faction, which gave him continual annoyance. He died on the 1st of March 1625, and on the 4th, was buried in the vaults of St. Peter's Church. He lived the life of a saint, was deeply respected by his own people, and friends of learning in Leyden, and died a martyr to the cause he loved.

The Plymouth Church continued to retain its convictions, and its sturdy independence, during the

Keeping the Faith

years it was without a pastor, desiring none of the imported clergymen sent by the Adventurers, whether of Episcopal or Puritan leanings, and heeding not the veiled rebukes and supercilious airs of the Salem fraternity. It was Separatist, and was neither to be bribed nor driven from its steadfast allegiance to the true ideal of liberty and independence.

In 1629, there arrived in the "Talbot" one Ralph Smith, a clergyman whose ecclesiastical status when he boarded the ship, was a matter of conjecture. He was thought to be a Separatist, and Matthew Cradock, Governor in England of the Massachusetts Colony, sent a message to Endicott of Salem, concerning him, "that unless he be conformable to our Government, you suffer him not to remain within the limits of our grant." Cradock's suspicions were well-founded, and Smith, upon inquiry, was compelled to accept the alternative of being shipped back to England, in the "Lion's Whelp," or of seeking quarters where his views would meet with more favour than Salem accorded to them. He fled to Nantasket, and after struggling for some time in poverty, he persuaded the captain of a Plymouth vessel, to take him and his family on board, and convey them to the freer Colony. He was received by the Pilgrims somewhat cautiously, but after close investigation was welcomed, and finally ordained the first minister of the church in Plymouth. Although a man of ordinary abilities, and it was said, not equal to Brewster

Ralph Smith
1629.

sage to Endicott of Salem, concerning him, "that unless he be conformable to our Government, you suffer him

not to remain within the limits of our grant." Cradock's suspicions were well-founded, and Smith, upon inquiry, was compelled to accept the alternative of being shipped back to England, in the "Lion's Whelp," or of seeking quarters where his views would meet with more favour than Salem accorded to them. He fled to Nantasket, and after struggling for some time in poverty, he persuaded the captain of a Plymouth vessel, to take him and his family on board, and convey them to the freer Colony. He was received by the Pilgrims somewhat cautiously, but after close investigation was welcomed, and finally ordained the first minister of the church in Plymouth. Although a man of ordinary abilities, and it was said, not equal to Brewster

The First Church in Plymouth

as a preacher, he served the church acceptably for five or six years. During three years of his ministry he was assisted by Roger Williams who arrived in America on the 5th of February 1631, and had been commended to the Colony by Governor Winthrop. On his arrival, he was invited to temporarily fill the pulpit of the Reverend John Wilson of Boston, who was about to make a visit to England. Roger Williams graduated from Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1626, and took orders in the church in 1629, serving as chaplain to Sir William Masham. The Anglican Liturgy proved distasteful to him, and the persistent attentions of Archbishop Laud drove him out of the land. He sailed from Bristol in England on the 1st of December 1630. The hope of finding liberty of conscience, and a field for his unquestioned ability and character in Boston, turned out to be delusive. In April 1631, he accepted an appointment as preacher or teacher, at Salem. This change brought him no advantage. In matters ecclesiastical, Boston and Salem were too closely identified, and after a few months, he removed to Plymouth, where he remained for nearly three years. He appears to have been an eccentric genius, able, scholarly, but of unsound judgment. Here, as elsewhere his pronounced views, and personal idiosyncrasies led him into trouble with the Puritan section, and not being able to smother his convictions at the behest of his worldly interests, the Plymouth church reluctantly parted with him. His principal contentions were, that the King had no right to grant the

Colony's charter, that even casual attendance at the services of the Church of England was a sin, and that any interference whatever with the right of private judgment was an injustice to the individual and the community. These, and some minor extravagances of his, were intolerable to the Puritan faction, and finally ended in his banishment from the Bay Colony.

The local scattering of the Colonists led to the founding of new churches in and around Plymouth. "Those that lived on their lots on y^e other side of y^e bay (called Duxberie) they could not long bring their wives and children to y^e publick worship and church meetings here, *The Duxbury Church 1632.* and with such burthen as growing to some competente number, they sued to be dismissed, and so they were dismist, about this time, though very unwillingly."

Shortly afterwards, and for similar reasons, another body, living at Green's harbour, Marshfield split off from the parent church, and set up on its own account. These defec- *The Marshfield Church 1632.* tions greatly weakened the resources of the Plymouth church, and were viewed with alarm, and, yet, nothing could be said against them.

In 1633, Bradford resigned the Governorship after twelve years' service, and Edward Winslow succeeded him. Seven assistants were chosen, and that was the number of the Governor's Council ever afterwards.

The First Church in Plymouth

The Bay Colony had never taken very kindly to the Plymouth Separatists, and veiled suspicion and dislike soon ripened into meddlesome interference. The Puritan and the Pilgrim had many things in common, but one or two vital principles, on which they differed, kept them apart. The Puritan was conservative, accommodating, obsequious to the powers that be, and inclined to furbish up the old weapons, which had been used against himself, for use against others. The Pilgrim was radical. He had broken with the past, even to a greater extent than he could realize, and was making a new experiment, civil and ecclesiastical. He was more tolerant than the Puritan, both in matters of opinion and conduct, and wore a more gracious mien. About this time, the feeling between them was neither pleasant nor safe. Strictures on the religious attitude of the Pilgrims were passing into efforts to divert their trade, and to trespass on their territory, which met with resistance, ending in bloodshed.

In 1634, Governor Winslow went to England on colonial business, and before sailing, accepted a commission for the Bay Colony, which required him to appear before the King's Commissioners for Plantations. Here he was brought face to face with Archbishop Laud, who could not resist the opportunity of venting his wrath upon the representative of the Plymouth settlement, about whose sayings and doings he had been duly informed by the Puritans. Winslow was accused of taking part in Sunday

services, and of conducting civil marriages. The Governor admitted the charges, and pleaded extenuating circumstances; but Laud was not to be appeased, and committed the bold Separatist to the Fleet Prison, where he remained for seventeen weeks, when he was released, and permitted to return to America, wounded in his conscience by the cruel wrong done to him, and impoverished by legal expenses.

In the year 1636, Ralph Smith resigned his pastorate, and was succeeded by the Rev. John Reyner, a quiet, godly man, who seems to have pursued the even tenour of his way, doing his duty modestly and efficiently, and commending himself to the good-will and affection of his flock, whom he

John Reyner
1636.

served faithfully for eighteen years. About two years after his ordination, the Rev. Charles Chauncey a graduate, and for some time a professor, of Trinity College, Cambridge, drifted towards Plymouth, and preached so acceptably, that he was invited to become co-pastor with Mr. Reyner. He had been vicar of Ware, Hertfordshire, and came into disfavour, by characterizing Laud's sacerdotal regulations as "idolatrous." He was brought before the Court of High Commission in 1630, and again in 1634, when he was suspended from the ministry, and imprisoned. On the 6th of February 1636, he petitioned the Court to be allowed to submit, and after listening to one of Archbishop Laud's admonitions to penitent heretics, he was released on

The First Church in Plymouth

payment of costs. He never forgave himself, for what he called his "scandalous submission," and before leaving for America in 1637, he wrote a "Retractation," which was published in London in 1641. After acting as Reyner's assistant for three years, he developed anabaptist ideas, contending for immersion as against sprinkling. Scripture was on his side, but the American climate and personal health and comfort, were against him. The church evidently did not consider the question a vital one, and was willing that he should dip or sprinkle, as occasion might require. But, it was obviously a matter of principle with him, and to the deep regret of the Parish, he left Plymouth to take charge of the church at Scituate. He held his pulpit there, for some time, and when contemplating a return to his former charge at Ware, in England, the Trustees of Harvard College, offered him the Presidency of that seat of learning. He accepted the offer, and became the second President of the College.

The colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, had been looking for some time towards federation. It was felt that their mutual interests and protection would be furthered by union, and in 1643, they entered into a Confederation known as "The United Colonies of New England." This union no doubt gave strength to the Colonies in their relations with the mother-country, and provided for the better administration of law, and more adequate defence in case of war. But, it gave to the Massachusetts Colony a preponderating power,

Keeping the Faith

and reacted unfavourably upon the liberalism of Plymouth. In every union of independent organizations something must be sacrificed. Corporations, like individuals acquire characteristics, which differentiate them from other bodies; but, when they sink themselves in federation, these original qualities are either modified or entirely lost. Plymouth Colony was unique. It represented heroic history and traditions in which no other colony could share. Its ideals of liberty, self-reliance, and manliness, were its own. From the first, it had carved out an independent course for itself, and had pursued that course, with unflinching loyalty and determination. Now, the age of chivalry and romance was coming to an end. The old Colony had fought a good fight and finished its course. It had stood out bravely for the widest conception then known, of civil and religious liberty, preserving the independence and integrity of the State, bridling religious intolerance, and offering an asylum for brave and honest men, who had been cast out by Prelacy and Puritanism. Henceforth, it was to form a minor part in a union with forces against which it had long contended. The heroes who had stood faithfully by it, were one by one failing under the weight of years, and stood ready to sing their *nunc dimittis*. Its name was to be relinquished; its career completed; and its wonderful history merged into the annals of secondary events.

CHAPTER VI.

Gain and Loss.

IN order to rightly understand the trend of later incidents in the history of the church, it may be well to observe, at this point, that the community was divided into two sections—the church, and the precinct or Parish. The former consisted of those, who on entering into religious fellowship, made confession of their faith, and supported the confession by a distinct experience of a moral and spiritual new-birth, or conversion, proof of which had to be publicly declared, first in the presence of the pastor and elders, and then before the congregation and communicants. The latter were members, who attended public worship and paid their taxes, but were not so closely and formally affiliated. These two bodies, distinct yet related, ruled the church, and appear to have stood in the same position to each other, on all ecclesiastical questions, as do the Senate and House of Representatives to-day, on political issues. The church represented a kind of spiritual aristocracy, or inner circle of advanced piety. The Parish consisted of a large body of devout men and women, who were by no means rigid as to doctrines or forms, but were attached to the institution. Neither could act independently on important matters, without the concurrence of the other. In the election or dismissal of a minister, for example, the initiative was taken by the church ;

but the action of the church had to be sustained by the vote of the Parish. Not unnaturally, the one came to stand for everything that was conservative in the life of the Society, and the other for everything that was progressive; this, enforcing rules and disciplines, that, chafing under what is regarded as undue restraints. Friction was inevitable. The tendency of the church was to become rigid and narrow, and as its records show, to bear hard on neglect of worship and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, frowning upon the most innocent forms of self-indulgence and pleasure, as upon the wiles of Satan. The tendency of the Parish, on the other hand, was to slacken ecclesiastical discipline, to assert personal liberty, and while sound enough as to essentials, and the need of pure and upright living, was liberal in its construction of non-essentials. Elder Brewster held the two in gracious equilibrium; but after his death, there does not seem to have been anyone with equal authority and tact, to suppress inevitable jealousies and dissensions. The old régime had its defects, but it was not without its compensating advantages. It was, spiritually, dogmatic and imperious, but it set the stamp of sacredness upon the church and its life, and emphasized the distinction between the standards of living within its jurisdiction, and those commonly accepted in the outside world, and in secular concerns. It was determined to lead the world, and not to be led by it, to dictate the type of character in the church, and not permit what was intended to

The First Church in Plymouth

be a Christian Commonwealth to shrink into the smaller proportions of a mere secular corporation, moulded by public opinion, whether religious or not, and subject like any other secular concern to the laws of the State, a condition into which so many congregational churches have fallen, and are still falling.

About the year 1643, the migratory movements of families in and around Plymouth led to another loss in the church. The tendency to go farther afield in search of a better livelihood, threatened the extinction of the Pilgrim society, and when a number of members living in or near Nauset (Eastham) sought separation, it was feared that the parent body would not hold together. A proposal was made, but not carried, that the church should be transplanted to Nauset. It was finally decided to establish a new society in that region. Re-

The Eastham Church old parish parted with her children, fearing dissolution by disintegration, but taking

to herself the consolation that in her poverty many were being made rich. Her venerable leaders, who had piloted her through many a storm, were either old and decrepit, or had one by one laid the burden down, and gone to their reward; and their children driven by hard necessity to seek a living elsewhere, were leaving the mother-church, weak and deserted,—the Niobe of civil and religious liberty in New England—a pathetic and oft repeated story in ecclesiastical history.

On the 16th of April 1644 William Brewster died. He more than any man was entitled to be called the *William Brewster* Founder of the Pilgrim Church. *died 1644.*

It originated in his house at Scrooby, he sacrificed everything for it: and for years after the settlement in Plymouth, he was practically both minister and elder, officiating twice each Lord's Day. He had left home and family, suffered imprisonment and persecution, wandered in fear and much trembling, turned the hands once used to delicate service to hard manual labor, thrown in his lot with the poor and despised of this world, shared their perils by sea, and their toils and sufferings on land, never faltering in his purpose, and never wavering in his love and loyalty to the little flock, of which he was the patient and tender shepherd. How poor and mean are the sacrifices any of us are called upon to make for the cause of right and liberty, in our day, compared with the thirty-six years of heroic service, which this man gave, for the things we so often treat with cold indifference! Firm as a rock, he clung to his noble purpose, and when his followers were in greatest peril and perplexity, worn and almost hopeless, through care and suffering, he kept a stout heart, and bade them be of good cheer. Although of frugal habits himself, not drinking anything but water, until within a short time of his death, and then medicinally, he was charitable to others, and unsparing in his service of the sick and destitute.

The First Church in Plymouth

Bradford writes of him "For his personal abilities, he was qualified above many: he was wise and discrete, and well-spoken, having a grave and deliberate utterance, of a very cheerful spirit, very sociable and pleasurable among his friends, of an humble and modest mind, of a peaceable disposition, undervaluing himself and his own abilities, and sometime over-valuing others, inoffensive and innocent in his life and conversation, which gained him y^e love of those without, as well as those within; yet he would tell them plainly of their faults and evils, both publickly and privately, but in such manner as usually was well-taken from him. He was tender-hearted and compassionate, of such as were in miserie, but esppecially of such as had been of good estate and ranke, and were fallen into want and poverty, either for goodness and religion's sake, or for y^e injury and oppression of others; he would say of all men these deserved to be pitied most. And none did more offend and displease him, than such as would haughtily and proudly carry and lift up themselves, being rise from nothing, and having little els in them, to commend them, but a few fine cloaths, or a little riches more than others."

Until his death, his hand was never lifted from Pilgrim history. He shaped the counsels of his colleagues, helped to mould their policy, safeguarded their liberties, and kept in check tendencies towards religious bigotry and oppression. He tolerated differences, but put down wrangling and dissen-

sion, promoting in every way within his power, the strength and cleanness of private and public life.

In 1648 the first church was built. It was situated behind Bradford's lot, and facing Leyden St., and like every first church, *The First Meeting* however modest, was raised *House 1648.* with becoming pride and joy.

Seven years before, an ordinance had passed the General Court "that no injunction should be put on any church, or church member, as to doctrine, worship, or discipline, whether for substance or circumstance, besides the command of the Bible." This might mean much or little, for justification of oppression was easily found in the Scriptures, but on the lips of those who had suffered greatly, and so often, for conscience sake, it meant a good deal. It meant that although men met for worship under one roof, it was not to be expected that they should think or feel alike; but whether or not, they were to enjoy such freedom, as was not to be found in any other church of their time.

The next decade brought great changes in the personnel of the Pilgrims. In October 1646, Winslow, against the advice of his compatriots, accepted a second mission to England. His last trip on a similar errand had proved disastrous to him: but, now, England was on the eve of a revolution, and the men who tormented him ten years before, were no longer in power. Laud had been sent to the scaffold on the charge of having

The First Church in Plymouth

attempted to disturb the foundations of Church and State, and Cromwell was commencing the famous struggle, which was to end in the death of Charles the First, and the establishment of a Protectorate. Marston Moor and Naseby had already been fought and won, and the victor was quelling the revolt of the army. In the midst of this strife Winslow reached England. He found his old enemies either dead or powerless, and their places were filled by men favourable to the Colonies. His commission was soon executed; but the dramatic scenes and incidents around him proved too fascinating. While anxious to return to his family, he nevertheless prolonged his stay, and eventually was induced to take service under Cromwell. He was engaged in diplomatic action on several important commissions, and was finally sent with others, in charge of a fleet for the capture of the Spanish West Indies. The expedition failed, but redeemed its fame somewhat, by the successful conquest of Jamaica. Winslow caught a fever in this expedition, from which he never recovered. He died and was buried at sea on May 8th 1655. He was Govern-

Edward Winslow
died 1655.

and always proved himself a man of exceptional ability and character, giving the best years of his life to the service of the Colony. He came with the Pilgrims in 1620, was one of the party sent to prospect along the coast, subscribed his name to the compact, and in 1623 while on a

mission to England published an account of the settlement and struggles of the Plymouth Colony under the title of "Good News for New England, or a relation of things remarkable in that Plantation." He further published a tract in 1646 entitled "Hypocrisie Unmasked; by a true relation of the proceedings of the Governor of Massachusetts against Samuel Groton, a notorious Disturber of the Peace," which is chiefly remarkable for an appendix giving an account of preparations in Leyden for removal to America, and the substance of John Robinson's address to the Pilgrims on their departure from Holland.

In the year 1656, the Colony lost its military commander, Myles Standish, who was born in Lancashire, about 1584, probably from the Duxbury branch of the Standish family. He was a unique and romantic figure in the history of the Colony. His military career commenced before 1603, when he obtained a lieutenant's commission in the British army, and fought in the wars against the Netherlands and Spain. He joined the Pilgrims at Leyden, when the project of emigration to America was pending, not so much from religious sympathy, however, as from a taste for military adventure. He embarked with the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower*, and on their arrival at Cape Cod, took command of the exploring parties. Afterwards, in February 1621, he was elected military captain of the Colony. With a very small

The First Church in Plymouth

force, he protected the settlers against Indian incursions, until all danger from that quarter was at an end. When the settlers were made peaceably secure in their rights and possessions, and further exploits, adventures, and hair-breadth escapes were no longer possible, Standish retired to his estate at Duxbury, on the north side of Plymouth Bay, frequently acting as Governor's assistant, and from 1644 to 1649 serving as Treasurer to the Colony. He was twice married, and had four sons and a daughter. In religious matters he was non-committal. He never belonged to the Pilgrim church, and though descended from a Catholic family, there is no evidence that he was a Catholic himself. He did noble service for the Colony, and practically settled the question, whether the Anglo-Saxon or the native Indian, was to predominate in New England. He died on the 3rd of October 1656, and was borne to his grave amid the grateful sorrow of his comrades. Art and poetry have invested his memory with undying honour. A monument stands on what was his estate at Duxbury, and Longfellow and Lowell have wreathed his fame in romantic verse.

Next summer, May 9th, 1657, Bradford sank to his rest, more from sheer debility than from any chronic disease. His work was done. Born in 1590, and early committing himself religiously to reform, he bore the burden and heat of the day, from the inception of the Pilgrim movement to its absorption in the Union

of the New England Colonies. He sprang from sturdy Yorkshire stock, living in Austerfield, and though not possessed of a University training, like some of his friends, he acquired more culture than most men of his station, and was well read, in history, philosophy, and religion. His mind took an early bias in the direction of theological and biblical studies, and when quite young, he began to attend the ministry of the Rev. Richard Clyfton, vicar of Babworth. In spite of the jeers and taunts of his family and friends, he joined the Separatist movement at Scrooby, and never regretted the step he took. His fresh enthusiasm induced him to throw in his lot with the Pilgrims. He accompanied them in all their wanderings, bravely sharing their trials, sufferings, and privations. On the death of Carver, he became the second Governor of Plymouth Colony. A patent was granted to him in 1629, by the Council of New England, vesting the Colony in trust to him, his heirs, associates, and assigns, confirming their title to a tract of land, and conferring the power to frame a constitution and laws; but eleven years later, he transferred this patent to the General Court, only reserving to himself, the allotment conceded to him, in the original division of land. His reputation as chief magistrate was marked by honesty and fair dealing, alike in his relations with the Indians tribes, and his treatment of recalcitrant colonists. His word was respected, and caused him to be trusted. His will was resolute in every emergency, and yet everybody knew that his

The First Church in Plymouth

clemency, and even charitable consideration, might be counted upon, whenever it could be safely exercised. The church was always dear to him. He enjoyed its faith and respected its institutions, and up to the hour of his death, confessed his delight in its teachings and its simple services. Governor Bradford was twice married, at Leyden in 1613 to Dorothy May, who was accidentally drowned in Cape Cod harbour, on the 17th of December 1620; and again, on the 14th of August 1623, to Alice Carpenter, widow of Edward Southworth. By his first wife, he had one son, and by his second, two sons and a daughter. He was the author of many pamphlets, some in prose, others in verse. The only work published in his lifetime was "A Diary of Occurrences during the first year of the Colony," written jointly with Edward Winslow, and published in England in 1622. He left many manuscripts, letters and chronicles, verses, and dialogues, which are the principal authorities for the early history of the Colony. The book, by which he will be best remembered is the manuscript "History of Plymouth Plantation," which at one time was deposited in the "New England Library," but was afterwards lost, and was supposed to have been carried away by some one during the war with England. It was not until 1855, that certain passages in "Wilberforce's History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America," printed in 1846, professing to quote from "a Manuscript History of Plymouth in the Fulham library," revealed the whereabouts of the

precious document. These quotations were identified as being similar to extracts from Bradford's History made by earlier annalists. The story of the recovery of that manuscript cannot be better told than in the words of the Hon. George F. Hoar, the venerable Senator of Massachusetts, who during a visit to England, was instrumental in having the book returned. After procuring an introduction to the Lord Bishop of London, he was invited to Fulham Palace, which for a thousand years has been an Episcopal residence. The bishop received him with great courtesy, holding in his hand the invaluable manuscript. Whereupon the following conversation occurred.

“My lord, I am going to say something, which you may think rather audacious. I think this book ought to go back to Massachusetts. Nobody knows how it got over here. Some people think it was carried off by Governor Hutchinson, the Tory Governor; other people think it was carried off by British soldiers, when Boston was evacuated, but in either case, the property would not have changed. Or, if you treat it as booty, in which last case, I suppose by the law of nations, ordinary property does change, no civilized nation in modern times, applies that principle to the property of libraries, and institutions of learning.”

“Well,” said the bishop, “I did not know that you cared anything about it.”

“Why,” said I, “if there were in existence in England, a history of King Alfred's reign for thirty

The First Church in Plymouth

years, written by his own hand, it would not be more precious in the eyes of Englishmen, than this manuscript is to us."

"Well," said he, "I think myself, it ought to go back, and if it had depended on me, it would have gone back before this. But, the Americans who have been here — many of them have been commercial people — did not seem to care much about it, except as a curiosity. I suppose I ought not to give it up, on my own authority. It belongs to me in my official capacity, and not as private or personal property. I think I ought to consult the Archbishop of Canterbury, and indeed" he added, "I think I ought to speak to the Queen about it. We should not do such a thing behind Her Majesty's back." *

In due form, and through the cordial offices of Ambassador T. F. Bayard the book was returned to the safe custody of the State of Massachusetts.

* Senator Hoar's speech at the presentation of the book to Governor Wolcott, May 24th, 1897.

CHAPTER VII.

Stagnation and Revival.

THE year 1665 was remarkable for two things — a falling off of interest in religion, so that ministers could not obtain support, and the churches were in financial straits, and the influx of Quakers. The former was probably caused by a too stringent ecclesiasticism. The Puritan ideal, which had been kept under wholesome restraint in Plymouth Colony, was spreading through the state, and contracting the sympathies of both clergy and laity. Religion with all its irksome restrictions was becoming too much of a burden. It lacked sweetness and light. Rigid and sour-visaged piety became oppressive, and created in the minds of many, a disposition to turn from hard conventionalism to the sincere, joyous, though often irrelevant zeal of unclassified prophets and prophetesses. Unordained zealots were preferred to learned ministers, and noisy worship in the open air to the decorous service in the Church. The Rev. John Reyner had resigned his pulpit in 1654, to the regret of his parish, and for thirteen years, the old church was without a settled pastor, and dependent upon Elder Cushman, and temporary supplies. The town seems to have been given up to ecclesiastical confusion, in which whoever was disposed might prophesy. The attempt of the English Parliament to regulate the church on rigid Presbyterian principles had pro-

The First Church in Plymouth

duced a set of Evangelistic revivalists, under the leadership of George Fox, whose followers, numbered by thousands, were drawn from the lower middle class, and from the outer edge of all the sects. They despised the deadness and formalism of the established faith, and were disturbed by its apparent inability to touch the springs of moral character. Affecting a rugged plainness of attire, and an equally rugged directness of speech, they succeeded in making themselves obnoxious. They were filled with a boisterous enthusiasm, sometimes grotesque and even gross. In a way, which nobody quite understood, these visionaries and fanatics threw the corporate life of the Puritan and other churches into complete disorder. The old meeting-houses were deserted, and crowds flocked to listen, in the open air, to these seventeenth century wearers of camel's hair and the leathern girdle. George Fox, the Founder of the English Society of Friends, had his followers in America, and though efforts were made to keep them out of the Colony, they persisted, defying the law and the magistrates, and apparently caring nothing for fines and imprisonment. One Humphrey Norton, claiming to be a prophet, came to Plymouth in 1657, and opened his tirade of abuse, which created a commotion. He was arrested, and the Court ordered him to leave the Colony, the under-marshal taking him to Assonet, near Rhode Island. He soon returned, however, bringing with him, John Rouse, a fiery

zealot, like himself. These two, proclaimed and declaimed, and disturbed the orderly serenity of the old town. They were apprehended and committed to prison. In the course of the trial and afterwards, they addressed the Governor and Court, in language which displayed the character of their minds, and unsettled the dignity of the grave assembly. The movement soon died out, and left no permanent traces of its existence.

The objection to an ordained ministry with a salary, which had led to the resignation of pastor Reyner, and had been one of the causes of the long interregnum in the ministerial succession, seems to have been overcome in 1669, when the Rev. John Cotton, son of the famous minister of the First Church in Boston, was invited to take charge of the vacant pulpit. He was a man of

John Cotton scholarly tastes and habits, somewhat
1669. decided in his convictions, diligent and faithful in his pastoral duties. He

had become greatly interested in the Indians and their religious education, and understood their language and spiritual needs, revising the last edition of their Bible, and teaching them to pray in their own tongue. M^r Cotton's care for the spiritual interests of his parish was constant. Meetings were organized for religious instruction, the children of the Parish were regularly catechised, and great efforts were made to restore the old and influential life of the church, which had suffered during the vacancy in the pastorate. The meeting-house

The First Church in Plymouth

was falling to pieces through neglect and decay, and it was decided to build a new one, larger and handsomer than the last. The new structure was

The Second Meeting- erected at the head of
House 1683. Town Square, and all that we know about it, is, that

it had "an unceiled Gothic roof, diamond glass, with a small cupola and bell." It served the purposes of the time, and became the active centre of ethical and spiritual power.

The disposition to break away from the mother church, for one reason or another, continued. In 1694, M^r Isaac Cushman had been invited to minister to the religious necessities of a small society which had been formed at Plympton, then part of the town of Plymouth. M^r Cotton contended that he ought not to enter the ministry irregularly, and without first being ordained to the office of ruling elder, by the church. This led to one of those feuds, which beginning on a small scale, and within a limited area, soon assumes, disturbing proportions. Families took sides, and bitter recriminations followed; and in the end, the minister served as a scape-goat, and though innocent himself, and fortified by ecclesiastical usage, was sacrificed to what was called the good of the church, which has ever been, and still is, a hackneyed apology for congregational meanness. This controversy continued for about three years, increasing in virulence, until M^r Cotton tendered his resignation in the interests of harmony, probably sharing the moral

Stagnation and Revival

indignation of Plautus against those who had injured his reputation — without, perhaps, daring to utter it.

Homines qui gestant, quique ascultant crimina
Si meo arbitrato liceat, omnes pendeant,
Gestores linguis, auditores auribus.

That (rumour notwithstanding) he was not guilty of anything worse than speaking his mind with too much freedom and veracity, is obvious from the fact, that he had a large and influential following in the church, took another pulpit at Charleston, South Carolina, and when he died in 1699, was buried with respect and honour, by his old parishioners, who erected a monument over his grave.

In the year 1698, another branch of the First Church was established at Plympton. This was the fourth church which had gone away *The Plympton Church 1698.* from the old parish, to suit the convenience of people living at a distance from the centre of the town, and like all previous departures, it weakened the resources and diminished the strength of the parent society. Still, the church bravely held up its head, and went on its way, in the dauntless spirit of its Founders.

The next step was to appoint a successor to M^r Cotton, and the Rev. Ephraim Little was ordained pastor, after a short probation. He was not a man of scholarly and studious habits, like so many of his predecessors, but was possessed of considerable natural gifts, and of executive ability beyond

The First Church in Plymouth

the average, making up in devoted service, and large-hearted benevolence, what *Ephraim Little* he lacked in conventional ac-
*1699.*quirements—a good and faithful minister, painstaking in his work, and tenderly solicitous of the needs of the sick and poor. He ministered to the church for twenty years, winning and keeping the esteem and affection of his people, and never growing weary in well-doing, until failing health compelled him to relinquish his duties. During his later ministry, there came another birth ecclesiastical, and a church was founded at the North end of the town, known as *The Kingston* Jones River Parish, afterwards
Church 1717. Kingston. One wonders how a church, never very strong, either in wealth or numbers, could survive these repeated defections. But, one of its dominating ambitions was to spread the truth, and proclaim the humane Gospel of Jesus Christ; and the faithful souls, who stood by it through all its trials, were comforted by the thought, that every new society was not only a jewel in its crown of rejoicing, but witnessed to its increase of faith, and the extension of the kingdom of righteousness.

On the 23rd of November 1723, Mr Little was called to his rest, at the age of 84. His grave is on Burial Hill, by the side of so many good town's-folk whose temporal and spiritual interests he so faithfully tended.

Stagnation and Revival

For five years the church was without a settled pastor, the pulpit being supplied for some time, by neighboring ministers. It was too weak to offer any great material inducements to clergymen seeking settlements, and this difficulty was considerably enhanced, by the somewhat fastidious tastes of the community, in the matter of choosing a minister. It had enjoyed the services of many able and learned men, scholars and preachers, who loved their profession for its honour and usefulness, and not for its worldly advantages, and was not, therefore, easily satisfied.

On the 29th of July 1724, the Rev. Nathaniel Leonard was ordained to the long vacant pulpit.

Nathaniel Leonard His advent on the scene was shortly marked by stirring movements in the stagnant
1724. pools of religious conventionalism, and there was a return to something like the fiery zeal of the Quaker Revival. A considerable number of people were again dissatisfied with the cold dignified régime of a learned ministry and ancient customs. They sighed, as religious people do, at regular intervals, for something more demonstrative and sensational. Not heeding the quiet processes of growth with which Nature perfects her creations they conclude that things which make no noise must be dead.

In the midst of this rising tide of religious fervour came another exodus of church members. Twenty-five persons, in good and regular standing, formed

The First Church in Plymouth

a new church at Manomet Ponds, and the ranks of the faithful were once more depleted. *The Manomet Church 1738.* Depressed by the loss, and probably desiring to recruit its strength, the church against the conviction of many of its staid members, threw in its lot, with one of those periodic convulsions, which ushered in "The Great Awakening." People were called upon to give oral proof of their conversion. It was not enough to be a Christian by baptism, or formal affiliation with the church, but every Christian by profession was expected to give the precise date and circumstance of an inward and spiritual change, and to be able to say something about it, to shout in chorus, if nothing better could be done. Pure living must be supplemented by vigorous hallelujahs, and more or less frantic gesticulations.

In the year 1743, one Andrew Crowell, an itinerant preacher, visited the town, determined to take the kingdom by violence. All true disciples were invited to stand up and be counted. Regular members of the church, who were living quiet and devout lives, were told that their righteousness was only as filthy rags, and people to whom religion was a slow spiritual growth, and who had never been accustomed to sound the loud timbrel, to whom "the unconscious was the alone complete," were classified among the unconverted. Shallow zealots, often ignorant and inexperienced, were invited to testify, as if anything they could say about the higher and holier life, was worth listening to. Hysterical

women and phenomenal children took to declamation and prophecy, and the whole town was thrown into a state of wild commotion.

It was not long before the sober element in the community began to ask questions. There was an awakening of the intellect as well as of the emotions. What is called "a revival" is very apt to provoke scepticism.

Mr Leonard seems to have been captivated, and carried away, by the excitement. His attitude on this matter caused disaffection and indifference in the parish. Zealous observers of ordinances, and regular attendants at public worship, showed their disapproval of his action, by neglecting their religious duties. At last, the disaffection ripened into revolt. Mr Josiah Cotton, whose deeply spiritual character was not to be questioned, invited the minister to call a meeting of the Parish to discuss the following questions:—

1. "Whether a sudden and short distress, and as sudden joy, amounts to the repentance described and required. (2 Corinthians VII 9-11)

2. Whether the judging and censuring others as unconverted, against whose lives and conversation nothing is objected, be not too pharisaical, and contrary to the rule of charity, prescribed in the Word, and a bold intrusion into the Divine prerogative.

3. Whether that spirit which leads us off from the Scriptures, or comparatively to undervalue them, be a good spirit: as for instance, the disorder and

The First Church in Plymouth

confusion in our public meetings, contrary to the Scripture rule (1 Corinthians XIV) the breaking in upon the order and religion of families, by frequent unseasonable evening lectures, without Scripture precept, or example (except an extraordinary case).

4. Women and children teaching and exhorting in the public assemblies, contrary to the apostolical direction. Many other things might be mentioned but are omitted. But, inasmuch as it has been publicly suggested, that three-fourths of this church are unconverted, we would humbly move, that we may meet together, in order to know whether they are in charity with one another, and also, that the admission of members, may not be too hastily pushed on, till we are better satisfied concerning the spirit that stirs up people to their duty herein." Whether Mr Leonard deemed it prudent to keep all this inflammable material out of a church meeting, or did not wish to be drawn into a personal controversy, is not known; but the questions were not submitted to a public meeting.

Mr Cotton, however, was bent upon forcing an issue. He, and eighty others like minded, decided to seek separation from the church. They petitioned for dismissal, and their request was granted, and in 1744, a new church was formed, to be called The Third Church and Congregation in Plymouth. The new community erected a place of worship in King Street, now Middle Street.

The year 1744 was noticeable on account of a

Stagnation and Revival

visit to Plymouth of the great English Revivalist the Rev. George Whitefield, one of the most eloquent pulpit orators of his time. While acting as servitor

George Whitefield at Pembroke College, Oxford, he came under the influence of John and Charles Wesley.

and the Methodists 1744. His zeal and piety induced the

Bishop of Gloucester to ordain him deacon in 1736, but so great was his power as a preacher, that he was sent on an Evangelistic tour, and drew vast multitudes to hear him. Wesley invited him to go to Georgia as a missionary. He accepted the call, and arrived in America on the 17th of May 1738, only to remain, however, for a very brief period. He returned to England to receive priest's orders, and to secure contributions towards his work in Georgia. During his absence from his native land, Wesley had diverged somewhat from Calvinism, and this change led Whitefield to withdraw from the Wesleyan communion. He returned to America in 1744, and commenced his preaching itinerary. It does not appear, that he owned any great gift of thought, or wide range of knowledge, or scholarship. He had none of the philosophic genius of Jonathan Edwards, or the organizing gift of John Wesley. His success as a preacher was due to his great elocutionary and dramatic power, a phenomenal voice, and a spiritual magnetism, which attracted attention, and held it. He subdued men to serious thought by his stern denunciations of sin, and captivated their hearts, by

The First Church in Plymouth

his searching pathos. His visit to Plymouth, at this time, was doubtless intended, like his later visit in 1754, as an antidote to the Arminianism, which had taken firm root in the community, and was thought to have wrought much mischief. He preached several times, and always to crowded congregations.

The old meeting-house, which had stood for more than sixty years, resisting wind and weather,

The Third Meeting-House 1744 and a stroke of lightning, was in poor condition, and the society resolved to erect a new structure on the same spot.

The building was quickly reared, and the opening service was conducted by the pastor, with great rejoicing.

In 1744-5 the church lost by death the last of its ruling elders, Mr. Thomas Faunce. He had held this responsible position for many years, and had shared with the minister the care and supervision not only of the material, but the spiritual interests of the community. The office of a ruling elder was next in importance to that of the minister, and was always held by a person of good education and accredited moral and religious standing. Mr. Faunce stood in few respects, if any, behind his eminent predecessors, in the exercise of his sacred office.

In the autumn of 1755, owing to increasing physical weakness, Mr. Leonard was compelled to resign his ministry. His resignation was accepted

Stagnation and Revival

on condition that his services should be maintained until the settlement of his successor. Then followed an interregnum of several years, in which the society made unsuccessful efforts to obtain a suitable pastor.

CHAPTER VIII.

Creed, or no Creed?

THE Rev: Chandler Robbins D.D. was called to the Plymouth Church, and ordained in 1760. He was the son of the Rev. Philemon Robbins, and a graduate of Yale College. By birth and education his tendencies were towards rigid Calvinism, which though firmly rooted in Connecticut, was subject to attacks from ministers and laymen in Massachusetts. The spirit of the age was against it. The air was charged with scepticism both as to its reasonableness and Scriptural authority. John Robinson's injunction, that the Pilgrims and their descendants, should keep their minds open to new revelation was on the eve of a severe test. Mr. Robbins set himself to check the rising tide of liberalism in Plymouth, always bearing himself with becoming dignity, selfrespect, and courtesy, towards those who differed from him; but resolutely bent upon stemming the waves which threatened his headland of faith. There is something pathetic in the way men stubbornly resist the inevitable tides of thought. Argument is of no avail, persuasion does not count, facts are brushed aside. The old dogmas must be retained at all hazards, if not in substance, then in form, and new trenches must be dug around the assaulted citadels. Mr.

Robbins addressed himself to the task in good earnest, and began to tighten the cords of belief, and against all the traditions of Pilgrim history, to encircle the community with doctrinal defences. In 1772, he introduced for consideration a number of attached articles affecting affiliation with the church. The door of the Half-way Covenant, opened some years before, must be closed, and admission to the church be through the wicket-gate of special election. Article *VI* raised the question "whether it be the opinion of the church, that the half-way practice of owning or entering into covenant, which has of late years been adopted by this church, be a Scriptural method — or a practice warranted by the word of God, and so to be persisted in." On the one side it was urged, that children born of visible believers, and baptized in infancy, were properly and truly members of the visible church, and, therefore, might claim the privileges of church members, when they arrived at adult age, and so by owning the covenant, it is not to be understood, that they qualified themselves thereby for the privileges of the covenant — they had a right to them before — but it is needful that they should acknowledge what their parents did for them.

On the other hand, it was pleaded, that Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are both seals of the covenant, viz, the Covenant of Grace. And that, consequently, they who had a right to one seal, had a right also to the other, and yet, they had no right from the word of God, to make a distinction be-

The First Church in Plymouth

tween the two seals, as if one was more holy than the other — that would be a dangerous tendency to put aside what God had joined together.* This dispute, arising out of neglect of the Lord's Supper, divided the parish so seriously, that it was not deemed expedient, in the interests of unity and peace, to proceed further with it. The issue was a technical one, and since men and women of unquestioned probity, and exemplary Christian character, were arrayed on both sides, it was not deemed advisable to push it to an extremity.

It was natural that the church should unite with the town in support of the independence of the colonies. Discontent with taxes and exactions had long been rife in the breasts of Plymouth merchants, and James W. Warren and Isaac Lothrop chosen to represent the town in the Provincial Congress were instructed to support any movement of the colonies against British oppression. Dr. Robbins advocated resistance and independence, and the town was put in a state of defence. Many obnoxious royalists felt uncomfortable and retired. During the Revolution, the community suffered from the suspension of trade and commerce, and the fear of invasion, and in 1778-9, there was great distress, so that the people, through their selectmen, had to petition his Excellency Jonathan Trumbull Esq., Captain-General, Governor and Commander-in-Chief, in and over the State of Connecticut, and the Honorable Council of said State, for the absolute

* The First Church Records.

necessities of life. M^r James Warren writing to Jonathan Trumbull, urged immediate aid "Many of the inhabitants of the town, who have been used to an affluent living have been for weeks destitute of bread, which, in addition to their peculiar sufferings from a total loss of their chief dependence for a subsistence, renders their case truly pitiable."* Starvation did not, however, weaken their loyalty to liberty, for when in the year 1775, General Gage proposed to locate the "Queen's Guards" at Plymouth, and the opinion of M^r John Watson was asked as to the wisdom of this step, the latter replied, "It is my opinion that it will not be prudent to bring your company here, for the people are in a state of great excitement and alarm." "Will they fight?" asked the Captain of the Guards. "Yes" replied John Watson, "like devils." In 1783, the conflict was brought to a close, and the town resumed its wonted activities, and set to work to repair the ravages of eight years of war.

The Third Church and Congregation settled in King Street in 1744, came to an end in 1776, and returned to the ancient fold thereby strengthening the forces of liberalism in the community.

The religious controversy was silenced but not settled. On the 11th of December 1794, a meeting of the precinct was convened to hear a report from a committee, of which D^r Robbins was chairman, relating to certain proposed alterations in the discipline and practice of the church, which committee

* Trumbull Papers. Collections of the Mass. Historical Society.

The First Church in Plymouth

was to meet a committee of the church to discuss the question and to report. The report of the church committee is as follows —

“The committee appointed, whereof the pastor was chairman, was not of so conciliatory and accommodating a nature as your committee were sincerely desirous might take place. In respect to the first Article, that the children of baptized parents of sober life and conversation, and professing their belief in the Christian Religion should be admitted to baptism, the committee of said church would not agree to any qualified sense whatever, nor were the committee of the church so far to extend the terms of admission into its communion as to embrace all persons of sober life and conversation though unfeigned believers in the Christian Religion, unless they would subscribe to certain articles of faith, which have indeed been the subject of dispute, among Christians of great eminence and piety, but which were never heard of as a term of communion amongst the Apostles and primitive Christians. Nothing more could be obtained on this head, than that baptism may be administered by a neighbouring minister. Upon the whole your committee are constrained to lament the narrow policy of the church, in excluding from its communion, many exemplary Christians, merely on account of their different conceptions of some points of doctrine, about which learned and good men, have entertained a great variety of opinions, and this circumstance is more especially a source of regret, at

this enlightened period, when the principles of civil and religious liberty are almost universally understood and practised. For whatever stress some persons may be disposed to lay on matters of mere speculation, the benevolent genius of the Gospel, will teach its votaries, amidst all their differences of opinion, to exercise mutual candour and indulgence, that they may if possible, preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* Notwithstanding this report, which represented the feeling of a large section of the church, D^r Robbins again raised the issue in 1795, in the shape of a creed, as a test to Christian fellowship. He formulated a Calvinistic Confession of Faith and insisted that subscription to it, should be made the test of fellowship. A creed in the First Church, and among descendants of the Pilgrims was an innovation. Neither John Robinson nor his successors, had ever proposed anything of the kind. The Pilgrims had their religious beliefs, to which they clung tenaciously, but it never occurred to them, to imitate their oppressors, and try to inflict upon others the stigmas, penalties, and disabilities, from which they had themselves escaped, at great cost. Such a step must not be allowed to pass unchallenged. The liberals, therefore contemplated a second departure from the church. Their respect for the personal character of D^r Robbins forbade any action inside the church, which would seriously affect his position. They contemplated a division

* Records of The First Church.

The First Church in Plymouth

and the establishment of a new society. Wiser counsels, however, prevailed, and the creed was tolerated for a little while. But, when on June 30th 1799, D^r Robbins died, after thirty-nine years of faithful service, the desire for more liberal preaching revived. An opportunity presented itself for the election of a pastor answering to the progressive spirit of the age, and to the needs of a majority in the church and the precinct. A large number of people who considered themselves both orthodox and evangelical, but not Calvinistic, and who had sat uneasily under the ministry of D^r Robbins, felt that they were entitled to some consideration in the choice of a minister, and, therefore, combined to choose some one in harmony with their needs and principles. The choice fell upon M^r James Kendall, who graduated at Harvard in 1796, and was a tutor at the College, when called to Plymouth.

James Kendall He was elected by a considerable majority in the church, and an overwhelming majority in the precinct.
1800.

Unlike so many Congregational Churches, at this time and after, the First Church resisted Calvinism so completely, that there was no ground left for dispute or litigation. The Church and the Parish were of one mind, and the forces of opposition were in a minority. The change thus wrought was more in the nature of growth than revolution. It had come slowly, imperceptibly, as the morning gently scattering the mists of night, as the opening spring giving new energy to a sleeping

world. The Church and its new minister were well within the lines of Evangelical Congregationalism, and certainly more in harmony with the spirit of the Forefathers, than those who resisted the change. It is wrongly supposed that Unitarianism had something to do with the division; but liberalism did not take that form until twenty years later. At the time Dr. Kendall was ordained, neither Channing, Emerson or Parker had spoken the words, which lifted so many New England churches from their moorings. No: the change in the Plymouth Church came from within, and not from without, was a growth of the divine spirit in the human heart, and not a sudden conversion. The records of the church give no indication of bitterness of feeling, or angry resentment. The theological transition from Dr. Robbins to Dr. Kendall was placid, if not pleasant, and when in September 1800, the unsatisfied minority sought separation, it was not with any evident signs of ill-will, although the intellectual and social cleavage was pronounced.

The following extracts from the Records of the First Church, indicate the spirit which actuated those who remained, and those who went out. On the 17th of September 1800, the following petition signed by fifteen men and thirty-five women was presented to a meeting of the church.

“We request that all the members, male and female that wish to be dismissed from their relation to the First Church in Plymouth, and that any male or female desiring hereafter a dismissal from

The First Church in Plymouth

either church, to join the other, be dismissed if recommended to the other.”

The meeting adjourned for a week to consider the question, not desiring to do anything, or to permit anything to be done, hastily.

“The church agreeable to adjournment met on the following week, at the house of the pastor, when the petitioners explained their meaning in the clause respecting the dismissal of members from one church to the other, hereafter, with a recommendation. They said, they had nothing further in view, by injecting the clause, than that the removal of relations from one church to the other in future, be regulated according to the usual practice of this, and other Congregational churches in New England. They also relinquish their pretended claim to the church furniture, being convinced that it was given to the First Church, the present members are not exclusively entitled to it, and therefore, had no right to the disposal of it. They asked only for the privilege of using it, a certain time, till it was convenient for them to furnish their own table.”* The following petition and resolutions were then presented.

“We the subscribers being members of the First Church of Christ in Plymouth, request to be dismissed, and establish in a church estate among ourselves, by the name of the Third Church in Plymouth.

Resolved, That the petitioners be dismissed from

* Records of the First Church.

their special relation to the First Church of Christ in Plymouth, in order to be set off into a distinct church by the name of the Third Church of Christ in Plymouth, agreeable to their request. The vote was passed in the affirmative unanimously.

The church further voted, That they have the privilege of using the furniture at their communions for two years.

The meeting then closed as usual, and dissolved in harmony. May the great Head of the church smile upon these transactions that they may contribute to the more rapid advancement of his kingdom among us!" *

So ended, amicably and peacefully, although not without deep feeling, the first separation in the church, into which dogmatic differences had entered. Both parties, those who stayed, and those who left, acted conscientiously and loyally. The old First Church was firmly convinced that it was supported in its action by the authority of Scripture and the traditions of Pilgrim history.

The seceders applied to the General Court for incorporation as the Third Congregational Society in Plymouth, pleading the inadequacy of one church to meet the needs of the town, (the second church being at Manomet) and their inability to co-operate with their late co-religionists through lack of agreement and sympathy.

The charter was granted, and in 1802, Deacon John Bishop with his fellow-seceders were incor-

* Records of the First Church.

The First Church in Plymouth

porated as a distinct society. Before taking steps to erect a church building they petitioned the town for a lot on Training Green. *The Third Church of Christ in Plymouth 1801.* A committee was appointed to take the matter into consideration and to report. After deliberation, they decided, in view of the contemplated sale of the whole of Training Green, that it was inexpedient at this time. "To comply with the request of the applicants by granting a lot, for the purpose mentioned, would in the opinion of your committee, not only preclude the Town under whatever circumstances, it may be, from opposing the prosecution of that object; but would sanction the separation of a small number of persons, on principles which do not appear to be substantial and well-founded. If religious societies are to be split up into divisions, merely for a variance of sentiment in certain polemic speculations, about which the greatest and best men in all ages of the Christian Church have differed, each Christian must consecrate his own dwelling, as his sanctuary, for scarcely two of the best informed Christians can be found precisely to agree on every controversial point." *

A church was erected on the westerly side of Training Green, and the Rev. Adoniram Judson was settled as the first pastor. Later on, two churches sprung from the new society, one at Eel River in 1814, and the Robinson church in 1830.

* Town Records *vide* Hon. W. T. Davis's Ancient Landmarks of Plymouth.

Creed, or no Creed?

On the 5th of May 1870, the name of the Third Church was changed to "The Church and Society of the Pilgrimage," and a Church Manual was printed, which appropriated all the ministers and deacons of the First Church down to 1801, and set up an unwarranted claim to be the first and oldest church in America, although on the 14th of November of the same year, the Church of the Pilgrimage adopted new Articles of Faith, with a new covenant, and rules of government.

CHAPTER IX.

Back to the Past.

THE Creed of 1795, the real cause of disension in the First Church, still remained to be dealt with. That had been the apple of discord in the community, and would remain a disturbing factor, unless some action was taken upon it. A creed in such a church, and with such a history, was a dangerous anachronism. The creed in question was a strongly Calvinistic statement of faith, and was intended to rule out of fellowship, all who could not subscribe to it. Its fundamental propositions were in substance the following.

1. The apostacy and total depravity of human nature by sin.
2. Salvation purchased by the atoning blood of Christ.
3. The absolute necessity of regeneration by the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit. The sovereignty of divine grace in the conversion of sinners.
4. The true and proper deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only meritorious ground of justification before God.
5. Eternal happiness for the elect: eternal misery for the rest.

The Pilgrim Fathers may have believed these dogmas, wholly or in part, but they never put them into a creed, or made belief in them essential to

Christian fellowship. The simple covenant still in use at the First Church satisfied their requirements.

It is, therefore, not surprising, that after the death of Dr. Robbins, the community rebelled against the new instrument, and quietly resolved to get rid of it; and on the 9th of July 1820, "a meeting was called to consider the expediency of altering the terms or conditions of becoming members of the church, and enjoying Christian privileges, in order to render them more conformable to the requirements of the Gospel, more agreeable to apostolic practice, and more in accordance with the usage of this church for 175 years. It appeared that in 1795 a departure from the ancient usage of the church was introduced by adopting a written creed or confession, which was thought to be a condition of admission to Christian ordinances, and not promotive of the increase and prosperity of the church. That it was, in fact a departure from the practice of this church from the time of our forefathers, and from the first principle of Protestantism — which is a sufficiency of Holy Scripture for all the purposes of faith and practice. Instead, therefore, of continuing to make a public acknowledgment of this creed, a condition of enjoying Christian fellowship and communion in future, it was voted unanimously to return to the former practice of this church, in this respect, and adopt the covenant made use of by the church previous to the year 1795."*

It is interesting to observe, how both parties to

* Records of the First Church.

The First Church in Plymouth

this controversy, those who accepted the creed, and those who rejected it, appealed to Scripture, and especially to the Gospels, in support of their conflicting opinions. Both claimed to be evangelical. The triumphant majority stoutly held, that neither the creed itself was scriptural, nor the use of it. Its dogmas were not known, when the earlier scriptures were penned; and not until many centuries after the death of Jesus and his apostles did theological belief and conformity to opinion become a condition of discipleship, or of enjoyment of Christian ordinances.

Once again, the old Church stood out in splendid isolation, and beneath an open sky, without any ecclesiastical affiliation or dogmatic bonds. Its faith was as great as ever, its teachings were unimpaired, its ordinances were intact, its work was unrestricted, and its first principles were in the way of fulfilment. It was still in spirit and in truth, the Church of the Pilgrims, the pure shrine to which the children of the ancient fathers gathered for worship.

That the controversy ended as it did, was due in large measure, to the tact, urbanity, and refinement of Dr. Kendall. He was by nature and habit, free from the passions and prejudices which heat and disturb less finely tempered minds. Strength and sweetness were so blended in his character, that the tempests of the soul, in which other men delight, and which so often lift them from their feet, left him serene and firm. The passing disturbance soon subsided, and the two churches settled down to their

separate functions, the Church of the Pilgrimage priding itself upon its loyalty to Calvinistic teaching, so far as the spirit of the age would permit it to do so; and the First Church adhering to the principles of non-subscription to creeds and articles, and openness to more scientific knowledge of Scripture and religious philosophy, in accordance with the true spirit of Protestantism and the practice of the Pilgrim Fathers; the former remaining in the Congregationalist body, the latter becoming more liberal, and finally joining the Unitarian movement, which at that time, differed but little from the advanced wing of modern Congregationalists.

On the 10th of April 1831, the last religious service was held in the old Meeting-House, which had stood for eighty-seven years. Dr Kendall preached from the text Haggai II, 3. "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And now do you see it?" It was decided to take the edifice down, and to build another, larger and more in keeping with the improved taste, and broader outlook of the times. The new building was in course of construction about eight months, and on the 14th of December 1831, was dedicated to "the worship and service of God." The opening sermon was

The Fourth Meeting- preached by the Rev Dr
House 1831 Kendall, from Ezra VI 16.
"And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy." The

The First Church in Plymouth

sermon dealt among other things with the unique catholicity of John Robinson and the Pilgrim Fathers, and with the desire of their heirs to perpetuate the same liberality and freedom from religious persecution. "May these sacred walls" said he, "never reverberate with licentious opinions, the shouts of fanaticism, nor the denunciations of bigotry." The new building was a handsome and commodious structure, for the place and the time, and like the one which preceded it, was the gathering-place of descendants of the Pilgrims, who met on different occasions, to express their veneration for the forefathers. Its walls echoed to the voices of many famous men, who continued to do honour to the founders of the republic, on the spot which their fame had glorified; and among the regular attendants at the services there, were many families claiming direct descent from the Pilgrims.

The church maintained its ancient ordinances, and continued to participate in the ordination and installation of ministers of other Congregational churches. Narrow restrictions were removed from the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in which Christians of any name or creed were permitted to participate. As early as 1804, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians, partook of communion in the Church. The Records relate that on the 12th of October 1804, Joanna Winslow and Mary Warren, Episcopalians of Scituate, sought permission to join in the communion of the First Church, and their request was cordially received and granted.

On the 15th of June 1837, a meeting of the parish was held, to consider the best means of further promoting the prosperity of the church, and it was voted unanimously to adopt the following profession and declaration, “Believing the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to contain the word of God, and to be the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice; it is my (or our) sincere desire and purpose of heart, in professing this belief, in joining this church, and partaking of the ordinances of the Gospel, by the aid of his grace—to live by the faith of the Son of God, and thus to walk in all his commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.” It was made optional with the applicant, to manifest his or her assent to this profession, either in public, or to the pastor, in private, and by so doing, the person was received, and declared to be, a member in full communion with the church. “This form being so much in harmony with the simplicity that was in Christ, and so conformable to the primitive practice of the church, it is hoped and believed will tend to remove from the minds of sincere and devout persons, every reasonable objection against joining the church, and availing themselves of the satisfaction and benefit of enjoying the Christian ordinances. May this harmonious proceeding of the brethren, be followed by the favour and blessing of the great head of the Church, and result in the prosperity of our spiritual Zion.” *

It was to be expected that the liberal attitude of

* Records of the First Church.

The First Church in Plymouth

the church would lay it open to some popular misrepresentation. The denial of Calvinistic theology was equivalent in the minds of illiterate persons, to the rejection of Scripture, and all the more so, after the society had formally affiliated itself with the Unitarians, although D' Channing and the leaders of the Unitarian movement regarded the dogmas of the trinity, man's natural depravity, and atonement by blood, not only as unreasonable in themselves, but unscriptural. The point upon which the early Unitarians were wont to lay stress was the unscriptural character of the dogmas, against which they protested. The time had not yet come, when they were to take other and broader ground, and to maintain, that doctrines which were intrinsically and logically unbelievable were not to be accepted, whether in the Bible or out of it. For the moment, they were willing to use the weapons of the Reformation, and to contend for the Scriptural basis of their beliefs. They were met with persistent misunderstanding and abuse from people, who would not, or could not see, that the issues at stake were to be settled by learning and fair judgment, and not by passion and prejudice, and that a man might believe or deny dogmas without being morally the better or the worse. Speculative opinions were impersonal things, and he might be a good Trinitarian, or a good Unitarian, without in any degree gaining or losing caste as a Christian. There was no moral merit in affirmation, and no culpability in denial. The questions at issue between the churches

were to be settled by critics and scholars, and not by appeals to ignorant zeal and prejudice.

There were good Christians in the world, and in the church, long before dogmas were promulgated, or creeds were invented. The old First Church was pledged by its history to this truth, and was among the earliest communities to recognize the fact, which is fast becoming a simple truism, that Christianity is a type of life, and not a collection of opinions: discipleship to the great master of the art of living, and not scholarship in a theological academy. It is a temper and disposition of the mind and heart, which may exist under this doctrine or that, under one name or another. There is some portion of it in every church, and no church contains the whole of it—a beautiful truth which is doing so much to efface the lines between the sects, and to bring people together, who despite their inevitable differences of belief, ought to live in one fold, and under one shepherd.

No one was better able to illustrate and champion this return to the primitive simplicity and inclusiveness of the First Church, at the opening of the nineteenth century, than D^r Kendall. He was a man of generous and dispassionate judgment, of inflexible integrity, of gentle and kindly affections. His very presence rebuked passion and disarmed prejudice, and opponents might challenge his opinions, but could not dispute his Christian character. His preaching and pastoral work won for him the esteem and love of his own people, and of others not

The First Church in Plymouth

of that fold. He became identified with the best life of the town, and endeared himself to citizens generally, by his readiness to serve them in any capacity within his power.

After he had been pastor for thirty-eight years, the congregation, with that kindness and courtesy which always marked the treatment of its ministers, persuaded him to accept the aid of an associate pastor. The Rev George W. Briggs, of Fall River, a graduate of Brown University, and a young minister of great promise, was invited to take this position. He accepted the call, and

George W. Briggs was installed on the 24th of
1838 May 1838. The appointment
was satisfactory, since there was

very much in common between the two ministers. For fifteen years, they worked together in brotherly harmony, the elder always giving his full sympathy and support to the younger, and the latter regarding his senior with something like filial respect and affection. "I look back through all those years" said Dr Briggs, in 1859, "to find my memory thronged with precious and beautiful remembrances of unvarying kindness. I can recall no word or look; I do not believe that he could recall a thought, which was not worthy of a father's love towards an unduly valued child. I relied upon his loving interest as upon the daily sunlight. In that relation, at least, he seemed incapable of a selfish or jealous thought. He turned the hearts of his people toward me, and never held them back."* In 1853, Dr Briggs re-

* Sermon of Dr Kendall, March 20th, 1859.

signed his pastorate to take charge of the First Congregational Society in Salem. His resignation was accepted with deep regret by the parish, which embodied its feeling in a resolution containing the following words "We shall ever cherish a grateful recollection of the harmonious relations which have existed between yourself and the parish for fifteen years, and our best wishes and prayers attend you in your new field."

The effort to find a suitable successor to Dr Briggs was not an easy matter. Mr Henry S. Myrick, a graduate of Harvard was appointed May the 19th 1853, but the connection was dissolved April 8th 1855. The Rev. G. S. Ball was installed on March 1st 1856, but his relation with the parish ceased in April 1857.

At last, the Church was fortunate enough to secure the services of the Rev. Edward H. Hall, son of Rev. E. B. Hall D.D. of Providence, and a graduate of Harvard. He accepted the call in December 1858, and was duly installed.

Edward H. Hall 1858 His ministry opened at a time when the anti-slavery forces were gathering for battle. The war of words which had proceeded with increasing bitterness for some years was about to ripen into a momentous conflict. Lincoln and Douglas were champions in opposite camps, and their debates, which were both numerous and ably conducted, prepared the way for a clear understanding of the issues which were being

The First Church in Plymouth

forced upon the country. "There is no way" said Lincoln "of putting an end to the slavery agitation amongst us, but to put it back upon the basis where our fathers placed it,—no way but to keep it out of our new territories—to restrict it forever to the old States where it now exists. Then the public mind will rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction." * The other way was to recognize slavery as part of the economic and industrial order, to allow it to remain where it was, and to prevent its extension over other States.

In the midst of this agitation, the venerable pastor who for nearly sixty years had been a tower of strength to the church, and had gone in and out among his people as a beloved friend and helper, was called to his rest. He died on the 17th of March 1859, in the 90th year of his age. During twenty-one years of his ministry, there had been several associate pastors, but he preached occasionally, until the last year of his life, and preserved unimpaired the confidence and affection, which had sustained him through an exceptionally long and pleasant pastorate. "The funeral services were held in the Church, on the afternoon of Sunday the 20th, and all the churches and places of business of the town were closed, in token of the general feeling of respect and affection throughout the community." †

National events were moving with great rapidity, and converging to a crisis; and when in April 1862,

* Lincoln-Douglas Debates, page 155.

† Records of the First Church.

in consequence of the open Rebellion of the Southern States against the United States Government, lovers of union and liberty gathered around the national flag, the First Church and its minister, were as loyal as their predecessors had been in Revolutionary times. Minister and people threw themselves heartily into the conflict. On the 28th of August 1862, M^r Hall announced that he had been elected Chaplain of the 44th Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers, and had resolved to accept the appointment. "At this time," he wrote, "when all our duties lie in one direction, and when each one is called upon to render what service he is able, to the great cause, I feel sure that you will approve of my decision to accept the place."

An informal meeting of the Parish was held at the church, on the 31st of August, and the following resolutions were adopted unanimously :—

"That it gives us sincere regret, that the ministerial relations of our pastor with this people are disturbed, and that we are to lose the ministrations of one so able, devoted, and affectionate, and whose labours have for us, been so valuable and interesting.

That we appreciate the motives, and respect the convictions of duty, which prompt him to devote his strength and best efforts to the sacred cause of our country, at this season of affliction and peril.

That it is the unanimous desire of the Parish, that the pastoral relations of M^r Hall with the people shall remain unbroken; and that the Parish Com-

The First Church in Plymouth

mittee be instructed to request him to withdraw his resignation, and to offer him leave of absence for nine months."

The resignation was withdrawn, and arrangements were made for the supply of the pulpit, during the absence of the minister. Throughout six months of this absence the pulpit was supplied by the Rev: Charles W. Buck.

In answer to the call of duty, the pews were in no respect behind the pulpit. Then, and afterwards, quite a number of the young men of the church, volunteered to serve their country in the war, and upheld the traditions of the community.

On June the 28th 1863, the pastor resumed his connection with the church, and received an enthusiastic welcome from his parishioners and friends.

It will be remembered, that at different periods in the history of the church, attempts were made to modify the original covenant, to meet the fluctuations of changing opinion. Not one of the changes made, was in any respect an improvement upon the original, and it is a remarkable illustration of the liberality and foresight of the ancient fathers, that more than 250 years after the first covenant was formed, the church should hark back to it, as to the ideal bond of Christian fellowship. A church meeting was held, to consider this matter, on Sunday Dec: 20th 1863, and it was unanimously resolved, to go back to the primitive covenant of the church, (*vide* Church Records Vol. I page 4).

It may be worth while to notice at this point,

the slow and imperceptible change, which at this time was creeping over the churches, in no way affecting the fundamental principles of congregationalism, but tending more and more to make membership a simple question of owning or renting pews. The ruling elder and his authority had long since ceased to be. Deacons were rapidly giving way to parish committees. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the observance of which was once so indispensable to communion, and the neglect of which was accompanied with reproofs and penalties, had become optional, like attendance at public worship. The era of ecclesiastical authority in Congregationalism was drawing to a close. The churches were in the way of becoming democratic corporations consisting of groups of people, with little in common as to religious belief, and owning pews or sittings, which might be occupied by the proprietors themselves, or rented to others, and which were sometimes owned by absentees who had become members of other churches, or had given up going to church altogether, but apparently enjoyed the right to a voice and a vote in the affairs of a church, in which they had ceased to have any other interest. Congregationalism was making its appeal to the religious instincts of its adherents, to the honour and enthusiasm of its people, and was willing to do so, despite the fact that its principles were liable in the hands of non-religious men to misuse and abuse.

The First Church harmonized the largest liberty with the warmest religious enthusiasm, and its affairs

The First Church in Plymouth

continued, as of old, to be directed by men who remained in its fellowship, and attended its services, because they enjoyed its religious privileges, for themselves and their families.

On Saturday June 1st 1867 the Rev: E. H. Hall resigned the pulpit, and shortly after settled in Worcester. His resignation was accepted with sincere expressions of regret.

In October 1869, a call was given to the Rev: Frederick N. Knapp, who graduated from Harvard College in 1843, to enter the Divinity School, and afterwards settled at Brookline. He left Brookline in 1869, on account of ill-health. On the 21st of July

1861, he joined the Sanitary Commission, becoming Assistant Secretary to the Eastern Division, and Superintendent of the Special Relief Department. "He was the personal friend of General Grant and President Lincoln, and when Grant visited Plymouth, he made Mr Knapp's house his stopping-place. While in the Sanitary Commission, fifty thousand wounded and sick soldiers passed through his hands, and received aid from him. After the war, he devoted a year to writing a history of the Special Relief Department of the Commission, and its war work. In 1866, he became principal of a military School at Eagleswood, N.J."* His ministry in Plymouth afforded scope for his scholarly attainments, and for the manifestation of a generous and

* In Memoriam Frederick N. Knapp 1889.

kindly disposition. His experience on the Sanitary Commission had brought him into close touch with suffering in all its forms, and gave to his work in a country parish, a wide range of personal sympathy and tender helpfulness. He was accessible to everybody needing friendly counsel or help, regardless of church or creed. Nature had endowed him with a bright, cheerful, happy disposition, which became contagious wherever he moved. He never ceased to think and act for others, and countless deeds of thoughtful kindness still serve to keep his memory fresh in the hearts of those who loved him. His Christianity was not confined to the pulpit, or to pastoral cares, but pervaded his social duties, and the obligations of citizenship. There was no institution in the town, educational, philanthropic, social, in which he did not feel a close personal interest. He was strongly identified with the education of the young, and during the five years of his ministry, and until his death in 1889, he conducted a successful school for boys. He was also Chairman of the School Committee for several years. The Grand Army departed from its usual custom in his case, and conferred upon him the unique distinction of being the only honorary member in the country.

His position as pastor of the First Church was relinquished in October 1874, but he retained a warm affection for the church, and attended its ministrations to the close of his life. His death came suddenly on January 12th 1889, in his sixty-eighth year. He died as he had lived, cheerfully,

The First Church in Plymouth

peacefully, hopefully, leaving behind him a wife, who shared his spirit, and supported him loyally, in all his varied labors, and a family of children, who cherish their father's memory as a rich inheritance. On the day of the funeral, factories shut down, the public schools were dismissed at an early hour, at eleven o'clock all places of business were closed, and the church bells tolled. There was a private service at the home, conducted by his friends the Rev^s C. P. Lombard, R. N. Bellows, of Walpole, and George W. Briggs D.D. of Cambridge. This was followed by a service in the Church, which was attended by a throng of personal friends, and representatives of the various military and benevolent associations, and conducted by the Rev^s C. P. Lombard, C. Y. De Normandie, George E. Ellis D.D., Thomas Hill D.D., and George W. Briggs D.D. Such tributes of popular esteem had not been given to any minister in the town, since the death of the venerable D^r Kendall, who like M^r Knapp, was everybody's friend.

On the 22nd of June 1878, M^r E. Q. S. Osgood was invited to take charge of the parish. He was then a student at the Divinity School, Cambridge. On the 11th of July, he accepted the call, and was ordained on the 10th of October following. He brought to his work the freshness and enthusiasm of early manhood, and devoted himself assiduously to the Sunday School, and work among the young people. Himself, the son

of a clergyman, the venerable Dr Osgood, of Cohasset, he was not unacquainted with the duties and responsibilities of a minister's life, and by his diligence and benevolent activity, he soon won for himself, the esteem and affection of his people. The women of the church, always loyal and faithful friends of the ministers, were among his willing and energetic supporters. At a Fair, held in the month of August 1879, they raised \$1000 for the benefit of the parish. In 1880, Mr Osgood's health declined, and that made rest and change essential to the further continuance of his labours, and in April 1881, leave of absence was given to him, and he went to Europe as tutor of a private pupil, and with the sincere good wishes of his parishioners.

During the minister's absence, the Rev: John H. Heywood, formerly of Louisville, Kentucky, occupied the pulpit and discharged pastoral duties, in such a way, as to make his services memorable to the church, and the community.

Mr Osgood returned to Plymouth in September 1882, and resumed his duties.

In the Spring of 1885, a branch of the Women's Auxiliary Conference was established in the church, for the purpose of elevating and strengthening the interest of women in parish work, and in missionary enterprise. Committees were formed for the study of the Liberal Faith, for the development of intellectual interest in its beliefs and history, and for the cultivation of social and philanthropic activities.

The First Church in Plymouth

The Rev M^r Osgood closed his pastorate October 22nd 1885, and from that time until April 1887, the pulpit was supplied by various ministers, without regular settlement.

On the 18th of January 1888, the Hon. Arthur Lord, chairman of the Parish Committee, communicated the desire of the congregation, to the Rev: Charles P. Lombard minister of the Second Congregational Society, at Athol, Mass: that he should become their minister, for three years. The call was accepted, and M^r Lombard entered upon his duties on April 1st 1888. He commended himself to the confidence and affection of the church,

and on the 21st of November
Charles P Lombard 1890, at the Annual Parish
1888 Meeting, he was confirmed in

his office as settled minister of the church. He laboured faithfully and earnestly for the good of the parish and community, and by his courtesy and good-will, did much towards developing friendly relations between the various religious bodies in the town, encouraging closer intercourse where that was possible, and exchange of hospitality. Union Thanksgiving Services were established among the Protestant sects, and sometimes union services were held for the development of a stronger, and more enthusiastic religious life, in the whole community.

In the summer of 1892, the second session of the school of Applied Ethics was held in the town, and the following clergymen and laymen delivered ser-

mons or addresses, in the church, on Sundays,— July 17th, Professor C. H. Toy, of Cambridge; the 24th, Mr Bernard Bosanquet, of London; August 7th, Rev. W. H. Johnson, of Wilmington; the 14th, Dr Emil G. Hirsch, Jewish Rabbi, of Chicago. The church which had stood for about sixty years, was very much in need of repairs, and the sum of \$2,500 was raised for that purpose, and the work was begun in September. When it was nearly finished, and the church was almost ready for the re-opening services, the fine old building took fire, and was burned to the ground, on Tuesday evening, November the 22nd 1892. There was universal sympathy with the parish, not merely in the town, and immediate neighbourhood, but throughout New England. Not only was a familiar landmark removed, but a church home had gone, around which many historic associations clustered, and in which, many personal and family memories were centred. From its impressive tower, the old Paul Revere bell had daily recorded the flying hours. Within its walls the voices of statesmen, poets, preachers, men of letters had been heard, men, who on special occasions, such as forefathers day, had delivered speeches and orations, in commemoration of historic events, of more than local interest. It was, moreover, the shrine of Pilgrim history, to which the faithful of our own land, and sympathetic visitors from abroad, gathered to do reverence to the only existing symbol of a great historic past. The ground on which it stood, was hallowed by the prayers of many genera-

The First Church in Plymouth

tions, sanctified by the joys and sorrows of more than two centuries of worshippers. The old church was thus like a sentinel standing day and night at the foot of Burial Hill, to guard the honoured dust of the forefathers.

CHAPTER X.

Liberty and Progress.

WHEN the first shock of surprise and sorrow had passed, the congregation quickly determined that the fifth edifice should soon be reared, to perpetuate Pilgrim history. A voice came to them from the past, speaking in language their hearts well understood,

“If, as some have done
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place,
And touch but tombs — look up! Those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.”

In the meantime, the churches of different denominations — Universalist, Baptist, Congregationalist, Methodist — kindly offered the temporary use of their edifices, to the homeless parish. The first service, after the fire, was held in the Universalist Church, on the afternoon of Sunday December the 4th. On the 19th, a parish meeting was held in Standish Hall, and the first five thousand dollars was subscribed, towards the building of a new church. The movement was taken up with enthusiasm, by young and old, and every society in the parish applied all its resources, towards acquiring funds for the erection of a new house. The whole church was dominated by one purpose, that of raising enough money to rear an edifice of stone, strong

The First Church in Plymouth

and durable, a fitting temple for the liberal faith, and an enduring monument to the ancient fathers, and the brave days of old.

On the 19th of June 1893, a parish meeting was held, to consider plans of the proposed new church. After several meetings, and much discussion, it was decided to accept those of Mess^{rs} Hartwell, Richardson, and Driver, of Boston. The architecture is of the English-Norman type, and bears some resemblance to the ancient church at Scrooby. At its front is a central tower, the entrance to which is through a series of receding arches, leading to a memorial vestibule, in which will be placed windows and tablets. The tower contains a belfry, in which the town bell cast by Paul Revere in 1801, is placed, and which hung in the old church, ringing the nine o'clock curfew for three generations, and on the night of the fire, sounding the alarm, just before it fell among the burning ruins. The main edifice is built of seam-faced granite, with Ohio sandstone trimmings. In the lower part of the building, under the church, are a vestry and Sunday School. A memorial window was presented by the Society of Mayflower descendants of New York, to be placed in the chancel of the church, representing the "Signing of the Compact" in the cabin of the *Mayflower*; and later on, another memorial window was placed in the north end, by a sister of M^r Edward G. Walker, representing "John Robinson delivering his farewell address to the departing pilgrims,"—appropriate and handsome memorials. The New

England Society, in the city of New York, gave its cordial support to the movement. The Hon: Elihu Root, the president, in his address December 22nd 1894, said "We have set our hands to another and somewhat different work, somewhat graver in its responsibility and more lasting in its results, than words which vanish into air. As you all know, in the winter before the last, the First Church in Plymouth was destroyed by fire, the church of the first congregation in New England, of the Society which was organized in Holland, and gathered in the cabin of the "Mayflower," and with prayer and faith endured the hardships of that first cold long winter—the church of Brewster, and Bradford, and Winslow and Carver. A new building is to be erected. It will stand where the old one stood, on the slope of Burial Hill. Faithful sons of New England have resolved, that the new edifice shall be a fitting memorial, of the noble hearts, and great events, for which it will stand; that it shall be shaped by that perfect art, which best comports with grave simplicity, and that it shall express, in form more enduring than the words of countless banquets, the fidelity of the sons of the Pilgrims to the memory of their fathers. This Society in its annual meeting has authorized its President to appoint a Committee to take charge of our part of this labour of affection and veneration, and I now announce the members of that Committee: Cornelius N. Bliss, J. Pierpont Morgan, Joseph H. Choate, Horace Russell, and the President."

The First Church in Plymouth

The Building Committee held large views of the proposed structure, and resolved that the memorial, about to be reared, should be in keeping with the noble history and traditions of the Church, even if it had to be built by slow degrees. They ventured upon a great trust, and as it happened nobly. The Hon: Arthur Lord, M^r. William S. Kyle, and M^{rs}. F. B. Davis attended a meeting of the National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian Churches held in Saratoga September 1894, and presented the claims of the Plymouth Church. A resolution was adopted at the Conference commending the Church to the general public, and appointing a Committee to raise funds.

The corner-stone of the new edifice was laid on Monday June 29th 1896, with suitable ceremonies, and in the presence of a throng of glad and grateful friends, who rejoiced to see the opening fulfilment of their heart's desire. The Hon: Arthur Lord, *President of the Pilgrim Society*, and chairman of the Parish Committee, commenced the proceedings with an address, in which he said:—

“On this hill-side, rich in memories, associations and history, we meet today, to lay the corner stone of the First Church in Plymouth, and the first church in America. Behind us, rises the hill, where rest in peace the dead of by-gone generations; before us stretches, the first street of the Pilgrims, once bordered by their simple dwellings, once echoing to the tread of their weary feet; and beyond, lies the sea, now sparkling in the sunlight of June,

but whose dark waters in that stormy December reflects the white sail of the Mayflower. All around us is historic ground. It witnessed the humble beginnings of a great people. It was the cradle of a mighty nation; the rude yet tender home of civil and religious liberty, which, elsewhere, seemed but a scholar's idle dream.

The inestimable privilege of such environment comes not alone. By its side, there ever stands the graver forms of duty and responsibility, and sometimes in their silent train, there comes in the lifetime of a generation, the great opportunity, not bidden perchance, but ever welcomed. Another generation, three quarters of a century ago, entered upon the work of commemorating the great events of Pilgrim History, of marking and adorning the localities peculiarly interesting to every American, of collecting and preserving each memento of the Pilgrims, which the hand of time had spared. Monument and statue, hall and rock, attest their labours.

To this generation, came the duty and the opportunity to erect upon the ruins of the old church, a memorial, simple yet enduring, to the religious life of its founders, the last and best of the great memorials to the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Built of granite from the rocky hillsides of Massachusetts, of stone from the quarries of that other Massachusetts on the banks of the Ohio, it is no less firm and enduring than they. In its stately tower shall hang the bell which Revere cast, whose tones, as in other days, again will mark the fleeting hour, will call to

The First Church in Plymouth

duty, and will sound the dread alarm. The carved tablets in its open vestibule shall tell the Pilgrim name and story to the thousands as they pass. The rays of the setting sun falling softly through its stained windows, shall gild with a new radiance the pictured forms and faces of the leaders of the Pilgrim band.

Of such a memorial, more appropriate, interesting, and suggestive than any other, we lay the corner stone. Long may it stand, sustaining, elevating, and inspiring the life and thought of this community, its portals ever open to the "new light yet to come." Long may it stand, to impress upon the minds and hearts of the generations yet unborn, the lesson of the lives and labours and faith, of its Pilgrim founders; those lives heroic, those labours triumphant, that faith sublime, which lifted them above every doubt, sustained them in every peril, and under whose benign influence the sea lost its terrors, the wilderness its fears, and sickness and death could not their souls dismay." This address was followed by a speech from M^r. Edwin D. Mead, Editor of the *New England Magazine*, and after the singing of a hymn the Hon: Charles Francis Adams, *President of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, was introduced. He said, among other things, bearing upon the occasion:—

"We are so accustomed to look upon all things American, as new, that it requires some forcible reminder, such as this, to make us realize what an antiquity has gathered upon Plymouth. Yet

the fact is, as I have stated. When the church, the unbroken succession of which you are, first gathered at Scrooby, and again at Delfthaven on the deck of the Speedwell, of the two most widely read books in all English Literature, our King James' Bible, had been only nine years issued from the press, while the other, the precious first quarto of Shakespeare, did not see the light until three years later. Of this Society, therefore, American though it be, it may truthfully be said, that it antedates not only the literature, theology, science, and law, of the modern world, but it has outlived most of the philosophies and dynasties, and not a few of the nationalities, which existed at its birth. It is among the world-venerable things. When John Robinson addressed his farewell discourse to the little band of Pilgrims, on that day of solemn humiliation in July 1620, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon, Harvey, Milton, Descartes, were either still doing their work, or, as yet, unheard of in the world; the house of Stuart was freshly seated on the English throne; Oliver Cromwell, a youth of twenty-one, had not yet undergone his change of heart; Gustavus Adolphus had won no name in arms; Richelieu was not a Cardinal, nor a very potter at his wheel, had he begun his momentous work on plastic France. Poland was still a power, and the barrier of civilization against the Turk. We regard that famous victory won by Sobieski under the walls of Vienna, which marked the culmination and decline of the Ottoman Empire, as so remote,

The First Church in Plymouth

that it seems of another world than ours; yet it happened more that sixty years after the unnoticed Speedwell weighed its anchor at Delfthaven; and John Robinson had already been four years in his grave, before Sobieski was born. Thus, as I have said, this church has seen dynasties, philosophies, theologies and nations, decay and disappear, and yet others rise to take their place.

“The drift of the maker is dark; an Isis hid by the veil,
Who knows the ways of the world, how God will bring
them about?”

These names I have mentioned, are names great in the world's annals; the events, I have referred to, are indisputably memorable. It seems strange to compare this religious society — a simple church in a provincial Massachusetts town — it seems strange, I say, to weigh the formation of this society in the scale of human events, against such names and such events, as I have recalled. So doing is suggestive of exaggeration, of hyperbole, almost of bathos. And yet in truth, as a factor in human events, it outweighs that among them, which is to be reckoned most and greatest. When the society which is met here today, first gathered on the Speedwell's narrow deck, its great mission was to bear to a new continent, and there implant, the germs of civil and religious liberty. In all seriousness I ask, was the passage of the Red Sea, by the children of Israel; was the founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus: was the crossing

of the Atlantic by Columbus, was any one of these, a human event more pregnant with great consequence?

Centuries have rolled by since your society was organized. Your pastors and teachers exhorted you in mid-Atlantic, in Provincetown, and in yonder bay, from the deck of the Mayflower; again they preached the word in "the first house for common use" the erection of which was begun on the 4th of January 1621; again, in the old Fort, with the cannon on its roof, on Burial Hill; again in the Meeting-House of 1648, from which a bell first here knoll'd to church; again, in the second house of 1683; and, yet again, in the third, of 1744. It is an honourable succession—Brewster, Reyner, Cotton, Little, Leonard, Robbins, Kendall, Hall, Knapp, Osgood, and Lombard—and that the line will long stretch out admits not of question in the mind of any descendant of the Pilgrims. Here shall the church edifice stand, and here let it continue to stand, looking out at that distant sea-line from which nearly three centuries ago, the Mayflower slowly loomed up in December, and under which its white sails as slowly disappeared in the following April; but whether this, the fifth and most elaborate of its edifices, continues to shelter the church, or in turn gives way to another, the church itself will, like the poet's brook, go on forever; and so long as it goes on, it will stand in far greater degree than any other association in the land, for those principles of civil and religious freedom, which

The First Church in Plymouth

it was its mission to bring to America. And truly the seed it has sown did not fall by the wayside, nor among the thorns, nor upon stony ground where it was scorched, nor did the fowls of the air come and devour it; but it fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, not thirty-fold, nor sixty, nor yet a hundred, but by the thousand and myriad, until it has multiplied and covered the land as with a mantle of snow."

After Prayer by the Rev: Charles P. Lombard, pastor of the church, a hymn was sung, and the proceedings came to an end.

The first service in the New Kendall Hall was held on April 25th 1897, and Sunday services continued to be held there until the dedication of the Church on Thursday December 21st 1899.

The Fifth Meeting- ing, labour, anxiety, incessant
House 1899 and unremitting activity, in

which the officers of the Church, Mess^{rs} Arthur Lord, William S. Kyle, W. W. Brewster and James D. Thurber, and all the Committees of men and women took part, the completed church building was in immediate prospect. D^r Hale, the Hon: John D. Long, and the Hon: Winslow Warren had issued a circular letter to friends of the cause, that the money to pay for the completion of the building might be obtained before the work was done, and when at a social gathering in Kendall Hall, February 24th 1899, it was announced that a friend who

Liberty and Progress

did not wish to have his name disclosed, had given \$15000 to the building fund, the audience rejoiced, and sang the doxology. The work went on, and was finished, and glad eyes and grateful hearts were delighted, when the doors were flung wide open for the service of dedication. The order of exercises was as follows:—

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

Hallelujah Chorus from The Messiah *Handel*

CHORUS

The breaking waves dashed high *Mrs Hemans*

INVOCATION

REV: CHARLES P. LOMBARD, PASTOR

SCRIPTURE READING

REV: EUGENE R. SHIPPEN, FIRST PARISH DORCHESTER (1630)

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

REV: EDWARD EVERETT HALE D.D.

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN

Written for the dedication of the Fourth Meeting-House December 14th 1831
by Rev: John Pierpont.

1. The winds and waves were roaring :
The Pilgrims met for prayer ;
And here their God adoring,
They stood, in open air.
When breaking day they greeted,
And when its close was calm,
The leafless woods repeated
The music of their psalm.

The First Church in Plymouth

2. Not thus, O God, to praise Thee,
Do we, their children, throng :
The temple's arch we raise thee
Gives back our choral song.
Yet, on the winds that bore Thee
Their worship and their prayers,
May ours come up before Thee
From hearts as true as theirs!
3. What have we, Lord, to bind us
To this, the Pilgrims' shore ! —
Their hill of graves behind us,
Their watery way before,
The wintry surge, that dashes
Against the rocks they trod,
Their memory, and their ashes —
Be Thou their guard, O God !
4. We would not, Holy Father,
Forsake this hallowed spot,
Till on that shore we gather
Where graves and griefs are not :
The shore where true devotion
Shall rear no pillared shrine,
And see no other ocean
Than that of love divine.—

Read by Rev. E. J. Prescott, First Church, Salem (1629)

SERVICE OF DEDICATION

MINISTER AND PEOPLE

ANTHEM

“I have surely built thee an house” . . . *W. O. Wilkinson*

ADDRESS

HIS EXCELLENCY, ROGER WOLCOTT, LL.D. GOVERNOR OF THE
COMMONWEALTH

Liberty and Progress

ADDRESS

REV : FRANCIS G. PEABODY, D.D., HARVARD UNIVERSITY

SOLO

BY MR. I. F. BOTUME

The Lord is my Light *Alitson*

ADDRESS

REV : JAMES EELLS, FIRST CHURCH BOSTON (1630)

ADDRESS

REV : JAMES DE NORMANDIE, D.D., FIRST RELIGIOUS SOCIETY IN
ROXBURY (1631)

ADDRESS

REV : S. A. ELIOT, SECRETARY AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

HYMN

Written for this service.

Let the organ roll its music, and the song of praise arise,
Unto God who crowns endeavor, and rewardeth sacrifice,
Who has poured His holy spirit into mighty men and wise,
Whose souls are marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Their souls are marching on.

Let us sing the Faith triumphant that has ruled the raging sea,
That has swept upon the storm-wind to a land of liberty,
That has bowed the gloomy forests and has reared a nation free,
Whose soul is marching on.

CHORUS :

With the Mighty Dead behind us, and a waiting world before,
Let us lift the torch they carried to the God whom we adore,
To His holy name be praises and the glory evermore,
Whose power is marching on.

The First Church in Plymouth

Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
His power is marching on.

BENEDICTION

On July 1st 1900, the Rev: Charles P. Lombard resigned his position as minister of the Parish, to take effect in September. He had served the church diligently and faithfully for more than twelve years, and was respected and beloved throughout the community; but the state of his health compelled him to seek rest and change. A farewell reception was given to him, and to his wife, on September 27th, when their parishioners and friends expressed appreciation of their past services and good wishes for the future, accompanied with a gift of \$700. M^r and M^{rs} Lombard sailed for Italy on the 6th of October, to remain abroad a year.

To the great regret of the congregation M^r James D. Thurber, who for more than twenty-five years had acted as clerk of the Parish declined to be re-nominated, feeling that the time had come when someone else should have an opportunity of rendering special service to the church, and carrying on with energy and enthusiasm the work which had been so freely given in the past.

Although the building itself was complete, its equipment was not quite perfect. A beautiful organ had been provided, but the chancel was unfurnished. A communion table and chairs and a baptismal font,

were greatly needed. Two handsome carved oak chairs were presented by a lineal descendant of Elder Brewster. A massive oak table to match the chairs, and a piece of the step of the ancient church at Delfthaven were also given. M^r Chandler Robbins of New York gave two bronze tablets in memory of D^r Robbins and D^r Kendall, which were placed near the gallery at the north end of the church. A legacy of \$250 was bequeathed which was applied to the purchase of suitable stair-railings. Two bronze tablets were attached to the buttress of the tower near the front entrance to the church, one of which bears the following inscription. "The Church of Scrooby, Leyden and the Mayflower gathered on this hill-side in 1620, has ever since preserved unbroken records and maintained a continuous ministry, its first covenant being still the basis of its fellowship. In reverent memory of its Pilgrim Founders this Fifth Meeting-House was erected AD, MDCCCXCVII."

Provision was made in the vestibule for placing on the marble wall, the First Covenant of the Church, and other historic records deserving special remembrance, and in due time the generosity of friends will no doubt permit the carrying out of these and other plans, which will serve as mile stones to mark the way along which the Pilgrims and their descendants have travelled.

My work is now done. Without entering too fully into the religious history of the Pilgrim Fathers, I have endeavored to trace their steps, and

The First Church in Plymouth

to bring into convenient compass, the record of a church, which is without parallel in its loyalty to truth and liberality of view, and to show that the after history of the church was the logical sequence of the principle which forbade persecution, and inculcated the Protestant doctrines of liberty of thought and the rights of conscience. That, for which the Pilgrims stood, the church still stands, viz. (1) loyalty to truth, hostility to every kind of mental torture and oppression; (2) fealty to conscience, be the consequences what they may; (3) aversion to creeds and articles as tests of Christian fellowship, and the enjoyment of Christian ordinances, on the ground that an honest man cannot make himself believe anything he pleases; that it is therefore wicked to drive him by threats and penalties, actual or implied, to dissemble his thoughts and disguise his opinions; (4) the identity of righteousness with salvation, intellectual righteousness which cares supremely for the simple truth, and moral righteousness which will not parley with sin. The world never reared a set of men more conscientious and fearless in their doings, more hardy, simple, unostentatious in their manners. May their fortitude continue to rebuke our cowardice; their thrift reproach our effeminate luxury; their hardihood condemn our supineness and lassitude; their breadth and catholicity of religious sentiment put to scorn the petty narrowness and littleness of our day. It is a proud thing to be their spiritual heirs, to possess their principles, and to cherish their heroic deeds as our best inheritance.

BX9834 .P65F5 C9
A brief history of the First church in

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00021 2433