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A BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE LAST

3
THREE PASTORATES

OF THE

FIRST PARISH IN DEDHAM.

1860—1888.

A SERMON PREACHED NOVEMBER 11, 1888,

By REV. SETH C. BEACH, Pastor.

DEDHAM:
PUBLISHED BY THE PARISH.
1888.

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"Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation."—*Joel*, i: 3.

THE history of this parish during its first seven pastorates, covering a period of two hundred and twenty-two years, has been written with a fulness and ability which, however much might be desired, leave little to be supplied. For the commemoration of the two hundredth anniversary of the gathering of the church, my predecessor, Dr. Lamson, prepared with painstaking care three sermons, in which, and in the notes to which, was told not only the story of this parish but the religious history of the town, to the beginning of his own pastorate in 1818. On the fortieth anniversary of his settlement, Dr. Lamson continued the history in a sermon, supplemented at the time of his resignation, in 1860, by another, in which was told most that is given a later generation to know of his long and fruitful ministry. We have also had prepared an interesting and valuable biographical sketch of Dr. Lamson, which, with other matter, we have printed in a small book entitled, "The First Church in Dedham." These sermons, with this biographical sketch, make together a very complete history of what is of most interest in the religious life of this parish during something more than six generations.

It is not my purpose to retell a story which has been told so well, but in taking leave of the period and of its names of blessed memory, we may be allowed to bear testimony to the reverent and loving appreciation in which the name of Dr. Lamson is still held by the generation that knew him in the flesh, and by the later generation that is not without some knowledge of his gifts. "He was a man of most lovable nature; he was our best patristic scholar," is the testimony of one of his intimate and scholarly associates.*

* Rev. George E. Ellis, D. D.

Upon his resignation, in 1860, Dr. Lamson left the parish at what I should suppose was very near the climax of its strength. Both as suggestive of the strength of the parish at that date and of the changes which have taken place in a generation, the names signed to a memorial of regret at the resignation of Dr. Lamson, found upon our parish records, are of great interest. They are, they say, "Members of the First Parish in Dedham and other worshippers there." The names are: Thomas Motley, Charles B. Shaw, John Gardner, Jeremy Stimson, Enos Foord, Alvan Fisher, Thomas Barrows, Henry Cormerais, Martin Marsh, Edward M. Richards, Ezra W. Sampson, William R. Sumner, William Chickering, Anna L. Rodman, Thomas Sherwin, Eben S. Fisher, Jonathan H. Cobb, Nathaniel Clapp, Waldo Colburn, Edward B. Holmes, William Whiting, Ira Russell, Calvin F. Ellis, Henry W. Richards, Henry O. Hildreth, William B. Tower, Danforth P. Wight, William Field, Alfred Hewins, Eliphalet Stone, Gershom J. Van Brunt, Luther Eaton, Isaac C. Bosworth, Jesse Farrington, Benjamin Weatherbee, John D. Runkle, George Coolidge, William J. Adams, Joseph W. Waters, Franklin Kimball, Abner Alden, John B. Henck, Joel Wight, George F. Wight, Charles H. Titecomb, Sanford Carroll, John E. Weatherbee, Henry Smith, Sanford Howard, Eben Wight, Eben W. Keyes, William F. Haynes, John Deane, Jesse Weatherbee, James Foord, Augustus B. Endicott, George F. Fisher, Lemuel Dana, Hezekiah Onion, Samuel G. Whiting. A list of sixty heads of families, of whom we can count only ten, or possibly twelve, today.

Over a parish so represented Mr. Benjamin Holloway Bailey, then fresh from his studies at Cambridge, was called to preside. The resignation of Dr. Lamson took effect the 29th of October, 1860, and the call to Mr. Bailey is dated January 7th following. The parish had the good fortune or the wisdom to agree upon a candidate for the pastorate

within the space of a little more than two months. At the ordination of Mr. Bailey, March 14, 1861,* Prof. Convers Francis, D. D., of Cambridge, preached the sermon, Dr. Lamson offered the ordaining prayer, Dr. Joseph Allen, of Northboro', gave the charge to the pastor, and Dr. George E. Ellis, then of Charlestown, made an address to the people. Others who took part in the services were: Rev. Dr. Morison, of Milton; Rev. T. B. Forbush, of Northboro'; Rev. John D. Wells, of Quincy, and Rev. Calvin S. Locke, of West Dedham. We get a further idea of what transpires in a generation when we note that of these men then in conspicuous service, only Mr. Forbush, now of Milwaukee, is in active ministry, and of the others only Dr. Ellis, Dr. Morison, Mr. Wells, and Mr. Locke survive.

Of Mr. Bailey, the time to write a biography happily has not come. When called, as very often during the last twenty years it has been his fortune to be, he is still able to speak for himself and for us. He came here a young man, a fine scholar, of noble presence, in exceptionally vigorous health, with great strength of feeling, and rare readiness and aptness of utterance. He won a warm place in the hearts of his parishioners which it has given me great pleasure to witness he still retains. His pastorate covered a period little short of seven years, except the period of the war for Independence the most eventful in our national history. They were also eventful in the history of the parish. The guns of the Civil War, — considering the number of men engaged, the battles fought and

* It happened that this date was the fortieth anniversary of the ordination of Rev. Ebenezer Burgess, D. D., of the First Congregational Church, as also the termination of his ministry. A signal act of courtesy appears in the Records in the minutes of a parish meeting held March 4th preceding: "Voted, That the parish committee be instructed to have the usual services in the church omitted on Sunday next, that being the time appointed by Rev. Dr. Burgess for preaching his farewell discourse."

the blood spilled, the greatest war of modern times and certainly the nearest to us, — opened with the second year of what had promised to be a serene and tranquil ministry.

During the next four troubled years it may be said in general of our churches at the North, that their attention and interest were absorbed by the humanities and inhumanities of battlefields to which so much of their best life had gone, and on which so much of their precious blood was spilled. The churches of every name were local sanitary commissions already organized, feeders to hospitals, sometimes themselves hospitals. The evidence is that in such patriotic Christian service this parish was not wanting. It could not be, for it had thirty-three of its sons in the service, — four in the navy and twenty-nine in the army, — all of them at posts of hardship and danger.

Sunday, August 31st, 1862, following the second battle of Bull Run, is one the experience of which still vividly haunts many of your memories, and the tradition of which quickens the pulse of a hearer after the lapse of twenty-five years. You had gathered here on that Sunday morning with hearts lightened by the news of the day before, which had encouraged you to believe that the enemy was in full retreat. In the midst of your service a messenger arrived with intelligence that a great battle had been fought, with its usual consequences, and that hospital supplies were wanted in unlimited quantities. The announcement from the pulpit at the close of the service called you to duty of another kind. One of your homes, always open for good works, was transformed into a factory for the afternoon, filled with generous hearts and busy fingers from other congregations as from your own, and before nightfall, we are told, twenty-seven cases of all sizes, among them "sixteen large packages of clothing, bandages, lint, jellies, cordials, and other necessaries and comforts," were on their way to the hospitals. I recognize the name of one of the sons of the parish

who fell on that bloody field, Charles Whiting Carroll; "the brave and patriotic captain," I find him called.

The crisis of the Civil War, in reference to which it is to some of us matter of easy memory that all citizens of equal patriotism did not think alike, was a trying time for many churches at the North, and especially so for our more liberal and unconventional churches. Those churches that did not allow in their pulpits allusions to political events more recent than the Jewish captivity or the destruction of Jerusalem, in that fermented era fared best, and their immunity from disaster may be taken as some vindication of their reserve. It is said that this parish had its hour of heart-burning, and that it had to mourn some losses besides those it suffered in the field, but, thanks to the wisdom of the pulpit or the forbearance of the pews, it was not wrecked.

Opinions would differ now, as then, as to what ought and ought not to have been said and done. It may not be amiss to say, however, that by more than one of my seniors whose fortune it was at that time to occupy a pulpit, the period when every one's blood was up, not excepting his own, is remembered as one of peculiar difficulty for a minister. "How I went through it with any credit," says your pastor of that day, "implies rather the mighty tide of patriotism on which we were all upborne than any claim that I can lay. The people were good and kind, as we know they have always been; quick to accept good intentions as equivalent for real service, and ready to supplement earnestness of purpose with amplest good will and endeavor. They needed no prompting to good works; they were in and of themselves originators and promoters of every kind of beneficence in those dark hours that were shutting down upon the nation's life. Withal, the great things for which the church stood prospered; its comprehensive unity in the substance of faith; its enlarged charity; its worship and

its hope. I have always felt that it was largely due to the affluence of Dr. Lamson's spirit overflowing his time and moulding mine."

It was during Mr. Bailey's pastorate that, under the lead of Dr. Bellows, fresh from the activities of the Sanitary Commission, and turning his constructive energies into a new field, occurred that awakening of Unitarian churches to their duty and their opportunity which led, in 1865, to the formation of the National Conference, and which, with a kind of burst of enthusiasm, carried the missionary collections of the American Unitarian Association from \$10,000, for a single year, to \$100,000. That this parish shared in that awakening is shown by the record of its contribution, \$468 for that year, though the contribution upon the same page of nearly the same amount, \$450, the proceeds of a fair, to the "Children's Mission" may be taken to indicate the relation in which, at that stage of its development, the parish held a great general but somewhat intangible interest compared with an object of very limited scope which had the merit of being near, definite and comprehensible.

It is a curious fact that this contribution to the American Unitarian Association in 1865 seems to be the first church or parish contribution of which there appears any record. That contributions had been taken before is matter of tradition, for do we not hear of at least one annually on Thanksgiving Day for the Juvenile Library? Whether the parish took its contributions and, as the saying is, "made nothing" of them, or whether the keeping of a record would have seemed to our predecessors too much like letting the right hand know what the left was doing, is not easy to say. It seems, however, that the contribution of \$468 for any purpose, considerably the largest single contribution perhaps since the days of the forefathers, broke down all reserve. It is, however, the only contribution recorded for that year.

For the year 1866 there are twelve recorded, among them four collections at Communion Service. It is interesting to notice that these collections run then very much as they do now: \$10.18, \$10.55, \$11, \$9. Our collections for the corresponding dates of this year were \$10.37, \$10.70, \$15.55, \$11.40. The total for the year 1865 was \$1124.13. One is glad to know that our total of last year, \$1017.10, did not fall greatly below these figures of the golden age. It is true that our total included \$147 of the "Women's Auxiliary," and \$157.23 of the Benevolent Society, but, perhaps, we may consider these entries offset by \$450 in the other total, the proceeds of a fair.

Of other matters of record, I find that in his pastorate Mr. Bailey baptized 65 persons, received into the church 60, officiated at 31 marriages, and attended 98 funerals.

A parishioner speaks of "the warm and active interest Mr. Bailey always took in the Sunday-school," and of "the comfort and help he always carried to those who were called upon to part with their loved ones," concerning which I have heard other testimony. "Very recently," says this writer, "I heard a mother who lost a little boy, while he was settled here, speak of the almost daily calls he made her, and each time brought fresh comfort." Mr. Bailey, in those days of his youth, was a pastor whose example would be the despair of a minister of this later and weaker generation.

At that date the parishioner of the ancient type still survived, of whom mythical stories are told. "Members of the church and parish were regularly in their pews," rows of white heads on either side bordering the aisles with a kind of fringe of age and respectability, children between father and mother filling the spaces as seraphs are clustered on the canvas of an old master, both floor and gallery occupied by attentive listeners, never nodding except in assent to the preacher; such is the traditional picture of that ancient day, twenty-five years ago.

"It seems to me," says the witness already quoted, "that a history of Mr. Bailey's pastorate is incomplete without some allusion to such men as Mr. William Chickering, Mr. Thomas Sherwin, Dr. Eben Wight, and many others who were his warm friends to the last." I find on the records the names of many who must have been strong and valued parishioners, whose presence I do not see today.

There is evidence that Mr. Bailey's hold upon the parish was very strong, and that the last year of his ministry must have been one of marked religious activity. I have been allowed to copy a memorandum, from which it appears that "Mr. Bailey held prayer or conference meetings in the vestry in 1866 and 1867, at first on Wednesday, afterwards on Thursday, evenings. After the spring of 1867 they were mostly conducted by lay members." Doubtless it was the direct result of these meetings that at the communion service following the sending in of Mr. Bailey's resignation, twenty-five persons, among them one of its present deacons, united with the church. This was an enviable experience with which to close a pastorate.

From the memorandum just referred to, I learn that "The second Sunday service," then regular, which after moving from the church to the vestry and from the vestry again to the church, we finally discontinued in 1884, "was usually held in the afternoon, only occasionally in the evening, till after the close of Mr. Bailey's ministry."

It was during this pastorate that the parish received a legacy of \$6,600, into the possession of which it has come and is to come as the limitations expire, for the improvement of singing in the church. To this generous provision may doubtless be traced a revival of interest and an improvement in quality of music in the parish.

Mr. Bailey resigned his charge in October, 1867, to assume the pastorate of the First Parish in Portland, Maine. In releasing him from his engagements, the parish say "that it is with deep sorrow that we are called upon

to dissolve the pastoral relation which Rev. Benjamin H. Bailey has so faithfully sustained to this parish for more than six years."

On February 1, 1869, after a vacancy in the pastorate of one year and four months, no doubt with the usual experiences, a call was given to Rev. George McKean Folsom, then pastor of the First Parish in Groton. Mr. Folsom was a man of another type from that of his predecessor, and very differently circumstanced. "What a contrast in two men," says a parishioner, equally appreciative of both; "the warm, vigorous push of the one, and the quiet, submissive manner of the other; but do not forget the earnest devotion of both the good men." It was my privilege to be a classmate of Mr. Folsom in the Divinity School at Cambridge, and to know him as one only knows those of his immediate family. He was simple-hearted even to childlikeness; I should be tempted to say he was pure and delicate as a woman, if that were not so hackneyed a phrase, and if it were more common to find a woman as pure and delicate as he. He was warm and impulsive in his feelings, very generous in his sympathies and with his means, strong and even chivalrous in his attachments, honest, unstudied and uncalculating in his act and speech.* There was about him a sensitiveness, diffi-

* The following is from a letter, received since the delivery of this discourse, from Mrs. Elizabeth G. Foord, an old resident of Dedham, since removed to California:

"I should be pleased to bear my testimony to the character of the late Mr. Folsom, from judgments formed while he was for some months a member of my family. He was a man of the greatest purity and simplicity, honest and sincere. No offer of worldly profit or advantage could have made him swerve from the path of rectitude. He was a faithful friend, and wise counsellor, a lover of his kind, prompt to follow the dictates of generosity, a cheerful giver. He was ever ready to see the good in the character of others, while his extreme modesty led him to underestimate his own. Incapable of resentment, he was ready to forgive, although slow to perceive the fault affording opportunity for forgiveness. He was more apt to take blame to himself than to take offense, a truly unselfish man."

dence and retiringness which kept him out of the current of men and things, and made his circle of intimates smaller than it should have been, but when his responsive nature was not weighed down by a burden or congealed as by frost, there was a flow of spirits and a play of humor that made him a delightful companion to those who knew him best. He was a cultivated gentleman, and a finished scholar such as it is rare to find, one who kept up the traditions of this pulpit for culture and scholarship close to the level of its best estate.

Two or three circumstances weighted Mr. Folsom's pastorate from the beginning. To one I have already alluded, his natural shrinking and reserve. It was predestinated from the first that very few of his parishioners, not those of a class but those whose contact was nearest and most frequent, should ever know him. Another circumstance was the long and sore affliction of his wife's illness, the tradition of which leaves it to my mind a marvel how, as pastor or preacher, he had time, strength or heart to accomplish anything. A third circumstance was the very delicate and critical condition of things theological at that date prevailing in most of the older Unitarian parishes, from which, if I have been correctly informed, this parish was not exempt. Indicative of what has happened since Mr. Folsom's settlement, there is now, and has been for three years, a volume of Theodore Parker's published by the American Unitarian Association, bearing its imprint and for sale at nominal cost, as one of the recognized representatives of Unitarian thought. Moreover, at their late October meeting, the directors of the Association gladly and gratefully accepted the trust of a valuable building lot for a church, the deed of which contains the condition that the church erected "shall never shut its doors to those who in their day shall represent the opinions of Theodore Parker," the statement also being inserted that the chief motive actuating the donor in making the gift is regard for Mr.

Parker's memory. In the year 1869, that of Mr. Folsom's settlement, we were not doing these things either through the Association or otherwise. On the contrary, in the year 1870, under the illustrious lead of Rev. George H. Hepworth, then a great light in our body, the National Conference rescinded an article that had been adopted in the interest of breadth, adopted a substitute in the interest of greater narrowness, and barely escaped formulating a creed. Those who remember that period will recall that a strong wave of conservatism was sweeping over the average Unitarian consciousness.

Mr. Folsom came here with his theological eyes open, and with much less than most others to learn from the new criticism and speculation which have since taken place. It fell to him to do a work which it is not always pleasant to have done, but which, nevertheless, it was inevitable that some one would have to do.

Early in his pastorate, I am told, he "gave a series of Sunday evening lectures upon the Bible, beginning with the book of Genesis," full of keen insight and good scholarship I do not doubt, which, it is said, "aroused extreme interest in his congregation, and, to no small extent, in the neighboring one, and which filled many minds with consternation at the ideas, then new and startling, that to-day are accepted without question." The same witness speaks of "a very instructive class for Sunday-school teachers which Mr. Folsom conducted fortnightly at his own house. Hase's 'Life of Jesus' was at one time the subject of study. Mr. William Chickering and Mr. Charles L. Adams were constant in their attendance, and the meetings were of great benefit." Somewhat more revolutionary views of Old and New Testament criticism than Mr. Folsom probably advanced in those lectures and lessons, we have now embodied in text-books for the Sunday-school, and with great happiness, and not a particle of misgiving, we put them into the hands of the children.

My witness says further that "Mr. Folsom's interest in the Sunday-school was very great; his love for children and the very happy manner in which he met them at a level and won their affection and interest was unusual and delightful to witness. He had what few men possess, a simple directness of speech which appeals to a child's understanding, and a rare manner of entertaining children, whom he would hold spellbound by his inimitable charm of storytelling or poetical recitation, with mimicry of bird-notes and talk of animals. I think Mr. Folsom was very dear to the children."

"It was," says the same witness, "while Mr. Folsom was with us that the need of a more commodious and convenient vestry was strongly felt and, though the building was not completed till a later day, moneys were raised from time to time for that purpose. Mr. Folsom himself contributed largely to the cause by giving public readings, which his remarkable talents rendered very enjoyable occasions, and which benefited us by considerable sums of money." It is gratefully remembered by many who have enjoyed our improved social and Sunday-school accommodations that the first contribution toward the new or renewed vestry was the proceeds of Mr. Folsom's readings.

Of Mr. Folsom's pulpit ability there is, as I should expect, a diversity of testimony. There are those who did not always, perhaps not often, find exactly what they desired in a sermon; there were others who listened to him with the delight which they experienced in anything delicate and beautiful. Upon the more important question, the actual worth and helpfulness of his ministry, estimates also greatly differ. There were those who were scarcely able to rate the period as one of special edification; and there are others to whom Mr. Folsom's ministry was an epoch, the time when they experienced the dawn of their own minds and set out upon a voyage of discovery; when the Bible became a new book and existence a new sensation

A matter about which there was no difference of opinion in the parish or out, was the admirable work of Mr. Folsom as member, and for some time chairman, of the town committee for public schools at a time when the duties of that board were more arduous than, since the employment of a superintendent, happily, they are now. I have no details of his work beyond the fact that his service extended from March, 1871, to March, 1875, but I have the testimony of a teacher of that day that of Mr. Folsom, in his relations with the schools, she has "most delightful recollections."

In March, 1875, after a ministry of six years, Mr. Folsom resigned this pastorate, and soon after accepted the office of a supervisor of schools in Boston, a position for which his friends here and elsewhere believed him to be eminently fitted. His letter of resignation is marked by his characteristic modesty: "I cannot make even this formal announcement without assuring the Society of my deep and heartfelt appreciation of the kindness, consideration and forbearance which I have always received from them, notwithstanding the many shortcomings of which I am perfectly conscious." In accepting his resignation the parish testify to "his attainments and ability as a scholar," to "the gentleness and sincerity of his character," to "the simplicity, directness and strong religious feeling that have marked his discourses," and to "the fidelity with which he has discharged the duties of his sacred office."

Mr. Folsom died suddenly, in Boston, May 20, 1882. In a notice of his death it was said, "He was as simple and true and genuine a man as ever lived. He loved his friends and his books. * * Certainly his life was not a brilliant or noisy one, but it was rich in gentleness and unselfishness, and in the power of doing good to others, and the rare gift of diffusing happiness."

The records show that Mr. Folsom attended 84 funerals, officiated at 30 marriages, baptized 29 persons, and received into the church 18 members. Several of those added to

the roll of the church in his time, as in Mr. Bailey's and in mine, were transfers of membership, a circumstance of which I should not consider it necessary to speak were it not that, I am told, it was a matter alluded to by Mr. Folsom in his last sermon, that so few during his ministry had chosen to bear this testimony. It would have been a response to his ministry which doubtless he would have had too much delicacy to suggest, but which, if it had been granted in larger measure, would have gladdened his heart.

From the date of Mr. Folsom's resignation to the call of his successor, was a period of eight months. The call was dated Nov. 8, 1875; its acceptance, Nov. 19; the installation took place Dec. 29—it will be easy to reckon the length of the pastorate which has followed. It has been almost exactly as long as both its immediate predecessors combined. For good or ill, it has been, I believe, considerably the longest pastorate in Dedham during nearly a generation. Interesting as it has been to me, and near as it has been to us all, I have not reserved a proportionate space for its history. Happily, it can be dealt with more briefly, as it will not be necessary to say anything at all about the minister. His inner man, during the last thirteen years, it would be a kind of breach of confidence for me to put into history, and of his outward relations you know enough, and, I dare say, better than I.

A faithful historian, not disposed to rose-color his narrative, would be obliged to say that you have not always been able to agree entirely with your minister. I remember after some escapade in a sermon which did not seem to every hearer to be greatly edifying, the gentlest of all parishioners in the gentlest of all protests, made bold to ask, "What were you aiming at? What were you trying to do?" I greatly fear the question may have been more to the purpose than the answer. It is a noteworthy fact, however, that the indications of dissent which have come to my knowledge have, in general, not related to matters

commonly classed as theological. I do not know all you have thought, but I have never heard that the pulpit was too radical or too conservative, too skeptical or too credulous, too slow or too fast. On the contrary, I have always felt that the pews were quite abreast of the pulpit, and abundantly ready for the latest intelligence, so it be intelligence, from the world of science, criticism or thought. Such differences as we have had have mainly related to practical details.

If I mistake not, the most serious trial which any of you have had with the pulpit was in the first year of my pastorate, concerning an expression of views in the midst of a feverish agitation of the subject of temperance. The minister may have been too sensitive, but he felt very much like one who is being dragooned into a movement with which he does not wholly sympathize, and very possibly he may have protested with more vigor than was necessary.

Perhaps the next most serious disturbance of our tranquillity related to a change in the administration of the Communion Service, ventured upon four years ago by the pastor on his own responsibility. It was undertaken to hold that commemoration as a part of the morning service, sometimes with, sometimes without the usual sermon, at first using the customary wine, for which, that being subject to objection in a service made so general, pure water was then substituted. The change had the good effect to attract several persons to the observance, but in none of its modifications was the experiment satisfactory to all, and, as I understood, the liberty taken with the emblems came near costing us a valued parishioner, not, I believe, because wine was considered indispensable, but because the reversal of the ancient miracle seemed a lapse from the healthy sentiment of the Master into the sickly sentimentality of a disciple.

I am happy to say that questions of politics have never greatly disturbed our serenity. I have noticed that some

of you have taken the liberty to think differently from your minister, but such have seemed to be satisfied to neutralize his vote at the polls, which I imagine, in the palmy days of this pulpit, might have been a bold thing for a mere layman to do.

In the affairs of the parish we have had great harmony, and you have given me hearty co-operation. It was due to your own enterprise that at an expense of \$3300, in 1879, you carried out the improvement upon the vestry projected in Mr. Folsom's pastorate, and that in 1882, at an expense of nearly \$2000, you greatly improved and beautified this edifice. It was as much your choice as mine that, in 1878, we adopted the Book of Services and Hymns then just issued by the Unitarian Association, the responsive readings from which have enriched our worship; and it was to the generosity of a parishioner* that, two years ago, the Sunday school was indebted for the Hymnal and Services issued by the Sunday-school Society, which, with increasing satisfaction, we now use.

It would not be hard to recall other things generously done. Of such I must not be denied the mention of a Christmas gift of \$462, towards which I had the grateful satisfaction of being assured every parishioner had contributed some token of his good will. I must be allowed, also, to mention a very thoughtful and timely favor of \$75 from the Benevolent Society, whose thoughtfulness I suppose its beneficiaries always consider timely. I have reason to be glad that the ladies found my case came properly under their rules; they were right in thinking they would look long before they found a more receptive object of charity.

Among the suggestions which I have made, and which you have carried out, for increasing our interest in parish affairs, not the least, I am persuaded, was the social gath-

* Mrs. John R. Bullard.

ering and supper which brought 140 of us together, at our last annual meeting, to listen to full and valuable reports from every arm of our service. I remember that when the shortest, but not least interesting, of those reports was being read, one said to me, "When you put us up to do this, you did the best thing you ever did in this parish." I shall be glad to leave the suggestion as a kind of perpetual legacy.

One of the most venerable of the parish organizations then reporting was the Ladies' Benevolent Society, which has just held its sixty-seventh annual meeting. I am told that during part of Mr. Bailey's pastorate, the Benevolent Society was merged into what was known as the Ladies' Aid Society, in which all denominations co-operated for the large work of humanity which the war made necessary. That Society raised for its purposes \$3040.96, of which it would be a delicate matter to apportion the amount that came from this parish. A third of it is \$1000, and a fourth of that is \$250; this, of course, does not include a thousand articles of value contributed, but was it perhaps about the average money contribution through this channel per year? During the early part of my pastorate the Benevolent Society was very active and efficient, with an attendance at its monthly meetings of fifty or sixty members. Since the Associated Charities has been organized, much of the work of the Benevolent Society has passed to its hands, but I notice that its disbursements last year were still \$215.

The Dedham Union, though a much younger offspring than the Benevolent Society, has attained some antiquity, and though it strenuously insists that it is not a parish organization, it has rendered us services which entitle it to a grateful mention. It was formed during Mr. Folsom's pastorate, and I dare say much of the credit for its existence is due to him. It appeared just in season to arrest any tendency to disintegration during the critical period of transition from one pastorate to another, and I have heard it said

that it served that purpose admirably. In its younger days, it gave many attractive lectures, and other entertainments, and contributed much to the social life of the parish. It was in full career at the time improvements were made upon the vestry, and liberally assisted in that work by its contributions of money. We have always accepted its good offices, and, so it conducted itself properly, we have never raised the question whether technically it was or was not a parish society.

The ability of our ladies for efficient organization was admirably exhibited in March, 1881, seven years ago, in the formation of a branch of the Women's Auxiliary Conference, as it has been since in the conduct of its affairs. To that movement was justly credited a perceptible increase in church attendance and of interest in all our parish activities. In addition to much excellent discussion which the ladies have given and heard, in addition to much increase of mutual acquaintance and intercourse, the "Auxiliary" has had its hands steadily employed in good works far and near, for the promotion of a religious life and a rational faith. To the credit of these faithful workers, I believe it was once said on a public occasion, that "for work, the Dedham Auxiliary was the banner Branch." I should like to distribute the praise for its success to those to whom praise is chiefly due, if the chief praise did not rather belong to all.

To the Sunday school during Mr. Bailey's and Mr. Folsom's pastorates I have already referred, though I have not written its history. I remember well when I first looked in upon it, thirteen years ago, with its bright faces and its well filled seats; it was a delight to my eye and heart. In our enlarged accommodations, greatly improved text-books, and excellent service book, we have facilities which did not then exist, and it is greatly to be hoped we are doing as good work as at any time in our history. In the recent death of Miss Ellis, the Sunday school has lost

one of its most indefatigable workers and one of its wisest friends. It is due her memory, and it would be a grateful tribute from the school, to hang her portrait in some form upon its walls.

The faithful and generous services of the choir, always reverently rendered as a labor of love, are a part of the history of my pastorate which I am glad of an opportunity to acknowledge.

I find upon the parish records a copy of my acceptance of its call to this pulpit. It is simply a brief business note, such as I might have written if one of you had invited me to be a clerk in his store. I find upon the church records an acknowledgment of its vote of concurrence, in which I observe four times the space was occupied, and much more expression of purposes and hopes was indulged. I said, among other things, "I trust this action of the church is more than an empty formality. I cannot resist the feeling that in any just conception of his office, a minister is before all else the minister of a church. * * * I shall come among you with the sincere purpose to discharge the obligations to the parish which I have assumed, but with the profound conviction that I can do so only by becoming first of all a faithful minister to the church. I shall not be satisfied with my ministry unless I am able to see the continuance of your prosperity, and to rejoice, as I trust I may, in many additions to your membership and a proportionate increase of your zeal and fidelity." As these letters indicate, I came here with a theory, which had been the fruit of some experience, which had slowly shaped itself into very positive conviction, and which, from a very unecclesiastical beginning, had transformed me into not a little of a churchman. That theory was that while vague good feeling, a kind of non-committal good feeling, is well, a feeling that has come to consciousness of itself, a decision made and registered, a purpose settled and declared, is better. With us the instrument providentially placed in our hands for

sometimes bringing about a decisive moment in religious experience is what we call the church. It is as a means to this end that I chiefly care, and that at last I have come to care a great deal for this roll of those who have pledged to each other their good endeavors. I may say that this theory of the church and of its uses, with which I came, is the theory by which my ministry during these thirteen years has been shaped.

The heated process of conversion, by which in churches calling themselves "evangelical" it is common to crystallize religious feeling, was not open to us, and I looked with a kind of helpless desire toward the ancient usage of confirmation by which our Catholic mother and her elder daughters, Anglican and Lutheran, lead up one generation and then another gradually and naturally to the result. It was eleven years ago that I first mentioned the word Confirmation aloud in this parish. It was to a large Bible class of young persons which was to have met, and for a few evenings did meet, at my house. I began by saying that I should like to meet them not for criticism or speculation, but for religious nurture, and, by way of illustration, instanced what is aimed at in a confirmation class. I remember that Bible class chiefly as a thing of glowing promise which suddenly dissolved like the morning dew. Like the apostle, "cast down but not destroyed," the next year to some of the same persons I said very much the same things. "Now don't say confirmation," urged a blessed saint, no longer with us; "that was what frightened them before." I dare say there may have been other discouragements. Eight years after, in 1886, we held our first confirmation service in this church, with seven candidates. We held a similar service last Easter, with fourteen candidates; nineteen, if we might count the adults. These were occasions which many of us will not soon forget. The three or four months of study and conversation with the classes in preparation for these occasions, have been

very pleasant experiences. At the last annual meeting the church, by vote, authorized admission to membership by confirmation; so the practice may be considered as one of our recognized and legitimate usages. If this is something over which we have a right to congratulate ourselves, let us put the merit where it belongs. It could not have happened but for the favor which the suggestion has met from the mothers in this parish. When, after a sermon upon the subject, as we were forming our class a year ago, one said to me, "I hope confirmation has come into this church to stay," my inward response was, If so you feel, it has come to stay. So it is, my friends, your minister can do nothing without you; you can do—you certainly can help him do—almost what you will.

The Young People's Religious Society, the youngest child of the parish, whose first report so gratified and encouraged us last March, cannot be said to have been an outgrowth of the confirmation class, nor the confirmation class of that. They have been parallel lines with something of the same history. As was said of confirmation, so of the Young People's Society, it is to be hoped it has come to stay. It is a good omen that it is able to be its own minister. One of my recent exchanges is quoted as saying that he had seen many young people's meetings, but never before one that took care of itself. It is fortunate that the one to whose inspiration and energy the society chiefly owes its existence has the gift of continuance.

We have great reason to congratulate ourselves that our young people are taking a part in the religious activities of parish and church, for with them this inheritance from the fathers will soon rest. I look about me and see that these thirteen years have told upon those who at the beginning of this pastorate were in their prime. I recall with tender love and reverence the many faithful, saintly, beautiful spirits who in these years, one by one, have taken their discharge and gone to their rest. I am grateful that since

we are denied the comfort of their presence, they have left us the inspiration of such precious memories.

A baptism, an admission to the church, a marriage, or a funeral, is an occasion upon which a minister comes close to the hearts of his people. Every such experience is an event in his own history. During my pastorate it has been my fortune to baptize 64 persons, to receive into the church 96, to officiate at 51 marriages, and to attend 137 funerals.

One of the pleasant incidents of my pastorate was a reception tendered us, with others, by the church over which Mr. Southgate was then pastor. In 1882, the year following I believe, we were able to reciprocate this courtesy by a reception of our hosts and fellow-guests, which was accepted with a cordiality that strained our accommodations to the utmost. In its turn, St. Paul's parish repeated the hospitality with a heartiness and liberality in which it was not at all behind either of its predecessors. Differing very widely in matters both of faith and practice, it is pleasant to remember the respectful, kindly and neighborly relations that have subsisted between these three adjacent churches, which to such an extent divide between them the families of this part of our village.

This harmony of feeling has made both possible and natural the joint celebration of our great anniversary by the two religious households that have together the noble traditions of the first six generations, the first 180 years, of this ancient church. It has been a privilege, without one experience to mar its pleasure, to serve on the joint committee to prepare for that commemoration. One cloud, indeed, there has been: the lamented death of a valued member of that committee.*

It would be easy to make reflections upon the events and upon the total of this history. It is so easy that I shall leave you to make them yourselves. Let me dismiss this

* Deacon Theodore L. Browne.

imperfect record of twenty-eight, some of them momentous years of your parish life, with the injunction of an apostle, "Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain," and may the God of all grace and love, who has blest you so much in your noble history, and me so much in giving me a modest place in that history, be with you both now and always.

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On Sunday and Monday of the week following this historical discourse, Nov. 18th and 19th, 1888, occurred the commemoration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the gathering of the First Church. The day following, Mr. Beach communicated his resignation, as below :

DEDHAM, November 20, 1888.

*Messrs. Alfred Hewins, Edwin A. Brooks, and Julius H. Tuttle,
Standing Committee of the First Parish :*

DEAR SIRS—At a meeting of the Directors of the American Unitarian Association, in September, an invitation was tendered me to become its Missionary Agent for the District of Northern New England. The position is one which I have not sought, but which, for certain reasons, I have not felt wholly at liberty to decline. I have been reluctant to disturb our relations until your great anniversary, just passed so happily and auspiciously, had been duly celebrated, but it has been understood in the parish that the appointment referred to would be likely to result in a vacancy in this pulpit, a vacancy which I sincerely hope you will have the good fortune to fill wisely and without a long and distracting period of delay. It now becomes my duty to place in your hands my resignation of that trust committed to me by the parish thirteen years ago, and to ask that the same be accepted to take effect November 30, that I may enter upon the work proposed to me December 1.

In taking leave of the parish, I wish to express the appreciation and gratitude of myself and of Mrs. Beach, whose interest and obligation are the same as my own, for the unflinching kindness and forbearance of the parish towards us during all the years of our life in its midst, and for the many expressions of kind feeling we have heard, and are hearing, at this time of our separation. We shall always cherish the memories of these years as among our most precious possessions, and we shall greatly rejoice in all the prosperity which the future has in store for this ancient parish and for its members.

Very sincerely yours,

S. C. BEACH.

At a meeting of the Parish, held December 3d, the resignation of Mr. Beach was accepted, and the following resolutions adopted :

WHEREAS, Rev. Seth C. Beach has presented his resignation as pastor of the First Parish in Dedham ;

Resolved, That we, the members of the Parish, in accepting this resignation, desire to express our deep regret at this termination of a faithful and efficient ministry, which has lasted nearly thirteen years.

Resolved, That we should fail to do justice to our retiring pastor, if we did not, at this time, also express our appreciation of, and our obligation for, his many valuable services during his connection with the parish ; the earnestness, independence and ability,—a continually increasing ability,—which have characterized his pulpit ministrations, in which he has given his hearers the results of wide reading and careful thought ; the attention which he has paid to the religious and moral interests of the Parish and Church, in his action as Superintendent of the Sunday-school, and in his connection with the Young People's Religious Society, as in many other ways ; the fidelity with which he has performed other Parish duties and endeavored to promote the general welfare of the Church and Parish ; the zeal with which he has given himself to the encouragement and advancement of all benevolent objects, and of freedom and liberality of thought and judgment.

Resolved, That we recognize that our pastor has been a good citizen as well as a good minister, in his care for the schools of the town, as otherwise, ready to do his part for the public benefit.

Resolved, That we also recognize that our minister, while thus remembering the interests of the parish and the town, has not confined himself to them, but has extended his labors to a wider field, in his connection with the American Unitarian Association, working for the objects it is striving to accomplish, and for the denomination at large, as well as for his own people.

Resolved, That in dissolving our connection with Mr. Beach, we offer him our most sincere wishes that, in his new charge, he may have the large success that we know he will deserve, and that in all his undertakings, and always, he may have a full measure of prosperity and happiness.

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