

PAPERS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE.

XI.

CRANE HOOK CHURCH,

PREDECESSOR OF

THE OLD SWEDES' CHURCH

AT

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE.

BY

PENNOCK PUSEY, ESQ.,

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE.

Read before the Historical Society of Delaware, June 18, 1894.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE,

WILMINGTON.

1895.

PAPERS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE.

XI

CRANE HOOK CHURCH,

PREDECESSOR OF

THE OLD SWEDES' CHURCH

AT

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE. ↓

BY

PENNOCK PUSEY, ESQ.,

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE,
WILMINGTON.

1895.

PLH

CRANE HOOK CHURCH.

CAREFUL readers of history well know how large has been the agency of religion in promoting the exploration and settlement of the New World by people from the Old. Indeed, it scarcely needs a critical student of history to discover how essentially the aspirations, condition, and destiny of man in his general career are involved with and shaped by his religious convictions.

One of the longest and certainly the bloodiest and most destructive of the world's conflicts—the great Thirty Years' War—had religion in some of its needs and aspects as its real origin, its professed object, and its sustaining cause. And, however humiliating the thought, however saddening the cruelties or monstrous the inconsistency that men should thus sacrifice the end to the means, that professing Christians should make war for Him who enjoined Peace, and butcher each other into compliance with the command not to kill; yet nothing, perhaps, than the prosecution of that exhaustive war with all its atrocities more effectually refutes the dishonoring pessimism which assumes that the average man is an ignoble self-seeker actuated only by selfish motives. Never did thought of self sway so little,

perhaps, as with the actors on either side in that sanguinary struggle. No incentive to personal gain; no fear of injustice within, nor danger of foes without the state ever induced such an outpouring of means, energies, and sacrifices as the people there volunteered in the ardor of their religious devotion. What the law failed to exact, the people freely gave to support and carry on that pious contest. No cowardly evasion of duty or base gratification of passion could avail against the dictates of conscience and noble fealty to faith. For ordinary purposes, the overtaxed supporters of government would have bitterly resisted the slightest additional impost; but for religious principle, to vindicate their cherished faith, the people cheerfully saddled themselves with fresh burdens, and for thirty weary years persevered in a struggle whose waste of life and treasure yet continues its direful effects after a lapse of two hundred and fifty years.

With that great war at least one of the movements for emigration to America was deeply concerned. Indeed, the sad conflict had a direct, if not logical, connection with the origin of our own city of Wilmington. For it was Gustavus Adolphus, the great champion of the Reformation in that struggle, who organized the first Swedish expedition to the New World; it was that prolonged war with its exacting demands that caused the postponement of the enterprise; and it was the last request of the great king who was sacrificed in that war which impelled the resumption and active prosecution of the project for colonization to America that resulted in starting the voyages from fatherland to the Delaware, and finally brought the Swedish

immigrants to their rocky landing-place within the limits of Wilmington.

It was in great measure the same religious fervor that impelled the several movements of people from Europe to the original colonization and settlement of the several sections of our common country. The pious devotion of the Pilgrim fathers in New England; the heroic zeal of the Jesuit missionaries in carrying the gospel to the heathen through the trackless wilds of the upper Mississippi; the steadfast trust of the Quaker's "testimony" in suffering persecution in the Old World and returning good for evil in the New; the stern persistence of the uncompromising Scotch-Irish in maintaining his faith in the barren strongholds of the Atlantic mountain ranges; the broad, just views of the enlightened Catholics of Maryland in their early religious toleration; the honest solicitude of the English church to conserve its established rights against the growing inroads of dissenters in Virginia and neighboring Southern territories; the tested fealty and chivalrous zeal of the suffering Huguenots who fled to South Carolina; the steady-going Moravians and lesser sects and worshipping societies who have usually been content to show their faith by their works in various parts of the country—all these, as well as the Swedish immigration, were in divers ways and various degrees indebted to religious feeling for their inspiration and sustaining cause.

But there was a difference. However common the *end*, in the means employed for attaining it there was one broad and marked dissimilarity in the origin and impelling agencies in these several movements. For while some of them

were born of religious intolerance and were prosecuted chiefly by refugees from persecution at home, others received the kindly encouragement and co-operation of the home government. To the latter class belonged the Swedish migration to the New World. Nay, it received not merely the friendly countenance and sympathetic aid of the home government; it owed its very conception to the Swedish throne, which persevered in its purpose in the face of a constantly depleted treasury and a succession of obstacles. Against these serious practical hindrances, and in spite of the distractions and numberless disabilities caused by a great war, the enterprise owed its initiatory zeal and its persistent support almost wholly to the pious and enlightened home government. A more religious monarch than Gustavus Adolphus, one more uniformly guided by religious considerations in his state policy, never sat upon a European throne. In a large degree he deemed himself an instrument of Providence in furthering a divine reign upon earth; and there was ever a lofty consecration and a seer's fervent spirit in this great monarch that excited an admiration akin to awe among friends and foes alike. It was this that impelled him to leave his throne and plunge in person with his small army, against such fearful odds, into the fortunes of the Thirty Years' War; and it was this as a primary incentive that caused his persistent devotion to the Swedish colonization in America. In enumerating its purposes in his first proclamation, the king states his hopes, "if God gives luck, that it certainly will tend to the honor of His holy name, to our state's prosperity, and to our subjects' improvement and benefit:" while in introducing the

second charter, with its thirty-seven articles, the king solicits the generous support of the people, among other reasons, "for the spread of the Holy Gospel, and through commercial intercourse the hope of bringing the Indians to a better civil state and to the truth of the Christian religion."

The untimely death of the king did not frustrate his plans, but simply committed their execution to his great minister, Oxenstiern, an enlightened and masterly statesman in full sympathy with his king's aspirations, who was all the more intent upon consummating them from the mute pathos of the great monarch's unfinished purposes, and the now undivided responsibility he felt for pushing them to completion. King Adolphus, in his desperate struggle for the very existence of Protestantism in Europe, had felt the greater urgency for providing an asylum for the rights of conscience in the free domain of the New World. From that virgin field his attention was not diverted by the engrossing events in which he acted a dominant part. "They did but enlarge his views," says the historian Bancroft; and he now, but a few days before his death on the field of Lützen, recommended the colonizing enterprise to the people of Germany, which he reurged later as a dying request to his own countrymen. Accordingly, in spite of continued requisitions from the wasting war, preparations were resumed with new vigor; and in order that the religious needs of the colonists should be promptly cared for, one of the earliest of Sweden's ten expeditions to the Delaware carried a clergyman provided with books of devotion and all

churchly appointments for worship; and on the spot where they first landed to settle, and within the same enclosure that embraced their first structure for occupation and defence, they built their first edifice for worship. In that little chapel in Fort Christina, built on the rocks within the present limits of this city, the first Swedish clergyman—the Rev. Reorus Torkillus—conducted the first Christian services ever held on the shores of the old South or Delaware river or bay.

This pioneer rector was born in West Gothland, Sweden, in the year 1608, and came to Christina with the second expedition, which arrived in 1640. He took a wife from among his own parishioners in the New World, setting an example at the outset of a sacred and promising mission which was generally followed by his clerical successors. But the pious career thus auspiciously begun was destined to short life. Torkillus was taken sick on the 23d of February, 1643, and died on the 7th of September of the same year, at the early age of thirty-five, leaving one child. He was probably buried in the old church-yard near the south end of the present edifice. We are not informed whether the deceased rector was succeeded by another appointee to continue services in the chapel in Fort Christina. But as this was as yet the only place of worship, it is probable that the Swedes here continued their services, perhaps by the lay reading of psalms and sermons, at least until supplied with another minister and church. It is certain that in Governor Beekman's time, prior to the English conquest in 1664, Andreas Hudde, who had been the Dutch commander at Fort Nassau (Gloucester), officiated as clerk in the church

at Christina for a time, under Rev. Mr. Lock, who was then the only Swedish clergyman in the country.

The second Swedish church was erected, three years later, on Tennakong, or Tinicum Island, in the year 1646, and there the Rev. John Campanius, who conducted the ceremonies attending its consecration, also laid out a graveyard, in which the first interment was made on the 28th of September, 1646. This second church on the Delaware was built under the auspices of the celebrated Governor Printz, who arrived in February, 1643, after a memorable voyage of perilous storms and divers delays, which terminated, "by God's grace," in one hundred and fifty days. The continued prominence given to the religious purposes of these Swedish expeditions is shown by the instructions given to Governor Printz by the Swedish government, which, among the first of the twenty-eight articles, require him "to promote by the most zealous endeavors a sincere piety in all respects toward Almighty God, to maintain the public worship conformably to the rights and doctrines of the national church, to support a proper ecclesiastical discipline, to urge instruction and virtuous education among the young," etc.; while he is urged to persist in the peaceful policy of the Swedes toward the Indians by promptly renewing and confirming the old treaty by which they had conveyed to the Swedes the western shore of the Delaware; and, while always recognizing the natives as the rightful owners of the country, he was to treat them in the most equitable and humane manner, and to accomplish, as far as practicable, their conversion to Christianity and their adoption of the manners and customs of civilized life.

In furtherance of this peaceful policy toward the Indians, this distinguished clergyman, Rev. John Campanius, who came with Governor Printz, specially devoted his labors to the instruction and conversion of the natives; to which end he zealously applied himself to the prompt acquisition of their language. He began the translation of Luther's shorter catechism in 1646, which was probably the very first work of translation into the Indian language in America, as the first Indian translation by John Eliot, the New England missionary, was not published till 1664. And, moreover, as Campanius, during the three years prior to his work of translation in 1646, had actively labored with the Indians, and, while exchanging friendly visits with them, had always taken care to teach them the rudimentary ideas of the Christian religion, the Swedes may claim the honor of having sent the first of Christian missionaries among the natives of America, while Eliot held his first service among them on the 28th of October, 1646. The Rev. Campanius, in 1648, returned to Sweden, where he completed his translation of the catechism, which was printed in Stockholm, in the Indian and Swedish languages, in 1696, a copy of which is in the library of the American Philosophical Society. In this celebrated work a notable deviation may be found in the Lord's Prayer, which, instead of the usual words "give us this day our daily bread," etc., reads "give us this day a plentiful supply of venison and corn," thus better suiting the comprehension of the Indian mind.

Following Rev. John Campanius, but during the administration of Governor Printz, which terminated the latter part of 1653, there arrived two Swedish clergymen, the Rev.

Laurentius Laers, or Lokinius, commonly known as Pastor Lock, and Rev. Israel Holgh. The latter, after a short stay, returned to Sweden, while Pastor Lock, who was probably Campanius's successor, lived a long and active life as minister in different churches, and died in the year 1688. We will see more of him hereafter.

Following these arrivals, there came to succeed Governor Printz Commissary and Counsellor Johan Claudii Rising, who arrived in May, 1654, in company with Lindstrom, the military engineer, and various officers and soldiers. With them came two clergymen, the Rev. Mathias Nicolai Ner-tunius and Rev. Mr. Petrus Laurentii Hjort. The latter, whom Rising described as "both temporally and spiritually a poor parson," took charge of the congregation at the captured Fort Trinity (New Castle). But both left the country with Rising upon his surrender of Fort Christina in September, 1655.

With the invading expedition compelling this surrender of Fort Christina in 1655 there came a Rev. Mr. Megapolensis as chaplain of Stuyvesant's forces; but as he came in the service of the enemy, and probably returned with some of them, it is likely that the Swedes experienced few or none of his friendly ministrations.

After the surrender of Fort Christina, but before the news of it had reached Europe, a Swedish vessel, the *Mercurius*, arrived in the Delaware, bringing the Rev. Mr. Mathias, a Swedish minister, who remained about two years and then returned to Sweden.

With the undyked marshes, exposing rank vegetation with each fall of the tide, there was increasing tendency to

fever; and great sickness, with attending destitution, afflicted the Christina settlers during the years 1657 and 1658, when, to stay its effects, a "fast, prayer, and thank" day was officially observed on the 13th of March, 1658, while, to the same end, the Rev. Mr. Welius, on the day following, preached a sermon at Altona (Fort Christina) at the request of the fort commissary.*

On the 18th of March, 1662, it was ordered that a fast and prayer day be thereafter kept quarterly, notice of which was to be given by tolling the bell of the fort.

On the 24th of July, 1663, the Rev. Abenius Zetscoven received a call from the Swedish congregation; but the Rev. Laers or Pastor Lock so strongly opposed his preaching, that the commissioners were obliged to threaten him with a protest before he would allow the new minister to preach on Whit-Sunday. This minister, the Rev. Abenius Zetscoven, gave his sermon at Tinicum Church on the last Monday of Pentecost, at the request of the Swedish commissioners. They desired to engage him also as a school-master at the same salary as that paid to the Rev. Mr. Lock, but the people of New Amstel (New Castle), where he had been employed, would not dismiss him; and he never had charge of any congregation in the South or Delaware River as a regularly ordained minister.

These embrace all the names of clergymen and references to church services, mentioned in chronological order, that I have been able to glean from the old court records, clerical authorities, or other available sources, from the

* This Rev. Mr. Welius died the following year, 1659.

landing of the Swedes in 1638 to about the year 1667. Down to this date all action looking to religious ends seems to have contemplated only the supply of Swedish needs, and in the interest of the Swedish Lutheran Church. Indeed, it may be mentioned as a remarkable fact that the provision for church supplies and management of religious affairs were then wholly in Swedish hands, while the conduct of business and the means for its daily transaction were as exclusively by Dutch money and measures, which indeed continued for many years later. The Dutch during their rule built no churches or otherwise supplied the religious needs of their colonists on the Delaware. Nor did the Swedes, with their earlier and longer supremacy, do business with Swedish currency or according to Swedish standards of value or measurement. Or at least there is no evidence of it in old records or by tradition. The contrast is not so much a difference between the two peoples as one between two methods and aims animating the two powers behind the respective nationalities. The Dutch were traders sent by a company whose object was wholly commercial. The Swedes were wholly agriculturalists, aided by a pious home government whose purpose was largely religious propagation.

Such had been the situation prior to the operation of causes which were now ripe for change. During the twenty-nine years since the landing of the Swedes in 1638 the government had twice changed hands, first by the Dutch conquest of the Swedes at Fort Christina in 1655, and then by the English conquest of the Dutch in 1664. The three years of English rule had as yet effected little

noticeable change of speech or customs among the two subject nationalities; but during the prior nine years of Dutch supremacy there had been such modification and intermingling of the languages of the conquerors and conquered that the Swedish and Dutch settlers were daily coming to a better understanding of each other. Originally from the same Teutonic family stock, the languages of the two nations were never greatly dissimilar: their governments at home had long stood upon a footing of fair neighborly comity; they held much commercial intercourse and had much in common in industrial tendencies, and more in religious faith and social usages. With the decline of the old Dutch trading company, its Dutch dependents on the Delaware had resorted to farming upon their own resources, and the settlers from the two nations being thus thrown into nearer connection, upon a common footing, with common aspirations, were not long in reaching a common recognition of each other. This was followed by closer social intercourse, which led to intermarriages, which through family relationships completed the various ties, cementing their union as one people with a common destiny.

Here, then, was a widened opportunity with the incentive of combined in lieu of divided resources. The opportunity was improved, and the result was the erection of the church at Crane Hook. Built for the joint accommodation, and with the combined means of Dutch and Swedish worshippers, its site was chosen in almost the exact available centre of the surrounding communities for whom it was designed. The edifice stood nearly midway between the Dutch resi-

dents at New Castle and below and the several Swedish settlements beginning at Christina and extending along the creeks flowing from the west and north beyond; while, although nominally further from settlers on the east side of the Delaware, the church was practically as near them by reason of the easier water transit, at that time almost the sole way of travel prior to the construction of inland roads and bridges.

It will thus be seen that the little log church at Crane Hook supplied a wide circuit of worshippers, embracing residents on the easterly shore south of Raccoon Creek with those on Penn's Neck and the region toward Salem, and including the entire westerly shore below the neighborhood of Chester. And notwithstanding the fast fusing unity of the two nationalities, with so many communities whose intermingling tongues were yet in various stages of transition, it may be imagined that the task of a single preacher in making himself understood by all the congregation was not an easy one, as it presumably required a curious conglomeration of Swedish and Dutch idioms, with an occasional English word or phrase as a sort of compromising cement and preparation for absorption into that compelling language which vaunts its growing universality as the destined speech of the modern world.

These are the peculiar circumstances which lend significant interest to this Crane Hook Church. Its character and construction mark a definable stage in the softening of national prejudices and the merging of racial elements of our composite population. This growing community of interests is exhibited at once in the commingling of the lan-

guages, sympathies, and habits of the two peoples; in the combination of appliances for a common worship; in the selection of a central church site, as far as practicable, for the equal accommodation of all concerned; and it is indicated even in the name of the selected site, which has successively undergone the changeful appellations derived from three different languages. It was first called *Trane Udden*, from the two Swedish words *trana*, crane, and *udden*, point or cape. "Hook," as here applied, although little used or known in modern speech, has a common derivation in the sense of "angle" in the several family branches of our common English tongue. Its orthography, under the Dutch supremacy, held firm sway variously as *hoek* and *hoeck*, the whole word being spelled "*Kraenhoek*." But all prior designations, like the prior rule of other nationalities, in due time yielded to the dominating English; hence the Crane Hook as we know it to-day.

It would be interesting to know all the minute circumstances which preceded and attended the construction of Crane Hook Church,—to learn just those particulars which in the case of our existing old Stone Church have proved so attractive to the revering descendants of its builders,—the influences leading to the initiatory steps, the collection of the requisite means, the selection of the site, the progress of the work, the hopes, fears, delays concerning it, and the final completion of the humble edifice. But, unfortunately, the accessible facts touching the ancient structure are very meagre. The church records prior to those left by Rev. Mr. Bjork are far less complete than his careful details, and have never been translated, while a diligent search among

the papers at home and in the archives of the Pennsylvania Historical Society has added but little to our scanty information.

Crane Hook Church was built about the close of 1666 or beginning of 1667. It was constructed of logs, which rested upon large rocks serving as corner-stones and supporting the edifice above the ground. This much we know: we know the site upon which it stood. But beyond these simple facts, and the further fact that the building served as an adequate place of worship for about thirty-two years, little can be ascertained.

Nicholas Collin, in his notes on the "Memoirs of Minister Rudman," among the records at Wicaco, as quoted by Benjamin Ferris, states, in referring to the early Swedes, that "their mild virtues also changed their former foes, the Dutch, into friends, so that they became members of their church. This happened the more easily as the Hollanders had no clergyman nor church of their own. They were of the Reformed Protestant communion,—not very different from the Lutheran. Their respective languages are in a great measure congenial; and thus, when a great many of the Dutch families had joined in the Swedish worship, a small church was built at Crane Hook, about one and a half miles from the fort, on the south side of the creek, being convenient for the Dutch at New Castle."

Acrelius, in his "History of New Sweden," says: "The church at Christina usually held its services in Christina fort; but for greater convenience a small wooden church was, in 1667, erected at Tranhook, at the distance of one-fourth of a Swedish mile from the fort on the creek: this

was more suitable for the Hollanders who dwelt at Sandhook" (New Castle).

Such are the brief references to Crane Hook Church; writers invariably assuming its existence without mention of any prior facts relating to its construction. Yet for thirty years the edifice subserved all purposes as the centre of all the lower or Christina settlements of church attendants.

Coming after the chapel at Fort Christina and the church on Tinicum Island, Crane Hook was the third church on the Delaware. The fourth was at Wicaco, the old block-house having been fitted up for temporary use, and which gave place to the brick structure built there in the year 1700, which still stands as a memento of the pious zeal of the early Swedes, being but two years the junior of our own venerable edifice in Wilmington. It is proper here to state that, according to Acrelius, at an early date there stood on Sandhook (New Castle) a small wooden church for a while, but without regular attendance.

During the thirty-two years of its existence as a place of worship, religious services were conducted in Crane Hook Church by three regularly ordained ministers. These were Reverends Laurentius Lokinius or Pastor Lock, Jacobus Fabritius and Eric Bjork. The first, Pastor Lock, came to America during the administration of Governor Printz about or before the year 1653, and first officiated in the church on Tinicum Island as successor to Rev. John Campanius. For many years this Pastor Lock was a prominent actor in river affairs, sacred and secular, his name frequently occurring in various attitudes in the law records of the

time. He was for several years the only minister serving the different congregations on the entire river,—a state of affairs from which he was himself one of the first sufferers. For when he had the misfortune to be deserted by an eloping wife and sought another to supply her place, he found it easier to find a willing companion than to make her his wife, from the lack of a clergyman to perform the wedding ceremony. And when from the necessities of his large household the urgency tempted him to perform his own ceremony in marrying himself to his proposed bride, who was but seventeen years old, his offence caused his suspension from the ministry for a time. But his sufferings did not end here. For when, in search of evidence against the wife-stealer, he broke open the renegade's trunk, the poor man as a punishment was made to pay all the debts the absconder had left behind; a travesty of justice rarely excelled in the jurisprudence of any age or country. Pastor Lock had moreover in the people's behalf more than once condemned the extortions of an odious government, by which he incurred the suspicion of having aided a preposterous movement known as the "Long Finn Rebellion," which alarmed the country in 1669, and for which he earned the contemptuous censure of the governor in New York. After long and varied service Pastor Lock became afflicted with lameness, and according to Acrelius "his old age was burthened with many troubles," from which he was relieved by death in 1688.

Rev. Jacobus Fabritius, the second pastor at Crane Hook Church, was equally celebrated as an active participant in both religious and general affairs on the Delaware, where

his name frequently appears in the reports of both church and legal proceedings. But the somewhat contradictory records render uncertain the date and duration of his ministerial services at Crane Hook Church. From the often repeated statement that he was called directly from New York and preached his first sermon at the Wicaco Church in the year 1677, it has been inferred that that occasion marked his first appearance on the Delaware; but the records distinctly show that he had been among the lower congregation here in a presumably clerical capacity at least five years previously. He was a Dutchman, and his first arrival in America was at New York on the 20th of February, 1669; and for the two years following he ministered to the Lutherans there, apparently amid much dissension, when, in July, 1671, his New York congregation expressed the desire "to have nothing further to do with him," and appointed a person to settle his accounts. Thereupon Fabritius asked leave to give his valedictory, and the following year he appeared on the Delaware. A petition from the Lutherans on the Delaware, with fourteen signatures appended on behalf of the whole congregations concerned, dated June 1, 1675, refers to a former petition with a document dated the 10th of December, 1672, whereby they divided the river into two parishes, so that all above Verdrietige Hook (Edgemoor) should be under the pastorate of Rev. Mr. Laers (Pastor Lock), and all below Verdrietige Hook under the pastorate of Magister Fabritius; and they humbly requested the governor to confirm the desired division and "also their Mag^r Jakobus Fabricius." This was presented as from "the churches of Swaenewyck and

Kraenhoek ;" but it was followed in August by a remonstrance from a few of the Swedes and Finns belonging to Crane Hook Church against the acceptance of Fabritius as their minister on the ground that neither they nor their wives and children could understand him. No further action is shown respecting this particular matter ; and, as Fabritius was a month later wholly suspended from exercising his function as a minister or preaching anywhere within the government, we are left in doubt as to the extent or continuance of his earliest ministerial services on the Delaware. The alleged cause of his suspension from the ministry was his violent and lawless conduct during a bitter contest respecting the labor and taxation for dyking certain marshes near New Castle. The opposing parties seem to have assembled in Crane Hook Church, where Fabritius vigorously protested against the scheme, and the angry contestants were led into a disturbance, for which the pastor and an accomplice were promptly arrested. A vigorous opponent of the project and resulting taxation having been seized by the authorities, the Magister earnestly denounced the unjust proceedings, loudly declaring that if the arrested man, who had done no wrong, must go to prison, he, too, would go ; and was taken at his word.

It is probable that in the early lack of places for public assemblies, Crane Hook Church had before been used for meetings of citizens ; and this may not have been the first time its walls resounded with the noises of wrangling as well as with the sounds of worship.

Readers of these old records are unavoidably impressed with much of the reported conduct of these colonial minis-

ters as discreditable and derogatory to their calling. But it should be remembered that the statements come from unfriendly reporters giving one side of debatable subjects, often distorted by national prejudices. Nor should it be forgotten that these clergymen had cast their lot with the common people engaged in a common struggle with the forces of nature, wherein it was difficult to consult the mere proprieties of life. In close sympathy with their parishioners in all their trials and hardships, these ministers were in no condition to pose in dignified seclusion as models of clerical decorum: their frontier necessities did not admit of it. An impartial scrutiny of their conduct reveals no crime or actual immorality, and, if they were sometimes carried beyond prudence or propriety in the heat of controversy, it was not an unpardonable offence. Indeed, it may well be doubted whether it was not to the credit of Pastor Lock that he resented the petty arrogance of the government at the risk of promoting rebellion, or whether Minister Fabritius did not evince a loyal faith to conviction in offering to share imprisonment with the man he thought wronged. Both pastors probably deserved the reverent affection their respective congregations expressed for them.

The practical government of these river territories was then a species of paternal despotism. Under the supreme and irresponsible rule of the Duke of York, it was administered by an executive "commander" and seven justices of the peace, of whom any four constituted a court of judicature. They were appointed by the duke's governor in New York, and their offices and acts were alike dependent upon his will. Under such control their powers seemed

without limit, ranging over the whole scope of colonial affairs, temporal, spiritual, and mixed. They ordered the construction of dykes and roads; they undertook to mediate in household troubles and neighborhood scandals. They established churches and enforced payment to the ministers; they required church-wardens to test and secure just standards of measurement; they ordered the repair of private grist-mills; they cared for the provisioning of indentured children at the expiration of their domestic terms; they ordered the stoppage of vessels sailing above favored New Castle; and in at least one instance they permitted an inhabitant of Crane Hook to continue living there with two wives, on the ground that both Dutch and English precedents could be found for such indulgence.

After the early service of Magister Fabritius at Crane Hook Church, as before stated, this gentleman was called in 1677 to Wicaco, where he served the congregation, probably without interruption, until August, 1684, at least, and perhaps longer. It is not known at what time he returned from Wicaco to Crane Hook Church, but he continued to officiate in the latter until his growing blindness prevented uninterrupted service, when it was opened and closed at intervals of months at a time. Mr. Fabritius died in 1693; and with the earlier death in 1688 of Pastor Lock with his prior disabilities all the river churches were destitute of ministers for several years prior to the arrival of the missionaries sent from Sweden, when Rev. Eric Bjork conducted his first divine service in Crane Hook Church on the 11th of July, 1697. This zealous rector at once entered upon the work of erecting the now existing stone edifice

familiarly known as the "Old Swedes' Church;" but he meanwhile continued services for nearly two years longer in Crane Hook Church, wherein the last divine service was held on the fourth Sunday after Easter in the year 1699, while the dedication services in the new church took place on Trinity Sunday of the same year. Until the completion of this now ancient structure, Crane Hook Church served the purposes of the fast growing Swedish parishioners, but, owing to a like growth and for greater convenience of the Dutch, they had partially formed a separate congregation at Swanwyke on the easterly side of New Castle, to which end they had taken steps to secure land for a church site, grave-yard, and glebe in 1678, and by 1683 they had dissolved religious partnership with the Swedes at Crane Hook and built a church of their own, as is shown by a letter written in the latter year by William Penn stating that the Dutch had a meeting-place for religious worship at New Castle.

The same increase of population in due time led to the erection of churches on the easterly side of the river, eventually causing the then new and now old Swedes' Church to serve the needs of the more immediately surrounding settlements only.

Reference has been made to the predominant and continued use of Dutch money and measurements in the business affairs of the olden time. Indeed, both the tenacity of old customs and transition to the new are curiously illustrated in the reported transactions of business and other affairs. It was something like ten years after the English conquest in 1664 before the names of English currency

appear at all in the old records, and for twenty-five years after the English gained control the guilders and styvers of the conquered Dutch continued to be more designated in business transactions than the pounds, shillings, and pence of their conquerors. Progress, indeed, in business, religious or national unity was not wholly uninterrupted, but rather with reflex waves, which mark, if they do not quicken, the general advance, as was seen in the retrograde motion of a few Swedish church members who were slow in comprehending Dutch followed by closer union in religious and social matters. The unification was inevitable, however hindered; and in the different stages of transition among the varied nationalities not only all the different kinds of money from the different home governments, including the wampum of the Indians, but beaver-skins, schipples of wheat, pounds of tobacco, and other commodities were used as business currency, not unfrequently all of them being combined in a single transaction, while the different kinds as agreed upon to be paid were invariably enumerated and specified in the written contract.

Perhaps an average exhibit, within a small space, of those primitive transactions relating to court, church, and currency affairs will be afforded by a single document, which I here present from the old records in its original orthography and phraseology:

Appeared before the august court at New Castle, "Elice the wife of Orle Torson dec^d shewing by Petition that Jacobus Fabritius heretofore did borrow of her husband the sum of seventy and seven gilders of the money then belonging to y^e church att Swanwyke, as also that there

was yett a small parcell of wampum in her hands of y^e s^d Church, defisiring (sence those of y^e Church of Crainhoek do demand itt) that this court would order her, to whom she should deliver the s^d wampum, as alsoe who shall Receive y^e money bake of s^d fabritius—Ordered that the wampum as also the debt of fabritius bee Received by this church of New Castle as the nearest to itt. Those of y^e Crainhoek haveing already Received a good part thereof.”

The Jacobus Fabritius here mentioned was the rector before referred to as having officiated in Crane Hook Church at various times between the years 1672 and 1677, when he was called as the regular pastor at the Block House church at Wicaco. After his service at that place, probably in 1684 or 1685, he again served Crane Hook Church, where he relieved Pastor Lock, who had become helplessly lame and otherwise disabled. Mr. Fabritius had begun to lose his eyesight about the year 1682, and his increasing blindness interrupted his services, and finally compelled his retirement in 1691, when Charles Springer, who had before aided the pastor at times, continued partial public worship by reading prayers, psalms, and homilies for the remaining six years until the arrival of Rev. Eric Bjork and his fellow-missionaries in 1697.

After the abandonment of Crane Hook Church in 1699, most of the neighboring glebe land, being inconvenient for the use of the minister of the new church at Christina, was soon after sold, and the old log structure was in time demolished and removed excepting the large supporting stones, some of which continued to mark the site down to a time within the memory of the writer of these lines. Part

of the site and yard was afterwards occupied by an orchard, but was still used for a time as a burial-place for poor people.

The orchard trees are now all gone; the supporting side and corner-stones have disappeared; the majestic buttonwood, which long stretched its protecting arms over the rustic structure, died many years ago, leaving its lifeless trunk to mark the spot, which, at last, is indicated only by the fast decaying stump of the historic tree. Thus has passed away a cherished house of worship, replete with tender interest and value as a transitional waymark in the progress of those ancestral peoples whose life and works were the formative material of the later citizenship of our common country.

Crane Hook Church stood upon a beautiful bank of fastland near the river shore, with gently undulating fields on the one hand and the bright and majestic Delaware on the other. To its rustic cupola the old bell, which had long done varied service in Fort Christina, was removed for a new lease of melodious life; and it is a pleasing fancy to recall its tones pealing over the virgin fields and through the echoing forests in mellow summons to its primitive worshippers. It is not difficult to imagine the assembled congregation exchanging neighborly greetings under the lofty buttonwood at the church-door prior to the service or lingering in its grateful shade in friendly chat at its close. Under the leafy protection of this noble tree the edifice must have been a notable object from the river, as were the arriving boat-loads of people in their varied costumes a picturesque spectacle from the shore. No marshy deposit then separated the fastland shore from the outer depths of

the river, and as the approaching worshippers glided over its tranquil surface to the grassy ascent to the church, they must have been soothed with gladdening suggestions of the Psalmist's words, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." Perhaps even one may not exaggerate the kindly agency which such a picture, with that of the fragrant meads, the singing birds, and the benign sky arching the coupled peace of land and water, may have exerted on a sweet summer Sabbath in attuning the simple-hearted attendants to worshipful thoughts of the merciful Father above all.

Should a spot thus full alike of sacred associations and historic significance be suffered to fade from the memory of men? For myself, while I may be deemed a victim to the morbid retrospection belonging to growing years, I am not ashamed to confess my growing affection for these dear old relics; and there was almost a personal element in the feeling with which I long continued to scan the horizon for a sight of the guarding old buttonwood pathetically lifting its bare, dead limbs as in plaintive appeal against extinction. And when, upon its final disappearance, I, some months ago, hastened to the spot after a long absence, it was with something of the anxiety with which I would have hastened to the bedside of a dying friend, as it was with something of heart-felt relief that I found, from the glad sight of the old tree-stump, that it was not yet too late to repair the mischiefs of neglect.

<p>123</p> <p>456</p> <p>789</p>

