

Early History of Williams College

Rev. Marvin Root (P)

2.

SERMON

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 2, 1828,

AT THE DEDICATION

OF THE NEW CHAPEL

CONNECTED WITH

WILLIAMS COLLEGE,

MASSACHUSETTS.

BY EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.
PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTION.

Williamstown :

PRINTED BY RIDLEY BANNISTER.

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SERMON.

DEUT. VIII. 2.

AND THOU SHALT REMEMBER ALL THE WAY WHICH THE LORD
THY GOD LED THEE.

IT is pleasant to run back to the early days of our own existence and to wander over the scenes of childhood and youth. There is a propensity in man to trace the past beyond the bounds of his own experience. To this instinct, which disposes him to gather instructions from the experience of ages, we owe the origin of history. But it is still more delightful to trace the dispensations of divine providence. By these the Great Unknown intends to bring himself out to view. A leading design of the final judgment is to cast abundant light on this department of divine operations. And eternity will be spent in looking back on the dispensations of God.

Whether this reminiscence is enjoined in the text as a duty or stated as a fact, is not material. It is the duty of all to study the book of

providence, in order to make proficiency in the knowledge of God; and it is an employment which good men will not fail to pursue. The most spiritual are the most steady in eyeing the hand of God in matters of daily occurrence; and Christians of enlarged views delight to take the telescope of history and bring distant events near, and arrange them in an order to throw light on the designs of their Author.

The present seems to be a fit occasion to trace the dispensations of providence towards this college.

About the middle of the last century, (say, eighty years ago,) this region was a wilderness. The limits of East and West Hoosack, (for so Adams and Williamstown were then called,) were first traced by a committee of the general court in 1749. The first meeting of the proprietors of the western township, found on record, was in 1753. The first English child was born in the town the same year.

Ephraim Williams, from whom the town afterwards received its name, was born at Newton, near Boston, Feb. 24, 1714. (O. S.) He was the eldest son of Col. Ephraim Williams, who became one of the first settlers of Stockbridge, and a justice of the court of common pleas for the county of Hampshire. The son in early life followed the seas, but afterwards devoted himself to a military life. In the war

against Spain and France which began in 1740 and was terminated by the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, he distinguished himself as the commander of a company in the Canada service. After the peace he retired a while to Hatfield, but he does not appear to have had any fixed residence.* In 1750 the general court granted him two hundred acres of land in East Hoosack, (reserving ten of those acres for a fort,) on condition of his erecting, and keeping in repair for twenty years, a grist mill and saw mill for the use of the settlers. He was appointed to command the line of forts on the west side of Connecticut river. On the reserved ten acres, a little more than three miles to the east of this, Fort Massachusetts arose. A house was erected for the captain within the fort, which became his principal residence. He commanded also a small fort in this town, a few rods north west of the present site of the meeting house. Under the protection of these forts the first settlers began their improvements; and amidst their hardships and dangers were encouraged, not only by the sympathies of the kind-hearted Williams, but by some intimations of his purpose respecting a free school.

Upon the breaking out of a new war between

* He is thought to have resided occasionally with a brother at Deerfield; but his executors who sold his farm in East Hoosack in 1761, speak of him as if a resident only of Fort Massachusetts.

England and France in 1755, he took the command of a regiment, and was ordered to join general Johnson at the north. On his way to that station, at Albany, he made his will, on the 22d day of July 1755. On the morning of the 5th of September he was ordered out at the head of a scouting party, 1200 strong, and was shot through the head by an ambush party of French and Indians, near the southern extremity of Lake George, in the 42d year of his age. His detachment retreated to the main army, which the same day obtained a memorable victory over the enemy.

Col. Williams was a brave and skilful officer, and much beloved by his soldiers. His benevolence and graceful manners secured him an uncommon share of influence at the general court.

His property, which was not large, consisted of bonds and notes, and wild lands in the two western counties of the state. In his will, after making some small bequests to friends, (he never had a family,) he devised the residue of his property for the support of a free school in West Hoosack, provided it should fall within the colony of Massachusetts and be called after his name; and in case there should be any surplus, for the support of a free school in East Hoosack. The lands were to be sold within five years after the peace. The peace was con-

cluded in 1763, and the town was incorporated, under its present name, in 1765. After these two events it was settled rapidly. The first meeting house was built in 1768.

The executors* sold the lands, and by a faithful and prudent management of the fund augmented it until the year 1785, when, on their application, a board of trust was incorporated, under the visitatorial direction of the supreme judicial court, to support a free school in Williamstown; the general court at the same time declaring, that if there should be any surplus funds, they ought to be applied to support a free school in the town of Adams. To this board the executors paid over near \$11,000.†

In 1788 the trustees voted to erect a three story brick building, and petitioned for a lottery. The general court, in February 1789, authorized them to raise in this way \$4,000. The lottery did not produce this sum,‡ and the town raised a subscription to put on a fourth story.||

* These were Israel Williams Esq. of Hatfield and John Worthington Esq. of Springfield.

† A committee of the legislature, in 1820, reported that the sum was \$9,157. This, it is now stated, is not to be relied on. Israel Jones Esq. one of the original trustees, thinks it was £3200, (\$10,666.) Dr. Fitch, the first president, thinks it was between £3200 and £3300. He would rather say, £3300, (\$11,000.)

‡ The committee of the legislature before mentioned say that it produced \$3,459,68.

|| The same committee say that there were raised by subscription \$903,58. A paper drawn up by President Fitch in 1802, states the

The house, (now the west college,) was built in 1790, but the rooms in the fourth story were not finished till after the school was opened.

As early as September 1790, Mr. Ebenezer Fitch, then a tutor in Yale College, was invited to the station. In September 1791 he resigned his office, and the next month opened the free school,—thirty six years after the death of Col. Williams.

In June 1793 the legislature incorporated Williams College, appointing all the old trustees, transferring to them all the property of the free school, and adding a grant of \$4,000. In August Mr. Fitch was elected president, and in October, just two years after the free school was opened, the college was organized by the admission of three small classes.

At the time of this organization there was no college to the north or west, where since have risen up Union, Middlebury, Burlington, Hamilton, and Geneva colleges. Amherst and Washington colleges have also arisen on the east.

sum to have been \$2,000. But there is a mistake somewhere. That paper says, "The expense of this building when finished was estimated at about \$11,700. The funds then remaining at interest amounted to about the same sum." Now if the original sum was only \$11,000, and the lottery and subscription produced something less than \$6,000, and if the building cost \$11,700, there could not have been more than \$5,000 remaining.

In 1794 the President's house was built. In 1795 the first commencement was held, and four received their degrees. In January 1796 the legislature granted two townships of land, which were sold in May for about \$10,000, and the avails, with a considerable sum besides,* were applied to build the east college, which was erected in 1797 and '98. In the latter year the present meeting house was dedicated. Towards the expense of this building the corporation paid a hundred pounds, on condition that seats should be reserved for the officers and students, and that they should have the use of the house on public days.†

In January 1802 it was stated that the library contained more than 700 volumes, and the library of the students three or four hundred ;

* Dr. Fitch, in the paper before mentioned, says, the additional sum was about \$2,400, making the whole expense \$12,400. But a committee of the corporation, appointed to settle the accounts of the first treasurer after his resignation, reported in September 1799, that they had allowed for expenditures on the east college, (including however some expenses on the west which had been confounded with them,) £3597.9.3, or \$11,991.54.

† The paper of Dr. Fitch states that from 1789 to 1799 there had been expended on the buildings, lands, library, and apparatus, about \$28,000. He reckons thus.

For the west college - - -	\$11,700
For the President's house and barn and six acres of land. } This estimate he lately made.	2,400
For the east college - - - - -	12,400
For the meeting house - - - - -	338
For the apparatus. So much had been expended in 1802. -	600
The rest for the library, say, " " " " " -	567
	<u>\$28,000</u>

that the members of college amounted to 103; that a new chapel was needed, and some additions to the apparatus, which at that time had cost about \$600.

The number of students continued to increase. At one time there were more than 130. The largest class that ever graduated was that of 1804. It contained 38.* Nothing occurred to check the prosperity of the institution till 1808. In the summer of that year some disturbance took place in college. Early in

The funds which had been received were as follows.				The Williams	
fund	-	-	-	} say {	\$11,000
From the lottery	-	-	-		3,500
From the subscription	-	-	-		2,000
The legislative grant	-	-	-		4,000
Two townships of land	-	-	-		10,000
					<u>\$30,500</u>
Take out what is said to have been expended	-	-	-		<u>28,000</u>
Would remain on hand	-	-	-		\$2,500

But the committee of the corporation, in September 1799, reported that, including a very doubtful debt of £132.5.8, (\$441,) and another disputed debt, the fund amounted to £1159.10, or \$3,865. This is decisive as to the amount of the fund after the resignation of the first treasurer and the completion of the east college. If the expenses of that building were no more than the committee stated, it accounts for so much being in the treasury. At any rate, either \$1,365 more had been received than the foregoing items indicate, or so much less had been expended than Dr. F. states. One thing is certain; the expenditure of all the funds was well accounted for up to that date, and \$3,865 remained in the treasury, including a considerable amount of doubtful debts.

* That of 1811 contained 34; those of 1800, 1809, 1810, and 1814 contained 29; those of 1805 and 1806 contained 26; and the last class that graduated under President Fitch, (that of 1815,) contained 24.

the next term a difference of opinion arose in the Faculty respecting the measures to be pursued in the case, which issued in the sudden resignation of the professor and both tutors. From this shock, increased by exaggerated reports respecting the extent of the disorders which had prevailed, the college never fully recovered. The institution was then at its height. The rooms in both buildings were nearly full. The four classes then on the ground produced more graduates than any other four successive classes have ever done, to wit, 115. The next largest number was 113, and consisted of the classes that were in college in the summer of 1808, when this difficulty began.* The class which entered the fall after the rupture, produced but 20; and the four classes which entered next after that event, produced but 89. Other colleges had also sprung up to increase the effect.

In the mean time a gore of land, of no great value, had been granted to Williams and Bowdoin colleges in March 1804. Another township had been granted to this college in Febru-

* The next largest number was 111, and the years were 1804, 5, 6, 7. The smallest number that graduated in four successive classes between 1798 and 1816, was 70, and the years were 1799, 1800, 1, 2.

It will give some idea of the number that failed to graduate, to state, that of the classes in college in the fall of 1808, which contained more than 130, only 115 graduated; and that of the classes which contained 103 in January 1802, 94 graduated.

ary 1805, which sold for \$4,500; and still another was granted in February 1809, which sold for something less than \$5,000.

In 1810 a professor was elected to supply the place of the one who had resigned, and in February of the next year a house and lot were purchased for his accommodation.*

In May 1811 Woodbridge Little Esq. of Pittsfield, made a donation of \$2,500 for the education of talented youth for the Gospel ministry, and at his death, in June 1813, increased the sum to near \$5,700.

In February 1814 the legislature granted \$3,000 a year for ten years, from the tax on banks. This was a most providential provision to sustain the institution during the conflicts which were to follow.

Hitherto, with the exception that has been mentioned, every thing seemed to go well with the college. That spring, at Philadelphia, I met the president, the revered tutor of my youth, after a separation of twice twelve years, and found him cheerful and happy, and with no other thought than to lay his bones in this delightful valley. But at the meeting of the board in September some suggestions were made, in the secrecy of the session, but not with any serious intent, about the removal of the

* On this lot stood the building which has been used for a laboratory. The whole cost about \$1,100.

college to Connecticut river. The suggestion took wind and spread like wild fire. Rumour with her hundred tongues went through the country. The college was agitated. In the event the president convened the board in the spring and announced his purpose to resign at commencement. The board made choice of the Rev. Dr. Moore for his successor, and at the same time elected a professor of languages. In the month of June the president left town for the summer. He returned with a call from West Bloomfield, in the state of New York; presided at commencement, at which time he inducted the new professor; resigned his office; and after staying long enough to receive Dr. Moore, left town about the middle of October, and was soon after installed at West Bloomfield.

Dr. Moore came with a full expectation that the college was to be removed to Northampton. Under this impression, honestly received and retained, the good man made no attempt to fasten it to this ground. And during the six years in which he presided, the expectation was constantly kept alive through the country that the college was about to be removed. The consequence is obvious. Few would attach themselves to a falling interest. The number of students the first year fell to 58; in the fall of 1819 it stood at 87. The graduating classes

for those six years sunk to 16, 7, 21, 13, 20, 13. The college did not support itself but drew upon its funds. These, to prevent the removal, were augmented, in 1819, by a subscription of near \$19,000. During the first year of my connexion with the college, which ended in September 1822, the number of students was 48. It arose, before the Amherst charter was obtained in February 1825, to 120. That event struck us down to 80. Since then a fund of \$25,000 has been raised, and a legacy of \$1,000 left us by Joseph Burr Esq. A new professorship has been established and filled; and this convenient chapel, with all the necessary public rooms, has been reared, at an expense of about \$10,000. Though we have been sending out larger classes, and retain one or two which came in before the panic had left the public mind, we have 87 students. Our library contains a little more than 2,000 volumes, and the library of the students half as many. Our fast property, with the library, apparatus, and cabinet of minerals, has cost us about \$44,000; and we have a productive fund of \$66,000.* The

* The standing committee of the corporation, last month, drew up a report of the state of the funds; by which it appears that the different items, (including what was due on term bills, on notes taken for subscriptions, for money lent, and for lands sold, but without reckoning all the interest up to that date,) amounted to \$44,904,78. Besides this there are thought to be due on the subscriptions of 1819 and 1826, \$20,000, exclusive of what is appropriated for the new chapel.

interest of more than \$13,000 goes to pay the term bills of indigent students.

In turning to the religious history of the college and its prospective connexion with the Redeemer's kingdom, a subject opens upon us of unbounded interest. In attempting this sub-

Add Mr. Burr's legacy of \$1,000 and the trifle that will be received for the gore when sold, and the funds may be reckoned at \$66,000. But considerable abatement must be made for losses on the term bills.

To correct an impression which has gone abroad, that we have sunk a large amount of our capital, I present the following table.

We had on hand in September 1799, - - - \$3,865.

We have received since ;

Two townships of land	-	-	-	say	9,000
The Little fund	-	-	-	near	5,700
3-16 of the bank tax	-	-	-	-	30,000
The subscription of 1819, thought to be worth	-	-	-	-	15,000
Do	1826,	Do			24,000
Mr. Burr's legacy	-	-	-	-	1,000
					<u>88,565</u>

We have expended since 1799 ;

For the professor's house and land				} say {	\$1,100
For repairs	-	-	-		2,500
For library, apparatus, and cabinet of minerals	-	-	-		2,400
For chapel	-	-	-		<u>10,000</u>
					\$16,000
Existing fund	-	-	-	-	<u>66,000</u>
					\$82,000
Deficit	-	-	-	-	<u>6,565</u>
As above	-	-	-	-	\$88,565

The above account of expenditures is in a great measure conjectural. The amount may be more, it cannot well be less. And when it is considered that a large sum reckoned on hand in 1799 was pronounced doubtful, that losses are yearly sustained on the term bills, that during seven years of deep depression the college had to draw upon its funds for support, and that the struggle was attended with considerable expense ; it is not to be wondered at if a small sum has disappeared.

ject I am exceedingly afraid that I shall appear to talk too much about myself. But if I know my heart this is far from being my aim. If I knew any way in which I could set forth the wonderful dispensations of providence which I have witnessed for six and thirty years, and which have surrounded this college as with a phalanx of cherubic wings, and which duty and gratitude forbid me to conceal; if I knew any way in which I could display those rays which have concentrated over this institution and marked its high and sacred destinies, and could thus raise its friends to the duties and hopes which become them, and yet lay myself out of view, I would gladly do it. But standing as I do the representative of the whole college and the whole community of its friends, to make those public acknowledgments which are due to sovereign grace, I cannot cover up all for fear of personal appearances, though I may for this reason cast a veil over a part.

The year 1792, it has often been said, ushered a new era into the world. In that year the first blood was drawn in that mighty struggle which for more than twenty years convulsed Europe and began the predicted destruction of the apocalyptic beast. In that year the first of those institutions which modern charity has planned, and which now cover the whole face of the Protestant world, arose in England.

And in that year commenced that series of revivals in America which has never been interrupted night or day, and which never will be until the earth is full of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.* In pondering upon the destinies of this college in illumined moments,—in moments of intense interest,—it has been no indifferent thought that it arose into being at that punctum of time; that it opened upon the world when those other institutions began to open which are full of salvation,—when the redemption of Africa commenced at Sierra Leone and St. Domingo,—when that moral change began which has swept from so large a part of New-England its looseness of doctrine and laxity of discipline, and awakened an evangelical pulse in every vein of the American Church.

Whatever has particularly connected this college with this march of the Redeemer's kingdom, and especially with these revivals, has carried with it an absorbing interest. I love to consider it as related,—even distantly related to these things. For many years I supposed

* Long before the death of Whitefield, which took place Sept. 30, 1770, extensive revivals in America had ceased. About the year 1772 there was a revival in Stockbridge and some other places in this county. Not far from the year 1780 there was one in the North Quarter of Lyme, (Conn.) About the year 1783 there was one of some extent in Litchfield county. But for many years previous to the time of which I speak, they were "few and far between."

I had been permitted to see, in my native neighbourhood and my father's house, the first revival in the series. But it was with many deeply affecting associations that I learned the other day, that the Vice President of the college, now in office, was allowed to take part in two revivals that same year, one of which was certainly earlier than that which I witnessed.

It was my happiness to be early carried by the providence of God to Litchfield county, and to be fixed in that scene where the heavenly influence was to send out its stronger radiations to different parts of the country;—where thrice twenty congregations, in contiguous counties, were laid down in one field of divine wonders. There it was my privilege to be most intimately associated with such men as Mills and Gillet and Hallock; names which will be ever dear to the Church on earth, and some of which are now familiar in heaven. Their voice which I often heard in the silent groves and in the sacred assemblies which followed, and in the many, many meetings from town to town, have identified them in my mind with all those precious revivals which opened the dawn of a new day upon our country.

During the first seven years of the existence of the college, (in which ninety three graduated in six classes,) there were but five professors of religion in the institution, exclusive of two, who,

seven months before the close of that period, were brought into the church by the revivals in Litchfield county.* In three of those six classes there was not a single professor. From the commencement in 1798 till February 1800, when the two before referred to joined the church, (a space of seventeen months,) there was but one professor of religion in college.† That one and one of the other two graduated that year. For a considerable part of the next term, (the fall of 1800,) there was but one professor on the ground,‡ till joined by another who had entered at commencement but had been detained by a school. From that time, in the four classes which afterwards sent out eighty graduates, there were but two professors; and both of these had obtained their hopes in the revivals in Litchfield county and its vicinity. These were James Watson Robbins of Norfolk, who entered the Freshman class in the fall of 1798; was awakened at home in March 1799, at the beginning of a great revival

* The seven were, Jedediah Bushnell, who graduated in 1797; Gideon Burt and Nathaniel Turner, who graduated in 1798; a member of one of these classes who never graduated here; Caleb Knight and Isaac Knapp, who graduated in 1800; and James H. Robbins. The last two were those who made a profession in Litchfield county. They were both from Norfolk; both obtained their hope at home, in the fall vacation of 1799, in the great revival of which I shall speak; and both joined the church in the winter vacation,—it is thought, the first sabbath in February.

† Caleb Knight.

‡ James H. Robbins.

which I had the happiness to see commence there ; obtained his hope in the fall vacation ; and joined his father's church in the following winter. The other was Josiah Weeks Cannon, who while fitting for college at New-Marlborough, obtained a hope in 1799, in a revival which had extended from Litchfield county, and who joined the Sophomore class in September 1800. This is now the Rev. Mr. Cannon, the Principal of our academy. These two young men laboured hard and with many discouragements through the winter to get up prayer meetings. But the next spring,—about the middle of the spring term, (said my informant with a glow of feeling,) the religious character of the college received an important change from the accession to the Freshman class of four young men from the revivals in Litchfield county ; two from Torrington and two from Norfolk. Of those from Torrington, one was Timothy Phelps Gillet, son of my early friend, the Rev. Alexander Gillet ; the other was James Beach, who fitted for college with him, and is now a laborious and successful minister in Litchfield county. In this way the influence of the new era gradually crept upon the college, which from that time began to rise up to the sacred distinction of being the birth place of American missions.

When I received this account from one of the

early actors in that scene, it filled me with gratitude and wonder to discover that the religious destinies of the college which are now opening with such unspeakable interest upon my age, received such an impression from the revivals in which I spent the labours of my youth.

Hitherto the new spirit had not fallen upon this congregation. A long scene of spiritual death had prevailed. But the time had now come for a morning to open which I trust will never go down. In the spring of 1805 a great revival commenced under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Swift, which continued between two and three years, and added 135 to the church. This good man had long laboured with little success, and for some time had been so pressed with discouragement as to think seriously of taking a dismissal. One day as he was walking his fields, cast down with reflections on the state of his people, an agony came upon him. He supported himself by the fence and wrestled with God. Soon after this the revival commenced, and extended some influence to the college, where five began to hope. It continued in town to some extent through the winter, and in the spring of 1806 was renewed with greater power.

That spring was made memorable to the college by the admission to its bosom of those two distinguished youth, Gordon Hall and Samuel

John Mills; the former to the Sophomore class, the latter to the Freshman. Mills was the son of my early friend, the Rev. Samuel John Mills of Torrington, Litchfield county; was known to me from a child; and received his permanent impressions in one of the most glorious revivals I have ever seen, in 1798, though he did not obtain relief till the month of November 1801. He at once devoted himself to the cause of missions, and with a heart glowing with this desire entered upon his course of education. When he arrived in this town he found himself in a revival of religion. He could not fail to catch the spirit. He had joined a class in which, to say nothing of the living, there were such men as James Richards and Robert Chauncey Robbins. The spirit of God fell upon the class. In the Life of Mills it is asserted, on the authority of "one of his most valued classmates," that he was much engaged before the event and during its continuance; was more resorted to than any other by the awakened; and was reputed the principal instrument. And yet his modesty and the peculiar structure of his mind prevented him from taking a conspicuous part in public meetings.

In the course of the summer eight or ten of that class became subjects of the work, and one or two others, among whom was Gordon Hall, who joined the church in Williamstown that

same year. The account from which I quote, drawn up in April 1827, adds, "Besides those who became church members from the classes that graduated in 1805, 6, 7, 8, 9, about seventeen have since become professors of religion." Another account says, "Thirteen were added to the church, of whom nine became ministers of the Gospel. Ten others were supposed to be subjects of the revival,—of whom several have since sustained an honorable Christian character and exerted a powerful influence on society."

This revival, says the author of *Mills' Life*, "was among the most signal expressions of favour to the Church." He alludes to the well known fact, that by means of this influence Mills prevailed to diffuse through a circle of choice spirits that zeal for missions which actuated his own breast. On Wednesday afternoons they used to retire for prayer to the bottom of the valley south of the west college; and on Saturday afternoons, when they had more leisure, to the more remote meadow on the bank of the Hoosack; and there, under the haystacks, those young Elijahs prayed into existence the embryo of American missions. They formed a society, unknown to any but themselves, to make inquiries and to organize plans for future missions. They carried this society with them to Andover, where it has roused into

missionaries most that have gone to the heathen, and where it is still exerting a powerful influence on the interests of the world.* I have been in situations to *know* that from the counsels formed in that sacred conclave, or from the mind of Mills himself, arose the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Bible Society, the United Foreign Missionary Society, and the African School under the care of the Synod of New York and New Jersey; besides all the impetus given to domestic missions, to the Colonization Society, and to the general cause of benevolence in both hemispheres. If I had any instrumentality in

* Since the Sermon was delivered I have received the following account from a member of our corporation, who was one of the five or six that formed the society, and the one who draughted the constitution. The society originated with Mills, and was formed by Mills, Richards, Fisk, and two or three others, in the spring of 1808, in the north west lower room of the east college, in which the society, with considerable additions, used afterwards to meet. The scene under the haystacks was in the fall of that year. The agent, said my informant, which had the most influence next to the living voice of Mills, was a certain missionary sermon which they got reprinted. A leading object of the society was to influence a select number of public men in the cause of missions. It was a part of the plan to introduce similar societies into other colleges. For this purpose one of their number took a dismission and joined Middlebury college. Mills himself had made up his mind to transfer his relation to Yale college with the same design; and actually made a journey to New-Haven to explore the ground; but for some reasons got discouraged. Attempts were made to introduce the society into Union and Dartmouth colleges, which failed. The society remained here after Mills and Richards and Robbins had set up a similar institution at Andover; how long is not known. My informant was the means of rousing the missionary energies of the celebrated Pliny Fisk, who died in Palestine.

originating any of those measures, I here publicly declare, that in every instance I received the first impulse from Samuel John Mills.*

The revival had not wholly disappeared from the town when Mr. Swift was removed by death in February 1807.

Early in 1812 another revival commenced in town under the preaching of Mr. Nott, one of the first five missionaries that went out that year to India; which added 43 to the church. In April and May it extended to college, chiefly to the three lower classes. Of the four classes then in the seminary, twenty four, according to one account, became pious then, and six since. Another account says, "Twenty one were added to the church, of whom thirteen have become ministers of the Gospel. Several others felt the power of this revival, and their lives have since proved that the effects—were not transient."

In July 1812 that man of God, the Rev. Walter King, was installed pastor of the church,

* It was at the request of Mills and his associates that I carried the proposition for an American Bible Society to the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the spring of 1814. On my return to Burlington I first proposed the subject to Dr. Boudinot, the great instrument by which the society was formed and endowed. Mills went from my house to lay the project of a missionary society before the general assembly, at the time the United Foreign Missionary Society was formed. And the letters of his correspondents, addressed to me by an understanding between us, were the engines that swayed the synod to the establishment of the African School.

and was suddenly removed by death in December 1815.

The parting sermon of Dr. Fitch in June 1815 had a powerful influence on the students. A third revival in college followed. About fifteen became hopefully pious in the course of the summer, and several have since. Another account says, "Twelve were added to the church, of whom nine became ministers of the Gospel. Several others received very salutary—impressions, whose lives have since shown the value of this revival to them."

During the long discussions about the removal of the college, no revivals took place.

"The Spirit, like a peaceful dove,
Flies from the realms of noise and strife."

Scarcely a drop of rain or dew fell on this Gilboa for near nine years; which is the more remarkable as in that time repeated showers descended on the town. The Rev. Ralph Wells Gridley was installed in October 1816. A revival soon commenced, which in 1817 added 18 to the church. A powerful revival commenced in January 1819, which added to the church 109. Another occurred in 1822, in which 37 made a profession.

About the first of March 1824 a fourth revival appeared to commence in college, which exerted a quickening influence on Christians, but had less effect on the unregenerate than was

expected. The great dispute was not yet ended. Twelve or fourteen used to attend the inquiry meetings. Several obtained hopes who endured but for a time. One made a profession, who has since devoted himself to foreign missions. Of others who were impressed, one obtained a hope in the summer of 1825, and is now employed on a domestic mission; another made a profession after he left college.

We have now come to a most interesting epoch in the history of the institution. In February 1825 a charter was granted to Amherst college, which terminated the long dispute. It had been so often said, in opposition to that seminary, that two colleges could not live in the western part of Massachusetts, that the doctrine now came back upon us like a reflux wave and threatened to sweep us all away. The story had been so often told that it had come to be believed, and the inference was, that Williams College must die. A panic seized the public mind and extended to the college. About thirty took dismissions in the spring and summer; and at commencement a class came in of seven, besides one that took an advanced standing; making eleven less than graduated that fall. Our number sunk from 120 to 80, and little prospect appeared of its being renewed. This was a moment of great trial. The heavens were covered with blackness; and du-

ring the awful syncope that succeeded in vacation, we often looked up and inquired, *Is this death?* But behold the providence of God. When college came together the arrows of the Almighty stuck in several hearts. Some old hopes were scattered to the winds. Convictions began to creep upon some who had never felt before. That cloud which had seemed like the darkness of the last day, now appeared to foretell abundance of rain. We stood in awful suspense, for we knew that God was in the cloud. At last it burst. And when I saw the heavenly floods descend, I could not help saying with Manoah's wife, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us he would not—have shown us all these things." It was impossible to resist the impression, *Heaven has decreed that this college shall live.* Why come to raise it from the grave if it is so soon to return to death?

During the latter part of the first term the power of God was astonishingly great, affecting almost the whole college. Several who were absent in their schools, returned after vacation with hopes. Of about 85 then in college, full 70 hoped that they were Christians. The impression was kept up through the spring term; but there it ended.

In this revival thirty five experienced hopes, some of which were soon renounced. For aught I know twenty seven hope still. Twenty

one have made a profession ; seven have already entered on the study of divinity ; and one has devoted himself to foreign missions.

About the beginning of 1826 the revival extended to the town, and in the course of that and the next year added 145 to the church.

This fifth revival saved the college. A few weeks before it commenced a resolution had been taken to attempt, in the strength of God, to raise a fund of \$25,000, to establish a new professorship and to build a chapel. It was seen that the seeds of consumption which had lurked in the college for eleven years, had lain in the talk about removal ; and that to extract those seeds something must be done to convince the public that it would live and flourish on this ground. It was believed that nothing was necessary to give stability to the institution but to fasten this conviction on the public mind. It was seen, notwithstanding all the interested reports to the contrary, that it was well situated for a healthful, moderate sized college,—in one of the most beautiful vallies in America,—in a region perfectly healthy,—far removed from the temptations of cities and large towns,—in the midst of a population distinguished for morality and religion,—where the living is as cheap as in any neighbourhood in the United States,—and where a sufficient range was still left for a college. Such an addition to the funds, officers,

and buildings, it was believed, would certainly produce this confidence in the public mind and accomplish every purpose. But this fund *must* be raised. Unless the institution could be thus placed on a stable and prosperous footing, two of the permanent officers had made up their minds to leave, and the third was apparently sinking into the grave: and the trustees, thus deserted, and discouraged by an eleven years conflict, would probably have given up the struggle. The crisis had come. The fate of the college seemed staked on the raising of the \$25,000; and the subscription was void unless filled by a certain day.*

That fund never would have been raised had not the revival intervened. For in the first place, without that affecting event the principal agent could never have been wrought up to so mighty an effort. By this signal interposition, and by all that God had done for the college, he was convinced that it was an institution dear to Christ. That same influence that had been sent down to save the college, had blessed his house; and he felt that if ever a man was bound to go till he fell down, in the service of an institution dear to the Saviour, he was that man. Nothing short of this strong and immoveable impression could have braced him to such an effort. In the second place, had it not been for a strong

* The last day of November 1826.

confidence in God's purpose to sustain the college, and of course to give success to this undertaking; a confidence which had grown out of the revival, and, I must add, was strengthened and confirmed by a series of most affecting interpositions during the whole course of the solicitation; had it not been for this sweet and sustaining confidence, he would have turned back a hundred times, and especially when there were \$12,000 to be raised in four weeks, and the most practical men pronounced with emphasis and concern, that, in the embarrassed state of commerce then existing, it could never be done. In the third place, without that revival he never would have found such favour with the churches. It was evident to all good men who heard the story, that the institution then suffering in the agonies of death, had been owned by heaven, and had been selected as an instrument of vast good to the Church.—And when success was attained, he could not but exclaim, with emotions never to be forgotten, and in a moment when the whole influence of that revival broke upon his mind at once; *This college has been saved by the Holy Ghost; and to the Holy Ghost let it be forever devoted, as a scene of revivals of religion, to raise up ministers and missionaries for Christ and his Church.* I will go home, said he, and preach this doctrine to the trustees, and faculty, and students, and the people of the

town, and to all the friends of Williams College. And this is the doctrine, beloved friends, which I am anxious to preach to you. I would it were written on the broad side of heaven, where all the friends of the college might read it till the final conflagration.*

It is an affecting thought that the little class of seven which entered in that darkest hour, will be the first to hold their recitations in this house which the pity of our God has reared.

And while I acknowledge the supreme hand, I never can forget the human benefactors to whose kindness we owe this building. I send them my gratitude and the gratitude of the whole college from the house which they have reared, and in this moment of its consecration. I should love to see their names hang on these walls by the side of Williams and Little;† but I pray that they may be enrolled on a higher tablet, and be emblazoned with light when this marble shall cease to speak.

The sixth and last revival which we have enjoyed, began about the first of March 1827.

* Let none fear that this marked attention to religion would crowd out the interests of science. The greatest enemies of science among youth are dissipation and indolence. Let sober habits take the place of the former, and a conscientiousness to improve time and qualify themselves for usefulness rouse the latter, and higher attainments will be made in every thing that can elevate the character or contribute to the advancement of human happiness.

† Two marble slabs in honour of these benefactors, are placed in the wall on the right and left of the pulpit.

and continued till vacation. It spent its chief force on the two lower classes, from which six professed religion.

The whole number of graduates up to this year inclusive, is 673. Many of the last four classes have not yet entered on their professions. The whole number of graduates up to the year 1824 inclusive, was 582. Of these, 198, (more than a third,) have become preachers of the Gospel. The last four classes promise a much greater proportion.

I now come back to the doctrine which I am anxious to preach to you ;—which fastened itself on my heart in one of the brightest moments of my existence. Could I reach so far I would send my voice into every corner where lurks a son or friend of Williams, and call upon him to unite in devoting^r this college to the Holy Spirit as a scene of revivals of religion, and to the blessed Redeemer as an engine to bring on the millennial glory of his Church. It is admirably located for such an operation,—in a county among the purest and best that the world ever saw, and far retired within the vales of the mountains from the contagion of the world. The sacred distinctions put upon it through the whole course of its history, and the wonderful interpositions for its preservation, warrant the hope that such a destiny is designed by heaven. It was resuscitated when it was no longer alive.

This is its resurrection state. And why was it raised but that it might live to him who died and rose again? The affecting mercies which have attended all its course, have heaped everlasting obligations upon us to devote it to God. Poor is that heart which cannot feel motives like these. Withered be the tongue that will not swear to this claim. For one I must confess that it is the paramount wish of my heart to see this college exerting high energies upon the kingdom of Christ and sending salvation to the ends of the earth. For several years my chief desire to live has been that I might do something for the Saviour through the influence of this institution. All my thoughts and plans of usefulness centre here. And such hopes are encouraged by the times in which we live. A new age is opening on the world, which will throw out greater wonders than have yet been seen. Tens of thousands of ministers and missionaries are wanted. All the colleges connected with a religious influence, may be expected to be visited with revivals as colleges never were before.

And if the colleges are ever to be the orbs whence the rays of a sanctified ministry are to be sent into the regions of upper and nether darkness, their friends must devote them to Christ, and follow the dedication with prayers not to be denied. It is distressing to reflect how little the colleges are remembered at the

throne of grace, and how little they are devoted by their friends, their guardians, their teachers, to the honour of him who purchased the earth and all its institutions with his blood; how much they are made to subserve a worldly policy and a system of secularized science, to the neglect of him who made and of him who redeemed the world. It is of the last importance to the interests of God and man that the colleges should be so organized and so conducted as to exert upon the students, not indeed a sectarian power, but the highest possible amount of sound religious influence. Among the teachers this object should throw the shadow of its form upon every measure, and this desire should beat in every pulse of the heart. But the Christian public have no right to expect this state of things, unless, with all the interest and influence they have in the colleges, they devote them to Christ, and follow the consecration with their never ceasing prayers. Consecration is of great efficacy with God; and prayer, we know, will move the heavens when nothing else can do it.

And now to the special work for which we assembled. If ever a building ought to be inscribed all over with *Holiness to the Lord*, this is that building. God himself has reared it. It has been erected by the Holy Ghost. The funds were furnished by that glorious revival which will never be forgotten on earth or in

heaven, and by a most marked and affecting and continued interposition of divine providence. They were yielded by the glowing hearts of good men, eager to make an offering to Christ. It would be sacrilege to apply the building to the uses of mere unhallowed science, or to any other interest than that of God. Let it be devoted to science as subservient to the Redeemer's kingdom. Let it be devoted to pure and undefiled religion. To me it has always appeared a sacred place. I have seldom entered the conference room without emotion, at thought of those anxious crowds which future revivals of religion may assemble there.

To the honour and glory of the ever-blessed Trinity,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—we dedicate this house. And if I knew any way to send down a message to future generations, I would charge all posterity to hold it thus devoted. In these spacious apartments may science be anointed with the heavenly chrism and be called after his name. In the conference room and in this chapel may the spirit of Pentecost sway and melt the assemblies. May many be born here. May prayers go up from this place that shall bring down blessings on successive classes and on the world at large. From this devoted spot may there go forth a long succession of able and faithful ministers of Christ, and a long list of holy missionaries, who, in the

spirit of a Mills and a Hall, a James and William Richards, a Rice and a White, a King and a Brigham, a Harvey and a Read, shall bear the pity of a dying Saviour to benighted nations. My head will soon be laid. But after my dust shall have mingled with the dust of my fathers, may a long train of successors in office fill this house with their prevailing prayers and their victorious songs. And may the loud triumphs of millennial joy be chanted through these aisles. Amen and Amen.

