

1794—1894.



CENTENNIAL MEMORIAL

ENGLISH

PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION,

HARRISBURG, PA.

GEO. B. STEWART, *Editor.*

HARRISBURG, PA.:
HARRISBURG PUBLISHING CO.
1894.

BEGINNINGS OF PRESBYTERIANISM IN THE MIDDLE COLONIES.

By Rev. JOHN DEWITT, D. D., LL. D.

I need not assure you of the great pleasure with which I received your invitation to take part in the services by which you had decided to celebrate the hundred years of our church's life. I say our church; because, after all, this church must always be mine in a sense in which no other church can be. I was born one of its members; and when my membership in the Church of God was recognized in the sacrament of baptism, it was among the children of this church that my name was enrolled. It was in the catechetical class and in the Sunday-schools of this church that I was instructed in the principles of our religion; and when I was led to confirm by my own act the vows of baptism, it was here that I united with some of you in partaking for the first time of the Lord's Supper. From this church I went to the Theological Seminary; and I must always remember, with great distinctness, that it was in the lecture-room of this church, while my father and Dr. Robinson were sitting in the pulpit, that I preached my first sermon to a company of friends, of whom some are before me at this time.

And Harrisburg can never be anything to me but home; my own city, the city of my people. A month or two ago I had occasion to spend two days here, and brought with me

one of my nephews. Both of us were deeply interested in visiting the resting places of five generations of our ancestors; and it was with no ordinary feelings that, in reading the epitaphs of those from whom we were descended, we found among them the names* of the first white settler of the place, of the founder of the city, of the first Senator from the Commonwealth, of the first president of the town's eldest bank, and of one who for a half century was pastor of the city's eldest Christian congregation.

One who was born and reared in this place must always think of the beauty of its situation with enthusiasm. It is my good fortune always to have lived in the presence of some strikingly beautiful natural object. My first parish was on the banks of the Hudson, just at the southern edge of the broad Tappan-zee. Northward my vision was bounded by the bold outlines of the lower Highlands, while looking down the river, I could

See sunrise rest or sunset fade
Along the frowning palisade.

From the banks of the Hudson I went to Boston and the banks of the Charles where it broadens into the Back-bay. Around me were the hills and uplands made memorable by a great history, and made to sing with beauty by the energy and intelligence of a great people; while a short walk brought me to the noble harbor and bay, "where," as Emerson has said,

Twice a day the loving sea
Takes Boston in his arms.

* John Harris, the first; John Harris, the second; William Maclay William Wallace; William Radcliffe DeWitt.

From Boston I went to Philadelphia; to the loveliness of Fairmount and the Wissahickon, and the broad and shining glory of the stately Delaware. From Philadelphia I was called to Lane Theological Seminary, and lived on Walnut Hills. The banks of the Ohio are beautiful from Pittsburg to the Mississippi; but at no point are the hills clothed with a more glorious green or with statelier trees, than at Cincinnati. From the valley of the Ohio I moved to the great City of the Lake; and I am sure that all of you who last summer saw the living waters of Lake Michigan must have been profoundly impressed with the magnificence of that great inland sea. And now at Princeton—whether looking eastward over the great plain lands toward the ocean, or westward to the first foothills of the mountains, or about me on the stately trees which have helped to give fame to our University town—I rejoice that my lot has again been cast in a place “suffused and saturated with the element of beauty.”

But the beauty of Harrisburg has a charm for me which that of no other place possesses. And sometimes, when I begin to fear that the charm resides, not in the scene but in my relation to it, I dissipate the fear by reading what another Harrisburger, the late Dr. Benjamin Wallace, has written of it; and I will please myself by reading it to you. “If there be a more beautiful spot on earth,” writes Dr Wallace in his paper on the Insurrection of the Paxton Boys, “if there be a more beautiful spot on earth than that where the men of Paxton settled, we have never seen it. From its source in Otsego Lake, along by its lovely windings where the Chemung intersects the North Branch, by the Valley of

the Wyoming which lives forever in the imagination of Campbell, but which is fairer even than the semi-tropical fancy of which he was enamored; on by the bold scenery of the meeting of its waters at Northumberland, to its broad glory and its magnificent union with the Chesapeake, every mile of the Susquehanna is beautiful. Other rivers have their points of loveliness or of grandeur; the Susquehanna has every form of beauty and sublimity that belongs to rivers. Everywhere its course is deflected. It begins a wooded lake; it winds a limpid brook by meadows and over silver pebbles; it makes its way through mountains; it loiters restingly by their base; it sweeps in broad courses by the valleys. Its vast width in its mad Spring freshets, when, swollen by the melted snows, it rushes from the hills with irresistible force, leaves with its fall island after island in its mid channel of the richest green and the most surpassing beauty; while those passages through the mountains afford points of scenery, which it is no exaggeration to call sublime. The Susquehanna makes the grandest of these passages just below the mouth of the Juniata. Its course there is several miles long, before it entirely disengages itself from the rapids called Hunter's Falls, which are the remains of the rocky barrier that once resisted its way. Entirely at liberty, it pours its stream, a mile wide, along a channel some fifty feet beneath its eastern bank. About seven miles below the mountains, at a point where they look blue in the distance, flows in a little stream, which the Indians called Pextang, Paixtang, or Paxton. This mountain range is the northern boundary of the great valley, which, underlaid with blue limestone, covered originally with the richest

and noblest forest growth, and including within it the garden of the Atlantic slope extends from Newburg on the Hudson, by Easton on the Delaware, by Reading on the Schuylkill, by Harrisburg on the Susquehanna, by Carlisle and Chambersburg, and Hagerstown and Winchester, until it loses itself in the North Carolina hills. The point of greatest beauty in all that valley is the spot where it is cloven by the Susquehanna."* So a son of Harrisburg and of this church wrote more than a third of a century ago, of the beauty of the place of which every foot of ground was precious dust to him. And so doubtless all her scattered sons and daughters feel, as they think of the mountains, and the valley, and the trees, and the gorgeous sunsets, and the shining river, that glorified their childhood.

I dare not trust myself to speak of the tender personal associations and the sacred memories which make a return to Harrisburg almost a holy pilgrimage. For, though I am tempted to be very free and personal to-day, I must pause before I stir up the deepest fountains of feeling in you and in myself. But I cannot forbear to say, that every Harrisburger, who is also a son of this church, must feel himself made better by returning to the place in which that man of God and friend of man, James Wallace Weir, so long did justice and loved mercy and walked humbly with his God.

Among the many traits of Harrisburg that endear it to a native, who has been called to live away from it, is its charming social life. This social life derives no small part of its charm from the fact that Harrisburg, with its surrounding country, was settled not by one class of people,

*Presbyterian Quarterly Review, April, 1860.

but by two classes. We are beginning to-day the celebration of the establishment a century ago of a church called the English Presbyterian Congregation. But we must not forget that, during the most of its life there has existed by its side in Christian amity a German Presbyterian Congregation. While here the spiritual descendants of John Knox have been fed on the catechism of Westminster, there the spiritual descendants of Ulrich Zwingli have been fed on the catechism of Heidelberg. The union of these two peoples has made a broader and kindlier, a far more genial social life than either would have made. Since the Scotch or Scotch-Irish has always been the dominant element in this congregation, and since in the course of this address I shall have a good deal to say about it, it will not be out of place now to remind ourselves how much we all owe to the other, the distinctively Teutonic element, with its less polemic and more genial, though perhaps more lax modes of religious thinking; with its home-loving, earth-hungering sentiment; with its *gemuthlichkeit*, which, though the word is perhaps untranslatable into English, our German brethren have imparted to the social life of this whole district. This union is seen in the union of family names. It is not long since you were accustomed to meet on the streets of your city one of the eldest members of the Harrisburg bar, whose geniality and courtesy were always a benediction; who, in his Christian name, preserved the memory of his Scotch, and in his surname preserved the memory of his Netherland ancestors; I refer to the late Mr. Hamilton Alricks. But the union of the Scotch Hamilton and the Teutonic Alricks, is only an instance of

what is typical and common in Harrisburg families and Harrisburg names. So are united the German Wiestling and the Scotch Weir; so Egle and Beatty; so Kerr and Orth; so Orth and Reily; so Kunkel and Rutherford; so Buehler and McCormick; so Ross and Haldeman; so Haldeman and Cameron; so Gross and Criswell; so Spangler and Hamilton; so Bucher and Ayres; so Fahnstock and McKinley; and so, to refer to the pulpit of this church, the Scotch Robinson and the German Buehler. When I think of the great social and religious value, to Harrisburg—of this union of the Scotch and Teutonic elements of its early population, I encourage the hope that it will be continued in the future. And the social news of the city that comes to me from time to time leads me to the conclusion that the hope is quite certain of fulfillment.

I have thus told you many reasons—and I could tell you as many more—why my affection for Harrisburg has not abated with absence and the lapse of time, and why it is a pleasure to return to the city, especially to take some part in such a celebration as you begin to-day: the celebration of the establishment a hundred years ago of this venerated church; the church of my family, the church my father and of my forefathers, the church that sprang from Paxtang, the church of my elder ancestry. And since we are looking backward to-day, it has occurred to me that it would be well if we were to begin at a point even earlier than a century ago, and call up before our minds a picture of the beginnings of Presbyterianism in this part of the United States. Of course, I must be very brief and fragmentary in my treatment of a large historical subject; but brief and

incomplete as I shall be, what I shall say may prove a not inappropriate introduction to the celebration of the week which this day begins.

The name of the church gives us a convenient order for the treatment of the subject I have to present: the English Presbyterian Congregation of Harrisburg. It is a Presbyterian congregation; a congregation of that peculiar type of Presbyterianism known as English speaking, and the place in which it has stood for a hundred years brings before us the fact that it belongs to the second generation of those English speaking Presbyterian churches that were planted in the Middle Colonies.

When, on All Saints' day, in fifteen hundred and seventeen, Martin Luther nailed on the door of his church in Wittenberg the *theses* on grace and indulgences which he was prepared to defend against the world, a step was taken which divided Western Christianity against itself. In the enthusiasm of the new movement, it seemed as if the churches of the Reformation must be as closely united, externally, as the Latin church of the Middle Ages had been. But events soon showed that the organizing, or Roman spirit, which had determined the external life of European Christianity since the pontificate of Gregory the Great, had given place to the Protestant, the critical and divisive spirit, which has marked the career of the modern church. This is not the time to discuss the question whether Christianity has gained most or lost most by the domination, during the last three centuries and a half, of the spirit of protest, of criticism and of dissent; whether or not the attainment of clearer views of truth, and of the internal

unity, of which we Protestants make so much, is an adequate compensation for the loss of that one fold with one shepherd, to which the Protestant world is so often invited to return. I believe that the compensation is more than adequate. But, to-day, I note simply the great historical fact that, with the first blow of Luther's hammer began the history of national churches and of modern denominational Christianity. This tendency to divide, supported by the relations of the Protestant churches to the civil governments, revealed itself first in the memorable controversy between Luther and Zwingli, touching the presence of the body of Christ in the Sacrament of the Supper. That controversy resulted in setting over against each other the Lutheran and the Reformed, as the two great families of National Protestant Churches. The resources of diplomacy and of theological analysis were exhausted in the fruitless endeavor to unite them. Since the Conference of Marburg, each of the two great types of Protestantism has developed along lines distinct from those of the other's history.

In dividing Protestant Europe between them, Lutheranism, broadly speaking, took Northern Germany and the Scandanavian countries. Its territories were contiguous, and it possessed, during the fight of Protestantism for life and for recognition on the map and in the politics of Europe, all the advantage that belongs to a compacted empire and to racial unity. The Reformed type of Protestantism, the more radical and thorough-going type, pushed itself into those countries which lay nearest to Rome, or which had felt most keenly the evils of the Papacy. Reformed Protestantism was the more widely spread, and

the less racially united. It appeared in South Germany, in German Switzerland and French Switzerland, in France, in Spain, in Italy and in Scotland. But for the fact that, for reasons personal to himself, the monarch of England took the lead in, and so largely limited the progress of the Reformation in England, it would have taken possession of South as it did of North Britain, and the modern religious history of the island would have been the history of a single national church.

The Reformed Churches were not so closely related to the State as were the Lutheran; and for this reason, as for others which I need not stop to mention, they required for their healthful development a form of government, both strong enough for the church's struggle with an adverse environment and representative enough of the faithful who composed it. For such a government, our spiritual fathers repaired to the Scriptures which they had accepted as their rule of faith; and they were convinced that they found its elements in the organization of the churches founded by the Apostles. But there was needed a genius, who could seize these elements and, employing them to form an actual church, could show to the Reformed Churches of Europe a living example of the revived Apostolic church organization. Such a genius appeared in John Calvin, first among the exegetes; first among the theologians and one of the first statesmen of his age. It is among the wonders of the world that he organized, seemingly without difficulty or hesitation, both the theology and the polity which have distinguished the great family of Reformed Churches. The church of Christ in Geneva became the model of the Pres-

byterian Churches of the world. The characteristic traits of this church order are familiar to us all; its exaltation of the truth and of the preacher, its provision for the representation of the people, its insistence on the church's autonomy, on the efficiency of its discipline, and on the subjection of a part to the whole. But we are not all so familiar with the fact that those who have given to the subject severe study, as historians and publicists, find it hard to resist the conclusion, to which our own historian Mr. Bancroft gives expression, when he assigns to Calvin's theology and polity a high if not the highest place among the causes of our system of general education and of our enjoyment of civil liberty and self-government.

The Reformed theology and the Presbyterian order were eagerly accepted by the people of Scotland. They were made the national religion and church order against the enmity of the crown, and they were maintained against a succession of hostile monarchs. Of these no one was more persistently hostile than James the Sixth, afterward James the First of England. He tried the strength and temper of the Scottish character, and found that he could not bend it to his will. When, therefore, the Ulster plantations needed settlers, he invited the Scotch to furnish them; and the Scotch, accepting his invitation and becoming the Scotch-Irish, began at once to justify the boast of their King, that here at least was a people, unlike the English of the Pale, too vigorous to be absorbed or modified by the Irish Celts. There in Ireland our Scotch forefathers lived for a hundred years before the great emigrations to America began. The training of their Irish life was severe

indeed. It robbed the Scotchmen of some of their most engaging traits; notably that gift for poetry which makes the Scotch ballad the most pathetic of popular songs. This gift seems to have died out during their stay in Ireland. But if the exile robbed the Scotch of this great gift, "their training in Ireland," as Mr. Bancroft has said, "kept the spirit of liberty and the readiness to resist unjust government as fresh in their hearts as though they had just been listening to the preachings of Knox or musing over the political creed of the Westminster Assembly"*

It is a sad story, that of the persecutions and oppressions which at last drove them from their new home in Ulster, and across the sea. We can understand the persecutions in the days of the Stuarts, of Charles the First and Charles the Second and James the Second. But the oppressions of the reigns of Anne and the earlier Georges, after all that Ulster had done to make their reigns a possibility; after Derry and Enniskillen and the Battle of the Boyne; these are hard to understand. Certainly, if ever a people purchased by patriotic self-sacrifice the right, I will not say to religious toleration, but to absolute religious liberty, our Presbyterian fathers of Ulster purchased it during the campaign of William of Orange against the followers and allies of the rejected James. Yet it was precisely in these latter reigns that the oppressions became intolerable and the great migrations to America took place. I shall not tell at length the outrageous story, but my subject requires me at least to say something. How can I speak adequately of the begin-

* Hist. of the U. S., Vol. iii., p. 29.

nings of Presbyterianism in the Middle Colonies. unless I tell in brief what were the facts that compelled the Briggses and Brysons of Silver's Spring, that compelled the Flemings and Simontons and McCormicks and Wallaces of Hanover, the Rutherfords and Elders and Gilmors and Cowdens of Paxtang, the Kerrs and Wilsons and Boyds and McNairs of Derry, to leave their Irish homes and clear the forests at distant out-posts of civilization in the province of Pennsylvania?

William the Third highly valued his Scotch-Irish subjects, and during his reign they enjoyed a liberty of religion to which they had not been accustomed. The act of toleration was faithfully executed and the policy of toleration was not changed. But after the accession of Anne, the execution of the act became tardy and unequal, and measures were taken by the High Church party for its amendment. Such an amendment was secured in the sacramental "Test act," by which conscientious Presbyterians were effectively driven or excluded from all public positions of honor or trust. And there were other methods of persecution. "No sooner," writes Dr. Blackwood, "had Anne ascended the throne than the same intolerant High Church party that had formerly oppressed them began to renew their assaults. At one time the annoyances of the Presbyterians of Ulster arose from embarrassments about marriages. At another time they were assailed because their ministers obeyed their Presbyteries by preaching in vacant churches; while the most absurd charges of disloyalty were urged against them in pamphlets and often made the subject of legal investiga-

tion by magistrates."* At last in 1714, an act was passed to prevent the growth of schism, in which under penalty of three months imprisonment and disqualification as a teacher, every teacher of children was forbidden "to be willingly present at any conventicle of dissenters for religious worship." The fifth year of the reign of the First George is marked by the passage of an act which gave back legal toleration to the Presbyterians in Ireland. But the relief came too late; and the effect was only to substitute the oppression of the wealthy land owner for the oppression of the Church, the Parliament and the Crown.

To escape this prosecution the Ulster Presbyterians sailed in large numbers for America. "In Ireland," says Mr. Bancroft, "the disfranchised Scotch Presbyterians who still drew their ideas of Christian government from the Westminster Confession began to believe that they were under no obligation to render obedience to Britain, and had all Ireland resembled them, it could not have been held in subjection. But what could be done by unorganized men constituting only about a tenth of the population, in the land in which they were but sojourners? They were willing to quit a soil which was endeared to them by no traditions; and the American colonies opened their arms to receive them. They began to change their abode as soon as they felt oppression, and every successive period of discontent swelled the tide of emigrants."† We are told by another authority, that "year after year, from the second quarter of the eighteenth cen-

*Introduction to Webster's History of the Presbyterian Church of United States.

†History of the United States, Vol. III, pp. 28, 29.

ture, it is estimated that 12,000 people annually sailed for America from the north of Ireland. Such was the drain indeed that it was computed that in 1773, and the five preceding years, the north of Ireland lost by emigration to America, one-fourth of the trading cash and a like proportion of the manufacturing people." *

Thus in the eighteenth century there flowed wave after wave of Presbyterian immigrants into America. They poured themselves over the whole Atlantic country south of New England and New York. There were two or three small colonies in New England; but New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and Maryland, and Virginia, and the Carolinas received by far the largest share. They brought with them vivid and bitter recollections of the injustice of their treatment at the hands of Great Britain; and therefore when the War of Independence was begun, they were unanimously for the cause of the Colonies and against the mother country. We should never forget, or forget to acknowledge the great debt we all owe to the New England Colonies for the part they bore in the Revolutionary war. But New England would have been powerless without the Scotch Irish people, scattered, as the latter were, throughout the middle and the southern colonies, and as ready as the New Englanders to take up arms for independence; as ready indeed for war as their fathers had been to fight in order to ensure the safety of the Protestant William's throne.

When the Scotch-Irish began their settlements in the middle colonies, and particularly in the Commonwealth of Penn-

*History of the Irish Presbyterian Church, by Rev. Thomas Hamilton, p. 133.

sylvania, they stood in a relation to the civil government entirely different from that of the Episcopalians in Virginia, the Dutch-Reformed and afterwards the Episcopalians in New York, or the Congregationalists in New England. The latter were legally related to the State, their church order was in some sense the established religion; "the standing order," as it was called in New England, "the religion of His Majesty's faithful subjects," as it was called in Virginia. Our fore-fathers' Presbyterian churches were voluntary societies in the eye of the law; and whenever a Royal Governor chose to do so, he was able to make the lives of the members of the Presbyterian churches, and of their ministers in particular, exceedingly uncomfortable. In New York, the Royal Governor did all in his power to extirpate Presbyterianism. Francis Makemie and John Hampton, two of our earliest ministers, were imprisoned by Lord Cornbury; and this for the avowed purpose of putting down the pestilent heresy of Presbyterian dissent; and Makemie had already been made to suffer for the same reason in both Maryland and Virginia.

Happily our ancestors in Pennsylvania, whatever else were their trials, escaped this particular mode of suffering. This church has among its most valued members those in whose veins runs the blood of ancestors who belonged to the Society of Friends. The rest of us may well remind ourselves at this time of the indebtedness of our Presbyterian fathers to that great souled and high minded follower of the Inward Light, William Penn; who, in 1682, came to his province of Pennsylvania to begin what he called "his Holy Experiment"; which "Holy Experiment" was a frame of government, a constitution, of which these were the two

distinguishing traits: first, that the people should govern, and second, that there should be liberty of conscience. Honor, everlasting honor, is due by the people of this church to the Commonwealth's great proprietor. This freedom of conscience, indeed, was one of the chief causes of the popularity of the province of Pennsylvania as a new home for the Scotch-Irish immigrants. They settled in the colony in great numbers. James Logan, William Penn's Secretary of his Province, said in reference to the movement as early as 1725: "It looks as if Ireland were to send all her inhabitants hither; if they will continue to come they will make themselves proprietors of the province." Professor Macloskie of Princeton points out that largely as the result of this movement the population of the province rose from 20,000 in 1701, to 250,000 in 1749.

At once upon their settlement the immigrants began to organize congregations for the worship of God. The evidence is clear that the initiative was taken by the people themselves. They had fought too long and too hard to maintain in the land of their sojourn the ordinances of religion, not to make immediate provision for them in the new land of liberty. And so while they were felling the trees and turning the soil, they made every sacrifice that they and their children might enjoy the stated services of the house of God. What I wish to emphasize is the fact that they were never an irreligious people requiring evangelization. They were from the first a religious people, knowing the value of the Church of God. The organization of these early churches was not due to the ministers who ministered in them, so much as to the laymen to whom they

ministered. This was true of almost every congregation from Philadelphia northward to the Irish Settlement at Easton, and from Philadelphia westward through the settlements of Chester and Lancaster (then including Dauphin), and Cumberland counties.

It is true that their first ministers came from the mother country. But they did not come to evangelize an unevangelized people. They came to small communities, which were Christian from the beginning; communities whose members knew the word of God and believed it, and had studied the great system of truth embodied in the Westminster symbols, and were moulded by it. In this respect, the Scotch-Irish settlements were precisely like the early settlements on Massachusetts Bay and in the Hartford and New Haven colonies. I dwell on this fact for the reason that in the histories of Presbyterianism in America thus far written, too much relatively has been assigned to the ministry and too little to the strong, God-fearing men and women of the laity. The life of these churches at the beginning was in this respect precisely like their subsequent careers. What would the later history of this church have been but for the profound religious life, and the continuous religious activity of the laity—the godly women and God-fearing men; but for the church in the household, the training of the children by parents, and the family Bible, and the family prayers? So it was at the organization of our congregations in all the province.

Closely connected with the churches they founded were the parochial schools. I am sure that I need take no time to show you that the Calvinistic theology must lead, as in fact

it always has led, to the establishment of a system of general education. A people, fed on the religious truths of that highly organized and profound system, will always see to it, as a matter of the first importance, that their children are disciplined and cultured far more carefully than themselves. We all know how true this is to-day. It was just as true at the beginning. Our forefathers planted the church and the school side by side. "With them," as has well been said, "religion and education were inseparable; no religion without the training of the intelligence; no education divorced from piety. The school was always planted near the church, the schoolmaster was often the pastor, often a candidate for the ministry, often one of the pillars of the church."* So Mr. Chambers, writing of the Scotch-Irish settlers in the Cumberland Valley, says: "Simultaneously with the organization of congregations was the establishment of school houses in every neighborhood. In these schools were taught the rudiments of education, of which a part was generally obtained at home. The Bible was the standard daily reader, and the Shorter Catechism was to be recited and heard by all in the school as a standard exercise on every Saturday morning."

But they were not content with this general system of education. They had scarcely been settled in their new homes when they began to feel that the ministry, and the members of the other learned professions, must be provided out of their own families. The Scotch Irish immigration and settlement took place about one hundred years later than the settlement of Massachusetts. The Scotch Irish were without the advantage of a charter of their own,

* Prof. G. Macloskie : *The Scotch-Irish and Education.*

such as was possessed by the inhabitants of Massachusetts. But they began at once individually and through their church courts, to make provision for the higher education. So William Tennent established the Log College on the Neshaminy, that was merged in Princeton College in 1746. So, as early as 1739, John Thompson proposed to the Presbytery of Donegal—the Presbytery to which Paxtang and Derry and Hanover churches belonged—the erection of a school to be placed under the care of the Synod, and the Synod in the same year approved the plan; and thus arose the school at New London in this State. So arose the Academy in Philadelphia, with Francis Allison as Principal, out of which issued the great University of Pennsylvania. So was founded the celebrated school of Samuel Finley at Nottingham, and the school of Samuel Blair at Fagg's Manor. It was precisely these schools and others like them that made the middle colonies independent at the war of Independence, and enabled them to come to the formation of the Federal and State constitutions, with culture and discipline adequate to the great work.*

As to the home life of these early Presbyterians, it must be remembered that they came to subdue to the use of man a section of the country which, if rich and fruitful, was difficult to conquer. Moreover they had to forge and frame their instruments of conquest. The modern era of labor-saving machinery was not to be ushered in for a century. When Thomas McCormick, in 1745, took up one hundred acres of land in Hanover township of this county, he did not have the advantage in reaping his crops, of the great

* See Appendix, Note I.

“harvester,” which his great grandson Cyrus Hall McCormick invented almost ninety years later. Our forefathers rose early and toiled hard. Theirs was not the generation that formed towns and cities. It was not the first, but the second John Harris, who founded Harrisburg. The first generation was a generation of farmers. They settled “near the springs and the brooks and in the valleys.” They lived in log cabins, of two rooms. They found comfort on hard settees and benches. They had few dishes, and few spoons, even of pewter; and they had to be content often with cups and pitchers of gourds. Slowly the conditions changed; and all the more slowly because Great Britain’s colonial policy was as harsh and tyrannical as possible. For instead of fostering, Great Britain did all that could be done to prevent the growth of manufactures in her possessions. But hard as the life was the Scotch Irish farmers were sustained by the great truths of their holy religion, and by that strong racial character that has made the Scotch the most persistent of European peoples. In that early period when they were called to conquer nature, during which, as a great American divine has pointed out, there was in the conditions of their lives great danger of a lapse into barbarism, they were held to a high ideal of life by their theology and their church life. They were lifted out of their hardships by their study of the Bible and their common and their private prayers to God.

The Scotch-Irish Presbyterian settlers of this part of the country have more than once been attacked by writers of our own State for their treatment of the red Indians, and the “Uprising of the Paxtang Boys,” and the summary ven-

geance taken by them at Conestoga and at Lancaster upon those whom the provincial government would not punish, has been made the text of many a discourse against the cruelty of our ancestors. That wrongs have been perpetrated against individuals among the Red men by individuals in every frontier settlement of the country there is no good reason to doubt. To say that among the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian settlers were "men of blood," is only to say that they were like any other community. But that as communities they wronged the Indians there is no shadow of evidence. We may lay it down as a truth based upon a law of God, that no people could ever have had a title to this fruitful valley as a hunting ground. At the beginning, God gave man the Garden and placed him there "to dress it and to keep it." And we may be sure that it is God's will that Esau, the mere hunter, shall always go down before the laborious Jacob, the worker in the fields, the plain man dwelling in tents. The laborious Scotch-Irishman found no difficulty in dwelling side by side with the laborious German man. Together and in peace in this very county they have turned the sod of the valley and the uplands, and sowed and reaped the harvests.

But the hunter, the Red Indian, who would not labor and who contemplated with envy the growing wealth of the white man, mourned the loss of the land as mere "hunting grounds;" and along the frontiers of the country killed or carried off to bondage more bitter than death hundreds of families. It is no wonder, as the historian Parkman says, that the frontier people of Pennsylvania "were goaded to desperation by long-continued suffering." Day after day

they lived in danger from the treachery and the cruelty of the savages whom no kindness could make trustworthy friends, and whom no efforts succeeded in civilizing. We, who remember the civil war, know how easily, at so late a date as eighteen hundred and sixty-one, the most violent of passions were enkindled. What wonder that they were aroused in the days of our forefathers, when it was the custom because it was an absolute necessity of John Elder's congregation, the minister included, to worship God in Paxtang church under arms.* And when Lazarus Stewart was told that the Indian settlement at Conestoga, professedly friendly to the whites, was treacherously harboring and entertaining an Indian known to have murdered a white man's family, what wonder that at the time when the conspiracy of Pontiac was threatening every English settlement on the frontier, a company was raised to inflict the punishment, which a neglectful government refused to inflict? Whatever may be said of this particular incident, this I think is true; that no English speaking population in the country has ever dealt more fairly as between the Indian and themselves than the Scotch-Irish citizens of Pennsylvania; and no people certainly were subject to greater provocations.

The mother churches of this part of the country were planted between the close of the first quarter and the close of the first half of the century. Paxtang, the mother of this church, being founded about 1732. It ought to be said that the period was not one in which the religious life was warm and glowing. In this respect, it was a period of decadence. There was a good deal of mere formality; and

*Parkman's Conspiracy of Pontiac, Vol. II., p. 119, et seq.

there was a strong disposition to distrust religious experiences. This disposition was nowhere stronger than in this part of the country. But the early Presbyterian churches of the Middle Colonies had scarcely been planted when, in both England and America, there occurred the Great Evangelical Revival. *In Great Britain it infused new life into the churches of England and Scotland and Ireland. In America its influence was felt from Massachusetts to Georgia. It was marked by the earnest preaching of great preachers. The sermons of Edwards in New England of the Tennents in the Middle Colonies, and of Davies in Virginia remain to us and serve to show the type of preaching common at the time. Some of its methods were blameworthy, and some of its evils were serious; but the incidental evils were spots upon the sun. It radiated everywhere the warmth and the light the churches needed for a more vigorous life. The Scotch-Irish churches of this section fought against its methods. The Rev. John Elder, strong, honest, believing in the Bible and in the theology of his church, had no confidence in it. But, its influence was felt in all the congregations, and in most of the houses of the Valley. Even before the War of the Revolution it had wrought a great change in the life of the churches and of the people. And when the hardships of that terrible struggle had brought the people nearer to God, the more genial religious life which had been wrought by the Spirit of God during the great evangelical movement was characteristic of the homes and the churches of our

*Here, as in one or two other places, I quote from my address before the Presbyterian Historical Society on the First General Assembly.

fathers. Meanwhile, the country about Harrisburg had been more thickly settled, and the son of the first settler had founded the town. Thus, in the more genial atmosphere of the great revival, this church was founded one hundred years ago.

I do not know how better to conclude this brief account of the conditions that immediately ante-dated the birth of this church, than to urge upon you the duty of keeping green the memory of your godly ancestry, that you may intelligently thank God for the blessings he has given to you, in preparing the way for this church by their faithful and laborious and religious lives. The sons and daughters of this congregation owe a large debt not only to their parents and grandparents who for three generations have been members of this church, but also, and this a debt quite as large, to those more remote ancestors, who while they spun the wool and linen and plowed the soil, read the Bible, and taught the catechism, and honored the Sabbath, and built Hanover and Derry and Paxtang churches, and established schools, and laid the foundations of a great Christian State. If Paul could glory in his people to whom belonged the covenants and the giving of the law and the promises, you may thank God for those from whom you are descended. But while we thank God for them, let us remember, that in leaving to us a great inheritance they have left to us great duties, also. The family religion which was theirs it is ours to maintain; the truth which made them strong it is for us to guard; the public schools of which they were the founders here, it is our sacred mission to defend against all open and concealed enemies; the Bible

which made them strong and courageous and hopeful in life and in death, it is our duty to make our rule of faith and life; and to the God to whose service they gave themselves—the God of our fathers—it is our privilege at this time to dedicate anew all our powers and possessions in an everlasting covenant.

At the close of Dr. DeWitt's address, the Rev. Thomas H. Robinson, D. D., for thirty years pastor of this church, offered prayer. The minister announced hymn No. 730 which the congregation, having risen, sang with spirit.

See the ransom'd millions stand,
 Palms of conquest in their hand;
 This before the throne their strain,
 "Hell is vanquish'd; death is slain;
 Blessing, honor, glory, might,
 Are the conqueror's native right;
 Thrones and powers before him fall,
 Lamb of God and Lord of all!"

Hasten, Lord, the promised hour;
 Come in glory and in power;
 Still thy foes are unsubdued;
 Nature sighs to be renew'd;
 Time has nearly reach'd its sum;
 All things with the bride say "Come!"
 Jesus! whom all worlds adore,
 Come, and reign for evermore!

After the Benediction had been pronounced by the Rev. Dr. John DeWitt, Smart's March in D was rendered as an organ postlude, and the audience dispersed with the conviction that Centennial Week had been successfully inaugurated, and would be a most notable week in the history of the church.