

A
HISTORY
OF THE
Presbyterian Church in America,

FROM ITS ORIGIN UNTIL THE YEAR 1760.

WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITS EARLY MINISTERS.

BY THE
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WITH
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An Historical Introduction,
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New England custom, and was frequent in Pennsylvania, it being understood that the minister was to spend his days in their service. At Westfield, all who chose bound themselves by a covenant to be assessed according to their property, to make up whatever was deficient in the pastor's salary.

The first time Hubbell met with the synod, he put in a protest with Webb and others, and seems for years to have relinquished all connection with it. In 1732, his name appears again on the Records, but generally as an absentee. In 1730, he gave up the charge of Hanover.

He was present as a correspondent at the meeting of the commission in Hemphill's case; and, in one of the pamphlets in defence of that unworthy man, it is said that Hubbell avowed that "any method of promoting a good cause was innocent and lawful."

He prosecuted a claim for arrears, which led to his dismissal in 1745, just before his death.

GILBERT TENNENT,

THE oldest son of Tennent, of Neshaminy, was born in the county Armagh,* Feb. 5, 1703, before his father entered into orders.

He was converted, through the exertions of his father, at the age of fourteen, while crossing the Atlantic. He was educated by him, and was licensed by Philadelphia Presbytery in May, 1725. He received in the fall the degree of A.M. from Yale. The honorary degree of Master of Arts was conferred by that institution for the first time in 1774, and he was the third person on whom it was bestowed. He was called, Dec. 29, to Newcastle, and, after remaining some time, abruptly left. The congregation and the Presbytery of Newcastle complained of his departure; and a letter was produced, declaring his acceptance of the call. The synod concluded that his conduct was too hasty and unadvised; and the moderator reproved him, and exhorted him to use more deliberation and caution in future. The rebuke was sharp, and he took it meekly.†

He was ordained at New Brunswick, by Philadelphia Presbytery, in the fall of 1726. He would have been called soon after to Norwalk, had not the Fairfield Association interposed their judgment that he ought not to be taken from so destitute a region as the Jerseys.

When he went to New Brunswick, he found there several excellent persons who had been converted under the ministry of the

* Family Record in Dr. Alexander's Log College.

† MS. Records of Newcastle Presbytery.

Rev. Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen.* That good man sent him a letter on the necessity of rightly dividing the word, which excited in him a greater earnestness of labour. He was distressed at his want of success: though greatly admired and very popular as a preacher, there was no instance of a saving change in any of his hearers during the first year and a half after his settlement. A severe fit of sickness gave him affecting views of eternity, and he was exceedingly grieved that he had done so little for God. On recovering, he examined many professing Christians, and found their hope to rest on sand. With these he dealt faithfully. Some were apparently converted; but others turned to be his enemies. He preached much on original sin, repentance, and the nature and the necessity of conversion: a considerable number around were hopefully converted, and at sacramental seasons there were frequently signal displays of the divine presence and power. "New Brunswick did then look like a field the Lord has blessed. Alas! now (1744) the scene is altered."

At Staten Island,—one of the places where he stately laboured,—there was, in 1728 or '29, a more general concern; and pretty many were converted. Once, while preaching from Amos vi. 1, the people, careless before, were so affected, that they fell on their knees to cry for mercy, and the general inquiry was, "What shall I do to be saved?"

In 1738, he laid before the synod "sundry large letters" which had passed between him and Cowell, of Trenton, on the subject of the true motive that should influence our obedience to God: whether it should be wholly a desire for God's glory, or whether, with this desire, there should be a desire for our own happiness: Is disinterested benevolence the essence of holiness? The large committee to whom the papers were referred, heard both parties, and delayed their decision for a year. They presented a wise, happy statement of the true doctrine; but it did not satisfy Tennent. He again introduced the business in 1740; but the synod, by a large majority, refused to consider it. This he represented in his paper, which he read a few days after, on the deplorable state of the ministry, as a slighting and shuffling the late debate about the glory of God, and as sanctioning the doctrine that there is no difference between seeking the glory of God and our own happiness, and that self-love is the foundation of all obedience.

At this time, he corresponded with Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine; and Whitefield, in giving them his advice, enforces it by saying, "Our dear brother and fellow-labourer, Mr. G. Tennent, thinks the same, and said he would write to you about it."

On hearing Tennent preach, Whitefield said, "Never before heard I such a searching sermon. He went to the bottom indeed, and did not daub with untempered mortar. He convinced me more

* His Letter in the Christian History.

and more that we can preach the gospel no further than we have experienced the power of it in our hearts. I found what a babe and novice I was in the things of God. He is a son of thunder, whose preaching must either convert or enrage hypocrites."

Whitefield preached, Nov. 20, "about noon, for near two hours, in worthy Mr. Tennent's meeting-house, to a large assembly gathered from all parts; and amongst them, as he told me, there was a great body of solid Christians; and again at three and seven. Several were brought under strong convictions, and our Lord's disciples were ready to leap for joy." Tennent sent him word, Dec. 1, 1739:—"Since you was here, I have been among my people, dealing with them plainly about their souls' state, examining them as to their experience, telling natural people the danger of their state, exhorting them that were totally secure to seek convictions and those that were convinced to seek Jesus. I reprov'd pious people for their faults. There are hopeful appearances among pretty many in the place I belong to." In April, it was said two had been savingly converted in November.

Whitefield wrote to him from Williamsburg, Virginia, Dec. 15, 1739, "Be not angry because you have not heard from me. Indeed, I love and honour you in the bowels of Jesus Christ. You are seldom out of my thoughts. I trust the work goes on gloriously in your parts: the hand of the Lord brought wondrous things to pass before we left Pennsylvania. . . . Last night I read the affecting account of your brother John. Let me die the death of that righteous man. Oh, my dear friend, my brother, entreat the Lord that I may grow in grace and pick up the fragments of my time that nothing may be lost. Teach me, oh, teach me the way of God more perfectly. Rebuke, reprove, exhort me with all long-suffering and doctrine: I feel I am but a babe in Christ. I only wish I was more worthy to subscribe myself your affectionate brother and servant in Christ."

From New Brunswick, April 28, 1740, he writes, "God has now brought me here, where I am blessed with the conversation of Mr. Tennent. Indeed, he is a good soldier of Jesus; and God is pleased in a wonderful manner to own him and his brethren. The congregations where they have preached have been surprisingly convicted and melted down. They are unwearied in doing good, and go out into the highways and hedges to compel poor sinners to come in."

To Mr. Habersham he wrote from Savannah, June 25, 1740, "I like the Messrs. Tennent for preaching in this manner. They wound deep before they heal: they know there is no promise made but to him that believeth, and therefore they are careful not to comfort overmuch those that are convicted. I fear I have been incautious in this respect, and have often given comfort too soon."

To Mr. R——, in Philadelphia, he wrote from Charleston, July 11, 1740, "Keep close, my dear friend, keep close to the dear Mr.

Tennents. Under God, they will build up your soul on your most holy faith. It gladdens my heart to hear of their success in the Lord."

Whitefield went to New Brunswick, Nov. 6, and Tennent, of Freehold, met him, besides other ministers. It was settled that Gilbert should go to Boston, though he pleaded inability for so great a work. His first wife had lately died; and he was so much supported that he was able to preach her funeral sermon while she lay before him in the coffin.

Whitefield wrote to Governor Belcher, at Boston, from Philadelphia, Nov. 9, "Great things has the great Immanuel done for me and for this people by the way. The word has been attended with much power. Surely our Lord intends to set America in a flame. This week, Mr. Tennent proposes to set out for Boston; to blow up the divine flame lately kindled there. I recommend him to your excellency as a solid, judicious, excellent preacher. He will be ready to preach daily."

Tennent took Long Island in his way; and his labours were greatly blessed. At Newport, there was a considerable concern. He preached at Westerly, Rhode Island, from Matt. xi. 28, in going, and, returning, from Gen. iii. 9; rousing up the people, and filling some with great wrath. He waked up the conscience.

He arrived at Boston, Dec. 13. His first sermon was on "The Righteousness of the Scribes," and was speedily printed. It was a period of protracted and unexampled cold; Long Island Sound was frozen across. The Rev. Dr. Cutler, Church missionary at Boston, laments to the Venerable Society that "Gilbert Tennent* afflicted us more than the most intense cold and snow. Though vulgar, crude, and boisterous, yet tender and delicate persons were not deterred from hearing him at every opportunity. The ill effects of Whitefield's visit might have worn off, if his followers could have been preserved from writing; but they carried on his design with too great success." Dr. Cutler said to Dr. Zachary Grey, (Nicholls's Lit. Anecdotes,) "Whitefield has plagued us with a vengeance, especially his friends and followers. Our presses are forever teeming with books. . . . While he was here, the town was as if it were in a siege; the streets were crowded with coaches and chaises. He lashed and anathematized the Church of England. After him came one Tennent, a minister, impudent and saucy, and told them they were damned. This charmed them; and, in the dreadfulest winter I ever saw, people wallowed in the snow day and night, for the benefit of his beastly brayings. Many ended their days under these fatigues. Both W. and T. carried more money out of these parts than the poor could be thankful for." He preached for nearly two months. The assemblies had been full from the time Whitefield preached; but under Tennent, the concern be-

* Hawkins.—Albany Documents.

came more general and powerful. From the deep and terrible convictions he had passed through, he had such a lively sense of the divine majesty, holiness, and justice, that the very terrors of God seemed to rise in his mind afresh when he brandished them in the eyes of unreconciled sinners. Some of the most stubborn sinners were made to fall down at the feet of Jesus in lowly submission. The Rev. Thomas Prince says that "in private he was seen to be of considerable parts and learning,—free, gentle, and condescending: he had as thorough an acquaintance with experimental religion as any person I ever conversed with; his preaching was as searching and rousing as any I ever heard. He aimed directly at the heart and conscience, to lay open numerous delusions and show the many secret, hypocritical shifts in religion, and to drive out of every deceitful refuge."

His preaching produced no crying out or falling down: he did not so much preach the terrors of the law, as search man's delusive hopes, show their utter impotence and impending danger. He left Boston, March 2, 1741, and preached his farewell from Acts xi. 23. He was exceeding strict in cautioning against running into the church. Yet, the opposers say, the congregations, while he preached, expressed their religious joy by a hearty laugh, and that Tennent laughed over those who were under conviction.

He preached eight sermons at Plymouth, in March, with good results, on the sin and apostasy of mankind in Adam; on the blindness of the natural man in the things of God; on the utter inability of the fallen creature to relieve itself; and on justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ.

In Maine, he preached seven sermons at Piscataqua, and three at East York, going from thence to Hampton, N.H., and Greenland; at Portsmouth, six or seven times, his voice drowned by the cries of the people in distress. In Massachusetts, he preached three sermons at Bridgewater, one from Matt. xi. 28, at Taunton, which awakened only a few, and was deep and lasting in only two instances. At Oxford, the Rev. Peter Thatcher, then under great depression, came from Middleborough to hear him, with sensible prejudice, but had not heard three sentences of his prayer before he found him to be a man of God. "I desire to bless God for that sermon. I never saw more of the presence and power of God in prayer and preaching, and never felt more of the power of God accompanying the word on my own heart. Every word made its own way. I felt the weight of it. This revived in me the ministry I sat under in my youth." At Middleborough, he preached from Rom. vii. 9, and said he was never so shut up but once before in his life. No one, however, perceived it. There was, however, no effect at the time; but the people were from that time inclined to hear, and half a dozen were awakened. At Lyme, the sermon, from Ezek. xxxviii. 9, was very dull. Parsons was afraid several times

he would have nothing to say. One was convinced. Next day the text was Luke xiii. 24: the audience very attentive and deeply affected. There was much visible concern; but the effects were far more extensive than at the time appeared. At the East Parish of Lyme, the two sermons were excellent, and were attended by a great, if not general, awakening. At Saybrook, he gave a plain, searching sermon. At New Haven, he preached seventeen sermons. Several were in the college hall. The concern was general in the college and in the town. Among the pious students were Brainerd, Bull, and David Youngs. They visited every room and conversed with every student. Dr. Sproat, of Philadelphia, and Dr. Hopkins, of Newport, were brought to the Saviour. Hopkins was about twenty,—had lately heard Whitefield: he thought Tennent the greatest and best man and the best preacher he ever saw or heard. "His words were to me like apples of gold in pictures of silver. I thought, when I should leave college, I would go and live with him, wherever I could find him." A large number of three upper classes entered the ministry: John Grant, Thomas Lewis, Caleb Smith, Job Prudden, Aaron Richards, and Thomas Arthur became pastors in our church. Tennent regretted, in 1744, having kept no journal of this tour,—the brokenness of his memory preventing his drawing up a full account of it.*

It being assumed that he had gone into New England on the supposition of the unregeneracy and uselessness of the ministers, he said that the reason of his undertaking the tour was to promote his "progress in the Christian course, by that continual train of labours and hardships I foresaw I should be engaged in and exposed to." He said it was admitted on all hands there was a lamentable decline in that region: but, if there were not, "do not general rules admit of exceptions? In extraordinary times, when the Spirit of God is poured out, may not extraordinary methods be pursued without censure?"

He reached home just before the division of the synod, and preached in Philadelphia, May 31, 1741, five times, and baptized eight adults. The next day the Protest was introduced. He published at once "An Examination and Refutation of the Protest." He soon lamented the rupture and the sad aspect of the churches throughout the colonies, and yet suffered a new edition of the Nottingham Sermon to appear. The rise of the Moravians troubled him greatly; and he preached against them at New York, and printed the sermons on Rev. iii. 3; and Colman prefixed a preface. To this, "Philalethes" replied, contrasting Gilbert with Tennent, and

* Gillies. He preached frequently three times a day. Thirty of the students followed him on foot to Milford, and for this were fined by the rector. The unscrupulous author of the Account of the State of Religion in New England since Mr. Whitefield's Visit says, "The college in Connecticut is nearly broke up." Tennent's labours at Harvard College were blessed.

placing in opposite columns his self-contradictions, accusing him of raising a hue and cry after Pharisees, and countenancing such unlearned exhorters as D—l R—s, S—l K—h—r, and L—y—r P—e. He without delay published, "The Examiner Examined; or, Gilbert Tennent harmonious."

In 1744, he removed to Philadelphia and took charge of the Second congregation: his feet were blistered in traversing the streets and visiting such numbers of distressed souls. He called on Franklin to point out suitable persons from whom to solicit aid in erecting a house of worship. The philosopher told "the enthusiast" to call on everybody: he did so, and built the church. He ceased his former method of uttering his discourses, and read them. He lamented his "extravagancy in discarding a wig and wearing his hair loose and unpowdered, with a large greatcoat fastened with a leathern belt for his outer garment." His ministry in Philadelphia was in the main unattended with encouraging success. Andrews said to Samuel Mather, April 17, 1745, "We are pretty quiet at present. Tennent lets me alone, and is generally moderate; but many of his followers grow weary of him, and wish for Whitefield's return." Tennent now assumed that persons of moral life, possessed of a knowledge of the principles of the Christian faith, should be admitted to the communion, and argued strenuously against his own former practice.

In 1749, he preached and printed his "Irenicum, a Plea for the Peace of Jerusalem," to effect a union between the synods of New York and Philadelphia. He did full justice to the brethren he had so bitterly assailed, and especially holds up Thomson—once the object of his unsparing invective—as a worthy representative of the excellent and estimable principles of his Old-Side associates. He freely justifies them from the charge of being opposers of the work of God or heart-enemies to vital godliness,—doing it as cordially as if he had not been foremost and loudest in creating these unfavourable impressions of them.

Davenport wrote to Bellamy, May 29, 1753, "Blessed be the great and good God for a remarkable reviving and quickening given lately, about the beginning of March, to Mr. William Tennent, and, about a fortnight after, to Mr. G. Tennent, before his wife's death and since."

His second wife, Cornelia Depeyster, widow of Matthew Clarkson, made a hasty flight, March 19, 1753, aged fifty-seven; and early in May he buried his mother.

His family being taken from him, he consented to go to Great Britain, in conjunction with Davies, to solicit aid for the college. The expectation of so accomplished a companion in the embassy was an encouragement to Davies to undertake the arduous task.

Whitefield writes in June, 1753, "I am glad Mr. Tennent is

coming over with Mr. Davies. If they come with their old fire, I trust they will be enabled to do wonders." He sailed Nov. 17, and reached London on Christmas day.

Davies was "deeply sensible of the kindness of Heaven in ordering his father and friend to be his companion, not only for the right management of the undertaking, but for his social comfort."

Tennent was cheerful and courageous on the voyage, and preached from John iii. 5 of a Sabbath evening. The sermon was judicious, plain, pungent, searching, and well adapted to do good. Having no opportunity to address the people at another time, he said, "Where there is no good to be done, the door is not opened."

The next evening after their arrival was spent with Whitefield. Tennent's heart was all on fire; and, after having gone to bed, he suggested to Davies that they should watch and pray: they rose and prayed together till three in the morning.

"Tuesday, Jan. 22.—Observing at Mr. Chandler's that our college would be a happy expedient to unite the German Calvinists with the English Presbyterians, Mr. Smith, afterwards Provost of the University of Philadelphia, replied that a union would not be desirable.' Tennent immediately answered, 'Union in a good thing is always desirable.' Mr. Chandler said, 'I have seen a very extraordinary sermon against union,' and reached him his Nottingham Sermon. Chandler had also read the examination of Tennent's answer to the Protest. All that we could say had no effect. He told us he would do nothing for us. The next day we waited on him, and Tennent made honest, humble concessions:—that the sermon was written in the heat of his spirit, when he apprehended a remarkable work of God was opposed by a set of ministers; that some of the sentiments were not agreeable to his present opinions; that he had painted sundry things in too strong colours. He plead that it was now thirteen years, and he had used all his influence to promote union between the synods. He produced his 'Irenicum,' and the minutes of the synod, to show the state of the debate. He urged that, if the sermon was faulty, it was the fault of one man, and should not be charged on the whole body." Davies exerted all his powers of pathetic address; and, in the end, Chandler gave them his name and co-operation.

The sermon had been officiously dispersed through London from hand to hand, and Tennent was sadly discouraged; and his success in obtaining funds amazed him and delighted him, as a gracious "regarding of the cry of the destitute."

Having, at Edinburgh, succeeded in obtaining from the Assembly an order for a national collection, Tennent went to Glasgow and to Ireland. He attended the General Synod; and they agreed to make a collection through all their bounds. The Presbytery of Antrim, "the New Light," Non-subscribers, fast sinking into Arian-

ism, did the same. He was advised to make private collections in Dublin. He returned to London early in October, having received, in Ireland, above five hundred pounds. He received three hundred and sixty pounds for the education of pious youth for the ministry. He sailed November 13, and reached home safely.

Burr* wrote to Erskine, in May, 1755, that the labours of Tennent had been blessed in Philadelphia; in June, "he was more than ordinarily engaged," and there was much to encourage him.

He joined with Alison, and the Presbyterians generally, in opposing the throwing off of the Proprietary government.

In 1762, he began to need an assistant; and, the congregation being regularly summoned, he presided, and, by a considerable majority, a call was made out for Duffield, of Carlisle; yet he, with the trustees of the building, objected to the presbytery's considering the call, until the question between the trustees and the congregation had been submitted to arbitration. The presbytery decided that the call was in order, and gave the commissioners leave to prosecute it. Donegal Presbytery declined to place it in Duffield's hands. The Rev. John Murray, from Ireland, was then called and ordained; but the synod would not acknowledge him, and he was soon cast off.

He died January 23, 1764. President Finley preached at his funeral.

He made his will October 20, 1763, giving three hundred pounds and his library to his son Gilbert, and directing that he should be put to learning, in the hope that God would prepare him for the ministry. He provides also for his daughters Elizabeth and Cornelia. He constituted his wife, † his brother William, and the worshipful John Lyal, of New Brunswick, the guardians of his children, they being very young. His son was lost at sea. One daughter married Dr. William Smith, of Philadelphia; the other died young.

As he drew near his end, every symptom of dissolution filled him with comfort. His disposition, naturally calm, was sweetened by piety.

Tennent was taller than most men, and every way proportionable; grave and venerable; affable, condescending, and communicative. He was endeared by his openness and undisguised honesty, eminent for public spirit and great fortitude; his mind was enriched by much reading, and his heart was laden with a rich experience of divine grace. As a preacher, he was equalled by few; his reasoning was strong, his language forcible and often sublime; his manner, warm and earnest. Most pungent were his addresses to the conscience. With admirable dexterity he exposed the false hope of the hypocrite, and searched the corrupt heart to the bottom. He said of some of his earliest sermons, that he begged

* Gillies's Collections, Bonar's edition.

† Mrs. Sarah Spafford, widew.

them with tears of the Lord Jesus. A lady asked him, at the close of his life, concerning his mode of preaching while in New England, during the Revival. He replied, he hardly knew what he preached; he had no time to study. The many years he had spent in diligent preparation, and his prevailing absorption in divine things, nobly qualified him to preach without effort. The droppings of his lips were as choice silver.

He was a mark for many archers. They emptied their quivers on him; he was sore wounded by their calumnies; but he "shook off the venomous beasts," and lived, serving Christ, approved of God and acceptable to men.

The publications of Tennent, like "the fourth part of the dust of Jacob," are not to be numbered. The earliest seems to have been a sermon preached in New York in March, 1734; in 1735, "A Solemn Warning to a Secure World from the God of terrible majesty; or, the Presumptuous Sinner detected, his Pleas considered, and his Doom displayed;" to which is added the life of his brother, the Rev. Mr. John Tennent. "The Necessity of Religious Violence to Durable Happiness," preached at Perth Amboy, June 29, 1735; two sermons on the nature and necessity of sincere sanctification, contrition, and an acceptable appreciation of a suffering Saviour, preached at New Brunswick in July and August, 1736. A volume of his sacramental discourses was printed in Boston, in 1739; his sermon on an "Unconverted Ministry," in 1740; on the "Priestly Office of Christ," preached at New Brunswick, in 1741; on the death of Captain Grant, in 1756; on "Public Fasting," in 1749; on "Religious Zeal," in 1750; on the "Duty of being Quiet," and at the opening of the synod, in 1759. He was struck by lightning; and the eagerness of some to proclaim it as a judgment led him to preach a sermon and print it, on the "Righteousness of the Scribes," in 1740; his Moravian sermons, in 1742; "The Examiner Examined," in 1743; on a thanksgiving, and on another public occasion, and a third on Admiral Matthews's victory, in 1744; on the success of the expedition against Louisburg, in 1745.

He published, in 1746, a volume of twenty-three sermons on important subjects,* embracing "Man's Chief End," "The Divine Authority of the Scriptures," "The Divine Attributes," and "The Trinity."

A French privateer came into Delaware Bay in December, 1747. The citizens of Philadelphia met in the New Meeting-house, and formed an association for defence. Tennent preached to them from Exodus xv. 3:—"The Lord is a man of war." A large number of copies† lay unsold when the British held the city, and were torn up for cartridges. The sermon being attacked, he published,

* It is said to have had "a florid preface" affixed by six divines.

† Day's Pennsylvania Historical Collections.

within a month, "Defensive War consistent with Christianity,"—the animadversions on which he repelled, in 1748, by a third pamphlet:—"Defensive War Defended."

In 1748, he printed a Fast-sermon, and one preached before a sacramental solemnity; in 1749, on the "Display of Divine Justice in the Propitiatory Sacrifice of Christ;" in 1756, one before Captain Vanderspiegel's company; in 1758, several on important subjects; and, amid his closing days, he issued an "Address on the Late Invasion of American Liberty by the Stamp Act." Most of these are very rare, being scattered in public libraries. They are all creditable to his abilities, were serviceable in their time, and, having served their generation, have passed into oblivion.

ARCHIBALD McCOOK

WAS received as a student from Ireland, by Newcastle Presbytery, in March, 1726, and was licensed, September 13, having subscribed the Westminster Confession. He was sent to Kent, in Delaware, embracing Dover, St. Jones, and Mother Hill, was called March 28, 1727, and ordained June 7. Houston proclaimed, and Thomson preached. He died before September.

The desolate condition of the people in Kent attracted the attention of the presbytery in 1714. Anderson was sent as a monthly supply; Gelston went as a candidate, in 1715; and the next year they had occasional supplies in connection with Cedar Creek, in Sussex. Cross preached for them monthly for several years, and Hook, Thomas Evans, Steward, and Hutcheson visited them. They had also Mr. Peter Finch, probably from England, for a season. After McCook's death, they had supplies for several years.

EBENEZER PEMBERTON,

THE son of one of the pastors in Boston, was born in 1704, and graduated at Harvard in 1721. When licensed, he was employed as chaplain at Castle William.*

* Robbins's Second Church, Boston.