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First Newry

(Sandys Street)

Presbyterian . . .

. . . Congregation:

Its History and Relationships.

BY

Rev. W. Gordon Strahan, B.A.

NEWRY:
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Rev. WILLIAM GORDON STRAHAN, B.A.

PREFATORY NOTE.

When I began to collect material for these notes it was with the intention that they should take the form of a Paper for the Young People's Guild connected with Sandys Street Congregation. But I had not proceeded far until I unexpectedly learned from Mr. William Magowan that he had it in mind to publish a small book upon the same subject, and would be prepared to issue what I should write in an attractive and permanent form. The measure of Mr. Magowan's design was larger than my original intention, and thus led me to write more fully both of Sandys Street Congregation itself and of its relation to other Congregations than I should otherwise have done.

While in the main the material used was derived from official records, I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. F. C. Crossle for valuable information to which he was my guide, and to the proprietor of the "Newry Telegraph" for access to its files; also the help I received from a lecture by the Rev. J. Elliott on Presbyterianism in Newry, delivered in 1864.

I hope what I have written shall be both interesting and profitable to the members of the Congregation, in whose service I have performed the self-imposed, but not uncongenial task.

W. GORDON STRAHAN.

FIRST NEWRY

(SANDYS STREET)

PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION:

ITS HISTORY & RELATIONSHIPS.

PART I.—

THE EARLY PERIOD.

THE year 1642 is a memorable one in the annals of Irish Presbyterianism. In that year a Scotch army of seven regiments, under General Robert Munro, landed in Ulster, sent hither for the protection of Irish Protestants and the pacification of the country. Every regiment had with it a chaplain, and several of the officers were elders. The headquarters were at Carrickfergus, and there on Friday, the 10th June, a Presbytery was duly constituted by these chaplains and elders. The first meeting, says Reid, "was attended by five ministers, viz., the Rev. Messrs. Cunningham, Baird, Peebles, Scott, and Aird, Mr. Simpson being at Newry with his regiment, and Mr. Livingston at Antrim; and by four ruling elders." The Rev. JAMES SIMPSON thus referred to is the first Presbyterian Minister of whose work in Newry we have any record. Lord Sinclair's regiment, to which he was attached as chaplain, was stationed here during

several years, and when it returned to Scotland he did not return along with it, but was still in Ireland in 1650, in which year the Rev. Hugh Binning, minister of Govan, was married to his daughter. It is probable that during the time his regiment was stationed here a Congregation of the permanent residents was gathered together, and that on its departure Newry continued to be the centre of his ministerial labours.

The Congregation had not, however, an unbroken history. The Presbyterian ministers of Ireland, in Presbytery assembled at Belfast on the 15th February, 1649, drew up a Representation which they ordered to be read from all their pulpits. In it they protested in the strongest terms against the execution of Charles I., and "the insolent and presumptuous practices" of the "sectarian army in England," and they declared the death of the King "an act so horrible as no history, divine or human, ever had a precedent to the like." It is not surprising, therefore, that the Parliamentarians when they got the reins of power treated them with scant favour; nor that when they fled or were banished, as happened to the great majority of them, Independent ministers were appointed to fill their places. "The Civil Establishment of the Commonwealth for Ireland for the year 1655," shows that there were three Independent ministers in Newry—the Revs. Thomas Skelson, Patrick Duncan, and William Fullerton; that Mr. Skelson received £100, and Mr. Duncan and Mr. Fullerton £80 each per annum, sums which Reid reckons to have been equivalent to £1,000 and £800 a year in 1837, about which date the reference to it in Reid's history was made. But this support of Independent ministers ceased with the Commonwealth. On the 28th May, 1660, Charles II., recalled by a predominantly Presbyterian Convention, entered

London in state, and ascended the throne amid enthusiastic demonstrations of joy. The state encouragement of Independency in Ireland left hardly a trace behind.

The first Presbyterian minister settled in Newry after the Restoration was the Rev. GEORGE LANG. He was a Scotchman, and his wife was a daughter of the Rev. Bernard Saunderson, a minister of the Church of Scotland. Mr. Lang was labouring in Newry in 1688, and resided at Carnmeen. During the early part of his ministry the place of worship was a Meeting-house "situated at a place still called the Meeting-house Rocks, not far distant from the turnpike on the road leading to Banbridge". * Dr. Crossle, whose opinion on such a matter is entitled to great weight, thinks it by no means improbable that the entrance to this house of worship was by the gate opposite the entrance to Ivy Lodge on the old road that passes Ashgrove.

The Revolution brought serious trouble to Mr. Lang and his Congregation. In the beginning of March, 1689, Mr. Lang was one of nine Presbyterian Ministers who attended the general council known as THE CONSULT, at Hillsborough, and acquainted that body that "there were in their several parishes many able men, fit for military service, who had arms and were not yet 'listed in the army, and yet were very willing to venture their lives for King William and Queen Mary, and the Protestant religion." The Council received the tidings and an offer of assistance on the part of the ministers with manifest approval, and appointed Tuesday, the 19th, at Blaris-moor, as the time and place for assembling; upon which the ministers set out for their several parishes to encourage and incite the people to come with them to the appointed meeting-place. But on Monday, the

* Newry Magazine, 1815.

11th, the main body of the Irish troops to the number of 15,000 arrived at Newry, and instead of marshalling themselves for opposition, Mr. Lang, together with 80 of his Congregation, with cattle and other effects, had to flee northwards by the line of road by which King William was expected to arrive. Mr. Lang made Carnmoney his place of refuge, and in 1690 undertook, with the consent of the Presbytery, to supply that Congregation till he should have an opportunity of returning to his proper charge. The opportunity was given in the following year. On what conditions it was given this extract from the minutes of a meeting of the Synod of Ulster held at Antrim on September 30th, 1691, shows :—

"Appears from Newry, William Stuart, fm the meeting of Tyrone, comissionate to supplicate this Synod that their formr minister, Mr. George Lang, may be requirid to return to Newry agt May next, they promising to pay him yearly twenty-three pounds sterling, comencing from al-saints next, with a mansion-house and farm, as also to get a meeting-house ready, and when they are better planted they are confident his maintenance will grow. The Synod considering this, and resenting the litle maintenance proposid, yet leave it to the meeting of Antrim, when they see these things secur'd, to allow and require Mr. Lang to return to Newry, at farthest, agt May next, and in the mean time to give them some visits."

On the 6th April following, when the Synod met again at Antrim, the Presbytery of Antrim reported that they had appointed Mr. Lang to return to Newry by May next, as they had been directed. Whether the meeting-house was repaired, it having apparently shared the same fate as the rest of the town, which was burned by the Duke of Berwick, or whether another was provided in some other place does not appear. But in 1697, in order to provide ordinances for the people of Narrow-water

who were unable of themselves to support a minister, the Presbytery of Tyrone was instructed to have the meeting-house more suitably situated; and in the year after (June 1st, 1698) it was reported that

"Tyrone Presbytery obeyed appointment in reference to Narrow-water, and the removal of Newry meeting house which is now within a mile of that town."

Mr. Lang died on the 25th January, 1702. How wide the district in which he laboured is indicated by the fact that his nearest neighbours in the ministry in the year of his death were the Rev. Archibald Maclaine, of Markethill, who had the distinction of being the first Presbyterian minister in this country who was prosecuted by the Bishop's Court for celebrating marriage; the Rev. Moses Cherry, of Clare; the Rev. Alex. Gordon, of Rathfriland; the Rev. John Wilson, of Carlingford and Dundalk; and his own son, the Rev. George Lang, of Loughbrickland, who was ordained on the 15th April, 1701, and continued to minister to that Congregation for forty years. Mr. Lang's Congregation must have included all the Presbyterians from Cullyhanna to Kilbroney, and from Mountnorris to the sea. In a sermon preached by one of his successors forty years after his death it was stated—"His extraordinary piety and great interest in promoting practical religion are still remembered by some who lived under his ministry."

His successor was the Rev. Robert Rainey. He was not ordained till the 25th June, 1706. So the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. Lang lasted four-and-a-half years. Changes took place then and soon afterwards that must have affected not a little the conditions of ministerial life and work in Newry. One of these was the erection of Donaghmore as a separate Congregation in 1705, and the forced annexation by the Synod of the large districts of Drumbanagher and Glen to the new Congregation.

Against this annexation the people of Drumbanagher and Glen protested vehemently and persistently, at one time praying the Synod to be erected into a separate Congregation, and at another to be reannexed to Newry. But though the people of Drumbanagher and Glen sent Commissioners to every meeting of Synod held during six years, (Messrs. Wm. Waterson, Wm. Andrew, James Ballentine, Samuel Henry, John Oughterson, James Connely, are among the names of Commissioners heard by Synod) the Synod held by its decision to annex them to Donaghmore. And though during the prolonged struggle the Newry Congregation took no official action, the whole proceedings must have been of intense interest to both its minister and members, and at times probably occasioned them no little perplexity. Another change that must have affected both the minister and members of the Newry Congregation was the union of Narrow-water to Carlingford, as the united Congregation of Carlingford and Narrow-water, when Carlingford was disconnected from Dundalk in 1707. The Narrow-water people were thus provided with the ministry of the Word in their own district, and the inconvenience to them which had occasioned the removal of the Newry Meeting-house to a place a mile from the town ceased. It must almost immediately have become apparent to the members of Newry Congregation that it would now be advantageous to them to have their Meeting-house located within the town. But it was not till the year 1722 that a site was obtained. In that year the plot of ground off High Street, now used by the Unitarians as a burying-ground, was obtained from Mr. Nedham on a lease of lives renewable for ever at the yearly rent of sixpence; and the meeting house, a part of which is still standing, was erected. The building was enlarged at a later period, when it con-

sisted of four aisles, and was capable of accommodating very large congregations. The old pulpit is still in its place in the part of the building that remains. It was occupied by some of the most famous of Presbyterian Ministers, and once on the occasion of a passing visit to Newry the Rev. John Wesley preached from it. Mr. Rainey died on the 10th September, 1736, after a ministry of thirty years.

The next minister was the Rev. JAMES MOODY, who was called from the Congregation of Magherally, and came to Newry in 1739 or 1740. His installation was deferred owing to a reference made by the Presbytery to the Synod of 1739. At this time objection had begun to be made to the law of the Church requiring subscription to the Westminster standards as a guarantee of orthodoxy. Mr. Moody, though he had subscribed at his ordination, refused to renew his subscription at his installation, and the Presbytery asked for direction in the matter. The Synod appointed a Committee to confer with Mr. Moody. The report of the Committee was such that it is better to give the words of the official minute :—

"The Committee ordered for Mr. Moody's affair report that they had discoursed w'th him and that he professed himself to be of subscribing principles and could subscribe what-soever he believed to be true, and desired to live in communion with us."

The Synod, after considering the Committee's report, came to the decision :—

"Ye Synod did on ye whole resolve that they see no cause to disprove sd Presbys transporting him to Newry, and do allow sd Presby to install him to Newry when they see fitt according to our known rules. Also that a member be sent to Newry to preach Sab. come 7 night, and read this our minute."

Thus, though the decision was somewhat weak in its tone, the way was cleared for the installation of Mr. Moody as minister of the Congregation. But it

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appears from references made to him in controversial pamphlets of a later date that he never renewed his subscription to the Confession of Faith, and that he was never installed as minister of Newry, though he officiated as pastor of the Congregation for forty years. He died on the 26th May, 1779.

The Rev. BOYLE MOODY, son of the Rev. JAS. Moody, succeeded him. Previous to his call to Newry he was a member of the Presbytery of Dublin, and connected with the Southern Association. He was installed by the Presbytery of Armagh, on 11th Aug., 1779. His ministry continued for almost twenty years. He died on the 5th February, 1799, after a lingering illness, at the age of forty-five. In an obituary notice it was stated of him—"He was the able advocate and bright pattern of revealed religion as taught by its meek and benevolent Author; his judgment was cultured and his taste embellished by a familiar acquaintance with the English classics. He was able to meet death with that serene fortitude which conscious integrity and the stable hopes of a blessed immortality can alone inspire."

The next minister, the Rev. JOHN THOM, was a native of Scotland, and a licentiate of the Presbytery of Aughterarder. He was ordained on the 5th August, 1800. His ministry lasted only eight years. It is recorded of him that his manners were quiet and conciliating, and his social intercourse with his friends was a sure source of cheerfulness and pleasantry. He died on the 18th July, 1808, leaving a widow and family.

The minister who succeeded Mr. Thom was the Rev. ANDREW GEORGE MALCOM, the great-grandson of the Rev. George Lang, one of his predecessors. Mr. Malcom was formerly minister of Dunmurry, and was installed in Newry on the 14th

The Rev. Dr. MALCOM.

March, 1809. He was a man of outstanding gifts and influence, whose high literary attainments and force of character were much respected by his brethren, and had great weight in the Church. His distinguished abilities were recognized by the conferring upon him of the Moderatorship of Synod in the year 1820, and his admission to the degree of Doctor of Divinity in the same year. The text of Dr. Malcom's sermon before the Synod was Acts xix., 20—"So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed," and the subject was "The Progress of Christianity." It was afterwards published, and when thus circulated it did much to enhance the already high reputation of

its author. An extract or two can hardly fail to be interesting. Here is one treating of the growth of corruption in the church :—

"In process of time the Christian world became deluged with corruptions, 'superstition displayed her tinsel treasures and ignorance erected her ebon throne.' The absurd veneration of relics which so strongly possessed the minds of men is alone sufficient to mark the degeneracy that prevailed. The simple institutions of the Gospel were no longer sufficiently attractive. The followers of Christ had long contemplated with admiration the pomp and magnificence of the heathen mysteries, and thought it degrading that those who professed the true faith should be outdone by the votaries of superstition. They were anxious also to recommend Christianity to the favourable attention of the world. The converted heathen were therefore liberally indulged under new names. The worshippers of Jove or Woden were not to be shocked with the sight of temples destitute of decoration. Splendour was therefore added to the offices of devotion, and Christian Churches were adorned with the garniture of pagan fanes."

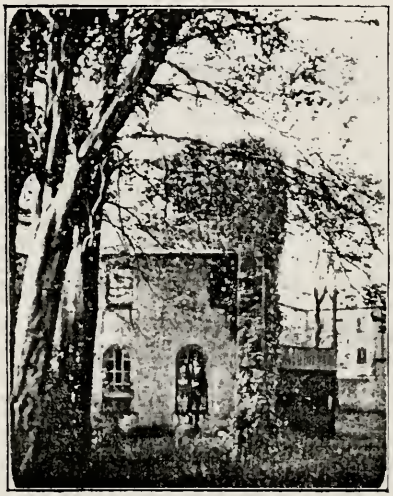
But Christianity did not continue this corrupting assimilation to heathenism. An awakening came. Dr. Malcom thus referred to it :—

"With the revival of learning, Christianity began to revive. The human mind awaked from a slumber almost as deep as that of death, shook off its chains ; the Bible was opened—the demon of error fled before it—and the colossal edifice of superstition was shaken to its foundations. The angel of prophecy was thus seen by the eyes of faith to fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

How, as he passed from point to point, Dr. Malcom gave his preaching a practical turn, and how high his standard of a minister's duty is shown by this application to ministerial life :—

"After the example of the Apostles we should study to recommend Christianity by the correct,

moral, and religious character of our own deportment. While we *preach* the Gospel we should also *practice* as the Gospel enjoins. For how can we recommend with effect duties which we do not observe, and how reprove others for vices which we ourselves indulge? A minister who leads a bad life is utterly unqualified for his office. He may preach with the eloquence of an angel: but will his people believe him to be sincere? They may possibly be influenced to some degree by the power of his words, but is it not much more probable they will be betrayed into sin and encouraged to persevere in it by his own example?"



Ruins of Old Meeting House, High Street.

Dr. Malcom was a frequent contributor to "The Newry Magazine," a high-class magazine conducted by Jas. Stuart, Esq. He published a Defence of the Bible Society, a work eminently fitted to increase the respect for, and to further the propagation of Divine truth, in the time in which it was written. Had he

lived longer it was his intention to write a History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the collection of materials for which he brought before the Synod in the years 1820, 1821, and 1822. But his highly useful life was terminated by typhus fever on Sabbath evening, the 12th January, 1823, at the early age of forty years. Seldom has the death of a minister been more widely or genuinely regretted, and seldom have the testimonials to character, which death brings, been more numerous or sincere in praise. The following extract is from the columns of the "Newry Telegraph" :—

"At the time of his death a residence of fifteen years among us, uniformly spent in a manner honourable to himself and useful to mankind, enabled us to appreciate his worth and to estimate the soundness and importance of his counsel. Nor can we contemplate, without the deepest sorrow, the chasm which has been made in our community by his removal to a better world. His conduct in all relations was truly exemplary, and the Christian precepts which he so ably illustrated and enforced in public were faithfully reflected in the unvarying tenor of his private life. Whether we consider him as a divine or as a citizen, whether we view him in the light of a private individual or of a public character, his merit shines throughout conspicuous, and universal approbation dictates the tribute of unqualified applause. Endowed with a manly and convincing eloquence which was only surpassed by his zeal for the progress of truth and for the promotion of the best interests of his flock—to correct error, to repress immorality, and to diffuse the benign influence of that *faith which worketh by love* were the objects of his unremitting and successful efforts. In the several assemblies of the Church of which he was a member his minute and unwearied attention to all its concerns, the clearness of his views, and the unbending uprightness of his character procured for him the confidence of all his brethren, and gained him an unusual share of rational and well founded influence."

Among the other tributes to the memory of Dr. Malcom was a poem of sixteen verses, which began:—

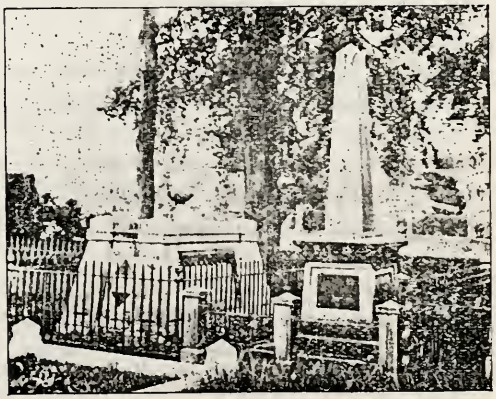
"Your soul was music here—its raptured sense
Drank in the dulcet stream of harmony;
But with an angel's feeling more intense,
Thrilled at the poor man's lamentable plea."

It ended with the following verses addressed to his widow so suddenly bereaved:—

"Ah, no! exulting in his happy lot,
You would not call him from the joys above;
Dear and affected matron! raise thy thought
To the pure transports of seraphic love."

"Yes, you shall meet, and wonder why you wept,
At his blest transit to the realms of joy;
And praise the kind protecting hand that kept
His rescued soul from ebbing life's annoy."

The remains of Dr. Malcom lie in the grounds attached to the Church in High Street, where he so faithfully ministered, and the spot is marked by a very beautiful monument erected by the Congregation to his memory.



Monument of Dr. MALCOM.

The dedication* upon the Monument is as follows: "Sacred to the Memory of the Rev. ANDREW GEORGE MALCOM, D.D. He devoted the powers of a cultivated mind to the Services of Religion, blending precept with example, faith with good works, knowledge with zeal, and eloquence with truth. He was an able and fearless advocate of the right of private judgment, candid, firm, and persevering. In every public and private duty, assiduous. In every social relation kind. His charity embraced all denominations, and of all he enjoyed the esteem and love." There is also an inscription on the other side of the tomb, "This Monument is erected by the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry, who, while they bow to the will of the Most High, deplore the loss of him who was during fourteen years their beloved pastor. Called to an early tomb—in the maturity of his powers: in the height of his usefulness—may this marble speak to future time, and stimulate the successive ministers and members of this Congregation to follow his example and emulate his virtues. Born, 15th Sep., 1782. Died, 12th January, 1823." After Dr. MALCOM'S death, his widow and family removed to Belfast, where she survived him until the 22nd March, 1854.

As it was during the ministry of Dr. Malcom's successor that the Congregation was divided into twain because of the Unitarian controversy, it will be well before passing to that exciting period to go back and notice another branch of Presbyterianism that got planted in Newry toward the close of the 18th century. This was what is known as "The Secession." Its leaders were the Erskines and Fishers, and its outstanding characteristics were devotion to liberty and

* It is a matter for regret that the inscriptions on this tomb are being allowed to wear away. The wording is almost undecipherable, and unless recut will in a few years entirely disappear.

to aggressive evangelicalism. When Secession preachers came over to Ulster from Scotland, two things facilitated their progress—first, the feeling of suspicion and dissatisfaction produced by laxity of doctrine in the Synod of Ulster; and second, the unwillingness on the part of the Synod of Ulster to increase the number of its congregations. The first approach of the Seceders to Newry was the establishment of a preaching station at Sheepbridge, in 1763. Some years later preaching was begun in a hay-loft in Newry, and in 1780 there were enough members to support a minister of their own. The Rev. WILLIAM LAING, a native of Perthshire, was called and ordained in that year. Mr. Laing entered zealously into his work and proved himself an able minister of the New Testament. He obtained from Mr. Nedham a piece of ground containing an acre-and-a-half, with an entrance to it from Church Street, at the annual rent of sixpence, on a lease for lives renewable for ever. The date of the lease was the 16th May, 1782, and the first trustees of the property to whom the lease was made out were Mr. Abraham Cowan and Mr. Alexander Dickson. Mr. Laing was an indefatigable worker. He conducted many services in the rural districts around the town. Possessed of the ability to preach in Gaelic he conducted services in that tongue when occasion furnished him with the opportunity; as when a colony of Scots from Ayrshire settled down at Ballymascanlan, or a detachment of the Southern Fencibles was quartered in the barracks. To combat a growing evil of his time he published a treatise under the curious title "Philemon's Letters to Onesimus on the subject of Christ's Atonement and Divinity." He died on the 22nd July, 1806, leaving a widow and family. His remains were interred in the Meeting-house Green. Mr. Thomas Laing, his son, is well and favourably remembered by many residents in Newry.

The next minister of the Secession Congregation was the Rev. JOHN GAMBLE, who was installed on the 19th April, 1809. Mr. Gamble did not remain long in Newry. He demitted the charge of the Congregation on November 2, 1812. Afterwards he was minister for some time at Newtownhamilton; but eventually he emigrated to New Brunswick.

The successor of Mr. Gamble was the Rev. JOHN KERR. He was ordained on 8th September, 1813. His ministry lasted for twenty years. He was permitted by the Presbytery to "retire" from the position of officiating minister in April, 1833, after having made an arrangement with the Congregation, according to which he was to receive an allowance from the Regium Donum.

The Rev. JOHN WEIR, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Markethill, succeeded Mr. Kerr. The date of his ordination was the 12th March, 1834. The Congregation were very enthusiastic in their reception of Mr. Weir. His ministry from the first was a ministry of great promise, and through the whole course of it was characterised by great success. The services at the ordination of Mr. Weir furnish an illustrative specimen of how much teaching and preaching our Presbyterian people could receive without complaining seventy years ago. The services commenced with praise and prayer and the reading of the Scriptures; which parts of worship we may be sure were in no degree abbreviated. Then the Rev. Alexander Strain, of Cremore, preached a sermon from the text Ezekiel iii., 17, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the Word at My mouth and give them warning from Me." On the conclusion of Mr. Strain's sermon, the Rev. R. Morrison, of Markethill, gave a comprehensive defence of Presbyterian ordination

and church principles. The ordination then took place, and following it, the Rev. R. M'Mahon, of Tyrone's Ditches, delivered the charge to minister and people. At this stage, with the several parts much briefer, a modern ordination service would be brought to a close with singing of praise and the benediction. But on the occasion we are dealing with the Rev. D. Stuart, of Dublin, ascended the pulpit and preached another sermon, taking as his text Micah v. 4 and 5, "And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men." The entire services lasted about five hours. Then, at six o'clock, the ministers, elders, and members of the Congregation, to the number of over seventy, went to the ordination dinner, at which the speaking continued until a late hour. No curtailment of speeches in those days in order to catch a train, and no hasty rush in order to attend a congregational tea-drinking in the evening! We believe the new order is better than the old, but the old served well, and probably left a more abiding impression. In the speech Mr. Weir made at the dinner, though he felt it necessary to apologize for its character because of illness from which he was suffering, he showed himself to be prepared to be a devoted servant of the Secession, and a man qualified for a very successful career in its ministry. His reference to the Secession fathers may be quoted—"The founders of our Church—the Erskines, and Fishers, and Moncrieffs, of the olden time, were men distinguished by great talent and fervent piety, men of unswerving purity of motive, and whose fair fame

the breath of calumny itself never sullied. Humble they may have been as far as this earth was concerned, but yet their names stand forth before our eyes invested with a dignity and glory far more to be desired than applause." To refer to the leading events of Mr. Weir's ministry, and show how the happy auguries of its opening day were realized, would be to introduce here what had better be kept till a later stage. We shall now return to the old Congregation in High Street, large, prosperous, and influential as it was left on the sudden and lamented death of the Rev. Dr. Malcom.

Sundial, Old Meeting House Green.

PART II.—

THE SEPARATION.

THE opening years of the nineteenth century witnessed a remarkable change in the religious condition of the North of Ireland, a change which was probably more noticeable in the Synod of Ulster congregations than in any other section of the religious community. Religion took on again its proper characteristics, and began to throb and glow with evangelic force and fervour. The doctrines of grace were regarded as the needful food of souls; and when ministers were being sought for by vacant congregations there was a general and a decided preference shown for those who were regarded as sound in their attachment to the truths about our Lord's Deity and Redemption of men.

Evidences of a most unequivocal kind that a time of awakening had come appeared in the Synod itself. One of these was the order given to Presbyteries in 1806, "that each minister be enjoined to ascertain with all possible accuracy, how the families of the poor in his congregation are supplied with Bibles: that he do faithfully report to the Presbytery of which he is a member what number of Bibles would be necessary to supply them. And it is to be understood by each minister that in taking the necessary steps to ascertain the wants of the poor in this respect he inform the poor in his Congregation that it is the intention of the Synod to furnish with copies of the Bible, at an easy rate, such of them as wish to read the Scriptures, but are unable to purchase them at their present high prices."

The result of this order of Synod was that when the report was presented the next year such a hunger for the Word of God was made evident, and there was such a desire on the part of the Synod to supply it, that a fund was organized to provide Bibles "to be, by ministers, distributed *gratis*, or at reduced prices, as they shall think proper."

The fund was kept open four years. When the first acknowledgment of contributions was made £1,102 8s 3d had been contributed; the next acknowledgment showed an addition of £375 2s 11½d; and the third showed a further addition of £294 8s 10d—over £1,772 in all. And even then more would have been forthcoming, but that the Committee in charge reported that the Hibernian Bible Society had in a great measure superseded the necessity for its labours, and the Synod recommended its ministers to encourage the formation of branches of the Hibernian Bible Society in their respective vicinities, and to avail themselves of all available aid for disseminating still more extensively a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. As often happens in a movement of the kind, some congregations especially excelled. As examples, places so widely separated as Buckna and Ballybay may be mentioned—Buckna gave £40 3s 0d; and Ballybay £48 17s 6d, which was supplemented by a second contribution of £21 14s 2d; or Dundalk and Ballymoney may be mentioned—Dundalk gave £25 7s 0d, and Ballymoney £72 5s 8d, which it, too, supplemented to the extent of £9 13s 8d. Newry does not appear in the list, though Dr. Malcom was a member of the Committee. But a movement so widespread and enthusiastic was proof of a genuine and growing interest in the extension of the Kingdom of Christ. Another sign of reviving vigour within the Synod was the introduction of Foreign Missions as an object for liberality. In 1812,

the celebrated Dr. Waugh appeared at a Synod Meeting at Cookstown, to present the cause of the London Missionary Society. Some objected to the granting to him of permission to speak. But the large majority favoured it, and when he spoke his words so impressed his hearers that not a few were moved to tears, and many pulpits were placed at his disposal for the advocacy of Foreign Mission claims.

With the rise of interest in the progress of evangelical religion came increasing uneasiness about the existence of Unitarian belief among the ministers, and a special desire so to safeguard the training of candidates for the ministerial office that they should not be exposed in the college class-rooms to Arian or Socinian heresy. This desire for the protection of students for the ministry was accentuated by the opening of the Belfast Academical Institution with a Parliamentary grant of £1,500 per annum, and classes for instruction in the various branches of theology. Between this Institution and the Synod there was a direct connection, and it was of the utmost importance that the teaching within its walls should be such as the Synod could endorse. In 1821, the existence of, and the desire to strengthen and increase the influence of Unitarianism in the Synod and the country generally was made plain by the arrival of the Rev. J. Smithurst, from England, as a propagandist of Unitarian beliefs. In the course of his itinerating he came to Killyleagh, where the Rev. Henry Cooke had been installed a few years before. Cooke attended his meeting, and when the address was given he invited the whole assemblage to come to his Church on the following Sabbath to hear a refutation of every dogma therein propounded. At the time appointed there was a vast assemblage, and Cooke did according to his promise: he took up the arguments of Smithurst and tore them

to tatters. Not only that, but he announced the intention of following Smithurst wherever he might go, and of refuting his heresies as soon as they were uttered. Very exciting was the chase, and very decisive the consequences. Smithurst soon left the land, to return to it as a Unitarian Lecturer no more.

The next meeting of Synod, subsequent to the defeat of Smithurst, was held in Newry in June, 1822. It was the only time the Synod ever met in this town. Cooke was now thoroughly roused, quick to discern doctrinal danger, and ready to lead a movement for its destruction. He introduced to the Synod the character of the professoriate at the Belfast Institution. In the course of an earnest speech he declared "that the interests of religion were concerned: that when he saw men introduced into the Institution who openly avowed the doctrines of Arianism and Socinianism he thought it was high time for the Synod to pause and consider whether they would continue their connection with the Institution." He asked the Synod to accept notice of a motion which would prepare the way for definite action in the following year. But he stood almost alone. Even the elements seemed against him. As he spoke a terrific thunderstorm burst over the town and almost drowned his voice. Dr. Hanna, a strong Calvinist and a leader of orthodoxy in the Synod, spoke against the receiving of the notice, and Cooke withdrew it. "I seem," he said, "this day to stand alone. Yet I am not alone. Men may draw back in fear, but God and truth are with me." For him the battle was begun—and before it had closed it would rend in twain the Synod he had addressed, and the Congregation whose church provided it with a place of meeting.

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At the meetings of Synod that year, the Rev. JOHN MITCHEL was Moderator. Great interest was taken in the proceedings by the Presbyterians of Newry and its neighbourhood, who attended in large numbers; and very favourable were the opinions about the manner in which the Moderator performed his duties. So well did he acquit himself and so favourable were the impressions made by him that on Dr. Malcom's sudden death, which took place in the January following, the minds of the Congregation turned towards him as their future minister. The result was, that when he preached his moderatorial sermon at Armagh in the June following, several gentlemen were present as commissioners from the Newry Congregation to hear him. And "so delighted were they with the sermon, and with the portrait that he drew of the duties of a minister, and which by unanimous consent was declared to be a striking picture of his own practice, that after a few hours deliberation they came to the resolution of waiting on him, and on their own responsibility engaged him to pledge himself to them until a regular call should be transmitted to him from the Congregation." * The call was made out in due course, and Mr. Mitchel was installed as minister of Newry, on the 2nd September, 1823. He was received by his Congregation with genuine enthusiasm.

At the Synod meeting in Armagh, Cooke again asked for enquiry into the orthodoxy of the professors of the Belfast Institution, but it was decided by a great majority that such enquiry was altogether uncalled for. It was only a temporary check however, that was administered. The next year, 1824, Cooke was Moderator of Synod, in which capacity he was summoned to give evidence before a com-

* Newry Telegraph—A note to Report of Installation, Sept. 5, 1823.

mission then enquiring into the state of Education in Ireland. The Rev. Wm. Porter, of Newtownlimivady, was then clerk of Synod, and he also was summoned to give evidence. When the evidence was published it was found that Cooke had made some statements regarding Arianism that gave great offence to its abettors in the Synod; and it was also found that Mr. Porter had declared himself an Arian. This and other matters hastened discussion, and brought the controversy to a climax. At the Synod of 1827, after almost a week had been spent in keen debate upon different phases of the Unitarian question, a motion was passed calling upon all the members present to declare whether they believed the answer to the sixth question in the Shorter Catechism—"There are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." Four ministers withdrew before the vote was taken. One hundred and seventeen ministers and eighteen elders voted "Believe;" two ministers voted "Not," and eight ministers declined to vote. The next year, 1828, a further step was taken towards strengthening the position of the orthodox. The celebrated overtures were carried which provided for the examination of all students of the ministry with a view to the exclusion from office of all candidates who did not accept fully the doctrines of the Confession of Faith. Against this decision protest was made, and the protesters met in October, in Belfast, and drew up a "Remonstrance," in which they declared that if they could not obtain a repeal of the obnoxious overtures they must form themselves into a distinct association. At this meeting Isaac W. Glenny, Esq., Clerk of Session of the Newry Congregation was in the chair, and Mr. Mitchel was one of the principal speakers. His speech is interesting still, not only

because of its clear expression of his own attitude, but because of a reference to his intentions with regard to his son, who afterwards became so prominent as a patriot and a politician.

"We have lived," he said, "to see an assembly of ministers where two or three men have been able, through the tame acquiescence of many of their brethren, and under the influence of a popular clamour, to set up a spiritual dictatorship—a most odious inquisition—in the very heart of Presbyterian Ulster! Sir, it is if possible to redeem the character of our church, which has been foully tarnished by these proceedings; it is to free ourselves from the domination of arrogant men; it is to preserve and hand down unimpaired to posterity the valuable rights we enjoy as Presbyterians and Christians; it is to assert the supremacy of Scripture, of conscience, and of God against a few aspiring worms of the dust like ourselves; it is with purposes such as these we have met here, and in such a cause we need be neither ashamed nor afraid to exert ourselves. It is the sacred cause of Christian liberty, it is the cause of the Bible, it is the cause of God, and it will prosper in our hands. We must not be told by a junto of fallible men like ourselves that they are the infallible judges and interpreters of Christian doctrine, both for themselves and for us. We wish for no control over the faith or conscience of others, but we do wish and we must have a control over our own. . . . . For myself, sir, I feel that I cannot with good conscience long continue my connection with the Synod of Ulster as at present constituted and administered: and when I say so I state you a determination in which I believe I shall be supported by the very respectable Congregation of which I am in charge. I have one son, whom if God

spare him I design devoting to the sacred ministry of the Gospel in the Presbyterian Church. I have no higher ambition for him on earth. I look upon it as the most truly valuable and honourable office which man can sustain under heaven. But no child of mine with my approbation shall ever enter the Synod of Ulster under its present regulations. What parent who values his own liberty, who values his own sincerity and integrity of conscience, could possibly subject the child of his affections to the awful ordeal prepared by the Synod's overtures? I call upon the fathers around me who may have sons designed for the ministry in our church—I call upon the Christian people of our communion to rally in time around the cause of Christian liberty, and to maintain their independence."

The Remonstrance drawn up by the minority was the first decisive step towards separation. No concession was made because of it, and on the 18th August, 1829, it was laid upon the table of the Synod at Cookstown, and a committee was appointed by the Synod to arrange terms of separation. It was signed by 18 ministers, 15 students or licentiates, 197 members of session, 138 members of congregational committees, and 314 seatholders. On the 25th May, 1830, seventeen ministers who withdrew according to their determination as asserted in the Remonstrance, met together and took the name "Remonstrant Synod of Ulster." The names of the seventeen separatists are given by Reid:—John Mitchel, Newry; James Davis, Banbridge; Jas. Lunn, Carlingford; Arthur Neilson, Kilmore; and Samuel Arnold, Narrowwater, are the first five mentioned.

But previous to the drawing up of the "Remonstrance" the question of Mr. Mitchel's beliefs and

preaching had become an acute one in his Congregation. He preached a series of sermons at the beginning of the year 1828, on "The Scripture doctrine of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ," which were soon afterwards published, and were stated in the preface to have been "designed to put the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry in possession of the writer's sentiments on some difficult and much disputed points of Christian doctrine." In these sermons Mr. Mitchel expressed so strongly his objection to the doctrine of the Trinity that many members of the Congregation felt that they could no longer continue under his ministry. A few of them met together and agreed that a meeting should be arranged to consider what steps should be taken. In a note appended to the sermons when published and not free from vilipendency it is stated that those who took this course were "marshalled by a military officer then quartered in Newry." The note was written at a distance of only ten weeks from the event, and was evidently intended to lay emphasis on the brevity of the officer's connection with the religious life of the town. But the whole proceedings indicate convictions too intense and action too combined to be explained by the intervention of this no doubt very worthy visitor. The meeting decided upon was held in "Mr. M'Whirter's large room" on the 23rd February, 1828, and the following resolutions were unanimously passed :—

1st.—"That we have heard, with great regret, the avowal of sentiments which we regard as altogether opposed to the true Gospel of Christ from the Rev. John Mitchel; and that as we hold the doctrines of the supreme and essential divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the necessity, reality, and efficacy of his atoning sacrifice for the sins

of men, the necessity and reality of the influences of the Holy Spirit to the conversion and salvation of men, and the other doctrines of the Gospel connected with these to be of the utmost importance to have preached and maintained among us: and that we hold it our indispensable duty to take all lawful means to have a pure evangelical local ministry in connexion with the General Synod of Ulster established among us: and we do hereby pledge ourselves in dependence upon God's help to endeavour, as far as in us is, to promote this important object."

2ND.—"That a meeting of those who agree in the foregoing resolution be held on Monday, the 25th inst., at three o'clock, in this room, to take into consideration the propriety and expediency of presenting a memorial to the Reverend the Presbytery of Dromore at their next meeting, at Banbridge, on the first Tuesday of next month, praying them to take means to have us supplied with the faithful preaching of the Gospel, and a due administration of the ordinances of religion by ministers of orthodox principles, with a view to our erection into a congregation in connexion with the General Synod of Ulster, and that the Presbyterian Society for Ireland be requested to supply us with Gospel preaching in the meantime."

3RD.—"That a Committee be formed for the purpose of preparing the above application, of procuring a suitable place to assemble for public worship as soon as convenient: and to adopt such other measures as may to them seem expedient for promoting our object."

The Committee selected consisted of thirteen members:—Messrs. Boyd, Henry, Montgomery,

Wilson, Hening, Ledlie, Parks, Brown, Graham, Millar, Lyster, A. Brown, and Dr. Woods, Dr. Woods to act as Secretary.

The meeting appointed for the 25th February was decisive. Mr. David Hening presided. At this meeting an earnest appeal from "the minister and elders of the Presbyterian Congregation of Newry to such of their brethren as are disposed to secede from them" was read by the chairman. It asked that they attend worship on the next Lord's day, when Mr. Mitchel had announced his intention of preaching "the discourse which he delivered in the year 1823, before the Reverend the General Synod of Ulster, and which chiefly led to the connexion since subsisting between him and us:" and invited them to remain after service for a friendly conference of the heads of families with a view "to prevent an unhappy division in our hitherto happy Congregation." But what was producing the division was a difference too vital for the rent to be bound together by personal considerations. The result of the appeal is given in the following letter to the Clerk of Session :—

ELLENVALE,
27th February, 1828.

DEAR SIR,

Agreeable to my promise, I read the enclosed friendly address to the meeting on Monday last, the prayer of which was unanimously refused to be complied with.

I remain, dear sir,

Yours sincerely,

DAVID HENING.

ISAAC WILLIAM GLENNY, Esq.

A memorial was adopted in accordance with the resolutions passed at the previous meeting. This memorial was signed by ninety persons, all of them heads of families save four or five. It was presented to the Presbytery of Dromore on the 4th March, 1828, when the Presbytery appointed a Committee of its members to come to Newry and "enquire into the case." The Committee met in "the New Methodist Meeting-house, Kilmorey Street," on Monday, the 7th April. There were present the Revs. Moses Finlay, John Johnstone, William Craig, and D. Stewart, together with Messrs. Sydney H. Rowan, and George Young, Elders. The Rev. Henry Cooke was also a member of the Presbytery Committee but was prevented by illness from attending. The memorialists were represented by Mr. David Hening, Mr. John Boyd, Dr. John Woods, Mr. Moses Henry, Mr. Alex. Graham, and Mr. Samuel Ledlie.

The Committee of Presbytery enquired very fully into the whole facts. The questions put and answers obtained are fully recorded. These show that the memorialists were not moved by any personal antipathy to Mr. Mitchel: that on the contrary they still held him in the highest personal esteem, and were driven to separate from his Congregation solely because of the principles avowed in the sermons referred to. The Committee of Presbytery came to the resolution—"That after a minute inquiry we have reason highly to approve of the answers given: and to recommend to the Presbytery of Dromore at its next meeting to forward the object of the memorial should application be made to that effect."

The memorialists had secured for themselves as a place of worship, as long as they might require it, the Methodist Meeting-house in Kilmorey Street, in which the Presbytery's inquiry was held, and there

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"on the 13th day of May, 1828, the 2nd Presbyterian Congregation of Newry was erected by the Reverend the Presbytery of Dromore." A week later a Congregational Meeting was held, Mr. David Hening in the chair, at which a Committee was appointed to manage the affairs of the Congregation. As it was the first Committee of the present Sandys Street Congregation under its new organization, the names will be of interest. They were—Messrs. John Gordon, David Hening, Samuel Parsons, John Boyd, Adam Ledlie, John Woods, M.D., Moses Henry, Alex. Graham, Jas. Henderson, Joseph M'Minn, jun., Samuel Ledlie, Joseph Mitchell, and Joseph Montgomery. Mr. John Boyd was chosen to the double office of secretary and treasurer. So our predecessors a little less than fourscore years ago separated themselves from loved associations, and from a Congregation numerically large and strong—so strong financially that it paid its minister the largest stipend* of any congregation outside Dublin, Derry, and Belfast: separated themselves from a place of meeting which must have had connected with it many sacred memories, and in the green around which many whom they loved in life lay sleeping; separated themselves at the bidding of conscience and for the sake of the Gospel to begin anew the work of organization, and making no claim whatever on the property they left behind them. Those who remained behind continued to worship in the old building in High Street till 1853, in which year they removed to the smaller but more handsome gothic church in Needham Place.

It was almost a year after the erection of the Congregation before a minister was called. Then unanimous choice was made of the Rev. James

* £140—See return furnished to Lord Castlereagh, April 27, 1799, and printed in Appendix to Reid's History, vol. iii.

Shields, who was ordained on the 29th June, 1829, the call presented to him "having been signed by all the members, and promising him £100 per annum." The Revs. H. Cooke, H. Dobbin, and W. Craig, officiated at the ordination services. In the speeches made later in the day references of the most respectful kind were made to Mr. Mitchel, who was then, and continued to be, highly esteemed by his fellow-townsmen of every religious denomination. But although the Congregation was without a minister for the first year of its separated existence, the members were busy. On the day the first congregational committee was appointed Messrs. Samuel Parsons, J. Boyd, and D. Hening, were appointed to wait on the agent of Lord Downshire for the purpose of obtaining a plot of ground suitable for the erection of a Church. On the 9th June, 1828, these gentlemen reported to a meeting of the Congregation that a plot of ground off Sandys Street was available, and recommended that it be selected. The Congregation endorsed the selection of its committee, and Messrs. Hening, Parsons, and Boyd, were appointed the first trustees of the Congregational property. Steps were taken immediately to collect subscriptions. Others besides members of the Congregation contributed generously. Soon a beautiful and commodious Church was erected. It was opened on the 22nd September, 1830, by the Rev. Edward Irving, of the Scots Church, London, who was then at the height of his popularity. The house was crowded at the opening services.

When the accounts were balanced in the April of the following year, it appeared that the sum of £1,250 was yet unpaid, and that interest at 5 per cent. was being paid upon this debt. Then was called forth a display of great liberality, and Sandys Street earned its right to be known for devising liberal things. Already the members had contributed largely,

they and those of other congregations who assisted them having raised over £1,700. But on the intimation of their indebtedness *it was unanimously resolved* "That this meeting recognize it as a duty to attempt the immediate liquidation of the debt contracted by the erection of their place of worship, and that acting on this persuasion they do hereby pledge themselves to pay the following sums, in addition to those already subscribed by them towards the same object."

Then follows in the minute-book this list of subscriptions promised at the meeting, a list which might be headed "Sandys Street Roll of Honour, 1831"—

Rev. James Shields	...	...	£100	0	0
John Gordon	...	...	150	0	0
David Hening	...	...	100	0	0
John Woods	...	...	100	0	0
Alex. Waddell	...	...	100	0	0
Samuel Parsons	...	...	60	0	0
John Boyd ...	...	...	50	0	0
Samuel Ledlie	...	...	30	0	0
Joseph M'Minn	...	...	15	0	0
A. Walkinshaw	...	...	7	10	0
Moses Henry	...	...	7	10	0
Richard Owen	...	...	5	0	0
A. Little, jun.	...	...	5	0	0
John Langtry	...	...	5	0	0
John Cummin	...	..	5	0	0
James Henderson	...	...	5	0	0
John Boyd, jun.	...	...	3	0	0
A. Peacock, jun.	...	...	2	0	0
C. Lawson	...	...	1	0	0
C. Lawson, jun.	...	...	1	0	0
Wm. Dickson	...	...	1	0	0
Alex. Cumming	...	...	15	0	0
Adam Ledlie	...	...	10	0	0
James Ledlie	...	...	10	0	0
Samuel Bailie	...	...	10	0	0
			£798	0	0

After the meeting, additional subscriptions brought the total up to £881.

A Balance Sheet dated 24th February, 1832, shows a sum of £2,902 9s 3d expended upon the church, and a balance of only £76 7s 10d remaining unpaid. But the first figure does not include the cost of putting pews in the gallery, and the second does not allow for a debt of £300 old currency (£276 18s 5d) due to Mr. David Hening. The total cost of the Church when completed must have been considerably over £3,000.

The Rev. James Shields was married to Miss Moody, a daughter of the Rev. Boyle Moody, one of his predecessors in the ministry of Newry. His place of residence was a house in Abbey Yard. It is interesting to note that the first resolution affecting the spiritual work of the Congregation is one to observe the Lord's Supper four times a year; and in connection with the observance of this ordinance it may further be mentioned that special attention was given to get those who were not communicants to attend and to wait during the sacramental service.

The Congregation during Mr. Shields' ministry had to grapple with many difficulties. But there is abundant evidence that both its temporal and spiritual affairs were zealously attended to. Mr. Shields was himself a man fond of public life, and gifted with great abilities. He took a leading part in the affairs of the town and neighbourhood. He resigned the charge of the Congregation on the 20th July, 1816, and left the town soon afterwards. His books were purchased to form the nucleus of a congregational library. Before his departure Mr. Shields was made the recipient of three valuable presentations. One, a purse of gold, was from the residents of Newry; another, also a purse of gold, was from the members

of the Congregation; and the third, a valuable Bible, was from the teachers of the Sabbath School. Each presentation was accompanied with an Address. That from the residents of Newry was presented by the chief magistrate. After recounting many public services rendered by him, it concluded with the words, "Weakly, indeed, does it express the feelings with which we view your departure from amongst us, whether as men about to be separated from a dear and valued friend or as townsmen who feel that the community is about to suffer A PUBLIC LOSS."

The first signatures to this address were:—D. Bagot, Vicar of Newry; ✠ Michael Blake, Bishop of Dromore; John Boyd, J.P., Seneschal of Newry; Isaac Corry, J.P., D.L.; John S. Moore, J.P.; Peter Quinn, J.P.; and there were in all 87 signatures attached to it.

The address from the Congregation stated—"We have to acknowledge seventeen years of faithful ministry. You commenced your labours here among very few families, which your assiduity soon increased into a large congregation. To your untiring exertions we are indebted for the handsome and commodious church in which we have the privilege of worshipping, the expense of its erection and perfect and tasteful fitting up having been wholly liquidated through your zealous efforts. In immediate connection with our own Church, and throughout the bounds of the Congregation, your care has provided schools for Sabbath and daily instruction where the rising generation are trained in the way that they should go." This address was signed by Moses Henry, A. Walkinshaw, James M'Watters, and John Woods, elders, and by 135 other members of the Congregation.

The address from the Sabbath School was signed by Henry Hawkins, Superintendent, Thomas Wood,

Secretary, and 23 Teachers—one at least of whom is connected with the Congregation still. Mr. Shields' reply indicated deep and sincere gratitude. With reference to his public service, it contained one or two notable sentences:—"I originated, as you know, the design and took an active part in leading to the erection of our present very excellent Fever Hospital and fine new Savings Bank; besides giving of late a portion of my time and influence in order to secure the commencement and carrying out of certain great public works, the success and accomplishment of which are closely connected with the prosperity of Newry. . . . On reflection, I now believe that under the excitement of the moment, I allowed my zeal in these matters to carry me too far. But it is pleasant to be assured by you that I leave Newry accompanied with the cordial and hearty good wishes of its entire population."

PART III.—
THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

Six years previous to the resignation of Mr. Shields there was effected in Belfast the union of the two Synods—a union destined to have far reaching consequences. From the elimination of the Unitarian element, the Church that was under the supervision of the Synod of Ulster appeared to be endowed with new vitality. Both in the work of her congregations as directed by Sessions, and in the general work of the Church as directed by the Synod, it was felt that the avowal of allegiance to Christ as God required a measure of consecration and service that had not previously been attained. And when in 1840 the two Synods became one under the designation, "*The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*," there was again reviving in all their borders. The effect of this soon began to manifest itself in Newry. Almost immediately after the conclusion of the sittings of the Union Assembly a meeting of Session was held at which three important resolutions bearing upon spiritual life and work in the Congregation were passed. The first was in favour of the introduction of catechetical examinations for the encouragement of accurate study of the Scriptures and the standards of the Church by all the families of the Congregation; the second was intended to fix attention upon the spiritual significance of the sacrament of baptism, and the importance of having it publicly administered; the third was that steps be taken towards the selection of additional elders. The last resolution, however, proved abortive. But it was a time of increase; increase in numbers, in liberality, in influence, in consecration. The congregation became the chief in Ulster and

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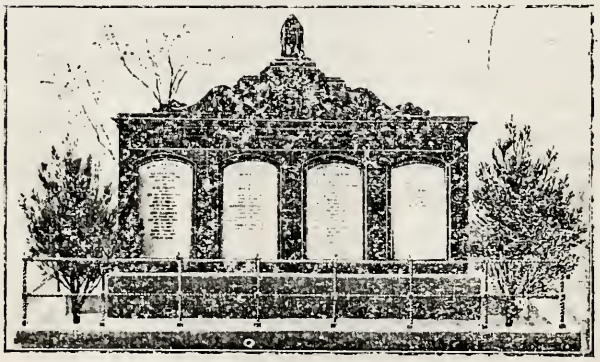
in 1845 a resolution was unanimously passed in favour of the erection of a suitable school-house for the accommodation of the Sabbath School and for other meetings for which such a building would be better adapted than the church. Before many weeks had passed the project attained such definiteness that it was decided to erect at the rear of the Church "a building to accommodate 400, together, if possible, with a sexton's house," and a Special Committee was appointed to get plans and report a fortnight later. But just then the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of Mr. Shields occurred, and when Mr. Shields was removed the proposal lost its chief advocate. It was not, however, dropped.

The Rev. JOHN MORAN was the next minister. He was for a few months minister of First Ballybay previous to his appointment here. He was ordained in First Ballybay on the 24th March, 1846, accepted the call to Newry on the 27th October following, and was installed in this Congregation (officially known from the Union as First Newry) on the 16th November of the same year, only four months after the resignation of Mr. Shields. Mr. Moran's installation past, the proposal for the erection of a school-house or lecture hall behind the church was almost immediately revived. Plans were asked for a building fifty feet by twenty-five, two storeys high, together with a vestibule; and after some time Mr. M'George, Mr. Kirkpatrick, and Mr. M'Culla, were instructed to make arrangements with Mr. A. Henry to commence the building without loss of time. Why nothing came of this instruction is not recorded. Possibly the raising of £120 to meet a debt occasioned delay. Possibly, too, the desire to increase the comfort of the minister altered the direction of the Congregation's thought. For when attention was next turned to the making of an addition to the congregational property,

Late Rev. JOHN MORAN.

it was concluded that a *Manse* should get the prior place. And at the annual meeting of the Congregation in 1852 the erection of a Manse was proposed and unanimously agreed to. The names associated with the carrying out of the proposal were :—Messrs. Wm. M'Culla, James Henderson, Robert M'Blain, William Sinclair, Henry Murdock, Samuel Parsons, Moses Henry, George Henderson, Henry Hawkins, Thomas Laing, James M'George, Robert Glenny, John Best, and Wm. Kirkpatrick. Instead of erecting a new house as at first proposed, the house No. 11 Downshire Place was bought from Mr. Robert Greer at £400, and by deed dated 9th May, 1855, the property was conveyed to Messrs. Samuel Parsons, Robert M'Blain, James M'George, and Wm. M'Culla, as trustees for the Congregation.

Another token of generous interest on the part of the Congregation in the comfort of its minister was a change made in the matter of stipend. From the first year the new church was occupied the pew rents collected were over £150. Of this £100 was promised to Mr. Shields, but £125 was paid. The annual income from this source rose within ten years to £180. But of this increase Mr. Shields got no portion, and no advance beyond £125 was made in the minister's income until 1856, in which year, at a meeting of the Congregation, presided over by Mr. James Henderson, it was unanimously resolved:—"That the whole of the pew rents be hereafter paid to the Rev. Mr. Moran, as stipend," a resolution that awarded an immediate and permanent increase of £30 and upwards. Still another token of generosity to-



Monument to Mr. JAMES HENDERSON, who died 4th March, 1863.

This Monument was erected in the Meeting-house Green, Church Street, to the memory of Mr. James Henderson, Proprietor of the "Newry Telegraph," by his son, Mr. James Alexander Henderson, as a tribute of devoted affection. The name of James Henderson appears upon the first Committee of Sandys Street Congregation (p. 35), and frequently afterwards. He was an earnest supporter of the Congregation.

wards Mr. Moran, and of favouring interest in those who attended to the spiritual affairs of the Congregation, was a resolution passed on the motion of Mr. Best:—"That the expenses of our minister and elder be paid when attending the General Assembly and Synods and Presbyteries." Mr. Moran well deserved these favours. He was a most painstaking and popular minister. As a preacher, he was held in very high esteem, his sermons evidencing a cultured mind and devout spirituality. But it was as a pastor that he especially excelled. It was while Mr. Moran had pastoral oversight of the Congregation that it was first divided into districts, and an elder appointed to the supervision of each. The arrangement of frequent diets of catechising was a matter to which he gave special attention, and although it was a kind of pastoral labour in which he did not receive much encouragement from the people, he prosecuted it with quiet persistency through many years. The choir was thoroughly organised, with rules so excellent that they would merit revival. An afternoon Sabbath School to meet fortnightly, having an occasional sermon or lecture substituted for the usual lesson, was established. These outstanding accomplishments were but the tokens of an initiative and watchfulness that concerned themselves with the whole religious activities of the Congregation, and called in the aid of everyone the pastor could persuade to become identified with the Lord's work within its bounds. If the Congregation barely held its own in numbers during Mr. Moran's ministry, it was not because of any lack of devotion in the minister, or lowering of spiritual tone in the membership. The explanation lay in circumstances beyond their control. When he decided to accept the call to Belmont there was unfeigned grief. The Session put on record "their deep regret at losing the services of one whose public ministrations

were so able, so carefully prepared, and so generally acceptable; and whose private life was so exemplary and consistent with his profession."

While Mr. Moran was minister the Session was twice enlarged. The elders at the time of his installation were the same who had been in office from 1837 (the first year in which there is any record of the proceedings of Session)—

DR. JOHN WOODS.
MR. MOSES HENRY.
MR. JAMES M'WATTERS.
MR. ARCHIBALD WALKINSHAW, Clerk.

In the beginning of January, 1851, there was an addition of three—

Messrs. WILLIAM KINGAN.
WILLIAM BRADY.
HENRY HAWKINS.

Messrs. Kingan and Brady, having held office elsewhere as elders previously, were installed, and Mr. Henry Hawkins was ordained. From 1851 Mr. Brady was Session Clerk. Again, on a Sabbath in March, 1859, three were added—

Messrs. ROBERT DEMPSTER.
THOMAS WOOD.
WILLIAM HUTCHISON.

Messrs. Dempster and Wood were ordained to office, and Mr. Hutchison, who had been previously an elder of the Free Church of Scotland, was installed. From 1859 Mr. Hutchison was Session Clerk. When Mr. Moran resigned the Congregation on Patrick's Day, 1862, these three were the only elders in office, all the others being dead or removed.

This is a convenient point at which to return to the year 1840, and to the Congregation of the Secession. The increase of vitality consequent upon the union of the two Synods affected the Secession Congregation (known after the union as Second Newry) also. Under the faithful and successful ministry of Mr. Weir it

increased so much that the old place of worship off Church Street was too small to accommodate the worshippers, and the new Church on Downshire Road was opened on the 6th March, 1844. The preacher was the Rev. Dr. Buchanan, of the Tron Church, Glasgow. The Rev. Dr. Morgan, of Belfast, continued the opening services on the following Sabbath. The collections at the two days' services amounted to £160. But Mr. Weir's abilities had attracted attention elsewhere; and on the 3rd November of the year in which the new church was opened he accepted a call to Townsend Street Church, Belfast. From there he removed to London, where, as minister of River Terrace, Islington, he had a very prosperous ministry. While in London he had conferred upon him a Doctor's Degree.

Dr. Weir, during his ministry in Newry, took a great interest in the religious aspect of social questions, and gave a great impetus to temperance reform. His farewell sermon was a strong warning against unhealthy amusements, especially horse-racing. He was succeeded by the Rev. JOHN DODD, of whose faithful bracing ministry many still have most grateful recollections. Mr. Dodd was an ardent advocate of Presbyterian principles; he took a great interest in the effort to secure Presbyterian representation in Parliament, in the appointment of Presbyterians to public offices, and in the difficult ecclesiastico-political questions that arose in connection with the disestablishment of the Irish Episcopal Church. He died in Newry on the 17th November, 1883. His successor was the Rev. WILLIAM WYLIE, previously minister of Ballyroney from the 4th May, 1866, to the 11th September, 1879, and later of Gardenmore, Larne. Mr. Wylie was installed in the Downshire Road Congregation on the 6th February, 1884. He is its minister still. His eloquence in the pulpit, and

business-like methods in all that pertains to the work of the Congregation are widely known, and have secured for him the ardent attachment of all his people.

On the vacating of the Meeting-house in Church Street it did not cease to be a place of worship. The whole property there, with reservation of certain rights of entrance for those who had grave plots in the burying-ground, was sold to the Reformed Presbyterians (Covenanters). The conveyance of it was made to Rev. ROBERT WALLACE, Covenanting Minister, Mr. Archibald Little, and Mr. Robert Gass, on the 5th November, 1849. The Congregation therein organized by the Covenanters now worships in the Riverside Presbyterian Church. The Rev. THOS. CONN BRITTON succeeded the Rev. Robert Wallace in its ministry. But he remained in Newry only two years. At the end of that time he removed on account of ill health to Bready, where he died a year later on the 10th March 1869. The Rev. A. S. LYONS is the present minister of the Congregation. He has much influence among his brethren of the R. P. Synod, and is much respected by the people of Newry.

On the resignation of the Rev. John Moran, steps were immediately taken towards filling the vacancy in the Sandys Street pastorate. At first there was cordial agreement, and a deputation was appointed with the unanimous approval of both Session and Committee to approach the Rev. Francis Pettierew, of Faughanvale, with a view of obtaining him for their minister. The deputation, however, reported "that Mr. Pettierew declined to entertain the idea of removing from his present place." A list of candidates was then appointed, and as many of them as consented to come to Newry and preach were heard by the Congregation. Before the mind of the Congre-

gation was taken with regard to this list it was supplemented by an addition of three. These additional candidates having been heard, it was decided by a majority of the Congregation to present a call to Mr. William Todd Martin, a licentiate of the Belfast Presbytery. To this decision the minority were so strongly opposed that they seceded, and determined to organize a new Congregation. This minority included all the members of Session, and all the surviving trustees of the Manse property, the Congregational Secretary, and several members of Committee. The inclusion of so many office-bearers among the seceding section, and the fact that they took with them the books of the Congregation, did much to complicate matters; and both majority and minority were for several years a source of care and trouble to a Commission of the General Assembly. But the points over which friction arose, and the successive stages of the struggle, have long since been allowed to drop into oblivion, and no good could be accomplished by reviving unpleasant memories. It is enough to note that the minority worshipped at first in the Savings Bank, and later on in the Primitive Methodist Church, Kilmorey Street, the same building in which the parent Congregation had passed through its transitional stage; that they were erected the third Congregation in Newry by ordinance of the General Assembly in 1863; that they called Mr. A. C. Murphy (afterwards Dr. A. C. Murphy), son of the well-known Professor of Hebrew in Assembly's College, Belfast, who was ordained their minister; that while under his ministry they built the ornate and comfortable church known as Riverside; that Mr. Murphy's successor in Riverside was the Rev. James Niblock, who ministered there from 1869 to 1873; that Mr. Niblock was succeeded by the Rev. Charles J. Legate; and that on a vacancy occurring in the pastorate of the

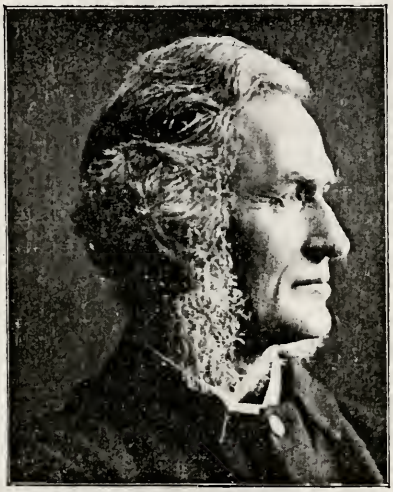
congregation in 1884, owing to the resignation of Mr. Legate, when the sufficiency of two congregations in connection with the General Assembly for the Presbyterians of Newry was brought before them, they acted on the principle that unity is strength, allowed Third Newry to be dissolved, their church to be sold to the Covenanters, and many of them returned to their original Congregation.

The Rev. Andrew CHARLES MURPHY, whose name must remain associated with the Church erected for him in Newry, was a man of singular grace and gentleness of disposition, remarkable, in a Church that maintains a high standard of scholarship for all her ministers, for his culture and learning. After he left Newry he was minister successively at Derry, Dublin, London, and finally of Elmwood, Belfast. He died on the 30th November, 1891.

During the major part of the existence of Third Newry as a Congregation in connection with the General Assembly there was a united service on Sabbath evenings, and a united prayer meeting on some other evening of the week, the prayer meeting following the course of the Sabbath evening service as it rotated from church to church. But this arrangement as regards the prayer meeting seems to have worked unsatisfactorily, save during occasional short intervals. A meeting that flitted from church to church did not engage or fix itself upon the attention of the people. To get rid of this objection, it was proposed by the Sessions of Sandys Street and Downshire Road that the meeting should continue united, but should be held in Sandys Street for one year, in Downshire Road for one year, and in Riverside for one year; each of the ministers to arrange for conducting the meeting on the Wednesday evening after the united Sabbath evening service in his own

http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found

church. But the Session of Riverside was not agreeable to this proposal, and it was allowed to drop. Eventually, at the end of 1882, Sandys Street Session withdrew from the united arrangement, and began a weekly prayer meeting in connection with its own Congregation. Ultimately, the united Sabbath evening service was also abandoned, and separate services established. But this was not until 1898.

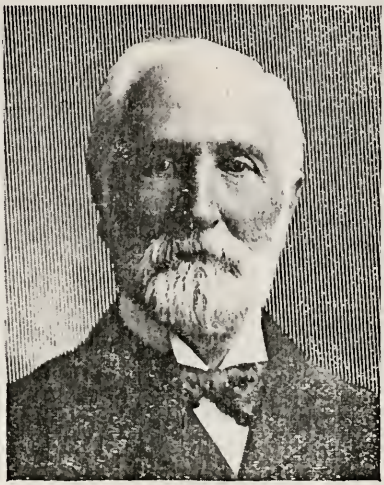


Rev. W. TODD MARTIN, D.Lit., D.D.

The Rev. William Todd Martin was ordained in Sandys Street on the 19th November, 1862. From the 21st September previous, he had officiated in the pulpit and attended to the other duties of the pastorate. He thus got into close touch with those who had invited him to become their minister, and became intimately acquainted with the very difficult conditions upon which his ministry was to be begun. The

speech he made on the day of his ordination showed with how great courage and determination he took up the burden. Mr. James Morell, District Inspector of National Schools, was in the chair, and in his introductory remarks he indicated sincere regret, and some hesitancy, if not a degree of misgiving because of the absence of so many of those who had been accustomed to take a leading part in Congregational affairs. But the young minister was calmly confident and sure that he was entering upon the path of duty—"When I received, some quarter of a year ago, a call from the Congregation of Sandys Street to labour among them, I carefully and prayerfully examined the whole facts of the case. I considered it to be my duty to come, and I did come. After being here two months, and having discharged the duty which falls upon a minister of a congregation, I find I was correct. What I believed to have been my duty then I believe to be my duty still."

Those who were dissatisfied, as I have stated, took a course of their own. But from among those who remained men came to the front and took up the arduous service of restoring the breaches and maintaining the prestige and usefulness of the Congregation, with great energy and hope. Many of these now rest from their labours, having continued stedfast unto the end; some before they put off their harness were transplanted by removal from Newry to other congregations, in which, also, they purchased for themselves a good degree; one only remains among us—his eye not dim nor his natural force abated, beloved and honoured for his work's sake—I refer to our Clerk of Session and Superintendent of the Sabbath School, Mr. David Martin, J.P., of Littleton, to whom the Sabbath School teachers in the month of May last presented an Address in recognition of



Mr. DAVID MARTIN, J.P.

his attainment of his jubilee in Sandys Street Congregation. Mr. Martin, during this long period, has been the consistent advocate of total abstinence, and the devoted friend of well-considered evangelistic enterprise. He is treasurer of the fund raised by the General Assembly's "Committee on the State of Religion and Evangelization" for evangelistic work, and a member also of many of the most important Committees appointed by the supreme court of our Church. But readers of the names of those who filled the roll of office bearers during the first year after "the split" will recognise among them not a few very worthy associates. I transcribe the list as it appears in the minute book :—

JOHN BEST,
JAMES HENNING,
DOCTOR SAMUEL CONNOR,
HENRY GEO. HENDERSON,
THOMAS LAING,
JOSEPH CATHCART,
JAMES M'GUFFIN,
WALTER BURNS,
JOHN M'DOWELL,
ROBERT GLENNY,
DONALD STEWART,
ADAM KERNAGHAN,
JOHN BROWN,
JOHN CARLISLE,
DOCTOR WADDELL,
DAVID MARTIN,
JAMES MORELL,
JOHN CARSON,
HUGH JOHN WALLACE.

Of these, Mr. Hugh John Wallace was Congregational Secretary, and Mr. John Best Congregational Treasurer.

To persons unacquainted with the worth of a special effort, requiring large devotion and large liberality, as a unifying and consolidating influence, it may seem that immediately after Mr. Martin's ordination was a very unsuitable time to undertake the long talked of erection of a Lecture-hall. The new office-bearers, on entering upon their duties, found that a very considerable sum had to be raised in order to place the Congregation on a clear footing financially. Yet only a little over a year had elapsed from the date of Mr. Martin's reception, when it was unanimously resolved to open a subscription list to meet the cost of this important addition to the congregational property. The ladies performed their part by organizing a Bazaar. Considering the circumstances in which the Congregation was placed, there was a generous response. The work of erection was entered upon, and by March, 1865, the substantial and suitable hall in which we now meet was ready for opening. The total price had not then been obtained; but though it was not till 1870 that it could be reported that "the debt of £160, which has long pressed on the Congregation as a remnant of the cost of the Lecture-hall is wholly defrayed," the initial effort was most creditable, and did much to

consolidate and strengthen Sandys Street Congregation, and to establish among the members that spirit of loyalty to congregational ties and congregational institutions that contributes so much to congregational efficiency.

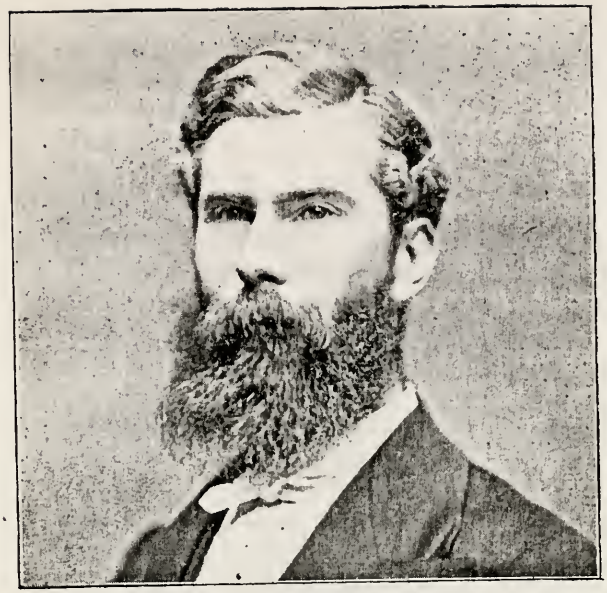
In the same year the Lecture-hall was opened there was an ordination of Elders. Messrs. William Gillespie, David Martin, John Carson, and Hugh John Wallace were ordained an the 7th April, 1865. At the first meeting Mr. Wallace was appointed Clerk of Session, an office he continued to fill for twenty-seven years, in a manner "that secured for himself the respect and esteem as well of his brother Elders as of the members of the Congregation generally."* Mr. Wallace presented to the Congregation a solid silver Communion Service, consisting of a pair of flagons, four cups, and four patens, of very beautiful design. Each flagon bears the inscription—"To the Congregation of First Newry (Sandys Street), from H. J. Wallace, Clerk of Session, 1888." The Rev. W. T. Martin, having accepted a call from Strean Church, Newtownards, was released from the pastoral charge of the Congregation on the 22nd January, 1867. Like Dr. A. C. Murphy, he had the degree of Doctor of Literature conferred upon him at the dissolution of the Queen's University, as a recognition of scholarly attainments when passing through his University course. He was elected to succeed Professor Wallace as Professor of Christian Ethics in Assembly's College, Belfast, in the year 1887. In 1892 the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the Presbyterian Theological Faculty of Ireland. In 1893 he was appointed Moderator of the General Assembly, an office that he filled with so much honour to himself and benefit to

* Session Minute, 26th January, 1892.

the Church, that he was appointed again to it in 1894. For the past few years, in addition to his work as professor, Dr. W. Todd Martin has devoted much time to the erection of the new Assembly's Buildings in Fisherwick Place, Belfast.

The pastorate of the Congregation remained vacant during almost the whole of the year 1867. It was felt by many that it would be for the advantage of the Congregation if its interests were committed to the charge of a placed minister of proved ability and experience, rather than to a licentiate just left the college class-rooms. And several efforts were made with that object in view. But as the result proved, they ended fruitlessly. It was with some hesitation, and after he had been heard preach as a candidate upon at least three Sabbath days, that a call was made out in favour of Mr. Monro, a licentiate of the Belfast Presbytery. But the choice was amply justified.

The Rev. JOHN HENRY MUNRO was ordained on the 17th December, 1867. He entered upon his work with method and determination. From the first it was evident that he was possessed of more than average prevision, and of the power to impress his views upon his fellow-workers; and success attended his advocacy of new ventures and new developments. The ordinary finances of the Congregation had been persistently troublesome; and it was impossible that the machinery could be made to move easily and agreeably while working expenses were not adequately provided for. But before attention could be successfully focussed upon this, the debt upon the Congregation, from the erection of the Lecture-hall, must be wiped out. An effort was accordingly made, and, as already stated, with complete success. Then it was proposed, that in order to pro-



Rev. J. H. MUNRO, D.D.

vide fully for the working expenses of the Congregation, and to increase its givings, the plan of the *weekly offering* should be tried. The proposal had been prepared for; for on the first introduction of it Mr. David Martin was able to state that several members of the Congregation had expressed their willingness to adopt the scheme. A Committee, consisting of Messrs. D. Martin, Wm. Corkey, John M'Dowell, A. W. Sinclair, and David Glenny, was put in charge, and soon the annual contributions for incidental expenses were largely increased. The plan of the weekly offering brought home to individuals the share that each should take in the support of the Congregation, and so developed the sense of individual responsibility in this matter that good fruit is being

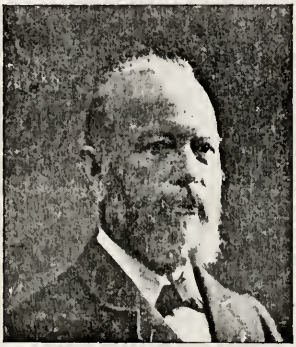
reaped from it at the present time. The clearing off of the debt that was operating as a drag, and the introduction of the weekly offering plan, were, however, but minor matters when compared with another financial scheme that was inaugurated during Mr. Munro's ministry. I refer to the Sustentation Fund. When in 1869 the Irish Church Act was passed disestablishing Episcopacy, and withdrawing from the Presbyterian Church the endowment she had enjoyed for almost two hundred years under the name of *Regium Donum*, it was a very critical point in our Church's history. It was made plain that the ministers might either draw their annuities for life or commute for a capital sum; and that each might commute either in his own personal interest or for the benefit of the Church. A great lay conference was held to consider what should be done in the critical circumstances which had arisen. Delegates were present from 282 congregations. First Newry was represented by Mr. Hugh John Wallace. Mr. John Lyttle presided. Mr. William Young, of Fenaghy, moved, and Mr. (now the Right Hon.) Thomas Sinclair, of Belfast, seconded a resolution asking the ministers to commute their incomes in the interests of the Church, and declaring that commutation by ministers would not only secure a larger profit to the Church, but would thereby powerfully stimulate the laity in the establishment of a Sustentation Fund. The resolution was passed with only four votes against it, the delegates pledging themselves to use their best efforts to raise a fund of £30,000 a year to supplement the interest from the commutation capital. The General Assembly adopted the scheme. The ministers by commuting put into the Church's treasury a capital of £587,803 17s 8d, and performed what Professor Heron quotes high authority for describing as "an act of the highest moral value."

We are now remote enough to judge the actions of both ministers and laity at that critical time in the testing light of results ; and though the interest from the commutation capital has shrunk to a figure considerably less than was expected, and the givings of the Church have always fallen short of the £30,000 aimed at ; though consequently ministers receive but £80 or thereabouts, instead of the £100 forecasted for them, and advocacy of the fund is left too much to those it directly benefits and is therefore difficult, the scheme was a wise one, and the men who devised it were men who had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do.

During the period when the Sustentation Fund was in its inception there was, of course, much discussion, and many letters appeared in the press. Not the least valuable of these were from the Minister of Sandys Street. They were "pronounced equal to any that appeared on the subject," and the fact that Mr. Munro wrote them no doubt did much to increase the interest of the members of the Congregation in the new scheme. When the first appeal for subscriptions was made, a committee consisting of Messrs. H. J. Wallace, J.P., John Forbes, and Joseph Fisher, J.P., was put in charge, and Sandys Street Congregation started to contribute at the rate of £120 a year to the Sustentation Fund. It is worthy, too, to be noted here that when the last-named member of the first Sustentation Fund Committee died, three years ago, he left a legacy of £500 to the Fund, and a testamentary request to his sons to remember it favourably when giving of their means to religious objects.

Turning to features of Mr. Munro's work that present a different aspect, one that should not be overlooked is his interest in Sabbath Schools. His

intervention and that of the Session in the administration of the Congregational Sabbath School gave to it an impetus and a thoroughness the effects of which have not passed away. The united afternoon Sabbath School was his creation. He took the liveliest interest in it, was its zealous superintendent, and got it attached to the congregations of Sandys Street and Downshire Road as having a recognised claim upon Congregational funds.



Mr. THOMAS IRWIN.

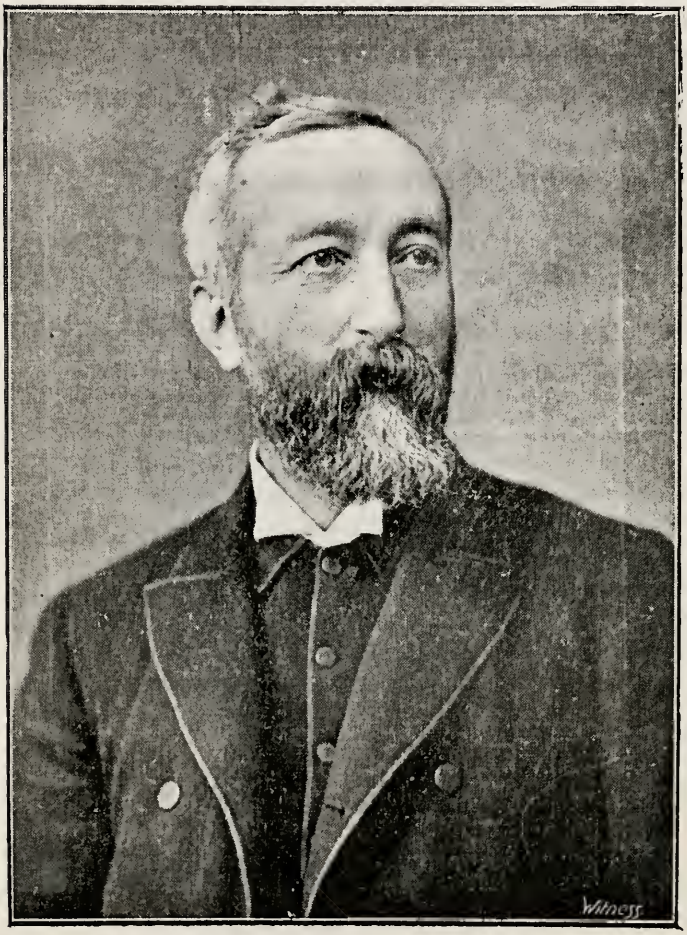
At a visitation by the Newry Presbytery on the 1st November, 1870, it was recommended that the Congregation take immediate steps to have additional elders appointed. How thoroughly the recommendation was approved by both Minister and Session was shown by a resolution passed to have "if possible *ten* elders added to the session." The number was later on reduced to six; and on July 14th, 1871, Messrs. Thomas Irwin, William Corkey, James M'Gaffin, F. S. Langston, John Forbes, and William Eakin were appointed, Mr. Irwin, by installation, he having been previously an elder in First Drumbanagher Church, and the others by ordination.

On the 12th May, 1873, Mr Munro intimated to the Session that he had received an invitation to become minister of a congregation in Boston, and had declined it; but that the invitation had been renewed, and that he had come to the resolve to accept it. The intimation was received with manifest regret; but Mr. Munro having definitely made up his mind the Session could offer no opposition to his translation. The call was presented to Mr. Munro on the 1st July, 1873, and accepted. In his parting words at the Presbytery he was able to say—"The Congregation is consolidated, and is as strong and large as if no misfortune had marred its history. Its financial affairs are settled on a sound basis. During each of the two last years we raised for all purposes twice the amount ordinarily raised five years ago. True religion abounds more and more, and the spirit of unity and brotherly love seems to reign among the people." Mr. (now Dr.) Munro has since removed from Boston to Philadelphia, where he is minister of one of the most important congregations. He has often visited Ireland since 1873, and preached from Sandys Street pulpit; and it is always a gratifying announcement to his former parishioners when it is intimated that they may thus renew their acquaintance with a preacher they so highly esteemed.

The next minister of Sandys Street Congregation was the Rev. James Caldwell Ferris, previously minister of Hydepark, near Belfast. His ministry here began on the 18th February, 1874. On that day the Newry Presbytery performed a double service to the Presbyterians of Newry. It installed the Rev. J. C. Ferris in Sandys Street, and ordained the Rev. Charles J. Legate in Riverside.

The first year of Mr. Ferris' ministry was that of the first visit of Messrs. Moody and Sankey, the well

known American evangelists, to this country. The interest awakened by their work was keen, and that, along with the readiness to undertake new duties which usually characterises a congregation immediately after a new minister has come among them,



The late Rev. JAMES C. FERRIS.

made the time favorable for the enlisting of new workers in Sandys Street. After the matter had been discussed at several meetings of Session, a draft scheme "to guide in Christian work" was submitted by Mr. Thomas Irwin and adopted. Other schemes somewhat similar were put into operation both prior to this one and subsequently. But this was as comprehensive as any, and more comprehensive than most of them; and though very short lived in its operation had the distinction of enlisting a larger number for defined organized effort than accepted similar obligation at any other time in the Congregation's history. The work assigned included the visitation of the sick, the destitute, and the careless; the holding of cottage prayer meetings; the bringing of scholars to the Congregational Sabbath School, and the getting up of district schools; the showing of attention to young people and strangers, seeing that they obtain proper church care, and an introduction to means and opportunities of Christian usefulness; tract distribution; and effort to increase the attendance at the weekly prayer meeting. The result of this increased and specialized attention to Christian usefulness was gratifying. In connection with it there occurs the only minute I have been able to find among the records of the Congregation specially devoted to the acknowledgment of enlarged blessing. It is dated February 1st, 1875, and is as follows:—

"The Session desire to record their grateful sense of the faithfulness and mercy of Almighty God, that in answer to the prayers of His people He has been graciously pleased to grant an outpouring of His Holy Spirit not only upon the congregations of this town, but upon the Church generally. They desire to record its blessed effects especially upon our own Congregation—

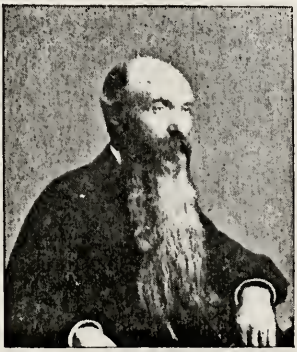
"1st—In the number of young people who have been brought under deep anxiety about their souls, and who have since professed to have found pardon and acceptance through the merits of the Saviour.

"2nd—In the stimulus given to those who had already made a Christian profession in works of faith and labours of love.

"3rd—In the spirit of prayerfulness and increased interest and earnestness of the people generally in all the means of grace.

"4th—In the breaking down to a certain extent of that spirit of formality and reserve which hinders so much the expression of Christian experience, and so deprives the people of the advantage of personal intercourse on the subject of religion.

"These blessings they thankfully acknowledge, and look upon them as the forerunner of a still larger measure which they trust through faith and prayer are yet to be obtained."



The late Mr. ALEXANDER WHEELAN.

In the year 1875 it was generally recognised by the members of the Congregation that the church required renovation; and a proposal was put forward that the whole interior should be thoroughly overhauled, the gallery altered, and new pews and a new

pulpit put in. On the 5th February, 1878, this proposal had so far advanced that a tender was accepted from Messrs. Wheelan & Watson for the work. The church was re-opened on the 20th of October, 1878, by the Rev. J. S. MacIntosh, minister of May Street Presbyterian Church, Belfast. A debt of £500 remained, but this was entirely removed by a special effort in November, 1882.

On the 27th April, 1883 a new appointment of trustees was made, with the result that from that date both church and manse were vested in Messrs. John M'Dowell, Samuel Connor, M.D., Robert Alex. Mullan, and Abraham Walker Sinclair.

In the year 1885 it was felt that an increase in the number of elders was again required, and arrangements were made to have six new elders appointed. Those selected were Messrs. John Strain, Robert A. Mullan, John Forbes, William Gillespie, James G. Gordon, and Donald Stewart. Mr. Forbes, who had severed his connection with the Congregation during a period of residence in Portadown, and Mr. Stewart, who had been an elder in Riverside Congregation, were installed, and Messrs. Gordon, Gillespie, Mullan, and Strain were ordained on the 15th January, 1886. There were then eleven elders in the Session—a larger number than at any previous time. The Congregation was re-divided, so as to appoint a district for each elder, and, with the reduction in the size of the districts committed to their charge, the elders' supervision of the Congregation became increasingly thorough and beneficial.

On the 9th November, 1887, Mr. Ferris, having received a call to Windsor Church, Belfast, resigned the ministry of Sandys Street. From beginning to end his ministry was highly successful. No questions to produce division or even serious divergence of

opinion arose among the people; attention was much concentrated upon the things by which congregational interests are most effectually maintained, and the Congregation grew and prospered. Mr. Ferris died after a lingering illness on the 28th August, 1898, at Windsor Manse, Belfast. His life and work were thus briefly referred to by the supreme court of the Church at its meeting in the following year:—

"The Rev. James Caldwell Ferris was largely influenced in his decision to enter the ministry by the religious awakening of 1859. He was a careful student of the Word of God, and his accurate knowledge of its spirit and teaching gave a tone and elevation to his devotions, and a character to his preaching which commended them to his hearers in a way no mere grace of oratory or charm of eloquence could ever have done. As a pastor he gave inspiration and direction in all departments of congregational activity, and his rich and abundant labours in the field of service bound many hearts to him in the tenderest sympathy. In social life he was always the true Christian gentleman. In the courts of the Church he took a prominent part, and was an earnest advocate of the cause of missions and generous supporter of the Sustentation Fund. His singleness of purpose, purity of aim, and unselfishness of action will, for years to come, make the influence of his life a sweet memory in the districts where he exercised his ministry."

We have now arrived at a time so near that there is no need to supply a connected chronicle. The three ministers who have yet to be mentioned were friends and fellow students at Assembly's College, and were licensed by their several presbyteries to preach the Gospel on the same day in a year that does not seem so long age (1887), and many of the chief participants in congregational events are still at posts of duty. It will be enough in the case of the

ministers to give the dates of ecclesiastical appointments, and then to refer in the briefest possible terms to a few events of outstanding influence and importance to the Congregation.

Rev. JAMES HUNTER, M.A.

The first of the three ministers referred to, and the immediate successor of Mr. Ferris, was the Rev. JAMES HUNTER, M.A. Mr. Hunter was ordained to the pastoral charge of Sandys Street on the 10th April, 1888, continued to labour in this Congregation till the 12th November, 1889, on which date he resigned the charge, having accepted a call to the Congregation of Dundela, where he was installed on the 5th December, 1889, and still continues his ministry.

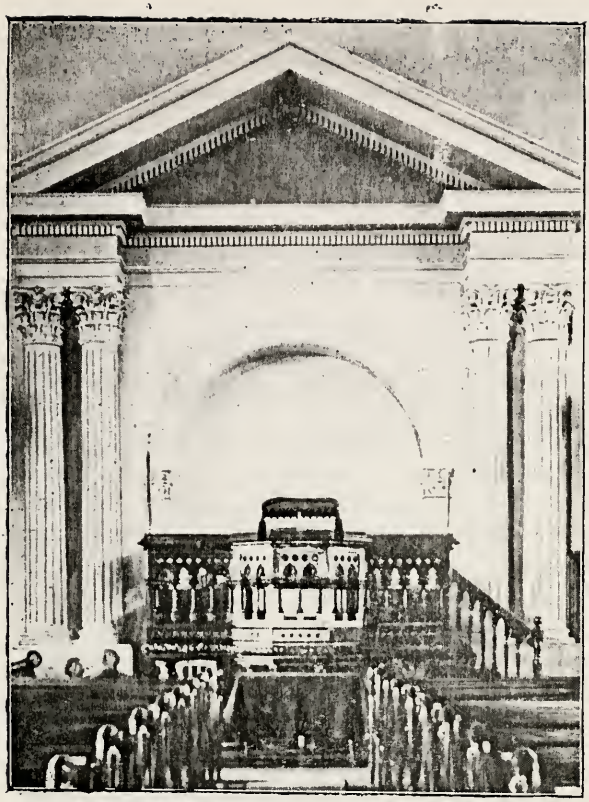
Rev. JAMES THOMPSON, B.D.

The vacancy in the pastorate occasioned by the removal of Mr. Hunter lasted a year and a quarter. It was brought to a termination by the choice of the Rev. JAMES THOMPSON, B.A., to be his successor. Mr. Thompson was ordained in Downpatrick on the 14th December, 1887; released from that charge on the 27th January, 1891; installed in Sandys Street on the 24th February following. He continued to minister here till the 11th December, 1899, when he accepted a call to Great James' Street, Derry, in which Congregation he was installed on the 16th January, 1900, where he still continues his ministry. Mr. Thompson obtained the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in the year 1892.

The present minister, the Rev. WILLIAM GORDON STRAHAN, B.A., is Mr. Thompson's successor. He was ordained at Ahoghill on the 13th September, 1887, where he continued to minister till the 18th April, 1900, on which date he accepted the call to Sandys Street. He was installed in this Congregation on the 16th May, 1900.

In the beginning of the year 1898 an expenditure of almost £1000 was incurred by the decoration of the interior of the church, the improvement of the heating apparatus, and the erection of the two class rooms in which the adult classes are accustomed to meet.

A very short time after the re-opening of the church in 1898 the Synod of Dublin met within it. Mr. Thompson was appointed Moderator. The meeting is notable, because from it there emanated the proposal that the General Assembly should raise a Twentieth Century Fund of £100,000, "to be used as an instrument of spiritual adventure in the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom." When the memorial introducing the proposal to the Assembly was presented, the commissioner who supported it was Mr. R. A. Mullan. The General Assembly received it with favour, sanctioned the formation of the fund, and appointed as conveners in charge of the arduous duty of raising the money the Rev. Wm. M'Mordie (now Dr. M'Mordie), of Kilkeel, and Mr. Thos. Irwin, of this Congregation. Among the largest contributions sent in was that from Sandys Street Congregation. Some of its members were especially liberal. Mr. Irwin gave £1000, Mr. Sands £1000, and Mr. Mullan £250. Mr. Irwin, in the prosecution of his duties as convener of this fund, became so widely and favorably known to the Church that when the Convenership of the foreign missions became vacant owing to the



INTERIOR OF SANDYS STREET CHURCH.

lamented death of Dr. Barkley, Mr. Irwin was at once looked to as his successor. The appointment was made in June, 1904. Thus one arduous duty was followed by another, and faithful service got an appropriate reward.

As a congregation increases in age, it both enriches congregational associations, and strengthens congregational ties, if special gifts for the benefit of

the Congregation are received from trusted members. Sandys Street has benefitted beyond the average in this respect. Reference has already been made to the beautiful Communion Service presented by Mr. Hugh John Wallace, which we make use of at our solemn communion seasons. When the other Sacrament is administered, the font used is a valuable piece of plate, on which is the inscription "Presented to Sandys Street Congregation by Mrs. Nesbitt. Feb., 1893." Mrs. Nesbitt also provided new seats of pitch pine for the Lecture Hall in 1901, and a large number of copies of the Psalter and Church Hymnary for the pews of the church when the Congregation began to sing hymns in congregational praise in the same year. On the day hymns were introduced—the 27th October, 1901—instrumental music also was installed, and Messrs. Abraham Wilson, J.P., R. J. Lynn, G. F. Alderdice, J. C. Nicholson, J.P., S. E. Martin, M.A., M.D., and Mr. Robert Sands, provided an American organ for the purpose. Two years later the excellent pipe organ now in use was erected; it was the gift of these and a few others who provided the cost by private subscription.

Among the legacies recorded from members of the Congregation are one by Mr. David Hening in 1837 of £50, and one by Miss Margaret Stewart in 1901 of £20, each of these being personal to the minister at the time; one by Miss Atkins in 1896 of £200 for the benefit of the poor of the Congregation; the legacy of £500 by Mr. Joseph Fisher already mentioned; and the chief portion of the estate of Mr. John Strain, which is to be distributed by the Minister and Session for the benefit of the Sustentation Fund and the Missions of the Church.

For its size, Sandys Street Congregation is very fully organized. The Sabbath School is large and

efficient. In 1903, if we include the two adult classes, there were 24 teachers and 240 scholars upon the rolls, and £29 was contributed for missionary purposes. The Women's Missionary Association holds a working meeting once a fortnight during the Winter months, and arranges an annual sale of work for the benefit of the Zenana Mission.

The Young People's Guild aims at uniting in one society the young people of the Congregation, that they may have opportunities of fellowship, and receive aid in the promotion of their intellectual and spiritual life, and have their interest definitely aroused in connection with the work of Christ in their own Congregation. It meets once a fortnight in the Winter. The Sabbath School Teachers' Association has for its members the Minister, Sabbath School Superintendent, Sabbath School Secretary, and all the Teachers. It meets quarterly for the scrutiny of class rolls, and for mutual conference and prayer. Besides these, there is a Band of Hope and a Total Abstinence Association, both of which have large rolls.

And special mention must be made of the Choir, never an easy part of a congregation's machinery to maintain in an efficient condition, but entrusted with a service that it is highly important to have well performed. It has always been the aim of those responsible for the choice of a leader of praise to have in Sandys Street an efficient precentor or choirmaster, and to give every possible encouragement to the Choir so that there might be maintained in the Congregation a high standard of congregational singing. Mr. Thomas Irwin and Mr. Geo. F. Alderdice rendered services of such magnitude in this department in the past that they received the special thanks of the Congregation; and that present service is favourably recognised the following paragraph

submitted in the Session Report at our last Congregational meeting, and adopted by the Congregation, is evidence:—"The Congregation owes much to the members of the Choir for all that they have done during the past year worthily to sustain the praise portion of the Sabbath services."

The task I set myself is now completed. But before I write the word "Finis" let me say that few Congregations have had a more chequered history, and few a more honourable one. Time has brought great changes since 1642. Only a few even of those who came out from the old Congregation in 1828 to found in Sandys Street this Congregation, by which alone the Synod of Ulster maintained connection with Newry from 1830 to 1840, have any of their name to represent them. But though the names are changed the continuity is unbroken. We are the heirs of faithful, devoted, generous men—men who loved the truth and adorned it by their lives—who were not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and counted not the number nor the measure of their sacrifices on its behalf. What they transmitted we are to use, honouring the same Lord. For though they are gone the way of all flesh, and the places of the earthly sanctuary shall know them no more, the Lord they served is "both their's and our's." And the word "finis" I was about to write may not properly be written. Their work, His work, through us goes on

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APPENDIX.

OFFICE-BEARERS FOR 1904.

Minister:

REV. W. GORDON STRAHAN, B.A.

Session:

THOMAS IRWIN,
WM. GILLESPIE,
JAMES G. GORDON,
ROBERT A. MULLAN,
DAVID MARTIN, J.P., *Session Clerk.*

DR. JOHN R. GILLESPIE, *Missionary, Moukden, China.*

Congregational Committee:

THOS. P. LEDLIE, *Treasurer,*
J. C. NICHOLSON, J.P.,
SAMUEL J. MORROW,
JOHN ALDERDICE,
WILLIAM H. CONNOR,
JOSEPH ERVINE,
JOSEPH LIVINGSTON,
J. FORD,
ROBERT SANDS,
JOHN FISHER,
S. E. MARTIN, M.A., M.D.,
WM. R. BELL,
G. F. ALDERDICE,
FRANK FISHER,
JAMES SINCLAIR,
ROBERT GRAHAM,
W. J. HENNING,
WILLIAM MAGOWAN,
JOHN HALDANE,
WM. ALLISON, *Secretary.*

Sabbath School:

TEACHERS:

MRS. NESBITT,
MISS COCHRANE,
,, CORKEY,
,, H. E. FOSTER,
,, ADA HENNING,
,, MARY LIVINGSTON,
,, MAGGIE LIVINGSTON,
,, S. LIVINGSTON,
,, MARTIN,
,, W. W. MARTIN,
,, MURPHY,
,, M'ARTHUR,
,, M'GAFFIN,
MISS TURKINGTON,
,, ROUGH,
WM. ALLISON,
JOHN FISHER,
WM. GILLESPIE,
J. G. GORDON,
JOHN HALDANE,
T. P. LEDLIE,
ROBERT LEDLIE,
WM. MAGOWAN,
ROBERT SANDS,
T. J. REA.

TEACHERS OF ADULT CLASSES:

THOMAS IRWIN,
ROBERT A. MULLAN.

DAVID MARTIN, *Superintendent.* WM. GILLESPIE, *Treasurer.*

ROBERT SINCLAIR, *Secretary.*

Musical Association:

COMMITTEE:

MISS LIVINGSTON,
MRS. SAUNDERSON,
MISS TEASEY,
W. ALDERDICE,
E. W. FLACK,
JOHN FISHER,
J. SAUNDERSON.

H. M'CLEARY, *Organist and Choir-master.*

Missionary Association :

COMMITTEE :

MRS. MARTIN,	MRS. STRAHAN,
,, WALLACE,	,, IRWIN.

MRS. NESBITT.

Young People's Guild:

COMMITTEE :

MISS CORKEY,	F. D. RUSSELL,
,, GREER,	A. J. CAMPBELL,
MRS. FORD,	ROBT. BREAKEY,
MISS GORDON,	ROBT. CORKEY,
,, LIVINGSTON,	JOHN ALLEN.

MISS MEEKE AND JAS. FORD, *Secretaries.*

MISS K. MARTIN AND T. R. LEDLIE, *Treasurers.*

MOORE BOYLE, *Editor.*

Total Abstinence Association :

COMMITTEE :

MISS GORDON,	A. EDMONSTON,
,, E. GILLESPIE,	JOHN HALDANE,
,, M'GAFFIN,	

JOHN FISHER, *Secretary.*

Congregational Statistics.

For the Year	Families.	Stipend-payers.	Collected as Stipend.	Sustentation Fund.	Ordinary Collections.	Missions.	Special.	For all Purposes.
			£ s d	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d
1841	....	....	172 3 4	....	....	52 10 0	....	266 4 2
1846	....	....	194 10 0	....	....	....	....	....
1851	....	....	150 2 0	....	42 5 4	66 15 10	....	....
1856	....	....	160 2 7	....	46 18 7	40 0 7	*40 4 0	298 16 7
1861	....	....	179 0 0	....	55 7 3	54 4 2	....	288 11 5
1866	230	192	164 8 7	....	53 4 2	33 19 0	†103 14 6	363 6 1
1871	230	192	156 0 0	115 0 0	110 0 0	35 0 0	....	416 0 0
1876	207	191	190 4 0	95 8 5	103 18 9	84 17 9	....	534 8 11
1881	230	183	229 7 3	75 0 0	101 7 6	100 12 9	....	587 3 6
1886	250	200	219 6 7	79 17 9	132 3 6	150 2 7	†160 3 0	820 13 5
1891	216	168	223 1 3	97 3 5	118 17 3	368 5 0	....	961 8 11
1896	230	184	228 13 5	90 4 1	138 12 6	606 0 0	....	1197 6 7
1901	259	232	284 6 6	85 1 6	172 17 2	473 4 6	....	‡2745 18 9

* Church and Manse Fund. †Reduction of Debt. ‡Included part of £2686 12s 3d contributed to Twentieth Century Thanksgiving Fund.

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