

CHAPTER VIII.

CHURCH AFFAIRS. REV. MR. SMITH. PROTEST. NOTICE OF COLONEL BLANCHARD. REV. JOSIAH COTTON. ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL. COMPROMISE. TOWN MEETING ON POINTS OF DOCTRINE. REV. MR. LIVERMORE. REV. MR. FESSENDEN. REV. MR. KIDDER SETTLED. NOTICE OF HIM. REV. MR. SPERRY. SLAVES OWNED IN TOWN. CUSTOMS AT FUNERALS.

HOWEVER distracted and divided our predecessors may have been in relation to religious affairs, we may justly be proud of them for their unanimity in patriotism. Exposed for so many years to the dangers of a border warfare, every citizen was a soldier. The story of Indian atrocities, and French instigation had been handed down from father to son, and not a few had shared personally in the conflicts. To hold a commission was then a high honor, and an object worthy of any man's ambition, for it was only bestowed upon those who had given proofs of courage and capacity. Every officer might be called at any moment into actual service. The military spirit was fostered as a duty, and New England freedom, which placed in the hand of every child a *gun* as well as a *spelling-book*, made necessarily of every child not less a marksman than a scholar.

September 26, 1757, the town voted, "that some measures be taken to settle the Gospel in this town;" and four persons were selected to preach one month each, on probation. Nov. 7 they gave a call to Rev. Elias Smith, (a graduate of Harvard in 1753), but difficulty ensued, and Dec. 16 the call was retracted.* It was a custom for those dissatisfied to enter their protest, and as a curiosity and a specimen, the following is inserted :

"We, the subscribers, being freeholders in Dunstable, do for ourselves protest against the choice of Mr. Elias Smith for our minister, which they have essayed to choose for these reasons: *first*, because we are not of the persuasion he preaches and endeavors to maintain; we are Presbyterians, and do adhere to the Westminster Confession of faith; and do declare it to be the confession of our faith; and that we are members of the Presbyterian Church in Londonderry—some 18 years—some 15 years, and have partaken of Baptism, and of the Lord's supper as frequently as we could, they being the sealing ordinances, and that we cannot in conscience join in calling or paying Mr. Smith. Therefore we plead the liberty of conscience that we may hear and pay where we can have the benefit.

JOHN ALLD, JEREMIAH COLBURN."

There was also a protest of David Hobart and others against his settlement, because, as they say, "Mr. Smith's preaching is contrary to our persuasion, and as we judge favors the Armenian scheme, which we judge tends to pervert the truths of the Gospel, and darken the counsels of God."

April 7, 1758, died Colonel Joseph Blanchard, aged 53. He was born Feb. 11, 1704, and his grandfather, Deacon John Blanchard, was one of the first settlers of the town. His father, Captain Joseph Blanchard, was town clerk, selectman and proprietor's clerk for many years, a very active and useful citizen, and died in 1727. On the death of his father, although young, Joseph Blanchard was chosen proprietor's clerk, which office he held, with a slight interval, during his life, and was constantly engaged in town business until his death. In early life he became distinguished as a surveyor of land, and was almost constantly employed in that capacity. In conjunction with Rev. Dr. Langdon of Portsmouth, he projected a map of New Hampshire, which was published after his death, in 1761, and inscribed to "Hon. Charles Townsend, his Majesty's Secretary of War."

At this period no accurate maps of the State existed, and to prepare one from the then scanty materials must have been a work of great magnitude. Surveys were to be made, and information collected from every quarter. Most of the labor, of course, fell on Colonel Blanchard. The greater part of our territory was then a wilderness, for our whole population scarcely exceeded 50,000, and the means of intercommunication were limited and difficult. But settlements were springing up rapidly, and the lands were becoming every day more and more valuable, and accurate information

*Perhaps the founder of the sect of *Christians*.

of the localities was important. Under these circumstances the map was considered of great value, and as a token of their estimate of it, Mr. Townsend procured from the University of Glasgow, for Mr. Langdon, (Colonel Blanchard having deceased), the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.*

Upon the dissolution of the connection between New Hampshire and Massachusetts in 1741, and the accession of Benning Wentworth as governor, Mr. Blanchard received the appointment of counsellor of state by mandamus from the Crown. This was an office of great dignity and authority, and, next to that of governor, was the most honorable and responsible in the colonies in the gift of the king. This office he held for a number of years, and probably until his death. In 1749, on the death of Chief Justice Jaffrey, he was appointed a judge of the superior court of judicature of the State, which office he held during life.

When the old French war broke out in 1755, an expedition was planned against Crown Point. New Hampshire raised a regiment of 500 men, and Mr. Blanchard was appointed colonel. Of this regiment, the famous *Rangers*, under the command of Rogers and Stark, formed a part. The regiment was stationed at Fort Edward, and returned home in the autumn of the same year.

Colonel Blanchard married Rebecca Hubbard, [Hobart?] by whom he had twelve children. He died in this town and is buried in the Old South Burying Ground; his tombstone bears the following inscription:—"The Hon. Joseph Blanchard, Esqr., deceased April the 7th, 1758, aged 53."

Nov. 27, 1758, the town voted to give Rev. Josiah Cotton a call, and offered 178 milled dollars salary. Jan. 29, 1759, they added £5 sterling, making his salary about \$200. The call was accepted,—the day of ordination appointed, and the churches invited to attend to assist in the services. But a quarrel ensued as usual,—the opposition prevailed, and Mr. Cotton was not ordained. Protests were entered at every meeting by the minority, as each party in turn prevailed.

In 1759, in consequence of the divisions and the bitterness of feeling which existed, an ecclesiastical council was called to settle the difficulties. For many years there had been two churches and two meeting-houses, but no minister. After much trouble and effort, a compromise was made and an union effected. Mr. Bird's meeting-house was purchased by Jona. Lovewell, removed, and converted into a dwelling house, which is now [1843] occupied by Jesse Bowers, Esq., and the two societies again became one.

As the town at its public meetings settled and paid the minister, so it determined his creed, and we find accordingly, the following to us curious record. In 1761 a town meeting was called expressly "to see what doctrines the town would support;" and it was voted, "that the Doctrines contained in the New England Confession of Faith are the standing doctrines to be defended by this Town."

July 19, 1762, an invitation was given to Mr. Jonathan Livermore to settle here. He was to receive £100 for a settlement, and £40 sterling per annum salary, "if he will fulfil the duties of a Gospel minister agreeably to the Congregational persuasion, according to Cambridge Platform, and New England Confession of Faith." This *proviso* was adopted by a party vote, and was a renewal of the old sectarian difficulties of past years. Mr. Livermore would not accept and afterward settled in Wilton.

During the next two years various preachers were heard, but not to general satisfaction. Although nominally united there was still a variance at heart, and no attempt was made to settle a minister until August, 1764. A call was then given to Mr. Thomas Fessenden, (a graduate of Harvard college in 1750), and an offer of £100 settlement, and £50 sterling salary. Against this call *three* separate protests were entered by persons styling themselves "*Presperterions*," or Presbyterians, because this mode of settlement was "contrary to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity," and "of our persuasion." Mr. Fessenden accepted the call, but such was the spirit of discord that he was never ordained. He left town very soon after for he commenced a suit at law against the town for the recovery of his salary before May, 1765, and recovered judgment.

For nearly *twenty years* the town had been without a settled minister. Sept. 12, 1766, they gave a call to Mr. Joseph Kidder, (a graduate of Yale college in 1764), and offered him £132 6s. 8d. [about \$450] for a settlement, and a salary of £53 6s. 8d. lawful money, [or about \$180]. Mr. Kidder accepted the invitation, and, more fortunate than his predecessors, succeeded in being ordained March

*1 Belknap, 312.

18, 1767. After many years old difficulties revived and new ones arose. Parties were again formed, and in 1796, by a reference of all disputes to a committee mutually chosen, the civil connection between Mr. Kidder and the town ceased. He was the last minister over the town. He continued his relation to the church, however, as before, and preached to his society until his death, Sept. 6, 1818. Nov. 3, 1813, Rev. Ebenezer P. Sperry was ordained as his colleague but was dismissed in April, 1819.*

A picture of Dunstable as it was before the Revolution, and of the manners and customs, opinions and feelings, doings and sayings of the inhabitants, would be highly interesting. To sketch such a picture would require the hand of a master, as well as materials, which can now hardly be obtained. A few facts and anecdotes must serve instead.

Slavery was then considered neither illegal or immoral. Several slaves were owned in this town; one by Paul Clogstone. She was married to a free black named Castor Dickinson, and had several children born here, but before the Revolution he purchased the freedom of his wife and children. Slavery in New Hampshire was abolished by the Revolution.

In those days it was customary to drink at all meetings, whether of joy or of sorrow. The idea which was long after in vogue—"to keep the spirits up, by pouring spirits down"—seems to have been then universally prevalent. Even at funerals it was observed, and in the eyes of many it was quite as important as the prayer. The mourners and friends formed themselves in a line, and an attendant, with a jug and glass, passed around and dealt out to each his or her portion of the spirit; and the due observance of this ceremony was very rarely omitted. It is said that sometimes "one more thirsty than the rest," after having received one "portion," would slyly fall back from the line, under some pretext or other, and re-appear in a lower place, in season to receive a *second portion*.†

*Mr. Sperry is now [1843] or was recently Chaplain of the House of Correction, at South Boston.

†This is stated on the authority of Mrs. Kidder, wife of Rev. Mr. Kidder, an eye witness.