

for direction and success; to depend on thee for ability and power. Prosper thou the work of our hand. As thou hast enabled us to make a beginning, so do thou enable us to prosecute the work to a happy issue, that we may have a commodious and comfortable edifice to assemble in, where in Christian unity we may dwell together and worship thee, as our fathers worshipped thee, with one heart and with one mind. And O, when the edifice which we are now beginning to erect shall be finished, may it be honored with the presence of the great Master of assemblies; may it be the birth-place of many precious souls; may it be said of it that this man and that man was born there; may it be a Bethel to the spared of us, and to those who shall come after us, even for many generations, a place where thou shalt be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and where the worshippers, sensible of thy presence, shall say, This is none other but the house of God—*this is the gate of heaven*. Grant that in thy Gospel may be preached, and thy holy ordinances dispensed in purity and in power. May the places round about it be made a blessing, the waters of the sanctuary flowing out from it in copious streams, because of the seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

O Lord, we pray for the Church universal. Do good, in thy good pleasure, to Zion. Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. May there be added daily to the Church such as shall be saved. May the Jews be brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles. May it please thee shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, hastening thy work till it is done, when the top-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings of grace, and all the scaffolding of this whole visible world, being removed, having passed away like a scroll, thy redeemed shall stand forth revealed—a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—an house of God, eternal in the heavens. Hear this our prayer; forgive our sins, and accept of us, for Christ's sake. Amen.

[Here the chairman of the trustees of the church, William Murdoch, Esq., read the inscription (which was on parchment), and particularized the coins and papers selected for deposits. These were then enclosed in a metallic case and put under the stone. The stone was then lowered to its place, when the Moderator of the congregation, the Hon. James McNab, who with trowel in hand had prepared it a bed, tested it with square and level, and then, striking it with the hammer, pronounced it to be rightly laid.]

ADDRESS.

It is impossible for us—it would be unnatural—on the occasion of our present meeting, not to cast a glance over the past; to suffer our minds to revert, for a moment, to the old building, now no more—to its history, and to its hallowed associations. Old St. Matthew's, dear to us all! We do not affect to appropriate, in a strict sense, the terms employed by the Lord's ancient people in their complaint in the prophet; we would only use them as an accommodation, in the way of allusion,—and as in accordance with our present feelings: "Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire, and her pleasant things are laid waste." Can we fail to have our hearts stirred, when our mind's eye turns to the old pews, the accustomed seats, the familiar faces—to the whole place hallowed by our worship and our communion there—by the religious impressions we received there;—the place endeared to us by the most tender associations;—the place where our fathers worshipped;—the place where we sat and mingled our prayers and praises with those of the dearest objects of our affections, now departed; and where we were wont to have recalled to us memories of the past, sweet and pleasant to the soul!

I am sorry that, not being a person given to antiquarian research, I can present you with but a very meagre account of our Church's early history. It is probable that the congregation was organised at the first settlement of the place; that is to say, immediately on the arrival of Governor Cornwallis

in 1749. It was designated the Protestant Dissenting Congregation; and by this name it continued to be called, as appears from inscriptions in the books of our congregational library, down to as late as the year 1790, when Dr. Brown was the minister.*

The congregation was originally composed of emigrants from London, joined, there is reason to believe, by settlers from New England.

The name of their minister was Aaron Cleaveland, as appears from inscriptions in our library books, these inscriptions running, for example, thus:—"The gift of the Reverend Mr. John Walker, of London, to the Reverend Mr. Aaron Cleaveland, and his successors in the ministry at Halifax, in Nova-Scotia, 1753." Again:—"The gift of William Mount, Esq., to the Reverend Mr. Aaron Cleaveland, at Halifax, in Nova-Scotia, 1753;" the dates thus proving the existence of the congregation in the third year of the settlement of the place.

We have no very early Church records. Captain Fullerton used to account for this to me by saying that he believed they were lost on the occasion of a fire at Mr. Fillis's. The register of baptisms commences in the year 1769, by the Rev. Mr. Sycombe.† The committee of management's book of minutes goes no farther back than the year 1787.

During the pastorate of the Rev. Mr. Russell,‡ who succeeded Mr. Sycombe in 1784, the congregation was composed of New England people and Scotch people in about equal numbers, who formed two parties, that strove, in a very violent manner, for the direction of their ecclesiastical affairs. Eventually their differences were settled by a compromise, which was this: the New England people conceded the applying to the University of Edinburgh for a pastor when the pulpit should become vacant; the Scotch conceded the using of Watt's psalms, according to the wont of the congregation to that time.

The frame of the church, as was the case in respect to not a few of the early buildings of Halifax, was probably imported from Boston. The church, when finished, was called Mather church, in compliment to a distinguished New England divine

*The Rev. Andrew Brown, D. D., one of the ministers of the Old church, and professor of rhetoric and belles-lettres in the University of Edinburgh, was a native of Biggar, in Lanarkshire. His academical education was commenced in Glasgow, and completed at Edinburgh. His talents were known and appreciated by Principal Robertson and Dr. Blair, who recommended him to the Scottish Church at Halifax, N. S., in which station he labored from 1787 to 1795. He then received a presentation to the church and parish of Lochmaben, in Dumfriesshire. Soon after he was removed to the new Greyfriars' church at Edinburgh, and promoted, after the death of Dr. McKnight, the commentator, to the Old church in the same city. He succeeded Dr. Blair as professor of rhetoric and belles-lettres in 1801. He died in 1834.

†The Rev. Archibald Gray, D. D. succeeded Dr. Brown, as Minister of St. Matthew's in 1795. He was a native of Morayshire, and an Alumnus and A. M. of King's College, Aberdeen. The University of King's conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1804. He died in 1826.

‡The Rev. Robert Knox, a native of Halifax, and for some time chaplain of the troops in the castle at Edinburgh, was, on the recommendation of Principal Baird and Dr. Brown, appointed assistant and successor to Dr. Gray in 1820. In Halifax he discharged his ministerial duties till 1822, when he returned to Scotland, having received a presentation to the church and parish of Ordiquhill, in the presbytery of Forlyce. He was thrown from his horse and killed in 1826.

The Rev. Ebenezer Rennie succeeded Mr. Knox as ordained assistant, but was not confirmed as successor. After officiating for a short time in St. Matthew's, he returned to Scotland.

At the time of Dr. Gray's death I was on my passage to Halifax, having been ordained his assistant and successor by the presbytery of Edinburgh.

Rev. Thomas Jardine was admitted co-ordinate minister in 1858.

† The Rev. John Sycombe was from the United States, and of the Congregational connection. He resided and preached at Chester some years before his death. He died in 1793.

‡ The Rev. Thomas Russell, first Minister in connection with the Church of Scotland, resigned his charge in 1786. He was lost at sea in crossing the Atlantic. J. S.