

by the magistrates, "because he refused to communicate with the church at Boston, unless they would make a public declaration of their repentance for having held communion with the Church of England; and because he declared it as his opinion that the civil magistrate might not punish any breach of the first table." In consequence of this refusal he was called by the Church of Plymouth to assist Mr. Ralph Smith, where, says Governor Bradford, "he was freely entertained according to our poor ability, and exercised his gifts amongst us; and after some time was admitted a member of the church, and his teaching well approved; for the benefit whereof I still bless God; and am thankful to him even for his sharpest admonitions and reproofs." He continued assistant to Mr. Smith two or three years; but finding some of the leading members of the church to be of different sentiments from himself, and having received an invitation to succeed Mr. Skelton as pastor of the Church at Salem, he requested his dismissal to that church. After some demur, his request was granted. He preached at Salem all the time of Mr. Skelton's sickness, and his labours were so acceptable to the church that he was chosen pastor after Mr. Skelton's death. Several who adhered to him were also dismissed and removed to the church at Salem. Though his settlement was still opposed by the magistrates, he retained the pastoral office at Salem about two years.

Mr. Williams was not a man to suppress or disguise his opinions; but openly and publicly declared whatever appeared to him to be the truth. This exposed him to the censure of those who were opposed to him, and involved him in troubles even soon after his settlement at Salem. At length, in 1635, he was summoned before the general court, and was charged with maintaining, among other things, that "the magis-

trate has nothing to do in matters of the first table, only in cases of disturbance to the general peace; that there ought to be an unlimited toleration of all religions; that to punish a man for following the dictates of his conscience is persecution; and that the patent which was granted by King Charles was invalid, and an instrument of injustice, being injurious to the natives, the King of England having no power to dispose of their lands to his own subjects."

Soon afterwards he appeared again before the court, and received the sentence of banishment for his dangerous opinions as they were called; the ministers coinciding with the magistrates in their approbation of the sentence. So imperfectly were the principles of religious liberty then understood. It is, indeed, a plant of tender and slow growth; and those who most earnestly desire it in their own case, are often the most backward in allowing it to others. The disgraceful sentence of the court was this:—"Whereas Mr. Roger Williams, one of the elders of the church at Salem, hath broached and divulged divers new and dangerous opinions against the authority of magistrates; has also written letters of defamation both of the magistrates and churches here, and that before any conviction, and yet maintaineth the same without retraction; it is therefore ordered that the said Mr. Williams shall depart out of this jurisdiction within six weeks now next ensuing, which, if he neglect to perform, it shall be lawful for the Governor and two of the magistrates to send him to some place out of this jurisdiction, not to return any more without license from the court."

By this barbarous sentence he was driven from his home, his wife, and his children at Salem, in the depth of a most severe winter, and obliged to take refuge among the wild Indians, where for fourteen weeks, as he