

AN EPITOME OF THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN
EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

By the Rev. Henry Caswall.

PART I.—History of the Church previous to the Revolution.

The eastern shores of the country now denominated the United States, were discovered under English auspices, and claimed by the English monarch, as early as the year 1497. Yet in deference to the authority of Pope Alexander VI. who had granted to the Spaniards all the territory more than a hundred leagues west of the Azores, no settlement was attempted prior to the Reformation of the Anglican Church. The feeble minority of Edward VI. distracted with factions, was not a more favourable period to schemes of doubtful utility, and the bigotry of his successor, Mary, disposed her to pay a sacred regard to that grant of the Holy see, which vested in her husband Philip, an exclusive right to the New World. It was not before the reign of Elizabeth that the English began seriously to form plans of settling colonies in those parts of America which hitherto they had only visited. Their early efforts, however, proved abortive, and no settlement was permanently established previous to the reign of James I.

On the 26th of April, 1607, two years before the settlement of Canada by the French, seven years before the founding of New-York by the Dutch, and thirteen years before the landing of the Puritans at Plymouth, a small band of colonists disembarked on that coast denominated, in honour of Queen Elizabeth, Virginia. They brought with them the refined habits of the higher orders of the English society; they were members of the Church established in the mother country, and they were accompanied in their adventurous enterprise by an exemplary clergyman, (the Rev. Mr. Hunt) whom they venerated as a father and loved as a friend. Religious considerations, had in a great measure, conduced to their voluntary expatriation. They had been required by their sovereign to provide for their preaching of the gospel among themselves and the neighbouring Indians, and they had been taught to regard their undertaking as a work, which, by the providence of God might tend to the glory of his divine majesty, and the propagating of the Christian religion. The piety of the emigrants, stimulated by the exhortations of their pastor, led to the almost immediate erection of a humble building, dedicated to the service of the Almighty.—On the 14th of May, within three weeks after their arrival, the colonists partook of the Lord's Supper: and Virginia commenced its career of civilization with the most impressive solemnity of the Christian Church. Upon a peninsula which projects from the northern shore of James river, may still be seen the ruins of the first Episcopal place of worship in North America; and this, with its surrounding burial ground, is now almost the only memorial of Jamestown.

Such were the fathers of the Church in the newly discovered continent; and it may be fairly presumed that, if all succeeding emigrants had possessed a kindred spirit, the form of religion which they introduced would have continued to prevail in the United States until the present day. But various causes soon contributed to multiply a very different class of settlers. In the year 1614, New-York was colonized by the Dutch, who brought with them their own confession of faith, and their Presbyterian form of ecclesiastical government. In 1620, the Puritans succeeded in colonizing New-England, and in establishing their peculiar doctrines and discipline. The Swedes and Finns introduced Lutheranism into Delaware and New-Jersey in 1627; Maryland was settled by Roman Catholics in 1634; and Pennsylvania by the Society of Friends in 1681. Long before the termination of the 17th century, the members of the Church of England in the colonies were exceeded in number by those of other persuasions. Nor was this all. From one denomination at least they soon began to experience opposition. The Puritans, although required by their charter to conform to the laws of England, had not scrupled to constitute a religious establishment, widely differing from that which the laws of England recognized. A few persons, offended at this procedure, withdrew from communion with their dissenting brethren, and assembled separately to worship God according to the Liturgy of the Church. This was too much to be patiently endured by the dominant majority. The leaders of the party, two brothers named Brown, were expelled from the colony and

sent home to England. A monument has been erected to their memory in St. Peter's Church at Salem, which describes these worthy men as the first champions of religious liberty in America. Heavy fines were inflicted on those who took part in Episcopalian ceremonies, severe laws were enacted against the observance of any such day as Christmas or the like, and an inquisition existed in substance, with a full share of its terrors and its violence.

As the country increased in population, the Church nevertheless slowly advanced. Even in New England a few Churches were at length established, and under a load of obloquy, gradually gathered strength. New-York having fallen into the hands of the English, a Church was erected in that city. Philadelphia under the tolerant influence of the Friends, was blessed with an Episcopal place of worship; and in Maryland, several congregations were organized. The Cavaliers and their descendants fled to Virginia, during the persecutions of Cromwell's government; and in that country the Church maintained undisputed pre-eminence for nearly a century, notwithstanding the efforts of missionaries from New England to produce a defection.

Up to the period of the Revolutionary war, the number of Episcopalians was very small, except in the southern colonies. In Virginia and Maryland a provision for the maintenance of the clergy was made by law; the territory was divided into parishes, Churches were built and glebes attached. Here the Church possessed all the authority, and commanded all the respect of a national establishment. But in the provinces north and east of Maryland the congregations were few and far between, and generally confined to the larger towns. It is believed that the only considerable endowment by the English government in favour of the Church in the northern colonies was a grant of land to Trinity Church, New-York. But during the early part of the eighteenth century, a zealous friend was raised up to the Church in the British "Society for propagating the Gospel in foreign parts." By means of this excellent institution, the great part of the clergy resident in New-England, New-York, Pennsylvania and New-Jersey, were maintained, and the number of congregations considerably increased. To this society a very liberal grant was made by the colonial government, which, under equitable management, might have sufficed to support the institutions of the Church to an indefinite extent. The territory of Vermont, when first surveyed, was divided into townships of 6 miles square, 114 of which were granted by Governor Wentworth, of New-Hampshire, an Episcopalian. In each of these, one right of land, containing usually 330 acres, was reserved for the first settled minister, one right as glebe for the Church of England, and one to the Propagation Society. But the surveyors being unfriendly to Episcopacy, the lots reserved for the society and for the glebes, were often situated within the same identical spot, often on mountains, rocks or morasses, in consequence of which, the grant promoted but little the cause which it was designed to subserve.

It is obviously important that something should be said in regard to the character of the clergy previous to the Revolution. It is more desirable on account of the many misapprehensions which exists in regard to this subject. Let it then be remarked, that the missionaries of the Propagation Society were generally men of holy, self-denying lives, and of blameless reputation. The venerable association just mentioned issued a notice in 1735 and subsequently, in which they besought those concerned to recommend no man to them as a missionary 'but with a sincere regard to the honour of Almighty God, and our blessed Saviour. In the same circular they expressed their persuasion that any clergyman in America who had disgraced his character, must have gone there without their knowledge, and they concluded by promising to dismiss any one in their employment, against whom a just complaint could be preferred. It is true that many disorders prevailed in those districts where the law, by assigning a considerable stipend to ministerial services, held out an allurements to the unprincipled. And yet, even under these circumstances, the clergy and their people were free from many imputations which must for ever attach to the memory of their chief opponents. The absurd superstitions which flourished in the North found an uncongenial soil in the Southern colonies, and the terrific excitements in regard to witchcraft had little nourishment where the

mild and scriptural worship of the Church prevailed. The severe laws of Virginia against dissent carry an appearance of persecution; but let it be recollected that these laws were not often enforced, and in fact, were little more than a nullity.

To be continued.

YOUTH'S COMPANION.

THE POOR BOY.

We delight to trace the progress of genius, talent, and industry, in humble life. We dwell with pleasing emotion on the character and conduct of individuals who from a 'low estate,' of obscurity and poverty, have raised themselves by their own native energy, to affluence and stations of respectability and renown.—Our country is full of examples of this description. They fall under our observation every day. Gideon Lee was once a poor boy, and in the occupation of a farmer. He is now in affluent circumstances—recently Mayor of New York, and at present a member of Congress. Charles Wells, late Mayor of Boston, was a journeyman mason.—Samuel T. Armstrong, the acting Governor of Massachusetts and at the head of several philanthropic institutions, was once a journeyman printer.* There are those living who recollect George Thibbits, a day laborer, and know him now as a gentleman of wealth, influence, and enterprise—the Mayor of the city of Troy, Stephen Warren, the well known and esteemed President of the Troy Bank, rich in this world's goods, and rich, too, in public spirit and deeds of benevolence, came from an obscure town in Connecticut, penniless—a shoemaker. Perseverance, energy and industry, and moral worth, produced this pleasing consummation of human wishes. With one more example, we close our sketch.

Thirteen years since, a poor boy, 'hired himself to the captain of one of the steamboats on lake Champlain, in some humble occupation. Few know the temptations to which young men are liable in the mixed, irregular company of a steamboat—surrounded by evil company, and under equally bad influences. But the poor boy had a talisman to keep him from falling. He recollected that there was one man being who relied on and cared for him. 'He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.' He faithfully discharged his humble duties.—His conduct was marked by those who passed that way and by his employers. Aspiring for what he merited, he gradually reached the top of his profession. He commanded one of the first steamboats on the Lake. His uniform politeness and attention to those who were necessarily thrown in his way, commanded for him universal respect and esteem.—His reputation reached the ears of the greatest steamboat associations in the world; and many who knew him when a boy on the Lake, now see him at the head of the most splendid boat that foams and dashes through the waters of the noble north, and from a salary of \$5 per month, his pay increased to \$1500 per annum.

Thirteen years have not altered the good principles of his youth; he still retains that simplicity and purity of character which must ever be regarded as the true nobility of human nature.—N. Y. Messenger.

An Honest Child.—The following pleasing anecdote related by an Englishman, fully demonstrates the influence of early religious training. A child, about ten years old, going down a street one day, saw, at a distance, a man counting money: when she came as far as the spot where he stood, she found a shilling—picked it up, and ran to his house, saying, 'Here, Mr.—, is a shilling you lost.' 'No child, it's not mine, keep it.' 'No, no,' said she, 'I saw you counting money, and when I came where you were, I found this.' He then took it and gave her a penny, with which she bought a toy, and went home; when her mother saw the toy, she asked her where she got it; the child then told the story, and said, 'An honest penny is better than a dishonest shilling,' 'for the love of money is the root of all evil.'—S. S. Treas.

Thoughts.—It matters not what else I lose this year, if I save my soul; and if I lose my soul this year, it matters not what else I save.

* Now Mayor of Boston.