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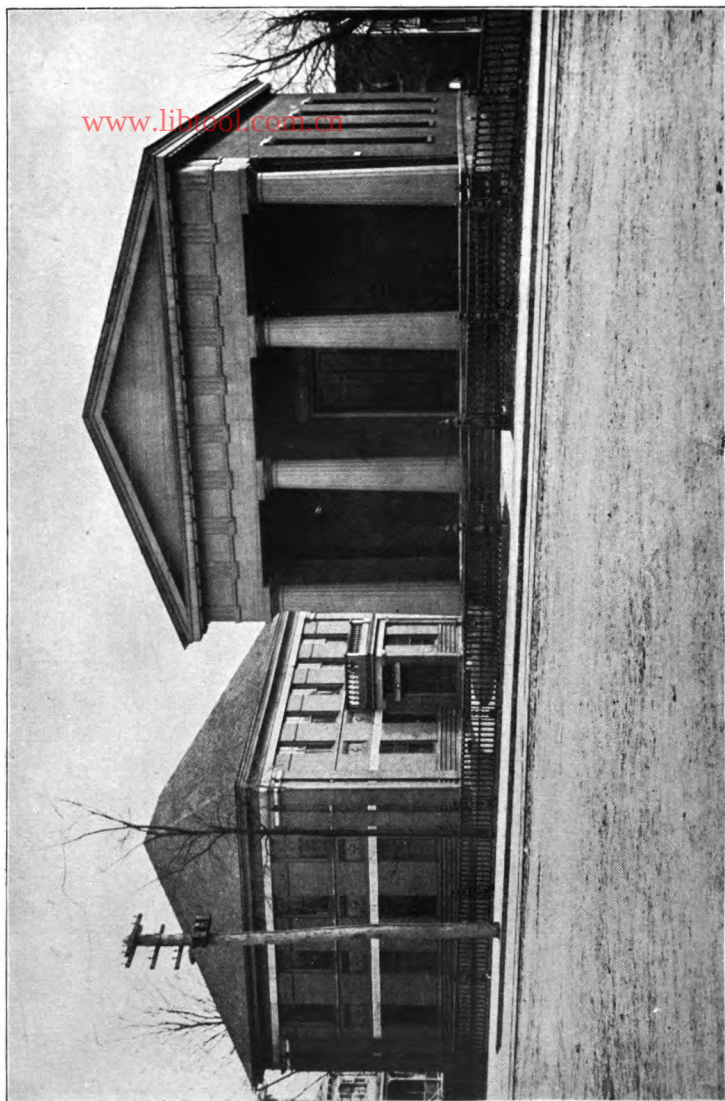
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A HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF THE
INDEPENDENT
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

MEADVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

1825-1900

BY

EARL MORSE WILBUR



MEADVILLE, PA.

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THIS history is the outgrowth of a historical discourse prepared for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the church, and delivered Tuesday evening, October 30, 1900. In the preparation of it I have tried to make so exhaustive use of all printed or manuscript sources discoverable that no one will need to work over the subject a second time. Much more material and many more details have thus been accumulated than could well be incorporated into the present narrative; but in order that this additional material, having once been unearthed from a great mass of newspapers and other sources, might not be lost again, I have deposited in the libraries of the Meadville Theological School, the Harvard Divinity School, and the American Unitarian Association copies of this history with the addition of full manuscript notes, appendixes, and references to the original sources.

E. M. W.

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LIST OF MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

WITH APPROXIMATE DATES OF SERVICE.

JOHN MUDGE MERRICK . .	October, 1825 - October, 1827.
WASHINGTON GILBERT . .	December, 1828-April, 1830.
EPHRAIM PEABODY	May, 1830-July, 1831.
GEORGE NICHOLS	July, 1831-July, 1832.
ALANSON BRIGHAM	July, 1832-August 24, 1833.
AMOS DEAN WHEELER . .	Three months early in 1834.
WILLIAM HENRY CHANNING, supply	May-August or September, 1834.
JOHN QUINBY DAY	October 4, 1834-September 1, 1837.
HENRY EMMONS	December, 1837-August 31 1843.
ELIHU GOODWIN HOLLAND .	Late October, 1843-late September, 1844.
RUFUS PHINEAS STEBBINS .	October 13, 1844-October 1, 1849.
NATHANIEL SMITH FOLSOM .	October 1, 1849-October, 1853.

LIST OF MINISTERS

COADJUTORS :

- ~~JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE~~ . September 28, 1851–October 13, 1852; July 17–October 4, 1853.
- RUFUS PHINEAS STEBBINS . October, 1852–June, 1853.
- CARLTON ALBERT STAPLES . July 2, 1854–March 11, 1857.
- RUSH RHEES SHIPPEN, supply November or December, 1857–September 13, 1858.
- OLIVER STEARNS, morning supply }
 NATHANIEL SMITH FOLSOM, evening supply } January–summer, 1859.
- RICHARD METCALF January 30, 1860–May 13, 1865.
- JOHN CELIVERGOS ZACHOS . May 6, 1866–October 4, 1868.
- HENRY PARTRIDGE CUTTING . March 13, 1870–middle of April, 1873.
- ROBERT SWAIN MORISON . . September 1, 1874–May 10, 1878.
- JAMES THOMPSON BIXBY . . January 19, 1879–July 15, 1883.
- WILLIAM PHILLIPS TILDEN, supply January 1–April 30, 1884; October 1, 1884–April 30, 1885.
- HENRY HERVEY BARBER . . January 1, 1886–September 1, 1890.

LIST OF MINISTERS

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JOINT SUPPLIES :

HENRY HERVEY BARBER

EGBERT MORSE CHESLEY

GEORGE RUDOLPH FREE-

MAN

September 1, 1890-July 1,
1891.

THOMAS JEFFERSON VOLEN-

TINE September 13, 1891-Sep-
tember 4, 1893.

JAMES MORRIS WHITON, sup-

ply October 8, 1893-June 10,
1894.

WILLIAM IRVIN LAWRENCE . January 15, 1895-April 1,
1899.

EARL MORSE WILBUR . . . October 29, 1899-

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HISTORICAL SKETCH

IT is my purpose in this history to relate what seems worth remembering of seventy-five years of a movement for maintaining and promoting the more liberal form of Christianity in an environment where it has had many and strong obstacles to overcome. It is a history not rich in dramatic events, nor in phenomenal successes; yet in the record of these three quarters of a century of steadfast adherence and unselfish devotion to a religious cause, there are many passages which, if writ large enough, might inspire us who still profess that cause with a generous emulation of those that have maintained it before us.

When, on the evening of May 12, 1788, the little company of hardy pioneers from Northumberland County built their first camp-fire on the bank of French Creek, where Meadville now stands, they found only the Indians in posses-

sion of the region. Fourteen years later, when during four weeks in the late summer of 1802 Mr. H. J. Huidekoper made his first visit to it, he found Meadville "a small village containing twenty-five or thirty houses, chiefly log ones, and a population of about one hundred and fifty inhabitants. The country around it was chiefly in a state of nature." Meadville was still far in the western wilderness; for on his return to Philadelphia Mr. Huidekoper found between the Pennsylvania line and Buffalo but three small cabins, and at Buffalo itself only perhaps a dozen and a half log cabins. "When I arrived here, and for years afterwards," he wrote, "there was not a single church or house of worship of any kind in any of the four northwestern counties, and I believe there was none west of the Allegheny River." Our little frontier village grew, however, steadily if not rapidly; for in 1810 it had 300 inhabitants; in 1820, 540; and in 1830, 1104; from which it is fair to presume that in 1825, the date at which the history of this church really begins, there was a population of something above 800. The completion of the turnpike between Philadelphia and Erie in 1824, and of the Erie Canal in October, 1825,

seemed to bring this part of the country into very close connection with the East. It was boasted that a gentleman had traveled to Troy from Erie in only seventy-nine hours, and that a merchant had arrived at Meadville from New York in the unprecedented time of five and one half days; while the time to Philadelphia had been reduced to only six days.

At the beginning of 1825 Meadville possessed ten stores, ten taverns, four mills, a college already ten years old, and a church organization of even age with the century. The church mentioned, the Presbyterian, had dedicated its meeting-house in 1820 (on the lot where the present church stands); and this remained the only place for public worship until 1825, when the Methodists, who had organized a class early in that year, fitted up a room for meetings over John Lupher's blacksmith-shop, the building still standing at the southeast corner of South Main and Arch streets. The Lutherans had formed a church in 1815, but it ceased to exist soon after, upon the departure of its minister. An Episcopal church was organized January 25, 1825, but its church building was not dedicated until three years later.

In its general religious tendencies this part of the State was markedly conservative, as it remains, relatively speaking, even to this day. The predominant element among the early settlers was of Scotch-Irish origin, strong in its allegiance to the faith of Calvin and of Knox; and the considerable proportion of German settlers was scarcely more favorable to liberal Christianity. Such was the little village, and such the general environment, into which this church came seventy-five years ago, — certainly it furnished no bright promise as a field in which to propagate Unitarianism. And it is but stating the truth in its simplest terms to say that, except for the devoted earnestness and the material support of one man and his family, there is little reason to suppose that there would have been a Unitarian church at Meadville even to this day, or that, had it once been founded, it would have been long or strongly maintained.

The man chiefly through whose efforts this church was organized and maintained for many years was Harm Jan Huidekoper; and it is necessary here to digress a little in order to bring his life into connection with the history



G. A. Audenkeper

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of the church. Born at Hoogeveen, in the province of Drenthe, Holland, April 3, 1776, he came to America at the age of twenty, and settled at Meadville late in the month of November, 1804, as agent of the Holland Land Company, which had acquired in this part of the State about half a million acres of land. At the time this church was founded, therefore, he was in his fiftieth year, one of the old settlers, and a man of wealth and influence in the community. He had been brought up a strict Calvinist, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, and early in life had joined the Dutch Reformed church; and there is no evidence that he had either seriously questioned its main teachings, or, on the other hand, had made them independently his own. When, however, he found his family of five children growing up about him, and realized that he was responsible for their religious instruction, it became a matter of serious concern with him what he should teach them. At about this period, in the autumn of 1823, he listened to a sermon preached by the Rev. John Campbell of Pittsburg at the dedication of the new Unitarian church there, which marked an epoch in his experience, and

caused him to examine the foundations of his religious belief. Finding it impossible longer to accept blindly the faith of his youth, and being ever a man of independent mind, he now applied himself earnestly to an unbiased study of the New Testament. That he might know what to teach his children upon what he regarded as the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, he read the New Testament through again and again, and wrote out all the passages bearing on each of those doctrines. From a comparison of these he drew his own conclusions, and, to use his own words, "soon acquired clear and definite notions as to all the leading doctrines of the Christian religion."

The result was the reverse of what he had perhaps anticipated. Instead of having his early faith confirmed, he became fully convinced that the Bible does not teach the doctrines of the Trinity, the total depravity of all men, or the vicarious atonement of Christ. Without ever having read a Unitarian book, or being familiar with Unitarian teachings, he had become a Unitarian by his independent study of the Scriptures; and it was not until now that he procured a collection of Unitarian works by

sending to the East for them. He had for more than twenty years attended the Presbyterian church with his family, had been one of its most liberal supporters, and had contributed a generous share toward the erection of its meeting-house. But the zeal of a new convert now possessed him, and he could not keep his liberal convictions to himself. He became an earnest propagandist, and in conversations and discussions by the way, and through the circulation of tracts and books, he embraced every opportunity that he found or could make, to spread his new faith among his neighbors.¹ His duty to his own children, too, was now made clear. He could not suffer them longer to be taught the religious doctrines that they were sure to learn at the Presbyterian church and Sunday-school. In seeking for tutors, therefore, to conduct their education at home, he sent to New England and engaged young men of the Unitarian faith, usually graduates of Harvard College or the Harvard Divinity

¹ He was agent for the tracts of the American Unitarian Association in 1830, and at an early date had formed a tract association with ten members. An "Association Auxiliary to the A. U. A." existed here in 1832 or earlier.

School, and candidates for the ministry, who were employed with reference to their willingness to hold religious services while here.¹ It was thus that the first Unitarian preachers were brought to Meadville; and as they were usually willing to devote only a year or two to the office of tutor, there was a rapid change of preachers during the first few years of the church's history.

I have said that it was mainly through Mr. Huidekoper's efforts that the church was organized and for a long time maintained; but no one family can make a church. There were other devoted supporters of the new cause, both with their substance and with their influence. There was Miss Margaret Shippen, who came

¹ Benjamin Bakewell of Pittsburg, writing to Mr. Huidekoper in 1824, says, "Mr. Ware [the Rev. William Ware, then of New York City, who had written to the Rev. Mr. Campbell of Pittsburg] wishes to know what prospect there would be for a young minister of the persuasion in western Pennsylvania. I suggested to Mr. Campbell that perhaps a clever young man who would undertake the education of a select number of boys, and conduct the worship on the Sabbath, might possibly meet with encouragement in Meadville. What think you of it?" It is perhaps from this letter that Mr. Huidekoper got his idea. The school was held in the north wing of "Pomona Hall," Mr. Huidekoper's residence in Water street, where that of his son Frederic has stood in more recent years.

to Meadville in 1825, already a zealous Unitarian, from Mr. Furness's church at Philadelphia, and so far as I have been able to learn, the only one of the first adherents of this church who had been trained in Unitarianism elsewhere; and not long afterward there came over from the Episcopal fold the wife and family of her brother, Judge Henry Shippen. There was Arthur Cullum, merchant, and his wife, whose children six presently came to be among the most stanch and influential members of the church. There was Judge Stephen Barlow, and Octavius Hastings, merchant, and Livy Barton, hotel-keeper, and John Beach and Bailey S. Courtney and Isaac Cooper and their families, and William P. Shattuck; not to mention many more, who must have been among the first to hear our gospel preached at Meadville.

The first preacher of Unitarianism here was John Mudge Merrick, a young man who had not yet finished his studies at Bowdoin College, and who was tutor in Mr. Huidekoper's family from October, 1825, to October, 1827. His first service, the date of which I have been unable to discover, though it was presumably soon after his arrival, was held in the Presbyterian

church in Liberty street. Mr. Merrick generally preached fortnightly, sometimes upstairs in the old log Court House standing at the northwest corner of the Public Square and Cherry Alley, where Haskins and McClintock's law office now stands, sometimes in the new Court House, but usually in the Presbyterian church at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. There was no organ, even in the church, and the services must have been exceedingly simple; but letters written at the time show that there was no lack of warm fervor and lively interest. Sunday evenings the little flock used to gather at Pomona Hall and sing hymns together under Mr. Merrick's leadership.

Mr. Merrick's preaching was of a high order, practical and earnest, extremely simple and direct. He was a thorough scholar of large and varied acquirements, and a faithful minister, conservative in theology, and active in the cause of education and of temperance. He remained here two years in his double office, and then withdrew in order to devote himself exclusively to the work of the ministry. He afterwards held pastorates at Hardwick, Sandwich, and Walpole, Mass., — at the latter place for nearly thirty years, where president George L. Cary

studied theology under his direction. He died at Charlestown, N. H., where he was minister, March 20, 1871, at the age of nearly sixty-seven years.

Let us now consider the way in which the new preaching was received. It might have been expected, perhaps, that the people of Meadville would be predisposed to give it a kindly reception; for Allegheny College, an institution of which Meadville was and is justly proud, had already had rich experience of Unitarian benefactions. The college had been founded in 1815 (chartered 1817); and when its first president, the Rev. Timothy Alden, went East to solicit funds for it, the first subscription that he received was one from President John Adams, while among the names that followed were those of Channing, Frothingham, Lowell, Ticknor, Greenleaf, Parkman, Thayer, Worcester, and Bancroft, all well known Unitarian names; and among local subscribers, Mr. Huidekoper had been one of the most generous. Moreover, the Rev. William Bentley, D. D., of Salem, Mass. — who at his death in 1819 bequeathed to the young college an important part of his library, valued at \$3000, and

known to be one of the most valuable private collections in the country, and in whose honor its first building, finished in 1819, was named Bentley Hall — was a prominent Unitarian clergyman. These gentlemen in the East, however, had given not as Unitarians but as Christian philanthropists, and without seeking to influence the religious tendency of the new college. It may be doubted, indeed, whether many here even knew their religious affiliations.

At all events, even before Mr. Merrick's arrival, Mr. Huidekoper's known acceptance and advocacy of Unitarian beliefs had roused such a storm of opposition as to-day can hardly be imagined. Not to mention the controversies which followed would be to omit a significant passage in the history I have to relate. Happily, however, we can speak calmly of these things now, and I trust without offense to any, since we are not to judge them by the standards of the end of the nineteenth century, and because the rigors of the theological climate have so wonderfully softened in the course of seventy-five years.

It was not a period when, at least outside of New England, liberal views in religion were

looked upon by those who opposed them with the least tolerance. To illustrate the spirit of the time, I may cite some characteristic examples of the way in which our dangerous heresies were received. In 1827 a leading Baptist minister in New York City said in a sermon, "Of all people I ever knew or read of, the Socinians I think are the worst; and if there is such a place as the *hottest* hell, I do think they richly deserve it, and no doubt will have it." In his Christmas sermon in 1824, a Roman Catholic clergyman named McGuire, at Pittsburg, took occasion to attack Unitarians, speaking of them as "infidels, worse than devils . . . lost not only to every sense of religion, but also of shame," and devoted them to eternal damnation. He was answered by a Unitarian of English origin, who bore much the same relation to the young Pittsburg church that Mr. Huidekoper bore to that at Meadville, Mr. Benjamin Bakewell;¹ and since the Pittsburg newspapers would not insert communications answering direct attacks upon Unitarians, Mr. Bakewell was compelled to publish his reply as a tract.

¹ Founder of the flint-glass industry at Pittsburg, and a most devoted Unitarian.

It is hardly to be supposed that at Meadville at that period, the disposition of the defenders of the faith toward teachings deemed so dangerous was essentially different from what it was elsewhere. The Rev. John Van Liew, indeed, minister of the Presbyterian church from 1821 to 1824, while strongly orthodox in his personal convictions, was a man of a generous tolerance unusual at that day. But during the pastorate of his successor, the Rev. Wells Bushnell, from 1826 to 1833, and in the intervening two years when the Rev. Timothy Alden often supplied the pulpit, the Unitarians — I quote from a local newspaper of the time — “were made the object of constant and unrelenting vituperation. It was charged that they were not Christians; that they were enemies to God and to Christ; that they denied the Lord who bought them; and that they wished to dethrone Christ, and to tear the crown of laurel from his brow.” The Erie Presbytery voted that all that attended the worship of Unitarians or Universalists should thereby become amenable to church censure. An aged member of the church at Meadville was repeatedly threatened by his minister with expulsion, for expressing the opinion that Uni-

tarians and Universalists were Christians; and an attempt was made to prevent the ringing of the church bell to call the people together to hear a Universalist preacher. Such was the opposition and persecution which those here that first adhered to Unitarianism had to meet.

The files of the "Crawford Messenger," the local newspaper of that period, afford an interesting view of forms of controversy now long obsolete. The most notable of these controversies, waged not without heat on both sides, and with some use of personalities and invective, fills column after column during nearly nine months; and when the editor's patient indulgence was finally exhausted, it was still continued as a pamphlet war. We can all afford to smile over these things now; but then it was no smiling matter for any one concerned. And it is worth while to have dwelt upon them here, in order the better to appreciate through what storm and stress our church first won for itself a place in this community. The ultimate result of these controversies was favorable, rather than otherwise, to the infant church. There was a lively leaven of theological unrest at work throughout the whole western country at this

time. All men were set to thinking; and of those that thought, not a few became persuaded that the things for which this church was founded were true.

The church thus established was the first Unitarian church west of the Alleghanies that has maintained an unbroken existence down to the present day, and one of the first in the country to be from its foundation avowedly Unitarian.¹ Meadville did not long remain the western outpost of Unitarianism, however; for in 1830 churches were founded at Cincinnati and Louisville, in 1831 at Buffalo, in 1834 at St. Louis, and in 1836 at Chicago.

Difficulty must have been experienced in filling Mr. Merrick's place, for there were no services held for a year after his departure. There was a tutor in Mr. Huidekoper's family,

¹ A large number of the original Congregational churches in New England, however, had already accepted Unitarian doctrines, and had been disfellowshipped for it by the orthodox. Joseph Priestley had established Unitarian churches at Northumberland and at Philadelphia in 1794 and 1796 respectively, and in 1820 the Rev. John Campbell had founded a Unitarian church at Pittsburg, which led a troubled existence until about 1865, when its activities ceased. It was revived in 1889 as an entirely new movement. A Unitarian church was dedicated at Harrisburg Feb. 4, 1829.

indeed, a thoughtful boy of sixteen or seventeen, fresh from Harvard College, who afterward became known to fame as Andrew Preston Peabody, one of the best known and best beloved ministers of the century. But he had not as yet even begun his studies in theology, and did not preach at all while here. He was only the first of several, later among the most distinguished ministers of the denomination, who had early experience at Meadville.

The second preacher was Washington Gilbert, a graduate of Williams College and of the Harvard Divinity School, who arrived here in December, 1828. Like Mr. Merrick, he usually preached every two weeks. At first the services continued to be held in the Presbyterian church, at two or three o'clock in the afternoon, by virtue of a clause in the original articles of that church's association, which provided that the meeting-house, when not occupied by the society usually worshipping there, should be open to any Christian society for the purpose of public worship. But it is more than doubtful whether Unitarianism was among the forms of Christianity that had been contemplated. At all events, not long after Mr. Gilbert's ar-

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rival the storm of controversy broke out afresh. A project was discussed for excluding Unitarians from the use of the church. On one Thanksgiving day they were forbidden to use the church, though unoccupied, for a Thanksgiving service; but an adventurous young man climbed into the window, and opened and lighted the church, so that service was held that evening. At another time the sexton hid the candles in the foot-stoves, that the Unitarians might not be able to light the church for their service. In short, the situation became so aggravated as to be no longer tolerable. Early in 1830, therefore, we find the Unitarians already holding their services in the new Court House at half past ten or eleven o'clock in the morning. Clinton Cullum, then a lad not yet in his teens, used to carry the pulpit Bible down to these services from his father's house.

During Mr. Gilbert's ministry an important step toward the permanence of the movement was taken in the adoption of a constitution, under which the church was formally organized May 21, 1829. This first constitution was a plain business document. Its first article, entitled "Fundamental Principles," provided that

"every one who believes in the existence of one God, and in the divine mission of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Son of God, is admissible as a member of this church; and no other profession of faith than that contained in this simple creed shall at any time be imposed as a condition of church membership. Every person," the constitution continues, "possesses the inalienable right of judging for himself in matters of religion, and no one has the right to call another to account for any religious opinions which he may hold." Members became such by subscribing the constitution; but only contributors were permitted to vote in the choice of a minister.

At the present day no Unitarian church within my knowledge so much as dreams of imposing a creed, however simple or liberal, as a test of membership. It has long since become an axiom that our basis of union is not identical belief, but common purpose; and that "every person possesses the inalienable right of judging for himself" concerning fundamental doctrines no less than minor ones. And the present history of our body abundantly demonstrates that from this absolute mental

freedom there results not a weakening diversity, but a remarkable unity of spirit in the bond of peace, which has tended to increase in direct proportion as doctrinal limitations have been discarded. But in 1829, and for long afterward, such freedom would have been thought not only dangerous but fatal. The Unitarian churches, as a rule, had their creeds no less than the orthodox; the difference between them was that, whereas the latter were generally elaborate and conservative, the former were generally liberal and simple. For their time, the conditions of admission to the Meadville church were rather mild.

Members might be expelled only for gross immorality, and after full trial. Two elders¹ were, with the minister, to attend to the spiritual, and a Committee of Management of three to the temporal affairs of the church. It is significant that the double organization of church and society, which was all but universal in New England, was not introduced here. There was but one organization, and that the church; and

¹ A Presbyterian feature. Mr. Huidekoper's whole ecclesiastical experience in Holland and in America had been in churches of the Presbyterian polity.

its basis of membership, as we have seen, was a religious one. Significant also was the name, "The Independent *Congregational* Church of Meadville." For, although its members were in belief avowedly Unitarian, that word had been used but little as the name of a denomination. Channing's Baltimore sermon, which first clearly defined to Unitarians their distinctive position, was not preached until 1819; and the American Unitarian Association, the first attempt to give liberal Christianity definite coherence, was not founded until 1825. There were not half a dozen churches in America that had taken "Unitarian" as a denominational name;¹ for, although there was abundant disposition to accept a new theology, there was little to form a new sect. The constitution was originally subscribed by thirty-two persons, and served until 1840, when, as we shall see, it was thoroughly revised.

Mr. Gilbert, though not a brilliant preacher, was distinguished for his practical sense, was in-

¹ So obnoxious was the name that when the church at Philadelphia adopted it in 1813, the most advanced men of our faith at Boston, the fountain head of American Unitarianism, remonstrated with their brethren at Philadelphia, and counseled them to abstain from the use of so unpopular a designation.

dustrious and faithful, genuine and sincere, and entirely devoted to his calling. He left Meadville in April, 1830, and returned to New England. He held pastorates at Harvard, West Newton, and Lincoln, Mass., and died at West Newton, January 5, 1879, aged seventy-eight years. In May, 1830, Mr. Gilbert was succeeded by Ephraim Peabody, a graduate of Bowdoin College and of the Harvard Divinity School, who not only preached every Sunday in the Court House, but often held services in neighboring schoolhouses, especially in what is now known as the Cotton schoolhouse, west of town, or on pleasant afternoons in the maple grove near by, and sometimes in the Methodist church out on the State road, east of town.

During his year's stay here, Mr. Peabody, with the purpose of making the Unitarian faith better known to the people of this "benighted section of our country," as a correspondent of the "Christian Register" called it, and of defending it against the attacks that continued to be made upon it, projected a small monthly periodical to be published at Meadville, and called the "Unitarian Essayist," of which he was to be the editor. It was published for two

years from January, 1831; and as Mr. Peabody soon removed from town, it was afterward edited, and in great part written, by Mr. Huidekoper himself. A paragraph from the first editorial gives us an idea of the opposition which the church had still to meet. "But in this part of the country our opinions, though perpetually spoken against, are to the great majority absolutely unknown, or known only through the medium of prejudice. The consequence is that we are subjected to every kind of unjust judgment and misrepresentation. There is hardly an error among those which we esteem the most dangerous, which we are not sometimes accused of believing, nor a truth which we value as among the most precious truths of revelation, which we are not accused of rejecting. . . . We are made the subjects of ceaseless denunciation and anathema; we are denied even the name of Christians; men are warned from our books and our places of worship as from the contamination of a brothel, and the doors of our churches are described as the entrances to hell."¹

¹ The *Essayist* contains (ii. 31) a noteworthy bit of controversy, in an open letter of the editor to the Rev. John W. James,

The two years' numbers of the "Essayist" make a small duodecimo volume of about 340 pages, and the contents are, in the main, dignified and scholarly discussions of the chief points of Christian doctrine on which Unitarians differed from their orthodox opponents. To this day, few more effective discussions of the points at issue have been published. The subscription list contained some 340 names, of which eighty-five were from Meadville. Read and discussed as thoroughly as such things were in those days, the "Essayist" must have had a very important influence in this community in persuading such as were open to persuasion, as well as in confirming the faith of those already Unitarians. Its place was in a measure filled afterward by the "Western Messenger," published at Cincinnati and at Louisville, 1836-41, to which Mr. Huidekoper contributed twenty-eight articles, mostly on theological subjects.

rector of the Episcopal church, respecting an aggravated case of the way in which Unitarians were sometimes treated. Mr. James had attempted to deprive a young lady of her livelihood for no other reason than that she was a Unitarian. Her name, not mentioned in the letter, was Miss Jerusha Dewey, sister of the Rev. Orville Dewey. She had come to Meadville to establish a school for "young females," and joined the church October 2, 1831.

The initial work of controversy, unpleasant, but unavoidable in the circumstances, was now pretty well accomplished ; although, as we shall see, it was later revived from time to time. The young church, having established itself in the community, had peace for a season, and its neighbors accommodated themselves to it as best they could. Mr. Peabody was an engaging preacher, an estimable pastor, and a brilliant writer, scholarly, and singularly modest. He was much beloved at Meadville, but, finding his double duties as teacher and minister too arduous, he left in July, 1831, to become minister of the church at Cincinnati which had been formed the previous year. He went later to the church at New Bedford, Mass., and became at length the distinguished minister of King's Chapel in Boston, where he died November 28, 1856, at the early age of forty-nine, universally loved and mourned.

The fourth minister of the church was the Rev. George Nichols, a graduate of Harvard College, who arrived fresh from the Divinity School in July, 1831. Up to this time, none of the ministers of the church had been an ordained clergyman, and the members had there-

fore been deprived of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹ To supply this want, Mr. Nichols was, at the request of the church, ordained as an evangelist at Cambridge just before his departure for Meadville. This church was Mr. Nichols's only charge. He left Meadville in July, 1832, and afterward became literary critic for the University Press at Cambridge, Mass., where he died July 6, 1882, aged seventy-three years. It was during his ministry, in the winter of 1831-32, that Miss Margaret Shippen — "Aunt Shippen," as she was affectionately called — organized the first Sunday-school in her own home, which stood where the present minister's house stands, and was afterward given to the church for a parsonage. The school at first met afternoons in the north room of the building, but later in the Court House before the morning service. The school was but

¹ In 1831, Benjamin Bakewell of Pittsburg presented the church a glass loving-cup of his own manufacture. A single cup of this kind used to be passed round the table to the communicants under the Rev. John Campbell's ministry at Pittsburg; and the same practice was followed at the Lord's Supper when observed here, while the members of the church sat about the long lawyers' table within the bar in the Court House. The cup is still in existence.

small, and its early teachers were chiefly members of the Huidekoper, Cullum, and Shippen families.

Mr. Nichols was immediately succeeded by his classmate, the Rev. Alanson Brigham, who, like his predecessor, was a graduate of Harvard College, and was ordained in Boston before coming west. He was a man of unusual modesty of deportment, urbane in manner, amiable in disposition, with a strong sense of duty, and had won reputation as a scholar. He endeared himself deeply to the people. After one year's preaching here, he went east for a summer vacation, and had returned to teach one year more in Mr. Huidekoper's family, after which he was to devote himself exclusively to the care of the church. But he fell ill of typhus fever, and died at Pomona Hall August 24, 1833, aged thirty years. His remains, at first buried in the grounds at Pomona, now lie in the Theological School lot in Greendale Cemetery.¹

¹ The rector of the Episcopal church declined to attend Mr. Brigham's funeral, on the ground that he could not recognize him as a Christian. The Methodist minister was then applied to, and conducted the funeral services.

After Mr. Brigham's death there was for some time no regular preacher. The members of the church, however, continued to meet regularly as usual, one of them reading a sermon; and this custom has ever since been followed in the absence of a minister. During the ensuing year, the tutor at Mr. Huidekoper's, and the last of their number, was John Sullivan Dwight; but, although he afterward entered the Unitarian ministry (subsequently becoming one of the Brook Farm company, and a distinguished musical critic), he did not preach while here.

From the time of its organization, the church had continued to grow rapidly. The congregation now numbered nearly two hundred, "among whom are to be reckoned (not to speak invidiously)," says a correspondent of the time, "a full proportion, at the least, of the truly intelligent and devout of the village." It was therefore determined to employ the exclusive services of a minister for the church; and Henry Augustus Walker, just graduated from the Harvard Divinity School, who had happened to pass through Meadville and to preach for Mr. Brigham during his last illness, was called; but the call, which there was at one time reason to

believe would be accepted, was finally declined. ~~Efforts continued to be made~~ to find a suitable person, but none was found until the autumn of the next year; meanwhile there were two temporary supplies. Amos Dean Wheeler, formerly of Salem, Mass., was engaged as successor to Mr. Brigham, at a salary of \$500. He preached here for three months early in 1834, but for some reason did not remain longer. He was a man modest and grave, deeply devout, and of blameless life; not a brilliant preacher, but an indefatigable worker, of large natural endowments and fine scholarship. His subsequent ministry was spent in the State of Maine, where he died, at Topsham, June 30, 1876, aged seventy-two.

After him William Henry Channing (nephew of William Ellery Channing) preached from May to August or September, 1834. Naturally a mystic, somewhat erratic in his course, he was devoted to every sort of philanthropy and reform. In the pulpit he was deeply spiritual, both scholarly and eloquent. He became much beloved during his short stay here, and was a man of perhaps as brilliant talents, and became subsequently as celebrated, as any of all those

that have ministered to this church. He held numerous important parishes in this country and in England, and died in London, December 23, 1884, at the age of seventy-four.

After this year of broken ministry, the Rev. John Quinby Day, a graduate of Bowdoin College and of the Harvard Divinity School, who had been ordained at Portland, Maine, the month previous, arrived here at the beginning of October, 1834. After a three months' trial, the church extended to him a formal call, which he accepted, becoming its first minister regularly settled and devoting his entire time to its service, at a salary of \$500. The earlier preachers had been paid a small salary in addition to what they received as tutors. Among the events of Mr. Day's ministry was the visit of Miss Harriet Martineau to Meadville; and a minute in the scanty church records of the time reads thus: "1834, Nov. 2. Sacrament administered. Harriet Martineau of London communed with us."¹

¹ See her Autobiography, London, 1877, iii. 118, 119, for an entry from her journal dated Meadville, October 29, 1834. She was the guest of Mr. Huidekoper. "The C's" and the "Mr. D." referred to were no doubt the Cullums and Mr. Day. Her visit was from October 29 or earlier, to November 2, or later.

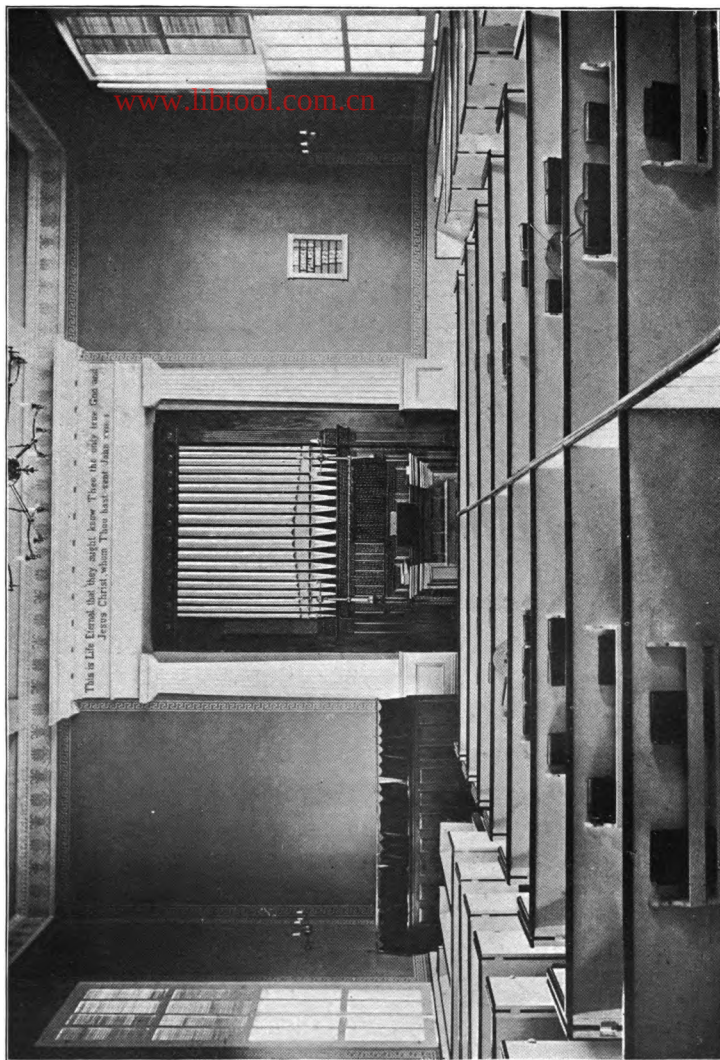
The great achievement of Mr. Day's ministry was the building and dedication of the church in 1836. Plans looking toward it had been initiated as long previously as 1829, the year in which the church was organized. In that year a circular letter, signed by the leading members of the church, had been sent to the ministers of most of the New England churches, requesting their aid in building a house of worship. The Rev. Mr. Merrick, writing to the "Christian Register" to second this appeal, had said (forgetting the church at Pittsburg) that this church was the "only one founded on our principles in the Western country; and from the situation and rapid growth of the town, is one that promises to be extensively useful in propagating liberal sentiments through those regions." He spoke of the society as "comparatively poor," but "composed of active and zealous individuals."

The wise forethought of Miss Margaret Shippen had secured a favorable location for the church. In 1830 she had bought the three lots comprising the present church property at the southeast corner of the Public Square. They had been a part of the original David Mead estate, and had later come into the pos-

session of Crawford County. The county commissioners had conveyed them in 1830 to John E. Smith and David McFadden, in part payment for building the new Court House; and they, in turn, to Miss Shippen. On August 20, 1835, Miss Shippen conveyed a portion of this property, measuring 88 feet on Chestnut street, and 105 feet on Hundred-foot street, as Main street was then called, to five trustees¹ for the benefit of the church; the lot being in reality the joint gift of herself and H. J. Huidekoper. In the following month active steps were taken for the erection of a church building, which Edward Derby built for the contract price of \$3500. The most of the money necessary was subscribed here; though substantial gifts came from members of the church at Philadelphia. It does not appear that anything resulted from the appeal to the churches in New England.

The plans for the church, which were rigidly adhered to, were drawn by Captain (later General) George W. Cullum, U. S. A., a son of the church, who, by the way, also drew the plans for a much more famous structure in Fort

¹ The trustees were H. J. Huidekoper, Octavius Hastings, Horace Cullum, Alfred Huidekoper, and Edgar Huidekoper.



CHURCH INTERIOR

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Sumter. The Doric style of architecture, to which it strictly conforms even in details, was much in vogue for churches during that period;¹ and the plans for this church closely resembled those of the Unitarian church at Philadelphia. Externally the church was of red brick, with white pillars, cornice, and pediment.² In the interior the walls were of a pale gray, and the ceiling flat and plain. The pews, all of which were furnished with doors, were painted white as at present; and the seats were five inches higher and two or three inches narrower than they are now, so that they were most uncomfortable, and footstools were indispensable to all but the tallest persons. The minister's seat, in the alcove where the organ now is, was complained of by two generations of preachers as being a very purgatory on a hot day in summer. The pulpit was several steps higher than it is to-day. The church was lighted from a chandelier of whale-oil lamps hung in

¹ A writer in the *Christian Register* (November 15, 1845) quotes a feeling then somewhat current, that "Gothic architecture belongs to the Trinitarian Church, and the severe majesty of the Doric would better suit the simplicity of the Unitarian faith."

² The church was subsequently painted gray; and in 1892 it was repainted red, with brown pillars, cornice, and pediment.

the center of the room and by other hanging lamps. The pulpit lamps were the gift of Benjamin Bakewell of Pittsburg. Heat was furnished by two large wood-stoves standing in the rear corners of the room, which was entered by a single center door. In the gallery there was a pipe organ which had been presented by the young Unitarian church at Buffalo. The singing was furnished by a voluntary chorus choir, and the hymn-book was Greenwood's "Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Christian Worship."

Five days before the dedication of the church, the pews were auctioned off to the subscribers to the building fund, as shareholders, and to others; and on Saturday, August 20, 1836, at 11 o'clock, this church, the second Unitarian one in western Pennsylvania, which was said to be, as it has always been, "much admired for its chaste style and classic symmetry," was "dedicated to the service of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The order of the service was as follows:—

1. Organ Voluntary.
2. Prayer by the Rev. James Thurston, Cambridge, Mass.

3. Reading of the Scriptures, Mr. Thurston.
4. Anthem, "Denmark."
5. Dedicatory Prayer by the Pastor, the Rev. John Q. Day.
6. Dedicatory Hymn, "O bow thine ear, Eternal One."
7. Sermon, by the Rev. Henry Coleman, Deerfield, Mass.; text, Eph. ii. 18-22.¹
8. Hymn.
9. Concluding Prayer, by the Rev. Ephraim Peabody, Cincinnati, O.
10. Hymn, "Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing."
11. Benediction.

The church thus so firmly established and well housed had now some sixty members, including a goodly number of persons of influence in the village. Nor is it to be supposed that in promoting its prosperity thus far the women of it had had any mean part. From the beginnings of the church they had met in each other's houses to sew on summer afternoons, while in the winter they sewed after tea in the even-

¹ The sermon was an excellent presentation of the position the church was founded to maintain. It was published in pamphlet form, by request of the church.

ing, when the men of the church usually joined them. At a later date suppers were served at these meetings, while a tradition was established from the first, which has ever since been adhered to : not to sew for profit, but only for the poor.

Meadville had now grown to have a population of about 1300; and, in addition to the single Presbyterian church which we found at the beginning of our history, the Episcopalians had built one in 1828, the Baptists in 1833, the Methodists and Cumberland Presbyterians in 1834, thus making this church building the sixth in order.

The church reached and maintained a very prosperous condition under Mr. Day's ministry. While he was well liked in other respects, however, he was not considered particularly successful as a preacher; and, realizing his limitations in this direction, he resigned September 1, 1837, and went away, bearing with him the good-will of the parish. He sought no other charge, but became a teacher at Medford, Mass., and eventually an editor at Portland, Maine, where he died, March 5, 1884, aged seventy-four years.

Mr. Day was succeeded by the Rev. Henry

Emmons, from Nashua, N. H., who arrived here in December, 1837, and served at a salary of \$700, a higher sum than had heretofore been paid.

During Mr. Emmons's ministry (May 10, 1840) a new constitution was adopted for the church in place of the original one. It was considerably more strict in form and details than the first one, and appears to have been copied after one of the constitutions then common in New England; for it introduced, in a veiled form, the distinction between members of the church and members of the society. It was also required that the names of new members be previously presented in writing and voted upon by the church; and that those that joined should assent to a rather elaborate covenant, containing a creed less simple than that at first required. Although all the members of the church signed this constitution, yet some of its provisions were found so embarrassing in practice that they were never actually observed; and after four years a second revision was made.

Mr. Emmons, writing to the "Christian Register" in 1842, says, "We are insulated — have no intercourse with other parishes; never,

or *very* seldom, see even a traveling brother minister, or missionary. We are surrounded by opponents active and efficient, envious of each other, yet combined against us. . . . Notwithstanding, we hold our own, and gradually increase. Several families have joined themselves to us during the last year. And what increase we have is from intelligent and firm materials. . . . Our society sustains itself well and vigorously, but has as much to labor under in doing this, as respects pecuniary means, as it can well bear." He also speaks of the need of tracts for distribution, and a large number of them was accordingly sent him by the Book and Pamphlet Society at Boston.

The period of Mr. Emmons's ministry here was one of vigorous missionary activity on the part of the church. During the most of the year there were morning and evening services in the church, as there had been under Mr. Day; and in the summer season services were held more or less frequently in the surrounding country, within a radius of from five to twelve miles; and at several of these preaching stations Sunday-schools were gathered. In the autumn of 1841 a school of some thirty or forty mem-

bers was thus formed at a schoolhouse in what was then Vernon (now Union) township, about three and a half miles south of Meadville on the Mercer Pike, and was maintained for about four years. The teachers were from the church, and in order to take them out to the school on Sunday afternoons Mr. Huidekoper used to send his carriage — an old conveyance famous in its time, which had been brought from Philadelphia in 1812, and was the second carriage ever brought to Meadville. There being no public school in that neighborhood, some of the classes used to pursue studies in English as well as to receive religious instruction. By the next season the attendance at this school, under the stimulus of a gift of library books from the Sunday-school at Brighton, Mass., had increased to seventy or eighty, and many walked three or four miles to attend it. In the summer the school was held in a grove near by, and preaching often followed the lessons. Early in the summer of 1842 another Sunday-school of fifty scholars was easily gathered out on the State Road in Mead township, about three miles east of town; and preaching services were also held there.¹ And

¹ The members of another church tried to break up one of

in midsummer of the same year yet another school was organized five miles beyond the one first mentioned, with some fifty scholars, and still another resulted at a greater distance yet.¹ Aside from the good thus directly accomplished, some portion of the church's later membership resulted from these early missionary efforts.

Every year, on the fourth of July, the members of these several Sunday-schools, with their near relatives or friends, would meet for their annual festival at Pomona Hall. There was a bountiful collation spread on great tables under the trees on the lawn; then came a prayer, a hymn, and an address; and afterward all sorts of games, a great romp for the children, and last of all a supper. Those were famous occasions, and they are fondly remembered to this day by many whose hair has long since grown gray.

By this time the feeling of the other churches toward the Unitarians seems visibly to have softened. In the summer of 1842 our Sunday-

these schools because it was conducted by Unitarians; but our school was too popular among the country folk to be thus injured.

¹ At this time or later, perhaps in Mr. Stebbins's ministry, there was another school conducted on Dunham's Flats, northwest of town.

school was invited for the first time to join in the festivities of the union village Sunday-school celebration, from which it had previously been excluded. Our scholars attended to the number of 230. Late in the autumn of the same year, while the Pittsburg Presbyterian Synod was sitting here, two of the ministers attending it, the Rev. Mr. Carr and the Rev. Mr. Lee, accepted invitations to occupy our pulpit. "The reign of bigotry is passing away," wrote a correspondent to one of the papers, commenting on this significant occurrence.

Mr. Emmons was a man of energy in his profession, a "Channing Unitarian," a preacher simple and earnest, a good pastor, and a man of gentle and kindly spirit. His ministry here was harmonious and prosperous. In 1843, however, hard times made it necessary to reduce his salary, and feeling it to be no longer sufficient, he resigned, and went away at the end of August. The dissolution of the connection was accomplished with the most kindly feelings on both sides. This ministry of five years and eight or nine months was the longest that the church has enjoyed in its entire history. Mr. Emmons went from here to Ver-

non, N. Y., where he preached for about twelve years. He subsequently lost the use of his voice, and was obliged to abandon the pulpit. Later he was for twenty-five years the secretary of the Home for Aged Women in Revere street, Boston. He died on the same day as Mrs. Emmons at Short Off, N. C., November 19, 1899, aged ninety-one years.

After Mr. Emmons's resignation, efforts were made for some months to obtain another minister from New England, but to no purpose. Meanwhile, the Rev. James Freeman Clarke of Louisville, Ky., who chanced to be on a visit here,¹ supplied the pulpit gratuitously until late in October. It was during this short ministry of Mr. Clarke that, on Thursday evening, October 12, 1843, Frederic Huidekoper was ordained in the church as an evangelist, the Rev. George W. Hosmer of Buffalo making the ordaining prayer and charge, and the Rev. Mr. Clarke preaching the sermon and extending the right hand of fellowship. The results accomplished during Mr. Emmons's ministry had shown what large opportunities for service there were in the surrounding country; and it was

¹ He had married Miss Anna Huidekoper, August 15, 1839.

Mr. Huidekoper's original intention to occupy himself as minister at large in the vicinity. This he did for a short time; but the Theological School founded in the following year presently absorbed all his energies.

Late in October, 1843, Elder Elihu Goodwin Holland of the Christian Connection, a religious body with which the Unitarians were then cultivating close relations, especially in the West, was engaged to supply the pulpit for six months, and before the end of that term for another equal period, at the rate of \$500 a year. It was expected that he might perhaps stay indefinitely as minister of the church, and at the same time assist the Rev. Frederic Huidekoper in giving instruction to students in the Theological School then under consideration, which was to receive both Unitarians and members of the Christian Connection as students. But the prospects for the school presently grew so large that such an arrangement did not promise to prove adequate. It was for this reason that, after a year of satisfactory service, in which he had won the cordial regard of the congregation, Mr. Holland resigned at the end of September, 1844, to make room for his successor.

Mr. Holland, though a man of marked eccentricities and not a good pastor, was a fluent speaker, of very uncommon oratorical gifts. He was a fine scholar, and a thinker of marked intellectual power; an author of several books of repute in their time, and withal one of the ablest and most distinguished men in his religious body during his generation. After leaving Meadville he ministered to some of the leading Christian churches in the country, especially in New York and New Jersey, and enjoyed fame as a popular lecturer, both at home and in Europe. He died December 13, 1878, at Canandaigua, N. Y., aged sixty-one years.

It was considered important to obtain for the president of the new school an abler man than could be secured for the meager salary that the resources at hand allowed. It was arranged, therefore, that a salary of \$1000 per annum should be offered, to be paid half by the school and half by the church, and that the incumbent should be at once minister of the church and president of the school. The Rev. Rufus Phineas Stebbins of Leominster, Mass., who had been most highly recommended for the purpose, was called to fill the double office for

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RUFUS P. STEBBINS, D. D.

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the term of five years. Mr. Stebbins arrived at Meadville early in October, 1844, and his great energy and organizing powers immediately made themselves felt, not only in the church, but throughout the whole community. He was beyond question the most powerful and eloquent preacher whose ministry this church has ever enjoyed; a controversialist, upon occasion, of great ability, as the local newspapers of the time bear ample witness, he did much to commend the Unitarian faith to the people of the community. His congregations doubled within the first year; and his Sunday evening lectures on "Unitarianism" were delivered to audiences that taxed the capacity of the church to the utmost. He devoted himself without reserve to every social or humanitarian reform, was a bold leader in the cause of temperance, and was outspoken in the anti-slavery cause, at the cost of some antagonism and friction with parishioners or friends.¹

In the pulpit the strength of his convictions

¹ Other ministers of the church during the period of the anti-slavery conflict, earnest in the same cause, were Professor Folsom and Mr. Clarke; and Mr. Huidekoper's house was a station on the "Underground Railway."

led him to be positive and dogmatic in temper and tone; and the moral standard of his preaching was characterized by a favorite phrase among his people as being one of "upright and downright and perfect integrity." It was perhaps these characteristics of his that caused the fires of religious controversy against Unitarians to flame up at Meadville during his ministry as they had not done since the earliest days of the church's existence.

The controversy began with Mr. Stebbins's Sunday evening lectures on Unitarian doctrine, to which I have referred, and which were delivered in the winter of 1847-48. The lectures were not designed to stir up antagonism, but they excited a popular interest so wide and intense that the ministers of the other churches felt it necessary to reply to them with counter-statements of orthodox doctrine. Nearly all the churches were drawn into the current, sooner or later, and by a more or less tacit understanding made common cause against heterodoxy. The orthodox side was at first championed by the Rev. William M. Carmichael, rector of the Episcopal church; but he soon proved himself, in public estimation, no match

for Mr. Stebbins. The Rev. Calvin Kingsley, a young man of unusual ability, then professor in Allegheny College, and later bishop in the Methodist Episcopal church, was therefore prevailed upon to conduct the one side of what speedily developed into a spirited running debate.¹ This side now found its main expression, by common consent, in the pulpit of the Old School Presbyterian church, which Professor Kingsley was invited to occupy for the purpose. If the controversy had begun and ended with a full and dispassionate discussion of the cardinal doctrines of theology, as seen from opposite points of view, upon the merits of which people might calmly judge for themselves, it would have been well; the air would have been cleared, and the ends of truth and religion might have been served. But, as is wont to be the case

¹ The controversy was carried into print. Professor George W. Clarke of Allegheny College contributed to it a little book entitled "Christ Crucified: or, a plain scriptural vindication of the Divinity and Redeeming Acts of Christ, with a statement and refutation of the forms of Unitarianism now most prevalent." New York, 1848. This was answered by Mr. Stebbins in a pamphlet, "A Letter respecting a Work entitled 'Christ Crucified: by George W. Clarke,' addressed to a parishioner." Boston, 1849.

in religious debates, the proper limits were not observed. The controversy spread far and wide through the village, and became most heated and unhappy; and animosities were aroused which were not only regretted as most unfortunate at the time, but which it has required a full fifty years to bury out of memory.

A sequel to this controversy, which reflected the unhappy feeling aroused by it, and which attracted more than local attention at the time it occurred, took place in the summer of 1851. Mr. Stebbins was invited by the Allegheny and Philo-Franklin literary societies of Allegheny College to lecture before them at the Commencement season. When this fact came to the knowledge of the college trustees, they demanded that the students withdraw their invitation to Mr. Stebbins; but this they refused to do. It was therefore proposed by some of the trustees to threaten with expulsion from college all students that should attend the lecture. This proposition was not supported by the majority of the board; but the use of a college room for the lecture was refused. Mr. Stebbins accordingly lectured before the students in the Court House on the evening of

July 1, his subject being "Academic Culture." The overwhelming sentiment of the people at large was shown by the fact that the audience, composed of persons of all denominations, was the largest that had ever assembled in the village. The Faculty of the College declined to attend; but the Rev. John V. Reynolds, minister of the Old School Presbyterian church, expressed his sympathy by offering the prayer and pronouncing the benediction.

The church gained greatly in numbers and influence under Mr. Stebbins's ministry, and the results of it have not yet died away. During this time the church building was repaired, in the summer of 1847, at a cost of about \$225.

In order to diffuse the views of liberal Christianity the more widely, Mr. Stebbins established in 1852 a monthly magazine called "The Christian Repository," in which Unitarians and members of the Christian Connection coöperated, and which was widely circulated through the western country. The magazine was constructive in its tone, not narrowly sectarian, and was published for one year, when it was discontinued for lack of support.

Mr. Stebbins was a conservative by temperament and habit. Life seemed so earnest to him that he could see no time in it for frivolous amusements. He let it be known that he deemed it an impropriety for people in leaving church to exchange greetings, and he desired them to go promptly home in solemn meditation on things eternal. A man of powerful physical frame, he was also of so strong and masterful a character as sometimes to be considered arbitrary or dictatorial, for he knew no compromise of convictions. He was known and respected throughout the country as a religious educator, and was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Harvard in 1851; and he is still widely and distinctly remembered by the older generation as a preacher and lecturer. At the end of his five years' term he felt obliged to devote his whole time to his duties in the Theological School, and resigned his office as minister. He remained president of the school until June, 1856, and afterward held pastorates at Woburn, Mass., Ithaca, N. Y., and Newton Centre, Mass. He died at Cambridge, Mass., August 13, 1885, aged seventy-five years.

The opening of the Meadville Theological School, October 1, 1844, was an event of great importance and far-reaching consequences to this church. It meant that, in addition to its normal local constituency, the church was to enjoy the presence and support of a constant company of teachers and students. It meant that this, being the church of the Theological School, and having an intimate connection with it, was to be the temporary home of half the ministers of the denomination, to which, though small, they would ever look back as being, in a way, the mother church of the Unitarian faith in America. It meant that this church was to have the privilege of training up and sending forth to lives of rare influence and usefulness as ministers' wives a far greater number of its daughters than any other church in the denomination, whether large or small, can claim.¹ It meant that this church was to enjoy in the frequent presence of distinguished visitors advantages which many larger churches might well covet; and that it was not only to

¹ Up to date, January 1, 1902, thirty-six students of the Theological School have found their wives at Meadville, besides six others who have married young women students in the school.

have a select company of young people especially fitted and willing to assist in the various lines of its church work, but that it was also to have the constant opportunity of doing much for these in return, opening homes and hearts to them in hospitality and friendship which should long be remembered with warm gratitude by many who had been trained here.

In 1845 the constitution of the church, which, as has been intimated, had proved unsatisfactory, was again revised, and given the form that it bears to-day, a return being made to something like the early simplicity of organization and of conditions of membership. A creed was still made a test of membership, as follows: "Every person of good moral character, who professes his belief in the existence of God and in the divine mission of his Son Jesus Christ, and who declares it to be his intention and wish to make the will of God, and the teachings of Jesus as revealed to us in the Gospels, the rule of his life and conduct, shall be admissible as a member of this church." Members were, as a rule, to be proposed two weeks in advance, subject to objection, and might join either by making a public profession or by simply signing the

constitution; but in important matters of business regular worshipers and contributors might have a voice, even though not formally members of the church. The office of elder was retained, though during much of the church's history it has practically been suffered to lapse. The minister was to act as moderator in business meetings not concerning himself. Baptism was to be administered under such form as the minister might approve; and, as a matter of fact, it has upon several occasions been administered to candidates for membership under the form of immersion.

Mr. Stebbins was followed in the ministry of the church by the Rev. Nathaniel Smith Folsom, who was called here from his ministry-at-large at Charlestown, Mass., to fill the double office of minister of the church and professor of Hermeneutics and New Testament Interpretation in the Theological School, with a salary from the church of \$700. He reached Meadville in September, 1849. It was at the beginning of his ministry that Mr. Rush Rhees Shippen, a son of the Meadville church and a graduate of the Theological School, was ordained as an evangelist, on Sunday evening,

November 11, 1849, the officiating clergymen being President Stebbins, Professors Folsom and Huidekoper, and Elder William A. Fuller. Professor Folsom, before coming to Meadville, had served nine years in the ministry of the orthodox Congregational church, and had been for an equal term in the Unitarian fellowship. For a year and more he had been editor of the "Christian Register." He was a very genial gentleman, of large social gifts, a man of strong intellect and fine scholarship, of refined sensibilities and an inexorable conscience; his especial talents, however, were rather those of a teacher than of a preacher or of a man of decisive action; he was therefore in marked contrast to his predecessor, Mr. Stebbins. Like him he resigned, in July, 1851, in order to devote his whole time to his work in the Theological School. He remained here as professor until the summer of 1861, when he was succeeded by Professor George L. Cary. He afterward taught a school for some years at Concord, Mass., and returned for a brief period to the fellowship of the orthodox ministry, and preached for a short time in orthodox churches. These relations, however, he found

so unsatisfactory, and so inconsistent with his deeper convictions, that he abandoned them after a few months. He published, in 1869, a "Translation of the Four Gospels," of great merit, and in 1879 received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Dartmouth College. He died, November 10, 1890, at Asheville, N. C., aged eighty-four years.

After Professor Folsom's resignation, it was arranged that he should still remain the responsible minister of the church, but that he should be relieved by coadjutors. Dr. Stebbins appears to have served in this capacity from October, 1852, to June, 1853; and the Rev. James Freeman Clarke, who, having broken down in health under the arduous work of establishing the Church of the Disciples in Boston, lived at Meadville more or less during the three years 1850-53, served in a similar capacity from September, 1851, to October, 1852; and again, after an interval of travel in Europe, for ten weeks in the summer and autumn of 1853, after which he returned to his work in Boston. At the beginning of his ministry here, Mr. Clarke made this entry in his diary: "To-day I begin my work as pastor of this Unitarian society."

My duties will be: on Sundays, to conduct public worship and to give lessons in the Sunday-school; on week-days, to visit the parish, hold meetings, Bible-classes, etc. The theological students to be members of my society." He taught gymnastic exercises to the students several times a week, and was in many ways their inspirer and friend. Aside from other important literary labors, he published while here his books on "The Christian Doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sin," and "The Christian Doctrine of Prayer;" and it is fair to presume that some of the chapters, at least, in those most helpful little works, had their first hearing as sermons from this pulpit. Mr. Clarke's preaching is characterized by one who was a member of his congregation here at that time as being "very earnest and interesting, full of apt illustrations, and appealing to the deepest spiritual experiences." He had a marked influence on the theological students, whom he did much to help, and was deeply interested in the anti-slavery question, on which he gave a public address in the Court House, besides one or more in the church on Sunday evenings. It need hardly be added that, after his short interval of

ministry at Meadville, Mr. Clarke became, as minister of the Church of the Disciples in Boston, one of the most conspicuous leaders of Unitarianism in America. He was a man of wide and varied learning, and was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Harvard in 1863. He died in Boston, June 8, 1888, aged seventy-eight years, universally revered and loved.

After Mr. Clarke's departure from Meadville an interval of some seven months followed, during which there was no settled minister, and the pulpit was supplied chiefly by students in the Theological School, and by professors. The church then made an innovation in April, 1854, by inviting a member of the senior class, Mr. Carlton Albert Staples of Mendon, Mass., to be its minister for one year at a salary of \$650, with the stipulation that he might seek the assistance of the professors at their common convenience. He accepted the call only after much hesitation, and was ordained in the church July 2, 1854, the sermon being preached by the Rev. Dr. Edward Brooks Hall of Providence, R. I.

It was a difficult and exacting position for a young and inexperienced man to undertake, to

preach twice a Sunday to a critical congregation including his teachers and fellow-students. Mr. Staples was a good preacher, however; the church grew and the Sunday-school made a great advance under his ministry, and he proved so generally satisfactory that at the end of a year he was called to be permanent minister at an increased salary. After a year's time he generously volunteered to give way to some one who might teach in the Theological School while at the same time minister of the church. Such a double relation was deemed inexpedient; and indeed, it has usually been felt, whenever the minister of the church has also been professor in the Theological School, that sooner or later the church has suffered by the arrangement.

Near the beginning of Mr. Staples's ministry the church suffered a unique loss in the death, on May 22, 1854, of H. J. Huidekoper, at the age of seventy-eight. He had been not only the founder of the church, and its most generous benefactor in material ways, but most active in everything pertaining to its welfare. He was one of its elders from its organization to the time of his death, was for years a constant

and faithful teacher in the Sunday-schools in both town and country, and was present with his class the last Sunday before his death. He was, with his son Frederic, virtually the founder of the Theological School, to which he gave generously. He was the first president of its board of trustees, and his position in the affairs of the denomination at large is shown by the fact that he was vice-president of the American Unitarian Association from 1837 to 1847. In the community, and throughout this whole region, he was widely known and deeply respected as a man of strong character and inflexible integrity, as well as of courtly manners and a tender heart.

On the day after Mr. Staples's ordination a step forward was taken, looking toward the future growth of the church, in the purchase of the lot on which the parish building now stands. The lot cost \$1000, which was paid from a fund contributed jointly by the Hui-dekoper heirs. Mr. Staples remained here until March, 1857, when he resigned in order to enter a larger sphere as colleague with the Rev. William Greenleaf Eliot in the church at St. Louis. He afterward ministered to important parishes at Milwaukee, Chicago, and Providence, and

was for a time Western Secretary of the American Unitarian Association. He has now been for some twenty years minister of the church at Lexington, Mass., and is to-day the oldest living survivor among those who have been ministers of this church.

After Mr. Staples's departure there was an interim of eight or nine months, during which the pulpit was supplied mainly by President Stearns and Professor Folsom of the Theological School. Within this interval the old church organ was replaced by a new one of twelve stops, at a cost of \$550. Late in the autumn of 1857 the Rev. Rush Rhees Shippen, who was at Meadville seeking a year's rest at his old home, after eight years' laborious work as minister of the First Unitarian Society at Chicago, was asked to supply the pulpit so long as he should stay here, and did so for nine or ten months. The church had been steadily growing for several years past, and this short ministry was one of marked prosperity. Mr. Shippen's preaching awakened an unusual degree of interest, and was attended by large congregations morning and evening, including many men who had hitherto remained aloof from the

church.¹ Mr. Shippen was asked to accept a call as permanent minister, but declined to do so. He went from here in September, 1858, to become minister of the church at Worcester, Mass., where he served thirteen years. He was secretary of the American Unitarian Association for ten years, minister of the church in Washington for fourteen years, and is now settled over the church at Brockton, Mass.

After Mr. Shippen, the pulpit was again supplied until the end of the year mainly by theological students; and during the year 1859 chiefly by two members of the faculty of the Theological School: at the evening services by Professor Folsom, and in the morning by the Rev. Dr. Oliver Stearns, who had been called from the church at Hingham, Mass., in 1856, to succeed Dr. Stebbins as president. Toward the end of the year the pulpit was also supplied for several months by the Rev. Thomas J. Mumford, recently from the church at Detroit.

¹ It caused no little comment at this time that, during some union revival meetings that were being held at Meadville, the conduct of them was so managed that students in the Theological School, who had at first taken part in them, were afterward excluded from doing so. The sole ground for this action was that they were Unitarians.

Pastoral work, and the consequent development of ~~the parish in certain~~ ways, must have suffered somewhat during these different periods when the church did not receive the full services of a minister; but the ministrations of the pulpit were of an uncommonly high order. Dr. Stearns, while not brilliant or magnetic, was a man of great ability, and ranked as a preacher among the foremost of his time, thoughtful, clear, and earnest, and of intense spirituality. He was called from here in 1863 to be professor (and in 1870, Dean) in the Harvard Divinity School. He died at Cambridge, July 18, 1885, at the age of seventy-eight years.

The next minister of the church was the Rev. Richard Metcalf, who had previously served the church at Bath, Maine, and who, after preaching here for a month or more, was called, January 23, 1860, at a salary of \$1000, the highest that the church had yet offered. At the outset of his ministry here, Mr. Metcalf aroused a good deal of interest by a series of doctrinal sermons, which were afterward published under the title of "Letter and Spirit," and were considered in their time one of the best presentations of the Unitarian position. Under him both church

and Sunday-school were in a flourishing condition;¹ many new members joined the former, and the latter received a great impetus. It became largely a missionary school, and a mission society was connected with it, to seek out the poor and destitute of the village, clothe them, and bring them into the school. Monthly vesper services were held, alternating with lectures, conference meetings, and Sunday-school concerts. Mr. Metcalf's ministry was a period of kindly relations with other churches. At the time of the session of the Western Unitarian Conference here, at the end of June, 1864, visiting Unitarian ministers were invited to occupy the pulpits of the Methodist and Baptist churches. The Rev. Alfred P. Putnam of Brooklyn, N. Y., and the Rev. Jacob G. Forman of Alton, Ill., preached in the former church, and the Rev. Dr. Stebbins and the Rev. Samuel B. Flagg of Kalamazoo, Mich., in the latter.

In the summer of 1863 the church underwent

¹ Meadville was feeling the stimulus that came from the opening of the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad in 1863, and from the then rapidly developing oil industry. It was the period of the town's most rapid growth. In 1863 there had come to be toward 7000 inhabitants; and a city charter was granted February 15, 1866.

extensive repairs, at a cost of over \$800, and eight new pews were added in order to accommodate the increased attendance. In May of the next year, too, Miss Margaret Shippen, who, it will be remembered, had given half the original church lot, gave for a minister's house her former residence, a brick house and lot at the rear of the church. The house had been erected by the county in 1819, and had served for county offices until the completion of the new Court House in 1825. This gift was made upon the condition that \$1000 should, at Miss Shippen's death, be paid to the Theological School on her behalf, and that an annuity representing the rents of the property should be paid her during the remainder of her life; but she assigned the latter in 1867 to the Theological School.¹ The house was never much occupied by the ministers, but was generally rented, until it was demolished in 1891 to make room for the present minister's house.

Mr. Metcalf was a man small in stature, never

¹ Miss Shippen had for many years resided in Philadelphia, where she died May 9, 1876, aged ninety-four years. The \$1000 was paid over to the Theological School soon after the gift of the property, out of a joint fund made up by the Huidekoper heirs.

of robust health, and with defective eyesight; yet he bore his crosses with a heroic endurance and a Christian cheerfulness which won him not only the respect but the devoted love of his congregation. He is said to have been not unlike Starr King in his brightness, geniality, and love of humor. Conservative in faith, but of generous tolerance, he was a man of fine mind and spirit, and of modest demeanor, equally good as preacher or as pastor; and his sermons, which his lack of eyesight compelled him to dictate to an amanuensis, and which he preached memoriter, were earnest and thoughtful, full of practical sense and a large spirituality. Continued ill health compelled him to give up his work here in May, 1865; and the esteem in which he was held is witnessed by the proposition that was made at the time of his resignation, to make him a parting gift of six months' salary. He afterward became more vigorous in body, and in 1866 became the first minister of the new church at Winchester, Mass., which he served for fifteen years, until his death, June 30, 1881, at the age of fifty-one years.

It was a full year after Mr. Metcalf's depar-

ture before his successor arrived; and in the mean time the pulpit was supplied by the Rev. Abiel Abbot Livermore, who had succeeded Dr. Stearns in 1863 as president of the Theological School, by Professor Frederic Huidekoper, and by students or visiting ministers. At length a call was given, January 28, 1866, to the Rev. John Celivergos Zachos of West Newton, Mass. He accepted the call and began his ministry here at the beginning of May, at a salary of \$1500, in addition to the rents of the minister's house, and with four weeks' annual vacation. The kindly attitude of the other churches, which in Mr. Metcalf's time had happily succeeded to a long period of intermittent controversy, continued during Mr. Zachos's ministry.

Mr. Zachos was a Greek by birth (though that was not evident in his appearance or his speech), and had come to America when a mere lad with Dr. Samuel G. Howe of Boston. He was a graduate of Kenyon College, but had not studied with direct reference to his profession, and before entering the ministry had been principal of the preparatory department of Antioch College, where he was a fellow-teacher with Professor George L. Cary. Something of the

schoolmaster was apparent in his style of preaching. He was a versatile man, with an uncommonly wide range of interests; a Greek in temperament as well as by birth, fond of abstract themes, and inclined to consider subjects rather from the philosophical or speculative than from the practical side. Yet, though fluent in language, he was not considered an especially strong preacher, nor yet a superior pastor. In addition to the work of his ministry, he was professor of Sacred Rhetoric and Oratory in the Theological School during the two years of his residence here, and continued to hold this office during the year after his departure, returning to give lectures. To him, it is said, is due the suggestion that led to the forming of the Meadville Literary Union in December, 1866.

Mr. Zachos resigned in July, 1868, and left Meadville at the beginning of October, in order to accept a call to the church at Ithaca, N. Y. His departure was generally lamented, as the loss of a faithful minister who was ready to devote himself to every good cause, and who had endeared himself to all classes by his affable manner and his kindness of heart. He was

minister at Ithaca for one year, where he also lectured at Cornell University on elocution, a subject upon which he published several books. In 1872 he became curator of the Cooper Union in New York City, and held this office until his death, on March 20, 1898, at the age of seventy-seven years.

After Mr. Zachos there followed yet another interval of nearly eighteen months during which no regular minister was settled. The pulpit was supplied by visiting ministers, by theological students, and by President Livermore. It was in this interval that, beginning early in February, 1869, a series of Unitarian theatre meetings was held for several weeks at Museum Hall in Chestnut street, and afterward at the Opera House, at the southeast corner of Water and Chestnut streets. The meetings were held under the direction of the professors and students of the Theological School. There was preaching by the Rev. Joseph F. Lovering of Concord, N. H., by the Rev. George W. Hosmer, D. D., of Buffalo, and by Mr. Ellery Channing Butler, a student in the Theological School. Theatre preaching was in great vogue at just that period, as a mode of evangelistic endeavor;

and the meetings here were well attended, and excited a considerable degree of popular interest.

On February 26, 1870, the Rev. Henry Partridge Cutting, recently from the church at Alton, Ill., was called to be minister, and began his labors on the second Sunday in March, at a salary of \$1200 and house, with four weeks' vacation. He was a man of middle age, who had originally preached for some twenty years in Universalist churches in New England, and more recently in Unitarian churches in the Mississippi valley. He was a vigorous preacher, untiring in the faithfulness and earnestness with which he labored to discharge his duties; but though the church at first continued to grow in strength under his ministry, the attendance at church and at Sunday-school at length fell off. He was a man of high character, though not of great culture or tact, and with certain infelicities of temper. But, although he had many friends here, his was not one of the church's happiest pastorates; and the friction that developed toward the end of it caused some division of feeling among the members of the congregation. His relation with the church was terminated in the spring of 1873, when he went to Sterling,

Mass., where he preached for eight years. In 1881 he entered the ministry of the orthodox Congregational church, and held various pastorates in it until his death at Harwichport, Mass., December 13, 1896, at the age of seventy-three years.

In the interval following Mr. Cutting's departure, the pulpit was supplied for three months by the Rev. Clark G. Howland of Kalamazoo, Mich., and, as usual in such cases, by members of the Theological School and by visiting ministers. In the month of December, 1873, Mr. Francis Greenwood Peabody of Boston preached two Sundays as a candidate. He was a graduate of the Harvard Divinity School in the preceding year, and son of the Rev. Ephraim Peabody, one of the earliest ministers of the church. His preaching aroused the greatest interest, and he was promptly called by a unanimous vote, at the salary of \$1800 in addition to the rents of the minister's house, — a larger salary than has ever been offered to any one else either before or since. His decision hung in the balance for some time ; but he at length declined the call, and accepted one to the First Parish Church at Cambridge, Mass., where he

has now for many years been professor in Harvard University. Mr. Peabody's classmate, Mr. Robert Swain Morison of Milton, Mass., preached here next as a candidate in March and April, 1874, at the end of which time he was called unanimously at the salary of \$1500 with five weeks' vacation. The call was accepted for the period of ten months; and at the end of that time it was renewed for an indefinite period, and accepted. After accepting the call, Mr. Morison received ordination at Milton, July 1, 1874, and began his ministry here with the month of September. In the intervening summer the church was thoroughly renovated and repaired, at a cost of over \$600.

Mr. Morison was one of the best beloved ministers that this church has ever had. During his ministry the church visibly grew both in the outward evidences of strength and welfare, and in the deepening of spirit and of interest in works of benevolence and philanthropy; and it became as prosperous as at almost any time in its history. Mr. Morison was a superior and indefatigable pastor, and he achieved the most phenomenal success in his work with the Sunday-school. Largely a mission school,

with many scholars from the German element, it rapidly grew until it had an enrollment of over 450, becoming one of the largest schools in the denomination, and larger, I think, than any school at Meadville has been either before or since.

The demands of the Sunday-school, which had now far outgrown its accommodations in the church, where it had always met hitherto, led to renewed discussion of a plan, which had been considered as early as 1871, to erect a parish building for the better accommodation of the Sunday-school and the social meetings of the church. It had been at first proposed that the terrace at the west of the church should be removed, and the basement finished off for the purpose; but it was soon realized that such a plan would be far from satisfying the needs that were felt. In September, 1875, however, the timely gift of \$5000 from the heirs of the late H. J. Huidekoper, made it possible to erect the present parish building, on the lot which had been acquired in 1854 adjoining the church on the east. Construction was begun the next spring, and the building was completed in August, at a total expense of over \$6000. The

furnishing cost over \$1000 more, of which the Young Ladies Society contributed about \$600, while \$100 in pennies was raised by the children of the Sunday-school. The building thus furnished was dedicated on Saturday, November 18, 1876, and a house-warming followed five days later.

Pleasant relations with the other churches of the city continued during Mr. Morison's ministry, and in 1875 he was invited by the Presbyterian minister to take part in a union Thanksgiving day service. "The tidal wave of toleration has reached Meadville in full force," wrote a correspondent to the "Liberal Christian." A ministry of the greatest promise was cut short when, in the autumn of 1877, Mr. Morison fell a victim to nervous prostration, which proved so serious that he was compelled to offer his resignation the following March. The resignation was accepted with extreme reluctance and universal sorrow. This was Mr. Morison's sole pastorate; and he has never failed each year since to testify his abiding affection for his only church by sending it a box of roses at Easter. He has been librarian of the Harvard Divinity School since 1889.

Some months of casual supplies again ensued, when the Rev. James Thompson Bixby of Belfast, Maine, who had preached here as a candidate two Sundays in September, was called, October 6, 1878, to perform joint service as minister of the church and professor of Religious Philosophy and Ethnic Religions in the Theological School. He began his ministry in January, 1879. Mr. Bixby's conspicuous gifts were those of a scholar, an indefatigable student, and a preacher of thoughtful sermons of a high intellectual character. During his ministry a monthly parish paper was published for three years, and was quite helpful to the cause of the church. It was known in 1879 and 1880 as "Church and School," and was edited by Fitz Henry Bemis. In 1881 it became "Good Tidings," published jointly in the interest of this church and the church at Buffalo, with the Rev. George W. Cutter as additional editor. Mr. Bixby ministered to the church acceptably until the summer of 1883, when, having resigned, he went abroad for the purpose of university study in Germany. He has been settled over the church at Yonkers, N. Y., since 1887.

In September, 1883, the Rev. William Phil-

lips Tilden of Boston, who had finished his active ministry, was invited to come to this church as a temporary supply, at a compensation of \$125 per month. He was unable to come at once, but came at the beginning of January for a supply of four months. He soon became revered and loved both in the church and in the community at large to such an extent that he was compelled, contrary to his first intention, to return for a second season. At the end of his second term, the church again renewed its call, and would have been heartily glad to settle him as its minister for an indefinite period; but he was unwilling, at his advanced age, again to take up the responsibilities of a regular pastorate, and, after supplying during the seven months from October, 1884, to April, 1885, he returned to New England.

Mr. Tilden had been trained in early life as a ship-carpenter, but had left that calling to study for the ministry under the Rev. Samuel J. May, and had preached for more than forty years in New England churches. He was a forcible and interesting speaker, combining vigor of thought with simplicity of expression; of saintly character, and beloved wherever he went. While

preaching here, he also delivered courses of lectures to the theological students on pastoral duties, which were so highly esteemed that they were published under the title, "The Work of the Ministry." Harvard College honored him with the degree of Master of Arts in 1884. He died at Milton, Mass., October 3, 1890, at the age of seventy-nine years.

The pulpit was again filled by supplies until the end of the year, when the Rev. Henry Hervey Barber was asked to supply the pulpit until the summer vacation. Mr. Barber was a graduate of the Meadville Theological School¹ in the class of 1861, and had come to Meadville in the autumn of 1884 from his church at Somerville, Mass., to become professor of the Philosophy and History of Religion in the Theological School. His services to the church were so satisfactory, both in the pulpit, where his preaching was earnest, fervent, and, in the best sense of the word, popular, and among the people, where he showed himself a real pastor, that he was re-engaged from year to year until the

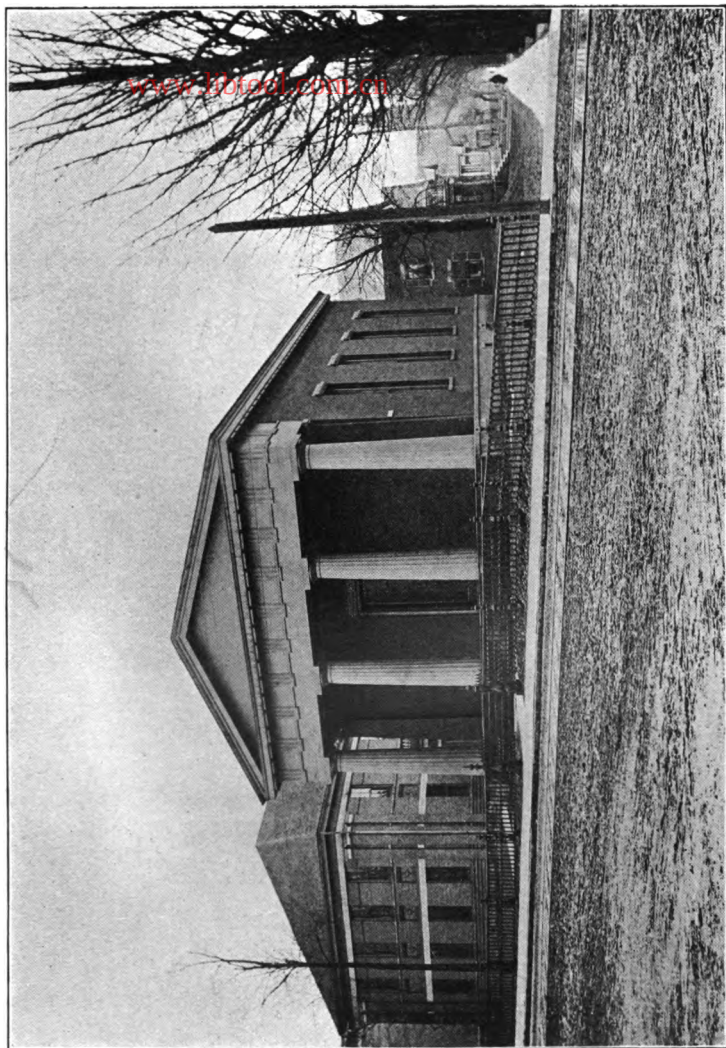
¹ Curiously enough, of all the ministers of this church, but three have received their training at Meadville: Messrs. Staples, Shippen, and Barber.

summer of 1890, when the state of his health required him to confine himself simply to his work as professor. Mr. Barber's ministry endeared him to the people in both city and country; and he has ever since been regarded by many persons without definite church connections, both in town and in the surrounding country (whither he often went to preach), as a sort of pastor-at-large. A noteworthy event of his ministry was the celebration, on June 16, 1886, of the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of the church. A historical discourse was delivered by the Rev. Rush R. Shippen; addresses were made by Alfred Huidekoper, president of the evening, by Joseph Shippen, Esq., the Rev. George W. Cutter of Buffalo, the Rev. Mr. Tilden, and others. Letters were read from former ministers of the church, and the hymns sung at the dedication of the church were sung again. The anniversary was attended by many friends from a distance, and was most successfully carried out. In 1887 the organ, which had until then stood in the gallery, was brought down and placed at the front of the church, east of the pulpit, and some further alterations were made.

It was more than a year before a successor

to Professor Barber was found ; and during the interval ~~the pulpit was~~ acceptably supplied, with morning services only, by Professor Barber, Professor Egbert Morse Chesley, and Professor George Rudolph Freeman of the Theological School. Meanwhile the Rev. William L. Chaffin of North Easton, Mass., and the Rev. George L. Chaney of Atlanta, Ga., were successively called to the church, and both declined. At length the Rev. Thomas Jefferson Volentine of Duluth, Minn., was called, July 25, 1891, after having preached here during the month as a candidate. He accepted the call, and began his ministry in September, at a salary of \$1500, and house. During the summer the present commodious and pleasant minister's house had been built at an expense of about \$6000, given from a joint fund contributed by the Huidekoper heirs, and supplemented by donations from Miss Elizabeth G. Huidekoper.

Mr. Volentine, not a well man, was a good preacher, facile in extemporaneous discourse, deeply interested in temperance and in other questions of practical sociology, and in the improvement of the city. He had originally been in the ministry of the orthodox Congregational



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church, and attached great importance to a proper organization and a recognized membership as necessary for the church's future prosperity. Finding that these matters, in the many and frequent changes of ministers, had suffered some neglect, he endeavored with great zeal to bring them into what he conceived to be a desirable condition. In the process of this work the discovery was made that a creed (long forgotten even by the most of those that had signed it) was still imposed as a test of membership, and that a considerable number of the most devoted supporters of the church were unwilling to become members of it under any such condition. The attempt was made to abolish the creed altogether, and thus to bring this church into harmony, as to limits of religious freedom, with the great majority of the Unitarian churches of the country. But to such a course unexpected opposition developed, and a compromise was at length arrived at, and a resolution adopted according to which persons having conscientious scruples about subscribing a creed might nevertheless become members of the church by so stating upon signing their names. These

reforms seemed, however, at the time when they were first proposed, so revolutionary, and they were urged in a manner so injudicious, as to arouse some feeling of personal antagonism, which culminated at length in Mr. Volentine's resignation. Many members joined the church under these new conditions, and the creed has again dropped into obscurity. Persons joining the church since 1895 have done so upon subscribing the simple and undogmatic covenant now so widely used in Unitarian churches: "In the love of truth, and in the spirit of Jesus, we unite for the worship of God, and the service of man." It is not likely that the creedal test will ever again be insisted upon; but the church has not yet seen fit squarely to disavow the right to prescribe certain beliefs for its members. Mr. Volentine's resignation was presented, May, 1893, and at once accepted. He went from Meadville at the beginning of September, and was afterward minister of the church at Waterville, Maine. After a painful and lingering illness he died in Brooklyn, N. Y., February 22, 1900, at the age of fifty-eight years.

After many tribulations in trying to have the old organ repaired, it was thought best to dis-

pose of it altogether, and a new organ was purchased late in 1893 at a cost of \$1885. During the season from the autumn of 1893 to the summer of 1894, the pulpit of the church was ably supplied by the Rev. James Morris Whiton, Ph. D., of New York, — a clergyman of the orthodox Congregational church, who had been recommended by our national Committee on Fellowship. In addition to his duties as minister, he lectured upon ethics and economics in the Theological School for a part of the year, to supply a vacancy. Dr. Whiton was not what is called a popular preacher; but he was in close touch with the important questions of the day, and his profound and scholarly sermons were highly appreciated. His fine social qualities made him a very useful pastor, and he did much to make the church respected in the community by the ability and excellent spirit of his work. But though Dr. Whiton gave great satisfaction both as preacher and as pastor, it was not thought advisable to form permanent relations with a minister not in the Unitarian fellowship, and his ministry here ceased in June, 1894. He is well known as one of the present editors of the "Outlook."

On March 17, 1894, the Rev. Frederick L. Hosmer, late of the church at Cleveland, Ohio, was called, but the call was not accepted. A month later a call was given to the Rev. William Irvin Lawrance, of Boston, which the state of his health did not permit him to accept. A call given in November to Mr. Minot Osgood Simons, a recent graduate of the Harvard Divinity School, was also declined. At the annual meeting in January, 1895, a second call was given to Mr. Lawrance, who was at that time supplying the pulpit, and he accepted, at a salary of \$1500 and house. Mr. Lawrance had been for a number of years a minister in the Christian Connection, and had more recently been minister of a Unitarian church at Dorchester, Mass., and a representative of the American Unitarian Association in its work in Japan.

The most important event in the external history of the church during Mr. Lawrance's ministry was the extensive repairs that the church building received in the summer and autumn of 1897. The church had fallen into a somewhat shabby state, and the plans for repairing it received earnest discussion and aroused great interest in the congregation at large. The

end aimed at was to restore the church to consistent harmony with the original plans, with modern freshening and brightening of color; and the effect secured was that of the "old Colonial" style of New England, and it gave great satisfaction to all. The church was given a new ceiling, and was repainted and newly decorated; the alcove behind the pulpit was deepened, and the organ placed in it; the seats were made lower and wider, and the pulpit lowered and brought forward, and some of the front pews removed to make room for it. The repairs were accomplished at a cost of about \$2500, and church services, which had during the mean time been held in the parish building, were resumed in the church on Sunday, November 28, 1897.

Mr. Lawrance's ministry was carried on under continuous physical infirmities, and during the most of the first six months, owing to his illness, the pulpit was supplied by members of the senior class in the Theological School; while students and professors rendered frequent assistance during the years following. Mr. Lawrance pursued his ministry with a true evangelistic zeal and fervor, and both he and

his wife, who brought untiring vigor into her own part of the parish work, greatly endeared themselves to the people. In the pulpit he was winning, original, and persuasive; and the church attendance steadily grew under his ministry. The work of the church for the children and young people thrived; and spiritual life was visibly deepened among the congregation, and found expression in a series of neighborhood meetings held in private houses during the lenten season of 1898.

During the season of 1896-97, Mr. Lawrence edited a monthly parish paper called "Good Tidings," which provided a means of intercommunication for the parish, and served a certain missionary purpose. In his ministry the last trace of controversy with other churches seems to have vanished;¹ he was made a member of the Meadville Ministerial Association,

¹ The last public controversy was one carried on in the Meadville *Tribune*, in the autumn of 1886. Originally upon the subject of the Bible, between Fitz Henry Bemis on the one side and the Rev. T. D. Logan of the Central Presbyterian church on the other, it presently drifted into a debate upon the doctrines of the Roman Catholic church, between the Rev. J. G. Carnahan of the Congregational church, and the Rev. J. J. Dunn of St. Bridget's church. The whole controversy occupied some seven months, and was widely read.

and was invited to preach at the union Thanksgiving ~~day service in~~ the Baptist church in 1897. It was a deep disappointment to the parish when Mr. Lawrance offered his resignation at the beginning of March, 1899, to accept a call to the church at Winchester, Mass., whither he went a month later. During the months that followed his departure several candidates were heard; and in September one of them, the Rev. Earl Morse Wilbur, who had previously had a ministry of eight years with the church at Portland, Oregon, was called. His ministry began with the last Sunday in October, 1899, and is not yet material for history.

No history of this church would be complete that failed to give some account of the various subordinate organizations through which it has performed its work along manifold lines. Of these the oldest and probably the most important in its usefulness has been that of the women of the church. As has already been related, the women were accustomed from the very beginning of the movement to meet and sew; but it was not until the autumn of 1845 that they formally organized by adopting a constitution, under the name of "The Ladies'

Benevolent Circle," "to promote a spirit of mutual sympathy, to assist in individual improvement, and to aid in works of benevolence." Meetings were to be held fortnightly, and the time "devoted to charitable work and reading books of a moral and religious character." The women of the Circle sewed for the poor, and for many years attended to such general relief work as is now carried on through the Associated Charities. Their meetings, in recent years held monthly, have been continued without interruption from the beginning down to the present day, except for a time during the Civil War, when the women were occupied in sewing for the soldiers; and their socials or suppers, held sometimes fortnightly and sometimes monthly, have been the social center of the parish. The Circle has in the aggregate earned and disbursed a large amount of money, both for the especial purposes of the church and for general benevolence, and has always assumed the care and maintenance of the parish building as its especial responsibility. Post-office Mission work has been carried on by a special committee since 1894.

The women also maintained a branch of the National Alliance of Unitarian and Other Liberal Christian Women from 1891 to 1898, which at first existed separately, but was in 1893 merged with the Ladies' Benevolent Circle, though it still held separate monthly meetings alternating with the meetings for sewing.

The Sunday-school has from the beginning been nurtured with the care it deserved, and has often been large out of all proportion to the size of the regular parish. It has always been to a greater or less degree a mission school, drawing in many children whose families had other church connections or none at all; and from such sources many members for the church have eventually come. The school has been singularly fortunate in being able to draw so largely upon the theological students for its officers and teachers; and some of the most successful Sunday-school workers in the denomination have had their early training in the work of superintending or teaching in the Meadville Sunday-school.¹ The school has

¹ To mention no others, the Rev. Edward A. Horton and the Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, superintendents in 1867 and 1868 respectively.

at various times raised considerable sums of money in aid of local church work, or of charitable objects at a distance.

Perhaps the most active and vigorous work carried on in connection with the church in its later years has been that of the young women, who in 1874 organized the Young Ladies' Society, for the purpose of raising money to erect a parish building. To this end fairs and bazaars were held, entertainments and concerts given, suppers served, and various other means were employed. The money for the desired building having been supplied from another source, the young women contributed largely toward the furnishings. In 1883, the members, in order the better to inform themselves about the religious faith they professed, added reading and lectures to their meetings, and in 1887 the name of the society was changed to "Ladies' Auxiliary Society," in order to signify the desire for closer coöperation with the Benevolent Circle, with which it has at times held its meetings. The membership of the society has averaged about thirty, and monthly or fortnightly meetings have been held — in recent years with the accompaniment of suppers. The society has at

one time or another bought a piano for the Sunday-school, redecored or refurnished the parish building, contributed toward the church organ or the choir fund, and given substantial aid to many other objects both related to the church and separate from it.

In November, 1886, a literary society was formed, with a membership of about twenty of the younger people. It held fortnightly meetings at the homes of members, and devoted itself to the study of the works of an author chosen for the year. Its membership presently became greatly increased, and in October, 1892, it was reorganized as a Unity Club, and allied itself with the church work, and met in the parish building. Meetings were discontinued probably in the spring of 1896.

The young people of the church also united for a more direct religious purpose early in the year 1888, and formed the Look-Up League, though without any strict organization. Sunday evening religious meetings have been held ever since that time, and have been of the greatest value to the religious life of the members. The League definitely organized by adopting a constitution in the autumn of 1900. The nom-

inal membership is about forty, and the meetings have been very helpful and well attended. Other organizations of briefer duration among the young people for different purposes have been the Cheerful Workers (also called Willing Workers, and Busy Workers), a society of the young girls of the Sunday-school, which existed from 1890 to 1896, and by sales and entertainments raised money which was spent for objects of the church or for charity; the Footlights, a dramatic club of a score or more of members, which held occasional entertainments from 1893 to 1898, and contributed generously to church causes; the Whatsoever Club of girls of the Sunday-school, formed in 1898, and still existing under the name of the Girls' Club, aiming to make its efforts useful to the church in any way possible; the Knights Excelsior, a secret society of boys, which met weekly from 1898 to 1900 for mutual improvement, and fitted up a gymnasium in the Sunday-school room. Doubtless there have been yet other societies whose existence has left no outward trace, but has nevertheless aided good causes, and developed the young in the way of unselfish endeavor.

The deeper history of a church is written in the lives of the members whom it has nourished, and who have supported it in turn with true filial devotion. Not to mention those still among the living, it would be ungrateful not to put on record here the names of at least a few of those whose devotion to the church has contributed most conspicuously to its welfare. Some of these have already been mentioned in the course of this history. Besides them, there were such men as Octavius Hastings, a well-known merchant, for a generation one of the most active and faithful in his attention to the business affairs of the church, and William D. Tucker, for over thirteen years its treasurer; there were the brothers Huidekoper, who gave largely of their substance, whether in their annual subscriptions or for special purposes, but not less largely of personal effort inspired by sincere devotion to the church that their father had founded: Alfred, who contributed a considerable part of the expense of the parish building, and liberally toward the building of the minister's house; Edgar, sometime treasurer of the church, and for many years the wise treasurer of the Theological School; and

Frederic, in whose heart the Theological School was founded, who for many years gave it his gratuitous services as professor, and whose daughter Anna, continuing the traditions of the family, left the church a legacy of \$2000¹ at her lamented death in 1893; there were also the brothers Cullum: Horace, for eight years treasurer of the church, and all his life a model layman, never absent from his seat on Sunday; Arthur, showing his devotion to the church in constant attention to its interests, and for twenty years president of the board of trustees of the Theological School; and Clinton, whose voice was for a generation heard in the church choir, who was long a member of the business committee, and who was constant in his watchful attention to the many little details that make church affairs go smoothly. These are some of the names that one finds recurring most frequently as one reads the records of the church, and without which its history must have been far other than what it is; but there have been scores of others whose love for the church and whose devotion to its welfare have been not

¹ One fourth of the income to go to the Sunday-school, the rest to the church.

one whit the less strong, and whose services have been less conspicuous only because their opportunities have been more restricted. Few churches have rejoiced in a larger proportion of both men and women that not only received its benefits, but also would give themselves to it in return.

The church's officers have served it unselfishly and faithfully, and to them it has owed more than can be repaid except in appreciation and gratitude. Its material resources have never been abundant, but it has been a matter of traditional pride to have its business affairs kept well managed. The constitution of the church provides that "it shall be the duty of the business committee to take care that the salary of the pastor be punctually paid;" and there has been rare occasion for complaint that it was not so. The envelope system of collections was first adopted in 1874; and after various trials, weekly offerings have been taken since 1893. Denominational benevolences have not been neglected; and, in addition to frequent donations for casual objects of need, \$4330.79 have been contributed to the American Unitarian Association from 1859 to 1900.

At the beginning of its history, as we have seen, this church was the extreme western outpost of organized Unitarianism in America. It has belonged successively to the Western Unitarian Conference, the Lake Erie Conference, the Ohio Conference, and the Conference of the Middle States and Canada, thus steadily moving, as it were, from what was relatively the extreme West to what is relatively the extreme East; and frequent meetings of the several conferences have been held here.¹ The church has never been, and from its environment is hardly likely to become, one of the greater and stronger Unitarian churches of the country; but, conspicuous in its earlier history, it has, since the establishing of the Theological School here in 1844, occupied a unique position among the churches of the denomination, and has had an importance out of all proportion to its numerical size; while its ministers have had, in their relation to the theological students, an unparalleled opportunity for usefulness. In its

¹ The Western Conference met here June 27, 1864, and June 19, 1872; the Lake Erie Conference, December 11, 1866 (when it was organized), and June 17, 1868; the Ohio Conference, June 8, 1880 (its first session); and the Middle States Conference, June 12, 1894.

local relations, the history of the church has been one with the history of religious toleration at Meadville. We have traced the progress of a movement in which controversy has played a frequent part. These episodes have not been pleasant to recall, but they have been significant as marking stages in an evolution. The stage has at length been reached when the narrower bigotry of the older day, on either side, appears to have become obsolete in our community; and when Christian brethren, though of differing convictions, can yet dwell together and work together in unity of spirit and purpose, and in the bond of peace.

The history of the church during this long period has been one singularly broken by frequent changes in its ministry, and by the frequent and long intervals between the different ministers; and yet the church has also been singularly fortunate in having such able assistance during these intervals that the altar flame has never once flickered or been suffered to die down, — fortunate, too, above all, in a harmony of spirit that has never once been destroyed by a quarrel or division or serious unpleasantness. I said at the outset that our church's history

had not been rich in dramatic events, nor in phenomenal successes. But, upon the maturer reflection that we can give after having followed it through, may we not say, after all, that having begun amid such conditions, struggled against such opposition, and persevered to such a serene and vigorous age, the whole sum of this church's life has been a success which need not shrink from comparison with that of any other, whether great or small? The book of its history is still open, and the moving finger writes daily. Let the memories of the past be an inspiration to us by the grace of God to press forward to a still more worthy future.

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