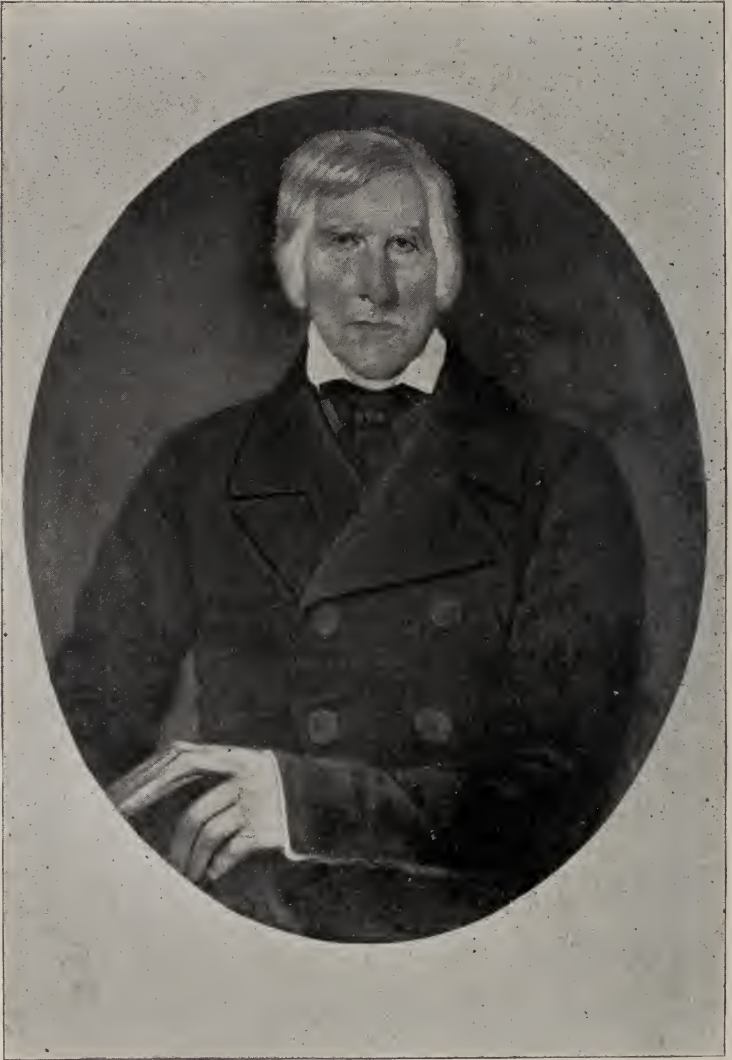




your aff^d Brother in Chris
John W. McHenry

922573
18134

RECOLLECTIONS

OF THE

REV. JOHN McELHENNEY, D. D.

BY HIS GRANDDAUGHTER,

ROSE W. FRY.

“O good gray head which all men knew.”

Richmond, Va. :

WHITTET & SHEPPERSON, PRINTERS, 1001 MAIN STREET.

1893.

SEMI-CENTENARY SERMON.*

“And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness.”—DEUT. viii. 2.

THESE are the words of Moses, addressed to the Israelites when they had approached the second time to the borders of the land promised to their fathers, and which they were about to take possession of as a perpetual inheritance. Their journey through that period had been for trial and discipline. Its events had been recorded by the pen of inspiration; and now, the people received from the aged servant of God, whose life was near its close, a special charge to treasure up in their memories, to review often and carefully, the way in which they had been led.

Amongst the many sources through which we obtain information, history holds a prominent place. To this we are indebted for most of our knowledge of mankind. Without it, we could know nothing of past events, farther than our own individual experience goes; nothing

* Dr. McElhenney's Semi-Centenary Sermon was preached on 5th June, 1858, and at a meeting of the congregation held immediately after, a request was made for the manuscript with a view to publication. In complying with this request the Doctor wrote to the committee appointed to carry out the wishes of the people, as follows: “Although I have always felt a great reluctance in having any thing which I have either said or written published, yet, as the sermon to which you allude was preached on an occasion of rare occurrence, and as its publication may, in some way, subserve to promote the interests of the church, I send you a copy containing the substance of what was said on that occasion, that you may have it published, and thus comply with the wishes of the congregation.”

of the revolutions that have taken place; nothing of the rise and fall of empires; nothing of the past doings of man; nothing of the deeply interesting and instructive events in which he has been an actor since God placed him on this earth.

But history has a higher claim on us than this. Had not Moses been divinely inspired to write the history of the world, what could we have known of its origin, or of the origin of any of the things on earth, or of the origin of sin, the source of all our miseries? If the Evangelists had not been inspired to write the history of our Saviour, all correct knowledge of him would have perished long since from the earth; and the world would now know nothing of his real character, of the life he lived, the death he died, or the way of salvation through him.

The mere knowledge of the facts of history is not its only end. Every fact that is recorded, if properly understood, confirms the truth of the religion taught in the Bible, for it forms a part of that great record from which we learn the manner in which God deals with nations, churches, and individuals. Here we have exhibited to us the working of that government which he exercises over this world, the natural state of man's heart, God's determination to punish sin, and the danger of resisting his divine authority.

There is no nation, amongst all that have existed on the earth, from whose history we may derive such lessons of instruction as from that of the Jews. This is true of their history from the commencement of their national existence down to the present day. And from no part of their history do more important lessons come to us than from the period of the forty years mentioned by Moses in our text. This is a history which no man can read and not see a most clear exhibition of the depravity and deep ingratitude of the natural heart; the long-suffering, patience, and forbearance of God with rebellious sinners; and the ab-

solite certainty that he will execute on them all that he has threatened, unless they repent. Well, then, might Moses enjoin on those for whom he had labored so long, and for whose welfare he felt so deeply solicitous, to remember all the way which the Lord God had led them.

The exhortation contained in the text applies not only to the Israelites in their peculiar circumstances, but takes a far wider range. The idea on which it is based is the government of God's providence, which guides and controls all his actions, and the acts of all his creatures. History, if correctly understood, is the record of what man sees of the working of this universal government of God. By far the larger part of this world's history is written nowhere but in the book of God's remembrance. It is impossible for man to write it. Much more of it might be written than is. It is the duty of the church collectively, and of particular portions of it, and of individuals, so to preserve the records of his dealings with them, that they may be able to remember all the way in which the Lord God has led them. There is a large amount of history floating in the traditions of congregations and families, which is constantly perishing from off the earth, as one and another of the more aged are gathered to their fathers. We are, to-day, attempting to gather up some of these traditions and recollections that more especially concern us, that we may remember the way in which the Lord God has led us.

On to-morrow, at 11 o'clock, it will be fifty years since I preached my first sermon in this house after I came to take charge of the united congregations of Lewisburg and Union. Where is the audience to whom that discourse was addressed? The most of them have long since gone into eternity. There cannot be more than three or four persons in this house to-day who were present on that occasion. The circumstances in which we are placed are deeply interesting

and affecting to us. I am called to deliver, and you to hear, a discourse such as has never been preached before in this State by a Presbyterian minister, or, so far as I know, by a minister of any other denomination. Indeed, I do not know whether such a sermon has been preached by a Presbyterian minister in any other part of this country. While engaged in this duty, let us not forget the great responsibility which rests on a pastor and people who have been united in this endearing relation for fifty years.

That we may have a correct view of the history which we are to review to-day, we must briefly review the origin of the Presbyterian Church in this region. Many years ago, I gathered up all that could be collected from any reliable tradition, and used it in the discourse that was delivered as the opening sermon at the first meeting of Greenbrier Presbytery. If the effort had been made at a still earlier period, some more of the minute details might have been preserved, which are now lost beyond recovery.

So far as can be ascertained, the first visit of the white man to this region was in the year 1749. For some years the hunters paid an annual visit to this side of the Alleghany, but no families came out until 1760. In that year the first settlement was made, the first cabins were built, and the first crop planted. The first improvements were made principally on Muddy Creek. This settlement was entirely broken up by the Indians in 1763. There is no tradition of any visit of a minister of the gospel to them, nor have I ever been able to learn what were the sentiments held by this unfortunate band of pioneers, nor whether any of them were members of the church.

The next attempt to occupy the country was in the year 1769. Those who formed this settlement were mainly from the Valley, in this State. They were generally inclined to Presbyterianism, and some of them were members of the church. Shortly after this settle-

ment commenced, missionaries were sent to visit them, but I never have been able to learn with any certainty by whom they were sent. The tradition existing when I came to this country is, that the first who visited them was a Mr. Crawford, and that he came from the South Branch. The names of Frazer, Read, and others are mentioned as having visited this region at a very early period, but nothing definite is known of the periods of their visits, nor the length of time they remained. Until within comparatively a few years, persons were living, both in this county and Monroe, who professed conversion under the ministry of these men; and from my long acquaintance with them, I can say, I have never met with any who manifested more of the life and spirit of true piety than they did. Some of them for sixty, and others of them for seventy, years were truly burning and shining lights in the church.

As great danger was apprehended from the Indians at that time, forts were built at various points, into which the people were collected at particular seasons, as places of protection. One of these stood on the ground now covered by this town, and was called Fort Union. Another, called Donnally's Fort, was about ten miles north from this place. It was attacked by the Indians in May, 1778. When the news of the attack reached Fort Union, there was a Presbyterian minister in it, who designed leaving that day. Before he left, there were some children to be baptized, and just as he was about to administer the ordinance, the news came that Fort Donnally had been attacked. This produced so much confusion, that some of the parents were about to present children not their own! This I had from one who was an actor in the scene. One child who was thus presented is now in this congregation, a man more than eighty years old!

The Rev. John McCue was the first Presbyterian minister who took up his residence in any part of this western region. The tradition of the people is, that

he came here in 1785, and on that tradition I so stated the period of the commencement of his labors in the discourse to which I have alluded; but, from some information that has reached me from his relations since the delivery of that sermon, I suppose that the tradition on which I relied was inaccurate, and that he came here in 1783. He was the first Presbyterian minister that labored on these western waters, except the missionaries before mentioned, whose visits were at distant intervals, and for short periods.

Mr. McCue had been preceded by the Rev. John Alderson, of the Baptist Church, who settled in this country in 1777, and organized a church in 1781. I have not been able to find the date of the first introduction of Methodism into this region, but it was at an early period in the settlement of the country.

Mr. McCue organized three churches—one on Spring Creek, one in this place, and one in Monroe. These were all organized in the first year of his labors here; but there is no record of the names of those who were ordained elders, nor of the number of members belonging to any of the congregations. In the time of his ministry two houses for worship were built in this county. One of them stood on this side of Spring Creek, on the land now owned by J. Ludington; the other, about one and a half miles from Lewisburg, on the land now owned by J. Feamster. Those who remember being in these houses when children tell us that they were made of unhewn logs, covered with clap-boards, and the floors laid with pieces of hewn timber. No provision was made for warming them; but, when the weather was cold, large log fires were made in front of the house for the accommodation of the congregation.

These houses were built in 1783, and were amongst the first, if they were not the very first, that were built in this whole western region for divine worship. They were humble structures, but we are not to despise the

day of small things; for, humble as they were, they may be considered as the corner-stones on which Presbyterianism has been reared in this western part of Virginia.

Mr. McCue continued to labor in these churches only a few years. He was succeeded by Rev. Benjamin Grigsby, who took charge of the united congregations of Lewisburg and Union in the year 1794. No records are left to show what was done during his ministry here, which, however, continued for only a short time. After his removal there was a period of ten years, or, perhaps, rather more than ten years, during which there was no Presbyterian minister in the region where Mr. McCue and Mr. Grigsby had labored. This brings us to the commencement of the fifty years which I have spent in connection with this congregation.

The providence of God led me here by steps, the bearing of which I did not at all see at the time; but, as I look back, I see a clear illustration of what is said in Proverbs xvi. 9: "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." This sketch would hardly be complete without a notice of them.

I started from the home of my youth in South Carolina to finish my education at Yale College. When I had almost reached New Haven, I learned that yellow fever had broken out there, that the college exercises were suspended, that the faculty and the students had left the place. This changed my plans, and changed the whole of my future life. Disappointed in my first scheme, I returned southward, and concluded to finish my education at Washington College. My choice was determined mainly by the consideration that my former school-mate and bosom friend, Samuel B. Wilson, now Professor in Union Theological Seminary, was a student there. On him, and on his being a student there at that time, hung the chain of events that brought me to this field of labor.

I was licensed by Lexington Presbytery on the 11th of February, 1808, at a meeting held in New Providence congregation, in the county of Rockbridge, of which the Rev. Samuel Brown, whose praise was in all the churches, and whose name will ever be revered by that people, was then the pastor. The ministers who belonged to the presbytery at that time were Rev. Messrs. Irvine, Wilson, Montgomery, McCue, Calhoun, McPheeters, Read, Brown, Baxter, Blain, Houston, and Logan. But where are they now? The answer is: Long since called home to their reward. "The prophets, do they live forever?"

Soon after my licensure I was appointed by the Committee on Missions, of the Synod of Virginia, to spend one month as a missionary in the counties of Greenbrier and Monroe. The Rev. Samuel Brown, to whom I have referred, and who acted the part of a father to me in a strange land, gave me a letter of introduction to several gentlemen in this county, all of whom are long since dead; while the letter, after having been lost sight of for a long time, has been discovered—to us, an interesting relic.

In February, 1808, I started from Lexington to fulfil the commission that had been given to me. The first family that I visited in the field of my mission was that of Mr. William Haynes, in the Gap, in Monroe county, and in his house I delivered my first sermon on the west of the Alleghany. On the next Sabbath I preached in Union, in the courthouse. The first family that I visited in this county was that of Captain John Anderson, who was an elder in this church, and to whom I delivered my letter of introduction, as he was the first person named in it. On the following Sabbath I preached in this house, then in its original form. The next place at which I preached was at the house of Major William Hamilton, on Muddy Creek, who, I believe, was one of those who formed the second settlement, of which I have before spoken. I

next preached at Major Andrew McClung's, on Sinking Creek. On the following Sabbath I preached at the house of Mr. John Handley, in the immediate neighborhood of the place where the Spring Creek Church now stands. There were still living several of the members of the church which Mr. McCue had organized. Since I have been engaged in preparing this sketch I have endeavored to find out, as nearly as possible, by the use of all the aids I could command to help my own memory, how many persons are now living in all these points who were then grown up, and may reasonably be supposed to have heard these sermons, and I cannot fix the number at more than eight or ten.

On Monday, the morning after the preaching at Mr. Handley's, I started for the Ohio. The way then, as it is now, was down the Valley of the Kanawha. No one who saw that Valley as it was fifty years ago, could have formed any conception of the change which that time has produced. What was then almost an entire wilderness, is now an almost uninterrupted village. No part of western Virginia has undergone such a change in the last fifty years as that Valley has.

I spent only a short time in Ohio, and returning in April preached in Lewisburg, and passed on to Lexington. At the meeting of presbytery at Timberridge, in the latter part of that month, a request from the congregations of Lewisburg and Union, that I should be appointed their supply till the fall meeting of presbytery, with the understanding that calls would then be presented, was laid before presbytery. Under this arrangement I came to this place, and preached my first sermon as the minister of this congregation on the first Sabbath of June. I was ordained to the full work of the gospel ministry on the 23rd of April, 1809, in the church then called Brown's meeting-house, now Hebron, and was installed pastor some time in the following summer, by a Committee of Presbytery, con-

sisting of Rev. Messrs. Baxter and Read, the former having been my kind and able instructor.

According to the calls which I had accepted, I was to preach alternately in Lewisburg and Union; these places were twenty miles distant from each other, and the congregations scattered over a large tract of country, which necessarily required much labor in performing pastoral duties. The labors of a minister at that day were, in some respects, very different from what is expected now. For about six months in the year the congregations came together on Sabbath morning to hear two sermons before leaving the ground; having an interval of only twenty or thirty minutes between the first and second. The tastes and habits of the people required the sermons to be longer than congregations are now willing to listen to. And on sacramental occasions the services were much more protracted than they are in the present day. It was the custom to have preaching on Friday and Saturday; on the Sabbath, after the first sermon, the services of the table in administering the supper; and then, after an interval of a few minutes, another sermon; and preaching on Monday. As, in the table service, every communicant left his seat in the congregation, and came forward and took his seat with his fellow-communicants at the table, and as only a portion could be accommodated at one time, these successive companies necessarily protracted the exercises more and more as the number of communicants increased. On the Sabbath the minister was engaged from three and a half to four hours.

It is natural for us to be attached to the mode of doing things that prevailed when we were young, and to the practices of the church with which are associated all the dear recollections connected with the youth and the prime of our Christian and ministerial life; and although the present mode of administering the Lord's supper is not without its advantages, yet,

when I go back and look at the course pursued by the Presbyterian Church from its origin, and connect with this the many delightful hours I have spent in distributing the elements of the supper to God's people when seated at the table—properly called the table—of the Lord, I cannot but feel some regret that this custom has been changed, and that nothing has come in its place calculated to make the same solemn impression.

To understand what was necessary to maintain and promote the interests of Presbyterianism in this region fifty years ago, we must look at what was then the state of the country. When I settled here, and for many years after, there was no Presbyterian minister on the east nearer than Lexington, none on the west this side of the Ohio, and none north or south for at least one hundred miles. I was thus placed not far from the centre of a region of country at least two hundred miles square, in which there was no Presbyterian minister but myself; and whatever was to be done to promote the interests of our cause must be done by me, for there was none other to do it; and this rendered it necessary that my labors should not be confined to the congregations of which I was pastor, extensive as they were. Although there were eight points where I preached occasionally and administered the sacraments in the counties of Greenbrier and Monroe, exclusive of Lewisburg and Union, yet, as there was no Presbyterian minister in any of the adjacent counties, I was frequently solicited to visit them, which I did as often as practicable. And in addition to preaching and administering the ordinances, funerals were to be attended, the sick were to be visited, and marriages celebrated.

In October, 1808, I commenced teaching in this place, which I continued for about twenty years. As I cast my thoughts over those who have been my pupils, I find that not a few, even of those who were the

youngest of them, have gone to their graves. But, on the other hand, many of them have been, and still are, eminently useful as ministers of the gospel, physicians, and lawyers; and very many others are filling, with credit to themselves and usefulness to their fellow-men, other stations in society. The Lewisburg Academy, which soon grew out of the school which I commenced, has long been a great blessing to this whole region.

From the time of my settlement here I had no help in the work of the ministry, except an occasional visit from some of the brethren at communion seasons, and a few sermons by ministers who visited the Springs in the summer season, till the year 1819. The late Samuel L. Graham, D. D., spent a few months as a missionary in parts of this county and the counties adjoining, in that year. After the lapse of a year or more, the late Rev. James Kerr spent several months as a missionary in this region. After his labors were ended, and I had been left alone on the ground for some time, Rev. William G. Campbell took charge of the united congregations of Oak Grove and Spring Creek, and labored there for a few years. The Rev. Joseph Brown succeeded him in that charge, and he was succeeded in the same field by Rev. George Van Eman. When Mr. Van Eman left for the West, Rev. M. D. Dunlap took charge of the churches of Oak Grove and Huntersville, where he still continues to labor.

I continued my connection with the Union congregation for twenty-two years. In 1834 it was proposed to me to give up that part of my charge, and to spend the whole of my time in this congregation. A sense of duty, and the interest of the church, induced me to accede to the proposition; yet it was no small trial to my feelings to sever the connection which had existed for so many years, and to give up a people to whom I felt bound by so many ties, from whom I had received so much kindness, amongst whom I had spent so much

of the prime of my life; a people in whom I felt an interest, and for whom I felt, and still feel, an attachment which time cannot efface. But, alas! most of those who were my early and intimate friends and collaborators in promoting the interests of the church have gone to their eternal homes.

In the year 1834, the late Rev. David R. Preston, whose name is dear to many, and with whom I associated in great fraternal affection, was invited to take charge of the Union congregation; but, after serving usefully and acceptably for a few years, ill health compelled him to resign. He was succeeded by the Rev. Samuel R. Houston, the present efficient pastor of that church. When to these we add the short time spent by Mr. Pinkerton and the late Rev. William S. Beard, and by Rev. M. Bittenger, who now labors in a part of Monroe, and the almost two years' labors of the late much lamented Rev. Samuel H. Brown in this county, we have the amount of all the stated Presbyterian ministrations performed in the country between the Alleghany and Sewell Mountains in the last fifty years.

In adverting to the means that have been used to promote the interests of the Redeemer's cause in this congregation, I must not omit to notice the Sabbath-school. One of the first, if not the very first, Sabbath-schools organized in Virginia, was in Lewisburg. The active agent in the work was the late John Spotts, then an elder in this congregation, and afterward a minister of the gospel in the Baptist Church. From its commencement, it has been a strong arm to sustain the church. To this, I must add the Bible Class. For more than forty years this has been attended to amongst us, and has been greatly blessed. Nor can I omit to notice, amongst the efficient means for promoting the cause of religion, the prayer-meetings; not only those that have been conducted by myself or the elders in this place, and in some neighborhoods in the

country, but the meetings for prayer that have been less public. Much, very much good has been done by this means.

To understand what these united efforts have accomplished towards the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the period under review, we must look at what we find now existing. Fifty years ago there were between forty and fifty members of the Presbyterian Church in this whole western part of Virginia. Amongst these there was not one young person; but most of them far advanced in life, and who lived but a short time after I came here. There were then, in the Baptist Church, 169 members in the counties of Greenbrier and Monroe. In the Methodist Episcopal Church there were in the Greenbrier Circuit 504. What number were in the Associate Reformed Church in Monroe I have not been able to ascertain. There was, at that time, a Lutheran Church in this county, which was occasionally visited by ministers of that denomination. To the descendants of those who composed that church we are indebted for a good many efficient members. There was, also, a small society of Menonites, which still exists; and some of the descendants of that people are now worthy members of this church.

In 1808 this house, then in its original form, was the only Presbyterian church in this county. It was built in 1794, at the expense, and through the exertions of a few individuals whose names ought never to be forgotten by this congregation. There were, also, in this county, one Baptist church, one Methodist, and one that was called a Union church. In the county of Monroe there was one small log house, standing about one mile and a half from Union, that had been built by the Presbyterians, in 1794, when Rev. John McCue was their minister. There was in Monroe one Associate Reformed church, one Baptist, and two Methodist churches, all of the most ordinary construction, and capable of accommodating but a few people.

In this condition of things, as to church accommodation, little reliance was placed on these houses as places for worship. Much of the preaching was done, in that day, in the groves, school-houses, private houses, and the threshing-floors of barns. At the church near Union a stand was put up and seats were prepared in the grove, and there I always preached, when the weather was favorable, for several years. Some of our most interesting meetings were held in the beautiful sugar-tree groves around Union—meetings which made an impression on my mind so deep that they never can be forgotten.

We are now prepared to look at the changes which fifty years have produced. Since my connection with this congregation commenced, two generations, and a part of the third, have passed into eternity. Those who were then old, and those in middle age, and many of their children, and even grandchildren, have passed off. There is but one person now living in this place who was married and living here in 1808. There is but one couple in this congregation who were married and living in it at that time, and I believe only one in the Union congregation. At the date to which I have just referred there were eleven graves in this burying ground, and the greater number of them were the graves of children; and now it is difficult to find room for another grave. I have attended the funerals of as many as eight members of the same family; and, in not a few instances, as many as five and six. There are comparatively few families in this congregation whose forefathers I have not followed to the grave.

I have stated that, in 1808, there was in this county one Presbyterian church, one Baptist, one Methodist, and one Union church, the common property of these several denominations. There are now seven Presbyterian churches, all comfortable houses of worship, four Baptist churches, and eighteen Methodist churches. At the period referred to, there was in

Monroe one Presbyterian church, one Baptist, one Associate Reformed, and two Methodist churches. There are now in that county five very comfortable Presbyterian churches, and one Associate Reformed, and several that belong to the Methodists and Baptists—not less, probably, than five or six of each. In the bounds of what was originally the Union congregation, there are now four organized churches; and in what originally constituted the Lewisburg congregation there are three or four churches; that is, there are now eight churches in what was the ground occupied by the two congregations of which I took charge in 1808. The number of members in these two churches at that time, including Spring Creek, was between forty and fifty. In the same bounds there are now nine hundred and ten. What number have been connected with these churches that have died, and been dismissed in consequence of their removal to other parts of the country, I have not been able to ascertain, but it is probable that these two classes united would nearly equal the present number in communion in these churches.

But, as it was from these congregations that the impulse was given to Presbyterianism in this whole western region of Virginia, to see what has been accomplished we must take into this computation what is now the state of things in the bounds of Greenbrier Presbytery. For many years subsequent to 1808, there was but one Presbyterian minister and two churches in the region where there are now thirteen ministers, twenty congregations, and about two thousand communicants.

As before stated, there were, at the commencement of this period of fifty years, 169 members in the Baptist Church in Greenbrier, and now there are 889. There were then, in the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the whole circuit, 504 members, and now there are in the county of Greenbrier 1410. In the Associate

Reformed Church in Monroe 120. The number of members in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in these two counties, I have not been able to ascertain.

It may be thought, when we take into view the time and the means employed by the Presbyterian Church, that the results are small; but, in forming an opinion on this point, we must consider the situation of the country in which these labors have been employed. And here we will at once see that Presbyterianism has labored under peculiar disadvantages. That congregations may be gathered and pastors settled, a compact population is required; and this never has yet existed, except in a few limited sections of the territory covered by Greenbrier Presbytery. The greater part of the population is scattered along the creeks and rivers which wind their way among lofty mountains and steep hills. To reach these sparse settlements requires much laborious travelling on horseback; so that the itinerant system is much better adapted to a large portion of this region than the Presbyterian plan of settled pastors. In looking over the ground, there is not more cause for humiliation that so little has been done than there is for gratitude that so much has been accomplished in circumstances so disadvantageous.

I have stated, in the preceding remarks, the names of the Presbyterian ministers who have labored in the region of country in which, for so many years, I stood alone. I have not been able to state, definitely, either the length of time that each of them spent, or the amount of labor performed. By the aid of records, and other means, I am able to state the amount of service God has enabled me to perform in some of the departments of ministerial duty, if not with absolute accuracy, yet, with a close approximation to the facts in the case. I have preached not less than seven thousand and eight hundred sermons; one thousand

of which have been funeral sermons. I have administered baptism thirteen hundred times, including both adults and infants. I have married one thousand five hundred couples. As to the number of times that I have administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the addresses and exhortations I have delivered, I can form no idea.

But these labors were not all performed in the congregations of Lewisburg and Union, nor even in the counties of Greenbrier and Monroe. For many years I frequently visited the counties of Pocahontas, Bath, Alleghany, Montgomery, Fayette, Nicholas, and Kanawha, in all of which I found many warm friends, and formed many strong attachments. Identified as I have been with the origin of the Presbyterian Churches in these places, I cannot cease to feel a deep interest in their prosperity.

Although, from the commencement of my ministry, there was scarcely any year that there were not additions to the church on profession of faith, and sometimes such as might be called revivals, those most distinguished in the history of this church have been in 1831, when more than ninety were added to the church; in 1834, when between forty and fifty were added; in 1849, when sixty-two were added, and in 1857, when sixty-eight were added.

I have endeavored to show, 1st, How Presbyterianism was first introduced into this part of Virginia; 2d, The means that have been used during the last fifty years to promote it; 3d, What was the state of things in the churches in this region when I commenced my ministry here; and 4th, What their condition is now. I close with two or three reflections:

1. The simple fact that I have delivered this discourse is in itself a very high encomium on this congregation. It shows a firmness and stability not only on the part of those who now compose it, but also on the part of those who have composed it for the last fifty

years, which is highly praiseworthy. In this day, when there is so much anxiety for novelty in matters of religion, and such a tendency to innovate on the good old ways, it is not only a proof of the firmness of a people who have retained the same pastor for fifty years, but it shows also that they have been under the practical influences of religion; that love to God, and a desire to promote the interests of Christ's kingdom, have been the ruling influences that have guided you. As a congregation, you are the first in this State that has continued the same pastor for half a century. That I have grown old in the service of our common Master has not been regarded by you as a reason for severing a relation which we have so long sustained. I have gratifying evidence that you are ready to cheer me in what remains of the downhill of life, by your respect, your sympathy, and whatever may be needful for my comfort.

2. This relation, long as it has continued, and endearing as it is, must now soon be dissolved. The results we are to meet and realize fully in eternity, where we must give a full and impartial account, at the bar of God, of the manner in which we have discharged our mutual duties. I must render an account for the manner in which I have performed my duty to you; and you, for the manner in which you have discharged your duty to me, and to God under my ministry. This should be to us a most solemn consideration. It becomes me to look back over the years of my ministry, and prepare to render the account of my stewardship at that bar from whose decision there is no appeal. Need I tell you that this is a most serious thing, on which the eye of every minister of the gospel should be fixed during the whole period of his ministry? But is it not peculiarly solemn in the closing days of a service so long as that which God has graciously granted me strength to perform? And mine is not the only account that is to be rendered at God's

bar. There you too must stand, and answer for the manner in which you have heard and improved God's instructions, sent to you by me. With scarcely a single exception, the oldest of those to whom I minister now were the youth and the little children when my services here commenced. Through your whole life, and thus far in the life of those that are younger, I have preached to you the unsearchable riches of Christ. I have "showed you publicly, and from house to house, testifying to all, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The ministry must be to each one of you, my long-loved flock, "a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death." Amongst all the relations existing on earth, there is not another the account of which at God's bar will be more solemn, or attended with more important eternal consequences, than that of pastor and people. May God grant, in his rich grace, that we may be prepared to give up our accounts with joy; for, if they are not rendered with joy, it must be with eternal sorrow.