

. . . Brief . . .

Biographical  
Sketches.



BRIEF  
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

OF SOME

IRISH COVENANTING MINISTERS

WHO LABOURED DURING THE LATTER HALF OF THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

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**Dedicated,**

WITH ALL FILIAL LOVE, TO

REV. WM. STAVELY FERGUSON,

GRANGE,

WHO, IN HIS GREEN OLD AGE, IS ONE OF THE LAST SURVIVING  
CONNECTING LINKS WITH A PAST GENERATION.



## PREFACE.

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SOME years ago the writer of these sketches was asked by a gentleman occupying an important and influential public position in Derry, if he could furnish him with an historical account of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in this city and neighbourhood. Inquiries made at that time led to the determination to collect all the information possible for this end. It seemed better, however, to make the effort on Biographical lines, as the history of the Covenanting Church during the last century is to a considerable extent the history of her ministers. Starting with this purpose in view, information was gradually and laboriously accumulated relating to the whole church. It appeared useless, having collected all the historical and biographical particulars available, to allow the result of so much labour to pass away without giving it some permanent form. The present publication embodies most of the material so collected, and the hope is entertained that the following pages may prove not unprofitable reading to those interested in such matters. The difficulties of such an undertaking as the present will be readily understood. Important links binding us to a forgotten past were found in many cases to be



broken by recent deaths, while there is no written history or published reminiscences to fall back upon.

It may safely be said that it would have been impossible to do what is attempted in this volume, little as it may seem, if it had not been for the collection of material in the same direction, by the late Rev. W. J. Stavely, D.D., and especially by the late Rev. Professor Chancellor, D.D., Belfast. As one of his students in the Theological Hall, the author of these pages desires to pay his tribute of respect to the memory of Dr. Chancellor. He was a man who adorned the gospel ministry, and who as a Professor of Theology had the highest ideal before his own mind, and he never failed to place it before the students committed to his care. The extent and accuracy of his information on all matters relating to the history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland is well known, and the fullest acknowledgment of the debt the author is under to him for a large number of the facts narrated in the following pages is hereby made. But the sources from which information has been drawn for the present effort are manifold, and the kindness of friends inside the church and outside it is gratefully acknowledged. The Librarians of Magee College, Londonderry, the Linenhall Library, Belfast, and the Curator of the Belfast Museum, with great kindness lent their experience and

assistance; while valuable information has been obtained from the surviving relatives of Revs. Robert Young, William Stavely and others. Mr. James Montgomery, bookseller, Londonderry, has to be thanked for his help in obtaining some rare and valuable books and pamphlets bearing on the subject matter of the volume, and Messrs. W. H. Jack, Londonderry, J. B. O'Neill, Belfast, and Rev. J. M. Cromie, Kellswater, with great kindness obtained the photographic views of the different churches.

The ministers whose lives and work are briefly and imperfectly sketched in these pages deserve well of their Church and posterity. They contributed very largely to the formation of the current of religious life and work that we experience to-day. Under many difficulties they bore their testimony for Christ, His crown and covenant, at a time when there were few to do it. Other lives might have been traced, but this would have led to the writing of what has already been published by the Rev. M. Hutcheson, of Scotland, and others in that country, and by the Rev. W. M. Glasgow in his exhaustive work on the history of the Covenanting Church in America. The Rev. Classon Porter has written the life of Rev. David Houston, "The Covenanter," more fully than any one else can ever hope to do, and we have nothing to complain of in his treatment of the subject.

The lives of ministers and authors in connection with the Presbyterian Church during the past century have been ably written by the late Rev. Dr. Witherow and Rev. W. T. Latimer and others, and the present small volume is an attempt to say a few words for our Covenanted labourers during the same period.

It may seem that the sketch of the Rev. William Stavely is proportionately much longer than the others, but his ministry was by far the longest, and his life was more eventful than the lives of the others. Indeed, for the sake of brevity, we have left out much regarding his ministerial work that we had at first purposed to publish.

The book, such as it is, is laid on the altar that hallows every service, with the prayer, that while it tells of some of faith's worthies in the bye-gone years, it may stimulate others to be equally faithful in the service of Him who everywhere and in everything deserves our best.

SAMUEL FERGUSON.

WATERSIDE, LONDONDERRY,  
*22nd November, 1897.*



# Brief Biographical Sketches.

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## THE REV. WILLIAM JAMES.

THE district between Derry and Coleraine is known as one of the most Presbyterian parts of Ireland. Here Rev. Mr. Hamilton, who was sent from Scotland for the purpose, administered the oath of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1644 to all "save a few Episcopal Ministers and a few profane and ungodly persons,"<sup>1</sup> and subsequently it was voluntarily taken in the same century by many of the people themselves. The spirit of the Covenanters lived in this district until the following century, and the parents of William James were among those who adhered to the solemn vows of their ancestors. In a farm house, near the village of Eglinton, in Faughanvale, Co. Londonderry, he was born in the year 1741, if we are to take the inscription on his tombstone as correct. Whether Mr. James was taken to Scotland for baptism or received that ordinance from one of the Scottish Covenanting Ministers, who periodically visited Ireland, we cannot now tell. Particulars of his early education are wanting beyond the out-

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<sup>1</sup> History of Irish Presbyterians, by Rev. W. T. Latimer, B.A. Page 52.

standing facts narrated in the Minutes of the Scotch Reformed Presbytery. From these we learn that at a meeting held in Crawfordjohn in March, 1763, "Mr. William James, a student from the Kingdom of Ireland," was taken under the care of Presbytery, having probably at that time completed his undergraduate course at Glasgow University. After appearing several times before the Presbytery during that year, and giving the various trial pieces, and passing the requisite examinations, he was licensed to preach the Gospel in November, and was directed at the same time to remain in Scotland for a few months to preach with one of the older ministers. It was in 1764 that he came to Ireland, carrying with him the highest recommendation from the Church in Scotland. He received appointments from the Irish Presbytery (which had been constituted in August, 1763), and soon after fulfilling these appointments moderation in a call was sought in his favour by the vacant congregation comprising large sections of the counties of Derry, Tyrone, and Donegal. At that time, though there were many societies in these districts, there was no fixed centre for the whole as a meeting place for public worship. This call, which was duly issued, Mr. James accepted, and was ordained in the open air in the presence of a vast congregation, near Cullion, at the back of the hill

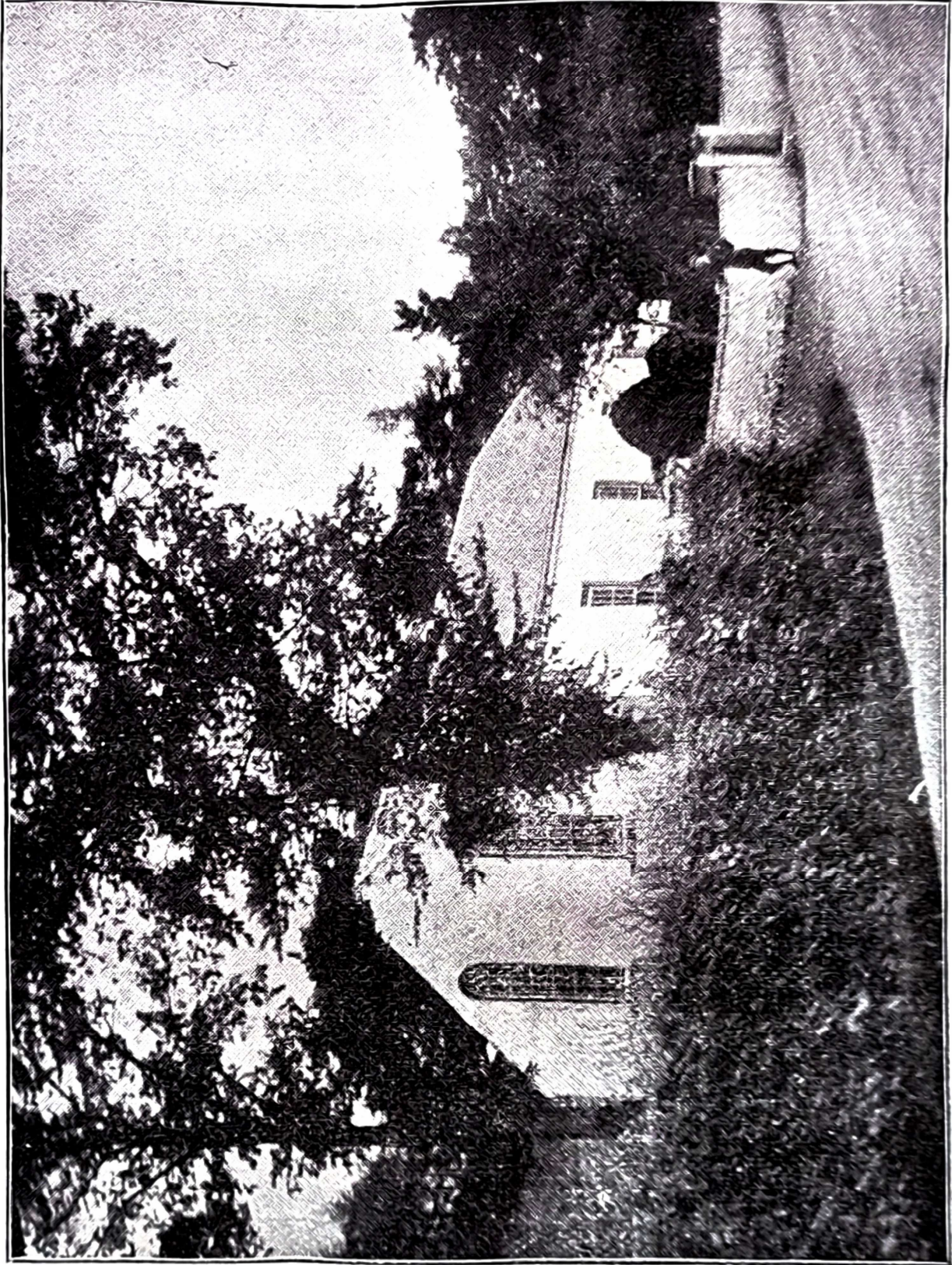
from Bready, on 8th May, 1765. The officiating ministers were, so far as we can gather, Revs. Wm. Martin, and Matthew Lynn, accompanied, in all probability, by some of the Scotch ministers.

Soon after his ordination, it became necessary to obtain a meeting-house, and much discussion took place as to where it should be located. Some wished to have it built at Mountcastle, near Donemanagh, Co. Tyrone; others living across the Foyle preferred to have it at St. Johnston, where the then Marquis of Hamilton is said to have offered a site, but the majority preferred to build at Bready, where the Church still stands. The site was generously and cheerfully provided, free of rent forever, by the Marquis of Hamilton, ancestor of the present Duke of Abercorn.<sup>1</sup> Though the exact date of the building of the first house of worship has not been preserved, it is evident that it must have been about 1766. We have been told that it resembled a long shed more than a church, and was so badly put together that it fell (as elsewhere recorded), during the ministry of Rev. Samuel Alexander. It is only just to the noble family of Hamilton, to state the fact that not only did they give their interest in the ground free,

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<sup>1</sup> The late Rev. Professor Chancellor, D.D., who for a time was Minister of Bready, says that the deputation to the Marquis on the occasion was Rev. Wm. James, H. Denniston, Samuel Gormley, and James Allen.





REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BREADY.



but in addition, offered (we have been told on good authority) to give ten acres for a glebe for the minister, at a nominal rent. At the time, however, for various reasons, the congregation were unable to avail themselves of the offer of the glebe.

Thus, under favourable circumstances in many respects, Mr. James entered on his ministry. He was about twenty-three years of age at the time, of good appearance, well educated, and of good address. One who sat under his ministry has written of him, "he was a good minister." About the time the Church was built at Bready, he himself went to live at Lisdivin, in a house said to have belonged originally to Sir John Hamilton. It is at present occupied by Mr. Clarke. Very little can now be learned of Mr. James's ministry. We have gathered that he lectured through the Book of Revelation, and that he was requested to publish his lectures. If he had any serious thought of doing so, his early death prevented him. He did, however, take up his pen, and that to very good purpose, in writing a pamphlet entitled, "Homesius Enervatus," a letter addressed to Mr. John Holmes, containing

1st. An Essay on Church Communion.

2nd. The terms of Church Communion held by the Reformed Presbytery vindicated.

3rd. Grounds of separation from the Synod of Ireland.

4th. Animadversions upon a pamphlet entitled, "A Testimony," and written by Mr. Holmes, Minister at Glendermot.<sup>1</sup>

The work (of which we have been unable to obtain any perfect printed copy) contains about 100 pages, and was printed by "Catharine Stevenson, London-Derry, 1772."

From the introduction we learn that both privately and by means of printed pamphlets, Mr. Holmes had frequently attacked his neighbour, Mr. James, and the principles of his Church, and in this tract "to balance the account," as he says, Mr. James makes reply. The Minister of Glendermott is twitted by being told that as he was a bachelor, he wished to do something to perpetuate his name, and it is also stated that it is no wonder he bestows his tracts on the Reformed Church, when he calls his own Revd. and dear brethren Arians, Socinians, &c., &c. The argument throughout is conducted with much ability, though written in a somewhat involved style, which makes an analysis of the contents a matter of some difficulty. The pamphlet is punctuated with frequent personal thrusts of a severe kind. We are not aware that Mr. Holmes made any reply to his antagonist.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of Mr Holmes, see Historical and Literary Memorials of Presbyterianism in Ireland, by Thomas Witherow. Second series, page 108.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Witherow says that Mr. Holmes died in the year after "Homeslus Enervatus" was published.



The last department of the publication is, for many reasons, the most interesting. Indeed it tells us part of a most wonderful story, illustrating the old adage "that truth is stranger than fiction." The facts of the case, gleaned from copies of the Minutes of Presbytery on both sides, are these:—

In the month of March, 1764, a young man named William Moore, then on trial for license in connection with the Synod of Ulster, married clandestinely a Miss Elizabeth Haslett, of Drumnashire, or Drumneicy, near Dungiven. Moore had previously sought Miss Haslett's hand in marriage, but had been refused by her friends, and she had been made to give a solemn promise to cease corresponding with him. He managed, however, to get access to her and arranged to be married to her on a certain evening in March in Bovevagh Presbyterian Meeting-house. Moore was to have a minister present to solemnize the marriage. At the appointed time and place the parties were present, he being accompanied by a student friend named Sherrard, she being alone. When they were met, the minister (?) came on horseback, and having dismounted in the twilight went into the church, ascended the pulpit, and went through the marriage ceremony, whether in a confused or correct way we cannot tell. Having done so, he came quickly down, received six guineas in payment and rode off again, hurriedly, as he had come. The truth had

soon to be told, and Moore was summoned before his Presbytery. There, he at first refused to divulge the name of the minister (?) who married them. The Presbytery at once took the only course open to them, and suspended both Moore and Sherrard. Being now in a bad fix, Sherrard went to Mr. M'Causland, J.P., and made oath that Rev. Matthew Lynn, a Covenanting minister from Bannside, married Moore. Another meeting of the Derry Presbytery was held in March, 1765, and the case again came up. Moore and Sherrard now directly named Mr. Lynn as the man who performed the marriage ceremony, and Moore gave account of how he met Mr. Lynn, arranged with him and brought him to the marriage (?) Lynn, who had meantime heard of the allegation against him, was present, and offered to take an oath clearing himself of the whole thing, and demanded to be told the day on which he was reputed to have performed the ceremony. This was surely a reasonable request. This information Moore, his wife, or Sherrard were unable or unwilling to give, beyond saying that it was on a Thursday evening in March. The Presbytery now referred the matter to the Sub-Synod, who, having heard the various statements (Lynn again offering to take an oath of expurgation), advised the removal of the sentence of suspension from both their men. This, of course, was equivalent to saying that Lynn was guilty. The

proceedings rested here, so far as the Derry Presbytery was concerned.

Mr. Lynn being now injured in what must always be a very tender point with a minister, his character, asked to have the charge against him investigated by the Reformed Presbytery assisted by Commissioners from Scotland. This was done at Drummond, near Ballykelly, in June, 1765,<sup>1</sup> and the minutes of the whole case as heard by them are printed in the last part of Mr. James's pamphlet. When the inquiry was opened at Drummond, Lynn rose and made his statement, solemnly denying any knowledge of, or part in, the transaction. Witnesses were examined at great length to prove how Lynn was engaged during each Thursday evening in March, 1764, to show that it was impossible he could have been at Bovevagh on any Thursday in the month. So clear and conclusive was the testimony that the court came to a unanimous finding that Mr. Lynn was not guilty, and assured him of their fullest confidence and sympathy.

But the story had wrought its mischief. Mr. Lynn's usefulness was impaired, and he knew it. We have been told that on more than one occasion, when he went from home to preach, before he

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<sup>1</sup> The following were present as constituting the court on the occasion:—Revs. William Martin, Moderator; John M'Millan, John Fairley (Commissioners from Scotland), Matthew "Lind," and William James, Clerk. Ruling Elders—John Huston, John Huey, William Cuddey, and William Brown. See "Homesius Enervatus," page 81.



began the services, he lifted up his hand and solemnly declared that he was not guilty in the matter. Seeing, doubtless, that some, at all events, of his influence for good was gone in this country, he resolved to accept the urgent call for ministers (made more urgent in his case by a deputation that waited on him) from America, and thither he removed, to the great regret of Bannside congregation, in 1773. He remained an honoured and useful minister in America until 1800, when he died.

But the strange part of the story remains to be told. Long after, we have several corroborative testimonies for saying, a Roman Catholic who was dying in the neighbourhood of Dungiven, confessed that he had been hired by Moore to personate Mr. Lynn at the marriage at Bovevagh, and had received six guineas as remuneration, and could not die with the sin unacknowledged. This man, according to report, closely resembled Mr. Lynn in appearance. We have been unable to trace satisfactorily the subsequent history of Moore, beyond the fact that he emigrated to Nova Scotia as a missionary in connection with the Synod of Ulster. One account (which may not be reliable) paints his life story in dark colours. Sherrard died young, from consumption, and appears to have been, to the end, the dupe of Moore.

Mr. James deserves credit, in that he boldly and manfully took up his pen in defence of one whom he believed to be the subject of a foul calumny.

After the publication of this pamphlet, Mr. James seems to have attended diligently to the work of his ministry at Bready without distraction. Frequently, indeed, he was away from home, preaching and administering ordinances. We have seen at least one certificate of Church membership signed by him as a Moderator of Session *ad interim* from the neighbourhood of Ballymoney.

He married a Miss Burgess, an Episcopalian lady of considerable means, by whom he had several children, who returned with their mother to her father's home, somewhere in County Antrim, a year after Mr. James's death. It is said they changed their surname from James to Burgess.

Mr. James, from early manhood, had been subject to attacks of erysipelas, and one of these attacks laid hold of his head, and caused his death at the early age of 38 years, in 1779. His remains were interred in the ancient burying-ground of Grange, near Bready, and a neat tombstone, bearing an inscription in Latin, remains to mark the spot.

He was the first stated clerk the Reformed Presbytery in Ireland had, and as the Minutes of the Presbytery, beyond those published by himself in Mr. Lynn's case, have been lost, it is possible his wife may have taken them with her to her father's home. The absence of the Minutes leaves a great blank in the history of the Church during those early years.

## REV. THOMAS HAMILTON.

WE can gather but few details of the life or work of Rev. Thomas Hamilton, and yet in his time he was the centre of many a storm in the famous Glendermott, in the neighbourhood of Derry City. He is believed to have been a native of Bovevagh district, in County Londonderry, and was brought up in connection with the Presbyterian Church, of which he became a licentiate under care of the Derry Presbytery in the year 1764.<sup>1</sup> Two years later we find him supplying the old congregation of First Glendermott, about the time of the death of the Rev. William Hair, minister of the place; and when the vacancy occurred a section of the congregation memorialised the Presbytery of Derry to have moderation in a call for him. But at the same time a more influential portion of the congregation sent a deputation to Presbytery asking a moderation in favour of Rev. James Knox, of Letterkenny. First Glendermott seems to have been completely split over the two candidates. Mr. Hamilton's friends took the law into their own hands, seized the meeting-house, and retained it for some time against the orders of the Presbytery. They were unable to hold it,

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Derry Presbytery of that date.

however, and the Presbytery made repeated attempts to heal the breach. Mr. Hamilton's party then sought to be erected into a separate charge, in order to give a call to their favourite. This was refused; and Mr. Hamilton proving disobedient to the directions of the Court, sterner measures were resorted to by the Presbytery in the form of censure. He appeared before the Court and boldly defended his action in the case. Ultimately, finding that he would not accept any of their directions, the Presbytery deprived him of his license to preach, and the various congregations were warned to have nothing to do with him. Mr. Knox, his rival, was called and ordained in the year 1770, and in the same year Mr. Hamilton applied to the Reformed Presbytery, was received by them, and was called and ordained as minister over a Covenanting congregation in Glendermott. Where his ordination was held, or where the house of worship was situated in which he ministered, we cannot find.<sup>1</sup> From communion tokens—of which two or three were in use until lately in Faughan Congregation—bearing date 1770, we know there was a separate Covenanting congregation worshipping somewhere in the valley of the Faughan in 1770. It is reasonable to suppose that a con-

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<sup>1</sup> The late Rev. Professor Chancellor, D.D., was of opinion that the meeting-house was situated in the townland of Killenan.



siderable proportion of Mr. Hamilton's charge was originally connected with First Glendermott, and followed him into the Covenanting church. He ministered to this new congregation during two or three years, and then left the neighbourhood, having accepted an appointment to preach where he was required over the whole Church. It is certain he was one of the officiating ministers at Mr. Stavely's ordination at Conlig in 1772. Mr. Hamilton itinerated over a great part of Ulster, preaching, baptizing, and solemnizing marriages as he was required. His pulpit services do not seem to have been much prized. We have heard that on one occasion a complaint was made to his Presbytery that he had preached the same sermon on three successive Sabbaths, though in different places. His accuser had the fortune or misfortune to be present on the three occasions. Mr. Hamilton started up and inquired what the divisions of the sermon were; but the complainant could not give a satisfactory answer, whereupon Mr. Hamilton coolly remarked that it was evident he would need to hear the discourse a fourth time.

On one of his journeys through County Monaghan he took suddenly ill on the road near Ballybay, and was carried to the house of an acquaintance in the neighbourhood, where he died after a short illness in 1779. So far as we can ascertain, his remains were interred in the corner of the graveyard

attached to Derryvalley Presbyterian Church. He is said to have left a wife and one child to mourn his loss. During the years of his ministry he must have had his share of disappointment, anxiety, and toil. We doubt not "his record is on high."

## THE REV. WILLIAM STAVELY.

THE subject of this sketch was born at Ferniskey, a townland near Kells, County Antrim, in the year 1743, just two years before the last effort of the Stuarts to regain the throne of England was shattered by the battle of Culloden. His father was Aaron Stavely, whose family had originally come from the neighbourhood of the town of Stavely in England<sup>1</sup>. Aaron Stavely owned a small freehold property at Ferniskey, and was in comfortable worldly circumstances. He was brought up an Episcopalian, but became a Covenanter from conviction, and having joined the fellowship of the Covenanting Church, remained until the end of his life a consistent, pious, and respectable member of the Church of his deliberate choice. William Stavely's mother was a daughter of the Rev. Patrick Vance, Presbyterian minister of Ray, County Donegal. Mr. Vance had been ordained as assistant and successor of Rev. Mr. Campbell, who was minister of Ray at the time of the siege of Derry in 1688<sup>2</sup>.

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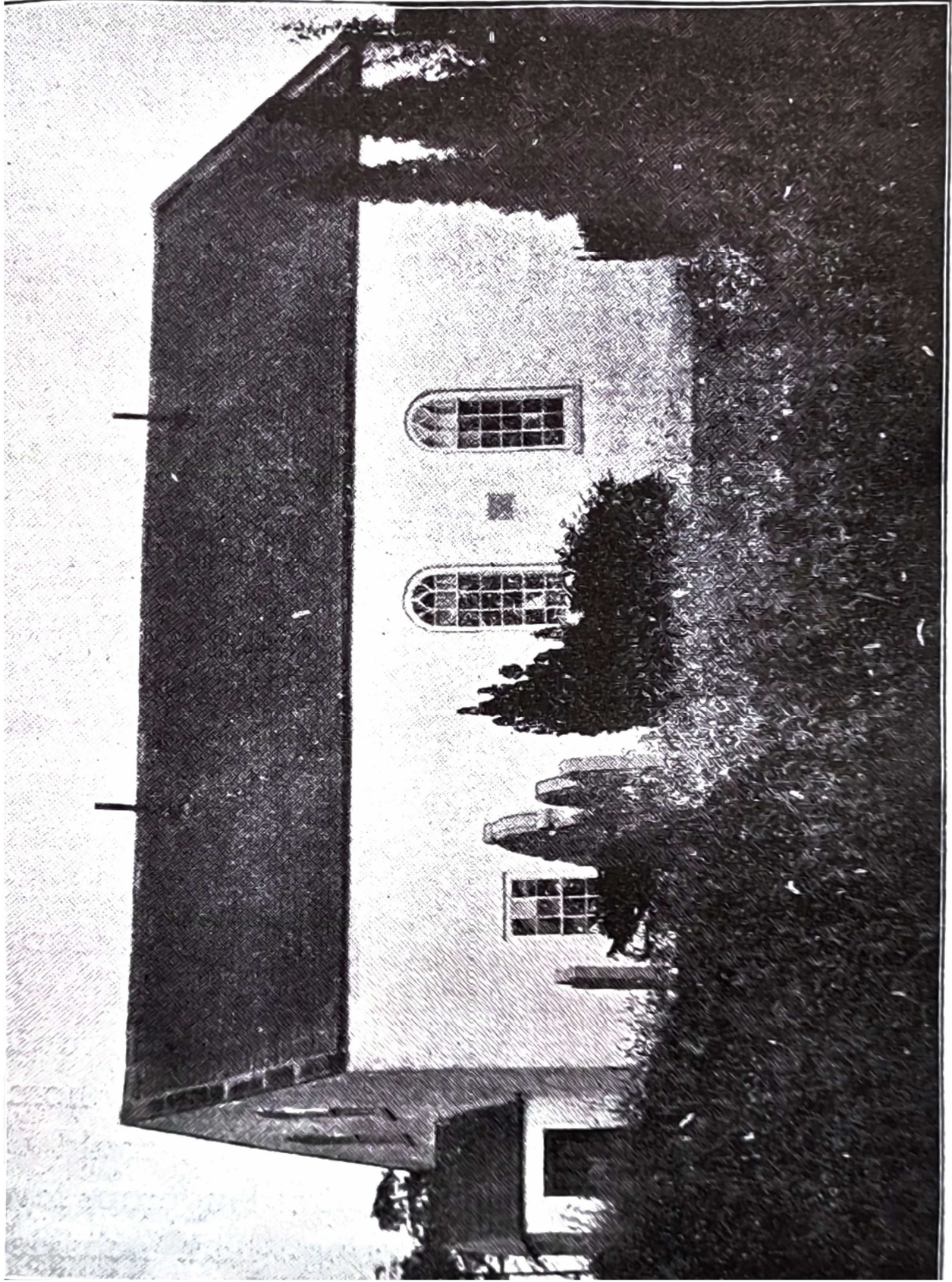
1. We have learnt that in 1638 William Staveley or Stavely, of Staveley Hall, near Ripon, Yorkshire, being harshly treated by his stepfather, Mr. Lascelles, fled to Ireland penniless, and settled near Kells, Co. Antrim. Lascelles appropriated the family property in England. This William Staveley was great-grandfather of the subject of this sketch.

2. See Dr. Killen's sketch of Ray congregation in his *History of Presbyterian congregations*.

Mr. Vance died in 1741, about the time of his daughter's marriage to Aaron Stavely. William Stavely was the only son of the family, which consisted altogether of three children, the other two being Esther, afterwards Mrs. Agnew, who, with her husband, emigrated to New York, and Eliza, who married Mr. Cussack, and with her husband also emigrated to America.

Aaron Stavely and his wife early dedicated their only son to God in the work of the ministry of the Covenanting Church, and determined to give him the best education their circumstances could afford. He was sent to a classical school at Antrim as soon as he was able to go, and was maintained there in lodgings, travelling home to Ferniskey generally at the week end that he might not be altogether sundered from home influences. His progress in his studies was rapid, and his perseverance somewhat remarkable. The only serious illness he had in his long life was a fever he contracted during his early stay at Antrim. He was overtaken with weakness when going to his father's on a Saturday afternoon, and, being unable to make his way home, he went to a house by the roadside, and could not be removed for three weeks, until a dangerous fever from which he was suffering had subsided. Whether this illness had any permanent influence on his character we do not know, but we do know that it did not interrupt his studies, even for one





REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, KNOCKBRACKEN.

month, after his restoration to health, or change his purpose of preparing for the ministry. In due time he entered Glasgow University, where he completed the curriculum required from arts students at the time. If he graduated M.A. no record remains of the fact. It is more than probable that he did not, as he never claimed a degree from his Alma Mater.

Having fulfilled the requisite course of literary and scientific, as well as theological, training, he was licensed in December, 1769, and after acting as probationer nearly two years, he received a call from the "Covenanted Electors between the Bridge of Dromore and Donaghadee, in the County Down." This call, of which until lately copies were extant, was signed by 92 persons, and accepted by Mr. Stavely, who was twenty-nine years of age at the time. The ordination took place at Conlig in August, 1772. Among the ministers present on the occasion we have heard the names of Revs. W. Martin, William James, and Thomas Hamilton. Soon the bounds of his pastoral charge were enlarged beyond the limits named in the call, and extended to Newry and Ballybay. After a time Knockbracken, four miles from Belfast, came to be recognised as the centre of his charge, and there the church was built about 1776. Subsequently an acre of ground was obtained on lease from the landlord, R. M'Neill, Esq., as a burying place.

The years brought changes. Rev. William James and Rev. Thomas Hamilton died in 1779; Revs. William Martin and Matthew Lynn emigrated to America, the former in the end of 1772, the latter, with Rev. A. Dobbin, in 1773; and Rev. Robert Young, though labouring in Ireland, had no fixed charge, so that Stavelly was the only remaining ministerial member of the Irish Reformed Presbytery. Consequently this Presbytery, which had been formed in 1763, now became extinct, and the question arose, What was to be done? Mr. Stavelly quickly decided that the only course open was to resume connection with the Scottish Presbytery, and the minutes of that court for 1780 state that, being met at Stirling, the submission of the congregations in Ireland was received.

In 1776 Mr. Stavelly married Miss Mary Donald, of Irishtown (Marymount), near Antrim, and after his marriage he settled at Annsborough House, near Newtownbreda, then a village quite two miles from Belfast, though now, it is needless to say, the very farm and house Mr. Stavelly owned is included in the municipal limits of the city. His home at Annsborough was a happy one. Whatever troubles or anxieties were felt outside in his public work, he had nothing but peace and comfort in his domestic life. He had with his house a farm of twenty acres, or thereabouts, the profits from which, added to his annual stipend of £50 (probably equal in pur-



chasing power to £150 or £200 to-day), with the rent of his own freehold at Ferniskey, and his wife's property at Irishtown, enabled him to live in ease and comfort, and allowed him to devote his whole attention to his ministerial work. To this work, indeed, he gave himself up with whole-hearted dedication and unceasing industry. He had a solid and extensive education to begin with, and to this he united habits of great diligence as a student, so that he kept himself thoroughly abreast of the literature of his time in all subjects that claimed his attention. He was especially careful, we have been told, in his preparation for the pulpit. We have seen the MSS. of some of his sermons and the notes of many others, all of which give evidence of his industry and ability. In pastoral work he was unwearied. The journeys he took on horseback are surprising. He was often away in Counties Monaghan, Cavan, and Armagh—indeed throughout Ulster in all weathers. There were few mail coaches at the time, and no railways, while the roads were, as a rule, hardly deserving of the name; and we are not surprised to hear that on one occasion when near Bailieborough, in County Cavan, he was so utterly fatigued, when travelling in a severe snowstorm, that he got off his horse, and did not care if death overtook him by the wayside. Though weary in the Master's service he was not weary of it. He had kind



friends, and found open doors everywhere. He commanded respect, and attracted large audiences wherever he went. He was probably the first to establish a Covenanted cause at Sleeth's Forth, in County Armagh, and was, if not the first, among the first of the Reformed Presbyterian ministers to preach to the scattered Covenanting families in Counties Monaghan<sup>1</sup> and Cavan.

In County Down, in the neighbourhood of Banbridge and Scarva, he frequently preached, and, on one occasion at least, he dispensed the sacrament of the Lord's Supper there. The old meeting-house,<sup>2</sup> now an utter ruin on the roadside between Banbridge and Scarva, was, we have been told, built largely as a result of his labours.

At some of the services he held in these places, what would now be called "scenes" took place. On one occasion, when Mr. Stavely was officiating in County Armagh, a neighbouring minister of the Secession Church was present. Mr. Stavely's text was Hosea v. 15—"I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek Me early," and his remarks led the Secession minister to rise in the audience and question his doctrine.

<sup>1</sup> The families of Messrs. Scott and M'Clean were among his earliest friends about Ballybay. Dr. Jackson, of "United Ireland" fame, of Ballybay or Crieve, though not a Covenanter, was one of his warm personal friends.

<sup>2</sup> Drumillar.—This place of worship was subsequently abandoned in favour of Loughbrickland and Ballenon.

The Covenanting minister was equal to the occasion. He invited his assailant to state his position, and then replied with such admirable judgment, learning, and temper that he gained the approbation of the large audience. His preaching was evangelical, and combined with a clear statement of the truth very strong and eloquent appeals to the hearts and consciences of the hearers. The notes of some of these sermons were published in the pages of the "Covenanter" and the Scottish "Witness" a number of years ago, and these fragments (skeletons as they are, though of considerable length) strike us by the grasp of Divine truth they shew.

We have been told that on another occasion, when Mr. Stavely was preaching on Testimony-bearing at Brown's Fort, near Ballybay, in the open air, to an audience numbering several hundreds, a man named Wiggins rose up in the congregation and shouted "Treason, treason," and threatened to inform the authorities on the preacher. Mr. Stavely went on undismayed until he had done. Wiggins, however, was so excited that he brought a fit of apoplexy on himself, from which he died that same night.

So powerful and persuasive were Mr. Stavely's discourses that even Roman Catholics were rivetted to the spot by them, and some of them were led to see the errors of the Roman Church and to forsake it.

Wherever he went he left a strong impression for good. There was much need for such preaching as his in Ulster at that time. A soul-destroying moderatism overspread the land, and it was the exception, rather than the rule, to find a minister of any Protestant denomination who might truly be called evangelical. Dr. J. S. Reid, in his history of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, mentions this lack of evangelical preaching during the latter half of the eighteenth century as a cause of so much spiritual deadness in Ulster, and at the same time he gratefully acknowledges the services rendered to the cause of truth by Rev. William Stavely and his fellow-labourers.<sup>1</sup>

It is a noteworthy fact that during the years from the date of Mr. Stavely's ordination at Conlig in 1772, until his removal from Knockbracken to Kellswater and Cullybackey in 1800, he was the means of laying the foundations of no less than ten or twelve Covenanting congregations.<sup>2</sup> No wonder Dr. Reid styles him in one place "the apostle of the Covenanting Church in Ireland," and in another connection he speaks of him as "the most distinguished minister of that denomination in Ulster."<sup>3</sup>

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1. See Reid's History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, vol. 3, 453. His words are . . . . "the fidelity with which their (i.e. Covenanters') ministers preached the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel was undoubtedly the grand secret of their progress."

2 See Reid's History, III., 424, note 35.

3. See Reid's History, III., 405.

During these years while Mr. Stavely was diligent in his ministry, he was also busy in his study. One evidence of that activity we find in the works from his pen that emanated from the Press. His first literary effort—a large pamphlet (ninety pages) “Truth Restored, or the new mode of Swearing Religious Oaths by Touching and Kissing a Book Examined” — was printed at Newry in 1775, three years after his ordination. The subject treated in this work was at that time a burning one among Ulster Presbyterians. In the year 1764 Rev. Thomas Clarke, M.D., Secession minister of Cahans, County Monaghan, was fined 40s with subsequent imprisonment chiefly because he refused to take the oath in the manner then prescribed, by kissing the book, though he declared his readiness to make an oath or affirmation to the same effect in the Scriptural manner with uplifted hand.<sup>1</sup> When Dr. Clarke was so severely<sup>2</sup> treated, we can understand how it was with others. Under these circumstances it is no wonder that Mr. Stavely took up his pen in exposition and defence of the nature and manner of Scriptural oaths. In the pamphlet on Swearing he gives his reasons for rejecting the form of oath-

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<sup>1</sup> See History of the Irish Presbyterians, by Rev. W. T. Latimer, B.A., page 164.

<sup>2</sup> It is true liberty was given by the Irish Parliament in 1782 to Seceders to swear in giving evidence in Courts of Justice by uplifted hand; in criminal cases this right was denied them.



taking then in use, *i.e.*, kissing the Gospels. It is impossible within the compass of a few lines to present a satisfactory outline of his arguments on the subject; it will suffice to mention some of the reasons he adduces in favour of swearing with uplifted hand. Among these he enumerates that an oath, being an act of worship, should be rendered as God requires; that "kissing the book" is frequently abused;<sup>1</sup> that it is a custom of heathen origin; that the decalogue requires a holy and reverent use of God's word, and that there is complete harmony of Scripture precept and example in favour of swearing with uplifted hand. The work is distinguished by the close and accurate acquaintance with the Word of God which it reveals, while it gives evidence of the possession of no mean argumentative power. One thing we can see, Mr. Stavely was in advance of his time on this subject, and it is remarkable that only within the last twenty-five years what he so forcibly contended for has been fully granted to Presbyterians by the Executive in this country.

In 1795 Mr. Stavely published, by request he tells us, a sermon preached at Newtownards entitled "War Proclaimed and Victory Ensured" or "The Lamb's Conquests Illustrated." This publication runs on to 66 large pages. The text of the sermon

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<sup>1</sup> A case in point is given, that of a person who had made oath by kissing the book on a certain matter, but refused subsequently to make an oath to the same purpose with uplifted hand.

is Revelation xvii. 14—"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and they that are with Him are called and chosen and faithful." Briefly stated, the pamphlet sets out the principles of the Covenanting Church, as will be gathered from the divisions of the sermon which are—

- I. The nature, causes and origin of the war undertaken by these combined forces.
- II. The nature of this royal character—Lord of Lords and King of Kings, or the nature of the authority with which He is invested.
- III. By what means He has obtained the victory, with some of the times He has done so.
- IV. The character and qualifications of those who are sharers in His victory.
- V. Some of the grounds of assurance that all have who are in His service, that they shall be sharers in His victories.

The sermon treats with great wealth of illustration, drawn from Scripture and profane history, of these various points. Some passages in it are striking and powerful, and we can understand that it would produce a very marked effect when delivered by a dignified, eloquent, and earnest preacher. The work was extensively read and highly valued for many years, and beyond question

had great influence in moulding the religious and political opinions of some of its readers.

About this time the French Revolution which broke out in 1789 was exerting a powerful influence all over Western Europe, and one of its concomitants was the infidel writings of Thomas Paine and men of his school. Thomas Paine, the author of the "Age of Reason," to which Mr. Stavely's "Appeal to Light" is a reply, was born in Norfolk, England, in 1737. He (Paine) had a checkered career. He was in succession staymaker, seaman, student, merchant, exciseman, usher at an academy, astronomer, grocer, editor, clerk to a committee of congress in America, historiographer to the United States, member of the French Convention, inventor, and author of infidel writings. Clearly he was a man of great but misguided genius, but at the same time of depraved character, and the companion of the very lowest members of society, utterly unreliable as "guide, philosopher and friend" to any who regarded him as such. His book, "The Age of Reason," was extensively read, both on the Continent and in these kingdoms, and bore evil fruit wherever it was accepted. He was now at the zenith of his influence, and it betokens considerable courage in Mr. Stavely to have ventured to cross swords with him. The "Appeal to Light," published in 1796, is the largest and most thoughtful of Mr. Stavely's books or

pamphlets.<sup>1</sup> It consists of 144 large pages, and is a defence of the Christian religion as revealed in Holy Scriptures against the attacks of infidels and sceptics. He lays down the following five tests<sup>2</sup> by which he tries the Bible:—(1) That the matters performed by Moses and the Prophets, by Jesus Christ and His Apostles, and the doctrines by them delivered, be of such a nature that the eyes that saw them, and the ears that heard them, be judges of them. (2) That these actions done, and doctrines delivered, be so public that every description of men may be witnesses. (3) That some significant monuments be instituted and commemorative actions done, declarative of the rectitude of these actions, and commemorative of the truth and goodness of the words spoken. (4) That these instituted monuments and commemorative actions do commence from the time these doctrines were delivered, and actions performed by Moses and the Prophets, and by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. (5) That these same monuments and commemorative actions have been regularly and without variation observed from the time these actions were done and doctrines delivered unto the present time.

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<sup>1</sup> We are surprised that so careful an historian, and so diligent a collector of such writings as the late esteemed Rev. Dr. Witherow, Derry, does not include this work in his enumeration of Rev. W. Stavelly's writings. See Dr. Witherow's *Historical and Literary Memorials of Presbyterians in Ireland*, second series, page 329.

<sup>2</sup> These tests and their consideration occupy only a section of the treatise.

Round these points a very able argument is built up in defence of the Divine origin of the Scriptures. The statement is put somewhat in this way—if the Bible was not given by God it must then have been given by angels, or by good men, or by bad men. By angels it could not be given, by bad men it would not be produced, as they would not promulgate commandments and precepts that make for righteousness, and so condemn themselves, therefore it must have been written by good men under the inspiration of God, as these men would not lie or impose on themselves or others.

The book amply repays a careful reading, even in this age when apologetics has come to be recognized as an important branch of theological training. The last section of the work is devoted to a dissertation on the best way to advance the intelligent study of the Bible. Mr. Stavely challenged Paine to a discussion of the whole subject. The terms in which the challenge was conveyed are worthy of being reproduced. He writes—“Was my arm long enough I would stretch it over to the Gallic shore and take you by the hand as a friend of the liberties of men, and a pointed opposer of despots, but when you step out of your way and attempt to destroy the foundations of faith, I must remonstrate with you, and now inform you that if the horrors of war were over, or

a free way of communication opened up, in the humble dependence of faith on the author of Divine Revelation, and a fixed trust in the truth and goodness of God, I shall meet you at any given place, and there *viva voce*, discuss the subject with you, of the Scripture authority, before any witnesses you please."

In 1794 we find Mr. Stavely republishing with a preface and notes of his own, Dr. Owen's sermon on Hebrews xii. 27. Here again his pen was called into exercise by the tendencies of the time. The revolutionary wave was sweeping with deadly effect over Western Europe, and the desire of the editor of this sermon is to call attention to the "things which cannot be shaken." Prophecy was a specially interesting study to Mr. Stavely, and finding many of the views he entertained on that subject already well expressed by Robert Fleming, in his Treatise on Prophecy, he published a new edition of that work, to which a few pages by way of preface were added from Stavely's pen.

These various productions, all issued from the press previous to the troubles connected with the United Irishmen rising, seem to have exhausted Mr. Stavely's literary efforts. We are not acquainted with anything published by him subsequent to 1798, though to the end of his days he remained an unusually diligent student.



He was now approaching the stormy part of his life. He had become a public man, travelling over Ulster and coming into contact with all sorts and conditions of men. Doubtless, he was frequently brought face to face with great hardships endured by the people, cases of oppression by the landlords, and instances of injustice by the Government. Being from his very nature, never to speak of his religious principles, a lover of liberty and justice, he hailed with delight any great popular agitation that gave promise of amelioration to the mass of the people. When the Volunteer movement (which had for its purpose the raising of an armed force for the protection of the country against foreign or domestic foes) was started in 1778 he sympathised with it, and a company was formed in the neighbourhood of Knockbracken, called the Drumbracken Volunteers, many of whom were members of his own congregation. He accepted the position of Captain and he took an active part in its organization. The Belfast newspaper the "Northern Star,"<sup>1</sup> of the time, tells that on one occasion he reviewed his company, being himself dressed as Commanding Officer. But after a little the movement assumed larger proportions, and took on a different hue from that which at first it seemed to have. Almost imperceptibly the United Irishmen sprang from it. The Uniting was at first

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1. Quoted by Dr. J. S. Reid.

a non-sectarian movement. Mr. Stavely did not like the trend it soon took, and publicly said so. He had already become concerned with the initial stage and it was difficult, even dangerous, though he was anything but a timid man, to discountenance it completely. He was generally understood to sympathise with its aims, and so became a suspect under the eye of the Government. When the affairs of the kingdom began to approach a crisis, he wisely decided to take the advice of the Scotch Presbytery as to what course Covenanters should pursue in the circumstances, and for this purpose he conferred with the Scottish brethren at Girvan. A short time afterwards, in October, 1796, the following "Seasonable and necessary information" was published in the "Northern Star,"<sup>1</sup> "At a critical time such as the present is, when the public mind is so much agitated, and so many false alarms are in circulation, we, the members of the Reformed Church, called Presbyterian Dissenters (reproachfully called Mountain Men) hold it our duty to step forward from conscience, and publicly declare, that we hold in the highest abhorrence and detestation, all tumultuous and disorderly meetings, and we utterly disclaim all connection with such, whether publicly or privately held, when anything is said or done, that is prejudicial to the peace, the

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1. "Northern Star" 10th to 14th October, 1796.

safety or property of any individual or civil society.

Done in the name of the Reformed Church in the counties of Antrim and Down.”

This declaration, whether it came directly from Mr. Stavely or not, evidently could not have been made without his agreement and consent. Notwithstanding, information was given to the authorities, through some channel now unknown, shortly afterwards, that in the meeting-house at Knockbracken a large quantity of pikes and other arms was concealed. We do not believe there was any foundation for this allegation. The charge was enough, however, to serve the purpose of those who had made it, and on Sabbath, 25th June, 1797,<sup>1</sup> Colonel Barber, accompanied by the “Town-Major” of Belfast, and a considerable troop of cavalry, came to Knockbracken during Divine Service, and being in the meeting-house green attracted the attention of the large congregation assembled within the house of worship. Mr. Stavely stopped the service and inquired the cause of the excitement, and was made acquainted with the presence of the soldiers. He sent out a message asking the Commanding Officer what was wanted. The answer was given that they had come to arrest Mr. Stavely. The minister immediately closed the Bible, dismissed the congregation, and gave himself up to the

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Stavely's arrest is chronicled in the Belfast papers of that date.

soldiers with whom he rode away, his horse's bridle being linked in the bridles of two of their horses. It was a very warm day, and when the cavalcade had ridden some three or four miles Mr. Stavely begged to get a drink of water, but one of the dragoons drew his sword and struck him on the cheek, giving him a cut, and said, with an oath, that that was sufficient drink for a rebel. He was kept a prisoner during the month of July and until the 26th August, when he was liberated on bail.<sup>1</sup> We know neither the names of the bailsmen nor the amount of the bail. The latter must have been for a considerable amount, as it is known the Government dreaded his influence with the insurgents and with the people generally. He was trusted as a leader where he was known, and he was well known over four or five counties. Indeed the authorities made seductive promises to him on the condition of his taking the oath of allegiance and throwing in his influence with them. This he utterly refused to do, and so remained under the jealous supervision of the Executive. Perhaps it was because of his determined neutrality that he suffered so much.

The charge against Mr. Stavely having arms concealed in Knockbracken completely broke down. He proved that he was away from home at the

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1. See "News-Letter" of that date.

time the arms were alleged to have been concealed. He was now given his liberty until after the battle of Ballynahinch. When the soldiers were returning from that battle he was again seized at his house at Annsborough on the charge of being a general officer of the United Irishmen. This was on the night of the 13th June, 1798. His house was sacked, his furniture burnt, and the soldiers made themselves drunk with wine they found in his house. Fortunately we are able from authentic papers still in possession of Mr. Stavely's descendants to allow him to tell the story of his second imprisonment in his own words. The reference to the arms being concealed in the meeting-house seems to be a revival of the charge under which he was arrested the first time. We quote the statement in its entirety, as it disproves completely the accusation that he had anything to do with the United Irishmen.

“ARTILLERY BARRACK, *August 24, 1798.*

On the 13th day of June last past, being Tuesday, I was arrested at my own house by a party of the Trainmen, a party of the Monaghan Militia and some Fifeshiremen. No charges whatever were mentioned and no officer was present. They set fire to the house in four rooms and kitchen. They burned my turfstack and carhouse and car, also a variety of articles. They took away that night and three succeeding nights, almost all my furniture,



plate and apparel, to the amount of £200 and upwards. I was very ill-used by the military on my way to Belfast, giving me the worst of language. They even refused to give me a drink though I was exceedingly warm. I was put into the common guardhouse and kept there three full weeks; eight days and nights without having a bed to lie on, or even having off my clothes. Sundry times I was insulted by the military, sundry times they threatened to hack me—to hang me—to burn me. One of them swore nine times by the Holy Ghost he would shoot me before I left that yard. On the 22nd night, being Sabbath night, I was ordered out directly under a strong guard and put into the Donegal Arms, where there were about 168 prisoners. I was put into a room with one John Hughes, and kept there ten days; when I was again removed to another apartment, and kept three days and three nights, and then on the evening of the Sabbath, I and eleven more were removed to the Artillery Barrack, and here have been kept till this instant, when on a sudden we were informed of our being ordered to go into a prison-ship in the Lough of Belfast.

It is necessary that I should make some remarks on the by-past part of my conduct during my confinement. I wrote on the second day after my confinement to General Barber, requesting to know for what reason I was arrested. No return was made,

but a report of a malicious nature that arms had been secreted in the meeting-house of Knockbracken, though there is no ground whatever for such report. And I do most solemnly declare that I never knew of nor was concerned in, nor believe there was any such thing in existence, as arms of any kind in that house of a hostile nature. I was in a little after called upon by Mr. Pollock, the Crown Solicitor, in the company of General Barber. He mentioned the above instance of the meeting-house, and added that on 25th December he charged me with preaching seditious doctrines, but did not instance any particular. After some time I again wrote to General Barber, to be communicated to General Nugent, requesting trial, and signifying that I neither was present nor did I assist in the late insurrection, but was active in restraining all I could from joining that insurrection; and yet I was taken from my own house and my property taken away without any known cause. Then a printed proclamation was offered to all the prisoners, signifying that the King's royal mercy would be shewn, provided important information be given, and penal obligations entered into to remove to some country not at war with the king. After I had read over this proclamation I returned to the Crown Solicitor in presence of General Barber the following denial of acceptance of said terms:— William Stavelly having never taken an oath to

United Irishmen, nor occupied any place or post among such men, and being a declared enemy to French principles or any foreign interference with the government of Ireland, cannot for these reasons accept General Nugent's proclamation.—WILLIAM STAVELY.

It may here be proper to add my judgment on the public divisions and parties now existing in this country. And first I declare myself a Presbyterian. In this religion I was educated from my earliest youth, and now am so from my own personal choice. By the Presbyterian religion I mean to say that I profess the Reformed Presbyterian Covenanted religion. In the faith of these doctrines I was brought up, and to proclaim them I was ordained in the month of August, 1772, at Conlig, Co. Down. I have hitherto continued preaching and inculcating these doctrines to this time, and no party divisions have in the least altered my judgment in any particular. Neither did I change my practice in public or private; nor did I ever say with my lips or write with my hand or signify by any instrument whatever that I would join with Roman Catholics. And I now declare that I could not join with United Irishmen, because their principles are deistical, their practice very immoral, such I mean as I have any acquaintance with. Such was the practice of Israel under the Old Testament, who were bound up not to join in

affinity with the people of the land, nor learn their ways, &c. 2 Cor. vi. 14–18, do most clearly point out the sinfulness of such associations. The contrary conduct is condemned and the offenders very severely punished by many natural calamities and judgments poured out on them for the same. On these, with many other grounds, I have kept myself free through the good hand of God accompanying me to this time.

Moreover in the spring and winter months past, in a course of ministerial visitation that I was engaged in, I gave solemn warning to every religious society under my inspection to beware of and keep at a due distance from all those sinful associations now existing, adding that ‘Israel were to dwell alone among the nations,’ and this I delivered in my own name and authority, and that of the Presbytery, that they and I were under the inspection of. Yet, alas! some have been seduced away from their duty to God, and at the expense of breaking their religious vows and obligations, have apostatised from the Covenanted Testimony, which is a matter of most serious concern to me. And on these grounds I do not believe that I could be useful to nor comfortable among those people again without very serious evidences of their repentance for past sins and a returning again to God with contrition of heart, declaring that it is against God that they have sinned and in His sight done the evils they are charged with.

This narrative is drawn and subscribed by me this 24th August, 1798.

WILLIAM STAVELY."

Accompanying this paper is another written at the same time, setting forth the character and extent of his loss in money (£70), furniture, &c., and in books. It is just possible that some valuable old manuscripts in connection with the early settlement of persecuted families from Scotland, as well as Minutes of Presbytery, may have been destroyed by the hands of these ruffianly soldiers.

It may be stated that though Mr. Stavely subsequently sought compensation from the Government for his losses, he never received one farthing. He, himself, was taken away and put on board the prison-ship in Belfast Lough. There he lay, during three or four months, a close prisoner, treated with much harshness and needless severity. Every morning, while he lay in the prison-ship, his wife or his eldest daughter used to go out to one of his fields in sight of the ship and put a white sheet on a bush, as a signal that all was well at Annsborough. During his incarceration his son Joseph (whom he never saw) was born and died. We have before us a copy of "A Declaration" of his religious and political principles, together with a solemn personal covenant founded on Jeremiah xv. 19, 20, 21, bearing date "Prison-ship, 30th September, 1798." The latter is interesting as

revealing his deep personal piety. His companions on board the ship were the famous Rev. W. Steele Dickson, D.D., and a priest. Dr. Dickson was imprisoned ten months, and was then sent to Fort George in the North of Scotland, and not finally liberated until 1802. The priest was, we believe, executed, and an annotated copy of the Bible, which Mr. Stavely purchased from him the night before his trial or execution, remains, though dilapidated, as an heirloom in Mr. Stavely's family.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately Mr. Stavely was liberated, nothing being distinctly proved against him.<sup>2</sup> It is a striking commentary on the procedure of the Government at this time, that on the night before the Battle of Ballynahinch, a man came to Mr. Stavely's house and sought an interview with him. The stranger, who pretended to be a United Irishman, asked Mr. Stavely if he had any message to send to the rebel army. Mr. Stavely replied that he had nothing to say. Several other efforts were made to extract an incriminating message, but in vain. Afterwards the man turned out to be a noted Government informer.

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1. The writer has often seen this book in his father's house (Rev. William Stavely Ferguson's), a grandson of Mr. Stavely.

2. Mr. W. J. Fitzpatrick, F.S.A., in his book "Secret Service under Pitt," page 290, says Rev. Mr. "Stevelly" was executed. This is clearly a mistake.



It was said by some that Mr. Stavely took the Oath of Allegiance as the condition of regaining his liberty. Someone asked General Barber if this was so. His reply was conclusive, "Oh, he is too great an old rebel to do anything of the kind."

Mr. Stavely took part in many striking incidents during those troublous years. He accompanied Mr. Orr, a wealthy farmer of Farranshane, near Antrim, to the scaffold at Carrickfergus, 17th October, 1797. The scene on the occasion was one well calculated to move the hardest heart. Orr and Stavely had been acquainted, probably from their school-days at Antrim, and when the death sentence was passed on Orr, his friend Stavely, accompanied by Rev. Mr. Hill, came at his request to cheer him by his presence and help him by his prayers. The conviction of Orr rested on very unsatisfactory and inconclusive evidence. He had been tried for administering the United Irishmen's Oath to two soldiers named Lindesay and Wheatley. So strongly did the Judge of Assize—Chief Baron Yelverton—realise this, that he is said to have sobbed aloud when passing sentence. The populace regarded the sentence as amounting to martyrdom. The inhabitants of Carrickfergus withdrew from the town at the time of the execution, to express their abhorrence of the conduct of the Government in carrying out what they regarded as an act of shameful injustice. A few days after the trial,

Orr's wife sent a memorial to Lady Camden asking her to use her influence with the Viceroy, appealing to her as a wife and a mother to stop the execution. We have never read a more earnest, passionate supplication, but it was of no avail. The law, such as it was, had to take its course. On the day of the execution a chaise was provided to take the condemned man from the jail to the scaffold. At first he declined its use, fearing that by going in it he would be deprived of the company of his friends, Stavely and Hill. The authorities, however, allowed the three men to go together in the carriage. During the short journey, Orr and his companions read in turn Psalm xxiii. and the concluding verses of I. Cor. xv. At the foot of the scaffold Stavely prayed aloud in the most solemn manner, the friends then embraced one another a last time on earth, and Orr ascended the ladder, and, speaking to the soldiers massed around the gallows in triangular form, and to the multitude beyond, said:—"I die for a persecuted country; Great Jehovah receive my soul; I die in the true faith of a Presbyterian." In a few seconds the bolt was drawn, and he was in eternity.<sup>1</sup> Henceforth "Remember Orr" became the ominous watchword of the exasperated United Irishmen.

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1. For a full account of Orr's trial and execution see "A brief Account of the Trial and Execution of William Orr," printed by J. Chambers, 5 Abbot Street, Dublin, 1797. The pamphlet is in "Caldwell Collection," Belfast Museum.

Another scene, even sadder than this execution, was the death of a young man named Daniel English.<sup>1</sup> He was a Covenanter—"a pious and amiable youth" (says Reid)—who had been charged with leading a party of United Irishmen to the house of Samuel Redmond, of Thornhill, near Connor, with intent to rob and murder. A conviction was obtained against English, and, like most drumhead sentences, it was speedily carried out. The condemned young man was led out from the guardhouse at Ballymena to Connor. He was accompanied by the soldiers and a vast concourse of the inhabitants of the whole district, who assembled to shew their sympathy with him. His arms were pinioned, he was clad in his grave clothes, and Mr. Stavely walked by his side the four miles, alternately reading portions of Scripture to him and praying with him; while the multitude from time to time, as directed by Mr. Stavely, engaged in singing such Psalms as the seventy-fourth, seventy-sixth, and one hundred and nineteenth. At length the mill bridge at Connor was reached. A grave had been dug by the soldiers on the roadside. English stepped over to it, looked into it, and calmly remarked, "It is a new tomb, wherein never man lay." A countryman

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to by Dr. Reid, History, vol. III., page 424, note 35. Dr. Reid omits the well-known fact of Mr. Stavely's presence.

who was passing at the time with his horse and cart was pressed into the service, though most reluctantly, and the cart was drawn under the scaffold. Mr. Stavely now prayed for a last time with English, who immediately afterwards knelt by the minister's side and prayed himself. The condemned man was then assisted into the cart, the while solemnly declaring his innocence of the crime charged against him, the rope was adjusted round his neck, and the cart driven on, leaving his body hanging lifeless. The remains were buried uncoffined, we have been told, in the grave on the roadside, despite the entreaties of his friends, who wished to have him buried in the family burying-ground in Connor Graveyard. This request was only granted by the authorities after three days. It was generally believed at the time that the charge against English was false, and the evidence quite insufficient to secure a conviction. We venture to think such a procession never marched before from Ballymena to Connor, and we trust never will again.<sup>1</sup>

These are only two of many painful incidents of those memorable times in which Mr. Stavely took part. He lived to see that the "uniting" was a mistake, and doubtless regretted any countenance he had seemed to give to it. It may fairly be

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<sup>1</sup> We have received this account of Daniel English's execution from one who had it from an eye-witness.

questioned if at any time, beyond the advocacy of his principles as a Covenanting minister, and the testimony he thought it his duty to bear against prevalent evils in the constitution and oppressive partiality in the Executive, he had anything of a real bond of union with the rebels. Certainly he warned his co-presbyter, Rev. Wm. Gibson, of Kellswater, of the danger in being connected with the movement. Of one thing we may be sure, had the Government found any evidence against him they would not have permitted him to go free.

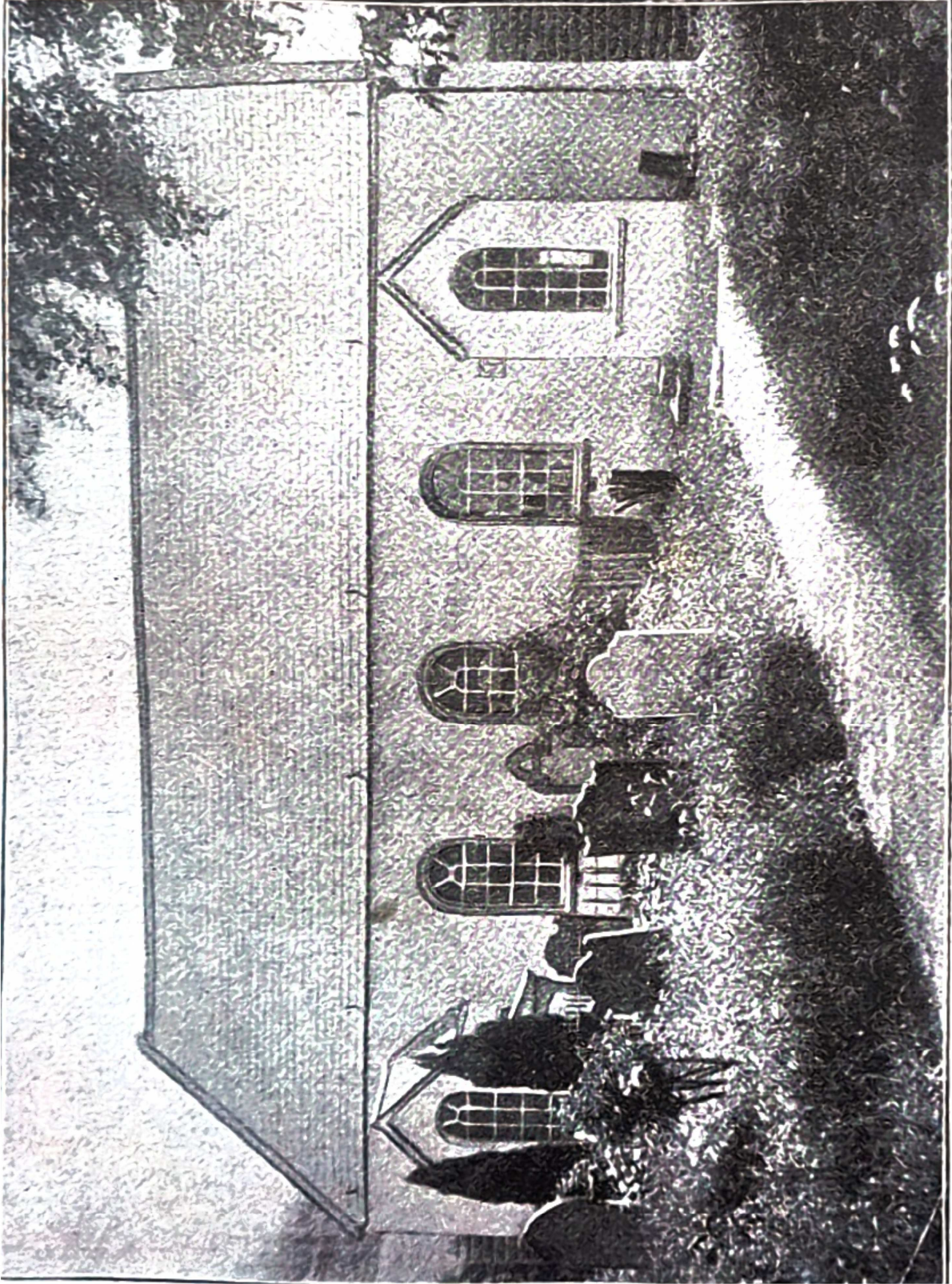
Still, little as he had to do with the rising, he suffered for it. He was imprisoned, and when released he found his influence for good at Knockbracken gone. The people affected to blame him for leading them into the trouble, and he on his part suspected some of them of treachery in the matter of the arms alleged to have been concealed in the church. Afterwards when the whole matter was gone into by the Presbytery (which had been re-constituted in 1792), aided by the Scottish brethren, Mr. Stavelly suggested—and the suggestion was to his credit—that he himself should be censured for any part he seemed to have had in the agitation, and actually was censured by the Presbytery—the Rev. Hans Boggs, of his own accord, standing with him. It is evident, in view of his own statement, that Mr. Stavelly submitted to discipline for the sake of the peace of the Church.

He did not go back to Knockbracken as minister of the place after the rebellion of 1798. In that or the following year a call was issued for him from Bready, but through some misunderstanding or mismanagement it was never presented. In the year 1800 he was unanimously called to take charge of the congregation in Co. Antrim, comprising chiefly Kellswater and Cullybackey. He now removed to a farm near Cullybackey, and ministered with great diligence to the widely scattered charge, which increased very much in numbers under his pastorate. Owing, indeed, to this growth a division of the joint charges became necessary. Cullybackey and Kellswater each was anxious to have his services, and each addressed a call to him. He elected to return to his native district, and so accepted Kellswater in 1813. Again he removed with his family, this time to his wife's property at Marymount, near Antrim, where he lived until his death.

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland was constituted at Cullybackey in 1811, Mr. Stavely being Moderator and also father of the Synod. His sermon on the occasion was from Hebrews iii. 10, "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways."

From the date of his settlement at Kellswater his life was uneventful, and a few sentences suffice





REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, KELLSWATER.

to tell its story. Every Sabbath when at home he rode by himself six miles to Kellswater, and conducted the lengthened services usual at that period, and rode back home, very rarely noticing any one by the way. His rule in the session was firm—perhaps some would say severe—and yet he was universally beloved and respected. His devotional habits were most marked. He would permit nothing to interfere with family worship, and certainly nothing to take precedence of it. His text for the Sabbath was chosen early in the week, and he elaborated the subject until Saturday evening at seven o'clock, when he closed his books, had family worship, then shaved, and retired to rest. He rose early on Sabbath morning, and spent the morning hours in devotional preparation for the work of the day. After all, was it not the best preparation? He was a man of a very strong will—stern, if need were, high-spirited, and somewhat impatient of opposition. To those who knew him he was gentle, and to the members of his own family tender almost to a fault. As an illustration of his strength of will, it is told that he had learned the habit of smoking, but on one occasion at Marymount, having made repeated attempts to light his pipe, he grew dissatisfied, rose and crushed the pipe under his foot, and never afterwards indulged the habit.

He has been described by one who lived with him at Marymount as a tall and dignified man,



with dark, penetrating eyes, possessing a remarkably strong but musical voice. His manner in the pulpit was impressive and rather cantillating, after the style of preachers in the last century. His sermons produced a remarkable effect on the large congregations that flocked to hear him wherever he went. It is seldom that a minister impresses himself so strongly on his generation. It is now a century since he was in his prime, yet his name is still mentioned in many places in Ulster, and always with respect, veneration, and love.

He had much to be thankful for in the bodily health he enjoyed. During a ministerial life of fifty-three years, we do not know that he was ever, on account of his health, unfit for his work on the Lord's Day. But even to the strongest sickness and death come. He had preached at Kellswater and announced the Spring Communion in 1825, but gave evidence of exhaustion. When he came to the Meeting-house Green, the elders gathered round him and assisted him to mount his favourite white pony. He told them that he felt really unwell, and bade them all an affectionate farewell, and turned his horse's head homewards. When he got to the top of the little hill overlooking the meeting-house, he stopped, turned in the saddle, and looked down on the peaceful river and the sanctuary he loved so well, and bade them also farewell in solemn and affecting words. On reach-

ing Marymount he grew worse, and after one month of rather severe suffering, his spirit was liberated. Needless to say, he died as he had lived, in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through Jesus Christ, his Lord. The Spring Communion was a sad one that year at Kellswater, for Stavely was not there.

His remains were laid to rest, attended by a vast concourse of mourners, in front of the meeting-house at Kellswater, and a monument, contiguous to that of his distinguished successor, Rev. Professor Dick, D.D., marks the spot.

Mrs. Stavely outlived her husband by twenty-three years. She died at Marymount in her 89th year, in 1848. Mr. Stavely was survived by a numerous family, their names being — Nancy, married to Mr. Andrew Ferguson, of Ardtrea, Co. Tyrone; William John, Minister of Dervock and Ballymoney; Esther, married to Rev. Simon Cameron, of Ballylagan; Margaret, married to Mr. Francis M'Millan; Mary, married to Mr. William Clugston, of Antrim; Eliza, married to Mr. John Graham, of Bailiesmills, Co. Down; and Jane, who died at Marymount, unmarried.

## THE REV. SAMUEL AIKIN.

MR. AIKIN was born in the neighbourhood of Clough, Co. Antrim, in or about the year 1746, his parents being respected members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. He received his education at Glasgow University and was licensed to preach a very few years after William Stavely, with whom he was always on brotherly and intimate terms.

We have it on the authority of the late Rev. Dr. W. J. Stavely that Mr. Aikin was ordained about 1776 and ministered to the Bannside Congregation, with its dependents, Dervock and Limavady, after the emigration of Mr. Lynn to America.

Mr. Aikin was always rather delicate in constitution, and of very winning manners. He is described as having a very acute and fertile mind. The remark of William Stavely, after hearing Mr. Aikin preach, has been preserved. "He amazes me," said Stavely, "he preaches like an angel." Mr. Aikin's piety was unquestioned, and even those who disagreed with him, or were dissatisfied with him, never ventured to call in question his real godliness.

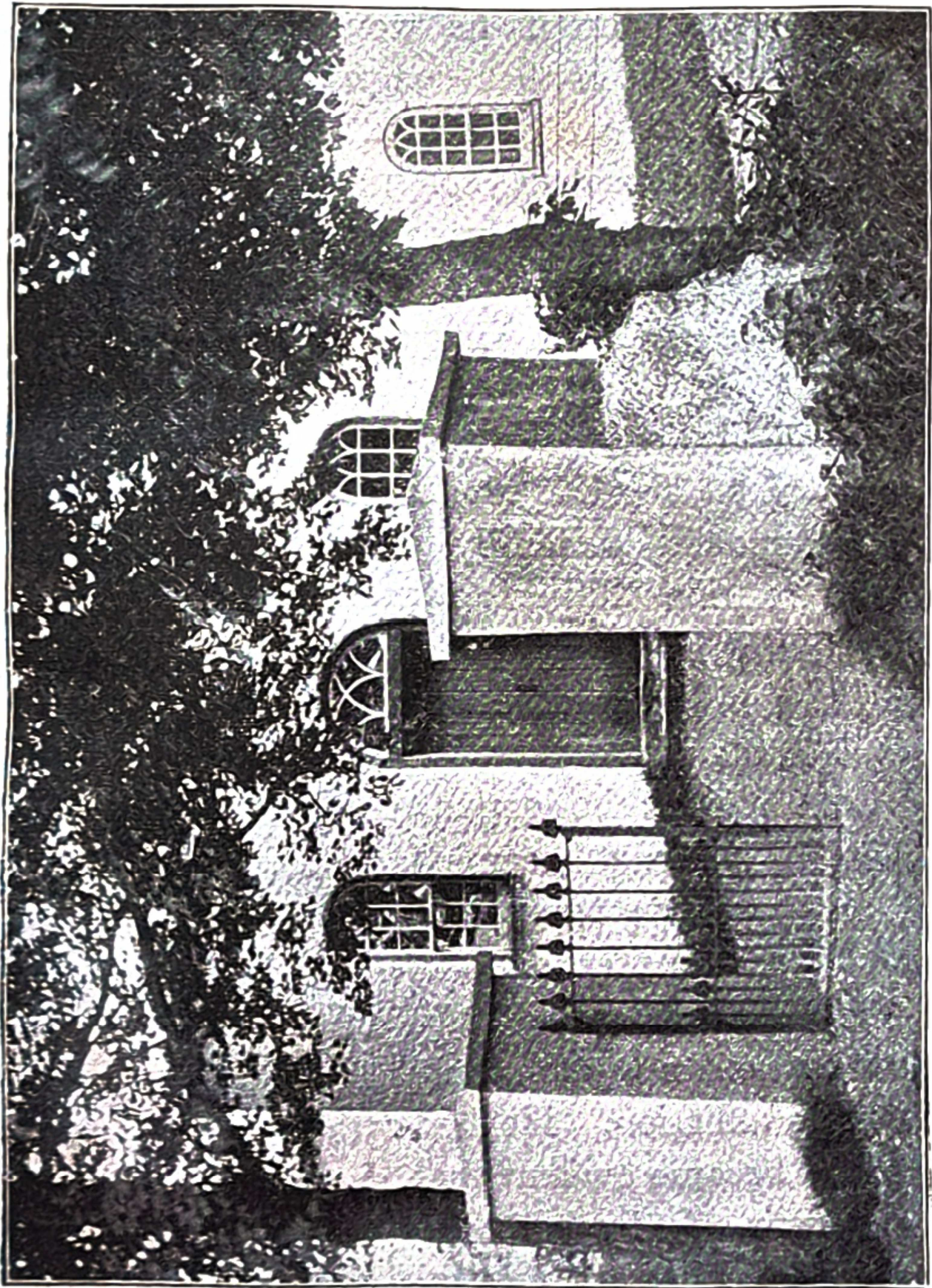
When the Irish Reformed Presbytery became extinct in 1780, Mr. Aikin does not seem to have been engaged in the active duties of the ministry.

He is reported to have received the offer of a living (if he would "conform") in connection with the Episcopal Church. To his credit, let it be told, he at once declined the offer. Someone asked him if he thought there was no salvation outside the Covenanting Church. His reply revealed the man. "I think no such thing," said Aikin, "but I do think there is no comfort for me outside it." His political principles, so far as he can be said to have had such, were decidedly Conservative, and this fact led him to have many friends among the landlords. No doubt his good offices were in this way often called into exercise by the harassed members of the Bannside congregation during the troubles connected with the United Irishmen. The members of his scattered charge were always much attached to him, and resorted to him in times of difficulty.

He was installed at Ballylane in 1790—Stavelly and Gibson, then of Kellswater, officiating. To be minister at Ballylane meant to have charge of Ballybay and Rathfriland also, so that the work of the three places rested on him. At this time he lived at Gransha, near Rathfriland. One can understand what an amount of physical labour this involved, at a time when there were none of the present facilities for travelling.

It is a sufficient testimony to his ability and perseverance that during his pastorate these congregations increased so much that separation became





REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CREEVAGH.



necessary. Ballybay was very forward in seeking his services as pastor, and at once offered to give him a full support if he would undertake the pastoral oversight of that congregation and Fairview. He on his part expressed his preference for the County Monaghan congregation. It would seem that the settlement was mutually agreed upon and sanctioned in 1798, and arrangements were made for Mr. Aikin entering on his work at Ballybay.

His constitution was greatly enfeebled by asthma, from which he had suffered for many years. Before removing his family to Ballybay, he himself started to ride thither to preach and to find a residence for his family in the neighbourhood of his new charge. He had not gone far when he became very ill and suffered intense pain. Still he pushed on, until he could no longer maintain his seat in the saddle. The pain became insupportable, and he had to stop at the house of an acquaintance by the way. For some time he lingered in suffering at the house of his friend, where he received every kindness and attention, until death came to free him from affliction. He died 25th December, 1798. When it became evident that death was approaching, he was asked where he wished his remains to rest. He replied at Creevagh, whither he was going to preach. And there he was interred in the corner of the graveyard; so that if he was not permitted

to minister to that people when living, his remains at least rest among them in hope of a glorious resurrection to life eternal. We have been told that a young tree was planted by loving hands at the head of the grave to mark the spot. The memory of the first minister of Creevagh is still green among the descendants of those who called him to be their pastor. Doubtless, though dead, he yet speaks to them.

Mr. Aikin never published anything known to us. He was married to a Miss Adams from his native district—about Clough, and was survived by a family. His son, the late Mr. John Aikin, was for a long time an honoured, useful, and highly intelligent elder in Kellswater congregation, while his grandsons, Mr. Samuel Aikin (now of Ballymena), the late Messrs. Wm. John Aikin and James Dick Aikin, were honoured and generous office-bearers in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

## THE REV. ROBERT YOUNG.

THE parents of Rev. Robert Young belonged to the Associate Presbytery in Scotland, at the time when he was born in the town of Kelso, in Roxburghshire, near the border, in the year 1732. The family owned some property there, and continued to be possessed of it until the beginning of the present century.

We know little regarding the early years of Mr. Young, beyond the fact that he pursued the Academic and Theological course required by the Associate Church from her candidates for the ministry. In due time he was licensed by that Church as a probationer, and received appointments to preach in their bounds. Somehow, he fell under the censure of his Presbytery, it is said, by refusing to fulfil certain appointments that were given him. He then connected himself with the Reformed Presbytery, and was ordained to go out as Missionary to the scattered families of that denomination in North America. In the year 1776, when America was embroiled in strife with the British Government, he sailed from Scotland for the Western Continent. "Man proposes, but God disposes." The vessel in which he was a passenger was caught in a storm before it had got clear of

the channel, and was dashed to pieces on the Irish coast. Mr. Young got to land in the neighbourhood of Glenarm, in County Antrim. In that district Rev. David Houston had laboured for some time in the latter part of the previous century,<sup>1</sup> and the results of his work still remained in the Society meetings. After a short time Mr. Young made himself known to some of the Covenanters of the district, by whom he was introduced to the societies, and became a welcome guest in the hospitable homes of these Scottish settlers who clung with such tenacity to the principles and practices of their Covenanted ancestry. After a time a request was sent to the Reformed Presbytery in Scotland that he might be allowed to remain in Ireland, and take up the work of Rev. William Martin who had emigrated to America. This request was acquiesced in by Mr. Young, who in his shipwreck had had enough of the perils of the sea. The Church in Scotland agreed to the request, and he settled permanently in Ireland.

In a short time the field of his labours was extended to Cullybackey, where he found lodgings in the house of a man named Wright; when here he became acquainted with the Dickson family from which he obtained his wife, Mary Dickson. The Dicksons belonged to the Synod of

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<sup>1</sup> See *Life of David Houston, the Covenanter*, published by Rev. Classon Porter in the pamphlet "Ulster Biographical Sketches."

Ulster, but Mary had become a Covenanter from conviction. They were married in 1777, when Mr. Young was 42 years of age, his wife being only 18. The union proved a very happy one. She was a woman of comely presence, strong Christian character, sound judgment, and great resourcefulness, who left the impress of her character upon her family.

About the year 1779, Mr. Young was appointed to labour among the societies scattered about the shores of Lough Swilly. This change in his field of labour necessitated a change of residence, and Ramelton, in Co. Donegal became his home. Here his son Robert and one of his daughters were born. Time brought further changes and witnessed his transference to the neighbourhood of Waterside, Derry, where he settled on a farm in the townland of Ardnabrockey, and here the remainder of his family were born, the youngest of them, Ann Young, being born two months after her father's death. During the time of his residence at Ardnabrockey he ministered chiefly at Faughan Bridge, where ground was obtained, and a meeting-house built in 1790.

Mr. Young does not appear to have been regularly called and settled in any particular congregation at any time. He went about dispensing ordinances as circumstances required. For each Sabbath Day's services he received the remuneration—



very considerable at the time—of three half guineas. In person he was tall and good-looking, and spoke with a very marked Scotch accent.

There can be no doubt that Mr. Young came to the assistance of a Covenanted cause at a time when it had few ministerial supporters in Ireland, and his services must have had an influence in keeping together the members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the various districts where he was located. As a preacher or controversialist he did not exert either a wide or profound influence, certainly not nearly so much as some of his contemporaries, but we cannot, on that account, deny him a place among those who “contended for the faith.”

He died on the 9th November, 1794, at Ardnambrockey, and his remains were interred in the Churchyard at New Glendermott, where on the south side of the church a neat and durable memorial, with suitable inscription, remains to mark the spot. His estimable wife, Mary Dickson, and some of his children, were subsequently buried beside him. His sons, John, Robert, and Joseph, went into business in Derry after their father's death. They became opulent merchants, honoured citizens and distinguished Christian men. The youngest of them, Joseph Young, who belonged to the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation, Londonderry, by his will bequeathed the munificent sum

of £20,000 to found a charity for girls, the children of necessitous and deserving parents, residing in the city and liberties of Derry. Messrs. John and Joseph Cooke (both of whom are lately deceased), nephews of Mr. Joseph Young, were appointed executors of the will, and trustees of their uncle's charity—known as the Young Charity—and so well did they manage the trust, that to-day sixty female children, belonging to all denominations, are receiving their support and education as the result of Mr. Young's generous and thoughtful provision. A sister of Mr. Joseph Young bequeathed £7 annually to the poor in connection with Clarendon Street Reformed Presbyterian Congregation; while the late Mr. Robert Cooke, of Fountain Hill, Londonderry, a grandson of Rev. Robert Young, bequeathed £700 to the funds of the Covenanting Church in Ireland.

So the shipwrecked Scotch missionary is not without honourable memorials in the land of his adoption.

## THE REV. SAMUEL ALEXANDER.

THE Alexanders, of Tyrkeeveny, have a long and honourable history. They were probably among the persecuted families who fled from Scotland during the killing times, and they settled on the brow of the hill overlooking the Glendermott, their home being situated about five miles from the City of Derry. One of the family, it is said, met his death in 1688-9, at the time of the Siege of Derry, under memorable circumstances. He had come down to the foot of the hill to look after the few cattle left to him in those troublous times, and having gone into a little natural plantation to engage in prayer, was discovered when on his knees by some of King James's soldiers who were out from the camp at the Waterside on a foraging excursion. The soldiers instantly shot this man—John Alexander—who is believed to have been either the grandfather or great-grandfather of Rev. Samuel Alexander, the subject of this sketch. Josias Alexander, who was married to a Miss Millar, of the same townland, was Samuel's father. There were but two children, Samuel and Jacob, by this marriage. The former, as we shall see, became Minister of Bready, and the latter was, during well-nigh fifty years, a ruling elder and

Alexander took a prominent part in its proceedings. The notes of his last address to this society were preserved, and they are interesting as revealing the bent of his mind. In taking leave of his college companions he points them to the unchanging Friend, and urges them to a union that time and space could not sunder.

In March, 1780, the Scotch Presbytery met at Stirling, and authorised Rev. William Stavely to appoint a Presbyterial exercise to Mr. S. Alexander. This was done, and the following year at Sandhills he was licensed to preach the everlasting Gospel. For a few Sabbaths he was to remain in Scotland, as customary at the time, to preach with one of the older ministers, and then to repair to the Church in Ireland. This he did, and in common with the other licentiates, of whom Mr. James M'Kinney, afterwards distinguished as an author, was one, supplied the vacant congregations, Kells-water, Bready, Bannside, and Ramelton. In the year 1782 Kells-water issued a call in favour of Mr. Alexander, but he not seeing his way clear to accept it, it was left in the hands of the Presbytery. In the following year Bready gave him a call, and this he accepted, and was ordained in the meeting-house there 19th August, 1783. The officiating ministers were Revs. William Stavely (who preached from Acts xx. 28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the

Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood"), Robert Young, James M'Kinney, with John M'Millan, sen., and Steven from Scotland; a licentiate named M'Garragh was also present.<sup>1</sup> The charge over which Mr. Alexander was ordained was very extensive. It included Faughan, Derry, Bready, with a considerable contingent from County Donegal. Bready, however, was the centre; there the meeting-house was situated, though it was generally too small to accommodate the congregation, which worshipped more frequently on the terraced green behind the church than inside its walls. Three years after his ordination, on a Sabbath day, when the congregation was engaged at Divine service inside the Church, the roof began to give way. Mr. Alexander directed the people to withdraw, and no sooner had they done so than the roof crashed in all round. Fortunately, through the minister's coolness, no one was injured. The house of worship that still stands was then built, and a stone was placed, and still remains in a conspicuous place in the wall, bearing the inscription, "This house was built 1786. Rev. Samuel Alexander, minister." Four years later the present church was built at Faughan Bridge, situated two miles from the centre of Derry city. The meeting-house

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<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Reid's reference to Mr. M'Garragh in his history, vol. iii., page 396.

at Convoy was erected for the convenience of the County Donegal part of the congregation in 1802, and the old church in Wapping Lane was built in 1811 for the Derry people.

It is greatly to be lamented that through a fire taking place in the house of Mr. M'Dougall, Clerk of Session in Bready for many years, the sessional records of the united congregation were destroyed. Previous, however, to that deplorable accident, by which Mr. M'Dougall was left for a time without a home, extracts were made from the session book. Among these extracts we find the following list of elders in Mr. Alexander's time given :—

Bready	John Mather	Tamnabrine
„	Joseph M'Maurice	Tyboe
„	James Laurimore	Cloghore
Derry	Samuel Willock	Creevagh
„	James Richmond	Derry
Bready	Jacob Alexander	Tyrkeeveny
Faughan	James Marshall	Cumber Claudy
Bready	James Allen	Tamnabrine
Faughan	Thomas Allen	Muff Glen
Bready	Andrew Stevenson	Ballylaw
Derry	John Rodgers	Kildrum
Faughan	Simon Robinson	Caw, Waterside, sea captain
„	John Michel	No residence
Bready	Robert Mathers	Coolmaghery

Bready	Samuel Arthur	Cooley, school teacher
„	John Davies	Tamnabrine
„	Robert Stevenson	Magheramason
„	Robert M'Kinlay	Desertone
Derry	Moses Speers	Manorcunning- ham
Bready	James Salters	Donaghmore
Derry	— Galbraith	
Faughan	Thomas Marchael	
„	John Guy	
„	Andrew Henry	
„	John M'Naught	

From this list, for which we are indebted to the kindness of the late distinguished Rev. Professor Chancellor, D.D., Belfast, we can learn something of the extent of Mr. Alexander's field of labour. There were twenty-four elders in the session of the united congregation—twelve for Bready, seven for Faughan, and five for Derry. During Mr. Alexander's pastorate regular sessional meetings were held, discipline was strictly, but lovingly, enforced, and every legitimate means used to ensure the growth of vital godliness. From the entire congregation the stipend was £50 annually (representing three or four times that amount to-day), and this, added to the minister's private means, afforded him a comfortable living.

No man has ever lived more thoroughly in the



affections of his people than Samuel Alexander. He gave himself up completely to his work as a minister, and he allowed nothing to interfere with his proper employment. The words of old Chaucer in describing one of the most estimable of his Canterbury pilgrims, seem signally appropriate to the subject of this sketch :—

“ Wyd was his parische and houses fer asonder,  
 But he ne lafte not for reyne ne thonder  
 In siknesse nor in meschief to visite,  
 The ferreste in his parische, moch and lite,  
 Uppon his feet, and in his hond a staf  
 This noble ensample to his scheep he yaf  
 That firste he wroughte, and afterward he taughte  
 Out of the Gospel he the wordes caughte  
 \* \* \* \* \*

But Criste's lore, and His Apostles twelve  
 He taughte, but first he folwede it himselve,”

The pulpit is, and ever must be, the minister's centre of influence, and Samuel Alexander fully recognized that truth. In his pastoral visitation and in his periodical teaching and catechising the young of his flock, he could only deal with individuals, or at best with only a few at a time, but in his public discourses, with the magnetism of large congregations before him, the best that was in him came out. In a short “characteristic sketch,” already referred to, by one who knew him personally, and frequently heard him preach, we are told that he excelled in lecturing. In this exercise he delighted, and during successive summer seasons

he went through twelve chapters of Isaiah and the whole of Hosea. But the crowning effort was when he addressed the congregation on the words of 8th and 9th verses of Hosea xi.—“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me and my compassions are kindled together,” &c. The memory of the pathos and power of that lecture remained fresh with the writer of the notice after fifty years.

The great theme of his pulpit ministrations was the love of God in Christ. Immediately before his death he completed a series of discourses on the text, “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” When he had concluded his last discourse on that text, he remarked with great feeling that he had now gone as far as he was able, and could only wait for further manifestations of the love of God. He was soon to have those manifestations in a way he knew not. Through the dark portico of death he was to be introduced to a new revelation of the love of God, “for since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for him” (Isaiah lxiv. 4). On the preparation Sabbath, before the

communion at Bready, Mr. Alexander preached from Zechariah ix. 9—" Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion, shout O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King cometh unto thee ; he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass." Before he was through with the discourse his strength was gone and he was evidently in great pain. He made the communion announcements and retired to a neighbouring house, where after a short rest, he ordered his horse to be brought. He mounted and rode home to Tyrkeeveny. He never crossed his threshold again alive. Some years previously he had crossed the River Foyle from Co. Donegal in a small ferry-boat in a terrible storm. The boatman was overpowered by the waves, and Mr. Alexander took an oar, but hurt himself in his effort to get the boat to land. This hurt laid the foundation, humanly speaking, of his death. From his bed of suffering he wrote a solemn and affecting letter, laying the charge of the communion on Mr. Stavely, and saying pathetically that he feared ere the time came he himself would have gone to a higher and holier service in the world of spirits. So the event proved. Stavely came, but only to find Alexander dead. The grief of the congregation was insupportable, and only a man like Stavely could have gone through the ordeal. He looked on Alexander as his own son in the Lord. He had

officiated at his licensure, he had preached at his ordination, and now, with heavy heart, he took up his work when he was called home. Rev. Wm. Gamble, who assisted Mr. Stavely, could not bear up, but repeatedly broke out into tears in the pulpit and wept as for a brother. When the Monday service came, Mr. Stavely with great power and appropriateness took up the words of Elisha after the translation of Elijah as he smote the waters with the mantle of the departed prophet saying - "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

The recollection of the shadows and the light of that communion time remained embalmed in memory with those who were present as long as life itself remained.

Mr. Alexander died on Wednesday, 17th July, 1793, and his remains were interred in the burying-ground of Old Glendermott, three days later. A stone was placed over his grave bearing this inscription:—

"Under this stone lieth the remains of Rev. Samuel Alexander, who departed this life 17th July, 1793, aged 45 years."

The funeral was one of the largest that ever passed up the old Glen, and even to-day it is possible to hear the older inhabitants of the neighbourhood speak with reverence of one whom their parents described as "the Godly Alexander."

Perhaps there was mercy in the removal of Mr.

Alexander just then. He was taken away from the evil to come. He had kept himself free from the Volunteer movement, but now the United Irishmen were coming into power, and it may be questioned if he could have kept himself altogether clear of that rising which drew into its vortex so many able and prominent men in the Church. Was his death in 1793, before the crisis in events came, not a mark of the special goodness of God to him? Nothing unpleasant remains to cloud the memory of one who deserves to live in the grateful recollection of the district in which he laboured, and indeed of the whole Covenanting Church.

## THE REV. WILLIAM GAMBLE.

THE family from which William Gamble sprang was one of the many families which fled from Scotland during the period of the persecution. Consequently they were of a far different fibre from most of those "planted" by James I. in Ulster. Originally their home was at Saltcoats, in Scotland, and as some of their ancestors bore arms at the siege of Derry, they must have been settled in this country prior to 1688. William Gamble was the son of Robert Gamble, a member of the Covenanting Church, and was born in the neighbourhood of Ballykelly, in County Derry, in 1763. After the preliminary education necessary, young Gamble went to Glasgow University about 1780. In Glasgow he had for companion William Gibson, afterwards Minister at Kellswater. Gibson had not been brought up a Covenanter, and it was owing to Gamble's influence that he joined the fellowship of the Covenanting Church. As often happens, the friendship of the two students, early formed, remained close and lasting during their lives. These two young men appeared before the Presbytery together, and they were licensed together on the same day in 1785. They preached as candidates to the congregation of Ramelton, and

a considerable difference of opinion prevailed among the electors there regarding their merits. The Rev. Robert Young presided at a moderation in a call in 1788, and a majority voted for Mr. Gibson. The minority were the most influential members of the congregation, and Mr. Gibson wisely declined the call, which was without delay transferred unanimously to Mr. Gamble, who accepted it. He was settled at Ballygey,<sup>1</sup> between Milford and Ramelton, on 23rd July, 1788, that place being considered the most central and convenient for all the members of the scattered charge. It may be added that so far as we can discover the meeting-house built at Ballygey was the first Reformed Presbyterian place of worship erected in County Donegal.

The district around Ramelton had proved a resting place for many Scottish families, both of the "Plantation" and of the persecution. Supplies had been sent to these members and adherents of the Church from the Reformed Presbytery in Scotland many years before Mr. Gamble's settlement among them. The Rev. Robert Young had lived in Ramelton for some years and had ministered to them. It is not surprising therefore that in 1788 there were eighty families in connection with the congregation, scattered, no doubt, very widely.

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1. This is erroneously written Ballyvey in Dr. Reid's History. The church at Ballygey is now an utter ruin.



Convoy, Donegal town, and the neighbourhoods around Milford, Ramelton, and Letterkenny, each contributed its quota of members. It seems almost impossible that one man could minister to such an extensive congregation. But Mr. Gamble was physically, as well as mentally, a very strong man. When he was at his prime he weighed eighteen stone, and was made in proportion. In the later years of his life his appearance has been described to us as very striking. As we have said, he was tall and portly, and when preaching away from home he wore a heavy blue cloth cloak fastened over his breast with a large brass clasp; he had "knee breeches" with long stockings, and he always wore shoes with large silver buckles. As Wordsworth says of his "Wanderer"—

" He was a man  
Whom no one could have passed without remark.  
Active and nervous was his gait ; his limbs  
And his whole figure breathed intelligence."

His first public service was not such as to give promise of eminence as a preacher. It was in a place near Bready, in a field now and for a long time past belonging to the M'Elowney family, that the service was held on the occasion. Mr. Gamble was with the Rev. S. Alexander at the time. Mr. Alexander prefaced the psalm, and Mr.

Gamble was then called on to deliver his first sermon. He got through the introduction satisfactorily, but after announcing the division of his sermon he came to a sudden stop. Several times he tried to go on, but in vain. His memory proved a blank, and ultimately he sat down humiliated. Alexander rose, took up his text, and preached with acceptance on the lines laid down by his young friend. Gamble was so much downcast by his first experience in preaching that he asked the Presbytery to give him another year to study and prepare for the work. This they refused to do, knowing that he was already thoroughly trained. His next attempt wiped out his first failure, and before long he had a well-established reputation as a powerful and effective preacher. For a long series of years he was regularly invited to assist at the Bready communion, and no one was more appreciated as a minister.

It is very much to Mr. Gamble's credit that during all the years of the Volunteers and United Irishmen he never allowed himself to be drawn into the whirlpool of strife and trouble. This, perhaps, may be accounted for by the fact that these organizations did not take such deep root in County Donegal as in Antrim and Down, and also, to some extent, by reason of his naturally distant and reserved disposition.

Many stories are still told of Mr. Gamble. Once

when riding over the mountain from Donegal he had as companion a talkative and self-important Methodist preacher, who said that he was the first to carry Christ over that mountain. "Well," replied Gamble, "I have many a time read of the ass that carried Christ, but I have never seen it before." Gamble himself had often preached there before his Methodist friend appeared on the scene. It was a thing of common occurrence in those times for travellers to be attacked by Peep o' Day Boys and other disturbers of the public peace. Frequently too the treatment accorded by such lawless bands to respectable and inoffensive wayfarers was cruel and disgraceful. One night Mr. Gamble was attacked by some such party who seized him and led him away into a house. Here the lights were at once extinguished by these disguised ruffians. He was ordered to deliver up his arms, money, or anything else that he had of a valuable nature. He managed to get hold of a chair and defended himself so ably that he made good his way to the door, got out, and left them sadder but wiser men. We have also heard that about 1798 a certain officer with a company of soldiers visited Mr. Gamble's house at Greenhill, near Letterkenny, during the absence of its master. The officer, doubtless to display his authority, demanded to be shewn the books and papers in the house, though no suspicion of complicity with the

United Irishmen rested on Mr. Gamble. Having duly tossed the manuscripts and books in the study, the officer was taking his departure when he fancied a fowl that he saw about the place. At once the order was given to one of the soldiers to lift the bird and bring it with him. Needless to say, the order was readily obeyed. On the return of the minister to his home, he was informed of what had taken place in his absence. He was greatly incensed and immediately started for Letterkenny. Entering the military barracks there, he sought the officer and boldly ordered him to return the stolen property. To this demand an insulting reply was returned. Mr. Gamble lifted his staff and told him there and then to draw his sword and defend himself or return the stolen property. Thinking discretion the better part of valour, the officer directed the fowl to be restored to its owner, and with it an apology was tendered. Punctuality was one of Mr. Gamble's strong points, and on one occasion he made his elders at Gortlee feel this in a very simple but effective way. A meeting of Session had been announced at Gortlee, and prompt to time the minister was in the Session-room. No one appeared, however. After waiting a few minutes, Mr. Gamble took his hat and walked off, meeting on his way several of the elders going to the Session. He simply bade them time of day and passed on.

We need hardly say that on the next occasion of their meeting they were all present before the appointed hour.

During Mr. Gamble's pastorate the congregation of Convoy<sup>1</sup> was formed as a kind of branch from the older organisation at Gortlee. Indeed, on every side there would seem to have been considerable additions to the membership of the congregation at this time. The districts now served by the congregations of Milford and Ramelton, Letterkenny, Convoy, Stranorlar, and the preaching station of Donegal town, were originally united under the pastorate of the minister of Gortlee.

During fifty years Mr. Gamble was unwearied in his work. He said near the end of his life that he was indebted to his congregation only three days' preaching, a wonderful testimony to the goodness of God in giving him health for the performance of his work. In his home life he seems to have been happy. His wife was a Miss Art, from near Stranorlar. He had a large family, with whose history we are not acquainted. He may be said to have died in harness. Coming to assist Rev. Gordon T. Ewing at the communion in Derry in 1839, and having to ride in his own gig, he got himself severely wet. He performed his work in Derry with great difficulty, and returned to his home at Greenhill with the shadow of death on

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<sup>1</sup> The title deed of the ground at Convoy (Ballyboe) bears date 1802.

him. The conduct of his own communion he committed to Dr. W. J. Stavely. Mr. Gamble was present himself at the communion at Gortlee, and was prevailed on to address the communicants at one table, but he broke down through weakness and had to resume his seat. Soon after he died at Greenhill, Letterkenny, 6th August, 1839, aged 77. His remains were interred at Gortlee, and a tablet with suitable inscription was erected to his memory.

Only one production of Mr. Gamble's pen has found its way into print, and even this only saw the light in 1880, many years after his death. It is edited by Rev. S. Patton, M.A., the subject, "The Glory of Christ," being an exposition of a portion of Psalm xcvi., and a lecture on Hebrews xi. 1-4. On reading it one cannot help regretting that he did not publish many of his sermons during his own life.

Mr. Gamble was an able minister, a zealous member of the Covenanting Church, and an upright Christian man.

## List<sup>1</sup> of Ministers, Licentiates and Students under care of the Presbyteries.

	Ordained.	Died.	Sphere of Labour.
William Martin	1757	1808	Kellswater and America
Matthew Lynn	1761 (?)	1800	Bannside and America
William James	1765	1779	Bready
Daniel M'Clelland	1765	—	America
Thomas Hamilton	1770	1779	Faughan
William Stavely	1772	1825	Knockbracken and Kellswater
Alexander Dobbin	1772	1809	America
James M'Kinney	1783	1804	Dervock and America
Samuel Alexander	1783	1793	Bready
William Gibson	1788	1838	Kellswater and America
William Gamble	1788	1839	Gortlee
Samuel Aikin	1776	1798	Rathfriland
Joseph Orr	1798	1825	Bannside
William White (Licentiate)	1787	1832	—
Patrick M'Keag (Licentiate)	—	1788	—
Hans Boggs	1798	1837	Ballylane

<sup>1</sup> This List is imperfect. The following authorities have been consulted in drawing it up:—Church Records, Rev. Prof. Chancellor, D.D.; Rev. W. M. Glasgow's History of R.P. Church in America; Rev. M. Hutcheson's History, and various friends.



	Ordained.	Died.	Sphere of Labour.
J. Alexander, D.D.	1803	1852	Faughan and Belfast
W. J. Stavely, D.D.	1804	1864	Dervock and Ballymoney
Hutcheson M'Fadden	1805	1812	Knockbracken
John Paul, D.D.	1805	1848	Carrickfergus
Matthew Smyth	1805	1818	Convoy
David Graham	1804	—	Emigrated
T. Cathcart, A.M.	1803	1857	Creevagh and Fairview
John Stewart	1807	1837	Grange and Rathfriland
Josias Alexander	1809	1823	Belfast
C. Houston, D.D.	1814	1852	{ Limavady, Cullybackey, and Newcastle- on-Tyne
Alexander Brittain	1815	1846	Bready
Robt. Gamble Orr	1815	1837	Coleraine and America
Wm. Henry, D.D.	1813	1852	Newtownards
Simon Cameron	1816	1855	Ballylagan
John Hawthorne	1820	1847	Ballenon
Stewart Bates	1823	1856	Scotland
Wm. Anderson	1820	1866	Loanhead
Thomas Mitchell (Student)	—	1815	—
William M'Nutt (Student)	—	1818	—
C. Madden, M.D. (Licentiate)	1819	—	—
Mr. Blakely (Student)	1816	—	—

	Ordained.	Died.	Sphere of Labour.
Mr. Paisley (Student)	1816	—	—
Mr. Morton (Student)	1817	—	—
James Matthews (Student)	1821	—	—
Rev. Andw. Arrott (Joined)	1820	—	—
James Blackwood	1819	—	Emigrated
John Warnock	1822	—	Emigrated
Samuel Duff (Student)	—	—	Emigrated
J. Craig	—	—	Emigrated
John M'Callum (Student)	—	—	Emigrated
Jas. Dick, A.M., D.D. (Professor)	1826	1880	Kellswater
J. P. Sweeny, A.M.	1827	1876	Faughan
Jas. Alex. Smyth	1827	1873	Drimbolg
J. Wright Graham	1826	1862	Bailiesmills
Alexander Clarke	1827	1874	Canada
Samuel Carlile	1827	1856	Coleraine
Thomas Houston, A.M., D.D. (Professor)	1828	1882	Knockbracken
Arthur Fullerton	1828	—	Limavady
Hugh Hawthorne	1830	1836	Emigrated
Wm. Somerville	1831	1878	Canada
Andrew Stevenson	1831	1881	New York
Armour M'Farlane	1830	—	Emigrated
William Toland	1832	1878	Kilraughts
Thomas Boyd	1833	—	Belfast

	Ordained.	Died.	Sphere of Labour.
William Gibson	1833	—	Lisdonnan
Gordon T. Ewing	1840	—	Derry and Grange
John Stott	1835	—	Convoy, and Emigrated
John Nevin	1835	—	Emigrated
Thomas Johnston	1838	—	—
Samuel Simms	1839	1881	L'ghbrickland
James Steen	1839	1895	Dromore
Robt. John Watt	1842	—	Belfast
Thomas Carlisle	1839	1856	Rathfriland
William Sweeny	1839	—	Ballylane
William Russell	1840	1884	Ballyclare
A. M'Leod Stavely	1841	—	St. John's Ballyclare
Robert Johnston	1846	—	Emigrated
Robert Nevin, D.D.	1842	1893	Londonderry
Jas. Kennedy, D.D.	1843	—	Limavady New York
Hutchn. M'Fadden	1843	1875	Ballylane
Wm. S. Ferguson	1844	—	Grange
Wm. M'Carroll	1845	1863	Belfast
Jas. Reid Lawson	1845	—	Canada
Robert Wallace	1846	1880	Newry and Glasgow
Josias A. Chancellor, D.D., Prof.	1847	1895	Bready and Belfast
Alexander Savage	1849	1889	Ballenon
Robert Stewart	1849	—	Canada

	Ordained.	Died.	Sphere of Labour.
John Hart	1854	1883	Ballylagan
Robert Allen	1855	—	Newtownards
William Hanna	1855	1860	Manchester
Thomas Hart	1857	1877	Rathfriland
Alex. M'Ilwaine			
Moore, M.A.	1857	1897	Australia

From this date forward the names and dates are easily obtainable from the various church records.

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