

First Unitarian Congregational Society of Rochester N. Y.

**A Sketch of its History,
with its Organization and Membership**

by Reverend Newton M. Mann

Rochester, N. Y.

**Press of Charles Mann
73 Meigs Street
1881**

Rev. Mann's history was published in two versions, one with a list of church members and one without. The cover pages were different, but the main text was identical. This document combines those two versions by including the list of members and both cover pages.

Notes:

- The title page refers to "Press of Charles Mann," a printer who was Rev. Mann's son.
- The fourth paragraph includes the date of December 1, 1859, which is a misprint. 1829 was the intended year.
- Susan B. Anthony, her sister Mary and their niece Lucy are included in the list of members.

Bill Fugate, church historian, 2024
www.rochesterunitarian.org/history

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At the present moment, two things about the Christian religion must surely be clear to anybody with eyes in his head. One is, that men cannot do without it; the other, that they cannot do with it as it is.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

The world's history is a divine poem, of which the history of every nation is a canto, and every man a word. Its strains have been pealing along down the centuries; and, though there have been mingled discords, to the Christian philosopher and historian—the humble listener—there has been a divine melody running through the song, which speaks of hope and halcyon days to come.

JAMES A. GARFIELD.



HISTORY.

FROM information drawn from the records of the American Unitarian Association, it appears that the Liberal movement in Rochester was begun in the year 1828. Rev. WILLIAM WARE of New York came and preached the last four Sundays in that year, making a kind of ecclesiastical reconnoissance. He reported so promising an opening that Rev. JAMES D. GREEN, a young and talented preacher, was induced to follow, January 1, 1829. We are told that Mr Green made a decided impression; that an audience of five hundred greeted him every Sunday; that "one hundred families were ready to form a Society," and that, March 16, the new-fledged Society unanimously called him to its pastorate at a salary, for the first year, of \$1,000. To the present slow-going Rochester public such stories of success sound rather apocryphal, and we might be led to think that in the genesis of our church, as in the genesis of greater things in history, we come upon the inevitable legend, were it not that we have the facts from so staid an authority. Rev. Mr. Green declined the call, and went to Cincinnati for a few weeks, where he awakened a similar interest; but, setting aside all western allurements, he returned to Massachusetts, and was settled for many years in East Cambridge. We hear of him later as a man of wealth and mayor of the city of Cambridge.

He certainly showed remarkable business faculty in making reports of missionary work to the Association.

The only records the Church now possesses of this earliest movement consist of a bundle of bills, subscription papers, agreements and so forth, all bearing date of 1829 and 1830, preserved by the late Samuel Stone of Chicago who was the first treasurer. These papers happened to be among the few things of more value that Mr. Stone saved from the great fire of 1871, 'hastily gathered up,' as he says, by his daughter before the family took their flight, and since kindly forwarded by him to the present officers of the Society. Of slight importance in themselves, they are of value to this writer, as the original movement to which they refer has fallen into oblivion here, even the oldest members of the congregation having no knowledge of it beyond the merest hearsay. It is believed that only one person survives of those who attended the first meetings. He still speaks with much enthusiasm of the preacher. The treasurer's books and other memoranda which would have further helped to give an idea of the beginning were lost in the Chicago fire.

The first minister mentioned in these papers is the Rev. Mr. Green. No mention is made of the throng of five hundred, or of the hundred families, or of the opulence of the parish. On the contrary there is every sign of feebleness in numbers and in resources. The interest of this effort lies in this—that it was a struggle of a few persons with difficulties too great to be overcome. The multitude were not hungering for the Unitarian gospel then more than they are now. It seems that the meetings were held in the court-house, at least in the

autumn of 1829, as we find an account of \$1.45 for wood and candles used there in November. On the 10th of November a subscription was started for the purpose of "erecting and completing a temporary house of worship." To this paper are appended the signatures of Joseph P. Needham, Samuel Stone, E. M. Parsons, Lewis Brooks and Elias Beach, for various sums, amounting to \$150. On another copy of the same paper John Swift, Eleazer Tillotson, James W. Andrews, C. Magne and J. A. Marsh are down for \$30 more. This subscription paper is a curious document, and shows the shortness of the currency in those days. Of all the subscribers only Mr. Parsons and Mr. Brooks agree to pay entirely in cash. One promises lumber, another blacksmithing, another groceries, &c. So small an amount was raised that the erection of any sort of building seemed out of the question, and it was proposed instead to purchase of the Episcopalians the old wooden church which a few years before had given place to the present St. Luke's, and remove it into Buffalo (West-Main) street, just west of Sophia Street, on a lot of which Mr Samuel Stone held the lease. An elaborate agreement, covering four pages of "legal cap," by the terms of which the Society was pledged to the payment of the rent, remains, bearing date of December 1, 1859, and with the signatures and seals of Elias Beach, W. Whitney, Nathaniel Prentiss, Sidney S. Alcott, Silas Ball, J. R. Clute, Samuel Stone, G. W. Pratt, Josiah Swift, R. King, C. G. Cumings, Adonijah Green, Gideon Caudi, Joseph P. Needham. Immediately after the execution of this instrument the old building was moved, at an expense, according to Mr. Stone's account, of \$149.85. How much was given for the

building does not appear—from what follows probably not much. The last installment of \$30.88 was paid January, 1830.

None of the original members is living now to tell of the dedication, if there was one; but as the treasurer reports paying Rev. Messrs. Green, Whitwell and Goodwin for services about the last of December, we may infer, perhaps, that they came to rejoice with the people in their new enterprise. The work went on through the year 1830, with just what results it is impossible now to say. There were the financial troubles which every new church encounters. A small debt accumulated, and, as there seemed to be no other way of meeting it, Mr. Stone was authorized to sell the church with the lease and all the appurtenances for \$200! Certainly zeal for the Lord's house was not eating anybody up at that time.

The records from which the above facts are gleaned carry us no further. The organization seems to have been wound up with the sale of the church. Still for the next ten years much desultory work was done in the direction of Unitarianism. In 1831 meetings were held in a hall on Exchange street, south of the bridge, called Masonic Hall; afterwards in a school-house on Plymouth avenue where Plymouth church now stands, belonging to the "Christians" and used by them as a church. The lack of a minister was made up by a layman who to his many other accomplishments added the gift of prophecy, and to whom, by common consent of the generation now passing away, more than to any other the actual establishment of our cause in Rochester is due. Mr. MYRON HOLLEY, a lawyer and publicist, who had been associated with DE WITT CLINTON

in his great work, holding the office of Canal Commissioner, came, at the close of his official duties, to live in Rochester. Ready for any good word and work, and specially interested in the religious education of the community, he gathered the liberal-minded in school-houses and in public halls and preached to them. "Could he preach?" asked the writer in surprise of an old resident of orthodox proclivities. "Preach! I should say so; he could do anything and do it well." A man of the rarest integrity, of culture and refinement, a philanthropist without cant, beloved and honored through all Western New York, his utterances had a lasting power, and yet embalm his memory in the hearts of children's children of those who heard him. Mr. Holley died about 1840, and people still remember Rev. Dr. Chester Dewey's oration at the funeral.

Another superior person who used to be heard in those days, and whose sermons are still fresh in the minds of the few of his company that remain, must be mentioned,—Rev. HENRY COLMAN. He also had creditably filled a place in the civil service, and was not one of those who take to preaching from incapacity to do anything else. He shortly became occupied in editorial work. We hear of him afterward as a writer on agriculture of some note in England, where he won social as well as literary distinction. Lady Byron erected a monument to his memory.

In 1830 the village of Rochester held 10,863 souls. In the next decade it became a city, and more than doubled its population. At the beginning of that decade the Unitarians had made some showing, where do we find them at its close? Not

making much stir certainly. A great deal of excellent seed had been sown, but the harvest was not yet. Indeed the palpable results of so much good work were far from re-assuring. Still there were occasional signs of life, and these became pronounced just ten years after the first church was sold. A little blank book (mostly blank) has been preserved which contains under date of July 18, 1840, the following statement, very cautious, as the manner of our people is. It is not a *credo*; in fact it is hardly a *sentio*, but it is something in the direction of a church.

We, the subscribers, do hereby signify our desire to become stated hearers in the First Unitarian Society of the city of Rochester.

MATTHEW BROWN,
WILLIAM W. ALLCOTT,
WM. H. SWAN,
JAMES H. WATTS,

D. W. POWERS,
GEO. F. DANFORTH,
ERASTUS S. MARSH,
DARIUS PERRIN.

Under the word "desire" in the above document we detect an erasure, as though possibly some stronger word had first been written, upon which all could not agree. This slight basis of organization continued in use over three years, and bears twenty seven other names, but no more signatures. It is noticeable that the names all belong to the sterner sex. The ladies did not "signify." Perhaps it was because they were determined to be *doers* as well as "stated hearers" of the word.

Those were the days of slow and social traveling by canal. People had time to find each other out. In this way it happened about this time that a lady of the parish met Rev. J. P. B. Storer, the long time minister of the Unitarian society in Syracuse, and made him acquainted with the situation in

Rochester. At the solicitation of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Watts he was induced to come and spend a little time in the spring of 1841, and his labors resulted in the re-organization of the "First Unitarian Church in Rochester." The original members were, Mr. W. W. Allcott, Mrs. Deborah Allcott, Mr. W. Henry Swan, Mrs. H. B. W. Swan, Mrs. Lucy Chamberlain, Mrs. Martha Watts, Mrs. Charlotte H. Brown, Miss Julia A. Greene. It is illustrative of the changing character of the population in those days that not a name appears in this list of those who had been active twelve years before. The first meeting was held in Mrs. Watts' parlors, but these proved inadequate, and recourse was had to the court-house. Mrs. Ebenezer Watts and her sister, Mrs. John Briggs, who survived until recently, and brought down the primitive Unitarian traditions—primitive, as they thought, for they seem to have had no knowledge of 1829, and would probably have felt hurt by the discovery of a previous Unitarian church—never wearied of recounting the simple incidents of that time; how they carried from their own house the candles to light the room for evening service, and how a certain lad in Mr. Watts' employ (now one of Rochester's most wealthy and esteemed citizens,) used to make the fires and ring the bell. Of ringing the court-house bell the first time, this gentleman relates that, being unused to that religious exercise, and thinking to put into it a measure of zeal to match the enthusiasm of the ladies, he pulled the rope so vigorously that the whole fire department turned out, supposing the city must be burning up. An audience was thus secured for one night at least.

Mr. Storer, having an important charge in Syracuse, of course

could not remain. He preached four Sundays, celebrated the ordinances of the church, and opened the way for regular services. Rev. C. A. Farley followed for a few months. Rev. J. I. T. Cooledge made a visit, and a strong effort was made to retain him, but Purchase street, Boston, had a stronger attraction. Rev. F. A. Whitney was also heard a few Sundays. Meantime the Society was thoroughly organized. The trustees met August 17, 1841, and elected Dr. Matthew Brown president, and Mr. Geo. F. Danforth clerk. The latter held his office for ten years, and is one of only two or three persons left with us, at this writing, of the Society of 1840. A certificate of incorporation was recorded on the date of the above meeting, at which time the trustees were, Matthew Brown, John Briggs, W. W. Allcott, H. B. Sherman, and W. H. Swan. At this time the congregation worshiped in the Christain church on "South Sophia" street.

Rev. RUFUS ELLIS was the first minister to stay any length of time, and he came from Northampton under some sort of pledge to return which resulted in taking him from Rochester after one year's service. Dr. Ellis, now the veteran pastor of the First Church in Boston, has kindly furnished the following recollections of his short stay in Rochester :

BEVERLY FARMS : MASS., JULY 7, 1881.

Dear Mr. Mann : Of Rochester I have only the most delightful memories, and, if I were not now intolerably lazy, you would receive from me more than you would know what to do with. I went there in the spring of 1842 at the age of 22, after having had charge of the Unitarian Society in Northampton for some six months. I believe it was understood that I was to remain in your city for a year. Our services were held morning and evening in a small wooden building which belonged to the Christians, and in which they had an occasional meeting; a meeting that

I found an awkwardness in announcing, as they did not like to be called *Christ-ians*, and to say that the Christians would have service in the afternoon seemed to imply that it had been occupied in the morning by persons *not* Christians. We were in formation. Messrs. Wm. W. Allcott and James H. Watts were at once sextons and, what I am sorry to say sextons in a more artificial state of society are not always, devoted members of the congregation. Our chief singer (I am unable in my ignorance to add whether he was a *basso* or a *tenor*) was Mr. Louis Thies, since dead, a man of fine artistic tastes as well as a thoroughly taught chemist. I remember buying of him a German copy of Strauss' *Leben Jesu*. He was afterwards in charge of valuable engravings at Harvard College. I think there must be some remaining in Rochester who will recall my noble old host, Dr. Matthew Brown, then 70 years old, one of the founders of your city—a man of large mind and large heart, and of most unstinted hospitality. The house was not many storied, and what stories there were were very low, but it covered a large piece of ground, and took in a multitude, the Doctor's own household and strangers too, and it was a charming home for all of us, the Doctor's wife and her sister the ruling and regulating powers, and a small boy, who *should* have been called Benjamin, "child of days", but *was* called David, kept us well alive. Rev. Henry Colman and that dear old lady, Mrs. Colman, with others older and younger, were inmates of the house. Mr. Colman who was at that time editing very successfully an agricultural newspaper, was still very helpful to the raw parson in the way of criticism and good advice and encouragement. The Society did not get much from me, but I got a great deal from them—not to be sure in money, though of that I had all I needed besides the best of homes and friends—but in fellowship, discipline and stimulus. I learned to go about in the forming parish, sometimes with the companionship of Mrs. Brown upon her charitable and other errands, and aided by an old white horse which got us over the ground about as fast as we could have walked. I kept no parish list, unfortunately, and names have faded; but some remain. I will not set them down because I have a very lively and pleasant recollection of several men and women whose names have gone from me utterly. Allcott, Danforth and the minister did most of the plotting and planning. The result was a very pleasant house of worship, which was dedicated during my year, and which I had the honor to occupy for several proud Sundays before my return to Northampton. Strongly as I was drawn to Northampton, it was very hard for me to pay no heed to an exceedingly kind invitation to remain in Rochester. I had become very much interested in the people and in the work. My opinions had become a faith, and gained to some extent a tongue. There were some very encouraging elements in the Society. We had worked together. They had made sacrifices, and I was ready to do so had there been any

need, as there never was for one who could live at Dr. Brown's as one of his household and find very agreeable companionship in many other directions, and be heard by an increasing company in a cheerful church twice a week. There were opportunities too for occasional missionary work in the country around, and I recall the satisfaction it gave me to hear the comment of an old farmer on one of my boyish sermons,—'Yes, he liked that, for he never could believe in a *disappointed God!*' I was very sorry to hear that the house of worship was burned; but trust that it has been replaced by a building which answers your needs. I could wish a young man no better fortune than my year at Rochester, and, although I can never regret my ten years at Northampton, I am sure that I should not have made a mistake had I remained in your city, though as to the effect upon your Society, I would not venture to give an opinion. I am sure that the congregation was animated by a high purpose. * *

With kindest remembrances to any who may recall me, I am
Your ante-diluvian, if not pre-Adamite, predecessor and friend,

RUFUS ELLIS.

The records of the Society from 1842 take on a decidedly business-like appearance. Frequent meetings of the trustees were held, and there was every indication that something of importance was to be done. In December of that year a Society seal was adopted by the following res-



SOCIETY SEAL. ADOPTED 1842.

olution introduced by Mr. Alcott which is of interest as showing the theological position then taken:

RESOLVED, that this Board adopt a common Seal of the following description, to-wit: That it be of the size of a half-dollar, having on the face a Bible with the words "OUR CREED" surrounded by a wreath, and on the outer circle the words: FIRST UNIT. CON. SOC. of ROCHESTER, N. Y.

The church building of which Dr. Ellis speaks was erected on the west side of Fitzhugh street near Allen, and cost, with the lot, about \$6,000. A subscription of over \$3,000 left the property encumbered for considerably less than half its value. The corner-stone was laid September 29, 1842. In it were deposited a brief sketch of the movement since 1841, a list of the subscribers to the building fund, the names of the trustees (as above given except that James H. Watts and Daniel Knower had taken the places of Messrs. Sherman and Swan), the building committee, and a list of the church members including in addition to the original eight Miss Maria G. Porter and Mrs. Louisa Schenck. The work of building was pushed with energy, and in the early spring the structure was ready for occupancy. The dedication took place May 9, in presence of a goodly assembly, Rev. Mr. Storer preaching a memorable sermon. A few copies of the bright yellow programme of the occasion are still preserved, having about them an air of triumph and rejoicing.

Mr. Ellis' year soon expired, and the new pulpit was left vacant. But a vigorous life had begun in the church, and its future was secured at least for ten years. Correspondence was at once opened with Rev. F. W. HOLLAND with a view to settlement. Mr. Holland desired full liberty of speech, and

the mature tone of the Society is seen in the resolutions passed in response, of which the following is one:

RESOLVED, that in inviting him to take charge of our pulpit and become the pastor of this Society, we would place him at an altar undesecrated by party prejudice, and as a Christian minister leave him unfettered and unpledged in the performance of his duty, amenable only to his conscience and his God.

Mr. Holland accepted the charge and remained at the post nearly five years. This was the first pastorate the church had had from the beginning in 1828 of more than one year's duration, and it was a period of continued prosperity. The minister was well adapted to the work of building up a weak and struggling society. Instant in season and out of season, doing whatever he did with all his might, he set the Society on its feet and kept it stirring. Unfortunately in January 1848 Mr. Holland resigned to become General Secretary of the American Unitarian Association.

Among the notable supplies that were had in those days must be mentioned Rev. Geo. W. Hosmer (lately deceased), then the influential minister of the Unitarian society in Buffalo, who throughout his long pastorate took the kindest interest in this church, and Rev. F. D. (now Bishop) Huntington, then showing the same earnestness in our ranks as he has since shown in command of other armies of the Lord. A distinct church organization then existed of the simplest description, on the basis of a "covenant" instituted by Rev. Rufus Ellis in 1843. It stood as follows:

You do, in this solemn presence, give yourself up to the true God, in Jesus Christ, and to his Church also, according to the will of God, promising to walk with God and with this Church of his in all his holy

ordinances, and to yield obedience to every truth of his which has been or shall be made known to you as your duty, the Lord assisting you by his spirit and grace.

The candidate assenting to this, the Church, through the minister, responded :

We, then, of the Church of Christ, do receive you into the fellowship, and promise to walk toward you and to watch over, as a member of this Church, endeavoring in all things to promote your spiritual edification in Jesus Christ.

Bating some forms of speech which have become meaningless, and others that are infelicitous, this covenant is one that we might still make use of.

By this time the Society counted a goodly number of able and active men and women. There were persons of extreme and pronounced opinions, sharply opposed to each other on political and social questions, with whom it was a wise captain who should direct the ship so as to avoid the breakers, or even escape mutiny on board. The anti-slavery sentiment was beginning to sway an irresistible influence, and made itself felt first of all in liberal circles. A Unitarian preacher was naturally a 'free-soiler' if not an Abolitionist. Church troubles were sure to come out of this matter, and to be all the worse if the minister leaned to the wrong side. A free church could not stand apologies for slavery. Rev. RUFUS H. BACON had been unwisely commended to Rochester and at a meeting of the Society, April 16 1848, it was voted to call him at a salary of \$700. In their letter of invitation the Committee thus speak again of the freedom of the pulpit :

From the organization of the Society, our pulpit has been free and its occupants have given utterance to such sentiments as seemed to them proper. We ask you to do the same, believing that a minister of Christ

should be left with no other judge than the gospel and his conscience to discharge the duties of his calling in a pulpit consecrated to God's service.

Mr. Bacon accepted the invitation in the same generous spirit, but this "liberty of the gospel" must have been somehow abused, for in a short time the minister was in hot water, and before the end of the year sent in his resignation. As is usual in such cases, some sided with the minister, and much ill feeling was engendered. Mr. Bacon went to Chicago where he was accidentally drowned. The disappointment of the Society was great, as Mr. Bacon's coming had excited high hopes. An ordination had been given him which seems to have been very much of an occasion. There were present Rev. Messrs. Hosmer, May, Buckingham, Barrett, Lothrop, Pierpont and Holland—more Unitarian ministers than had ever assembled in Rochester before.

The elements remained disturbed. In the course of these years however some good practical work was done. The church had been constructed with fine basement rooms, and there a famous school was kept. Mrs. I. J. Porter and the two sisters, Miss Mary Jane and Miss Almira B. Porter—beloved and honored names—were the teachers, and won for themselves the highest distinction. Dr. Anderson has pronounced them the best teachers he ever knew. Their faces have vanished, but their works do follow them.

In the spring of 1850 the Society called Rev. W. H. DORTCH, lately from Ireland, a man of some parts, but not Americanized. Pastor and people got on passably for a year, but the renewal of the engagement proved too much of a

strain. Mr. Doherty had notions of the priestly functions and especially of ministerial authority, which could not pass among Unitarians in this country. It sometimes happens that a minister's salary does not come in with the same promptness as his grocer's bills, which makes it inconvenient, but ministers generally feel some delicacy in pressing payment. Not so Mr. Doherty. Among other similar communications we come across the following:

ROCHESTER, MARCH 9, 1852.

Rev. W. H. Doherty's compliments to the Treasurer of First Unitarian Church, begs *again* to request that the arrears of last quarter's salary, now so long and so shamefully over-due, (\$203.00) will be paid with as much promptness as the means of the members, and their sense of decency will admit.

To J. P. FOGG, Esq.,

Treas. and Col. of First Unitarian Church.

Bold words and no doubt true enough, whatever we may think about their being fitly spoken. About this time it is reported that Mr. Doherty preached a sermon in which he rebuked the people for their short-comings with more than apostolic vehemence, lashing his opponents roundly for their impertinences. Some left the house, one leading man, as he rose, shouting to the speaker: "This, sir, is the last time you will preach in that pulpit!" And so it was. The feeling became general that the minister's usefulness was over. A meeting of the Society was immediately called. The trustees were sent out to wait upon the pastor and request his resignation, with which they shortly returned. The connection was dissolved on the spot, although by the terms of the contract six months' notice was to be given. Six weeks' salary was given instead. Mr. Doherty went to Ohio—was for a

short time professor in Antioch College—went south, and at the outbreak of the war became chaplain in the Confederate army, in which service he died.

In the general discouragement the Society turned to Mr. Holland, but he declined at that time to resume the charge.

The contentions of these years were carried on with great bitterness, and nearly proved disastrous to the Society. A number of families withdrew and formed permanent connections elsewhere. Discord seemed incurable. A succession of unhappy pastorates—broken only by the one next to be mentioned—gradually wore away the strength of the organization.

It is pleasant here to come upon a name already endeared to Unitarians as a household word and destined to receive a peculiar distinction in the person of the thoughtful mystic who came and spoke as never man before had spoken in Rochester. It was a gleam of light, blinding to some eyes, but falling with such happy effect upon others that the short ministry of one year and one month is still spoken of as a season of spiritual illumination. Rev. W. H. CHANNING, now spending the quiet evening of his days in London, was settled April 27, 1853. His graceful letters to the officers of the church are in agreeable contrast with a mass of documents of earlier as well as later date through which the writer of this history has had to wade. An intimation has been given Mr. Channing that some pleasant reminiscence of his stay in the city would be most welcome for this publication, but nothing has been received from him. The following he had here was not what he had a right to expect. His lectures elsewhere than in the church were well attended, and,

as an intimate friend states, he had serious thoughts at one time of starting an independent movement, and so escape the prejudice against the Unitarian name. When he had made up his mind to relinquish the pastorate the Society awoke to a sense of its loss in a long and ardent letter, recounting his eloquent and faithful ministrations in this place. This preacher was wanted elsewhere, and in 1854 went to Washington, and to a better appreciation.

It was the beginning of more troubles. With the best of fortune in securing a successor to Mr. Channing it was hardly possible that the pulpit should have long maintained its high reputation for sanity. Men of genius are not to be retained for the hire of an ordinary clerk. A season of unusual depression set in, and suggestions were even made to sell the church. The mortgage had passed into the hands of a disaffected member, and foreclosure was threatened. The frequent Society-meetings continued tempestuous, and seem to have been held chiefly to give the factions a chance at each other. Most of the talkers were much more liberal with their tongues than they were with their cash, and no little trouble was had in collecting assessments. The burden fell mainly upon a few who made no noise at the meetings.

At this time a call was extended to Rev, R. P. Stebbins, D. D., who declined the invitation.

In 1856 Rev. THOMAS HYER preached a few Sundays, and was so well liked that it was determined to make another effort to secure a pastor. The ability of the Society was so seriously reduced that the settlement of Mr. Hyer was conditioned upon his obtaining \$500 a year from the Amer-

ican Unitarian Association until the Society should be able to pay its own expenses. The new minister preached for several months; but as the Association was unable fully to accede to the request, the arrangement fell through. In November the Society was again without a pastor.

Early in 1857 interest revived. Rev. JAMES RICHARDSON, of whom as a divinity student Mr. A. Bronson Alcott tells the amusing story of his once "asking Louise to blacken his boots"—a request which it is believed he did not repeat—came and preached a year, reenacting with variations the idiosyncrasies of his youth. An unpleasant misunderstanding arose at the termination of his engagement concerning the amount to be paid him, which nearly led to a law-suit. It is due to the memory of Mr. Richardson to say that he did noble service during the war in hospital at Washington where he died.

In these latter years the honored names of Brewster, Bower, Clarkson, Curtis, Wilder, Angle, and others now familiar, come to the front, and under ordinary circumstances would have saved the Society. Mr. Richardson left in May, 1858. At the beginning of the next year Mr. James K. Hosmer preached awhile. Rev. Mr. Fitzgerald was then invited to preach two months on trial, and commenced November 6, 1859. The next Thursday the church was burned.

This was the concluding catastrophe. The clerk in registering the event says it was believed to have been the work of an incendiary. The fire occurred between two and three o'clock, and the building with its contents was a total loss. An organ had just been put in at a cost of \$750. There

was insurance on the whole for \$2,000. Mr. Samuel Porter found the pulpit bible next day yet unconsumed among the smouldering ruins. He took it tenderly home, and the burnt and tattered relic is still preserved. This bible was first presented to the Church of the Savior in Brooklyn by Mr. Holland, and afterward at his suggestion was sent here.

The loss was not so great but that it might have been overcome under favorable circumstances. But a series of mishaps and mistakes had taken the spirit out of the Society, and there was no heart for new undertakings. Some effort to rebuild was made, but the response was too faint. Not long after it was unfortunately determined to sell the lot on which the church stood—an act scarcely less damaging than the burning of the church itself.

In February, 1865, Rev. F. W. Holland returned to Rochester with the zeal of a Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Zion. He gathered what he could of the scattered forces in Corinthian Hall, and by his untiring exertions stirred the people to a fresh endeavor. He undertook himself the task of raising funds to build a church. It was determined at the outset that \$10,000 must be secured before the work of building was commenced. The effort would probably have failed but for one person whose liberality has placed this church under lasting obligations. Says Mr. Holland: "Mrs. Jonathan Watson saved me by her unexpected generosity from being crushed when I had become sick by over-effort and refusal of aid. Let her \$4,000 be held in ever-grateful remembrance!" A lot was secured on the east side of Fitz-

hugh street, nearly opposite the site of the old church, much smaller and less desirable but well situated, and the present modest church edifice erected. The corner-stone was laid September 5, 1865. In it were deposited some relics from the old church, the papers concerning the new building, and various articles of interest,—the names of the pastor and trustees, James L. Angle, Joseph Curtis and De L. Crittenden. A total obliviousness of the movement of 1829 is recorded on "a handsome silver plate" in the words: "*Second* church edifice of the First Unitarian Society." This deficiency of historical knowledge is the more remarkable as Mr. Holland had been General Secretary of the A. U. A.

The dedication took place January 24, 1866. Mr. Holland preached the sermon. The other ministers present were, Rev. Samuel J. May, Rev. Dr. Hosmer, Rev. S. H. Camp, Rev. Dr. Saxe and Rev. Mr. Fiske—the two latter of the Universalist church. The subscription footed up \$11,599, and, with some additional offerings shortly made, covered the whole outlay. Though not a large amount, it represented considerable enthusiasm. The subscription-paper is more remarkable for the number of names than for the amounts set opposite, only two (Mr. J. H. Howe and Mr. Geo. G. Clarkson) beside the lady already mentioned, being down for over \$500.

The angularities of the good man to whose apostolic labors the Society owes its chapel are to be seen in the ponderous pulpit chairs, and in the belfry-like turret which surmounts the front and performs the office of a chimney. By this means, though no bell was rung as in the case previously mentioned, an alarm of fire was raised when smoke was first

seen issuing from the belfry, and again the Unitarian place of worship received the attention of the fire department.

Mr. Holland remained in charge three years, doing for the Society what few men could have done.

Rev. CLAY McCAULEY, then of Detroit, accepted a call to succeed Mr. Holland, and entered upon his work October 4, 1868. At the end of a year's service Mr. McCauley was invited to remain longer, but declined, preferring a better cultivated field in New England. The honorable positions he has since held have justified the admiration of his friends here who have watched his career with much interest.

Rev. E. H. DANFORTH followed, preaching with good acceptance for six months. Want of health prevented his remaining. We hear of him afterward among the Utes at the time the Government availed itself of the wish of the churches to take a hand in the management of the Indians.

In the spring of 1870 the present incumbent was called to the charge. He had been strongly drawn to Rochester two years before, and this time could not resist the invitation. In the meantime Rev. F. W. Holland came upon the old ground for which he still had a clinging affection, and preached two months, preparing the way for the new minister. The latter entered upon his ministry the first Sunday in June, and with a feeling of disappointment that in the two years previous there had been a noticeable decrease in the congregation. However, he set in with what energy he could muster, and, after eleven years and more of service, sees no occasion on his part to regret his coming, however otherwise it may be with those to whom he ministers. But if

there are regrets, it is only another instance of the kind considerateness of this people that they have kept the fact entirely from his knowledge. Discordant as the Society was at one period of its history, for the last decade at least it has been singularly harmonious. We have been, perhaps, even too much of one mind for our spiritual health. No such lively times occur at the business meetings as formerly, and the history of the period has about it less of surprise and dramatic interest. Great changes have taken place, as must have happened by the lapse of time. The 'spirit of the age' has breathed upon us. The pulpit has become free and rational to a degree exceptional even in the Unitarian denomination, and some position in the public esteem has been conquered for Liberal ideas. A step has been taken toward more pronounced rationalism, with no loss, as we hope, of the religious spirit, leaving the ground once occupied by this church to other churches of the city now eagerly pressing to the defense of the old positions. We think of several societies here that now applaud much more than we do the legend which this Society placed upon its seal forty years ago. It may be worth repeating in this connection that on the north-east corner of Plymouth avenue and Troup street there once stood a school-house, which was also a meeting-house, and that there Myron Holley, Henry Colman and Rufus Ellis plead for a more reasonable religion, and urged the Bible as the sufficient creed. Now on that ground, though this line of spiritual descent is not yet recognized by its occupants, stands the stately church whose minister has lately been disfellowshipped by the orthodox clergy

of the city and by the authorities of his denomination, only to be the more accredited by his own people, and to hold a higher place in the public estimation. "The Bible our Creed" goes very well now. The heterodoxy of half a century ago flourishes on the very spot where it was first planted. Considering the unpromising conditions under which that work was done, let it never be feared of any faithful labor that it is in vain!

The Society, though making no marked increase in numbers, holds its own, and, thanks to the unfailing generosity of a few persons, keeps out of debt. Mrs. Ebenezer Watts, one of the congregation since 1841, gave a last proof of her devotion to the Church in a bequest of \$2,000., and various articles of household goods. This gift is the more appreciated as the estate left was not large. Other like noble offerings are needed, as it is only too apparent that the prosperity of the Society is seriously hampered by the lack of accommodations for social and Sunday-school purposes.

OUR CREED.

As may be seen from the foregoing sketch, this Church has been very careful not to make any authoritative statement of faith. It is not Unitarian to set forth what one must believe to be a Unitarian. We aim at rational views,

and undertake to apply to religious thinking, the same rules of reasoning that we make use of in all our other thinking. Uniform conclusions are not expected. A wide margin is left for varying temperament and conditions. The deepest unity is that of spirit and purpose. Still we have our distinct and positive convictions, and many private statements have been made which with more or less exactness embody the doctrines received by us as fundamental. Of these one of the briefest and best is by Rev. John Wills of Portland, and has the advantage of rhyme and rythm. The incredibility of most creeds makes them tolerable only in poetry of the very highest order—Miltonian epics and the like—but ours will pass in the plainest verse.

Rejoicing in the freedom of the mind,
We have no steel-clad creeds, our faith to bind.
From many standpoints we the truth behold,
To us more precious than the finest gold.
Our motto has been, is, and still shall be—
"LOVE, HOLINESS AND GODLIKE LIBERTY,"
First, we affirm the dignity of Man,
Formed in God's image on a perfect plan.
Comes next the Christ conception of "The All,"
As still "Our Father" whatsoe'er befall;
As still *All-wise, All-perfect* and *All-good*,
Binding mankind in bonds of brotherhood,
Stamping with his divine, approving seal
All that's conducive to Man's highest weal;
Condemning all that's false, unkind or mean,
Irreverent, or selfish, or obscene.
We hold the man of Nazareth to be
The true, fast friend of our humanity,
A teacher sent from God to save from sin,
Who taught that God's true kingdom is within.
We deem that he, 'mong ancient prophets, stood
Foremost and greatest, though misunderstood
By his own countrymen, who failed to see

His glory, veiled in his humility.
The Holy Spirit, we conceive to mean
The influence divine, pure, sweet, serene.
We all affirm there is no God but He
Who reigns supreme o'er heaven and earth and sea.
Our faith includes no fiend God's will to balk,
Through the fair earth defiantly to stalk;
No devil—personal—'gainst God to wage
Warfare, perpetual, from age to age;
No nature wholly bad, corrupt and base,
In which no spark of virtue finds a place;
No endless hell of hate, and fear, and woe,
Wherein, enthroned, reigns man's eternal foe.
The righteous banner, by our faith unfurled,
Displays the truth in sight of all the world
That GOD IS LOVE—his Justice never fails,
Nor against Mercy ever once prevails;
For no discordant attributes belong
To Him—the Infinite—the Wise—the Strong!
"THE ALL IN ALL," the soul of harmony;
The One—inhabiting Eternity.

Profession of even so rational a creed as this is not required. Dr. James Martineau very wisely says:

At present it must suffice to say that our societies are dedicated, not to theological opinions, but to religious worship; that they have maintained the unity of the spirit without insisting on any unity of doctrine; that Christian liberty, love and piety are their essentials in perpetuity, but their Unitarianism an accident, of a few or many generations,—which has arisen, and might vanish, without their losing their identity. We believe in the mutability of religious systems, but the imperishable character of the religious affections,—in the progressiveness of opinion, within, as well as without the limits of Christianity. Our forefathers cherished the same conviction; and so, not having been born intellectual bondsmen, we desire to leave our successors free.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

The Sunday School has never been large. This however has not hindered doing much faithful work. There is a very good library of several hundred volumes, to which additions are constantly being made. Mr. Blake's "Services and Songs" has been used from the first issue, if not with entire satisfaction, with unmistakable profit. In connection with this book we gratefully recall the labors of Mrs. E. G. Haydon who taught us the beautiful music. Some effort is made by the older classes at a scientific study of the scriptures.

The officers are: Superintendent, Hon. James L. Angle; Assistant Superintendent, J. Vincent Alexander; Secretary, Miss Hattie T. Bennett; Treasurer, Miss L. E. Morgan; Librarian, W. H. Stout; Assistant librarian, R. W. Alexander; Organist, Miss Georgie A. Post; Teachers, Mr. Angle, Mr. Mann, Miss Price, Mrs. Curtis, Mrs. Hurn, Miss Alexander.

The beginning of a Parish library was made a few years ago to supplement the Sunday-school library. Additions to this are needed to make it useful.

THE YOUNG FOLKS' CLUB.

The young people of the Society have formed a club for social and literary improvement. Its modest efforts thus far have been wholly successful, and it promises to be a very useful adjunct to the Church. The officers of the Club are as follows; President, Geo. H. Smith; Vice-president, Miss Jessie Post; Secretary, Miss Augusta A. Bronson; Treasurer, Charles Mann. The membership is indicated below.

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Members of "THE YOUNG FOLKS' CLUB" are indicated by an asterisk. Notice of errors or omissions should be given at once for correction in the next edition.

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