



INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

FOR many years past the idea had been entertained by members of the New York Historical Society that some public commemoration should be made in this State of the character and services of WILLIAM BRADFORD, by whom the Art of Printing had been introduced into New York, and indeed into the Middle Colonies of British America generally. Little was known by the publick at large of his Life; but every incident which had come down to us, served to reveal a character of much more than common accomplishment and strength. Yet the name of this remarkable person, while indeed it could never be forgotten, seemed, for a time, destined to become a matter of dim traditionary record; and in another century might be still further lost to the publick knowledge and regard. THE BRADFORD CLUB, established in this city a few years ago, by a small Association of tasteful and opulent lovers of literature, was the first indication that the people of this great Metropolis were not unmindful of the blessings which, through Bradford's efforts, the Art of Printing had bestowed upon us; blessings, indeed, like other gifts of a benignant Providence, not always rightly enjoyed; often indeed abused; sometimes even, through our own passions and depravity, turned into calamities themselves; but blessings not the less, if used as the author of them designed that they should be, to the improvement of our minds and edification of our hearts.

There seemed too, indeed, in our very obligations to the National Fame, to be something of a publick kind due from the body which, in this great city of New York, represented more especially the Historical interests and duties of the Country. While it has been truly observed that either

personal or national vanity may become bloated on the contempt and ridicule of the rest of the world, it had been remarked at the same time that an honourable self-dependence, a manly self-reliance, can be inspired in no way so well as by contemplating as external to ourselves, the monuments of one's own character and abilities. "Our country in its origin was little else than a concourse of individual persons, aggregated but not associated, and of companies clustered but not combined. Gradually this dust and powder of individuality had tended to an organization; a definite principle of social life had been evolved. Characteristics of a National Existence have been perceived, and have deepened and multiplied as time has gone on. In every thing the dead-reckoning, which carried forward the old wisdom into the new region had failed, and new observations have required to be taken. A thousand tokens in every thing from which we could prognosticate, made it manifest that a spirit indigenous and self-vital, inhabits our country; a spirit of power, *" ipsa suis pollens opibus."* We have an American Literature. Why should we not have an American Bibliography? An American Bibliography did in fact already exist; and in the very city of New York, the issues of Daye's, or of Green's, or of the eldest Bradford's Press, have, ever since the institution of the Bradford Club, commanded better prices than a good Aldus, or a good Stephens, or even than a good Caxton itself would command in any city of the world. No Bradford was now seen that was not instantly purchased, collated, washed, bound with elegance, and treasured with care.

Public attention had also been frequently called of late to the decaying state of Bradford's tomb-stone in the grave-yard of Trinity Church; a memorial well enough in its time, but erected in the day of our small things, decayed by the lapse of more than a hundred years, and injured not very long ago by accidents occurring in the building of the present Church. Nobles and men of wealth in London, displaying their taste and liberality through the incorporation of The Roxburgh Club, had placed within St. Margaret's Chapel at Westminster, where Caxton reared his Press, an enduring record of their grateful recollection. "Why shall not we"—was the feeling of many gentlemen in New York, not less noble, we may hope, in all that constitutes the true nobility of man, 'the graces of an erect and manly spirit'—"do the same honour to ourselves and Bradford?" Trinity, herself, it was observed, had not been backward in raising tributes to her worthy children in whatever sphere of usefulness they have

discharged their duties to their God and man. And no more welcome sight, as many had observed, could greet the *true* Republican than the cenotaph which she had erected to THOMAS SWORDS, Bookseller and Publisher of our own city, within those same, her consecrated walls, where she honours the integrity and learning and judgment of Richard Harrison; the genius and patriotism and statesmanship of Hamilton, the exalted piety of Hobart himself.

It was under feelings and impressions of this kind, that at a stated meeting of the New York Historical Society, held December 2nd, 1862, Mr. G. H. Moore introduced for consideration, the subject of a "*Publick Commemoration of the Birth-Day of William Bradford on its Two hundredth Anniversary in the year 1863*;" and that the matter—very favourably received at its first suggestion by the Body—was referred to the Executive Committee for further action. This Committee having with ardour and unanimity agreed in the propriety of such a Celebration, arrangements were undertaken to have the event commemorated with becoming effect and dignity. It was understood that Mr. Verplanck, alike one of the most respected and venerable members of Trinity Church Vestry, and of the Historical Society of New York, had introduced the subject of a more enduring Memorial over Bradford's grave to the Corporation of the Church just named: and that this matter, with a proper Religious Office, would engage the attention of that Body. The next matter was the subject of an Address; a subject which occupied the most active interest of the Committee. The office, to whomsoever intrusted, was one of no slight difficulty. It seemed desirable, as Bradford had first established the Press in Pennsylvania, and was the founder there of that long line of Printers, who in the language of one of the Patriots of 1776, had "univerally distinguished themselves by devoting the Press to the preservation and extension of the liberties of their country," that the Orator of the Occasion should be some gentleman of Pennsylvania.

The following correspondence now accordingly took place.

LIBRARY OF THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, }
NEW YORK CITY, FEBRUARY 28TH, 1863. }

TO JOHN WILLIAM WALLACE, Esquire,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

Sir—The New York Historical Society having resolved to Commemorate by suitable acts and proceedings the Birth-Day of William Bradford (our first Printer, and