

THE CENTENNIAL MEMORIAL

OF THE

PRESBYTERY OF CARLISLE.

A SERIES OF PAPERS, HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL, RELATING  
TO THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF PRESBYTERIANISM  
IN THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN PART OF  
SOUTHERN PENNSYLVANIA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.—BIOGRAPHICAL.

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George M. Mearns

"Write this for a memorial in a book."—Ex. 17: 14.

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SKETCHES  
OF THE  
MORE PROMINENT  
DECEASED MINISTERS  
OF THE  
PRESBYTERIES OF DONEGAL, CARLISLE  
AND HARRISBURG.

BY REV. EBENEZER ERSKINE, D. D.

Smith, of Pequea, was ordained and installed pastor of Rocky Spring church in 1768. Here he continued his ministry until 1799, when, on account of failure of health and mental derangement, his pastoral relation was dissolved. He died April 20, 1799, and was buried in the Rocky Spring graveyard.

Mr. Craighead is noted in history for his earnest and patriotic appeals to his people during the struggle for American Independence, and for his services as captain and chaplain to a company formed from his own congregation in response to his patriotic appeals, at a solemn crisis in the war, when the whole male portion of the congregation rose to their feet in token of readiness to embark in defense of the country.

#### **Rev. John King, D. D.**

Dr. John King was pastor of the church of Upper West Conococheague, Mercersburg, from 1769 until 1811, and fourth moderator of the General Assembly in 1792. He was the son of Robert King, a ruling elder in the Chestnut Level church, Lancaster county, Pa. He was born December 5, 1740. His father, a truly pious man, careful in the religious education of his children, came from Ireland, and purchased a tract of land in that part of Lancaster county, on which he lived until his death in 1760.

At the age of thirteen John entered a classical school at home, and continued in it until he had acquired a considerable knowledge of Latin, Greek, logic and mental and moral philosophy. He then engaged in teaching school for three years in West Conococheague. One of his pupils was John McDowel, who afterwards became Rev. Dr. McDowel, provost of the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia.

At the end of that time, in 1763, he returned home, the Indian war having broken out and his sister having been killed by the savages and his school much declined, greatly perplexed as to what he should pursue as his life work. He had had the benefit of a careful religious training at home, and had been the subject of early religious impressions and had united with the church at Conococheague, but had not had any special or comforting religious experience until at a com

munion service at East Conococheague, conducted by Messrs. Steel and Roan. This was the first time he had partaken of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, when he states he found himself unusually engaged with the concerns of religion and in prayer, before and during the communion services, and that he had then much freedom in receiving Christ and in devoting himself to his service. Still, he had afterwards much reason to complain of his heart as careless about the things of true religion, though he still had seasons of much spiritual tenderness, and had at times much freedom in receiving and resting on Christ for salvation. After much reflection, being still distrustful of his religious experience, and knowing that his voice was weak and that he had suffered much from hoarseness, he thought he could not see his way clear to study for the ministry, and finally concluded, all things considered, that the finger of Providence pointed him to the medical profession. In regard to this, after much loss of time and means, he was over-ruled, when, by the advice of his classical teacher and Dr. Allison, vice provost of the University of Pennsylvania, he was led to abandon all further effort in that direction and enter the university with a view of preparing for the ministry. This he did May, 1765, and graduated in May, 1766. He studied theology with his pastor at Chestnut Level, and was licensed by the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, August 13, 1767. He supplied the church at New London that fall and winter, visited Upper West Conococheague in the meantime and preached there, and the next spring received a call to that congregation, but was not ordained and installed pastor until August 30, 1769. He was there married to Elizabeth McDowell, a pious and most excellent woman, a grand-aunt of the Rev. J. I. Brownson, D. D., and performed his life work in that congregation. He resigned his charge September, 1811, and died July 15, 1813, in the seventy-third year of his age, and his remains were interred in the cemetery at Church Hill, close by the church where he had preached the gospel for over forty-two years.

Dr. King was a man of a good mind, which he diligently improved. "He was," said Dr. Creigh, "a man of piety, social

in his disposition, an edifying preacher, sound in the faith, diligent as a pastor, and a man of varied acquirements." Under his ministry the state of the congregation was peaceful and prosperous. At every communion season the number of professing disciples was increased by new accessions. His labors were owned of God, and eminently blessed in building up this church. He was all his life a diligent student, and became a good general scholar. Said Dr. McKnight in his memorial sermon: "Besides being a good Latin and Greek scholar, he had a competent acquaintance with Hebrew and French. He had studied natural and moral philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and logic with attention, and had a considerable general knowledge of chemistry. He had also paid considerable attention to ecclesiastical history. With divinity, in its several branches, he was well acquainted." Dr. David Elliott speaks of him as a man of strong mind, an able and well read theologian, a man capable of close and logical processes of thought, capable of investigating the most difficult and abstruse subjects with marked ability. His preaching was solid, scriptural and edifying, rather than popular. He was an intelligent and judicious ecclesiastic, and was chosen moderator of the General Assembly in 1792, at Carlisle, Pa.

In his religious belief he was strictly Calvinistic, a warm friend of the doctrines of grace. As his life advanced he manifested an increasing concern for the interests of Zion. He was a man of a catholic spirit, held friendly intercourse with persons of other denominations, and was ready to encourage all who sought the advancement of Christ's kingdom, but was uncompromising in his adherence to that system of doctrine which he held to be revealed in the word of God.

He was a man of great moral courage, an earnest advocate of law and order in the face of violent opposition and much popular excitement. At the same time he was thoroughly patriotic, sympathizing fully with the war for independence, making many addresses in defence of the rights of the colonies, and in favor of liberty and independence, volunteering his services and going as a chaplain in the army.

On his tomb is found this inscription: "As a tribute of re-

spect to the memory of Rev. John King, D. D., upwards of forty-two years the able, learned and faithful pastor of the congregation of Upper West Conococheague, whose life exhibited the beauty of holiness, whose death declared the triumph of the cross, this monument is erected by the grateful children of his pastoral care."

Dr. King was the author of a catechism on the evidences of Christianity, and of a dissertation on prophecy. Among other public services, he gave the charge at the ordination of the Rev. John McMillan, the patriarch of western Pennsylvania, at Chambersburg, Pa., June 19, 1776, and also the charge at the ordination and installation of Dr. Cathcart, at York, Pa., in 1793.

"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, forever and ever."

**Rev. Robert Davidson, D. D.**

Mr. Davidson was a native of Maryland, born at Elkton in 1750, graduated at the University of Pennsylvania, at Philadelphia, in 1771, was licensed by the Presbytery of New Castle at the age of twenty-two. At the age of twenty-four he was appointed instructor in the University of Pennsylvania, and was soon made professor of history. At the same time, 1774, he was chosen assistant to Dr. Ewing, pastor of the First church, and was ordained by the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

In these positions he was distinguished for learning, patriotism and piety, and for his ability and zeal, for his purity of character and life as a minister of the gospel.

In 1784 he was chosen professor of logic, metaphysics and ethics in Dickinson College provisionally, and acted as its temporary president, on the recommendation of Dr. Rush, a warm friend and patron of the institution, and who wrote to Dr. Nisbet, saying: "His name will be of use to us, for he is a man of learning and of excellent private character."

In 1785 he accepted a call from the first Presbyterian congregation of Carlisle, and was installed April 27, 1785. He received the honorary title of D. D. from the University of Pennsylvania at the age of twenty-five.