

THE  
NASSAU LITERARY MAGAZINE

VOL. LVIII

APRIL, 1903

No. 9

Andromache: A Fragment

BAIRD PRIZE POEM FOR THE YEAR 1903

sollemnis cum forte dapes et tristia dona  
ante urbem in luco fali Simoëntis ad undam  
libebat cineri Andromache, Manisque vocabat  
Hectoreum ad tumulum, viridi quem caespite inanem  
et geminas, causam lacrimis, sacraverate aras.

*Vergil — ÆNEID: III; 301 et seq.*

SEMI-CHORUS OF PRIESTS

O daughter of Eëtion,  
The yellow light along the grass  
Lies warm and welcome to our eyes;  
And lo! we see, her victory won,  
Returning Spring in triumph pass  
Far up the hills' haze-softened rise,  
Where every grove with new life teems  
And Echo banters loose-tongued streams.

SEMI-CHORUS OF HANDMAIDENS

Now, far afield, the pipes of Pan  
Ring clear and mellow through the trees;  
The dryads hear some satyr's voice  
That calls to gods or cries to man:  
"Apace the sullen Winter flees —  
The woods, the earth, the skies rejoice!"  
O Lady, Peace comes with the years —  
Let Spring within thee still thy tears.

## A Week in the Log College Country

**A**N ordinary traveller passing along the turnpike that winds southward through the county of Bucks in Pennsylvania would take no particular interest in a certain empty field lying on his left; but were he a lover of history he would stop short and gaze earnestly, for in the middle of a potato-patch, just where a knoll rises, stood once the structure that has become famous to posterity as the Log College. Not for its size or architectural beauty did it gain renown, for it was only eighteen by twenty feet and built of the crudest materials; but because within its wooden walls were trained youths who became the intellectual giants of their day and who helped to found, among other educational institutions, the College of New Jersey. It is not remarkable then that the public at large, and Princetonians especially, have a deep interest in this building and its founder; and this interest is increased by the fact that our knowledge regarding their appearance and character is based entirely on the writings of one person, George Whitefield, who kept a diary during his evangelistic tours in this country.

Let us first glance at the meagre facts that history has given us concerning the founder, William Tennant. Born in 1673 at Armagh, Ireland, he inherited the energy, wit and fearlessness common to Irish blood. He was educated at the University of Edinburgh and soon after his graduation took clerical orders and became the private chaplain of an Irish nobleman; but an acquaintance with a certain Mr. Kennedy who had been persecuted for his non-conformist views (and whose daughter he married), made him "scrupulous of conforming to the terms imposed on the "clergy of the establishment" and having, therefore, been forced to resign from the church, he brought his wife and four sons to America in 1716. During the next years that

preceeded the beginning of his real life work, Tennant acted with characteristic energy. Applying for admittance to the Philadelphia Synod, then the leading judicatory of the Presbyterian Church in America, he was received and we are told that he "delivered before the Synod an elegant Latin oration." He next pursued his ministerial labors at East Chester and Bedford in New York state until 1721 when he was called to a small pastorate at Bensalem in Bucks County, Pa. Here he remained until 1726 when he was summoned to Neshaminy in the same county and in this vicinity he resided until the day of his death, May 6th, 1746. While this final period of twenty years was his main tempus operandi, in that it witnessed the founding of the historic school and the building of the church on the Neshaminy River, the previous events of his life are nevertheless significant, for they reveal the decision and independence of the man and presage the greater deeds that followed.

One of the problems that confronted Tennant was the education of his sons. At this time there were only three colleges in the colonies: Harvard and Yale in the north and William and Mary in the south. Between them lay a vast extent of territory in which were but few schools and these of the most rudimentary sort. Tennant had not the means to send his boys so far to college, yet he appreciated the value of a first-class training; accordingly, with their assistance, he erected a small log structure and in this humble building took upon himself the education of his sons and a few others who lived in the immediate neighborhood. Under the date of Nov. 22, 1739, Whitefield wrote in his diary: "Set out for Neshaminy (twenty miles distant from Trent Town), where old Mr. Tennant lives, and "keeps an academy, and where I was to preach, to-day, "according to appointment," and the following extract shows that, unassuming as this institution was, it was not

without its detractors: "the place wherein the young men study now is, in contempt, called the Log College." For several years longer Tennant labored incessantly but in 1742 his ill health compelled him to resign his pastorate and although he lingered until 1746 he seems in these closing years to have withdrawn from all active work. The writer, determining to investigate the Tennant country for himself, spent a week in Bucks county, taking Doylestown, the county-seat, as a head-quarters and making short tours into the country round-about. It may be remarked in passing that the entire district is a gold-mine for the seeker of historical nuggets. Its first settlers received their grants from no less a distinguished personage than William Penn; upon its soil were born and nurtured celebrated men like Zebulon Pike and Daniel Morgan; and here lived Hannah Simpson, the mother of Grant, and the ancestors of Polk and Roosevelt. But the one concerning whom local tradition speaks most often and whose memory is held in greatest reverence is Tennant.

A drive of an hour brings one close to the Neshaminy, a small river about the size of the Millstone, and upon the left bank, shaded by tall pines, lies the old cemetery in which Tennant was buried. I was fortunate enough to secure as a guide Henderson Darrah who has lived near by for many years and who is one of the elders of the present Neshaminy church—together we inspected the site of the first church. The spot where the pulpit stood is now marked by a raised slab to the memory of Nathaniel Irwin, one of the later pastors, and all that remains of the original structure is a stone set in the wall which bounds the front of the cemetery. It is a block about a foot square, green with moss, and upon its face is the legend:

W M

W G

1727

The stone was formerly in one end of the church nearly

up to the gable and the date is unquestionably that of the year in which the edifice was built. But Tennant was called to Neshaminy in 1726 and therefore for a year he must have been without a regular auditorium. Probably he used some neighboring house until the church was built and doubtless it was his energetic spirit that took the lead in this enterprise. The letters upon the stone have been a subject of much conjecture: many are of the opinion that they are the initials of the architects, who carved them after the completion of their task; while others believe that they were cut many years later by unknown persons for no other reason than their own vanity. In this connection Mr. Darrah related a story. A friend of his placed his own initials on the stone in 1851; whereupon Mr. Darrah immediately brought his hammer and chisel and chipped them off, remarking afterwards to his friend that "there 'd been enough trouble guessing what the letters meant that were already on there without fooling people with some more that did n't mean anything." The traces of this philanthropic act are still visible.

Within a few feet of the site of the old church is the grave of its founder. The slab which formerly indicated the place is now hidden beneath a more elegant granite monument erected a few years ago, and upon this is inscribed:

In Memory of  
Rev. William Tennant, Sen.  
Pastor of Neshaminy Church 1726-1742  
And of Deep Run Church 1720-1738,  
Died May 6, 1746 Aged 73 years  
Founder of Log College *Struit melius quam scirit.*

From the cemetery it is only a few minutes ride to Hartsville where one meets the York Road. This historic thoroughfare is itself worthy of mention for it dates back to the beginning of the eighteenth century and was traversed many a time by Benjamin Franklin, especially

after his appointment as Deputy Postmaster General. Following for a mile in the track of my illustrious predecessor and paying a penny at the toll-house as did he, I found a second pilot just beyond in the person of Thomas Engart. He left a wagon half-washed and led the way to the exact spot which tradition names as the site of the Log College. Although tradition is the only authority, no one has ever questioned the site. When the anniversary of the founding of the college was celebrated in 1889, the exercises were held upon this spot and if any doubts as to its genuineness existed, they would certainly have been expressed at that time. The building faced the York Road, standing about forty feet back upon a gentle rise. Toward the north and north-east, hills meet the horizon and the many trees that are standing within view to-day seem to indicate that the land was once densely wooded. The Neshaminy River lies a mile and a half to the north but cannot be seen from this point. Bare enough the country appeared that March day; the trees looked cold in their nakedness and rotting potato-vines covered the site of the college: but in the full spring time the region is said to be most attractive. After the death of Tennant, the building was torn down and some of the logs (o tempora! o mores!) were converted into a hog-pen; others were taken across the road by one of the Carrells (of whom more anon) and formed part of a house which still remains. A Mrs. Guyon lived here later and in the house was a wooden crane which is said to have been used for cooking purposes in the Log College. This she took with her upon her removal to Philadelphia. At the time of the celebration, Johnson Beaus, who then resided on an adjoining farm, went to Philadelphia, secured the loan of the crane for exhibition and endeavored to purchase it for the Bucks County Historical Society, but the owner declined to part with it for the amount offered. It is doubtless still in her possession.

Prior to the house built by Mr. Carrell and upon the same site, stood the home of Tennant. Indeed, part of the stone foundation of the present building is still pointed out as belonging to the former dwelling and Dr. Alexander in his "Log College" speaks thus of the original structure: "Here, within a few steps of his own dwelling, he erected "the building which has already been described." A person named Kirby now lives on the property and the Log College lot across the road is included in the farm of Nathan E. Perkins.

The sun was touching the hills when I drove on down the turnpike and stopped before a large, colonial house in the village of Hatborough. An elderly lady answered my ring and in response to the query whether she knew of any documents connected with the Tennant property, said that there were some old papers in the garret but that she had not examined them. She soon returned with several musty, yellow parchments which she gave to me with the remark that they were of no possible benefit to herself. The first bore the inscription:

White }  
to } Releafe  
Tennant } of land in Buck Co.  
Sept. 11th 1735

and by the greatest good fortune it proved to be the original deed for the purchase of the land on which Tennant built his home and the Log College. The document is written in the old fashioned script and begins thus: "This indenture made the eleventh day of September in "the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and "thirty-five between John White of the city of Philadelphia "merchant of the one part and the Reverend William Tennant of Northampton in Bucks County Clerg of the other "part." The words "of Northampton" are important for it had been supposed that Tennant lived continuously at Neshaminy from 1726 until his death in 1746; but North-

ampton was at least a mile and a half south of Neshaminy and it is evident that Tennant must have moved to that locality some time after 1726 and dwelt there before he purchased the land of White in 1735. Also, since the Log College was upon the same property, we are forced to conclude either that Tennant rented or was given the use of a small lot for his school before 1735 (of which no record remains); or else that he held his school elsewhere, perhaps at Northampton, until he bought the property and then erected his log building. The deed then states that Tennant paid £140 for the land and describes the boundaries in the interesting if unscientific method of those days: "Beginning at a Spanish oak marked for a corner "thence northeast by George Harris land forty-two perches to "a marked hickery etc." This is followed by a brief history of the land before its possession by John White showing that it was formerly owned by one Joseph Howell who left unpaid debts at his decease, whereupon the property was seized by Timothy Smith, High Sheriff of the county of Bucks, and sold at auction to White who was the highest bidder. The document concludes with a signed receipt of White for the money, the signatures of the witnesses and the seal of red wax which is still intact.

The other deeds indicate that after Tennant's death, his wife Katherine and his eldest son Gilbert sold the land to a certain James Baldwin who in 1748 resold it to James Carrell and Miss Matilda Carrell, the donor of the documents, is the great-great-granddaughter of James Carrell. In a foot note to his *History of the Neshaminy Church*, written about 1850, the Rev. D. K. Turner mentions the documents, but for over half a century they have lain untouched in the attic of the Carrell house and owing to the fact that they are of parchment, they are as legible as on the day when they were written, one hundred and sixty-eight years ago.

By means of other deeds in the court-house at Doylestown, the owners of the Log College site can be readily traced back to James Carrell, proving unquestionably that the White to Tennant deed covers the present accepted location of the College. Among other valuable papers in the court-house is the will of Tennant and also an inventory of all his moveable property, made presumably after his decease. Inasmuch as these documents have not hitherto appeared in print, they are given here in full:

## WILLIAM TENNANTS

## WILL

This Sixteenth Day of February Annog Domini one thosand Seven hundred & forty five I William Tenant Senir Minister of the Gospel in the Township of Warminster in the County of Bucks and Province of Pennsylvania being weak  
in Body but of sound Mind

and Memory Thanks be to God therefore Call to mind the  
Mortality of my

Body and knowing that it is appointed for all men once to Dy Do make & ordain this my last Will and Testament in the Manner and Form following Imp'r I will that all my Just Debts be paid & fully discharged Item I Give and bequeath unto Kathren my dearly beloved Wife all my Moveable Eftate to be by her pofsefsed and enjoyed and  
appoint and Conftitute

her my Executrix of all my s'd Moveable Eftate so that she May at her Death or any Time before give devise or dispose of the same as she may See Cause to my Dear Sons William and Charles Tenant or to any of their Children And Also I will that my s'd well beloved Wife have Ufe, occupy and enjoy all the Rents Ifsues and Profits whatsoever that may and shall arise or accrue from my Plantation whereon I now Live or from any part thereof and that during her Natural Life And then I will that my well beloved Son Gilbert Tenant whom I conftitute make and appoint my only & Sole Executor of this my Laft Will and Teftament as concerning all my Plantation, Messuage And Track of Land So that I authorize and oppoint him to sell and lawfully to convey away the same and the Money ariseing from said Sale I will that one hundred

pounds Current lawfull Money of s'd Province be paid to my Grandson William Son of William Tenant Jun'r and fifty Pounds of like lawfull Money be paid to my Grandson William Son of Charles Tenant and after that my Exe'c hath paid himself for his Trouble what may then remain I Desire that he may at his own Difgreffion Divid among my Children And I do herby utterly Disallow Revoke and Disanul all and every former Testaments Wills Legacies and Executors by me in any wife before this Time named willed and bequeathed Ratifying & confirming this and no other to be my last Will and Testament In Witnefs whereof I have hereunto Set my Hand and Seal the Day and Year first above written  
 WILLIAM TENNENT (seal)  
 Signed Sealed published pronounced and Declared by the said William Tenant Seni'r as his last Will and Testament in the Presence of Charles Beatty Evan Jones.

An Inventory of the Goods and Chattoles of the Rev. Mr. William Tenant of Warminster in Bucks County Is as followeth

To apparel	£10	0	110
To a Desk Cubort and four Tables	4	0	0
To Eighteen Chairs and Looking Glafs	1	13	—
To Watch and Tea Ware	5	5	—0
To Puller and Tinn Ware	5	10	—0
To Brafs Iron and Copper Ware	6	04	—0
To Barrels and all wooden Ware	3	—15	—0
To Chests Boxes Cuburt and Dough trough	1	—10	—0
To Carpenters Tools Sickle Stylyards	2	—	0—0
To Bed Beding and Two Spining Wheels	5	—	1 0
To Implyments of Husbandry	3	5	0
To Sadles and Bridles	3	0	0
To the Wagon Syder Mill and prefs	8	5	
To the Corn In the Gorund	8	0	0
To Two Horfes	12	0	0
To the Cattle and Hogs	8	0	0
To the Three Negroes	40	0	0
To the Servants Times	10	0	0

As the Several particulars Were prised this Eighth Day of April 1746 by us as witnefs our hands

JACOBUS C (name obliterated)  
 EVAN JONES