

JOURNAL

OF THE

Presbyterian Historical Society

VOL. II.

SEPTEMBER, 1904.

No. 6.

PRESIDENT DAVIES AS A HYMN WRITER.

BY LOUIS F. BENSON, D. D.

It is the purpose of this paper to make some record of the work of the Reverend Samuel Davies as a writer of hymns. Of Davies, as man and missionary, preacher and president, it may be said that ample memorials are already at hand.

The impression made upon his friends by his strong personality drew forth, soon after his death (on February 4th, 1761), several memorial tributes, of which the sermons by Dr. Gibbons and President Finley and the biographical sketch by Mr. Bostwick have been repeatedly printed in editions of Davies's sermons.

As time passed on, and the estimate of Davies and his work increased rather than diminished, these early obituary discourses were supplemented by more deliberate estimates of the man and his relation to the times in which he lived.

The recognition of Davies's work in Virginia called forth a Memoir by the Rev. John H. Rice, D. D., running through the numbers of the second volume of his *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, from March to December, 1819.¹ An extended study of Davies's career covers three chapters of Dr. William Henry Foote's *Sketches of Virginia* (First Series), Philadelphia,

¹ Dr. Ashbel Green in the notes to his *Discourses delivered in the College of New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1822) refers to these papers as "Dr. Rice's Memoir of Samuel Davies," which is perhaps the occasion of Allibone's citing them in his *Dictionary of Authors* as though a separate publication. But I can find no evidence of their republication in book form.

NOTES.

THE REV. DR. EZRA STILES ELY.

His Philadelphia Home.—On Second Street, a few doors above Spruce, is a driveway with iron gates opening into a large yard, where stands in the grandeur of decay a Colonial house, known as the Waln or Ely Mansion. This house was purchased from the estate of Nicholas Waln by the Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely, D. D., pastor of the Old Pine Street Church, and there, in the midst of a neighborhood which was then the fashionable residential section of the city, Dr. Ely lived for many years, using the little "lodge" structure by the gate (it, too, is still standing) as his pastoral study. It is the only house in the block whose exterior has not been altered or entirely destroyed in the seventy years which have made Second Street a business centre. To go into this old house, walk through the broad hallway, and look into the stately parlors, carries one back into the early days of the nineteenth century, when Ezra Stiles Ely, gentleman, scholar, and philanthropist, ministered to the congregation of Old Pine Street for over twenty years, and honored his parish and the Presbyterian Church as much as the parish and the Church honored him.

His Earlier Life.—Ezra Stiles Ely was born at Lebanon, Connecticut, on June 13th, 1786, of good old New England stock, and was named after the president of Yale College, of which his father and grandfather were graduates. He entered Yale at the age of thirteen, and was the seventeenth of his family to matriculate at that institution. He graduated in 1803 and a year later received the degree of Master of Arts. He studied theology with his father, and was ordained and installed pastor at Colchester, Connecticut, in 1806, being then in his twenty-first year. In 1810 he became chaplain to the City Hospital and Almshouse in New York. His experience in this work gave him the material for his first book, *Ely's Journal*, which was reprinted in England under the title of *Visits of Mercy*.

His Philadelphia Pastorate, 1814-1835.—We cannot attempt to estimate the twenty-one years of a brilliant and eminently successful pastorate that crowned the first seventy years of Old Pine Street history. There are still on our active roll, after a lapse of a second seventy years, some who were children in the church in Dr. Ely's time, some on whom he laid his hands in baptism, some to whom he taught the catechism, and many others whose parents received their religious instruction at his hands and were married by him. The old records that are before me now tell more eloquently than words the fruitfulness of his labors, and the loving care with which he gathered and preserved by laborious copying in his own handwriting earlier records that would otherwise have been lost. No other pastor has shown so clear a realization of the importance that future generations would attach to the early history of Old Pine Street.

Notwithstanding his arduous pastoral duties he found time for work

both within and without the church. He was editor of the *Philadelphian*, and wrote some famous books, principally in the line of polemic theology.

During his entire pastorate at Old Pine Street he was prominent in the General Assembly, and was twelve times a delegate. In 1828 he was elected Moderator, and from 1825 to 1836 he served as Stated Clerk, of which position Dr. Duffield had been the first incumbent. The year of his moderatorship was signalized by the publication of his most popular book, *The Collateral Bible; or, Key to the Holy Scriptures*.

His Home Life.—Dr. Ely was a man of large independent means. He lived well, and yet he always had more money to spend on others than on himself. He felt keenly the responsibility of his stewardship, and was an exemplary Christian giver. He gave freely of what he had, often exceeding his income. When Jefferson Medical College, of whose Board of Trustees he was president, needed a more eligible site and more commodious buildings, he purchased a lot of ground on Tenth Street above Walnut (the lot on which the new buildings for the college are now being erected), and put up entirely at his own expense the building which was used for over half a century. This munificent act, to quote the *History of Jefferson Medical College*, "gave an impetus to the fortunes of the college which placed it above the risk of failure, . . . and so long as Jefferson Medical College remains the name of Dr. Ely will be held in remembrance as one of its greatest benefactors."

In his home life Dr. Ely was unfortunate. He had married a member of the church, Miss Carswell, and her death deprived the children of the maternal control, so much needed in their training. The evil of too little attention and too much luxury was most harmful. His favorite son went away from home in disgrace. His daughter, a belle of the city, and one of the most beautiful women in America, left him, and took up her residence in Paris, where she became one of the most brilliant and notorious women of the French Court.

His Later Life.—In 1835 Dr. Ely reluctantly resigned the pastorate of Old Pine Street Church, because he felt that his duty called him to the West. He had with all the enthusiasm of his nature conceived the idea of founding a Presbyterian city at Marion, Missouri, which should contain a theological seminary, a college, and industries that were sorely needed in the development of the West, then an almost unknown country. Dr. Ely undoubtedly felt that it was duty's call, and for the realization of this dream he was willing to sacrifice his fortune and the pleasant, cultured life of Philadelphia. Many of his congregation were involved in this scheme, and forsook their home to follow him. Marion was a failure, and Dr. Ely was broken in health and irretrievably ruined. But his spirit was not broken nor his zeal for the Master's service abated. After struggling against fate for several years he returned to Philadelphia and with a courage that had in it all of heroism he put his hand again to the plow, and for eight years served as pastor of the First Church,

Northern Liberties. In 1852 he reached the limit of endurance, and broke down completely. But death was not merciful, and he lived on, bearing his cross until June 18th, 1861.

A man of gigantic intellect, indomitable courage and energy, and withal of humble spirit and unfailing courtesy, he lived a true and wholesome life. Born and raised and launched into manhood with Fortune ever smiling upon him, before his prime he became one of the eminent men of his day. With the means to gratify his every wish, and the breeding and education to enjoy the good things of life, he wanted for nothing. Then, when the misfortunes of Job came upon him, and he was assailed on all sides, wounded by those he loved, and disappointed in the work to which he had given his life and soul, he drank of the bitter cup of heartache and failure, without a murmur, for the Lord was with him and he knew it.—[Extracts from a sketch of Dr. Ely by Herbert Adams Gibbons, in *Old Pine Street Church News* for June, 1904.]

His Portrait.—There has been hung in the pastor's study of the church an oil portrait of Dr. Ely, pastor of Old Pine Street Church from 1814 to 1835, and one of the noted men of his day.

Dr. Gibbons recently received this portrait from Lehman P. Ashmead, Esq., an Old Pine Street boy of seventy years ago. The following extract from the letter which accompanied the gift is of interest :

“This family picture of the Rev. Dr. Ezra Stiles Ely, formerly pastor of your church some seventy years ago, belonged to my devoted mother, who considered it a precious relic, and always had it on the wall by her bedside until she passed into eternity, in her ninetieth year, at the close of the Centennial ; also my aged sister, Maria, who died in the old residence on South Fourth Street, in her eighty-fourth year, ten years ago. I have another aged sister still living in Germantown in her ninety-first year. She was one of the zealous young church members who accompanied Dr. Ely in his enterprise to found a Presbyterian colony at Marion, in the State of Missouri, the location of which at that early period was a wilderness surrounded by Indians. My sister and her husband fully shared in the hardships and disastrous failure of Dr. Ely's project, and probably she is the only one of the party now in life. I have another older sister, in her eighty-eighth year, living in England. She, in early life, was one of Dr. Ely's devoted Sunday-school teachers at the Old Pine Street Church. So you see my desire that the quaint old picture be preserved is not strange ; rather than to allow it, perchance, to drift with other pictures into an ordinary auction store sale. It is a most excellent likeness of Dr. Ely, just as he dressed, and vividly recalls recollections of my happy boyhood days at the good Old Pine Street Church, under whose teaching I was born and reared into Christian love and faith. I have just passed my eighty-first birthday, and this old picture of Dr. Ely coming into my hands, and with no one after me to leave it to, the thought is inspired that the most fitting spot

for it to find permanent rest should be within the walls of the ancient church building itself, among the venerable associations of eighty years past."—From *Old Pine Street Church News* for February, 1904.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF KING'S MOUNTAIN.

At the meeting of the Executive Council of The Presbyterian Historical Society, held on June 20th, 1904, the following paper, offered by the Rev. Henry C. McCook, D. D., was unanimously adopted :

"Whereas, October 7th, A. D., 1905, will be the 125th anniversary of the battle of King's Mountain, in which many of our Presbyterian ancestors of Scotch-Irish descent took part on the side of the patriots, this Presbyterian Historical Society ventures to call public attention to this fact, and to suggest that citizens of the four States especially interested therein, and the various patriotic societies throughout the country, take early action toward an adequate celebration of this important event."

The Clerk of the Society was instructed to send a copy to the Governors of the following States: North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee.

CAPTAIN CHARLES ROSS

In the graveyard of the First Presbyterian Church, Pine Street above Fourth, Philadelphia, an elaborate monument, surmounted by military trophies in bronze and standing within a railed enclosure, marks the grave of Charles Ross. On its four sides are the following inscriptions :

"This Monument is erected by the Members of the 'First Troop, Philadelphia City Cavalry,' friends and associates of their late Commander, Charles Ross, of which Troop He was a Member 23 years and Captain 6 years. Consecrated by Friendship to departed Worth. The virtues of the Brave and Honourable we cherish."

"In Memoriam, CAROLI ROSS Equitis Turmae Equitum Ducis Qui Natus est V^{to} Octobris MDCCLXXII Obiit VIII^o Octobris MDCCCXVII Ætatis suae XLVI."

"In the field to the many virtues of the Soldier, he joined the discipline, honour and deportment of the Officer. In private life the urbanity of the gentleman, the valuable qualities of the useful citizen, dutiful son, affectionate brother, sincere friend, governed his conduct. Noble, generous, honourable, intrepid, he departed in the prime of life. It is left for us to mourn his loss, to emulate his character, and by this testimony of our affection to show our respect for his talents and his virtue."

"Sacred to the memory of CHARLES ROSS.

"How sleep the brave who sink to rest
By all their Country's wishes blest !

"The body decays, but the immortal soul awaits the last trumpet's joyful sound."