SKETCHES

OF

VIRGINIA,

HISTORICAL

AND

BIOGRAPHICAL.

BY THE

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This whole yard is strewed with the ancient dead. These new-looking monuments mark the beginning of a second century among the graves. Excellence and beauty lie here. How gladly would we stop at the very grave of William Hoge, from whom have descended so many honorable families, and so many ministers of the Gospel! And "the beauty of Opecquon" — who shall tell us where she laid down, heart-broken, to rest? To this yard hundreds and hundreds in Virginia, and the far West, will come to seek the sepulchres of their emigrating ancestors. At the Resurrection there will be joyous meetings.

Could proper memoranda of Back Creek, Falling Waters, and Tuscarora, in Berkeley County, and Elk Branch and Bull Skin, in Jefferson, and of the south branch in Hardy, be brought to light, reflections, profitable and impressive, would cluster around the recollections and memorials of the worthy emigrants. They were of the same race as those of Opecquon, and probably not a whit behind in excellence. In the absence of other testimony, these examples must guide our judgment respecting the congregations in the northern part of the great Valley of the Shenandoah.

CHAPTER II.

THE SETTLEMENTS ON THE FORKS OF THE SHENANDOAH—THE STONE CHURCH.

The traveller on the great paved road from Winchester to Staunton, after passing the eighty-third mile-stone, sees on his right, (about eight miles from Staunton), in a grove of ancient oaks, a stone building, of antique and singular appearance. The east end is towards the road, with a large doorway for folding doors, about midway from the corners of the house; and on one side of this large entrance is a low, narrow door, according with no known architecture or proportion. Near the ridge of the roof the gable slants a number of feet, as if the corner of the roof and gable had been cut off, and the vacancy covered with shingles. A little above the great door is a window of modern construction. On the north side of the house is an appendage, a small room with walls and chimney of stone. Diverging from the road, in the path long trod by the generations assembling here, the visitor will perceive, at a small distance from the house, traces of a ditch and the remains of an embankment, drawn quite round the house in a military style. This is the oldest house of worship in the Valley of Virginia. It has seen the revolution of years carrying away generations of men, and their habitations, and their churches. The light pine doors speak at once their modern origin, swinging in the place of the massy

oaks that hung upon the solid posts, in unison with the walls that now, after the storms of a century have left their marks, give no signs of speedy decay. Reared before Braddock's war, this house was to the early emigrants a place for the worship of Almighty God, and a retreat from the inroads of the savages, the dwelling-place of mercy, and a refuge from the storm. That ditch was deep, and that bank had its palisade; and that little door was the wicker-gate, and that room was the kitchen, when the alarm of approaching savages filled the house and closed the massy doors. Thus secured, the courageous women and children could defend themselves from any savage attack while the strong men went to their fields, or to drive off the intruding foe. On the other side of the great road is the place where these adventurous emigrants were laid to repose till dust has returned to dust, in close assemblage, as in the house of God, or the palisaded fort.

These first settlers of this beautiful country were like those of Opecquon, from the north of Ireland, the blended Scotch-Irish, and in search, as they said, of freedom of conscience with a competence in the wilderness; and for these they cheerfully left their homes and kindred in Ireland. Unallured by the speedy steamers and comfortable packets, they crossed the great abyss of waters, and sought the mountains of Virginia. Benjamin Burden and William Beverly had each obtained a large grant of land from Governor Gooch, to be located west of the Blue Ridge, on the head-waters of the Shenandoah and the James. Each of these was interested to procure settlers by the terms of the grant, and for their own convenience and profit. Beverly was from the lower country of Virginia, a branch of the well-known family; Burden was an enterprizing trader from New Jersey, and had ingratiated himself with the Governor. John Lewis was from Ireland, by way of Portugal, to which he first fled after a bloody encounter with an oppressive land-holder, of whom Lewis was lessee. Lewis brought his wife, Mary Lynn, and four sons, Andrew, Thomas, William, and Charles, and one daughter, as we are told by Colonel Stuart, of Greenbrier, and made his locations on a creek running into the Middle Forks of Shenandoah. His residence was a few miles below Staunton, which stands on the same creek, called, after the first settler, Lewis. John Mackey at the same time took his residence at Buffalo Gap; and John Salling at the forks of James river, below the Natural Bridge. Lewis located land in different places, making judicious selections. Beverly's tract lay across the valley, the upper edge of which included Staunton. Burden's tract was in the upper part of Augusta, and in Rockbridge.

Great efforts were made to call the attention of emigrants, who, landing on the Delaware, were finding their way to the lower end of the valley, and the pleasant country at the eastern base of the Blue Ridge, on the waters of the James and Roanoke. Advertisements were sent to meet the emigrants at landing, and also, it is said, across the water. It does not appear that either of these

gentlemen went, or sent agents to Europe, to seek for emigrants: that was not necessary. The tide of emigration was rapid. The invitations offering the most favorable terms, were the most successful. Beverly and Burden could present more encouraging circumstances in the upper end of the valley, than Hite and others could at the lower end, threatened as they were by Fairfax, with lawsuits, and all the vexations of litigation. And before the year 1738, numerous settlements were made on the prairie hills and vales of the Triple Forks of Shenandoah.

The old stone church, with the grave-yard near, was the centre of a cluster of neighborhoods. Emigrants in sufficient numbers to form a congregation able to support a minister, would scatter abroad in distant localities in this beautiful region, scarcely near enough for self-defence, or to assemble on the sabbath. Families chose their residence according as they fancied a spring of water, a running stream, a hill, a piece of woods, a prairie, or extensive range for cattle and horses, or abundance of game, that gathered in some valleys. The first consequence of this wide occupation of the country was ease of living. The range was sufficient for the cattle and horses, summer and winter. A few fields were tilled for bread. The next consequence was a long ride or walk to meet in congregations for public worship on the sabbath; and by degrees the people became disused to the sanctuary, and began to lose a regard for religious ordinances. The third was exposure to savage inroads. For some twenty years the emigrants were unmolested. Some that had known war in Ireland, lived and died in that peace in this wilderness, for which their hearts longed in their native land. Others in the quietness and abundance of this isolated county, began to think wars and fightings were confined to the legends of past days. The use of fire-arms, in which they became expert, was to supply from the wild game their returning appetites.

Missionaries speedily followed these emigrants. "A supplication from the people of Beverly Manor, in the back parts of Virginia," was laid before the Presbytery of Donegal, September 2d, 1737—"requesting supplies. The Presbytery judge it not expedient for several reasons to supply them this winter; but order Mr. Anderson (James) to write an encouraging letter to the people to signify that the Presbytery resolves, if it be in their power, to grant their request next spring." Mr. Anderson was the bearer of the petition of the Synod of Philadelphia, to Governor Gooch of Virginia, made at the request of John Caldwell and others, in 1738, to obtain protection in the exercise of their religious preferences. Having been kindly received, he visited the emigrants in the valley with assurances from the Governor, of protection in the exercise of their consciences in matters of religion, and encouragement to extend their settlements.

Another supplication was presented in September, 1739. "The Presbytery having discoursed at some length upon it, and hearing Mr. Thompson express his willingness in some degree to be ser-

viceable to that people, if the Lord shall please to call him thereto, and if other difficulties in the way be surmounted, the Presbytery look on him as a very fit person for the great undertaking. Mr. Thompson made a number of visits to the Valley of the Shenandoah, and to the Presbyterian Congregations east of the Ridge; and finally took his residence for some years in Prince Edward, near or with his son-in-law, Mr. Sankey, minister of Buffalo. The same year, 1739, Mr. John Craig, a licentiate, was sent by the Presbytery to visit "Opecquon, the High Tract, and other societies of our persuasion in Virginia, at his discretion." The next spring from different congregations there came up "supplications, wherein they request that Presbytery, by reason of great distance, please to form a call to Mr. Craig, and affix the names to the call of the subscribers to said supplications." The Presbytery called on Mr. Craig for information and his wishes in respect to these supplications. Mr. Craig expressed himself in favor of the "call from the inhabitants at Shenandoah and the South river;" the Presbytery directed Mr. Sankey to prepare a call. On the 17th of June, Mr. Craig declared his acceptance; and in September, 1740, passed his trials for ordination. "Robert Doag and Daniel Dennison from Virginia, declared in the name of the congregation of Shenandoah, their adherence to the call formerly presented to Mr. Craig"—the next day was appointed as "a day of solemn fasting and prayer, to be observed by all parties concerned, in order to implore the divine blessing and concurrence in the great undertaking." Mr. Sankey preached from Jeremiah 3. 15, "I will give you pastors after mine own heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding;" and Mr. Craig was set apart for the work of the gospel ministry in the south part of Beverly's Manor."

Mr. Craig was the first Presbyterian minister regularly settled in the Colony of Virginia. In his old age, he prepared for his descendants a manuscript volume containing the important facts of his life, interspersed with reflections, prayers, and meditations. It is entitled—

A preacher preaching to himself from a long text of no less than sixty years: On review of past life.

"I was born August 17th, 1709, in the parish of Dunagor, County Antrim, Ireland, of pious parents, the child of their old age, tenderly loved, but in prudent government, and by early instructions in the principles of religion as I was capable of receiving them, which had strong effects on my young and tender mind, (being then about five or six years of age,) and engaged me to fly to God with prayers and tears in secret, for pardon, peace, guidance and direction, while in the world, and to fit me for death; and what appears strange to me now, the just thoughts and expressions that were given to me, and the strict care of my conduct, lest in my

childish folly, I should sin against God; and the correct desire I had to know more of God and my duty to him, made me diligent, and the task easy, to learn to read the word of God, which then and ever since gave me great delight and pleasure: and though I endeavored to conceal my little religious exercises and acts of devotion, my affectionate and tender parents discovered my conduct, and turn of mind, and thirst after knowledge, which raised in them pleasing hopes, and engaged them contrary to their former designs, to bestow upon me a liberal education." About the age of fourteen or fifteen, he made profession of religion, being admitted, after examination, to the Lord's table, by Rev. Alexander Brown, who baptized him. While at school he was careful to avoid those companions that might lead him into the imitation of their vicious ways. He was at first shocked by the depravity he saw around:—this he says — "made me pray more earnestly that God would keep me from falling in with those views. As for my conduct and diligence for the space of eight or nine years at school, I never received one stroke, or so much as a sharp rebuke from all the masters I was with: but still gained the favor of them all." He then spent some years in reading Algebra, and the Mathematics generally, Logic, Metaphysics, Pneumatics and Ethics — and also Geography and History, ecclesiastical and profane: and then he repaired to Scotland, and in the college at Edinburgh, attained to the degree of A. M. Anno Domini, 1732. His observations in college, and the opening prospects in worldly matters, embarrassed him greatly in his choice of a profession. After much perplexity he resolved to attend the physicians' hall. A long and dangerous illness that came upon him was accompanied with the sufferings of an accusing conscience. After a confinement of about six months, unexpectedly to himself and others he recovered. He had wept and prayed, and humbled himself before God. "Patrimony and estate had then little weight in my mind, being well convinced that God who saved my life from death would support it, while he had any service for it. So I cast myself upon his care, and earnestly prayed for his direction." He was now pretty much settled in his convictions that he ought to engage in the ministry of the gospel.

"America was then much in my mind accompanied with the argument — that service would be most pleasing and acceptable, where most needful and wanting — which raised in me a strong desire to see that part of the world. I consulted my parents and friends, who did not much hinder my designs. I earnestly cried to God for his directions, that he would restrain or encourage me, as he saw it would be to his glory and my happiness. At that time I had a dream or vision, representing to me as it were in miniature, the whole that has happened to me of any importance these thirty-five years; yea, the very place I have been settled in these thirty years. I knew it at first sight, and I have done here what was represented to me then. I thought little of it then, though often of it since."

He embarked at Learn, June 10th, 1734, and was landed at New Castle upon Delaware, on the 17th of the succeeding August. "I escaped a very imminent danger, without any means but the kind hand of providence, being accidentally cast overboard in a dark and tempestuous night. I lay as on a bed of down on my back, on the raging wave which tossed me back on the ship's side, where I found hold and sprung aboard, and none aboard knew of it. When I came ashore I met with an old acquaintance, Rev. Benjamin Campbell, minister of New Castle. He was then aguish, and died about two months after, greatly to my grief."

He attended the Synod of Philadelphia, in September 1734, and delivered his letters of introduction to the members. "It gave me both grief and joy, to see that Synod; grief, to see the small number and mean appearance; joy, to see their mutual love and good order, and men of solid sense among them, and steady to the Presbyterian principles, and against all innovations, which began to appear at this Synod, from an overture read publicly by the Rev. Gilbert Tennant, concerning the receiving of candidates into the ministry, and communicants to the Lord's table—which he imbibed from one Mr. Frelingheusen, a low Dutch minister, which notions were then openly rejected, but afterwards prevailed so far as to decide the Synod, and put the Church of God here into the utmost confusion." After looking around, with much discouragement, for a proper location, he at length found "a home, a maintenance, a faithful and able friend, a sincere Christian, the Rev. John Thompson of Chesnut Level, whose praise is deservedly in the church. I taught school one year, and read two years more. Being invited by the Presbytery, I entered on trials, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Donegal, 1737. I was sent to a new settlement in Virginia of our own country people, near 300 miles distant. From the dream I had before I left Ireland, I knew it to be the plot in Christ's vineyard, where I was to labor. I must say I thought very little of it, which perhaps was my sin."

"From them I had a call, and durst not refuse it, although I well saw it would be attended with many great difficulties. I accepted the call — the place was a new settlement, without a place of worship, or any church order, a wilderness in the proper sense, and a few Christian settlers in it, with numbers of the heathen travelling among us, but generally civil, though some persons were murdered by them about that time. They march about in small companies from fifteen to twenty, sometimes more or less. They must be supplied at any house they call at with victuals, or they become their own stewards and cooks, and spare nothing they choose to eat and drink." This was previous to Braddock's war. The Act of Assembly forming Augusta County, passed 1738. The first court was held in 1745. Kentucky, and all Virginia claimed in the west, belonged to it. Mr. Craig goes on—"When we were erected into a county and parish, and had ministers inducted, of which we had two, they both in their turns wrote to me, making high demands. I

gave no answer, but still observed our own rules when there were no particular laws against them."

About the division of the Presbyterian Church he writes — "Having seen the conduct of ministers and people, when I was in Pennsylvania, that maintained these new doctrines, examined the controversy, had free conversations with both parties, applied to God for light and direction in the important concerns, which was done with time and deliberation, not instantly, I attained clearness of mind to join in the protest against these new and uncharitable opinions, and the ruin of Christ's Government. This gave offence to two or three families in my congregation, who then looked upon me as an opposer of the work of God, as they called it, an enemy to religion, and applied with all keenness to their holy and spiritual teachers, to come and preach, and convert the people of my charge, and free them from sin and Satan, and from me, a carnal wretch on whom they unhappily depended for instruction, to their souls' utter destruction. They flying speedily came and thundered their new gospel through every corner of my congregation; and some of them had the assurance to come to my house, and demand a dismission of some of my subscribers who had invited them, being tainted with these notions formerly. But Providence so ordered that affair, that they gained none of my people that I knew of; my moral character stood clear and good, even among them; but they freely loaded me with these and such like, poor, blind, carnal, hypocritical, damned wretch; and this given to my face by some of their ministers. And when I administered the Lord's Supper to my people, they mockingly said to their neighbors going to it, what, are you going to Craig's frolic? I thought God had given me a difficult plot to labor in, but I ever called upon him in trouble, and he never failed to help."

Of the congregation Mr. Craig says—"It was large by computation, about thirty miles in length, and near twenty in breadth. The people agreed to have two meeting-houses, expecting they would become two congregations, which is now come to pass. That part now called Tinkling Spring was most in numbers, and richer than the other, and forward, and had the public management of the affairs of the whole settlement: their leaders close-handed about providing necessary things for pious and religious uses, and could not agree for several years upon a plan or manner, where or how to build their meeting-house, which gave me very great trouble to hold them together, their disputes ran so high. A difference happened between Colonel John Lewis and Colonel James Patton, both living in that congregation which was hurtful to the settlement, but especially to me. I could neither bring them to friendship with each other, or obtain both their friendships at once ever after. This continued for thirteen or fourteen years, till Colonel Patton was murdered by the Indians. At that time he was friendly with me. After his death, Colonel Lewis was friendly with me till he died. As to the other

part of the congregation, now called Augusta, the people were fewer in numbers, and much lower as to their worldly circumstances, but a good-natured, prudent, governable people, and liberally bestowed a part of what God gave them for religious and pious uses, and now enjoy the benefit; always unanimous among themselves, loving and kind to me these thirty years, with whom I enjoyed the greatest satisfaction, and serve them with pleasure. I had no trouble with them about their meeting-house, but to moderate and direct them when they met. They readily fixed on the place, and agreed on the plan for building it, and contributed cheerfully money and labor to accomplish the work, all in the voluntary way, what every man pleased.

"As to my private and domestic state of life when fixed in the congregation, I purchased a plantation and began to improve upon it: and June 11th, 1744, married a young gentlewoman of a good family and character, born and brought up in the same neighborhood where I was born, daughter of Mr. George Russel, by whom I had nine children. My first-born died October 4th, 1745, being four months and six days old: a great grief to us the parents, being left alone. God exercised me with trying dispensations in my family. He took my first child, and left my second; he took the third and left the fourth; took the fifth and left the sixth, and gave me then more without any further breach. The people of my charge were all new settlers and generally of low circumstances. There own necessities called for all their labors; they could or did do little for my support, except a few, and consequently fell greatly in arrears." It appears to have been the habit of Mr. Craig to keep a regular account of all he received from his congregations, for whatever purpose paid into him: and in the final settlement was willing to count all receipts as part of his salary.

"What made the times distressing and unhappy to all the frontiers, was the French and Indian war, which lay heavy on us, in which I suffered a part as well as others. When General Braddock was defeated and killed, our country was laid open to the enemy, our people were in dreadful confusion and discouraged to the highest degree. Some of the richer sort that could take some money with them to live upon, were for flying to a safer place of the country. My advice was then called for, which I gave, opposing that scheme as a scandal to our nation, falling below our brave ancestors, making ourselves a reproach among Virginians, a dishonor to our friends at home, an evidence of cowardice, want of faith, and a noble Christian dependence on God, as able to save and deliver from the heathen; it would be a lasting blot to our posterity." Mr. Craig urged the building forts in convenient neighborhoods, sufficient to hold twenty or thirty families, secure against small arms, and on alarms to flee to these places of refuge. One of which was to be the church. The proposition was acted upon very generally — "They required me to go before them in the work which I did

cheerfully, though it cost me one-third of my estate. The people very readily followed, and my congregation in less than two months was well fortified."

Let us walk around this house, and enjoy the beauty of the prospect. These remains of the fortifications in the Indian wars wasting away by the constant tread of the assembling congregations, are eloquent memorials of the early age of Augusta County. This old house has seen generations pass; it has heard the sermons of the Virginia Synod in its youthful days. Could its walls re-echo the sentences that have been uttered here, what a series of sermons! Its three pastors, for about a hundred years, taught from the same pulpit. Here the famous Waddell was taken under care of Hanover Presbytery, as candidate for the ministry, in 1760: here the venerated Hoge was licensed in 1781: and here the Rev. Archibald Alexander passed some of his trials, in preparation for the ministry. In no other house in Virginia can such recollections be cherished as rise up around us here. Here were the teachings of the first settled minister in Virginia, and here have been heard the voices of the worthies of the Virginia Presbyterians for a century. Here has been treasured their testimony for God, to be heard again in the Judgment Day.

Let us cross the turnpike, and, passing the parsonage, enter the "God's acre"—the old burying-ground where lie so many of the first settlers; and, as at Opecquon, we mourn that so few of these mounds have inscriptions to tell us where those emigrants sleep. They are all around us, we call over their names, and no answer comes, even from a stone, to say, "we lie here." How short-lived is man and his unwritten, or his historic memory! forming to-day a part of the life and activity of society, and to-morrow like a withered branch cast in the dust. We bless and praise the Lord for the gospel, and will hope that these withered branches shall, very many of them at least, be found grafted into the good olive tree, and partaking of its fatness on Mount Zion. But the congregation has not been forgetful of the graves of their three pastors, who, for nearly a century, were examples of patient labor of ministers, and the stability of the church. Look on this slab, with a head-stone, near the middle of the yard. On the stone is the short record, expressing volumes, "Erected by G. C., son to J. C." On the slab, "In memory of Rev. John Craig, D. D., commencer of the Presbyterial service in this place, Anno Domini, 1740; and faithfully discharging his duty in the same, to April the 21st, Anno Domini, 1774: then departed this life with fifteen hours' affliction from the hand of the great Creator, aged sixty-three years and four months. The church of Augusta, in expression of their gratitude to the memory of their late beloved pastor, (having obtained liberty of G. C.) paid the expense of this monument, 1798." Now, let us turn towards the gate on the west end, and read on a white marble slab—"Sacred to the memory of Rev. Wm. Wilson, second pastor of Augusta church. Born Aug. 1st, 1751, died Dec. 1st, 1835." A sketch of his life will appear in a subsequent chapter.

Let us go a little nearer the gate, and read upon the white marble slab, "Sacred to the memory of the Rev. Conrad Speece, D. D., for more than twenty-two years pastor of Augusta church, born November 7th, 1776, died February 15th, 1836. He consecrated a mind rich in genius and learning, to the service of his Saviour, in the great work of the gospel ministry; and here sleeps with his people, till they shall stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ. Reader—If in his life he tried in vain to save, hear him at last, O! hear him from the grave. This stone is erected in token of affection that can know no end." This man could write better than most of his contemporaries, and could preach better than he could write. Feasted by the poetic labors of others, he himself indited a hymn to be sung while the English language praises God. Of humble origin, he was raised by the smiles of the Lord to stand in the valley, with such men as Samuel Brown, G. A. Baxter, and Moses Hoge, and form one of the triad at Hampden Sidney, with Rice and Alexander. His prolific pen contributed abundantly to the three octavo periodicals in his native State, devoted to religion and morals, and sent contributions to the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine. With Dr. Baxter, he laid down in the Assembly, in the case of Daniel Bourne, his neighbor, the platform of the southern churches on slavery. Beloved by his brethren in the ministry, in general, and feared by some in particular; a systematic pastor and punctual presbyter; he left productions of his pen, and incidents in his life, sufficient to form a volume worthy of preservation. His merits and productions cannot be discussed in this place, they must have their appropriate positions among his brethren. When another century is passed, may it be found that this congregation has been served as constantly by ministers as few in number, and equal in ability and spiritual qualifications, to these that lie gathered with their people. And may the present pastor fill his full measure of excellence and service, in honor of his birth-place and his parents.

CHAPTER III.

TINKLING SPRING.

Going down from the splendid prospect on Rockfish Gap, to the edge of the "lake country," as the Sage of Monticello termed it, you enter the bounds of the oldest congregation in Augusta County, one that contends with Opecquon for the honor of being the first in the great valley, and the first in the State after the days of Makemie,—the congregation of the Triple Forks of the Shenandoah, which formerly stretched across the valley from this Gap to the Ridge, in the western horizon. You are, too, in the bounds of that division of the congregation named Tinkling Spring, which assembled to worship God in the southern part of the settlement, the old