

JOURNAL

OF THE

Presbyterian Historical Society

VOL. XIII

DECEMBER, 1929

No. 8

THE ADOPTING ACT *

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We celebrate today the bi-centennial of the adoption of the constitution of our Church. Like many another historic fact which a grateful posterity delights to commemorate, the event to which our attention is directed by the exercises of this hour was the achievement of a small group of men, most of whom were little known beyond the regions where their daily work was being done, and not one of whom could foresee the far-reaching consequences of their united action. But few in number though they were, inconspicuous as was the scene of their joint endeavors, feeble as was the young but growing Church which they represented, and trivial as their doings may have seemed to the casual observer who had no eye for spiritual values, these ministers and elders of the General Synod appear to us today, as they have to generations of Presbyterians before us, as veritable heroes of the faith, transfigured to our view by the glory of the great cause of revealed truth which they served, and which in turn largely made them what they were. Under circumstances that were destined to

* An address delivered at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., at St. Paul, Minn., May 24, 1929, in celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the Adopting Act. The address was published by order of the Assembly, but the edition has been exhausted. In view of repeated requests for further copies, the address is here republished.—Ed.

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE ALUMNI OF THE LOG COLLEGE

BY REV. GEORGE H. INGRAM,
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10. JOHN REDMAN¹

After finishing the life of Daniel Lawrence, the author of these biographies thought that he had told the stories of the alumni of the Log College about whom less was known, and he was about to commence at the top of the roll and gather new material, if possible, concerning Mr. Tennent and the leaders whom he educated in his academy.

But an article in this JOURNAL by Nathaniel Irwin, pastor of Neshaminy Church, 1774–1812, entitled, "Memoirs of the Presby^{ta} Ch. of Neshaminy," or rather the following footnote of the article, engaged his attention: "Several persons who became eminent in their secular professions rec'd their education in Arts & languages at this Academy. Distinguished among these stands Doct^r. John Redman, Pres^t. of the College of Physicians, Philad^a."²

Upon reading this note the first thought was that it is strange that so prominent an alumnus of the Log College should have been allowed to drop out of sight for more than a hundred years.

Turning aside, then, to follow this newly discovered student of the Log College, we here give the salient points in his life, so far as we have become acquainted with them.

John Redman was the son of John and Sarah Redman. He was born in Philadelphia, February 27, 1722. His parents

¹ For the preceding articles in this series, see vol. xiii, pp. 175 ff., 217 ff., 255 ff., and 297 ff. On Redman the following are the leading authorities: *Philadelphia Medical Museum*, vol. v, pp. 49 ff.; Scharf and Wescott, *History of Philadelphia*, vol. ii, p. 1591; *University of Pennsylvania Bulletin*, vol. xx, p. 300.

² *Journal*, ii, p. 224.

early expressed the desire that their son might be educated for a liberal profession. He was sent to Mr. Tennent's academy at Neshaminy. While the date is not given, it must have been when he was quite young. In a biographical sketch by his grandson, Dr. John Redman Coxe, the following account of his Log College days is given:

Here he acquired a correct knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages and a general acquaintance with such of the sciences as were then taught. . . . His companions and schoolmates in this academy were his preceptor's sons, the Revs. Gilbert, William and Charles Tennent, Rev. Daniel Lawrence, and the Rev. Dr. Rogers, of New York, with all of whom during their lives he kept up a friendly intercourse.^a

^a *Medical Museum*, vol. v, p. 49 ff.

It will be noted that John Tennent, who died in 1733, is not included. His relations with Neshaminy were probably after that date. Then among his associates he included Dr. John Rodgers, the first moderator of the General Assembly, who is not ordinarily counted a Log College alumnus. He, however, attended a grammar school at Neshaminy, taught by Mr. Doan, while the latter was studying at the Log College. This was about 1742 or 1743. Then young Rodgers went to Samuel Blair's academy at Faggs Manor, a school patterned after the Log College, and taught by a Log College alumnus. Then Mr. Rodgers went to Philadelphia to study theology with Gilbert Tennent, who in 1744 had taken the pastorate of the Second Presbyterian Church, to carry on the work that had been started through the preaching of George Whitefield. With these associations, it is not strange that as time passed on, Dr. Redman should come to class Dr. Rodgers with those who had studied in Mr. Tennent's academy.

Upon the completion of his academical course, young Redman decided to study medicine, putting himself under Dr. John Kearsley, one of the leading practitioners of Philadelphia, for his apprenticeship, as the term was in those days. The ordinary time was six years. With his term of service completed, he decided to make a trial of his profession a good way from home. He went to Bermuda, where he remained

several years. Returning to Philadelphia, he resolved to continue medical studies in the Old World. He spent a year in Edinburgh. Then he "walked" the hospitals of Paris. Going from there to Leyden, he took the medical course in that famous institution. Here he took high honours, graduating July, 1749. Before returning to America he visited the hospitals of London. Taking up his practice in his native city, he immediately took a commanding place in his profession.

In 1760, Benjamin Rush, graduating from the College of New Jersey, turned to Dr. Redman to serve with him an apprenticeship in medicine. At the close of his term, young Rush decided to follow the example of his preceptor in going to the Old World to complete his medical and scientific training in long-established universities. Coming back to Philadelphia, he threw himself into his professional work, and besides took a leading part in the struggle for the independence of the colonies: he was a member of the Continental Congress, and was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was also the founder of Dickinson College. Throughout his life he was close to Log College influences. It was Samuel Finley, a Log College alumnus, at West Nottingham, who prepared him for college. It was, as we have seen, with a Log College alumnus, Dr. John Redman, that he took his first course in medicine. It is easy to picture the spirit and ideals of the schoolmaster of Neshaminy entering into and shaping the life of Dr. Rush, through these two Log College alumni who were especially intimate with him in the formative period of his life.

Early in his professional life, Dr. Redman served a term in Common Council. This ended his experience in political affairs, for ever afterward he refused to allow his name to be considered for political office.

Dr. Redman served as a trustee of the College of New Jersey from 1761 to 1778, when he resigned.⁴ He was the sixth alumnus of the Log College to hold the office of trustee of the College of New Jersey. After him there were two others chosen to that position, making a total of eight Log College

⁴ *General Catalogue of Princeton University.*

alumni who held positions in the governing body of the College of New Jersey. Taking into consideration the fact that there were less than a score of Log College men to draw from, this is a notable showing.

During Dr. Redman's lifetime, Philadelphia was visited with two epidemics of yellow fever. He threw his energies during these times into the task of alleviating the suffering in the city. In 1793 he gave a lecture before the College of Physicians on the yellow fever as it prevailed in Philadelphia in 1762. This lecture was not published until 1865, when, by order of the College of Physicians,⁵ it was printed, more than seventy years after its delivery. Upon the organization of the College of Physicians, in 1787, he was elected the first president. This organization through the years has continued to number among its members the foremost physicians and surgeons of Philadelphia. Their library ranks second in the list of medical libraries in the United States. Dr. Redman was a fellow of the College until his death.

He was chosen a trustee of the College of Philadelphia in 1762, and he held this position until its consolidation with the University of the State of Pennsylvania, which afterward took the name of the University of Pennsylvania.

In 1759 there was formed in Philadelphia a corporation "for relief of poor and distressed ministers and for the relief of widows and children."⁶ It afterward took the name of "The Presbyterian Ministers' Fund," and it continues to this day, the oldest life insurance company in the United States. Out of this corporation, and the provision for the "Widows Fund" made by the Synod, grew later the Board of Ministerial Relief, or the Pension Board, as it is now known. Dr. Redman had a part in the organization of the memorable corporation, was a member of the committee that solicited subscriptions in 1760, and was chairman of the first finance committee in 1760. In 1762 this corporation made an appeal to the Synod of New York and Philadelphia to send some missionaries "to preach to the distressed frontier inhabitants,

⁵ Library of the University of Pennsylvania.

⁶ Original minute book of the corporation.

and to report their distresses. . . .”¹ This appeal was presented to the Synod at their meeting, May 23, 1763, Dr. Redman being a member of the committee appointed to present the request to the Synod. This was one of the early movements that later grew into the Board of Home Missions, now the Board of National Missions.

On March 17, 1777, the corporation agreed “to loan to the Continental Congress five thousand pounds, as soon as it can be done conveniently.” Later the statement was made that more than half of the company’s assets were helping to save Washington’s army, and to provide for the driving of General Howe from their capital in due season.

On May 25, 1791, Dr. Redman was unanimously elected president of the corporation, and during the first year of his administration the corporation took additional action in investing its funds in support of the government under the new constitution. After serving for five years as president, Dr. Redman asked to be released from the presidency, whereupon appreciations of his long service were placed upon record.

At the age of forty he was stricken with an abscess of the liver, which left him with impaired strength ever afterward, so that for the latter half of his life he was not able to do the work that before he had undertaken. He was a devoted member of the Second Church. He had known its pastor, Gilbert Tennent, since Log College days, and was associated with him in the corporation for the relief of poor and distressed ministers. It was to him a source of sorrow when his pastor died, in 1764. Giving up his practice in his later years, he found more time for religious activities. He was elected an elder in 1784. “The benevolent duties of his office employed him and gave him great delight.” He ministered to the sick and the needy of the congregation in things temporal and spiritual.

In Watson’s *Annals* there is the following pen picture of Dr. Redman in his later days:

The next aged physician of the Old School was Dr. Redman, who lived next door to Dr. Ustick’s Baptist meeting-house, in

¹ *Records of the Presbyterian Church*, p. 326.

Second near Arch Street. The doctor had retired from practice altogether, and was known to the public eye as an antiquated looking old gentleman, usually habited in a broad-skirted black coat, with long pocket flaps, buttoned across his under dress; wearing in strict conformity with the cut of the coat, a pair of Baron Steuben's military shaped boots, coming above the knees, for riding; his hat flapped before, and cocked up smartly behind, covering a full-bottomed powdered wig—in the front of which might be seen an eagle-pointed nose, separating a pair of piercing black eyes—his lips, exhibiting (but only now and then) a quick motion as though at the moment he was endeavoring to extract the essence of a small quid. As thus described, in habit and person, he was to be seen almost daily in fair weather, mounted on a short, fat, black, switch-tailed horse, and riding for his amusement and exercise, in a brisk racking canter, about the streets and suburbs of the city.

He was so well known, that in his rambles about the town on foot, he would step in, without ceremony, at the first public office which presented itself to his view, and upon seeing any vacant desk or writing table, set himself down, with a pleasant nod to some one present, and begin writing his letter or memorandum. One day while thus occupied in his writing, he was suddenly addressed by a very forward, presuming person, who wanted of him some medical advice gratis. Finding himself thus interrupted, he lifted the corner of his wig, as usual, and desired the person to repeat the question, which he did loudly, as follows: "Doctor, what would you advise as the best thing for a pain in the breast?" The wig having dropped to its proper place, the doctor, after a seeming profound study for a moment on the subject, replied, "Oh, ay—I will tell you, my good friend—the very best thing I could advise you to do for a pain in the breast is to—consult your physician."⁵

Early in life he married Miss Mary Sobers, a lady described as of uncommon talents and accomplishments. Four children were born—two boys and two girls. The boys died quite young. Sarah, the younger daughter, on June 5, 1771, married Daniel Coxe, of Trenton, of the King's counsel of New Jersey, who held to the loyalist cause throughout the Revolution. He was secretary of the Peace Commission in 1781. Mr. Coxe returned to England in 1785, his family following him later. The parting with this daughter was a source of

⁵ *Watson's Annals of Philadelphia*, vol. ii, p. 332.

great sorrow to Dr. Redman. She came back to visit her father a few years later. Her son, John Redman Coxe, came back to America in 1791, and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. He became a member of the faculty of his *alma mater*, and for many years edited the *Philadelphia Medical Museum*. The death of his elder daughter, in 1806, was followed soon after by the death of Mrs. Redman, with whom he had lived in the one house on Second Street for nearly sixty years. Dr. Redman died March 7, 1807, in his eighty-fifth year. He was buried in the Second Church Yard on Arch Street above Fifth.

While Dr. Redman's calling was a secular one, yet throughout his long life there were the marks of that deep spirituality that came from contact with the schoolmaster of Neshaminy, and has been noticeable in the other alumni of the Log College as they have been reviewed in this series of biographies. And, as we have seen, Dr. Redman stood for self-sacrificing patriotism in support of the struggle for American Independence.*

*Systematic search has begun to find other "persons who became eminent in their secular professions," who received "their education in Arts and languages in this Academy."

[To be continued.]