

THE SCOTCH-IRISH IN AMERICA.

PROCEEDINGS AND ADDRESSES

OF THE

EIGHTH CONGRESS,

AT

HARRISBURG, PA., JUNE 4-7, 1896.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF
THE SCOTCH-IRISH SOCIETY OF AMERICA.

NASHVILLE, TENN.
BARBEE & SMITH, AGENTS.

E
184
S4
S42

COPYRIGHT, 1897.
SCOTCH-IRISH SOCIETY OF AMERICA.

PIONEER EDUCATORS IN WASHINGTON COUNTY, PA.

BY REV. JAMES D. MOFFAT, D.D., PRESIDENT OF WASHINGTON AND JEFFERSON COLLEGE.

In the first Congress of this Society Prof. Macloskie, in his address on the Scotch-Irish in America, very accurately described one of the best traits in the character and history of the race when he said: "Above all other public institutions they loved the Church and the school. With them religion and education were inseparable; no religion without the training of the intelligence, no education divorced from piety. The school was always planted near the church, the schoolmaster was often the pastor or a candidate for the ministry or one of the pillars of the church." I suppose that every section of our country settled in large part by the Scotch-Irish could furnish illustration and proof of the statements made by Prof. Macloskie. Certainly Washington County of this state, settled almost exclusively by the Scotch-Irish, is no exception to the general rule. So important to the welfare of any people is the principle that religion and intelligence should ever go hand in hand, that I need no other apology for giving you an illustration of the principle, additional to several previously presented before the Society, by sketching the pioneer educators of Washington County, and tracing the results of their labors as these have appeared in later years.

The first ministers to enter the county were both the pioneer preachers and the pioneer educators of Western Pennsylvania, and they were nearly all Scotch-Irish. The leader, both in his time of settling in the county and in the prominent place that he ever afterwards occupied, was Rev. John McMillan, D.D. He was the son of Scotch-Irish parents, William McMillan and Margaret Rea McMillan, who came from the North of Ireland in 1742, and settled in Fagg's Manor, Chester County, Pa. Their son John was born November 11, 1752, and after being graduated from Princeton College in 1772, under the presidency of John Witherspoon, he studied theology with Rev. Dr. Robert Smith at Pequea, Lancaster County. His first trip into Western Pennsylvania was made in 1775, when he was but twenty-three years of age, and on the fourth Sabbath of August he preached the first sermon in the county.

When, three years later, he came permanently into the county with his family it was with the purpose fully formed not only to preach, but to inaugurate educational work. This purpose was due to the suggestion of the theological instructor, the Scotch-Irish Dr. Robert Smith,

who enjoined it on him to look out pious young men in the new country, and educate them for the future ministry of the country. This suggestion met his own approval, and as soon as possible he built a log schoolhouse, and gathered into it a number of young men, whom he taught Latin and Greek. The exact date of the opening of this school cannot now be determined with certainty, but it was not later than 1782, and possibly as early as 1780. It was certainly the earliest school of a classical grade opened west of the mountains in this state. Dr. McMillan not only provided the house and gave the tuition gratuitously, but he also boarded a number of men who afterwards became useful ministers, for which he received no compensation, one of them later paying Mrs. McMillan forty dollars.

The second minister who settled in the county was not exactly a Scotch-Irishman, unless his mother or some maternal ancestors were Scotch-Irish; but he was certainly imbued with the Scotch-Irish spirit. This was Rev. Thaddeus Dod. He was of New England stock, his great-great-grandfather having come from England to Connecticut in 1642. He was born in New Jersey, and was graduated from Princeton College at the somewhat advanced age of thirty-three. His first visit to Washington County was in 1777, although he did not finally settle there until 1779, when he made the fort at Ten Mile (now called Amity), ten miles southeast of Washington, his home. The Indians were yet so numerous and dangerous in that part of the country that no church could be erected, the people occupying for safety the two forts, in which Mr. Dod preached regularly. But just as soon as it was safe enough for him to put up a cabin for his family he proceeded at once to erect another cabin for a school for teaching the boys of the neighborhood the elements of Latin and Greek and mathematics. This school was beyond doubt opened in 1782, as we have the testimony of one of the first pupils, who was afterwards known as Rev. Jacob Lindley, D.D. Dr. Lindley describes this cabin as "sufficiently large for three or four beds, with room for tables," etc.; and, giving the names of thirteen students, states that they all boarded with Mr. Dod. This school was conducted for about three and a half years, when it was closed on account of Mr. Dod's moving on to another farm; and the students generally entered another school just opened at Buffalo, six miles west of Washington, by the third minister who settled in the county, Rev. Joseph Smith.

To illustrate the devotion of Mr. Dod to the cause of education, and especially his estimate of the importance of a thorough education as a preparation for preaching the gospel, even in those wilds, I may men-

tion the fact that an independent presbytery had been formed in New Jersey whose members believed it wise to license young men who had but a limited education, so that the demand for ministers might be met more speedily. Several of these hastily licensed young men remaining uncalled for some time, Mr. Dod was asked if some of them could not be profitably taken to Western Pennsylvania. Mr. Dod replied in a kind of a parable, saying that Western Pennsylvania was a very rough, hilly country, and that the roots of trees still green required a very strong, well-trained team to break up the ground, and he did not think that two-year-old steers would answer.

The Rev. Joseph Smith, also a graduate of Princeton College, was as deeply interested in the work of education as his copresbyters, McMillan and Dod, although he opened a school a few years later than they did. This school was also held in a log cabin, which had been erected as an addition to his own residence, and was designed to be used as a kitchen. But his wife generously gave it up to school purposes, and with restricted facilities for cooking undertook the task of boarding a considerable addition to her family. The young men in these schools had not only to be taught and boarded at the expense of their teachers, but they needed also to be clothed. But the Scotch-Irish women of the country were equal to the task, and cheerfully undertook it. One of them, Mrs. Irwin, giving her recollections years afterwards, tells how the women of five congregations made summer and winter clothing for the students, "coloring linen for summer wear in a dye made of new-mown hay, and sending woollen cloth by merchants, east of the mountains to be fulled and dressed, and brought back with them on their return."

Thus it is certain that the three ministers who first settled in the county were all deeply interested in the work of education, and took active part in the teaching, regarding this as a most important part of their mission. Their schools were not rival schools, nor does any one of them seem to have supposed that his school would be a permanent one, supplanting the others and growing into something higher. It is reasonable to suppose, from all we certainly know, that these three men had a tacit understanding that they must take turns in bearing the burdens of teaching. After Mr. Dod had taught for three years, his pupils went to Mr. Smith, and then later the same students are found in Mr. McMillan's school.

But the noteworthy fact is that such schools should be found in the midst of such surroundings. As the late Prof. Patterson expressed it, "It reflects the highest honor on these illustrious men that scarce

thirty years were suffered to elapse after the first daring adventurer had penetrated a hitherto pathless wilderness—thirty years, not of prosperity, but of painful vigilance and struggle, of unexampled hardships and heroic endurance—until the poetry and eloquence of Greece and Rome, the truths of modern science and of sacred learning, had found three humble halls, three devoted instructors, and a score of assiduous pupils, though the war whoop of the retreating savage still echoed within the surrounding valleys, and his council fires still blazed upon the hills." Dr. Carnahan, who was a student in Canonsburg Academy, and afterwards President of Princeton College, writing in 1848 his personal recollections of the early life, says that in the whole of what was then Westmoreland County, embracing Washington, "there was not, in 1781, a single stone or brick or frame house. All the inhabitants lived in log cabins"—with earthen floor or rudely hewn boards, and for windows, a small square hole cut in between two logs, and closed with oiled paper or linen. There was a lack of all those conveniences which we regard as simple necessities. Dr. McMillan says that when he and his wife began housekeeping in their first cabin, they "had neither bedstead, nor table, nor chair, nor stool, nor pail, nor bucket. We placed two boxes on each other, which served us for a table, and two kegs served us for seats, and having committed ourselves to God in family worship, we spread a bed on the floor and slept soundly until morning. Sometimes we had no bread for weeks together, but we had plenty of pumpkins and potatoes, and all the necessities of life; and as for the luxuries, we were not much concerned about them." Dr. Ralston, referring to the same period, or a little later, writes: "Our wives and daughters were industrious, and made much homespun, and we wore it. I did not buy a coat for thirty or thirty-five years." And Dr. Junkin tells a story of a certain blue cloth coat, which somehow found its way into that country, and as it was the only dress coat in the whole section it was made to do duty at nineteen weddings, nineteen bridegrooms in succession securing by purchase or loan the use of it, for the one occasion in even a pioneer's life when he wants to appear well dressed.

And yet Latin and Greek could be learned in the schools of these Scotch-Irish pioneers wanting nearly all the conveniences of civilized life! And to show you how these outwardly rude people appreciated the educational efforts of their pastors let me read a few names from an old subscription list, bearing the date of 1794, which exhibits the liberal gifts of the people toward the academy, the results of their own labor in the field and at the loom: "James Ewing, five bushels

wheat, @ 2s; Robert Moore, two bushels wheat; John Logan, two bushels wheat; James Laird, four bushels wheat; Samuel Riddle, 7s 6d; John McMillan, \$1; Joseph Patterson, \$6; Mrs. Vallandingham, six yards linen; A. Nesbit, three yards linen; Widow Riddle, three yards linen; her daughter Mary, three yards linen; James McBride, three bushels rye;" and one subscription was payable in whisky, which, coming from an old-fashioned Scotch-Irishman, represents, I think, a good degree of self-denial.

It might be thought by some that these three preachers were interested only in securing helpers and successors in the work of the ministry, and not in the general cause of education; but this would be doing them injustice. Their views were broad and their sympathies wide. Seeing clearly that their own labors were restricted, and that all they could do as mere teachers would fall short of securing to the whole community the benefit of liberal culture, they united with others to secure the founding of a permanent academy at the county seat. The Washington Academy was chartered September 24, 1787, and the state gave a donation later of five thousand acres of land. The first meeting of the trustees was held in Philadelphia November 15, 1787. Benjamin Franklin was interested in this backwoods academy, counseled with the trustees, and gave the first gift toward a library—fifty pounds, which were expended in the purchase of books. Among the early trustees we find the names of the following ministers: Messrs. McMillan, Dod, Smith, Clark, Henderson, and Corbly, all who were then settled in the county. Thaddeus Dod was the Principal, and the upper rooms of the courthouse were occupied until the courthouse was burned, in 1791. The difficulty of finding another place caused the suspension of the academy, and the discouragement of the ministerial members of the Board of Trustees. Col. Canon, the principal proprietor of the town of Canonsburg, now offered a lot and the advance of money needed to erect a good stone building. His offer was promptly accepted, and the ministers of the county immediately transferred their allegiance to the new academy as promising to realize their hopes more surely and quickly. Thus the academy at Canonsburg was started on a career of prosperity so great and steady that in 1802 a college charter was procured for it under the name of Jefferson College.

In considering the temporary suspension of the Washington Academy fairness demands that we should take note of the fact that the trustees had little else than a charter on which to found an academy. At that time the five thousand acres of land were only promised; they were not yet located, and of course no use could be made of them.

Moreover, while it was true that there was in Washington considerable indifference toward education, it was also true that there was a like indifference toward religion. A church was not yet organized in the town, although it had for ten years been the county seat. The successful founding of the academy at Canonsburg aroused in Washington the Scotch-Irish trait which causes us to rebel against taking the second place, and so they started the academy again, but it never got fairly on its feet as a rival academy until there was religion enough developed in the place to justify the organization of a church. Canonsburg, on the other hand, was in close proximity to Dr. McMillan's church, and its academy was opened with solemn religious exercises. For Scotch-Irish development religion must be intelligent, and intelligence must be religious. Indifference to one causes in time deterioration in the other.

Now what effected the needed change in Washington so that there should be the necessary interest in both religion and education? It was the coming into the place of a Scotch-Irish minister who combined these two qualities, and possessed them in the highest degree, the Rev. Matthew Brown, who became at once the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church and the Principal of the academy.

John Brown, a native of Ireland, of Scottish descent, came to this country about 1720, and settled in Pennsylvania. His son Matthew was the father of the Matthew Brown of whom I speak. His father dying when he was two years old, he was adopted by his uncle William Brown, who as one of the commissioners of this (Dauphin) county assisted in laying out this town of Harrisburg. He was also a member of the Legislature and a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1790. He is said to have been the first to propose the gradual emancipation of the slaves within the commonwealth. His nephew was in due time educated at Dickinson College, and, after teaching and preaching for a few years, was called to the pastorate of the First Church and to the principalship of the academy in Washington in 1805.

I cannot forbear to remark that this double call was not merely because both institutions wanted the same man, but was the result of the adoption of the principle of which I have spoken, the common interest of the school and church.

In 1804 the board became convinced that the academy must form a kind of alliance with the church. The Presbyterians were using the academy and depending on it, and now the academy must use the Presbyterians if it is ever to do any good. It is probable, too, that by

this time the trustees had become identified with the church. At any rate, I find a resolution on the minutes of the board that might just as well have been offered in a congregational meeting; and it seems not improbable that it was first passed in a congregational meeting, and then offered to the board.

To show you how completely the academy and the church were becoming blended, I must read the resolution just as it is recorded. November 24, 1804, "Moved and seconded that it would be unwise and imprudent to have any person established as the pastor of *this congregation* who is not fully qualified to superintend as well the affairs of the congregation as those of our academical institution; therefore resolved that it be earnestly recommended to the *members of this board*, and all others, to make use of every exertion to have some person of suitable qualifications and competent talents established in this place as the pastor of this congregation and the Principal of our academy." This was passed unanimously, and a few months later Rev. Matthew Brown was called to the pastorate, and the board of trustees of the academy voted him a salary of £100 per year.

So great and rapid was the progress the academy made under Dr. Matthew Brown, that in 1806 a charter was obtained for Washington College. The history of the development of the academy into the college illustrates the importance of the alliance between education and religion, at least in that early day.

It is not my purpose to give a history of the progress of education in Washington County, and so I forbear to trace now the development of these two colleges (Washington and Jefferson), and of the one which has grown out of their union. My purpose has been to give a brief account of the pioneer educators as illustrating the best of all Scotch-Irish traits, the combined love of religion and education. But the facts already presented will fail to produce their full effect if I do not say something of the results of these pioneer labors.

Washington County, principally because of its devotion to Christian education, very early became the center of all missionary effort over the country farther west. The records of the Presbytery of Redstone show that its ministers were sent as missionaries and supplies northward as far as Meadville and Erie, and westward into Ohio to Steubenville, New Lisbon, St. Clairsville, Youngstown, Gallipolis, Cadiz, Chillicothe, Canton, Newark, Hudson, and other points, and even as far away as Detroit. Had the pioneer preachers of Washington County not been educators as well, how different might have been the religious history of Western Pennsylvania and Ohio and West Virginia!

Moreover, whatever good may have been accomplished by the graduates of Washington County colleges is also to be included among the results of the labors of the Scotch-Irish pioneer educators. Over three thousand seven hundred graduates, and probably three thousand more partially educated men, have gone from the walls of the two colleges which trace their origin to McMillan and Dod. Over sixteen hundred of these have carried the Scotch-Irish devotion to a combined religion and intelligence to the highest degree, and have entered the ministry. And, lest any one should suspect that these have been largely poor preachers, let me say that no less than eighteen of them have reached the highest office within the gift of their respective denominations, and have been Moderators of Assemblies, if I may include in the eighteen Bishop McLaren, of Chicago, whose position as bishop may be said to correspond in prominence to that of Moderator.

The representation of the college in the Episcopal Church is naturally very small, but it includes one bishop and two others who have been prominently named as likely to become bishops (Rev. Dr. Greer, of New York, and Rev. Dr. S. D. McConnell, of Brooklyn). About seventy have presided over colleges and universities, and one hundred and seventy have been professors in institutions higher than academies.

Among the nine hundred lawyers have been men no less distinguished. Of these, fully one hundred became judges, over twenty reaching the highest bench in their own states. Among those who have occupied the supreme bench in our own state in recent years, I may mention Chief Justice Mercur and Chief Justice Sterrett and Justices Clark and Dean. To these may be added our representation in the Superior Court, ex-Gov. Beaver and Judge Orlady.

Taken mainly from the nine hundred lawyers have been over two hundred Legislators, about seventy Congressmen, and eleven United States Senators, including Hon. James Ross, the first representative of this commonwealth in the United States Senate, who was a pupil and assistant of Dr. McMillan, and our latest representative, Hon. M. S. Quay. Four men have served in the President's cabinet: Hon. T. M. McKennan, who was Secretary of the Interior in 1850; Hon. Henry Stansbury, Attorney-general in 1866-68; Hon. B. H. Bristow, Secretary of the Treasury under Grant; and Hon. James G. Blaine, who twice filled with so much ability the Secretaryship of State.

If such a record as this does not prove the wisdom of our taking an active and earnest interest in Christian education and in educated religion, then there is no truth in the saying that the tree is to be judged by its fruits.