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Sketch of Log College.

BY REV. D. K. TURNER, HARTSVILLE, PA.

(Ambler Park Meeting, June 10, 1886.)



SOON after William Penn opened the Province of Pennsylvania for settlement, a little more than two hundred years ago, many English people crossed the ocean and found a new home in and around Philadelphia. They were followed somewhat later by immigrants from the north of Ireland, who were of Scotch descent, and who were attracted hither by the fertility and cheapness of the land, the genial climate and the civil and religious liberty enjoyed under the mild sway of the Proprietary.

Among them was Rev. William Tennent, born in or about 1673, in county Down, Ulster, Ireland. He received a thorough classical education, and was ordained deacon and priest in the established Episcopal church of his native country, where he was chaplain to a nobleman. Having married the daughter of Rev. Mr. Kennedy, a Presbyterian clergyman, and being dissatisfied with Episcopacy, he turned his steps with his family to America, where he arrived in 1716 or 1717, when he was in the vigor of his manhood, about 43 or 44 years of age. In 1718, a year or two after he reached New York, he united with the Presbytery in that city, giving the reasons that influenced him in making the change in his ecclesiastical connections. From 1718 to 1726 he was minister of the Presbyterian church in Bedford, N. Y., as appears from the records of that church still in existence. In the latter year he came by invitation to Bucks county, Pa., to the neighborhood of Neshaminy, now Hartsville. It is uncertain whether he found a church already formed or gathered one himself from the settlers, mostly his countrymen, who had recently been landing in large numbers in Penn's hospitable domain. Settlements were forming rapidly on both sides of the Delaware river and in Maryland and Virginia, and ministers were needed to preach the gospel to the increasing population. Some of that profession came from Great Britain and some from

New England, but too few adequately to supply the destitution. A part of the synod of Philadelphia were decidedly in favor of a liberally educated ministry and were opposed to receiving any into their number but such as had been trained at a university; while others, contemplating the wants of the country and the lack of men thoroughly qualified, were ready to welcome candidates who were endowed with competent talents and piety, though their education was somewhat limited.

Mr. Tennent sympathized with the latter class and was deeply impressed with the importance of having young men prepared for the sacred office on our own shores. No theological seminary had then been established in our land, nor was there any college west of the Hudson river. To meet the demand for intelligent and devoted clergymen, he determined to open an institution in which instruction might be given in the Latin classics, in the original language of the Scriptures, Greek and Hebrew, and in the doctrines of Christianity. It was designed to be not a mere academy nor a college for a scientific and classical course alone, but to combine the advantages which such institutions afford with training in theology. At what date Mr. Tennent commenced his efforts in this direction imperfect records fail to inform us, but it was probably not long after his settlement at Neshaminy. We are equally in ignorance of the precise spot where it was inaugurated. The site of the log structure, in which it was held during the later years of its existence, was on the York turnpike, about a mile south of Hartsville, in Bucks county, on ground now occupied by Mr. — Warner, formerly a part of the farm of Isaac Carrell. Mr. Tennent bought this tract of 100 acres of John White, of Philadelphia, September 11, 1735, and in the deed conveying it to him he is spoken of as a resident of Northampton. Hence he must have had his seminary previous to 1735 in some other locality, perhaps in the township of Northampton. But in what precise spot it was before matters little. It was within the bounds of Neshaminy congregation, of which he was the pastor, and therein were educated many men eminent for learning, eloquence, talents and piety, who shone as bright lights in the subsequent history of the Presbyterian church. The building in which its exercises proceeded after 1735, stood three-quarters of a century or more, until it had

become time-worn, when it was taken down and appropriated to ignoble uses; but a cane made from a part of it was deposited by Rev. Robert B. Belville, formerly pastor at Neshaminy, in the library of Princeton College, where it now is, a relic of an edifice within whose humble walls the minds of men were disciplined who became distinguished in the church and state.

Four sons of Mr. Tennent, Gilbert, William, John and Charles, received all their training from their father, though the eldest, Gilbert, was not strictly speaking a student in the college, having reached the age of twenty-three when the family came to Pennsylvania. He assisted in giving instruction at Neshaminy in 1726 and became pastor of a church in New Brunswick, N. J., the next year, where he remained till 1743, when he was called to the Second Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, and there closed his labors and his life in 1764, in the 62nd year of his age. He was endowed with great mental ability, and preached with remarkable power, not only in the cities where he resided, but in Boston and other places in Massachusetts and Connecticut, whither he went on long evangelistic tours, and occupied a position among the most prominent in the land, which he ably filled. Rev. George Whitfield, the celebrated evangelist, speaks of him in the highest terms of commendation. Among other remarks he says, "In New York I went to the meeting-house to hear Rev. Gilbert Tennent preach, and never before heard I such a searching sermon. He is a son of thunder and does not regard the face of man." Dr. Alexander observes, "it is doubtful whether Mr. Whitfield ever expressed so high an opinion of any other preacher of any denomination. Indeed it is probable that he never met with a man of a more perfectly congenial spirit with his own." Gilbert Tennent was buried first under the middle aisle of the second church in Philadelphia, and when the building was remodeled his remains were deposited in the grave-yard belonging to that church in Arch street, between Fifth and Sixth streets, and in 1853 they were removed to the cemetery of the Presbyterian church in Abington, Pa., where they now lie.

John Tennent was settled as minister to the church in Freehold, N. J., when only twenty-three years of age, but died two years afterwards of consumption, when he had apparently but

just begun his work. It has been said of him, "Natural quickness of apprehension, copiousness of fancy and fluency of expression served to qualify him eminently for the office of a preacher." If he had lived till middle life he would in all probability have been in a high rank in the sacred profession.

William Tennent succeeded John at Freehold, N. J., in 1733. Before his ordination, while pursuing his studies at the house of his brother, Gilbert, in New Brunswick, he became unwell from excessive mental application, and at length his life seemed to be in danger. While in this state of extreme debility he suddenly lost the power of motion, color left his face, his eyes closed, his senses failed, breathing and pulsation ceased, and he appeared to die. Every means was employed to recall the spark of animation, but in vain. After two or three days the body was prepared for burial and invitations were sent out for the funeral, but a young physician who had attended him thought he observed an unusual warmth about the heart, and induced his brother, Gilbert, to postpone the last rites till the following day. Meantime the utmost exertions were made to reawaken vitality without avail. The hour for the interment had a second time arrived and the people were assembled, when the doctor, who had been near the body constantly, unwilling to withdraw his efforts for resuscitation, was putting some oil on the tongue, which had become swollen and cracked. At this juncture, to the alarm and astonishment of all present, the eyes, deep sunk in their sockets, opened, a dreadful moan was heard and again all was silence and apparent death. Thoughts of burial were now exchanged for renewed attempts to recall life, and in a few hours consciousness fully returned. For about six weeks, however, he continued so feeble that his final recovery seemed doubtful, and a year elapsed before he was restored to ordinary health. When he was able to walk about his room and converse somewhat, it was discovered that he had forgotten everything that related to his previous life. He did not know how to read or write, and Latin, which he could speak readily before, had entirely gone from his recollection. He had to be taught anew, like a child. One day when he was reciting to his brother from a Latin author, he put his hand quickly to his head and remarked that he felt a throb of pain there, and it seemed to him he

had read that book before. From that time his memory gradually recovered its strength, his former history came again to his recollection, and he could speak Latin as well as ever. He always thought that during the period of suspended animation his spirit was conducted by an angel to the confines of Heaven, and that he saw some of its ineffable glories and heard the songs of the ransomed, and it was a sore trial to him when he was told that he must return to earth. His pastorate at Freehold continued till his death in 1777, a period of forty-four years. His attainments in the classical languages and in divinity were of a high order, he was an earnest and impressive expounder of the word from the sacred desk, displayed rare wisdom and knowledge of human nature, and wielded a powerful influence over the minds of his hearers. He was an ardent patriot, and during the portion of the Revolutionary war in which he lived, he exerted his influence to the utmost for the success of the American Colonies in their struggle for independence.

Charles Tennent, the fourth son of Rev. William Tennent, Sen., was born in Ireland and came to this country when five or six years old, with his father, by whom he was educated at home and in Log College. In 1737 he was ordained and installed at Whiteclay Creek, in Delaware, where he remained twenty-five years, and in 1762 removed to Buckingham, Maryland, serving the church there till about the time of his death in 1770 or 1771. Though less distinguished than his brothers, he possessed a sound, clear mind, and was useful in the sacred calling to which his life was devoted. His son, Rev. William M. Tennent, was for many years pastor of the Presbyterian church in Abington, in this county, and having acquired extensive learning he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Yale College. He married Miss Susanna Rodgers, daughter of Rev. Dr. John Rodgers, of New York.

Another student at Log College was Rev. Samuel Blair. Born in Ireland in 1712, he was under Mr. Tennent's tuition between 1730 and 1735, and was first stationed at Shrewsbury, N. J., afterwards, in 1740, at New Londonderry, Pa., often called Fagg's Manor. Here he established a school similar to that at Neshaminy, after Mr. Tennent had become too old and infirm to engage in that kind of labor. At this seminary, which may be

regarded as a continuation of Log College, some men were trained who rose to eminence in the land. Among these were Rev. Samuel Davies, the successor of Dr. Jonathan Edwards in the presidency of Princeton College; Rev. Alexander Cummings, Rev. Dr. John Rodgers, Rev. James Finley and Rev. Hugh Henry. President Davies visited Europe, and on his return he was asked his opinion of the celebrated preachers he had heard while he was abroad. After speaking in most favorable terms of many, to whom he listened with much pleasure and profit, he said, that "he had heard no one who in his judgment was superior to his former teacher, Samuel Blair."

Rev. John Blair, a younger brother of Samuel, was also a pupil at Log College. He was pastor twelve or fourteen years of three congregations in Cumberland county, Pa., one of which was Big Spring, now Newville. When the French and Indian war commenced, his home was in danger of attack by the savages, who were frequently making incursions against the frontier settlements, and he was compelled to leave that part of the State. About that time the church at Fagg's Manor was made vacant by the death of his brother Samuel, and he was called to that field. Here he remained nine years, and besides performing his clerical duties in an able manner, he superintended the school his brother had established and prepared many young men for the ministry by instructing them in the languages, philosophy and theology. When Dr. Finley, president of Princeton College, died, he was chosen professor of Divinity, and subsequently vice-president of the college, and discharged the functions of the president till the arrival of Dr. Witherspoon. As the funds of the institution were at that time limited, and Dr. Witherspoon was an eminent divine fully qualified to instruct in theology, he resigned his professorship and accepted an invitation to be minister at Wallkill, Orange county, N. Y., where he died in 1771.

Rev. Samuel Finley, another of the students at Neshaminy, was seventeen years pastor at Nottingham, Maryland, where besides preaching the gospel with great fidelity and acceptance he established a school like that of Mr. Tennent, and that of the Blairs at Fagg's Manor. In it several men of a high order of intellect were fitted for honor and usefulness in the churches of America. Having proved himself able to conduct the educa-

tion of brilliant young men, as well as to move and edify an audience from the pulpit, he was chosen president of Princeton College, and succeeded Mr. Davies in that important position. While there he became favorably known in Great Britain for talents, learning and piety, and the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the University of Glasgow, which was at that time an unprecedented honor for any American.

I might speak particularly of others who studied under Mr. Tennent, as Rev. William Robinson and Rev. John Rowland, but limited time forbids. I will pass on hastily to Rev. Charles Beatty. His mother's maiden name was Christianna Clinton. General George Clinton, of the Revolutionary army, eighteen years governor of the State of New York and for two terms Vice President of the United States, was her nephew, and DeWitt Clinton, the projector of the Erie canal, was the son of another nephew. Charles Beatty was brought over from Ireland when a child, and after he was sufficiently grown he traveled as an itinerant peddler for several years. One day in the pursuit of this vocation he halted at Log College, and astonished Mr. Tennent by addressing him in correct Latin. After much conversation with him, in which he seemed to manifest talent, piety and a tolerably good education, the venerable clergyman said to him: "Go and sell the contents of your pack, and return immediately and study with me; it will be a sin for you to continue a peddler, when you can be so much more useful in another profession." He accepted the invitation, became a minister, and the successor of Mr. Tennent himself at Neshaminy, where he was ordained in 1743 and where he remained pastor till his death, a period of twenty-nine years. During this time the French and Indian war took place, and troops were raised in Pennsylvania to defend the frontiers against the attacks of the savages. A corps of 500 men was enlisted and placed under the command of the philosopher, Benjamin Franklin, and Mr. Beatty was appointed chaplain. They marched against the enemy early in January, 1756. While in this campaign of peril and hardship, an amusing incident occurred, which is thus related by Franklin himself. "We had for our chaplain a zealous Presbyterian minister, Mr. Beatty, who complained to me that the men did not generally attend his prayers and exhortations.

When they enlisted they were promised, besides pay and provisions, a gill of rum a day, which was punctually served out to them, half in the morning and half in the evening, and I observed they were punctual in attending to receive it, upon which I said to Mr. Beatty, 'It is perhaps below the dignity of your profession to act as the steward of the rum, but if you were to distribute it out only just after prayers you would have them all about you.' He liked the thought, undertook the task, and with the help of a few hands to measure out the liquor executed it to satisfaction, and never were prayers more generally and more punctually attended; so that I think this method preferable to the punishment inflicted by some military laws for non-attendance on divine service."

From this expedition Mr. Beatty returned home early in the spring of 1756, and as recruits were much needed for the army he urged those of his people who could be spared to enlist and serve against the barbarous and cruel foe, and told them that if the synod would provide supplies for his pulpit he would offer himself as chaplain, and should be glad to have some of his congregation go with him. So forcible was his address that during the following week about a hundred men agreed to accompany him, and he was commissioned by the Lieutenant-Governor of the State to be chaplain to the regiment of foot under Colonel Clapham. The synod commended his course and provided for the supply of his pulpit, and he was absent most of the summer with the Provincial troops, going as far as the region west of the Susquehanna river. In 1758 an expedition was sent against the French and Indians in the western part of the State, consisting of 9,000 men under General Forbes, and Mr. Beatty was invited to act as chaplain of the First Battalion of Pennsylvania Provincials. These forces compelled the French, who had been deserted by their Indian allies, to abandon Fort Du Quesne and retreat in boats down the Ohio. Our army took possession of the fort November 25, and its name was changed to Fort Pitt, in honor of William Pitt, now Pittsburg. Mr. Beatty preached a thanksgiving sermon after the triumphant occupation of the enemy's fortification, before the whole army, no doubt the first thanksgiving discourse, and perhaps the first Protestant sermon ever delivered in the valley of the Mississippi.

In 1760 he was sent to Great Britain by the corporation of

the fund for the widows and orphans of deceased ministers, to solicit contributions in aid of the fund. He left Philadelphia in March and visited England, Scotland and the north of Ireland, and crossed over the channel to Holland, preaching often, and meeting with much encouragement in his efforts to collect money. He witnessed the coronation of George III October 25, was presented at court and received from his majesty a handsome donation for the fund. He seems to have been absent in this work two years, supplies being sent for his church by the synod.

In 1766 he was commissioned by the synod to go in company with Rev. George Duffield, of Carlisle, to the western part of Pennsylvania to visit the Indian tribes there and prepare the way for the establishment of a mission among them. He penetrated the wilderness on horseback one hundred and thirty miles beyond Pittsburg, had several interviews with different sachems, to whom he explained Christianity through an interpreter, and returned after two months absence. In 1767, on account of the ill health of Mrs. Beatty, he visited Great Britain a second time, being absent, as before, about two years. He was treated with great respect in Scotland, being elected free burgess of three important towns in that country.

He manifested much interest in the prosperity of Princeton College, of which institution he was a trustee nine years. In 1772 it was deemed advisable that some one should go to the West India Islands, where many wealthy English planters resided, to secure donations for the support of the college. As Dr. Witherspoon, first appointed, could not leave his family, Mr. Beatty was selected for the important and honorable task. He repaired to Barbadoes, where he was taken sick of yellow fever and died August 13, 1772. Dr. Sproats, of Philadelphia, preached a funeral sermon on his death, when intelligence of it reached this country, and he was widely lamented as an able and highly useful minister of the gospel.

I have thus spoken briefly of some of the alumni of Log College. All of them, concerning whom we have knowledge, were acceptable public speakers, and faithful in the discharge of the ministerial office, and some rose to eminence and distinction. The institution was the germ of Princeton College, which was founded soon after Rev. William Tennent, Sr., died, and located originally in

Elizabethtown, N. J., in 1746, removed to Newark in 1748 and permanently to Princeton in 1756. Most of the members of the New Brunswick Presbytery at its formation had been students at Neshaminy, and all of them held views similar to those of the Tennents. They desired to have a college founded upon principles which they deemed sound and adapted to promote the good of men, and their efforts led to the establishment of the College of New Jersey, which has been for almost one hundred and fifty years a fountain sending forth streams of light and blessing to our country and the world. Log College was the predecessor and the origin of the two schools of a like character at Fagg's Manor and Nottingham, Maryland, which were opened by its pupils, and many noted men were educated wholly or in part in those seminaries; and it has been said that Jefferson College, Hampden Sidney and Washington College, in Virginia, sprang ultimately from the obscure seat of learning at Neshaminy, for they were all founded and conducted originally by graduates of Princeton.

When the general assembly of the Presbyterian church in the United States determined in 1811 to establish a theological seminary, some were in favor of fixing its location where Log College stood, to which the Presbyterian church owes so large a debt of gratitude, and Rev. Nathaniel Irwin, then pastor at Neshaminy, left in his will one thousand dollars to be given to the institution on condition that that site was chosen. But it was deemed best ultimately to place it at Princeton. It has been nearly a century and a half since Mr. Tennent's humble school of the prophets passed away, but it still lives in the important and beneficent results that flowed from it.