

HISTORY
OF
CHESTER COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA,

WITH
GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

BY
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DICKEY, REV. EBENEZER, D.D., was born near Oxford, Chester Co., Pa., March 12, 1772. His ancestors migrated from the north of Ireland, and were members of the Associate Presbyterian Church. His mother, whose maiden name was Jackson, descended from English Puritans.

He graduated with great credit at the University of Pennsylvania, of which Dr. John Ewing was then the provost, in the year 1792. He was licensed in 1794 as a minister of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, and in 1796 became pastor of the Associate Reformed congregations of Oxford and Octorara. His connection with Octorara was continued until 1800, and with Oxford until his death. His father and grandfather had both served as elders in the latter church.

In 1822 a union took place between a part of the Associate Reformed Synod and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and the Oxford congregation, with their pastor, came under the care of the General Assembly. Mr. Dickey had taken an active part in bringing about this union. In 1819 and 1820 he traveled extensively in Europe for the benefit of his health.

He possessed eminent intellectual endowments, a clear, comprehensive, and well-disciplined mind, and was a clear, strong, solemn, and impressive preacher. He was a man of great prudence and sincerity, and an eminently safe counselor. His advice was frequently sought and seldom disregarded. He was also characterized by amiability and simplicity of character; was cheerful, social, and affectionate, and enjoyed the confidence of his congregation and of the community in which he lived.

He was an earnest advocate of every cause promising to advance the interests of man for this life as well as the future. The cause of education, temperance, and agriculture in his native county found encouragement at his hands. He was free from sectarian bigotry, and his views were far in advance of the general opinions and feelings of his day. He seemed to have caught the first dawning light of the world's progress, and his only desire to live was that he "might see the great changes which would take place in the next twenty years."

He was a prominent actor in the affairs of the church, and exercised a commanding influence in her judicatories. The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the College of New Jersey, at Princeton, in 1823. He died May 31, 1831, in the 60th year of his age.

DR. EBENEZER V. DICKEY.—Of the family of Samuel Dickey, who came to this country from the north of Ire-

land early in the seventeenth century, his son, Samuel Dickey, was married to Mary Jackson in 1759, and had four sons,—John, Samuel, Ebenezer, and David. Ebenezer, born in 1771, had four sons,—John, Samuel, Ebenezer, and



D. E. Dickey

David. Ebenezer V., the subject of this sketch, was born in Oxford, Dec. 15, 1821. After completing his preparatory studies in the academy at Hopewell, he entered Lafayette College, and was graduated by the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania in 1844, and settled in the practice of medicine in Oxford. He was married in 1845 to Miss Frances G. Ralston, daughter of Samuel Ralston, of Brandywine Manor, and sister of Dr. Ralston, of Norristown. She and three children survive him. In connection with his brothers, John and Samuel, he was largely instrumental in the building of the Baltimore Central Railroad, of which he was president at the time of his death. He was elected from Chester County in 1856 to the State Legislature, and served one term in the House, and having secured, with his brother Samuel, a charter for the Octorara Bank, which was located at Oxford, was elected its first president. For the purpose of restoring his health he traveled in Europe, but returned unbenefited, and died July 31, 1858. As a man and as a physician he was very much respected, and exerted a wide influence as a citizen and member of the Presbyterian Church.

REV. JOHN MILLER DICKEY, D.D., for more than fifty years was a most successful man in doing good. Remarkable for the variety of the work accomplished, for the large, comprehensive, and correct views entertained, and for the independence shown in devising and executing plans of usefulness, the purity and benevolence of his motives and the modesty and sincerity of his manner won for him the confidence of all who labored with him, or who knew him. The scene of Dr. Dickey's labors, and where for the most

of his life he retained a home (residing a large part of each year in Philadelphia), was the town of Oxford, in Chester County. Here, on Dec. 16, 1806, he was born, the eldest son of Rev. Ebenezer Dickey, D.D. Here his grandfathers for three generations had lived, many of whom had been office-bearers in the church. Here his own father was pastor of the Presbyterian Church for thirty-five years, known as a learned divine, an earnest and eloquent preacher, and a wise and judicious counselor. His mother was the daughter of John Miller, Esq., of Philadelphia, from whose four daughters, all marrying ministers, have sprung many men of high standing and acknowledged ability in the learned professions and in business. Another daughter married Rev. William Finney, for fifty years pastor in Churchville, Md.; another, Rev. Dr. Charles G. McClean; another, Rev.

Samuel Dickey, still prominent before the people of Chester County as a man of large mind, varied attainments, and great benevolence; the other son was Dr. Ebenezer V. Dickey, a physician and surgeon of large practice and skill, who is mentioned elsewhere. Gifted by nature with a strong physical frame, the eldest son early began the study of the classics in the academy connected with his father's church, then under the charge of a famous teacher named Kirkpatrick, who afterwards went to Milton, Pa., accompanied by his pupil, who there completed his preparation for college associated with other pupils, many of whom afterwards gained distinction in their native State. Among them were ex-Governors Curtin and Pollock, with whom an unbroken friendship was maintained, and who assisted him on various occasions in his plans of public benevolence.



REV. JOHN MILLER DICKEY, D.D.

Dr. George Junkin, founder of Lafayette College, Pa., and president of Washington College, Va., and Miami University, Ohio. Jane, the eldest daughter, was a woman of remarkable character, in whom we can trace many of the features which distinguished the son. Of her, as a pastor's wife for forty years, her brother-in-law, Rev. William Finney, wrote,—

"She possessed a strength of nerve and a spirit of enterprise that carried her beyond the narrow circle of home. She hesitated not over what she believed to be her duty, but efficiently and at every hazard performed it. Her whole soul was thrown into all her undertakings. She was qualified to lead rather than to be led, to govern rather than to obey, and while manifesting in various forms the humble spirit of a Christian, she possessed in an eminent degree all the essential elements of a mind and heart of the highest order. She was a friend to all, especially to those in need."

Born of such parents, should we not expect a noble character in the son? Besides the eldest son, there were born to these parents three daughters and two sons,—Rev.

He graduated at Dickinson College, Carlisle, in 1824, then under the presidency of Dr. John M. Mason, afterwards of New York (his father's co-laborer in the establishment of the Associate Reformed Theological Seminary of New York City), the influence of whose spirit made a deep impression upon the young heart. Hence he passed to Princeton Theological Seminary under Drs. Alexander and Miller, from whence he was licensed to preach in 1828 at the age of twenty-one. But his preparation was not yet complete. The good old custom of the church required him to spend two years in missionary labors. In these God blessed him with marked success. He was sent to visit the northern tier of counties of Pennsylvania, then possessing few Presbyterian churches. On horseback and with his saddle-bags he traveled, passing through Stroudsburg, Wyalusing, Orwell, Towanda, and many other towns, preaching in school-houses, court-houses, and, when the congregations were too large, in barns. In some places, after two or three weeks' preaching,

there were scores of converts gathered, which grew in many instances into flourishing churches, and still remain. During the next year he went as missionary to the State of Georgia, and to St. Augustine, Fla., where his success was such that he was called as pastor to St. Mary's, Ga., and to the Second Church, Savannah, and at the same time to New Castle, Del., in which latter place he was ordained in 1830. Here he began a ministry of the warmest mutual interest, attended by the chancellor of the State, Kinsey Johns, Judge Black, and others. But during the next year, on the death of his father, he was called to the charge of the Oxford Church. During the remarkable revivals of religion in 1832-33 he was conspicuous as a revival preacher in the best sense of the word,—old in doctrines, new in labor, power, and effect. At this date he was about twenty-six years of age, tall and commanding in appearance, with strongly-marked features and a penetrating eye. Especially was his voice noticeable, clear and powerful, yet sweet and persuasive. His articulation was so perfect that even the old and partially deaf came to hear him preach. A ripe scholar and earnest student, his public exercises and sermons commanded great attention. During 1832-33 he was accustomed to go from church to church and preach at protracted meetings, day and night. At this time Dr. Dickey received numerous calls, among others to Washington, D. C., and two to Philadelphia, one of the latter, signed by many clergymen (Albert Barnes and others), urging his acceptance. Declining all invitations to remove elsewhere, he chose rather to devise new places of usefulness in his own large congregation, including at that time fields occupied by several other congregations. He maintained at one time in different parts of his congregation more than twelve Sabbath-schools, and regular preaching in Oxford and West Nottingham churches, and at other points. He established Zion Church as a separate congregation.

In 1834, Dr. Dickey married Miss Sarah Emlen Cresson, of Philadelphia, sister of Elliott Cresson. How much the husband's success should be attributed to the wife eternity alone will disclose. Educated, refined, devoted, self-sacrificing, possessing a deep religious experience and knowledge of the truth, and interested in every good work, her influence was strong and lasting. For more than forty years they walked side by side. In 1854 his health was broken down, and his life is believed to have been prolonged by their removal to Philadelphia, where they continued to reside during the remainder of life, a period of about twenty-four years. She died in February, 1878, and he six weeks thereafter. One of their sons, John M. Cresson Dickey, Esq., resides in the homestead in Oxford, and is a member of the bar of Chester County. Another son, Rev. Clement C. Dickey, is pastor of the Sixty-third Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. The sons inherit the public spirit of their parents.

In 1835 the subject of public schools excited the deep interest of Dr. Dickey. Throughout the State they were taught by teachers poorly prepared. After consideration he decided to establish a training-school for women as teachers, wherein moral science and the Bible would form part of the course. In the employment of women as teachers he was much interested; accordingly, in 1837,

property was purchased for the purpose, and he associated with himself, at first, Rev. Dr. Ralston, afterwards, his brother, Rev. Samuel Dickey; and the "Oxford Female Seminary" became and remained for more than twenty years a powerful instrumentality for good, sending out hundreds of young women fitted for any position in life. Its work only ceased when the State established normal schools for all. On the subject of temperance Dr. Dickey took decided grounds. He organized local societies in his own congregation, gathering in the young. He conducted conventions, which did much to secure the present school system. He took an interest in improved agriculture, and in the planting of ornamental trees and flowers. He originated and assisted in completing the Philadelphia and Baltimore Central Railroad. One incident illustrating his character cannot be omitted, and is of itself full of thrilling interest. A young colored girl named Rachel Parker, living in Pennsylvania, was cruelly kidnapped and carried to Baltimore and sold into slavery. No one dared to pursue or attempt her recovery. All were intimidated by threats of personal violence if they should presume to enter a slave State for any such purpose. Dr. Dickey formed a party of a few interested men and started to Baltimore. The train upon which they traveled was watched by desperate men, who at one point, near Baltimore, boarded the cars, and taking out one of the party, hung him to a tree until life was extinct, thinking in this way to intimidate and turn back the brave leader of the company. But nothing daunted, he pursued his purpose. He entered the courtroom in Baltimore and demanded the body of the woman upon a writ of law. Accompanied by the sheriff of Baltimore, he passed her captors among the slave-pens of the city. Failing to find her there, he pursued from place to place, until they were beaten out in their vain efforts of concealment and compelled to return their victim, with another taken about the same time, from the far-distant city of New Orleans, whither they had taken her. This incident created universal interest at the time, and may be found described at length in Still's "History." It produced a most salutary effect upon public opinion, and the warmest approval was bestowed upon Dr. Dickey for his conduct of the case. There remains to mention another great and successful work of Dr. Dickey's later life.

He long felt the need of educated teachers and preachers for the colored people both North and South, and though at the time slavery existed, yet he determined to do what he could to prepare teachers for this destitute people, not only in America, but in Africa, where the life of a white man was very short because of a fatal climate. Accordingly, in 1851, he resolved to lay the foundation of a permanent institution, though more than ten years were yet to pass before emancipation should be proclaimed. He secured a charter from the State for "Ashmun Institute," taking the name from that of "Judiah Ashmun," an African missionary whose character he admired. By necessity he became the president of its board of trustees and its nursing father, although he never taught as a member of its faculty. The site was chosen about four miles from Oxford, at what is now called Lincoln University Station, upon the Philadelphia and Baltimore Central Railroad, upon a spot where

a young colored man, afterwards a missionary in Africa, and whom Dr. Dickey had partially educated in his own study, used to pray that a way might be opened up for the education of his race. The *rock* upon which he knelt was placed in the foundation. In December, 1856, the Rev. Dr. Courtlandt Van Rensselaer delivered the opening address, and Hon. William E. Dodge, of New York, endowed the first professorship. In the front of the main hall Dr. Dickey erected a tablet with the prophetic words,—

“The night is far spent; the day is at hand.”

This was truly the darkest hour, when only the strong eye of Faith could see that it was “far spent.” Under the instruction at first of Dr. Carter, of Baltimore, and now of Dr. Isaac Rendall, president of the faculty, the classes have never been omitted. When the work became wonderfully increased by emancipation the name was changed from Ashmun Institute to Lincoln University,* and now, after a quarter of a century of uninterrupted success, its graduates are to be found occupying positions of trust in nearly every State in the Union. Several of its graduates have gone as missionaries to Africa. Dr. Dickey, at the time of his death (March 21, 1878), had been for many years an esteemed member of the board of directors of Princeton Theological Seminary. He is everywhere acknowledged to have been a leading spirit in all departments of public usefulness in which he was engaged.

JESSE C. DICKEY is of Scotch-Irish origin. His grandfather, John Dickey, came to America in 1744, bearing with him a certificate of membership from the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, which he deposited in the Presbyterian Church of New London. He was a farmer of considerable intelligence and noted integrity. Dying at the age of seventy-five, he bequeathed his farm and homestead to his son Robert. He being anxious to engage in a business more lucrative than farming, sold his farm in 1800 to Francis Good, late owner of the same, and removed to Beaver, Pa. From thence he removed to New Castle, Lawrence Co., Pa. Here, on the 27th of February, 1808, Jesse C. Dickey was born. The father, being unfortunate in his new undertakings, became much discouraged, and returned in the autumn of 1812 to Chester County. The demands of a largely-increasing family made it necessary to seek aid from his children. Thus, at the early age of eleven, Jesse became a farmer's boy, and continued working in the summer and attending school in the winter until twenty-one years of age, when he began teaching. For six years he taught and attended school alternately. He was very ambitious and anxious to advance in scholarship, and pushed forward with untiring energy towards the acquirement of an education. A share in the New London Library furnished him with excellent reading, and contributed largely in storing his mind with valuable knowledge. History and biography were his favorite reading. Especially did he esteem the lives of Benjamin Franklin and Henry Clay. To the life of the former he declares much of his success in life is due. During these six years of teaching he gave instruction to six of his sisters and two brothers,

who, with an ambition akin to his own, soon became independent. Being anxious to secure a permanent home for his parents, he purchased, in 1832, his present homestead farm, to which they immediately removed. Here his father died at the age of eighty-one. His mother, some years later, died at the home of her daughter, Elizabeth Hudson, at the advanced age of ninety-seven. Mr. Dickey married, Dec. 11, 1834, Margaret, youngest daughter of Col. David Dickey, of Hopewell. Twenty years later she died, and three years subsequently he married Elizabeth, daughter of Joseph Wilson, an eloquent preacher in the Society of Friends. As early as 1832, Mr. Dickey became noted for his strong anti-slavery principles. In 1837, when William Burleigh was invited to deliver an anti-slavery speech in the school-house of Hopewell (which, owing to the prejudices of the neighborhood, was locked against him), Mr. Dickey opened his private house, from whose porch Mr. Burleigh delivered an eloquent address to an interested audience. He received in 1842 the nomination on the Whig ticket for the Legislature, and was elected for three successive years. As a member of the Legislature Mr. Dickey became prominent through his active interest in matters of special importance.

In 1846 he purchased the property late the residence of Col. David Dickey. After enlarging the buildings he opened the Hopewell Academy. A liberal patronage made this work a success. Many young men came hither to secure an academical education, and no young man proving himself worthy of aid was ever denied a home and advantages of instruction. In the fall of 1848, Mr. Dickey was elected to Congress. In that body his anti-slavery principles were manifested in his speech on the admission of California into the Union as a free State. His whole record was such as to secure his renomination, although his opponent, the Democratic candidate, was chosen to the office.

At the breaking out of the Rebellion, Mr. Dickey, as a member of the State Central Committee, labored zealously for the election of Governor Curtin and President Lincoln. Being in Washington when Fort Sumter was fired upon, he joined the Cassius M. Clay battalion for the defense of the city, in which he served until it was disbanded. After this he was connected with the quartermaster's department, under Capt. C. G. Sawtill, until the “Seven Days' Fight.” In the mean time he was appointed paymaster in the United States army. He continued in this service until June, 1866, with headquarters at St. Louis and New Orleans. During this period he traveled by land and water 33,188 miles, disbursing more than four million of dollars. Since the war Mr. Dickey has been actively engaged in farming, taking always a deep interest in the growing skill and intelligence of the agriculturist. To the laboring class of the community he has ever been a fast and efficient friend, advocating their cause both in public and private. The passing years have touched him lightly, his physical nature being still strong and vigorous.

* See sketch in Educational Department of this work.