

CENTENNIAL BIOGRAPHY.

MEN OF MARK

OF

CUMBERLAND VALLEY, PA.

1776—1876.

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## REV. GEORGE DUFFIELD, D. D.

**T**HIS eminent patriot and divine was the third son of George Duffield who had left the north of Ireland and had settled first in Octorara township, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, at some time between 1725 and 1730. He is supposed to have descended from a Huguenot family which had taken refuge under the British crown in consequence of the revocation of the edict of Nantz. At the time, however, in which the subject of this sketch was born, (October 7, 1732,) the family resided at Pequea, in the same county, on lands which still remain in possession of some descendants. The father died there at the advanced age of eighty-four years, having been "noted for his stern integrity and devoted piety."

The son, George, received his preparatory education at Newark, Delaware, and graduated at Nassau Hall in 1752. He then spent four years as a tutor in the academy and the college where he had been educated, but having become hopefully pious under the preaching of Dr. Robert Smith, of Pequea, he studied theology under the instruction of that divine, and was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of Newcastle, March 11, 1756. Three days before his licensure, he was married to Elizabeth, daughter of Samuel Blair, of Fogg's Manor, and in the autumn of that year, he was sent to supply some vacancies in the valley of the Shenandoah. During the next year he preached in some parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and his labours were attended with revivals of religion, especially in the neighbourhood of Princeton and Fogg's Manor.

In consequence of those dissensions which had resulted in the great Presbyterian schism of 1741-58, a new congregation had been formed in Carlisle, but within the limits of the church of Upper Pennsborough. On the re-union, in 1759, Mr. Duffield had evidently been labouring for some time in this new congregation. When the call from Carlisle and Big Spring, (Newville,) was presented to him, early in 1759, he had become a resident of the former town, and had married for his second wife, Margaret, a sister (Webster says a daughter,) of John Armstrong, and an elder of the new church. A house of worship had been commenced, for we find that the Synod were grieved that year, at the divided state of the people in Carlisle and recommended that only one house of worship be erected in that town. He accepted of

the call, engaging to give one-third of his time to the church of Big Spring, but he was not actually ordained and installed until the third Wednesday of September, 1759. He had entered warmly into the re-union and had himself chosen to be connected with the Presbytery of Donegal, though, as he declared at the time, "he hardly expected much comfort in it for awhile." Accordingly we find that for years an unhappy state of feeling existed between him and his neighbour, Rev. John Steel, and their respective congregations. More than once, causes of dispute were carried up to the higher judicatories of the church, who, "after mature and serious deliberations, unanimously agreed that the grounds on which these unhappy differences were built, were not sufficient to raise them to such a height as they have come to."

In April, 1760, two Presbyterian meeting-houses are mentioned as in existence in Carlisle. That in which Mr. Duffield preached was located on the east side of Hanover street, nearly opposite the present Second Presbyterian church. In spite of the contentions in which he and his people were involved, his preaching was attended with great success. He entered with all his heart into the revival spirit of that time, and was very popular as a preacher. His discourses were not generally written out in full, though from the specimens which remain, we should conclude that his manuscript was in the more difficult parts complete, while in others he trusted to the inspiration of the moment. They were highly evangelical in sentiment and urged upon impenitent men, especially, the claims of religion with unusual importunity and skill. Of a warm temperament and ardent in the assertion of his views, he often provoked controversy, but he was equally generous toward an opponent and ready to forgive. The whole population of the Cumberland valley was then exposed to the merciless ravages of the Indians, and not unfrequently, when preaching at some retired station, his congregation were obliged to assemble with arms in their hands. His sympathies with the suffering, and his courage in meeting danger made him a popular favourite. Dr. John McDowall, at one time Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, tells us that when he was but eight years of age he heard Mr. Duffield preach at Monaghan, (Dillsburgh,) from Zech. ix, 12, "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope," when the preacher took occasion, from the entrenchments still remaining around the building, to illustrate the imagery of his text, and he ascribes his own conversion, under God, to impressions received under that discourse. The reputation he acquired brought him a number of calls to more important congregations. Twice he received

invitations to the Second Presbyterian church, of Philadelphia, and commissioners were sent who urged the claim before Presbytery with much zeal. But his own judgment, as well as that of his Presbytery, appears to have been averse to his relinquishment of his charge at Carlisle. More than once he undertook long missionary tours into destitute regions, under the direction of his Synod, and in response to "the supplications" of the people. In 1765, he was sent to North Carolina, and directed to "tarry half a year in vacant congregations there, as prudence might direct," and the next year he was sent with his intimate friend, Rev. Charles Beatty, to preach for, at least, two months on the frontiers of Pennsylvania and Ohio. In 1769, he gave up his Big Spring congregation, and was installed for one-third of his time at Monaghan, (Dillsburgh.)

On May 21st, 1772, he received a call from the Third Presbyterian church, on Pine street, Philadelphia, which after five months' indecision and careful consideration, he deemed it his duty to accept. The Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, however, to which that church belonged, and which was composed of such as had sympathized with the Old Side during the schism, and having been unable to amalgamate with any of the Presbyteries and so had been joined together by themselves, were unwilling to receive him and refused to present the call to him. It was not until the Synod had reversed their action and had permitted the congregation to prosecute their call without the action of Presbytery, that it reached his hands and was at once accepted. For some time, nevertheless, his way was obstructed, until, by the action of Synod, both minister and congregation were transferred to the First Presbytery of Philadelphia, (May 26th, 1773.) An effort was made (November 11th, 1773,) by his former congregation of Carlisle to obtain his restoration to them, but without success.

During the political agitations which preceded the American Revolution, he took a prominent part on the popular side and became especially obnoxious to the official authorities. His large church edifice was on one occasion closed against him on the authority of the incorporated committee of the First church, who claimed a joint jurisdiction over it, but under the influence of a concealed political hostility. The house was opened by the officers of his congregation, and when his way was blocked up by the crowd which had assembled to hear him, he was introduced to his pulpit through a window. He had scarcely commenced the usual services, when a royal magistrate, (J. Bryant,) under the pretence of quelling a riot, commenced reading the Riot Act, and commanded the people to disperse. When other

means of silencing this intruder had failed, one of the officers of the congregation seized him, bore him through the midst of the assembly out of the house, and ordered him to begone and to cease disturbing the worship of God; Mr. Duffield then went on with his preaching, but on the next day, he was required to give bail before the Mayor's Court for his appearance on the charge of aiding and abetting a riot. He refused not only to give such bail but to permit any one, even the Mayor himself, to give it in his behalf. He protested that he stood on the ground of principle, and that he was resolved to maintain the right of a minister of Christ and a worshipping assembly to be undisturbed while they were violating no law. He was allowed to withdraw and take the matter under consideration, but under the assurance that he would be soon called upon for his answer. The excitement of the people became intense as the news of this threat of imprisonment, spread, and the "Paxton Boys" who had formerly known him assembled and resolved to hold themselves in readiness to march a hundred miles for his rescue.

When the Colonial Congress held its sessions in Philadelphia, Dr. Duffield was for some time its chaplain, and when the British held possession of Philadelphia, and his church was occupied by them as a stable, he accompanied the American Army and shared in its distresses. He mingled with the soldiery, and by his ardent and patriotic addresses, did much to sustain their fainting spirits. During the dark period when Washington was in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and on Long Island, he was with the troops, and more than once came nigh being captured. He had been honoured from the commencement of the war by having a price put upon his head, and by being numbered with some leaders who were excluded from the offer of amnesty. As soon as circumstances permitted he returned to his congregation and continued the pastor of the Third church until the day of his death. He returned more than once to his former home in Carlisle, for which he always retained the warmest affection, and his name is mentioned several times as a corresponding member at the meetings of the Presbytery of Carlisle. He took a prominent part in the new organization of the General Assembly, and in the formation of the new Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1788. He was the Stated Clerk of the Assembly from the time of its organization until his death, which took place February 2d, 1790, when he was in his fifty-eighth year. Although a man of slight frame and of small stature, he possessed a firm constitution and was capable of much endurance. He continued his ministrations until about a week before

his death, when a severe pleurisy contracted at a funeral prostrated him. He was remarkable for the strictness and fervour of his devotional habits and for his valuation of the Sabbath. His confidence in the efficacy of prayer was such that he appeared to have no anxiety, though in the troubles of the time he more than once knew not where his day's bread was to come from. As he betook himself to prayer he would exclaim, "The Lord will provide," and his expectations were uniformly fulfilled. He was interred in the middle aisle of the church of which he was pastor, and his funeral sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green, from Rev. xiv, 13.

Some manuscript sermons are to be found among his descendants and others, but we are not aware of anything published from his hand, except an "Account of his Western Tour," and a "Thanksgiving Sermon" on the restoration of peace. He received the honorary degree of a Doctor in Divinity from Yale college, in 1785. As the fruit of his second marriage, he left two sons, (two others having died in infancy,) the youngest of whom (George,) was Register and Comptroller General of the State of Pennsylvania under Governor Thomas McKean, and the father of Rev. George Duffield, D. D., for seventeen years the pastor of the First Presbyterian church of Carlisle.