

HISTORY

OF THE

EBERHARTS

IN GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES,
FROM A. D. 1265 TO A. D. 1890—625 YEARS.

BY
REV. URIAH EBERHART.

WITH AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR,
INCLUDING MANY REMINISCENCES OF HIS
MINISTERIAL AND ARMY LIFE.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

PROF. JOHN FREDERIC EBERHART, A. M.

John Frederic Eberhart, fifth child of Abraham and Esther Eberhart, was born January 21, 1829, in Hickory township, Mercer county, Pa., and spent his boyhood on his father's farm, in what was then a new settlement. He was a slender, active child, with very fair complexion and very light flaxen hair. He, however, soon developed into a dignified physical man, so that to-day he stands six feet high and weighs 162 pounds.

At the age of eight years he moved with his parents to Big Bend on the Allegheny river, in Venango county, Pa., where he lived and worked on his father's farm, attending school during the winters, until sixteen years of age. At that age he taught his first school at the mouth of Oil Creek, near Franklin, Pa., for \$8.50 per month, and "boarded round."

The following summer he took special lessons in writing, drawing, and pen and ink flourishing, and during the fall and winter taught the same in the surrounding villages. After attending school several terms at Cottage Hill Academy, Ellsworth, Ohio, and teaching one winter at "Anderson's Mill," and one winter in "Craig's District," in the home neighborhood, he entered Allegheny College in the spring of 1849, and graduated July 2, 1853. He paid his way through college by teaching penmanship and other branches during the spring and fall vacations, and mowing and cradling in the harvest field during the summer vacations. He boarded himself four terms, assisted by his parents, and to complete his course the

writer of this book advanced him the money which was soon refunded with more than compound interest.

While at college he was very studious and ambitious, so that during his entire college course he was never marked below the highest grade, except one term in two studies in the classics; viz., Sallust and Heroditus, and that term he had two studies more than were usually taken.

During the time he was so earnestly developing his mental powers he did not neglect his physical system, so that he soon got to be quite an athlete and gymnast, and was one of the two of the 325 students who lifted a brass cannon in the arsenal at Meadville, Pa., weighing 900 pounds. This was the cannon presented to the State of Pennsylvania by Gen. LaFayette. He could also out-jump any of the students, and out-run all but one.

Two days after graduating he made the Fourth of July oration at Rockland, Pa., near his home, to about 7,000 people, who were wild with delight at his "school-boy oratorical flights." As the writer now remembers, few large assemblies were ever so pleased and swayed as was this one.

On the first of September next after graduating he entered upon his duties as principal of Albright Seminary, at Berlin, Somerset county, Pa. (afterwards changed to a college). It was the first institution of learning founded by the Evangelical Association, and during his administration flourished beyond expectation—having among its pupils such men as Rev. H. W. Thomas, now of the People's Church in Chicago; Rev. Wm. B. Gregg of the Delaware Conference of the M. E. Church; Rev. L. Hornberger, of the East Pennsylvania Conference, and Rev. Dall, of the Pittsburg Conference of the Evangelical Association, with many others who have risen to prominence and usefulness in life.

He had entered upon this work with great zeal and enthusiasm, intending to make teaching a *life work*, but before the close of the second year he was forced to resign, on account of failing health, as three leading physicians had given it as their opinion that he could not live over six months. "This," he says, "was the greatest sacrifice of my life, to give up my cherished plans." But he ceased from all labor, and came "West," arriving at Chicago April 15, 1855. After a short stay in the "muddy city," he went to Dixon, Ill., where he spent the summer in outdoor exercises, such as fishing and hunting, as soon as he was strong enough to do so. This and the change of climate had a wonderful effect on his health. He was passionately fond of shooting "on the wing," so with his gun and faithful dog "*Fred*" he whiled away many a pleasant hour among the prairie chickens, which were still very plentiful in that vicinity. And this he is "*sure*" did him more good than all the medicine he took. He says: "It renewed my life." So strong was his faith in this kind of treatment, that he continues to practice it. Only the other day he said: "I have since then made it a practice to spend at least a few weeks each year in fishing and hunting and energetic outdoor life." "In this way I have maintained my health and strength, so to-day, at sixty-two, I feel as active as a boy and am as fond of my gun and outdoor sport as ever." He soon got to be an *expert* in "shooting on the wing," so that but few excelled him, and woe to the duck, goose, or even antelope at which he pointed his gun.

During the time he was at Dixon, he edited and published the *Dixon Transcript*, but as it was a local political paper it did not suit his taste, so he sold it.

He spent the following winter in delivering a course of ten popular and scientific lectures on Chemistry, Nat-

ural Philosophy, Meteorology and Astronomy. He usually delivered these lectures before institutions of learning, illustrating with apparatus, etc., which made them very instructive and popular. He next traveled about a year in the interest of the New York publishers, Ivison & Phinney, and A. S. Barnes & Co., but as he had a desire for a more distinctively educational life he purchased, and published and edited *The Northwestern Home and School Journal* of Chicago, for three years. During these three years he spent much time in lecturing before "teachers' institutes," and frequently conducting them. He lectured mostly in the State of Illinois and Iowa, but was also employed by the Hon. Henry Barnard, Chancellor of the Wisconsin State University, to hold institutes in that State. This kind of work he enjoyed and valued greatly, because it not only gave him a general knowledge of the educational work of the country, but brought him in contact with the great and indefatigable workers in the cause—even such men as Elihu Burritt and Horace Mann.

In the fall of 1859 he was elected superintendent of the schools of Cook county—in which Chicago is situated—and continued in that office for ten consecutive years. They were ten years of hard work, and much of it at that time but poorly understood and appreciated. The free schools had never been under proper supervision, and were in a neglected condition. To remedy this evil he visited every school once a year at least, and conferred with teachers and directors, and also organized "teachers' institutes," and in every possible way tried to inspire interest and strengthen the cause. But finding it impossible to secure teachers fully qualified, he commenced agitating and advocating the erection of a county normal

school. At first he met with but little encouragement from any source; but at the end of several years the supervisors of the county were induced to appropriate the necessary funds, and the school was opened in September, 1867, at Blue Island, with thirty-two pupils and D. S. Wentworth as principal. It was afterward moved to Normal, where it continues to grow and prosper, so that it now numbers 573 pupils, under the care of Col. F. L. Parker as principal. It is widely known, and has pupils from adjoining counties and states.

From boyhood up, Professor Eberhart has been devoted to the cause of education, and nothing but failing health could ever have driven him from the school-room proper, and even then he took refuge in a more diversified and general work, such as editing educational journals, conducting teachers' institutes, lecturing on educational subjects, and finally becoming Superintendent of Schools. He always affiliated with associated efforts. He was among the first organizers of the Illinois State Teachers' Association, and attended seventeen of its consecutive annual sessions. He also assisted in the establishment of the State Normal University, and the construction and passage by the State Legislature of many amendments to the school laws of the State, including the act authorizing counties to establish Normal Schools.

He was the principal mover in forming the State Association of County Superintendents, and their first president. He was also a member of the American Institute of Instruction, and was one of the first Life members of the National Teachers' Association. He was also associated with many other educational and charitable societies having for their object the care and education of those who have not the wisdom and means to care for themselves. As president of the County Board of Education, he was

the means of introducing the kindergarten into the Cook county Normal School, and greatly aided in establishing the "Free Kindergarten" schools in the city.

At different times he had offered to him very prominent educational positions, such as a professorship or president's chair in some of our best institutions of learning, but declined because he believed his health would not endure that kind of a life. In his earlier years he had but little desire or expectation to make more money than to afford a comfortable living with a little left to buy books, etc. He always had a great desire to travel and hoped in some way to accumulate enough to gratify this desire in later years, but as the salary of the educator does not furnish means for very extensive travel and exploration, he decided after twenty-five years of educational effort to try his luck at making money and turned his energies to real estate. And in this direction he was quite successful, so that when the panic of 1873 first touched the country, he considered himself worth over \$1,000,000. It is true that it consisted mostly in non productive property, and the shrinkage, taxes and failure of many to pay his claims reduced it fearfully during the five years the panic brooded over the land. But not discouraged he started in again, profiting by the lessons of the past, and was again very successful, so that he now has a great abundance for himself and family, and to give to charitable purposes; the latter he is already doing. He was married on Christmas evening, 1864, to Miss Matilda Charity Miller, daughter of Joseph C. and Mercie H. Miller, of Chicago, and, as he puts it, "the best woman in the world." She was born April 15, 1837, in Toronto, Canada, but emigrated to this country when she was one year old. She received her education in Aurora and Chicago, finishing in the Chicago High School

She afterward taught in the city schools. She is an accomplished, generous woman, who is always cheerfully planning for the comfort and education of her children, as well as for the elevation and education of poor "waifs" and orphan children, by securing homes and free kindergarten and other schools for them.

As he was born and raised in a strictly religious family, he early in life accepted the doctrines and principles of Christianity, conforming his life to the same, and continued therein to the present time, with the exception of a few changes in ceremonies and matters of minor importance. But I will give his creed, as given by himself a few days ago: "I trust in an All-wise Creator and disposer of events, and I believe in the religion of Jesus Christ as epitomized in his memorable sermon on the mount:" "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

And again: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto these the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

He says further: "I look upon life as a reality, and that it should be made a beautiful activity. Unless one lives to better the life of some one else, his life has been a failure."

"Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art—to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul."

CHILDREN OF JOHN F. AND MATILDA C. EBERHART.

1. *Maude Winifred Eberhart* was born November 1, 1866, at 101 Park avenue, Chicago, and departed this life February 11, 1873. Her death was caused by malignant sore throat, terminating in membranous croup. She was a lovely child, beautiful and charming in her short life on

earth, but as a "tender plant" was early removed from the nursery on earth to the Garden of Eden above. She is buried at Rose Hill Cemetery.

2. *John Joseph Eberhart* was born September 8, 1870, at Geneva Lake, Wis. He is a vigorous youth both physically and intellectually, and bids fair to make a good business man. He is at present in his father's office, at 161 La Salle street, Chicago.

3. *Frank Nathaniel Eberhart* was born December 17, 1872, at 101 Park avenue, Chicago. He is a very genial, social young man, and notwithstanding that he has spent the most of his years in school and fully kept pace with his classmates, he is nevertheless already an expert in "shooting on the wing," and bids fair to make a second "Nimrod."

4. *Mary Evangeline Eberhart* was born April 3, 1875, at Norwood Park, Illinois. She is a noble, womanly young lady, well advanced in her education, promising well for the future. She is especially noted for her talent and proficiency in music.

5. *Grace Josephine Eberhart* was born June 4, 1877, at Norwood Park, Illinois. She is a very active and robust "child of nature," full of life and fun, and yet an original thinker, with a comprehensive mind, that bids fair to out-strip her older brothers and sister at no distant day.

6. *Wilfred Eberhart* was born June 12, 1881, at Chicago Lawn, and died December 26, 1882, after three days' illness of malignant scarlet fever. He is buried at Rose Hill Cemetery.