JOURNAL

OF THE

Presbyterian Historical Society

VOL. VI. SEPTEMBER, 1912. No. 7.

PRINCETON HYMNS.

BY PROFESSOR BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD, D.D., LL.D., LITT.D.

In the literary product of the sons of Princeton Seminary, there is naturally included a good deal of religious verse. Few varieties of religious verse—from epigrams to epics—have been wholly neglected. But, as was to be expected, a considerable part of it takes the form of hymns. A large number of these hymns have been occasional in their origin, have served their purpose, and have passed out of sight. A not inconsiderable number of them, however, have taken their places in the permanent hymnody of, at least, the Presbyterian Church. In this "centennial year," when Princeton Seminary is reviewing its work of an hundred years and, as it were, "taking stock" of the services it has rendered the Church and the Churches, it is worth while, perhaps, to endeavor to estimate with some exactness the contribution it has made to the hymnody of the Church also.

The most natural way of doing this is to pass in review the Hymn Books which have been most widely in use in the Presbyterian churches for the last fifty years or so, and note the hymns of Princeton men which have found place in them. We have therefore examined, with this end in view, a series of Presbyterian Hymn Books and, in order to get a little wider view, have added to them a few other very

A REVOLUTIONARY HERO: JAMES CALDWELL.

BY HARRY PRINGLE FORD.

On the Walnut Street front of the Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia, is a colossal statue of James Caldwell, one of the most distinguished Presbyterian chaplains of the Revolutionary War. Although he made many heroic self-sacrifices for the cause of liberty, yet now he seems to be quite forgotten.

A window in the office of the writer of this article looks directly out upon the statue. Well-educated men, from widely scattered sections of the country, frequently visit the office, and usually the first question they ask is, "Whom does that statue represent?" When informed, the reply almost invariably is, "I never heard of him." Yet time was when Caldwell enjoyed the boundless love of his congregation, the high esteem of Washington and Lafayette, and the enthusiastic devotion and admiration of many American citizens and soldiers.

He was born in Charlotte County, Virginia, of sturdy Scotch-Irish ancestry, in April, 1734, and was graduated in 1759 from the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. He enjoyed the unusual experience of being a student under three Princeton presidents: Aaron Burr, who died in 1757; Jonathan Edwards, who died in 1758, and Samuel Davies, who succeeded to the office in 1759. He was a trustee of the College for many years, and was secretary of the Board from 1772 until his death in 1781.

He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of New Brunswick July 29, 1760, and was ordained on the 17th of the following September by the same Presbytery. After preaching for a time in the Carolinas, he accepted a call to the Presbyterian Church of Elizabethtown (now Elizabeth), New Jersey, and was installed in March, 1762, at a salary of one hundred and sixty pounds, which "was punctually paid

monthly." He was a man of undaunted courage, of fine presence and was very popular as a preacher.

In order to recall some of the primitive conditions existing at that time, it may be interesting to read a few of the eighteen rules adopted for the guidance of the sexton of the church in the performance of his duties:

"1st. He must attend the Ringing of the Bell at all proper Seasons when Divine Service is to be Performed, and to Open Doors and Windows when necessary.

"2nd. He is once every fortnight at least, to take Care that the Church be thoroughly swept out, Seats & Isles; and that the Benches and Tops of the Seats be afterwards well & neatly dusted off.

"3rd. Once every three months the Alleys below the Pulpit Stairs and Gallery Stairs must be Washed out, and well sanded, and this to be done at the Beginning of the Week in order to be thoroughly Dry the Sunday following.

"4th. For Evening Lectures You are to get the Candles, Such as the Trustees shall direct, & Illuminate the Church in Every part, where places are or Shall be Provided to receive Candles. And at the Conclusion of Prayer before Sermon, you are immediately to go up and Snuff the Pulpit Candles & the rest of the Candles in the Church. When you judge the Sermon to be about half finished you are once more to snuff the Candles in the Pulpit, and at the Clerk's Desk. Now and at all other times, when there is Occasion for your going about in time of Service, you are to walk Softly and lightly as Possible.

"5th. You are to be very Careful of the Silk Hangings & Cushions that they receive no Injury by Dust Spots or otherwise, and to fold them Smoothly to prevent Wrinkling; these are to be Used only in the Day time. You are to put them up just before you Ring the first Bell, on the Sunday Morning, & to take them Down after Service in the Afternoon, and to Lock them up in the place Provided. Then you are to put up the Brass Arms & Velvet Cushions which with the Bible you must cover from the Dust, whenever the Church is to be Swept. You are also to Observe not to put up the

Hangings for the Clerk's Desk on the Morning of Communion Days."

For the faithful observance of these and the other rules governing his position, the sexton received the munificent remuneration of "thirty-nine shillings per annum," less than $10.00, together with small fees for digging graves, etc.

March 14, 1763, one year after he had become pastor of the Elizabethtown Church, Mr. Caldwell married Hannah Ogden, of Newark, whom he had met when he was a student in that town, and who was destined to be the victim of one of the most dastardly outrages connected with the struggle for Independence.

LOYAL TO LIBERTY.

Mr. Caldwell was an ardent patriot, and his congregation was, for the most part, like-minded. Among those who sat under his ministry were William Livingston, Governor of New Jersey; Elias Boudinot, afterwards President of the Continental Congress; Abraham Clark, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence; Robert Ogden, Speaker of the Assembly at an earlier date, and William Peartree Smith, one of the most distinguished civilians of the day. This congregation furnished about forty commissioned officers, and a large number of non-commissioned officers and privates, to battle for civic freedom.

Mr. Caldwell was made chaplain of the New Jersey brigade, and became widely known as "The Soldier Parson." His tireless energy and enthusiastic devotion won for him the admiration of all who were interested in their country's welfare. Naturally, he incurred the hatred of those to whom he was opposed, and in many ways he suffered at their hands. On the 25th of February, 1779, his home, "a long, low, red, shingle-covered building, two stories high in front, and one in the rear," was destroyed by fire; and on the night of Tuesday, January 25, 1780, his church also was burned by a marauding Tory party led by a young man named Hetfield. Hetfield's father was a ruling elder of the church and a loyal friend of Caldwell.

For some time preceding its destruction, the church had been used as a hospital for sick and wounded soldiers. In a petition afterward sent by the Session to Congress, asking for assistance in the restoration of the building, it was stated that Mr. Caldwell, "while preaching the gospel of peace, was compelled to lay his loaded pistols by his side in the pulpit."

The year in which the church was burned proved to be an eventful one in the life of our patriot preacher and his family, as well as in the history of the country. The preceding summer he had removed his family, for greater security, to Connecticut Farms (now Union), a small village some four miles from Elizabethtown. On the 6th of June, 1780, General Knyphausen, with six thousand British troops, landed at Elizabethtown Point, and early the next morning marched into the interior, committing many outrages. The American militia flocked from all quarters to oppose them—Washington, Lafayette and Maxwell being among those who participated in attempting to check their advance. As darkness came on, the British encamped at Connecticut Farms, where they remained until ten o'clock in the evening, when they began their retreat to Elizabethtown. A British officer gives us this interesting glimpse of the return march:

"Nothing more awful than this retreat can be imagined. The rain, with the terrible thunder and lightning, the darkness of the night, the houses at Connecticut Farms (which we had set fire to) in a blaze, the dead bodies which the light of the fire or the lightning showed now and then on the road, and the dread of the enemy, completed the scene of horror."

Death of Mrs. Caldwell.

It was during the brief occupancy of Connecticut Farms by the British Army on June 7, 1780, that Mrs. Caldwell was shot and killed, while in a room to which she had retired to pray with her children. The most authentic account of this event is the following, written within a few days after the tragedy:

"The maid who had accompanied her to this secluded apartment and had charge of the smaller children, on looking out

of the window into the back yard, observed to Mrs. Caldwell that 'a red-coat soldier had jumped over the fence and was coming up to the window with a gun.' Mrs. Caldwell rose from sitting on a bed very near, and at that moment the soldier fired his musket at her through the window. It was loaded with two balls which passed through her body."

The Rev. Elijah R. Craven, D.D., thus wrote, in 1902, of this tragic event:

"Mrs. Caldwell was not shot in her own home but in the parsonage of the Presbyterian church of Connecticut Farms, a village about four miles from Elizabeth. During the retreat of the British, she was standing at a window of the parsonage, with a child in her arms, and was shot by one of the retiring soldiers. Her body was not dragged into the street, as is so often told, nor was the house burned. For thirty-three years I was pastor of the Third church, Newark, in the immediate vicinity of Elizabeth and Connecticut Farms; and I have been intimate with members of the Caldwell family. The child who was in the arms of Mrs. Caldwell, Maria, born September 29th, 1779, and less than a year old at this time, was the grandmother of one of my most valued elders, and was an intimate friend of my family. I have stood in the room in which Mrs. Caldwell was shot and have looked out of the window at which she was standing when the tragedy occurred."

Mr. Caldwell, who was away from home at the time, with Washington, found his wife's body the next day, and gave it Christian burial.

When General Lafayette revisited this country in 1824, he went to the graves of the Caldwells in Elizabeth; and in speaking to Dr. John McDowell of the murder of Mrs. Caldwell, he said that at the time it occurred Mr. Caldwell was standing with General Washington and himself on the heights of Springfield. When they saw the smoke of burning houses, Caldwell expressed his great joy that he had had the forethought to remove his wife and children to a place of safety, mistakingly thinking that the smoke was not in the direction of her temporary home.

The Battle of Springfield.

On June 23, 1780, two weeks after the untimely death of Mrs. Caldwell, the British, five thousand strong, advanced upon the little village of Springfield, only a short distance from Connecticut Farms. Mr. Caldwell, with the memory of his great sorrow fresh upon him, was among the few gallant defenders. It is not surprising that he entered the fight with implacable abhorrence of those who had done him the irreparable injury. The Continental troops fought with their wonted daring, but, being greatly outnumbered, slowly retreated. To add to the gravity of the situation, they had no paper with which to ram their powder and balls. Seeing the dilemma, Caldwell galloped to the village church, gathered up an armful of Psalm books, remounted his horse and dashed back to the struggling soldiers, shouting the words which have since become one of our country's most treasured sentences, "Now put Watts into them, boys!"

Never did the cause of American freedom find fitter embodiment than in this noble patriot, bereaved husband and Christian warrior, when he rushed among the fighting heroes bearing the sacred pages; and never were the inspired verses of the illustrious King of Israel chanted to grander music than on that day when the volleying thunder of musketry rang out thrilling accompaniments to the cheers of the gallant men who were fighting so nobly for their homes and liberty and in defence of helpless women and little children.

Death of Mr. Caldwell.

On the 24th of November, 1781, a year and a half after the battle of Springfield, Mr. Caldwell rode in his gig to Elizabethtown Point to meet a young lady, a Miss Beulah Murray, who had come over from New York under the protection of a flag of truce. After Miss Murray was seated in the gig, an American sentinel noticed a small parcel tied up in a handkerchief which she was holding in her hand, and which he claimed was contraband. Mr. Caldwell attempted to explain, and offered to go with the man to the commanding

officer, but without further parley the soldier shot him dead where he stood.

This was on a Saturday. News traveled slowly in those days, and on the following morning many people assembled to hear their beloved pastor preach. Their distress and indignation may well be imagined when they learned of his death. He was buried on the following Tuesday, "in the presence of an immense concourse of people." Dr. Alexander McWhorter preached the sermon. The body was exposed to view in front of the house. Dr. Elias Boudinot led the nine orphan children of Mr. Caldwell to take a last look at their father, and as they stood about the coffin he made an impromptu address of great power and pathos in their behalf. Subsequently, he contributed most generously to their support.

The man who shot Mr. Caldwell was named James Morgan, and although an American soldier, it was thought that he was bribed by the British to commit the dastardly deed; this, however, could not be proved. He was given a fair trial and was condemned to be hanged. The day of his execution, January 29, 1782, was a bitterly cold one, and Morgan's last words, addressed with an oath to his executioner, were, "Do your duty, and don't keep me here suffering in the cold!"

Mr. Caldwell's eldest son, John Edwards, was taken to France by Lafayette in 1782, and was there educated. Nine years later he returned to America and became a prominent citizen of New York, being a recognized leader in philanthropic work. He was the founder and editor of "The Christian Herald," and was one of the founders of the American Bible Society. He died, greatly esteemed, March 9, 1819.

Mr. Caldwell was in his forty-eighth year at the time of his death. He and Mrs. Caldwell are buried side by side in the yard of the First Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth, under a monument erected in 1845 by the citizens of Elizabeth and the Society of the Cincinnati of New Jersey. The original slab which covered the bodies is now preserved in the wall of the church.

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.