

PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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NEWARK, May 21, 1896.

The Society met to day in Dryden Hall, in the Prudential building, the President, Dr. Samuel H. Pennington, LL. D., in the chair.

The minutes of the last meeting were read by Ernest E. Coe, the Recording Secretary, and approved.

William Nelson, the Corresponding Secretary, in presenting the letters received since the last meeting of the Society, remarked that they embraced a large variety of topics, principally, however, in the nature of genealogical inquiry. It had not been possible for the Secretary to answer all these letters as fully as might be desired, and he submitted the substance of the correspondence in the hope that other members of the Society might have the information which he had been unable to furnish. He would be grateful for any facts or suggestions in this direction.<sup>1</sup> He added :

For many years it has been the earnest desire of persons engaged in historical research that the voluminous records of the Continental Congress should be printed, and so be made available to students throughout the land. This matter has been urged upon the attention of Congress repeatedly, but unfortunately with comparatively little result. An effort has been made at

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<sup>1</sup> See "Notes, Queries and Replies," on pages 93 et seqq.

THE SEARCH FOR THE  
LOST WRITINGS

—OR—

THE REV. JACOB GREEN,

OF HANOVER, MORRIS COUNTY,

By the REV. JOSEPH F. TUTTLE, D. D.

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TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT PRINCETON COLLEGE, SEPTEMBER 24, 1783, IN THE  
PRESENCE OF GENERAL WASHINGTON AND THE  
CONTINENTAL CONGRESS,

BY ASHBEL GREEN.

of other pamphlets of Mr. Green, which had been lost and found.

#### THE LESSON OF PERSEVERANCE.

And so I found "A Vision of Hell," which, whatever other good qualities it may have, was this—an encouragement to poor souls who have sought long and in vain for documents apparently lost hopelessly, not to be discouraged! "Hope on! Hope ever!"

The "Vision of Hell" has taught me this, which, added to the finding of Parson Green's political tracts, as already related, is very encouraging to the despondent hunter after apparently lost literature! And I may be allowed to add that the examination showed it to be quite harmless in its contents, notwithstanding its formidable title page. It gave, with some details, a conference among the devils as to the most effective methods of leading souls to ruin. One of them stated how well he had succeeded in turning the attention of a well-to-do farmer by tempting him to believe himself unable to attend church, and then, after people had gone to church, leading him to believe he was well enough to visit his fine grained fields and his finely stocked grazing pastures!

But the methods of these devils in themselves matters little to me. I had found Parson Green's "Vision of Hell," and at least, for once, was satisfied with the result of my long search. Enough of Parson Green's "Vision of Hell" when examined at short range.

#### ASHIBEL GREEN'S VALEDICTORY.

Recently I have been able to unearth a hidden Morris County document for which I have long sought. In the life of Jacob Green occurs the significant incident of his establishing a school of which for some years his son-in-law, Rev. Ebenezer Bradford, was the Principal. Among those educated in that school were Samuel Beach and Ashbel Green. They were fitted for Princeton and were grad-

uated in the class of 1783. They received their honors from the hands of the famous scholar, divine, patriot and statesman, John Witherspoon, the sixth President of the College of New Jersey. The graduation of that class occurred October 24, 1783. The circumstances attending it were unusual. The Continental Congress was holding its sessions at Princeton at that time, and there was a large attendance of distinguished civilians and soldiers. The most illustrious guest that day was George Washington, the saviour of his country, "the first in war, the first in peace, and the first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Rarely has there been so happy a concurrence of men and circumstances as that which honored Princeton on the occasion of its thirty-sixth commencement.

It has been reported that young Ashbel Green was somewhat inclined to be vain. It is to be said, however, that he had qualities of which he had reason to be proud. In his case it would have been unprecedented not to have been somewhat vain. He was of good New England stock. One of his kinsmen, Gen. Nathaniel Greene, next to Washington, was the most noted soldier in the American army. His own father, as a preacher, author and statesman, had achieved an enviable reputation. And young Ashbel, in spite of the distractions of the times and the limited educational privileges of his preparatory studies, had reached the head of his college class. And now to crown his admirable career, he has become the valedictorian of his class, to be graduated in circumstances of extraordinary interest. If vanity—of the worthier kind—is ever pardonable, we may assume that it must be conceded to be such in the case of Ashbel Green, the valedictorian of Princeton's class of 1783.

#### THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS AT PRINCETON.

It will be remembered that "on the 20th of June, 1783, a collection of mutinous soldiers of the American army, in

number about three hundred, surrounded the State House in Philadelphia, in which were sitting the Continental Congress and the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. They placed guards at every door and sent in a written message to the President of Congress and Council of the State and threatened to let loose an enraged soldiery upon them, if they were not gratified as to their wishes within twenty minutes. The situation, though they were not the particular object of the soldiers' resentment, was far from being agreeable. After being about three hours in duress they retired, but previously resolved that the authority of the United States had been grossly insulted. Soon after they left Philadelphia and fixed on Princeton as the place of their next meeting."

This account of a disgraceful episode in the great war was given by Dr. Green himself in a letter to his son, and printed in Jones' "Life of Dr. Green," pp. 141, 142. The entire letter is full of charming reminiscences of the times. The Congress, after its rude and insulting treatment at Philadelphia, "found it expedient to separate and reassemble at Princeton, which they did on Thursday, the 26th of June." (Thatcher's Military Journal, Reprint, Hartford, p. 344.)

Whilst Congress was in session at Princeton in the summer of 1783, as related by Dr. Green in his letters to his son, two interesting incidents occurred which are best given in the Doctor's own words. He says, "Congress held their sessions in the Library room of the Nassau Hall — a room which was nearly as spacious as that which they occupied in Philadelphia. . . . Not long after their meeting the National Jubilee, the 4th of July, was to be celebrated; and then occurred the first instance of the Whig and Clio-philic Societies appointing each an orator to represent them as a speaker before the public audience. I had the honor to be the Whig representative, and my

Cliosophic competitor was a classmate by the name of Gilbert T. Snowden. It was considered as a point of some importance which orator should speak first. This was decided by lot and the lot was in my favor. The subject of my oration was: "The Superiority of a Republican Government over any other Form." . . . . . Congress made a part of our audience, and the orators of the day were invited by the President of Congress to dine with him and other invited guests, at his quarters, which were with his sister, then a widow, at her seat at Morven."

Such is Dr. Green's account of the first incident in the life of the college as related to the sessions of the American Congress at Princeton. How tame, we may think,—this competition between these two famous Nassau Hall Societies—one hundred and thirteen years ago! Yet not so tame!

The second incident is one of greater inherent interest, and is such especially to the author of this paper. When Dr. Green's life by Joseph H. Jones was published in 1849 I procured the book. Many a laugh have I enjoyed in reading some of the records made in its pages, but for many reasons very few books in my library have been more frequently read, or with greater relish than this one. The reason has been found in its simple and frank statements of life in Morris County by one of its most intelligent and noted sons, covering a period full of undying interest to all who study the history of the great struggle for national life and liberty—the American Revolution. There are peerless pages of this sort.

Among the scenes which he has modestly and delightfully described is that of the relation of Nassau Hall to the Revolution itself. He gives us the narrative of the college after the war was over, or about to finish itself, as it appeared on its high "commencement day," surrounded with such delightful and imposing circumstances. Let me

be indulged in quoting Dr. Green's words which picture to us "dear old Princeton" one hundred and thirteen years ago.

PRINCETON COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT, 1783.

"The church in Princeton," writes Dr. Green, "had been repaired during the summer (1783) which preceded the commencement at which I received my bachelor's degree. An extended stage, running the length of the pulpit side of the church, had been erected; and, as the President of Congress<sup>1</sup> was a Trustee of the college, and the President of the college<sup>2</sup> had recently been a distinguished member of Congress, and that body itself had been accommodated in the college edifice, an adjournment to attend commencement seemed to be demanded by courtesy, and was readily agreed to. We accordingly had on the stages with the trustees and the graduating class, the whole of the Congress, the Ministers of France and Holland, and the Commander-in-Chief of the American Army. The valedictory oration had been assigned to me, and it concluded with an address to General Washington. I need not tell you that both in preparing and delivering it, I put forth all my powers. The General colored as I addressed him, for his modesty was among the qualities which so highly distinguished him. The next day, as he was going to attend on a committee of Congress, he met me in one of the long entries of the college, stopped and took my hand, and complimented me on my address in language which I should lack his modesty if I repeated it, even to you. After walking and conversing with me for a few minutes, he requested me to present his best wishes for their success in life to my classmates, and then went to the committee room of Congress."

Dr. Green then adds this statement, which has special bearing on this paper:

<sup>1</sup> Elias Boudinot.

<sup>2</sup> John Witherspoon.

"I never took a copy of my valedictory oration, but carelessly gave the original, at his request, to Shepard Kollock, who then printed a newspaper at Chatham, Morris County. It was published by him in October, 1783. I have made several attempts to find the paper which contained it, but hitherto without success." (Jones' Life of Ashbel Green, 1849, 141-4.)

## THE SEARCH FOR THE VALEDICTORY.

When I first read about Ashbel Green's valedictory, delivered before so remarkable an audience, I felt a great desire to discover it, if, perchance, it had survived the risks of transmission. From time to time I have explored libraries in Philadelphia, Newark, New York and Boston. I have inquired of various friends, learned in this home lore, but all in vain, until recently I received a letter from a gentleman in New York, who is himself a descendant from ancestors who were members of Parson Green's congregation, neighbours of Ashbel Green, the son of Jacob, a graduate of Nassau Hall. But I will quote from Mr. Ambrose K. Ely's letter to explain how he found the copy of the valedictory which elicited the complimentary words of Washington himself:

NEW YORK, Jan. 13, 1896.

*Rev. J. F. Tuttle, D. D., Crawfordsville, Ind.*

DEAR SIR:—I have been recently informed that at the last May Annual Meeting of the N. J. Historical Society, a letter from you was read, asking for a copy of Ashbel Green's valedictory oration, delivered at Princeton College Commencement, Sept., 1783, to which the Secretary replied that the N. J. Journal of Chatham—in which you supposed it was published—had gone out of existence before that date.

A member of my family—brother—has a bound volume of the "Political Intelligencer and N. J. Advertiser," the successor of the Chatham Journal, and published by the same party at New Brunswick, which he thinks contains this oration and a copy of which I should be happy to furnish if you have not already obtained one.

Yours truly,

AMBROSE K. ELY.

NEW YORK, January 21, 1896.

*Rev. Joseph F. Tuttle, D. D., Crawfordsville, Ind.*

DEAR SIR:—Your favor of the 13th came duly to hand, and I have the pleasure, to-day, of forwarding to you, by Adams Express, a typewritten copy of the "Valedictory," comprising 17 single page leaves, placed in the small volume (spoken of in my previous letter) which my brother permits me to present to you. The heading to the Valedictory address does not designate the speaker, but there is no question as to the individual, for a previous number of the Journal, from which it is taken, in giving an account of Princeton Commencement, says, "the exercises were closed by the delivering of a Valedictory address by Mr. A. Green."

I am happy in being able to make this slight return to you for the enjoyment received from your writings in the *New York Evangelist* (in former years) and other Journals. The *Morristown Jerseyman* has just commenced re-publishing your incidents of the Revolutionary War in New Jersey. The Aaron Kitchell, spoken of in last number, was my great-grandfather.

Truly yours,

AMBROSE K. ELY.

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## ASHBEL GREEN'S VALEDICTORY ADDRESS, 1783.

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[From the "Political Intelligencer and New Jersey Advertiser," of Tuesday, October 28, 1783, Vol. I, No. 3. Printed by Kollock and Arnett, at the Barracks, New Brunswick.]

The following valedictory oration was delivered by a young gentleman<sup>1</sup> at the late commencement at Princeton:

On me has devolved the difficult, melancholy office of closing the exercises of the day, and of bidding adieu to these pleasurable abodes of science. The office is difficult because I shall want words to express our obligations to those fathers of science and of virtue, under whose care and guardianship we have been placed. It is melancholy because that care and guardianship are now to be no more.

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Mr. A. Green. See Vol. I., No. 1. Sept. 24. 1783.

Among the many tender ties of attachment that engage our hearts perhaps there are none of a more delicate texture than that which we formed in the pursuit of knowledge. Such an attachment is founded on the clearest principles of reason; it is cemented by refined pleasure and advantage; and when necessity calls for a separation, it is not easy to reconcile the mind to part with so dear an acquisition. At such a time the images of past pleasure crowd thick about the heart; and fancy, ever busy in works of the pencil, does not fail to paint them strongly on the feeling mind. Indulge us, then, for a moment, while we trace over those scenes of enjoyment which afforded us so much satisfaction when we were passing through them, and the recollection of which must ever engage and delight our hearts. Here the tender thought has been nursed to virtue; here the buds of genius have been taught to expand; here the first dawnings of mental excellence have been cherished and encouraged; here the great examples of antiquity have been laid before us. "Learn to imitate the virtues of this man, says the careful teacher, but beware of his vices. This action was heroic, but ambition, we fear, was its only motive. Here this philosopher excelled, but there he pushed his virtue to excess. Let the example of this sage teach you resignation to the will of heaven, and learn by that to love your country. See here the fatal end of too great ambition, and be convinced, by the example of him who has tried it, that had you the world you would weep for another. Here you view the effects of diligence and perseverance; and if you envy the fame of the man you must imitate his example." Thus the pages of classic lore are passed over. The fire of emulation seizes the breast of the youth, and he is pained with a generous fear of being excelled. But now a new scene is opened—the mind is called off from dwelling wholly on the beauties of the poet, and the

eloquence of the orator and historian, to the closeness of demonstrative science. By this it is prepared to search into the wonders of nature, to trace them to their causes, and to look through them up to nature's God. Then the principles of morals are imbibed. The youthful mind is taught to look into its capacity, its qualities and its powers, and to reason from them to the being and attributes of their Creator, and thence to deduce the nature and sanction of the moral law. Hence the rights of men are derived, either as individuals or societies. We view mankind as the subjects of one great lawgiver, as the children of one common father, and we acquire the principles of universal justice and benevolence. Once more the scene is changed. The beauties of language and polite literature are laid before us. We are prompted to imitate them. The attempt is made, the hand of matured knowledge and experience prunes away the extravagance of youthful fancy, and, pointing to the examples of others, excites us to excel. Then the first essays of the infant muse are offered to the indulgence of a public audience, and the mind looks forward with pleasure to the period when the honors of the place of our education shall be conferred on us. The time is at length arrived. But whether shall we say that our joy or sorrow the more preponderates. We rejoice in having the favorable testimony of such characters as the worthy and honored trustees of Nassau Hall to introduce us to the world, but we tremble at the prospect of being deprived of their patronage and direction. Yes, honored gentlemen, it is with the deepest feelings of regret that we view ourselves separated from a place which claims you for its guardians. Never shall we find such another retreat, and in vain shall we look for such protectors. Who, alas, will guide our unexperienced minds amidst the flattering allurements of vice and folly? Who will direct our untried footsteps in the giddy paths of

youth? To the care of a kind and watchful providence, and the influence of your prayers, we look for safety. Deny us not this our last our most important request, but beseech the Supreme Disposer of all Events to guard us from every evil and from every folly, and to dispose us to act in such a manner as to be an honor to the place of our education and a blessing to the world. Penetrated with the most lively sentiments of gratitude and respect for the care and attention you have ever exercised over this institution, and for the honors of it which you have been pleased to confer upon us, with the fondest hopes that you may see it reward your labours, and with the most affectionate wishes for your highest happiness and prosperity, we bid you a hearty farewell.

Reverend and honored Sir, to you next, and to the worthy faculty of the college, it becomes us to pay our humble tribute of warm and unfeigned thanks for the diligence, care and tender regard with which you have acted toward us during the whole of the time that we have been under your direction. Be assured that we esteem it among the happiest circumstances of our lives that the forming of our young minds, and laying a foundation for our future prospects in life, have been under your auspicious care. And if we have had any success in exploring the pleasing past of science, if we have treasured up any useful or ornamental knowledge, if we have any flattering hopes of answering the expectations of those who placed us here, to you are we indebted for those invaluable acquisitions. And should we be so happy as to meet the plaudit of indulgent or partial friends, we would catch it as it rises, and, with grateful hearts, bowing, present it to you. It is your tribute, and though the offering be but small, you will permit us to place it to the account where it is so justly due. We are now to be separated from your protection and from each other. A few mo-

ments hence we must take a long, perhaps the last, farewell view of yonder consecrated edifice, where we have so often heard the words of instruction, of wisdom, and of piety, fall from your lips. No more can your protection guard us, no more your lips instruct us. What have I said? I recall the ungrateful sentence; your protection shall ever guard us, your lips shall ever instruct us. We will keep in the closest recesses of our hearts your wise admonitions. We will fix deep in our remembrance this last parting advice which you have bestowed on us. Those shall be our protection, this shall be our instruction. With these assurances, and with hearts of gratitude too great for expression, we ask your prayers, we must bid you a cordial, though to us it be a sad, farewell.

Fellow graduates, if I have failed in doing justice to your feelings to our governors and teachers, forgive me; the task was too arduous for my feeble tongue. But we, too, must part. To-morrow's sun will view us separated from these pleasant, peaceful walks of science, and from each other. What shall I say? Shall I attempt to describe the pleasures of our union, or the solemnity of our separation? I shall not attempt it. The one is already written on our hearts, and expression will not reach the other. To drop the tear of regret when we view these sacred walls rising from the ruins of tyrant cruelty, when we see our alma mater recovering from the wounds which the savage hand of war had inflicted on her, when we see the august council of this rising empire honoring the place of our education, to drop the tear of regret at such a time may, perhaps, to an indifferent spectator, appear preposterous. But, alas! these are the circumstances that point the arrows of sorrow that wound our hearts. We are to be torn from these flattering prospects when they are but beginning to dawn. Farewell, ye pleasing scenes, thou delightful place of our youthful studies, seat of the muses, how shall we express

it? A long, perhaps a final, adieu? And you, too, ye dearest companions, with whom I have traveled the field of science, with whom I have so often spent the joyous hour, when the muse smiled upon us, time has now come —we must bid each other the affectionate farewell.

Students of Nassau Hall, the ties of friendship can no longer prevent our separation. Duty calls, necessity obliges us, and we must part. To you we leave the pleasing enjoyment to crop the fairest flowers of knowledge, and to drink at the stream of science and of virtue. And oh! beware how you treat the invaluable privilege. We mean not to reproach you with insensibility, but seen from the point where we stand, your advantages appear of uncommon magnitude. We have experienced them, and now they are flying from us, we see them in their brightest lustre. Let it, then, be engraven on your hearts, that interest advises and duty demands, your strictest obedience and most cheerful attention to the salutary counsels and instructions of the officers of the college. It is their due; it is the reward of their care and anxiety for your welfare; and forbid it gratitude; forbid it every noble and manly sentiment; forbid the thought of depriving them of so just a recompense. And oh! in some happy moment, when drinking at the pierian spring, ye view the genius of Nassau Hall laving herself in the limpid fountain, tell her that we, her sons, have not forgotten her; tell her that we will ever be guided by the influence of her precepts; that we will ever pray for her prosperity. Fain would we dwell on her beauties, but we must bid both her and you a sincere farewell.

Illustrious Senators of America! Pardon the extravagance of youth, if love and affection have for once destroyed the order of strict propriety. It was not for want of the highest deference and veneration for your characters, but because our hearts were too full, that we

have not before now expressed the deep sense we entertain of the honor conferred upon us by your presence. To leave the affairs of empires and the fate of nations to attend on the essays of inexperienced youth, how great the change, how great the condescension. But to countenance science, even in its humble walks, to protect and honor literature, has been the employment of great and wise legislators. Neither are they personally unconcerned in such a business. The muse, cherished by them, has recorded their actions, or sung their praise, in lines more durable than the sculptured stone, the carved brass or the towering pyramid. Nor shall such be wanting to you. The faithful historian, some American Livy or Robertson, shall tell to ages yet unborn, the deeds of those patriots whose virtue, wisdom and perseverance, procured the blessings which they enjoyed; and as wise, virtuous and firm as the American Congress, shall be a compliment to the legislators of futurity. Nor in that day, illustrious and magnanimous chief, shall thy actions and thy exploits be unrecorded. Some future bard, whom all the muses love—oh, that it might be some happy son of Nassau Hall, shall tell in all the majesty of epic song, the man whose prudent conduct, and whose gallant sword, taught the tyrants of the earth to fear oppression, and opened an asylum for the virtuous, and free to all the world. But, adventurous bard, whoever thou art, beware! Leave poetic fiction and ornament to those whose themes require it; the greatest panegyric of my hero is his true character.

We cannot conclude without expressing our obligations to this audience for having now, and so often heretofore, honored us with their attention; and, prompted by this indulgence to our first essays, we will carefully aim at producing something that shall better deserve the attention of the public.