Historical and biographical sketches/09 Samuel Richardson

SAMUEL RICHARDSON.

A COUNCILOR, JUDGE AND LEGISLATOR OF THE OLDEN TIME.

ON the 3d of July, 1686, not quite four years after the arrival of Penn, a bricklayer from the island of Jamaica, named Samuel Richardson, bought five thousand eight hundred and eighty acres of land in Pennsylvania, and two large lots on the north side of High street (now Market) in the city of Philadelphia, for three hundred and forty pounds. He had probably been but a short time a resident of Jamaica, since the certificate he brought with him from the Friends' meeting at Spanish Town, to the effect "y^{t} he and his wife hath walked amongst us as becomes Truth," was only given "after consideration thereoff and Enquiry made." Of his previous life we know nothing, unless it be the following incident narrated in Besse's *Sufferings of the Quakers:* In the year 1670 a squad of soldiers arrested George Whitehead, John Scott and Samuel Richardson at a meeting of Friends at the Peel in London, and after detaining them about three hours in a guard-room, took them before two justices, and charged Richardson with having laid violent hands upon one of their muskets. "This was utterly false, and denied by him, for he was standing, peaceably as he said, with his Hands in his Pockets." One of the justices asked him, "Will you promise to come no more at meeting?" *S. R.*: "I can promise no such thing." *Justice*: "Will you pay your 5s.?" *Richardson*: "I do not know that I owe thee 5s." A fine of that amount was nevertheless imposed. The sturdy independence and passive combativeness manifested upon this occasion formed, as we shall hereafter see, one of the most prominent characteristics of the emigrant from Jamaica; and there are some other circmustances which support the conclusion that he was the person thus commemorated. Driven, as we may safely suppose, from England to the West Indies, and thence to Pennsylvania, by the persecution which followed his

sect, he had now experienced the hardest buffetings of adverse, fortune, and soon began to bask in the sunshine of a quiet but secure prosperity. Surrounded by men of his own creed, he throve greatly, and rapidly passed into the successive stages of a merchant and a gentleman. In January, 1689-90, he bought from Penn another lot on Higli street for the purpose of erecting quays and wharves, and he now owned all the ground on the north side of that street between Second street and the Delaware River.

In January, 1688, William Bradford, the celebrated pioneer printer, issued proposals for the publication of a large “house Bible” by subscription. It was an undertaking of momentous magnitude. No similar attempt had yet been made in America; and in order that the cautious burghers of the new city should have no solicitude concerning the unusually large advances required, he gives notice that “Samuell Richardson and Samuell Carpenter of Philadelphia are appointed to take care and be assistant in the laying out of the Subscription Money, and to see that it be imployed to the use intended.” A single copy of this circular, found in the binding of an old book, has been preserved. In 1688, Richardson was elected a member of the Provincial Council, a body which, with the governor or his deputy, then possessed the executive authority, and which, in its intercourse with the Assembly, was always excessively dictatorial and often dispose to encroach. Quarrels between these two branches of the government were frequent and bitter, and doubtless indicated the gradual growth of two parties differing in views and interests, one of which favored the Proprietary and the other the people. Soon after taking his seat he became embroiled in a controversy that loses none of its interest from the quaint and plain language in which it is recorded, and which may have had its origin in the fact that he was then a justice of the peace and judge of the county court, a position he certainly held a few years later.[1] The Council had ordered a case depending in that court to be withdrawn, with the intention of hearing and determining it themselves, and Richardson endeavored in vain to have this action rescinded. At the meeting of the 25th of December, 1688, a debate arose concerning these proceedings, and the deputy governor, John Blackwell, called attention to some remarks previously made by Richardson which reflected upon the resolution of the Council, telling him that it was unbecoming and ought not to be permitted, and “Reproveing him as haveing taken too great liberty to Carry it vnbeseemingly and very provokeinly.” He especially resented “ye said Sam^{ll} Richardson's fformer declareing at several times y^{t} he did not owne ye Gover^{r} to be Gover^{r}.” Richardson replied with some warmth that “he would Stand by it and make it good — that W^{m} Penn could not make a Gover^{r};” and this opinion, despite the almost unanimous dissent of the members present, he maintained with determination, until at length the governor moved that he be ordered to withdraw. “I will not withdraw. I was not brought hither by thee, and I will not goe out by thy order. I was sent by ye people, and thou hast no power to put me out,” was the defiant answer. The governor then said that he could not suffer Penn's authority to be so questioned and himself so contemned, and, being justified by the concurrence of all the Council except Arthur Cook, who “would be vnderstood to think and speak modestly,” he succeeded in having his motion adopted. Thereupon Richardson “went fforth, declaring he Cared not whether ever he sat there more againe.” After his departure it was resolved that his words and carriage had been “vnworthy and vnbecoming;” that he ought to acknowledge his offence, and promise more respect and heed for the future, before being again

permitted to act with them; and that he be called inside and admonished; “but he was gon away.”

A few weeks after this occurrence the governor informed the Council that he had made preparations to issue a writ for the election of members in the places of Richardson and John Eckley, and also presented a paper charging Thomas Lloyd — who had recently been chosen one of their number, and who, as keeper of the Great Seal, had refused to let it be used in some project then in contemplation — with various crimes, misdemeanors and offences. At this meeting Joseph Growden, a member who had been absent before, moved that Richardson be admitted to his seat, but was informed by the governor that he had been excluded because of his misbehavior. On the 3d of February, 1689, during the proceedings, Richardson entered the Council-room and sat down at the table. In reply to a question, he stated that he had come to discharge his duty as a member. This bold movement was extremely embarrassing to his opponents, and for a time they displayed hesitation and uncertainty. Argument and indignation were alike futile, since, unaccompanied by force, they were insufficient to effect his removal; but the happy thought finally occurred to the governor to adjourn the Council until the afternoon, and station an officer at the door to prevent another intrusion. This plan was adopted and successfully carried into execution. Upon reassembling, Growden contended that the Council had no right to exclude a member who had been duly chosen by the people; and this led to an earnest and extended debate, in which, the secretary says, “many intemperate Speeches and passages happen'd, ffitt to be had in oblivion.” Ere a week had elapsed the governor presented a charge against Growden, but the fact that three others, though somewhat hesitatingly, raised their voices in favor of admitting all the members to their seats, seemed to indicate that his strength was waning.

The election under the new writ was held on the 8th of February, 1689, and the people of the county showed the drift of their sympathies by re-electing Richardson. The Assembly also interfered in the controversy, and sent a delegation to the governor to complain that they were abused through the exclusion of some of the members of Council. They were rather bluntly informed that the proceedings of the Council did not concern them. In the midst of the conversation upon this and kindred topics, Lloyd, Eckley and Richardson entered the chamber and said they had come to pay their respects to the governor and perform their duties. A resort to the tactics which had been found available on the previous occasion became necessary, and the meeting was declared adjourned; “upon which several of ye members of ye Council departed. But divers remayned, and a great deel of confused noyse and clamor was expressed at and without the doore of ye Gover^{r}'s roome, where ye Councill had sate, w^{ch} occasioned persons (passing by in the streets) to stand still to heare; which ye Gover^{r} observing desired ye sayd Tho. Lloyd would forbear such Lowd talking, telling him he must not suffer such doings, but would take a course to suppresse it and shutt ye Doore.” The crisis had now approached, and soon afterward Penn recalled Blackwell, authorized the Council to choose a president and act as his deputy themselves, and poured oil upon the troubled waters in this wise: “Salute me to ye people in Gen^{ll}. Pray send for J. Simcock, A. Cook, John Eckley and Sam^{ll} Carpenter, and Lett them dispose T. L., & Sa. Richardson to that Complying temper that may tend to that loveing & serious accord y^{t} become such a Goverm^{t}.”[2]

After the departure of Blackwell the Council elected Lloyd their president. Richardson resumed his place for the remainder of his term, and in 1695 was returned for a further period of two years. During this time Colonel Fletcher made a demand upon the authorities of Pennsylvania for her quota of men to defend the more northern provinces against the Indians and the French, and Richardson was one of a committee of twelve, two from each county, appointed to reply to this requisition. They reported in favor of raising five hundred pounds, upon the understanding that it “should not be dipt in blood,” but be used to “feed the hungrie & cloath the naked.”

He was a judge of the county court and justice of the peace in 1688 and 1704, and for the greater part — probably the whole — of the intervening period. In the historic contest with George Keith, the leader of a schism which cause a wide breach among those early Friends in Pennsylvania, he bore a conspicuous part. A crew of river-pirates, headed by a man named Babbit, stole a sloop from a wharf in Philadelphia and committed a number of depredations on the Delaware. Three of the magistrates, all of whom were Quakers, issued a warrant for their arrest, and Peter Boss, with some others to assist, went out in a boat and effected their capture. Although, as the chronicler informs us. Boss and his party had “neither gun, sword or spear,” it is fair to presume they did not succeed without the use of some force. This gave Keith an opportunity of which he was no by means loath to take advantage, and he soon afterward published a circular entitled an “Appeal,” wherein he twitted his quondam associates with their inconsistency in acting as magistrates and encouraging fighting and warfare. Five of the justices, one of whom was Richardson, ordered the arrest of the printers, William Bradford and John McComb, and the authors, Keith and Thomas Budd, and the latter were tried, convicted and fined five pounds each.[3] These proceedings being bruited abroad and “making a great noise,” the six justices, including the five above referred to and Anthony Morris, published a manifesto giving the reason for their action. Keith, they say, had publicly reviled Thomas Lloyd, the president of the Council, by calling him an impudent man and saying his name “would stink,” and had dared to stigmatize the members of Council and the justices as impudent rascals. These things they had patiently endured, as well as his gross revilings of their religious society, but in his recent comments upon the arrest of Babbit he not only encouraged sedition and breach of the peace, but aimed a blow at the Proprietary government, since if Quakers could not act in judicial capacities the bench must remain vacant. Such conduct required their intervention, as well to check him as to discourage others. The Friends' yearly meeting, held at Burlington, on the 7th of July, 1692, disowned Keith, and their testimony against him, Richardson and many others signed.

Robert Quarry, judge of the court of admiralty, received his appointment from the Crown. He seems to have been personally objectionable, and his authority, being beyond the control of the Proprietary, was not submitted to even at that early day without evidences of discontent and some opposition. An affair occurring in the year 1698 led to a conflict of jurisdiction between him and the provincial judges, in which he obtained an easy triumph; but his success appears only to have been satisfactory when it had culminated in their personal humiliation. John Adams imported a quantity of goods, which, for want of a certificate, were seized and given into the custody of the marshal of the admiralty court, and although he afterward complied with all the necessary legal forms, Quarry refused to redeliver them. The governor would not interfere, but Anthony Morris, one of

the judges of the county court, issued a writ of replevin, in obedience to which the sheriff put Adams in possession of his property. Thereupon, Quarry wrote to England complaining of what he considered to be an infringement by the Proprietary government upon his jurisdiction. On the 27th of July, 1698, Morris, Richardson and James Fox presented to the governor and Council a written vindication of the action of the county court, saying it was their duty to grant the replevin upon the plaintiff giving bond, as he had done, and adding that they had good grounds for believing the sheriff to be as proper a person to secure the property "to be forthcoming in Specie, as by the replevin he is Comanded, as that they should remain in the hands of Robert Webb, who is no Proper officer, as wee Know of, to Keep the Same." More than a year afterward, Penn, who had recently arrived in the Province on his second visit, called the attention of the Council to the subject, and to the great resentment felt by the superior powers in England at the support said to be given in Pennsylvania to piracy and illegal trade. The next day Morris surrendered the bond and the inventory of the goods, and resigned his commission. To his statement that he had for many years served as a justice to his own great loss and detriment, and that in granting the writ he had done what he believed to be right, Penn replied that his signing the replevin was a "verie indeliberate, rash and unwarrantable act." His cup of humiliation had not yet, however, been drained. Quarry required his attendance again before the Council, and said the goods had been forcibly taken from the marshal, and "what came of y^{m} the S^{d} Anthonie best knew;" that he could not plead ignorance, "having been so long a Justice y^{t} hee became verie insolent;" and that the security having refused payment, and it being unreasonable to burden the king with the costs of a suit, he demanded that the "S^{d} Anthonie" should be compelled to refund their value. Morris could only reply "y^{t} it lookt very hard y^{t} any justice should suffer for an error in judgment; and further added that if it were to do again, he wold not do it."

David Lloyd, the attorney in the case, when arguing had been shown the letters-patent from the king to the marshal, with the broad seal of the high court of admiralty attached. He said, "What is this? Do you think to scare us w^{t} a great box and a little Babie? 'Tis true, fine pictures please children, but wee are not to be frightened at such a rate." For the use of these words he was expelled from his seat in the Council, and for permitting them to be uttered without rebuke the three judges, Morris, Richardson and Fox, were summoned to the presence of the governor and reprimanded. Edward Shippen, being absent in New England, escaped the latter punishment.

Richardson was elected a member of the Assembly for the years 1691, '92, '93, '94, '96, '97, '98, 1700, '01, '02, '03, '06, '07, '09. He probably found the leaders of that body more congenial associates than had been the members of the Council, and, from the fact that he was sent with very unusual frequency to confer with the different governors in regard to disputed legislation, it may be presumed that he was a fair representative of the views entertained by the majority. Though doubtless identified in opinion with David Lloyd, he does not appear to have been so obnoxious to the Proprietary party as many of his colleagues, since James Logan, writing to Penn in 1704, regrets his absence that year, and on another occasion says that the delegation from Philadelphia county, consisting of David Lloyd, Joseph Wilcox, Griffith Jones, Joshua Carpenter, Francis Rawle, John Roberts, Robert Jones and Samuel Richardson, were "all bad but the last." \ On the 20th of October, 1703, a dispute arose concerning the power of the Assembly over its own adjournment — a question long and warmly debated before — which illustrates in a

rather amusing way the futile attempts frequently made by the governors and their Council to exercise control. A messenger having demanded the attendance of the whole House of Representatives forthwith to consult about adjournment, they, being engaged in closing the business of the session, sent Joseph Growden, Isaac Norris, Joseph Wilcox, Nicholas Wain and Samuel Richardson to inform the Council that they had concluded to adjourn until the first day of the next Third month. The president of the council objected to the time, and denied their right to determine it, and an argument having ensued without convincing either party, the delegation withdrew. The Council then unanimously resolved to prorogue the Assembly immediately, and to two members of the latter body, who came a few hours afterward with the information of its adjournment to the day fixed, the president stated “that ye Council had Prorogued ye Assembly to ye said first day of ye said Third month, and desired ye said members to acquaint ye house of ye same.” The order is solemnly recorded in the minutes as follows: “Accordingly ye Assembly is hereby prorogued.” To prorogue them until the day to which they themselves had already adjourned was certainly an ingenious method of insuring their compliance.

On the 10th of December, 1706, the Assembly sent Richardson and Joshua Hoopes on a message to the governor, who, upon their return, reported that his secretary, James Logan, had affronted them, asking one of them “whether he was not ashamed to look, the said James Logan, in the face.” The wrath of the Assembly kindled immediately. They directed Logan to be placed in custody, that he might answer at the bar of the House, and sent word to the governor that since he had promised them free access to his person, his own honor was involved; that they resented the abuse as a breach of privilege; and that they expected full satisfaction and the prevention of similar indignities for the future. The governor sent for Logan, who explained that “all that past was a jocular expression or two to S. Richardson, *who used always to take a great freedom that way himself*, & that he believed he never resented it as an affront;” and Richardson, being summoned, declared that he was not at all offended.

For many years after his arrival in Pennsylvania, Richardson lived upon a plantation of five hundred acres near Germantown, and probably superintended the cultivation of such portions of it as were cleared. There he had horses, cattle and sheep. The Friends' records tell us that several grandchildren were born in his house, and from the account book of Francis Daniel Pastorius we learn that when they grew older they were sent to school at the moderate rate of fourpence per week. On the 19th of April, 1703, however, Ellinor, his wife, died, and some time afterward, probably in the early part of the year 1705, he removed to the city.[4] He married again, and lived in a house somewhere near the intersection of Third and Chestnut streets, which contained a front room and kitchen on the first floor, two chambers on the second floor, and a garret.

In the same year he was unanimously elected one of the aldermen of the city, and this position he held thereafter until his death. In December of that year he, Griffith Jones and John Jones, by order of the Town Council, bought a set of brass weights for the sum of twelve pounds twelve shillings; and the poverty of the new city may be inferred from the fact that they gave their individual notes, and took in exchange an obligation of the corporation, which, though often presented for settlement, was not finally disposed of until five years afterwards. In May, 1710, the Town Council determined to build a new

market-house for the use of the butchers, and they raised the necessary funds by individual subscriptions of money and goods. Richardson was among the fourteen heaviest subscribers at five pounds each, and after its completion in August, 1713, was appointed one of the clerks of the market to collect the rents, etc., on a commission of ten per cent. The first moneys received were applied to the payment of an old indebtedness to Edward Shippen for funds used “in Treating our present Governor at his ffirst arrival.” The meeting of the Town Council on the 1st of October, 1717, was the last he attended.

He died June 10th, 1719, at an advanced age, and left a large estate. Like many others of the early Friends, he was a slaveholder, and among the rest of his property were the following negroes: viz., Angola, Jack, Jack's wife, and Diana. His wardrobe consisted of a new coat with plate buttons, cloth coat and breeches, loose cloth coat and drugget waistcoat, old cloak, old large coat and “Round robin,” two fustian frocks and breeches, two flannel waistcoats, three pair of old stockings, two hats, linen shirts, leather waistcoat, and breeches, six neckcloths, three handkerchiefs, one pair of new and two pair of old shoes.

He had four children. Joseph, the only son, married in 1696, Elizabeth, daughter of John Bevan,[5] and from about the year 1713 lived at Olethgo on the Perkiomen creek, in Providence township, Philadelphia (now Montgomery) county. This marriage was preceded by a carefully drawn settlement, in which the father of the groom entailed upon him the plantation of five hundred acres near Germantown, and the father of the bride gave her a marriage portion of two hundred pounds. Of the three daughters, Mary, the eldest, married William Hudson, one of the wealthiest of the pioneer merchants of Philadelphia, mayor of the city in 1725, and a relative of Henry Hudson, the navigator; Ann married Edward Lane of Providence township, Philadelphia county, and after his death Edmund Cartledge of Conestoga in Lancaster county; and Elizabeth married Abraham Bickley, also a wealthy merchant of Philadelphia. Among their descendants are many of the most noted families of the eastern counties of Pennsylvania.

1. ↥ He was appointed a Justice 12th of 11th mo. 1688.
2. ↥ Joseph Growden, Samuel Carpenter and four others wrote to Penn, 9th of 2d mo., 1699, complaining of Geo. Blackwell that “He has excluded Sam. Rich'dson an able & honest man.”
3. ↥ “By a Warrant signed by Sam. Richardson & Rob. Ewer, Justices, the Sheriff and Constable entered the Shop of William Bradford & took all the above written Papers they could find call'd *An Appeal*, and carried the said W. Bradford before the said Justices, and also sent for John McComb, who (as they were informed) had disposed of two of said Papers and they not giving an Account where they had them were both committed to Prison. Also they sent Robert Ewer and the said officer to search the said W. Bradford's House again for more Papers &c. but found none, yet took away a Parcell of Letters, being his utensils, which were worth about ten pounds.” *Postscript to Second Edition of Appeal, 1692.*

4. ↑ The Abington monthly meeting records for 23d of 12th mo., 1701, say: “Samuel Richardson having desired that ffriends should keep a Meeting of Worship at his house, and this meeting having answered his request have ordered also that friends do meet at his house on ye s^{d} sixth day in every month, considering ye weakness of his wife.”
5. ↑ John Bevan's wife was Barbara Aubrey, aunt of the William Aubrey who married Letitia Penn, and a descendant of Sir Reginald Aubrey, one of the Norman conquerors of Wales.