

GRIFFITH MORGAN.

AFTER Samuel Cole had fixed his abode at New Orchard, across the creek from the little village of Penisaukin, and was laboring diligently to increase the extent of his cultivated acres, so that his farm might yield a comfortable support to his family, he was summoned to his old home in Hertfordshire, England, to arrange some unsettled business at that place. But for the care and attention extended to his wife and children by the few families then living at the town before named, their condition would have been lonely enough in their wild forest home; yet his absence was relieved by this friendly intercourse and protection, as well as by the confidence that had grown up between the emigrants and natives, from whom they had nothing to fear. The deference and respect observed toward the wives and daughters of the emigrants by these untutored children of the forest must always be a redeeming trait in their character, and commend their memories to us for all time to come. Though the emigrants were at their mercy for many years, yet no accusation of tyranny or brutality is recorded against them; although the settlers were without the means of protection or defence, yet no advantage was taken by the natives of their superiority to satisfy a feeling of envy or revenge.

The imperfect knowledge of navigation, and the primitive construction of vessels at that day, rendered a voyage across the ocean dangerous and tedious, and the time occupied was usually more than double that now taken by sailing-vessels. The time of return of Samuel Cole was doubtless fixed upon

between himself and wife, always excepting the dangers and delays of the sea, and, as the period of his coming approached, the anxiety of his family to see him again very naturally increased. On the return voyage of the ship in which he came, the island of Barbadoes was taken as a point of stopping; this lengthened the trip, and in a degree added to the uncertainty of arrival. At that place, however, Samuel Cole was attacked by one of the diseases incident to those latitudes, and, before the departure of the ship, had died, and was buried. The extended distance of the voyage, and consequent delay therefrom not being known to the wife, she made frequent visits to Philadelphia to meet her husband and welcome him to his family again. Tradition says that she would stand for hours by the water's edge, looking anxiously down the river for the sail that would bring the father of her children. These visits and watchings at last attracted the attention of a young mariner who frequented the port, and who was not long in discovering the cause of her anxiety. Sympathizing with her, he extended his inquiries in her behalf, and at last discovered that her husband had died on his return, as before named. Her grief for this sad bereavement enlisted his feelings, and, finding that she was about to return home alone in her boat, he offered to accompany her and manage the same. This offer she accepted, and he sailed the craft up the river to Pensauken creek, and thence nearly to her residence, thus bearing the sad news to her children and neighbors.

This man was Griffith Morgan, who, after a proper interval of time, sailed his own skiff up the creek aforesaid to offer his consolations to the widow, and to interest himself about her children and estate. This solicitude soon assumed another shape, and culminated in the marriage of Griffith Morgan and Elizabeth Cole. Many interesting incidents are still remembered in the family touching this courtship and marriage, and will pass from generation to generation by reason of the commendable desire to preserve everything relating thereto. The log house was but lately standing on the farm owned by the heirs of Joseph H. Coles, now deceased, just as left by Samuel Cole on his departure to his native place

in England; its limited dimensions and primitive appearance leave no doubt as to its many years of existence.

Griffith Morgan was probably a native of Wales, whence he emigrated to America on account of the religious persecution of Friends in that part of the kingdom of Great Britain. In 1684, he was imprisoned in Haverford West for not attending church, with many others who refused to pay tithes for the support of the rector of the parish wherein they lived, or to attend at the place where he dispensed the gospel to the people. Some years previously to this time, he was arrested in the public road and beaten by the officers, for a similar disregard of the laws and customs of the land in which he lived; but to these exactions he could not yield, nor could he act in opposition to his religious belief in such matters.¹ Although he appears to have been in this country in 1677, yet he may have visited his old home, and have subjected himself to the outrages above named, as was the case with many of the emigrants. Without assuming that any proof of identity be made out, yet the probabilities are that these facts relate to one and the same person.

The marriage referred to took place in 1693, in Philadelphia, the issue of which was one son, Alexander. Previously to this, however, Griffith Morgan had purchased several tracts of land in Gloucester county, New Jersey. This is evidence that he was a man of considerable estate. The probability is that he continued his sea-faring life, as he does not appear to have participated in the religious or the political affairs of the colony at that time. Upon his marriage, he made a settlement upon a tract of land which he had bought of David Lloyd and Isaac Norris, executors, in 1677, being part of the estate of Thomas Lloyd of Philadelphia, a contemporary and intimate friend of William Penn.² This tract was bounded by the river Delaware and partly by Penisauken creek. The old mansion is still standing, but so much enlarged and changed as scarcely to be recognized. This tract of land appears to have been located by Samuel Jennings, the first governor of New Jersey; it was resurveyed in 1717 by Alexander, the son of

¹ Bease's Sufferings, Vol. I., 748-759.

² Lib. B₂, 590.

Griffith Morgan.³ It contained five hundred acres of land, and extended more than a mile up the creek aforesaid, and about one-fourth that distance along the river.⁴ The house is just where a son of Neptune would have it,—near the mouth of the creek, with a clear and uninterrupted view of the river Delaware, where every kind of craft on both streams must pass in sight.

Elizabeth Morgan survived her last husband, and died in 1719. By her will, she bequeathed much personal property among her children.⁵ They were Samuel Cole and Rachel Wild, wife of James Wild (by her first husband), and Alexander Morgan (by her last). This paper indicates beyond question that she was twice married, and also the number of children by each. Her estate was large for the day in which she lived, and was fairly distributed to those nearest of kin.

According to the good order of Friends at the Newton Meeting, in the year 1717 Alexander Morgan was married to Hannah, a daughter of Joseph and Lydia Cooper, and granddaughter of William Cooper, the first emigrant. This marriage connected the Morgan family with the Mickles, the Hopkins, the Ladds, the Coxes, the Coateses and the Clements, of West New Jersey, and with the Rawles, the Riggses, and other families in Pennsylvania,—forming a line of consanguinity which was strengthened by subsequent like connections and in some instances brought down to the present day.⁶ Alexander Morgan settled and remained on the homestead property during his life, making but little change therein, either by purchase or sale. He deceased in 1751, leaving his widow and several children, as follows:⁷ Joseph, who married Agnes Jones; Benjamin, who married Jane Roberts 1761; Isaac; Mary, who married Edmund Hollingshead; Elizabeth, who married William Miller; Lydia, who married Nathan Beeks; Sarah, who married Josiah Burrough; Hannah, Rachel, and Alexander, who died young. Joseph and Agnes Morgan had one child, Griffith, who married Rebecca Clement, daughter of Samuel, in 1766. The first wife of Joseph Morgan deceased, and he married Mary ———.

³ Lib. W, 326.

⁴ Sharp's Book, 39. O. S. G.

⁵ Gloucester Files, 1718.

⁶ Lib. No. 4, 77.

⁷ Lib. No. 7, 165.

Their children were Joseph, who married Mary Evans and Mary Butcher ; Hannah, who married — Saterthwaite ; Elizabeth, who married Joseph Reeves ; and Sarah, who married James Hinchman. Mary, the second wife of Joseph Morgan, having died, he married Mary, a daughter of Joseph Stokes. Their children were Isaac, who married Sarah Ridgway ; Alexander ; Mary, who married Joseph Bennett, and Benjamin, who married Mary Champion. Mary, the third wife, deceased, and Joseph Morgan married Elizabeth Atkinson. By the last marriage there was no issue. Benjamin and Jane Morgan's children were Hannah, Benjamin, who died young, and Benjamin R., who never married. He owned part of the paternal estate on Penisauken creek, which, at his death, he gave to his cousin Alexander, of Philadelphia. Edmund and Mary Hollingshead's children were Joseph, who married Alice — ; Edmund, who married Hannah Foster ; Morgan, who married Rebecca Matlack ; John, Samuel, Hannah, Lydia and Sarah. Nathan and Lydia Beeks had one child, named Morgan. The direct line of connection with the Morgan family of such as are of the blood in the region of Gloucester county, may be traced through Griffith and Rebecca. The issue of this marriage were three daughters : Agnes, who married Enos Eldridge ; Rebecca, who married James B. Cooper ; and Ann, who married William E. Hopkins. The family connection is very extensive throughout the United States, yet, in many cases, the blood is so much diluted as to be scarcely traceable.

Where the Penisauken creek falls into the Delaware, and about where the old Morgan house is situated, some two hundred years ago stood Fort Eriwonack, it being one of the centres from which a colony was to radiate and fill the territory that now constitutes Pennsylvania and New Jersey with an industrious and happy people. In 1634, Charles I., king of England, made a title to Sir Edmund Ployden, knight, etc., for all the territory lying between New England and Maryland, with that vague and doubtful kind of description incident to the little knowledge of the estate being conveyed,—a kind of description which in so many instances led to disputes and, sometimes, to bloodshed among the owners and settlers.⁸ No

⁸ Smith's History of New Jersey, 24—60.

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regard was paid to the claims of the Dutch or Swedes within the limits of this grant, and, as a consequence, trouble very soon emanated from this source; so, in the same manner, was Ployden's title ignored when the king made a deed to his brother, the Duke of York, for the same section of country.⁹ The government was also fully vested in Sir Edmund, and the territory was called "the Province of New Albion, to be and remain a free County Palatine, in no wise subject to any other."¹⁰ Sir Edmund was made Earl Palatine, which gave him regal power in all things save allegiance to the king; and each of his family was also titled, in contemplation of a settlement to be effected in the wilks of America.¹¹

Steps were immediately taken to know something of this land; and Beauchamp Plantaganet, a friend of the earl, was despatched to America to make the necessary examinations and report accordingly. This trip was undertaken in 1636; and, after much traveling through the forests, and intercourse with the natives, this adventurer ascended the Delaware river to the mouth of the Penisauken creek, where some of his company had already erected a fort, and where they were waiting for the government of Sir Edmund Ployden to be established. About the same time, another settlement was made near where Salem now stands; but the adventurers were driven away by the Dutch and Swedes, who were jealous of their success, and feared their influence among the natives. The fort at Penisauken creek was occupied for four years by those under the patronage of Earl Ployden, and considerable trade was carried on with the Indians. Subsequently, a small colony of Swedes occupied the place, and doubtless remained until the proprietors assumed the government of West New Jersey and established their title to the land. It is needless to follow the history of this matter, and only necessary to say that none of the brilliant imaginings of the founder of this "palatinate" were realized, and that the whole thing was ultimately abandoned.

A remarkable feature in this attempt at settlement in

⁹ Mickle's Reminiscences, 74.

¹⁰ Mulford's History of New Jersey, 72.

¹¹ New Jersey Historical Society Proceedings, Vol. 1., 38.

America is that each of the historians of New Jersey, from first to last, has been unsuccessful in collecting and arranging the facts in relation thereto. Each in his turn has explored musty records and consulted new authorities upon the subject, and has extracted something overlooked by his predecessor; yet each became satisfied that other and more reliable knowledge was in existence, but knew not where to find such desirable information.

As late as in 1784, a person named Charles Varlo came to Philadelphia, claiming to have an interest in the palatinate, and enlisted that able jurist, William Rawle, in his behalf, making some stir among the holders of the land in this region by reason thereof. One faithful and industrious antiquarian of that day, John Penington, of the city just named, made this matter a specialty, bringing his knowledge and experience to the purpose, to accomplish what so many others had failed in; but at last, despairing of success, he pronounced the whole matter a fabrication, and Sir Edmund Ployden an imaginary being.

To Isaac Mickle is due the merit of giving this matter a most thorough investigation, and of collecting the reliable authorities in his valuable book, so that the reader may see at a glance the trouble that has always surrounded it, and the doubts that may always attend it. It is, however, one of the incidents of the history of New Jersey, and of this particular neighborhood, that is worth remembering; the truth of which, at some future day, may be brought to light, and may make the first settlement of Griffith Morgan a point of particular attraction to such as care to preserve those myths of historical romance so pleasantly blended through the early settlement of our country.

A gold mine was also said to exist near Fort Eriwonack; and its value was held out as an inducement for persons to come here and settle, unbounded wealth being promised to such as would make the venture. This belief, like the old fort, has passed away with those that occupied the land long before our ancestors came; it being one of the fancies of the brain that promised so much in the New El-dorado, and yet, for those who accepted all as truth, realized so little. This spot is therefore

surrounded with much of antiquarian interest; and whether the story of the Palatine of New Albion be true or false, it will always be a fertile subject of inquiry for those that labor without reward and enjoy the search, though nothing be found. To such as have patiently turned from page to page among the dusty tomes that are crowded into the dark corners and out-of-the-way shelves of the various libraries and offices of record in our country, the last lines will be fully understood and appreciated.