

GREEN EZRA

DIARY OF EZRA GREEN,
M.D. FROM NOVEMBER
1, 1777, TO SEPTEMBER
27, 1778

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PREFATORY NOTE

A few words may be necessary in respect to the Diary of my father, Dr. Ezra Green, which I am quite sure he never suspected would appear in print before the public eye.

When quite a lad I was, out of curiosity, rummaging over an upper chamber closet, where in promiscuous order were odd volumes, – school books, speeches, sermons, &c., – when this unpretentious pamphlet turned up in marbled paper-cover. All the particulars of it I had heard my father frequently recount, and hence did not at that early age appreciate its value, and so I gave it to my cousin James D. Green, who, after preserving it with scrupulous care for more than sixty years, has deposited it in the library of the New-England Historic, Genealogical Society, together with important authentic remarks relative to his and my father's progenitors. There this Diary came under the eye of Commodore George Henry Preble, who requested my

permission for its publication in the Historical and Genealogical Register, together with such facts as he might gather of my father's public life during five years service as surgeon in the army and navy during the American revolution. To this request I gave my willing assent, promising as a sequel thereto a memoir of his private life.

Walter C. Green.

Boston, Nov. 16, 1874.

I. HIS PUBLIC CAREER

By Commodore Geo. Henry Preble, U.S.N

In June, 1775, the Sunday after the battle of Bunker Hill, Dr. Ezra Green, in the capacity of surgeon, joined the American army, then under the command of Gen. Artemas Ward, and was stationed with Reed's New-Hampshire regiment on Winter Hill in Charlestown. Here he received the smallpox by inoculation, and was secluded in the hospital at Fresh Pond, Cambridge, for seventeen days, returning to his regiment in camp on Winter Hill the 20th of March, 1776.

After the evacuation of Boston by the British, he left with our army for New-York, going by way of Providence, Norwich and New-London, where they embarked. Having remained in New-York a few weeks, they proceeded up the Hudson to Albany, thence by batteaux to Saratoga; landed, and marched to Lake George; remained about a fortnight; went down Lake George in batteaux, and stopped at Ticonderoga; thence proceeded by Lake Champlain to St. John's; thence to Montreal, and joined Arnold. There the army suffered greatly from sickness. Dr. Green was with the troops which occupied Mount Independence

until December, when, on the advance of the British under Sir Guy Carleton, the American forces retreated to Ticonderoga.

The following letter, addressed to his friend Mr. Nath'l Cooper, at Dover, New-Hampshire, graphically describes the situation of the American army at that time.

Ticonderoga, Oct. 30, 1776.

Dear Sir:

I must beg your pardon for troubling you with so many of my letters, but I am a good deal at leisure, and so lucky an opportunity of conveyance offers, that I can't let it pass without sending you one line or two. Since my last, our Fleet is destroyed, of which I suppose you have heard, but 5 vessels remaining to us out of 16 sail. The engagement began on Friday morning, October 11th, and held out all day. They surrounded our Fleet, but in the night succeeding the engagement they very narrowly and fortunately made their escape and came up towards Crown Point, but were overtaken and attacked again Sunday morning, within about 25 miles of this place. Our men fought bravely, but the enemy were of so much greater force than we had any suspicion of that our little fleet stood no chance; most of the vessels lost were blown up, sunk, or burnt by our own people, they escaping by land. We lost, killed, about 50; taken prisoners, about 100, which are dismissed on parole. The Indians have done us no damage till very lately they waylaid three men, kill'd one, took the other two prisoners, who are sent back on parole. They were treated very kindly

by the Indians as well as by the King's troops who were at the time at Crown Point within 15 miles of this place, where they have been ever since the destruction of our Fleet. We have lately been alarm'd several times. On Monday morning last, there was a proper alarm, occasioned by a number of the enemies boats which hove in sight, and a report from a scouting party that the Enemy were moving on; where the Fleet is now, I can't learn, or what is the reason they don't come on I can't conceive. 'Tis thought they are 10 or 12 thousand strong, including Canadians and Indians. We are in a much better situation now than we were fourteen days ago, and the militia are continually coming in. Our sick are recovering, and it is thought we are as ready for them now as ever we shall be. There has been a vast deal of work done since the fight, and we think ourselves in so good a position that we shall be disappointed if they don't attack us. However, I believe they wait for nothing but a fair wind. In my next, I'll tell you more about it. In the meantime I am yours to command.

Ezra Green.

My respects to your lady and love to your children.

P.S. I have some thought of leaving the army and joining the navy, provided I can get a berth as surgeon of a good continental ship or a privateer. Should be glad if you would enquire, if you don't know, and send me word what Incouragement is given; and let me know if any ships are fitting out from Portsmouth, and you'll oblige your friend,
E. G.

Dr. Green remained with the troops which occupied Mount Independence until they left the position in December, when he returned to Albany, and there left the army and returned to Dover, New-Hampshire. All through the following summer, he was afflicted with fever and ague, but in October, 1777, accepted an appointment as surgeon of the continental ship-of-war *Ranger*, then fitting out in Portsmouth, N.H., under the command of Capt. John Paul Jones, and nearly ready for sea. They sailed, as his diary shows, on the 1st of November, 1777, for France. The following letter, written to his friend Mr. Cooper, describes the passage out.

On Board the Ranger, Peanbeauf Road,

Dec. 4, 1777.

"Sir:

By a Gentleman who is writing I have an opportunity just to present my respects to yourself and lady, and to inform you of my safe arrival at Peanbeauf 27 miles below Nantz on the 2d of December current, after a passage of 32 days. Our people all in good health and high spirits. We had as good weather as we could wish 'till within a week of our arrival. In the Bay of Biscay we had a very heavy Gale of Wind, but it continued but about 48 hours. Saw but one ship of war, and she was in the chops of the English Channel, with a Fleet under convoy. – I have the happiness to inform you of the Capture of two Brigs, on the 25th and 27th of November, both from Malaga laden with wine and fruit, which on my own and friends account could wish with all

my heart were in Portsmouth, New-Hampshire. They were ordered to some part of France, but have not yet heard of their arrival. There is nothing new here. The French say but little about a war, being very intent on getting money. Here are a number of vessels fitting out for America in the trading way. The news of Gen. Burgoine affair got here just before us, and before this time is in all parts of Europe.

I don't expect we shall go from this Place these six weeks, as there is a great deal wanting to be done to the ship before she will go to sea again. It seems probable to me that she will be ordered directly back to America, as soon as may be. In the meantime I am,

With the greatest sincerity & respect,
Your humble servant,

E. Green.

Please to present my best regards to Susy ¹, & love to your little children, & salutations to all enquiring Friends.

Mr. Nathaniel Cooper, of Dover,
New-Hampshire,
New-England.

Dr. Green continued in the *Ranger* until her return to Portsmouth in October, 1778, when he left her, and returned to Dover.

When the *Ranger* was refitted in the following spring, under the command of his friend, Capt. T. Simpson, he rejoined her as surgeon, and sailed in her on a cruise in company with the

¹ This was Susannah Hayes, whom he subsequently married.

Warren, 32 guns, Commodore J. B. Hopkins, and Queen of France, 28, Capt. J. Olney; the latter a French ship, which had been purchased at Nantes for the American government.

While on this cruise, in March, they captured a privateer schooner of 14 guns, and on the 6th of April the schooner Hibernia, of 8 guns and 45 men, and the next morning, off Cape Henry, six more of a fleet of nine vessels, viz.: the ship Jason, Capt. Porterfield, 20 guns, 150 men; ship Maria, letter of marque, 16 guns, 80 men, cargo of flour, &c.; and brigs Prince Frederick, Patriot, Bachelors John, and schooner Chance, all laden with stores for the British army. Among the prisoners taken was a Colonel Campbell, and twenty-three army officers of lesser rank, on their way to join their regiments at the south.² All these vessels were brought into Portsmouth, N.H., three weeks after the squadron sailed from thence.

On another cruise, the Ranger, still commanded by Simpson, in company with the Providence, 28, Commodore A. Whipple, and Queen of France, 28, Capt. J. P. Rathburn,³ on the 17th of July, 1779, when on the Banks of Newfoundland, fell in with the Jamaica fleet, homeward bound, consisting of one hundred and fifty sail, convoyed by a ship-of-the-line, and several cruisers, and succeeded in capturing eleven large ships, of seven to eight

² Emmons's History U.S. Navy, 1776-1853.

³ The Queen of France, Providence and Ranger, all three under the same commanders, were sunk at Charleston, S.C., May 12, 1780, by the British Squadron, after that city had surrendered to the forces under Sir Henry Clinton.

hundred tons, three of which were re-taken; but seven of them, whose cargoes were estimated to be worth \$1,000,000, were brought safely into Boston. All Boston was alarmed at the sight of the little continental squadron and its prizes, – ten large ships standing directly into the harbor, – believing them to be a British fleet. The buildings were covered with spectators. The cargoes, consisting of rum, sugar, logwood, pimento, &c, were delivered one half to the government and one half to the captors. ⁴

On his return from this successful cruise, Dr. Green resigned his position as surgeon of the Hanger in favor of Dr. Parker, of Exeter, and returned to Dover.

In 1780 he sailed on another cruise in the *Alexander*, Captain Mitchell, 14 guns, but they accomplished nothing. In 1781, the vessel having been fitted up as a letter of marque, under Captain Simpson, he went in her to Fredericksburg, Virginia, and they took thence a load of tobacco to l'Orient in France. He returned in the *Alexander* to the United States in the autumn of that year, which concluded his revolutionary services.

⁴ The Rev. Dr. Lothrop's Centennial Sermon in Dover, N.H., June 28, 1846 (Appendix).

II.

DR. GREEN'S PRIVATE LIFE AND CHARACTER

By Walter C. Green

My father, Dr. Ezra Green, was born in Maiden, Mass., June 17, 1746, and, after he was graduated at Harvard College in 1765, he commenced the study of medicine and surgery with Dr. Sprague, of Maiden, finishing his course with Dr. Fisher, of Newburyport. He then went to Dover, New-Hampshire, to reside, in 1767, where he was in successful practice up to his appointment as surgeon in the army. Dr. Green's five years service in the army and navy I need not describe, it having been already narrated by Commodore Preble.

About the same time that Dr. Green went to reside in Dover, his friend the Rev. Jeremy Belknap, from Boston, was by unanimous vote invited there and ordained minister of the Congregational Society on a salary of £150, payable semi-annually, and there he preached for eighteen years. This small pittance being inadequate for the support of himself, his wife, two sons and two daughters, he asked a dismissal, and returning

to Boston, he was soon settled as minister over the Federal Street Society, and there remained until his greatly lamented death, June 20, 1798, at the early age of 55 years. Dr. Belknap was my father's next-door neighbor, and the close intimacy so early commenced between the two families, never abated during their lives.

When Dr. Green and the Rev. Mr. Belknap went to Dover, my dear mother was eight years of age, and being of a lively, pleasant disposition and quick apprehension, with an ardent fondness for books and study, she early enlisted their kind offices in the direction of her various studies; and to them she was largely indebted for her excellent education.

On the 13th of December, 1778, my father was married to my mother, Susannah Hayes, of Dover, by the Rev. Jeremy Belknap. This fortunate union remained unbroken, save for his absence during the remainder of his service in the navy, until it was severed by her death, – a period of fifty-seven years.

In a letter from on board the Ranger dated March 12, 1779, Dr. Green wrote to his then young married wife: "I never felt so uneasy on account of your absence. I pray we may not long be separated from each other, but as Providence seems to have pointed out this to me as a duty, I desire to pursue it cheerfully and with good courage, and I know you would not wish me to turn or look back; and I wish you all the happiness of this world and that to come." As soon as he had discharged the duty here mentioned, that is, on the termination of the

revolutionary war, Dr. Green relinquished his medical practice to his friend and successor, Dr. Jacob Kittredge, to whom he gave his surgical instruments, books and medicines, and then commenced a mercantile business.

Early after this he was made post-master in Dover, which office he voluntarily resigned after several years of faithful duty.

Dr. Green was made deacon of the First Congregational Society in Dover, and was a most devout, unflinching attendant on all Sunday or week day religious services, despite the adverse weather of severest cold or snow of winter, or scorching heat of summer. My father's religious education gave to his early and middle life a degree of asceticism that controlled his thoughts and conduct; but from this in his later years, with a wider range of religious and theological information, and with greater experience and reflection, he happily emerged into broader views of the truths of Christianity. These gave him fresh vitality, and added a more gentle influence and sweetness to his character.

In the year 1827, Dr. Green, with many others of similar religious belief, withdrew from the First Congregational Church, and formed the First Unitarian or Second Congregational Society in Dover. In the affairs of the new society, though nearly 80 years of age, he took an active and prominent part, and especially in erecting, during the year 1828, a large commodious church, in which the Rev. Samuel Kirkland Lothrop soon after was called to preach as the first pastor of the society; presiding in that ministry with satisfactory zeal and fidelity for five years, until

1834, when he was called away to a wider field of usefulness, to the pastorship of the Brattle Square Church in Boston, where he happily officiates to this late day with no diminution of ardor and faith.

Dr. Green and family were fond of friendly social intercourse, and his doors were ever open and largely frequented by the refined and cultivated persons of both sexes, who appreciated their society and liberal hospitality.

In the various affairs of the town, he took a lively interest, and under his charge the first school-house was built; and for educational and religious purposes, the dissemination of the Scriptures at home and abroad, and support of the ministry, he was always a willing contributor.

From time to time he served as selectman, or as surveyor of the highways and by-ways, and now and then as moderator at the town-meetings, where the clashing parties of Federalists and Democrats met, with passionate party feelings, which at times raged with scarce controllable fury.

From active mercantile business in 1811, he sought that domestic quietude with his devoted wife and family he so fondly cherished, and there he largely indulged his taste in reading to their ever attentive ears. He was no hum-drum reader, but with a clear voice and superior elocutionary powers he rendered his various readings pleasingly attractive, and this was his fondest daily enjoyment, up to the very verge of his prolonged years.

My dear mother had but a feeble constitution, yet I never

knew her depressed in spirits. Her well-stored, retentive memory made her society attractive to the old and young who frequented her house; and as a wife and mother, she was in all her duties watchfully diligent and greatly endeared by her family. Her life was that of a liberal Christian, and she awaited her exit from this world with patient resignation, and in the happy belief of an immediate entrance into a future life of endless duration and happiness; and thus she passed away, on the 3d of April, 1836, in the 77th year of her age.

During those early times it was the prevailing fashion, whatever the hour of a friendly call, to invite the guest to imbibe as he might prefer from the several potations before him. The custom was a pernicious one, and when the temperance societies sprung up, Dr. Green, though always a most temperate person, was the first to enter his name on the list of "total abstinent," not from the least necessary restrictive requirement on his part, but because he hoped it might prove an efficient example for many of his fellow-townsmen, who were more or less demoralized by this habitual indulgence.

He had no craving desire for official position or for public notoriety. He was, however, honored by several governors of the state with a commission as justice of the peace, and was also chosen one of the delegates at large, and chairman of the state convention for the adoption of the constitution of the United States. His vote gave a majority in its favor, an event of profound importance for New-Hampshire, to which the other assenting

states were looking for this hoped for result, with no small doubt and distrust of feeling.

He had a fond taste for horticulture, and in his garden it was his daily enjoyment to spend a few hours in healthful exercise, where he gloried over his various fruits and delicacies. From his wife's farm of 150 acres, four miles from town, most of the staple necessaries of life were produced, so that at his table, where there was no needless waste, there was a sufficiency to satisfy the keenest appetite or most dainty palate. His garden at one time had more than thirty peach trees, most of which were killed by an untimely snow-storm in June, when they were in full blossom. The few which escaped during my boyhood I well remember for their luscious flavor.

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