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CHRONICLES
OF
NATHAN BEN SADDI

PHILOBIBLON CLUB

1904



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A
FRAGMENT OF THE
CHRONICLES
OF
NATHAN BEN SADDI

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A Fragment of the
Chronicles of
Nathan Ben Saddi

PRINTED IN PHILADELPHIA
BY JAMES CHATTIN, 1758



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY
SAMUEL W. PENNYPACKER

IN order properly to appreciate the remarkable Colonial Satire, entitled *A Fragment of the Chronicles of Nathan Ben Saddi*, printed in Philadelphia by James Chattin in 1758, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the people and political conditions in Pennsylvania at the time of the French and Indian War and the period immediately prior and subsequent to that important epoch. The Quakers had been in control of the Province since the time of

William Penn and had a majority in the Assembly. They were supported by the Mennonites, Dunkers, Schwenkfelders, and Moravians, who represented among the Germans those people whose religious views were opposed to warfare. They constituted the larger number of the inhabitants, and, in a political sense, may be designated as the Popular Party. Antagonistic to them was another party, at the head of which stood the Governor, appointed by the Proprietaries, composed of those who held office under him, the Church of England people, the Scotch - Irish, and the Lutherans and Reformed among the Germans, and designated as the Proprietary Party. At each session of the Assembly for many years Isaac Norris, of Philadelphia, a man of wealth and culture, who possessed a fine library and used a book-plate and whose family more than a

half century before had emigrated from Jamaica, was chosen Speaker. The Chronicle depicts him as proud and wielding great influence—"I bid one go and he goeth and another run and he runneth." The Assemblies and the successive Governors were in a state of chronic contention, and each event as it arose was used by one or the other as a means of holding or securing the advantage.

When the difficulties with the French threatened war and it began to appear probable that they would have the assistance of the Indians, Governor Robert Hunter Morris wrote a message urging the necessity of taxation and a militia law in order that preparations for defence might be made, but the Assembly was controlled by Quakers who had always been able to live in accord with the natives without recourse to arms. While they passed a militia law it was not

compulsory and they proposed to include in the scheme of taxation the proprietary estates, which led to controversy.

At this time William Moore, President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Chester County, and a Colonel in the Provincial Militia, son of John Moore, who was Queen Anne's Collector of the Port at Philadelphia, was living at his home at Moore Hall on the banks of the Pickering Creek, in Chester County. He wrote in 1755 a letter in which he said he was coming to the city at the head of two thousand men to compel the Assembly to enact a law to provide for the defence of the Province. Meanwhile a number of petitions were presented to the Assembly, in great part no doubt instigated by political opponents, complaining of numerous acts of alleged injustice committed by Moore in

his judicial office, and thereupon that body cited him to appear before them and make response. He denied their right to sit in judgment upon his conduct and later published in the newspapers an Address in which he berated the Assembly for what he regarded as its many failures in the performance of duty. The Assembly had a hearing in his absence, asked the then Governor, William Denny, for his removal from office, and treating his paper as a breach of the privilege of the House directed its Sergeant-at-Arms to arrest him and Dr. William Smith, the first Provost of the College, who afterwards married a daughter of Moore and was supposed to have taken part in the preparation of the offensive paper. They were both thrown into prison, but were released by the Governor after the adjournment of the House, and Smith carried the

matter before the throne of Great Britain with the result that the King reproved the Assembly for its action. These events, the details of which may be found in *The Life and Times of Dr. William Smith*, Dr. Stillé's *Memoir of Dr. William Smith*, and my own *Historical and Biographical Sketches and Annals of Phoenixville*, caused a great excitement throughout the Province and led to the production of much controversial literature in newspapers and pamphlets. David James Dove, a rather acrid schoolmaster, living in Philadelphia, of whom while in England some anecdotes are told in a book, entitled *The Life and Adventures of the Chevalier Taylor*, and who has secured a renewed immortality by the publication of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's admirable novel *Hugh Wynne*, wrote some verses, entitled *Labor in Vain, or an Attempt to Wash the*

Black-Moore White, which were widely circulated as a broadside accompanied by a caricature. Of the *Fragment of the Chronicles of Nathan Ben Saddi* only two copies are known to me and both are in the library of the Library Company of Philadelphia. Its false imprint and its concealment of the names of the persons referred to have no doubt caused its importance to be overlooked and have prevented its preservation. The present facsimile is a reproduction of one of the copies in the Philadelphia Library. Its author is unknown, but he was, of course, a member of the Proprietary Party. The notes upon one of the MS. fly-leaves are in the hand of the late Charles R. Hildeburn, and I have accepted his interpretation of the characters as correct. As to the most of them there can be no doubt whatever. To Benjamin Franklin,

who appears as Adonis, the Scribe, is accorded the credit of suggesting that an attempt be made by the Assembly to incite the people against the Governor. At this time he was the Clerk of the Assembly, and the printing of the votes and the laws constituted a large part of his private business. He is described as having learned to say "the things that was not," and as asserting concerning himself, "I am one of them that are peaceable. . . . If any man draweth a cane across my mouth I lick the dirt as a serpent; and if any man call me rascal in one ear I turn the other and bid him say on." This fling would seem to hint at an incident in his career not elsewhere narrated.

The original of Daniel the Ethiopian was Daniel Roberdeau, of Philadelphia. Even a satire may be of value in giving information as to character and appearance,

and we may safely infer that Roberdeau was swarthy and taciturn. To the query of Isaac, the Judge, following the suggestions of Adonis, the Scribe, his answer was the monosyllable, "Yea." Nathaniel Grubb, of Chester County, called "Gruban, the son of Ashbosheth," was probably fluent. The *Chronicle* says of him that he was noisy, "for he spake and said nothing, and he talked and no reason was found." Shiptol, the Hermaphrodite, was Thomas Leech, and he is described as without means and a dependent of Isaac Norris.

Hughall, the son of Gomarg, was John Hughes, of Philadelphia County. If the *Chronicle* is correct he must at one time have been a baker. He was one of the close political friends of Franklin, who at the time of the passage of the Stamp Act had him appointed Collector of Stamp

Duties. It was to him that Franklin wrote his famous letter denouncing those who were opposing the British Government and calling them rebels. Masterol of the suburbs, William Masters, of Philadelphia, through whose property the present Master Street in the northern part of the city runs, seems to have been reticent, "for he never spoke." Asber, the son of Amittai, George Ashbridge of Chester County, who has the distinction of having sat in the Assembly for forty years, the longest period of service down to the present time, is described as "stiff but not stately, gloomy but not grave."

Tochal, the son of Stentor, John Douglass of Lancaster County, had a voice of thunder, "but without lightning." Wane-

reth, Isaac Wayne of Chester County, the father of the most brilliant of Revolutionary soldiers, and ever a political opponent of Moore, of Moore Hall, though both were members of St. David's Church at Radnor, is described as "the stupid." Edward Kelley, the doorkeeper of the House, appears as Kerak, Joshua Ash of Chester County as Asa the butcher, and Richard Pearne, of Philadelphia, as Peronal the Beastly. Shimei, a Rabbi, was Dr. William Smith; Morat, the son of Ahimiaz, was William Moore, and they were "two men that loved justice and law and eschewed evil things." The literary merit of the *Chronicle* and the art with which the barren tree is described in the last chapter were for the time when they were written re-

markable and excelled anything of a like kind up to that period produced in the American colonies. The satire well deserves the wider attention which will now be given to it.

FACSIMILE

A
FRAGMENT
OF THE
CHRONICLES

OF
Nathan Ben Saddi;

A Rabbi of the Jews.

Lately discovered in the RUINS of
HERCULANEUM:

And Translated from the ORIGINAL, into the
ITALIAN LANGUAGE.

By the Command of the King of the Two-SICILIES.

AND

Now first publish'd in ENGLISH.



CONSTANTINOPLE:

Printed, in the Year of the Vulgar Æra, 5707

A Fragment of the CHRONICLES of
NATHAN BEN SADDI.

BOOK I. CHAP. I.

AND it came to pass in the days of *Isaac, judge over Judah*, that many woes happened, and there was great murmuring of the people; for the number of the Gentiles was increased much in the land.

2 And the *Jews* said amongst themselves; Now is our power gone from us, and her glory departed from Judah.

3 Then came these words unto the ears of *Isaac* the judge, and he was grieved.

4 Wherefore he sent unto his counsellors, bidding them come unto him that he might take counsel concerning these things: and they came and stood before him.

5 Now there was amongst his counsellors a certain man, a *scribe*, called *Adonis*, which, being interpreted, is *beautiful*. For

the length of his hair was comely, and when he *polled* his head (because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he *polled* it) he weighed the hair of his head, at two hundred shekels, after the king's weight.

6 And *Adonis* the scribe was a learned man, after the learning of the *Jews*; for he had read over the seven volums of the *Talmud*, containing the dreams and visions of those who hated truth; and from thence he learnt to say the things that *was not*.

7 He likewise had perused the *jargums* of the law, tho' not in the original; for he understood it not: but the translations thereof, by *Jacobs* the translator, those he perused.

8 And whatever dropped from *Jacobs* the translator, that he swallowed; and

CHAP. I.] CHRONICLES.

Dell-warr, Sbaw-an and *Cberocks*; from *Docan* (which is by the river of *Grief*) even *Allegh* in the mountains, and the inhabitants of the *inner* plains.

17 And the people mutter many mutterings, saying, The *Jews* are *unjust rulers*, and care not for the *Gentiles*, if Jerusalem be safe. We must needs die; but is not life as a precious ornament, opened to the air, which cannot be collected again?

18 We have neither helmets on our heads, nor spears in our hands, nor coats of mail, of mail for war! but as a fool falleth before wicked men, so we fall.

19 Now, therefore, that I speak of these things to my Lord the judge, it is because the people have made me afraid.

20 I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in *Judab*. The sword is hateful to my eyes, and gun-powder stinketh in my nostrils. If any man *draweth a cane-crofs* my mouth, I lick the dirt as a serpent; and if

any man call me *rascal* in one ear, I turn the *other*, and bid him say on.

21 Peace be unto us and to our helpers. The noise of the drum and the trumpet is terrible: I love *no sound* but *MY OWN*.

22 This thing then shall my Lord the judge do, and the thing will serve us well; and the complaints of the people shall be turn'd into praises, and their revilings into thanksgivings.

23 Let us send out false prophets among the people, to every city and to every village, and to each part of the country, divers; and let them cry aloud with a great voice saying,

24 Arise, arise, O ye people! be watchful and spare not; for the man that *ruleth* over you is a man of a wicked heart, and seeketh to make you *eaters of grass* and *drinkers of water*.

25 He longeth to yoke you unto his chariot, and to drive you with burthens as one driveth mules.

26 He hateth your counsellors. because they watch

CHRONICLES. [CHAP. I.]

watch over you as faithful dogs watch over sheep, and will not suffer you to be devoured of the beast.

27 Arise, arise then, O ye people! and strengthen the hands of your counsellors. Let the *Philistines* ravage in the borders, it is better to *die* than to *live*, and NOT DO AS WE PLEASE.

28 And it shall come to pass, when these words shall be heard of the people, that they will be wroth against their ruler, and they say; This man is the cause of our evils; cast him out from among us.

29 For the people will speak in simplicity, and will not know the thing.

30 And it shall not be said any more that the *Jeros* are unjust rulers; nor shall be remembered in the land that *war* is an abomination unto them.

31 But the crime shall lie upon the head of the wicked ruler, even upon his head shall the innocent blood lie; but from my Lord the judge, and from his seed, and from his

HOUSE, shall it be taken quite away.

32 And when the people shall send up their counsellors to Jerusalem, thus shall it happen: There will be none that can turn to the right or to the left, from ought that my Lord shall speak.

33 And my Lord shall observe all the rites and ceremonies of the Jews which he hath long neglected, and shall go into the temple, and pray in publick, after the manner of the Pharisees; and the people will take notice of it, and be pleased.

34 Then shall my Lord counsel a tribute to be raised over all Judah, and it shall be so: for the counsels which my Lord counselleth in these days shall be as tho' a man had enquired at an Oracle.

35 And it will be said, my Lord careth for the people; but my Lord will hold the bag, and bear what is put therein, as did some rulers in the days of Old.

36 And when the tribute shall be raised, then shall

CHAP. II.] CHRONICLES.

shall my Lord set one counsellor over a post, and another over an office; so the men shall be pleased, and cleave unto thee, and give thee a *GREAT NAME*.

37 Let my Lord the judge do according to these sayings, and his authority shall be established in his *House*, and his *HOUSE*, will govern the people.

38 And the saying of

Adonis the scribe pleased *Isaac* the judge well; and he turn'd unto *Daniel* the *Æthiopian*, and said unto him, What sayest thou? shall it be done after the sayings of *Adonis* the scribe?

39 And *Daniel* the *Æthiopian* opened his mouth, and said, *YEA*: for *Daniel* was not eloquent, but of a slow tongue.

CHAP. II.

NOW these are others of the counsellors of *Isaac* the judge, with whom he countelleth wise counsels.

2 *GRUBAN*, the son of *Ashbosheib*, surnamed the *Noisy*.

3 For he spake, and said nothing; and he talked, and no reason was found.

4 And *SHIPTOL*, named *Hermaphrodite*. For some said he was a man, some said he was a woman, and there were others who said he was both: therefore was he surnamed *Hermaphrodite*.

5 And he never did eat of the breac of the land, for he had none of his own to eat; but he lived on the juice of my Lord's bag, which he sucked; even as a *Leuse* or a *Leech* sucketh the blood of a man, so sucked he it.

6 And *HUGHALL*, the son of *Gomarg*, who was knowing in *fire*; for he baked *puddings* and *pies*, and the children called to one another at play in the streets, "Whose cakes are like unto the cakes of *Hugball* the son of *Gomarg*?"

CHRONICLES. [CHAP. II.]

rag ?" Verily he was
a curious baker.

7 And *MASTERAL*,
of the suburbs, who was
a wise man; for he never
spoke.

8 And *ASBER* the son
of *Amittai*. He was stiff
but not stately, gloomy
but not grave; and he
walked as one in a medi-
tation.

9 And *TOCHAL* the
son of *Stentor*. His voice
was thunder, but without
lightning; for no man saw
whither it aimed.

10 And *ASA*, the son of
Hagi, of the street of the
butchers, near the place
Golgotba, that is the skull.

11 And *WA-NERETH*
the stupid, and *PERO-
NAL* the beastly. And
when a debate was debat-
ed, *Isaac* the judge count-
ed those men as a man
counteth his asses, whom
he leadeth to the crib, and
feedeth with provender.

12 And *Isaac* the judge
did according to the say-
ings of *Adoms* the scribe,
and he mouldeth the
counsellors in his hands,
even as a potter mouldeth
his clay.

13 So they gave him a
great report among the
people; and he grew proud
in heart, saying to himself,

14 I bid one go and he
goeth, and another run
and he runneth. Am not
I great in authority? If
any man stand up against
my sayings, thus and thus
shall be done unto him.

15 And he became
haughty, and his mind
swelled within him; and
he went from the ways of
David his father.

16 And he made an I-
mage of paper, in the
shape of a calf; and the
body seemed as tho' thirty
calves were joined together,
but there was only one
head, and the head was
like unto the head of *Isaac*
the judge.

17 He likewise went af-
ter the ways of *Jeroboam*,
the son of *Nebat*, who
made Israel to sin: for the
lowest of the people he
made *Priests* of the *Higb
Places*.

18 And he gathered
together the captains, the
treasurers, the counsellors,
the sheriffs, and all the
people.

19 Then

CHRONICLES. [CHAP. II.

peradventure it should be said, that he judged in his own cause, and *Sbiptol* the *Hermaphrodite* went up in his stead.

29 And *Sbiptol* the *Hermaphrodite* burned with the love of *Isaac* the judge, and he spake wrathfully, saying :

30 Is it true, O *Sbimei* and *Morat*, that ye do not worship the image which my lord the judge hath set up, nor acknowledge its power.

31 And they answered and said, we are not careful to answer thee in this thing ; we confis the image is like unto a calf, and the calf's head is like unto my lord the judge's Head.

32 But heaven forbid it, we should say the Image hath life and power, or is infallible as a God ; For the thing *is not so*.

33 Upon this we stand, that it is contrary to the religion of our fathers, to worship in this manner, neither canst thou make *black, white* ; nor that *lawful* which is *unlawful* ; moreover it is contrary to

the *covenant* of the *Rights*, covenanted unto the *chosen people* to be extracted in this sort.

34 Know therefore, that we will not worship the calf which my lord the judge hath set up, nor acknowledge its power, we cannot do this evil thing to our own consciences, and live ; Nor are we afraid of my Lord the judge, nor of his deep and dirty dungeon.

35 And a multitude of the people shouted for joy, and were pleased with the words which *Sbimei* the Levit, and *Morat* the son of *Abimiaz*, had said.

36 And my Lord the judge and *Sbiptol* the *Hermaphrodite*, and all his counsellors were astonished with astonishment ! and they became full of fury, and the form of their visage was changed and became pale, and lengthen'd exceedingly.

37 And they would have put the men *Sbimei* and *Morat*, and all that shouted, to death, but they were afraid ; for that by the law of the *Jews* no man

CHAP. II.] CHRONICLES.

man might suffer death for this thing. I do this great crime against the law?

38 And Shiptol the Hermaphrodite sent a message to the governor of the city, in the name of my Lord the judge, and all his counsellors, saying, Come and join thy strength to our strength, and avenge us of our enemies. Cut *Shimei* the Levit, and *Morat* the son of *Abimiaz* in pieces. 41 Or why do you request me to take away the birth-rights of the people and to kill justice. As I hope for good things I will not.

39 And we will sell the birth-rights of the people unto my Lord the governor, and we and our children will become his servants, and his servants servants until the last generation. 42 Then Shiptol the Hermaphrodite commanded Daniel the Æthiopian and Afa of the butchers, to seize on *Shimei* and *Morat*, and bind them and throw them into the darkest and dirtiest dungeon, and they did so.

40 Then the governor of the city answered and said, Wherefore will you ask this wicked thing of me, that I should cut in pieces *Shimei* the Levit and *Morat* the son of *Abimiaz*, without cause? How can 43 And Shiptol the Hermaphrodite came down from his seat, and sat no more thereon. But Isaac the judge went up thereon; as he sat of old, so did he sit now.

44 And Isaac the judge made a proclamation, saying, Thus shall be done to the man that saith ought against my Lord or his Calf.

C H A P. III.

AND it came to pass in the eight year of Isaac the judge, that he dreamed dreams, where- with his spirit was troubled and his sleep brake from him. 2 Then

CHRONICLES. [CHAP. III.

2 Then Isaac the judge commanded to call his counsellors to shew his dreams. So they came and stood before him.

3 And Isaac the judge said unto them, I dreamed a dream, but the thing is gone from me: Now therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof and ye shall receive great gifts and reward.

4 But the counsellors could not shew the dream. For they were no conjurers.

5 Therefore Isaac was very angry and furious, and his wrath boiled in him, and he spoke violently. Hitherto have ye spoken many lying and corrupt words before me, but now the times are changed. There is no proof in you.

6 And they answered and said, My Lord's servants are not wise men, neither do they deal in wisdom: as they have served my Lord until this time, even so will they still serve.

7 But never before did my Lord ask this thing

of his counsellors, that they should speak truth.

¶ 8 Now there was a certain man, named *Kerak*, who stood at the door of the Sanhedrim, and watched there: and he knew concerning what Isaac the judge was in wrath.

9 And Kerak was wiser than all the counsellors of Isaac the judge, howbeit he sat not in the Sanhedrim with them. Because he served in the Temple.

10 And he came and bowed himself before Isaac the judge, and said, O judge, live for ever!

11 The secret which thou hast demanded is revealed unto me, and thy dream and the visions of thy dream are these.

12 Thy thoughts, O judge, in the night, were upon all that thou and thy counsellors have done in this house, from the very beginning of troubles until this day: but chiefly upon the trap and the plot that thou and Masterol, and Adonis the scribe, laid together, to catch *Shimei* the Levit, and *Mo-*
rat

CHAP. III.] CHRONICLES.

rat the son of Ahimiaz.

13 And then thy thoughts turned upon what should come to pass hereafter; and this was thy dream.

14 Thou sawest, O JUDGE, and, behold a great multitude; and the multitude was like unto the sands on the seashore, or the leaves in the forest of Basan, for numbers.

15 And some were footmen, and some were horsemen: and they encompassed thee about: but my Lord was exalted and rode in an open chariot, that he might be seen of all the people.

16 On the right hand sat *Adonis* the scribe, and on the left was *Masterol* of the suburbs.

17 And the multitude moved very slowly: as an army marching that is encumbered with much plunder: or as the cedars on mount Lebanon bow down their high heads with a heavy wind, and raise them up again, when it is past and gone; even so they moved.

18 In this wise they travelled, and when they had gone a little space out of the city, my Lord looked, and, lo! there was a strange tree.

19 The tree was strong and straight and tall, and it had two trunks that went into the ground; so that there was no tree in the wilderness like unto it.

20 And people marvelled, because it had two trunks, that it had no leaves nor fruit, for it was barren.

21 But, behold! the trunks had no roots, and therefore was it barren.

22 And when *Adonis* the scribe, and *Masterol* of the suburbs, saw the tree, their knees smote together and their teeth talked to one another.

23 Then also my Lord became astonished, and his countenance changed, and the people said, What smell is this? And the multitude went on, and the chariot came and halted under the tree and rested there.

24 And, after some time

CHRONICLES. [CHAP. III.

the chariot moved again, but, behold, my Lord the judge, and Adonis the scribe, and Masterol of the suburbs, went not with it, but staid behind.

25 For their heads caught hold of the tree and they were taken up between heaven and earth, even as Absalom was taken up in the boughs of the oak, in the wood of Ephraim, save that they were not taken up by the hair.

26 These are the visions which my Lord the judge saw, in the night upon his bed. Now the interpretation thereof is. * * * * *

27 And Isaac the judge cried out suddenly, Enough, enough, O Kirak ! This is my dream; and the interpretation needeth not, for in the meaning thereof a child is as an astrologer, and a suckling child, as a Chaldean.

28 So Kerak was promoted and made keeper of the prison, and it was a great promotion : for in these days if one commun'd

with a man that was hateful to Isaac the judge, tho' he were a father or a near friend, he was shut up amongst the criminals and a dungeon became his dwelling.

29 So he kept the people in fears, and fear kept them in silence, and silence kept them in slavery, and slavery kept them in every thing unbecoming MAN, who was made in the image of his Creator.

30 Isaac the judge was sore troubled with the dream, which he had dreamed, and he went to his own house and put ashes on his head, and mourned sixty days and sixty nights, and wou'd not be seen of any one.

And the rest of the Acts of Isaac, and all the foolish things that he spake, are they not written in the minutes of the chronicles of the Judges of Judah ?

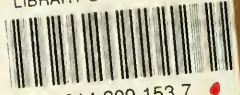
Here endeth the FIRST BOOK of the CHRONICLES.

Yucca = J. Brown
Shineri = W. Smith
Morat = W. Moore
Skeptel = J. Leech
Vaughall = S. Hughes
Melatent = W. Masters

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