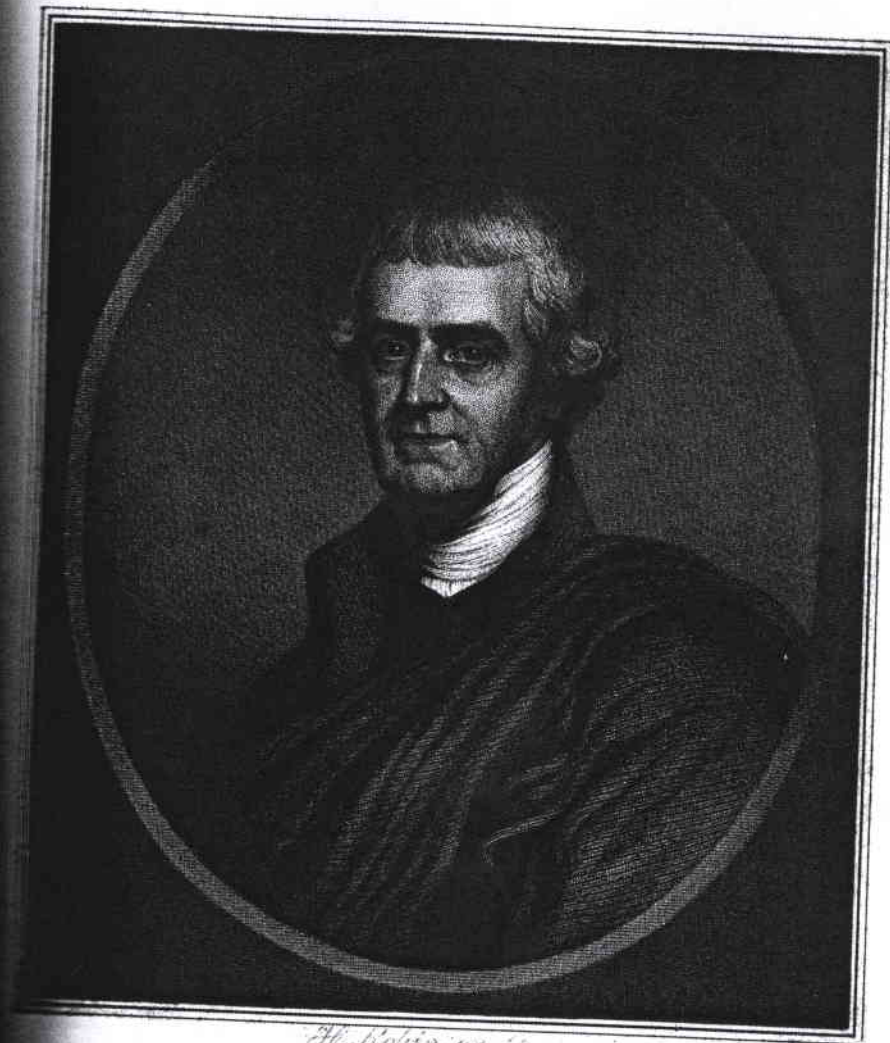


Noble Wymberley Jones.

THIS son of Colonel Noble Jones, a trusted friend and early companion of Oglethorpe, who, as military officer, surveyor, registrar, member of the Royal Council, and treasurer of the Province of Georgia, during a long life proved himself a valuable and an influential citizen, and never once wavered in his allegiance to the Crown, was born near London, England, in 1723.

Such was the respect and so great was the affection entertained for him by his distinguished and devoted son that, when first elected a member from Georgia of the Continental Congress, Noble W. Jones, in deference to the entreaties of his aged father, then sorely perplexed and trembling upon the verge of the grave, put aside for the time being this important trust, that he might, with filial love, minister to the infirmities and soothe the last hours of his dying parent.

Coming to Georgia at a tender age, he secured a cadet's appointment in Oglethorpe's regiment. Having in time studied medicine and received his degree, he was promoted to a first lieutenantcy, and, with the rank and pay of surgeon, was assigned to a company of Rangers in the pay of the Crown. After a few years passed in military service, he resigned from the army, and entered upon the practice of his profession in Savannah. He rose rapidly in the public esteem, as a citizen and as a physician winning golden opinions from the community. No idle spectator of passing events, or indifferent to political preferment, he was in 1768 elected Speaker of the Lower House of Assembly of the Province of Georgia. By that body he was placed upon a committee to correspond with Dr. Benjamin



N. W. JONES.

FROM THE ORIGINAL PORTRAIT
IN THE POSSESSION OF HIS GRANDSON G. WYMBERLEY JONES.

Franklin—who had been appointed an agent “to represent, solicit, and transact the affairs of the Colony of Georgia in Great Britain”—and give such instructions as might appear necessary for the public welfare. Reelected to this position in 1770, so pronounced and influential had become his views and conduct in opposition to the objectionable and oppressive acts of Parliament and in support of American ideas, that Governor Wright, exercising the power vested in him, refused to sanction this choice, and ordered the House to select another Speaker.

Incensed at this affront offered to one who had been aptly termed a morning star of liberty in Georgia, and resenting what they deemed an unwarrantable interference with the power resting solely with them to nominate and judge of the qualifications of their own presiding officer, the members of the House passed resolutions complimentary to Dr. Jones, and declared “that the sense and approbation this House entertain of his conduct can never be lessened by any slight cast upon him in opposition to the unanimous voice of the Commons House of Assembly in particular and the Province in general.” Criticising the action of the Executive, they resolved “that this rejection by the Governor of a Speaker unanimously elected, was a high breach of the privileges of the House, and tended to subvert the most valuable rights and liberties of the people and their representatives.” This bold assertion the Council was pleased to stigmatize as “a most indecent and insolent denial of his Majesty’s authority,” and the Governor, wielding the only punitive weapon at command, dissolved the Assembly on the 22d of February, 1770.

Adhering to the preference shown on a former occasion, and resolved to rebuke the late interference on the part of the Executive, at the first session of the eighth General Assembly of the Province, convened at Savannah on the 21st of April, 1772, the Commons House perfected its organization by electing Dr.

Jones as its Speaker. Officially informed of this action, the Hon. James Habersham, who during the absence of Sir James Wright was occupying the gubernatorial chair, responded: "I have his Majesty's commands to put a negative upon the Speaker now elected by the Commons House, which I accordingly do; and desire that you will inform the House that I direct them to proceed to a new choice of Speaker."

Despite this inhibition, and in direct opposition to the injunction of the Executive, thrice did the House adhere to its selection; and it was only by dissolving the Assembly that the Governor was able to carry his point.

In a long letter to the Earl of Hillsborough, dated the 30th of April, 1772, Governor Habersham dwells upon the injurious effects of this dissolution of the Assembly, and yet demonstrates its necessity in obedience to existing instructions from the Crown. He also comments freely upon the conduct of Dr. Jones and his friends in "opposing the public business" under the "specious pretense of Liberty and Privilege." "My Lord," he continues, "it is very painful to me to say or even to insinuate a disrespectful word of anyone; and every person who knows me will acknowledge that it is contrary to my disposition to dip my pen in gall, but I cannot help considering Mr. Jones' conduct for some time past in opposing Public Business as very ungrateful and unworthy a good man, as his family have reaped more advantages from Government than any I know in this Province. He was several years First Lieutenant and Surgeon of a company of Rangers paid by the Crown, and in these capacities met with great indulgence. His father is the King's Treasurer, and, if I am not mistaken, reaps very considerable emoluments from it."

The truth is, while Governor Habersham was loyally seeking to carry out the instructions of the King and to support the au-

thority of Parliament, Dr. Jones was in active sympathy with those who esteemed taxation without representation as wholly unauthorized, and who were very jealous in the maintenance of what they regarded as the reserved rights of the colonists and the privileges of provincial legislatures. Both were true men, but they viewed the situation from different standpoints. An honored servant of the Crown, Mr. Habersham was confronted with peculiar duties and stringent oaths. Dr. Jones, on the contrary, as a representative elected by the people, was free to give expression to his own and the sentiments of his constituents at an epoch when American liberty was being freely discussed and proclaimed. Of each it may be fairly said he was pure in purpose, wise in counsel, and fearless in action; enjoying in a conspicuous degree the esteem and the affection of the community. But their political paths henceforward diverged. The one clave to the Crown and shared its fortunes, while the other cast his lot with the Revolutionists, and became a favorite leader of the patriot band.

With Archibald Bulloch, John Houstoun, and John Walton, he issued the public call on the 20th of July, 1774, which convened the citizens of Georgia at the Watch House in Savannah. The resolutions then adopted and the measures there inaugurated, gathering potency and allegiance as they were discussed and comprehended, proved effective in unifying public sentiment in support of the plans suggested by the Liberty party, and paved the way for sundering the ties which bound the Province to the British Empire. Of the committees then raised to conduct the public affairs of the Colony, and to minister to the relief of the "suffering poor" of Boston, he was an active member.

Noble Wymberley Jones, Archibald Bulloch, and John Houstoun, elected delegates to the Continental Congress by a con-

vention of patriots assembled in Savannah on the 8th of December, 1774, and again by the Provincial Congress of January, 1775, concluding very properly that, inasmuch as they had been nominated by a political convocation which in reality embraced only four of the twelve parishes then constituting the Province of Georgia, they could not justly be regarded as representatives of the entire Colony, and yet persuaded that the will of those who commissioned them should be formally made known and the mind of Georgia be fairly interpreted—on the 6th of April, 1775, addressed the following communication to the President of the Continental Congress:

“SIR:—The unworthy part which the Province of Georgia has acted in the great and general contest leaves room to expect little less than the censure or even indignation of every virtuous man in America. Although, on the one hand, we feel the justice of such a consequence with respect to the Province in general, yet, on the other, we claim an exemption from it in favour of some individuals who wished a better conduct. Permit us, therefore, in behalf of ourselves and many others, our fellow-citizens, warmly attached to the cause, to lay before the respectable body over which you preside a few facts which, we trust, will not only acquit us of supineness, but also render our conduct to be approved by all candid and dispassionate men.

“At the time the late Congress did this Province the honour to transmit to it an extract from their proceedings, enclosed in a friendly letter from the Honourable Mr. Middleton, the sense and disposition of the people in general seemed to fluctuate between liberty and convenience. In order to bring on a determination respecting the measures recommended, a few well-affected persons in Savannah, by public advertisement in the *Gazette*, requested a meeting of all the parishes and districts, by delegates or representatives, in Provincial Congress. On the day ap-

pointed for this meeting, with concern they found that only five out of twelve parishes to which they had particularly wrote had nominated and sent down delegates; and even some of these five had laid their representatives under injunctions as to the form of an association. Under these circumstances those who met saw themselves a good deal embarrassed. However, one expedient seemed still to present itself. The House of Assembly was then sitting, and it was hoped there would be no doubt of a majority in favour of American freedom. The plan, therefore, was to go through with what business they could in Provincial Congress, and then, with a short address, present the same to the House of Assembly, who, it was hoped, would, by votes in a few minutes and before prerogative should interfere, make it the act of the whole Province. Accordingly, the Congress framed and agreed to such an association, and did such other business as appeared practicable with the people, and had the whole just ready to be presented, when the Governor, either treacherously informed or shrewdly suspecting the step, put an end to the session. What then could the Congress do? On the one hand, truth forbid them to call their proceedings the voice of the Province, there being but five out of twelve parishes concerned; and on the other, they wanted strength sufficient to enforce them on the principle of necessity, to which all ought for a time to submit. They found the inhabitants of Savannah not likely soon to give matters a favourable turn. The importers were mostly against any interruption, and the consumers very much divided. There were some of the latter virtuously for the measures; others strenuously against them; but more who called themselves neutrals than either. Thus situated, there appeared nothing before us but the alternative of either immediately commencing a civil war among ourselves, or else of patiently waiting for the measures to be recommended by the General Congress.

"Among a powerful people, provided with men, money, and conveniences, and by whose conduct others were to be regulated, the former would certainly be the resolution that would suggest itself to every man removed from the condition of a coward; but in a small community like that of Savannah (whose members are mostly in their first advance towards wealth and independence, destitute of even the necessities of life within themselves, and from whose junction or silence so little would be added or lost to the general cause), the latter presented itself as the most eligible plan, and was adopted by the people. Party disputes and animosities have occasionally prevailed, and show that the spirit of freedom is not extinguished, but only restrained for a time till an opportunity shall offer for calling it forth.

"The Congress convened at Savannah did us the honour of choosing us delegates to meet your respectable body at Philadelphia on the tenth of next month. We were sensible of the honour and weight of the appointment, and would gladly have rendered our country any service our poor abilities would have admitted of; but, alas! with what face could we have appeared for a Province whose inhabitants had refused to sacrifice the most trifling advantages to the public cause, and in whose behalf we did not think we could safely pledge ourselves for the execution of anyone measure whatsoever?

"We do not mean to insinuate that those who appointed us would prove apostates or desert their opinions, but that the tide of opposition was great; that all the strength and virtue of these our friends might be sufficient for the purpose. We very early saw the difficulties that would here occur, and therefore repeatedly and constantly requested the people to proceed to the choice of other delegates in our stead; but this they refused to do. We beg, sir, you will view our reasons for not attending in a liberal point of light. Be pleased to make the most favourable representation of them to the Honorable the Members of the Con-

gress. We believe we may take upon ourselves to say, notwithstanding all that has passed, there are still men in Georgia who, when an occasion shall require, will be ready to evince a steady, religious, and manly attachment to the liberties of America. For the consolation of these, they find themselves in the neighborhood of a Province whose virtue and magnanimity must and will do lasting honour to the cause, and in whose fate they seem disposed freely to involve their own.

"We have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient and very humble servants,

"NOBLE WYMBERLEY JONES.

"ARCHIBALD BULLOCH.

"JOHN HOUSTOUN."

The news of the affairs at Lexington and Concord reached Savannah on the 10th of May, and caused the wildest excitement. The thunders of the 19th of April aroused the Georgia parishes from their lethargy, and multiplied patriots within their borders.

The magazine at the eastern extremity of Savannah—built of brick and sunk some twelve feet under ground—contained a considerable amount of ammunition. So substantial was this structure, that Governor Wright deemed it unnecessary to post a guard for its protection. The excited Revolutionists all over the land cried aloud for powder. Impressed with the importance of securing the contents of this magazine, quietly assembling at the residence of Dr. Jones, and there hastily arranging a plan of operations, Dr. Noble W. Jones, Joseph Habersham, Edward Telfair, William Gibbons, Joseph Clay, John Milledge, and some other gentlemen—most of them members of the Council of Safety, and all zealous in the cause of American liberty—at a late hour on the night of the 11th of May, 1775, broke open the magazine and removed therefrom some six hundred pounds

of powder—a portion of which was sent to Beaufort, South Carolina, for safe-keeping, and the rest was concealed in the garrets and cellars of the houses of the captors. Although Governor Wright issued a proclamation offering a reward of £150 sterling for the apprehension of the offenders, it failed to elicit any information, although the actors in the affair are said to have been well known in the community. The popular heart was too deeply stirred, and the “Sons of Liberty” were too potent to tolerate any hindrance or annoyance at the hands of Royalist informers. The tradition lives, and is generally credited, that some of the powder thus obtained was forwarded to Cambridge, and was actually expended by the patriots in the memorable battle of Bunker Hill.

On the 22d of June, 1775, in response to a call signed by Dr. Jones, Archibald Bulloch, John Houstoun, and George Walton, many of the inhabitants of the town and district of Savannah assembled at the Liberty Pole in Savannah, and elected a Council of Safety, with instructions to maintain an active correspondence with the Continental Congress, and with Councils of Safety, both in Georgia and in other Provinces, with a view to bringing about a union of Georgia with her sister colonies in the cause of freedom.

Of the Provincial Congress which assembled in Savannah on the 4th of July, 1775, Dr. Jones was a member, accredited from the “Town and District of Savannah.”

In this Congress every parish was represented. Dr. Jones was of the committee then selected to frame a suitable address to the inhabitants of Georgia, advising them of the true nature of the disputes existing between Great Britain and her American Colonies, and informing them of the deliberations and conclusions of the present Congress. He was also chosen, with John Houstoun, Archibald Bulloch, Reverend Dr. Zubly, and Dr. Lyman Hall, to represent Georgia in the Continental Congress.

Georgia was now in acknowledged sympathy with her sisters, and took her place, by regular representation, in the National Assembly. Of the Council of Safety which ordered the arrest of Governor Wright, Dr. Jones was a member.

Late in 1776 the General Assembly of South Carolina adopted a resolution to the effect that a union between that State and Georgia would promote the general strength, wealth, and dignity, and insure mutual liberty, independence, and safety. Commissioners—of whom the Honorable William Henry Drayton appears to have been the chairman, as he certainly was the spokesman—were sent to Savannah to treat of the matter, and to secure Georgia's acquiescence in a project which, if carried into effect, would practically have put an end to her political existence. The members of the Council of Safety listened with patience and courtesy to the arguments and persuasions of the Carolina Commissioners, but rejected the proffered union. President Gwinnett, Dr. Jones, and all the leading Republican spirits were radically opposed to the scheme on grounds both material and constitutional; and so the effort of South Carolina to swallow up Georgia signally miscarried.

Upon the capture of Savannah in December, 1778, Dr. Jones removed to Charles-Town, South Carolina. There, upon the fall of that city in 1780, he was taken prisoner by the British and sent in captivity to St. Augustine, Florida. Exchanged in July, 1781, he went to Philadelphia, and there entered upon the practice of his profession. While a resident of that city, he was, by the General Assembly of Georgia, reelected to the Continental Congress.

Shortly after its evacuation by the King's forces in the summer of 1782, Dr. Jones returned to Savannah, repaired the desolations which war had wrought in his comfortable home, and resumed his professional labors. He was a member of the committee which received and saluted President Washington with

an address of welcome upon the occasion of his visit to Savannah in 1791. Over the Constitutional Convention which, at Louisville, Jefferson County, in May, 1795, amended the Constitution of Georgia, Dr. Noble Wymberley Jones presided. In 1804 he was President of the Georgia Medical Society. Preserving his intellectual and physical powers in a wonderful degree, he died in Savannah on the 9th of January, 1805, honored by the community as an accomplished gentleman, an influential citizen, a skillful physician, and a sterling patriot.

To the refined taste and liberality of his grandson, the late George Wymberley Jones De Renne, M.D., of Savannah, a gentleman of broad education (enriched by study, travel, and observation), of large wealth, exquisite culture, and thoroughly imbued with a love for Georgia and all her traditions, are we indebted, among other literary legacies, for the series of *Wormsloe Quartos*, esteemed alike for their intrinsic value, admirable manufacture, and extreme rarity.

Since his death his widow—manifesting like generous interest in everything appertaining to the early history of Georgia, and as a tribute to the memory of her husband—has borne the charge of two other beautiful and expensive *Wormsloe Quartos*, edited by the writer, one entitled *Acts passed by the General Assembly of the Colony of Georgia, 1755 to 1774. Now first printed. Wormsloe. MDCCCLXXXI*; and the other, *A Journal of the Transactions of the Trustees for establishing the Colony of Georgia in America, by the Right Honorable John, Earl of Egmont, Viscount Perceval, of Canturk, Baron Perceval, of Burton, one of his Majesty's Most Privy Council in the Kingdom of Ireland, and first President of the Board of Trustees of the Colony of Georgia. Now first printed. Wormsloe. MDCCC-LXXXVI*. In each case the edition was limited to forty-nine copies.

C. C. JONES, JR.