

REVEREND EDWARD TANJORE CORWIN D.D.  
LITT.D.

*Born July 12, 1834, died June 22, 1914*

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH BY HIS SON, REVEREND CHARLES E.  
CORWIN

The Reverend E. T. Corwin D.D. Litt.D., the discoverer and editor of the *Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York*, was born in New York City on July 12, 1834. On his father's side he was descended from the Puritans of New England, while through his mother he was related to the Dutch founders of New Netherland.

Doctor Corwin's youth was passed in the metropolis, whose history he knew so well and in whose affairs he was so much interested. He was graduated in 1853 in the first class sent out by the College of the City of New York. In 1856 he was graduated from the Seminary of the Reformed Church at New Brunswick, New Jersey. After a year spent in special linguistic studies, he was ordained and was for six years, 1857-63, the pastor of the Reformed Church of Paramus, New Jersey. His chief pastorate, of twenty-five years, was spent at Millstone, New Jersey. In 1888 he became the rector of Hertzog Hall of the Reformed Church Seminary at New Brunswick, New Jersey. Seven years later he accepted a call from the Reformed Church of Greenport, New York. He served in this, his last pastorate, from 1895 to 1897. In the latter year he was sent by the General Synod of

the Reformed church to Holland on a mission of historical exploration. The results of his discoveries in the archives of the Classis of Amsterdam and elsewhere are embodied in the *Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York*. After his return to America he devoted himself entirely to literary work. He resided, first at New Brunswick, and, after the death of his wife, in 1905, with his son at North Branch, New Jersey. He died there, very suddenly, on June 22, 1914.

Doctor **Corwin** was born with a genius for historical research. As a boy it was his delight, when visiting in the country, to copy

[9]

Digitized by Google

the inscription on ancestral tombstones. His genealogical studies bore fruit in the *Corwin Genealogy*, 1872, one of the first books of its class. This work was constructed on a plan original with the author, but since widely copied. In each of his pastorates he became immediately interested in local church and town history. The results of these studies were preserved in published discourses,

The results of these studies were preserved in published discourses, all of which at once became standards for their class.

For ten years, during his pastorate at Millstone, he received into his home and educated for college, Japanese students. These young men were sent by their government to obtain a western education. Several of them have risen to positions of power and honor in the Sunrise Kingdom.

From the beginning of his ministry he took an interest in the history and larger relations of his own denomination. The *Manual of the Reformed Church in America* was the result. The first edition of this work, published in 1858, was a small book of one hundred sixty-six pages. A second edition, much larger, appeared in 1869. An edition still further enlarged was issued in 1879. The last edition, of ten hundred eighty-two pages, was published in 1902. This work is unique among church manuals. There is no other denomination in the country which has so much information in regard to its ministry and churches in so accessible a form. A *Digest of Synodical Legislation of the Reformed Church in America*, brought out in 1906, was the by-product of many years of toil.

It was, however, in the discovery and editing of the *Amsterdam Correspondence*, incorporated in the *Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York*, that Doctor Corwin's historical instincts were most fully revealed. In Holland his ability to find what existed, and to find out about what had been lost, amounted to a peculiar genius. As the hart pants for the water brooks; so he searched

for documents of the Dutch colonial period until he found them. The present index, completed by Doctor Corwin, but not issued before his death, brought to conclusion these valuable historical labors.

Besides these major works, he was the author of innumerable essays and magazine articles on historical and biblical subjects, and coeditor in the preparation of several important volumes. He left, unfinished, an elaborate *History of the Collegiate Church of*

Digitized by Google

ECCLESIASTICAL RECORDS

11

*New York City* upon which he had been engaged for several years. During the last few months of his life, he had in preparation for the American Society of Church History a list, with sketches, of all the ministers of all denominations who served in the Middle States before 1800. He was at work upon this list on the day he died.

Doctor Corwin's genius was a genius for hard work. His industry was tireless and he had an infinite capacity for taking pains. Not by sudden inspiration but by patient toil did he accomplish so much. To those who knew him personally, the historical scholar was merged in the conscientious, kindly man. He was absolutely upright in his dealings with his fellows, and justice was continually passing into mercy. Each of his pastorates especially that at Millstone, was solidly successful. He was greatly loved by multitudes whom he served in the ministerial office. Although more than twenty-five years had passed since he left Millstone, a delegation of about fifty of his old parishioners made the journey to North Branch to attend his funeral.

His body was laid to rest beside that of his beloved wife in the cemetery at Paramus, New Jersey. This cemetery he himself laid out, near the old stone church of his first pastorate.