

**BIOGRAPHY OF REV. JACOB
SMITH KESSLER, OF
THE CHURCH OF THE
UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST**

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Biography of Rev. Jacob Smith Kessler, of the Church of the United brethren in Christ by I. L. Kephart

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I. L. KEPHART

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BIOGRAPHY

OF

REV. JACOB SMITH KESSLER,

OF THE

Church of the United Brethren in Christ,

COMPILED FROM HIS

AUTOBIOGRAPHY,

BY REV. I. L. KEPHART,

WITH A SERMON BY THE COMPILER.

PUBLISHED BY THE PUBLISHING COMMITTEE OF THE EAST
PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE, OF THE CHURCH
OF THE UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST.

DAYTON, O.:
W. J. Shucy, Publishing Agent.
1867.

To the Publishing Committee of the East Pennsylvania Conference:

DEAR BRETHREN:—

A perusal of the accompanying manuscripts will give you a knowledge of the manner in which I have accomplished the work you committed to my hands. None can be more fully aware of the fact that it is but *imperfectly* done, than am I. That it would have been dispatched with much more ability and completeness, had it been committed to other hands, I feel very well assured; nor am I willing to admit that it is as well done as it might have been, *even by myself*, under more favorable circumstances.

The cumbering cares that ever hang around the mind of the pastor, enveloping and burdening his mental powers like a gloomy cloud, together with the many interruptions to which he is always exposed—called upon at all hours, either to entertain a friend, visit the sick, or officiate at funerals, &c., &c.,—must, to a very great extent, disqualify him for the efficient discharge of duties of a literary character.

Conscious, however, of the fact that, *under the circumstances*, I have done the best I could, and hoping that your expectations are, *in part*, realized, I commit the manuscripts to you, for whatever disposition you may deem best calculated to do justice to the dead, and further the interests of our holy religion.

Very respectfully,

Your brother in Christ,

I. L. KEPHART.

HUMMELSTOWN, Pa., February, 1867.

P R E F A C E .

In presenting this biography to the public, the object is twofold:

1. A desire to do justice to one who lived, labored and died among us, by giving an unvarnished history of the unselfish, pious, devoted life and efficient labors of a plain, unassuming, humble minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. A hope that by the perusal of its pages others may be stimulated to perseverance and self-denial in the discharge of the duties of the ministry, and the cause of vital godliness, evangelical conversion, and the new birth be strengthened.

That Mr. Kessler was truly a spiritual man, and that the love of God in his soul prompted him to a life of holy zeal and strict self-denial, all must feel well assured who peruse these pages. That his labors were very efficient, and he a very successful minister of the gospel, the reader will feel well assured; the more especially, when he remembers the disadvantages under which he set out, and the many obstacles and incumbrances with which he had to contend and with which he was so frequently harrassed, during the whole of his ministerial life. Nor will it be denied that the United Brethren Church, which he served so long and so faithfully, and on which he reflected so great honor, by his very exemplary life and efficient labors, and by which he was so poorly compensated, owes him a lasting debt of gratitude. It will be seen that he spent twenty-six years in the active ministry, in which time he traversed and re-traversed nearly the whole of eastern Pennsylvania—after pushing his way into new districts, where the United Brethren Church was unknown—nor did he, in many instances, abandon such places, until he had succeeded in permanently establishing the Church there. To him and others, who were, in spirit and labors, the same as he, the Church is indebted for the great progress it has made in eastern Pennsylvania.

since the year eighteen hundred and thirty. And who that intelligently compares the strength and efficiency of the United Brethren Church in this section, at the time Mr. Kessler first received license to preach, with its present strength and efficiency, but becomes deeply sensible of the great progress she has made since that day. And what minister or member of the church, conscious of this rapid advance of the church of his choice, but feels thankful to God and takes courage, despite the whinings of a few croakers, who are ever longing after "*the good old times!*" Thanks be to God, the United Brethren Church does move, and *moves in the right direction*—in the direction of vital godliness, stripped of fanaticism, and seasoned with intelligence and charity.

Without claiming for it any merits of a literary character, this little volume is committed to the reading public in general, and to the ministers and members of the United Brethren Church in particular, with the hope that its defects may be viewed with the eye of charity, and its pages perused with interest and profit. While there doubtless are in the work many things at which some may cavil—some defects sufficiently glaring to horrify the critic—and while it may be wholly incapable of interesting the fastidious novelist or silly romancer, yet we feel well assured that the sober, intelligent reader, while he may discover defects in the composition, will not fail to admire Mr. Kessler's unselfish zeal, approve his devoted piety, and be moved with a sincere desire to die the same tranquil, triumphant death.

With the sincere desire that it may contribute something to the cause of vital godliness, this biography is submitted to the reading public in general, and the lay and clerical members of the United Brethren Church in particular.

I. L. K.

HUMMELSTOWN, PA., February, 1867.

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INTRODUCTION.

A word respecting the circumstances that gave rise to this biography, and the manner in which it has been brought forth, is deemed necessary, by way of introduction. By perusing the volume it will be seen that many of the later years of Mr. Kessler's ministerial life were spent on stations, instead of circuits. Although his labors and duties, as a stationed pastor, were arduous, yet he found himself, almost every day, in possession of a few leisure moments. Being, as he truly was, possessed of a very industrious, energetic nature, he soon became anxious for some exercise to which he might profitably devote those moments. After meditating upon various projects, he finally determined to devote them to the work of writing out a history of his life. He commenced the work, and continued it from time to time, as opportunity afforded, until the last year that he labored in Lancaster City, when he ceased writing, having brought the history of his life down to that year. These manuscripts he deposited in his library, where they remained until after his death. They