WILLIAM CLARK

WILLIAM CLARK, the Boston physician and political writer, was born in that town on May 17, 1709. His father, William, was a merchant, and his mother, Hannah, was a daughter of Colonel Samuel Appleton and Elizabeth Whittingham. Through the Appletons and Whittinghams he was related to two Harvard presidents, John Rogers and John Leverett. His great-aunt, Mary Whittingham, was the wife of another wealthy Boston merchant by the name of William Clark, and this gentleman, upon his death in 1710, bequeathed to William and Hannah Clark the property on the corner of School and Tremont streets which includes the site of the Parker House. On this land William and Hannah built the fine brick mansion which is associated in Boston history with the name of the Clarks. William died intestate on August 25, 1721,[1] leaving Hannah with five children and an estate of over £18,000. The children chose as their guardian their great-aunt Mary, who after her first husband's death had married Governor Gurdon Saltonstall (A.B. 1684) of Connecticut, and after his death had returned to Boston and begun her series of benefactions to Harvard. On April 7, 1726, Hannah (Appleton) Clark married Josiah Willard (A.B. 1698), the Secretary of the Province. They lived in the Clark mansion.

Young William had entered Harvard the year after his father's death. Considering his wealth and his family connections, one cannot explain why he was placed second in his class instead of first. He was a normal undergraduate; his conduct varied from that of the group only in that he tended to break college regulations at his own convenience rather than in times of general disorder. On March 11, 1725/6, he pronounced the class valedictory in the Hall and, according to President Wadsworth, "did it very well." At Commencement he pronounced the gratulatory oration at the end of the morning exercises. After the ceremonies he and Benjamin Woodbridge (Class of 1728), son of the governor of the Asiento Company of the West Indies, evidently did some celebrating, for in the evening they called upon some girls who were guests of the Champneys and then, "Desparing of Room in

[1] James W. Spring, *Boston and the Parker House*, Boston, 1927, p. 58.

the House, never Enquired and roll'd into the Barn" for the night.[2]

During the summer Clark attended Lieutenant Governor William Dummer on his mission to make peace with the Indians at Arrowsic, after which he resumed residence at the college. Probably the presence of the Willard children in the Clark mansion had more to do with this decision than any academic purposes, for he was once fined 3*s* for not disputing in the college Hall as the laws required. When Governor Burnet visited the college on August 21, 1728, it was Clark who as "the Senior Batchelor residing at the College, pronounc'd before him an Oration in Latin; after which His Excellency stood up and in Latin returned his Thanks for the tokens of affection and respect manifested to him therein."[3] Being senior Batchelor also had its disadvantages, for it was he who had to lead off in the public analyzing. When he took his M.A. in 1729 he chose as his Commencement part to deliver an affirmative answer to the question, "An Traditio Scripturalis Orali sit præferenda?" In November of that year he finally left the college.

Madam Saltonstall, who died that same year, left Clark a farm in Pomfret and some wild lands to add to those inherited from his father. Thus comfortably well off, although not rich, he decided to go to London for the purpose of "accomplishing himself in phisic & chirurgery." He was established there by July, 1731, for at that time he was called before the Board of Trade to testify regarding the Dummer treaty.[4] Among his friends in London was Jonathan Belcher (A.B. 1728), a son of the Governor. Jonathan's extravagance irritated his father who reproved him by quoting Clark's mother as saying that her son did "not spend in all articles more than £100 sterling a year."[5] When the younger Belcher took Clark to task for this, the latter boasted that he expected to spend £1000 on his London voyage, a statement which shocked Governor Belcher when it was quoted to him because he knew that this represented the larger part of the boaster's fortune.[6] When the younger

[2] Ebenezer Parkman, Diary (Am. Antiq. Soc.), July 7, 1726.

[3] *New England Weekly Journal*, Aug. 26, 1728.

[4] *Papers of the Privy Council, Unbound Series*, p. 230.

[5] *Belcher Papers* (*6 Coll. Mass. Hist. Soc.* VI–VII), I, 123. The editors of these papers mistakenly identified William Clark as John Clark (A.B. 1728), an error followed in the earlier Sibley volumes.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 184–5.

Belcher acquired an M.A. at Cambridge University, Clark irritated the Governor by telling around how much the degree cost.[7] The Belchers were very much relieved when their talkative friend finished his medical studies and returned to America. The voyage nearly came to a sorry end, for the brig which brought him ran onto Ipswich Bar on April 26, 1733.[8] All got off safely, and the young physician arrived in Boston bringing Governor Belcher some stockings.

The return of the traveler was the signal for a series of festivities which occupied the attentions of Boston society for months. His brother Richard (A.B. 1729) married Elizabeth Winslow, he himself married Sarah Brandon on July 4, 1733, and his sister Mary on the day following married Peter Oliver (A.B. 1730). The ceremonies were performed by Parson Sewall of the Old South, of which the Clarks were members. William and Sarah had one child, Sarah, who was born on August 20, 1734.

William and Richard immediately plunged into the iron business. They bought a forge and mines in Attleborough, Bellingham, Wrentham, and in Smithfield, Rhode Island. William moved to Attleborough to manage the property and did produce some iron, for he made at least one payment in that commodity. In December, 1737, he headed a petition by Massachusetts iron-makers for a grant of Province land as a subsidy.[9] The rejection of that petition by the House and the division of his father's estate among the children early in 1738 were probably responsible for his return to Boston at that time. Two years later he sold his iron interests.[10]

In the division of the family estate William received 2/6ths of the mansion and a smaller house on the same lot. Richard moved into the mansion and William settled beside him in his own house. The estate included a quantity of land in central Massachusetts which gave rise to prolonged lawsuits which were without profit to them and are without interest to us.

Clark had begun the practice of medicine immediately upon his return from England. He had no medical degree because training in medicine, in England as in America, was then usually a matter

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 280.
[8] *American Weekly Mercury*, May 10, 1733.
[9] *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts*, Mass. Hist. Soc., 1919–1949, XV, 248.
[10] Dolbeare Mss. (M.H.S.), *passim; Publ. Colonial Soc. Mass.* VII, 91–2 *n.*

of apprenticeship; but his preparation and his success were far above the ordinary colonial standard. Consequently his practice, throughout his life, included the cream of New England society. His ledger [11] shows that besides his relatives, who made up a large part of the aristocracy, he enjoyed the patronage of men like William Bollan, William Shirley, Godfrey Malbone, William Bowdoin, John Smibert, and Sir Harry Frankland. He is commonly confused with two other physicians of the same name practising medicine in Boston during his lifetime. The oldest of the three was the Honourable William Clark (1670–1742) who married Sarah Bronsdon and was much more prominent in public life, although his practice was among much less distinguished people as is shown by his ledger.[12] This Dr. William had a nephew, Dr. William, who was born about 1725 and who greatly confuses the probate records by having a Martha Saltonstall for a mother. Among these physicians one would never suspect our London-trained William Clark, who enjoyed the cream of Boston practice, of being the one who in 1744 accepted a commission as surgeon of Castle William, but the original document is preserved among his papers.[13]

Our Dr. Clark was an intensely busy man, which perhaps explains why he never held other public offices. Besides faithfully attending the soldiers at Castle William for many years, he sold drugs and did not despise pulling teeth. It appears to have been he who was active in the Boston Medical Society and was called upon to write the official reply to some minor physicians who felt that the organization had slighted them:

> Some Practitioners without being named or called upon, not being capable of writing, employed an indiscreet Scribler to vindicate them, not entering into the Merits of the Cause, but by calling the vilest of Names at Random, without any Regard to Truth. This Rhapsody of Billingsgate Scurrillities and low School-Boy Pedantry is much below our Notice or direct Answer.

He then went on to describe the activities of the Society in dissecting the bodies of executed criminals, erecting their bones into

[11] At the Mass. Hist. Soc.
[12] At the Mass. Hist. Soc.
[13] In the Dolbeare Mss.

"beautiful Skeletins," and examining other bodies and entering the "Phaenomena of their Cases" in the records of the organization.[14]

Apparently both of the elder doctors William Clark were hard-money men, and it was evidently the graduate who showed his Old-Light sympathies by subscribing for the *Seasonable Thoughts* of Charles Chauncy, one of his patients.

Sarah (Brandon) Clark was living on January 12, 1740/1, but on February 7, 1744/5, her widower registered his intention of marrying Sarah, daughter of John and Sarah (Comer) Dolbeare. The Doctor soon left his bride to go to Louisbourg from which during the fall and winter of 1745 he wrote long letters to William Bollan defending Shirley and damning Admiral Warren and the Navy who were trying to steal the credit for the victory and were making a pose of "protecting" the ladies of the town from the "ruffians" and "pumpkins" who composed the New England army. He also sent Bollan a full journal of the campaign intending that it should be printed in England to assist in obtaining compensation for the expenditures of the New England governments.[15] By February, 1745/6, Dr. Clark was once more at Castle William attending sick and wounded soldiers.[16]

After Dr. Clark's return from Louisbourg the town of Boston frequently called upon him to use his wisdom and influence in its behalf in other than medical matters. In 1753 he was appointed to a town committee to draft a petition to the General Court regarding the depressed state of the town resulting from the decline of population which followed the smallpox scare. The next year he was on a committee to find means of reducing the cost of poor relief and of raising more money without increasing taxation. Strange to say, the latter appears to have been too much of a problem for his wisdom, because he later served on a committee to ask the General Court for permission to lay a special tax. He was one of those who protested the over-taxation of the town by the Province,[17] and under the Province act of 1754 he was named a trustee of the linen manufactory, which was a method of lessening the cost of poor-relief. Twice he served on the committee to visit the schools.

[14] *New England Weekly Journal*, Oct. 2, 1739. A note on the Mass. Hist. Soc. copy attributes this article to William Clark.

[15] Dolbeare Mss. The journal was not printed.

[16] Executive Records of the Province Council, XI, 568, *et passim*.

[17] Mass. Archives, CXVII, 53.

Dr. Clark moved in that small circle of Bostonians who could see imperial problems with a certain amount of perspective, and who judged policies by broader standards than a possibility of future encroachments upon New England political liberties. What he wrote on these subjects sounds so much like his step-father, Secretary Willard, that there must have been a frequent exchange of ideas between them. Having met a man who had conversed with John Pattin, Dr. Clark took down his version of Pattin's account of the Northwest. In 1754 he sent this manuscript to Benjamin Franklin, with Governor Shirley's encouragement, seeking additional information on that region from the sage of Philadelphia.[18] About the same time he drew up for Shirley a series of observations on the French encroachments in the Northwest and their implications.[19] A copy of these he sent to Franklin on May 6, 1754, with a letter in which he expressed his despair of achieving a colonial union:

> Inclosed I send you the heads of what is intended to serve, for several small pieces, to be published at home; if it should become necessary to raise the spirits of the people, in order to awaken the attention of the ministry. I should be extremely obliged to you for any hints upon any part of it, especially the last; particularly the nature of the union, that ought to be established amongst his majesty's colonies, on this continent; under what direction the whole English force of this continent might be best placed, to answer the design of the union.[20]

These observations were published in London and Boston in 1755 in the same pamphlet with Franklin's "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind." In spite of their castigation of the French, they are statesmanlike in the presentation of their thesis that England must fall if the colonies do. Franklin's note on the author — "A very intelligent writer" — is justified.

Despite his distrust of even the humane acts of the French, Dr. Clark spent much of his time that year in caring for the Acadian exiles, at the expense of the Province.[21] During the war years he was responsible for the care of the French prisoners in the

[18] Misc. Mss., Bound (Mass. Hist. Soc.) The Pattin account is printed in *Wis. Hist. Coll.* XVIII, 113–4, 143–9.

[19] There are preliminary drafts with interesting revisions at the Mass. Hist. Soc. in John Davis Mss. II, under the date 1745, and *ibid.*, III, 15.

[20] 1 *Coll. M. H. S.* IV, 75.

[21] Mass. Archives, XXIV, 172.

Boston jail and the sick colonials who were dumped at Castle William after the Crown Point and Canada expeditions.[22] When Pownall succeeded Shirley he recommissioned Clark as surgeon of the Castle. Sir William Pepperrell, who was appointed captain of the Castle at the same time, evidently regarded his post as an honorary one, but the Doctor labored among the unfortunates on the island as earnestly as among the aristocracy of Boston. When he sold drugs and medicine to the army, no question was raised as to quality and profits.

Dr. Clark died of camp fever on June 8, 1760, universally mourned as "a Physician of great note." [23]

> He was a Gentleman of extensive Learning: of great Knowledge in his Profession, and Success in his Practice. He was easy in his Manner: humane and benevolent in his Temper: a Lover and encourager of Arts and Industry: a tender Husband, a good Master, and a steady Friend.[24]

He was buried from his childhood home, now the mansion of his brother Richard, no doubt because the small house from which he had served his generation would not hold all who came to pay their last respects. The inventory of his estate shows a luxurious home, but even with his Negro man Boston, it amounted only to £1215.[25] Most of it went to his widow, Sarah, and at her death was to go to his brother-in-law, Benjamin Dolbeare, among whose papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society are most of his literary remains. The fact he was related to the Winslows by marriage makes it probable that it is he who lies under the memorial to "Dr. William Clark" by the Winslow tomb on Copps Hill.

WORKS

OBSERVATIONS on the late and present Conduct of the French. . . . To which is Added. . . Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind. . . [By Benjamin Franklin]. Boston, 1755. (8), iv, 47, 15 pages. AAS, BA, BPL, CHS, H, JCB, LC, MHS, NYH, NYP.

[22] Executive Records of the Province Council, 1755–1761, *passim*.

[23] There is a detailed account of his final illness in John Perkins, Adversaria Sparsa (Am. Antiq. Soc.), pp. 22–5. See also Edmund Trowbridge to William Bollan (H. W. L. Dana collection), June 21, 1760.

[24] *Boston Gazette*, June 9, 1760.

[25] Suffolk Probate Records, LVII, 21–2, 160. There are papers relating to the estate in the Dana Mss. (Mass. Hist. Soc.)

——— London, 1755. (10), 54 pages. BA, H.
——— In *The Magazine of History with Notes and Queries*, XVI, Extra No. 62.

THEODORE COKER

THEODORE COKER was born on October 16, 1707, a son of Benjamin and Ann (Price) Coker of Newbury. His father was an under sheriff and owned several houses and lots. At college Theodore was a disorderly lad. In one period of six months in Freshman year he, alone and unassisted, broke a great portion of the college windows. He left college immediately after graduation but returned to take his second degree with his class, on that occasion being prepared to argue that astronomical space is eternal.

After one or more foreign voyages [1] Coker settled in Dorchester where he was living when, on October 14, 1736, he married Ellen Marion of Boston. Leaving her in Boston he went to Providence, Rhode Island, where he was practising medicine when he died, sometime in 1746. On August 25 of that year his widow was appointed executor and was granted a license to sell strong drink in Boston.

[1] Early Files in the Office of the Clerk of the Supreme Judicial Court, 33,293.