

## STORIES of New Jersey

His companions made their escape, but Witherspoon remained and was released soon after. The experience resulted in a nervous disorder which afflicted him for the rest of his life. To forestall or mask the dizzy spells to which he was subject, particularly when under stress, he was compelled to cultivate a quiet, calm, deliberate manner.

The next 20 years he spent as a Presbyterian minister at Paisley, Scotland. His searching mind and his devotion to the cause of the people led him to take an active part in church councils. He was a member of the General Assembly, the governing body of the church. The lucid, direct style of his writings on church politics during this period reveal his ability to popularize his subject by presenting his arguments in simple, telling language.

He had become the outstanding leader in the Popular Party of the church, which opposed the patronage system. The Moderate Party favored the practice of allowing the patron, the chief financial supporter of the church in each parish, to appoint the minister. Often soldiers had to force the unwilling people to accept the minister of the patron's choice.

Witherspoon attacked this procedure furiously, but the Moderates won. In the end, however, the people triumphed; by the time Witherspoon left Scotland for America, more than 100,000 persons had deserted the Moderate-controlled churches and had established 1,200 churches of their own.

Witherspoon had become the hero of popular Presbyterianism throughout the world. It is not surprising, therefore, that the trustees of the College of New Jersey voted unanimously to break a tradition that covered the first five presidents to invite the famous Scotsman to become the first foreign president of this American institution.

Witherspoon declined the first invitation in 1767 because of his wife's reluctance to leave their native land, but by the next year she had reconciled herself to the move, and when the invitation was renewed he accepted.

After 12 weeks at sea Witherspoon with his wife and their five surviving children of ten landed at Philadelphia on August 7, 1768. His reputation had preceded him. The election of a foreign president to the college had caused some stir; and there had just been published an edition of his most celebrated work, *Ecclesiastical Characteristics*, a biting satire written during his fight with the Moderates. Consequently there was something of a welcome arranged for his arrival, and he found himself lionized during his stay in Philadelphia.

He took up his duties at Princeton five days later, and the students staged an impromptu welcome--every window in Nassau Hall, which housed the entire college at that time, was illuminated with tallow candles.

Witherspoon was described at this time as heavily built and of medium stature, with blue eyes under thick brows, high cheekbones, a prominent nose and a mobile mouth. His face, "grave in repose but lit by gleams of humor when he talked, was strongly modelled and somewhat heavy, but not stern or severe; character was stamped in every feature. He had that indefinable quality called presence. His voice was disappointing and he spoke with a very marked Scottish accent."

Within a few weeks of his arrival he had improved the curriculum of the grammar school to prepare students for the seminary and had reduced the tuition fees so that sons of poorer families could attend. Soon afterward he established graduate courses.

Witherspoon traveled from New Hampshire to Georgia during the next few years collecting money and gaining a first-hand knowledge of the colonies, their development, their needs and their complaints against the measures of the King. It was an intensive course in Americanization, and he emerged from it thorough-