

ANNALS

OF THE

AMERICAN PULPIT;

OR

COMMEMORATIVE NOTICES

OF

DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN CLERGYMEN

OF

VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS,

FROM THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTRY TO THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE.

WITH HISTORICAL INTRODUCTIONS.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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as well as useful and excellent members of society. Mr. Scott was buried in the grave yard of the Hebron Church, and his memory is gratefully and reverently cherished by the children of those whose characters were moulded by his influence. Many of his descendants are members, and several of them are ministers, of the Presbyterian Church. His son, the Rev. William N. Scott, still survives, (1856,) as the patriarch of the Winchester Presbytery; and three of *his* sons have also entered the ministry, though one of them,—the Rev. William C. Scott, after a brief but brilliant course, has been called to his reward.

In person Mr. Scott was tall and manly—his features were prominent; his eyes large and blue; his nose aquiline; his hair rather light; and his skin slightly pitted by small-pox. He possessed a logical and discriminating mind, and was a strong, vigorous thinker—"a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." He was characteristically meek and humble, and had a low estimate of his own performances; but his preaching is said to have been in a high degree instructive, and often eloquent and powerful. He exerted great influence in the community at large, while, by his own people, he was regarded with an almost boundless esteem and veneration.



JAMES FRANCIS ARMSTRONG.*

1777—1816.

JAMES FRANCIS ARMSTRONG was of Irish extraction. He was a son of Francis Armstrong, and was born at West Nottingham, Md., April 3, 1750. His father was a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church in that place. He received the elements of his education at Pequea, but was subsequently transferred to the celebrated school founded by the Rev. Samuel Blair, at Fagg's Manor. The school, during his connection with it, was under the care of the Rev. John Blair, a younger brother of its founder, who was afterwards chosen Vice President and Professor of Theology in Princeton College.

In the autumn of 1771, Mr. Armstrong entered the Junior class at Princeton, and had the privilege of living in the family of the President, Dr. Witherspoon. He graduated in the autumn of 1773; and, immediately after, commenced a course of theological study under Dr. Witherspoon's direction. On the 6th of June, 1776, he was received under the care of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, as a candidate for the ministry. Having passed his several examinations, and sustained the trials assigned him, he was to have been licensed at a meeting of the Presbytery appointed to be held at Shrewsbury; but this meeting was prevented by the invasion of the State by British troops; and, in the uncertainty of the future, Dr. Witherspoon certified the facts to the Presbytery of Newcastle, within whose bounds were Mr. Armstrong's paternal church and home, and they adopted him as their own candidate, and licensed him to preach, in January, 1777.

* Hall's Fun. Serm. for Mrs. Armstrong.—Murray's Hist. of Elizabethtown.—MS. from Rev. I. V. Brown.

This was an exciting period of the Revolution. The battle of Princeton took place in that month, and the seat of war had advanced to Philadelphia and Delaware. Even before his licensure, his patriotism prompted him to join a volunteer company; but now he was desirous of serving his country more consistently as a Chaplain to the army. With this view, he was ordained by the Presbytery of Newcastle, in January, 1778, and, on the 17th of July following, was appointed by Congress "Chaplain of the Second Brigade of the Maryland Forces." Before that date, he had proceeded with the army to the Southern campaign, and is supposed to have remained in the service till the decisive victory at Yorktown. In the exposures of this campaign, he contracted a rheumatic disease, which continued to the close of his life, and was attended, in his latter years, with intense suffering.

In June, 1782, Mr. Armstrong commenced preaching to the Church in Elizabethtown, N. J. On the 22d of August following, he was married by Dr. Witherspoon, to Susannah, daughter of Robert James Livingston. Her mother was a daughter of William Smith, an eminent lawyer, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New York, and sister of William Smith, also Chief Justice of New York, and afterwards of Canada, and author of the History of New York. Mrs. Livingston, after the death of her husband, removed with her family from the city of New York to Princeton, for the sake of more conveniently educating her sons. Hence it was at Princeton that Mr. Armstrong was married to her daughter. He continued to supply the pulpit at Elizabethtown for nearly a year, when he was compelled to discontinue his labours on account of an enfeebled state of health, occasioned by an attack of the measles.

The Rev. Dr. Elihu Spencer having died at Trenton at the close of the year 1784, Mr. Armstrong preached his Funeral Sermon, and afterwards frequently supplied the vacant pulpit. On the 17th of October, 1785, a call was agreed upon by the Congregation, but, owing to some financial arrangements necessary to be made, it was not formally accepted until April, 1787. Meanwhile, however, Mr. Armstrong had taken up his residence in Trenton, and been received by the Presbytery of New Brunswick. The charge included, beside the church in town, one a few miles distant in the country, known in latter years as "Trenton First Church." He gave one third of his time to the country church, and the remainder to the one in town, till April, 1787, when the former found a separate supply, and the next year the inconvenient partnership of the two congregations was legally dissolved. He then served the town church alone, (unless he may have given part of his time in the interval to Lawrenceville,) until September, 1790, when the Lawrenceville Congregation called for half his time; and from that date until 1806, he was the joint pastor, preaching at Trenton and Lawrenceville on alternate Sabbaths. But through much of this period, he was so disabled for public effort by his rheumatic disease, that both pulpits were supplied by the Presbytery.

In 1806, a new church was built by the Trenton Congregation; and, during its erection, Mr. Armstrong preached on every alternate Sabbath in the Episcopal Church, the Rector then in office having a second charge at Bristol, Pa., as Mr. Armstrong had at Lawrenceville. This courtesy grew out of the habit of a large number of the two congregations worshipping with each other, in their respective churches, when their own pastor was at the other place. In 1815, Mr. Armstrong had an assistant provided for him;

for though he was still able to go out, and occasionally to enter the pulpit, he was never free from bodily suffering. It was in the summer of that year that he performed his last public service. There was no reason to suppose, at that time, that he might not be spared for years, and be able occasionally to bear a part in the services of the sanctuary. On the Sabbath referred to, his text was "Wo is me, if I preach not the Gospel;" and it was noticed that the only Psalm used in the singing was the third part of the seventy-first; the first half being sung at the beginning, and the remainder at the close, of the devotional exercises. Nothing could have been more appropriate to his circumstances, or more expressive of what seems to have been the habitual temper of his mind. A few months after this brought his sufferings to a close—he died on the 19th of January, 1816, in the sixty-sixth year of his age, the thirty-eighth of his ministry, and (counting from the date of his call) the thirty-first of his pastorship. The Sermon at his Funeral was preached by the Rev. Dr. Miller, Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton.

Mr. Armstrong was the father of six children, five of whom survived him, and three of whom still (1857.) survive. One of his daughters became the wife of Chief Justice Ewing. One son, *Robert Livingston*, was graduated at Princeton in 1802, settled as a lawyer at Woodbury, N. J., and died September 22, 1838. Mrs. Armstrong died on the 13th of February, 1851, in her ninety-third year. Dr. Hall, in a sermon preached on the occasion of her death, says,—“This venerable lady was characterized, to the last day of her life, by the dignity, yet gentleness, of her manners; her considerate and efficient benevolence; the quiet, yet faithful, discharge of her social and Christian duties.”

FROM THE REV. ISAAC V. BROWN

TRENTON, 24th February, 1855.

My dear Sir: You ask for my recollections of my former neighbour and friend, the Rev. James F. Armstrong, of Trenton. I knew him intimately, and we were in the habit of frequently exchanging visits. He was an exceedingly interesting companion, full of intelligence and anecdote, frequently referring to past events and thrilling scenes, in many of which he had been personally interested. My recollections of him are very grateful, and I am happy to do any thing that may help to honour and perpetuate his memory.

He was by nature,—the evidences of it being very decisive, even in infirmity and old age,—a person of much ardour, activity, and decision. The interests of letters and of religion were, more than any thing else, impressive and absorbing with him. He was a highly acceptable preacher, and, had his health remained firm, I have no doubt that he would have been eloquent and attractive in the pulpit, far beyond most of his contemporaries. No man was more constant and untiring in his attendance on the judicatories of the Church, from the General Assembly down to his own Session; and he was always a vigilant, active and efficient member. He was equally exemplary in his attendance on other public bodies, especially the Board of Trustees of Princeton College,—in the welfare of which institution he always took the warmest interest.

Mr. Armstrong, in his personal appearance, was noble and striking, even in ruins. He had a princely, generous spirit, which always answered quickly to the claims of human wretchedness. Hospitality reigned in his heart and in his house. His noble partner in the cares of life manifested a cordial interest in the cause to which he was devoted, corresponding with his own. The same

spirit has descended to his excellent surviving daughters, and is visible even in the generation following them, through the line of a deceased sister, who has left four children distinguished for usefulness in the different walks of life.

Mr. Armstrong had, in various ways, a decisive influence in advancing the prosperity of this place of his residence; and many of our citizens who still survive, retain grateful and vivid recollections of him. By his marriage, he became connected with one of the most distinguished families in the State of New York; and, in addition to this, he was the intimate friend and associate of a noble company of patriots, scholars, and Christians, in this State; such as General John Beatty of the Revolution, Colonel John Bayard, Dr. Boudinot, Judge Patterson, Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith, Dr. McWhorter, Dr. Woodhull, and others, in whose society he moved as an ornamental and animating element. It was interesting to observe how the celebrations of the Cincinnati and other kindred Societies,—while they furnished an opportunity of reviving his old associations, and renewing his intercourse with many of his old friends, served also to quicken his patriotic zeal, and work up his spirit to the tone of other days. When, by reason of his infirmity, he was not able to sustain himself in a long march through the streets, I have given him my arm to prevent his falling by the way. And having a little of the old '76 spirit myself, it afforded me great pleasure to mingle with such groups, to hear their exciting speeches and music, and to partake of their hospitality.

I am, dear Sir, most respectfully yours,

ISAAC V. BROWN.

SAMUEL DOAK, D. D.*

1777—1830.

SAMUEL DOAK was a son of Samuel and Jane (Mitchel) Doak, who emigrated, when they were very young, from the North of Ireland, and settled in Chester County, Pa.; but, soon after their marriage, removed to Virginia, and took up their residence in Augusta County, within the bounds of the New Providence Congregation. They were both members of the Presbyterian Church at the time of their marriage, and belonged to that division of it that was known as the Old Side. It was in August, 1749, after their settlement in Virginia, that their son Samuel was born. He remained at home, labouring upon his father's farm, till he was sixteen years old. He then made a profession of religion, and shortly after commenced a course of classical study in a grammar school, in the neighbourhood of his father's house, kept by a Mr. Alexander. This school, after a while, passed into other hands, and was removed to another place; and, subsequently, it underwent other changes still, until it finally grew into the institution which is now known as Washington College, in Lexington, Va. Such was his desire for an education that he proposed to relinquish his share of the patrimonial inheritance to his brothers, in order to obtain it. His father, for a time, dissuaded him from the attempt; but, observing that it threw him into a discontented and melancholy mood, he determined to gratify his wishes. His funds were low, and he *clubbed* with another similarly situated, erected a hut near the school house, lodged and boarded

* MSS. from Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey and Rev. S. W. Doak, D. D.