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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.

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BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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VOLUME IV.
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By ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

subject of Colonization upon the Synod with which we were connected, while the Colonization Society existed in no other form than as a project in his own benevolent mind. His labours in that cause exhibited an almost martyr-like zeal; and in connection with it, probably his character is most gratefully embalmed, and his name will be longest remembered.

I am yours in the bonds of the Gospel,

SAMUEL FISHER.

EBENEZER DICKEY, D. D.*

1794—1831.

EBENEZER DICKEY was born March 12, 1772, near Oxford, Chester County, Pa. His paternal ancestors migrated to this country from the North of Ireland, and, on their arrival here, attached themselves to the Associate Presbyterian Church. His mother, whose name was Jackson, was descended from English Puritans, who settled first in Maryland, and remained there until the supremacy of the Episcopal Church was established by law. Her brother, Paul Jackson, is spoken of in Watson's Annals of Philadelphia, as a graduate of the first class in the University of Pennsylvania. The subject of this sketch was called *Ebenezer*, from a grateful recognition of the merciful providence of God; and it was the earnest prayer of his mother, from his birth, that he might become a faithful minister of the Gospel.

His studies preparatory to entering College he pursued in a log school-house, several miles from his father's, to which he was accustomed to walk every day; but he there enjoyed the instruction of a very eminent teacher,—a Mr. Wilson,—grandfather to the Rev. Mr. Ramsey, now (1848) a missionary of the Presbyterian Board among the Choctaw Indians. After going through his preparatory course, he became a member of the University of Pennsylvania, then under the Presidency of the Rev. Dr. Ewing; and, having held a high rank as a scholar, he graduated with great credit in the year 1792. His theological education was conducted by the Rev. John Smith, who had been sent out from Scotland as a missionary, and, after acting for a time with the Associate Reformed Body, went back to the part of the Associate Church which had not come in at the union. After his licensure by the First Associate Reformed Presbytery of Pennsylvania, in 1794, he spent some time, preaching in different places on the Hudson River, and was finally settled over the United Congregations of Oxford and Octorora, Pa., in 1796. His connection with the Congregation of Octorora continued until 1800, and with that of Oxford, until his death, which occurred on the 31st of May, 1831.

In the year 1822, when the union was ratified between part of the Associate Reformed Synod and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, the Pastor and Congregation of Oxford were brought under the care of the General Assembly.

Towards the close of the year 1819, he crossed the ocean, and travelled somewhat extensively in Europe, during the greater part of the next year,

* MS. from his son, Rev. Dr. J. M. Dickey, and Rev. Dr. McJimsey.

for the benefit of his health. His inquisitive and well furnished mind revelled in the new and vast field of observation that now opened upon him. He returned home in the autumn of 1820.

In 1823, he was honoured by the College of New Jersey with the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

The last few months of Dr. Dickey's life were months of great suffering. His disease, which was an affection of the stomach, though it subjected him to severe pain, never deprived him of his composure, self-possession, and cheerful confidence in the wisdom and goodness of his Heavenly Father. He manifested the deepest concern for the state of the Church, and would fain have desired to see her walking in a brighter light, previous to his departure; but he bowed submissively to God's sovereign will, and, without a murmuring word or look, committed to Him not only his own interests, but the more extended interests of his Redeemer's cause. His death was worthy of his life,—full of Christian hope and peace.

Dr. Dickey's whole course was marked by eminent disinterestedness. In the early part of his ministry, he was called to the pastoral charge of an important and wealthy congregation in the State of New York, but he preferred the more retired and humble place in which he actually spent his life. It was the Church in which his father and grandfather had served as elders; and in this endearing association, in connection with other circumstances, he found a motive strong enough to detain him there to the end of his days. One of his sons has entered into his labours, and has, for fifteen years, been successfully occupying the same field which the death of the father vacated. He has two sons in the ministry, and one daughter married to a clergyman; and his widow is still (1848) living.

Dr. Dickey's printed works are a "Tract to Parents," published by the American Tract Society; an Essay in pamphlet form entitled "A Plea for Christian Communion;" and a series of Letters published in Dr. Green's Christian Advocate entitled "Travels in Europe for health by an American Clergyman of the Synod of Philadelphia." These Letters were read very extensively and with great interest, and would have been published in a volume, if the author's consent could have been obtained.

FROM THE REV. GEORGE JUNKIN, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF LAFAYETTE COLLEGE.

EASTON, Pa., February 28, 1848.

Dear Brother: Yours of the 22d inst., asking for my impressions of my friend, the late Dr. Dickey of Oxford, has been duly received, and, in reply to it, I shall endeavour to guard the avenues of friendship, lest truth should fall before affection. Allow me to speak very briefly of him as a Man, a Christian, a Preacher, and a Public Benefactor.

As a Man, Dr. Dickey was the very personification of amiability. A flow of good sense, vivacity, and something bordering on wit, made him a most agreeable companion. His conversation, even when he was broken in health, was lively and instructive, by reason of his very general information. Few subjects turned up in the ever varying intercourse of society, upon which the company did not derive information as well as pleasure from his share of the conversation. Every person could see that he thought for himself without supposing that he monopolized the privilege. But conceding the same right to all others, he never

attempted to force his opinions upon his friends, except as reason constituted force.

But the leading moral characteristic of the man was *sincerity*—he was a *true* man. Apart from what grace had made him, there was a deep sincerity woven into the very texture of his mind. Paul before his conversion lived in all good conscience before God. He was sincere and honest, though in error—so our brother was a true man; and when his mind was enlightened, and his heart sanctified, he became one of the brightest examples of uncorruptness;—“an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile.”

As a Christian, humility was perhaps the strongest point of his character. There was in his whole manner an inimitable and unaffected simplicity, in respect to which I have often been at a loss whether it was to be put more to the credit of nature or of grace. He was truly humble, without appearing to know it. This, combined with the deep current of devotional feeling, whose refreshing waters flowed directly from the living Rock, gave to him a moral force, both in private circles and in public bodies, which can never be attained by mere learning, talents, and eloquence. He was an eminently prudent man, and therefore an eminently safe counsellor; and it is believed that the counsels of few men were ever as seldom disregarded as his. Whether they were whispered into the ear of private friendship, or spread before the understandings of the deliberative body, they were very generally adopted, and rarely followed by regrets.

As a Preacher, Dr. Dickey was clear, strong, solemn and impressive. His manner was not graceful—he aimed at nothing like oratorical effect. But his power of analysis being very considerable, he generally succeeded in exhibiting the truths of his text or context in such logical arrangement, as to secure the attention and carry the understandings of his hearers with him. He never uttered sound without sense; and he seems to have understood the true philosophy of mind,—for he practised upon the principle that the most logical and philosophical arrangement of thoughts is the easiest for the hearer to comprehend, as well as for the speaker to present. Accordingly, Dr. Dickey's auditors were very likely to leave the church meditating upon the truths they had brought away with them—not the words, gestures, tones, and manner, of the preacher, but the thoughts, occupied their minds; and they found it easier to remember his discourses than those of almost any other man. It were well if our young ministers would seriously consider this. What may be called the essay style of sermonizing may entertain and amuse; but philosophical analysis and logical arrangement will edify and permanently benefit.

Dr. Dickey always made himself felt in the Councils of the Church. As a Director of the Theological Seminary under the care of Dr. J. M. Mason of New York, he exerted great influence, and commanded universal respect. Between him and Dr. Mason there existed a most tender and confidential friendship. Long did they labour together in building up the Associate Reformed Church; and afterwards they as cheerfully co-operated in bringing about a union of a portion of that church with the General Presbyterian Body. Here too, Dr. Dickey exercised an almost unbounded influence. No man in the Newcastle Presbytery was looked up to with feelings of deeper affection, or more cordial confidence. So also in the large Synod of Philadelphia his prudence and soundness of judgment, as well as his guileless character, soon secured to him a high place in the respect and good will of his brethren. A similar position he held in the General Assembly; but just as his influence was beginning to be extensively felt there, disease arrested him in his course, and at no distant period both his usefulness and his life were at an end.

Upon the general benevolent enterprises his mind was much set, and his tongue and his pen were ready to help forward every good cause. In the use of the pen, he confined himself chiefly, in his earlier days, to preparations for the pulpit, and

at a later period to fugitive essays for periodicals. Perhaps I should except his Letters in the Christian Advocate, edited by Dr. Green, (vols. 3d, 4th, 5th,) entitled "Travels in Europe for health in 1820." These Letters excited very considerable interest, when published, and I have often wondered why the public did not demand them in a separate volume. Certainly there are few travellers better worth being accompanied; few observers who have given forth more interesting and instructive matter. Indeed, letter writing was Dr. Dickey's forte, as to the pen. In this department of literature, I might almost say that he was unrivalled.

Very respectfully yours in the Lord,

GEORGE JUNKIN.

FROM THE REV. JOHN KNOX, D. D.

NEW YORK, March 11, 1848.

Dear Brother: It gives me pleasure to know that in the work which you have under preparation, the name of the late Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Dickey is to have a place. It is a name worthy to be associated with the names of the best men who have adorned the American Pulpit.

Doctor Dickey was eminent alike in intellectual endowments and moral worth. He possessed a clear, comprehensive and well disciplined mind, capable in a high degree of sustained, vigorous and successful effort. His judgment was sound, his piety fervent and consistent, and his life was without reproach. Of childlike simplicity of character,—amiable, cheerful, social, and affectionate, enjoying the confidence of all, he was a man eminently beloved.

In his theological views he was conscientiously and decidedly a Calvinist; but he was no bigot. Taught and disciplined in the School of Christ, the affections of his warm, kind and sanctified heart flowed out freely to all who loved his Lord. His preaching was with peculiar *unction*—often tender and touching,—always clear, rich, evangelical and impressive in thought; and, although his utterance was laboured and slow, his manifest sincerity and earnestness rendered his manner by no means unattractive, especially to the intelligent and sober-minded.

As a member of the various Church Courts he was admirable, and uniformly exerted great influence. Thoroughly drilled in the rules of procedure; firm in his adherence to what he believed to be evangelical truth and order; and at the same time, kind in spirit, modest and unassuming in manner, and always honest and disinterested, the most gifted of his compeers yielded to him a cheerful deference.

He was, as the natural result of his peculiar qualities, a prominent actor in the affairs of his Church,—a frequent and leading member of her delegated Courts, and in the adjustment of affairs of difficulty and delicacy, his counsel and influence were frequently invoked.

Such, in few words, was the character of this revered father, as impressed upon my mind and heart in the days of my youth. My recollections of him are all respectful, affectionate and pleasant.

Wishing you the Divine assistance and guidance in presenting to our imitation the examples of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises,

I am, dear brother, affectionately and truly

Yours in the bonds of the Gospel,

JOHN KNOX.