

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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otherwise he would have been. He could weep with those that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice, as few other men could. But often, in the house of mourning, his utterance would be impeded by the welling up of sympathy from the fountain of his great heart. And, at times, in preaching, when the grand theme of Christ and Him crucified filled his soul, he would be forced to stop from the gush of feeling, that silence and tears, not words, can express.

Punctuality was a marked trait in Mr. Blackwood. I was a member of the same Presbytery with him for eighteen years, and I recollect only one meeting from which he was absent. I heard him say, not long before his death, that he had rarely been absent from any of the sessions of Synod at roll-call, and never absent from any of its meetings. In the Courts of the Church he was an active and useful, but not a noisy, member. He had the happy faculty of condensing his thoughts within narrow limits, and presenting the result of his reflections with great clearness. He loved the peace of Zion. The Pittsburg Presbytery, after the division of 1833, was composed of but five members. These Mr. Blackburn, in after days, often called "the old team," with reference to their harmony in judgment and action. Of these but two now survive.

In stature Mr. Blackwood was perhaps a little less than six feet. His form was quite erect, and his bearing soldierly. His hair was red, and his complexion exceedingly fair. He had clear blue eyes, overshadowed by heavy brows, and a highly intellectual forehead.

The social qualities of Mr. Blackwood were of the first order. His disposition was lively. Few men could contribute more to while away in pleasantry an hour of relaxation. But he could also entertain and profit in those seasons of religious intercourse when heart talks with heart. Though far enough from ostentation in religion, he would tell to the ear and to the experience of the confiding friend what God had done for his soul.

With kind regards your brother in the Gospel,

THOMAS SPROULL.

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## MOSES RONEY.\*

1829—1854.

MOSES RONEY was born in Washington County, Pa., on the 20th of September, 1804. His parents were members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and were careful to train him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In his fourteenth year he entered the Grammar School connected with Jefferson College, and in due time became a member of the College, where he graduated with the highest honours of his class in 1823. After his graduation he spent some time in teaching, in Baltimore, and then prosecuted the study of Theology under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Willson, at that time one of the most distinguished ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. He was licensed to preach on the 8th of June, 1829, and at once took rank among the most popular preachers of his denomination.

After preaching in different places a few months, he was called to the pastoral charge of the Church in Newburgh, N. Y., and was ordained and installed there on the 8th of June, 1830.

\* Ref. Presb., 1854.

In 1832 Mr. Roney was married to Elizabeth F., daughter of James Beattie, a Ruling Elder of the Coldenham Congregation.

Shortly after Mr. Roney's settlement, the great controversy took place in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, concerning the relations of the Church to the constituted authorities of the United States. Regarding the proposed changes with decided disapprobation, as an essential infringement upon the vital principles of the Church, he took strong ground in favour of adherence to the ancient landmarks. Though he was but a young man, he was among those who were most prominently identified with this controversy.

In 1836 he was unanimously chosen, by the Synod, to be the editor of a contemplated Monthly Magazine. The first number of this periodical,—“The Reformed Presbyterian,”—was issued in March following. He conducted this work with much ability, with the exception of a single year when he was at the South, until he had reached about the middle of the eighteenth volume, when this and all his other labours were terminated by death.

In the spring of 1843 Mr. Roney had a severe attack of inflammation of the lungs, which prepared the way for a hemorrhage in January of the next year. Though he partially recovered from these attacks, it was apparent to his friends that he was already the subject of an incipient pulmonary affection. In 1848 his health had become so much impaired that he felt constrained to resign his pastoral charge; though he did it with great reluctance and much to the regret of his people. In the autumn of 1847 and of 1848, he went South to avail himself of a milder climate during the winter; but, though this retarded the progress of the malady, it did nothing towards its removal. In 1849 he removed to Allegheny, Pa., having accepted an invitation from the Pittsburg Presbytery to take charge of their literary institution. Here he continued, labouring often beyond his strength, till the time of his departure had nearly come. The following letter addressed to his intimate friend, Mr. Andrew Bowden, of New York, and believed to be one of the last, if not the very last, that he ever wrote, will give some idea of the state of his mind in the prospect of the final change:—

PITTSBURG, June 20, 1854.

Very dear and highly esteemed friend: I have for months longed to communicate with you, but have been unable. In the expectation of friends, and in my own opinion, I was near the end of my earthly journey. It has pleased my Heavenly Father to give me a little respite, and I have been for a few days tolerably comfortable. I have no expectation that it will be of long continuance, but still it gives occasion for thankfulness to God, and is a ground of satisfaction. On two occasions I was really brought low; but though the Lord chastened me sorely, He did not give me over to death. My prayer is that, while I live, I may call on Him who is my only support and my only portion. I trust that, by his grace, “for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Oh that I may find the presence of the Good Shepherd when I come to enter the dark valley. My only trust is in the righteousness of Christ. My dependence is on the aid of the Holy Spirit. Oh, my friend, pray for me and that I may die in a triumphant faith. Mrs. R. is much fatigued from want of rest, &c. Still she and the children are mercifully kept in health. Give my warmest love, and what may perhaps be my last farewell, to Mrs. B. and all the family. My kind remembrance to all inquiring friends.

With love and esteem, I remain

Affectionately and truly yours,

M. RONEY

From this time he gradually declined till the 3d of July following, when his earthly career closed in perfect peace.

Mr. Roney was the father of eight children, five of whom, with their mother survived him.

## FROM THE REV. SAMUEL O. WYLIE.

PHILADELPHIA, November 3, 1863.

Reverend and dear Sir: It gives me pleasure to furnish you, for your forthcoming volume of the "Annals of the American Pulpit," some recollections of the late Rev. Moses Roney. My acquaintance with him extended through a period of fourteen years, beginning in 1842, at his own house in Newburgh. I had known him by reputation for years before; but this was the time and this the place of our first meeting. Subsequently he was often in my house, and I often in his; and our correspondence by letter was constant up to the time of his death. I can truly say that I had no more esteemed and valued friend.

The personal presence of Mr. Roney was more than ordinarily commanding. He was about six feet in height and large in proportion. His form was erect and remarkably well developed. His complexion was dark, eyes full and jet black, forehead high, face broad, and the whole expression highly intellectual and full of benignity and kindly feeling. His gait was advised and deliberate—he never seemed to be in a hurry. He had fine gentlemanly manners, and in every position was completely at his ease. He was extremely affable, inviting confidence and freedom from all whom he met. I have often been struck, in walking with him through the streets of Newburgh, to notice with what a large number of persons he seemed to be acquainted. He was singularly free from every thing like respect of persons. He had a salutation for every one; and it was offered as cordially to the man in tattered garments, covered with the dust and sweat of toil, as to the man of opulence and refinement. This polite deference which he showed to others did much to secure for him universal esteem and good will. As an evidence of the respect entertained for him, I may mention that, when he was on the eve of leaving Newburgh for Allegheny City, several persons, outside his congregation altogether, attended the sale of his furniture, and purchased small articles to be kept purely as mementos. His social qualities were admirable. His house was always open to his friends, and his numerous visitors always felt assured that he was glad to see them. He was gifted with rare powers of conversation, having, in this respect, few equals and scarcely a superior.

Mr. Roney gave early indications of an uncommonly vigorous mind. When a student in Jefferson College, his proficiency merited and received the commendation of his teachers, and his example was recommended by them to the imitation of others. It is known that his very rapid progress arrested the attention of the President of the College, the Rev. Dr. Brown, who spoke of him as a youth of remarkable promise. His mind was distinguished for strength and keenness, rather than originality. He possessed a large fund of general knowledge. He was remarkably well read, and was accurately posted as to current events, both at home and abroad. He was ready in debate, and could detect and expose a sophism with most damaging effect to an opponent. In the pulpit he appeared to excellent advantage. His manner was graceful; his gesture appropriate; his voice sonorous, well-tuned and of large compass; his eye brilliant, and his countenance at times wonderfully expressive. He possessed, in a high degree, the elements of the Pulpit Orator, and, prior to the failure of his health, almost every sermon was marked by occasional bursts of impassioned and thrilling eloquence. It was a fault, perhaps, that occasionally, in his moments of fervid utterance, his voice seemed to be upon a strain. He belonged to the class of extemporaneous preachers. He seldom, and, in the later period of his ministry, perhaps never, wrote out a discourse. He did not even use notes in the pulpit. His sermons were commonly logical in arrangement, always instructive and thoroughly evangelical. The Roy-

alty of Messiah was a favourite theme with him, and he insisted much on his claims as "Prince of the kings of the earth," and the duty of nations to acknowledge and submit to Him, and receive the law of God from his hand. He was a true patriot,—loved his country ardently, but was not blind to its faults. The omission to incorporate into the Constitution of the United States a formal recognition of the being of God, of the supremacy of his Law, and the dominion of Christ, he deemed highly criminal; and, not unfrequently, in his public discourses, he inveighed against the compromises of the Constitution in the interests of Slavery. I have heard him say that the fearful guilt of Slavery would be washed out by the best blood of the American people.

As a Pastor, Mr. Roney was greatly beloved. He was unwearied in his efforts to do good to his people, and to promote their temporal as well as spiritual welfare. Having considerable knowledge of Medicine, his advice was often sought and cheerfully given, though it was a point with him never to stand in the way of the Physician, but rather to encourage application to him. His executive abilities were superior, and he was frequently consulted on points of business. Cautious and sagacious, he was an eminently wise counsellor. His faculty for business was happily illustrated in the Councils of the Church. There was no better Presbyter. His knowledge of ecclesiastical law and forms of procedure was accurate and extensive. On these points he was looked up to as an authority. In Church Courts he occupied the floor less frequently than many others; but he was gifted with the faculty of knowing at what time to speak so as to make his influence tell to the best advantage. He seldom failed to carry his point. Before entering the ministry, and after the demission of his pastoral charge in consequence of shattered health, he was engaged in teaching. I have been told by those who had the best opportunities for judging, that his competency as a Teacher was unsurpassed. The Rev. Dr. Sproull, of Allegheny City, one of the Trustees of Westminster College, an institution of which Mr. Roney had the charge, assured me that he never knew an instance in which a Teacher commanded, to an equal extent, the reverence and affection of his pupils.

Mr. Roney was a lively and growing Christian. His piety was earnest but not obtrusive. Every thing like ostentation in religion was disgusting to him. With intimate friends he conversed freely in regard to personal religion, and in his private correspondence often referred to it. In prayer he breathed a filial spirit, and was happy in adapting himself to particular cases and circumstances. His patience under affliction was extraordinary. In this regard he had, as much as any one I ever knew, the mind of Christ. During the later years of his life he was greatly afflicted with difficulty of respiration, often gasping for breath; but ask him how he was, and he was always "very comfortable," or "very well for me." No one, I believe, ever heard a murmuring or complaining word escape from his lips. As his disease advanced, the difficulty of breathing was aggravated to such a degree that it was found necessary to keep him from sleeping more than a few minutes at a time, lest suffocation should be induced. He was compelled to sit most of the time in his chair. In this posture he was when death came to his relief, and found him rapt in vision as was Stephen, whose dying words he made his own.—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

Truly yours,  
SAMUEL O. WYLIE