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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.

Dr. Palmer deserves to be reported to posterity as one of the great men of his times. Great, not in the reach and grasp of his intellect, in the depth or variety of his learning, in power of invention, or of philosophical analysis; but great, first of all, in his pre-eminent goodness; and great, next, in the rare combination of his intellectual and moral qualities. Great in the intense individuality of his character, by which he impressed himself upon all with whom he came in contact, and which made him like a tall cliff, or jutting promontory, observed and known of all men.

Deprived of health in his later years, he laboured, void of ambition, in small and remote churches, preaching with increasing unction and power to the last; when, suddenly, yet gently, he fell asleep on his Saviour's breast. Many throbbing hearts must lie beneath the sod, before he is forgotten on earth; yet even then will his memory be green in Heaven, where he will be hailed by many as a spiritual father, whom he has begotten through the Gospel.

Very respectfully and truly yours,

B. M. PALMER.

ELISHA YALE, D. D.*

1803—1853.

ELISHA YALE, a son of Justus and Margaret (Tracy) Yale, was born at Lee, Mass., June 15, 1780. His parents, however, shortly after his birth, removed to Lenox, where he was brought up under the ministry of the late Dr. Shepard. His father was a farmer, and he was himself accustomed to labour on a farm till he was nineteen years old. He became, as he believed, the subject of a renewing influence in 1799; and from that time, or shortly after, he meditated the purpose of becoming a minister of the Gospel. He taught a school in Richmond, Mass., in 1798 and 1799, and in Lenox in 1800.

In May, 1800, he commenced a course of study under his pastor, the Rev. Dr. Shepard, but, after a short time, went to West Hartford, Conn., where he pursued his studies, both classical and theological, under the Rev. Dr. Perkins. Here he continued till February, 1803, when he was licensed to preach by the North Association of Hartford County. In April following, he went to preach at Kingsborough, N. Y., the place of his ultimate and only settlement. Having remained there a few Sabbaths, he passed on to Oneida County, and spent a month at Augusta, and then returned to Kingsborough, and remained there during the summer. A revival of religion commenced immediately under his labours, and continued without any perceptible abatement a whole year. In the autumn of that year, and while the revival was still in progress, he went to Becket, Mass., and preached a short time; then returned to Kingsborough, and went back to Becket again in the early part of 1804, when he received a call to settle there in the ministry. He declined the call, and in April of the same year, received one from Kingsborough, which, in due time, he accepted. He was ordained

* Memoranda furnished by Dr. Yale.—Memoir by Rev. Jeremiah Wood.—MS. from Rev. Edward Wall.

and installed, May 23, 1804, the council being composed of ministers of the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Reformed Dutch, denominations. The Sermon on the occasion was preached by his venerable instructor, Dr. Perkins.

He was married in September, 1804, to Tirzah, daughter of Samuel Northrup of Lenox, who survives him. They had no children.

In 1813, 1814, and 1822, from 1829 to 1832, in 1838 and 1839, religion was extensively revived, and large additions were made to the church, under his ministry.

He was chosen a corporate member of the American Board of Foreign Missions in 1838. The honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by Union College in 1840.

Dr. Yale began to receive young men, with a view to superintend their education, at least in its earlier stages, almost immediately after his settlement; and he continued to do this until 1833, when the necessity of it was superseded by the establishment of an Academy at Kingsborough.

He continued his public labours with little interruption till March 16, 1851, when he was attacked with paralysis, which confined him five months. He then preached one sermon, and occasionally, though rarely, preached after that time. He resigned his pastoral charge on the 23d of June, 1852. In August following, the Rev. Edward Wall, who had been ordained as an evangelist by the Presbytery of Rochester, in 1851, commenced preaching to the then vacant church, as a candidate for settlement, and was installed as its pastor on the 30th of June, 1853.

During the early part of 1852, Dr. Yale was engaged in completing a work which had occupied his attention for years, and which was published about the time of his death, entitled "Select Verse System." Two other works also, which had not been published,—the one entitled "A Review of a Pastorate of forty-eight years," and the other "Helps to cultivate the conscience," he finished about the same time. On the first Sabbath in 1853, he preached in the morning at Gloversville, and in the afternoon administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which was the last public service he ever performed. The next Saturday evening, (January 8,) at eleven o'clock, he was seized with a fit of apoplexy. Remedies being promptly applied, his consciousness returned after about an hour, and he conversed with great freedom and the utmost serenity until about four o'clock the next day, when he had another fit which almost immediately brought his life to a close. His Funeral was attended on the succeeding Thursday, and an appropriate Discourse delivered by the Rev. Jeremiah Wood from Job v. 26. Mr. Wood's Sermon, in connection with a Memoir of Dr. Yale's Life, was published in 1854.

Dr. Yale published a Sermon on genuine and spurious religion, 1810; a Sermon at the installation of the Rev. Mr. Ambler, Greenfield, N. Y., 1821; a Sermon on occasion of the departure of Loring S. Williams and wife on a mission to the Southwest, 1816; The Christian's Home: A Sermon on the death of Deacon Samuel Giles; Missionary paper, 1845; a Sermon in the National Preacher on "the Duties of the Rich," 1846; a Sermon on the Eldership in the Church of God, 1852; Select Verse System, 1853. He also contributed occasionally to several religious newspapers and periodicals.

My acquaintance with Dr. Yale commenced at the time of my installation in Albany, in 1829, on which occasion he delivered to me the usual Charge. From that time till very near the close of his life, I was in habits of familiar intercourse with him.

In Dr. Yale's personal appearance there was nothing particularly marked or impressive. He was fully of the middle stature, and of a countenance rather grave than lively. His perceptions were far from being rapid, but they were clear, and his judgment was uncommonly sound; and when his mind was once maturely made up on any subject, he rarely had occasion to change it. If he was cautious in forming his opinions, he was still more so in expressing them; especially when they had respect to any real or supposed delinquencies in others. He had naturally a kindly and benevolent spirit, that disposed him not only to judge charitably, but to bestow positive favours, whenever it was in his power. He had great strength of purpose; and though he pursued his objects noiselessly, he pursued them with untiring zeal and perseverance. His piety was at once intelligent, calm and earnest. The Bible was always his standard of feeling and action; and no one who knew him, ever expected to hear of his pursuing any other than an even and straight forward course. His spirit was eminently guileless, and his manners, though far from being polished, were gentle and bland, making up for any lack of artificial culture, by the humility, meekness, and benignity which they indicated.

Dr. Yale, though he never had the advantages of a collegiate education, yet, by great application and perseverance, made himself an excellent classical and general scholar. In all that was necessary to prepare young men for admission to College, he is said to have had few superiors in his day. As a teacher, he was uncommonly attentive, exact and successful.

As a preacher, he never had any great popularity in the ordinary sense of that word; but still his preaching was characterized by much of substantial excellence. In respect to religious doctrine, he stood by the Assembly's Catechism with a constancy that never wavered, and a zeal that never grew weary; though it is probable that his expositions of the Catechism were nearly in accordance with those of the New England school, in which he was educated. In his preaching he was remarkable for dwelling upon different truths in due proportion; uniting the doctrinal, the practical, and the experimental, without making too much or too little of any of them. His discourses were always rich in substantial and well matured thought, skilfully arranged and presented with great clearness and simplicity. There was nothing ornate in his style, and nothing graceful or elegant in his delivery; and yet there was so much weight in what he said, blended with such evident sincerity in his manner of saying it, that no intelligent and sober minded person could hear him without deep interest. The fruits of his labours show that he must have been in the best sense a good preacher.

Dr. Yale had great influence among his brethren in the region in which he lived, and especially in Church Courts, and in cases of difficulty. His sound judgment and great caution gave to his opinions an acknowledged importance above those of most of his profession. Though he was Pastor of a Congregational Church, he was himself a Presbyterian; and during his ministry was an efficient member of the Presbytery of Albany. He was remarkably and conscientiously punctual in his attendance on all ecclesias-

tical meetings, and there was no one whose presence was more welcome, or whose influence was more desirable.

For nothing was Dr. Yale more remarkable than his devotion to the cause of missions. This was one of the main objects for which he lived; and he evinced his zeal for its promotion, not merely by contributing liberally of his own substance, or by promptly meeting every demand that was made upon his time or influence from abroad, but by training his church to be emphatically a missionary church; by keeping their sense of obligation on this subject so habitually alive that their contributions to the various charities of the day, connected with the renovation of the world, had come to form a distinct and important part of the economy of life.

In the management of revivals also, he was equally prudent and successful. Recognising no other standard of truth or duty than that which he found in the Bible, he endeavoured to conform to this, even amidst scenes of the greatest excitement; he carefully distinguished between the true and the false in Christian experience; and the result was that, though a very large number were admitted to the church under his ministry, there were few who did not subsequently exemplify the Christian life. Many of the young men whom he introduced into the church, have since entered the ministry, and most of them now honourably occupy important fields of usefulness.

FROM THE REV. EDWARD WALL.

KINGSBOROUGH September 13 1854.

My dear Sir: My acquaintance with Dr. Yale was brief. I arrived in Kingsborough in midsummer of the year 1852—Dr. Yale died in the early part of the following January. Yet, from the peculiar relation I sustained to him as his successor in the pastorate of the church, over which he had so long presided, I enjoyed favourable opportunities for observing his many rare and beautiful traits of character. The impressions produced by that peculiar aspect which was presented to me, are what I would recall and record.

The relation in which we stood to each other was, as is well known, one of great delicacy. I was the youthful successor of an aged pastor, who still resided among the people of his former charge. He had a ministerial experience of half a century, and his character had been formed under other influences than those which mould the men of the present day. I was inexperienced and educated in a different generation. Yet, there never was the slightest grating of our distinct individualities, or, so far as I know, the slightest discordancy even in opinion between us. And this resulted, not from his still continuing to occupy in reality the position which I occupied in form, but from his accepting, in their full extent, all the consequences involved in his resignation of the pastoral office.

As to myself, I can truly say that I was an utter stranger to any fear of interference or intermeddling. My only feeling in regard to his presence was that of gratitude for the hallowed influence of his society, and for the opportunity of profiting by his experience. Yet it was natural for him to think that a young man might have some apprehensions that he would still attempt to perpetuate his authority. Accordingly, soon after my arrival, he declared to me that his sole desire was to work in subordination to myself, and to aid me in accomplishing my plans. And subsequently, he gave such prominence to this thought in various ways, that it became almost painful. On one occasion he asked my permission to distribute some religious tracts and papers among the families who did not attend church, adding that he wished to take no step without my hearty

concurrence. He refused to perform the marriage ceremony after my arrival. On the first occasion of this kind that occurred, I called upon him, and with no feigned earnestness remonstrated against his course. I remarked that it was the prerogative of the lady to choose the person who should perform this ceremony,—that it was natural that young people whom he had baptized, and whose parents, in some instances, he had baptized and married, should wish him to perform the ceremony; and that for my part, I should not feel pleasantly to officiate at weddings, when I knew that no choice in the matter had been left the parties, but they had been driven reluctantly to me. His answer was characterized by his accustomed good sense and knowledge of the human heart. The performance of such ceremonies, he said, belonged to the office of the pastor. Marriages and funerals contribute to form those ties which bind together pastor and people. “Besides,” he added, “I may yet live for years, and by and by my faculties may begin to fail. And if I were not still called on, I might be wounded by the neglect. Now, therefore, while in the full possession of all my powers, when I can decline such calls altogether with honour, I choose to do it.”

He carried the same delicacy and reserve into the communication of information and advice, even when it was solicited. I was naturally desirous of becoming acquainted with those methods by which he had so successfully cultivated religion and benevolence among his people. I wished to infuse the new life into the old forms, well knowing that many mistake a change of form for a change of substance. But I never could get him to enter upon a description of his methods, and whatever information I got, I was compelled to gather from other sources.

It was a marvel to me how completely he divested himself of those feelings which one would have thought long exercise would have matured into a second nature. I know not that he ever differed from me in regard to any statement of truth, or any opinion which I publicly expressed as a religious teacher. If he differed, it was unexpressed,—knowing, doubtless, that the error, if there was an error, would do less harm, than the discredit which would be thrown on all my instructions by his condemnation of a part. He would listen to my preaching with such attention and humility as often humbled me. This was owing, I soon discovered, not so much to what I uttered, as to what his own mind furnished. He always brought half the feast with him, and the thoughts which I uttered in weakness, he would so enrich and enlarge, that when he referred to them in our social meetings, I could scarcely recognise my own offspring.

He was one of the finest specimens of a happy old age that I have ever seen. In public he dressed with scrupulous neatness and propriety. His face was habitually serene, and sometimes even sad and solemn. Yet I have never seen a sweeter smile on human lips than that which he often wore. It seemed to be the overflowing of a holy and happy heart, and would light up his whole features, like sunlight on a ruined temple.

His whole demeanour to myself, as a minister, and as a man, was, as far as I could discern, perfect. I could detect no failure. I could suggest no improvement. No man bred in courts, could have treated me as a minister with a rarer and more exquisite politeness, with a finer and more delicate appreciation of what was becoming from a man in his situation towards one in mine. And eminent as he was as a pastor, he deserves equally to be held up as a model to those ministers who, after having resigned their pastoral office, still continue to reside among the people of their former charge. Of his treatment of me, as a man, it is unnecessary for me to speak. I will only say that he showed himself in every way as solicitous for my comfort and happiness as a father for a son.

The circumstances connected with his death were peculiar. He had preached and administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the previous Sabbath. On the following Saturday, about midnight, his last and fatal malady came upon him. Immediately after the conclusion of the second service on the Sabbath, I

visited him. He was evidently in great pain, but his countenance still wore its wonted aspect of joyful serenity. He talked in the most delightful manner of Heaven and Christ. He wept for sinners. And while we talked, suddenly death came, and we were separated. I was the only man present when he was struck with death, and the circumstances involuntarily reminded me of another parting, scarcely more triumphant, when Elisha exclaimed, as he beheld the vanishing form of Elijah charioted to Heaven in fire, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

With great respect and regard,

I remain truly yours,

EDWARD WALL.

JAMES PATRIOT WILSON, D. D.*

1804—1830.

JAMES PATRIOT WILSON, a son of the Rev. Dr. Matthew Wilson and Elizabeth his wife, was born at Lewes, Sussex County, De., February 21, 1769. His father was eminent both as a physician and a clergyman, and his mother is represented as having been a model in all her domestic and social relations. He was graduated with high honour at the University of Pennsylvania, in August, 1788; and so much was he distinguished in the various branches included in his collegiate course, that, at the time of his graduation, it was the expressed opinion of the Faculty that he was competent to instruct his class mates. He was, at the same time, offered a place in the University, as Assistant Professor of Mathematics; but, as his health was somewhat impaired, and the air of his native place was more congenial with his constitution, he became an assistant in the Academy at Lewes, taking measures to regain his health, and occupying his leisure with reading History. Having devoted himself, for some time, to the study of the Law, he was admitted to the Bar in Sussex County, in 1790. Though he had acquired a reputation as a lawyer, unsurpassed perhaps in his native State, yet he ere long relinquished his profession, and entered the ministry. During the earlier part of his life, he had been sceptical in respect to Christianity; but, by a series of distressing afflictions, one of which was the assassination in the dark of an only brother, he was brought to serious reflection, and ultimately, not only to a full conviction of the truth, but to a practical and cordial acceptance of it. He was licensed to preach the Gospel in 1804, by the Presbytery of Lewes, and in the same year was ordained and installed as Pastor of the united Congregations of Lewes, Cool Spring, and Indian River;—the same which had for many years enjoyed the ministry of his father. In May, 1806, he was called, at the instance of the late Dr. Benjamin Rush, (his early and constant friend,) to the pastoral charge of the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia: he accepted the call, by advice of the Presbytery of Lewes, and removed to Philadelphia the same year. In May, 1828, he retired to his farm about twenty miles from the city, on account of the infirm state of his

* MS. from his son, Rev. Dr. J. P. Wilson.