

THE PANOPLIST;

OR,

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMORY.

No. 16.] SEPTEMBER, 1806. [No. 4. VOL. II.

Biography.

LIFE OF LUTHER.

(Concluded from p. 106.)

THE principles of reformation which the people in various parts of Germany had imbibed, rendered them impatient of those multiplied superstitions which were still practised, and solicitous to obtain a more simple and scriptural ritual. They looked to Luther as the best fitted to organize a system of worship which might supersede the use of that which he had proved to be so universally corrupted; and with a prudence which, in general, marked his conduct when he had time for deliberation, or was not inflamed by passion, he introduced such changes as silenced the clamours of the multitude, while every thing, in any degree tolerable, was allowed to remain. In baptism, the language only was altered, though two years afterwards, when the reformation was more advanced, many of the ancient ceremonies were retrenched. In the Lord's Supper, none of the rites were abolished, but such as related to the false notion of its being a sacrifice, and to the adoration of the host; though pastors were left to judge for themselves, pro-

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vided they did not obscure the design of the ordinance. He ordered communicants to submit to an examination, required knowledge of the nature and end of the institution, and of the advantage expected to be derived from it, as the qualification of admission, and appointed both kinds to be administered, and that those who would take only one, should have neither.*

The Bohemian reformers, named Picards or Waldenses, not only corresponded with Luther, but sent one of their pastors to hold a conference with him; in consequence of which, he entertained a more favourable opinion of their sentiments than he had formerly done. Having found one of their treatises *On the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament*, he composed a short treatise on the subject, which he dedicated to them, and in which, though he censured their doctrine on this point, and their adherence to the seven popish sacraments, being yet uninflamed with a controversial spirit, he

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* See *Seekand.* § 126.

For the Panoplist.

**MEMOIRS OF PRESIDENT
DAVIES.**

WERE the homage, so generally paid to brilliant intellectual endowments, transferred to virtue and religion, it would be well. Yet when genius and learning are sublimated by piety, and devoted with ardour to the best interests of mankind, they furnish a character equally venerable and lovely. Such a character was President DAVIES. To dwell on the talents, the virtues and the exertions of so eminent a man, is an employment at once pleasant and edifying in a high degree. The present memoirs lay claim to little of originality. Their principal object is to methodize and incorporate the distinct and independent accounts which are already before the public. Whatever additional information they contain, is either suggested by his works, or drawn from other sources of unquestionable authority.

He was born November 3, 1724. His father was a planter, in the county of Newcastle, on the Delaware, of great simplicity of manners, and of reputed piety. His mother, an eminent Christian, had earnestly besought him of Heaven; and considering him as given in answer to prayer, she named him *Samuel*, and with great solemnity, devoted him to the Lord. "The event proved," says Dr. Finley, "that God accepted the consecrated boy, took him under his special care, furnished him for, and employed him in, the service of his church, prospered his labours with remarkable success,

and not only blessed him, but made himself a blessing."

The prayers and vows of this excellent woman were succeeded by active exertions. There being no school at hand, she took upon herself the task of teaching her son to read: and her efforts were early rewarded in the uncommon proficiency of her pupil. He continued with his parents till about the age of ten. They had not the happiness, during this period, of observing any special impressions of religion made on his mind; but he behaved himself as is common for a sprightly, towardsly child, under the influence of pious example and instruction. After this, he was sent to an English school, at some distance from home, where he continued two years, and made great progress in his studies. But failing of the pious instructions to which he had been accustomed, he became more careless of the things of religion, than before.

Yet even at this period, he habituated himself to secret prayer, especially in the evening. The reason for this punctuality, as stated in his diary, was, that "he feared lest he should perhaps die before morning." It is likewise remarkable, that, in his prayers, he supplicated nothing so ardently, as that he might be introduced into the gospel ministry.

The time was now come, when that God, to whom he had been solemnly dedicated, and who designed him as an eminent instrument of shewing forth his praise, would bring him home to himself. He was awakened to solemn and serious concern re-

specting eternal things. In the light of divine truth, he was led to see himself a sinner, exposed to the awful displeasure of God, and to all its insupportable consequences. These impressions were full of anxiety and terror. In this distress, he was enabled to discern the necessity, the importance and all-sufficiency of the salvation revealed in the gospel. This divine system of mercy now appeared in a new light. It satisfied his anxious inquiries, and made provision for all his wants. In the blood and righteousness of the REDEEMER, he perceived a solid ground of hope, an unfailing source of consolation. Here he was enabled to place his whole reliance. Here he found a peace and satisfaction before unknown. "Believing, he rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." His religious comforts were, however, long intermingled with doubts and perplexities. But after some years of repeated and impartial self-examination, he attained a confidence respecting his state, which continued to the close of life.

From this happy period, his mind seemed almost entirely absorbed by heavenly things. His great concern was to *keep his heart*, and set a watch over every thought, word, and action. Animated with love to God, he felt stronger desires than ever, to *serve him in the gospel of his Son*. Having tasted the sweets of religion, he longed for nothing so much as to be instrumental in bringing his fellow sinners to know the same pure and substantial delights.

Inspired by these sublime objects, he engaged, with new ar-

dour, in the pursuit of knowledge. His progress was impeded by a variety of obstacles. But the native vigour of his genius, united to an indefatigable assiduity, surmounted them all. Sooner than could have been rationally expected, he was found qualified for the gospel ministry. He passed the usual previous trials with distinguished approbation, and consecrated all his faculties and acquirements to the service of the sanctuary.

Being now licensed to preach the gospel, he applied himself to unfold and enforce those precious truths, whose power he had happily experienced on his own heart. In the exercise of this sacred and delightful office, his fervent zeal and undissembled piety, his popular talents and engaging methods of address, soon excited general admiration, and acquired him a distinguished character. Scarce was there a congregation where he was known, but would have esteemed it a happiness to enjoy his stated ministrations. But how mysterious are the ways of Heaven! He was about this time attacked with complaints, which were supposed consumptive, and which brought him apparently to the borders of the grave. In this enfeebled state, and without hope of recovery, he determined to spend the remainder of what he apprehended an almost exhausted life, in endeavouring to advance his Master's glory in the good of souls. Being among a people who were destitute of a minister, he assiduously laboured, *in season and out of season*. While, by night, his hectic was so severe as to render him sometimes delirious, and make it ne-

cessary that he should be attended by watchers, he still preached in the day.* Nor did his indefatigable and heroic zeal go unrewarded. God gave him some precious first-fruits of his ministry, particularly, in the remarkable conversion of two gentlemen, who manifested in their future lives and conduct, that they were saints indeed.

In consequence of an earnest application, he removed, after a time, to some of the distant settlements of Virginia, where he undertook the charge of a dissenting congregation. Nothing but the purest motives of self-denying benevolence could have dictated such a step. It separated him from the beloved society of his friends, and his brethren in the ministry; it plunged him into a sea of anxious, unremitting labours; while it exposed him to the bitter censures and resentments of many. Numbers of the inhabitants were but little removed from absolute heathenism. All the obstacles which could arise from blindness and prejudice, from profaneness and immorality, his preaching encountered. Yet his patience and perseverance, his magnanimity and piety, added to his evangelical and powerful ministrations, were not without success. The more he was known, the more was he esteemed. Contempt and aversion were gradually turned into reverence. Opposition yielded to the doctrines of the cross, and the pow-

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* These remarkable facts are related on the authority of Dr. GIBBONS of London, who, being an intimate friend of Mr. Davies, appears to have received them from his own mouth.

erful energy of the divine Spirit. *The wilderness, and the solitary places rejoiced, and blossomed as the rose.* A great number, both of *whites* and *blacks*, were hopefully converted to the living God. In this success, the benevolent soul of Mr. Davies found a rich gratification. His tract of preaching was singularly extensive, his labours almost incessant, and his pecuniary compensation small. But to be an instrument of spreading the Redeemer's triumphs, and of adding new subjects to his spiritual kingdom, though from among the despised and oppressed natives of Africa, was to him, the highest reward.

From this scene of toil and of enjoyment, the providence of God now summoned him away. He was chosen by the synod of New York, at the instance of the trustees of New Jersey college, to accompany the Rev. Mr. Gilbert Tennent to Great Britain and Ireland, in order to solicit benefactions for the college. This election evinced the confidence both of the synod and corporation, in his superior abilities and popular talents; a confidence, which the issue of the affair no wise disappointed. A service in itself difficult and delicate, in its consequences precarious, and involving a temporary sacrifice of those domestic enjoyments, which were peculiarly dear to him, he cheerfully undertook, and executed with singular spirit and success. The benefactions he received from the patrons of religion and learning in Great Britain, were numerous and liberal, and such as placed the college in a prosperous condition.

Returning from his voyage, he entered anew on his beloved task of preaching the gospel to his people in Virginia. Here he continued till the year 1759. The unusual lustre of his piety and talents was now no longer to be confined to so remote a region. A vacancy being occasioned in the college of New Jersey by the decease of the eminent President Edwards (who had occupied the place but a few days) Mr. Davies was elected by the Trustees to fill the important station. He received the news of this event not merely with concern, but with a kind of consternation. Though earnestly invited to accept the charge, it was with great difficulty he was brought to think it his duty. The province he occupied was important; and it was unspeakably distressing, both to him and his people, united by the strongest bonds of mutual affection, to think of a separation. Repeated applications, however, at length prevailed to shake his resolution. But to preclude all mistake in a case so important, he withheld his consent, until he had submitted the matter to the Rev. synod of New York and Philadelphia. They unanimously gave their opinion in favour of his acceptance. Thus, to use his own expressions, the evidence of his duty was so plain, that even his sceptical mind was satisfied; while his people saw the hand of Providence in it, and dared not oppose.

The period of his presidency was equally auspicious to the college, and honourable to himself. It was here that he gave the crowning evidence of the vigor and versatility of his geni-

us. His previous situation had afforded little leisure and comparatively few means, for the cultivation of general science. He came likewise to the college at a time when its literary state and reputation had been much improved by the great and acknowledged abilities of President Burr. It was natural, therefore, that even his friends should have some doubts of his complete preparation to fill and adorn so exalted a sphere. But it soon appeared that the force and activity of his mind had supplied every defect, and surmounted every obstacle. His official duties were discharged, from the first, with an ability which disappointed every fear, and realized the brightest hopes.

The ample opportunities and demands which he found for the exercise of his talents, gave a new spring to his diligence. While his active labours were multiplied and arduous, his application to study was unusually intense. His exertions through the day seemed rather to dispose him for reading, than rest by night. Though he rose by break of day, he seldom retired till twelve o'clock, or a later hour. His success was proportionate. By the united efforts of his talents and industry, he left the college, at his death, in as high a state of literary excellence, as it had ever known since its institution. The few innovations which he introduced into the academical exercises and plans of study, were confessedly improvements. He was particularly happy in inspiring his pupils with a taste for composition and oratory, in which he himself so much excelled.

His unremitting application to study, and to the duties of his office, probably precipitated his death. The habit of his body being plethoric, his health had, for some years, greatly depended on the exercise of riding, to which he was, from necessity, much habituated in Virginia. This salutary employment had been, from the time he took the charge of the college, almost entirely relinquished. Toward the close of January, 1761, he was seized with a bad cold, for which he was bled. The same day, he transcribed for the press his sermon on the death of king George the Second. The day following, he preached twice in the college hall. The arm in which he had been bled, became in consequence, much inflamed, and his former indisposition increased. On the morning of the succeeding Monday, he was seized, while at breakfast, with violent chills. An inflammatory fever followed, which, in ten days, put a period to his important life.

What are called *premonitions* of death, are generally rather the fictions of a gloomy or misguided imagination, than realities. Yet the following anecdote contains so singular a concurrence of circumstances, as gives it a claim to be recorded.

A few days before the beginning of the year in which Mr. Davies died, an intimate friend told him, that a sermon would be expected from him on new-year's day; adding, among other things, that President Burr, on the first day of the year in which he died, preached a sermon on Jer. xxviii. 16. *Thus saith the Lord, This year thou shalt die: and that after his death, the peo-*

ple remarked that it was premonitory. Mr. Davies replied, that "although it ought not to be viewed in that light, yet it was very remarkable." When new-year's day came he preached; and, to the surprise of the congregation, from the same text. Being seized about three weeks afterward, he soon adverted to the circumstance, and remarked, that he had been undesignedly led to preach, as it were, his own funeral sermon.

It is to be regretted that the violence of his disorder deprived him of the exercise of reason, through most of his sickness. Had it been otherwise, his friends and the public would doubtless have been gratified with an additional evidence of the transcendent excellence of the Christian religion, and of its power to support the soul in the prospect and approach of death. But he had preached still more emphatically by his life; and even in his delirium, he clearly manifested what were the favourite objects of his concern. His bewildered mind was continually imagining, and his faltering tongue uttering some expedient to promote the prosperity of Christ's church, and the good of mankind.

His premature exit (he was but little more than thirty-six) was generally and justly lamented, as a loss almost irreparable, not only to a distressed family, and a bereaved college, but to the ministry, the church, the community, the republic of letters, and in short, to all the most valuable interests of mankind. An affectionate tribute was paid to his character and virtues, by Dr. Finley, his successor, in a

sermon preached on the occasion of his death, from Rom. xiv. 7, 8. *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the*

Lord ; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

(To be continued.)

Religious Communications.

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS ON CERTAIN PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THOUGH the apostles in writing, as well as in preaching, used great plainness of speech ; yet particular passages, taken by themselves, may to us seem obscure. These however may generally be elucidated by other passages, or by the analogy of faith. If they remain of doubtful interpretation, yet the essential doctrines and duties of religion are not endangered by them ; for *these* depend not on a few doubtful or obscure passages, but are plainly taught in innumerable places. Still it may be useful to investigate the meaning of texts, which seem obscure.

The writers of the New Testament, it is well known, used the *Greek* language, except Matthew and the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, who wrote in *Aramaean*. This was the learned language of the day ; most men of education were acquainted with it ; and it was the native language of many subjects of the Roman empire ; of those particularly, to whom St. Paul wrote most of his epistles. It was, on many accounts, the best language in which the inspired books of the

New Testament could be written.

The inspired writers had occasion to treat of many things, of which the *Greeks* had no previous knowledge, and for which they had no appropriate terms. But those writers chose such terms and phrases, as were best adapted to express their meaning. Where perspicuity required, they used description. To ascertain the sense of particular terms, it is not necessary to recur to heathen writers ; it is better to consult the sacred writers themselves. As *they* have used words, so we must understand them. They are their own best interpreters.

The New Testament is written, not in pure, classical Greek, but in a peculiar dialect, which may be called *Hebraistical Greek*. The writers were Jews, and spake the *Hebrew*, or rather the *Aramaean*, or *Syro-Chaldee* language. When they wrote *Greek*, they introduced into it the idioms of their own language. - Thus also did the seventy Jews, who translated the Old Testament into Greek by the command of Ptolemy, king of Egypt. Their translation was in use in the apostles' times, and from it are made most of the quotations from the Old Testament, which we find in the New. Without some ac-

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Biography.

MEMOIRS OF PRESIDENT DAVIES.

(Continued from page 160.)

HAVING detailed the leading incidents of the life of Mr. Davies, we will pause, and contemplate some of the prominent and most interesting features of his mind and heart.

The Father of spirits had endued him with the richest intellectual gifts; a vigorous understanding, a glowing imagination, a fertile invention, united with a correct judgment, and a retentive memory. None, who read his works, can doubt that he possessed a portion of *original genius*, which falls to the lot of few. He was born for great undertakings. He was destined to excel in whatever he undertook. "The unavoidable consciousness of native power," says Dr. Finley, "made him bold and enterprising. Yet the event proved that his boldness arose not from a partial, groundless self-conceit, but from true self-knowledge. Upon fair and candid trial, faithful and just to himself, he judged what he could do; and what he could, when called to it, he attempted; Vol. II. No. 6.

and what he attempted, he accomplished."

How pleasing to contemplate a mind of such elevation and energy, divested of the pride of talents and of science, moulded into the temper of the gospel, and consecrating all its powers and exertions to the promotion of religion!—"I desire," says he, in a letter to his intimate friend, Dr. Gibbons, "seriously to devote to God and my dear country, all the labours of my head, my heart, my hand, and pen; and if he pleases to bless any of them, I hope I shall be thankful, and wonder at his condescending grace. O, my dear brother! could we spend and be spent, all our lives, in painful, disinterested, indefatigable service for God and the world, how serene and bright would it render the swift approaching eve of life! I am labouring to do a little to save my country, and, which is of much more consequence, to save souls from death, from that tremendous kind of death, which a *soul* can

die. I have but little success of late ; but, blessed be God, it surpasses my expectation, and much more my desert. Some of my brethren labour to better purpose. The pleasure of the Lord prospers in their hands."

Mr. Davies' religion was, in principle and spirit, purely and eminently *evangelical*. It brought him to the foot of the cross, to receive salvation as a free gift. It penetrated his soul with the profoundest reverence for a pardoning God, and the tenderest gratitude to a dying Saviour. It engaged him in an ardent and vigorous pursuit of universal holiness, while, at the same time, it rendered him humble and dissatisfied with himself, amid his highest attainments. These traits of character are strongly illustrated by some passages in a letter to the friend above-mentioned, to whom he was accustomed to disclose the inmost recesses of his heart. Having spoken of a violent sickness, from which he was just recovering, he proceeds in this style : "Blessed be my Master's name, this disorder found me employed in his service. It seized me in the pulpit, like a soldier wounded in the field. This has been a busy summer with me. In about two months, I rode about five hundred miles, and preached about forty sermons. This affords me some pleasure in the review. But alas ! the mixture of sin, and of many nameless imperfections that run through, and corrupt all my services, give me shame, sorrow and mortification. My fever made unusual ravages upon my understanding, and rendered me frequently delirious, and always

stupid. But when I had any little sense of things, I generally felt pretty calm and serene ; and death, that mighty terror, was disarmed. Indeed, the thought of leaving my dear family destitute, and my flock shepherdless, made me often start back, and cling to life ; but in other respects, death appeared a kind of indifferency to me. Formerly I have wished to live longer, that I might be better prepared for heaven ; but this consideration had but very little weight with me, and that for a very unusual reason, which was this :—After long trial, I found this world is a place so unfriendly to the growth of every thing *divine* and *heavenly*, that I was afraid, if I should live longer, I should be no better fitted for heaven than I am. Indeed, I have had hard yany hopes of ever making any great attainments in holiness while in this world, though I should be doomed to stay in it as long as *Methuselah*. I see other Christians indeed around me make some progress, though they go on with but a snail-like motion. But when I consider that I set out about twelve years old, and what sanguine hopes I then had of my future progress, and yet that I have been almost at a stand ever since, I am quite discouraged. O my good Master, if I may dare to call thee so, I am afraid I shall never serve thee much better on this side the region of perfection. The thought grieves me ; it breaks my heart, but I can hardly hope better. But if I have the least spark of true piety in my breast, I shall not always labour under this complaint. No, my Lord, I

shall yet serve thee; serve thee through an immortal duration; with the activity, the fervour, the perfection of the *rapid seraph that adores and burns*. I very much suspect this desponding view of the matter is wrong, and I do not mention it with approbation, but only relate it as an unusual reason for my willingness to die, which I never felt before, and which I could not suppress.

“In my sickness, I found the unspeakable importance of a Mediator, in a religion for sinners. O! I could have given you the word of a dying man for it, that JESUS whom you preach is indeed a necessary, and an all-sufficient Saviour; indeed he is the only support for a departing soul. *None but CHRIST, none but CHRIST*. Had I as many good works as *Abraham* or *Paul*, I would not have dared build my hopes on such a quicksand, but only on this firm, eternal rock.

“I am rising up, my brother, with a desire to recommend him better to my fellow-sinners, than I have done. But alas! I hardly hope to accomplish it. He has done a great deal more by me already, than I ever expected, and infinitely more than I deserved. But he never intended me for great things. He has beings both of my own, and of superior orders, that can perform him more worthy service. O! if I might but untie the latchet of his shoes, or draw water for the service of his sanctuary, it is enough for me. I am no angel, nor would I murmur because I am not.”

Mr. Davies cultivated an intimate acquaintance with his own heart. He scrupulously brought

to the test the principles and motives of his actions, and severely condemned himself for every deviation from the perfect rule. Having been solicited to publish a volume of poems, he communicated to a friend the following ingenuous remarks: “What affords me the greatest discouragement, attended with painful reflections, in such cases, is the ambitious and selfish spirit I find working in me, and intermixing itself with all my most refined and disinterested aims. Fame, for which some professedly write, is a strong, though a resisted temptation to me; and I often conclude, my attempts will never be crowned with any remarkable success, till the divine glory be more sincerely my aim, and I be willing to decrease, that Jesus may increase. It is easy to reason down this vile lust of fame; but oh! it is hard to extirpate it from the heart. There is a paper in Dr. Watts’ miscellaneous thoughts, on this subject, which characterizes me, in this respect, as exactly as any thing I have seen; and a poem of his, entitled, *Sincere Praise*, is often the language of my heart.

—“Pride, that busy sin,
Spoils all that I perform;
Curst pride, that creeps securely in,
And swells a little worm.
“The very songs I frame
Are faithless to thy cause;
And steal the honours of thy name,
To build their own applause.”

But though rigid in judging himself, he was exemplarily catholic in the opinions he formed of others. He entertained a high regard for many, who differed from him in various points of faith and practice. Taking a large and luminous survey of the

field of religion, he accurately distinguished the comparative importance of things, and proportioned his zeal accordingly. While conscientiously tenacious on all great subjects, he was generously candid in points of minor consequence. Few indeed have so happily avoided the opposite extremes of bigotry and latitudinarianism. Few have exhibited so unwavering a zeal for evangelical truth, and the power of religion, yet in such uniform consistency with the sacred principles of love and meekness. His warm and liberal heart could never be confined within the narrow limits of a party. Real worth, wherever discovered, could not fail to engage his affection and esteem.

Truth he sought for its own sake, and loved for its native charms. The sentiments, which he embraced, he avowed with the simplicity of a Christian, and the courage of a man. Yet keeping his mind ever open to conviction, he retracted his opinions without reluctance, whenever they were proved to be mistakes: for he rightly judged that the knowledge of truth alone was real learning, and that attempting to defend an error, was but labouring to be ignorant.

He possessed an ardent benevolence, which rendered him the delight of his friends, and the admiration of all, who knew him. The gentleness and suavity of his disposition were remarkable. One of his friends declared, that he had never seen him angry during several years of unbounded intimacy, though he had repeatedly known him to be ungenerously treated. He

was as ready to forgive injuries received, as solicitous to avoid offending others. His heart overflowed with tenderness and pity to the distressed; and in his generous eagerness to supply the wants of the poor, he often exceeded his ability. While thus eminent in his disposition to oblige, he was equally sensible of the kindness of others; and as he could bestow with generosity, so he could receive without servility.

His deportment in company was graceful and genteel, without ceremony. It united the grave with the pleasant, and the accomplished gentleman with the dignified and devout Christian.

He was among the brightest examples of filial piety. The virtues and example of his excellent mother made an indelible impression upon his memory and heart. While pouring blessings on her name, and humbly styling himself, a "degenerate plant," he declared, not only that her early dedication of him to God had been a strong inducement to devote himself by his own personal act, but that he looked upon the most important blessings of his life as immediate answers to her prayers. As a husband, he was kind, tender, and cordial; mingling a genuine and manly respect with a delicate respect.

As a parent, he felt all the affectionate, trembling solitudes, which nature and grace could inspire. "There is nothing," he writes to his friend, "that can wound a parent's heart so deeply, as the thought that he should bring up children to dishonour his God here, and be miserable hereafter. I beg you

prayers for mine, and you may expect a return in the same kind." In another letter, he says, "We have now three sons and two daughters; whose young minds, as they open, I am endeavouring to cultivate with my own hand, unwilling to trust them to a stranger; and I find the business of education much more difficult than I expected. My dear little creatures sob, and drop a tear now and then, under my instructions, but I am not so happy as to see them under deep and lasting impressions of religion; and this is the greatest grief they afford me. Grace cannot be communicated by natural descent; and, if it could, they would receive but little from me."

Few have had a higher relish for friendship, than Mr. Davies. Few have better understood its delicacies, or more faithfully and judiciously discharged its duties. These and various other parts of his character, are agreeably unfolded in the following letter, written in the year 1751.

"My very dear friend,

"I redeem a few nocturnal hours to breathe out my benevolent wishes for you, and to assure you of my peculiar regards. Human life is extremely precarious and uncertain; and, perhaps, at your return, I may be above the reach of your correspondence; or, perhaps, your voyage may end on the eternal shore. I, therefore, write to you, dear Sir, in the last agonies of friendship, if I may use the expression. If, upon your return, you only hear my worthless name tost from tongue to tongue, and find this system of clay that now breathes, and

moves, and writes, mouldering into its native element, you may safely indulge this reflection: "Well, once I had a friend; a friend, whose affection could find room for me in his retired opportunities for mercy at the throne of grace, when his own wants were so numerous and great, that they might have engrossed all his concern." Or, if I am doomed to survive you, I shall have the melancholy satisfaction to reflect, "My friend did not live without such assurances of my tender affection as might engage his confidence in my useless friendship."

"And now, when I feel the soft emotions of friendship, and speak of the final period of this mortal state, I cannot restrain myself from intermixing some of the solemnities of religion. We shall have an interview beyond the grave, though we should never converse more beneath the skies, in the low language of mortals. But, oh! on what happy, or on what dismal coast shall we meet? On the verdant plains of the celestial paradise, or in the dreary regions of horror and despair? The human mind is incapable of forming a more important inquiry; and if the hurries or amusements of this infant state of things can banish it from our minds, we have forfeited the character of rational creatures; we are as really, and more perniciously mad than any wretch in bedlam, though we are not stigmatized as such by the world, who are seized with the same delirium. The valley of the shadow of death appears frequently gloomy and tremendous to me; but, it is in those un-

happy hours, when my views of the glorious method of salvation through a mediator appear in an obscure light, and my complacency in it is wavering or languid: when the fervour of devotion is abated, and my soul is lulled asleep in a carnal security: but my mind cannot rest under this uncertainty: it is too important a matter to make an implicit venture in. Oh! Sir, an eternity of consummate happiness! An eternity of the most intolerable misery!—My mind sinks beneath the unwieldy thought, and I cannot finish the sentence! If I am mistaken in this, if I form to myself some easy scheme of religion that may suit the humour of this world well enough, but will not obtain the approbation of the supreme Judge, then my reason is a pernicious superfluity, my very being an eternal curse; *Wo is me, my mother, that thou didst bear me.* But, in those joyful hours, when I can rest my guilty soul on an all-sufficient Redeemer with all the humble confidence of a confirmed faith; when I can read the evidences of regenerating grace upon my heart; when I can recollect the solemn transactions between God and my soul, and renew them in the most voluntary dedication of myself, and all I am and have, to him, through the blessed Mediator; then immortality is a glorious prospect; the grizzly phantom, death, is disarmed of all its horrors, and, with the inviting mildness of an angel, charms me into its cold embraces. Then the mortal pale, the dying cold, the quivering lips, the falling jaws, and all the grim attendants of the last

agony, carry nothing terrible in them.

“Clasp'd in my heavenly Father's arms

I would resign my fleeting breath;
And lose my life amid the charms
Of so divine and blest a death.”

“Dear, dear Sir, I have opened to you some of my sentiments on experimental religion, and, you know, we unhappily differ upon sundry points relating to it. Our differences on many other points, and sundry of them even with respect to this, have but a very remote connexion with everlasting salvation; and, no doubt, multitudes arrive in the same heaven, who are tenacious of different sides. But that thorough change of heart, usually denominated regeneration; that distressing conviction of our undone condition by sin, and utter inability to relieve ourselves by virtue of that strength common to mankind in general; that humble acceptance of Christ as our only Saviour and Lord, by a faith of divine operation, that humbling sense of the corruption of human nature, and eager pursuit and practice of universal holiness, which I have, I believe, mentioned in conversation and my letters, appear to me of absolute necessity.

“I should be glad you would read the second and third of Dr. Doddridge's Sermons on Regeneration, which, I think, give a very just and rational account of that important change. I would not venture my soul on a religion short of this for ten thousand worlds, and I am inexpressibly anxious, (pardon the perhaps needless anxiety of my love) lest you should fatally mis-

take here. My anxiety is heightened when I consider your favourite authors. Tillotson's and Sherlock's works, the *Whole Duty of Man*, and such authors, are truly valuable in their place, and handle many points to peculiar advantage; but if I know any thing of experimental Christianity, they treat of it very superficially, and, I think, in their most obvious sense, tend to mislead us in sundry things of great importance relating to it, not so much by asserting false doctrines, as by omitting sundry branches of it absolutely necessary. I have examined the matter with some care; and I am sure their delineation of Christianity is not an exact copy of what I must experience before I can see the Lord: I must indeed come up to their account of it; but I must not rest there; there is a necessity of experiencing something farther than they generally inculcate. The same thing I would inoffensively observe with respect to all the sermons I have heard in Virginia from the established clergy. Hence, by the by, you may see the peculiar safety of my scheme; if their scheme of religion be sufficient, I am as safe as they, since mine includes it; but if it should prove essentially defective, then you see where the advantage lies. This difference is not at all owing to their being of the church of England, for many of that church agree with me; and many Presbyterians with them; but it is owing to their imbibing the modern divinity, which, like a pernicious leaven, has diffused itself among all denominations: and however confidently some

assert it, I could not embrace it without willfully throwing myself into ruin.

"You know, Sir, what use I would have you make of these hints; and I am confident you will pardon the affectionate solicitude for you, which prompts me to them. I speak solemnly, dear Sir, solemnly as in the presence of God, and not with the contradictious spirit of a disputant. Of all the systems of practical religion, which have come under my examination, I have endeavoured to choose the most sure as the foundation of my hopes; and I should show a guilty and unfriendly indifference about your immortal interests, should I not recommend it to you, and caution you against those that appear insufficient. It matters little to me whether you use the ceremonial peculiarities of the church of England, or not; as I know they have but little concern with experimental religion: but our notions of the substance of vital piety ought to be well examined, and impartially formed; as a mistake here may be of pernicious consequences. But I must desist. May almighty grace prepare you for a glorious immortality! May divine Providence be your guardian through the dangers of the boisterous ocean!

"May He, whose nod the hurricanes
and storms,
And blustering waves in all their
dreadful forms,
With calm adoring reverence obey;
May He with friendly vigilance preside
O'er the outrageous winds and
boist'rous tide,
And safe thro' crowds of deaths con-
duct your dang'rous way!

"I commit two letters to your care, one to Dr. Doddridge, and

one to Mr. Mauduit. Upon your arrival in London, please to write a few lines along with mine to Dr. Doddridge, informing him where to find you, that he may commit his answer to your care.

“And now, dear Sir, with affectionate salutations to your family, my whole self wishes you a most hearty farewell.”

The ardent and active mind of Mr. Davies entered with a lively interest into the concerns of his country. Her prosperity and honour, her sufferings and her wrongs, he regarded as his own. During that gloomy period when the French and Indians were ravaging the frontiers of Virginia, and when a general listlessness and inactivity seemed to have seized the people, he exerted all his faculties to rouse a spirit of resistance. The sermons, which he preached for this purpose, exhibit him to great advantage as a *Christian patriot*.

(To be continued.)

MRS. ANNE STEELE.

THE writings of this amiable and excellent lady have endeared her memory to every pious Christian, who has read them. Her Hymns, selected by Dr. Belknap, are among the best in his Collection. There are many others in her “*Miscellaneous Pieces*,” of equal excellence, not generally known in this country, with which we shall occasionally enrich the poetic department of the Panoplist. We feel confident that we shall gratify our readers by presenting them with the following biographical account of Mrs. Steele, drawn up by Dr. EVANS of Bristol, and prefixed to a volume of her *Miscellaneous Pieces*.

EDITORS.

THE father of Mrs. Steele was a dissenting minister, a man of primitive piety, the strictest integrity and benevolence, and the most amiable simplicity of manners. He was for many years the affectionate and faithful pastor of an affectionate congregation at Broughton in Hampshire, where he lived all his days greatly beloved, and died universally lamented. Mrs. Anne Steele, his eldest daughter, discovered in early life her love of the muses, and often entertained her friends with the truly poetical and pious productions of her pen: but it was not without extreme reluctance she was prevailed on to submit any of them to the public eye. It was her infelicity, as it has been of many of her kindred spirits, to have a capacious soaring mind enclosed in a very weak and languid body. Her health was never firm, but the death of her honoured father, to whom she was united by the strongest ties of affectionate duty and gratitude, gave such a shock to her feeble frame, that she never entirely recovered it, though she survived him some years.

Her state of mind upon that awful occasion will best be conceived from the following affecting description of it by herself.

Still bleeds the deep, deep wound!
 —Where is the friend
 To pour with tender, kind, indulgent
 hand,
 The lenient balm of comfort on my
 heart?
 Alas, that friend is gone!—Ye angels
 say,
 Who bore him raptur'd to your blest
 abode?
 Can ought on earth compensate for
 my loss!
 Ah, no! the world is poor, and what
 am I!

THE PANOPLIST;

OR,

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMORY.

No. 19.] DECEMBER, 1806. [No. 7. VOL. II.

SOLEMN PROSPECTS AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NEW YEAR.

IT is a just though trite remark, that the world in which we live is never stationary. Itself, and all things in it, are suffering perpetual change. The effects produced in external nature, by the revolutions of day and night, and by the regular succession of seasons from year to year, are obvious, even to the most common observer; and have often furnished the subject of many a delightful song, to those who have viewed them with a poetic eye.

Though human society never becomes extinct, yet the individuals of which it is composed are continually changing. Every day that passes, removes many individuals from life; and the number must certainly be great, which each succeeding year consigns to their eternal home. Many, in every department of society, of every condition, of every age, and of every character, are cut down by the stroke of death; so that the places which they formerly occupied "know them now no more." Such changes have happened in all the years that are past, and similar events will undoubtedly occur, in those that are to come.

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Whilst multitudes of unthinking mortals spend their days and years in vanity, regarding, with a brutish insensibility, the most striking facts which the progress of time exhibits; let us be wise, and attend for a little to those *solemn prospects*, which the commencement of a new year opens to our view. Let us admit the possibility of dying in the course of it; and O that the writer, as well as every reader of this paper, might be enabled, through divine grace, suitably to improve the interesting prospect!

"This year thou shalt die," was the message of God by the mouth of Jeremiah, to the false prophet Hananiah: "This year thou shalt die," is the voice of God this day, to many who are putting far from them the thoughts of death, and exulting in the hope of many future years of prosperity and joy.

Ye men of rank and figure, this message is addressed to many of you; who, placed in the commanding stations of society, are raised to a proud pre-eminence above your fellow creatures. This day ye are receiving the adulation and homage of servile dependents and flatterers;

if its conclusion find thee with Christ, and with God above, "serving him day and night in his temple."

Such are some of the prospects which this, the first day of the year, presents to our contemplation. Thousands, amongst whom there may be some who now read these lines, shall find them fully realized before its next return.

Reader, before the subject be

dismissed—perhaps forever! pause for a moment, and lift up thy soul to Heaven, and address to thyself this solemn inquiry, "If I should die this year, where shall my eternal habitation be?"

"O that they were wise; that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end."

"Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom."

Rel. Monitor.

Biography.

MEMOIRS OF PRESIDENT DAVIES.

(Concluded from page 256.)

THE eminence and lustre of Mr. Davies' character as a *President*, were generally confessed. In his mode of governing the college, the firmness of authority was tempered with benignity, mildness and condescension. He watched over his pupils with the tender solicitude of a father. He repressed their youthful irregularities by the gentlest methods possible; nor did he ever inflict punishment, without evident reluctance and pain. The consequence was, that he was equally revered and loved by every member of his literary family. They esteemed it not a confinement, but a privilege and happiness, to be under his care. They complied with his injunctions, and the general regulations of the seminary, less from fear, than from principle and inclination. In his method of instruction, there was something unusually

captivating and impressive. Conveying his ideas with the utmost facility, and, by the aid of a lively imagination, imparting the charms of novelty, even to common subjects, he could not fail to rivet the attention of his pupils. And generously communicative, as he was, of his ample intellectual treasures, he was scarcely less sure to enrich their minds. But while thus assiduous to promote the literary improvement of the youth committed to his charge, he was still more anxious and engaged to cultivate their *hearts*. He considered religion as unspeakably the best and brightest of all accomplishments; the only sure foundation, either of usefulness, honour or felicity. He therefore bent his principal attention, as every instructor should, to impress the youthful mind with the importance of this object. He seized with avidity every occasion to inculcate on his pupils, in private, the worth of their souls, and the pressing necessity of

their immediately securing the blessings of salvation. And his public discourses bear frequent witness how near their immortal interests were to his heart. Toward the close of a new year's sermon, he expresses himself in this tender, glowing language : " I beg leave of my promiscuous auditory, to employ a few minutes in addressing myself to my important family, whom my paternal affection would always single out from the rest, even when I am speaking in general terms to a mixed crowd. Therefore, my dear charge, my pupils, my children, and every tender and endearing name ! Ye young immortals, ye embryo angels or infant fiends, ye blooming, lovely, fading flowers of human nature, the hope of your parents and friends, of church and state ; the hope, joy and glory of your teachers ! Hear one that loves you ; one that has nothing to do in the world, but to promote your best interest ; one that would account this the greatest blessing he could enjoy in his pilgrimage ; and whose nights and days are sometimes made almost equally restless, by his affectionate anxieties for you : Hear him upon a subject in which you are most intimately interested ; a subject the most important that even an apostle or an angel could address you upon, and that is, the right improvement of time, the present time, and preparation for eternity." He then proceeds to urge their immediate attention to religion, by the most cogent arguments, and in a manner peculiarly awakening and persuasive.

In another sermon, on this text ; *And this is the condemna-*

tion, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil ;—we find the following pungent address to his pupils : " There is not one in a thousand of the sons of men that enjoys your advantages. Light, human and divine, natural and supernatural, ancient and modern ; that is, knowledge of every kind shines upon you, and you are every day basking under its rays. You have nothing to do but to polish your minds, and, as it were, render them luminous. But let me put you in mind, that unless you admit the light of the glorious gospel of Christ to shine in your hearts, you will still be the children of darkness, and confined in the blackness of darkness forever. This is intolerably shocking, even in supposition. Suppose any of you should be surrounded with more light than others, for no other purpose but that you may have a stronger conflict with conviction, and that your consciences may with greater force raise tumults and insurrections within you ; suppose your sins should be the sins of men of learning and knowledge, the most daring and gigantic sins on this side hell ; suppose you should turn out sinners of great parts, fine geniuses, like the fallen angels, those vast intellects ; wise, but wicked ; wise to do evil, but without knowledge to do good ; suppose it should be your highest character that you can harangue well, that you know a few dead languages, that you have passed through a course of philosophy ; but as to that knowledge which sanctifies all the rest, and renders them useful to yourselves or

others ; that knowledge which alone can make you wise to salvation, and guide you to avoid the paths of destruction, you shun it, you hate it, and choose to remain contentedly ignorant in this important respect ; suppose your parents, who have been at the expense of your education ; your friends, who have entertained such high and pleasing expectations concerning you ; church and state, that look to you for help, and depend upon you to fill stations of importance in the world ; and your careful instructors, who observe your growing improvements with proportional pleasure ; suppose that after all this generous labour, and all these pleasing prospects, they should see you at last doomed to everlasting darkness, for your voluntary abuse of the light you now enjoy ; suppose these things, and ——— but the consequences of these suppositions are so terrible, that I am not hardly enough to mention them. And, O ! shall they ever become matters of fact !

“ Therefore, my dear youth, admit the light, love it, and pursue it, though at first it should make such discoveries, as may be painful to you ; for the pain will prove medicinal. By discovering your danger in time, you may be able to escape it ; but never expect to remove it by the silly expedient of shutting your eyes. Be impartial inquirers after truth, as to yourselves, as well as other things, and no longer attempt to put a cheat upon yourselves. Alas ! how childish and foolish, as well as wicked and ruinous, would such an imposture be ! The gospel, in this particular, only requires you to

be honest men ; and surely this is a most moderate and reasonable demand. Therefore, be ye *children of the light and of the day*, and walk as such, and then it will be a blessing to the world, and to yourselves, that you ever were born.”

Instructions thus faithful, delivered with the greatest tenderness, and enforced by a life of ardent, uniform piety, could scarcely fail to make the most important and salutary impressions on the minds of his youthful charge.

The public and official appearances of President Davies were marked with dignity, decorum and elegance. His performances at anniversary commencements reflected equal honour on himself and the institution, and afforded the highest gratification to the crowded auditories, which those occasions brought together. But the work of the ministry was his chief delight. Here, emphatically, he was in his element. Here he was at home. He had, indeed, a lively and almost overwhelming sense of the magnitude of the sacred office, and of his own insufficiency for its discharge. This is strikingly apparent from some passages in a letter to his friend, Dr. Gibbons. “ It is an easy thing,” says he, “ to make a noise in the world, to flourish and harangue, to dazzle the crowd, and set them all agape ; but deeply to imbibe the spirit of Christianity ; to maintain a secret walk with God ; to be holy as he is holy ; *this is the labour, this is the work*. The difficulty of the ministerial work seems to grow upon my hands. Perhaps, once in three or four months, I preach in some measure as I could wish : that is, I

preach as in the sight of GOD, and as if I were to step from the pulpit to the supreme tribunal. I feel my subject. I melt into tears, or I shudder with horror, when I denounce the terrors of the Lord. I glow, I soar in sacred extacies, when the love of Jesus is my theme; and, as Mr. Baxter was wont to express it, in lines more striking to me, than all the fine poetry in the world,

“I preach as if I ne'er should preach
again;
And as a dying man to dying men.”

But alas! my spirits soon flag, my devotions languish, and my zeal cools. It is really an afflicting thought, that I serve so good a Master with so much inconsistency: but so it is, and my soul mourns upon that account.”

The same humble and self-diffident spirit breathes in the following paragraph, which we find at the beginning of one of his discourses: “To preside in the solemnities of public worship, to direct your thoughts, and choose for you the subjects of your meditation in those sacred hours which you spend in the house of God, & upon the right improvement of which your everlasting happiness so much depends—this is a province of the most tremendous importance that can be devolved on a mortal: and every man of the sacred character, who knows what he is about, must tremble at the thought, and be often anxiously perplexed what subject he shall choose, what he shall say upon it, and in what manner he shall deliver his message. His success in a great measure depends upon his choice; for though the blessed Spirit is the proper agent, and
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though the best means, without his efficacious concurrence, are altogether fruitless, yet he is wont to bless those means that are best adapted to do good. After a long course of languid and fruitless efforts, which seem to have been unusually disowned by my divine Master, what text shall I choose out of the inexhaustible treasure of God's word? In what new method shall I speak upon it? What new, untried experiments shall I make? Blessed Jesus! my heavenly Master! direct thy poor perplexed servant, who is at a loss, and knows not what to do: direct him that has tried, and tried again, all the expedients he could think of, but almost in vain, and now scarcely knows what it is to hope for success.”

Respecting Mr. Davies' appearance in the pulpit, an eminent minister,* who intimately knew him, has given the following testimony: “His manner of delivery, as to pronounciation, gesture, and modulation of voice, seemed to be a perfect model of the most moving and striking oratory. Whenever he ascended the sacred desk, he seemed to have not only the attention, but all the various passions of his auditory, entirely at his command. And as his personal appearance was august and venerable, yet benevolent and mild, so he could speak with the most commanding authority, or melting tenderness, according to the variation of his subject. With what majesty and grandeur, with what energy and striking solemnity, with what powerful and almost irresistible eloquence would he illus-

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* Rev. Mr. Bostwick, of New-York.

trate the truths, and inculcate the duties of Christianity! Mount Sinai seemed to thunder from his lips, when he denounced the tremendous curses of the law, and sounded the dreadful alarm to guilty, secure, impenitent sinners. The solemn scenes of the last judgment seemed to rise in view, when he arraigned, tried, and convicted self-deceivers and formal hypocrites. And how did the balm of Gilead distil from his lips, when he exhibited a bleeding, dying Saviour to sinful mortals, as a sovereign remedy for the wounded heart, and anguished conscience! In a word, whatever subject he undertook, persuasive eloquence dwelt upon his tongue; and his audience was all attention. He spoke as on the borders of eternity, and as viewing the glories and terrors of the unseen world; and conveyed the most grand and affecting ideas of these important realities."

Though to some, this description may seem like the partial, undistinguishing panegyric of a friend, there is much reason to rely on its truth and accuracy. There are those still living, who repeatedly heard Mr. Davies preach, and who speak of his public performances as combining a solemnity, a pathos and animation truly wonderful, such as seemed directly to result from a lively sense of a present Deity, together with a most tender, fervent benevolence to the souls of men. The effects were in some measure answerable. It is said, that he seldom preached, without producing some visible emotions in great numbers present; and seldom, without some saving impressions being left on one or

more of his auditory. That this should have been the case, will not probably appear surprising to those who attentively peruse the volumes of his printed discourses, and reflect that the selection was made, after his death, from such as he ordinarily preached. The world is in possession of a great variety of excellent and invaluable sermons. Yet, if aptitude to accomplish the great ends for which sermons are needed, be considered as the standard of merit, few extant are superior to those of President Davies.

Their chief and prominent excellence is doubtless this: that they abound in clear, forcible and affecting delineations of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. The utter depravity and impotence of man; the sovereignly free grace of Jehovah; the divinity of Christ; the atonement in his blood; justification through his righteousness; regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Spirit; these were his favourite themes. On these he never ceased to insist and expatiate. He viewed these doctrines as constituting the essence of the Christian scheme; the grand support of vital and practical religion. He considered their intelligent and cordial reception as of the highest importance; and viewed every attempt to subvert and explain them away, as equally hostile to the truth of God, and the best interests of men. On these points, he was uniformly explicit, decided, and strenuous.

Still he defended the truth, and even repelled those errors, which he viewed most dangerous, in the spirit of love and meekness. None could be more

distant from pressing unhallowed human passion into the service of God. In his sermons, we find none of those asperities by which religion has too often been dishonoured. Truth appears in an attitude and aspect, not only majestic, but graceful and attractive.

Even in his most pungent and awakening addresses to the unconverted, the spirit of benevolence and compassion is obviously predominant. Perhaps there are no sermons, which depict, in more striking and awful colours, the guilt, the wretchedness and danger of the impenitent. Yet, who does not see, that a tender, trembling concern for their best interests prompts and pervades the whole? And where is the sinner, who can refrain from taking the preacher's part against himself?

These sermons contain frequent descriptions of the nature and evidences of real religion. They exhibit it as commencing in repentance and faith, as continued by a course of mortification and self-denial, and as manifesting itself by substantial fruits of holiness and virtue. So luminous and striking are these delineations, and so accurately do they distinguish genuine religion, both from its opposites and counterfeits, that it seems scarcely possible that any one should attentively peruse them, and yet remain ignorant of his real state. His discourses upon *the poor and contrite in spirit,*

upon the *bruised reed,* and upon the *spiritually whole and sick,* abound with discriminating remarks on character, and with consolations for the weakest, the most dejected and trembling believer.

It is no small recommendation of the sermons of Mr. Davies, that, while intelligible to the meanest capacities, they are calculated to gratify persons of the greatest knowledge and refinement. They abound with striking thoughts, with the beauties and elegancies of expression, and with the richest imagery. Some fastidious critics may perhaps object to his style, as florid and ornamented in the extreme. But it should be remembered that nature made him a poet; and that a brilliant imagination, operating on a warm heart, familiarized him to forms of expression, which, in others, might seem unnatural and affected. On the whole, it may be properly remarked, that his style, though rich and entertaining, is rather a dangerous model for imitation. Young preachers, by following it too closely, might be betrayed into a manner ill suited to their genius. Let them study to resemble President Davies in his piety, his zeal, his fidelity in exploring and communicating truth; but let them not be too emulous of soaring upon the wing of his vigorous and exursive imagination.

Z.