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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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## JOHN BLAIR HOGE.\*

1810—1826.

JOHN BLAIR HOGE, a son of the Rev. Moses Hoge, D. D., was born in Jefferson County, Va., in April, 1790. He obtained the rudiments of his education in his father's house, and chiefly by instruction from young men who were prosecuting theological studies under his father's direction. He was for two years a pupil of his brother James, (now the Rev. Dr. Hoge of Columbus, O.,) in a classical school which he taught at Augusta Church, of which the Rev. Dr. Speece was afterwards Pastor. After this, he assisted his father for some time in a school which he had established at Shepherds-town, meanwhile pursuing his own studies; and then entered Hampden Sidney College, at an advanced standing, where he graduated about the year 1808. He afterwards became a Tutor in the College, his father having in the mean time become its President.

On resigning his place at Hampden Sidney, he commenced the study of the Law under the instruction of Henry E. Watkins, of Prince Edward County, and he mastered its principles with such facility, and evinced in so high a degree the faculty of generalization, that there was every prospect of his early becoming eminent in the profession. On mature reflection, however, he determined to abandon both the study of the Law and the prospect of its practice, and prepare himself for the Gospel ministry. He accordingly placed himself under his father's care, as a student of Theology, and on the 20th of April, 1810, was licensed by the Hanover Presbytery to preach the Gospel. In 1811, he was transferred to the Winchester Presbytery; and, having accepted a call from the Congregations of Tuscarora and Falling Waters, was ordained and installed at the Tuscarora meeting-house, on the 12th of October of the same year. A portion of his labours also was given to Martinsburg.

From his first appearance in the pulpit his preaching attracted great attention. With uncommon power of analysis, an exuberant imagination, a highly cultivated taste, and a susceptibility of deep and strong emotion, he held his audience almost as by a charm, and the educated and the uneducated alike rendered their testimony to the power of his eloquence. But, at no distant period, his constitution, naturally by no means robust, began to sink under his labours, and he found it necessary to devote some time to relaxation; and, in doing so, he determined to avail himself also of a still more genial climate. He accordingly directed his course across the ocean, and stopped for some time in the South of France, with manifest advantage to his health. He left home in the autumn of 1814, and returned in the summer of 1816, greatly delighted, and in various ways benefitted, by his tour. He was now even more sought after as a preacher than he had ever been before; but his popularity never seemed to occasion the least self-exaltation.

When the Church on Shockoe Hill, Richmond, was prepared for the Presbyterians who were gathered by the Rev. John D. Blair, Mr. Hoge was

\* Foote's Sketches of Va.—MSS. from Rev. James Hoge, D. D., and Rev. D. H. Riddle, D. D.

invited to become their Pastor. He was accordingly released from the pastoral charge of Falling Waters on the 19th of April, 1822, and of Tuscarora, on the 19th of June following; and was transferred to the Hanover Presbytery on the 7th of the ensuing September. In this new field his usefulness was enlarged, and his health, for a time, seemed to be improved. But it was not long before it became apparent that his life was drawing to a close. In 1824, he began to suffer seriously from an affection of the liver; and though, after a few months, he was partially relieved, the disease recurred in a more aggravated form in August, 1825, and very soon run into a dropsy which terminated his life on the 31st of March, 1826. After it became manifest to his friends that his earthly labours were closed, he retired to Gerardstown, about eight miles from Martinsburg, to the house of a Mr. Wilson, who had formerly been an elder in one of his Churches, and there, after lingering several months, a most edifying example of Christian faith and hope, he entered into the joy of his Lord. His remains were removed to Martinsburg for burial; and there he sleeps surrounded by many who once enjoyed the benefit of his ministrations.

On the 6th of May, 1819, he was united in marriage to Ann K. Hunter of Martinsburg, Va. They had two children, who were quite young at the time of their father's death.

FROM MRS. DR. JOHN H. RICE.

NEAR HAMPDEN SIDNEY COLLEGE, May 4, 1854.

My dear Sir: My recollections of the Rev. John Blair Hoge reach back to his boyhood. I knew him when he first came to College, and knew him ever after, until death terminated his brilliant and useful career. He was our neighbour during part of the time of our residence in Richmond, and our relations with him were always most intimate and affectionate.

You could scarcely have met him in the most casual way, without being struck with his personal appearance. He was of a tall, slender and remarkably graceful form, and had a pale, comely,—I might almost say handsome, face, in which the lines of intelligence were deeply drawn. His manners were worthy of the court,—combining both dignity and suavity in the highest degree. And while they evidently showed the workings of a fine, benevolent spirit, they showed also a high degree of cultivation—they were what you would expect to find only in one who had always been accustomed to the most polished society.

Mr. Hoge's intellect was universally acknowledged to be of a high order—it was at once quick, delicate and penetrating. He was an indefatigable student, never satisfied unless he was adding something to his varied stores of knowledge. In the pulpit he possessed very uncommon attractions. I cannot say that he had the advantage of a very good voice—for, as I remember it, it was slightly inclined to be husky; but still, by a dexterous management of it, he could produce a very considerable effect upon his audience. His manner in the pulpit, though evincing great care and culture, was simple and natural; and it was earnest without any extraordinary vehemence. His gesture was not very abundant, but it was appropriate and effective. His discourses were carefully prepared, full of weighty, impressive thought, and pervaded by a tone of deep evangelical feeling, that was well fitted to open a passage to the heart. You felt not only that all that he said was vastly important, but that he himself fully realized its importance, and spoke under a deep impression of the solemnity of his vocation as an ambassador of Christ.

In his private intercourse, Mr. Hoge was a model of all that is gentle, discreet and exemplary. He was sometimes thought to be somewhat reserved; but

I am sure he was never so with his intimate friends, and I doubt whether he was so at all, beyond what a due regard to circumstances, in connection with his own ministerial dignity, would require. He was, undoubtedly, a very modest man; and no one could ever attribute to him the semblance of ostentation. This trait was particularly illustrated in his appearance in Presbyteries and other public bodies; while yet he never hesitated to speak when he felt called upon to do so; and he never expressed an opinion which did not receive a respectful consideration. I ought to add that he kept entirely aloof from the gay world, and, by example as well as precept, constantly urged the importance of a high standard of Christian character.

When Mr. Hoge returned from Europe, where he had been for the benefit of his health, he arrived at Philadelphia during the sessions of the General Assembly, where I happened myself, at that time, to be. There he found many of his friends, and from all met a most cordial welcome. When we left Philadelphia, on our homeward way, Dr. Alexander, who was then a settled pastor there, accompanied us as far as Newcastle; and, by the urgent request of the Captain and all the passengers, consented to favour us with a sermon on board the boat. After we had reached the Potomac, and several of our friends had come up to meet us, Mr. Hoge being on board, it was proposed by some of the passengers that a sermon should be requested from *him* also; but when it was suggested to him, he declined on the ground that there were many worldly people on board to whom such a service would be unwelcome; and he did not think it best to obtrude a religious exercise upon them contrary to their wishes. He was reminded that they practised their various amusements on board, without any respect to the feelings of Christians; but his reply was—"the people of the world do not expect to bring Christians over to their maxims and practices, and therefore have no interest in attempting to conciliate them; but we are deeply interested to conciliate the world to Christian views and practice, and therefore we ought to be careful, and do nothing needlessly to awaken their opposition, and thus paralyze our own good influence." This incident may stand in the place of many others, illustrative of his fine sense of Christian propriety.

Most affectionately and respectfully,

ANNE S. RICE.

FROM THE REV. D. H. RIDDLE, D. D.

JERSEY CITY, N. J., July 8, 1857.

Rev. and dear Sir: It would afford me great pleasure to contribute, in any degree, to set the character and excellencies of the Rev. J. B. Hoge in a proper light before the Church through your pages. This would only, indeed, be paying, in part, a debt of gratitude to the benefactor of my youth,—my early guide, who, under God, gave direction to my earthly, possibly my eternal, destiny. He was the pastor of my honoured father, the friend and counsellor of my widowed mother, the first minister I knew and loved. He was, for many years, an inmate of our household, and conducted its devotions.

J. B. Hoge was one of the most gifted sons of old Virginia. He was the descendant of a genuine Scotch Irish stock, was born within ten miles of my native place, spent the most of his ministerial life in my native county, and lies buried in the old grave-yard of Norbourne parish. The highest honours of his native State were within his reach, if he had lived to himself, and followed the promptings of his early ambition. His talents, taste, and acquirements, were acknowledged by all who knew him intimately to be of the first order. He was a worthy son of an honoured sire, (Dr. Moses Hoge,) whom John Randolph pronounced "the most eloquent man in Virginia." His ministry began early, and ended, to human vision, prematurely, embracing only about sixteen years.



When he began to preach, he was in appearance a mere boy, and in fact, quite young. My boyish impressions of him were almost of idolatrous reverence; and at the table and the fireside I was never weary of his sparkling conversation. I remember well his ordination and installation in old Tuscarora Church, and heard "the prophecies which went before," concerning this young Timothy, from the older clergy and elders. Dr. John Matthews, himself no mean theologian, once said that, even at this early period, "his views of the evangelical system were more clear, enlarged and symmetrical, than any man's he had ever known." The old Scotch Irish people of his charges in Berkley County feasted on his preaching, and were swayed by his eloquence, like the trees of the forest by the wind. I remember, with special vividness, some of the sacramental seasons, when, in the bright summer days, the tables were spread in the old grave-yard, and there was a general gathering from all his congregations to the feast—how tears stood in aged eyes, and silver heads were bowed, and emotion swept over youthful hearts, when he depicted the sufferings and love of Christ and the glories of the ransomed. Though incapable, then, of analyzing the elements, I felt, in common with others, the power, of eloquence. Among my most valued treasures are the impressions on my youthful heart of his preaching. At a later period, when his powers were more developed, and my taste more matured; after my return from College and a profession of religion, I enjoyed the privilege of hearing him statedly during a winter in Richmond, Va., in the acme of his popularity. His preaching was greatly admired by professional men—members of the Virginia Legislature, and transient visitors at the Capital. Their eulogies I had often an opportunity of hearing. Their names, were it proper to mention them, would attest their qualifications to pass judgment.

I remember some of his Funeral Discourses, especially those in memory of "some honourable women," and of my father. The texts were peculiarly apposite; the delineation of character, accurate; the impression, profound. These discourses displayed acquaintance with human nature, sympathy with the deepest religious experience, and clear apprehensions of the evidences of piety. Some of his Farewell Discourses too made a profound impression on my youthful heart, and are remembered by many to this day. These were preached when he was obliged, on several occasions, to journey to the South for his health, and when he took leave of his people to go to Europe for the same purpose. His letters from Europe, giving his impressions of men and things, during that stormy period, were full of mingled thought and imagination, and were "a feast of fat things" to young and old. His Salutatory Discourse, on his return, composed on shipboard, illustrates one of his characteristics,—the adaptation of his discourses to circumstances. It was on the text, II. Cor. 1. 3, "Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ," and is a fine specimen of the intellectual and æsthetic combined, embodying the results of deep thought and the gushing of a warm heart. His removal from Berkley to Richmond was a sorrowful day, as I have heard it described. I was then absent. Mr. Hoge wrote his sermons carefully; but he left them in his study, and no one would have imagined that the trains of thought and burning words, which flowed so freely, had been pre-composed. His style and the structure of his sentences greatly resembled Chalmers, rising from climax to climax of strength and feeling, till it was sometimes overpowering. Of this, one of the finest specimens is mentioned by Dr. Foote, in his interesting "Sketches of Virginia;"—the peroration of his discourse before the Synod of Virginia. The remembrance of that discourse has never been obliterated from those who heard it. To this day, you will hear it spoken of, as almost magical. The auditory in this case, was larger and more appreciative, but this was by no means a solitary instance; as many can testify.

I should suspect my estimate of Mr. Hoge's intellectual power, of partiality and exaggeration, so natural in the circumstances, were it not confirmed by the best judges,—namely, the Rev. Joseph Glass,\*—one of the acutest minds of his age; Dr. John Matthews, who knew him more intimately probably, than any other minister; that stalwart Boanerges among Virginia preachers, Dr. William Hill, not to mention others. My own father, who was his elder during the most of his ministry, had exalted conceptions of his mental powers and of his eloquence, of his prudence, kindness, and theological attainments. One of my earliest luxuries was to sit on the knee of one of them, and listen to their grave discussions, interspersed with flashes of humour, or anecdotes of the living and the dead. The ministry was invested with attractiveness to my early fancy, from the living actualization of its ideal in my venerated friend, and the respectful affection and almost idolatry of his elder. One of the mysteries of Providence, with which my heart had to battle, was the quenching of that light, that even yet, according to ordinary longevity, might be shedding its mild lustre on the Church, for guidance in its perils and perplexities. Had he lived till now, he would have been still this side of threescore years and ten. He was resting from his toils, before the storms which agitated the Church he loved and adorned. His ministry was confined to his native State. He lived and died a member of the Old Synod of Virginia, the associate of Speece and Baxter, Rice and Hill, Williamson† and Wilson, loved and honoured of all. At one time, he was spoken of for President of Dickinson College, and his claims strongly urged by some in that region, who, in their visits to Virginia, had learned to estimate him properly. Mr. Hoge lived and died before ecclesiastical titles were as cheap and common as now, and he never received the Doctorate.

Mr. Hoge became connected, by marriage, with a large and influential circle, by whom he was universally respected for his talents, and loved for his social qualities. Notwithstanding the flattering attentions he received, and the obvious impressions he made, he ever preserved the simplicity of his character and habits, and his diffidence of his own powers. Probably no man ever had more aversion to ostentatious self-display.

Mr. Hoge's constitution was never vigorous. He was early attacked with hemorrhage of the lungs, and sought invigoration repeatedly in travel. His mental labours, especially after his removal to Richmond, were severe and exhausting, as in addition to his pastoral duties, much of the labour of conducting the "Literary and Theological Magazine" devolved on him. Often, to a very late period at night, he was plying his pen, and while enjoying the pleasant socialities of the parlour, we could hear his peculiar, and ominous *little cough* in the adjoining study. Oh! how often, afterwards, did I and that charmed little circle, remember it, with a pang of useless anguish. He purposed to spend the summer of 1826 with his old friends in the Valley. A sermon he preached on his way, at Warrenton, I believe, I have heard spoken of, as amazingly impressive and spiritual, like the notes of a dying swan, especially his description of "the glory yet to be revealed." His last days were spent under the hospitable roof, and cheered by the attentions, of his old and tried friend Wilson, near Gerardstown,

\* JOSEPH GLASS was a grandson of Samuel Glass, who migrated from Banbridge, County Down, Ireland, to Virginia, and settled on the Opequon in 1736. He (Joseph) exercised his ministry in the neighbourhood in which his grandfather settled, and died in his full vigour in 1821.

† WILLIAM WILLIAMSON was educated in Scotland, his native country, and came to Virginia with a view to engage as a teacher. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Hanover, October 12, 1792, and was ordained the next year. He resided for a time near Gordonsville, and preached in the adjacent congregations; but afterwards removed to the Valley of the Shenandoah, and took his position in Warren County, near Front Royal. He subsequently removed to Loudon County, established a classical school near Middleburg, and preached in the Counties of Loudon and Fauquier, as he could find opportunity. He continued his labours till he was about eighty years of age. He was a man of powerful intellect, and a bold and exciting preacher.

one of his youthful charges. His sufferings were severe and protracted. His end was peace. I had not the melancholy privilege of seeing him after the spring of 1824, and the news of his death reached me at Princeton. He was buried at Martinsburg, with no monumental stone yet reared to mark the spot where the revered pastor and gifted child of genius, and eloquent preacher, reposes. His Funeral Sermon was preached by Dr. Matthews, who loved him with a peculiar affection, and wept over him with irrepressible grief, so as to choke his utterance—a scene yet remembered by many, alike honourable to both. His enduring monument is in the hearts of many whom he guided to the Saviour. His memory is fragrant in the beautiful valley where he lived, laboured and died. In Tuscarora, and Falling Water, and Berkley County, and Richmond and Prince Edward, no name is more hallowed than that of *John Blair Hoge*. Friend of my youth! my parents' pastor! one of Virginia's brightest jewels! would that some worthier hand had earlier and better traced thy character and worth. "None knew thee but to love thee, or names thee but to praise."

Yours very truly,

D. H. RIDDLE.

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## HENRY AXTELL, D. D.\*

1810—1829.

HENRY AXTELL was born at Mendham, N. J., on the 9th of June 1773. His father, Henry Axtell, was an intelligent and worthy man; a farmer; and Major of Infantry in the Revolutionary war. He was fitted for College under the tuition of James Stevenson, a teacher of some note, and before going to College, was himself, for some time, an assistant teacher in the Morris Academy. He took his collegiate course at Princeton, where he was graduated, an excellent scholar, in 1796. After his graduation, he spent several years in teaching, both at Morristown and Mendham, for which employment he was considered as possessing superior qualifications. At length, about the year 1804, he removed from New Jersey to Geneva, N. Y., where, for several years more, he was at the head of a flourishing school. But he had aspirations which this employment, useful as it is, did not meet—he ardently desired to become a minister of the Gospel. With a view to this, he pursued a course of theological study under the direction of the Rev. Jedediah Chapman, who had then, for several years, been ministering to the Congregation in Geneva. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Geneva, on the 1st of November, 1810.

After his licensure, he preached, for short periods, in several different places, but the Congregation at Geneva, amidst whom he had lived for several years in the capacity of a teacher, began to think of him as a suitable person to serve them in the ministry of the Gospel. Up to this time, they had never had a regularly installed pastor. Mr. Chapman had, for about ten years, made his home among them, and had divided his services

\* Hotchkin's Hist. of West. N. Y.—MS. from Rev. Charles Axtell.