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ART. I.—CHARACTER AND WRITINGS OF DR. MASON.

*The writings of the late John M. Mason, D. D. Consisting of sermons, essays, and miscellanies, including essays already published in the Christian's Magazine. In 4 volumes. Selected and arranged by Rev. Ebenezer Mason.*

It is the ordinance of heaven, that no man greatly distinguished for his talents and virtues should die, without leaving an important legacy to the world—the *legacy of his own character*. This is designed by Providence to be in the place of his living example and active efforts; to plead the cause of virtue after the eloquent tongue has been palsied by death, and to stimulate to noble enterprises on earth, when the spirit has entered on a higher sphere of action in heaven. Each generation therefore is bound to preserve some substantial record of its truly illustrious men;—such as while living have contributed most under God to form its character. Men of this stamp will indeed do much even without the aid of such a record, to guide the destinies of posterity; because such is the power of great talents, and such the connection of moral actions with each other, that from the life of every man of distinguished greatness and excellence, there is a tide of influence sent forth which must force its way through every obstacle down the tract of coming ages. Still the interests of society demand, that these influences be widened and perpetuated, by the erection of permanent memorials of departed greatness. If this is altogether neglected, or performed in a careless and cursory manner,—if it is entrusted to inadequate hands, or becomes a monument of the partiality of human friendship rather than a faithful account of those qualities and actions which have really made up the character—great injustice is done both to the claims of the living and the dead. It is true indeed, that the character of departed illustrious men may exert its full influence upon

those who have known them well, without any other record of it than that which is inscribed upon their memories and their hearts; but with the mass of the world it is far otherwise; with them the want of some enduring and faithful delineation of what those men were, is the loss of all the good which might accrue to them from the contemplation of human intellect and virtue in some of their noblest forms.

But while it is due alike to the memory of great and good men, and to the interests of posterity, that a faithful account of such characters should be preserved and transmitted, it is important that the proper time for performing this service should not be overlooked. A work of this kind may lose in a great degree its legitimate interest and effect by being delayed too long; for no record of departed excellence or greatness can come with much authority, unless it embodies the personal recollections of the writer, or at least is formed of materials of undisputed authenticity. The proper time, as it seems to us, for erecting such a monument as we here contemplate to the illustrious dead, is, when they have been in the grave long enough to have their characters looked at with due impartiality, and yet not so long as to have thrown them in any degree into the mist of uncertainty. The biographer of such men is laboring for the world and for successive generations; and he should have every external facility, as well as every quality of mind and heart, which his important office demands.

The views which we have now expressed have led us deeply to regret, that down to this time there has appeared no adequate memorial of the illustrious man whose name stands at the head of this article. The public indeed were encouraged to expect, soon after his death, that this task would speedily be undertaken; and it was understood, to a limited extent at least, that the services of a distinguished professor in one of our theological seminaries, long the intimate friend of Dr. Mason, and probably better qualified to do justice to his character than any other man, had been, or might be expected to be engaged for this purpose; but we regret to find that the volumes before us have appeared without any thing in the form of a biographical notice. There were indeed two highly interesting sermons preached and published on occasion of his death, containing a brief outline of his life and character; but a *volume* would scarcely be adequate to do justice to such a man; and we cherish the hope that some individual, who is competent to the task, will yet be found to satisfy the reasonable demands of the christian public, by the production of a work, which shall carry down to distant generations the influence of one of the brightest characters of our age.

But as a complete biography of Dr. Mason is still a desidera-

tum, we cannot feel willing, in bringing his *writings* before our readers, not to make use of such materials as lie within our reach, to present a brief sketch of his eventful *life*. We shall only glance at a few of the more prominent facts in his history, and the more striking features of his character, depending partly on our own personal knowledge, and partly deriving materials from other sources, particularly from the judicious and valuable discourses of Dr. McElroy and Dr. Snodgrass, to which we have already referred.

Of Dr. Mason's ancestry we know nothing, except that his father, Dr. John Mason, was a native of Scotland, and was held in high estimation as a learned, able, and devoted clergyman. The father came to this country in 1761, soon after being licensed to preach, and took the pastoral charge of the Scotch Presbyterian church in Cedar-Street, New-York, where he continued to exercise the ministerial office with great fidelity and success, until his death in 1792. One of the noblest tributes which a son ever paid to the memory of a father, is to be found in the address which Dr. Mason (the son) delivered before the Presbytery relative to the resignation of his pastoral charge;—a tribute which no one can read without feeling a sentiment of veneration for the parent, and of admiration for the intellectual greatness and the filial sensibilities of the son.

Dr. Mason was born in the city of New-York, March 19th 1770. His childhood is said to have been characterized by a freedom from every thing vicious, an unusual sprightliness of temper, and a strong relish for study. It was obvious in the earliest development of his powers, that he possessed an intellect of no common order; and the rapid improvement and brilliant exhibitions of the boy gave no equivocal presage of the pre-eminent greatness of the man. His father, who was distinguished for his classical attainments, mainly conducted his education up to the time of his admission to college; and it was during this period that he laid the foundation of those habits of intellectual discipline, for which he was subsequently so much distinguished. In May 1789, he graduated at Columbia college in his native city, at the age of a little more than nineteen. After having spoken of his diligent application, it is hardly necessary to say that with such powers as he possessed, he held a distinguished rank in point of scholarship. His comprehensive and brilliant and versatile mind gave him the power of becoming pre-eminent in any department of learning to which he applied himself; while he is said to have been actually most distinguished for his classical attainments and his familiarity with metaphysical science.

The foundation of Dr. Mason's religious character seems to

have been laid at a very early period, in the blessing of God on a course of faithful parental efforts. His mind was imbued with a knowledge of the great truths of the gospel, as soon as its faculties were sufficiently developed to admit of comprehending them; and at a very early period, it is not easy to say how early, these truths, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, seem to have become the commanding principles of his conduct. And here we cannot but remark in passing, that there seems at this day to be too little importance attached to a direct parental influence in securing the early sanctification of children. We are most cordial well-wishers to the cause of sabbath schools and bible classes, and to all other judicious means which the church has so successfully brought into operation, for the religious improvement of the young; but we greatly fear, that in many instances this has been made an apology for relaxing parental vigilance; and that thus the most important part of the education of children—that which has the most direct bearing upon their eternal destiny—passes out of the hands of those who are appointed by Providence to take the oversight of it, and is turned over almost exclusively to the teachers of sabbath schools. The legitimate design of sabbath schools, is not to supersede, but to assist parental effort; and every christian parent ought to regard himself as the responsible person in this great concern; and while he cheerfully and thankfully avails himself of all the aid he can command in training up his child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, he ought to expect the blessing chiefly in answer to his own prayers and his own faithful efforts. If there were at this day, under the advantages of sabbath school instruction, more watchful restraint, more believing and earnest prayer, more looking and inquiring after the blessing on the part of christian parents, we doubt not that there would be many more plants of righteousness to diffuse their fragrance through the garden of the Lord.

But to return. Though Dr. Mason's *conversion* is not, so far as we can learn, dated to any precise period, yet he is said to have been the subject of deep religious impressions at the age of ten years. He once incidentally remarked concerning himself, that, at that early period, he used sometimes to go into the garret, taking along with him Ralph Erskine's work entitled "Faith's Plea upon God's word," and as he read it, to weep in view of his sins and humbly supplicate God's mercy. At seventeen, his religious views and feelings were so matured and settled, that he made a public profession of religion, and was received to the communion of the church of which his father was pastor.

From the time of his leaving college, and probably at an ear-

lier period, his views seem to have been directed towards the christian ministry. His course of preparation for the sacred office was begun and continued for a while under the direction of his venerable father; and it was during this period, that he became so familiar with the original languages of the bible, especially the Greek;—a circumstance which he afterwards turned to great account, in his expository labors. But after having passed a year under his father's instruction, he crossed the ocean in 1791, with a view to complete his theological course in the university of Edinburgh. Here he was honored with the respect and friendship of many distinguished men, among whom were Dr. Hunter and Dr. Erskine, who rendered him marked attentions and continued his cordial friends through life. Here also, he became associated as a student, with several individuals with whom he formed an enduring intimacy, and who have since risen to the highest respectability and usefulness. It was during his connection with the university, that his intellectual character seems to have been more fully brought out, in all its wonderful brilliancy, and strength, and originality; and though he was constantly brought in contact with vigorous and noble minds, his own intellectual efforts lost none of their lustre by being compared with those of his most distinguished associates. There was a comprehensiveness of intellect, a lightning-like rapidity and energy of conception, a power of severe abstraction and rigid analysis, united with a glowing and commanding eloquence, which were witnessed with delight and astonishment, as well by his instructors as his fellow students; and which seemed to mark out before him, the brilliant path to which he was destined. While he was thus distinguished by his intellectual powers and efforts, every thing that he did, evinced a most cordial attachment to evangelical truth. He was extremely jealous of the least attempt to rob the Redeemer of his glory, or to substitute any thing else in place of the Lord Jesus Christ, as all in all; and hence it is said of him, that on being called upon by his professor to comment on an exercise of one of his fellow students, which had exhibited much talent, but had been marked by a striking destitution of evangelical sentiment, he rose, and after having given full credit for the exhibition of taste and imagination and power of argument, added that "there was one thing wanting in the discourse—it needed to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to entitle it to the name of a christian sermon."

One of the most important advantages which Dr. Mason seems to have derived from his connection with the university, was the admirable facility which he acquired at extemporaneous speaking. He possessed an original talent for this in no common de-

gree ; and here he had an opportunity to cultivate it, which at that time he could scarcely have enjoyed in an equal degree, any where else. Connected with the university, there was a theological society composed of students, which held its meetings every week, for the purpose of mutual improvement ; and the exercises of this society, consisted to a considerable extent, in extemporaneous debate. In these exercises, Dr. Mason took a prominent part, and while he was always listened to with admiration of his superior powers, it was by this means no doubt, that those powers became developed and matured, and that he ultimately held a rank among the first extemporaneous preachers of the age.

Towards the close of the year 1792, Dr. Mason's course in the university was suddenly interrupted by his receiving the afflictive intelligence of the death of his father, and his being invited to take the pastoral charge of the church with which his father had been connected. Considering that this was the church, in the bosom of which he had been born and educated, and that he was now but little more than twenty two years of age, this might have seemed at first view, a hazardous experiment ; but the knowledge which they had of his talents and piety, and their conviction that he was destined to eminent usefulness, led them unhesitatingly to direct their eyes towards him as their spiritual guide. The event proved, that their confidence was not misplaced. In compliance with their wishes, he returned immediately to this country, was licensed in November, 1792 ; and after preaching for them a few months, was installed in April, 1793, as their pastor. In this relation, he continued rising in respectability and usefulness for seventeen years. It is probable that during this period, he realized the richest fruits of his ministry.

One important service which Dr. Mason rendered to the church, especially to the denomination with which he was connected, a little before the close of the century, was the publication of his "Letters on frequent Communion." Up to that period, it had been the practice of the Associate Reformed Church in this country, to celebrate the communion but once, or at most, twice a year ; and to precede it by a day of fasting, and follow it by a day of thanksgiving. The Letters to which we have referred, were addressed to the churches of that denomination, and were designed to bring them to a more frequent celebration of the ordinance, and to lead them to view it more in its scriptural simplicity. This pamphlet was extensively circulated, and produced a powerful, and to a great extent, the desired effect ; for it was followed on the part of most of the churches by a gradual, and

ultimately, an almost entire relinquishment of the ancient practice, and by the practical adoption of the views which the Letters were designed to recommend. While referring to this pamphlet, which is now republished in the author's works, we cannot forbear to say that it is characterized by uncommon strength of argument, and a most comprehensive view of the whole matter to which it relates; and we should hardly know where to direct our readers for a more edifying, quickening, elevating view of the *general* subject of the communion than its pages present, notwithstanding it was written for a specific purpose.

We may notice in this connection, though somewhat out of the order of time, another publication of Dr. Mason's at a later period in life, which was designed to take away the unnatural, and as we believe in common with him, unscriptural barriers, which certain denominations, of which his own was a signal example, had thrown around the table of the Lord. In this work he defends, with great learning and eloquence, the principle of catholic communion; and maintains that no church has any scriptural ground for repulsing away from the Lord's table, any who profess their faith in his doctrines, and give evidence of having been renewed by his Spirit. This was regarded by the denomination to which Dr. M. belonged, as a gross infringement on the established order of the church, and was met by many of them, as might have been expected, with that spirit of bold resistance, which is always sure to be the result of contravening any long established religious prejudice. But notwithstanding all this opposition, there was in the book so much of reason and scripture, of life, and spirit, and strength, that it awakened general attention, and ultimately, to a great extent, accomplished its design. Dr. M. had himself, during the early part of his ministry, doubtless from the influence of education, adopted the principle of exclusive communion; but his soul was never made to be trammelled by the little peculiarities of sect; and when his attention was directed to the subject, he became satisfied that the exclusive principle was inconsistent with the whole genius of christianity; and that he had a fair warrant from the Master, for administering the communion to any who gave evidence of being his followers. The result of this effort in favor of open communion, was not merely an extensive change of practice on this subject in the denomination with which he was connected, but a general impulse in favor of christian catholicism among different denominations on both sides of the Atlantic. The work has been printed and circulated extensively in Great Britain, and has been regarded there as a most efficient auxiliary to the cause, which more than almost any other, awakened the interest and drew out the matchless powers of Robert Hall.

As Dr. Mason had known by experience, the advantages of a thorough theological education, he was exceedingly desirous not only that the standard of qualification for the ministry in this country should be elevated, but that young men destined to the sacred office, should enjoy better opportunities for theological improvement. This led him about the beginning of the present century, to project the plan of a Theological Seminary, to be established by the authority, and subject to the direction, of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Church. This plan he succeeded in carrying into effect in 1801; and the result was, the establishment of the first theological institution in the United States. Of this institution, he was himself the very life and soul; he was appointed its first professor, and continued to discharge the duties of that responsible office, in connection with his various other official duties, through a succession of years, until, by the gradual decay of his constitution, he was admonished to retire.

To aid in the accomplishment of this favorite object—the establishment of a theological seminary,—Dr. Mason again visited Great Britain for the purpose of procuring a library. We do not know exactly how successful he was in the object of his mission, though we believe Providence smiled upon the enterprise; but we *do* know that he left behind him an impression of his greatness, which remains vivid on many minds to this day. Some of the most eminent clergymen and statesmen in England, rendered the highest possible tribute to his genius and eloquence; assigning him a rank among the very first preachers of the age. It was during this visit that he preached in Edinburgh, his famous sermon, entitled “Living faith;” and in London, his sermon before the London Missionary Society, entitled “Messiah’s Throne;” both of which were published, and are justly reckoned among the noblest efforts of his mighty mind. The London missionary sermons, have generally been preached by men of the first distinction, and have been published with few or no exceptions to the present time. We were looking them over not long since, as a matter of curiosity; and though we found among them many of distinguished excellence, we found none, in our own estimation at least, superior in power of reasoning, or force of eloquence, to the one of which we have just spoken. Indeed we doubt whether any Missionary Society has ever listened to a discourse, which has thrown more of heavenly majesty and attraction around the cause of missions, or which has made infidelity both feel and look more contemptible.

In the year 1806, his fertile and active mind projected the plan of the Christian’s Magazine;—a periodical which he conducted for several years, furnishing not a small part of the matter



which it contained from his own resources. In this work his versatile mind had full scope. Though it partakes in no small degree of a polemical character, yet there are articles from his pen which show that he was equally at home in almost every species of composition, and almost every department of learning. Some of the controversial papers in this work we are glad to see republished in the volumes before us; though we do not know a single article of his in any of the numbers of the Magazine, which we do not think well deserves to be transmitted to posterity.

In 1810, owing to the small size of the building in which Dr. M. preached, as well as to various other circumstances, he formed the purpose of establishing a new congregation; and in view of this, asked and obtained leave of the Presbytery to resign his pastoral charge. On this occasion, he delivered the speech to which we have before adverted, stating the grounds of his request, and urging it with a force of argument and eloquence which was perfectly irresistible. We know of nothing which bears more strikingly the impress of his original and mighty mind, than this address. It is hardly possible to read it without at one moment, smiling at some cutting sarcasm, and the next, melting at some expression of inimitable tenderness; here admiring some lofty flight of imagination, and there yielding to an impression of grave solemnity; and again shrinking back, as if about to be taken up in a whirlwind. We have heard more than one competent judge, who was present when this address was delivered, declare that it was the highest effort of eloquence to which they ever listened; and that its effect upon the audience in general, was entirely overpowering.

During the interval that elapsed between Dr. Mason's resignation of his pastoral charge, and the completion of the new church in Murray street, which was built entirely under his direction, the infant congregation to which he ministered, held their meetings for public worship in the presbyterian church in Cedar street; and never, it is said, did his transcendent pulpit talents shine more brightly, than during this period. It was about this time that he preached and published his sermon on the death of that invaluable woman, Mrs. Grahame;—a sermon in which the majesty of his intellect, and the tenderness and strength of his affections, are alike put in requisition to exhibit the claims of the gospel as a system of genuine consolation; and which, we think, no christian can read without having a more elevated and consoling view of the Resurrection and the Life. Mrs. Grahame had long been Dr. Mason's intimate friend: he had been her adviser in difficulty, and her comforter in trouble, and was well acquainted

with the numerous vicissitudes through which she had passed, and the marvelous fortitude and dignity with which she had sustained them. Hence no other man was probably so competent as he to delineate her character; and in every part of the picture, we see the hand of the master and the heart of the friend. In the summer of 1812, the Murray Street church was ready for occupancy, and was henceforth the place of his stated ministrations, until his increasing infirmities obliged him finally to relinquish the active duties of the ministry.

The duties of Dr. Mason as professor of theology, and as minister of a large congregation, in connection with the numerous demands which were made upon his time by other public engagements, and in the ordinary intercourse of society, were enough, and more than enough, even for his gigantic constitution; but in addition to this accumulation of labor, he accepted in the summer of 1811, the office of provost of Columbia college. This with him was much more than a mere nominal concern, for he was really the acting head of the institution; and by the splendor of his talents, and the energy of his efforts, he gave to it a character which it had never before possessed. The amount of labor which he performed for several years, after accepting this appointment, would seem scarcely credible. During five days of each week, he was in the constant habit of attending to his classes in college, from twelve o'clock until half past one; and to his theological students, from two to half past three; besides devoting part of every Saturday to hearing and criticising their discourses. In addition to this, he made his preparation for two public services each sabbath; and though his preaching, so far as language was concerned, was to a great extent, extemporaneous, yet it was always full of weighty instruction, and often the result of much intellectual labor.

But Dr. Mason, during these years, was exhausting his strength more rapidly than either he or his friends imagined; for while he was seen moving majestically forward under this mighty burden of responsibility and intellectual toil, in the enjoyment of vigorous health, it seemed to be almost forgotten, that any shock could be severe enough to undermine his constitution. But time soon put this delusion to flight. In 1816, his health had become so far impaired by his excessive labors, that he found it necessary to resign the office he had assumed in connection with the college, and resolved to try the effect of a voyage to Europe. On the sabbath previous to his departure, he addressed his people in an appropriate and excellent farewell discourse, from the passage—"Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." The parting with his family on that occasion, is said to have been

touching beyond description. The scene, as we have heard it described, was one of the finest exemplifications of the tenderness of natural affection, and the sublimity of christian faith, of which we remember to have heard.

At this time Dr. Mason visited the continent, and traveled extensively in France, Italy and Switzerland. The journey was a source of constant delight to him, not only as bringing relief from the cares under which his constitution had begun to sink, but as carrying him into a field of most interesting observation. His familiarity with the classical as well as religious associations of the countries through which he traveled, and the interest and cordiality with which he was every where greeted by the wise and good, as one of the most distinguished characters of the age, gave him an advantage which few travelers in foreign countries have ever enjoyed. His visit at Geneva, particularly, was one of great interest; for no man had more than he of the genuine spirit of the reformation, and none would tread on the dust of the reformers with deeper reverence. It was just at this period, that Dr. Malan was laboring in the conflict between evangelical truth, and Socinianism; and he has frequently, since abandoning the errors in which he had been educated, expressed his deep sense of obligation for the timely aid which he received in his intercourse with Dr. Mason, at the critical moment when he was making up his religious opinions. We do not mean to intimate however, that the views which Dr. Malan now holds are all of them accordant with the views of his venerable friend and counselor; for it is well known that while he maintains the fundamental truths of the gospel, and gives satisfactory evidence of having reached a high state of sanctification, he has nevertheless run into some unhappy peculiarities of doctrine, which, in connection with constitutional imprudence, have done much to impair his usefulness. Dr. Mason was of use to him, chiefly in directing and satisfying his inquiries, in respect to the great truths and principles of the gospel.

From the continent Dr. Mason passed over to England, where he arrived just in season to attend the anniversary of the British and Foreign Bible Society; an institution which he justly regarded as one of the brightest ornaments of the British church. On this occasion he delivered an address, which did justice both to his powers and to his feelings, and which was received with the most enthusiastic demonstrations of applause. During this visit, he had an opportunity to revive many of the friendships of other days, and to hold delightful communion with some of the purest and noblest spirits of the age. Among these (to say nothing of the living) was that incomparable man, Robert Hall, whose admi-

ration of Dr. Mason's character was almost unbounded. We know that he has, at least once, rendered a testimony to his greatness, which may reasonably be a matter of pride (if the word can ever be used in a good sense) to every American.

In the autumn of 1817, Dr. Mason returned to this country, and met his congregation for the first time, apparently in a much improved state of health, on the 2d of November, the day after his arrival. On the evening of that day, he preached to an immense congregation, his first sermon, from the text—"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work;" and we can truly say (for we happened to be present on the occasion) that we never heard him preach with equal force or effect. We regret to find that this sermon is not embodied in his published works; and what is still worse, to know that no trace of it is believed to exist, except in the minds of those who listened to it.

Dr. Mason now resumed his accustomed labors in connection with his pastoral charge, in the hope that his health was so far confirmed that he should be able to prosecute them without interruption. But it was not long before the painful conviction was forced upon him, that his constitution had been effectually undermined by the labors of preceding years, and that he had nothing to expect but that his subsequent course must be one of gradual decline. In the summer and autumn of 1819, he experienced in two instances a slight paralytic affection, which however soon passed off, though it was an admonition to him and his friends of an advancing process of decay. After the second attack, he was induced by the advice of physicians and the importunity of friends, to suspend his public labors for six weeks; but at the end of that period he resumed them, and continued them without further interruption until February 1820, when an affecting and monitory incident occurred in his pulpit, which put the matter beyond all question that his work was drawing to a close. During the week which preceded the sabbath on which this incident occurred, he had been remarked by his family, not only to have lost his accustomed cheerfulness, but to be in a state of great bodily depression. When the sabbath came, he went to the sanctuary as usual and commenced the service; but soon after having read the portion of scripture on which he intended to lecture, his recollection failed, his mind became confused, and bursting into tears, he told the audience, that such was the infirmity which had been induced by disease, that he was unable to proceed; upon which he immediately offered a short prayer, gave out three verses of the fifty-sixth psalm, and dismissed the congregation.

His people being now fully satisfied of his inability to sustain the burden of care and labor incident to his pastoral charge, and

yet willing, if possible, to retain him among them to enjoy the benefit of his counsels and the privilege of sympathising in his sorrows, and doing what they could to brighten the evening of his life, resolved, if possible, to procure an assistant minister. Repeated attempts to effect this, however, proved unsuccessful; and meanwhile, Dr. Mason by an entire cessation from active labor, had gathered so much strength, that on the first sabbath of October, he again appeared in the pulpit. He commenced at this time an exposition of the first epistle of Peter; and it has been remarked by some who listened to him as far as he went, that though these lectures exhibited comparatively little of the fire of his genius, and of that impressive and overwhelming eloquence by which he had been so much distinguished in his earlier days, yet they breathed a spirit of more deep and earnest piety, and indicated a more single hearted devotedness to the cause of his master, than most of the discourses which had borne a deeper impress of his original and powerful mind. But here again, his course was at no distant period interrupted by continued and increasing infirmity, and on the 25th of October 1821, he finally resigned his pastoral charge.

We cannot forbear to pause for a moment at this stage in the history of this great man, to note the melancholy fact, that the waning of his usefulness seems to have been prematurely brought about, by his assuming a greater amount of labor than his, or we may say, any other constitution could bear. While we honor the spirit of active zeal which prompted him to undertake so many arduous enterprises, we are constrained to say, that we think he mistook his duty in attempting to do so much. In the case of almost any other man than himself, there would have been an insuperable objection to it, on the ground that it would be impossible, even for a limited period, to act in so many different spheres, and to perform such an amount of labor; but in his case the objection was, not that his powers were inadequate to it for a time, but that it must necessarily induce premature infirmity and decay. Much as Dr. M. accomplished for the church and the world, by his labors, we verily believe he would have accomplished more, if he had not attempted to spread himself over so wide a field, or rather if he had not accumulated upon himself a burden which no constitution on earth could sustain.

If we do not greatly mistake, Dr. Mason's experience furnishes a chapter of admonition, which ought to be read and pondered seriously by many of our clergymen at the present day. In this age of benevolent effort and of revivals of religion, the standard of ministerial labor has been greatly raised above what it was in former years; and he who brings with him to the sacred office in

these days, the spirit of a drone, cannot expect to be honored either of God or man. We rejoice that it is the order of the age, that ministers should be hard-working men; and as a general rule, we do not believe that the amount of labor which they perform transcends their real ability, or puts at hazard their health. But we are quite sure, that this remark has its exceptions; and if we mistake not, there is among many of our most devoted men, a seeming disposition to labor to the extent of their *present* ability, without taking into view the more remote consequences. The true rule by which every man should regulate his conduct is, to turn his life and all his talents to the best account in benefiting his fellow men and glorifying God. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary that his labors should be characterised by discretion and judgment; and that the period of active exertion, should not be prematurely cut short. Suppose then, that during a revival of religion, or some other season of uncommon effort, a minister in the fervor of his zeal, crowds into a given period twice the amount of labor which his constitution can bear; and suppose, that after the excitement by which he was sustained has passed by, he finds himself sinking into a state of settled lassitude and exhaustion, and possibly with the elements of some alarming and incurable disease, and that he is thus entirely taken off from his labors, perhaps for a longer time, than he had been engaged in them; we ask, whether there is not in all this, a manifest loss to the church? Would it not be better, that a minister should take six months to do a six months work, than by crowding the whole into three, to render himself incapable of exertion during the three which should succeed? The case becomes still worse, when it is remembered that in a multitude of instances, these extraordinary efforts give a permanent shock to the constitution, and actually prepare the way for an early grave. We know how strong the temptation is, especially during a season of revival, for a devoted minister to go beyond his strength; and it is always a soothing consideration to his conscience, that he is doing the Lord's work; but whether in a revival or not, he is bound to remember that God requires him to use his powers in such a manner as to make the most of them; and that in order to do this, prudence and diligence must be united. It is one effect of the error of which we are speaking, that ministers at the present day, are often obliged to be absent for a long time together from their congregations, in order to restore themselves from great exhaustion; and every one knows, that this is a step always to be regretted; and that it not unfrequently brings in its train, the most serious and lasting evils.

Previous to the resignation of his pastoral charge, Dr. Mason was invited by the Trustees of Dickinson college, Carlisle, to

the presidency of that institution ; and as he thought the labor incident to the station, would not be more than he could perform, and withal hoped, that the change of climate might be favorable to his health, he determined to accept the appointment. Accordingly, he removed to Carlisle shortly after, and entered upon the duties of the office which he had accepted ; but even those duties he was soon convinced, required an amount of exertion to which his shattered constitution was entirely inadequate. During his residence here, it pleased God to try him with severe affliction, in the death, first, of a beloved daughter, and then of a promising son. On both occasions, he discovered the keenest sensibility ; and in the latter case, when the companions of the deceased youth had lifted the bier on which his remains were placed, the father, under the impulse of overwhelming emotion, is said to have addressed them in this striking, but characteristic language—"Tread lightly, young men, tread lightly, ye carry a temple of the Holy Ghost." This dispensation, while it appeared to be eminently sanctified to the afflicted father, was also accompanied by a blessing to the institution over which he presided ; for it was the means under God, of awakening a general attention to the subject of religion among the students, and as there is reason to believe, of bringing many of them to a cordial acceptance of the terms of the gospel. In this revival, Dr. M. was doubtless less active, than he would have been in a more vigorous state of health ; but he is known to have been deeply interested in it, and to have regarded it as a genuine work of the Holy Spirit.

In the autumn of 1824, Dr. Mason having resigned his office as president of the college, returned to the city of New York, to pass the residue of his life among the friends, who had enjoyed the best opportunity to appreciate his talents and virtues. From this time, he relinquished the idea of attempting any thing more as a public man ; and determined to seek that state of quietude in the bosom of an affectionate family, which his circumstances seemed loudly to demand. During a considerable part of the time, until within a short period before his death, notwithstanding it was manifest that there was a gradual decline, he enjoyed a comfortable state of bodily health, and was capable of a moderate degree of intellectual exertion. It was painful to all who saw him, and had known him in better days, to perceive how that mighty mind was verging back towards the imbecility of childhood ; nevertheless, up to the last day of his life, there were evidences of strength and majesty, amidst all his weakness. There were times, even after his mind seemed little more than a wreck, when it would suddenly wake up from its habitual drowsiness, like a giant from

his slumbers, and soar away into the higher regions of thought, as if he was borne upward on the wings of an angel; and then perhaps in a single half hour, there could scarcely be discerned a trace of intellectual existence. We have heard of instances, in which clergymen who visited him after this decay of his faculties, have started some query in respect to a difficult point in theology, or the meaning of some passage of scripture; and his mind has instantly grasped the whole subject, and disentangled it from all difficulties, and thrown around it a flood of light, which could scarcely have emanated from any other intellect than his own. A striking instance of this momentary kindling of mind, happened to fall under our observation. Not long before his death, we had the melancholy pleasure to call upon him, charged with friendly salutations and messages from some of his friends in England. At first he seemed to hear without any interest, and said not a word to indicate that he had any recollection of the persons whose names were mentioned to him. At length, when an allusion was made to Rowland Hill, his faculties instantly brightened into exercise, and the image of his old friend, seemed for a moment to be distinctly before his mind: he then related a characteristic anecdote respecting him, with as much correctness, and interest, and effect, as he could have done at any period of his life; and after remarking, that he was afraid to go to England again, because he should be obliged to look for most of his friends in the burying ground, he relapsed into the same state of mind from which he had been roused, and apparently took no longer any interest in the conversation.

During this melancholy period of Dr. Mason's life, he habitually attended church, when his health would permit, and would sometimes remark upon the services with much taste and judgment, though always with kindness, and often with high approbation. Though his residence was remote from the place of worship, in which he had formerly officiated, yet that was the place to which his inclinations carried him; as he was surrounded there by his own people, and every thing was fitted to keep alive the most interesting associations. It is believed that he uniformly declined any part in the public services of the sanctuary after his return from Carlisle, with the single exception of administering baptism to a child of his successor; and on that occasion, we have heard it said, that there was in the prayer which he offered, so much of his characteristic appropriateness and originality, to remind the congregation of what he had been; and so much of unaccustomed hesitancy and confusion of mind, to impress them with the change he had experienced; that many of them were affected to tears, while they listened to him with the utmost reverence and



affection. We have understood that he uniformly conducted the family devotions of his own house, up to the close of his life; and that his prayers on these occasions, were scarcely in any respect different from what they had formerly been, except that they were characterized by more of the tenderness, and spirituality, and depth of devotion. After having gradually sunk for several years under the power of disease, the hand of death was at length laid upon him, and he went calmly to his rest on the 26th of December 1829, in the 60th year of his age.

In the rapid outline which we have now given of Dr. Mason's life, we have necessarily anticipated to some extent the more striking features of his character. But so remarkable was he in the constitution and habits of his mind—in almost every thing indeed which entered into his character, that we should do little justice to our own convictions of what is due to his memory, as well as due to the world, if we should limit ourselves to the incidental hints which we have already thrown out. In contemplating such a life as his, it is grateful to trace back the stream to the fountain; to analyze the character, and look at it in its original elements; to inspect the whole mechanism of a mind which operated with such mighty power, and produced such wonderful results.

The lineaments of Dr. Mason's character, were strongly impressed on his majestic form, and noble countenance. In his person he was considerably above the medium size, and was formed in most perfect proportions. His movements, though somewhat rapid, were always majestic and graceful. There was eloquence in his countenance even when his lips were sealed; something that told of burning thoughts, and lofty purposes, and left no one at his option whether or not to regard him with profound respect. It was a favorite kind of exercise with him to ride on horseback; and such was the dignity of his person, and the perfection of his riding, that he rarely appeared in this way without being the object of marked attention.

As was Dr. Mason's person, so, we hardly need add, was his mind—well proportioned, bold, energetic. His faculties were all originally of the highest order, and each faculty had received an appropriate and thorough training. He was fitted alike for the lofty and the profound; and was equally at home in the regions of philosophy, taste and imagination. He rarely, if ever, framed an argument, but he seemed to be conducted by a broad and luminous path to an irresistible conclusion. He saw clearly the difficulties by which any subject was beset, and he knew well how to encounter them; and sometimes before a single effort of his intellect, they would all vanish away. His mind was singularly inventive; for he rarely touched the most common subject without

throwing around it an air of originality, which almost left those who listened to him, to the momentary delusion, that he was conducting them into some field of intellectual light and beauty, which the genius of man had never before explored. His imagination, though eminently sublime and vivid, was entirely under the control of his more sober powers. It would indeed sometimes stretch its wings and mount into the third heavens, and seem to burn with seraphic fire; or it would wander in ecstasy among scenes of natural grandeur and beauty on earth; or it would fly off on a visit of curiosity to worlds of whose existence the telescope alone has made a report. Amid the grander and the softer, the more awful and the more delightful scenes of creation, it was alike in its element; but in its noblest excursions it was never wild or eccentric; never cut loose from judgment, and always moved hand in hand with taste. Nor was he less distinguished for his common sense—the ability to form a right estimate of men and things. He read human character as if by intuition; and no man could be long in his presence, but that he had taken the measure of his mind, and marked at least the prominent features of his character.

Nor were his moral qualities less remarkable than his intellectual. There was implanted in his nature a strong sense of honor, which made it difficult for him to brook a mean action. While he was careful to treat his fellow men with strict propriety, as became the various relations he sustained to them, no one could approach him with an indecorous familiarity, without being awed into respect by the majesty of his frown. He was as far as possible from any thing like concealment or cunning; for though he was not without that prudence which is justified and demanded by the circumstances of society, yet he was pre-eminently an honest man, and always acted in full day light. He was distinguished also by native decision and intrepidity; there was a moral heroism about him which belonged to his very nature, independent of the influence of christian principle; so that he never looked upon the face of man with fear, and never shrunk from any enterprise because it was great or difficult. At the same time he had little of that pride of opinion, that unyielding obstinacy, oftener the quality of little than of truly great minds, which leads an individual to shut his eyes upon the light that reveals to him his own errors; or to persist in maintaining errors in the face of his own convictions. He would not, such a mind as his *could* not, lightly surrender his own opinions, because they were never formed inconsiderately; but he would listen candidly to arguments by which any of his opinions were assailed, and if he could not sweep them away as a cobweb, he would subject them to patient investigation; and if he was con-

vinced that he had been in an error, whether of faith or practice, he would acknowledge it with his characteristic magnanimity. He was generous perhaps to an extreme. There was a chord in his heart which vibrated in a note of sympathy to every touch of woe; and wherever he knew there was distress, his hand and heart were both open to administer relief. Never was he more in his appropriate sphere than while ministering consolation to the wretched; and no man could be more welcome than he wherever he was known, amidst scenes in which consolation was demanded. In a word, his heart was the dwelling place of all that was warm and tender, and his approach to the disconsolate was always the harbinger of sympathy and kindness.

In the piety of Dr. Mason, if there was any one attribute more prominent than another, it was that his feelings were eminently evangelical. It were impossible that such a mind as his should take any doctrine upon trust; and as all his religious convictions were built upon a thorough examination of the lively oracles, so his piety was based entirely upon these convictions. Those great doctrines which relate to the character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the agency of the Holy Spirit, he held with a firmness which nothing could shake; and those doctrines emphatically constituted the spiritual nourishment of his soul. He dwelt upon them in public and in private, in a manner which showed that they were incorporated with all his habits of thought and feeling; and not infrequently in conversation with his christian friends, his mind would kindle with transport at the mention of the peculiarities of the gospel, and would throw around these cardinal truths a blaze of illustration equally edifying and delightful. We remember to have heard the lamented Bruen, who was Dr. Mason's particular friend and fellow traveler when he was last in Europe, remark, that at a certain time they lodged together in the same room; and Mr. B. happening to be awake very early in the morning, heard Dr. Mason uttering himself in a low tone. He at first supposed that the Doctor was engaged in his morning devotions; but soon found that he was revolving a passage of scripture in his sleep, and framing out of it a powerful and original argument in favor of one of the great doctrines of the gospel. When the argument became perfectly clear to his own mind, he repeated it two or three times with an air of satisfaction and triumph; as if it were some gain to the cause of the Master whom he loved and served. Mr. Bruen being exceedingly struck with the argument, ventured the next day to mention to the Doctor, how much he had instructed him the night before in his sleep; and when he repeated to him the substance of the remarks, his reply was that the argument was conclusive, though he had never thought of it before.

Dr. Mason always manifested an uncommonly strong faith. He loved to contemplate God not merely as a Redeemer, but as a father and a keeper; and to lay hold with confidence, of the promises which he has made in these various relations. It was an exercise in which he peculiarly delighted to leave himself and all *his* interests, his friends and all *their* interests, the church and all *its* interests, in the hands of God; and this feeling of filial confidence more than almost any other, gave a complexion both to his conversation and his prayers. In that sublime and affecting scene to which we have already referred—the scene of separation from his friends previous to embarking for Europe—he invited his family, at the moment of his departure, to join with him in singing the hymn entitled, “The Lord will provide;” and in a scene still more affecting—that of taking leave of his friends while he was on his way through the dark valley, he leaned with full confidence upon his Redeemer, and declared in reference to the only refuge in such hour—“that is enough.”

It would naturally be expected that with so much buoyancy and strength of feeling as Dr. Mason possessed, he would sometimes find occasion to lament the temporary suspension of a full share of christian circumspection and vigilance. Such we are assured was the fact. In the full tide of social feeling, and with his mind in contact with other minds of a kindred structure with his own, he did no doubt sometimes allow his native good humor to transcend the limits which his own enlightened judgment and conscience would have marked out. We have reason indeed to believe, that he regarded this as the besetting infirmity of his nature, and that it cost him a severer conflict than any thing else. He has been known, in speaking of it to his particular friends, to manifest the deepest regret, and no doubt it often carried him in penitence to the throne of the heavenly grace.

We have been led to the conclusion, from all that we have known of Dr. Mason's christian character, that his earlier and later days were more strongly marked by an habitually devotional frame of feeling, than was the intervening period in which he saw the zenith of his fame. Besides the testimony which we have had from some of his friends, in favor of the warmth and depth of his religious feelings in the early part of his ministerial life, we have seen some of his letters addressed at that period to a beloved brother in the ministry, which breathe the most heavenly spirit, and were manifestly dictated by a heart full of faith and the Holy Ghost. Subsequent to this period, when he had assumed the duties and responsibilities of several important stations, and was obliged, to task himself to the utmost in order to discharge them, when he became to some extent enlisted in the political specula-

tions and enterprises of the day, and rose to a point of intellectual distinction which few men in any age have ever attained ; then, there is reason to believe, was the winter season of his piety : though the principle was in his heart, yet its growth was no doubt in some degree impeded by the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed, and especially by the homage, amounting almost to idolatry, which was every where paid to the grandeur of his intellect. But He who chastens those whom he loves, and who leads his people to glory through tribulation, was pleased, as the evening of life came on, to appoint to this great and good man a deeply afflicted lot. The hand of God touched him at the very point from which his glory had chiefly radiated ; and he was forced by evidence which he could not resist, to the melancholy conviction, not only that his sun had passed its meridian and was declining into the western sky, but that there were painful indications that before it should yet sink beneath the horizon, it might be overshadowed with clouds and thick darkness. In addition to the shock given to his intellect, he was visited with severe domestic affliction, in the early removal of two beloved and promising children. Under this severe paternal discipline his christian character shone out with more than its former brightness ; he submissively and cheerfully owned the hand of God in these afflictive dispensations ; and from this time onward he evinced a constantly increasing meetness for heaven. There was a mellowness of christian feeling, an impressive sense of personal unworthiness, a disposition to refer every thing to the providence of God, a strong practical faith in the mediation of Christ, and a cheerful waiting for the final change, which put it beyond all doubt that his christian character had gained a maturity and elevation, rarely to be found in any other school than that of adversity.

In the religious experience of Dr. Mason, to which we have just referred, we find nothing like a departure from the common order of God's providence towards his people. It is a rare case indeed, in which any of his children are suffered to pass through the world without a considerable amount of severe trial ; and if there had been nothing to cloud in any measure the brilliant path of Dr. M. toward the close of his life, we should almost have asked in view of his well nigh unexampled prosperity, what had become of the promise, "He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." It ought not to be accounted by the people of God a hardship, but a privilege to suffer ; for in sowing in tears, they have a pledge of reaping in joy. Perhaps indeed, there is no species of prosperity, which is more likely to draw the soul from God, and which needs more to be visited with paternal rebuke, than that which arises from high intellectual distinction. The man of lofty genius is not only in peculiar danger from the admiration of

others, but from the idolatry of his own heart; and if he is a christian, though his heavenly Father will keep him from falling, or will reclaim him from his wanderings, yet it will usually be by means of a severe discipline. How wise, how gracious is that Providence which sometimes associates eminent piety with illustrious talents, and keeps the latter from interfering with the former, by the counteracting influence of affliction!

Dr. Mason was pre-eminently great in the pulpit. It was one of the most prominent characteristics of his preaching, as of his piety, that it was highly evangelical. The great doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, as it lay at the foundation of all his religious experience, and constituted in his view the very substance and glory of the gospel, so it was the luminous center about which he delighted in his preaching, continually to revolve. Not that he confined himself to a single point of evangelical truth, however important, for he proclaimed the whole counsel of God; but the doctrine of Christ crucified, was in some way or other, first and last in his public ministrations; and every thing else sustained to this, the relation of a superstructure to its foundation. He inculcated indeed, with great zeal, the whole circle of moral virtues; but he took care to distinguish between the morality of the world and the morality of the gospel; and maintained that nothing deserved the name of evangelical virtue, which is not the fruit of living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, it is hardly necessary to say, that his discourses were eminently instructive. Though he rarely allowed himself in any thing like metaphysical speculation in the pulpit, and kept within the limits of the bible and common sense, yet his preaching was far as possible from mere declamation. There were indeed strong, and glowing, and irresistible appeals to the heart; but these were always based upon solid argument; and the reason why he often took the passions by storm, was that he had previously entrenched himself in the fortress of the understanding. No man could listen attentively to his preaching, without gaining more noble and enlarged views of the gospel; and no christian could sit under it, unless he was criminally listless, without having his devout affections quickened into more vigorous exercise, and becoming better able to give a reason of the hope that is in him.

We cannot forbear in this connexion, to express our apprehension, that *instructive* preaching, in some parts of our country at least, is too much undervalued; and that there has been too much yielding to the popular taste on this subject on the part of ministers, if indeed they have not been chargeable in some degree, with originating it. With all that is bright and promising in the character of the age, it cannot be denied that in many respects,

there is a superficiality about it, which needs to be corrected; and if we do not greatly mistake, this evil exists in respect to the preaching of the age, as truly as any thing else. The popular notion to some extent, seems to be, that men are to be converted by means of bold and stirring appeals, something that will strike irresistibly on the passions; and some ministers seem to preach as though they believed, that if they went beyond a few topics of exhortation, notwithstanding they might keep within the limits of the whole counsel of God, they had no right to hope for any success in their ministrations. We will not say, that there may not often be a greater apparent effect for the moment, more of a tumult among the passions, produced by fervid and impassioned exhortation, where the truth of God is to a great extent kept out of view, than where it is soberly and intelligently held up before the mind, in all its length and breadth; but we do say, that we have tenfold more hope, that apparent conversions will prove genuine in the latter case than in the former; and that christians will be proportionably more edified, and strengthened, and advanced in the divine life. We fully believe, that there is the most reason to look for a sound and healthful state of christian feeling, as well as for genuine conversions among the impenitent, where divine truth is held up most clearly and constantly, and with the greatest simplicity before the understanding; where ministers preach habitually with the impression that God will honor his own word, and that men are sanctified by the truth.

Dr. Mason's preaching, owing no doubt in a great degree to his natural turn of mind, was often controversial. Not that he was accustomed to attack in the pulpit, other denominations than his own, whom he regarded as holding the fundamental doctrines of the gospel; but those who professedly rejected the gospel, or those who denied its essential doctrines, could not listen to him without thinking that his tender mercies were cruel. The infidel, the Socinian, the Universalist, found no favor in his eyes; and when he undertook to expose their errors, there was a power in his reasoning, a majesty in his rebuke, a severity in his sarcasm, which were fitted to awe them into silence, and to render them with some, the objects of pity, with others, of little less than contempt. We have known him sometimes, to hold up a flagrant errorist before his congregation, exposing the arrogance of his pretensions on the one hand, and their despicable littleness on the other, until it seemed as if the object of his attack was completely swept away by his mighty arm. Whether this was, in all cases, the best way of accomplishing his purpose—whether there might not have been advantageously more that was conciliatory, and less that was polemic in his preaching, may reasonably ad-

mit of question ; nevertheless it must be acknowledged, that in his boldest attacks upon error, he seemed to be influenced by an honest zeal for the glory of his Master, and a holy indignation against those who would either openly or secretly tarnish the luster of his Redeemer's name, or diminish aught from the honors of his cross.

It was impossible to listen to Dr. M's preaching without feeling a great variety of emotions. At one time the mind would be chained, and the reasoning powers tasked to the utmost, by some process of profound argumentation ; and for a moment, the delusion would almost be induced, that such an intellect was made for reasoning and nothing else. At another, there would be a lightning-like impulse communicated by a sudden flash of his imagination ; and his hearers would be carried by surprize into some new field of beauty, or else they would be awed by some scene of natural or moral grandeur, which combined the rapidity of the cataract and the terrors of the storm. Here there would be awful exhibitions of the law of God, and of the wrath of God in the wages of sin, and a deep and solemn communing of the soul with the realities of eternity ; and there the gospel would come out in its most attractive loveliness, and the cross would seem to be made visible to the eye of imagination and faith, and the heart would be dissolving, and the eye overflowing from the sublimity and pathos of his appeals. And then again, there would be a kind of involuntary sportiveness of fancy, an incomparable aptness of illustration, an air of biting sarcasm which bordered well nigh upon ridicule, which would for a moment cause a smile to play over the countenances of the most serious of his hearers. He was however, always dignified ; and no man sooner than he, would have shrunk from prostituting the pulpit to be an arena for vulgarity.

If there ever was a man who could make use of the lighter emotions in the pulpit to advantage, that man we think was Dr. Mason. We have strong doubts however, whether even his preaching would not have been attended with better effect, if he had used this faculty, to say the least, more sparingly ; and we are quite sure, that much positive evil must result from attempts to perform feats of this kind, where there is no native adaptation to them. We have known instances in which a desire to say something bold and striking, has led men to an utter prostration of the dignity of the pulpit ; and puerile and even vulgar anecdotes have been repeated, which, while they have made a portion of the congregation laugh, have made a larger and better portion of them hold down their heads with regret and mortification. We do not at all object to great simplicity in preaching, or to the



occasional relation of an anecdote in the way of illustration ; but we maintain, that just so far as the pulpit becomes a theater for idle story telling, or coarse and vulgar sayings, it is perverted from its true design, and becomes an engine of evil, rather than one of the most important means of good. We would say then, let the man who has even Dr. Mason's talents of moving the lighter feelings of his audience, (if such a one can be found,) use it but rarely and with great discretion ; and let others to whom God never gave this power, be contented to use only the powers they have, without forfeiting their dignity or impairing their usefulness, by an affected eccentricity. If we do not greatly mistake, there is danger to be apprehended on this subject, in connection with those gracious visitations of the Spirit which we enjoy in revivals of religion ;—danger that ministers and good ministers too, may suffer themselves in the excitement of the moment, to forget the dignity which belongs to the character of ambassadors of God, and say and do things which may bring a lasting reproach upon the ministry, and materially injure the cause which they wish to advance.

Dr. Mason's manner in the pulpit, strikingly embodied the peculiarities of his character. There was every thing in it that was fitted to make a powerful impression. His noble form, his commanding countenance, his expressive eye, his easy and graceful attitude, his majestic and flexible voice, gave him advantages for public speaking, which few men have ever enjoyed. He could be loud as the thunder, soft as the zephyr, rapid as the whirlwind. His reading of the scriptures was so perfect, that it answered well the purpose of a commentary ; and no intelligent person could listen to him without gaining more correct and enlarged views of divine truth. Much of the power of his manner consisted in the expression of his countenance. The various emotions which were prompted by different parts of his discourse, were to be seen in his face, as if it were the very mind of his soul ; and this was one grand secret of his, always enlisting the most profound attention. It is unfortunate that his sermons, with but few exceptions, were never written ; though there is no doubt that his extemporaneous delivery was highly favorable to immediate impression. There was a kindling of the spirit in his looks, a life and energy in his gesture, a perfection of nature in his intonations, which would have been incompatible with reading his discourses, or perhaps even delivering them *memoriter*. It is one proof of this, that when he was obliged towards the close of his ministry, in consequence of his infirmities, to take up the practice of reading, his preaching greatly diminished in interest, and that notwithstanding he delivered ser-

mons which were written in the days of his greatest intellectual strength and activity.

In the capacity of a teacher of youth, Dr. Mason was scarcely less distinguished, than by his pulpit talents. His learning was extensive and varied; it was not limited to those branches which were more immediately connected with his profession, but embraced almost every department in the field of classical and general literature. His knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages particularly, was critical and minute; so that he could bring out from the ancient classics, many beauties which the greater part even of more thorough students, would overlook. He was also uncommonly familiar with the whole subject of Biblical Criticism; for he had made it almost the study of his life, to ascertain the genuine meaning of God's word, and had brought to this study, not only an inquisitive and investigating mind, but a rich amount of varied acquisition. With the ample stores of knowledge which he possessed, he had a wonderful facility at communication. Instead of spreading his thoughts over an extensive surface, he brought every thing quickly to a point; and left an impression on the mind of the attentive student, so clear and strong, that it could not be easily effaced. It was a grand object with him, and one in which he admirably succeeded, to train his students to a habit of reflection;—not merely to impart knowledge, but to establish a conviction, that the great secret of intellectual improvement lies in the power of independent thought, and to bring that power into active exercise. His instruction in the theological seminary, was founded almost exclusively upon the bible. He was accustomed to recommend to his students, a course of reading on the various subjects to which their attention was directed; but he often cautioned them to beware of an improper reliance on human authorities, and to let their conclusions be based ultimately on the law and the testimony. His intercourse with the young gentlemen under his care, whether of the Academical or Theological departments, was a delightful compound of dignity and familiarity; and the consequence was, that he gained in an equal degree, their respect and affection. We have heard the testimony of many who enjoyed the privilege of his instructions, that he was in that department, a model of all that was condescending, and dignified, and paternal.

It is hardly necessary to say, that Dr. Mason bore a most important part in the public concerns of the church. He was highly gifted with wisdom to plan, and with firmness and skill to execute. The theological seminary with which he was connected, owed not only the high distinction which it gained, but its very existence chiefly to his persevering efforts; and when by reason of infirmity, he could no longer sustain its interests, it declined and finally be-

came extinct. In a deliberative assembly, when some question of magnitude came up for discussion, he often appeared with unequalled strength and majesty. It was sometimes true of him on such occasions, as he himself remarked of Hamilton, that "he rose, and towered, and soared, surpassing himself as he surpassed others."

In all the private relations of life, Dr. Mason was most amiable and exemplary. As a son, a husband, a father, he always appeared with the utmost consistency, and dignity, and tenderness. His desire for the spiritual welfare and salvation of his children, seemed paramount to almost every other; and it pleased God in his gracious sovereignty and covenant faithfulness, that this desire should be granted; for before the close of his life, each of his children had hopefully become a subject of renewing grace. As a friend, he was open, generous, and sincere; and his attachments once formed, were strong and enduring. Those who knew him best, bear the most decisive testimony to the strength and value of his friendship. Such were his powers of conversation, and such the exuberance of his good nature, that he was the life of every circle in which he moved. It is hardly necessary to add, that an acquaintance with him was extensively sought, and that his dwelling was the seat of generous hospitality.

It is much to be regretted, that Dr. Mason's writings, though certainly an invaluable legacy to the world, should be comprised exclusively of his book on Catholic Communion, in four thin octavo volumes; and of the contents of these much the larger part, are a reprint of his former publications. He has indeed left enough to secure all the immortality which an author can have on earth; but we cannot but feel regret that so few comparatively of the thoughts of such a mind should have been preserved; and we are quite sure that posterity will lament this the more, the more conversant they are with his writings. That he tasked his gigantic powers to the utmost, there can be no question; but it may reasonably be doubted, whether if he had assumed less of public responsibility and labor, and given himself more time to use his pen, he might not on the whole have served the church to better purpose; for though his influence in that case might have been less perceptibly felt, while he was living, it might have acted upon a greater number of minds after he was dead. As the mighty power of the press is now so well known, and so adequately appreciated, we cannot but think that there is a loud demand upon those who have a talent for writing, to use it in the service of the church; for if an individual writes a useful and popular book, even though it may not possess merit enough to secure it a transmission to posterity, yet it may be the means of affecting the moral destinies of ma-

ny to whom by his personal influence, he could never have access. We say then, let the press be kept constantly at work in behalf of the church; and let those who have the ability to write, diligently improve the talent; and if they should not be known to posterity, they may at least have the honor of serving their generation.

The writings of Dr. Mason, as appears from the title of his works, are chiefly Sermons and Essays; the former consisting partly of the occasional discourses which he published during his life, and partly of what were found in manuscript after his death; the latter being a reprint of various articles which were originally published in the *Christian's Magazine*. Though the sermons are masterly, and bear the image of his own mind so distinctly, that none who have known him, can fail to recognize it, yet the impression which is gained by reading them, bears no comparison with that which was made by the delivery; for in addition to the fact, that his best thoughts are said to have been extemporaneous, even when he preached a sermon, the substance of which had been written, there is an abruptness in his style, which, though it was admirably accommodated to his bold and exciting manner of delivery, is not so well adapted to the calm perusal of the study. The sermon which probably procured him more reputation than any other in the delivery, was that originally published in the *National Preacher*, entitled "The Gospel preached to the poor;" and perhaps there is no other in the collection, which on the whole, has equal claims to merit; though it must be felt by all whoever listened to it from the pulpit, that it was incomparably more grand and overpowering, than as it appears from the press. We doubt whether there has ever been a sermon preached within the limits of the American church, which has swayed, and melted, and overwhelmed an audience more than this, or which has left a deeper impression of the dignity and excellence of the gospel. Most of the published essays are more or less of a controversial character; the most important of them are on "the church," and on "episcopacy;" the latter of which are regarded by Presbyterians and Congregationalists as perfectly triumphant on the points in dispute, between them and Episcopalians. We have no doubt that most of our readers will be disposed to find out more particularly the contents of these volumes for themselves. We are sure, that whoever takes them up, will find himself in communion with a mighty mind, and will often pause in admiration as he proceeds, and will not be disposed to quit the work until he has given it a thorough and diligent perusal.

From the survey which we have now taken of the life, and character, and writings of Dr. Mason, it were impossible to resist the conclusion that he was one of the master spirits of the age. It may be said of him more emphatically than of almost any other

man, that his field was the world. Few men have had direct access to as many minds as he; but his hand was often felt where his footsteps and his voice were not heard. There is indeed scarcely any department of knowledge or action in which he has not exerted an influence; for though his direct influence has been chiefly in the line of his own profession, yet such a mind as his could not view with indifference any enterprise which had for its object the intellectual and moral elevation of his fellow men; and hence he was ready with his powerful aid, as often as any such object was proposed to him. While his influence has been so benignly and powerfully exerted not only in his own country but abroad, he has contributed not a little to elevate the American character in view of other nations; for there are few men of any nation or age with whom he might not be advantageously brought into comparison. Our own mother country whom we have sometimes thought, (perhaps as a punishment for our mischief in other days) a little backward in allowing us all the merit which we might be disposed to claim, has nevertheless promptly awarded due honor to this illustrious man; and more than once have we heard him spoken of in British circles, in a manner which was fitted, in our estimation at least, to heighten the privilege of being an American.

As Dr. Mason's name is intimately associated with the intellectual and moral character of our country, it will, as a matter of course, descend through all coming generations on the brightest page of her history. But what is still more important, his influence will be perpetuated with his name; and he will live not only in the habits of many who will come after him, but in the future destinies of the church. It is one of the most delightful reflections which a great and good man can enjoy, that his labors do not expend their influence on the generation to which he belongs; and that, even though his influence should not be acknowledged by succeeding generations, it will be written of him in heaven, that he had contributed, under God, to form and elevate their character.

Let it not be said, that owing to the exuberance and splendor of Dr. Mason's powers, he cannot be properly held up as a model to those whose intellect is of a far less commanding character. Doubtless there are few who, with the most vigorous and persevering efforts, could ever reach the eminence which he was permitted to attain; though there is as little doubt that there are many who content themselves to remain in the ranks of mediocrity, who with suitable exertion, might stand forth not only morally, but intellectually, as lights in the world. Most men are lamentably ignorant of the extent of their own powers, because they have never brought them into vigorous action. No one can calculate the amount of good which an individual of even common powers may accomplish

during an ordinary life, provided they are well directed and faithfully improved. And let him who would do most and do best, beware that he fix his eye on no common model. Nothing is more sure than this to dwarf the mind, and give a commonplace, if not a groveling character to its operations. He who has any model before him, should be sure that it is an illustrious one; and so long as the power of intellectual effort is continued to him, he ought not to be satisfied with any given amount either of acquisition or of usefulness. Let an individual of ordinary powers possess the single and elevated views, the strength of purpose and the persevering industry of Dr. Mason, and we greatly mistake if he is not in the end surprised by his own attainments and efforts, and if the world does not find occasion to record his name on the list of their benefactors.

There is much in the present state of our country and of the world—much we may say in the character of the age, to stimulate to the highest efforts of intellect, and the most faithful improvement of all the powers which God has given us. No one can doubt that this is a critical era in our country's history; and that well directed efforts of mind are of immense moment in securing the privileges we have inherited from our fathers and transmitting them to posterity. If we look abroad, we see an unwonted agitation among the nations,—portentous signs of revolution, which tell in language of no equivocal import, that the social fabric is soon to be taken down, and built again upon some improved model. The very elements of society seem to be already in a commotion, waiting for some master spirit—some plastic hand to impress upon them the character of stability, and of political and moral reform. From these and other circumstances, it results, that the age has a peculiarly impressive character; and of course, is highly susceptible of being molded by influence. Let every man then feel that this important characteristic of the times, brings upon him an increased responsibility to task himself to the utmost for the improvement of his own powers, and for the benefit of his fellow men. With the present generation more perhaps than any preceding one, may the political and moral destinies of the world be said to be entrusted. God grant that men of high and low degree may realize that they have a part to act in this eventful crisis of things; and that that part is to do all that they can to render this an age of light and virtue and purity, that its spirit may be propagated to the joy and benefit of coming generations.