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ANNALS

OF THE

AMERICAN PULPIT;

OR

COMMEMORATIVE NOTICES

OF

DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN CLERGYMEN

OF

VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS,

FROM THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTRY TO THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE.

WITH HISTORICAL INTRODUCTIONS.

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BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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VOLUME IV.
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By ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

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

With great respect and regard,

I remain truly yours,

EDWARD WALL.

JAMES PATRIOT WILSON, D. D.*

1804—1830.

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

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

health; preaching nevertheless to his congregation, as often as his health permitted. His resignation of his pastoral charge was accepted in the spring of 1830. In the course of that season he visited the city, and preached for the last time to his people. He died at his farm in Bucks County, in the utmost peace, on the 9th of December, 1830, and was buried on the 13th, in a spot selected by himself in the grave yard of Neshaminy Church. His remains lie near the tomb of the celebrated William Tennent, the founder of the "Log College."

The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the University of Pennsylvania in 1807.

In June, 1792, he was married to Elizabeth, daughter of John and Hannah Woods, of Lewes, with whom he lived but little more than three years, as she died in December, 1795. She had two children, but neither of them survived her. His attachment to this lady is said to have been, even in his own estimation, quite idolatrous. He was absent from home at the time she became dangerously ill, and was immediately sent for, but did not arrive until she had become speechless, though her reason still continued. Her eyes followed him around the room, wherever he moved, in intense earnestness, but her lips could not do their office. He hung over her, as a mother over the cradle of her dying child, in hope of some parting word of affection; but it was in vain. A lady who sat up with her corpse during the night after her decease, remarked that she could hear him all night walking the room over that in which she had died, and occasionally prostrating himself heavily upon the floor and groaning aloud. In referring to this event at a subsequent period, in some written memoranda that still remain, he remarks,—“it was in the course of providence necessary to bring me to my senses.” In May, 1798, he was married to Mary, daughter of David and Mary M. Hall, and sister of the late Governor Hall of Delaware. By this marriage he had nine children,—only two of whom survived him. Mrs. Wilson died on the 5th of January, 1839, after three months suffering from the puncture of a needle in the sole of her foot,—resulting finally in mortification.

Dr. Wilson was in person above the middle height, and had a countenance rather grave than animated, and expressive at once of strong benevolent feeling and high intelligence. In the ordinary intercourse of society, his manners were exceedingly bland, though he was as far as possible from any approach to the courtier. He was affable and communicative, and generally talked so sensibly, or so learnedly, or so profoundly, that he was listened to with earnest attention. He had some peculiarities that would sometimes excite a smile, but they would not diminish any body's respect for his character. I saw him a few times in private, and he struck me as a model of a Christian philosopher. He was uniformly gentle, urbane, and obliging, and rarely spoke without uttering something that I could wish to remember. I heard him preach one sermon, and it was throughout as consecutive and condensed as the demonstration of a problem of Euclid. I am confident that I never heard another preacher who tasked my powers of attention and reflection so much—the loss of a sentence or two would have greatly marred the impression of the entire discourse. He spoke without notes, and with great deliberation, but with as much correctness as if every word had been written. On a blank leaf of his copy of Henry Ware's Tract on "Extemporaneous Preaching," he has left the following

testimony over his signature:—"I have preached twenty years, and have never written a full sermon in my life, and never read one word of a sermon from the pulpit, nor opened a note, nor committed a sentence, and have rarely wandered five minutes at a time from my mental arrangement previously made."

Among the papers of the late Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green I found the following note addressed to him by Dr. Wilson, which is so characteristic of the writer as to be worthy of preservation. The work to which it refers seems to have been sent to Dr. G., with a view to its being noticed in the "Christian Advocate," of which he was then editor.

"3d March, 1826.

"Rev. Sir: Through undeserved mercy I still live, but am very feeble, and my lungs somewhat affected.

"Having received from a learned stranger his sublimation and corrections of Hopkinsianism, (perhaps because by some deemed to have partaken at the same fountain,) I take the liberty to send it to you, as a matter of curiosity, which, when you have glanced at it, may be returned.

"The first dissertation would require me to change my prayers. The second would invert the order of my conceptions. The third alter my Bible. The fourth make me abandon God's justice, and frustrate his grace in Jesus Christ.

"Please not to review till other copies come, lest I be blamed.

"Respectfully,

"J. P. WILSON.

"When I came to his rationale of the atonement, and found that he had exactly reached the hypothesis of Burnet, I made no more notes."

The following is a list of Dr. Wilson's publications:—Lectures upon some of the Parables and historical passages of the New Testament, 1810. An easy Introduction to the knowledge of the Hebrew language, 1812. Ridgley's Body of Divinity, with notes original and selected, 1814. An Essay on Grammar, 1817. A pamphlet entitled "Moral Agency or Natural Ability consistent with Moral Inability; being Remarks on an Essay on the Inability of sinners by a Presbyterian." By a Christian, 1819. A pamphlet entitled "Sin destitute of the apology of Inability; or Moral Inability no constituent of human nature. By a Christian, the author of 'Moral Agency.'" A Sermon on the death of the Rev. Andrew Flinn, D. D., of Charleston, S. C., 1820. An Essay on the Probation of fallen men, or the scheme of salvation founded in Sovereignty and demonstrative of justice, 1827. Common objections to Christianity proposed and answered in two dispassionate conversations, 1829. The Hope of Immortality imparted by Revelation, transmitted by tradition, countenanced by reason, betrayed by philosophy, and established by the Gospel, 1829. A Free Conversation on the unpardonable sin; wherein the Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the final Apostacy, and the Sin unto death, are shown to have been originally distinct, 1830. The Primitive Government of Christian Churches; also Liturgical Considerations. [The first part of this work was published in Numbers in the Christian Spectator, and the second, (Liturgical Considerations,) in the Philadelphian, during Dr. Wilson's life; but they were both republished in a volume, by his son, in 1833.]

FROM THE REV. THOMAS H. SKINNER, D. D.

PROFESSOR IN THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, NEW YORK.

NEW YORK, December 26, 1848.

My dear Sir : I know not that I can more effectually meet your wish in respect to Dr. Wilson in any way than by sending you a slightly modified extract from a Sermon which I preached on the occasion of his death. You are at liberty to do with it as may best suit your purpose.

“While ministers of a certain class, possessing little intellectual furniture, besides a bare knowledge of the essential truths of the Gospel, are, with warm spirits, with a most exemplary zeal, and with much success, constantly employed in applying these truths to the hearts of their fellow men, they are sometimes disposed to hold in too little esteem the labours of brethren to which nevertheless they may be more indebted than they are aware of. There are ministers of Christ whose taste, learning, and sense of duty incline them to deep research into the principles of things, to careful analysis of complex subjects, to critical investigation and minute exegesis of the sacred text, to elaborate inquiry into ecclesiastical antiquities and the opinions and productions of early days, and to the solution of all the most subtle objections that have at any time been urged by heretics and unbelievers against the true Christian faith; and without such toilsome operations at the fountains of wisdom, less curious workmen it is certain could not be supplied with some of those sweet streams of which they are content to drink, without considering sometimes to whom, next to God, they are most under obligation for the privilege. When our friend fell asleep, in what pulpit of this land was a man to be found, so enriched as himself with the fruits of these patient and perhaps too unusual reaches of mind? Our ears never listened to a preacher whose common discourses discovered as rich treasures of recondite learning. And what more surprised us than the extent and variety of his acquisitions, was the ease, and simplicity, and nice exactness with which, on all occasions, he used them. In proportion to the depth and difficulty of his subjects, his tongue was ready and free as now in its favourite sphere,—expressing the most subtle distinctions; pursuing the most refined and complicate argumentations; collecting, criticising, paraphrasing, Scriptures hard to be understood; reciting out of ancient and uncommon books, historical testimonies and statements of doctrine; without the assistance of notes, and yet with a fluent precision and perspicuity of language, which no such assistance could have improved.

“Another recollection of him which deepens exceedingly our sense of the loss we sustain by his departure is that, with his great elevation in other respects, he united in a rare degree, what transcends all other excellence, and is the highest proof of true greatness,—a catholic and charitable spirit. We never knew one who scrutinized more severely the evidences of doctrine; and he was consequently, when convinced, not liable to be soon shaken in mind; nor did he lightly esteem the truth, which, with so much diligence and honesty, he had acquired; or think it unimportant that others should be ignorant of it, much less that they should falsify or pervert it. But his reading was too various, his observation too wide, his acquaintance with the history of theological strifes too ample, his persuasions too lively that the differences among religious parties are rather referable to a sectarian than a truth seeking spirit, and, while they anathematize one another, may be consistent with the existence in some degree of real piety in both, and their ultimate reconciliation in Heaven—he was, in a word, too sound minded and enlightened a man to be a fierce champion of an ecclesiastical shibboleth, or to cast those out of the Church whom he might suspect of having no readiness in framing to pronounce it right. He was among

the worthiest of those ministers of our own denomination, who, espousing no side in our debates about orthodoxy, are willing to let those debates proceed as long as they threaten no schism; but when that danger is seen, throw in their influence as a balance wheel in a vast machine, where movement without such a regulator would presently stop with a terrific crash and damage. Such was the spirit of this high souled man; and who of us can consider the present state,—might we not almost say *crisis* of affairs in our Church,—without sighing deeply in his spirit, that the voice which he could raise, were he here in the midst of us, is not to be heard again in our assemblies.

“Nor was it merely in his high place as a minister of Christ, that he singularly honoured his Master. He was distinguished by simplicity as his disciple, not less than by gifts as his representative, and it is when these two exist in union that they become worthy of admiration. What a charm is there in gifts, when simplicity exercises them; and how venerable is simplicity when it invests illustrious gifts. Never have we seen the person in whom simplicity dwelt in a higher degree. Whether in his public ministrations or in private life, this eminent man was unassuming as a little child, claiming no distinctions above the plainest individual, and appearing to be conscious of no superiority to him in any kind of excellence. Such exemplifications of the spirit of Christ are not so common amongst us that we shall suffer little by this privation. How often does the Church, not to say the world, concede reputation for greatness, when it is no sooner received than it becomes manifest there was a mistake by the immediate taking on of stateliness which it occasions. Such a transcendent instance of the reverse of this weakness was not to be lowly rated by true judges of excellence, and by them at least the loss of it will not be unlamented.

“With such rare simplicity in such a man, it was unavoidable that other great virtues should be united: in two of which especially he was almost excessive. How did justice, as beaming from his example, rebuke those inconsistent religionists, who, by their *pious*, would fain make atonement for their *dishonest*, actions; and how did his generosity, a kindred principle, put to shame those covetous professors, who uphoard treasure for themselves, as if orphans, and widows, and the children of want, had ceased from among men. Time fails me to speak of his other high excellencies; the strength and calmness of his feeling, his gravity and cheerfulness, his rare pleasantness, and exhaustless resources in conversation, and his most exemplary manner of life in his family. I shall leave his defects to be reported by those who would remind us that human nature is imperfect; only begging them, if they censure his excitability, and his too great confinement at home, to imitate his nobleness in retraction, and to remember what an invalid he was the last twenty years, how open his door ever stood to visitors, and what a good use he made of retirement. It being our purpose by these remarks to stir and strengthen in our minds a just sense of the dispensation, which has taken him from us, we choose rather to remember to what a height of excellence he attained, than that he did not rise beyond it.

“It does not alleviate the sadness of the event we deplore, that it occurred not unexpectedly, but by means of a very lingering illness, which slowly enfeebled his frame, until it could no longer perform the least function of life. On his own account we rejoice that the days of his patient suffering are ended; but he had not yet numbered threescore years and ten, and the force of his mind was never greater than at the moment he ceased to breathe.

“He departed prematurely, in the full strength of his intellectual powers; and that disease should have so long interfered with the use of those powers before his hour came, only gave cause in a less degree for the same grief which his death more loudly calls for. But let us now cease from recollections of what we have lost, whether by the infirmity of his years, or the too soon completion

of them, to secure in our breasts, if possible, an indelible stamp of the precious lesson of his dying conduct.

“He glorified God in his death. Having protracted his pastoral labours until his breath became too short for the purpose of continuous utterance, he reluctantly concluded, as he was wont to say to his friends, that his work for the Church and his God was done, and all that remained for him now was to prepare for his change. And how seriously did he set himself about that most momentous of all the undertakings that mortal men are concerned with; choosing, as the scene of it, a country retreat, and there amid the quiet for which he always pined, ordering his conversation and reading, his prayers and meditations, with constant reference to the great event—whereby, while he established his own heart in the faith of the Gospel, the hope of immortality, and confidence in the fullness of God’s forgiving mercy, he became so instinct with these Divine themes, that with the pen of a ready writer, he indited for the edification of survivors a short treatise on each of them. His favourite books now were those of the most spiritual and heavenly strain, whereof the ‘Saints Rest’ of Baxter was almost always found with the Bible upon the stand beside him. Of Baxter’s work especially he would speak in strong terms of commendation, at the same time remarking—‘there is no book to be compared with the Bible, and if I might prefer one part of that blessed book before others, I would say I love the Psalms the best; I can always find in them something more expressive of my feelings than my own language.’ At the last Communion service of the Church within whose bounds he resided, which was but a little while before his death, he took part in the distribution of the sacred symbols; and in a manner which revealed his assurance that he should never so officiate again. Solemn from a sense of a near eternity, and with a heart enlarged with the love of Christ, and the hope of very soon being with Him,—he addressed his fellow-worshippers on the great things of their common faith, far beyond his strength. His soul henceforth spread her wings for the world of rest. He said to a friend,—‘I have a strange difficulty, and you will perhaps think strangely of it; I am at a loss what to pray for;’—and added, in a most solemn tone, and with his eyes lifted to Heaven,—‘God knows I am willing that whatever He pleases shall be done.’ His triumph over the fear of death was complete. ‘I have,’ said he, ‘been looking the case between God and myself, over and over and over again, and though I see enough to justify God in casting me off, a thousand times and more, my conviction of my interest in Christ is so firm, that I cannot make myself afraid; the only thing I fear is, that I have not fears enough.’ He remarked on the last Sabbath evening of his life, ‘I am almost home, and I thank God that I am. I went astray from Him, but in his rich mercy He brought me back. I am unworthy of the least of his mercies, and if I may lie down beside his footstool, or if He will even put me under it, I will take the very lowest place in Heaven.’ He needed some refreshment, and when the cup was handed to him, he took it and said, ‘O God, bless this cup—I think I have a covenant right to it.’ A few hours before he died, he asked a brother in the ministry to pray for him, and specified this petition—‘pray that God will do with me just as He pleases.’ ‘Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.’”

Hoping, my dear Sir, that you may have great assistance and success in the work that you are engaged in,

I am, with the highest respect, yours,

THOMAS H. SKINNER.

FROM THE REV. WILLIAM PATTON, D. D.

NEW YORK, March 13, 1848.

My dear Brother: I knew the Rev. Dr. James P. Wilson; for my earliest recollections of the pulpit are associated with him. So far as known to me, his was the first church that I ever attended,—my parents being members of that congregation. He was a man of strong peculiarities arising from the strength of his mind and affections. His sense of right was not only clear and vigorous but powerfully influential. Before his conversion, when practising at the Bar, he secured to himself the enviable reputation of “the honest lawyer.” He not only would not take advantage of any mistake on the part of an opponent, but would candidly admit the points of strength and justice which lay on that side. He would refuse to defend a client who obviously had the wrong side, and uniformly advised him to go and settle the business without delay.

Naturally Dr. Wilson was of a highly excitable temperament, but he was enabled by grace so to keep it in subjection that it seldom gained the mastery. Perhaps an exception should be made when engaged in a close argument—then he could not bear any interruption. I remember two incidents which will illustrate my meaning. Once, while he was preaching, a young child in the gallery began to fret and made some little noise. Immediately the Doctor turned round, and said with evident irritation—“Take that child out—Take that child out;” and then proceeded with his discourse. At another time, perceiving some mischievous tendencies in one of his sons, sitting in a pew near the pulpit, he stopped abruptly in his discourse, and said,—“Sammy, go home; go home;”—motioning at the same time with his hand towards the door. Any gesture with the Doctor was the certain sign of an unusual degree of emotion.

He was peculiar in the use of the first person plural; always saying,—“we think” or “we advise,” &c. Once when lecturing on a difficult portion of Scripture, after giving the opinions of some half dozen or more of learned commentators, with his reasons for not adopting them, he said,—“Now you will ask, what is *our* opinion: *we* as an *individual* think,” &c.

When speaking of Nicodemus, as referred to in the third chapter of John, he would uniformly say,—“There was a *gentleman* of the Pharisees called Nicodemus.” And when commenting on the parable of the ten Virgins, he used to call them the “ten *young ladies*.”

Perhaps he was the only clergyman in the United States, who had not only read all the Greek and Latin fathers, but who almost literally lived among them. He was perfectly familiar with them all, and knew the peculiar views of each. All who have read the articles, signed, “The Lay Elder,” in the Christian Spectator, can form some idea of the extent of his Patristical learning. It is the current tradition that among the last efforts that he ever made from the pulpit, he recommended to his people, so far as they had opportunity, to make themselves familiar with the Greek and Latin Fathers. His fondness for this department of study had grown almost into a passion, and he was desirous that his people should reap the advantage from this kind of intercourse with the men of other ages, which he thought he had received himself.

He was careful to a fault not to give the least trouble to his friends; and his solicitude in this respect not unfrequently led him to decline their urgent invitations to pass some time with them in the summer at their country residences. And when, as a very rare thing, he accepted their invitations, he was sure to carry with him his own towel, and use it instead of the one placed in his room. There was not the semblance of pride or fastidiousness in this: it originated simply in his unwillingness to give trouble, where it could possibly be avoided.

He was eminently the friend of young ministers, and was always happy in furnishing them with the results of his experience and his investigations of the Word of God. He seemed particularly fond of communicating to them the conclusions at which he had arrived in respect to the meaning of difficult passages of Scripture; and there are not a few who have availed themselves of his profound researches.

Conceiving that his publisher had not acted fairly concerning a book that he had printed for him, he would not allow his next work,—I think it was his work on the Principles of Grammar,—to be published by any bookseller; but had it printed and then sold in the store of a personal friend, who was in the hardware business; nor could the book be procured except at that particular place.

Every body, who has any knowledge of Dr. Wilson, knows that he was an eminently great and good man. But he was also a man of strongly marked peculiarities, or if you please, eccentricities; and I have thought that I should better subserve your purpose by attempting to give some idea of these, than by dwelling upon those more general characteristics with which his usefulness was chiefly identified.

Yours truly,

WILLIAM PATTON.

FROM THE REV. EZRA STILES ELY, D. D.

PHILADELPHIA, October 1, 1847.

My dear Brother: I cheerfully comply with your request, though I am not sure that I have any thing to communicate that will materially aid you in your contemplated sketch.

The Rev. James Patriot Wilson, D. D., I believe, never wrote his name in full,—not because he disliked it, but because he was even fastidiously modest. As his father was a noted Whig of the American Revolution, he intended his son should be, as he was, a decided republican *Patriot*. Both father and son were honest Presbyterians, and yet they adopted a somewhat modified form of Presbyterianism, verging a little nearer to Congregationalism than some of their co-presbyters.

When James A. Bayard, the distinguished Senator in Congress from Delaware, was a member of the Bar with Mr. Wilson, the former was wont to say that the latter gentleman was the only antagonist in any cause, who broke his rest; but that when he was to meet Wilson in the morning, it kept him studying all night.

Doctor Wilson was very kind and hospitable in his social intercourse; but he could not endure the thought of remaining under obligations for any favour conferred. As an instance of this peculiarity, the Rev. Mr. P——, a brother in the ministry, who was intimate with him, gave him a small root of rhu-barb, when he had occasion for some; and Dr. Wilson immediately divided a small pocket memorandum, composed of four goat skin leaves, and insisted that his friend should receive half. When Mr. P. bantered him on the subject, he replied that he could not bear to receive the least gift without making some return.

He once refused to receive some oranges from an old lady of his congregation, saying in his usual style of regal plurality,—“We can buy oranges when we wish for them.” Not long after, at his own house, he offered the same lady a fine large apple from his mantel-piece; but she, shrugging up her shoulders, declined receiving it, saying,—“We can purchase apples, when we wish for them.”

In his private intercourse with men, Dr. Wilson was instructive, gentle, and amusing, but in public debate he was ardent and impatient of contradiction. On account of the regret which he often experienced in the review of his undue

excitement on these occasions, he frequently absented himself from meetings of the Presbytery, and sometimes expressed an unwillingness, "lest he should put his hand into the lion's mouth," to attend the meetings of the General Assembly. He was as confiding as a child in respect to persons against whom some prejudice had not been introduced into his mind; and when convinced of error, no one could be more prompt than he in acknowledging it.

I have heard Dr. Ashbel Green say of himself and Dr. Wilson that they were both proud men; but "I am proud," said Dr. Green, "and know it; he is proud and is ignorant of it." You may say in truth that Dr. Wilson was a great and good man, having a mixture of pride with his humility, and of severity with his mildness; that he had more learning than almost any of his contemporaries; that he was admired and beloved by his congregation; and fell asleep in Jesus with the simplicity of a babe in Christ, and yet with all the dignity and profound anticipations of a Christian Philosopher.

Yours very affectionately,

EZRA STILES ELY.

FROM THE REV. JOHN HALL, D. D.

TRENTON, June 12, 1857.

My dear Sir: Whoever recollects Dr. Wilson must be conscious of a revival of the reverential impression that was produced by his presence. His tall figure, slow gait, placid and benevolent, but fixed and thoughtful countenance, took the notice of every one who met him. In his company, or in the pulpit, the same quiet visible dignity, insured the highest deference from the spectator. For some prophylactic purpose, Dr. Wilson was in the habit of bleeding himself with a lancet, and whatever sanitary effect the depletion may have had, it maintained that paleness which, in connection with the prominence and regularity of the features, and the settled composure of the countenance, suggested the idea of a noble statue. Death did but little to increase the resemblance to the marble; and I am sure that those who saw that remarkable face, after the spirit had passed away, will never forget its more than artistic beauty.

Dr. Wilson's attractiveness as a preacher, was doubtless owing, in some measure, to these physical peculiarities. Whether his sermons were always understood or not by every one, his personal appearance, and the invariable solemnity of his manner, alike in praying and preaching, appeared to impart a grateful seriousness to the congregation. There was no animation, but that which was spiritual and intellectual. During all the years within my memory, (which were those only after the removal of the place of worship from Market Street to Washington Square,) he sat through the sermon on a high-seated chair: after reading the text he closed the Bible, and set it aside; he would then discourse for a full hour, without a gesture, and scarcely with any change of intonation—his whole manner indicative of the most complete self-possession and ease, without the slightest symptom of forgetfulness of respect to the audience. In warm weather, he sometimes wore a light gown, and had a fan convenient to his hand which he would use gently, for minutes together, as he proceeded in his sermon, without the least embarrassment to himself or his hearers. Indeed, the fanning came in quite congruously with the whole familiarity of the posture, and the conversational flow of the discourse.

The sermons themselves were highly appreciated and enjoyed by those who had a taste for critical exegesis, and who could and would give attention to a close, continuous series of reasoning. Dr. Wilson did not conceal the steps of grammatical and philosophical study by which he had come to his interpretation of the text, nor the adverse conclusions of other students, whether as to translation or doctrine. It is an extraordinary and suggestive fact, that with such a man-

ner, and with such matter, and at such length, Dr. Wilson kept the attention of large audiences, year after year, so long as his health permitted his voice to be heard over his spacious church. One reason, however, was, that, having his eye free to look upon the whole congregation, and having to draw his calm, logical discourse from the stores of his mind, without the least assistance from notes, he could not endure disturbances which most clergymen can, or have to, tolerate. Many anecdotes are related of the coolness with which he disposed of the causes of such embarrassment; at one time pausing for an instant to say, in the direction of his own pew, "Samuel, my son, go home;" at other times, with equal publicity directing a restless child, or wandering dog, to be removed.

I ought not to convey the impression that Dr. Wilson's sermons were wholly of the erudite description. Sometimes the entire discourse was upon the commonplace topics, and, after the conclusion of his closest arguments, was impressed in a few sentences of appeal to the emotions, which had the greater effect from its being unusual. The style of his published productions is stiff and obscure: he was always more given to reading than writing, and his experience at the Bar had helped his readiness of utterance; but his extemporaneous sermons were as plain in their language, as they were easy, natural and flowing, in their delivery. His public prayers were unimpassioned, but made deeply devout by their calm solemnity, and the manifest evidence that his words were indeed spoken under a sense of the Divine presence.

Dr. Wilson's private life was very recluse. His taste, perhaps, even more than his feeble constitution, kept him in his study, and made him willing to seclude himself from social intercourse with those he most esteemed, and whom he was happy to meet when circumstances brought it about. His heart was not cold: he was not indifferent to the condition of the people of his charge; but he thought he could accomplish most, according to his position, by devoting himself to the work of the pulpit. He was a very independent and liberal churchman; and would probably have liked to see some modification of the existing rules of our system. He had no relish for mere forms, or reverence for their authority. He did not, for instance, approve of the Presbyterian inquest of Sessional Records. I think he would have preferred throwing open the Communion table, like the other ordinances, to all worshippers upon their own responsibility, after proper instruction. But he was not the man to disturb the Church by urging his peculiar opinions.

The last days of this eminent man were marked by the humility, sincerity, quietness, which were so characteristic of his life. They were spent in the retirement of the country, and throughout, in the full possession of his faculties. He used to say, at that time, that if he had a partiality for any one part of the Scriptures, it was for the Psalms, as he could always find in them expressions for his own emotions. He was so peaceful in the view of death, that he tried in vain to find something to arouse his fears, and said that this absence of natural dread of the great change, was the only thing that gave him uneasiness. He called himself "the unworthiest of the unworthy," but found no limit to his confidence in the efficacy of the righteousness of the Divine Substitute, and looked, with ineffable hope, to the possession of a place, however humble, in his presence.

Regretting that my recollections of this venerable man are so circumscribed, and glad to make even the slightest contribution, in honour of his memory,

I remain very truly yours,

JOHN HALL.

FROM THE REV. ALBERT BARNES.

PHILADELPHIA, February 15, 1851.

Rev. and dear Sir: In your letter of January 27th, you request me to furnish you some notices of the late Rev. James P. Wilson, D. D., my predecessor in the pastoral office in the First Presbyterian Church in this city. You ask only for my personal recollections of him in connection with the general impression he made upon me.

My personal acquaintance with Dr. Wilson was very slight. I became Pastor of the Church in June, 1830. Dr. Wilson had resigned his pastoral charge about a year before, and had retired to a farm which he had purchased in Bucks County in this State. I had, on one occasion, about the year 1827, heard him preach, but had no acquaintance with him, and my intercourse with him was limited to the few visits which I made to him in Hartsville, after I became Pastor of the Church. He never visited the city after I succeeded him in the pastoral office.

His general character as a preacher is too well known, and will be too fully described by others, to make it proper that I should attempt any description of it. On the only occasion on which I ever heard him preach, several circumstances, however, struck me as remarkable. His personal appearance was very impressive and solemn. He was very pale and apparently feeble. He sat in the pulpit, and as he was accustomed to do, used a large fan. He had a very dignified air, and his whole manner was calm, collected and solemn. What first arrested my attention particularly in his pulpit performances, was the manner in which he read the Scriptures. It was a chapter in the Gospel by John. His reading was accompanied by brief explanatory remarks,—I thought the most clear and interesting exposition of the Bible that I had ever witnessed. It was so simple, so plain, so striking, that at the time it occurred to me that he could better prepare a Commentary for the use of Sunday schools, than any man I had ever met with. His sermon was equally clear, impressive and solemn, and what was most remarkable about it, was a very clear and beautiful exposition of the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which he quoted from memory, and commented on as accurately as if he had had the passage before him. He used no notes of any kind. His preaching at first seemed to be merely conversational. He sat and *talked* to the people before him, as a gentleman might be expected to do in his own parlour. Soon, however, I forgot entirely the man—his fan, his sitting, and his somewhat singular habit of lifting up and down his watch chain; when, for a moment, he laid down his fan, and I became wholly absorbed in what he was *saying*, and to me it was then of no importance what he was *doing*, or whether he made many gestures or none. I have never in my life found myself more absorbed in the *subject* on which a public speaker was discoursing, than I was on that occasion. And what was true of myself seemed to be true of the entire congregation.

My personal acquaintance with him, which I have said was all subsequent to that, was while he resided at Hartsville. He was in feeble health, and had removed there, as he informed me, that, among other reasons, he might have the advantage of retirement and leisure to reflect on the great change which he did not regard as remote. He had withdrawn from all the duties of a pastor, and at the same time from all active participation in ecclesiastical affairs. Those he regarded as appropriately belonging to the pastors of the churches. As I knew him personally, he was as perfect a model as I have ever seen of a Christian gentleman. He was kind and courteous in an eminent degree; he was dignified and urbane in his manner; he was affable and instructive in his conversation; he took a deep interest in the affairs of his farm, and took a pleasure in showing

me his improvements, and stating his plans; he kept himself, and, I think, intended to, from the turmoils of the Church and the world; he employed much of his time in his favourite studies, yet gradually more and more limiting his reading to books of practical religion. To me personally he rendered essential service. He endorsed and defended the sentiments which I preached, and his entire influence was exerted to secure my being happily settled among the people of his former charge. I regard it as among the most cherished recollections of the past that I was permitted to form this acquaintance with him, and I owe much of the peace and comfort of my ministry here to the fact that, for a period of six months, in his intercourse with his people who visited him, and in every way in which he had occasion to exert any influence, he commended me to his people, and helped me, when young, by his counsel, as I was entering on a most arduous field of labour.

I am very respectfully and truly yours,

ALBERT BARNES.

UZAL OGDEN, D. D.*

1805—1822.

UZAL OGDEN was a descendant of David Ogden, one of the early settlers of Newark, and a son of Uzal Ogden, who was a highly respectable member, and a Warden, of the Episcopal Church. He was born in Newark, (one authority has it Newton, Sussex County,) N. J., about the year 1744. His education, immediately preparatory to entering the ministry, was conducted by the Rev. Dr. Chandler, a distinguished Episcopal clergyman, of Elizabethtown. He went to England and received both Deacon's and Priest's orders, in the Chapel of the Episcopal Palace at Fulham, Middlesex, from the then Bishop of London, on the 21st of September, 1773. At the same time, he received from the same Prelate a commission to "preach in Sussex County, or elsewhere, within the Province of New Jersey, in North America."

After his return to this country, he married Mary, daughter of Samuel Gouverneur, of New Jersey. They had seven children,—four sons and three daughters. His wife's death preceded his own by many years. Two of his children,—a son and a daughter, still (1857) survive.

For several years after he commenced his ministry, he laboured as a missionary chiefly in Sussex County, N. J.; but in April 1779, Trinity Parish in Newark being without a Rector,—his father, then a Warden, was requested to write to him to desire him to come and visit them. Whether any further negotiation took place at that time does not appear; but in November, 1785, a definite invitation to the Rectorship was extended to him, which he finally accepted in 1788,—the parish having been vacant nine or ten years. During a part of this time, Mr. Ogden had officiated in New York, and had occasionally supplied the Church of which he subsequently became Rector. After he assumed the Rectorship, he preached

* MSS. from his granddaughter,—Miss H. M. Rood; Hon. Chief Justice Hornblower; Archer Gifford, Esq.; and Samuel H. Congar, Esq.