

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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VOLUME III.

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NEW YORK:  
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS  
530 BROADWAY.  
1858.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1856.

BY ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

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

## HEZEKIAH BALCH, D. D.\*

1769—1810.

HEZEKIAH BALCH was born of pious parents in Harford County, Md., in the year 1741. While he was yet a child, his father removed his family to an elevated and salubrious tract of country in Mecklenburg County, N. C.; and it was here that the subject of this sketch passed most of his early years.

In 1758, he was admitted as a student of the College of New Jersey, at the recommendation of the Rev. John Rodgers, (afterwards Dr. Rodgers of New York,) and was graduated there in 1762. For a considerable time after his graduation, he was engaged in teaching a school in Fauquier County, Va. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Newcastle between the meetings of Synod in 1768 and 1769. Soon afterwards we find him labouring as a missionary within the bounds of the Presbytery of Hanover, then reaching from the Potomac indefinitely towards the Pacific. For the increase of his usefulness, this Presbytery ordained him as an evangelist, on the 8th of March, 1770. The Synod of New York and Philadelphia, at their next sessions, constituted him and six other ordained ministers, the Presbytery of Orange.

It was during his ministrations in North Carolina that Mr. Balch first made his acquaintance with the young lady who became his wife. Her name was Hannah Lewis. She was a person of fine intellect and great personal attractions, but was, in after life, occasionally under some degree of mental derangement, which proved a great trial to her husband, and a serious embarrassment in the training of their younger children. They had six children,—four sons and two daughters. The eldest daughter became the wife of the Rev. (afterwards Dr.) Robert Henderson. After the death of Mrs. Balch,—about the year 1808,—he was married to Ann Lucky, a native of Pennsylvania, who removed to Tennessee in 1795 or 1796, and who was also a lady of excellent character. Her father was Robert Lucky, a native of New York. She died in Jonesborough, in 1835, aged seventy-two, having had no children.

Mr. Balch felt encouraged to bestow a portion of his labours on some of the destitute parts of Pennsylvania, and with a view to this, obtained a dismissal from Orange Presbytery to join that of Donegal, between the meetings of Synod in 1774 and 1775. For about one year he supplied the Presbyterians in the village of York. After his return to the Presbytery of Hanover, which had ordained him, he received more frequent notices of the growing demands for ministerial services among the numerous Presbyterian settlers in the part of North Carolina, West of the Alleghany mountains. Having made no small proof of his ministry, from 1769 to 1784, on the Atlantic slope near their Eastern side, and being urged by the zeal and enterprise of the Gospel pioneer to present himself where most needed, he formed his determination to cross the mountains, and cast in his lot with the people of God in the West.

\*MS. from Rev. Dr. Coffin.—Foote's Sketches of N. C.

It was not much before the date of the charter of the Presbytery of Abingdon in 1785,—the first on the Western waters, within what is now Tennessee,—in which his name appears with those of two other petitioners and original members, the Rev. Messrs. Samuel Doak and Charles Cummings—that he removed with his family into the vast Western wilderness; where there roamed at large, in untamed ferocity, the Cherokee Indians,—furious with jealousy of the white population, that were then rapidly taking possession of their favourite hunting grounds. Here Mr. Balch, by reason of his age and experience, was called to take part in organizing churches. Among these was the First Presbyterian Church in Greenville, of which, ere long, he became the pastor; and it grew under his ministrations to be the largest in the Valley of the Holston and Tennessee. His most frequent exchanges of labour, as well as his most intimate consultations at this period, were with the Rev. Samuel Doak, who had settled somewhat earlier at Salem Church, Washington County; where he had opened a private classical school, which was the germ of one of the most important institutions that have been established in the South West.

It was mainly through the combined influence of these two brethren, that Dr. Watts' Version of the Psalms was introduced, instead of the former one by Rouse, into use in the churches in that region. The measure had to encounter violent opposition, and was not a little prejudiced by the indiscreet zeal of some of its advocates. Mr. Balch preached a Sermon on the subject, at the opening of the Presbytery of Abingdon, in October, 1786, which produced a great effect at the time, and which was published seven years afterwards, under the title—"Gospel Liberty in singing the praises of God, stated, illustrated, and urged." This sermon, with other concurrent means that were used, wrought a gradual change in public opinion, until the object which the Sermon contemplated was finally accomplished.

There was one procedure in which Mr. Balch and Mr. Doak were associated, after their removal to Tennessee, which was at once too remarkable and too characteristic to be omitted. By reason of very high waters keeping their brethren of the Presbytery away from them at the time and place of one of their fall sessions, they found themselves alone, except some few elders. The meeting was specially important, as the Presbytery had expected to license a candidate, whose trials had almost been gone through, and whose labours were impatiently called for by deplorable destitutions. After waiting in vain for absent brethren, they united with the elders present in prayer for Divine direction; and when they had held a free and satisfactory consultation, they opened and constituted as a Presbytery; finished the remaining trials of the candidate; licensed him to preach the Gospel, and appointed his labours for the next six months, or in other words, till the next stated sessions of Presbytery. They made a faithful record of their proceedings, and pledged themselves to each other, under consent and order of Presbytery, to attend together the next meeting of Synod; (for it was before the formation of the General Assembly;) submit their Records for review; meet any censure for irregularity; and state what they believed were the justifiable reasons of their procedure. A journey of six hundred miles on horseback brought them to Philadelphia, seasonably for the meeting of Synod. When the Committee, charged with the review of their Records, were called upon to report, the speaker and his fellow reviewer were thrown into such a convulsive and half suppressed titter, at what they

regarded the wild vagrancy of their brethren in the backwoods, that they could scarcely compose themselves sufficiently to make an announcement of the irregularity. But though the Assembly were at first prepared to condemn the procedure, yet, upon hearing Mr. Balch's full and pathetic explanation, they were perfectly satisfied, and dismissed the matter with the most kindly spirit, and without a disapproving word.

Mr. Balch identified himself with the political troubles growing out of the formation of the State of Franklin. In consequence of this, he fell into a controversy with the Rev. William Graham of Virginia, who addressed a letter to him through the press, which was made the ground of an ecclesiastical process against the writer before the Old Synod; and when the General Assembly was formed, the cause fell under the jurisdiction of the Synod of Virginia.

About the year 1793, Mr. Balch had conceived, matured, and communicated to some of his friends, the plan of Greenville College. When the Territorial Legislature met in 1794, he applied for a Charter, and the granting of it—by which also he was constituted President and ex-officio a Trustee—was the first act of that Body; and he was allowed to have a plat of ground for the College near his own dwelling. When a copy of the Charter was delivered to Mr. B., an influential member of the Assembly said to him—“Now, Sir, you will have to travel and collect funds to put the College in operation, as George Whitefield did for his Orphan House.” Mr. Balch replied that he had indulged no other expectation.

The next year, (1795,) he visited New England to collect funds for the new institution; and in that visit may be said to have originated a theological controversy which gave a somewhat polemical character to his whole future life. The full history of that controversy is to be gathered only from the Records of the different Ecclesiastical Bodies in which it was carried on; but some of the most prominent facts in connection with it will be found in the subjoined communication from the venerable Dr. Coffin, whose testimony will not be impaired, in the view of any body who knew him, by the fact that he is understood to have sympathized somewhat with Mr. Balch in his theological speculations. As his account, however, terminates with Mr. B.'s being acquitted with an admonition from the General Assembly in 1798, it may not be amiss to state that this was by no means the termination of the controversy. Previous to his trial before the Assembly, a civil suit had been instituted with a view to dispossess him and his adherents of the meeting house; and while this was pending, it was attempted to eject him from the pulpit by force. In the midst of a most tumultuous scene that occurred the Sabbath after his return from the Assembly, he retired with a large part of his congregation to a wide spreading tree, a short distance from the church, and there read the papers relating to his trial and acquittal by the Assembly. He subsequently performed Divine service there for several months; and such was his attachment to the spot that he intimated a wish to be buried there, provided it could be done without impropriety. Though his congregation was now divided into two, the greater part remained with him, and, as might have been expected, regarded both him and his theological system with increased favour. The decision of the law-suit restored the meeting house to him and his congregation, as the ascertained majority,—and in due time they resumed their worship in it.

In October following his trial before the Assembly, several charges were brought against him, before the Synod of the Carolinas, by a reference from the Union Presbytery,—the most grave of which was that he had acted with duplicity in making certain statements after his return from the General Assembly that were inconsistent with what he had said before that Body. Most of the charges were pronounced unsustainable, but the one just mentioned was considered as proved, in consequence of which Mr. B. was suspended from his office as a minister, until the Presbytery of Union, to which he belonged, having become satisfied of his penitence, should see fit to restore him. At the same time the sentence of suspension from the office of elder and from the Communion of the Church was pronounced upon four of the elders who had appeared against Mr. Balch, “for the impropriety and irregularity of their course.” Both parties expressed their submission to the judgment of Synod, and received a suitable admonition from the Moderator.

In 1800, Mr. Balch and several others, were constituted, by their own request, a New Presbytery, by the name of Greenville Presbytery. The same year he preferred a charge before the Synod against the Presbytery of Abingdon for having ordained his successor in the Mount Bethel Church, before they had settled their pecuniary accounts with himself, and for having ordained a man of questionable orthodoxy.

The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by Williams College in 1806.

When the Rev. (afterwards Dr.) Charles Coffin took up his permanent residence in Tennessee, about the beginning of the year 1805, he became associated with Dr. Balch in the labours of both the pulpit and the College. Dr. B. continued to labour in both relations as much and as long as he was able, though for the last two or three years of his life, his increasing infirmities rendered him incapable of severe or continuous exertion. He died after a brief but most distressing illness in April, 1810.

It has already been stated that one of Dr. Balch’s daughters was married to the Rev. Robert Henderson. She died, in her twenty-fifth year, on the 11th of March, 1795; and, according to the account of her last hours, written by her husband and published in the New-York Missionary Magazine of 1802, there has rarely been exhibited a more strongly marked scene of Christian triumph. Her father, who arrived just in time to see her die, asked her several questions designed to bring out the state of her mind in regard to his favourite doctrine of “unconditional submission;” and he expressed himself perfectly satisfied with her answers.

It is now (1857) several years since the last of Dr. Balch’s children deceased. Several of his grandchildren entered the ministry, but not till some time after his death. His adopted son, the nephew and foster-child of his second wife,—*Seth J. W. Lucky*, was graduated at Greenville College; has been, for several years, on the Bench in Tennessee, first as a Circuit Judge, and now as a Chancellor, and is not only an exemplary and influential member, but an active and useful elder, of the Presbyterian Church in Jonesboro’. It was in his house that the second Mrs. Balch spent her last years.

## FROM THE REV. CHARLES COFFIN, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF GREENVILLE COLLEGE.

GREENE COUNTY, Tenn., March 30, 1850.

Rev. and dear Brother: I have been casting about me for some time to see if I could not find some person more competent to do justice to the character of the Rev. Dr. Hezekiah Balch than myself; but time has made such desolating work with his contemporaries that I am almost ready to say that I am the only one left to testify concerning him. I have, therefore, determined to make an effort to comply with your request; though, in doing so, I feel bound to say that I am quite aware that I am undertaking a task of no small delicacy. Dr. Balch, more than almost any other man of his day, was involved in controversy; and was called to answer for alleged theological errors at each of the several Church Courts to which he was amenable. His most vigorous opposers were undoubtedly conscientious and excellent men, and I would not even seem to cast a shade upon their memories. But it is no reflection upon either him or them to admit that both were fallible, and *that* doubtless must appear in what I shall feel obliged to say in performing the service you have allotted to me. I cherish Dr. Balch's memory with affectionate veneration, and am glad that you propose to make him the subject of an enduring record. I knew him most intimately, having lived several years under his roof, and my family with me the latter and larger part of the time.

My first sight of this interesting man was in the summer of 1795, in the town of Newburyport, my native place, where I was then engaged in the study of Theology. The South Western Territory had recently been organized. At his suggestion, the charter of Greenville College had been granted by its first legislative Act, but without any provision of funds to enable him, as the President, to make it useful. After a successful visit to Charleston, S. C., to procure donations and endowments, he passed through the Middle and Eastern States, as far as Portland in Maine; and I afterwards found that both the President and Board of Trustees were well satisfied with the amount that was obtained. I heard him preach twice in different churches, and enjoyed his conversation at my father's house. His personal appearance was prepossessing,—with a dark coloured, lustrous, commanding eye, a full habit and erect frame of body; and his address was animating and full of benignity, both in the house of God and the private circle. His preaching was evangelical, hearty and impressive. The general bearing of his manner fastened itself on my memory as being well designated by the following words in his first sermon:—"I now come to the application, which I ever think to be the life of preaching." When he called the next day, my father, after making his donation, spread before him on the table Dr. Morse's first large map containing the South Western Territory; thinking to gain from him, as he did, some further knowledge of his country's Geography. I was myself very much interested while the President pointed out the ranges of the mountains, the beautiful valley of his residence, its water courses and fertile grounds; and described the climate as one of the most salubrious and delightful upon earth. The early concern for a College, amid the growing population soon to become a State, appeared to me a noble imitation of the patriotic care which made the founding of Northern Colleges so much a primary object. In about a year from that time, the new State of Tennessee was organized. In the spring of 1799, I was licensed to preach. A providential affliction in my eyes had been severely troublesome to me for two or three preceding years. I had suffered much from the wintry storms and piercing winds of the North, and from the overpowering reflection of the dazzling sunbeams from the snow and ice. A milder climate for the cold season was recommended by physicians. A conviction had likewise fastened upon my mind that some months might usefully be

occupied in travelling, and gaining knowledge of the diversified population of our extensive Union, which might be followed with some important advantages through life. My recollections of President Balch were lively and pleasing. I passed the greater part of the subsequent winter preaching in the South, and wrote Mr. Balch a letter, intimating that I had some thoughts of visiting him in the spring. In his answer, he urged me to cross the mountains, and made the following somewhat startling communication:—"Since my return from New England, Sir, I have been cited to ecclesiastical trial for errors imputed to me by my prosecutors, sixteen times before Presbytery; four times before Synod; and once before the General Assembly. I had not far short of one hundred scholars in the College. But my interruptions and absences to attend my trials arrested the progress of the institution. The students were obliged to go home. Nevertheless, Sir, all that I have suffered has only served to confirm me more and more in the belief that what I have contended for is God's Bible truth, and will stand forever. My prosecutors have never yet taught me the doctrine of fear. Come over, Sir, and I hope God will so order it that you will fall in love with our country." My heart, I must confess, grew warm towards the man.

On the 11th of July, 1800, I rode up to his gate; and when he had ascertained my name, he said with tears filling his eyes—"I believe, Sir, there is a God in Heaven who hears prayer." In subsequent conversations he informed me that, long before his Northern journey, he had felt a confidence that clearer light than he had attained on the cardinal doctrines of grace, as to their agreement and harmony with each other, their fitness to honour God and feed and bless his people, was in all probability to be found somewhere; and that he had often thought he would account it but a small sacrifice to take his staff, and travel on foot to the ends of the earth, to find the man who could so unfold the mind of the Spirit, contained in the Sacred Scriptures, as to pour the desired light into his soul. He said it was impossible for him to travel under the rare advantages of improving conversation with the most enlightened ministers and other Christians, which he enjoyed, while soliciting for the College, without an earnest spirit of theological inquiry. "This," said he, "the great and good Dr. Green of Philadelphia did much to invigorate and direct by his kind, brotherly counsels to me on my way to the North, for which I have ever been thankful. He told me that I would find, as he did, in the Northern States, a class of ministers, some of whose religious sentiments were considered erroneous, while their main tenets were unquestionably Calvinistic. He advised me by all means to become acquainted with these men. 'I do not myself agree with them,' he said, 'in every thing; but in some things which are questioned, I know they are right. I found reason to esteem them as among the most laborious students, faithful pastors, successful preachers, and instructive writers in all New England.'" "Now," added Mr. Balch, and often did he take occasion to repeat it in my ears,—"these were the very ministers who most assisted me to obtain donations; and who afforded me, by conversations and books, my principal helps in the investigation of religious truth." He informed me that he preached, of course, boldly and explicitly, on his return, his most illustrative thoughts on Gospel doctrines, as had ever been his way; keeping nothing back of the whole counsel of God; fully persuaded that he had learned better to understand it by his opportunities of receiving additional light. "I took pains," said he, "to assure ministers and people, privately and publicly, that I believed more firmly, because more intelligently, than ever before, the cardinal doctrines of free and sovereign grace, which I had so long preached; but I blessed God He had led me into a clearer knowledge of them all in their inspired meaning and essential harmony; that I felt myself able to unfold them, and defend them, in a more consistent manner, and to preach the truth on one topic, without taking it back again, when discussing another."

As to the views which rendered Dr. Balch obnoxious to many of his brethren, it is impossible, in so brief a space as is allotted to me in this letter, to go into detail. It will perhaps be sufficient to say that he sympathized with that class of New England divines, who were and still are known as Hopkinsians. His most familiar and favourite sentiment was that all true holiness, both in God and his intelligent creatures, consists in impartial, disinterested good-will, love or benevolence to all beings capable of happiness; and a benevolent complacency in the moral excellence of all who possess this essential qualification for happiness, and for promoting its diffusion. The first impression which his preaching made upon his church and large congregation after his return from the North and East, as I received abundant evidence from many of them, was very generally favourable. But alarms were gradually excited among his people, and in due time, when he thought the case required it, he was heard by his Presbytery,—that of Abingdon; before whom he stated what were his views of Divine truth, which he fully believed were vindicated both by the Bible and the Confession of Faith. So satisfied were the majority of that body that he embraced nothing heretical, or dangerous to the souls of men, that they passed a vote to this effect; and agreed individually to do what they could to quiet any alarms existing among the people.

But so dissatisfied were the minority with this procedure, and so little did they expect any appeal could serve their cause, that they withdrew from the connection of the Synod and General Assembly, and constituted themselves an independent Presbytery. At their return to order, with due acknowledgment to Synod of the incautious step they had taken, the Presbytery of Union, composed of Mr. Balch and those ministers of Abingdon Presbytery, who had not taken ground against him, was constituted; and with what spirit, the very name by which they chose every where to be known, sufficiently and very truly indicates. Yet the alarms kept up by the remaining members of the Presbytery of Abingdon, extended to those who had removed from Washington and Greene Counties, to inviting lands below, within the bounds of Union. Yet the better spirit ultimately prevailed. Even the venerable fathers themselves, who saw most to disapprove in Mr. Balch's sentiments, and felt called upon to oppose them most sternly, were too good not to welcome the peaceful gales from Heaven, as they drew near to the promised land of light, love, and concord. They were able and faithful men, who held with intelligence and tenacity the views in which they had been educated; who rendered much important service to the Church in their day; and whom to know was surely to venerate and love. The opposing and the opposed, have, it is believed, already joined together in the never-ending song before the throne,—“Not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory,” Oh God of our salvation!

In regard to Mr. Balch's most important trial at the bar of the General Assembly, representing the whole Presbyterian Church before its division, I have not one tenth part of the desirable space for rendering the honour most justly due to the ever present Head of his militant Church; to that faithful and enlightened judicatory which could do nothing against the truth, but for it; and its imperfect yet heroic witness, enjoying the privilege of answering for himself. After my first visit to Mr. Balch and his ministerial brethren in the Presbyteries of Abingdon and Union, I passed two or three times between Tennessee and my native State, and had opportunities of hearing frequently about the particulars of his trial. I was informed by ministers and others in the Middle States, that when the charges against him had been publicly read, and the testimony heard, and his time for defence was announced, he rose with humble boldness, and nobly exerted his powers to distinguish, explain, and prove from the Bible, what he had been contending for as the truth of God; that he was heard with profound attention by that venerable body, and a large crowd of spectators; and

that he was much extolled by persons present for his frankness, intrepidity, perspicuity, and earnestness, combined with the submissive deference due to so respectable and numerous an assembly of ecclesiastical judges. In order to show something of the impression made at the time upon men of improved minds and deep thinking, it may suffice to state one anecdote, out of a number. The celebrated Dr. Rush, in the midst of extensive professional engagements, had received such information of the interesting trial of a Tennessee clergyman, that he chose to take time, and hear the defence. At the close of Mr. Balch's speech, the Assembly adjourned for dinner. The Doctor procured at the door an introduction to him; though he had seen him on his soliciting tour, and given him his patronage by his name and donation. He pressed him to go home and dine with him. Mr. Balch made his arrangements with reference to others, and went with the Doctor. "Sir," said the latter, "when a Gospel minister will come six hundred miles to face his prosecutors, and defend the assailed principles of his religious faith with the zeal and intrepidity which I have witnessed to-day, before the highest tribunal on earth to which he could be cited, my heart cannot but beat warmly in his favour, whether his sentiments and mine are identical or not." On my first return to the North, I had myself already read in Mr. Balch's papers the substantial history of the trial; but did not omit, while in Philadelphia, to call on the Rev. Dr. Milledoler who was at that time the Recording Clerk of the General Assembly, and, by his indulgence, to read in the folio book of Records the full account, in the corrected Minutes, of the whole trial and its result. Every thing was, as the certified extracts I had read before, attested. During my first visit, after spending a few months with Mr. Balch, and preaching and becoming acquainted in the general neighbourhood, I had got thoroughly to feel that he understood what he contended for; as he did not once, in all our conversations, give and take back any Gospel doctrine about which I found the controversy had been maintained. I began now to think seriously whether it might not be my duty to comply with his oft repeated request, and settle down by him as an instructor in the College, and a preacher in the town and vicinity. Having, from my early attachments, some reluctance on this point, and feeling some sense of obligation not to decide rashly, I became the more inquisitive to learn more distinctly, not merely from Mr. Balch, but from all accessible sources of information, what sentiments were supposed to be erroneous in his preaching; what he had been understood to maintain on the topics discussed, and especially, how the several judicatories that had tried him, had finally pronounced upon his religious views. I was now so happy as to find that it was not less his wish, than my determination, that I would hear every thing his opposers as well as friends might have to say. I was deeply impressed with the idea that my prospect of usefulness in the whole region, if I should settle in East Tennessee, would greatly depend upon my obtaining a correct knowledge of the minds of the people on the subjects so much debated. Hence I carefully sought and improved opportunities of free and friendly conversation with men of every class; with all the brethren in the ministry, old and young,—whether approving or disapproving Mr. Balch's views; also with his adherents and opponents among the people, and with serious observers in other denominations. After this extended and persevering investigation, I became satisfied that he was a vigorous and earnest defender of the leading doctrines of Hopkinsianism; that he had embraced the system intelligently as well as cordially, and that he had most unflinchingly and minutely defended before each judicatory what he had wittingly and confessedly held, and what he informed them he could not without new light renounce. Imprudences, in several instances, of speech and conduct were confessed; also some injudicious selections of words and phraseologies were reported by witnesses, and charged upon him. In these cases he seemed to have been ingenuous, docile and submissive; though he once

or twice declared that he did not appear to have been understood. When the Assembly's Committee brought in their report upon his "creed," (See the Digest,) in which they pointed out three particulars as errors held by him, according to their understanding of words ascribed to him by witnesses, and after hearing his defence, he said he felt assured, when he heard them read, that he had never held or asserted them as truths. Hence the thought immediately struck him,—men appear now to be leaving you; if God should leave you, your condition would indeed be dreadful. "But," he added, "the very next thought that took possession of my soul, and nerved me afresh, was—I will at all events stick to God's truth." That very evening, a clergyman,—not of the Assembly, who had been a close observer of the whole course of the trial,—one who felt, as he perceived many others did, that the Committee had been led, by words reported as Mr. Balch's, to mistake his real sentiments, as he had unfolded them in his principal address to the Assembly, and in his more private communications to his friends, came to him in much excitement—we may hope with more love for the truth as it is in Jesus, than soundness of practical judgment, and thus addressed him—"Sir, I am afraid you will not get fair treatment. My advice to you is to go to-morrow morning, and tell the Assembly that you have been so misunderstood by their Committee that you do not see much prospect of getting justice from them as a judicatory; and that you therefore appeal from their fallible tribunal to the infallible tribunal of the Lord Jesus Christ." Mr. Balch had courage enough, and if left to himself, might, in his extremity, have had rashness enough, to have welcomed the suggestion. But from his large and righteous heart instantly burst forth the following Christian reply:—"A schism in the Church, Sir, is a dreadful thing. I should not like to be the guilty cause of any such curse. My shoulders are pretty broad—I trust they will spare my conscience. If they will only do that, Sir, I can bear for the truth's sake whatever burden they may think it their duty to put upon me." Others of better judgment came to advise him, and to pray with him for the favourable interposition of Heaven. At length, Mr. Irwin of Neshaminy, who had, with great vigour and boldness, sustained some of his controverted sentiments before the Assembly, called upon him, and put into his hand a small piece of paper, and asked him to consider its contents, and let him know whether he could, with a clear conscience, make the import of that writing his final answer to the Assembly, and rest the issue of his trial upon it. When he had read it, and felt assured that he correctly understood it, he replied that he readily could adopt it, without the smallest reserve; for it stated the truth of facts and nothing else; but that he had been so misapprehended by the Committee in their adopted report, that he was at a loss to know whether it would probably be accepted. His friend answered him—"I know so much of the minds of the members, that I have no doubt it would; and I entreat you to make use of it. Accordingly, when the Assembly called for his ultimate answer, he gave it nearly in the exact words of the paper handed him. I cannot tell who wrote it. Mr. Balch thought Mr. Irwin wished him to understand that he did not himself. From Dr. Green's personal friendship and conduct during the trial, he immediately said to him,—“It looks to me as coming from Dr. Green.” “If so, it comes from a most estimable source,” said Mr. I.; “and that is enough for me to say.” The answer was accepted by such a majority as precluded any need of dividing the house to ascertain it. So soon as the Moderator, the Rev. Dr. John B. Smith, had declared, in the name of the Assembly, their vote of acceptance, and by obvious implication, of acquittal, in favour of Mr. Balch, and given him the admonition agreed upon, and a concluding prayer had been thankfully offered, Dr. Green arose with a majestic benignity in his commanding eye and face, and kindly said,—“Moderator, Mr. Balch is now in as good and regular standing as any member of this Assembly; and I move you, Sir, that he and the minister

and elder in Tennessee, now come forward in the presence of this judicatory and shake hands; in token that they will go home with the full purpose to live in Christian love and peace hereafter." Mr. Balch immediately stood on his feet, and, with his hand upon his generous and forgiving heart, said,—“Moderator, here is my heart; and here are both my hands,”—extending them earnestly. They did shake hands forthwith, to the general satisfaction of that truly Christian and enlightened Body. Thus amicably and providentially ordered was the most important ecclesiastical trial of Mr. Balch, leaving him, at its termination, in the unrestricted enjoyment of that faith which he had abundantly shown to the Church and the world was dearer to him than any thing else he could call his own. Should it not be considered an enduring honour to the widely extended Presbyterian Church, then an undivided whole, that under so persevering a course of prosecutions, carried through twenty-one trials or parts of trials, Presbyterian, Synodical, and of the highest Court, an upright conscience, even in an imprudent man, was thus safe beneath the outspread wings of its constitutional protection?

Yes, I must acknowledge that he was an imprudent man. His natural honesty and intrepidity were unsurpassed. All the movements of his soul seemed to be open and direct; but, under excitement, they sometimes savoured strongly of impulsiveness and indiscretion. His intrepidity was a bad counsellor in the moment of provocation and temptation. I could fill sheets with the details of his noble, self-denying and arduous exertions for the good of his fellow men. But I am sorry to add that even I, and certainly his opponents, if surviving, could fill pages in stating his rash steps, his unwise measures, and indiscreet words, where consummate prudence was demanded. His maxim, in all debates and controversies, was,—“I have no contention with any but about holiness.” When he discovered his error in any thing, he was most ingenuous and thorough in repentance, confession, and making amends. As he did not always meet a similar return, he was sometimes thrown off his guard. From much knowledge of his life and conduct, I was obliged to conclude that when the fear of God was suspended in its rule over his lofty and intrepid soul, he feared nothing in the universe; and that of course Satan was at his elbow to take some advantage of him.

An impressive illustration of the influence of Mr. Balch’s piety upon his principal prosecutor may here be stated. When they were about starting to a trial before the Synod of the Carolinas, he proposed to the elder, his neighbour, who was going there to prosecute him, that, for safety and convenience on their long journey, they should travel together. They did so. But rains had raised a particular stream so high that they saw it could not be forded without the swimming of their horses. Mr. Balch then said to his fellow traveller,—“Sir, you and I have families at home, to whom our deaths would be afflictive; we are in the hands of Divine Providence—don’t you think we should do well to kneel down here on the bank of this deep and rapid stream, and pray God to help us over in safety?” “By all means, Sir,” answered the elder—“please, Mr. Balch, offer a prayer.” He did so. They passed over safely, and travelled on quietly together. This is the elder who shook hands with him before the Assembly; and once did so before the Synod. Soon after I came into the State, when Mr. Balch urged him, for his own satisfaction, to converse with me freely and fully on the disputed sentiments, which had cost him so much in their defence, he replied, and I doubt not candidly,—“Mr. Balch, it is not necessary; now I understand you better than I did. I have no serious objection to what you hold.” And he was not the only opposing elder who gave Mr. B. substantially the same testimony.

I must say a word of the important service which Dr. Balch rendered to the cause of liberal education. By his exertions for Greenville College, interrupted, as we have seen, in a most unexampled manner, he provided a commodious two

storied College-Hall, a considerable library, a well selected, though small, philosophical apparatus, daily instruction, the best text-books and improvements in teaching within his power to secure. He gave an important impulse to exertions in the same great cause throughout the whole South-western region, where there was before hardly a beginning. Greenville College had at one time students from nine different States and Territories; and a more than usual proportion of them rose to honourable eminence in the different walks of life.

To all persons who had any familiar and intimate acquaintance with Dr. Balch during his last years, the sunshine of his Heavenly Father's countenance seemed to irradiate his noble soul in a manner altogether uncommon. His numerous citations and trials were disastrous to his temporal interests. Pains of body and anxieties of mind, with irreparable injuries to his constitution, from his many journeys and exposures, were not their only consequences. The many imperious calls to attend trials, mostly at a distance from the whole circle of his home duties, as husband, father, master, pastor, and president, during the most exposed years of his younger children, the arrest given to instruction in the College, when most needed, the failing health of his wife and the increased expenses of his family, caused him to endure trials which touched the sympathies of his worthy opposers, and appeared to all exceedingly rare. Like his several brethren here in the ministry, he then had slaves in his family; who, from the kindness of his treatment, dearly loved him. He wished to do his duty to them. But the greater number were taken from him for family debts. The rest he liberated. One went to Liberia, and became useful there. Under all his afflictions, he so encouraged himself in his God, that, submissive and cheerful, he stood erect and unshaken, with an unbroken fortitude that struck all beholders. Once, late at night, when all were in bed, his large and well filled barn was struck with lightning. A large crop of hay and a valuable horse were consumed with the building. Some of his opposers observed him bathed in tears, and supposed that a troubled conscience was the cause—thinking that he interpreted the lightning's stroke, as they did, to be a token of God's anger against him for his errors and missteps. I was then absent in the counties below. Soon after my return, I heard of the above surmise. Some of the family had given me an account of the fire, and said they wished I could have witnessed the scene of their family worship the next morning, when Mr. Balch, having read a select portion of Scripture, and sung a few stanzas from Watts, with melting emotions, instead of kneeling, as was common, prostrated himself at his whole length on the floor; and offered what they considered the most admirable and affecting prayer to which they had ever listened. In our conversations before my absence, he had so condescendingly let me into his inmost soul, that I had a strong desire to hear what account he would himself give of his tears and emotions while his barn was burning. Taking opportunity one day when we were alone, I intimated my wish. "Sir," said he, with his emotions kindling afresh, "I was so filled with a sense of God's love, while, in his adorable sovereignty, he was burning down my barn and destroying my property, that I felt it, and still look back upon it, as one of the most favoured scenes of my life." It then seemed to me useless to ask why he prostrated himself in a family prayer the next morning. Considering the originality of his character, and the strength of his devotional feelings, I concluded, without the shadow of a doubt, that to exalt his God, and abase himself in the dust at his footstool, as unworthy of the love with which he had condescended to refresh him, was the joyful effort of his happy heart. Some years after that, I saw him in distress incomparably more extreme. The wife of his youth lay a corpse in his house. I found him silently and calmly pouring out a copious flood of tears. "Sir," said he, when he spoke,—“I have been in many a trying condition, where nothing but absolute submission to the will of God could reach my necessity; and I am now in one of the most trying in my whole

life. But blessed be God, absolute, unconditional submission to his will is plaster sufficient for every sore."

Dr. Balch's retirement from his duties in the College was chiefly to the bed of languishment and death. But from that bed, on the lower floor of his log-house, shone forth all but the radiance of Heaven itself. When I first mentioned to him his approaching death, and his entrance into the world of retribution,—“Sir,” said he, “with such a Redeemer as the Lord Jesus Christ for my dependance, I scorn to be afraid to die.” Not many days afterwards, he resumed his soul-rejoicing theme:—“Sir,” said he,—“if it were not for the infinite atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the dependance of my soul before God, I would not go into eternity for ten thousand worlds. Without this, if I had strength, I would be running through the woods, and tearing the trees for very agony; but with this for my reliance, here I am, Sir, calmly waiting the Mighty Master's call.” In another interview, he said to me, looking up with tears towards Heaven,—“Sir, I cordially submit to the righteous sentence of God's eternal law; the precepts of which I have no apology for breaking. At the same time, I trust I have a little—oh! how little, of that holy disinterested love which makes the life of a justifying faith in Christ; that love, Sir, that will bear the examination and meet the approving smile of the great Judge of quick and dead. Even in his last will and testament, he gave his soul to his God to be made for Christ's sake, in boundless grace, an eternal vessel of mercy in Heaven, or, in righteous judgment for his sins, a vessel of everlasting wrath in hell; just as seemed good in his sight. I said, Mr. Balch, will all who may read your will, understand your unshaken hope of salvation through Christ? “Sir,” said he, “I cannot allow myself to make conditions with God; to Him I cordially submit, without any reserve, for time and for eternity. Let the words stand, Sir; they show the only way in which I mean to die. Those who have heard me insist on unreserved submission, as always involved in saving faith, may learn the importance of it in their own case, when they find how I choose to die.” So, therefore, the words now stand in the Register's office in Greenville.

Such is, I believe, a faithful, though certainly a very inadequate, miniature of that truly venerable man of God, Hezekiah Balch, D. D. I shall be glad if it answers in any degree the purpose for which you have requested it.

That the Spirit of truth, grace, and holiness may preside over your important studies, and bless your diversified labours, is the fervent prayer, I doubt not of many, besides,

Dear Sir, your unworthy brother in Christ,

CHARLES COFFIN.