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Historical Sketches,

THE REV. ALEXANDER GUNN, D. D.

We have been constrained to notice more than once, how barren of detail, and meagre in incidents, are the lives of even the most useful Pastors. The events of each week, and of each year, are almost uniformly the same. Very few pastors keep a journal; and when one perchance, has been kept, or an outline of autobiography has been sketched, it has been sent into the flames in that rash hour of inquisition, held by the dying man over his papers,—or by his own inexorable command.—We have done our best to collect materials to form a memoir of our much loved friend and brother.—We have been disappointed in our researches. The only sketch of himself, written by his own hand, some years ago, detailing the incidents and exercises of his early life, and which had been written on the blank leaves of his family bible,—was not found there. It had been cut out, and destroyed by himself, as we learn from his widow. For the following we have been indebted to the Rev. Dr. R. who had long been the associate, and companion of his life.

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The Rev. Dr. Gunn was born August 13, 1785. His parents removed to New-York while he was a youth, and he here received his education. After due academical preparation, he entered Columbia College as Freshman in 1801, and after receiving the respect and confidence of his instructors and fellow students, by his amiable manners and industrious prosecution of his studies, he was graduated in the year 1805, at the age of 21. The estimation in which he was held by the faculty and trustees, for scholarship and elocution, is proved by the fact that he was selected from a very respectable class, to deliver the *valedictory address*.

We have not met with any who can detail the early conversion, and devout exercises of Dr. Gunn. That his conversion must have been at an early date, and that his devotional exercises must have been of a marked character in early youth, appears strikingly from a fact related to us; that at the age of thirteen or fourteen years, he led family worship, in the absence, and after the death of his father.

His mind having been early and deeply imbued with religious principles, he determined, on leaving college, to devote himself to the service of God, in the gospel of his Son. Accordingly he commenced his theological studies at Princeton, under the direc-

his death, he looked up, and recognizing a friend standing by his bed side, he very significantly pointed towards heaven, and said, "The Lord is trying me in deep waters!" His friend remarked, "the Lord will not forsake you,"—To which he confidently replied, "the Lord forsake his children; *No, no*, the Lord will not forsake any that put their trust in him!"

The last words he was heard to utter were—"Lord Jesus receive my spirit!" And

"His spirit with a bound
Left its encumbering clay;
His tent at sun-rise on the ground
A darkened ruin lay."

The sudden removal of so accomplished a divine, with a judgment matured by study and experience, in the strength of his days, and in the midst of useful designs, and of great expectations of future usefulness, is among the deep things of God's providence, and is a severe affliction to the church of Christ. But though removed, to the great loss of the church, his removal is of infinite advantage to himself. He is advanced to a state of nobler service, and to the enjoyment of more perfect happiness. He was a lamp in the sanctuary of God, to give light to those who were in darkness; and a star in the hand of Christ to guide wandering souls to heaven. But he now moves in a higher orb, and shines with a brighter glory. He is a sun, in the kingdom of heaven, and a pillar in the temple of God above.

The recollection of such a pious and exemplary life, and such a peaceful and triumphant death, may, on every reasonable and scriptural ground, comfort the hearts of his mourning relatives. And his surviving brethren in the ministry may hear a voice from his tomb, saying unto them—"Take heed to thyself, and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made thee overseer, to feed the

church of God, which he hath purchased with his blood. Thou art charged before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, that thou preach the word, that thou be instant in season, and out of season, that thou reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. You must soon follow me to the abode of silence. Your opportunities of doing good to the souls of men, will soon end, therefore, while you have tongues to speak, and they have ears to hear, preach and labour among them with all your might. Do it quickly, or it will be too late, fervently, lest your words be disregarded, and faithfully, or their blood will be required at your hands."

May his decease be sanctified to survivors, and may the Great Lord of the harvest, raise up many faithful labourers in his vineyard, in the room of those who are successively going to their reward.

THE LAST MOMENTS OF THE REV.
MATTHIAS BRUEN, A. M.
of Bleecker Street Church, N. Y.

"Life's little stage is a small eminence,
Inch high the grave above; that home of
man,
Where dwells the multitude; we gaze
around,
We read their monuments; we sigh, and
while
We sigh, we sink; and are what we de-
plored;
Lamenting, and lamented, all our lot!"

Young.

The Rev. Mr. Bruen was a son of Matthias Bruen, Esq. formerly of this city, now of Amboy, New Jersey. Their ancestry they traced to the venerable Puritans, who settled in New England. The branch of the family, from which he was, in a right line, descended, had, some generations back, been transplanted to Newark,

N. J. And in that town Mr. B. was born,—on April 11th, 1793.

His father who had been sometime an elder in the Reformed Dutch Collegiate Church, (and I believe, still is,) had devoted him to God in the solemn ordinance of baptism, in infancy, and had taken especial pains to instruct him in the first elements of the pure Christian doctrine. The fruits of this parental care and instruction, were evident in a tenderness of conscience, and fear of sin, and strictness of moral deportment, even from his early years. But it was only in his eighteenth year, that he himself could venture to indulge the hope of a saving change, and genuine conversion before God.

Having passed his Academical course with applause, he was entered in the Freshman Class, in Columbia College, in A. D. 1808, and was graduated in 1812. Shortly after this, he entered the Theological Seminary of the Associate Reformed Church, under the care of the Rev. Dr. Mason. Here he pursued with zeal and assiduity, the necessary and appropriate studies, for the holy ministry, under that eloquent and very learned master in Israel. After passing through the full course prescribed in that school, he was licensed by the Classis of New York, to preach the gospel of Christ.

He did not immediately enter into the field of usefulness presented to him in the American Church. In 1816, he sailed from New York, in company, with his distinguished preceptor, Dr. Mason, for Europe; and he made an extensive tour through that land of literature, and gospel knowledge. And he did not lose the opportunities and facilities, held out to his young and ardent mind,—which was bent on the attainment of all that which might make him an able minister of Christ; so far as human means can accomplish, by the grace of God.

He spent two years and a half abroad. And he had reached Liverpool on his way home to his native land, when he received an urgent call to return to Paris, and become the Pastor of the American Chapel of the Oratory, in that city. Deeming it to be indeed the call of his Master, he promptly accepted it; was ordained in London, to the gospel ministry;—and soon after, entered on his official duties. But he occupied this station, only for six months.* For reasons not known to us, he relinquished that post, and returned home.

He preached in different places with great acceptance, until 1822, when he was employed, by the committee of Missions under the care of the Rev. Presbytery of New-York. His missionary services, which by the wealth of his family, and the generosity of his own warm heart, were rendered gratuitously,—were so eminently blessed, that the result happily was, the establishment, and organization of the Presbyterian Church in Bleecker Street. Of this he became in due time, the Pastor; and here he laboured, like a devoted servant of his Lord, until by his early death, he has been called away to his crown.

But it was not our design to write a memoir of him. Materials have not been furnished to us though we sought them with care and earnestness. We had designed only to give the touching scene of this eminent young Minister's *last moments*. And we have been anxious to record them *emphatically*, in as much as, by some of the enemies of the cross of Christ, the enemies of our LORD'S SUPREME DEITY, who rob the gospel of its glory, and leave in their own wretched, and garbled system, nothing that merits the name of the '*glorious*

* The Rev. Mark Wilkes, son of the late venerable Mathew Wilkes, so long an able Minister of Christ, in London,—was Mr. Bruen's successor, in Paris.

gospel,—he has been traduced and slandered as one, who had, in his last moments solemnly made his recantation of gospel truth, and had expressed his regrets that he had taught the doctrines of the Reformed Church.

The following extracts will show how utterly wide of the truth are all these assertions. We are indebted to a writer in the *N. Y. Observer*, for them. He has condensed them from the able funeral sermons published on the lamented decease of Mr. Bruen, by the Rev. Dr. Cox, and Dr. Skinner.

“Mr. Bruen’s death was a most unexpected providence. It was sudden. From Woodbury, where he performed his last public service, he returned, in usual good health, to New-Haven, and the same week to this city, with the intention of occupying his own pulpit on the Sabbath. He did actually meet his people in the morning of the Sabbath, and enter upon his accustomed service, when he found himself under the pressure of disease, and was constrained to call upon a clerical brother present, to complete what he had begun.

From that hour he was the victim of excruciating and almost incessant sufferings. His life was worn out by the violence of his pain. But while his death was alike violent and unexpected, it did not fail of developing, as might have been expected, more of that Christian temper, which had marked his public and private character while in health. He was indeed surprised, when he first understood how certainly, and how soon, he was to change states and pass into eternity. He expressed the deep impression which he had of the suddenness of his call. “God” said he, “is coming in darkness, Lord have mercy on my soul.” But quietness and assurance of spirit soon returned. And he gave utterance to sentiments of grateful love to God, and peaceful confidence in Jesus Christ.

It might have been expected, that in such a time of agonizing pain, and solemn anticipations of the eternal world, he would have taken no thought but for himself. Instead of this, his week of fatal sickness was one of intense solicitude for the best interest of his friends, and especially of all the loved flock of which he was pastor. Besides conversing in the most serious and faithful manner with many individuals he sent instructive messages to others, as the last friendly advice of their Christian guide. He gave the same deliberate attention to the adjustment of his secular affairs, and bade a most affectionate and Christian farewell to his relatives, his wife, and the two lovely babes, whom he was leaving behind. Nor were his thoughts and anxieties confined, in this trying hour, to the individual objects of his attachment, and the subjects of his pastoral charge. “I die,” he said, “in peace and love with all men.” To the Executive Committee of the Home Missionary Society he sent, as his dying message, “Yours is a great work; the work of God; hold on.” He earnestly requested that nothing might be said respecting him in his funeral discourse, which should not consult the welfare of others. “Do not make me out a saint,” he said, “for that would be to ruin souls,” “Do not preach a gloomy sermon, but make heaven seem brighter than the world.” Being asked, a few hours before his death, whether he could give his attention during a short devotional exercise, and having answered in the affirmative, several passages of Scripture, descriptive of God’s care of his people, and replete with gracious promises, were read to him. As he remained entirely silent, the inquiry was made, whether he heard what was read. He replied, “I heard and loved it—every word.” “Is your mind at rest?” “Yes, I have a calm peace within.” Then after tenderly embracing his

near relatives, and addressing them in a more impressive manner, prayer was made until he became fatigued. He did not long survive this expression of his faith, and affectionate leave of his endeared friends; but fell asleep on the morning of the Lord's day, Sept. 6, 1829, in the 37 year of his age.

"The character of Mr. Bruen is too exactly developed in his useful life, to call for an extended delineation. He was highly accomplished in manners, in literature, and the knowledge of men. He was an elegant scholar, and often extremely happy in bringing his learning to assist his forcible illustrations of practical subjects. The operations of his mind were rapid. He had a most retentive memory, and a sound judgment. He possessed a nice sense of what was honorable, and becoming the place, and time, as well as lawful: and a characteristic abhorrence of whatever is trickish and mean. With high and honorable feelings, he united great ingenuousness, and humble views of his own powers and acquisitions; but, especially of the measure of his religion. No person who knew him, we might say, none who observed his deportment for an hour, could fail of marking him for a man of truth and moral intrepidity. There was a beautiful correspondence of his kindly, dignified, and discreet demeanour, to the actual characteristics of his mind.

His ministrations were not only instructive and acceptable to his people, but sanctified to the conversion of some, who mourn, in his decease, the loss of a spiritual father. Seldom, it is believed, has any congregation manifested a more universal and tender attachment to their pastor; or greater sorrow at his removal, while the public sympathy expressed during his illness, and at his funeral, give no doubtful testimony to the high estimation in which he was held."

May these loud and repeated calls

be distinctly heard by all of us, dear Brethren, in the gospel ministry. Mr. Bruen is gone! Dr. Gunn is gone! To us their deaths were, I may say, equally unexpected. The Master standeth even at the door. Let us labour in our own personal duties, and the solemn preparations for eternity. Let us labour most earnestly and prayerfully in our official duties, to save the souls of our people. Blessed is that servant who is found even so doing, when his Master cometh!

Religious Communications.

EMMET.

Mr Editor.—Let me through you, address myself a moment to our young people. What is human glory without piety! And how effectual is the cure which the religion of Jesus brings to every calamity and sorrow! How many a tear has been shed over the accomplished and unfortunate Irish patriot EMMET. I never could read his last speech before his cruel judges, without tears. And I am sure that there is not a young man, nor a young lady (who honours your pages.) who will read the last solemn parting of Emmet and his betrothed, without a tear.

The evening before his death, while the workmen were busy with the scaffold, a young lady was ushered into his dungeon. It was the girl whom he so fondly loved, and who had now come to bid him her eternal farewell. He was leaning, in a melancholy mood, against the window-frame of his prison, and the heavy clanking of his chains smote dismally on her heart. The interview was bitterly affecting, and melted even the callous soul of the goaler. As for Emmett himself, he wept and spoke little; but as he pressed his beloved, in silence, to his bosom, his