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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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SAMUEL DAVIES HOGE.*

1813—1826.

SAMUEL DAVIES HOGE was the fourth son of the Rev. Moses Hoge, D. D. and Elizabeth, his wife, and was born in Shepherdstown, Va. in the year 1791. In his childhood he was rather large and robust; but as he grew to manhood, he became comparatively feeble, and while he was yet quite a youth, exhibited some symptoms of the disease which terminated his life.

His early training was decidedly Christian,—not merely as conducted by his father, but especially by his mother, who was distinguished for sound judgment, great promptness and decision, and an intelligent, deep and consistent piety. Though no definite account of the commencement of his religious experience has been preserved, it is known that he was the subject of serious impressions from early childhood. In the autumn of 1800, while he was yet a mere child, his father and mother travelled into the more Southern States for the benefit of her health, and he accompanied them. It was at the time that the remarkable revival of religion prevailed in that region, which was accompanied by so many strange and extravagant demonstrations. He was taken to several of the great meetings which were held in connection with that work, and on one occasion became a subject of powerful excitement, and prayed, and exhorted the crowd who gathered around him, with astonishing fervour and effect. The impressions which he received at that time were not a little strengthened during a revival which occurred three years later; and, though it might not have been easy to mark the exact period of his conversion, he became openly and decidedly a follower of the Saviour, several years before he reached manhood.

He was first taught the Latin language by his father, and the students of Theology who resided in his father's family. He was then for some time a member of a classical school taught by his brother James (now the Rev. Dr. Hoge of Columbus, O.) at the Augusta Church, Va.; and subsequently attended an Academy instituted by his father in Shepherdstown, in the same State. When his father removed to Prince Edward to become the President of Hampden Sidney College, Samuel Davies accompanied him, and there pursued his studies until he graduated in 1810. He then prosecuted his theological course, under the direction of his father, who was the Synodical Professor of Theology as well as President of the College. He placed himself under the care of the Hanover Presbytery, as a candidate for the ministry, in October, 1812, and was licensed to preach on the 8th of May, 1813. His father addressed him on the occasion, and presented him with a Bible which had belonged to his mother, with an appeal which filled the house with audible weeping. While pursuing his theological studies, he was employed as Tutor in the College, and, after his licensure, occupied, for some time, the place of Professor and Vice President.

His earnest desire to engage more directly in the ministry of the Gospel led him to resign his place in the College, and accept a call as Pastor of the Churches of Culpepper and Madison, in Virginia. Here he was ordained, by the Presbytery of Hanover, in the year 1816, and here he continued to

* MS. from Rev. Dr. James Hoge.

labour with great acceptance, fidelity and success, until April, 1821, when he removed to Ohio.

His attention was directed to the West, at an early day, by the rapid increase of the Church, and the urgent demand for a larger number of ministers, in that portion of our country. Doubtless he was influenced in some degree also by the fact that his eldest brother had been labouring in the same vocation in Ohio, for more than fifteen years. After remaining a few months with his family, at the house of his brother in Columbus, he was called to the pastoral charge of the Churches of Hillsborough and Rocky Spring, in Highland County. To these congregations he ministered with his wonted diligence and success some two years. His health, however, proved insufficient for the duties incident to so extensive a charge. His voice, especially, which was naturally weak, was scarcely adequate to preaching frequently to the large congregations that waited on his ministry. A change of location and of duties, therefore, became desirable,—even necessary.

At this time the Professorship of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy in the Ohio University, at Athens, was urgently proposed to him, including also the opportunity of preaching in the College Chapel, and in the Church of the town, and in the vicinity, as often as his health would allow. Having accepted this appointment, he removed to Athens, and entered on his duties near the close of the year 1823. The University was at that time without a President, but, under the influence of Mr. Hoge, in connection with two or three other able instructors, its prosperity was not a little increased. His preaching likewise, both in the College and in the Church, was highly acceptable and useful.

In the course of the year 1825, his health began perceptibly to decline, and it became manifest that he was the subject of a serious affection of the liver. He, however, continued his accustomed labours until the summer of 1826, when the disease had evidently taken on a chronic form, and for several weeks he was confined to his room, and much of the time to his bed. In November following, he seemed to be considerably relieved, and became, as he supposed, able to resume his duties in the College. He, accordingly, made the attempt; but his death occurred almost immediately after, under the very extraordinary circumstances, which are minutely detailed in the subjoined letter.

Mr. Hoge was married in October, 1812, to Elizabeth Rice, the eldest daughter of the Rev. Drury Lacy. They had four children,—two sons and two daughters,—all of whom became members of the Church at an early age. Both of the sons are ministers of the Gospel. The eldest, *Moses D.*, is (1857) Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Va., and one of the Editors of the Central Presbyterian; the younger, *William J.*, was lately Pastor of the Westminster Church, Baltimore, Md., and is now Professor of Biblical Instruction in Union Theological Seminary, Prince Edward County, Va. Mrs. Hoge died in Gallatin, Tenn., November 18, 1840.

The Rev. Dr. Hoge of Columbus writes thus of his brother:—"As a pulpit orator, he only lacked voice and physical strength to have ranked with the first preachers of his age. His style was pure, simple and energetic, expressing with great exactness the nicest shades of thought. And his subject matter was always evangelical truth, presented in such a way as to instruct, and at the same time deeply affect, his hearers. The growth of believers

in holiness and comfort, and the conversion of sinners, to the glory of God in Christ, was evidently his supreme end in all his ministrations. Nor was he disappointed in the results of his labours. Though his ministry was short, reaching through a period of only thirteen years, it was attended with a rich blessing from on high, and will doubtless be the occasion to many of everlasting joy.

“In stature, he was rather below the medium, though hardly so much as to be noticed. His personal appearance, as a public speaker, was in his favour. His voice, though weak, was pleasant. He possessed an amiable and agreeable temper, conversed with ease and freedom, and shared largely in the affectionate regards of his friends.”

FROM THE REV. MOSES D. HOGE, D. D.

RICHMOND, Va., September 2, 1857.

My dear Sir: I cannot decline the grateful, though delicate, office you have assigned to me, in assisting to form a suitable memorial of my lamented and revered father, and my only regret is that the circumstances in which your request finds me will allow me to do it only in the most hurried manner.

I was very young when my father died; but I have a distinct and even vivid recollection of him. He was a very grave looking man, and his manner was strikingly solemn, when in the pulpit, or engaged in any serious duty. Yet in the social circle he was eminently cheerful, and without effort he could entertain a large company with the most familiar and playful discourse. He was easy and graceful in his address; invariably polite without formality; and while faithful in rebuking what was reprehensible, very considerate of the feelings of others. Such was his nice sense of propriety and delicacy of sentiment, that he was never known to make an allusion, or to utter an expression, that could offend the most fastidious ear; and although easily diverted and fond of innocent wit, he instantly became grave and silent, when any one spoke a vulgar or profane word in his presence. He could thus, by a single look of grieved surprise or displeasure, rebuke and abash any one who ventured to retail an indelicate story, or make use of an indecent innuendo, in his company.

While, as I have remarked, his manner in the pulpit was characterized by great solemnity, it often melted into tenderness. In speaking of the love and sufferings of Christ, he would not unfrequently burst into tears; and sometimes his emotion would impede his utterance—yet these involuntary interruptions of his discourse never injured the effect of any appeal with his auditors. They softened and wept with him.

He was a diligent student, and very versatile in his tastes and pursuits. He read the Greek and Latin languages with great facility, and though delighting in the ancient classics, was equally fond of the exact sciences. Though his chair in the College was that of Natural Philosophy, he could have filled that of Ancient Languages with equal ease. Few men of his age have been better versed in English literature; and though he more frequently wrote poetry for his own amusement than for publication, he possessed decided poetic genius. With such tastes, talents, and application, had his life been spared, he would have taken a high position among the literary and scientific men of the country.

The circumstances attending his last illness and death are deserving of commemoration. His health had been feeble for several years; he was enfeebled and crippled partially by some disease resembling rheumatism, and frequently walked with an unsteady, limping gait. One day, as he sat in the Philosophical room in the College, he was writing a note on a book resting on his knee, when he was suddenly seized with a violent cramp in the leg. Such was the force of

the contraction that the thigh bone was broken! Had the bone been sound, this could hardly have been possible. After he fell, some of the students in the adjacent room heard his groans, and the door of the Philosophical room being fastened with a spring lock, they burst it open, and at his request made a litter, and carried him to his residence. The broken limb was set by a skilful surgeon, but never united. He lingered about a fortnight, and on Christmas Eve of the year 1826, finding that he was near his end, he summoned his family to his bedside to receive his dying benediction. I well remember the night. It was one of the coldest I ever felt. The snow lay deep on the frozen ground. The wind blew furiously. Attending friends hovered around the fire; but my father, fevered with inward heat, ordered the window nearest him to be thrown open. The fierce wind sometimes blew the dry snow into the room, (it was on the lower floor,) and upon his bed. But while every thing was tempestuous without, all was peaceful within that chamber, where the good man met his fate. One by one, he addressed the members of his family—first his wife, whom he had ever tenderly loved and cherished, and to whom he had never even spoken a hasty word—earnestly did he commend her to the watch and care of a covenant keeping God. And then he gave his blessing to his children, as they successively approached him. And finally, the servants were called in, and addressing them by name, he urged them to prepare for death and judgment. When these admonitions and partings were ended, he folded his hands upon his breast, closed his eyes, and continued evidently engaged in prayer until the hour of his release and translation came.

So deeply frozen was the ground that it was a tedious work to dig his grave. The day of the Funeral was one of intense cold, but all the College students joined in the procession, walking with the Faculty, next the bier, as if chief mourners, while the great majority of the citizens of the town, notwithstanding the severity of the weather, followed in the sad march to the grave,—lamenting with bitter tears a loss that seemed to them irreparable.

I have thus, my dear Sir, endeavoured to comply with your request in the best way I could. Though I was too young to have much personal knowledge of my father's character and habits, I have of course enjoyed the best opportunities for becoming acquainted with his peculiar characteristics, both intellectual and moral; and I trust that the estimate which I have given of him will not be found to betray any of the exaggeration of filial partiality. I think I may safely say that I have written nothing which would be pronounced extravagant by any of the few surviving witnesses of his brief but useful career.

Regretting that I am not able to do more ample justice to the subject,

I am very respectfully and affectionately yours,

MOSES D. HOGE.