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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.
✓
BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

VOLUME III.

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HENRY PATILLO.*

1757—1801.

HENRY PATILLO was born in Scotland, in the year 1726. He came to this country with an elder brother, when he was nine years old. He took up his residence, for a time, as a merchant's clerk, in the Province of Virginia; and notwithstanding he had received a religious education, yet, in the absence of the restraints to which he had been accustomed in his childhood, he now, for a time, yielded to the power of temptation. Leaving the counting-house, he engaged as a teacher of youth; and, while thus employed, became the subject of deep religious convictions. He continued his labours as a teacher, in two or three Presbyterian Congregations, successively; and, during the whole time, his mind seems to have been exercised in regard to his relations to God as a sinner; but it was not till after a year or two, that he obtained comforting and satisfactory views of evangelical truth. In a record which he has left of his own exercises subsequent to this, he states that, in the warmth of his feelings, he fell into the error of making his own experience too much a standard by which to judge of the experience of other professed Christians; but that further reflection and observation led him to correct the error.

After his hopeful conversion, he felt deeply anxious in respect to the spiritual condition of those around him, and in this state of feeling cherished the desire, and at length formed the purpose, of devoting himself to the Christian ministry. He now fell in with the Rev. John Thomson, of the Donegal Presbytery, Pa., who was on a visit to the Carolinas, and who invited him to go to Pennsylvania, and prosecute his studies preparatory to the ministry, under his care. He accepted the invitation, and actually set out on his journey, but, after a few hours, was arrested by a violent attack of pleurisy, which not only obliged him to return, but in its remoter effects, rendered him incapable of much exertion for several months. The result was that his project for going to Pennsylvania was given up; and the next year (1751,) the Rev. Samuel Davies, then residing in Hanover, Va., being on a preaching excursion to the Roanoke, met with Mr. Patillo, and, having learned his wish to enter the ministry, kindly offered to receive him under his care as a theological student. Mr. P. thankfully accepted the offer, and arrived at Mr. Davies' house in Hanover on the 1st of August.

He pursued his studies under the instruction of Mr. Davies, until 1753, when that eminent man went on a mission to Great Britain in behalf of Princeton College; and, on his return, about the beginning of 1755, Mr. Patillo resumed his studies under him, and continued to enjoy the benefit of his instruction until he was licensed to preach.

In the summer of 1755, he was married to a Miss Anderson. He had consulted Mr. Davies on the subject, and had received from him an opinion adverse to his forming the connection at that time; and though, at first, he was inclined to listen to Mr. Davies' advice, yet, on mature considera-

* Foote's Sketches of N. C.—MS. from Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander.—Life of Dr. Alexander.—Webster's MSS.

tion, he felt constrained, in honour, to carry out his previous purpose. While he resided in Hanover, he was sustained partly by the kindness of friends, and partly by teaching a few children during several hours of each day; and, after his marriage, he seems to have depended somewhat on the pecuniary resources of his wife. They lived on a most economical scale; and in 1757, the small cabin which they occupied as a dwelling, was struck by lightning, and though it had in it eleven persons, they all escaped unhurt.

On the 28th of September, 1757, Mr. Patillo, having gone through all his Presbyterial examinations and trials, was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Hanover. His ordination took place at Cumberland, on the 12th of July, 1758. On the 27th of September following, he accepted a call from the Churches of Willis Creek, Byrd, and Buck Island. Having remained with these Congregations about four years, he was dismissed from his charge, on the 7th of October, 1762, on the ground of an inadequate support. In May, 1763, he began to supply the Churches of Cumberland, Harris Creek, and Deep Creek, and continued with them two years. At a meeting of the Presbytery at Hico, on the 2d of October, 1765, a call was presented to him from Hawfields, Eno, and Little River. This call he accepted, and immediately removed to North Carolina, where he spent the remainder of his life. He, however, retained this charge only until the year 1774.

In 1775, he was elected one of the delegates for the County of Bute, (now Warren and Franklin,) to the first Provincial Congress of North Carolina. He accepted the appointment, and not only acted as one of the Chaplains of that body, but when, on a certain occasion of great interest, they resolved themselves into a Committee of the whole, he was unanimously appointed Chairman. It is hardly necessary to add that he was a zealous friend to those measures which hastened on the Revolution.

In 1780, he became pastor of the Congregations of Nutbush and Grassy Creek,—composed originally of emigrants from Virginia, who had been trained under the ministry of the Rev. Samuel Davies and his coadjutors. Here he continued his labours till they were terminated by death, in the year 1801; when he had nearly completed his seventy-fifth year. He died at a distance from home, in Dinwiddie County, Va., whither he had gone on a sort of missionary excursion. In his last moments, he evinced a triumphant faith. His Funeral Sermon was preached by the Rev. Drury Lacy.

Mr. Patillo, during several years of his ministry, was occupied partly in the instruction of youth. Though he never enjoyed the advantages of a collegiate education, as he had at one time hoped to do, he had the reputation of being a good classical scholar, and was a highly successful teacher. In 1787, the degree of Master of Arts was conferred upon him by Hampden Sidney College.

In 1787, Mr. Patillo published a small volume containing three Sermons—namely, on Divisions among Christians; on the Necessity of Regeneration; and on the Scripture doctrine of Election. A note appended to one of these Discourses broached the same doctrine concerning Christ's human nature, of which Edward Irving has since been so distinguished an exponent. At a later period, he published an Abridgment of Leland's Deistical writers, and a Sermon on the death of Washington. He also left in manuscript some Essays on Baptism, and on Universalism; a Catechism of

doctrine for youth, and a Catechism or Compend in question and answer for the use of adults. He also prepared a Geography for youth, which is said to have possessed very considerable merit.

The following incident concerning Mr. Patillo is related by Dr. Alexander:—

“While I was minister in Charlotte, the old gentleman came once to pay his last visit to his friends in Virginia. I made a string of appointments for him, reaching from Cnb Creek to Cumberland, and accompanied him the whole round. It was previously suggested to a few, as we passed from place to place, that it would be well to make a contribution to aid the aged servant of God. When we had finished our tour, I had in my saddle bags about thirty dollars, which the people had freely given. As I handed him the silver coin, (for we had then never seen a bank note,) the good old man appeared to be penetrated with gratitude.”

FROM MRS. DR. JOHN H. RICE.

NEAR HAMPDEN SIDNEY COLLEGE, April 19, 1854.

My dear Sir: Though the Rev. Henry Patillo lived a considerable distance from my father's residence, he often travelled through our region, and came frequently to our house, where he was always a most welcome visitor. At a still earlier period, I have heard it said that he was familiar in my grandfather's house; so that he may be said to have been an acquaintance of the family during three generations. I was a girl of not more than fifteen, when I knew him, but there was so much in his appearance and manner that was striking and peculiar, that time has done little to efface the impressions I received respecting him. I have also many traditionary impressions of him, which I have received through some of his intimate friends; so that, on the whole, I may venture, with some degree of confidence, to say something, in compliance with your wishes, in respect to his character.

Mr. Patillo, if my memory serves me, had a large frame, and considerably more than the ordinary degree of flesh. I think his features were rather large and coarse, though his face easily lighted up with a smile of good-will. He seemed to be an eminently devout and godly man, and delighted to converse on subjects connected with experimental religion; and yet he was one of the most cheerful and good-humoured persons I ever knew. It seemed natural for him to say droll things; and he would sometimes keep a whole company convulsed, apparently without being conscious that he was doing it. He had great frankness of character, and would never even seem to dissemble in the smallest matters, though I have heard of cases in which he almost made himself ridiculous in avoiding the appearance of it. He was of a most contented and happy turn of mind, and though always poor, never seemed to regard his lot as a hard one. He was a great lover of books, and is said to have indulged his taste in that respect quite as much as his circumstances would warrant. His house, during his absence at a certain time, was burnt; and when he met his wife, on his return, his first exclamation was—“My dear, are my books safe?” and on receiving an affirmative answer, he thanked God, and seemed perfectly satisfied. I think he was uncommonly affectionate in his intercourse: he used always to address my mother as his daughter; and he was a great favourite with all the children.

I heard him preach, though I remember little more concerning it, than that, like his conversation, it was striking, and occasionally, I think, bordering on the ludicrous. He had a loud voice, spoke with great earnestness, and was listened to with much attention. I remember once seeing him at the house of my uncle, the Rev. Drury Lacy, for whom he had come to preach. Mr. Lacy had but one hand; and yet, by a dexterous use of it, he was able, with great facility, to make a pen. Mr. Patillo, as a matter of curiosity, handed him a quill, and

asked him to make a pen for him. He immediately set about it, and in a short time gave him the pen. "Why," said Mr. P., "I could have done that as well as you." "And why did you not do it, then?" "Oh, because I wanted to see you work with your one hand."

That you may know in what estimation Mr. Patillo was held by Mr. Lacy, who was long his intimate friend, I subjoin the following extract of a Sermon which Mr. L. preached on the occasion of his death:—

"Possessed of an originality of genius, and endowed by nature with powers of mind superior to the common lot of men, he cheerfully determined to consecrate them all to the service of the Saviour, in the Gospel ministry. That the Scriptures were his delight, and that he meditated on them day and night, so as to become well versed in their doctrines and precepts, all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance, all who ever heard him preach, and all who have read his printed works, can not be ignorant. That he devoted his time and talents to the service of God, his works of faith and labours of love among you, and as far as he had an opportunity of travelling to preach, abundantly testify. His zeal was so far from being diminished by age, that it evidently appeared to increase; as if the near prospect of obtaining the crown animated him to greater exertions to be found worthy of it. My hearers! Can you have forgotten the ardour and pertinacity of his prayers, the weight of his arguments, the fervour of his exhortations, and the persuasiveness of his counsels? Did he not visit your bedside when you were sick, and there communicate heavenly instruction, to revive your fainting spirits, and pour forth the fervent prayer to God that your affliction might be sanctified? And in the social intercourse of friendship, you must remember how readily he improved every occurrence to communicate useful and religious knowledge. That his life was a pattern of resignation and thankfulness has been remarked even by those who had but a slight acquaintance with him. Always cheerful, he seemed more disposed to bless the hand of Providence for the favours he enjoyed, than to think hardly of any afflictive dispensation he suffered. When was the tenor of his soul so lost and discomposed as to unfit him for the discharge of the sacred duties of his office?"

With best wishes for your success in every good word and work,

I remain truly yours,

ANNE S. RICE.

JAMES LATTA, D. D.

1758—1801.

FROM THE REV. ROBERT P. DU BOIS.

NEW LONDON, Pa., May 9, 1850.

Dear Sir: You have requested me to prepare a sketch of the life of the late Rev. James Latta, D. D., for insertion in your forthcoming work. In this request his only surviving son has joined. However incompetent for such a task, yet thus solicited, I feel encouraged to make the attempt. For the sake of your readers, who will naturally inquire how far they may confide in my statements, it seems necessary to observe concerning myself, that I am married to the eldest daughter of one of his sons,—the late Rev. John