

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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District of New York.

He was distinguished for exactness and propriety in every thing; travelled much; conversed much on religion with Indians and whites, wherever he went, and did good to all men as he had opportunity. Of the death of his wife he writes as follows—‘My dear wife, after a long and painful sickness, departed the 17th of September, 1757,—the greatest loss I ever sustained—the most sorrowful day my eyes ever saw. May God sanctify the heavy stroke to me and my little babes, support me under it, and make up the great loss to us in spiritual and Divine blessings. Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return. Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. She has exchanged a vale of tears for a crown of glory. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.’”

JOHN RODGERS, D. D.*

1747—1811.

JOHN RODGERS was born in Boston, on the 5th of August, 1727. He was a son of Thomas and Elizabeth Rodgers, who emigrated from Londonderry, Ireland, to Boston in 1721. In 1728, they transferred their residence to Philadelphia, when the subject of this sketch was a little more than a year old.

While he was yet a child, he evinced an uncommon love of knowledge, and a thoughtful habit of mind in respect to his eternal interests. It was under the preaching of Whitefield that he became first permanently impressed with the truths and obligations of religion. On one occasion, while Whitefield was preaching in the evening, on the outside of the steps of the Court House in Market Street, young Rodgers was standing near him, and holding a lantern for his accommodation; when he became so deeply impressed with the truth to which he was listening, that, for a moment, he forgot himself, and the lantern fell from his hand, and was dashed in pieces. Some time after he was settled in the ministry, Whitefield being on a visit to his house,—Mr. Rodgers alluded to this incident, and asked him if he recollected it. “Oh yes,” replied Whitefield, “I remember it well; and have often thought I would give almost any thing in my power to know who that little boy was, and what had become of him.” Mr. Rodgers replied with a smile,—“I am that little boy.” Whitefield burst into tears, and remarked that he was the *fourteenth* person then in the ministry, whom he had discovered in the course of that visit to America, of whose hopeful conversion he had been the instrument.

From the period when he believed the principle of religion was formed in his soul, he set his heart upon the ministry as his ultimate profession; and to this his studies began immediately to be directed. Having remained a few months at a grammar school in Philadelphia, under the care of a Mr. Stevenson, a celebrated teacher then recently from Ireland, he was removed to another grammar school, established shortly before, on the Neshaminy, a few miles from Philadelphia, by the Rev. Mr. Roan, an eminent Presbyte-

* Memoirs by Dr. Miller.—Dr. Phillips' Two Discourses on the opening of the Presbyterian Church in Wall street.—Webster's MSS.

rian clergyman. Here he continued about two years, distinguished alike for his diligence in study, his exemplary deportment, and his fervent zeal in the cause of religion. In the summer of 1743, at the age of sixteen, he was transferred from Mr. Roan's school to an Academy of high reputation at Fagg's Manor, in Chester County, Pa., under the care of the Rev. Samuel Blair, one of the most respectable scholars and divines of his day. Here he completed his academical studies, and made some progress in Theology. While he was connected with this institution, he was brought into intimate relations with several individuals, who afterwards obtained very considerable celebrity in the ministry; among whom was the Rev. Samuel Davies, who died President of the College of New Jersey. Having pursued his theological studies for some time under Mr. Blair, he returned to his father's in Philadelphia, and completed his preparation for the ministry, under the direction of Gilbert Tennent. In June, 1747, he appeared before the Presbytery of Newcastle, and entered on the usual trials for licensure; and, having passed these trials, was licensed in October following.

During the winter after his licensure, he was occupied, by direction of the Presbytery, in supplying some of the vacancies under their care; but in the spring he accompanied his friend, Mr. Samuel Davies, to Virginia, with an intention to share with him, for a few months, the labours of the ministry in that destitute region. As the Episcopal Church was then established by law in Virginia, and no other denomination tolerated, except by explicit consent of the government, he made application, immediately on his arrival at Williamsburg, for permission to exercise the functions of the ministry; and though the Governor received him with great kindness, and did every thing in his power to further his wishes, yet the General Court utterly refused even to allow the reading of his testimonials,—a necessary pre-requisite to his receiving the desired license: Being thus disappointed in not obtaining permission to labour in Virginia, he passed over to Somerset County in Maryland, where he spent the summer of 1748, enjoying the hospitalities of many accomplished and excellent families, and preaching in various places, as he had opportunity. His labours during the season were generally highly acceptable, and in some instances were crowned with a signal blessing.

Early in the autumn of 1748, Mr. Rodgers returned to Pennsylvania, and when he attended the meeting of his Presbytery in October, he found no less than four calls waiting for his consideration. He chose the one from the Congregation of St. George's; which, though the least promising on the score of temporal support and comfort, still seemed to have the strongest claims upon him, on the ground that the prosperity, if not the continued existence, of the congregation was thought to depend upon his acceptance of it. Accordingly, he was ordained to the work of the ministry, and installed pastor of the church of St. George's, on the 16th of March, 1749. The sermon on the occasion was preached by the Rev. Dr. Finley.

His labours in his new charge were attended, from the beginning, with marked success. While he was most diligent in every department of pastoral duty, he had the pleasure to see the number of his hearers constantly increasing, and not a few, as he hoped, savingly profited by his ministry. The congregation soon became too numerous to be accommodated in their

place of worship; and they enlarged it repeatedly in the course of a few years; while he was constantly growing in the affection and confidence of all around him. In one of the earliest catechetical exercises which he held for the benefit of the children of his congregation, he met a youth by the name of Alexander McWhorter, the promptness and correctness of whose answers attracted his particular notice, and laid the foundation of an affectionate intimacy between them that was terminated only by death. This lad afterwards became the Rev. Dr. McWhorter of Newark, N. J.

Besides the Congregation of St. George's, Mr. Rodgers had under his care a small congregation near the village of Middletown, De., then generally known as "the Forest Congregation." Here he laboured one-third of his time, and with manifest tokens of the Divine favour.

In the great controversy which, for many years, agitated the Presbyterian Church, and in 1741 rent it asunder, Mr. Rodgers was not a mere spectator. His sympathies were altogether with the "New Side," or the "New Lights," as they were called; and, considering that he had been trained in the school of Whitefield, it would have been strange if it had been otherwise. When a reunion took place in 1758, he had been about nine years in the ministry. It was an event in which he felt the deepest interest, as having in his view a most important bearing on the welfare of Christ's Kingdom.

In September, 1752,—between three and four years after his settlement at St. George's, Mr. Rodgers was married to Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Colonel Peter Bayard, of Cecil County, Md. She was every way fitted for her station, and became the mother of four children; one of whom was Dr. John R. B. Rodgers,—an eminent physician of New York, and another was the wife of the Rev. Dr. William M. Tennent of Abington, Pa.

In 1753, the Rev. Messrs. Samuel Davies of Virginia and Gilbert Tennent of Philadelphia were commissioned by the Synod of New York to visit Great Britain, with a view to solicit contributions in aid of the College of New Jersey. As the Synod undertook to supply their respective pulpits during their absence, Mr. Rodgers was sent, in the spring of 1754, to supply the pulpit of Mr. Davies. In consideration of the rude treatment to which he had been subjected on his previous visit to Virginia, he was apprehensive that he might still meet with some embarrassment from the same source. But herein he was agreeably disappointed: he was received with marked respect and kindness, and suffered to proceed in the discharge of his duty without molestation. He remained in Virginia several months.

Mr. Rodgers had now acquired such general popularity that, towards the close of the same year, (1754,) he was earnestly requested to visit New York, with reference to finding there a permanent settlement. The Presbyterian Church in that city had fallen into a state of unhappy disunion; and it was hoped that a person of his popular talents and conciliatory dispositions and manners might be instrumental in restoring peace. His attachment to his people, however, together with the doubt which he felt in respect to the issue of the proposed change, led him to decline the invitation.

In 1762, Mr. Rodgers was appointed by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia to visit Great Britain, to solicit benefactions in aid of the establishment of a "fund for the relief of poor and distressed Presbyterian ministers, their widows and children." This important and honourable mis-

sion, however, the state of his family obliged him to decline; and the Rev. Charles Beatty, another eminent minister, was appointed in his place.

On the 20th of January, 1763, Mr. Rodgers was called to mourn the death of his wife,—an affliction of which he often spoke, to the close of his life, with the utmost tenderness and sorrow. After somewhat more than a year and a half from the time of her death, he entered into a second matrimonial connection with Mrs. Mary Grant, the widow of William Grant, an eminent merchant of Philadelphia. By this marriage, he had one child, a daughter, who died several years before her parents. Mrs. Rodgers survived her husband, and died on the 16th of March, 1812, in the eighty-eighth year of her age. Of this lady Dr. Miller, who knew her well, says,—

“Her great firmness of mind, her remarkable prudence, her polished and dignified manners, her singular sweetness and evenness of temper, joined with fervent piety, endeared her to all that had the happiness of her acquaintance, and rendered her an excellent model for the wife of a clergyman.”

In 1765, he was elected one of the Trustees of the College of New Jersey. This office he continued to hold, discharging its duties with most scrupulous fidelity, till 1807, when, with characteristic disinterestedness, he resigned it, that a younger and more active person might be appointed in his place.

In the early part of the year 1765, he received two calls,—one from the Congregation in New York then just vacated by the death of the Rev. David Bostwick,—and another from a large and important Congregational Church in Charleston, S. C. Mr. Whitefield, who happened to visit him about that time, gave it as his decided opinion that the indications of Providence were in favour of his removal, but was doubtful in which direction he ought to go. The question,—which call he should accept, was finally referred to the Synod; and after a patient investigation of the comparative claims of the two congregations, they decided almost unanimously in favour of the Congregation in New York. Accordingly, his pastoral relation to the Church of St. George's was dissolved in May, and his installation as pastor of the Church in New York took place in September following. The Installation Sermon was preached by the Rev. James Caldwell of Elizabethtown.

Scarcely was Mr. Rodgers introduced to his new sphere of labour, before the influence of his ministrations became perceptible, not only in the rapid growth of the congregation, but in a greatly increased attention to religious things. It became necessary, at no distant period, to erect a new place of worship; and measures were accordingly taken for this purpose early in the spring of 1766. Within about fifteen months, the building was completed,—the same which still stands at the corner of Beekman and Nassau Streets, and is known as “Dr. Spring's Church.” A large part of the funds requisite for this enterprise were collected by the personal applications of Mr. Rodgers. The Congregation, though now worshipping in two buildings, was still considered as one body. The ministers preached alternately in each building; and there was but one Board of Trustees, and one Eldership.

In 1768, Mr. Rodgers was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the University of Edinburgh. Dr. Franklin, who was at that time in London, wrote, at the suggestion of Mr. Whitefield, to Principal Robertson, recommending Mr. Rodgers as a suitable person to receive such an honour; and, without any unnecessary delay, the request was complied with.

In the summer of 1768, Dr. Witherspoon arrived from Scotland, having a short time before been called to the Presidency of the College of New Jersey. Dr. Rodgers was among the first to do him honour; and he never ceased to regard him with the most affectionate respect. The year after his arrival, he accompanied him on a visit to Boston, and other parts of New England, from which both of them seem to have derived great enjoyment. Dr. Rodgers, who survived his venerable friend many years, preached a Sermon on the occasion of his death, by request of the Trustees of the College over which Dr. Witherspoon had presided. The Sermon was published, and is thought to have been the most creditable, in a literary point of view, of Dr. Rodgers' printed productions.

In 1774, Dr. Rodgers was appointed by the Synod to make a missionary tour of a few weeks during the summer, through the Northern and North-western parts of the Province of New York. He fulfilled the appointment in a laborious and faithful manner, and with considerable success. This mission occurred just at the time of the violent controversy between the settlers of the territory which is now Vermont, and the government of New York, in respect to the matter of jurisdiction. Some of the incensed Vermonters suspected, as he came from New York, that he had some political end to accomplish, adverse to their interests; and in one or two instances, there was a serious purpose formed to arrest him. But the individuals who had meditated it, were prevailed on to suspend its execution till he had fulfilled an appointment to preach; and, after hearing him, they were so much impressed with his Christian sincerity, that they were disposed to bid him God speed in his mission.

Dr. Rodgers was an early and devoted friend to his country's independence. Previous to the commencement of hostilities, he was associated with several other clergymen, among whom were Doctors Mason and Laidlie, in a weekly meeting for friendly intercourse and mutual improvement. As things were seen to be approaching a crisis, these excellent men determined to make this meeting an occasion for special prayer that the struggle in which the country was about to engage might be successful; and the meeting was continued, with reference to this object, until the ministers composing it, and the great mass of the people, were obliged to fly for safety from the city. Dr. Rodgers removed his family to a place in the neighbourhood, in February, 1776. They remained there for about two months; and he, in the mean time, visited the city, whenever his professional duties required. On the 14th of April of that year, General Washington took possession of New York for its defence. Shortly after his arrival, Dr. Rodgers, with several other gentlemen friendly to the American cause, called to pay him their respects. The General received him with marked attention, and, as he was about to retire, followed him to the door, and remarked that he had been mentioned to him in Philadelphia as a person who might be able to render him important service in reference to the cause of his country, and asked if he would allow him to apply to him for information whenever he might find it desirable. The Doctor assured him that he should do with the utmost alacrity whatever might be in his power. The General subsequently availed himself of the privilege of consulting the Doctor on more than one occasion, and it is hardly necessary to add that all his suggestions and requests received the most prompt attention.

In May, 1776, Dr. Rodgers removed his family from the neighbourhood of New York to Greenfield, Conn., as a place where they would be more out of the reach of the din and perils of war. Having been just before appointed a Chaplain to General Heath's Brigade, which, for several months, was stationed near Greenwich on York Island, he returned immediately from Greenfield, and entered on the duties of his Chaplaincy. These duties he performed with great zeal and fidelity, exhibiting at once a spirit of earnest piety and glowing patriotism.

In November of that year, having important private business to transact in Georgia, he resigned his Chaplaincy, and travelled by land through the whole Southern country to Savannah. He, however, took care to make his journey instrumental, as far as he could, of the furtherance of the Gospel; preaching not only on the Sabbath, but also on week-day evenings, whenever there was an opportunity. At Savannah he remained for some time with his friend, the Rev. Dr. Zubly, who had shortly before visited him in New York. Here also he met many of the friends of Whitefield; and the intimate relations in which he had stood to that eminent man, were a passport at once to their affectionate regards and devoted attentions.

In April, 1777, Dr. Rodgers returned from Georgia, and on his way home was informed of his election to the Chaplaincy of the Convention of the State of New York, then in session in Esopus. Having paid a short visit to his family at Greenfield, he immediately repaired to the Convention, and entered on the duties of his office. Subsequently, when the power of the State was lodged in a Council of Safety, which also held its meetings in Esopus, he served as Chaplain to that Body also. And at a still later period, when the first Legislature of the State, under the new constitution, convened, he was a third time elected to the same office. Meanwhile, he removed his family from Greenfield to Esopus, where they spent the whole of the summer, and part of the autumn, of 1777. They were, however, at length driven from Esopus by the burning of the village by the British; and the Doctor determined then to select for them a more retired and less exposed situation. Accordingly, towards the end of October, he removed them to Sharon, Conn., where he passed the following winter. During his sojourn here, he preached repeatedly for the Rev. Cotton Mather Smith, the minister of the parish in which he resided; and still more frequently to a congregation in the town of Amenia, in Dutchess County, N. Y., in the neighbourhood of Sharon,—where he afterwards made a temporary settlement. This latter congregation had, for many years, been agitated by serious divisions; but, through the healing influence of Dr. Rodgers' ministrations, it was restored to its former harmony, besides being in other respects greatly benefitted and improved.

In April, 1780, the Doctor, to the great grief of the people among whom he had laboured in Amenia, accepted an invitation to remove to Danbury, and preach to the Society in that town. Here again he found a divided congregation; and by his prudence, zeal, and fidelity, he accomplished the same harmonizing work as in the congregation to which he had previously ministered. He declined being installed pastor of the church, on the ground that he wished to hold himself in readiness, on the return of Peace, to resume his pastoral charge in New York. He, however, joined the Congregational Association within whose bounds he resided, and cheerfully co-operated with his brethren around in all their plans for the general advancement of religion.

After remaining at Danbury somewhat more than two years, he was led, by some adverse circumstances, to determine on a change of residence; and, accordingly, in the spring of 1782, he accepted an invitation from the Church of Lamington, N. J., to minister to them, as long as Providence should continue the separation between him and his own people. In May of that year, he removed from Danbury to Lamington, where he continued, discharging all the duties of a pastor, till the autumn of 1783, when the close of the war permitted him to resume his connection with his Congregation in New York, from which he had so long been exiled.

On their return to the city after their dispersion, they found their numbers greatly diminished, their parsonage burnt, and both their houses of worship in a state of almost total ruin. They, however, rallied their energies with a view to recover themselves; and their first object was to obtain accommodations for public worship during the time that must elapse before their church edifices could be repaired. The Vestry of Trinity Church, with most honourable liberality, offered them the use of St. George's and St. Paul's Churches, as long as their necessities should require. This offer they gratefully accepted, and were thus accommodated by their Episcopal neighbours, from November, 1783, till the following June. One of Dr. Rodgers' earliest sermons, after resuming his ministry in New York, was delivered on a day of National Thanksgiving and Prayer, and was afterwards published, bearing the title "The Divine goodness displayed in the American Revolution."

The church in Beekman Street was first repaired, and as it was immediately ascertained that one building was quite inadequate to accommodate the applicants for pews, they set about repairing the church in Wall Street also; and in due time both were ready for occupancy. The expense of repairing the two buildings was very considerable; but Dr. Rodgers, with his accustomed magnanimity, volunteered, as he had done on a former occasion, to do a large part of the drudgery of collecting the requisite funds.

The Rev. Mr. Treat, with whom Dr. Rodgers had been associated as co-pastor, did not, owing to some personal considerations, return to the city after the close of the war; and the congregation having signified their willingness to dispense with the services of a second pastor, he was dismissed by the Presbytery in October, 1784. Subsequently, however, as their numbers increased, it was found that another pastor was needed; and the congregation, in April, 1785, called Mr. James Wilson, a licensed candidate for the ministry, who had then just arrived from Scotland. He was installed in August following, as colleague with Dr. Rodgers; but, after labouring very diligently and acceptably for about three years, his health became so much impaired that he was obliged to seek a Southern climate, and consequently resigned his pastoral charge.*

In the summer of 1789, the Rev. (afterwards Dr.) John McKnight, pastor of the Church in Marsh Creek, Pa., was invited to succeed Mr. Wilson; and, having accepted the invitation, was installed as a collegiate pastor of the Uni-

* Mr. WILSON, about the time of resigning his charge, received a call from the Presbyterian Church in Charleston, S. C., where there was reason to believe that both the climate and the service required of him would be more favourable to his health than those of New-York; and he accordingly signified his acceptance of the call on the 22d of January, 1788. After spending several years of ministerial comfort and usefulness in Charleston, he returned to Scotland where he remained a year or two, and then came again to America. He never took a pastoral charge after this; but, after struggling with ill health for several years, died in Virginia, in the year 1799, in the forty-eighth year of his age.

ted Churches with Dr. Rodgers, in December following. In the year 1792, Dr. McKnight's health became so much impaired that he was unable to preach, as he had been accustomed to do, three times on the Sabbath, in consequence of which, they called a third pastor, Mr. Samuel Miller, now (1849) the Rev. Dr. Miller, Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton. Dr. Miller remained pastor of the church for several years after the death of Dr. Rodgers, and still cherishes his memory with a truly filial veneration.

The Legislature of New York, shortly after the Revolution, passed an Act establishing a Board, styled, "The Regents of the University of New York,"—whose office it is, in general, to watch over the interests of literature throughout the State. Of this University, Dr. Rodgers was chosen Vice Chancellor, and he held the office as long as he lived.

In the revision of the public standards of the Presbyterian Church, and in all those measures which led to their adoption and establishment on the present plan, Dr. Rodgers had a highly important agency. And when the first General Assembly, under the new arrangement, met in Philadelphia, in May, 1789, he had the honour of being chosen Moderator of that Body.

In December 1803, Dr. Rodgers gave notice to the Session of his Church that, "on account of his age and growing infirmities, he was no longer able to preach more than once on the Lord's day," and requested that the requisite additional supply for the pulpit might be furnished. The request was of course acceded to with the utmost alacrity. Previous to this time, he had been accustomed to deliver his Sermons *memoriter*; but finding that his memory had begun to fail him, he commenced preaching with his sermon before him, and continued this practice as long as he continued to preach. In 1809, he had become so far enfeebled in both body and mind, that it was not without much difficulty that he could go through the service; and in September of that year he preached his last sermon. He subsequently attempted, on one occasion, to officiate at the administration of the Lord's Supper; but the great imperfection of his memory rendered the service alike difficult to himself, and painful to those who witnessed it. He continued gradually to decline, though he occasionally walked abroad, till about the close of the succeeding year, when he became too feeble to leave his house. For six weeks previous to his death, he was confined to his bed nearly the whole time; and after his memory had ceased to do its office in respect to all temporal objects and interests, and even his dearest friends, it was almost as vigorous as ever in regard to spiritual and eternal realities. He prayed with his family for the last time on the evening preceding his death, and sunk calmly to his rest on the 7th of May, 1811, in the eighty-fourth year of his age, and the sixty-third of his ministry. His funeral was attended two days afterwards, and an Address delivered on the occasion by the Rev. Dr. Milledoler. A Funeral Sermon was preached on the succeeding Sabbath by Dr. Miller, which was published some time after, in connection with the Memoirs of Dr. Rodgers, in an octavo volume.

Besides some miscellaneous articles in connection with the Episcopal controversy, and several Sermons in the "American Preacher," Dr. Rodgers published A Sermon before a Masonic Lodge, at Stockbridge, Mass., 1779; A National Thanksgiving Sermon, 1783; A Sermon on the death of Dr. Witherspoon, 1794; and A Sermon at the opening of the Cedar Street Church, 1808.

FROM THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.,
PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON.

PRINCETON, May 30, 1849.

Rev. dear Brother: When you request me to prepare for your forthcoming biographical work some brief memorials of the late venerable Dr. Rodgers of New York, I feel as if I were called not to the performance of a task, but to the enjoyment of a privilege. If there be a man living who is entitled to speak of that eminent servant of Christ, I am that man. Having been long and intimately acquainted with him; having served with him twenty years as a son in the Gospel ministry; and having enjoyed peculiar opportunities of contemplating every phase of his character, personal and official; so my ardent attachment and deep veneration for his memory make it delightful to record what I knew with so much distinctness, and remember with so much interest.

My acquaintance with Dr. Rodgers began in 1792, when he was more than sixty years of age, and when I was a youthful and inexperienced candidate for the ministry. He recognised in me the son of an old clerical friend, and from that hour till the day of his death treated me with a fidelity and kindness truly paternal. And when, next year, I became his colleague, he uniformly continued to exercise toward me that parental indulgence and guardianship which became his inherited friendship, as well as his Christian and ecclesiastical character.

Without attempting in this connection to enter into the details of his history, which I have already done at large in my "Memoir" of this beloved man, I shall content myself with recounting in a brief manner those features in his character which I regard as worthy of special commemoration, and which rendered him so conspicuous among the pastors of his day.

One of the great charms of Dr. Rodgers' character was *the fervour and uniformity of his piety*. It not only appeared conspicuous in the pulpit,—dictating his choice of subjects, his mode of treating them, and his affectionate earnestness of manner; but it attended him wherever he went, and manifested itself in whatever he did. In the house of mourning it shone with distinguished lustre. Nor was this all. He probably never was known to enter a human dwelling for the purpose of paying an ordinary visit, without saying something before he left it to recommend the Saviour and his service. Seldom did he sit down at the convivial table, without dropping at least a few sentences adapted to promote the spiritual benefit of those around him. In all the domestic relations of life, piety pervaded and regulated his conduct; controlling a temper naturally hasty and irascible, and prompting to the affectionate courtesies of Christian benevolence. I well remember a circumstance which, though small in itself, was considered by an impartial observer as not a little significant. A young clergyman, who had paid a short visit to the city, and who had enjoyed two or three pleasant interviews with Dr. Rodgers, a few years before his death,—at the close of the last interview, rose and offered his hand for the purpose of bidding him farewell. The Doctor took it, and squeezing it affectionately, with a very few simple words expressive of pious hope and tender benediction, dismissed him. The clergyman, on retiring, inquired whether what he had just witnessed was the Doctor's *common* manner of taking leave of his friends; adding that he had seldom seen any thing so much like the pious and primitive style of an Apostle before.

Another quality in Dr. Rodgers which, next to his piety, contributed to his high reputation, was *prudence, or practical wisdom*. Few men were more wary than he in foreseeing circumstances likely to produce embarrassment or difficulty, and in avoiding them. Few men were more cautious of "giving" unnecessary "offence that the ministry might not be blamed," or more watchful with respect to all those modes of exhibiting truth or of performing duty, which are calculated to conciliate the differently constituted minds of men. Hence he was

able to do a thousand things without exciting the least resentment, which many others would not have accomplished without encountering the most determined opposition and animosity. And hence he rarely found himself in those perplexing and painful situations, to which the indiscreet and unwary are so frequently reduced, to the interruption of their own peace, and to the discredit of religion.

He was remarkable also for the *uniform, persevering and indefatigable character of his ministerial labours*. In preaching, in catechizing, in attending on the sick and dying, in all the arduous labours of discipline and government, and in visiting from house to house, he went on with unceasing constancy, year after year, from the beginning to the end of his ministry. He not only abounded in ministerial labours, but he laboured systematically, uniformly, and with unwearied patience. Difficulties did not usually appal him; delays did not discourage him. Those who found him busily engaged in pursuing a certain regular and judicious course at one period, would be sure to find him, after a series of years, pursuing with steady and undeviating steps the same course. In short, as his learned friend, Dr. Livingston, has remarked concerning him, he was literally "*forever the same.*"

The character of Dr. Rodgers' *preaching* was another of the leading elements of his popularity and usefulness. The two qualities most remarkable in his preaching were *piety and animation*. His sermons were always rich in evangelical truth; and they were generally delivered with a solemnity and earnestness which indicated a deep impression on his own heart of the importance of what he uttered. And hence, though he was never remarkable for that variety, either in the choice or the illustration of his subjects, which some would have preferred; and though he never gave himself the trouble to attain that polish and elegance of style to which many lend a large share of their attention, still, in the days of his vigour, he was one of the most popular as well as useful preachers in the American Church. No one ever found him affecting novelty in the representations which he gave of Divine truth, either with respect to their substance or their modes of expression, because he considered *the old as better*; and in the old track he was found forever walking.

Dr. Rodgers was *eminently a disinterested man*. Few men have ever been more free from private and selfish aims in acting their part in the affairs of the Church, than he. Of ecclesiastical policy, other than that which sought to promote the peace, the order, the purity, the extension, and the happiness, of the Church, by the most fair and honourable means, he evidently knew nothing. In petty schemes for diminishing the influence of his brethren that he might increase his own, or in the arts of intrigue, to play off contending parties or individuals, as engines for promoting his personal elevation, he was never suspected of engaging. He was always a peace-maker, never a divider. He rejoiced in the honour and success of his brethren. And when, towards the close of his life, some of the young men whom he had been instrumental in introducing into the ministry enjoyed a measure of popularity, which might be said in a degree to eclipse his own, his most intimate friends never saw him manifest on this account the smallest uneasiness. On the contrary, he appeared to take unfeigned pleasure in witnessing the acceptance of their labours, and in contributing to raise rather than depress their reputation.

Dr. Rodgers was further distinguished by a *punctual attendance on the judicatories of the Church*. He made it a point never to be absent from the meetings of his brethren, unless sickness or some other equally imperious dispensation of Providence rendered his attendance impossible. And when present in the several ecclesiastical courts, he gave his serious and undivided attention to the business which came before them, and was always ready to take his full share, and more than his share, of the labour connected with that business. The consequence was that he became personally known to almost all his brethren in the

ministry of his own denomination in the United States ; that he enjoyed their friendship and confidence ; that he kept up a connected and thorough acquaintance with the affairs of the Church ; that he contributed to strengthen the hands of those with whom he acted ; and that thus the sphere both of his honour and his usefulness was greatly extended.

The great *liberality of sentiment* which Dr. Rodgers habitually discovered, endeared him to thousands, and contributed not a little to the extension of his influence. Though he was a firm Presbyterian, and a decided Calvinist, he was far from being a bigot. He seldom mentioned the opinions of others in the pulpit ; but contented himself with declaring, illustrating, and endeavouring to recommend, what he believed to be the doctrines of Scripture. And on one occasion, when he was urged by some of the officers of his church to preach against what he regarded the errors of a particular sect, and to warn his people against them by name, he utterly refused, saying, "Brethren, you must excuse me. I cannot reconcile it with my sense either of policy or of duty to oppose these people from the pulpit, otherwise than by preaching the truth plainly and faithfully. I believe them to be in error ; but let us out-preach them, out-pray them, and out-live them, and we need not fear."

Dr. Rodgers was remarkably prompt in obeying the calls of *humanity and benevolence*. Besides attending to his duty in several religious Societies, of all which he was President, he found time to be one of the most active and useful members of the "Society for the relief of distressed prisoners," and of the "Board of Trustees of the City Dispensary," in both of which, for a number of years, he presided. He was also a member of the "Manumission Society" of New York, and manifested a deep interest in the abolition of slavery, and in the success of plans for meliorating the condition of slaves. Nor did he, as is too often done, content himself with being a mere nominal member of those Associations. As long as he retained his vigour of body and mind, few persons in the community took a more active part than he in promoting and executing plans of enlightened and diffusive benevolence.

Both the reputation and usefulness of Dr. Rodgers were doubtless promoted by the *peculiar and uniform dignity of his manners*. This part of his character was not only remarkable but pre-eminent. If his manners had sometimes a degree of formality in them which excited the smile of the frivolous, they always manifested the polish of the well-bred gentleman, as well as the benevolence of the Christian, and never failed to command respect. He was habitually cheerful, and often facetious and sportive ; but his sportiveness was always as remarkable for its taste and dignity as it was for the perfect inoffensiveness of its character. There was a uniformity, an urbanity, and a vigilance, in his dignity, which plainly showed that it was not the result of temporary effort, but the spontaneous product of a polished, benevolent and elevated mind.

I may say also in this connection that he was always *attentive to his dress*. Like his manners and his morals, it was invariably neat, elegant and spotless. He appeared to have an innate abhorrence of every thing like slovenliness or disorder about his person. And while there was nothing that indicated an excessive or finical attention to the material or adjustment of his clothing, it was ever such as manifested the taste of a gentleman. In this respect, he resembled his friend and spiritual father, Mr. Whitefield, whose sayings and example on the subject he not unfrequently quoted, and who often remarked that a minister of the Gospel, in his dress, as well as in every thing else, ought to be "*without spot.*"

The *personal appearance* of Dr. Rodgers, like every thing else about him, was remarkable. His *stature* was very little, if any, above the middle size. But his person was expanded and thick set, and whenever he appeared in the street, his neat and becoming professional costume, his large white wig, his venerable

figure, and his dignified, slow, composed walk, all proclaimed the grave, apostolic man of God, who was going to and fro on errands of mercy.

I am, my dear Sir,

Sincerely and affectionately yours,

SAMUEL MILLER

ELIHU SPENCER, D. D.

1748—1784.

FROM THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

PRINCETON, April, 20, 1849.

Rev. and dear Sir: I am happy, in compliance with your request, to send you some notices of the 'Rev. Elihu Spencer, D. D., who was for many years the respected and beloved pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Trenton, N. J., and whose decease in that city, took place in the year 1784.

The ancestors of the family from which this eminent man descended, were five brothers, who emigrated from England to Massachusetts early in the seventeenth century. The eldest of these brothers, *John Spencer*, appears to have been a large landholder, a magistrate, a member of the General Court, and a high military officer in Newtown, now Cambridge, from 1634 to 1638, when he returned to England, and seems to have left no descendants on this side of the Atlantic. *William Spencer* the second brother, also settled in Cambridge, where he was a member of the General Court, and a landed proprietor. He afterwards removed to Connecticut, where he died in 1640, leaving a numerous family. He was the ancestor of the Honourable *Ambrose Spencer*, late Chief Justice of the State of New York. *Thomas Spencer*, the third brother, was also first settled in Cambridge, but removed to Connecticut in 1638; and died in Haddam, the residence of his family, in 1685, leaving a numerous posterity. The Rev. *Ichabod S. Spencer*, D. D., pastor of the First Presbyterian church in Brooklyn, N. Y.; the Honourable *Joshua Austin Spencer* of Utica, and several other eminent men bearing that name in the same State, are among his distinguished descendants. The fourth brother, *Jared Spencer*, originally settled with his brothers at Cambridge. He removed thence in a few years to Lynn, and not long afterwards to Connecticut, when he became one of the first settlers of the town of Haddam. He died in 1685, leaving a large family of children. The Rev. *Elihu Spencer*, the subject of this article, and General *Joseph Spencer*, a distinguished and active military officer during the Revolutionary war, were among his descendants. The fifth brother, *Michael Spencer*, was a joint proprietor with his brother *Jared*, and removed with him to Lynn, where he died in 1653. It is not known to me that any of his posterity remain.

ELIHU SPENCER, the subject of this sketch, was born at East Haddam, Conn., February 12, 1721. He was the son of Isaac and Mary Spencer, and early manifested an active and energetic mind. He commenced a course of literary study, with a view to the Gospel ministry, in the month of March, 1740; entered Yale College in September, 1742; and was graduated A. B. in September, 1746. After his graduation, he was recommended