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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.

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

operated prejudicially by leading him to utter himself, even on questions of moment, without due consideration.

Mr. Macurdy, as a preacher, was distinguished for directness, earnestness, boldness, in both matter and manner. He never daubed with untempered mortar. He never softened down God's truth for the sake of conciliating those who pronounced it a hard saying. It is possible that he may have sometimes, in his uncompromising plainness, have failed to choose out acceptable words in the sense of the wise man's direction; but if he erred in this way, it was evidently under a strong impulse of fidelity to his Master. There was certainly little refinement in his manner or style of preaching; but there was a rich vein of evangelical thought, and an air of deep sincerity, that were far more impressive and effective than any mere rhetorical exhibitions could have been. He had a clear, loud voice, which was usually brought into exercise in the pulpit under the influence of intense feeling, and very often in the utterance of the most terrible denunciations of God's word. It is probable that his earnest piety may be considered as having been the leading element of his usefulness—it kept his heart always beating, and his hand always busy, for the promotion of the great interests of Christ's Kingdom. He was undoubtedly among the most laborious and useful ministers in Western Pennsylvania.

Yours, in the Beloved,

WILLIAM NEILL.

CHARLES COFFIN, D. D.*

1799—1853.

CHARLES COFFIN was born in Newburyport, Mass., August 15, 1775. His father was Charles Coffin, M. D., who was graduated at Harvard College in 1759, was for many years a distinguished physician in Newburyport, and died in April, 1821, at the age of eighty. He kept a journal in Latin from 1775 till about the close of that century. His mother, whose maiden name was Hepzibah Carnes, was a native of Boston, a devoted Christian, and eminently faithful in the discharge of parental duty.

His early youth was marked by freedom from all immoral tendencies, great precocity of intellect, and an ardent thirst for knowledge. At the age of ten, he had read twice through the whole Bible; though he was attracted to it rather by the wonderful things which it revealed to his imagination and curiosity, than by any spiritual appreciation of its contents. He was fitted for College, partly at least under the instruction of Nicholas Pike,—the author of an "Arithmetic" that had no small celebrity in its day; though he had also the advantage of the careful supervision of his father, who was an admirable Latin scholar, and every way competent to the best intellectual training of his son. In August, 1789, when he was only fourteen years of age, he became a member of Harvard College; and, having sustained a high reputation for both scholarship and deportment, during his whole course, was graduated in July, 1793,—on which occasion he delivered a Poem on the "Comparative Beauties of Nature and Art." After leaving

* Presbyterian Witness, 1853.—MSS. from his son,—J. A. Coffin, Esq., Miss C. M. Melville, and Rev. J. H. Martin.

College, he commenced the study of medicine; but he soon made a profession of religion, and resolved to devote himself to the ministry. It was an interesting circumstance that his father, though he had been for many years a regular attendant on the Rev. (afterwards Dr.) Samuel Spring's ministry, and accustomed to give religious counsel to his children, had never made a public profession of his faith, and both the father and the son joined the church at the same time. Of the early religious exercises of the son, the following testimony was furnished by the late Professor Woods, of Andover, who was his intimate friend, in a letter to Dr. Coffin's son, written shortly after his death. He says,—“I was made acquainted with his religious exercises by Dr. Spring, who told me that your father's convictions of sin were very strong and deep, and that, for a time, he was driven into a state of despair,—in which state his distress of mind was insupportable, and he ‘chose strangling and death, rather than life.’ His subsequent state was uncommonly happy.”

Having pursued his theological studies under the instruction, first of the Rev. Dr. Joseph Dana of Ipswich, and then of his own Pastor,—the Rev. Dr. Spring,—he was licensed to preach by the Essex Middle Association, at Ipswich, on the 14th of May, 1799. Previous to his licensure, he had been engaged for some time as an assistant teacher in Exeter Phillips Academy.

His health having become impaired, and his eyes injured, by too intense application to study, he determined to try the effect of a journey into the Southern States. Accordingly, he left Newburyport in December, 1799, and spent the winter in Norfolk, Va., where he was abundant in his evangelical labours. At that time there was only one church edifice in Norfolk, and that Episcopal, and in a dilapidated and almost ruinous state. The Presbyterians held their public worship in the Town Hall, or Court House. While preaching there one Sabbath, he alluded very pointedly in the course of his sermon to this lamentable destitution of church accommodations, and exclaimed with a pleasant satire, which he knew so well how to use charitably—“Oh, happy people of Norfolk! If an enemy should come into your harbour, and bombard your city, they could not batter down your churches; for you have none to bear the brunt.” A smile flitted for a moment on the faces of his congregation, and an emotion of shame and regret instantly followed, which was shared by every Presbyterian in the assembly. A subscription was shortly after commenced, and in 1802, a substantial brick building was dedicated by them to the worship of God.

In the latter part of May, 1800, Mr. Coffin left Norfolk, where he had been, for several months, most diligently, usefully, and pleasantly occupied, and travelled on horseback through Virginia and North Carolina, to Greenville, Tenn., which he reached in the month of June. He remained in Tennessee, preaching in different places, until April, 1801, when he returned to New England with his health much improved. While in Tennessee, he became much interested in the prosperity of Greenville College; and the conviction which he felt of the importance of having the number of competent teachers, as well as ministers of the Gospel, greatly increased in that newly settled Western country, gave direction to his future course in life.

On the 19th of October, 1802, Mr. Coffin was married to Susan W., daughter of James and Mary (Woodbridge) Ayer, of New Milford, Me.—She was a lineal descendant of Benjamin Woodbridge, whose name stands

at the head of the Catalogue of Harvard College. In November succeeding his marriage, he started on horseback for Tennessee, and arrived at Greenville in January, 1803. Having remained there long enough to make arrangements for a permanent residence, he returned by way of South Carolina, reaching New England in June following. Here he was occupied for a considerable time in soliciting funds for the endowment of Greenville College, of which he had now become Vice President.

On the 11th of September, 1804, he was ordained as an Evangelist by the Essex Middle Association, the Sermon on the occasion being preached by Dr. Spring, and the Charge delivered by Dr. Joseph Dana of Ipswich. About a fortnight after, he set out with his family, consisting of his wife, an infant son, and his wife's sister, for their new and distant home. They reached Greenville about the 1st of January, 1805, having made the journey—at that day both perilous and difficult—in a vehicle drawn by three horses.

Mr. Coffin now devoted all his energies to the building up of Greenville College; and its good influence was felt in moulding the characters of not a few who have since been among the brightest lights of the South West. But with his labours as a teacher he combined also a great amount of preaching; for he could never forget that his highest vocation was that of a Gospel minister. It was common in that part of the country, at that day, to preach in the open air, and without notes; and Mr. Coffin conformed to this usage to the material injury of his health. For many years he preached in Hawkins County, at Rogersville and New Providence Churches,—till they were able to sustain a pastor. He likewise preached once in three weeks at Jonesborough, and was instrumental in building up a Church there, to which he ministered till about 1820. For a few years before he ceased preaching at Jonesborough, he was greatly encouraged and aided by David Nelson, one of the ruling elders of the Hebron Church, (Jonesborough,) who afterwards became a distinguished clergyman and author. During the greater part of the time that he was connected with Greenville College, he had charge of the Harmony Church in Greenville. He made it a matter of conscience to attend the meetings of Synod, in all cases in which it was not absolutely impracticable; though, in doing so, he was sometimes obliged to travel a distance of three hundred miles.

In 1808, he was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Williams College.

Having acted as Vice President of Greenville College until the death of its President,—the Rev. Dr. Hezekiah Balch,—in 1810, Dr. Coffin was elected his successor. In this capacity he continued to serve until the spring of 1827, when he accepted a call to the Presidency of East Tennessee University, at Knoxville. Here he remained till 1833; when, in consequence of declining health, he resigned the office, and returned to his former residence near Greenville, where he continued during the rest of his life. His latter years were years of great bodily infirmity, but he uniformly sustained himself in the dignity of Christian submission and trust, and availed himself of every opportunity to serve the cause to which his life had been pre-eminently devoted. He died on the 3d of June, 1853.

Dr. Coffin's only publications, as far as is known, are a Sermon on Disinterested Benevolence; a Sermon on the Conclusion of Peace with Great

Britain, 1815; and a Sermon on the Anniversary of the East Tennessee Bible Society, 1817.

Dr. Coffin was the father of twelve children. Two of them died in infancy, and six sons and four daughters reached mature age, all of whom have been highly respected and useful members of society. His widow still (1857) survives.

FROM THE REV. DANIEL DANA, D. D.

NEWBURYPORT, Mass., March 17, 1857.

Rev. and dear Sir: My acquaintance with Dr. Coffin commenced when we were both young, he being four or five years my junior. As our parents lived in neighbouring towns, and were intimate friends, I had early and frequent opportunities of familiarity with him. I found him a youth of amiable dispositions, of a tender conscience and of an accurate and discursive mind. Soon after leaving Harvard College, he raised a trembling eye to the ministry, and commenced the study of Theology with my father at Ipswich. The minister of his parents was the Rev. Dr. Spring of this place, whose religious views were, as you know, decidedly and strongly Hopkinsian. But though such were not the early views of the young man, there occurred, afterwards, a great revolution in his mind. He finished his studies with Dr. Spring, and, becoming a candidate for the ministry, was viewed as one of the most acute and able defenders of the new system which he had embraced. Previously to this, however, he became the subject of deep religious dejection;—a dejection which, for a time, bore the aspect even of despair. From this state of mind he gradually emerged, and became a successful and popular preacher.

From the time that he went to Tennessee, my intimacy, or rather my intercourse, with Mr. Coffin, in a great measure ceased. As to the general estimation in which he was held by the community, amidst which he finally settled, I am precluded, by my distance, from giving you minute information. I have always supposed, however, that both his literary and religious character were highly appreciated; that he filled his presidential office with great ability; that he was an instructive and evangelical preacher; that his life was without a stain; and that his labours were eminently fruitful of blessing to the Church and the world. I doubt not that what exists in my mind only in the form of a general impression, will be abundantly confirmed to you by the testimony of at least some surviving witnesses to his useful career.

Believe me, with distinguished regard,

Your affectionate friend,

DANIEL DANA.

FROM THE REV. FRANCIS A. McCORKLE, D. D.

GREENVILLE, Tenn., February 16, 1857.

Rev. and dear Sir: I became personally acquainted with Dr. Coffin in the summer of 1822. He was my intimate friend from that time until his death, and my near neighbour also, with the exception of a few years, while he was President of the University at Knoxville. I often met and conferred with him on Educational and Church matters, and had every opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with his character.

Dr. Coffin was of about the medium size, with very white hair, a bright eye, well-formed features, expressive countenance, and in his whole bearing benignant, dignified and venerable. He possessed excellent intellectual powers, which remained in great vigour to the last. With a great flow of animal spirits, and the

most amiable and gentlemanly qualities he combined great decision and independence of character. He possessed fine conversational powers, and was an uncommonly interesting companion—he had a boundless fund of good humour, and a great variety of interesting anecdotes, which were always at command, and always turned to the best account. If there was any point at which he may be said in any degree to have failed, perhaps it was in the judgments that he formed of men's characters. He was so perfectly honest and guileless himself, that he was slow to impute bad motives where good ones could possibly be supposed; and this really amiable trait, no doubt, often operated to prevent the legitimate exercise of his better judgment, and sometimes to subject him to inconvenience from designing men.

Dr. Coffin's whole professional life was identified with the cause of education. Knowing, as he did, its value by experience, (for he was a very highly educated man,) he laboured for its promotion in the sphere in which Providence placed him, with untiring assiduity. He was not only an excellent teacher, but an admirable disciplinarian—he carefully studied the peculiar mental and moral constitutions of those who were committed to his care; and the results of his labours in forming the minds and characters of many of the most influential men in the Southwest, are the best testimony to his ability and fidelity.

Dr. Coffin, though engaged so much in teaching, had a great love for the duties of the ministry, and he scarcely intermitted them, when his health would allow him to labour, during any period of his life. His sermons were highly instructive; his style was sometimes diffuse, and sometimes concise and nervous, according to circumstances; his delivery was natural, and earnest, and unembarrassed by notes; and his whole manner such as to leave the impression that preaching was with him a most serious business. He was remarkably felicitous in religious conversation, and in pastoral visits. Rarely did he enter a dwelling, without in some way dropping a word designed to tell upon the spiritual interests of some or all of the family. He took a deep interest in the various benevolent enterprises of the day, and had a heart and a hand open to all the recognised claims of charity. If a minister, a member of the Church, or even a man of the world, had been guilty of any marked delinquency,—while he was ready to admit every apology that charity could suggest, he sought the earliest opportunity to endeavour to convince him of his error, and to recover him to the sense and practice of his duty. As an instance, I may mention that when General Jackson was President, the Doctor was at Washington city, on an agency to collect funds for the College; and, calling upon the General for a contribution, he told him honestly that he did not vote for him, because he could not conscientiously lend his influence to place a profane man at the head of the government, and at the same time expressed an earnest wish that he might attend to his spiritual interests. “But, Sir,” added he, “I think you are a friend of education, and I trust you will be willing to give something to build up a literary institution in your own State.” The result of the Doctor's plain and yet respectful and affectionate dealing with him, was, that before he left the city, the President handed him a paper containing a liberal donation to the College. Is it not possible at least that that faithful conversation with that distinguished man may have had its influence in producing the happy reformation that afterwards appeared in him? Another instance illustrative of his fidelity in a different way, occurs to me—Dr. Coffin had a coloured servant in his family,—not his own, for he never owned a slave,—and by his faithful instructions and admonitions, the servant was hopefully converted. At the death of the Doctor, with a sad countenance, and eyes suffused with tears, the poor fellow said—“I have lost my best friend upon earth.”

I am fraternally yours,

F. A. McCORKLE.

FROM MISS C. M. MELVILLE.

MACON, Ga., February 23, 1857.

Rev. Sir: I wish that I could give you a pen and ink likeness of Dr. Coffin at all worthy of the subject.

The first time I saw this venerable man was in the summer of '39 or '40. I had often heard of him,—as who had not, that had spent any length of time in East Tennessee or Western Virginia? There is not a mountain, or a cove, throughout that whole region, in which the familiar and honoured name of Dr. Coffin is not a household word. I remember well the impression his clerical costume and gentlemanly appearance made on me, at our first introduction, and not less impressed upon my memory is the true Christian urbanity, which at once made the stranger feel at home in his presence. I can see him now distinctly, when he gave the hand of welcome, not bending, but rather becoming more erect, while he drew you towards him, making you feel as one of the same loving family, of which he was an honoured minister. Thus I thought as I shook hands with Dr. Coffin, in 'Squire Eason's parlour at Jonesborough; and this impression was strengthened by a close intimacy of many years. Even in personal appearance, he did not change during the last twenty years of his life, or so little, that it was not noticeable to his most intimate friends.

Dr. Coffin was about the middle height, and his slight figure remained unbent. Although age had robbed him of teeth, and stamped many wrinkles upon his brow, yet his utterance was remarkable for distinctness, and the nervous power of his arm was undiminished. His black eye remained as lively and piercing, and could look or be looked into as steadily in the latter, as in the former, years; and his hair, white as snow, became him as well when I first saw him, as it did when I received his last blessing. The appearance of Dr. Coffin must always have commanded respect,—not only for himself, but for the Church of his love. His invariable cheerfulness threw sunshine into whatever circle he entered, unless indeed it was one from which piety must be repulsed. It will be many a day indeed before his physical, intellectual, or moral portrait be forgotten in Greenville. It would be difficult to depict Dr. Coffin happily, without placing him in some situation in which his benignant countenance, his clear judgment, and his willing hand, could all be brought into play. I think I see him now, riding rapidly in his open "buggy" (he was one of the best drivers) into town; bowing to his friends as he proceeded, and, after stopping at the post office, make a call of kindness on Mrs. K., Mrs. I., or some other afflicted friend, cheering not more by the promises of the Bible, which he had ready for every occasion and case, than by the example of resignation and cheerful courage to bear his own trials with manly Christian patience. His health, never robust, had been for many years very feeble, and no one could have imagined, outside the room, that the hearty laugh, and the gleeful repartee, came from that prostrate old man, who must rest an hour on that lounge, before he can be enabled to bear the fatigue of returning home. His intimate friends were aware of his feebleness, and a place of rest was always ready, round which the family gathered, and the newspapers, religious and secular, and the books in which he might be particularly interested, new or old, all were brought, and an hour or two would pass away most delightfully and profitably.

What a comfort and help was Dr. Coffin to the pastor of the village, or to the teacher who would fain do his duty. In every difficulty he was ready with prudent advice. If some church member acted inconsistently, who like Dr. Coffin could mildly and gently tell him his fault, and procure a promise of amendment?

Never was there one who carried out the Bible precept of charity, which "thinketh no evil," more perfectly than this venerable man. No matter who

the offender, no matter what the offence, no matter whether it was the seventh, or the seventy times seventh, time, it had been committed against him,—the least sign of sorrow brought free forgiveness, and in the most depraved or reprobate, some redeeming quality was ever readily found by him. Instances without number might be given, to show these traits of character, which were well known to all who even had but a slight acquaintance with him.

I do not consider myself competent to an analysis of Dr. Coffin's intellectual constitution and character; and therefore I shall not attempt it. But that he was a man of fine judgment, that his stores of knowledge were ample and well selected, that his memory was most wonderful, that, as a highly intelligent and social companion, ever ready with the illustrative anecdote, he had scarcely his equal, no one who knew him, I think, will doubt. Many a delightful reminiscence of the old times of New England, many a sketch of his early labours in Tennessee, many an anecdote of which he was *seldom the hero*, but which ever drew out the brightest traits of our common nature, have I listened to, as I sat by him in his buggy, while we whirled rapidly through the woods to his simple but beautifully situated home. The horse, stone blind, never stumbled, and often, as one hand held the reins, and guided, the interest of the recital would compel the whip to the keeping of the same hand, while the other by gesticulation gave force to his meaning. Never shall I forget those rides, or the most delightful evenings which followed them.

I cannot forbear to say that among the thousands of letters which his busy hand wrote, among the scores which I was honoured to receive, there are none which would not stand the closest criticism. As a letter writer, few could compare with him. His style reminded one of the writings of Addison. These were great favourites of his youth, and no one could read Dr. Coffin's letters, or hear him converse in some of his happy moods, but must have thought of the Spectator and "Clio."

I will close this hurried communication with the following account of Dr. Coffin's beautiful and sublime death scene, which was furnished me at the time, by his daughter-in-law:—

"It was my happy privilege to watch in his sick chamber from the evening of Tuesday until the hour of his death. Nothing that I ever witnessed, equalled the full submission to the will of his Heavenly Father, that marked those last hours. He was willing to depart, but would cheerfully have tarried longer. The calm faith and beautiful trust with which he met the announcement from his physician, and brother in the ministry, that all earthly hope had passed, was thus expressed—'I am well aware of it, Sir; but I am in the hands of a Being who cannot err—He doeth all things well.' The natural enthusiasm with which he entered into whatever interested his friends, continued unabated. The mercies of God were recognised in the smallest matters. He would say to his friends,—I thank God for this delightful chamber,—so far removed from noise and confusion; for this wide, beautiful view of mountain and valley, and for the pure air which breathes upon me, but more than all for the love and attention of the dear ones who watch me.'

"His literary taste and discriminating criticism did not seem lessened by disease, nor was the strength of his memory impaired. He had previously spoken to one of the many ladies,—who came as daughters to weep beside him, of the history of Napoleon by Abbot, as then being published by the Harpers; and now abruptly asked, with his usual animation, 'How is it with the man of blood in the last number?'—and then expressed his regret that such a fascination should be thrown around the character of Buonaparte.

"Two ladies, who were particularly overcome with grief, at the thought of his departure, said,—'No one in Greenville will miss you as we shall, Dr. Coffin—you have been so like a father to us in our afflictions.' He replied, 'There is

a Comforter, who will ever be near you, if you but seek Him,—a Friend who will never leave you.’ To an aged friend he said, ‘Madam; as thy days, so shall thy strength be.’

“He frequently spoke with deep feeling of the affection of his children, saying,—‘If ever a man was blessed in his children, I am; and it is over a broken covenant—a broken covenant, for I have been ungrateful and unfaithful.’

“At ten o’clock, it became evident that the chill of death was stealing over the frame, and making more pallid the brow of the beloved father—yet there was no indication of bodily suffering, and not a shadow of mental disquietude. As one of his constant and faithful nurses was examining his pulse, he asked,—‘How do you find it—how many does it beat?’ When told that the strokes were few and feeble, he said, ‘All is well,—Jesus can make a dying bed,’ &c. His little grandson, who had for years been the object of his daily care and unwearied attention, came into the room to kiss him. He looked upon the child with inexpressible fondness, and said, ‘Sweet one, remember the prayers that have been offered for you, and meet Grandpa in Heaven.’ There was so little pain attending the release of the soul, that he was much inclined to sleep, and desired all to leave the room, except a daughter-in-law, saying,—‘S. will watch me, and the room can be quiet that I may sleep.’ With his hand clasped in hers, she said,—‘Dear Father, all we have now to ask of God for you is an easy passage through the valley—for that we are praying.’ He answered—‘I trust He will grant it—I know there are many prayers going up for me now.’ His youngest daughter, who had watched him with unceasing devotion through his illness, stood by the bed. Although but a few minutes before his departure, he remembered that she must necessarily be fatigued, and said,—‘My daughter, sit down—you are wearied.’ Consciousness did not forsake him, and the power of utterance was distinct, ten minutes before he ceased to breathe. After his posture was changed, one of his children said,—‘Pa, can we do any thing more for you?’ He looked up, with a grateful, tranquil expression, and answered,—‘No, nothing more—I have been sleeping have I not?’ When told he had, he added, ‘I thought so.’ These were his last words.

“What need now to admit the half excluded sunbeam, to shed even so soft a light through the chamber of the dying saint? The eloquence of those undimmed eyes seems to have caught the lustre of the world, where there is neither sun nor moon. That form needs not the invigorating air, for its soul finds strength in the promises of Jesus. Fear is overcome by the fulness of faith. With folded hands, and closed eyes, he remained a few moments quiet; and just as the soul was leaving its tabernacle, his eyes were opened wide, and fixed with an upward gaze, full of unearthly joy. I cannot close more appropriately than in the language of a beloved son, who is now with him in the holy city—‘O for the faith of my father; he died with his eye fixed where it had been through life.’”

I am, Rev. Sir, yours most respectfully,

C. M. MELVILLE.

FROM THE REV. FREDERICK A. ROSS, D. D.

HUNTSVILLE, Ala., March 24, 1857.

My dear Sir: You desire some recollections of the Rev. Dr. Coffin, of East Tennessee. All my memories of him are pictures, very pleasant unto me. My wife’s father was a ruling elder during his ministry in Jonesborough, Tenn. And Mrs. Ross was baptized by the Doctor, and always a great favourite with Mrs. Coffin and himself before, as well as after, our marriage.

It may have been in 1820 that the Church at Kingsport, E. Tenn., was organized. I resided near the village,—then an unmarried young man. Having some relatives, recently from Virginia, and members of the Presbyterian Church, I

attended, on that occasion, with better motives than mere curiosity, although the scene was attractive. The congregation assembled in and around an unfinished store-house, on the very edge of the Holston River. I recollect that the surly carpenter, who had no love for religion, hesitated to give consent to the use of the house, as it would derange his benches, tools, and lumber. However, the room was obtained, and fitted up with rough planks, on blocks, as seats; and a reading desk, equally hasty in structure and accommodations. But rude as that building was, being merely designed as a depot for salt, it had much of pictorial beauty about it in that day. It stood, as I have said, on the brink of the Holston,—a clear stream right from the mountains. The lower point of Long Island was just opposite the back door of the house, across a narrow arm of water,—the intervening channel affording a landing for great flat boats, to carry salt, and every thing else in the varied commerce of East Tennessee, a thousand miles. There were no boats at that season of the year. The deep blue water only was rippling past that gathering assembly. Immediately across the river, Bay's Mountain jutted down in bold, abrupt termination. The house was overshadowed by some elms, as fine as any in New Haven; and two of them made the noblest leafy arch I ever saw.

In that house and under those trees, fifteen persons were organized into a Presbyterian Church—the same to which I afterwards preached nearly thirty years. The officiating ministers on the occasion were Dr. Coffin and Rev. George Erskine. And strange as it may sound to our abolition brethren, Rev. Mr. Erskine was an African negro, as black as ebony. There he stands preaching,—a large man, with strong, good face,—of decided talents, giving a masterly sermon in the vigorous old Hopkinsianism and manly style of the Rev. Isaac Anderson, of Maryville, by whom he was educated. He was on his way to Liberia, where he died very soon, in the morning of his usefulness.

I remember only that sermon, and one of Dr. Coffin's, the next day,—the Sabbath, and the first Communion occasion in that little flock.

I see now, as if yesterday, the man who was ever after so venerated and beloved of me. He is beginning to speak—immediately at the door—not the door on the river side, through which the running water is seen, but the one near the street—it is open too, that he may be heard by the crowd outside. His left hand is towards it. A board—the temporary pulpit—has on it his Bible and Hymn-Book. He uses no notes. I sat sufficiently near, on one of the benches in front of him. His text was the whole ten commandments, which he condensed into a discourse of the usual East Tennessee length, as to permission and requirement in those times, when people went thirty miles to a “Presbyterian Sacramental meeting,” and would have been dissatisfied with a sermon of thirty minutes. I had never before been so much interested in a sermon. There was one passage, particularly, which affected me greatly, in which Hannah More was represented, training the women of England; and in *that* noble guardianship, worthy of as high honour as the warriors of her land, to whom she was seen presenting daughters and sisters so watched over, to fathers and brothers, returning from fields of victory. I was subdued into tears under this eloquence. The speaker saw my tenderness. And although there was in my emotion, more of response to his power, than of a touched conscience, yet he became at once interested in me, sought me out, and on going away, made me promise to visit him at his home some forty miles distant.

Dr. Coffin had long been a teacher of young men, and was most attractive to them. He was, to me, at once. His personal appearance and carriage, the habits of his body and mind, had that not to be defined something, which is the charm of impressiveness. He was only becoming grey; and his eyes and features were full of that joyous vitality of soul and body, which makes men live long and beloved. There was a nervousness too, all over his slight, graceful figure,

which made his step most elastic, and his mind most mercurial, to correspond. Once seen, you never forgot or mistook his walk. It had a springy singularity, and an oscillatory motion from side to side, which showed he loved to walk, and was thinking, on his way. I never saw any walk in which the inner man was so perfectly revealed in muscular motion. If you caught but a glimpse of him, or his momentary shadow, you knew—there comes Dr. Coffin. That walk and temperament enabled him to pay more pastoral visits in given time than most ministers,—while that subtilty of spirit made him exceedingly attractive in metaphysical disquisition to the last days of his long life. His voice was the most exhilarating, the most expressive of felt peace and joy, and the most rapid conductor of the same feeling, electrically to others, I ever heard. And it did you good to be present when he laughed,—the tears running down his face. His address, full of ease with every body, and every where, was the refined outward expression of such a spirit, and of a man who had mingled freely with the greatest, the best, in every part of our varied country.

I paid the Doctor my promised visit. He lived near Greenville. The road some three miles—the same that leads to the Warm Springs, Buncombe County, North Carolina, giving fine scenery as you approach. His house—it was the New England house, fifty years ago, in every part, and most marked in contrast with every other house thereabouts. It was nearly square—two stories, a chimney in the middle, giving a little lobby, from which were stairs to the rooms above. The parlour was to the right, the dining room to the left, the kitchen, &c., &c., back of both rooms—all clustering round that one big chimney, very comfortably. The house was painted some tint of yellow, with plain cornice, and modest porch, both white. Fence and gate to correspond ran along the road before mentioned, about twenty steps from the front, forming a small yard in which were some noble forest oaks. As you stood in the porch, the orchard was to your right. An open green, on the left, led down to the College—the work of the Doctor's life, then in its best promise. There it stood, like the house, a little piece of Massachusetts, brought all the way to Tennessee. Yea, a veritable place for the schoolmaster, with hall, library, apparatus, cupola, and bell—white and clean. When seen by me with the boys about, it was the central object in a noble landscape of rich fields and forests, beyond which there was a long winding river of vapour high above the under living stream of Nolachucky,—while huge, distant mountains stretched far away into the blue of the heavens.

At the little gate, that fine old man met me, as Pilgrim was met at the wicket, and welcomed me to come in and find the strait way. It was ever the same, during more than thirty years thereafter—the same full-toned, strong voice of welcome, and in later day, the loud clearing of the throat, and both hands—New England hands, too, from use of pruning-knife or some tool, just laid aside to welcome me—then, there, in the door or out in the little portico, *that* affectionate full open face, looking from within its ample cap and wide ruffle—*her* face, which then, and ever thereafter, always said, even before the tongue, “I am so glad to see you—how is Theodosia and the children?” [Theodosia was my wife, greatly and ever beloved of Mrs. as well as Dr. Coffin.] And so it was ever to impress on me that she was happy always in conferring pleasure on those around her.

That visit gave me the first opportunity I had enjoyed of being present in a New England minister's family. Although not a Christian in heart, I was one intellectually, and in that state of mind to be impressed by the elevated and refined religion of such a house. I was greatly gratified, and I am sure, benefited, by that interview with the Doctor at his home. Yet I bring up in memory, very vividly, among matters more important, this slight incident. It was new to me when the Doctor in the morning, after reading the eighteenth of John, asked the children and servants to repeat some sentence or word, to show how they

had listened. One little girl said, "Now Barabbas was a robber." No doubt the little thing had had many other sentences on her tongue, while her father was reading; but that last was the easiest because it *was* the last, and she had heard, too, of robbers, so she spoke out distinctly and composedly, as finely trained,—“now Barabbas was a robber.” That was all. Then the coloured woman was asked, and she said “Am I a Jew?” She, I was sure, believed the Jews were very bad people. Then *his* prayer. ’Twas good to be there—and so I felt even then, years before I yielded to the Gospel.

Every public speaker knows how much he is afraid, in his first efforts, to have before him a master critic. But I was always glad to speak before Dr. Coffin. For his face, and gestures, and nervous interest in all I was saying, expressed to me as plainly as face, and gesture, and interest could, that he was pardoning all defects, and making the most of every thing that would do at all. But wo to me, albeit very pleasantly inflicted, if I came out with what he regarded wrong doctrine,—if I believed in permissive decrees, or denied disinterested benevolence, or affirmed it in any other way, than as the alone attribute of the regenerated sinner. The passage at arms was sure to come—the argument, like artillery,—the anecdote and wit, like the musketry between—the battle often lasted till twelve o’clock at night. And I was sometimes pursued to my farthest retreat, by long columns of assault in the finest letters of love. Yea, and I am realizing now every day the good effects of training and discipline, acquired under Dr. Coffin’s hands, in our many discussions of the doctrines of grace.

I must, I see, finish this sketch. I linger with reverence due to him only, over the grave of Dr. Coffin. Gallaher and Nelson, I write about, as equals. But I first knew Dr. Coffin as my father in age and spiritual wisdom. And although years, in my grey hairs, lessened the distance, comparatively, between us, still I looked up to him as the most venerated of all I knew in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

In high regard,

F. A. ROSS.

MATTHEW BROWN, D. D., LL. D.*

1799—1853.

MATTHEW BROWN was descended from respectable and pious ancestors. His paternal grandfather, a native of Ireland, but of Scottish extraction, came to this country about the year 1720, and died not long after his arrival in Pennsylvania, leaving five sons,—all distinguished as devout and exemplary Christians. His son *Matthew*, the father of the subject of this notice, was born in 1732, resided some years in the vicinity of Carlisle, Pa., and thence removed to White Deer Valley, Northumberland County, of which he was one of the early settlers. He was a ruling elder in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and is reported to have been a man of decided talents, and to have been somewhat famous for his wit. He took an active part in the early stages of the Revolutionary struggle, and while thus engaged, died of a fever in 1778, at the age of forty-six. *Matthew*, his youngest son, was born in the year 1776,—two years before his father’s death. He was adopted in his infancy by his father’s brother, William Brown, who, for many years, was well known, and exerted an extensive influence, in both the political and religious world.

* Presbyterian Advocate, 1853.—MS. from his son,—Rev. A. B. Brown, D. D.