

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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BY ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

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

from his chair. "Those books." Then with a gesture of serious courtesy, he added,—“Pay for them when you please, Sir; pay for them when you please!” And, without waiting for an answer, turned, and went into the house. They were paid for the next day.

When speaking of personal piety, he always, to the end of his life, dwelt upon his great sinfulness. “It is an ocean without a shore,” he would say. “My transgressions are like mountains piled upon mountains.” “I *hope* to be saved, Sir,” he once said to Dr. Dickinson,—“but I’m an awful sinner, Sir,—an awful sinner. If I am seen in Heaven, Sir, it will astonish the universe!” And this he said with such sincerity and earnestness, that, for a moment, his visitor was confused and unable to reply.

A few months before his death, an elder of his church called to see him, and, in the course of the conversation, remarked,—“Ah well, Doctor, when we go to Heaven we shall leave all these sorrows behind us.” The old man sat up, and looked at him with apparent wonder—he scanned him once or twice from head to foot, and then exclaimed with an emphasis on every word,—“Do you expect to get to Heaven?” Then shaking his head, and withdrawing his gaze, he added, “It’s a great thing to say, Sir;—a great thing to say.”

He was greatly loved. “The dear old man!”—said one who had been speaking of his kindness and generosity. “He was one of the best men in the world,” say many. I am often caused to regret that I did not share with my predecessors the pleasure of knowing him in his vigour and activity. I could then have replied to your request with a fuller and more accurate account of this singular, influential and venerated man.

With affectionate esteem,

G. A. HOWARD.

DRURY LACY.*

1787—1815.

DRURY LACY, the son of William and Elizabeth (Rice) Lacy, was born in Chesterfield County, Va., October 5, 1758. His father was a planter in comfortable circumstances, but was distinguished more for his hospitality than his carefulness in either the management of his estate or the education of his children. The son was about ten years old when the father died; and for a year or two previous to this event, he had attended the school of the Rev. Mr. McCrea, an Episcopal clergyman in the County of Powhatan. From the age of ten to sixteen, he lived with his mother, who was left, at the death of her husband, in very straitened circumstances, and found it extremely difficult to provide for her small family. When he was about fourteen or fifteen years old, (one authority says *ten*.) he met with a sad casualty, which, however, had a very propitious bearing upon his subsequent life. At a County muster of the militia, a man in the ranks had loaded a gun so deeply that he feared it would burst, if it were discharged; and in a most cowardly spirit, asked some one of the boys standing by to discharge it, without intimating that there was any danger. Young Lacy stepped forward, took the gun and fired it—the barrel burst, and his left

* MSS. from Rev. B. T. Lacy, and Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander. Foote's Sketches of Va., 1st Series.

hand was frightfully mangled, and torn off. In after life, his wrist was protected by a silver cup which was fitted over it, and into the end of which a fork and other instruments prepared for the purpose were screwed; and thus the loss of the hand was, in some degree, supplied. From this circumstance, when, in after life, he became an instructor of youth, in connection with Hampden Sidney College, he received the nick-name of "Old Silver Fist;" and it also gave him the designation among his ministerial brethren, of "Lacy with the silver hand and the silver voice."

His mother, who was an eminently pious woman, died when he was about sixteen years old; and, being now cast upon his own resources, he engaged, with that slender stock of information which might have been expected from his hitherto very limited advantages, in teaching a school. It was, however, a school of the humblest class, and the compensation was barely sufficient to procure for him the plainest clothing. At the age of about eighteen, when he would have served in the war of the Revolution but for the loss of his hand, he procured another and more eligible situation as a teacher, in Cumberland County, in the family of Daniel Allen, an elder in the Presbyterian Church, which was at that time supplied by the Rev. John Blair Smith, President of Hampden Sidney College. Here he became acquainted with Mr. Smith, attended his ministry, and ere long joined the church of which he had the charge. While engaged in this school, he acquired, by his own efforts, a very good knowledge of Geography, English Grammar, Algebra, Geometry, and Surveying. He subsequently taught in the family of Colonel John Nash, of Prince Edward County, where he enjoyed the instruction of President Smith, one or two hours each week. With this slight assistance, he acquired such a knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages, that, at the age of about twenty-three, the office of Tutor in Hampden Sidney College was offered him. He accepted it, but still pursued his own studies privately. From the time that he commenced his religious life, he had cherished the purpose of devoting himself to the ministry; and, in due time, in connection with his other duties, he began his theological studies under President Smith, and prosecuted them until he was ready to receive license to preach. He was received under the care of the Hanover Presbytery with a view to being licensed, in April, 1787, and was actually licensed in September following, when he was not far from twenty-nine years of age. He was ordained by the same Presbytery that licensed him, in October, 1788.

In July, 1788, Mr. Smith informed the Trustees of the College that he found the united duties of President and Pastor quite too laborious, and asked to be excused from the former. The Board acceded to his request, but desired him still to continue his relation to the College, and appointed Mr. Lacy Vice President, devolving upon him a large part of the labour and responsibility which had previously fallen to the lot of Mr. Smith. The next year, Mr. Smith resigned the Presidency altogether, and then the whole supervision of the institution came upon Mr. Lacy. There was a concurrence of circumstances to render his situation one of great difficulty, as well as of great responsibility. He, however, continued his connection with the College till the year 1796, when he tendered his resignation, and retired to a farm which he had purchased in the immediate neighbourhood, and to which he gave the name of Mount Ararat.

On the 25th of December, 1789, Mr. Lacy was married to Anne, daughter of William Smith, of Montrose, Powhatan County,—a lady eminently fitted, by her fine intellectual and moral qualities, to minister to both his happiness and usefulness. They had six children,—three sons and three daughters. Two of the sons are Presbyterian clergymen, the third a physician.

After Mr. Smith left Virginia, Mr. Lacy succeeded him, not only as acting President of the College, but as one of the ministers of the churches with which he had been connected; though he seems never to have been regularly installed in the pastoral office. After he removed to his farm, he opened a small classical school, which he continued during the rest of his life. Among his pupils were many who have since become eminent men.

Mr. Lacy was often a delegate from the Hanover Presbytery to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and in the year 1809, was Moderator of that Body. He also served as Clerk of the Presbytery, during a large part of his ministerial life. His handwriting was not only beautiful but exquisitely so; insomuch that the volume of Presbyterial Minutes which he has left, is valued not merely as a Record but as a curiosity.

In the year 1815, Mr. Lacy was afflicted with a serious complaint, (the calculus,) which led him to make a journey to Philadelphia, to avail himself of the skill of some of the distinguished surgeons of that city. He accepted an invitation to stop at the house of his intimate friend, Robert Ralston; and there he finished his earthly course. The surgical operation was performed with entire success; but, after a few days, his strength began perceptibly to fail, and he quickly sunk into the arms of death. His wife, whom he left at home in her usual health, was seized with a violent fever, and died within a few days after his departure; but, though the tidings of her death had reached Philadelphia previous to his own death, it was thought unsafe that they should be communicated to him, and he was left to learn the fact first by meeting her beyond the veil. He addressed a letter to her in the immediate prospect of the operation he was to undergo, expressing a doubt whether they should ever meet again on earth, but the letter did not reach its destination, until the eye for which it was designed was closed in death. Mr. Lacy died in the exercise of the most serene trust in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, on the 6th of December, 1815. His remains repose in the burying ground belonging to the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

Mr. Lacy published a Sermon on the death of the Rev. Henry Patillo of North Carolina, 1801; and also a pamphlet of considerable size, containing an account of the great revival in Kentucky, and the strange appearances connected with it.

The following notice of Mr. Lacy's character as a preacher, has been kindly furnished me by his eldest son, the Rev. William S. Lacy, of Arkansas:—

“He left but few manuscript sermons, and those not entirely finished, and far inferior to his ordinary pulpit performances, having been written in the earlier years of his ministry. During the last fifteen years of his life, the period of his greatest ministerial success, he rarely, if ever, wrote his sermons, and but seldom prepared even short notes for the pulpit. His preparation was almost exclusively mental and spiritual. He thought intensely upon his subject, and arranged the matter carefully in his mind,

and then trusted to the occasion to suggest the appropriate language. I have often, when a youth, been greatly impressed with the deep abstraction and awful solemnity depicted in his countenance, while engaged in meditation, as he was walking in his chamber or in the yard. And when, from these scenes of meditation and prayer, he went into the pulpit, there was frequently in his preaching a solemnity and pathos, a freshness and vigour, a penetrating, burning, melting eloquence, which I have never known surpassed. At the same time, candour compels me to say that not unfrequently there was a dryness, hardness, and confusion, in his preaching, with an utterance, hurried and painfully loud, which brought him, for the time, as far below the average of respectable preachers, as he usually rose above it. He was at times subject to deep mental depression; and then he was frequently unable to make any preparation for the pulpit; and the consequence was that his preaching was attended with pain and grief almost insupportable to himself, and with disappointment to his hearers. But, for the most part, he enjoyed the light of his Father's countenance in a remarkable degree. His style was formed very much upon the model of the sacred writers, and his discourses were enriched with large and pertinent quotations from the Word of God. In reading a chapter from the Bible in the presence of his congregation, his eye seldom glanced at the page, but was fixed on the congregation, as if he were speaking extemporaneously. The same was true of him, while reading or rather reciting the psalm or hymn. His utterance was rendered doubly effective by the expression of his beaming and flexible countenance, and the power of his flashing and melting eye."

FROM MRS. DR. JOHN H. RICE.

NEAR HAMPDEN SIDNEY COLLEGE, }
PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, JUNE 7, 1849. }

Dear Sir: I knew Mr. Lacy well from my very early years. He was a near neighbour of my father, and he often walked to our house for exercise, and to enjoy a conversation with my good mother, and I may say, a play with the children. By taking part in our little sports, he made us all love him, and by the good instruction which he took care to communicate, he made us respect and revere him. He contrived so to secure our confidence that we did not hesitate to impart to him any secret; and he would advise us in so gentle a way, that we were scarcely sensible that he was advising us at all. His grand aim evidently was to bring us to the Saviour. Often would he tell me how he longed to see my face glowing with an expression of love to God, and how dangerous it is to enter a world like this without being a true Christian. And after I became thoughtful on the subject of religion, nothing could exceed the interest which he manifested that my serious impressions might not pass away.

His person was very large and imposing, and his countenance, when lighted up, was most expressive and delightful. I can in no way bring him more plainly before me, than by thinking of him as he was listening with delight to Dr. Alexander's eloquence, and casting his deep blue eye over the congregation, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, to notice the effect which it produced. His own preaching was simple and natural, and sometimes very eloquent. His prayers, especially in his latter years, were peculiarly fervent; and he seemed, like Abraham, the friend of God, most reverently and devoutly speaking, as if face to face, to his Heavenly Father. He was uncommonly successful as a preacher to the coloured people; and his addresses to them at the Lord's table were most simple and impressive, and often highly pathetic. In his private inter-

course he was cheerful and sociable, but never lost sight of what was due from him, and due to him, as a Christian minister. A good old lady remarked that he exceeded any one she ever saw at a Sacrament, and at a Wedding. When inquired of if he thought it was sinful to dance, he would say,—“Be warmly engaged in religion, and then you may dance as much as you please.” My recollections of him, both in the pulpit and out of it, are most grateful and affectionate.

To supply in some measure the deficiency of my own account of Mr. Lacy, I take the liberty to add the following graphic account of him from the pen of his intimate friend, Dr. Alexander:—

“About the time that Mr. Lacy entered the ministry, commenced that remarkable revival of religion, which extended more or less through every part of Virginia, where Presbyterian Congregations existed. And although Dr. J. B. Smith was the principal instrument of that work, yet the labours of Mr. Lacy were, in no small degree, successful. His preaching was calculated to produce deep and solemn impressions. His voice was one of extraordinary power. Its sound has been heard at more than a mile’s distance. His voice was not only loud, but clear and distinct: in the largest assemblies convened in the woods, he could always be heard with ease at the extremity of the congregation. On this account, Mr. Lacy was always one of the prominent preachers at *great meetings*. His preaching also was with animation. His address to his hearers, whether saints or sinners, was warm and affectionate. Indeed, according to his method of preaching, lively feeling in the speaker was an essential thing to render it either agreeable or impressive. Mr. Lacy was therefore a much more eloquent and impressive preacher on special occasions, when every circumstance combined to wind up the mind to a high tone of excitement, than in his common and every day discourses,—in which he was always evangelical, but sometimes flat and uninteresting. Upon the whole, it may serve to characterize his preaching, to say that it was better suited to the multitude, than to the select few who possess great refinement of taste; better adapted to satisfy and feed the plain and sincere Christian, than to furnish a feast for men of highly cultivated intellect. He enjoyed the unspeakable pleasure of knowing a considerable number of humble, exemplary Christians, who ascribed their first impressions to his preaching or conversation; for he excelled in the art of conversing on the subject of experimental religion. To inquirers and young converts he addressed himself in private in a very happy manner; which was to them often the means of important spiritual benefits. And on general subjects he conversed in an agreeable and instructive manner.”

With great regard, sincerely yours,

ANNE S. RICE.

is at rest, and that he now beholds without a mist, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. As a preacher, his constant endeavour was to be faithful in delivering the message of God, and with him the trumpet of the Gospel never gave an uncertain sound."

With great respect, very truly,

Your sincere friend and brother,

DRURY LACY.