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ANNALS

OF THE

AMERICAN PULPIT;

OR

COMMEMORATIVE NOTICES

OF

DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN CLERGYMEN

OF

VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS,

FROM THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTRY TO THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE.

WITH HISTORICAL INTRODUCTIONS.

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BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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VOLUME IV.
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NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
530 BROADWAY.
1858.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1856.

By ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

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

His learning was not, I think, extensive. He was regularly and respectably graduated at Nassau Hall; and all his attainments had an evangelico-utilitarian character. He aimed at a mark within his reach, took good aim, understood the service, fired, and almost always did execution.

Politics, doings in Wall street, and romantic stories, were no part of his preaching. His ministry was richly scriptural—it spoke its own character, thus:—*My doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me.* His audience retired thoughtful. They felt the Master rather than the man. As a consequence, they were Bible-reading, and Bible-searching, and Bible-thinking in their piety; and if there be any better kind of Christians than such, let him who can, tell us where to find them.

His stature was rather above the average. His form was plain and massive rather than corpulent. His manner was eminently simple, and I may say appropriately *American*. It was in no sense artificial or affected. His social character was grateful and free, yet his words were not commonly multiplied. What he said always meant something, and all his friends attended to it, expecting that it would reward their care. To his own people he was accessible and affable; to all, courteous and serviceable.

You, my dear brother, have asked me to chronicle these memories of one I loved; and if my hasty contribution can perpetuate or diffuse them, in any useful degree, I shall not regret that in this as in other and similar cases, I have been prompt to comply with your request, urgent with me also,—because it was yours.

Fraternally in Christ,

SAMUEL H. COX.

EZRA FISK, D. D.*

1810—1833.

EZRA FISK, a son of Simeon Fisk, was born in Shelburne, Mass., January 10, 1785. The most interesting fact that I can learn in respect to his early life, is thus narrated by the Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander, late Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton:—

“In attending Commencement at Dartmouth College in 1801, I became acquainted with the Rev. Dr. Packard of Shelburne, Mass.; and in travelling with him on horseback down the Connecticut River, my horse became lame, and he invited me to go and spend a few weeks with him in his parish, so that my horse might recruit. I did so. During my stay in Shelburne, there was an interesting work of grace. Many of the children and youth were subjects of the work. As Dr. Packard and myself were one morning walking along by a house, he said to me,—‘There, I wish you would go and talk with that *chunk* of a boy, who stands by the fence yonder.’ I did so as faithfully as I could. I of course did not suppose that I should see or hear of the boy again. Some years ago, a stranger passed through Princeton, and called at my study. He said,—‘You are Dr. Alexander—do you remember that you spent a few weeks in Shelburne, Mass., many

* Christian Advocate, XI.—Packard’s History of the Churches and Ministers in Franklin County, Mass.

years ago?' 'I do,' said I. 'Do you remember that Dr. Packard asked you one morning to talk with a *chunk* of a boy that stood by the fence?' 'Why,' said I, 'the circumstance had long been forgotten, but I now recall it to mind.' He then said,—'That chunk of a boy was myself. The words which you spake to me were blessed to my spiritual good. I date my conversion back to that time. My name is Ezra Fisk. I am Pastor of a Church in Goshen, N. Y.'"

Young Fisk pursued his studies preparatory to entering College, under the Rev. Dr. Packard, then Pastor of the Church in his native place. He was graduated at Williams College in the year 1809, having been, during his college course, one of the little company of pious young men, who met frequently for prayer with reference to evangelical missions; among whom were Mills and Richards. After his graduation, he prosecuted his theological studies under the direction of Dr. Packard, towards whom he continued to cherish, till the close of life, the most affectionate respect and veneration. He was licensed to preach by the Franklin Association, on the 19th of April, 1810; and, after preaching for some months as a licentiate, was ordained as an evangelist. He laboured in this capacity chiefly among the numerous destitute congregations then in the State of Georgia; and, during his sojourn there, in March, 1812, he entered into the marriage relation with a daughter of the Rev. Dr. Francis Cummins. In the autumn of the same year, though debilitated by his residence and labours in the South, he performed the work of a city missionary for some months in Philadelphia. In August, 1813, he became the Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Goshen, N. Y., where he continued in the faithful and acceptable discharge of his duties upwards of twenty years.

He received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Hamilton College in 1825.

In the autumn of 1832, Dr. Fisk was obliged, in consequence of an affection of the lungs, to intermit the greater part of his ministerial duties, and he sought relief by a winter's residence in the milder climate of Georgia. During his absence, he unexpectedly received the appointment of Corresponding Secretary and General Agent of the Board of Missions of the General Assembly; which, on his return, he felt constrained to decline, from a conviction that it would involve more labour and hardship than he was able to endure. In May, 1833, he was recommended by the Directors of the Western Theological Seminary to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church for the Professorship of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in that Institution. Shortly after this he made a journey to Alleghany town, to make himself acquainted with the condition and prospects of the Seminary, that he might be able to judge more intelligently in respect to his duty; and the result was that he signified his acceptance of the appointment. On his return, he sought and obtained a release from his pastoral charge, which was a sore trial to both himself and his people. His Farewell Sermon to his brethren of the Presbytery of which he was a member, was published, and is a fine illustration of his tenderness, wisdom, and piety.

Having taken leave of his people, Dr. Fisk set out for his new field of labour, and reached Philadelphia on the 2d of November. On the evening of the next day, (Sabbath,) he preached his last sermon in the lecture room of the Second Presbyterian Church. Immediately after preaching,

he became very sick at the stomach, and the day following had a high fever accompanied by excruciating pain in the head. Other decidedly unfavourable symptoms soon followed, one of which was an incessant and exhausting liecup. After about two weeks, however, his disease seemed to leave him, and he was encouraged to hope that he should soon be able to proceed on his journey. But this hope was not destined to be realized. On Sunday night, December 3d, he was taken with a relapse, and after an alternation of hopes and fears in respect to him, he departed peacefully on the afternoon of the following Tuesday, December 5, 1833,—having nearly completed his forty-ninth year. His Funeral was attended on the Saturday following in the lecture room in which he preached his last sermon, and an appropriate Address was delivered by the Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green, which was afterwards published in the "Christian Advocate." His remains were removed, by request of his former charge, to Goshen, and there reverently deposited in their final resting place. Mrs. Fisk survived him; but they had no children.

Dr. Fisk was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1833, and was a Trustee of Williams College, from 1823, and a Director of the Theological Seminary at Princeton from 1825, till his death.

Dr. Fisk published an Oration delivered before the Society of Alumni in Williams College, 1825; a Lecture on the Inability of Sinners, delivered in the Spruce Street Church, Philadelphia, 1832; a Farewell Sermon, 1833. He also published a series of valuable articles on Mental Science, in the Christian Advocate, in 1832.

FROM THE REV. LUTHER HALSEY, D. D.

BLOOMING GROVE, N. Y., March 2, 1857.

My dear Brother: I confess it has not been without some hesitation that I have made up my mind to comply with your request—not from any lack of regard to yourself, nor of tender remembrance of the friend of my youth,—the late Dr. Ezra Fisk; but solely because of an habitual aversion to writing for the public, and a fear that I might fail, after an interval of so many years, to draw an accurate portrait in the attitude required. The truth is, Dr. Fisk lives in my memory by his general amiableness and connection with former studies, ecclesiastical councils, correspondence and social life, rather than by his pulpit exhibitions. Our friendship was intimate and unalloyed; and as a *critic*, a friend is less valuable than a stranger; as in the former, the heart rather than the head is the seat of impressions. Distance, too, affects our optics; and I now stand so far off from my friend, I can but sketch a general outline, while much of feature and colour are lost in the haze of years.

In the pulpit, his person was fine, his dress ever plain and neat, his countenance benevolent, his voice pleasant, his pronunciation distinct and accurate, varied and enlivened by special emphasis, his action moderate and graceful, his air solemn, and at times earnest and tender, altogether suited to secure respect and attention. Of his sermons, I may say his texts were not startling by singularity, but selected because fairly and clearly conveying an important doctrine, which became the burden of the discourse. The text he carefully studied in the original Hebrew or Greek, also in its relation to antecedent and succeeding passages, for the purpose of catching its exact sense, allusions, and argument. Thus assisted, he endeavoured to bring out the doctrine as far as possible in a textual manner. His divisions were natural, logical, briefly and distinctly stated. His language was simple, but classical—the movement of his sentences rather stately and uniform. His illustrations not abundant, and rather fair than striking—

the understanding rather than the emotions seemed his aim. His argumentation was clear and scriptural—the practical advantage taken of it in his applications was connected and faithful. In a word, as his temperament was kindly and equable, so his pulpit exercises were interesting, uniform, and solid, attended by a large and growing congregation of piety and intelligence.

True, there were times when his manner was less calm and stately, and rules were forgotten; when he allowed himself to drift on the full influence of the times, the truth and the Spirit. Then his voice took greater range, the fountains of emotion were broken up, and he was remarkably impressive and moving. This was most observed in his incidental addresses at evening meetings for devotion and religious inquiry. There he was truly eloquent.

In this brief retrospect of the ministerial character of Dr. Fisk, it would be treachery to worth as well as friendship, to omit his special aptitude and usefulness as a *counsellor*. There was in him a tenderness, a patience, a perspicuity, a comprehension, an unusual knowledge of human nature, a candour and suavity of manner, which, united to a large share of the public confidence, made him eminently useful in this sphere. Like the silent, unseen and universal powers of nature, which give life and harmony to the system, but in their wide-spread agencies exceed detail; so his life was a wide-spread and noiseless blessing to the Church. His record is on high.

I am, my dear Sir,

Very sincerely yours,

LUTHER HALSEY.

DANIEL A. CLARK.*

1810—1840.

DANIEL A. CLARK was born at Rahway, N. J., March 1, 1779. His father was David Clark, a relative of Abram Clark, one of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence. His mother was Elizabeth Moore, a person of great energy of character, and of consistent and devoted piety. She bestowed great care upon the religious education of her children, in which unhappily she was rather hindered than aided by her husband, as he seems to have had little sense of the importance of religion, and to have cared little whether his children grew up Christians or infidels. The mother's treatment of them, owing perhaps partly to a natural severity of temper, and partly to the influence of her own early education, was sometimes wanting in due consideration and prudence; but she never left them in doubt as to her commanding desire to see them in possession of the richest of all blessings.

The subject of this notice, at a very early period, began to resist his mother's counsels and exhortations, and to mingle clandestinely in scenes which her judgment, and affection, and authority, had forbidden to him. He had a perfect passion for attending balls; and, on one occasion, having gone to a ball, without the knowledge and contrary to the command of his mother, his conscience would not suffer him to remain, and he returned