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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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distinguished by lucid and energetic statements of the main points belonging to the theological views of the time; and in such statements his ability was not surpassed by any man of the age. His taste for those theological distinctions, his high sense of their value, and his facility and satisfaction in using them, gave his most rhetorical pulpit discourses remarkable internal coherence and compactness, and enabled him to command the judgments of his hearers by the force of a very stringent logic. The great prominence and intense light in which he placed some leading points of religious truth constitute the striking feature of his theological discussions. This trait is conspicuous in his Park Street Lectures, his work on the Atonement, and some smaller publications on particular points of Christian doctrine. On the whole, the position and influence of Dr. Griffin are widely attested by the profound and general respect for his memory, and by the evident fruits of his labours. His power of clear, penetrating, and at the same time, of lofty and comprehensive, thought,—his skill and force in argument, his rhetorical genius and culture, his eloquence, his majestic person and manner, all pervaded and controlled by his enlightened religious devotion, performed efficient service for the Church, and placed him among the greater lights of his age.

Yours with sincere respect,

J. W. YEOMANS.

GIDEON BLACKBURN, D. D.*

1792—1838.

GIDEON BLACKBURN was born in Augusta County, Va., then one of the frontier counties of the State, on the 27th of August, 1772. His father was Robert Blackburn, and the family name of his mother was Richie. They were of Scotch Irish extraction, and were devout members of the Presbyterian Church, though in very humble worldly circumstances. He lived most of the time with his grandfather, General Blackburn, until he was about twelve years old; and, after his grandfather's death, his maternal uncle, Gideon Richie,—a pious young man without family, observing that he was a youth of much more than ordinary promise, so far adopted him as to undertake to educate him at his own expense. He became hopefully the subject of renewing grace at the age of about fifteen. In the current of Westward emigration, both his parents and his uncle, shortly after this, got as far as Washington County, Tenn., then within the bounds of North Carolina. Here his uncle placed him under the care and instruction of the venerable Samuel Doak, D. D., distinguished both as a minister and an instructor, and the Founder and Principal of Martin Academy, which was only about a mile from the place where the Blackburns settled. At this school he passed the greater part of his literary course. But when, after some time, his uncle removed some seventy miles farther West, into Jefferson County, Tenn., he accompanied him; and there they both found a home in the house of his father's brother, John Blackburn, a man of rare excellence. There, too, he

* Letters from Dr. Blackburn to Doctors Green, Morse, and Richards.—MSS. from A. M. Blackburn, Esq., Rev. Dr. McCampbell, Rev. Dr. Cleland, Rev. Dr. Anderson, Rev. A. Blackburn, Rev. J. H. Martin, Rev. J. K. Lyle, Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey, Curran Pope, Esq., and J. A. Jacobs, Esq.—New York Observer, 1838.

completed his literary course, and also pursued his theological studies, under the instruction of the Rev. (afterwards Dr.) Robert Henderson, who then resided five miles distant, near the town of Dandridge. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Abingdon, in the year 1792.* It is worthy of remark that his uncle, to whom he was indebted for his education, instead of being in affluent circumstances, was dependant for his own living upon his daily labour.

Here is the young preacher, without a dollar, on the very outskirts of civilization, ready to enter upon his work; and he certainly did enter upon it under very peculiar circumstances. The scattered population of that region was, at that time, constantly liable to Indian depredations. A company of soldiers was about to march from the neighbourhood in which he lived, to protect a fort on the spot on which Maryville was subsequently built. Mr. Blackburn being doubly armed,—having on the one hand his Bible and Hymn Book, and on the other his hunting shirt, rifle, shot-pouch, and knapsack, joined this company, and marched with them to the fort; and there he commenced his labours as a minister of the Gospel. Within sight of the fort, he built a house for his own dwelling, and shortly after was erected a large log building that served as a church. He very soon established the New Providence Church, Maryville, and also took charge of another Church called Eusebia, about ten miles distant. But besides his stated labours in these congregations, he preached much in the region round about, and was instrumental in organizing several new churches. During the early part of his ministry here, his situation was one of imminent peril. So long as the Cherokees remained hostile, no work could be done except by companies,—some being obliged to stand as sentinels, while others would work, with their loaded guns so near that they could seize them in a moment. As there were many forts in the region, the young preacher would pass, under an escort, from fort to fort, and within a moderate period would preach in them all. He very soon became a general favourite, and his preaching commanded universal attention. When the people were out of their forts, the place of preaching was generally a shady grove; the immediate position of the preacher was beneath some wide-spread oak; and he usually stood with his gun at his side, and all the men, including also boys who were old enough to use a rifle, stood around him, each with gun in hand. He was compelled at this period to perform not a little labour with his own hands; and his preparation for preaching was made either while he was actually thus engaged, or in the brief intervals of leisure which he was able to command. He kept himself not only on familiar terms, but in exceedingly kind relations, with all his people, and exerted a powerful and most benign influence in forming their characters. He took special pains, both in private and in public, to make them well acquainted with the Bible; and by accustoming them to frequent meetings for devotion, he taught them to cultivate both the gift and the spirit of prayer, thus rendering many of them at least, at once intelligent and spiritually-minded Christians.

Mr. Blackburn was an active participant in the scenes of the great revival which took place at the South and West during the early part of this century. I have in my possession a letter to the Rev. Dr. Green of Phila-

* This is the date furnished by Dr. B.'s family. But another authority, justly entitled to consideration, places it in 1795.

delphia, written in 1804, in which he not only expresses the utmost confidence in the genuineness of the revival, but says of the "bodily exercise," or "jerks," as it was sometimes called,—“I have not only heard of it, and seen it, but have felt it, and am persuaded that it is only to be effected by the immediate finger of God.”

Not long after Mr. Blackburn's settlement at Maryville, his attention was earnestly drawn to the condition of the neighbouring Indians, and he soon commenced a vigorous, and, so far as possible, systematic, course of effort to evangelize them.

In 1803, he was a member of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church from the Union Presbytery, and was appointed the same year to act, during a part of the time, as a missionary among the Cherokees. As early as 1806, he had two flourishing schools in the nation, the second of which was established in August of that year, commencing with thirty scholars. His health about this time was much impaired, and he was induced to go to Georgia to seek medical aid; and, while under the care of a physician,—not being closely confined, he availed himself of the opportunity thus furnished, to do something toward his favourite object of evangelizing the Indians. In 1807, he made a tour through the Northern States, to collect funds in aid of his missionary operations, and, after an absence of seven months, returned with five thousand two hundred and fifty dollars, which had been contributed for that purpose, besides a large quantity of books and clothing. The next year, (1808,) he made a tour of six weeks through the Cherokee nation, and was much encouraged by the visible marks of progress among them, though he was prevented, by want of the necessary means, from attempting the establishment of any new schools. At that time, he supposed that the whole number who had received instruction in his schools was about three hundred, and that the credit of the institutions was not at all diminished. In the latter part of 1809, he made another similar tour among the Cherokees, which occupied him twelve weeks; though, during four of them, he was prostrated by a bilious fever. Among other services which he performed on this tour was an examination of a wagon road, which the Indians, without the assistance of a white man, had built through a part of their country, crossing two considerable mountains. This he regarded as an evidence of civilization altogether unprecedented in the history of the tribe.

Though Mr. Blackburn had lost nothing of his interest in the Indian mission, and would gladly have continued in it if the requisite means had been provided, yet, in view of all the circumstances of the case,—particularly of his own pecuniary embarrassments, which had been occasioned chiefly by his personal sacrifices for the mission, he felt constrained to retire from the field. Accordingly, having disposed of as much of his property as he could, he removed in the autumn of 1810 to Maury County, Middle Tennessee; but, owing to some cause that is not known, he remained there but a few months. In the spring of the next year, he removed again to West Tennessee, and settled at Franklin, the capital of Williamson County, eighteen miles South of Nashville. Here he took charge of Harpeth Academy,—situated one mile East of the town,—for the support of his family, while he preached in rotation at five different places, within a range of fifty miles. Though he found the religious state of things very discouraging, a favourable change seems very soon to have occurred; for within a few months after he

commenced his labours, he had organized churches at the several places at which he preached, and at the first Communion there were present three thousand persons, and forty-five new members were added to the church. After his removal to Franklin, his health was greatly improved,—chiefly, as he supposed, on account of his being relieved from the manifold toils and exposures incident to his missionary excursions.

He was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Greenville College, Tennessee, in 1818.

He remained at Franklin about a dozen years, during which time, in addition to his other duties, he superintended the studies of several young men in preparation for the ministry. In May, 1823, he visited, by request, the Presbyterian Congregation in Louisville, Ky., and preached several Sabbaths with great acceptance; the result of which was that, on the 9th of June following, the Church unanimously called him to be their Pastor. He accepted the call, and, having arranged his affairs in Tennessee, returned to Louisville, where he entered upon his duties on the 12th of November. His labours here are said to have been greatly blessed to the edification and increase of the Church.

For the following incident which occurred, as I suppose, in connection with his ministry at Louisville, I am indebted to Curran Pope, Esq.:—“There is or was in this vicinity a Church called ‘Beulah,’ erected and donated by a Mr. H——, the deed to which was drawn by Dr. Blackburn, and the gift was made through his influence. Mr. H. had been an extensive negro trader to the South, and had accumulated a large estate. He was converted by the preaching of Dr. Blackburn, and in his last moments Dr. B. was with him, and wrote his will, by which he emancipated all his negroes, and provided for their support and removal to Africa, and conveyed his real estate for benevolent objects. The probate of this will was resisted by the heirs next of kin,—he being unmarried; and the will was set aside by the Court of Appeals, on account of the controlling influence exercised over the testator by Dr. Blackburn.”

In October, 1827, he accepted the Presidency of Centre College, Danville, Ky. Here he remained, performing, besides the duties of President, a great amount of ministerial labour, till 1830, when his connection with the College ceased. He then removed to Versailles, Ky., where he was occupied, partly in ministering to the Church in that place, and partly as an Agent of the Kentucky State Temperance Society.

In October, 1833, Dr. Blackburn removed to Illinois, and never afterwards had a stated charge. In 1835, he was employed by the Trustees of Illinois College to raise funds for that institution in the Eastern States. While thus engaged, he conceived the idea of establishing a Theological Seminary in Illinois. The plan which he proposed was this—that individuals should advance money at the rate of \$2 per acre for Government lands in Illinois, for which he would have to pay but \$1.25 per acre; that of the surplus, 25 cents should be retained by him for his services and expenses, and the remaining 50 cents out of each \$2 advanced, should be invested in lands for founding and sustaining the proposed Seminary. The plan was embarrassed by serious difficulties in its practical operation; and he did not live to see it fully carried out; but the efforts which he made have resulted, since his death, in the establishment of a Theological Seminary at Carlinville, Ill., which bears his own name, and is under the control of

the New School branch of the Presbyterian Church. This result, however, has not been reached without a protracted course of litigation.

In the division of the Presbyterian Church, Dr. Blackburn went, heart and hand, with the New School. I have seen letters from him written about that time, which show that he had no doubt the truth and right were upon that side, and that if circumstances had favoured it, he would probably have been one of the leaders in the controversy.

As early as 1826, Dr. Blackburn began to be the subject of a cancerous affection, of which he writes thus, in May of that year, to the Rev. Dr. James Richards:—"I have been so much afflicted with a cancer on my lip, for several months past, that it has paralyzed my exertions, and rendered me very uncomfortable. The issue of it is yet rather doubtful, but the case is under the management of Infinite Wisdom." After about a year it was removed; but in 1836,—owing, as was supposed, to excessive bodily exertion, it reappeared in a form so aggravated as to threaten a fatal and speedy termination. He continued, however, to preach for some months after this, though the exertion occasioned him great pain. In the early part of the winter of 1837-38, he fell upon the ice, and so severely injured the hip-joint, that he was never able to walk afterwards. Thus he was confined to his bed for about six months,—suffering intensely at times, not only from the injury, but especially from the cancer, which became daily more painful. But, amidst all his suffering, he manifested a cheerful submission to the Divine will, and remarked to one of his friends, in his own impressive manner, that the Saviour was at his side directing every pang he felt. In conversation with his wife, he expressed the hope that the Lord in mercy would send some other disease, which would give him an earlier and an easier dismissal from his sufferings. For this, he said, he often prayed. And his prayer was signally answered. Two weeks before his decease, he was attacked with dysentery, under the debilitating influence of which he gradually declined, until he actually experienced the wished-for change. He died at Carlinville, on the 23d of August, 1838, in the sixty-sixth year of his age.

Dr. Blackburn published a Sermon in 1825, "designed to excite the attention of Congregations to the selecting and educating young men for the Gospel ministry;" and one or two other occasional Discourses.

He was married on the 3d of October, 1793, to Grizzel Blackburn, his second or third cousin. They had eleven children,—seven sons and four daughters. Two of his sons were successful preachers of the Gospel, and one died while fitting for the ministry. His widow, two sons, and one daughter still (1857) survive.

FROM THE REV. J. W. HALL, D. D.

DAYTON, O., December 20, 1848

Dear Sir: According to your request, I employ my first leisure moments in communicating to you some of my "recollections and impressions" of the late Dr. Blackburn. I do so with a melancholy pleasure, for the effort brings him before me with all the freshness and distinctness of yesterday, and revives my reverence and affection for the man and his memory.

Regarding him through the medium of a just and grateful affection, as well as through the mellow light of my bygone and earlier years, I might be pardoned

if my portrait, in some of its features, should seem too flattering, or its tone too high, or its colours too bright; but as truth is always preferable to fiction, and indiscriminate praise, like indiscriminate censure, of little value, I shall endeavour to guard against all extravagance, and instead of eulogy, confine myself to facts. With these before my mind, I will try to give you a sketch of him, as he appeared to me, in his person; in his manners; in his social and domestic relations; and in his character as a teacher, as a preacher, and a Christian. My means of information in respect to all these points may be regarded as ample and accurate, having been a student with him for three years, two of which were spent in his family; and having lived the greater part of my life in that portion of the State of Tennessee, which was the principal theatre of his public life and labours.

1. In his person, Dr. Blackburn was much above the ordinary stature, being about six feet one or two inches high. He was not fleshy, but ordinarily of a habit rather full than lean. He had a slight stoop of the shoulders; and when in motion you might perceive that he was somewhat lame. His lameness was occasioned by a twofold cause—by a fracture of the thigh bone in early life, which was badly set, and by a white swelling afterwards on the same limb, from which he suffered dreadful pain for many months. Owing to these causes, the right leg became shortened about an inch, and its muscles contracted considerably. But although he was lame, yet his movement in walking created no painful sympathy, for he moved with ease, elasticity, grace, and dignity. Indeed, it was often remarked that his gait, as well as his whole bearing, was military,—resembling rather a man who had been trained in a camp than one who had been educated in a cloister or a college. The features of Dr. Blackburn were strongly marked. He had a high and somewhat receding forehead—eyebrows prominent but smooth—eyes large, full, light blue or rather greyish. His nose was large, but not heavy, and slightly aquiline. His lips were thin, finely chiselled, and gently compressed, and the corners of his mouth being slightly elevated, he usually looked as one wearing a benignant smile. His chin was broad and prominent, giving the aspect of solidity and firmness to the whole countenance. His complexion was ruddy and healthful. His head was large, and when he was a young man, was clothed with a heavy suit of glossy black hair—in his latter years his hair became perfectly white, and being parted on the crown of his head, it hung in large and graceful curls over the back part of his neck, and down almost to his shoulders, which, added to his fair complexion and fine face, gave him a most venerable and even majestic appearance. It was his eye, however, that was the most striking feature in his whole countenance. Calm, mild, benevolent, and even somewhat languid in its ordinary expression, it was capable of outshading every thought, feeling, and emotion or passion of his soul, without effort. It was the

“Throne of expression! whence his spirit’s ray
 “Poured forth so oft the light of mental day,
 “Where fancy’s fire, affection’s melting beam,
 “Thought, genius, passion, reigned in turn supreme.”

Such is my recollection of the person of Dr. Blackburn; and if I have succeeded in conveying my own impression of his personal appearance to your mind, you will perceive at once that he was a man, both in form and feature, nobly endowed by his Maker. But, although one of the finest looking men of the age, he was not vain of his person, although to one unacquainted with him, he might have perhaps seemed somewhat proud. He never sat for his portrait, although often solicited,—yea, entreated to do so. The only portrait there is of him was obtained by stealth in Boston many years ago. The story of this portrait, as I had it from himself, is as follows:—Looking over the books in his library one day, I found an old periodical—the Panoplist, if I remember rightly, and in one

of the numbers an admirable engraving of the Doctor. Knowing his aversion to having his portrait taken, I brought it down stairs with a view of making some inquiries concerning its history. "Doctor, this is an admirable likeness." He glanced at it coldly, and remarked,—“It is said to be,”—but, looking very serious, added,—“I am very sorry it ever got there. It is one, and the only, unpleasant association I have, connected with Boston. It was obtained, not with my consent, but by stratagem. Some ladies wished me to sit for my portrait—I would not consent, for I was then, as I still am, opposed to all such ministrations to human vanity. Besides, I think it expressly contrary to the second commandment. But my friends determined to have my likeness at all events. An artist was procured, and secrecy enjoined upon him. I was invited several afternoons in succession to meet with friends at the house of one of the ladies. The artist was concealed in a favourable position in an adjoining room, and laboured at the portrait, while my friends kept me engaged in earnest conversation about my favourite hobby,—the wants of the Southwest. Thus the portrait was obtained and engraven, and, before I was aware, the engraving was in the hands of many, and soon after appeared in this work. It has always grieved me, although I had to forgive my friends the unintentional pain, which they gave me on this occasion, and which they sincerely regretted.” The Doctor’s horror of portraits he probably inherited from his old Preceptor, Dr. Doak, President of Washington College, East Tennessee;—who is said to have been quite overwhelmed when he learned that one of the Literary Societies had obtained his portrait in a similar manner, and that it was hanging up in their Hall. I may as well add that the engraving in the Panoplist I never afterwards saw.

2. In his manners, Dr. Blackburn was of the old school—easy, gentle, mild, courteous, affable, but always dignified. There was even something of reserve, if not distance, in his manners, and that too in his own family, and among his most intimate friends. No one could treat him with familiarity. The sentiment inspired by his presence was reverence rather than love, or perhaps I should say it was reverence *and* love. His dignity was not assumed or laid aside at pleasure. He could not have parted with it, if he had tried. He could not have diminished it any more than he could have diminished his stature, or altered his complexion. It was a gift of his Maker, conjoined inseparably with his nature, and it sat upon him easily and gracefully every where,—afoot and on horseback, in the family and in the pulpit—in the exchange of the ordinary civilities of life, listening to the recitations of his pupils in the class-room or lecturing from the President’s chair in College, something of it uniformly appeared.

Dignified, however, as he always was, there was nothing austere or repulsive about him—on the contrary, he was kind to all, especially to the sick, the unfortunate, the aged or infirm. I shall always remember the condescending and touching manner in which he used to speak to one of his old and infirm domestics,—a coloured woman,—“Aunt Judy”, (as we all called her,) and inquire after her health, and converse with her about her spiritual welfare, and also his soothing and parental manner in the sick room of his students. “Be courteous, be pitiful,”—appeared in his intercourse with all classes.

By some he was accused of severity and even haughtiness on some occasions. And the charge is true, if it be confined to occasions when he met with those who had assailed his character, or impugned his motives, or attempted an overbearing manner with him. At such times, while he never lost his self-control or presence of mind, his friends could have wished that there had been more meekness, more gentleness, more humility. On one occasion, he had a difficulty with General Jackson in the presence of the General’s Staff and the Army, concerning the disposition which should be made of a company of soldiers which he himself had raised as volunteers, and brought to General J.’s camp. The General wished to consign them to the command of an officer under whom the Doctor had given

his pledge to the young men that they should not be placed. Thereupon the difficulty arose. General Jackson was imperious—the Doctor was firm. It came to words,—high words—many feared it would end in blows. A gentleman present remarked that it was the most exciting and eloquent duel of words he ever witnessed. The Doctor was as haughty in his bearing as the General was imperious and threatening; but then he was calm, collected and firm, and he carried his point; and then, with a bow of great dignity, he ended by saying,—“General, that is all that I ever asked; and now, with the greatest confidence, I commit these noble young men to your care, whose parents have committed them to me.” They parted with mutual civilities. Years afterwards I called upon General Jackson, when he was President of the United States. I came from the neighbourhood of the Hermitage. The first person after whom he inquired was “my much respected friend, Dr. Blackburn.” It so happened that I had a letter from the Doctor, and I immediately handed it to him. He apologized to me, saying—“Excuse me a moment while I run over this letter.” He broke the seal eagerly, and as he read, his countenance betrayed deep and serious emotion. The substance of the letter, as I learned afterwards, was to urge upon him the fulfilment of a promise to confess Christ before the world. After the letter was read, the conversation turned upon the Doctor, and the President spoke of him with the greatest respect, and paid an eloquent tribute to his piety, usefulness, and eloquence. If this anecdote shows the Doctor’s self-control under contradiction; and the highest pitch of excitement, it also illustrates the pride of his manner under provocation, and it must be confessed that, on such occasions, there was rather more of the haughty bearing and defiant manner of the Norman Knight than was pleasant to behold in a Christian minister, and especially in one who was ordinarily so kind and gentle. And if General Jackson could respect and even love him after that famous passage at arms, it was rare that the like happened with others. His blows were too heavy, and his manner of dealing them too haughty, for that. It was one of his infirmities.

I have already said that in his gait and bearing the Doctor’s manner was military. All his manners partook somewhat of this style. The truth is, he had, in early life at least, a strong *penchant* for the profession of arms, and even after he was a preacher, he led or accompanied several expeditions against the Indians in East Tennessee; and in one of these he is said to have distinguished himself as a skilful commander, and an intrepid soldier. That this statement, if intended as eulogy by me, would sound somewhat strangely at the present day, I admit; but it is not so intended;—for, sure I am that I am no advocate of war, and, especially under the cassock, no eulogist of heroes; but I have no doubt that the Doctor’s known love of adventure, and his undoubted reputation for courage, and his high military bearing in his manners, contributed largely to his influence over the hardy and adventurous pioneers of the West and Southwest, when he appeared before them as a preacher of the Gospel; for such qualities among such a people, especially when associated in their minds with high moral worth, always command their admiration and respect.

3. In the family, and in social life, the Doctor was, according to the direction of Paul, “blameless, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, one that ruled well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.” The memory of the two years in which I was a member of his family as a theological student is the most pleasant of my life. Order, uniformity, characterized the management of his household affairs. Family worship, twice every day, morning and evening—in the morning just before breakfast, in the evening immediately after tea. He had prayers in the evening at this early hour, before the children or servants became sleepy, because, as he said, he did not like “to bring the lame for sacrifice to the altar.” A chapter was read, a hymn sung, and then prayer either by himself, or one of his theological students. The whole

service was conducted with the utmost deliberation, gravity, and solemnity. Often in family prayer, the Doctor was quite as fervent as he was in the pulpit. The Sabbath was "an high day" in his family. Besides the usual devotional exercises of the week, the children were all required to read the Scriptures, and study some portion of the Assembly's Catechism, with the aid of Fisher's or Williston's Expositions. In the afternoon we were all assembled in the parlour, and from one to two hours he examined us on what we had read in the morning, accompanying this exercise with familiar expositions, illustrations, and exhortations to Christian duty. This service was always conducted in the most pleasant and familiar manner, interspersed with touching and instructive anecdote. The result of such discipline in his family was most gratifying. Order, quietness, peace, constantly prevailed in the house; and his wife, children, and domestics, looked up to him with reverence and affection. Never have I seen a husband, father, master, so beloved as he was. "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Dr. Blackburn performed the duty here enjoined, and the promise was fulfilled. All his children who reached maturity became pious at an early period in life, and united with the church. Two of his sons became preachers of the Gospel, and another died just as he was about to enter on the duties of the sacred office.

In regard to the temporal and spiritual welfare of his domestics, he always manifested a deep concern. One of them who had served him very faithfully for several years, he emancipated, when he was about thirty-five years of age, giving him a handsome outfit towards housekeeping. The others, some seven or eight in number, he emancipated one after another, until all were freed with two exceptions. These were very wicked, and were judged by him unfit or unworthy to enjoy their freedom, and being an annoyance in his family he sold them. The sale of these slaves, it is believed, he ever regretted, notwithstanding their viciousness and unworthiness; for he was always opposed to slavery, and ever gave his countenance and example, with these two exceptions, to the cause of emancipation. Those whom he liberated from bondage, with the exception of the first, were all sent to Liberia in Africa—the only place, as he judged, where the coloured man can enjoy true and substantial freedom.

4. Dr. Blackburn was engaged as a teacher for many years—first, as Principal of Harpeth Academy in Williamson County, Tenn.; afterwards of the Independent Academy in the same county; and still later as President of Centre College in Kentucky. A finished scholar he was not. Latin he read with facility; Greek indifferently; of Hebrew he knew nothing or next to nothing. His knowledge of the physical sciences was general rather than minute. Of Mathematics, beyond the simplest elements of Algebra and Geometry, it is believed that he knew nothing. History, Geography, Chronology, Logic, Rhetoric, Mental and Moral Science, he had studied with great care, and his instruction in these branches was admirable, especially in Logic, Rhetoric, Mental and Moral Philosophy—in these he excelled, and his Lectures on Rhetoric and his illustrations in the art of speaking, his pupils will never forget. One day, I remember, after having commented on the usual rules laid down in the text-books for the composition of a discourse, the management of the voice, gestures, &c., he suddenly stopped and said,—“There is one rule not laid down in the books, more important than all these—it is to get your head, heart, soul, full of your subject, and then let nature have its own way, despising all rule.” This canon he himself observed, and to its observance, I have no doubt, he owed much of his celebrity as a public speaker.

As a disciplinarian and governor of youth, he was eminently successful. He governed by authority, by condescension, by love, by a thousand little acts of attention and kindness,—chiefly, however, by the power of persuasion and religious motives. In the exercise of discipline, he usually won the affections of the

truant, and I do not remember a single instance in which he alienated them. A striking illustration of his manner and its success in this department I will relate. Two of his students, S. and C., had a personal difficulty—a quarrel ensued, which ended in a fight. S. was much the older and stouter of the two, and he beat C. most unmercifully. C., although only in his sixteenth year, challenged S. to fight a duel. S. knew not what to do. To accept or send a challenge, according to the law of the institution, was expulsion, if the student was over sixteen,—if under, chastisement with the rod. In his perplexity, S. called a *Board of Honour*. Fortunately, the Board of Honour came to the decision that he ought not to accept C.'s challenge, but hand it over to the Principal. S. did so. Assembled for worship in the chapel at the close of the day, the Doctor took the challenge from his pocket, read it aloud in the hearing of all, and asked C. if he was the author of it. C. admitted that he was. The Doctor took occasion to speak at length on the subject of duelling, and perhaps never did this fashionable crime receive a more searching examination, or its folly and wickedness a more severe exposure. Before he was through, its false lustre was all gone, and it stood before us condemned in the eye of reason as folly, in the eye of God as murder and murder only.

Having finished his address, he turned to S., and, in a manner severe but kind, addressed him upon the subject of his conduct towards C., which had provoked the challenge, and received from him an ample apology and confession for his ill treatment of his unfortunate fellow-student. Then calling C. forward, with a few kind and sorrowful words, he reminded him of the punishment which it was his duty to inflict upon him. He held the rod in his hand, but said, "before I proceed, let us pray for God's blessing." He then led in a most fervent prayer, the burden of which was that God would deliver us all from the temptations of evil customs, and for the two culprits,—that he would grant them repentance and forgiveness, and restore them to each others' friendship, and cause them to live together as brothers. So far all had been solemn; but, during the prayer, C. very quietly and gradually fell back towards the door, and when the Doctor looked for him, he had disappeared. An ill-suppressed titter went round the room at the *slip* that had been played upon the Doctor. It lasted but for a moment. He sternly commanded order and silence; and, waiting a moment, said calmly—"Mr. C. is suspended until he acknowledges his fault, and submits to his punishment." C. and S. met and made friends. Two weeks passed away. C. still lingered in the neighbourhood, often sending messages to the Doctor through his friends and fellow-students, asking a release from his punishment and restoration to his standing. He always answered these messages kindly, usually accompanying his answer with some expression of pity or affection for C., dropping, carelessly, as it were, some word about his talents, promise, &c.; but still would end by sending him word that he must submit to his whole sentence, or he could not be restored. C. finding no sympathy from home, and but little countenance in his course by his friends or fellow-students, at length made his appearance in the chapel, in his best trim, and consented, in a very humble and submissive tone, to receive his sentence, but asked its remission—"That will do! that will do! that will do! John," said the Doctor, evidently moved by the boy's manner—"You are forgiven—you are restored—you shall not be chastised—you will be a better boy than you ever were—you will make a wiser man than if this had never happened. Take your place." C. burst into tears. Prayer followed and we were dismissed. C. exclaimed, as he left the chapel door,—“That is the greatest and best man that God ever made!” The language was extravagant, but I doubt whether there was a single one among all the eighty students there, that did not echo the sentiment from the very depths of his heart. I hardly need add that John C.

was one of the best and most orderly students in the institution ever afterwards.

5. As a Preacher and Pulpit Orator, Dr. Blackburn is most generally remembered. He seldom wrote his sermons. He never read them from the pulpit, even if he had written them. The matter of his discourses, however, he thoroughly digested, and even premeditated much of the language, it is believed, in his best sermons, after the fashion of Robert Hall. In his studies and preparation for the pulpit, his plan was to fold a sheet of paper, and lay it on his writing desk, and then commence walking backwards and forwards across the room, every now and then stopping to note down a head, or leading subdivision, of his thoughts, leaving considerable space under each note. Having thus arranged the plan of his discourse, which he called "blazing his path," borrowing a figure from backwoods' life, he then proceeded to take up each head separately, until he had thought his whole discourse through and through, stopping occasionally, as before, to dot down a word or thought, sometimes a sentence or an illustration, under each division, until he had finished. Then taking up the paper, he would usually con it all over again and again, now blotting out, now adding, something. Thus he continued until every part of the discourse was satisfactorily arranged in his mind. The notes thus prepared, he usually took with him into the pulpit, but he rarely had occasion even to glance at them. He used to remark,—“ I try to get the thoughts fully into my mind, and leave the language generally to the occasion.”

Necessity at first led him to this method of preparation for the pulpit which I have described. When he entered the ministry, he was poor, and his congregation were poor, and he was obliged to cultivate the soil for a living in part. Compelled to labour, he was accustomed to take a sheet of paper and his inkhorn with him to the field, and laying them on a stump or some other convenient place, he would follow his plough or his work,—at the same time meditating upon his subject, and when he had arranged any part of it, or wished to retain some thought, he would stop a moment, note it down, and then go on with his work. Thus he would proceed from day to day, until Saturday evening, when he would review, arrange, and fix in his mind, the mental labours of the week. His other evenings he devoted to reading, often until a late hour of the night. His favourite authors at this time, as I have heard him say, were John Newton, Hervey, and Doddridge. Hopkins, Bellamy, Strong, Emmons, and Edwards, were his favourites when I knew him. His three oldest sons were named Newton, Hervey, and Emmons. Thus, by constant reading, he cultivated his mind, and enlarged the sphere of his theological science, and by thinking on foot, and in motion, he acquired the habit of doing so, and from habit, he continued it ever afterwards, as for him the most effective manner and posture of study.

The style of his sermons resembled that of President Davies in many respects. Like him he was generally didactic and analogical in the beginning—but highly descriptive, and abounding in appeals to the imagination, the conscience, and the hearts of his hearers towards the close. His sermons, like those of Davies also, were usually very long,—occupying frequently from an hour and a half to two hours in their delivery. In one particular, however, I imagine he must have excelled Davies—I am sure he far excelled all the preachers I ever heard—I mean in the power of *painting* scriptural scenes before the eye of the mind, so as to make them appear as realities for the time being. If he spoke of the children of Israel hemmed in at the Red Sea, or crossing it, or chanting their triumph on its shores; or Mount Sinai with its brown barren rocks; or the serpent lifted up in the wilderness; or the terror-stricken camp; the fall of Jericho; Christ in the garden or on the cross, you saw it all before you. He seemed to see it himself, and his eye, his countenance, the tones of his voice, the motions of his body, every gesture, and word seemed to express the vividness of his mental

vision; and the effect was often thrilling, electrical. An illustration may be given—preaching one day, (it was a Communion Sabbath,) on the crucifixion of Christ, he proceeded in his usual way to describe the whole scene somewhat in the following manner:—

“Being condemned, the Saviour was led away to a place called Calvary to be crucified. See Him bearing his own cross—multitudes follow Him—they have arrived at Calvary—there is a pause—three crosses may be seen there—one of these is for Christ. The executioners approach Him with ropes, nails, and hammer, in hand—rough but sad looking men they are—they hesitate—He opens not his mouth—meek as a lamb, He makes no resistance—there is deep silence—every eye is on that spot—they fasten Him to the cross, drawing the cords tightly about his body—they drive a large spike through his feet—a nail through each hand”—(here, as he pronounced these words, he struck the pulpit with his fist as if actually driving the nails, his countenance betraying, meanwhile, all the emotions of agonizing sympathy,) “having fastened Him to the cross,” he proceeded,—“they raise it, and its foot drops heavily into the deep socket prepared to receive it—the shock makes the whole body of the Saviour quiver with pain.” Just as he was pronouncing this last sentence, the profound silence, hitherto only interrupted by sobs here and there, was broken by wild shrieks of agony, from various parts of the large church, many seeming to feel as if they were mingling with the multitudes around the hill of death, and actually looking on the terrible scene. Here was a perilous position for the orator—his audience wound up to the highest pitch—how will he sustain them? how let them down? To him it was easy enough. “Oh!” said he, “you shriek with agony, looking on the scene—well you may. It was a spectacle of woe, such as God, angels, devils nor men never saw before—never will see again. The sun refused to look upon it—the earth trembled—the centurion cried out,—‘Truly this was the Son of God!’ That cross was the centre of a universal sympathy—around that awful hill of death every passion and feeling, Divine, human, devilish, mingled in a fearful conflict for three dreadful hours. Look on! Look on! Gaze with the awe-stricken crowd! Weep with the daughters of Salem! Linger until you hear that loud lament—until you hear him say ‘It is finished!’ and see Him bow his meek, pale face, all bloody, and bearing upon it the mysterious shadow of death—but it will do you little good to see Christ crucified before you, as you do this day, unless Christ crucified becomes your hope and your salvation.” The sermon then ended with a brief exposition of the objects of Christ’s death, and a pathetic exhortation to sinners to accept of salvation through Him, and to Christians to come forward and commemorate his death.

I have given you this specimen of his preaching to illustrate as well as I could that particular point in which, as a preacher, he most excelled. I doubt whether Whitefield himself, in this particular, surpassed him. One specimen I have given—I could give many more. A gentleman told me that he heard him preaching one day from John iii. 14 —“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,” &c.; and that, after he had spoken of one and another being stung by the serpents, and of the terror of the camp, and when every one was in a state of intense excitement, occasioned by the picture which he had drawn, and which they seemed to see, suddenly starting back, “There,” said he, pointing in a given direction, “see that woman! one of the serpents has just struck her, and she is fainting.” In a moment every eye was actually turned in the direction toward which he pointed. On another occasion, the late Rev. Mr. C., formerly of Bowling Green, Ky., told me that he heard him speak one evening of the torments of the lost, for half an hour, and so entirely was his imagination occupied with the Doctor’s pictures of the place of torment, that he could only remember the words of a single sentence in the whole address. “It did not appear to me,” said he, “that I had been *hearing* but that I had been *seeing*.” It was in this

power of *painting* chiefly that he excelled even the most eminent of his cotemporaries as a preacher. In other respects, many of them were on an equality with him. In argument and logic he was surpassed by Dr. Anderson* of Maryville, Tenn.; in pathos by Dr. Nelson, the author of "the Cause and Cure of Infidelity;" and in fire and occasional flights of terrible grandeur, by his theological preceptor, Dr. Henderson, of Murfreesborough; but in person, voice, gesture, and in the peculiar power of which I have spoken, he had no compeer in his day. The truth is, such was his commanding presence, the elegance of his figure, the sweetness of his silvery voice, the gracefulness of his gestures, his powers of description, the total *abandon* and unctiousness of his manner, in his finest moods, that his hearers forgot every thing else—forgot to criticise as they listened, and surrendered themselves to the mastery,—I might say witchery, of his sermons, as the lovers of music delight to surrender themselves to the spell of a master. Mr. M. of C—ville, himself no mean orator, told me that he came to Columbia one day on business; and though he was in haste, yet, hearing that Blackburn was preaching at the Court-House, he thought he would step in a moment and hear him. The house was crowded. He took his position in the door, leaning against the door-check—there, as if enchanted, he stood an hour and more without altering his position, and when he attempted to move, he was so cramped that he could scarcely walk. Time, his errand, his fatiguing posture, had all been forgotten in the spell the orator had thrown over him.

Mr. B. of Rutherford, Tenn., used to tell a good anecdote of an attempt which he made to criticise Blackburn the first time that he heard him. Mr. B. was a fine classical scholar, a finished orthoëpist and grammarian, and withal of a very fastidious taste,—being as sensitive to a false quantity, or a blunder in grammar, as the most delicate spirit thermometer to the temperature of the atmosphere. Mr. B. was returned to the Legislature. It met at Knoxville, and Blackburn was to preach a sermon to the members at the opening of its sessions. B. had never heard him, but had formed his idea of him from scattering reports. He had heard it said that he pronounced many words contrary to all analogy, polite usage, or authority;—that, for instance, he said *poolse* for pulse, *impoolse* for impulse—some times *decreptitude* for decrepitude—that occasionally he used the participle for the preterit tense in the irregular verbs,—saying for instance, "he *done*" for "he did," besides many other like blunders of grammar and pronunciation; and, in addition to all this, that, at times, he was very extravagant in the pitch of his voice, and in the number of his gestures. Still he was very popular. B's theory was that he owed his popularity to his person, his musical voice,—and yet more, to the want of judgment and taste in the ignorant and uncultivated masses that flocked to hear him. Still there was a great stir—expectation was on tiptoe—and every body was

ISAAC ANDERSON was born in Rockbridge County, Va., on the 26th of March, 1780. He was of Scotch Irish descent, his ancestors having migrated to this country from Ireland at an early period. At the age of twenty, he united with the Presbyterian Church, near Lexington, then under the care of the Rev. Samuel Brown. Having prepared himself for the ministry, he was licensed to preach the Gospel, by Union Presbytery, in May, 1802; and in the autumn following, was ordained and installed Pastor of Washington Church, Knox County, Tenn. Here he laboured for about nine years, during which time he also performed much missionary service, which was attended with signal success. In the spring of 1811, he was called to the New Providence Church, Maryville, then vacant by the resignation of the Rev. Gideon Blackburn. This call he accepted, and removed thither with his family the next autumn, where he performed the principal part of the labours of his life. The Southwest Theological Seminary at Maryville was established chiefly through his instrumentality, and for many years enjoyed the benefit of his labours as a teacher. In the division of the Presbyterian Church in 1838, his judgment and influence were strongly on the side of the New School. The last five or six years of his life were marked by gradual decay of both body and mind. On the 17th of March, 1856, his dwelling, with all it contained, except himself and family, was burnt to ashes. He was quite overwhelmed by the shock, and it may have hastened his departure from the world. A few months before his death, he removed with his son-in-law, Rev. John M. Caldwell, to Rockford, Tenn., where he died on the 28th of January, 1857. He was a man of commanding powers, of glowing zeal, and untiring and successful industry.

going to hear. Mr. B. would go too,—would hear for himself,—hear without prejudice, but would hear as a critic, and ascertain where his great strength as a speaker with the people lay. Pencil and note-book in hand, he would set down his blunders, and make memoranda of the discourse. Taking his seat in an obscure corner, he prepared for his task, expecting to make a rare collection of gross mistakes for his own amusement, and for the confusion of the Doctor's foolish and extravagant admirers. The Doctor commenced in his usual dignified, but entirely unassuming and unpretending, manner, hesitating occasionally, now as if waiting for a thought to become clear to his own mind, now as if for a fit expression in which to embody it—presently as an illustration, he drops into the classical story so admirably told by Xenophon concerning the generosity of Cyrus towards a captive prince; the admiration and gratitude of the prince towards the Medo-Persian General; and the devotion of the princess to her husband, who had offered his life to rescue her from captivity and slavery. Having cleared his way by this illustration, he quickly gets into the heart of his subject—his countenance is lit up—words follow not in sentences, but in chains—whole paragraphs without a pause. On, on, he dashes, now like a courser towards the goal,—now beautifully like a ship with all its sails set to the breeze, careering over the curling waves; now like an eagle soaring away towards the sun over lofty mountains; now presenting picture after picture as in some magnificent dioramic exhibition. The spell had come down upon our critical friend, as over all others—that fine allusion to Xenophon had something to do in disarming him perhaps—at all events, when it is over, he finds he has only one criticism on his paper which he remembers to have made somewhere about the beginning of the discourse, and that is “*brung* for brought.” “Why,” said Mr. B., in telling me this anecdote himself, “I could not criticise him: not that he was not vulnerable enough, but a man must be a cold-hearted, mean, contemptible creature, even in his own eyes, to criticise such a man and such preaching. He that would or could do it, would criticise any thing—the falls of Niagara—the bend of the rainbow—the manner of the sun's rising in the morning, or his glorious setting in the West—or—even *Homer's Iliad*.” My classical friend told me that he never failed to hear the Doctor after that when he could, but that he never carried his inkhorn or pencil to church afterwards.

Blackburn was not only an eloquent, but laborious and successful, preacher. Like Whitefield, he loved “to range,” and besides many extensive tours of preaching through various portions of the United States, his vacations in the Academy and College were uniformly spent in travelling from place to place, often preaching night and day, and uniformly followed by weeping, wondering, admiring audiences wherever he went;” and even during the sessions of the Academy and College, often have I known him, mounted on horseback on Friday afternoon, to dash off ten, twenty, and even thirty, miles; preach four or five times, administer the Communion on Sabbath; and return on Monday morning in time to be in his chair in the lecture room at nine o'clock. And notwithstanding such labour, he never seemed fatigued, but fresh and vigorous as ever;—for he had an iron constitution, indomitable energy, and an inexhaustible flow of animal spirits. Laborious and zealous, he was a successful preacher. Many, very many were converted under his ministry, and many churches planted and watered by his indefatigable labours.

6. As a Christian, Dr. B.'s piety was of the active rather than the contemplative type. In religious experience, in the peculiar joys and sorrows of a Christian, he fully believed, and often spoke of them as one who *knew* whereof he spoke; but he put more confidence in obedience to the commandments as a test of Christian character than in “frames and feelings.” In the reality of God's providential government, as well as moral, he was a firm believer, and to it he was ever ready to resign himself without a murmur. Indeed, this cheerful and

habitual resignation, as well as his reference of every thing to the will of Providence, was one of the marked traits of his Christian character. Perhaps the many sufferings, as well as perils, through which he was called to pass, gave this cast and colour to his piety. For like Job, he might have said, "I am the man who hath seen affliction." In his family, he suffered repeated bereavements,—one of which deserves to be particularly noticed,—as the manner in which he bore it, will serve to throw light upon his character as a Christian.

His second son, *James Hervey*, was a young man of remarkable promise. He was distinguished for his fine genius, varied and extensive acquirements, and elegant and fascinating manners. He possessed many of the most striking characteristics of his father: indeed it was Dr. Anderson's opinion that of the two, nature had cast the son in the finer mould. This son had been a sceptic until he was eighteen or nineteen years of age; but, through his father's influence and prayers, had become a Christian,—a zealous, earnest Christian, and had determined to prepare for the Christian ministry. Having concluded his classical and scientific studies, he wished to obtain a knowledge of the Hebrew. His father sent him to Maryville in East Tennessee to study the language with his old friend, Dr. Anderson. He had been there about six months, endearing himself to every body, when he was attacked with erysipelas, and in a few days died. The sad intelligence of his death, Dr. A. communicated to his father by letter, with a request on the back of the letter that the Post Master would hand it to him immediately. The letter arrived on Sunday morning. The Post Master went to church, and when the Doctor arrived, handed it to him. He stepped aside, and read it, folded it up, put it into his pocket, went into the pulpit, preached as usual, did not make the remotest allusion to his bereavement, and not until he went home, and attempted to communicate the intelligence to his family, did the "great deep" of his grief break up. Then came, as I have heard him say, the most dreadful conflict of his life. For God, as he said, had laid the pride, the idol, the honour, and glory, of his house in the dust. "I did not know how to reconcile it either with his wisdom or goodness, nor do I yet *know*; but I believe, yes, I *believe* it is all right—all wise—all good—and that is enough to satisfy reason and piety; and passion and selfishness ought to submit, must submit,—yea and I do submit, rejoicing that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

He himself had several violent attacks of fever at different times, from which he hardly recovered. I assisted to nurse him in one of these, when it was not expected that he would live. He was lying near a window that looked to the West. It was autumn, and the sun was nearly setting. He asked me to remove the curtains and open the window, that he might, as he said, look out upon God's glorious world once more before he died. I opened the window, as he had requested. He was in a burning fever. As the cooling breeze reached his fevered cheek, he said, "How refreshing is this! What a fine emblem is this wind of the precious and refreshing influence of the Holy Spirit! Oh! that sun! how grand it looks! Its setting is like the dying of Christ—it sheds a glory over all created things. Darkness will soon be here, and I shall not probably see this world any more; but if I do not, I shall open my eyes on a world wonderfully different from this. Oh! what a world! what a world that must be where Christ is, and God and the Lamb the light thereof! Oh, to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better!" Then turning to me, and seizing me by the hand, he added,—“Hall, get ready to preach as soon as you can, and then preach Christ! preach Christ and Him crucified! preach with all your power, and preach nothing else!” Seeing him overcome with weakness and emotion, I prevailed upon him to cease, and to take his rest. The crisis of the disease took place that night, and he rapidly convalesced.

He lived fifteen years afterwards to preach Christ himself, and then died, as I have been told, rejoicing to be with Christ which is far better.

I add no more—I have already transcended the limit which I had prescribed to myself.

Yours truly, in Christian love

J. W. HALL.

ROBERT M. CUNNINGHAM, D. D.*

1792—1839.

ROBERT M. CUNNINGHAM, a son of Roger and Mary Cunningham, was born in York County, Pa., September 10, 1760. When he was in his fifteenth year, his father removed his family to North Carolina, and purchased a plantation on which he settled and reared his children. From a very early period his mind seems to have been religiously impressed, and he ardently desired a classical education with a view to entering the Gospel ministry. His father discouraged the idea, chiefly from pecuniary considerations; but the wish on the part of the son was gradually matured into a purpose; and when he was in his twenty-second year he set himself to the accomplishment of it. In 1782, he entered a Latin school taught by the Rev. Robert Finley† in the neighbourhood of Rocky River, N. C. At this school he continued somewhat more than a year, until Mr. Finley resigned his charge of it. He then went to Bethel settlement, York County, in the same State, where a school was opening under the tuition of a Mr. Robert McCulloch, where he remained two years. He then removed to an Academy at Bullock's Creek, taught by the Rev. Joseph Alexander; and there he completed his preparation for entering College.

In the year 1787, he entered Dickinson College, Carlisle, at an advanced standing, and graduated in 1789. On leaving College, he returned to his parents, and soon joined the First Presbytery of South Carolina. He was at this time somewhat straitened for pecuniary means, and it is believed that he was engaged for some time in teaching a school, and in connection with this employment pursued a course of theological study. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of South Carolina, in 1792; and in the autumn of that year he went to Georgia, and organized a Church in that part of Greene County now called Hancock, and ordained elders to a Church called Ebenezer. He settled in that neighbourhood, and opened a school which he continued for some time, preaching alternately at Ebenezer, and at a Church about twenty miles distant in the same county, called Bethany. He subsequently removed to Bethany, and remained there until he left the State. In 1796, he, and four other ministers, were set off from the Presbytery of South Carolina, to form a Presbytery by the name of *Hopewell*, which was accordingly duly constituted in March following.

* MSS. from his daughter, Rev. J. D. Shane, Rev. Dr. Beman, and Samuel McCullough, Esq.—Foote's Sketches of N. C.

† ROBERT FINLEY was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Orange, between the meetings of Synod in 1783 and 1784; was received as a member of the Presbytery of South Carolina on the 12th of April, 1785; and in June following was ordained and installed Pastor of the Waxhaw Church.