



Portrait of a man in clerical attire, likely a historical figure.

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

Mr. Cummings died in March, 1812, in about the eightieth year of his age, leaving many and most respectable descendants. He was a sincere and exemplary Christian, and a John Knox in his energy and zeal in support of his own particular Church. He never lost sight of his object, and always marched directly up to it, with a full front and determined will. He performed a great deal of missionary labour, through an extensive district of the country, beyond his immediate field, which was of itself large,—once, at least, going into Kentucky. The fruits of his labours still remain. He was a Presbyterian of the old stamp, rigid in his faith, strict in the observance of the Sabbath, and faithful in teaching his children and servants the Catechism.

With great respect,

I am your obedient servant.

DAVID CAMPBELL.

JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D.*

1768—1794.

JOHN WITHERSPOON was a son of the Rev. James Witherspoon, minister of the parish of Yester in Scotland, fourteen miles East of Edinburgh. He was probably the youngest child of his parents, and was born on the 5th of February, 1722. His parentage and family connections were highly respectable. His father was an uncommonly able and faithful minister, and was especially distinguished for the accuracy which marked his public discourses. On the mother's side, he traced an unbroken line of ministerial ancestry, through a period of more than two hundred years, to the great Reformer, John Knox. The father lived several years after the son was settled in the ministry,—probably till sometime after his removal to Paisley, and had the happiness of seeing him one of the ablest and most influential ministers of the Church with which he was connected.

There is reason to believe that the subject of this sketch experienced the power of religion upon his heart at a very early period; and that this was to be attributed mainly to the faithful instrumentality of a devoted Christian mother. At an early age, he was sent to the public school at Haddington, where he soon evinced remarkable powers; and so rapid was his progress in the various branches of study, that, at the age of fourteen, he was transferred to the University of Edinburgh, where he continued till he had reached his twenty-first year, when he was licensed to preach the Gospel. He was associated, at the University, with several persons, as fellow-students, who afterwards had a splendid career in life,—such as Blair, Robertson, John Erskine, &c., in the ministry, and many others distinguished in the other liberal professions. His collegiate course fully answered the expectations which had been awakened by his earlier developments; and, at the Divinity Hall particularly, he stood unrivalled for perspicuity of style, logical accuracy of thought, taste in sacred criticism, and

* Sketch of his Life by Rev. Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith.—Dr. Rodgers' Sermon occasioned by his death.—MS. Memoir by Dr. Green.

all those intellectual qualities and accomplishments, which, in after life, conspired to render him one of the great men of the age and of the world.

Soon after he left the University, he was licensed to preach, and was invited to become assistant and successor to his venerable father in the parish of Yester; but having, in 1744, received a presentation from the Earl of Eglinton to the parish of Beith in the West of Scotland, he, with the unanimous consent of the people, was ordained in the early part of the following year as minister of that populous parish. Here he laboured with much acceptance, receiving many tokens of public and private regard, and many honourable testimonies to his distinguished usefulness. Not long after his settlement, he was married to Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Montgomery, of Craighouse, in Ayrshire. It is a somewhat singular fact that, previous to his marriage, he addressed an intelligent and excellent young lady of Edinburgh, who rejected his proposals; and yet not only a warm friendship, but a most interesting correspondence, was kept up between them, till the close of his life.

Soon after his settlement at Beith, the Pretender to the British throne landed in the North of Scotland, and was speedily joined by a devoted band of Highlanders, who espoused his cause; and a general alarm was spread throughout the country. The famous battle of Falkirk, which proved so disastrous to the Royal army, was fought, January 17, 1746; and among those whose curiosity carried them to witness the encounter with the rebels on that occasion, was Mr. Witherspoon, accompanied by a youth who went in the capacity of a servant. Unsuspecting of danger, he remained in a situation in which he was, with a number of others, made a prisoner. After continuing some time in custody elsewhere, the prisoners were confined in the castle of Donne, then in possession of the rebels. Having been kept in close confinement about a fortnight, and subjected to no small anxiety and some suffering, he at length succeeded in obtaining his release. It has been supposed by some that his nervous system, previously enfeebled by intense study, received a shock from the confinement occasioned by this curious and perhaps rash adventure, from which it did not soon, if ever, fully recover.

Mr. Witherspoon's first appearance as an author was in the year 1753, in an anonymous publication, entitled "Ecclesiastical Characteristics, or the Arcana of Church Policy." It was aimed at certain principles and practices, which then prevailed extensively in the Church of Scotland, and by its acknowledged ability, and particularly by the keenness of its satire, it produced a great sensation, and acquired immense popularity. Within less than ten years after it was first published, it had passed to a fifth edition. This was followed, soon after, by another able performance, entitled, a "Serious Apology" for the Characteristics, in which he avows himself the author of the work which he defends. In 1756, he published his "Essay on Justification," which has always been regarded as one of the ablest Calvinistic expositions of that doctrine in any language. The year after this, he published his "Serious inquiry into the nature and effects of the Stage,"—which also has had a wide and enduring popularity. This work had its origin in the fact that Mr. John Home, a clergyman of the Church of Scotland, had published his well known tragedy of Douglass, which was acted repeatedly in the Edinburgh Theatre, where a number of the author's clerical friends attended. An ecclesiastical procedure in respect to the case

resulted in his relinquishment of the sacred office, and his devoting himself exclusively to literary pursuits.

In the year 1757, he was invited by the people of Paisley to become the Pastor of the Low Church in that town. But the Presbytery of Paisley, in consideration of his being the reputed author of the "Characteristics," (for he had not at that time avowed himself the author,) refused leave to grant even a call to be made to him, notwithstanding the unanimous and earnest application of all concerned. The matter, however, was referred, by way of complaint, to the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr; on which occasion he made a most masterly speech, (preserved in the American edition of his works,) in which, without either admitting or denying that he was the author of the work complained of, he managed with such address as not merely to obtain a formal acquittal, but to place his opposers in an exceedingly awkward and undesirable attitude. The Presbytery that had accused him, were obliged to sustain his call, to install him as Pastor of the Church to which he had been invited, and to receive him as a member in good standing, with their own Body; and he was chosen Moderator of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, the very next year after he had pleaded his cause before it. After having retained his pastoral charge in Beith for twelve years, he was installed at Paisley, January 16, 1757, as the successor of the Rev. Robert Finley, who was translated first to the North-west parish in Glasgow, and subsequently to the Theological chair in the University of that city.

During the period of his ministry in Paisley, besides discharging with great fidelity the ordinary duties of his office, he preached on various public occasions, and several of these Discourses were printed. In the early part of 1762, he published a Sermon, entitled "Seasonable advice to young persons,"—which subsequently involved him in no small difficulty. The following account of the affair is from a communication procured, in 1835, by Dr. Green, from a gentleman in Scotland, who in early life sat under Dr. Witherspoon's ministry, and who had access to the best sources of information on the subject on which he writes:—

"On Saturday evening, immediately preceding the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, in February, 1762, a few young men in the town connected with the higher ranks, were enjoying themselves in a convivial manner, when, amidst their madness and folly, they went through such religious forms of a profane celebration of that holy ordinance, as caused the inhabitants of the town to make the event that had taken place the subject of general conversation, and to denominate the profane action a mock Sacrament: and I well remember that when the affair was ever mentioned, it was always in strong terms of abhorrence of the blasphemous and wicked deed. In accordance with the general feeling of the respectable inhabitants of the town, Dr. W., a man of keen feelings, and actuated with laudable zeal for the interests of piety, in about a fortnight after the affair had happened, preached a Sermon on the subject of 'Sinners sitting in the seat of the Scornful,' in which he alluded in pointed terms to what had so lately taken place; and firmly believing the reports that had gone abroad, he published the Sermon with an introductory address to the public, with strong remonstrance, and giving the names of the persons accused. This gave great offence, and a prosecution was commenced against the Doctor for defamation of character, which went against him,—the proof having been con-

sidered by the judges defective ; and he was subjected to a fine or expenses which brought him into pecuniary difficulties, which called his friends to come under engagements. From these engagements it has been generally understood his sureties were not relieved, when the Doctor left Scotland in 1768 ; and the impression on my own mind was, from the reports I heard in early life, that, had it not been for the friendly interference of those particularly interested in his welfare, he would have been prevented at the time from leaving the country."

The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him, in 1764, by the University of Aberdeen ; and the degree of Doctor of Laws, in 1785, by Yale College.

In 1764, he went to London and published his "Essays on important subjects," &c., in three volumes. These volumes were composed of pieces which had been previously published in Scotland, with the exception of his celebrated Treatise on Regeneration, which appeared now for the first time. By this means, he became more extensively known as a theological writer, and his fame reached far beyond his own country. Meanwhile, he was engaged in an extensive literary correspondence, both at home and abroad ; and such was his reputation that he was invited to take charge of a congregation in Dublin, of another in Rotterdam in Holland, and of a third in Dundee in his own country ; but he seems unhesitatingly to have declined them all. He made a brief visit to Holland, previous to his coming to America, but for what specific object does not appear.

Shortly after the death of President Finley, in 1766, the College of New Jersey chose Dr. Witherspoon to be his successor ; and the letter informing him of his appointment was enclosed to Richard Stockton, Esq., a member of the Corporation of the College, then in England, with a request that he would visit him in Scotland, and deliver it in person. Dr. Witherspoon, however, owing, as has been said, chiefly to the reluctance of his wife to leave her native country, at first declined the appointment ; but, as she became subsequently reconciled to such a step, and other circumstances also seemed favourable to it, he signified his willingness to accept the office, provided the invitation should be renewed. Accordingly, the Board of Trustees proceeded immediately to re-elect him, and, in notifying him of the appointment, expressed a wish that he would enter upon his office at the earliest period that might consist with his convenience.

It being now decided that he should cross the Atlantic, he was called to the painful office of taking leave of his pastoral charge. This he did on the 16th of April, 1768, in an excellent Farewell Discourse, which was published, first in pamphlet form, and afterwards as part of a volume. It was entitled "Ministerial fidelity in declaring the whole counsel of God." The volume referred to was published at Glasgow, on his leaving the country,—partly as an expression of regard for his congregation ; and another was published at Edinburgh, about the same time, entitled, "Practical Discourses on the leading truths of the Gospel." The Discourses in the latter volume are so arranged as to form a concise system of Practical Divinity.

Dr. Witherspoon, having made all the arrangements requisite to his departure from the country, embarked from London, with his family, about the 20th of May. The precise date of his arrival in Philadelphia does not appear, though his voyage seems to have been a somewhat protracted one. From the friends of the College in Philadelphia he received a most

cordial welcome, and, after having rested there for a short time, he was escorted to Princeton, where he was met with every demonstration of respect and kindness. On the evening of his arrival, the college edifice was brilliantly illuminated; and not only the whole village, but the adjacent country, and even the Province at large, shared in the joy of the occasion. To this most kind and gratifying reception the Doctor referred, with great modesty, and in a most appropriate manner, in the first sermon which he preached after his accession to the Presidency.

Dr. Witherspoon was inaugurated as President of the College, at a meeting of the Trustees, called specially for the purpose, on the 17th of August, 1768; and, either at that meeting or that which was held in connection with the Annual Commencement on the 28th of the following month, (it is impossible now to determine which,) he delivered an Inaugural Address in Latin, on the "Union of Piety and Science." It was soon ascertained that the highest anticipations which had been cherished in respect to his influence in promoting the interests of the College were likely to be realized. He introduced, at once, many important improvements in the system of education, and gave to the institution a more vigorous intellectual tone, and greatly increased its reputation abroad. Particularly, he introduced the method of teaching by lecture, which seems previously to have been unknown to our American Colleges; and he actually delivered Lectures on four different subjects;—namely, Eloquence and Composition, Taste and Criticism; Moral Philosophy; Chronology and History; and Divinity. Though it was impossible that he should go very much in detail into these several subjects, yet they were all handled in a luminous and able manner, and showed at once the versatility and the industry of the lecturer.

Dr. Witherspoon rendered most important service to the College by increasing its library and philosophical apparatus, and introducing the study of the Hebrew and French languages. When he came from Europe, he brought with him three hundred choice volumes as a donation to the College; and this number was afterwards considerably increased, by his influence with his friends in England and Scotland. He was also chiefly instrumental in obtaining the first Orrery constructed by the celebrated Rittenhouse, as well as a tolerable philosophical apparatus from Great Britain, the former of which was greatly injured, the latter nearly ruined, in the war of the Revolution. In 1772, a teacher of Hebrew was appointed in the College, but he seems never to have entered on the duties of his office, and instruction was given in this department by the Doctor himself. A teacher of French actually *was* employed, though it was left at the option of the students whether or not to avail themselves of his instruction. Dr. Witherspoon was himself an adept in French as well as Hebrew, and spoke and wrote the former with almost as much ease and elegance as his mother tongue.

When Dr. Witherspoon entered on his office, the funds of the College were so much reduced that the Trustees could not immediately fulfil their pecuniary engagements to him, and could only instruct their Treasurer to answer these engagements by the first money that should come into his hands. In this exigency, the Doctor made a journey through New England, preaching in several places, particularly in most of the churches in Boston, and soliciting private benefactions in aid of the College. Not less than a thousand pounds were contributed, as the result of his application. A sub-

scription was opened also in South Carolina and Virginia, and some other of the Colonies, chiefly through the influence of Dr. W., which resulted in a yet further increase of the college funds. In consequence of this favourable change in the financial state of the institution, its debts were all paid, and a small surplus remained in the treasury. As the President had, in the mean time, accepted the Professorship of Divinity, in addition to his other duties, the Trustees added fifty pounds to his salary, making it then four hundred. As it was thought important to increase the number of active Professorships,—in order to which a still greater increase of the College funds was necessary, the Doctor was solicited to visit some of the West India Islands, to ask contributions; but, after he had consented to perform the mission, he was providentially prevented from undertaking it. His colleague, the Rev. Charles Beatty, actually went, and died immediately after reaching Barbadoes, and before he had had opportunity to make any collections. It was in connection with this enterprise, which was finally altogether abandoned, that Dr. Witherspoon wrote and published, in pamphlet form, “An Address to the inhabitants of Jamaica, and other West India Islands, in behalf of the College of New Jersey.”

Dr. Witherspoon, in connection with his duties as President, discharged with great fidelity those of a Christian minister. In the third and fourth years of his administration, a remarkable revival of religion took place among his pupils, in which a considerable number, who subsequently occupied high places in both Church and State, were supposed to have a share. He sustained the office of Pastor to the Church and Congregation of Princeton, during the whole period of his Presidency,—preaching to them regularly twice on the Sabbath, and performing other duties incident to the pastoral relation. But, at the time when he seems to have been most zealous and abundant in his pastoral labours, a circumstance occurred which seriously threatened the termination of both his ministry and his life. In the midst of a discourse in the church at Princeton, he was seized with an affection of the brain, which obliged him to come to a sudden pause; and, supposing himself able to leave the church, he opened the pulpit door, and almost instantly fell helpless into the pew at the foot of the pulpit stairs, in which his family were sitting. He was but little injured by the fall, and the violence of the fit which occasioned it soon subsided,—followed, however, by a dizziness which, for some time, produced considerable embarrassment in public speaking. This is supposed to have been the first fit of the kind (Dr. Rush expressed the opinion that it was of the nature of apoplexy) that he experienced; though it would seem from a letter addressed by him to a friend in Scotland, that he was afterwards the subject of several similar attacks; which, however, were probably all included within quite a limited period.

The 17th of May, 1776, was appointed by Congress to be observed as a day of Fasting, with reference to the peculiar circumstances of the country. On this occasion, Dr. Witherspoon preached a Sermon, (afterwards published and dedicated to John Hancock, President of Congress.) entitled “The dominion of Providence over the passions of men.” This Sermon went fully into the great political questions of the day, and was received on this side the water with the highest approbation; but it gave serious offence to his friends in Great Britain, and an edition of it was subsequently pub-

lished in Glasgow, accompanied by notes, in which its author was represented as a traitor and a rebel.

The Provincial Congress of New Jersey met a few days after this sermon was preached, and Dr. Witherspoon was a member; though he retained his connection with it only eleven days. During this period, however, the important measure was adopted of arresting, and putting an end to the authority of, the Royal Governor of the Colony,—William Franklin. On the 22d of June, the day after the case of Governor Franklin had been disposed of, he was elected, in connection with five others, to represent the Colony of New Jersey in the Continental Congress;—with instructions, if it should be deemed expedient, to join with their associates in declaring the United Colonies independent. For this responsible place he was eminently qualified, not only by the clearness and vigour of his intellect, the calmness of his judgment, and his indomitable strength of purpose, but by an uncommon familiarity with the forms of public business, acquired from the position which he had held as a leader in the Church Courts in his native country.

Immediately after his new appointment, he left the Provincial Congress; and, having made the necessary preparation for leaving Princeton, repaired to Philadelphia, where he joined the General Congress, a few days before the Declaration of Independence. His mind had been previously made up as to the propriety and the necessity of that measure; and, after he became a member of the Body, he replied to a suggestion that there might be danger of precipitancy in coming to so important a result, that, in his judgment, the country was not only *ripe* for the measure, but in danger of becoming *rotten* for the want of it.

Dr. Witherspoon represented the State of New Jersey in the General Congress, for six years; that is, during the sessions of 1776, '77, '78, '79, '81, and '82. At the close of the year 1779, he resigned his place, from a conviction of his inability to sustain the burden of expense incident to holding it, as well as from a desire to give his particular attention to the revival of the College. He was, however, at the expiration of a year, prevailed on to return to the same field of duty; influenced no doubt chiefly by the critical state of the country, and the urgent solicitations of those who knew his wisdom in counsel, and his energy in action. It would be impossible, within the space allotted to this sketch, even to hint at the numerous important and diversified services which he rendered to his country, during this stormy period. He had great influence as a speaker, but he reserved it chiefly for great occasions. Notwithstanding he had the happiest talent at extemporaneous debate, all his more important speeches were maturely considered, and carefully written, and then delivered memoriter; and yet in a style of such perfect freedom, that no one would have suspected that he had written a word. Many of the most important State papers of the day, in relation to such intricate subjects of political economy as the emission of paper currency, the mode of supplying the army by commission, &c., were from his pen; and though he differed on some points from some of his illustrious associates, and was overruled by them, it has been remarked that he lived to see his own views, in almost every particular, justified by a mature and enlightened public sentiment. He was a leading member of various important committees, and many of the prominent measures adopted by Congress are understood to have had their origin with him. Neither his

courage nor his confidence ever faltered in the darkest day; for it was sustained not only by a naturally heroic spirit, and unwavering Christian integrity, but by an undoubting conviction of the rectitude of his country's cause. During the whole period in which he was occupied in civil life, he never laid aside his ministerial character, but always appeared in every relation as became an ambassador of God. The calls for the observance of days of Fasting and Prayer were, commonly, if not always, written by him. He preached also, on the Sabbath, whenever opportunity offered, and always, when, for a short period, he visited his family. Nor would he consent, like some other clerical members of Congress, to change, in any particular, the dress which distinguished his order; wishing not only to remember, but to make others remember, that he was a "minister of God" in a sacred as well as in a civil sense.

During a considerable part of the Revolutionary war, the operations of the College had all been suspended; the principal edifice had been made a barrack, alternately for each of the contending armies; the library and philosophical apparatus had been destroyed; and the funds of the institution, which had always been scanty, had been reduced, by the depreciation of paper money, to a mere pittance. In these circumstances, the Trustees of the College resolved to send a commission across the water, to solicit donations, both in Great Britain and on the Continent;—a measure which, as the event proved, was premature and ill-judged, as the deep-rooted prejudice in Great Britain, occasioned by our national revolt, had not had time to subside. Dr. Witherspoon and the Hon. Joseph Reed, President of Pennsylvania, were appointed to this trust; and, in the month of December, 1783, they sailed for London with a view to execute it. But, on their arrival in England, they found every thing adverse to the object of their mission. Dr. Franklin, Mr. Jay, and Mr. Laurens, who had served with them in Congress, and who were then in Europe in a public capacity, strongly discouraged their application, on the ground that it was not merely unpromising but undignified. Many of Dr. Witherspoon's old friends were still living, but nearly all of them were more or less embarrassed by the change of relations which had occurred in consequence of the part he had taken in the American cause. It is not known that he preached, or was invited to preach, except in Paisley, his former place of residence. Having become fully satisfied that nothing of any moment was to be done for his main object, and probably also that a long visit was scarcely desirable even to his friends, he resolved on a speedy return to America; and, after a prosperous voyage, he reached this country, in the latter part of August, or the early part of September. Though he received a small amount from some few individuals, it was by no means sufficient to cover the expense of the mission.

In the autumn of 1789, Dr. Witherspoon was called to a severe domestic affliction in the loss of the wife of his youth. She was a person of distinguished piety, amiable temper, fine social and domestic habits, and endeared to all who had the privilege of her acquaintance. She had been the mother of ten children, all of whom were born in Scotland: only five of these, however,—three sons and two daughters, survived to accompany their parents to America. His son *James*, a young man of great promise, was Aid to General Nash in the Revolution, and was killed at the battle of Germantown. His son *John* was settled for several years as a practitioner

of medicine at St. Stephens Parish, S. C., and is believed to have died at sea between New York and Charleston in the summer of 1795. His son *David*, who graduated with distinguished honour, at the early age of fourteen, married the widow of General Nash, and was successfully engaged for several years in the practice of Law at Newbern, N. C. The daughters of Dr. Witherspoon, by his first marriage, were *Anna* and *Frances*. The former was married to the Rev. Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith, Dr. Witherspoon's successor in the Presidency of the College; the latter, to Dr. Ramsey, the Historian of South Carolina.

About a year and a half after the death of his first wife, he was married to a young widow, the relict of a Dr. Dill of Philadelphia, and the step-daughter of the Rev. William Marshall, of the Associate Church. The difference of age between him and his second wife was not less than five and forty years. By this marriage he had two daughters, one of whom died in infancy, and the other was married to the Rev. James S. Woods, a Presbyterian minister of Pennsylvania, and is deceased.

During the latter part of Dr. Witherspoon's life, he suffered much from pecuniary embarrassment, in consequence of having ventured some imprudent speculations in Vermont lands. The fact that he was unable to meet his pecuniary engagements subjected him, for a time, to no inconsiderable reproach; though there was never the slightest ground for questioning his integrity. Not long before his death, there was a rigid examination of all his accounts in connection with the College, of which, for many years, he had been almost the sole financial agent; and, though the result was not, in all respects, quite satisfactory, it left not the shadow of a suspicion upon his good name.

After his return from Europe, he was occupied till the close of life, in attending to the concerns of the College, in superintending the cultivation of his farm, on which he resided, two miles from Princeton, and in endeavouring to adjust his secular affairs in Vermont and other places. But, for some time previous to his death, he was utterly deprived of his vision. His blindness commenced first in one eye, from a contusion received in a storm at sea, on his voyage to Britain in 1784. It was occasioned in the other, some six or seven years afterwards, by a fall from a horse, when travelling through Vermont in search of lands which he had purchased in that State. His voyage to Europe, and his speculations in Vermont lands, may be regarded as, in several respects, the two most unfortunate enterprises of his life.

But even after he was thus providentially shut out from the light of day, the activity of his mind still continued, and his labours, in some departments, suffered little abatement. Particularly, he kept up an extensive correspondence, both in this country and in Scotland, in doing which he put in requisition an amanuensis, for at least one day in the week. He was accustomed also to preach every third Sabbath; and, on the preceding Saturday evening, he heard the sermon read which he had selected for the next day, and such was his power of memory that, though the sermon had been written many years before, he could, after a single reading, deliver it, without any embarrassment, and with little or no variation from the manuscript.

His descent to the grave was comparatively easy, and his views and feelings in reference to the approaching change were truly and sublimely Chris-

tian. The malady which terminated his life was the dropsy. He presided at the Annual Commencement on the 23d of September, 1794, with his usual propriety and dignity, and on the 15th of November,—less than eight weeks after, closed his earthly career. He was very little confined to his bed, and retained the full exercise of his mental faculties to the last. At the time of his death, he had advanced nine months and ten days in his seventy-third year. His Funeral Sermon was preached by one of the oldest Trustees of the College, and his particular friend, the Rev. Dr. Rodgers of New York: the character or memoir of Dr. Witherspoon, which appears in connection with the sermon, was, at Dr. Rodgers' request, supplied by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith.

Dr. Witherspoon was undoubtedly one of the ablest, as well as one of the most voluminous, writers of his time. Beside the works already mentioned, he published a large number of Sermons, Lectures on Moral Philosophy, on Eloquence, on Divinity, on Education, Letters on Marriage, an Essay on Money, a work called the "Druid," in a succession of numbers, various Speeches in Congress, and other short articles having a bearing on the state of the country, &c., &c. Some of these, however, were not published till after his death. The only complete American edition of his works was published in three volumes, octavo, in Philadelphia, in the year 1803, under the supervision of the Rev. Dr. Green. An edition in nine volumes, duodecimo, was published in Edinburgh, in 1815.

The following sketch of Dr. Witherspoon's character is extracted from an unpublished Memoir of that eminent man, by the late Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green, who was, for many years, on terms of great intimacy with him, and had every advantage for estimating him correctly. I am indebted to the Hon. James S. Green of Princeton, for the privilege of making this use of his venerable father's manuscript.

"In person Dr. Witherspoon was of the middle size. He was fleshy, with some tendency to corpulence. His limbs were well proportioned, and his complexion was fair. His eyes were strongly indicative of intelligence. His eyebrows were large, hanging down the ends next his temples;—occasioned, probably, by a habit he had contracted of pulling them, when he was under excitement. Like many other clergymen in our country, he laid aside a full bottomed wig at the commencement of our national independence; and thenceforward wore his own natural hair, which covered the whole scalp, and at its lower extremity was confined in an artificial curl or buckle. His countenance united gravity with benignity, in its general expression; and this made the change in its aspect, when he frowned, more sensible and impressive. The features of his face possessed much of what painters denominate *character*; and of course he was a good subject for the pencil. His likeness by the elder Peale is striking. His public appearance was always graceful and venerable, and in promiscuous company he had more of the quality called *presence*, than any other individual with whom the writer has ever had intercourse, Washington excepted. His dress was becoming; avoiding equally the extremes of slovenliness and foppery. In the pulpit he always wore a band, and when he preached at Princeton, a gown likewise.

"It is believed that he was naturally of high temper, with ardent feelings and strong passions. These, however, had, in an eminent degree, been subdued by reason, religion, and habitual vigilance. In the numerous controversies and collisions of party in which he was engaged, especially in the earlier part of his public life, his antagonists never gained an advantage against him by provocation.

He withstood them with unembarrassed firmness, and replied to them with deliberation, sagacity, and consummate address. * * * Against a known enemy it appeared to be a maxim with him not to utter any thing unfavourable, unless it was plainly and imperiously demanded by duty. * * * His wit was never permitted to wound or embarrass the unoffending. He was not profuse in its use in the common intercourse of society; and when indulged among friends, its object was to enliven conversation, and promote innocent hilarity. Its severity was reserved to scourge vice, impertinence or arrogance, whether public or private. He conscientiously avoided every appearance of it in his sermons.

“Dr. Witherspoon was more a man of genius than of learning. He was indeed a scholar, and a ripe one; yet many have exceeded him in various and extensive erudition, whom he greatly excelled in native powers of mind, and in their vigorous, efficient and useful exercise. His reading was select rather than general and promiscuous. * * * What he had read he had well digested, and had formed a system of opinions for himself on various branches of knowledge. * * * That he was not deficient in imagination and wit, his satirical productions furnish unequivocal evidence; and that his memory was prompt and tenacious, was manifest from the facility with which he committed to it his precomposed sermons and speeches, and the confidence with which he could rely on its fidelity to enable him to deliver what he had committed, with accuracy and without embarrassment, before a public audience. His chief mental strength, however, lay in his reasoning faculty. He was a powerful thinker. When he took hold of a subject, he searched it to the bottom; and, in discussing it, he often treated it both analytically and synthetically. * * * His sagacity in discerning the character from indications which generally pass without notice, was truly wonderful. It was difficult for any individual, though previously a perfect stranger, to practise upon him any impositions. It was also surprising to observe with what readiness he could see through a complicated and perplexed subject, estimate its real merits and bearing, disentangle it, and present it in its true aspect. Prudence was a marked feature of his mind and character. He spoke and acted with great discretion, and readily perceived when speech or silence, action or forbearance, was demanded by circumstances. But when satisfied that an object was both proper and feasible, he pursued it with steady but cautious perseverance.

“In a notice of Dr. Witherspoon that appeared in the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* of October, 1829, the following statement appears in respect to his Christian character:—“His personal religion is well known. Few men were ever more anxious to walk close with God, and by a solid, righteous and pious life, to adorn the doctrine of the Gospel. Beside the daily devotions of the closet and the family, he regularly set apart with his household the last day of every year for fasting, humiliation, and prayer. He was also in the practice of spending days in secret exercises of this kind, as occasions required.”

“Dr. Witherspoon’s Theology was Calvinistic, according to the system of Calvin himself, subject only to the modification which it has received in the standards of the Presbyterian Church. Between him and Calvin, indeed, there was, in talents and improvements, no inconsiderable resemblance. Both were men of great intellectual powers, both eminent divines, both distinguished heads of literary institutions, both erudite civilians, and both keen satirists. Dr. Witherspoon certainly possessed a peculiar talent for presenting the Calvinistic doctrines in a popular form, and in a manner the least offensive to those who do not hold them; while he maintained them firmly in their substance. He was heard to say that the British critics who reviewed his works before he left Scotland, treated him with quite as much candour and respect as he had any right to look for from men whose religious sentiments so widely differed from his own.

“Dr. Witherspoon was among the very few *memoriter* preachers, whose manner is free from all indications that they are repeating what they have learned by

heart. There was absolutely nothing of such an appearance in his delivery. This was doubtless in part owing to the simplicity of his language, and to the fact that he did frequently intermingle extemporary remarks, illustrative of what he had precomposed, or with a view to give it enforcement. He also made use of an expedient calculated to favour the appearance of unpremeditated address—it was this:—never to repeat from memory any considerable portion of Scripture, however perfectly recollected, but to open the Bible and read it from the sacred text. He earnestly recommended this to *memoriter* preachers, as calculated to increase the impression of the passages quoted, as well as to break the monotony of delivery. His own manner of doing it much resembled that of an eloquent lawyer, when quoting his authorities. * * * * His action in speaking never exceeded a graceful motion of his right hand, and the inclination of his body forward, when much in earnest. His greatest defect in public speaking was the lowness of his voice when he began. For, although his voice was remarkably articulate, the distant part of a large audience could not hear it distinctly, for a few sentences at first; afterwards, if profound silence was preserved, all that he said was easily audible by every attentive hearer. He affirmed that the nature of his voice required this gradual increase of its volume, to prevent its failing altogether. Yet, take his pulpit addresses as a whole, there was in them not only the recommendation of good sense and powerful reasoning, but a gracefulness, an earnestness, a warmth of affection and solemnity of manner, especially toward and at their close, such as were calculated to produce the very best effects of sacred oratory. Accordingly, his popularity as a preacher was great. The knowledge that he was to conduct a public service usually filled the largest churches in our cities and populous towns, and he never failed to command the profound attention of his audience. * * * * His public prayers were admirable; plain in language, correct, methodical, abounding in a choice selection of scriptural phrases, and uttered with the appearance of deep devotional feeling. When offered on special occasions, their appropriateness was singularly excellent. His manner of introducing and administering the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper surpassed any other performance of that sacred service which the writer has ever witnessed.

“As President of a College, it is believed that no one ever heard him utter a word in derogation of the merit of his predecessors. He lauded every thing in their arrangements, which he thought excellent. He made no violent or ostentatious changes; but introduced his improvements as silently and imperceptibly as was practicable. They mainly consisted in rendering the college course better adapted to qualify his pupils for active life, than it had been previously to his accession to the Presidency; and in this he was unquestionably and highly successful. He inculcated on the youth committed to his care, that transgressions directly contravening our duty to God, were always to be regarded as of the most aggravated kind; and, next to this, he placed deliberate offences against the authority of the College. These were in all cases to receive the severest discipline; while juvenile indiscretions, though not to be regarded as entirely innocent, were to be treated with great lenity. A sacred regard to truth, in an offender under discipline, was ever to be viewed as no inconsiderable mitigation of a delinquency. His official life was of considerably greater duration than that of his five predecessors, taken in the aggregate—their whole term of incumbency was less than eighteen years; his was more than six and twenty.

“Dr. Witherspoon, although habitually a student, and much given to profound thought, was nevertheless far from being a recluse. He greatly enjoyed social intercourse, and might justly be denominated a companionable man. That *presence* which has been mentioned, as attending him in formal company, or in intercourse with strangers, seemed, in a great measure to leave him, when among his friends and intimate acquaintance. With them he engaged in free

conversation, permitting it to take its natural course, and promptly contributing his part to keep it up; yet never engrossing it, but allowing to others their proper share. He abounded in anecdote, and had a felicitous talent in giving it the full force of intended application. * * * * The young as well as the old loved his society; and when the company consisted exclusively, or chiefly, of the former class, it was his delight to impart such information or instruction as he thought might be useful to them; and this he did in a manner the most happily adapted to give impression to what he uttered, and to fix it in the memory. There was more of his Scotch dialect in his common conversation than in his public speaking—in both it was very perceptible, yet not extreme in either, nor to his friends unpleasant.

“Dr. Witherspoon professed to be fond of agricultural occupations. In the management of his Tusculum farm, however, it is believed, he did not excel. Of scientific farmers he once said, jocosely, that they could generally assign very good and plausible reasons why their experiments did *not* succeed. He not improbably belonged to this class himself. But in horticulture he was successful. He had practised it in Scotland; and few better kitchen gardens than his at Princeton were any where to be seen. Walking in this garden on a certain occasion with a lady of his acquaintance, she said to him,—“Why, Doctor, I see no flowers in your garden.” “No, Madam,” was the reply,—“no flowers in my garden, nor in my discourses either.”

“He was fond of horseback exercise, and till he was blind, used it, in good weather, as a daily habit. Often, while a member of Congress, he preferred to make his journey to Philadelphia on horseback, rather than by stage. Indeed, the writer does not remember ever to have seen him, while his eyesight continued, in a vehicle of any kind. He accounted himself a good horseman, but, on a certain occasion, was reported to have remarked that, in Scotland, it would have been considered as a great indecorum to put a horse on a gallop; that he never did it there, nor in America, except on one occasion, and that was after Congress, on the approach of the British army to Philadelphia, had adjourned to Lancaster, and he, with other members, was fearful of being overtaken by the enemy’s cavalry—a case of necessity surely, for which, even in Scotland, a dispensation might have been granted him.

“He was very punctual in the observance of all appointments, and very intolerant of those who were not. A man in his neighbourhood had made with him an engagement to meet him on some business at a certain place, on a day and hour that were specified. He, as usual, was punctual to his engagement—the other man did not attend at all. They shortly after met by accident, when it was found that the delinquent individual could assign no sufficient reason for his neglect, but said,—“I will positively meet you, Doctor, on such a day and hour,” naming them. “No Sir, you will not,”—was the reply,—“I must change my mind greatly, if I ever make with you another appointment, while I live.”