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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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By ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

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

ever!" And when he parted with his wife, and could no longer speak, he took her hand and pressed it, and pointed with the other to Heaven. And thus he died.

He was highly valued by those of us who were his co-presbyters—we were truly fellow-labourers. We often counselled together, and prayed together; our objects were one, one our trials, and one our joys. At this distance of time, I remember him with great affection, and only regret that I can furnish you with nothing better than these meagre tokens of his great excellence.

With great affection and respect, I remain your brother and companion in the labours of that Gospel, in which it is Christ to live and gain to die.

GARDINER SPRING.

SALMON GIDDINGS.

1814—1828.

FROM THE REV. J. M. PECK, D. D.

ROCK SPRING, Ill., February 8, 1856.

My dear Sir: I am happy to furnish you, agreeably to your request, with a brief sketch of the Rev. Salmon Giddings, the first Presbyterian minister who settled in St. Louis. He was truly a pioneer missionary in both Missouri and Illinois, and may justly be regarded as having taken the lead in establishing the Presbyterian Church in both States. Such was his self-consecration to Christ and the interests of his Kingdom, that he was led to come to this forbidding field, and engage in a frontier religious enterprise, without waiting for any congregation to invite him to his Master's work, or to pledge to him even a partial support. He did just as many an enterprising man now does, in the pursuit of secular objects—he entered a new field, and made business for himself. In my own judgment, and that of several of his old friends in St. Louis, with whom I have conversed, it would have been difficult to find another man in the whole Presbyterian Church, who would or could have accomplished the same work that he did, and at the period when he did it.

SALMON GIDDINGS was born in Hartland, Conn., on the 2d of March, 1782. His parents were moral, industrious and respectable, but not communicants in any church. They implanted in his young mind the seeds of virtue and morality, and taught him to fear God, honour his parents, and do good to his fellow men. Like other farmers' sons of his native State, he received a good common school education in boyhood, and made some advances in academical learning in early life. He was inured to both physical and mental labour. He was distinguished then, as well as ever afterwards, by an ardent desire to accomplish as much as his powers of body and mind would admit. When he reached maturity, his judgment was reckoned by his relatives and friends as a very safe guide in difficult cases.

At what particular time, or under what circumstances, he, as a guilty sinner, was led to seek mercy of the Saviour of sinners, I am not informed; but it was after he attained to years of manhood. The distress which he experienced on account of his sins was deep and long continued; but it was succeeded by great peace of mind, and a sweet and undoubting reliance on

the Divine promises. But scarcely had his mind become thus composed, before it became painfully agitated by an attempt to reconcile the Divine decrees with the free agency of man. It was not long, however, before he abandoned the effort, and came to the conclusion that it was ground which it was very unfitting for a mortal and a sinner, like himself, to occupy. From this time, the spirit of childlike submission and obedience seemed to have full possession of his heart, and the prayer which he constantly breathed forth, was that of converted Saul,—“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

He seems now to have settled down with the conviction that the faithful performance of duty was the best evidence he could have or give of his acceptance in the Beloved, and of his interest in the Divine promises. And his great desire to glorify God suggested to him the idea of devoting his life to preaching the Gospel to a lost world. The result of his reflections on the subject was that he determined to give himself to this great work; and there was no earthly sacrifice that he was not willing to make, to carry this purpose into effect.

There are those now living in St. Louis, who recollect the circumstances under which he laboured there from thirty to forty years since, when some fifteen or twenty persons were all that could be induced to attend his meetings; and how patiently and perseveringly he strove to gather a congregation, and establish a Presbyterian Church there, without the least prospect of any earthly reward. They remember how industriously and laboriously he plodded on in the arduous and perplexing vocation of an instructor of youth, that he might have a room for meetings on the Sabbath, and the scanty means of paying his board and meeting other necessary expenses; how patiently and silently he endured the calumny and contempt then cast on the office of the ministry by the thoughtless and profane; how unremitting he was in his visits to the sick, the distressed and the dying; and how unwearied in promoting the best interests of the entire community by every means in his power. The secret of this self-sacrificing spirit no doubt lay in the depth and power of his early Christian experience—in those almost convulsive inward struggles which marked his entrance upon the Christian life. From the very beginning, all his powers and faculties seem to have been consecrated to the service of Christ; and this was the key note to the history of his whole subsequent life.

In due time, Mr. Giddings, having gone through his preparatory studies, entered Williams College, where he maintained a high character for scholarship throughout his whole course. He was graduated in 1811, and soon after joined the Theological Seminary at Andover. He was licensed to preach the Gospel in the early part of 1814, and was ordained, as an Evangelist, in the autumn of the same year. In 1814–15, he was a Tutor in Williams College; and, during a part of the latter year, was employed in itinerating among the Congregational Churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut, where his labours were blessed to the hopeful conversion of many souls.

He had become personally acquainted with Samuel J. Mills; and his journals and those of his colleagues,—Messrs. Schermerhorn and Smith, together with repeated conversations with Mills, had brought him to the determination to follow their trail into the Valley of the Mississippi, and make St. Louis a point in his evangelical labours. The Trustees of the

Connecticut Missionary Society, learning his intentions, sent him a commission to labour in the "Western country,"—quite a large parish for a New England Congregationalist. Mr. Giddings travelled from his native State over to St. Louis, then in the Far West, on horseback,—the common mode of travelling at that period. He started in December, 1815; preached on his journey on the Sabbath, and often on week days also; slept comfortably in the log cabins, and partook of the homely fare of the inmates; conversed with parents and children about their spiritual interests; prayed with them night and morning; and, like a man of good common sense, took care of his own horse, and made himself at home wherever he tarried. He reached St. Louis on the 6th of April, 1816; preached to a small congregation the next day; and became the pioneer missionary in the Presbyterian ranks to the country West of the "Great River."

Messrs. Mills and Smith had visited St. Louis in November, 1814, and had preached the first sermons ever heard from ministers of their denomination, in that French village. A gentleman then residing at St. Louis, in a letter to a minister at the East, written about that time,—referring to the labours of itinerant Methodist preachers, says,—“They preach in our Court House, perhaps once a month.” About two months before the arrival of Mr. Giddings, the Rev. Gideon Blackburn, then of Nashville, Tenn., visited St. Louis, and preached several times.

The first year and a half Mr. Giddings spent in itinerating through the country,—visiting most of the towns and settlements on both sides of the Mississippi. One object, which he kept steadily in view, was to search out those who had been members of Presbyterian Churches, and to gather them again, as wandering sheep, into the fold. The first Church he organized was in Bellevue settlement, Washington County, about eighty miles Southwest from St. Louis. This was on the 2d of August, 1816; and the church consisted of thirty members. The next was the Church in Bonhomme settlement, thirty miles West of St. Louis—it was organized the same autumn, and consisted of sixteen members. In the period of ten years, this indefatigable missionary gathered eleven churches,—five in Missouri and six in Illinois. The First Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, consisting originally of nine members, he organized in November, 1817; and, through his personal persevering efforts, their first house of worship was erected and finished in 1823-24. For four years from the time the church was constituted, he was able to preach to them only one half of the time,—the other half being appropriated to itinerant visitations to destitute places, and to churches he had been instrumental of establishing.

In the spring of 1822, by a special appointment from the Managers of the United Foreign Missionary Society of New York, he made a long tour of exploration among the Indian tribes, in what is now called the Kansas and Nebraska Territories, preparatory to the establishment of mission stations among them. In this tour he spent about ten weeks, and, during the greater part of the time, was in the wilderness, beyond the white settlements. He visited several Indian nations, held councils with their chiefs and head men, selected sites for mission stations and schools, and in all these varied labours evinced a sound, discriminating judgment, as well as a benevolent heart. It was a season of heavy rains and high water in all the streams, so that he was often obliged to make his horse swim the creeks. But in his somewhat minute journal, that now lies before me,

I find no indication that in this, or his encamping in the woods, or his partaking of the rough fare of the frontier hunter, or any other hardship, there was any thing to occasion the least disquietude to his spirit. In this missionary excursion, he visited the Osages, Kansaus, O'Mahas, Pawnees, and Ottoes.

Previous to his setting out on this tour, he had enlisted several gentlemen in St. Louis in an attempt to build a house of worship for the Presbyterian Church; among whom was the late Stephen Hempstead, Esq.,*—then at the age of nearly threescore years and ten,—his senior elder and faithful coadjutor. An arrangement was made by which a lot was purchased on the border of the town for \$331, as a site for the new building. In 1853, this lot was leased by the church, for fifty years, for \$4,000 per annum, payable quarterly; which, at the rate of six per cent., made the value \$66,666. At the expiration of fifty years, this ground, with the buildings, comes again into possession of the church. Their new and splendid church edifice, just completed, at the cost of \$105,000, is located ten squares farther West, in a populous part of the city. To the sagacity and foresight of Mr. Giddings, this church owes a debt of gratitude, in respect even to its temporal interests, which it is not easy to overrate.

The first house of worship was commenced in the spring of 1823;—the Trustees appointing Mr. Giddings their agent to contract for the erection of a house of such dimensions and plan as he thought best. The house was of brick, forty by sixty feet, and cost something over \$8,000. In March, 1824, the Trustees, having entire confidence in the economy and business talents of the Pastor, gave him power of Attorney to mortgage the lot and house which had been commenced, for \$2,000, to be employed in finishing the edifice. He effected the loan by pledging his own property and credit, and taking the mortgage to secure himself. The building was completed, and dedicated on the 26th of June, 1825. The contributions of the citizens, through the influence of the Pastor, and the proceeds of the sale of pews in 1826, reduced the debt to about \$5,000, which was subsequently liquidated by the congregation.

Mr. Giddings remained in the relation of Stated Supply to the Church, until November, 1826, when he was installed Pastor by the Presbytery of Missouri, which then embraced the two States of Missouri and Illinois.

The Rev. James E. Welch and myself, as colleague missionaries, under the patronage of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, arrived in St. Louis on the 1st of December, 1817, and, notwithstanding we belonged to another denomination, holding different views of Baptism and the order of the visible Church, we were cordially received as brethren in Christ, members of the same spiritual Kingdom, and heirs to the same glorious inheritance. Mr. Welch left Missouri for New Jersey in 1820; but I remained, and was in intimate relations with Mr. Giddings for ten years. We often met in the same social and religious circle; were engaged in the same objects

* STEPHEN HEMPSTEAD was born in New London, Conn.; May 6, 1754. He was a distinguished patriot and soldier in the Revolution, and was severely wounded and taken prisoner at the massacre of Fort Griswold. He became the subject of converting grace before the close of the war, but from the unsettled and dispersed condition of the Congregational Church in New London, as well as from scruples in regard to the genuineness of his own experience, he did not make a public profession of his faith until 1787. Four of his sons having migrated to Missouri, he, with his wife and the rest of the family, followed to St. Louis in 1811. Alone for five years, his light shone steadily, and he faithfully performed the duties of supplying the destitute with the Bible, and visiting the poor, sick and afflicted.

of Christian philanthropy; preached frequently to the same congregation and in the same house,—and what is more,—each of us preached his distinctive views on the points on which we differed; and yet our relations always continued strictly fraternal, and never an unkind or complaining word passed between us. But far be it from me to intimate that Mr. Giddings held lightly his own religious convictions. Not only was he a strict Presbyterian, but he never hesitated to avow and defend his principles on all proper occasions. But he valued the great common Christianity above any thing that marked mere denominational differences. He loved the friends of Christ, by whatever name they were called, and he delighted to encourage and animate every one's efforts in doing good. We co-operated in the formation and management of the first Bible, Sunday School, Tract, and Colonization, Societies in St. Louis.

Some weeks before his last illness, he was thrown from his horse, on going to attend a funeral, and received a severe injury. He, however, so far recovered as to resume his official labours, and preached several times. Always faithful in visiting the sick, the poor and friendless, he went out to perform these offices of mercy, and took a severe cold, which brought on the disease that in a few days had a fatal termination. He died on the 1st of February, 1828, when he had nearly completed his forty-sixth year. His Funeral was attended on the afternoon of the Sabbath following, (February 3d,) by a larger concourse of people than had then ever been assembled in St. Louis. The Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Baptist, ministry was each represented in the services of the occasion. The Trustees of the Church, in token of their affectionate respect, had his remains deposited in a vault constructed for the purpose under the pulpit. By the joint request of the elders of the Church, the widow and the family at Collinsville, I preached a Funeral Discourse on the 20th of March, from Matt. xxv. 21-23—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant," &c. I will quote the concluding paragraph, as containing what I believe to be a just epitome of his character:—

"If I place my esteemed friend and Christian brother before me, as he appeared in life, as a Man, a Christian, a Citizen, and a Preacher of the Gospel,—in each relation he appears amiable, excellent, conspicuous, but in all of them he is ever the same. One general encomium includes all that can be said—few of the human family have passed through life, to the age of forty-six, so blameless and unimpeached. If any one trait of his character appeared more prominent than others, it was his uniform and consistent piety. If any one habit of his Christian life was more strongly marked than the rest, it was his habit of constant secret intercourse with God. If any quality of mind shone pre-eminent, it was vigorous perseverance in whatever he undertook—if any one virtue, it was prudence."

One, and I think only one, of Mr. Giddings' Sermons was ever printed. This was preached in the settlement of Bellevue, where he formed the first Presbyterian Church ever organized in Missouri, at the installation of the Rev. Thomas Donnell, April 25, 1818. It was entitled "The Gospel the power of God unto salvation." It was printed at St. Louis, and was the first sermon ever printed, West of the Mississippi.

In 1826, Mr. Giddings was married to Almira, daughter of Deacon William Collins of Collinsville, Ill., and formerly of Litchfield, Conn. They

had one child,—a son, who is now a distinguished lawyer in Quincy, Ill. Mrs. Giddings still survives.

Yours fraternally,
J. M. PECK

FROM THE REV. RALPH EMERSON, D. D.

NEWBURYPORT, Mass., August 1, 1857.

Dear Sir: Mr. Giddings and myself were contemporary as students of the Theological Seminary at Andover, and I had such opportunities for knowing him as were furnished by free and daily intercourse. After we left the Seminary, our fields of labour were remote from each other, so that we had little personal intercourse, but I was familiar, at least with the outline of his history, to the close of his useful and honourable career.

In person, Mr. Giddings was not above the medium height, but thick set, and quite full in the face, and of a kind and genial aspect—the genuine index of his disposition; and his whole deportment was expressive of an honest, generous and noble spirit. His manners, however, were by no means graceful; and I doubt whether, till after leaving Andover, he had learned much of the conventionalities of society. I presume none of his class mates ever doubted the sincerity of his piety, or the depth of his devotion to the cause of Christ. While at Andover, he was much afflicted with asthma, which was one cause of his devoting himself to the Western field, where he expected a more congenial climate.

Though not one of Nature's excitable, and perhaps not capable of passionate eloquence, he was possessed of a sound and very well balanced and logical mind, and as might be expected from such intellectual and moral qualities, his doctrinal views were clear, well defined and decided. He was neither rapid in thought nor fluent in conversation; but, with his calm and steady self-possession, I believe he rather excelled in extemporaneous discourse. His thoughts did not flow so rapidly as to become confused. The following anecdote which I had from himself, after his settlement in St. Louis, will illustrate this:—He gave place on a particular occasion to a stranger of another denomination who wished to preach to his people. The young man had not been accustomed to address so fashionable an assembly, and it became manifest, soon after he commenced his discourse, that he would be unable to proceed, and that Mr. Giddings must himself preach, if any preaching was to be done. In this emergency, and with but a moment's thought, he took up the same subject, using also the same text, and preached a discourse of the usual length.

Yours truly,
R. EMERSON.