

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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spirit has descended to his excellent surviving daughters, and is visible even in the generation following them, through the line of a deceased sister, who has left four children distinguished for usefulness in the different walks of life.

Mr. Armstrong had, in various ways, a decisive influence in advancing the prosperity of this place of his residence; and many of our citizens who still survive, retain grateful and vivid recollections of him. By his marriage, he became connected with one of the most distinguished families in the State of New York; and, in addition to this, he was the intimate friend and associate of a noble company of patriots, scholars, and Christians, in this State; such as General John Beatty of the Revolution, Colonel John Bayard, Dr. Boudinot, Judge Patterson, Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith, Dr. McWhorter, Dr. Woodhull, and others, in whose society he moved as an ornamental and animating element. It was interesting to observe how the celebrations of the Cincinnati and other kindred Societies,—while they furnished an opportunity of reviving his old associations, and renewing his intercourse with many of his old friends, served also to quicken his patriotic zeal, and work up his spirit to the tone of other days. When, by reason of his infirmity, he was not able to sustain himself in a long march through the streets, I have given him my arm to prevent his falling by the way. And having a little of the old '76 spirit myself, it afforded me great pleasure to mingle with such groups, to hear their exciting speeches and music, and to partake of their hospitality.

I am, dear Sir, most respectfully yours,

ISAAC V. BROWN.

SAMUEL DOAK, D. D.*

1777—1830.

SAMUEL DOAK was a son of Samuel and Jane (Mitchel) Doak, who emigrated, when they were very young, from the North of Ireland, and settled in Chester County, Pa.; but, soon after their marriage, removed to Virginia, and took up their residence in Augusta County, within the bounds of the New Providence Congregation. They were both members of the Presbyterian Church at the time of their marriage, and belonged to that division of it that was known as the Old Side. It was in August, 1749, after their settlement in Virginia, that their son Samuel was born. He remained at home, labouring upon his father's farm, till he was sixteen years old. He then made a profession of religion, and shortly after commenced a course of classical study in a grammar school, in the neighbourhood of his father's house, kept by a Mr. Alexander. This school, after a while, passed into other hands, and was removed to another place; and, subsequently, it underwent other changes still, until it finally grew into the institution which is now known as Washington College, in Lexington, Va. Such was his desire for an education that he proposed to relinquish his share of the patrimonial inheritance to his brothers, in order to obtain it. His father, for a time, dissuaded him from the attempt; but, observing that it threw him into a discontented and melancholy mood, he determined to gratify his wishes. His funds were low, and he *clubbed* with another similarly situated, erected a hut near the school house, lodged and boarded

* MSS. from Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey and Rev. S. W. Doak, D. D.

himself, and became at length assistant teacher, and thus acquired the means of defraying the expenses of his college course.

In October, 1773, young Doak entered the College of New Jersey, two years in advance, and in 1775 was admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts. He was subsequently, for a short time, an assistant teacher in the school of the Rev. Robert Smith of Pequea, Pa., and commenced the study of Theology under his direction. On his return to Virginia, he was married to Esther H. Montgomery, sister of the Rev. John Montgomery,* whose family belonged to New Providence. Shortly after this, he accepted the office of Tutor in the then new College of Hampden Sidney, which had been established by the Rev. Samuel Stanhope Smith. Here he remained about two years, pursuing the study of Theology under the Rev. John Blair Smith, President of the College; and afterwards continued his studies for some time, under the Rev. William Graham, at Timber Ridge. He was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of Hanover, on the 31st of October, 1777; and having preached for some time in Washington County, Va., he removed to the Holston settlement, in what was then a part of North Carolina, but now a part of East Tennessee. Here he found the means of subsistence, especially meal, extremely scarce; and he was obliged to go thirty miles back in the direction of Abingdon, for supplies. On one occasion during his absence, the Cherokees, then in a state of hostility towards the whites, came near his cabin; and Mrs. Doak, apprized by the barking of the dogs, of their approach, retired stealthily to the woods with her infant asleep in her arms. From her hiding place she saw several of them enter the door, carry out a portion of the furniture, and then set fire to the building, and retreat with their plunder. She considered it a remarkable providence that her child did not awake; for if it had, the novelty of the passing scene would have produced fright and crying, and would thus have betrayed their place of concealment, and both the mother and child would have become victims to Indian barbarity. After the departure of the Indians, she went, by a blind path, ten miles to the nearest station, where she met, the next day, with her husband. Preaching one Sabbath on the frontier, a panic was produced by a messenger riding hastily up, and exclaiming "Indians, Indians,—Rogdale's family are murdered." Mr. Doak stopped abruptly in his discourse, referred to the case of the Israelites in similar danger, offered a short prayer that the God of Israel would go with them against these Canaanitish heathen,—called for the men to follow him, and taking his rifle, led his male hearers to the pursuit. At another time, after he had commenced teaching at Salem, and while his class was reciting, a similar alarm was given; and he immediately dismissed his school, and repaired with his students to the camp of General Sevier.

Mr. Doak was a member of the Convention of 1784, that formed the constitution of the ancient Commonwealth of Franklin; and tradition ascribes to him the paternity of a clause in the rejected constitution, making

* JOHN MONTGOMERY was graduated at the College of New Jersey in 1775; was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Hanover, October 28, 1778; was ordained April 27, 1780; accepted a call in October 1781 from Winchester, Cedar Creek, and Opequon, and after spending a few years here, resigned his charge in 1789, and took up his residence in "the Pastures," Augusta, where he had inherited property. Here he remained during the rest of his life. Previous to his ordination, he was associated with Mr. Graham in the instruction of Liberty Hall. He was an amiable man, a popular preacher, and a good scholar. During the latter part of his life, his ministry was interrupted by bodily infirmities.

provision for a University,—requiring the Legislature to erect it before the year 1787, and to endow it liberally.

After residing at the Holston settlement a year or two, he removed in the hope of finding a more promising field of usefulness, to the settlement on Little Limestone, in Washington County, and there purchased a farm, on which he built a log house for purposes of education, and a small church edifice, and founded a congregation known as the “Salem Congregation.” The literary institution which he here established, was the first that was ever established in the great Valley of the Mississippi: in 1785 it was incorporated by the Legislature of North Carolina, under the name of “Martin Academy;” and in 1795, it became “Washington College.” From its incorporation as an Academy till the year 1818, Mr. Doak continued to preside over it; and the elders of his congregation formed a part of the Board of Trustees. While he was attending a meeting of the General Assembly at Philadelphia, he received a donation of classical books for his infant institution, which he carried in a sack upon a pack horse, five hundred miles; and this constituted the nucleus of the library of the present Washington College.

Having organized a number of churches in the county in which he lived, also at Bethel and Timber Ridge, in Green County, he resigned the Presidency of the College in the year 1818, and was succeeded in the office by his son, the Rev. John M. Doak, M. D. He now removed to Bethel, where he opened a private school, which he called Tusculum Academy, and which, under his son, the Rev. Samuel W. Doak, D. D., has since grown into a flourishing College. He was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from both Washington and Greenville Colleges, in 1818. At Bethel he passed the residue of his life, in honour and usefulness, and died in his eighty-second year, on the 12th of December, 1830. The most respectful notice of his death was taken by his former pupils in Washington College, in a series of Resolutions, testifying their gratitude for his services, and their veneration for his memory.

Dr. Doak’s ministry was attended with no small success. Several powerful revivals of religion occurred in connection with it, from the fruits of which proceeded a number of zealous and efficient preachers of the Gospel.

Dr. Doak’s first wife died on the 3d of July, 1807. He was afterwards married to Margaretta H. McEwen, who died September 22, 1831. He had five children,—all by the first marriage. The eldest son, *John Whitefield*, was born, October 18, 1788; was educated by his father; was licensed to preach by the Abingdon Presbytery, when he was in his nineteenth year, and shortly after was ordained and installed pastor of New Dublin and Wythville Churches, in Virginia. He was subsequently Pastor of Mount Bethel and Providence Churches, in Tennessee. In the year 1809, he was installed Pastor of the Church in Frankfort, Pa. In consequence of the failure of his health, which rendered it doubtful whether he would be able to continue in the ministry, he studied medicine, returned to Tennessee, and became a very successful medical practitioner, and at the same time officiated as a stated supply of Salem and Leesburg Churches. He died on the 6th of October, 1820. He was distinguished for his talents and usefulness. Dr. Doak’s other son, the Rev. *Samuel W. Doak*, D. D., is now (1857) the President of Tusculum College, Tenn.

FROM J. G. M. RAMSEY, M. D.

AUTHOR OF THE "ANNALS OF TENNESSEE."

MECKLENBURG, near Knoxville, Tenn., November 21, 1849.

My dear Sir: It costs me no effort to comply with your request for my reminiscences of the venerable Dr. Samuel Doak, my early friend and teacher. His name is associated with some of my most cherished and grateful recollections, as well as with the progress of knowledge and religion in East Tennessee, from its first settlement to the period of his death.

Dr. Doak, if my memory serves me, was somewhat above the middle stature, had a large muscular frame, well formed, and in later life a little inclined to corpulency,—full chest, wide shoulders, and short neck, indicating a strong tendency to apoplexy,—of which indeed he died. His appearance was grave and commanding; his voice stentorian to the extreme, and any thing but melodious; his eye deep blue, not entirely lustreless, but yet indicating little of passion or genius. The whole countenance expressed strong intellect, manly good sense, calm dignity, and indomitable firmness.

His habits were those of the student, teacher, and divine. The amount of his reading in the latter part of his life was small; that of his thinking immensely great. Though naturally very social and friendly, he spent little of his time in conversation, and none of it in conviviality. The very fragments of time he sacredly appropriated to preparation for the pulpit, and to his Presidential duties. The entertainment of his guests (except such as were clerical and professional) devolved upon other members of his family. When out of College, his whole time was spent in his study. There, reclining at his ease in an arm-chair, his head bending backwards, his eyes generally closed,—almost entirely abstracted from the world without, he cultivated the powers within, and prepared that rich intellectual and moral aliment, which it was at once his duty and his pleasure to impart to his class and his congregation. In the recitation room, his posture was nearly the same. Two or more classes, in the languages especially, would sometimes be reciting to him at once; and his practised ear seldom failed to detect an error. His fidelity as a teacher is beyond all praise. The students of Washington College, under his Presidency, were not, as is common in most similar institutions, subdivided into Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior classes; but each pupil studied, and learned, and disciplined his mind, for himself. One brilliant genius, one diligent student, could not, under this system, act as a ferry-man for the whole class, and carry over the incompetent or the indolent. Each one was permitted, without artificial restraint, to make as rapid progress in his studies as his industry or his abilities enabled him to do. The acquisition of knowledge,—mere literary attainment, was not the sole or even primary object of Dr. Doak's instruction—it was mental discipline—it was to train the intellect,—to teach the young man how to think,—to think accurately and profoundly,—to think for himself, and to beget a spirit of manly reliance upon his own powers of independent investigation and vigorous thought. "Nullius addictus jurare in verba," he inculcated as a favourite maxim; and his stern rebuke was never withheld from the exhibition of a blind subserviency to popular sentiment or antiquated usage.

As one instance of his indefatigable application to scientific and literary pursuits, I may mention that, though a tall son of Princeton, in some of its palmiest days, he had learned little of Chemistry, and nothing of the Hebrew language, at that ancient seat of learning. But, at the age of sixty-five, he commenced his chemical studies, and, though entirely self taught, he was soon well qualified to teach the science to others. About the same time, he commenced the study of Hebrew, and very soon was able to teach it; and the class which he graduated

in 1815, were examined upon that language publicly before an admiring audience,—the first case of the kind that ever occurred in Tennessee. He read the ancient works on Theology in the languages in which they were originally written: Calvin's Institutes in Latin he always placed in the hands of his theological students; and the Presbytery usually confided to him the Latin exigeses of probationers for the ministry. He had a passion,—not a taste, but a passion,—for philology. He taught the languages to the last; and when the apoplectic tendency was upon him, his discourse to those around his dying bed, though incoherent, was in good Latin.

Commencement was the only gala-day in the year with Dr. Doak. On that occasion, he wore his antique wig, his shorts, and his old fashioned shoes: the muscles of his stern brow were relaxed, and he gave himself up to an unusual urbanity and kindness of manner. He was still grave,—still dignified and venerable; but there was an air of self-complacency,—of benignity blended with conscious self-consequence, which he exhibited on no other occasion. His posture was erect; his movements less ungraceful; his manner calm and most respectful. His Board of Trustees, who were indeed his Faculty, were seated upon plain benches near and around his chair. The candidates for the Academic honours approached him deferentially, slowly, modestly, and with filial regard and consideration bowed to him. Returning the salutation, the old President arose, and holding the diploma in one hand, said in a solemn and impressive tone of voice, and with a paternal pride and solicitude in his eye,—“*Præses et Curatores Washingtoniensis Collegii,*” &c. The scene was deeply interesting and impressive, and was never forgotten by a graduate.

The *amor habendi* that so much characterizes our countrymen and our age, and the belittling influences of which are unhappily sometimes seen in ecclesiastics, and other learned men, degrading the noble powers of the intellect down to the grovelling pursuits of mammon, was not even an emotion,—far less a passion, with Dr. Doak. He rose above it, and even in old age, when avarice sometimes gets in the ascendant, he considered the acquisition of wealth for its own sake as ignoble and disparaging. His tuition fee was five dollars a session of five months; and in this was included the use of the college library, and other facilities of instruction. His habits were frugal; his hospitality, though not elegant, was better—it was unpretending and cordial. The primitive simplicity of early times in the West, and of frontier life, was exhibited upon his farm, in his house, in his dress, and in his intercourse with the world. When a young man, the condition of things around him created a necessity of participating actively in the settlement and defence of the country, and in its civil and political affairs. He always voted; and the consideration in which he was held by the people, generally allowed him to open the polls,—in other words, to vote first.

As a minister of the Gospel, I hardly need say that his praise was in all our churches. He may well be considered the first apostle of Presbyterianism in Tennessee. No one has been more successful in training up young men for the ministry. The pupils of his charity are lifting up their voices in the abodes of refinement and civilization, and in the recesses of the wilderness. His style of preaching was original, bold, pungent, and sometimes pathetic. His delivery was natural and impressive, and well fitted to give effect to the truths which he uttered. It is a remarkable fact that he was a subject of that far-famed physiological phenomenon,—the “*Exercise,*” or “*Jerks,*” that prevailed so extensively in the Western country, about the beginning of this century. He had cautioned his people against it, privately and from the pulpit. He took it while preaching. He alluded to it afterwards, when lecturing to his classes; said he could not explain it satisfactorily, and called it “*the strange work of God.*”

On the whole, I think it may safely be affirmed that Dr. Doak was among the most useful men of the period in which he lived. His influence in the propaga-

tion of Christianity, and especially in the extension of the Presbyterian Church, in the West, it is not easy to estimate; while his students, in the early days of Tennessee, filled all the learned professions, and were almost the only teachers, for several years, in the infant settlements of the West and South-west.

The portrait of Dr. Doak is preserved in the library of Washington College. The contour of his face bears a strong resemblance to that of John Knox; and the strong points of character in the two men were strikingly similar.

I am, dear Sir,

Very respectfully yours,

J. G. M. RAMSEY.

JOHN BLAIR SMITH, D. D.*

1778—1799.

JOHN BLAIR SMITH was the fourth son of the Rev. Robert Smith, D. D., and was born at Pequea, Lancaster County, Pa., June 12, 1756. He received his name from a maternal uncle,—his mother being a sister of the Rev. Messrs. Samuel and John Blair. In very early life, he evinced a great thirst for knowledge, and an uncommon facility at acquiring it. At the age of fourteen, he became, under the most watchful and faithful parental training, hopefully a subject of renewing grace; and at sixteen was admitted to the Junior class in the College of New Jersey. During his whole college course, though he was naturally of a cheerful and social turn, his conduct as a Christian was always worthy of his profession, and his improvement in the various branches of study worthy of his acknowledged talents, and answerable to the high hopes which his earlier developments had awakened. He was graduated under Dr. Witherspoon in 1773, and was one of a class of twenty-nine, fourteen of whom became ministers of the Gospel, and three Governors of States.

An elder brother, Samuel Stanhope Smith, having become the head of the rising institution in Prince Edward County, Va., under the care of the Presbytery of Hanover, and also in 1775 been installed pastor of the Churches of Cumberland and Briery in Prince Edward,—the subject of this notice went, at his suggestion, in the early part of 1776, to join his brother as an assistant teacher, and at the same time to prosecute his theological studies under his direction. Having previously joined the Newcastle Presbytery, he transferred his relation from that to the Presbytery of Hanover on the 18th of June, 1777; and having gone through his several trials, was licensed to preach by the latter Body, at Tinkling Spring, on the 29th of April, 1778. He was ordained by the same Presbytery at Prince Edward Court House, on the 26th of October, 1779. At the same meeting of Presbytery, (October 28,) his brother, having received an invitation to the chair of Moral Philosophy in the College of New Jersey, asked leave to resign the Presidency of Hampden Sidney College, and also his pastoral charge; both which requests were granted. John Blair Smith was

*Assemb. Miss. Mag., 1805.—Foote's Sketches of Va., 1st Series.—Life of Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green.—MSS. from Archibald Alexander, D. D., and William Hill, D. D.