

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.

B. B.
BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

VOLUME IX.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
530 BROADWAY.
1869.

In August, 1853, he was united in marriage with Susan Julia Maria, daughter of the late Dr. S. B. Wylie, and they became the parents of three children. Mr. Black continued to labour with great diligence and fidelity till he was disabled by the malady which terminated in his death. He died on the 10th of October, 1860, in the forty-fifth year of his age, and the fourteenth of his ministry. He was an able, eloquent and highly popular Preacher, and his early demise was deeply lamented. One of Dr. Black's daughters is married to a clergyman, the Rev. Samuel Wylie, of Eden, Ill.

Very respectfully yours,
J. N. McLEOD.

SAMUEL BROWN WYLIE, D.D.*

1790—1852.

SAMUEL BROWN WYLIE, a son of Adam and Margaret Wylie, was born in Moylart, near Ballymena, County of Antrim, Ireland, May 21, 1773. His father was a farmer in easy circumstances, and both his parents were exemplary members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. His religious education was very carefully attended to in the family, and the influence of an elder sister had much to do in moulding his Christian character and determining his choice of the ministry for a profession. After having gone through the requisite course of preparation,—during which time he was himself engaged as a teacher,—he entered Glasgow College, where he distinguished himself much as a scholar, and graduated as Master of Arts in April, 1797. After his graduation he engaged in teaching a school in Ballymena, and continued thus employed until he was compelled to fly from his native land in consequence of his connection with the efforts made in favour of Irish independence.

Mr. Wylie landed at Newcastle, Del., on the 18th of October, 1797, after a passage of twenty days. Notwithstanding the Yellow Fever was then prevailing in Philadelphia, he, with one of his fellow-emigrants, after a few days, started for the city on foot, and arrived there on the 31st. Within about six weeks, through the kindness of a venerable man of the Society of Friends, he was engaged in teaching a school in Cheltenham, about ten miles North of the city. Here he remained until the fall of 1798, when he was appointed a Tutor in the University of Pennsylvania. He afterwards established a private academy, which he taught with great success for many years. In 1828 he became Professor of the Latin and Greek Languages in the University of Pennsylvania, and held the place until 1845, when he ceased from its active duties, and became Professor *emeritus*. On the organization of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, in 1808, he was appointed a Professor in that institution, and held the office until his resignation of it in 1851. He was engaged as a teacher, with only some slight interruptions, during a period of upwards of sixty years.

He studied Theology, after he came to this country, under the care of the Reformed Presbytery, and was licensed to preach, by that Body, at Coldenham,

* MS. from his son, Rev. Dr. Wylie, of Philadelphia.—Dr. McLeod's Fun. Disc.

Orange County, N. Y., on the 24th of June, 1799. He preached some time in Walkill, N. Y., and assisted Mr. McKinney at a communion in Galway, and, in the winter of 1799-1800 returned to Philadelphia, where he preached for a while to a small congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, which had been organized in 1798. He was ordained at Ryegate, Vt., on the 25th of June, 1800, and immediately after made an extensive tour to the West and South. He was sent on this mission, in company with the Rev. James McKinney, to carry into effect the decision of the highest judicatory of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, prohibiting any of its members from holding slaves. In 1802 he was sent as a delegate from the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States to the sister Churches in Scotland and Ireland; and he visited those countries again in 1845. His first and only pastoral charge was in Philadelphia, to which he was called in 1802, and which he retained till the close of his life. He was, however, partially relieved from his labours in 1843, by having his son, the Rev. Theodore W. J. Wylie, associated with him as a colleague.

He was chosen a member of the American Philosophical Society in 1806. The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him, by Dickinson College, in 1816. He was chosen Professor of Languages in that College, but declined the appointment.

In 1847, the fiftieth anniversary of his arrival in this country, his many friends, in his congregation and out of it, held a public meeting in the church, and presented him, in token of their affectionate respect and veneration, with a service of plate and a purse of five hundred dollars in gold.

Dr. Wylie continued to preach with unabated mental power, and with his usual earnestness of manner, until within four months of his death. In the immediate prospect of his departure he exhibited the utmost composure of spirit, the deepest humility, and the most joyful and triumphant confidence in his Redeemer. He died, from general debility and suffusion of the heart, on the 13th of October, 1852, in the eightieth year of his age. He was buried in Woodland Cemetery, his funeral being attended by crowds of mourning friends from all ranks and professions. A Discourse, commemorative of his life and character, was delivered shortly after, by the Rev. John N. McLeod, D.D., of New York, and another by the Rev. Gilbert McMaster, D.D., which were published.

Dr. Wylie's publications are two Sermons, 1804; a Greek Grammar, 1838; and a Memoir of the late Rev. Alexander McLeod, D.D., 1855.

He was married on the 5th of April, 1802, to Margaret, eldest daughter of Andrew Watson, of Pittsburg, Pa. They had seven children, four of whom, with their mother, still (1863) survive—two daughters, one of whom became the wife of the Rev. J. N. McLeod, D.D., of New York, and the other of the Rev. Robert J. Black, of Philadelphia, (now deceased); and two sons, both Ministers in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the elder,—*Theophilus A. Wylie*, being also a Professor in the University of Indiana, and the younger, *Theodore W. J. Wylie*, who has succeeded his father in his pastoral charge, being also his successor as Professor in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

FROM THE REV. SAMUEL B. HOW, D.D.

NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J., March 25, 1857.

Rev. and dear Sir: Agreeably to the promise I made you, I now furnish you with some of my recollections of the Rev. Samuel B. Wylie, D.D., whom

I knew well, especially during the time that he was associated with Mr. James G. Thompson, as a Teacher in the Grammar School of the University of Pennsylvania. Both of these gentlemen were highly accomplished classical scholars, and most thorough and accurate teachers. The school flourished greatly under them, and consisted of more than one hundred scholars, all studying in one of the very spacious rooms of the old University building. The discipline and mode of teaching adopted by both these eminent instructors were the same.

As a Teacher, Dr. Wylie insisted upon the greatest possible thoroughness, and was never satisfied until every difficulty in the lesson had been mastered, and the most minute details had been intelligently and accurately grasped. His mode of teaching brought into exercise not merely or chiefly the memory, but the faculties of reflection, combination and association—indeed, each student, as the mysteries of the Latin and Greek were gradually unfolded to him, was, at the same time, undergoing a process of thorough mental discipline. I have often thought that a recitation to Dr. Wylie, especially in Greek, was, merely in relation to the power of reflection, as severe and improving a mental process as the solution of a long and difficult problem in Mathematics.

Dr. Wylie was a strict, and even severe, disciplinarian in the government of his school, and often, as well as Horace's teacher, Orbilius, deserved the epithet of "*plagius*." No interference of parents with the management of the school was permitted. But he was considerate and discriminating in his discipline, and often kind and generous. The studious and well-behaved had nothing to fear. In his strictest discipline it was manifest that he was influenced by a conscientious regard to duty, and a sincere desire to effect the reformation and promote the welfare of those whom he punished. I consider him as having been a fine model of a Teacher. Thoroughly qualified for teaching the Latin and Greek languages, holding the profession of a Teacher in high esteem and thoroughly devoted to it, relying for success on the fearless and conscientious discharge of duty, he was highly esteemed while living, and is held in grateful remembrance by his surviving scholars.

I had the opportunity of hearing Dr. Wylie preach but a few times. Once was when he lectured, or gave a continuous comment, on the First Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. His thoughts were clear and vigorous, his criticisms able, and his expositions thorough. I remember to have been taken somewhat by surprise at his proving, by learned grammatical criticism, that *O Θεος*, in the eighth verse, is in the vocative, and not in the nominative, case. He concluded his criticism by saying,—“These remarks are for those present who understand the learned languages.” He was undoubtedly an able Preacher as well as an able Teacher.

With high regard and esteem, yours truly,

SAMUEL B. HOW.

FROM THE HON. WILLIAM B. REED.

PHILADELPHIA, September 2, 1859.

My dear Sir: I have not been unmindful of your request as to Dr. Wylie, but have been trying to gather materials out of which to frame an answer. I am under the impression that, in directing your inquiry to me, you have confounded me with my brother Henry, who was a fellow Professor with the Doctor in the University of Pennsylvania, and who knew him well and loved him much. I had very little acquaintance with the old gentleman and never was his pupil, and could give you very little but what lawyers call “general character,” which was that of a single-minded, devout clergyman, and of an accomplished scholar. He was a man of large fortune, or would have been so

but for his profuse generosity to all around him,—family, parishioners and friends; and some rather grotesque traditions exist of his credulity on the side of generosity and charity. More than this I cannot say.

On Dr. Wylie's death in 1852, my brother Henry wrote a sort of Obituary Review for a Church newspaper with which he was connected. I will transcribe two or three paragraphs from that article, which may give you an idea of some of the more prominent features of his character :—

“Dr. Wylie was a life-long student—even when between seventy and eighty years of age, his active mind was opening for itself new spheres of study. His acquirements as a linguist were very extensive—besides the Greek and Latin and Hebrew, to the teaching of which so many years of his life were devoted, some of the Oriental languages were known to him. Of several languages he had a mastery, and is said to have understood, in all, no less than fourteen.

“It is interesting to know that all this profound scholarship and earnestness of ministerial labour were joined with unflinching Christian cheerfulness and a freshness of character that was most attractive. The paragraph in Mr. McLeod's Sermon, which describes Dr. Wylie in his home, may be quoted as a very pleasing picture of a clergyman's domestic life:

“In domestic life he was simple in his habits, cheerful in his intercourse with all, strict in carrying out his family regimen, careful in the instruction of his household, faithful to warn and rebuke, prompt and punctual to an extraordinary degree, and yet attracting all by his honest and exhaustless affection, which he poured forth as from a horn of plenty. His heart was always young. A household, almost prostrated by their bereavement, show how they loved him. We never knew a man more attached to his own home than he was; and where he was, there his family desired and loved to be also. His house was the abode of friendship, and its hospitalities were dispensed without stint and without murmur. For his charities he was proverbial, and if they were not always discriminating, they were as cordial as they were ample. Caring nothing for money except as a means of usefulness, a very considerable portion of his income, which was sometimes large, was all his life expended in works of beneficence to others. Even ingratitude, from which he did not always escape, could not divert from its course the stream of his bounty.”

“We have rarely met with any thing more beautiful—so full is it of an old man's wisdom and a child's innocence—than the expression of the feeling with which this good Christian, bringing together in his thoughts a retrospect of near eighty years, and a close prospect of his last hours, contemplated life and death. To Mr. McLeod's question,—‘What are the exercises of your mind now, and in immediate view of death?’—he answered,—‘I cannot say that I am anxious to die, as I have heard some Christians say they were,—for life is still pleasant to me. I feel no serious decay of my mental powers; I am not oppressed with poverty; I find nothing in the conduct of my family to make me think they wish me away; my congregation is peaceful and prosperous; and I have better hopes of the Church than I had. I do not feel like a burden as yet. I am, therefore, willing to live. But, on the other hand,’ he continued, ‘I am nearly fourscore; I feel of course that my earthly pilgrimage is near its end; I can do little more for God, and I know that to depart and be with Christ is far better than to continue here. I am perfectly willing to die. I leave the whole matter in the hands of my Redeemer. My faith, I think, is taking the form of entire submission to the will of God. I rest with perfect confidence in Jesus Christ.’”

In the hope that these extracts may avail to the object contemplated by your request,

I am, my dear Sir, very sincerely yours,
WILLIAM B. REED.

FROM THE REV. JOHN FORSYTH, D.D.

NEWBURN, November 6, 1859.

Rev. and dear Friend: I send you my recollections of the late Dr. Samuel B. Wylie, such as they are, with a great deal of pleasure.

I became acquainted with him while I was serving as a licentiate; and, though he belonged to a different branch of the Church, he kindly assisted at my Ordination as a Pastor of a Church in Philadelphia. I was an inexperienced youth, and almost from the moment of my introduction to him, the

venerable man treated me with paternal kindness. His library was placed at my command, and, having no domestic hearth of my own, I had at all times freest access to his. A native of Ireland, he had all the best traits of his countrymen,—a genial temper, an open hand, and a heart full of the milk of human kindness. But he had other qualities, for which Irishmen are not specially noted, and among them I should name an indomitable patience, a persistent energy, which no difficulties could affright or exhaust.

One of his older parishioners told me that when Dr. Wylie was called to Philadelphia, his congregation was the merest handful,—indeed, so small that, (as Dr. W. himself told me,) on the first Sabbath after his Ordination, the members of it met for sermon in the bed-room of one of them who happened to be sick. Even then they were not in the least crowded. He was, of course, obliged to depend upon his own efforts for support, and he, accordingly, opened a school. But he was a stranger in Philadelphia; he knew nobody except a few poor Covenanters; and when the session of his Academy began, not a solitary scholar darkened its door; he had no one to teach but himself. However, he stayed in the room from 9 A.M. till 3 P.M., then “closed his school,” and went home. This he did with punctual regularity, day after day, for a week or more, until a gentleman, living in the vicinity, struck by the oddity of the affair, or curious to learn something about a teacher who seemed so laboriously engaged in doing nothing, called upon him. He was so well pleased that he sent him, the next day, a pupil, who speedily brought more, until Dr. Wylie’s school became one of the largest, the most renowned, and the most successful in the city. Such it continued to be until its Principal was transferred to the chair of Ancient Languages in the University of Pennsylvania. He had filled this office for many years when I became acquainted with him. The Latin and Greek authors, read by his classes in College, must have been familiar to him as household words; but he made it a rule, as he himself told me, never to meet a class without a previous and careful reading of the lesson of the day.

During a long life he was a most laborious student. He was a thoroughly old fashioned Presbyterian in his notions about a learned ministry. He collected a noble library containing several thousand volumes, and particularly rich in theology, classic literature, and science. There were few books in it of which he could not give you a good account. If he were at leisure, and you were disposed to draw him out in regard to a book, he would have charmed you with his curious and exact information, respecting the subject or the author, yet unmixed with the slightest spice of pedantry, but seasoned with occasional sallies of Irish humour.

Though unable to devote much time to pastoral labour, he gathered a large congregation; but he continued his academic labours, which, indeed were a sort of second nature to him, even after his people had become numerous enough to have afforded him an ample maintenance. Occupied as he was during the day in his school, and subsequently in College, he could not have done what he deemed justice to his pulpit duties, if he had not resorted to a somewhat singular expedient. He went to bed immediately after tea, slept soundly until twelve o’clock, then rose and studied for three or four hours. He escaped the invasion of visitors, to whom—such was his kindness—he could not have denied himself had he been awake, and he thus found time to enrich that treasury of knowledge out of which he brought things new and old, from Sabbath to Sabbath, to delight and edify his hearers.

For many years Dr. Wylie held the office of Professor of Theology to the Reformed Presbyterian Synod, and frequently had a dozen or more theological students under his care. I have reason to believe that those trained by him for the ministry will compare, both as Theologians and as Preachers, with the

alumni of any other Seminary in our land. You will be ready to say, What an iron constitution he must have had to enable him to discharge such multifarious duties, for so long a period, and to discharge them all so well. He was a person of large frame, well-built, and stately,—a man of presence, who could scarcely fail to arrest the eye of a stranger, in the street or elsewhere. At threescore and ten, he was as erect in his bearing as a soldier, and having all the marks of robust health, so that he looked much more like a hearty old country gentleman whose days were spent *sub Jove*, than a hard working student. In a word, even unto old age he was a noble illustration of the oft-quoted words, *sana mens in corpore sano*.

Dr. Wylie was not an eloquent Preacher in the sense in which that phrase is commonly understood. His voice, though strong, was wanting in flexibility, and his manner was perhaps somewhat modified by the necessity he was under of preaching extempore. But no one could listen to him without feeling that he was in the presence of a man of massive sense, thoroughly versed in Scripture, and master of the topic under discussion. From the few opportunities which I had of hearing him, I should judge that his sermons, in the main, were better adapted to instruct, console, edify the believer, than to arouse the careless; though the latter class was by no means overlooked. They had the rich unction of the Gospel, so that they could be relished by the humblest as well as the most cultivated Christian; but they were argumentative and expository rather than hortatory or sentimental. He won, and kept until his dying day, the devoted and reverential love of his congregation, which, under his able ministrations, became very numerous. A better instructed congregation, or one more fruitful in all good works, it would be difficult to find in Philadelphia or elsewhere.

I remain very truly yours,

JOHN FORSYTH.

JAMES RENWICK WILLSON, D.D.*

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1807—1853.

JAMES RENWICK WILLSON was born, April 9, 1780, in "the Forks of Yough," the neck of land between the Monongahela and Youghiogheny Rivers, about fourteen miles from Pittsburg, Pa. His paternal great-grandfather had emigrated from the County of Down, Ireland, in 1721, and settled near Back Creek, Dauphin County, Pa.; but the family subsequently removed to "the Forks," where they still resided at the birth of the subject of this notice. His father, Zacchæus Willson, was a Ruling Elder in the Reformed Presbyterian Church. His mother, whose maiden name was Mary McConnell, was also of Irish extraction. Both his parents were distinguished for earnest piety, for great vigour of mind, and, considering their limited opportunities, for a large measure of general intelligence.

His father was a farmer; and he himself pursued the same occupation until he had reached his twenty-first year. But, from his early youth, he evinced a decided intellectual taste, and was never satisfied unless he was adding something to his store of knowledge. His mind also early took a religious direction, as was evinced by the fact that at the age of fourteen he officiated in the family devo-

*MS. from his son, Rev. Dr. S. M. Willson.