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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.

minds of the Board turned with entire unanimity upon Dr. Mason; and he would undoubtedly have been chosen, but that he would not allow his name to be put in nomination.

As a preacher, I may safely say that he had few equals. Others may have possessed more vigour of imagination, and greater powers of extemporaneous speaking; but for a firm grasp of truth, and the ability to conduct an argument with logical accuracy, and to throw the conclusion into the brightest sunlight—for what Cousin calls the mathematics of thought, he had scarcely any equals. Herein lay his great strength. Men listened to his argument as they would to a demonstration in Euclid, or to an analysis in Algebra, and were bound fast by it. His sermons were prepared with great care. He was not wont to bring other than beaten oil into the sanctuary. Even his weekly lectures were carefully prepared, and were usually delivered from a brief before him. In his preaching he dealt much with the conscience of his hearers. He made the law of God speak out. Men saw their obligations and felt their guilt, and were thus urged to seek a refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The death of Dr. Mason threw a general air of sadness over the city. The feeling was universal that a great and good man had fallen in Israel, and fallen in the midst of his days. Though the grave has closed over him, and even the very sanctuary in which he ministered has disappeared, and men lay up the treasures of earth on the very spot where this faithful minister of the Gospel urged them to lay up the treasures of Heaven, it is grateful to reflect that his powerful ministrations,—his works of faith, and labours of love, are still silently, but certainly, accomplishing their end, in advancing the great interests of the Kingdom of Christ.

Very sincerely yours,

J. W. McLANE.

ICHABOD SMITH SPENCER, D. D.*

1826—1854.

ICHABOD SMITH SPENCER was a descendant, in the seventh generation, from Thomas Spencer, one of the first settlers of Hartford, Conn., who died in 1687. The son of this Thomas Spencer settled in Suffield, in the same State, where the family resided until about 1786, when Phineas Spencer, the father of the subject of this notice, removed to Rupert in the State of Vermont. Here he was born on the 23d of February, 1798,—the youngest but one of eleven children. He lost his father when he was seventeen, but his mother's death occurred only three years before his own. His father was a farmer in comfortable circumstances, able and willing, it would seem, to give this son, whose early intellectual developments were somewhat remarkable, a collegiate education; but, for some reason, he remained at home till after his father's death, enjoying only the advantages of a common school. His parents being neither of them professors of religion, though persons of exemplary moral habits, little attention was paid to his religious education, and his early years seem to have been an unbroken scene of thoughtlessness and gaiety.

* Memoir by Rev. J. M. Sherwood.—MS. from Mrs. Spencer.

The death of his father, which occurred in 1815, marked a decisive epoch in the history of his life. The year after this event, and in consequence of it, he left home,—the first step, it would seem, towards that eminent position which he was destined ultimately to occupy. Providence directed him to the town of Granville Washington County, N. Y., where, for about a year, he was engaged in manual labour. During his residence here, he became the hopeful subject of a revival of religion, and made a public profession of his faith by joining the Congregational Church of Middle Granville, then under the pastoral charge of the Rev. Nathaniel Hall. Being regarded as a young man of decided talent, and as giving good evidence of piety, it was strongly recommended to him to devote himself to the ministry. In pursuance with this advice, and in conformity with his own feelings and convictions, he soon after entered the Academy at Salem in the same county, where he remained until he was fitted for College. Here he profited much by the ministry and friendship of the venerable Dr. Proudfit, who was distinguished for the interest he took in young men, struggling with difficulties in the effort to obtain an education. He sustained himself, while at the Academy, partly by teaching. He also went through a course of medical reading with the student who occupied the same room with him at Salem; and this he was able to turn to good account, in after life, in many of his visits to the poor.

He entered the Sophomore class of Union College in 1819, and graduated in 1822, at the age of twenty-four, with a high reputation for both talents and scholarship. At this period, he seems to have been somewhat undecided in regard to a profession. He thought seriously of the Law, and actually commenced a course of study in that direction; but, instead of continuing it, he accepted an invitation to take charge of the grammar school in Schenectady. Here he remained about three years, and acquired great distinction as a teacher. Having already given considerable attention to Medicine and Law, he engaged now in the study of Theology under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Andrew Yates, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Union College; and, at the same time, made himself quite familiar with several of the Indian dialects.

In the autumn of 1825, he removed to Canandaigua, in Western New York, having been chosen Principal of the Academy in that place. That institution, though well endowed, had greatly declined in prosperity; but, by his vigorous and well directed efforts, he quickly succeeded in imparting to it new life, and raising it to a commanding position among the primary educational institutions of the State. In connection with his laborious duties in the school, he continued his theological studies until he was qualified to preach the Gospel. He received licensure in November, 1826, from the Presbytery of Geneva. He continued his connection with the Academy nearly two years after this, preaching frequently on the Sabbath in the neighbouring pulpits, and giving all the time he could spare from his engagements in the school, to theological study.

In May, 1828, he was married, in the city of New York, to Hannah, youngest daughter of John Magoffin. Mrs. Spencer, with four children, survives her husband.

In the summer of this year, Mr. Spencer received and accepted a call from the Congregational Church in Northampton, Mass. He was ordained as Colleague Pastor with the Rev. Solomon Williams, on the 11th of

September following. Here he continued labouring with most untiring zeal and energy, and with remarkable success, three years and a half. During the years 1830 and 1831, a very extensive and powerful revival occurred in connection with his labours, which tasked all his energies so intensely and incessantly, and for so long a time, that he found, at the close of it, that his health was giving way, and that even the continuance of his life probably depended on his taking some less laborious charge. Accordingly, with great reluctance, and much to the regret of his people, he determined on a removal; and he soon accepted a call from a Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, N. Y. He was installed there on the 23d of March, 1832; and this was his last field of ministerial labour.

The church of which he now took charge was in its infancy; but, by his great wisdom, and energy, and almost unexampled industry, in connection with a rich blessing from on high, he succeeded in raising it into one of the most prosperous and efficient churches in the Presbyterian denomination.

In 1836, he accepted the Professorship Extraordinary of Biblical History in the Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York, and retained it for about four years. He was one of the Founders and original Directors of that institution; though, by reason of some considerations, partly of a personal, and partly of a public nature, he ultimately resigned the office both of Professor and of Director.

In the great controversy which divided the Presbyterian Church in 1837-38, he held somewhat of a neutral attitude, not fully sympathizing with either party. His preference, however, on the whole, was for the Old School, as was evinced by his always continuing in that connection.

In 1841, he was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Hamilton College.

Though Dr. Spencer suffered not a little during his ministry from physical derangement, and especially from a diseased state of the nervous system, his public labours were very little interrupted by sickness until the last year or two of his life. In the spring of 1852, his people, perceiving that his health was seriously impaired, proposed to him to intermit his labours for a season, and try the effect of a voyage to Europe. But, instead of carrying out their wish, he made a hasty trip to Savannah, and in a few weeks was again at his post, as laboriously engaged as ever. His last attack occurred early in January, 1854; and its severity obliged him at once to suspend all labour. In May he was so far recovered as to take a journey to the White Sulphur Springs of Virginia, accompanied by Mrs. Spencer, and his eldest son, who was also an invalid. After six weeks, he returned so much improved as to preach again to his people until the close of July. After that, he visited Sharon Springs, Saratoga, and other places, in quest of health; but his torturing malady yielded to nothing. He returned home about the middle of October, and it now became apparent that his case was beyond the reach of medical aid. He went to his chamber for the last time on the 28th of that month, and, after about four weeks of the most intense bodily anguish, passed away in perfect peace, and in the joyful hope of a blessed immortality. He died on the 23d of November, 1854. The Funeral services were attended at the Church on the Sabbath following, and a Sermon preached on the occasion by the Rev. Dr. Spring, of New York, which has been published.

The high estimate in which Dr. Spencer was held, was sufficiently evinced by the efforts that were made to secure his services in various important fields of ministerial labour. In 1830, he was called to the Presidency of the University of Alabama, and in 1832, to the Presidency of Hamilton College. About the time of his leaving Northampton, he received a call from Park Street Church, Boston, and overtures on the same subject were again made to him by the same Church in 1835. In 1833, he received a unanimous call to the Essex Street Church, Boston. Many formal calls were put into his hands, and many overtures made to him, from Churches in New York, Philadelphia, Newark, Buffalo, Cincinnati, and various other important places. In 1853, he was elected to the Professorship of Pastoral Theology in the East Windsor Theological Seminary. None of these calls tempted him away from his chosen field,—though they were unequivocal evidences of his distinguished worth and ability.

The following is a list of Dr. Spencer's publications:—A Discourse occasioned by the Great Fire in New York, 1835. A Discourse on the Claims of Seamen, 1836. A Sermon preached the Sabbath after the death of General Harrison, 1841. A Sermon on the day of the National Fast, observed on account of the death of the President of the United States, 1841. A Sermon in the National Preacher on Living and Walking in the Spirit, 1841. A Sermon on the comparative claims of Home and Foreign Missions, 1843. A Sermon in the National Preacher, entitled "Solomon's experience and observation—Hatred of Life," 1849. A Sermon on the Necessity of the Sufferings of Christ. A Sermon on the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850. A Pastor's Sketches, or Conversations with Anxious Inquirers respecting the Way of Salvation, 1850. A Pastor's Sketches, Second Series, 1853. [These Sketches have been republished in England, and have also been translated into the French language, and published in France.]

Since the death of Dr. Spencer, two volumes of his Sermons have been published, in connection with a Memoir of his life by the Rev. J. M. Sherwood.

FROM THE REV. GARDINER SPRING, D. D.

BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL, New York, }
January 9, 1855.

My dear Brother: It is a pleasant yet a painful task, to comply with your request in regard to our deceased brother, Spencer. I have so many years enjoyed the privilege of such fraternal intercourse with him, that to speak of him gratifies me, while, at the same time, it opens the wound inflicted by his departure, afresh. The following imperfect sketch is the best I can now furnish you.

It is characteristic of the best ministers that they are best at home, and most distinguished in their own pulpits. There was no "flourish of trumpets" with Dr. Spencer, when he went abroad. He was not demonstrative in his nature, nor eager for the praise of men. He was emulous, but it was mainly to magnify the truths of God, and do good to the souls of men. No man was less desirous than he to "create a sensation" and set the world aghast by his preaching. Yet was he exclusively devoted to his work. His heart, his thoughts, his studies and attainments, his time, his interests, his influence and his life, were given to the ministry. Few ministers of the Everlasting Gospel, if any, are more industrious; and few have less occasion to lament misspent and wasted hours. The result was that he became one of the best and most effective preachers of the

age. Few habitually spake like him in discourses of such instructiveness, such attractive persuasion, such withering rebuke of wickedness, or such happy effects upon the minds of men. He spake "the things which became sound doctrine," and declared "the whole counsel of God." He was cautious and wise, but he was urgent and in earnest. He was often tender to weeping, yet was he a most fearless preacher. There was a large commingling of the "Son of Consolation" with the "Son of Thunder" in his character. I have heard him say that he did not know what it was to be ensnared or embarrassed in preaching God's truth, and that the thought of being afraid to utter it, because it was unpopular, never once entered his mind. There was something of nature in this, and more of grace; he was fearless of men, because he feared God. There was great variety in his preaching; he was not confined to a few thread-bare topics; his mind and heart took a wide range, and brought out of his treasure "things both new and old." Nor was he given to crude and imperfect preparations for the pulpit: a volume of sermons might be selected from his manuscripts, which would be a beautiful model for the youthful ministry, and a great comfort to the Church of God. His Sabbath Evening Lectures on the Shorter Catechism, as well as portions of his Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, will not easily be forgotten by those who heard them.

In his style of writing, and in his style and manner of preaching, he was manly, strong, and energetic, rather than rhetorical. His thoughts were weighty; his imagination rich; but they were sweet thoughts and hallowed imaginations. He had no verbiage. I know no man whose piety and taste more instinctively revolted from the ostentation of words: his words were simple and "fitly spoken," and his style remarkably terse and sententious. There was now and then an iron nerve about his discourses and manner, and a flash of thought, that were startling, and that broke upon his hearers like a voice of thunder. Yet, with all this startling boldness, there was sweetness, humility, and meekness, and those deep and realizing views of Divine truth which indicated that he was taught of God. It was not difficult to perceive that he was no stranger to the duties of the closet. In his own pulpit, his prayers were distinguished, not only for their devotional spirit, but for their appropriateness and variety. Those who have heard him most and longest, and most attentively, have remarked that they never knew any thing like repetition in his prayers, and never enjoyed such variety of sacred thought and emotion as they enjoyed from his devotional exercises.

He excelled also as a preacher. His parochial duties were his labour and delight. There was great faithfulness, great painstaking, and even great *tact* in his pastoral services. The life of a pastor consists, in no small degree, in the study of personal character, and in the study and exhibition of those Divine truths that are adapted to the character and experience of those committed to his charge. Dr. Spencer's "Pastoral Sketches,"—a work of great interest in itself, and great value to ministers, and to all inquiring minds, illustrates his great excellence in this department of ministerial labour. His acquaintance with the spiritual history of his people gave him prodigious advantage over their minds in his discourses from the pulpit. His portraits of character were to the life; and though they were delicately drawn, and without personal allusion, there was no escape from the grasp of truth, when he put the screws upon the conscience, and made the law and the Gospel alike utter the words of Nathan to David,—*"Thou art the man."* And the beauty of the process was, that he did it with a tenderness and sympathy that so linked the speaker with the hearers, that the stout-hearted could not complain, and the broken-hearted were made whole. He had no theory of "revivals," yet was he often in the midst of them. God's truth, God's Spirit, and the prayers of his people, were the only agencies he relied on, and he found them abundantly adequate to their end. God gave

him souls for his hire. This is the reward he sought after, and he enjoys it now.

I need not speak of his *life*. He is the only man who ever doubted that he was a man of genuine piety. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," these things belonged to Dr. Spencer. Not a blot rests upon his fair name. The perplexed will miss his counsels, the afflicted will miss his sympathies, and the poor of Brooklyn will miss his laborious charities.

Dr. Spencer was for years a great sufferer, and his sufferings sometimes oppressed his heart, because they unfitted him for active labour; yet I have seen him more depressed when the sunlight of prosperity shone upon him, than in the dark night of his affliction. His graces grew under the sharpest trials; and amid all the outward darkness with which he was so long enveloped, his path shone brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

During the last three or four weeks of his life, so severe were his sufferings, that he was not inclined to much conversation. But, on the Monday preceding his death, being comparatively free from pain, and perceiving that his time was short, he called his family about his bed, and requested them to be so arranged that he could see them all, and separately address each one of them. He told them that he expected to die, and expected to go to Heaven, and expressed the hope that he should meet them all there. In his own simple manner, and with all the tenderness of a dying man, he opened to them the way of life by Jesus Christ, spoke to them of his own confidence in the Saviour, and urged them to "cling to Christ and the Bible" as their only hope.

It was just after this affecting scene that I knocked at his door. And never was I more kindly directed than in making this fraternal visit. I had some fears from what I knew of his self-scrutinizing spirit, that I might find him in a depressed state of mind. But as he drew near the close of his struggles, God was kind, and gave him sweet indications of his paternal love. There he tossed, day after day, and night after night, upon that couch of racking pain, with a mind as clear as Newton's, and a heart as peaceful as a child in its mother's bosom. The great peculiarity of his Christian character was his shrinking humility, and self-diffidence. More than once in the days of his unbroken vigour, I have heard him say,—“I have mistaken my calling; I never was fit for a minister of the Gospel.” No one else thought so; yet he retained this self-diffidence to the last. I said to him,—“Brother Spencer, I am afraid you are about to leave us.” He replied,—“I think so.” I took his hand and he said,—“You see I am strong; I may rally, but it is more than probable that I shall leave you by to-morrow morning.” “Is it *peace* with you, brother?” His body was in agony; he tossed his head on the pillow and replied,—“*It is all peace.*” He paused, and fixing his piercing eye upon me, said,—“I am afraid it is too much peace. I cannot discover in myself those evidences of personal godliness which justify me in enjoying such abundant peace.” I could not repress a smile at these sweet words, and then reminded him of those words of the Lord Jesus, when he said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it *more abundantly.*” He simply replied,—“Pray with me;” and then called his family around his bed, where we knelt and prayed together for the last time. His sufferings continued without any abatement, with the exception of a few tranquil hours which he employed in giving to those around him his last counsels and charge, commending them to God, and testifying his own precious hopes and the prospects that cheered him, as he bade them farewell. He subsequently conversed but little. His manly frame was exhausted. Three days after this, the strong man bowed himself to the impotence and dust of death. An inscru-

table Providence made him a partaker in his Master's sufferings; abundant grace made him partaker in his glory.

With affectionate regards and earnest desires that the persevering labours of your pen may remind future generations of the worth and excellence of many devoted servants of God,

I am, my dear Sir,

Your friend and brother,

GARDINER SPRING.

FROM THE REV. MELANCTHON W. JACOBUS, D. D.,

PROFESSOR IN THE WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

ALLEGHANY, February, 28, 1853.

My dear Sir: During a pastorate of twelve years in Brooklyn, Dr. Spencer was my near neighbour and co-presbyter. They were the years of his prime and power, when his highly favoured church and that intelligent community enjoyed his best labours. He was the last of our cotemporaries called to yield his pulpit at the pressure of disease, two only excepted—Dr. Cutler, of St. Ann's, and the Rev. Jonathan Greenleaf, of East Brooklyn. The Lord preserve them both many years!

Dr. Spencer was of the middle stature; square, rather than corpulent; and of a commanding presence from his massiveness of frame.

A keen look and prompt movement, with a certain liveliness of address, gave him a business air, not undignified, though at times somewhat abrupt. With great energy and individuality, united to a characteristic fearlessness of temper and power of will, he may have seemed often to wear a bluntness of manner. But they who knew him at the fireside and in the lecture-room, showed by their warm admiration how winning he could be in his intercourse, and how fondly he could exercise the finest feelings of the Christian heart.

In the pulpit, with a broad, bold face, short, gray whiskers, and a peculiar glare in his eye, he had an aspect of gravity, that bordered perhaps upon severity. A peculiar arrangement of his hair, exposing an open, majestic forehead, aided this characteristic expression; and this, with an accent that was often taken for a foreign one, might remind you of one of the Scotch Reformers, as capable of great blandness, yet able to gather into a perfect storm-cloud of rebuke.

In conversation he was rather reserved than talkative, but of ready wit, which he wielded at times with excellent effect. In the study of our Episcopal brother, Dr. Cutler, his attention was directed to a fine picture of a shipwreck that adorned the wall. Dr. C. pointed him to the crew who were making off in the small boat, and especially to a young Lieutenant, who, in springing for it, had fallen short and was drowning. "That countenance," said Dr. C., "has the very expression of prayer." The word "prayer," struck Dr. Spencer, and raising himself in his chair, with his eye intently fixed upon the young man, he said to Dr. C.,—"But where's the Book?" The rejoinder of course was not lacking.

In his positive style, he could deal out the most crushing denunciation, or the keenest sarcasm, whether in public or in private. Yet no one could do this with greater impunity. It was conceded as his privilege to express himself boldly—sometimes sharply. But if he offended ever by this means, he still drew his people and his brethren to him by other ties too strong to be broken. He was a ruler as well as a teacher.

A prominent member of his church, having the same cast of character as himself, differed from him, and removed to another connection. A few years afterwards, in conversation with a brother minister, when the name of Dr. Spencer was mentioned, he said,—“I don't like the Doctor—he is rough and tyrannical;

but," he added, "I will say this for him,—he taught me all that ever I knew." Not long after this, the conversation was related to him. It amused him greatly. He spoke very kindly of his former parishioner, remarking only,—“I know why he didn't like me. I wouldn't let him have his way.”

He possessed, as is well known, an intellect of very uncommon vigour. Able to grapple with complicated questions, theoretical and practical, he excelled in power of analysis and argumentation. In ecclesiastical bodies, he spoke seldom, but to the point—was brief rather than long—rather last than first, coming in usually with an opinion or argument that would serve as a solution of the matter.

His sermons were uniformly written out in full; yet with ready command of the manuscript, few extemporaneous speakers were more able to impress an audience. His style was logical and forcible, and his matter commonly compact. His discourse was characterized by a simple and clear statement, rejecting mere rhetorical fineries, and seldom using a rare word. He eschewed alike a *dilettante* performance, and a newspaper harangue. He came to his people with his own exposition of great Gospel subjects, yet occasionally with a profound discussion of some mooted topic of the day. In certain published efforts of this kind, he won the most flattering testimonies of leading statesmen, as having a mind that would have adorned any public station. But no station was higher than his own. He had his own views, and expressed them often, when he differed from some of his leading members, gaining a character for plain spoken deliverances, whether men would hear or forbear. He was at home in preaching Christ Jesus,—with amplitude of thought, and originality of treatment, and copious citation of Scripture, with expression rather strong than elegant, yet not without fine flashes of fancy and striking illustrations. His delivery was earnest and tender, with impassioned bursts of eloquence, and pungent in enforcement of his well discriminated points. Frequently as he used to appear in the lecture-room, many of his best hearers preferred him there.

His sermons and lectures were rather experimental than theological in their general cast. He had great power in dealing with the heart,—exposing subtle sophisms and lurking objections; analyzing the religious characters of his hearers, and storming their strongholds. He would often *pick out* a case in his audience, like a practised marksman; and we may safely say that few of his congregation found themselves unreached. His style was characterized by great *directness*. These public ministrations he would follow up with earnest private appeals, that were often richly blessed to the salvation of old and young. His conferences were faithful pungent probings of the various phases of unbelief, or misbelief, or disbelief, that came under his charge, and few found their difficulties unanswered, if they opened their case honestly and fully to his notice.

He paid great attention to his Sabbath School, commonly dropping in at least for a word or a look before the service of the Church; and the effect was felt in a most flourishing condition of this department, including often two or three separate schools.

It can readily be inferred that it was as a PASTOR that Dr. Spencer displayed his most eminent gifts. The two rare volumes of “Pastor's Sketches” which he has left, were the natural fruit of his labours. None but one so rarely adapted to that office, could have left such a thesaurus of experience. They are his best autobiography. They sketch the Pastor fully as much as the Parishioner. His distinguished traits as a shrewd casuist, a subtle logician, a tender counsellor, a patient, persevering winner of souls, appeared to full advantage in his daily ministrations. All his energies were devoted to the pastoral work. He loved it. He declined important calls to other posts, because his heart was in this. He was a Shepherd, and if not always and to all the same *gentle Shepherd*,

none could say that he was not a “good *Shepherd*,” who “made his sheep his own.”

He spent much time in seeking out and visiting the poor, and sick, and distressed,—relieving the destitute from his own liberal hand, or putting them in the way of the best attentions. So entirely did his flock enjoy his services, that he often appeared only too exclusively wrapped up in their affairs. It was plain that he identified himself with his church,—not sparing himself, and preaching only too often and too persistently for a prudent regard to health. He bore a leading part in the great evangelical operations of the city. With such a press of parochial labours as few could bear, he rescued time for the Bible, Tract, and other, Societies; and the two here named owed much to his efficient management.

That executive ability which is so essential to success, especially in such a city, carried Dr. Spencer through times of peculiar trial; building up a large congregation from the commencement, discharging a heavy debt, carrying his own measures, and gathering around him a substantial, wealthy and intelligent people. A discriminating preacher, he had also discriminating hearers.

He sustained himself at the head of one of our most numerous, liberal, and influential churches, and died in their arms and at his work. He rests from his labours and his works do follow him.

Very truly yours,

M. W. JACOBUS.

FROM THE REV. R. S. STORRS, JR., D. D.

BROOKLYN, February 18, 1857.

My dear Sir: I first heard Dr. Spencer preach on a casual visit which I made to Brooklyn in the winter of 1845, nearly a year before I came here to reside. He was at that time delivering a series of Sunday evening Lectures to his congregation, on the Westminster Catechism, expounding successively the doctrines embraced in that venerable instrument; and it was one of these which I chanced to hear. His lecture for that evening was on the doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance. He lectured without full notes, I remember, but with a “brief” before him, and with frequent reference to a small Bible which he held in his hand; and most of the peculiarities which I afterwards noticed in his more elaborate discourses were very distinct and even prominent in him that evening. He approached his subject immediately, without apology or delay, grasped it with a precise and energetic statement, opened it with a very clear and logical analysis, showed himself familiar with the customary modes of presenting and illustrating it, yet treated it in a fresh and peculiar way, and urged it with great earnestness of language and manner, and with much real impressiveness of thought, on those who heard him. I remember that some of his phrases seemed to be strong, pungent, and easy to be remembered, rather than either exact or elegant; that I did not much admire his interpretation of some of the more difficult texts; and that the total impression which I received of the man was, that he had a great deal of what is usually called power in the pulpit, with that subtler quality and habit of mind which naturally originates new modes of treatment, in handling an even trite subject; but without much of native refinement, or of literary sensibility, or of catholicity of feeling. The latter impression I found reason afterwards materially to modify.

When I came to Brooklyn, in the fall of 1846, as Pastor of the “Church of the Pilgrims,” Dr. Spencer met me with great frankness and cordiality of manner, was present at the services attending my installation, and was afterwards prompt to call upon me, and to offer me the courtesy of an exchange of pulpits. He gave me to understand at once that he valued highly New England institu-

tions, and many New England men, though he differed from and deprecated certain religious and political opinions which he understood to prevail there. I told him, as frankly, that I agreed in many things with those from whom he differed, but hoped to live and work beside him, in general sympathy, and an efficient co-operation in all good efforts. I had thenceforth frequent opportunities to hear him preach, and often met him in social and clerical circles, though my relations with him never became intimate.

He was a man of extreme independence of character, of a naturally reserved and reticent temper I think, and of very strong and positive convictions. With these, too, he combined unusually sensitive and ardent feelings; and I imagine that it had been the habit of his life, from a very early period, to devote himself assiduously, almost exclusively, to what he regarded as his special work, to be wrought in his particular place, and in his own methods, without much attention to those around him. These qualities, and this habit, of course kept him aloof to a considerable extent from those who were not ecclesiastically connected with him, and who were not in many things of his way of thinking. And while I was often brought in contact with him, I do not feel that I ever came fully into his special sphere of feeling and thought. My observations upon him were those rather of a friendly spectator than of a sympathizing confidant; and as such you must receive them.

In the family circle, his own or that of any friend, or in company with those whom he admitted to frequent and familiar intercourse, the same characteristics to which I have referred made Dr. Spencer delightful and attractive beyond most men; and they made him a model of energy, efficiency, and untiring assiduity, as the Pastor of his own parish, and as a visiter to those of the sick and poor whom he regarded as under his especial charge. No minister in the city, at that time or since, no minister whom I have ever known in any place, had a stronger hold than he had on the affections of his own people. Their confidence in him was almost literally unlimited. No man was ever more beloved and revered among the poor whom he assisted. And certainly no man, in his own household, was ever honoured and loved beyond him, as the memory of no one is now more tenderly and religiously cherished.

On one of the last occasions on which I met him, at the house of a common friend, a parishioner of his, I was greatly impressed with his kind and affectionate attentiveness to the children of the family. The eldest daughter of our friend, a lively and inquisitive little girl of then perhaps nine years old, seemed to be his particular favourite. She was almost instantly installed upon his knee, and a perfect battery of questions was established on either side. Interrogatories and answers flew back and forth, almost without cessation or intermission, till the little lady was dismissed at bedtime; and the beautiful tenderness and playfulness of his manner to this lamb of his flock, as contrasted with the usual seriousness and reserve of his demeanour, marked a feature in his character which I shall never cease to remember, or, I trust, to be instructed by. The incident followed soon after the only direct collision in controversy which I ever had with Dr. Spencer, in which sharper things had been said upon both sides than the later judgment of either party would probably have justified; and it was therefore peculiarly pleasant and memorable to me. The light of this genial and delicate tenderness, irradiated and placed in new aspects the character of which the public saw only the colder and less gracious side.

The same qualities of character which led Dr. Spencer to interest himself so peculiarly and familiarly in the children of his people, led him also to meet with a most attractive readiness and warmth those who came to converse with him on the subject of personal religion. He studied their several cases with the utmost earnestness, and laboured intently to assist and guide them. All the forms of reserve which he gathered around him, in general society, as if to

shield himself from the scrutiny of the public, all the aspect of abruptness and occasional harshness with which he met those who, as he thought, were intruding on his rights or his privilege, were instantly and spontaneously laid aside with those who came to him in any spiritual perplexity or distress; and with a rare assiduity and fidelity, as well as with a very unusual power of conversational argument and appeal, he applied himself to the removal of every honest difficulty from their minds, to the breaking down of every fabricated excuse, and the carrying of their hearts to the Person and the Cross of the Saviour of the world. Of course this was a relation in which I never personally met him. But his published writings bear witness to his extraordinary skill and success in this species of labour,—a success owing partly, of course, to his mental constitution, but essentially, and perhaps more largely, to the real and hearty interest which he took in every honest and earnest inquirer. And some of those who have had experience of it have assured me that the delicate, sinuous, yet vigorous, masterly and inevitable manner in which he developed their hidden experience, met their resistances, overcame their objections, anticipated their excuses, and rained the warnings, the promises, and all the urgencies of the Gospel upon them, until they yielded and gave themselves to Christ, will never be effaced from their recollection, and cannot be surpassed in the impressions which they have left of fidelity and power.

The conversation of Dr. Spencer on general subjects, unless when his mind was otherwise pre-occupied, was always animated, energetic and instructive; and now and then his sentences flashed with a rapid and trenchant wit of which I never saw any trace in his public discoursing. His wit more frequently took the form of irony or satire, than of any fanciful or humorous turns of speech; and once or twice I remember to have heard from him a sudden and original reduction to absurdity of some argument against which he was reasoning or inveighing, which seemed to indicate that that was among the more frequent and familiar of his mental processes. As a faithful narrator of the impressions which he made on me, I am bound to add that he seemed to me to see rather the weak points than the strong points, the points of marked irregularity and defect rather than those of proportion and beauty, in the character of the men with whom he was contemporaneous, and especially of those with whom he had differed. I have heard him speak of distinguished divines in the Presbyterian Church, and in his own branch of it, with a pungent freedom of characterization, which in a man of another constitution would have argued an unfriendly or hostile temper towards them, but which in him I think showed only this peculiarity of mind, unaccompanied by any real acerbity of spirit. He was sensitive, however, and was subject to great occasional depression of spirits. And when his feelings had been wounded, he undoubtedly felt the smart of it long; so that something of this may occasionally have mingled in his conversation at such times.

The sermons of Dr. Spencer undoubtedly owed very much of their effectiveness to the strong personal qualities of the man, and especially to his great voluntary force. He seemed sometimes to carry his hearers by the sheer energy of volition to the conclusions which he announced. Whether their minds had fully grasped his argument or not, he so far governed them by the pressure of his will, for the time at least, that few, I presume, ever went from the house in which he had preached without having been impressed and moved. There were times, too, in his preaching, when this remarkable and mastering power, co-operating happily with a vivid development of logic and thought, and a cogent and potent strain of appeal, produced the effect of noble eloquence. It seemed to me more than once, when I heard him, that if he could have been perfectly liberated at certain points from the last imperceptible restraints of that reserve which still clung to him like a nature, and could have poured his whole soul into his speech

with a perfect *abandon* to the impulse of his theme, then, with this great power of will, and with his very eminent logical faculty, he would have surpassed almost any preacher of the day. There may have been some passages in his discourses where this was realized, but I never heard them. The final finish of an utter unreserve, which would have put the crown of light on his so muscular and urgent speech, seemed to me to be wanting in him.

Aside from these qualities of which I have spoken, I was always struck in his sermons, more than with any thing else, with occasional passages of a certain weird and mysterious loftiness of suggestion, which seemed to show that the imaginative element was naturally strong in him, and that if it had been cherished, it would have been more prominent than any other. I frequently heard arguments from him with which I could not altogether agree, and saw positions taken by him which failed to command the deference of my judgment; but I was always impressed with this imaginative power in him; the more, perhaps, because it was not generally recognised. I remember a sermon of his on the Mystery of Redemption,—I am not sure whether it is contained in the volumes of his published Sermons or not,—which he preached in my own pulpit, and which I was providentially permitted to hear, in which the vastness and darkness of the experience of Death, as confessed by all men, was presented as a kind of counterpoise to the asserted mysteriousness of the system of Redemption; and in which his words, his sentences, his whole manner and tone, seemed suffused with an almost palpable influence from the august mystery of which he was discoursing. The whole paragraph, as uttered by him, was easy to be understood, was entirely perspicuous and natural in construction and imagery; and yet it seemed strangely shrouded and loaded with an atmosphere of mystery,—an atmosphere which it gradually diffused through the house. The words shed dark suggestions on the hearers. The heart grew chill and palpitated under them, till I am sure that all who heard it must have felt that the dark and supernal glory of Death had been meditated by the speaker until, as a Presence, it had dominated his thoughts and toned his words. The impression grew constantly weightier to the end, as the sentences successively shuddered forth in the deepest bass of his peculiar and arresting voice. In this respect, the sermon, or at least that part of it, still remains in my thoughts as one of the most remarkable it has been my fortune to hear.

In all our local Societies, for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ within the bounds of the city,—especially in the City Bible Society, of which he was in fact the father,—Dr. Spencer took a lively and efficient interest. The same tendencies of mind which led him to concentrate his sympathies and his energies very much on his own parish, led him also to appreciate highly such Societies, and to labour diligently to advance and invigorate them. Whoever else might be discouraged or backward in the effort to sustain and extend their usefulness, he never was. He was an example of regularity and punctuality in his attendance upon their quarterly and annual business meetings; and often I have seen his powerful influence interposed at some crisis, encouraging the irresolute, resisting those who would counsel any abatement of their efficiency, and urging instead to loftier plans and wider effort. In this respect the city suffered an important loss when he was removed from it; and it will owe him a debt of remembrance and gratitude as long as its history as a city continues.

The last illness of Dr. Spencer was protracted and painful, far beyond the ordinary experience of men, and it brought into bright and impressive exhibitio those parts of his character which were really admirable and unusual. With his robust and massive frame, and his long habit of perfect health,—enabling him to perform without difficulty or fatigue such labours as few are prepared to undertake,—any sickness must of course have been a burden to him,—the severer and more trying, because it was rare. But in his case the sickness itself was of

a nature to task his utmost power of endurance. An internal malignant disease consumed some organs whose processes are necessary to the maintenance of life; and it must have been like carrying, day after day, a literal fire among his members, to sustain the pain which this inflicted. Yet when I met him upon the street, a few weeks only before his death, although his usually prompt and firm step was wavering and weak, and his cheek was blanched with the fearful experience through which he was passing, and though his tone was tremulous and despondent as he spoke of the prospect of resuming his labours, there was no one syllable of repining or impatience in all that he said, and he even referred to the pain he had suffered in a way to lead me to think of it as a matter not extreme or unusual. When afterward, learning that he was confined to his bed again, and that it was doubtful if he would ever rise from it, I called to inquire for him, he was unable to see me, and the groans wrung from him by the excess of his pain were audible on the door-step. Yet he met the whole, even to the last, with a settled and resolute Christian patience, a supreme resignation to the will of God, which was only appropriately as well as affectionately recognised by Dr. Spring in his Funeral Sermon, and which no man, although of the hardest nature, could possibly have exhibited without the same Christian experience, without the same sustaining trust. The thickest cloud of his own distress, the heavy darkness which gathered over him through the sudden failure of the reason of one who was very dear to him, was still parted and gilded, if it was not dispersed, by the assurance he felt of God's goodness and wisdom, and of his acceptance of himself through Christ. And so, without repining or murmuring, he struggled bravely through, and passed, I cannot doubt, from his furnace on the earth to his mansion in the skies!

I am sensible, my dear Sir, as I look over what I have written, that there is little in it of much importance, or, I fear, of much fitness to your purpose. Dr. Spencer was pre-eminently a man who must be lived with, or very frequently and familiarly met, in order to be truly and thoroughly known. His outward and public manner he seemed to wear oftentimes like a corslet; and the throbbings of his heart were only to be felt by those who leaned on his heart at home, or whom he clasped in the warm embrace of an intimate friendship. Such a relation to him, as I said at the outset, I never sustained. Many things prevented it; our difference of age, of constitution, of opinion, and of connection; especially, latterly, our total disagreement on themes which to both of us seemed important. I have had but these general impressions, therefore, derived from occasional and fragmentary observation, to communicate to you. But I am happy in having the opportunity to do this; both because I represent, probably, in what I have said, the prevalent or at least one prominent impression which the public mind took from him, and because I gladly pay my tribute to one whose laborious and indefatigable life, whose remarkable powers, earnest fidelity to what he deemed duty, great success in 'winning souls,' exemplary and intelligent charity to the poor, and saintly and heroic death, will cause his name to be held, even amid this changing city, in long, honoured and affectionate remembrance.

With great regard, I am ever yours,

R. S. STORRS, JR.