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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.

years, while they ripened his judgment, wrought no abatement of his enthusiasm and energy. A short time before he died, I received a letter from him, in which he manifested a willingness to embark in an enterprise, new, difficult and laborious. Speaking of ministerial education in connection with our General Assembly, he says,—“Had Providence permitted, I should have entered the important field you opened to me with *a will*, and laboured in it with a zeal and enthusiasm I never exhibited before. There is no place on earth I prefer to it; none so important.” Thus he wrote, Nov. 13th, 1854.

I have given facts sufficient to justify what I have said of the characteristics of Dr. Bullard. He passed from earth by a death of violence, at the period of his greatest strength and highest usefulness. But he lived long enough to have an influence decided, wide-spread and enduring, on that Great Valley of the West, to whose religious culture he had consecrated his energies.

Yours truly,

THOMAS BRAINERD.

SAMUEL GOVER WINCHESTER.*

1829—1841.

SAMUEL GOVER WINCHESTER, a son of Samuel and Eliza (Gover) Winchester, was born at Rock Run, Harford County, Md., on the 17th of February, 1805. His mother, whose parents belonged to the Society of Friends, died when he was about fifteen months old, so that he had no recollection of her; but she committed her infant child to the care of her surviving sisters, who were eminently pious persons in communion with the Methodist Episcopal Church, and were every way qualified for the responsible trust which was thus devolved upon them. Though he was separated from them during the greater part of the period of his education, they kept up a constant correspondence with him, and their affectionate and earnest letters made impressions upon his mind which, in subsequent life, he considered as having had much to do with the formation of his religious character. At the age of eleven, he was put to a boarding school at Bel Air, Md., under the instruction of a Mr. Davis, where he continued four years—till the year 1820. He then went to Baltimore to reside with his father, and there became a pupil of Mr. D. W. Boisseau,—a man eminently skilled in teaching, and distinguished for the fervour of his piety. From early childhood he had discovered a great fondness for oratory; and, by this time, it seemed to have grown into a passion. He was instrumental, during his connection with this school, in forming a Society among the pupils for improvement in declamation; and in these exercises he used to take the most intense delight. He soon projected the plan of connecting with the other exercises that of debating; but this suggestion found little favour with his fellow-students, on the ground that they felt themselves wholly inadequate to it. He, however, shrewdly contrived to engage them in a warm discussion on this very subject, and then sportively and triumphantly remarked to them that they had been ardently debating to show that they

* Presbyterian for 1841—MS. from Mrs. Winchester.

were unable to debate. The result was that his proposal immediately took effect, and the new exercise became so popular as entirely to supersede that which formed the original object of the Association.

In the autumn of 1824, he left school, and in January, 1825, was matriculated as a student of Law in the University of Maryland, under David Hoffman, Esq., Professor of Law. He entered upon his studies with great vigour and alacrity, feeling that the profession opened a fine field for his peculiar talents, and resolved to be satisfied with nothing short of standing at the head of it. Shortly after he began his course, a "Law Institute" was formed by the students, for the purpose of discussing questions connected with their studies; and in forming and conducting this association, he took an active part. He was particularly interested in what he called the philosophy of the science,—in tracing out the reasons of enactments, and the origin of customs,—discovering those expedients for evasion which the Law anticipated, and marking the wisdom of its provisions. The Professor offered a premium of a gold medal to the author of the best Essay on any given subject. Mr. Winchester resolved to try for the prize, and had actually made considerable progress in an Essay entitled "*A brief history of the potestas alienandi* from the earliest times." But before it was completed, his thoughts were directed with great intensity to the subject of religion. He had been, for several years, an attendant upon an Episcopal Church; but was now induced occasionally to attend in the afternoon on the ministry of the Rev. William Nevins, of the First Presbyterian Church; and, after a while, became a member of Mr. Nevins' Bible class, which included also some from the Second Presbyterian Church, and was conducted partly by the Rev. John Breckenridge. In March, 1827, an extensive revival of religion commenced in the two congregations,—of which many in the Bible class, and young Winchester among the rest, were reckoned as subjects. On the 6th of May following, he was admitted to the Communion of the Church under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. Nevins.

He had now nearly completed his studies preparatory to admission to the Bar; and his prospects of success in his profession were scarcely exceeded by those of any young man of his time. But the religious change which had been wrought in him immediately suggested the inquiry whether it was not his duty to serve God in the ministry of the Gospel; and, after pondering the question most devoutly and earnestly, he felt constrained to return to it an affirmative answer; and that, notwithstanding some of his nearest friends, including his father, strongly opposed his taking such a step. In coming to this determination, he felt that his plans of worldly ambition must all be sacrificed, as well as the cherished hopes of his friends disappointed; but his convictions of duty did not allow him to hesitate which side of the alternative to choose.

In November, 1827, he became a member of the Theological Seminary at Princeton, where he was sustained chiefly by the relics of an estate, to which, as the representative of his mother, he was lawful heir. In the autumn of 1829, he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Baltimore, and shortly after preached his first sermon in Mr. Nevins' Church. In the spring of 1830, while he was yet pursuing his studies at Princeton, he was unanimously called to be the Pastor of the Sixth Presbyterian Church in

Philadelphia, then vacant by the removal of the Rev. John H. Kennedy. He accepted the call, and was ordained and installed, May 4, 1830.

On the 8th of June following, he was married to Grace, daughter of Alexander and Frances (Crane) Mactier, of Baltimore,—a lady every way qualified for the important sphere in which her lot was to be cast. They had four children, all of whom survived their father.

After a residence in Philadelphia of about seven years, during which time he maintained his position as a minister with great dignity and ability, his health became much impaired, and he determined, in accordance with the advice of his friends, to visit the Southern States, and the Island of Cuba. By this tour, his health was decidedly improved, and a new impulse seemed to have been given to his physical constitution. In the spring of 1837, he resigned his charge, and was employed as an Agent of the General Assembly's Board of Domestic Missions. In the autumn of the same year, he received a unanimous call to the large and flourishing Presbyterian Congregation in Natchez, Mi. Believing that the change of climate would be favourable to his health, and that his field of usefulness would at least not be contracted by a removal thither, he accepted the call and removed with his family to Natchez. Here he continued in the faithful and successful discharge of his duties for nearly four years.

In May, 1841, he came to Philadelphia as a delegate to the General Assembly; and it was no common testimony of respect, considering his age, that he should have come within two votes of being chosen Moderator of that venerable Body.

Having leave of absence from his congregation for six months, he availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded him, to visit his friends, and travel somewhat extensively in the North. After stopping a little at Niagara Falls, and making the tour of Canada, during which time his health was evidently in an enfeebled state, he returned to the city of New York, with the intention of soon pursuing his homeward way. On the 22d of August, he preached in the Reformed Dutch Church in Lafayette Place an impressive and earnest Discourse from the text—"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." During the following week, he made a brief visit to West Point, and when he returned, it was manifest that he was seriously indisposed. His case gradually assumed a more alarming character, and terminated in congestion of the brain. At half past five o'clock on Tuesday morning, the 31st of August, it was discovered that his spirit had passed away. He died at the house of his relative, Alexander G. Mactier, Esq. His remains were conveyed to Baltimore, and placed in the Mactier vault, in Green Mount Cemetery.

The following is a list of Mr. Winchester's publications;—Companion for the Sick, altered from Willison's Afflicted Man's Companion; with additions, 1833. Christian Counsel to the Sick, 1836. A Discourse at Oakland College, 1838. Family Religion, 1841. Theatrical amusements.

FROM THE REV. WILLIAM ENGLS, D. D.

PHILADELPHIA, September 25, 1848.

Rev. and dear Sir: In compliance with your request, I transmit you a few recollections of my much esteemed and lamented friend, the late Rev. Samuel G. Winchester.

In regard to his personal appearance, he was above the medium height, finely proportioned, erect and graceful in his carriage, with a face in which dignity and benevolence were happily blended. When animated in conversation or in public speaking, his eye expressed his emotions, and beamed with light. His countenance in repose was indicative of gentleness; but when the occasion demanded, it could express firm determination, and even severity. In the pulpit, or on the floor of a deliberative body, although his appearance was youthful, his person was commanding, his self-possession perfect, his gesticulation easy and graceful, his voice full and well modulated, and his whole manner peculiarly oratorical.

From the commencement of his ministerial course, Mr. Winchester was strongly inclined to cultivate a habit of extemporaneous speaking, and was evidently trammelled by notes. In an experiment, always perilous to a young pastor, from its tendency to mere verbiage, he may have often failed; but, careful to arrange his thoughts in the study, practice gave him the most desirable facility in expressing them before a public assembly. During his last visit to the North, there was perceptible a very marked improvement of his pulpit efforts. The frame-work of his sermons was more logical, the thoughts richer and more condensed, and the expression of them more forcible and fluent. In doctrinal preaching, in which he often indulged, as well from a sense of duty as a natural predilection, he was, as I have heard some of his stated and most intelligent hearers say, highly instructive. He excelled too in his hortatory addresses, and was often particularly pungent in his appeals to the conscience. Imagination was not his predominant faculty; and yet he was by no means deficient in it. It was perhaps more perceptible in the freedom of familiar conversation, than in his public addresses. The bent of his mind was for argument and discussion; and in deliberative bodies he was often listened to with pleasure, if not surprise, for the happy facility he displayed in developing a point of controversy, particularly when it related to ecclesiastical law. If he was not always right, he was at least always plausible and ingenious. His appearance before the Assembly of 1834 will long be remembered. The subject under discussion related to the grounds of appeal. He was young, he was comparatively unknown to the great majority of the members; and nothing unusual was expected of him when he took the floor. The subject was a dry one, and seemingly afforded but little scope for the display of oratorical power; yet it was the kind of subject with which he loved to grapple. In the discussion of it, the energy of his mind was fully tasked; his eye kindled, the best points of his naturally oratorical manner were brought forth, and with the self-possession of a practised debater, he reasoned his points with a cogency and fluency which carried conviction to many minds, and held the attention of the house for more than two hours. This effort, like many preceding ones in the inferior Courts of the Church, afforded the requisite proof that, had he been admitted to the Bar, agreeably to his first intentions, he would have become one of its most distinguished ornaments. Esteemed as he was as a preacher of the Gospel, he displayed still higher power as a debater; and familiar as I was with his manner on such occasions, I cannot recall the instance in which he was betrayed into discourteous warmth by strong opposition, or even defeat.

Mr. Winchester was exemplary in his domestic relations, warm in his attachments, true in his friendships, and amiable in his intercourse with others. He was ardently attached to the doctrines and order of the Presbyterian Church, and always prepared to defend them. He frequently contributed to the periodical press, and wrote several original works, which were creditable alike to his head and his heart.

I am, dear Sir, very truly yours,

WILLIAM ENGLES.