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A
HISTORY
OF THE
Presbyterian Church in America,

FROM ITS ORIGIN UNTIL THE YEAR 1760.

WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITS EARLY MINISTERS.

BY THE
REV. RICHARD WEBSTER,
LATE PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MAUCH CHUNK, PA.

WITH
A Memoir of the Author,
BY THE REV. C. VAN RENSSELAER, D.D.

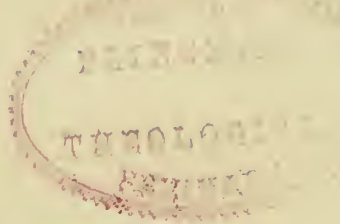
AND
An Historical Introduction,
BY THE REV. WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, D.D.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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NOTICE.

THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY resolved, in 1853, to publish the Rev. RICHARD WEBSTER'S "History of the Presbyterian Church." A committee, consisting of C. VAN RENSSELAER, JOHN C. BACKUS, and SAMUEL AGNEW, was appointed, with power to take measures to carry the resolution into effect. Various circumstances interfered to prevent the publication of the work until the present time.

Since the committee was appointed, the basis of the Presbyterian Historical Society has been enlarged so as to include other branches of the Presbyterian church. It is, therefore, proper to state that the Society itself is not to be considered as committed to any of the controversial statements of the present history; but merely as issuing it under its general patronage and authority, after the manner of other Historical Societies.

This volume of Church History is the first volume of the PUBLICATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

C. VAN RENSSELAER,
Chairman Ex. Com. of P. H. S.

DECEMBER 22, 1856.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE

REV. RICHARD WEBSTER.

THE writer of this sketch was on familiar terms of intercourse with the late Rev. RICHARD WEBSTER. Born and brought up in the same city, contemporaries in age, and students in the same theological seminary, a friendship existed between us which ripened with the progress of time and was interrupted only by death. My friend, in his will, bequeathed to me his historical manuscripts: they are now published in the same condition in which he left them.

In our last interview, I asked Mr. Webster when his history would be ready for the press. He answered, with a smile, "Never; I am all the time making corrections and additions." The truth is, that his work was left in an imperfect state; but it will nevertheless be highly appreciated by the public as a valuable repository of Presbyterian history and biography.

Another remark I may make here respecting his work is, that it only professes to give the early portion of the history of our church. The period embraced in the present volume is a little more than half a century, and is limited to the reunion of the Synods of New York and Philadelphia, in 1758. The reader, therefore, must not expect to find a *complete* history of the Presbyterian church in the United States. The early por-

tion, which is exceedingly rich in events and in illustrious men, possesses a peculiar interest; and this is the portion comprehended within the scope of Mr. Webster's researches, now published.

It is my purpose to make a few remarks on the character of the lamented author of this volume, chiefly in connection with his devotion to history; and to incorporate into this sketch, on other points, the views and opinions of brethren who were more intimately acquainted with his ministerial character and habits of life.

RICHARD WEBSTER was born in the city of Albany, New York, on the 14th of July, 1811, and was the youngest child of Charles R. Webster and Cynthia Steele. His father was a prominent bookseller in that city, and publisher of an influential newspaper. Richard's love of books and of newspaper-writing was undoubtedly nurtured by his father's occupation. His mother belonged to one of the good old families in Albany whose praise is in the churches. The young child was trained according to the principles of the covenant of promise, and was brought up under the ministry and ordinances of the First Presbyterian Church, which was at that time under the pastoral care of the Rev. Dr. William Neill, and subsequently of the Rev. Dr. Henry R. Weed and the Rev. Dr. John N. Campbell, the latter of whom is still pastor of the church. Richard Webster early professed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and, while the "dew of youth" was upon him, united himself with the followers of the Redeemer. The principal facts in his life will be presented in extracts from the personal reminiscences and testimony of others.

God gave to Richard Webster a good, vigorous intellect. Even a casual observer could not fail to see the flashes of intelligence which emanated from no ordinary mental constitution. In the true acceptation of the word he might be called a talented man,—sprightly, however, rather than logical, and original and ready rather than very profound. Well cultivated in early life, his mind expanded under the influence of the collegiate and theological course, and received great strength and discipline from the higher studies incident to his profession. His intellectual powers were far above the average of those of his ministerial brethren; and, although not in the first rank, occupied by the privileged few alone, he was certainly

prominent among the many who belong to the class of able, well-endowed, useful men.

With a retentive and excellent memory, Mr. Webster treasured up what he acquired. He was a hard student all his life. His professional education was regarded only as a means to an end. The preliminary course had but prepared him to continue his literary and religious investigations with the greater zeal and perseverance. Many, it is to be feared, err in placing too great reliance upon the discipline and knowledge early acquired, instead of aiming at a steady and progressive improvement by means of their preparatory resources. Mr. Webster, instead of relaxing from study, made it his daily work. He became more and more familiar with the original languages of Scripture, and prosecuted his theological studies to an extent quite unusual among the temptations of an active missionary life. If not a very learned man, he was more so than many who, owing to circumstances, have attained a higher reputation.

Mr. Webster possessed warm social feelings. The emotional part of his nature was simple and earnest, and was a true balance to his insatiable love of knowledge. When free from restraint and among friends, he loved to indulge his natural humour. Few persons, indeed, had more wit, more genuine playfulness, a more rich vein of native fun. This exuberant capacity for amusing others often manifested itself in pleasant and jocular remarks producing irresistible laughter. His nature was eminently social; but deafness interrupted, especially in the latter part of his life, this genial flow of soul. In the family, his affectionate disposition showed itself in endearing and delightful manifestations.

Mr. Webster's piety was sincere and full of good fruits. With much of the emotional in his nature, religion drew forth the homage of his soul. His affections were set upon things above. He was a holy man. No one could mistake the purposes of his life. His heart was in the ministry of reconciliation. Devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ was his reigning passion. He had consecrated himself to his Master's service with a view to preach the gospel among the heathen; but, when Providence seemed to throw obstacles in this direction of his choice, he joyfully went to a missionary-field at home, doubtless under the guidance of his heavenly Father, who greatly blessed him in his labours. Living a zealous, self-denying, and active life, he accomplished much for the advancement of the Re-

deemer's kingdom. A tender compassion for souls was the beauty and power of his ministerial character. A sweet, earnest love, that came from God, enabled him to toil in the destitute coal-regions of Pennsylvania, edifying the saints and exhorting sinners to repentance. The Rev. A. B. Cross, who preached his funeral sermon, fitly chose for his text, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe; as ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye should walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory:" 1 Thess. ii. 10-12.

The Rev. F. DE W. WARD, of Geneseo, New York, was the class-mate and room-mate of Mr. Webster at Union College and at Princeton Theological Seminary. Mr. Ward was deeply afflicted by the intelligence of the death of his friend, and sent the following notice for publication in the PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE. I thought it expedient, however, to reserve it for the present sketch:—

"GENESEO, New York.

"I am a mourner. A friend, greatly respected for his richly-stored mind,—a Christian brother, dearly beloved for his pious heart,—has fallen before the great destroyer, 'whose shafts none can repel.' Rev. Richard Webster, despite the prayers and tears of a weeping family and a large circle of loving parishioners and clerical associates, has been called away from us. Our loss is his gain. He has doubtless gone to join the company of 'the just made perfect.'

"He was my fellow-collegian at Schenectady, my room-mate for nearly three years at Princeton, a most faithful and valued correspondent during my ten years' missionary-life in India, and a visitor than whom none was more welcome to my home. I have known him long and well, and have loved him the more with every year's extended acquaintance.

"His conversion occurred at Albany, his native city, and was *whole-hearted*. When he united with the church, he laid upon the altar of his Saviour mental capacities of rare excellence and power. His was a rapid mind, a poetic genius, a retentive memory, quick wit, great ability of application, indomitable perseverance, untiring energy, and *all devoted to Christ!* In naming these characteristics I do not flatter. The grave is a place where truth alone is to be spoken.

"I said that his conversion was deep,—'whole-hearted.' He has told me (not with ostentation: that was far from him) with what pleasure he waited the hour

of noon, when his law-employer would go to dinner, leaving him alone to read his Bible and enjoy his private devotions *undisturbed*. Nor could I detect, during our long acquaintance, any diminution of this devotional temper,—any thing that would seem to say, ‘Oh that I were as in days past!’ I have rarely met one who so loved his Bible. He had a ‘Woodworth’ edition, and with loving intensity did he daily read and study its pages. That dear book!—I think I see it still, as it used to lie upon his table,—plain in binding, plainer still in paper and type; but it contained a stream to which he was ever resorting, to drink of its life-giving waters.

“He was in heart a foreign missionary. Ahmednuggar was the field he had chosen. Upon the eve of departure Providence said, ‘You must not go.’ The prohibition seemed strange, when the call was so loud from the grave of Gordon Hall and his devoted associates,—‘Send the gospel to the land of Brahma.’ Our brother grieved and wept over the disappointment. But his was not the disposition to say, ‘If I cannot go where I would I will turn to another profession.’ With the same self-devotion which would have sent him to India, he sought for a destitute locality on Christian ground. He found it among the mountains of Pennsylvania. The history of his life there, others’ pens will, I trust, give to the church and the world. Our mutual friend and classmate, Dr. D. X. Junkin, told me, in May last, that, ‘notwithstanding the sad disadvantage of his deafness, not a member of our class had accomplished more, if as much, for our church as Mr. Webster,—nearly a score of churches (if I am not misinformed) owing their existence to his agency.’

“My last letter from his loved pen contained a warm request to come and see him. Would that I had done so! And shall all that he wrote find a grave with his body? Those thousand pages of manuscript, upon almost every possible subject:—his researches in church history,—his letters, full to overflowing of fact and thought and spiritual wit,—essays, orations, and poems,—his discourse upon the death of the missionary Barr,—his many, many sermons, exegetical, doctrinal, and hortatory:—is there no one to collect all these, read them, and compile a volume of ‘Remains’? My judgment is greatly at fault if such a volume would not be well received by the Christian public, while the proceeds might go towards a family left in far from affluent circumstances.

“I am a mourner. Two of my best-beloved friends and zealous co-workers in the Christian field are in their graves:—*Lawrence* in India, *Webster* in America,—kindred in heart, and one now in heavenly worship. May my last end be like theirs!

“Adieu, my much-loved brother! In the words with which you closed a letter to me years ago, ‘Very pleasant hast thou been to me; thy love to me was passing the love of women!’ Be it mine so to live, that, in the general revelation, these eyes shall see thee again in peace, these ears shall hear, and this heart shall again commingle and coalesce with the heart of him for whom I mourn. W.”

In order to exhibit more clearly some of the traits of the Rev. Richard Webster's character, I will lay before the reader a graphic letter of the Rev. BENJAMIN J. WALLACE, editor of the Presbyterian Quarterly Review, Philadelphia, who was a classmate of our departed brother in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey.

"PRESBYTERIAN HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA, }
July 9, 1856.

"MY DEAR SIR:—

"It is a melancholy pleasure to comply with your request, to endeavour to give those not so well acquainted with our departed friend Webster as were you and myself, some idea of his character as it impressed me.

"He came to the Seminary at Princeton while I was a student there. I think I was a year with him before I knew much of him. We were not in the same class, and he was not a person much given to seeking new friends. I cannot now recall the occasion of our intimate acquaintance; but I remember well that it was immediate, and a source of great pleasure to me while I continued at Princeton.

"I may as well state at once that the keynote of Richard Webster's character, as it was revealed to me in the confidence of youthful friendship, was one hardly suspected by those who knew him in after years. *He was a poet.* I do not mean by this merely that he wrote verses, or only that he took great delight in the works of the great masters of the imagination. My meaning is, that he was a poet in the essence of his nature, and that he had all the special traits which go to make up that strange and interesting character. No one can gain the right position from which to see him without keeping this in view. His mind was indeed so absorbed in later times by things which he considered much more important, that he did not give much time to poetry as an art; but it was impossible to root out from his nature its constituent elements. I remember, at this distance of time, but two of his poetic ideas, and I will mention them as specimens of his mood of early thought.

"One occurs in a *critique* on Shakspeare. 'Artists have found,' Webster says, 'great difficulty in painting the different shades of white in nature; and, in order to bring them out, they have generally contrasted them with dark colours. Writers have met with a similar difficulty in delineating the female character. Their plan is to contrast it with impurity or ruggedness. Shakspeare alone, like Nature, *shades whiteness with white.*' Mrs. Jameson's 'Characteristics of Women' might almost be taken as a commentary on this admirable criticism.

"The other thought—or fancy—occurs in a beautiful poem, the finest, I think, he ever wrote—'The Funeral of Shelley.' The body of this exquisite, though, it must be regretfully added, infidel poet, was, it will be remembered, burned on

the shores of the Gulf of Spezia, by Byron and others. The flame, Medwin declares, in blazing up, was coloured like the rainbow. Webster says, it

‘Gracefully curl’d up,
As if from offer’d flowers, that to the flame
Gave all their beauty.’

“You, my dear sir, who knew Webster so well, will be able, with this clue, better to understand his peculiar nature. You will better appreciate his acuteness, his peculiar kind of shrewdness, his playful fancy, his satirical turn, his reverence for every thing old, his passion for books, his power of living within himself and

‘Chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy,’

and, in fine, that slight dash of eccentricity which you must have often noticed. That he kept his poetic nature so much to himself is one of the marvels of his peculiar genius.

“Richard Webster has never been appreciated. That he bore up so bravely, and, on the whole, patiently and meekly,—that he laboured kindly on in an obscure place for a lifetime, with no more restlessness than was betrayed in an occasional satiric hit at some of our *famous* men,—is a wonder, attributable partly to the nobleness of his nature, and, we must devoutly add, partly to the grace of God, which was given to him in no common measure. It was his misfortune, as men estimate things, to have a body of most frail and nervous organization: he reminded one of Charles Lamb, only that he was sharper, and thus not so genial. He was very deaf, even at the Seminary; and it grew upon him steadily with increasing years. He was very near-sighted, and he grew prematurely old. A man who always appeared to me young, I found spoken of as old,—almost (partly from his connection with ancient historical documents) as an antique. These defects, especially his deafness, interfered materially with his power as a public speaker. He heard none of the ordinary sounds of nature in the fields or woods; he heard nothing of the mixed sounds of a great city: he heard nothing, he once wrote to me, but ‘the human voice raised more loudly than usual.’

“This comparative isolation from society, and physical unfitness for much of the business of life, drove him to history. Passionately devoted to the Presbyterian church, holding our Faith and Order to be the very primitive form and mould of apostolic truth, he could conceive of nothing more noble and venerable than Calvinism and Presbyterianism. Around the church he poured the wealth of his reverence, his imagination, and his affection; and by how much he was restrained from being a great actor in the present, he determined to chronicle what was great in the past. It was impossible to confine so active, so versatile, so eager, and so discursive a mind to one small spot: it lay in his nature to expand itself; and, if he could not be an ecclesiastical statesman, his instincts led him next to be an ecclesiastical historian. Yet, after all,—for we would not allow the partiality of

friendship, even over his grave, to lead us from the strict truth,—as he would always and under all circumstances have been rather artist than statesman, so he had not so much the large comprehensiveness and far-seeing sagacity of the true historian, as the keen observation, the acute insight, the delight in an event, the homelike feeling, the fondness for anecdote and incident, which make the biographer. And it is no mean thing to be known to after-times, for how long we may not yet say, as *the biographer of the Presbyterian church in America*.

“Of Mr. Webster’s course as a pastor, as a member of church courts, and in the varied relations of the ministry, others can speak better than myself. We were separated, during his ministry, by distance, and by our position in different branches of our church, and differed materially as to some important church questions. But I can well believe all that I have heard of his excellence in these relations. I think, however, that I can appreciate, better than those who knew him later in life, the difficulties which he overcame in himself before he settled quietly down among the mountain-valleys, as a missionary and pastor to a scattered, and in a great degree rude, population, limiting his ambition to the founding of a presbytery, of which the younger ministers called him the father. His fervid, discursive, and somewhat romantic nature was more characteristically shown in his consecrating himself to the missionary work in India, whither he would have gone had not circumstances entirely beyond his control prevented him. It was, perhaps, the tenderness of his heavenly Father which shielded him from trials which he might not have been able to bear, accepting the sincere and earnest intent for the accomplished deed.

“What was especially admirable in Webster was the practical good sense with which he accepted his narrow conditions, feeling that God had fixed his lot, and addressing himself with constant and patient industry to every field of exertion which lay within his reach. There is something of the true sublime in this self-abnegation, the laying aside of vain imaginings and the dissolving of day-dream, to accomplish the plain, practical work given us to do. No one can be sure what he is fit for, until the providence of God confirm his aspirations; but one thing we may all do:—we may heartily and cheerfully address ourselves to whatever work is actually allotted to us, be it great or small. Webster exemplified this greatness. ‘He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.’

“His death-scene was very interesting. You will permit me to refer to it, as illustrative of his inner or more hidden character. I think it is Göethe who remarks that the poet is one who carries all through life the fresh feelings of childhood. There belongs to such intensely vital organisms as Webster’s—where there is no robustness, but vivid nervous energy—a kind of elastic tenacity of life, such as we see in children, who rebound from attacks of disease that lay strong men low. Accordingly, he could not believe that he was dying. Like all of us, he had some idea about death; but it was not realized. ‘Doctor,’ he said, ‘you

must be mistaken. I cannot be dying. I feel naturally; I am in full possession of all my powers. I feel very much as I have always felt.' On being assured that his hours were numbered, he said, 'You must know best; but I never conceived of such a death.' There was, it will be observed, no thought of fear,—his preparation for death having been long since made,—but, mingling with his calm faith and trust, and with every other feeling suitable for a Christian's death-bed, there was a palpable CURIOSITY, a wonder at death, a gazing at this king of terrors, as though he were overrated,—a fresh, keen sensation, in view of this great crisis through which he was now to pass. 'It cannot be death,' he said; 'if it be, it is such a death as I never dreamed of.' It is not too much to believe that the Saviour, whom he had, amid great disappointment and difficulty, so unfalteringly and uncomplainingly served, kept all evil influences from that death-bed, gave him to part from life sweetly and pleasantly, and opened for him so gently the portals of heaven, as that the poet-Christian felt, in its loveliness, something so natural, that he said, 'I never dreamed of such a heaven. It is most glorious; but, what is wonderful, it is not strange. It is only a brighter home!'

"You have, my dear sir, so repeatedly assured me that I might write just what I pleased of our mutual friend, that I have perhaps indulged my feelings too much. The public may not be interested in my view of Richard Webster. I can only say that I can think of him no otherwise; and that, however imperfectly I have answered your expectation, I have done what I could.

"Very truly and respectfully yours,

"BENJAMIN J. WALLACE.

"The Rev. C. VAN RENSSELAER, D.D."

Having given the testimony of *classmates* at the college and seminary, who had abundant opportunities of discovering character, as well as tact in delineating it, I next present to the reader the testimony of a *parishioner*. The Rev. JAMES SCOTT, of Holmesburg, Pennsylvania, who was formerly a teacher at Mauch Chunk, attended on Mr. Webster's ministry, and partook of the hospitalities of the parsonage. Mr. Scott writes as follows:—

"HOLMESBURG, Pa., August, 1856.

"REV. DR. VAN RENSSELAER:—

"DEAR SIR:—It affords me much pleasure to learn that you are engaged in the publication of the late Rev. R. Webster's work on the History of the Presbyterian church in this country; and, in compliance with your request, it gives me great satisfaction to place at your disposal the following reminiscences of one whom I have esteemed as a friend, honoured as a minister, and loved as a father.

"About eight years ago, it was, in the providence of God, my lot to be em-

ployed as teacher in the grammar-school at Mauch Chunk. I was then a stranger in this land; and it requires the heart of a stranger to realize the full weight and preciousness of true Christian friendship. It was then and there that I was first made truly sensible of the reality of those bonds which unite the many members of the one mystical body. The Rev. Mr. Webster quickly sought me out, and extended to me a most cordial welcome. From that hour till the day I left for Princeton I found in his house a most grateful asylum. His friendship towards me increased day by day. His excellent library was at my service at all times, and his counsel was always good and seasonable. He threw around me a chain of such delightful circumstances as I never again expect to find in this world of change and turmoil. I need not say how fraught with instruction was the conversation of such a man. His learning was varied and extensive. He read much, and seemed to have remembered all he read. His memory for names of persons and places was proverbial.

“His Sabbath services were always interesting and instructive. The matter was excellent,—plain, doctrinal, practical, and experimental truths, often mingled with some appropriate illustrations, drawn from his favourite study,—history. As he was long deprived of the sense of hearing, it would be preposterous to judge of his pulpit performances by elocutional standards.

“He was earnest in his delivery, being sometimes moved even to tears.

“Again and again have I heard him, in a strain of extreme tenderness, expostulating with sinners, beseeching them, by the mercies of God, to turn from their evil ways and live.

“The low state of religion that prevailed for many years in Mauch Chunk greatly grieved him. During this period, the plaintive tone of the weeping prophet often characterized his pulpit services. Especially on one occasion I recollect how deeply he was affected. His heart seemed overwhelmed within him. I went, in company with a mutual friend of his and mine, with a view of administering some word of comfort. He freely unbosomed to us his whole soul; and truly his feelings were such as could arise from nothing less than the most vivid apprehension of spiritual things, the value of the soul, and the worth of the Saviour.

“But we can gain a clearer insight into the heart of the man from the following selections out of a correspondence stretching over the whole period of my seminary life, and up to my settlement in my present field.

“I am yours, fraternally,

“JAMES SCOTT.”

The following are extracts from the letters of Mr. Webster referred to in Mr. Scott's communication. These specimens of Christian correspondence with a young friend are highly creditable to head and heart:—

“The death of the excellent Dr. Miller brought to my mind sensibly the many and great obligations I owe to him. When I was about to leave the seminary he prayed with me, and parted with me most affectionately. I can never be thankful enough to God for his mercy to our beloved church in sparing him, through thirty-six years, to aid so efficiently in training her sons for the ministry. His venerated and beloved colleague may yet live to see many of us go before him to the dust. In our presbytery, every minister but Mr. Hunt was trained at Princeton.”

“We have just closed an interesting series of meetings at Nesquehoning. The attendance was large, regular, and solemn: ten persons confessed themselves deeply concerned about their souls. It was very encouraging.”

“Let nothing hinder you from taking a full course at the seminary. Who is sufficient for these things, even with the best training? Our church is suffering with half-educated men. ‘Workmen that need not to be ashamed’ are needed, greatly needed, in this day of lamentable and amazing indifference to the means of grace. In this place, swarming with people, I do not think more than fifty male heads of families attend any place of worship regularly; while of the younger men a larger proportion attend, but with what shocking carelessness! With sorrow I say it, mine is not a rare case. Sin reigns triumphantly, unto death of the soul as well as of the body. Seeing these things are so, how lamentable that our spirit is not stirred within us, as was Paul’s at Athens! There, the city was wholly given to idolatry; here, the whole world lieth in wickedness, worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator.”

“Now, my dear brother, God has led you in this land of strangers graciously, and permitted you to preach the gospel. Value highly the privilege, and magnify the grace of God in counting you worthy to be put in trust with the ministry. I have great confidence in your faithfulness as a student, and in your sincerity as a follower of Jesus. Desire much to be enabled to do great things for him: especially cultivate the spirit of a compassionate, suffering Saviour, that you may condescend to men of low estate, and weep with them that weep. Much is to be done in going from house to house; but it cannot be done without the preparation of heart which is from the Lord.”

“Have you made any arrangements yet as to your future field of labour? I trust that you will remember the Scripture rule of waiting for the Lord and asking counsel of him. He sets the bounds of our habitations, and opens the doors of usefulness. Oh, may he graciously direct you, and abundantly replenish you with the spirit of piety, with all saving knowledge, and with a large and blessed experience of the fulness of Christ! There are trials and perplexities in the exer-

cise of the ministry unexpected and wonderful. Paul prayed to be delivered from unreasonable and absurd men: we need the like deliverance, but, to escape them, we must needs go out of the world. Hence, there is nothing of such unspeakable importance and infinite comfort as a childlike trust in God and a sincere and hearty endeavour to know and to do God's will. How comfortable to be able to say, 'Lord, all my desire is before thee.' 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people.' 'My times are in thy hand.'

"You will feel the lack of Christian fellowship,—no one to understand your motives, to enter into your designs, to help you by example or counsel, sympathy or co-operation. How often will you be forced to realize, 'All seek their own;' and, judging you by themselves, they will attribute all that you do to selfish ends, to low-minded cunning.

"You will grieve to find them that seemed to be pillars savouring only the things that be of men, and caring only for the things which perish in the using. Even if you do not bitterly cry out, 'My soul is among lions,' you may suffer from being 'in a dry land where no water is.'

"Temptations will arise,—'musing, the fire burns; then spoke I with my tongue,'—as one weary of life, weary of the service of God:—temptations to sloth, to discouragement, to self-exaltation, unwisely comparing yourself with others. These temptations will harden the heart and hinder prayer.

"Above all things, be mindful that, as Christ was in this world, so are you in this world. He said, 'Yet I am not alone; he that sent me is with me.' May this be your comfort too!

"Let me hear from you, especially as to what has presented as a future field of labour.

"I wish you would, at some convenient time, write a letter to McKillip on the subject of his duty to his soul. His direction is Sacramento, California."

"You probably heard that, at White Haven, the fault in your public services is said to be that your prayers and sermons are too long. Remember they have been used to different ministrations,—short in length, not heavily laden with instruction, and off-hand in manner. You have been used to the ways of a well-trained people, who waited for instruction, and who listened that they might remember. But too many listen now only to be interested for the moment, and never remember, much less consider, except it be some striking saying or outlandish expression. 'Jesus spake unto them as they were able to bear it.' He used similitudes, 'and without a parable spake he not unto them.' The whole kingdom of nature furnishes analogies to aid us in understanding the mysteries of the kingdom of grace. So does the providence of God in the history of the past and the events of to-day. What use did Jesus make of the news that Pilate had cruelly murdered the Galileans at the altar? The tower of Siloam had

probably fallen years before; yet he turns the remembrance of it to account. What will suit a mind like yours, accustomed to the catechisms and the valuable teachings of an aged pastor, will repulse a mind untutored as a wild ass's colt. The Greenlander needs much pains to be taken with him before he can be satisfied with venison or turkey: to him, train-oil is at once a necessity and a luxury. Many a deceived heart feeds on ashes, of choice, and can scarcely stomach any thing else. We are sent as physicians to heal a dying world. They can neither relish nor profit by the strong meat, save in small quantities. Hence the great difficulty of dividing aright the word of God, and of giving to each man a portion in due season."

"I am persuaded that where there is extreme diffidence, or, as in the case of our friend at ———, no fluency, it is decidedly a duty to write out the whole sermon in a fair, large hand, to read it over, so as to be entirely familiar with it, and then use it in the pulpit. This was the method of Dr. Green. Mr. Glen uses the same method, and his style of preaching is generally and greatly admired. It is true, he has complete self-possession,—not the slightest embarrassment; and it is our duty to cultivate boldness as ambassadors of God. Humility towards God, and boldness in his service, are related as cause and effect. There is a criminal timidity growing from want of faith, forgetting that we speak 'as though God did beseech men by us.'

"A missionary who has two or three preaching-places may use the same sermon; and, if he does this with a diligent attempt to improve, his success will equal his desires. Dr. Franklin says, 'Whitefield never appeared to such advantage as when preaching a sermon the fortieth time.' Our great danger is, to let other things occupy us, and make our preaching only an accessory, not the main business. I rely, dear brother, on your unfeigned piety to keep you, in a great measure, from this error."

The Rev. Dr. DAVID X. JUNKIN, now of Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, was formerly settled at Greenwich, New Jersey, and was well acquainted with our departed brother. The intimacy was formed at the Theological Seminary, and was nurtured by frequent intercourse as members of the same synod. They were friends by social and ecclesiastical ties. Dr. Junkin thus refers to Mr. Webster in a communication which is copied from "*The Presbyterian*:"—

"He graduated at Union College in 1829, and at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1834. It was in the latter place that the writer made his acquaintance in 1832. In the Seminary he was the devout and conscientious student, the cheerful

companion, the consistent Christian. After completing his seminary course in 1834, he offered himself, and was accepted, as a foreign missionary by the American Board. But his increasing deafness threatening to make the acquisition of spoken languages difficult, and other causes having delayed his departure, he was detained from the foreign field; and, with the promptness and zeal which ever characterized him, he sought one of equal or greater toil and self-denial in his own country.

"In the autumn of 1835, he came to South Easton, Pennsylvania, at the instance, it is believed, of the Hon. J. M. Porter, and for a short time laboured in that place; but, the field not proving as encouraging as was hoped, he shortly afterwards entered the important field in which he wore out his valuable life and in which he was the instrument of such extensive good.

"On Sabbath, the 1st of November, 1835, the writer, aided by Ruling Elder Enoch Green, of Easton, (lately gone to his rest,) organized the Presbyterian church of Mauch Chunk, with twenty-four members. On the 4th of the following month, accompanied by Brother Webster, he again repaired to Mauch Chunk, preached, and introduced the youthful pastor to the little flock that had so lately been gathered in those mountain-gorges. On the next evening, (Saturday,) December 5, Mr. Webster preached his first sermon in the field of his life-labours; and the next day (Sabbath) the two classmates administered the first Lord's Supper that was spread in that congregation.

"From that time to the hour—indeed, to the moment—of his death, he continued to preach Christ crucified to that people, and at many other points in the Pennsylvania coal-region. He was emphatically the apostle of the coal-fields. He threw his earnest heart, his clear, well-furnished mind, his untiring energies, and his worldly substance, into the work of evangelizing the population of the mining region and towns. With a slender and feeble frame, and amid impediments and difficulties that would have deterred most men, he hoped on and toiled on, until, with God's blessing, his own immediate flock was enlarged and became an important and efficient church, and churches were organized and houses of worship reared in all that region. He was indefatigable in preaching, travelling, visiting, corresponding, and introducing and sustaining missionaries. Whilst his own stipend was very small, he relinquished his allowance from the Board of Missions, in order that it might be given to other labourers in his favourite mountain-field. Often, like his Master, did he travel on foot to great distances, over steep and rugged roads, to carry the gospel to the destitute, and this without hope of earthly reward.

"In the spring of 1838, he was married to Miss ELIZABETH CROSS, of Baltimore, and, in a home of more than usual affection and felicity, found rest amid his toils, and solace in his trials. A fonder, a happier, or a wiser husband and father the writer has rarely known.

"Arduous and widely extended as were our brother's professional labours, he

found time for literary effort and historical research; and the columns of the *Presbyterian*, the *New York Observer*, the *Watchman of the South*, and other journals, were enriched by his scholarly and sprightly contributions. The readers of these journals will not soon forget 'K. H.,' the initials of his place of residence.

"No one had collected such rich and extensive materials for a history of American Presbyterianism; and, indeed, some of the histories already published are indebted to his researches and his liberality in imparting information. It is hoped that this portion of his life-labour is in such a shape that it will not be lost to the church.

"Though he seldom published, he not unfrequently wrote in poetry, and some of his unpublished verses are worthy a place among the best productions of the American muse.

"Although deprived of the facility for social intercourse which ready hearing affords, Mr. Webster was nevertheless a favourite in the social circle. He was a cheerful Christian; and his extensive reading, his unfailing memory, his exhaustless fund of anecdote, his sparkling wit, his lively but always barless repartee, all chastened by the most considerate Christian propriety, gave a charm to his conversation that made it ever coveted.

"But it was as a Christian and a minister that he made his strongest mark upon his generation and will be most fondly remembered by his brethren and his sorrowing church. Solemn, earnest, ready, sound, scriptural, illustrative, terse, and compact in style, and full of holy unction, his sermons were always impressive, and were largely blessed. In pastoral duties he was tender and skilful, and in example such as became the Christian pastor. His death-bed sermons were the most impressive of his life. To his dear ones, to his mourning people, and to all that approached him, he most effectively commended, in dying, that gospel he had preached when living. His last two pulpit discourses—by a coincidence that startled at the time and now seems almost prophetic—were from the texts, 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' and, 'Enoch walked with God, and he was not: for God took him.' He had gone from the bed to the pulpit, and from the pulpit to the bed, from which he never rose.

"At the time he was seized with his last illness he was looking forward with desire to the completion of the new and elegant church-edifice, the second built during his pastorate; and one of his last efforts at letter-writing was an invitation to the writer to preach at the dedication when it should be finished. But he was not permitted, in the body, to witness the consummation so dear to his heart. But will he not witness it from the bulwarks of the upper temple?

"Did your space permit a detailed description of the closing scenes of this great and good man's life, it could not but commend the blessed gospel to your readers, and teach them how to die. One of the most unselfish men the writer ever knew,

this characteristic was apparent to the close. With a countenance radiant with the joy of salvation, and borne in triumph upon the full tide of the promises, his thoughts, his counsels, and his prayers were employed for the good of others, and he seemed scarcely to think of himself. The tender husband and father seemed to wish to live for his dear ones, and the devoted pastor longed to labour on for his Master; but every such wish was qualified with the language, 'The cup that my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?' 'Not my will, but thine, be done.' With his children standing, at his request, where his eye could rest upon them to the last, he prayed for them, their mother, and the church, until, with 'Into thy hands I commit my spirit,' he peacefully fell asleep in Jesus.

"Many, as they tearfully retired from that chamber, so

'Privileged beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite on the verge of heaven,'

said that now they better understood the prayer, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'"

The following letter from one of his co-labourers, now at the South, will be read with much interest:—

"AUGUSTA, GA., September 2, 1856.

"REV. C. VAN RENSSELAER:—

"DEAR SIR:—Permit me to say a few words respecting our deceased brother, the late Rev. Richard Webster, of Mauch Chunk. For several years I laboured, as a licentiate of Luzerne Presbytery, in the section of country embracing White-Haven, Beaver Meadow, and Hazleton, and, during that time, had much friendly intercourse with Mr. Webster, and learned to love him as a brother and revere him as a father. He frequently administered the sacraments for me and aided me in pastoral visitation; and I do most thankfully acknowledge my deep indebtedness to his example, counsel, and Christian sympathies. In the coal-mining region, comprising Carbon and Schuylkill counties and the lower portion of Luzerne, he was well known and much beloved and revered as a father in the gospel; and it is to his long, self-denying labours and watchful oversight that the churches of that region owe very much of what they are at present. I believe that the uniform impression of Mr. Webster in the minds of the people is that of a most sincere, self-denying, and devoted servant of Christ, as tender and sympathizing a friend in sorrow as ever lived, and, withal, a man of singular acuteness of mind and depth of character. I never knew a man with heart so womanly in tenderness, and so quick to enter into sympathy and feel with the woes of others. It was one of his most prominent and lovely traits, and most of all endeared him to those among

whom he laboured as a pastor and evangelist. His words were always full of comfort to the bereaved and afflicted. Although seemingly frail in body and of little physical strength, he yet possessed great hardihood, and was in the habit of walking distances of miles, in all weather, to fulfil his frequent missionary engagements. Wherever he went, on these errands of love, preaching formed but a small part of his work: 'in season and out of season,' from house to house, he laboured,—instructing, warning, and tenderly admonishing and beseeching, with all meekness, patience, and fidelity. His pastoral visits were very edifying. On account of defective hearing, the burden of conversation fell upon himself; but he possessed a rare facility in discerning, or learning in some way, the true character and circumstances of persons and families, and in adapting his discourse to them. I have sometimes seen him plead with tears; and his manner, tone of voice, and expression of countenance, at such times, were very affecting. Unfeigned humility, springing from a deep, abiding sense of his unworthiness and unprofitableness, was, as all who knew him intimately will testify, one of the most marked and beautiful features of our departed brother's character. Although gifted with a rare fund of humour and pleasantry, which he freely disbursed among others, the habitual seriousness and even sorrowfulness of his countenance clearly shadowed the depth and intensity of his heart-struggles and experiences. More than once, in confidential Christian interchanges with him, he would speak with tears of the unfruitfulness of his ministry and the unprofitableness of his life.

"Mr. Webster's *preaching*—as all know who have heard him—was singularly earnest, affectionate, and evangelical.

"Yours, in the gospel,

"JOHN F. BAKER."

The Rev. ANDREW B. CROSS, the brother-in-law and intimate friend of Mr. Webster, was called upon, in providence, to preach his funeral sermon. This excellent discourse has been printed in pamphlet form; and, had there been room, the whole of it would have been published in this Preface to the History. The delineations of character are remarkably well drawn, and are not *overdrawn*. The account of the last hours of our beloved brother in the Lord is particularly interesting and edifying. The reader will find the whole worthy of his attentive perusal:—

"The knowledge I have of your late pastor commenced twenty-four years since, when we entered together upon our theological studies, and has continued until his death, in an intimacy and familiarity which rarely happen. During all this period

nothing ever interrupted our friendship. To his life I could bear witness. But I am forbidden by his dying direction; and you know, from his humble, modest, diffident life, he would not allow me to say any thing which might appear flattery concerning him. If he were present he would say, Preach plainly and practically to the people.

“What can be more practical than to call upon you to bear witness to his ministry?—to call up to your recollection his life, his labours, his prayers among you and for you, and to remind you that you are witnesses to these? Not only you who were the members of his church, but the people of this town, of the country around, the many congregations to which he so often and so earnestly preached the gospel,—*ye all are witnesses.*

“He strove to preach the gospel to *every one* of you. Instant in season and out of season, he warned, exhorted, charged, and comforted you in the spirit and with the love of a father. On his death-bed he expressed his anxiety to live to a certain hour, that he might see a man who had neglected attending the sanctuary, and to beg him to attend, that, if any thing in him had hindered, that cause would now be removed. God spared him to see him, and from his dying lips did speak to him. Could any thing but the sincerest love for the soul of a man move him at such an hour? And yet this was only an exhibition of the tender and faithful spirit which, during his ministry, sought thus to deal faithfully with the souls of his flock, and any whom the providence of God placed in his way.

“While he sought to preach the gospel to every one of you, he did not cease to remember every one of you in his prayers before God. I doubt if there be an individual among all his people, or among all his friends, whose particular case, with all its attendant difficulties, he has not made the subject of special prayer to God. Are there not among you, parents, many parents who do not pray for yourselves and your children, on whose behalf he has often wrestled with God, and who have been a burden on his heart so great that he has been ready to sink under it? (Read his sermon, ‘A Word to Fathers,’ preached in this church January 8, 1854.) He is here no more to preach or to pray. But if you perish, and if your children go down to hell, it will be against his warnings, entreaties, and *prayers*. I mention his prayers for you because they were remarkable for their earnestness, particularity, and tenderness. He seemed to make every case his own for which he was praying. In the house of mourning, amid the afflicted and bereaved, he will not soon be forgotten. His tender and sympathizing heart led him to seek out such, to minister to them the consolation of the gospel.

“The house of mourning and affliction were never passed when it was in his power to visit them. This was not confined to his own congregation, or this town, or the churches of your vicinity. His letters of condolence went far and wide, whenever the hand of God was laid upon one that he knew. The tenderness of his heart towards the afflicted I need not call up to you who have for many years known and

felt it. He came as the minister of Jesus, and brought you the consolation of the gospel,—the true balm of healing and consolation.

“You had his whole ministerial life. *Ye are witnesses.* God also made him a witness among you, and his testimony is on record in the high court of our King. Soon you will meet him to hear his testimony. I call upon you to-day to remember and profit by it. Take heed to it. His voice, which so often warned and testified, is now silent. Lay up his instructions in your memories; meditate upon them. May God quicken your consciences to apply them! Walk with God, and you shall meet him with joy before your Father in heaven.

“REV. RICHARD WEBSTER was born at Albany, New York, July 14, 1811; was the youngest child of Charles R. Webster and Cynthia Steele, of that place; died at Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania, Thursday morning, June 19, 1856, at a few minutes before twelve o’clock, leaving a wife and six children. At his death he wanted only twenty-five days of being forty-five years of age.

“He graduated at Union College in 1829, at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1834. On leaving the Seminary he designed entering the foreign missionary field, and was, on September 2, 1834, designated by the Committee of the American Board to the ‘Mahratta Mission.’ A difficulty delayed his sailing, which gave him pain at the time, but was cleared up satisfactorily and greatly to his honour. God had work for him in another field not less laborious or self-denying, in which he was to do much for his Master’s glory. He was ordained an evangelist, by the Presbytery of Albany, April 29, 1835. He was soon engaged as a missionary at South Easton, Pennsylvania, and there commenced a work, which, through many changes and difficulties, has grown into the Second Presbyterian Church. From this place he extended his labours to Mauch Chunk, thirty-six to forty miles northwest from Easton, on the Lehigh River. At this point, a few years before, coal-mines had been opened: there, and in the vicinity, had collected a population of about two thousand persons. He commenced, in 1835, preaching there once a month, and missionating in the vicinity. His labours were so successful that, by the spring of 1836, there had been a church organized, a lot secured, and part of the money promised towards building a church, which was afterwards erected, and dedicated February, 1837. He commenced, in April, to preach one-fourth of his time at Summit Hill, nine miles west; was installed pastor at Mauch Chunk in July, 1837. From January, 1843, he gave up the other places, and preached regularly at Mauch Chunk. But then, as before, he preached during the week in the adjacent villages, and visited the people. The amount of these labours and his self-denial cannot be well estimated by any one who is not familiar with the rapid growth and great necessity for preaching in the coal-regions, embracing parts of Berks, Lehigh, Northampton, Luzerne, Columbia, and Schuylkill counties, and the zeal with which he laboured to carry the gospel to them.

“At his instance the General Assembly was memorialized, and, in May, 1843,

constituted the Presbytery of Luzerne. The great object of this presbytery was to take charge of this missionary-field. By appointment of the Assembly he opened the presbytery with a sermon. He was considered not only the father of the presbytery, but was looked up to as a father by the ministry and churches in all that vicinity.

"In a letter from one of the oldest members of this presbytery, he remarks that, for information and counsel by his brethren, none of our ministers would be missed as much, excepting some of the older professors in our seminaries. 'He was a model for a member of presbytery,' said another member.

"His ministerial life was abundant in labours, not sparing himself. Gifted by God with great clearness of mind, a wonderful facility in acquiring knowledge, an exceedingly tenacious memory, a diligence and application which knew no cessation, he was familiar with almost every subject connected with the church: with a faculty for, and promptness in, communicating information, he was a most entertaining and instructive companion.

"Among the incidental labours of the years of his ministry was a constant contribution to the religious press. Few men who were not regularly in the editorial chair wrote more. But most of this period he gave the strength of a mind, which seemed to have been constituted by God for the work, to gathering up and preparing for publication what could be found of the early history of the Presbyterian church in the United States, and the lives of her early ministers. In the prosecution of this work he became the repository of almost every thing that could be collected in connection with them. Since the effort has commenced among the churches to prepare histories of their early settlement and organization, he has been called upon continually for a history of some church or preacher, and, from his generous disposition, he has been taxed with writing almost weekly such sketches and histories, many of which have appeared in the historical sermons preached and published by pastors. In the histories of the church in different States, published within a few years, large contributions have been furnished by him, in addition to the numerous articles contributed on this subject to the religious press of our own church.

"The 'History of the Presbyterian Church,' to which he had devoted so much time and attention, and which has been looked for with so much anxiety, happily for the church, had so far reached its completion as to be in readiness for publication, and, under the auspices of the Historical Society, was about being placed in the printer's hands a few weeks before his decease.

"He prepared, at the request of the Board of Publication, 'A Digest of the Acts of the Assembly,' which is a most valuable book of reference in our church judicatories.

"The field to which he had given his regular labours for twenty-one years was the congregation collected at Mauch Chunk. There he had been greatly blessed in

collecting and gathering into the fold of the Great Shepherd many souls, who will hail him with joy before the throne as their father in the gospel of Christ. The congregation had gradually so increased, notwithstanding deaths and the numerous changes incident to such a population, that persons could not obtain sittings. During the past year another lot was procured, and a large, comfortable house, of fifty feet long by eighty-five feet wide, has been erected: in a few weeks the basement will be in readiness for preaching.

“He was a most laborious preacher and an indefatigable pastor. Such was his promptness and vigilance that no part of his field was neglected or escaped his oversight. With his delicate frame, and the heavy calamity of his deafness, it was always the wonder of his friends and people how he could perform the amount of service which he so regularly rendered. At the same time, while he suffered nothing to hinder his preaching to his own people, his labours among his brethren in the congregations around were abundant. In a letter, of December, he said, ‘Last week I preached five times for Brother Irwin at Catasaqua; last month three times for Brother Gaston, besides a Sabbath. In September, I preached ten times for my brethren in eight days.’ These are specimens of labour extra from his own people, and yet he did not seem to feel he was doing any thing. His labours were unto the last. After his first attack, which was severe, he preached twice to his own people. On the last Sabbath, he got out of his bed, and went into the church, and preached from the words, ‘Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him.’ As he closed his sermon with the prayer that both pastor and people might so live that, when they came to die, it might be said of them with truth, they had walked with God, many of the congregation thought, and some of them remarked, that he seemed as if he was preaching his last sermon.

“He went from his pulpit back to his bed. A week after he had another attack, in which he suffered violent pains and was left greatly prostrate; but his physician hoped, under proper treatment, he might recover.

“He was down-stairs two or three times on Monday, June 16, walked about the yard, and wanted to fix a number of little things; took tea with his family. Tuesday, he was not so well, lay in bed, but read the newspapers and letters of correspondents, and wrote. On Wednesday afternoon, (18th,) when the papers were brought, he felt so weak that he told them he did not wish them, and only glanced over a letter which had come. The doctor observed his pulse was very rapid and weak, and concluded to spend the night with him. About twelve o’clock, he felt his pulse; on noticing which, he asked the doctor if there was any prospect of immediate death. ‘I should like to know if there is.’ The slate was handed, and on it was written, he ‘might live a few hours, perhaps less.’ On reading it he remarked, ‘This is sudden; I did not expect it: but, blessed be God! I have no preparation to make. That was made long ago. I have renewed it daily; I am a sinner, I have had my faults; but I have trusted in the righteousness of my blessed

Saviour; I throw myself upon him: I trust I have the forgiveness of my God.' 'I wish heartily to forgive every one;' 'give my love to all.' 'I have often admired the dying sayings of Samuel Blair and Jonathan Edwards,' repeating them, 'and that of John Breckenridge,—God is with me.' 'And it is mine: not a cloud, not a fear,—entire trust in my Saviour. I did not expect this; but thanks be to God for such a death! Can it be that it is death? Is not the doctor mistaken? I had no such thought.' On the head being shaken to say that there was no mistake, he said, 'It is such a death as I never knew of:' 'not a pain, no weakness; my faculties are all as usual.' 'Thank God, no one could be more kindly dealt with; it is not only without a terror it comes, but it is sweet: can it be death? I thank God my body is not racked with pain, that I have the perfect use of my senses, that I was early called to the knowledge of the Saviour, that he permitted me the honour of preaching his name. Oh, how I have loved to preach it! I can bless God, my times are in thy hand.'

"About half-past one o'clock in the morning, he requested that his children should be awakened, to see him and bid him farewell, as he might not live until daylight. When they came he embraced them, kissed each of them, prayed for them, which he did several times. He gave directions about things of his house and family, his funeral, who should preach, his burial, avoiding all show, and mentioned friends to whom he wished letters to be written. He said he would like to live for his family and the church; lamented the vacancies, need of ministers for the missionary-fields. 'Oh, how I love the cause of missions!' 'I am comfortable. It seems impossible that I am drawing near to death. I can well pity the poor sinner, drawing near his end, and so little in the circumstances to aid in his preparation. My voice and words fail me to express the trust I have in God.' 'I would like to say to the impenitent, sickness is no time to prepare to meet God; when there is a sinking of all the faculties, it is hard to do any thing, hard to enter in at the strait gate, hard to find the narrow way.' 'If this be death, it approaches with tender, gentle, loving embrace; I feel no pain, no apprehension. I look forward with joy to meeting my Saviour, with perfect calmness of mind, and assurance of the blessing of the Lord upon myself, my wife, my family, my friends, and the church of God.' 'If I have been deceived all my life, I now come, at the eleventh hour, and put my trust in the Saviour, hoping in his mercy, confessing my sins, and acknowledging his mercy, which has been with me always. Into thy hands I commend my spirit: thou hast redeemed me. His I am, and him I serve.' He repeated the hymn, 'Lord, I am thine, entirely thine,' to the line, 'And consecrate to thee my all:' then added, 'Blessed be God, this is not a new work, not a thing taken up to-day or yesterday!'

"Speaking of his people, he said, 'May God be with them! I loved to preach the gospel to them; I thank God for permitting me to preach it to one people.' He had a horror of pastoral changes. 'He thought he had not been altogether un-

faithful, but had come very short.' 'How strange the deceitfulness of things! I feel that I might get up in a few minutes as well as any of the children.' 'Truly, man walketh in a vain show.'

"Speaking to his family, he said, 'I love you, my wife and children; I have no breath, or I would tell you—but words cannot tell you—how much I love you. This is a great trial. How little we expected it yesterday! How differently we would have spent yesterday and last night if we had known it!' 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Thy will be done. Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.' 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; thy rod and staff comfort me.' 'I have not been faithful enough with my children, and yet I have tried in some measure to bring them up for God.' 'He has promised to be a Father to the fatherless, a God to the widow. How dear is every one of you to me! Oh, how hard to part!' 'I would like, when death approaches, for all to leave me but my own family, that we may have a calm, quiet, pleasant committing of ourselves into God's hands.'

"He continued to read what was written on the slate until within a few minutes before he died, when he told them to put it away,—that he was so weak it was too great exertion for him to read. At that time his pulse had ceased in one of his wrists, and nearly in the other. A very short time before this he said to his wife that his hands were cold, and asked her to rub them; and, while she and his oldest child were rubbing them, he remarked about his mistake of the coldness. 'He did not think.' 'It was death.' And so quietly and gently did he pass away, that those around did not perceive it until the doctor said, 'He is gone.'

"These gathered thoughts from his death-bed have been saved from the many things said by him during that period, through the recollection of some that stood by him. Very much that he said has escaped. During the morning, when it was known that he was dying, his room was filled with friends and members of the congregation, who wanted to hear the last word or take the last look at one who had so long been identified with them. All his sayings bore the correct, concise, and pointed marks of his mind. Without wandering, or wavering, or hesitating, he continued his utterances as long as his strength permitted. His tongue had scarcely ceased to utter the thoughts of his heart to his people and family until it was animated with new energy in the presence of his Saviour.

"How glorious and blessed the change! He—who for years had not heard the sound of his own voice, or of one of his own children, or the voice of the congregation to whom he preached, when they sang praise to God—has awaked amid the company of the redeemed, to tune his harp and lift up his voice, and hear the songs of the redeemed, as they give glory and honour to the Saviour whom he so loved and sought to honour on earth.

“ Oh for the death of those
 Who slumber in the Lord!
 Oh be like theirs my last repose,
 Like theirs my last reward!”

“Added to the life and labours, you have had the death, of your pastor. A life of devotedness to God,—ripened and completed in your midst,—with a calm, quiet, peaceful, hopeful, and blessed death.

“May his death be more blessed to all of you than the labours and example of his life have been! May you, who have been the objects of his prayers, and warnings, and entreaties, flee to that Saviour whom he so often, so earnestly, and so tenderly besought you to embrace! Make him the end of your conversation. May God, in his great mercy and grace, give each one of us the wisdom and the grace to live the remainder of our days in his service, and, when they are ended, may we in peace enter into our rest!”

The following interesting letter from MRS. WEBSTER, the respected widow of the departed servant of Christ whose life it is my aim to illustrate as fully as possible in a brief space, is here introduced, with the advice of some of my personal friends whom I consulted. Although the letter was written simply to furnish *materials* for the compilation of a biographical sketch, and not for publication by itself, yet I have assumed the responsibility of inserting it entire, for reasons which, I trust, the reader will appreciate on a perusal. It was a point of great delicacy; and, if I have offended propriety by the course adopted, I throw myself upon the indulgence of the public.

“MAUCH CHUNK, July 28, 1856.

“REV. C. VAN RENSSELAER, D.D.:—

“DEAR SIR:—I feel very grateful for your kind letter, and far more indebted to you for the interest manifested in regard to my dear husband’s book than words can express: if there were any way to lessen your care and trouble with it I should be very glad to know of it, and would cheerfully incur the additional expense; and may I hope that you will do no more personally than is absolutely indispensable? The terms of the agreement appear to me fair and liberal: profit I do not expect, though I should deeply regret Mr. Wilson losing in any way by it.

“There appears to be something of an impression that Mr. Webster’s great antiquarian tastes, &c., combined with his deafness, rendered him almost unfit for other labours. But it is a very great mistake indeed: the business of his life was to labour faithfully, earnestly, and amid much fatigue and discouragements, in the

service of his Master. Every thing else was subordinate. He had literary and antiquarian tastes, but they were gratified only in fragments of time, redeemed, I may say, by his unfailing industry. His correspondence was large. He had many calls to prepare obituary notices and many other such small things, which were promptly attended to. His sessional and presbytery books were carefully kept,—the entries of the last meetings all neatly recorded. He was always ready to prepare a New Year's Address, &c.; but his chief work was never neglected. He mourned over his deafness, and yet visited as faithfully, embraced every opportunity for saying a 'word in season,' and was as welcome and his society as much desired as that of any pastor. His preparation for the pulpit was extremely careful. He delighted in his work. The time passed unconsciously while in his study,—often saying, when sent for to dinner, that he 'had not thought the morning half spent,' so busy had he been. His rule was to visit every family before each communion-season; and I scarcely remember an instance of social visiting that was not closed with prayer. And here suffer me to say, he was peculiarly a man of prayer: he did not require solitude, on account of his deafness; the closing of his eyes, or the hand placed over them, was enough; and our little ones often slipped out of the room when they saw it, leaving him alone. But not only thus: as he attended to his flowers, as he walked the streets, as he travelled, and as he often sat in the social circle, hearing nothing, his heart was lifted up in prayer. No one can imagine the holy, devotional spirit in which his days were passed. I saw and felt it; and almost the only feelings of alarm and fear for his recovery, during his illness, proceeded from this very feeling. I saw, as plainly as I saw his face, the wonderful growth in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness; and, as I sat by his bedside, the thought would come unbidden, 'Has all this manifest growth in grace been the preparation for his end?' Many of our people have remarked to me, since his death, that they had felt the same. His preaching, especially on Wednesday's lecture, had so much of heaven,—so much as though the glories of it were already objects of *sight*,—so much holy joy in dwelling on the glory to be revealed,—that, among themselves, several had remarked, they feared their minister was soon to finish his work, and, while he and I were looking forward to his recovery, many of them scarcely ventured to hope for it. At our late communion-seasons I have almost trembled: he seemed so nearly done with emblems, so nearly drinking of the 'wine new in the kingdom of his Father.' I hope I am grateful for the mercy of such an abundant preparation; but the loss to myself—to his poor children—is not lessened. We have lost his holy example, and his prayers, which were almost unceasing for us.

"He repeated to me, after his last visit to Philadelphia, your prediction, smiled incredulously, and, I think, the subject was never mentioned by him again, and scarcely thought of, most likely.

"The Thursday after his return he was taken violently ill. After a few days he

rallied, and was able to take short rides in about a week, improving slowly. He preached twice between the two severe attacks. From the last he recovered slowly; and when from many of his symptoms we feared another, came the sleeplessness, the sinking and the exhaustion, and the end, so unexpected, that it seemed hard for either of us to believe that it was death. Again and again I asked the doctor if it were not possible he was mistaken. He referred me to the imperceptible pulse, but added, all else was as new to him as to me. He had seen death in many forms, but this differed from all that he had ever imagined. To him, it seemed like one preparing for sleep and leaving directions to be attended to during the time. He had feared from the first, not from the violence of the disease, but from the worn-out state of the system. He considered him the most cheerful and patient sick person he ever saw. He was grateful for every attention, perfectly satisfied to do what we thought best.

"The Sabbath was to him ever a delight. He rose earlier than on other days; and, oh, how we miss his cheerful greeting on that holy day,—his morning prayer, so full of praise and thanksgiving,—the holy cheerfulness that characterized his appearance during the interval of worship; and then, when the labours of the day were over, and we sat down, alone, to talk them over, and as I saw the solemnity, and especially the mourning over our young people, who seemed so careless, so kind, and so attached to him, and yet slighting his message, I have often thought that, could those who think the pastor's duties easily performed have seen the sickness of heart, the failing of spirit, and almost the giving up of hope, they would have changed their opinion.

"From the commencement of his ministry until about a year since he preached regularly three times a day: this past year he has not more than half the time.

"My brother has fallen—I know not how—into the strange mistake of supposing that he did not hear his voice. He again and again told me that he did. And as to our children, it was their delight to talk to him and ask questions. Our voices reached his ear easily. Of course, he lost all general conversation; but all our family matters—all that interested us—was told him as a matter of course. I always encouraged it in the children, for his sake as well as theirs; and none but ourselves know the cheerful, sprightly, interesting, and pious spirit which threw such a charm around our home,—with what delight he returned, after his frequent absences, forgetting the weariness and fatigue in the comfort of being again with us; and, to the very last days of his life, as our boys returned from school, he was interested in their lessons and in hearing the little things they had to relate.

"He had his books and papers gathered around his sick-bed; for there he spent nearly all the time, on account of weakness. He had sent for 'Dr. Hodge's Ephesians:' it came while he was sick. He read it carefully, comparing the notes which he had taken when at Princeton. And in bed he copied what is done of

President Davies's letters,—wrote letters, even on the Monday before his death, relating to a vacancy in our bounds, &c. His Bible was always beside him. He requested me, one day, to read some of the closing chapters in 'Alexander's Isaiah,' saying he had just reread them with so much comfort. He said he had several sermons all thought out, and only waited for strength to write them. He pointed out Isaiah xxxviii. 19 as the first one he wished to preach after his recovery,—having felt in what peril of life he had been, and how his heart overflowed with thankfulness, thinking the danger was past. Hebrews xiii. 7, last clause, was another. His interlined Greek Testament was always at hand. The word of God was to him an unfailing delight, reading almost with rapture.

"There were none present in that hallowed chamber of death who can do justice to the scene. No words can express the holy composure, the strong desire for life, the clinging to us with an intensity of affection. He said that words could not tell the longing desire to labour for souls, and yet the loveliest spirit of submission, all indicating that he was not alone in that hour of trial:—the Everlasting arms were manifestly supporting him; the sting of death was not there."

Mr. ROCKWOOD, of Mauch Chunk, was an intimate friend of Mr. Webster, and one of the elders of the church. He was present at the closing and impressive scene, and has sent an interesting communication, which we here publish, giving his impression of Mr. Webster's character and labours, and an account of his last hours.

"MAUCH CHUNK, August 12, 1856.

"REV. DR. C. VAN RENSSELAER:—

"REV. AND DEAR SIR:—Friends of our late pastor, Rev. Richard Webster, understanding that you are preparing a 'Biographical Sketch' to accompany his forthcoming work, have requested me to attempt to give you the impressions made by him as a man and a minister *at home*. While his historical labours are widely known, few besides his own people could be familiar with his pastoral work, as his brethren in the ministry seldom saw him in the midst of his labours.

"My acquaintance, both social and in the church, has been intimate for about four years. These were not his most laborious years,—his declining strength having, of late, compelled him to lessen his labour outside of his own parish. During the greater part of his ministry he had been in the habit of performing an amount of extra services in the destitute neighbourhoods, from four to twenty miles around, which is surprising when his feeble frame is remembered, and which undoubtedly shortened his life. To these efforts many of the churches of the coal-region owe their origin. Many of these efforts have been made quite beyond the limits of a

'Sabbath-day's journey,'—by holding series of meetings during the week, after which he would return and preach to his own people on the Sabbath. Until within about two years past he has had regular preaching-stations, which occupied nearly every Sabbath afternoon. Many of these preaching-expeditions were made wholly or in part on foot, and often in the night, regardless of the injurious effect of the night-air upon his hearing.

"Mr. Webster's deafness occasioned no aversion to society. He was of a genial, pleasant spirit; and, even since he could be addressed only through a tube, he was affable and easy of approach, even to strangers,—delighting in social intercourse, and capable of entertaining with lively anecdote or of instructing by grave remark. He was, notwithstanding his difficulty of hearing, faithful in pastoral visitation, especially in times of sickness or affliction, when the natural tenderness of his feelings enabled him to make the sorrows of others his own, and unite his tears with theirs in true sympathy. His depth of feeling on these occasions (constantly recurring in a community so liable to accident and sudden death) wore seriously on his own strength. Cases of bereavement were feelingly noticed in public prayer, and often again remembered on their anniversary another year. His conversations with the impenitent were frequent, and his faculty of pleasantly introducing pointed, personal appeal was good. Often, where conversation was precluded, his pen was used. His general conversation showed that the conversion of souls was his most earnest desire, and, while naturally cheerful, nothing so saddened him as the fewness of additions to the church from the world. He continually mourned that he was not more useful.

"Mr. Webster's historical researches have been so spoken of as to give the impression that they formed the labour of his life. They were, however, the result of leisure hours, although the amount of these labours (often performed in unselfish regard for the wishes of others applying for information) gives evidence of his industrious habits. His life was literally and truly devoted to the *ministry*. His pulpit exercises were uniformly good, and well digested and prepared. During the last few years he wrote most of his sermons; but they were complete in his mind before writing, so that the manuscripts showed few alterations. The distinguishing feature of his preaching was that he preached *Christ*,—seldom occupying the pulpit with discourses merely historical, literary, or critical. His language, while showing no attempt at ornament, was clear, condensed, and often beautiful, but never calculated to attract attention from the truth to itself. His sermons were earnest, convincing, and instructive, and such as would interest and profit both the learned and the unlearned. The peculiarity of voice—arising probably from deafness—was to a stranger unpleasant; but, when the ear had become accustomed to it, his delivery was found to be forcible, and the preaching grew upon the hearer from year to year.

"His life and manner were becoming a minister of the gospel,—cheerful, but serious and beyond reproach, commanding the confidence alike of the Christian

and the worldling. He felt little encouragement in his work; but his exertions and influence have not been without their share—and that a large share—of effect upon the community around him, shown in the increased regard for the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and for sacred things. The church originated and fostered by him, and now for years self-sustaining and prosperous, is a testimony to his usefulness.

“Mr. Webster had a great advantage for study, in a remarkably retentive memory, which enabled him to treasure up what he read even casually, and to remember clearly his own trains of thought. He once remarked to me that he could preach an unwritten sermon, even several years after its first preparation, without material change even in the language. He kept himself well informed in the religious and other literature of the day, and, both in preaching and conversation, showed a mind thoroughly trained and abundantly stored.

“Mr. Webster was humble and unselfish in a high degree in his intercourse with all. He gained the warm regard especially of those of his congregation who were in the more humble walks of life, by the interest he took in their welfare. Their children were all known to him by name. Towards the close of his life it was noticed that he preached with increased unction, and watched with more earnest desire for an increasing religious interest. When confined with sickness, his desire to preach was so strong that it was with difficulty that he could be induced to forego the attempt; and, on two Sabbaths during his last illness, he arose from his bed to preach, and returned from the pulpit directly to his bed.

“Although his friends greatly feared the result of his sickness, he did not appreciate the danger, and, until within a day or two of his death, looked forward with expectation to an early resumption of his pulpit duties. His vital powers failed very gradually for many hours before death. When told, about twelve hours before his departure, that he was near death, he could scarcely believe it, his feelings having given so little admonition of the decay of nature. He was taken by surprise, but not unprepared. Without the least perturbation he expressed his resignation and entire peace of mind. I was permitted to be with him for the last ten or eleven hours, and a greater privilege is seldom enjoyed in a lifetime. No written narrative of peaceful death-bed scenes ever gave me such a realizing sense of the value of a good hope in Christ, and *daily* consecration to God, as a preparation for death. There was not a fear or a doubt. His mind was calm and composed, though active and fully awake to his nearness to eternity; yet all was peace and joyful anticipations for the future for himself, and cheerful trust in God for his family and the church. Some of the death-bed sayings which I have read have always appeared to me as if said because expected by those around; but, in this instance, the continuous utterance of devout thought was the evident overflowing of a heart stayed on God and filled with love for him and his cause. The expressions of resignation, love to God, and entire confidence in him, accompanied by humble self-abasement and confession of sin, would make a valuable chapter of religious experience.

"Soon after being informed that he was gradually but steadily sinking, and could live but a few hours, he said, 'If this be death, it approaches with tender, gentle, loving embrace: I feel no pain and no apprehension. I look forward with joy to meeting with my Saviour,—with perfect calmness of mind and assurance of the blessing of God upon myself, my wife, my family, my friends, and the church of God.' At another time he said, 'I am very comfortable: it seems impossible that I am drawing near to death.' 'My voice and words fail me to express the trust I have in God.' 'If I have been deceived all my life, I now come, at the eleventh hour, and put my trust in the Saviour, hoping in his mercy, confessing my sins, and acknowledging his mercy, which has been with me always.' 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit! Thou hast redeemed me,' repeating the hymn, beginning—

" 'Lord, I am thine, entirely thine,'

and ending with

" 'Thee, my new Master, now I call,
And consecrate to thee my all.'

He said, 'Blessed be God! this [consecration] is not a new work; not a thing taken up to-day or yesterday.' . . . 'Dying is but going home.' He expressed no desire to live except to be useful to the church and to his family. He said, 'I would have been thankful to be spared to preach. I love to preach. I have embraced every opportunity to do so, and have, no doubt, overworked myself.' He was thankful that his whole ministry had been among 'one people.' 'I would like to say to the impenitent, that sickness is no time to prepare to meet God, when the sinking of all the faculties makes it hard to do any thing,—hard to enter into the strait gate,—hard to find the narrow way.' 'I had hoped to rise up to preach from the words of Hezekiah on his recovery, (Isa. xxxviii. 19,) "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth,"—the duty of those spared to teach the knowledge of God to children.' He 'thanked God he had not been altogether unfaithful; but had come very far short.'

"He had no pain: his mind was clear, his sight and voice strong, and he seemed unable to realize that he could be dying. He said, 'How strange the deceitfulness of things! I feel as if I might get up, in a few minutes, as well as any of the children. Truly, man walketh in a vain show.'

"With frequent confessions of sin and expressions of his entire trust in saving grace alone, he, from time to time, as he supposed the scene was closing, committed himself 'to God, to go through the dark valley and shadow of death, *but not alone.*' He spoke but seldom of his own salvation: it seemed to be a subject long since committed to God, with the full assurance of faith. His thoughts were mainly given to others. His prayers were for his family and the church. Several times, as he thought death approaching, he bade each member of his family good-by with a most affecting exhibition of love. He had the children,

more than once, all brought near, where he could look upon them. He prayed that his boys might be permitted to preach the gospel.

"In the morning, one or two of his congregation came to bid him farewell, and it distressed him; but afterwards he seemed to receive strength from on high to sustain him, and he desired to see all. Many of his church and congregation came in, for each of whom he had a word in season, and sent messages to the absent. Many were mentioned by name, whom he had hoped to see brought into the church. He was anxious to see one friend, who lived near but had then gone out to his work. He wished to live till noon, when this person would return from work, and frequently inquired, 'How late is it?' 'Is it twelve o'clock?' His desire was gratified: his friend was sent for. Such was his interest for his congregation, each of whom, by name, children and adults, he was in the habit of bearing on his heart at the throne of Grace.

"His faculties were spared to him, so that he continued to converse until within a very few minutes of his ceasing to breathe. It was the 'death of the righteous;' and none, witnessing it, could fail to wish, 'May my last end be like his!'

Very respectfully yours,

"CHARLES G. ROCKWOOD."

Thus did this good man live and die! His "works do follow him." The seals of his ministry were many, and bright are the jewels in the crown of his rejoicing. He lived to a good purpose, and, having ended his work, has entered into his rest.

Among the incidental labours of Mr. Webster's life is the history which is now published. It was written amid the incessant calls of active ministerial duties. This is, of itself, a sufficient apology for whatever imperfections may be found in the volume.

Mr. Webster had a *natural taste* for historical investigation. His longing for facts and incidents in history and biography was ever fresh and intense. A lover of history has reason to thank God for directing his pursuits towards a branch of knowledge so grand and useful. It is a study that brings the mind in contact with Providence; it has relations of a very comprehensive character; and, while in itself satisfying and delightful, it produces results helpful to the cause of religion and truth. Mr. Webster, in devoting a considerable part of his time to historical investigations, felt that he was engaged in a way likely to benefit his generation. His tastes and desires made history a recreation. His mind was refreshed by roaming through the by-ways and paths of the

olden time. It was his delight to pursue inquiries relating to the history of the Presbyterian church and the men of a former generation.

Mr. Webster's *patience and alacrity to endure hardship* were as conspicuous in historical inquiries as in ministerial labours. Whatever he did he tried to do heartily, as unto the Lord. He did not regard preaching as for his Master and writing history as for himself. He was devoted to Christ in every thing, and hence was willing to bear toil and self-denial wherever they were to be encountered. His labours as an historian were abundant. Who will ever know how many miles were travelled, how many letters sent forth and received, how many books consulted, how many late hours of the night taken from rest, how many chambers and old repositories explored with scrupulous care and cunning, how much time and health and strength and property taxed, in promoting the pursuits which he had at heart? It was delightful to find this diligent man cheerful in the midst of his labours. He worked at his task gladly. His patience was inexhaustible, and his habits of endurance extraordinary. He copied with his own pen all that part of the extensive Bellamy correspondence which threw any light upon the history of the Presbyterian church, into a large volume, elegantly written, which is in the possession of the Presbyterian Historical Society,—a donation of his thoughtful head, untiring hand, and benevolent heart.

Unaffected *modesty* marked the character of our Presbyterian historian. With all his ardour of investigation and success of research, Mr. Webster was the last to appreciate his own just claims. He never obtruded himself into public notice. No one ever charged him with desiring notoriety or public applause. On the contrary, his modesty interfered with his merit, and his diffidence prevented an extensive appreciation of his researches.

A *disinterestedness* of spirit is the last trait I shall mention in the character of my friend as an historian. Mr. Webster had a large and generous soul. He worked not for himself, but for all who chose to avail themselves of his labours. Jealousy formed no part of his character. He had no private ends to answer. Some might have considered it a lawful and proper reserve to keep their manuscripts from the inspection of others, but he was ever ready to lend to investigators of history all the papers in his possession. Few men, it is believed, showed as great gene-

rosity as he in thus allowing others even to anticipate the results of his own researches, if they had shown a disposition to do so. His manuscripts have been freely lent in a spirit of disinterested and religious scholarship worthy of all praise.

The last time I saw Mr. Webster was in May, when he came to Philadelphia to attend the anniversary of the "Presbyterian Historical Society." He himself was the life of the meeting. He wrote the annual report which was read on that occasion, and made several speeches full of wit and learning. The appearance of his venerated friend, Samuel Hazard, Esq., in the chair, revived some reminiscences of a pleasant character; and he told several historical anecdotes with great glee, and to the amusement and edification of us all. On the following morning, when he came to bid me farewell, I asked him to leave his manuscript history for publication. He smiled, and said, "I do not believe it will ever be published." He, however, left it, and measures were about to be taken to put it to press, when the unexpected and melancholy tidings of his decease suspended the undertaking for a season.

The last will and testament of Mr. Webster contained the following bequest:—

"To the Rev. Dr. Courtlandt Van Rensselaer I give and bequeath the manuscript of my book, and all my historical memoranda."

Acting under a sense of the responsibility thus imposed upon me, I made inquiries respecting the terms on which the history could be published; and, finding that Mr. JOSEPH M. WILSON made the most advantageous offer, I put the work into his hands. I previously communicated, however, with the executors and with judicious friends, and obtained a general assent to the arrangement as a just and liberal one.

And, now that I have finished this brief and imperfect sketch of the life and character of the author, I commit the volume, in his name, to the public, with the hope and prayer that it may meet every reasonable expectation, be the means of imparting useful information, assist in awakening and in extending the spirit of historical inquiry, and redound to the honour of our common religion and to the glory of God.

C. VAN RENSSELAER.

PHILADELPHIA, December 22, 1856.