

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
NATHANIEL HEWIT, D. D.

A Discourse

PREACHED AT HIS FUNERAL,

IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BRIDGEPORT, CONN.,
FEBRUARY 6, 1867.

BY

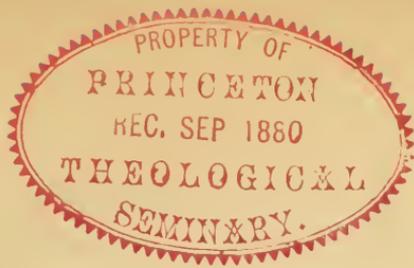
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DISCOURSE.

“He being dead yet speaketh.”—HEBREWS xi. 4.

WE have met to pay our last tribute of respect to a great and good man. Few die whose life speaks with greater emphasis and solemnity after their death.

My acquaintance with Dr. Hewit began in May, 1835—nearly thirty-two years ago—just as I, at the age of twenty-two, was beginning to minister to the church in Fairfield, of which a few years previous, from January 4, 1818, to December 18, 1828, he had been the honored and beloved Pastor. This acquaintance soon ripened into the closest intimacy, which continued, with little interruption or abatement, through the almost score of years of my pastorate in a field, where I was at once his successor and near neighbor. We unbosomed ourselves to each other with all the mutual freedom and confidence, I was about to say, of brothers; but that savors too much of equality. Shall I then say, of father and son, of teacher and pupil? This, too, might look as if there was an attitude of magisterial superiority on his part, which, however justifiable, he forbore to assume; for, with the intellect of a

giant, he had the simplicity of a child. His relation to me is best expressed by saying that it partook of all these characters. He was to me at once father, brother, teacher—most faithful, tender, instructive—while I heard him with love, reverence and profit. In these relations I saw him completely unveiled, without disguise or reservation.

As his successor, also, in a field which he occupied for ten years of a powerful and fruitful ministry, I had large opportunities to become informed of his gifts, his traits, his achievements, and his peculiarities—physical, intellectual, moral, religious, ministerial. The periods above mentioned cover most of the prime and vigor of his manhood; and of his highest success, fame and influence, as a Pastor, Orator, Theologian, Reformer—in short, as a power in the church and the world. It is now a melancholy pleasure, as I stand over his breathless remains, to bear testimony to his rare endowments and virtues, and to render my humble tribute in honor of his memory.

My brethren, a mighty man is fallen—a man, I hesitate not to say, among the most extraordinary of our own or any day—a man who has been felt, for the last half century, as few men are or can be felt. That imperial form and visage of his, which never failed to impress every man, woman and child that beheld it, in which a regal majesty and prophetic solemnity were strangely blended, was but the index of the man, and the outbeaming of

his soul. But, not to detain you with vague generalities, I pass at once to the great events of his life, and the more specific features of his character.

Nathaniel Hewit, D. D., was born in New London, Conn., August 28, 1788. While yet a boy, he exhibited tokens of that great mind and brilliant genius which afterwards won for him such great celebrity. He was accordingly prepared for Yale College, which he in due time entered. He was there while it was presided over by that admirable man, Dr. Timothy Dwight. Among the evidences of his extraordinary fitness for this office, to wield a firm and commanding yet paternal authority, to kindle the admiration of youth for his splendid abilities, and yet win their hearts by his tender sympathy, judicious counsel, and generous aid, is the grateful warmth with which I have often heard Dr. Hewit speak of his own obligations to this great man, for the inestimable services of this kind rendered to himself during his college course. At this period of his life, Dr. Hewit had to contend with formidable difficulties ; with foes which have often sufficed to crush feebler men—scanty means, ill health, and that hypochondria which through life ever and anon haunted and clouded and baffled him, and brought him down to the depths, out of which he cried unto the Lord. This conspired with all other spiritual foes to intensify that conviction of absolute dependence on divine grace, which was so marked a feature of his theology and

religious experience. In this dire conflict he had constant recourse to Dr. Dwight, whose judicious and sympathetic counsel, and timely assistance in his spiritual and temporal straits, were, as he often delighted to testify, of inestimable benefit to him, and contributed much to prepare the way for his ultimate introduction into the gospel ministry. He graduated with honor in 1808, having in his college course given no dubious tokens of those mighty powers which were so conspicuous in his after career.

Of what followed until some years later, when he became pastor of the Fairfield church, I know little, far less than I should, had it ever occurred to me that Providence might ever devolve this painful yet pleasing service upon me. He first determined to pursue the profession of law, and for this purpose entered the office of the Hon. Lyman Law, of New London. He soon, however, gave it up, and chose the gospel ministry instead. He also betook himself to the usual resource of liberally educated but needy young men. He taught, how long I cannot say, the Academy in Plainfield in this State, and there made his mark.

There he studied Theology with the Rev. Dr. Joel Benedict, pastor of the Congregational church in that place. He was licensed to preach September 24, 1811. He supplied several congregations in Vermont and elsewhere, for longer or shorter periods, and made a powerful impression by his preaching.

He, however, became convinced that he needed more thorough preparation before assuming the responsibilities of a permanent pastorate. He accordingly repaired for a time to Andover Seminary, when that was almost the only public training school for the ministry in the country. He was ordained and installed pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Plattsburg, N. Y., by the Presbytery of Champlain, July 5, 1815. From this charge he was dismissed, October 2, 1817. He was installed in Fairfield on the 14th of January, 1818.

He went to Plattsburg in the spirit of true missionary zeal and self-sacrifice, while it was yet little more than a military outpost, in a comparatively new country, on the northern border of the Empire State. The severity of the climate was so injurious to his health, that he was compelled to leave for a milder region. I have heard him say that his exposure and suffering there greatly aggravated that injury to what he was wont to call his "dead eye," which made it sightless ever afterward. His ministry there was one of power and fruitfulness. He left the impress of present influence, and the presage of his future greatness in that region of country.

On the 26th of September, 1816, he was married to Miss Rebecca W. Hillhouse, daughter of the Hon. James Hillhouse, of New Haven, one of the most remarkable men and eminent civilians the country has produced. He has left his monument,

more enduring than brass, not only in the great public improvements he originated and pushed to completion in New Haven and Connecticut, especially in securing its munificent Common School Fund, but in the renown which he won for himself and his State in the United States Senate. She was a lady of great native intelligence, highly cultured, of lovely traits of character, all purified and ennobled by Christian piety. Her piety was deep, experimental, earnest, active. She was a great aid to her husband, not only in conjugal sympathy and ministries of love; in furnishing him, amid all his labor and weariness, the refreshment of a happy home; but as seconding his labors, by all the efforts she could put forth, in promoting female piety and organized activity in the congregations to which he ministered, leading "honorable women not a few" in works of faith and labors of love.

At the time of his dismissal from Plattsburg, the adjacent parish of Fairfield had become vacant by the dismissal of the Rev. Dr. Heman Humphrey, who had served it with great acceptance and success for ten years, and had recently been transferred to the church in Pittsfield, Mass. Fairfield was then a post of no small difficulty. The congregation was largely composed of men high in the legal profession and in public life, and of people of that grade of culture and refinement which would naturally result from its having been for nearly

two centuries, not only a business centre, but the county and court town. The Sabbath assemblies, too, were often graced with the presence of the most eminent lawyers and civilians from all parts of the State, drawn there to the courts, and not able, as now, at the end of the week, to reach their homes quickly by steam. The parish had long been under the preaching and training of one of the ablest and best pastors in the country, who himself succeeded to distinguished predecessors. The people found, as may well be supposed, great difficulty in supplying his place, and were rapidly falling into threatening divisions and parties. Mr. Hewit was procured to supply for a Sabbath. The effect was electric. The congregation was at once captivated by the force and the charm of his sacred eloquence. Opposing elements were speedily carried as by storm, and, after two or three Sabbaths, the church and congregation were united and enthusiastic, not only in calling him, but offering him a salary which they had never before deemed themselves able to pay. He accepted and speedily entered on the duties of a mighty ministry, which lasted till God called him to another field. Of his ministry there; the light, fervor, evangelism and eloquence of his sermons; their profound spiritual and experimental character; their bold and heroic rebuke of fashionable vice and popular immoralities; their trumpet-tongued rally of all the friends of God and man to the work of popular reformation

from the ruinous sins that had entwined themselves in all the usages of reputable life and common hospitality ; of drinking customs abolished, and intoxicating beverages driven into disuse ; of its rich fruits in sinners converted, Christians enlightened, corrected, comforted, edified, I cannot now further speak. I may, however, advert to incidents in his ministry there, illustrative of his character and endowments, at other points of this discourse.

Dr. Hewit's eloquent warnings and denunciations against intemperance, and against moderate drinking as its prolific cause, in his own and other pulpits, soon made a profound impression on the public mind ; and, if they provoked bitter and desperate opposition, also enlisted large and increasing numbers on the side of total abstinence from distilled liquors. Few now have any conception of the formidable odds against which the proclaimers of such a doctrine then had to contend. The use of strong drinks was not only, as already indicated, intrenched in the strong fortress of fashion, of the conventional laws of social intercourse, hilarity, and hospitality ; it was supposed to be absolutely necessary to health, vigor, and ability to endure the fatigues of ordinary labor. It was supposed to be unsafe for the husbandman, the mechanic, the artisan, to pursue the ordinary avocations of life without the help of this fiery stimulus. These were the honest convictions of the people, of the staunchest pillars of society, the purest and most

intelligent Christians. Add to all this, the impatience of appetite, and the vast pecuniary interests involved in the traffic in such drinks, then prosecuted by members of the church as freely as others, and you may form some conception of the tremendous antagonism which the first assailants of temperate drinking and promoters of total abstinence were compelled to confront; a conception hardly possible for those to realize, whose life does not run back through nearly two generations.

These beverages had installed, nay, enthroned themselves in the chief places on all occasions—social, political, ecclesiastical. Rev. Dr. Bacon, of New Haven, in a discourse delivered upon the fortieth anniversary of his installation, which occurred in March, 1825, states that, among the society charges of expense, in connection with that solemnity, was one for the liquors furnished at the installation dinner. The first recollection which I have of hearing the name of Nathaniel Hewit, was when, during that very year, he preached one of his great Temperance discourses in Dr. Bacon's pulpit, which provoked a loud outcry that he was beside himself—a fanatic, a magnificent genius and orator run mad—and this too from those who, in large numbers, speedily embraced his views and rallied to his support. In short, there was precisely that infatuation, and delirium, and tyranny of appetite, habit, custom, misguided conviction, prejudice, fashion, avarice, arrayed against all efforts

to disturb practices which were sweeping away the flower of the people, that required nothing less than the dauntless courage, the unsparing fidelity, the thunderbursts of eloquence, almost preternatural, all this and nothing less, which Dr. Hewit brought to bear, to break them down. Thus alone could even a beginning be made in arresting the strides of this dreadful vice, which was fast turning the country into an "abomination of desolation."

The American Temperance Society, then recently formed, for the suppression of this gigantic evil, was not slow to perceive this; and its committee of most sagacious men, after casting about long and anxiously for a man best qualified to storm the mighty ramparts behind which it was intrenched, settled with a singular, but quite natural unanimity upon Dr. Hewit. They accordingly called him to this great work.

He first served them, temporarily, for five months in the year 1827. He at this time visited numerous principal places in Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and Pennsylvania; organized many Temperance societies; and widely inoculated the public mind with the doctrines of total abstinence. He also appeared before some of the leading ecclesiastical bodies of the country, and presented the cause with a power, which soon enlisted the adhesion and earnest advocacy of the great mass of evangelical ministers and church officers in the land. This was a great step towards ultimate

triumph in the church and the world. The success of this temporary agency only proved the importance of securing his services more permanently. He was accordingly urged to resign his pastoral charge, and give himself wholly and permanently to this work.

Not without great hesitation and pain did he consent to tear himself from the pastorate, the people, loving and beloved, the whole work and field, to which he was so tenderly attached. Yet, after due consultation, meditation and prayer, he felt that necessity was laid upon him, and that he must obey the call as a call of God. This was the great sacrifice of his life, to take up the burdens and trials of itinerant lecturing, in exchange for the home and study and pulpit and flock he so loved. But, once satisfied that it was the will of God, he neither shrunk from it, nor fainted under it. He consulted not with flesh and blood. He, however, only committed himself to it for a limited period—three years—until the public mind should be roused from its lethargy, an ample supply of co-laborers enlisted, and organizations formed, so that the reformation would go forward of its own momentum, without further impressing his whole time and power into its exclusive service. He was accordingly dismissed from the church in Fairfield to enter on this work, December 18, 1827.

He at once addressed himself to it with the spirit alike of a hero and a martyr, and prosecuted it

with amazing ability and success. Far and wide, as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, with invincible logic, with "blood earnestness," with fearless fidelity, with torrents—often cataracts—of burning eloquence, he moved, and fired, and electrified the people. The reform made rapid headway. It enlisted the great majority of the moral and Christian portion of society, the aged and the young, reclaiming many, if not from intemperance, at least from its verge, and guarding multitudes against it. Of the astounding eloquence and prodigious effects of these discourses, I have often heard, in forms and from quarters so various, as to leave little doubt that what Luther was to the Reformation, Whitfield to the Revival of 1740, Wesley to primitive Methodism, that was Nathaniel Hewit to the early Temperance reformation.*

By his great and exhausting labors, in season and out of season, in this cause, he was at length worn down, and his nervous and digestive system greatly depressed. Finding the Temperance movement successfully inaugurated, he craved a return to his first love, the office and duties of a Christian pastor and Gospel preacher. The Second Congregational Church and Society of Bridgeport, then recently formed, were only too glad to secure the services of so eminent a man. He was only delighted to be welcomed back to the region of his former labor and love.

* For decisive testimonies to this, see Appendix A.

He was installed pastor of that church, December 1, 1830 ; Dr. Woods, of Andover, preaching the sermon, and in behalf of the American Temperance Society, bearing the strongest testimony to the zeal, power, and success with which Dr. Hewit had advanced the cause intrusted to him.

Soon after, he was sorely afflicted in the death of his excellent wife. She died January 4, 1831. Rev. Dr. Bacon, who had been in early life an intimate in Dr. Hewit's household, writes: "One incident of her dying experience I have always remembered, (as reported to me at the time,) for it seems to be an instance of that forgetfulness of self which was so characteristic of her life. When death was understood to be near—perhaps it was the last day of her consciousness—prayer was about to be offered at her bedside, and her husband or some friend asked her what Scripture should be read for her support and comfort in view of death. 'Read "The heavens declare the glory of God,"' was her answer."

He made a powerful speech in behalf of Temperance, and especially against the traffic in ardent spirits before the New York City Temperance Society, at the Anniversaries in New York on the following May.* A liberal friend of the cause,† at or about this time, offered to pay his expenses if he would go to England, and assist in initiating the

* For an extract from this speech, see Appendix B.

† John Tappan, Esq., of Boston.

Reform in that country. He accepted the offer, and went at the very short notice of four days, upon the advice of Drs. Woods, Church, Cornelius, and others, being moved by the hope of recruiting his health, then greatly shattered by the exhausting labors of his Temperance agency, and the desire to give the needed impetus to the beginnings of the movement in the Old World. He sailed for England, May 18, and arrived in London, June 28. He attended a meeting at Exeter Hall, June 29, the day after his arrival in London, and made an address. He is reported to have introduced himself to his audience on this occasion by saying, amid other prefatory remarks, "Although my being began in New England, I am of old English origin, and British blood, in mingled streams of English and Irish, runs through my veins. If, therefore, I should be too free, remember my English blood, and if I should err, remember my Irish blood." On July 19, he was present and assisted at the formation of the British and Foreign Temperance Society, thus witnessing the accomplishment of one great object of his foreign tour. He then visited Paris, returned to London, and proceeded thence to Birmingham and Liverpool. He startled many crowded audiences by his electric appeals to the heart and conscience, the reason and Christian principle of his hearers. An English journal, in attempting to report or give an account of one of his addresses, cut the whole short, assign-

ing as the reason, that it was "impossible to print thunder and lightning."

Meanwhile, during his absence, another sore bereavement had fallen upon him. His eldest child, Rebecca, died at the house of her uncle in New Haven, on the 31st of July. He received tidings of this by letter at Liverpool, September 2. He then relinquished his intended visit to Scotland, and returned home, arriving November 1, after a tempestuous voyage of forty-two days.

The following statement of Dr. Bacon represents not only Dr. Hewit's feelings in reference to his experiences, labors and trials during the years of his Temperance agency, but also certain sides of the man, perhaps as vividly as any formal portraiture can do.

"I think it was after his return from England that Dr. Hewit, speaking about the loss of his wife, and then of his daughter so soon afterwards, adverted to the great trial which he felt in being so much and so long separated from his wife and children while he was in the service of the American Temperance Society. He left them only because a necessity was laid upon him; and 'all the while,' he said, 'I was like the milch-kine that drew the ark of God, when their calves were shut up at home, and that went along the highway lowing as they went.'"

While it required the medicaments of time and divine grace to heal such wounds, yet Providence

speedily opened the way for him measurably to repair these great breaches, and again to turn into brightness his clouded and desolated home. He was married again to Miss Susan Eliot, of Fairfield, November 14, 1831. She was the daughter of Rev. Andrew Eliot, one of his honored predecessors as pastor of the church in that place, of which she was an exemplary member. She died after a protracted, lingering, painful sickness, leaving him to a second widowhood, on May 1, 1857, nearly ten years ago. She was a lady of genuine piety, and of signal prudence, dignity, and kindness. Intelligent, true and faithful, her husband surely trusted her, and she adorned her station as the wife of a Christian pastor and the mother of his children. One daughter was the fruit of this marriage. She received the name so endeared by love most tender and sorrow most sacred--REBECCA. She too died at about the same age as his first daughter of the same name. And so he mourned for three REBECCAS, torn from him by death.

When he resumed his pastoral duties among the people over whom he had been installed, the congregation steadily grew, under his powerful ministrations, in knowledge, grace, and numbers.

Of the affluence of evangelical and experimental truth ; of scriptural exposition ; of fresh and original thought ; of his kindling eloquence and unflinching fidelity ; of his tenderness and heavenly consolation administered in affliction and distress

in that sphere, many of you know far better than I can tell you. His ministry there continued prosperous and peaceful for more than twenty years. Then, a difference arising in the congregation, now grown to be larger, in regard to the proper course to be pursued in procuring assistance for their venerated pastor, the problem was at length solved by a division into two churches—the one retaining the old organization, and calling a new minister; the other forming a new organization in connection with the Presbyterian Church, O. S., and retaining their old, revered, and beloved pastor, whose ministrations they could not consent to forego. He was dismissed from the former church Sept. 21st, 1853, and installed over the latter Oct. 31st of the same year. Here he continued to preach the Word and feed the flock of God, till, well advanced towards fourscore, increasing infirmities constrained him to ask assistance and relief. When he reached the age of seventy he tendered his resignation, but his people refused to accept it, being unwilling to lose his valued services. And when God sent him a colleague and successor—at last granted by his congregation in obedience to his pressing request—a successor well beloved and trusted, he cordially handed over to him the charge. The mutual confidence, love, and helpfulness between him and his junior colleague constituted a chief solace of his last days. After an honored ministry of more than half a century, followed by a brief interval of rest,

and of alternations between health and disease, he has fallen asleep, all but an octogenarian. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors ; and their works do follow them."

This brief biographical sketch would fall short of the truth, if it failed to record Dr. Hewit's attitude in the theological controversies which have agitated the Congregational and Presbyterian churches for the past forty years, and especially at and after the time of his settlement in Bridgeport. In these he took a decided and influential part. In these, too, as in other things, he uttered no uncertain sound. He ranged himself with those known as Old School. He withstood to the last, and to the utmost, all doctrinal innovations, believing the Westminster symbols to contain the system of doctrine taught in Holy Scriptures, and lying at the foundation of the soul's life. His voice was as thunder in summoning men to the defence of the ancient doctrine against all assailants. This cost him the more, as it separated him from some who had been his chiefest friends. But herein he knew no man after the flesh. I will not say that the former East Windsor, now Hartford, Seminary owes its original founding, and subsequent maintenance, under threatening financial difficulties, to Dr. Hewit ; but I will say, if this be due, under God, to any man—to him more.

It now remains that, so far as practicable in the

time at command, I present a brief portraiture of the leading characteristics of this wonderful man.

His physique, the whole shaping and proportions of his frame, his countenance, head, and entire physiognomy, bespoke an extraordinary man. Seen first, whether in the face or the back, or sidewise, that massive frame, that prodigious breadth of chest, and from shoulder to shoulder, at once arrested the attention of strangers, and led to the inquiry, who he was. Herein were stored that intense vitality and amazing power which bore him up under his great sorrows and trials, and onward through various perils and exhausting toils, till he neared fourscore years. His great head, "a very dome of thought," his deep and broad forehead, projecting temples, heavy eyebrows; his eye so quick with the play of genius; the strong, and oftentimes even terrible earnestness beaming out in his whole expression, at once marked him as no common man—nay, a man who rarely has a peer; such, indeed, as one sees no two specimens of in his life. One of our distinguished civilians once said to me, that "he looked like an emperor;" and another, who had little sympathy with his views, said, that "Dr. Hewit always looked to him like one of the old prophets or reformers." This, with his unequalled voice, gave him a mighty presence before public assemblies.

His majestic frame, so typical of his intellectual, moral, and spiritual strength, although it was the

repository of prodigious vitality and power, at the same time had a certain defect in the inward adjustment and attempering of the organs of life, which produced much jar, and friction, and chafing in the working of the vital machinery. He had a morbid, nervous sensitiveness, irregular digestion, and other difficulties, which bowed him down, and made him to feel the chastening of the Lord all his days. This often degenerated into hypochondria, which he ever felt to be his thorn in the flesh, and no less needful for him than Paul's was for him. This also had much to do with any of those less genial manifestations which sometimes pained himself as well as others. And I may as well say here, once for all, that if any judge that the outlines of his character, which I am now about to give, need shading or toning down to any extent, any such drawback was largely due to this dark trouble of his body and his soul. This, taken in connection with another thing, will largely explain any unpleasant impressions which such as differed from him may have formed, in regard to what they may have supposed an undue severity or harshness in his character. Dr. Hewit, as I have said, was a mighty man. His whole being intellectual, sensitive, moral, had a vast momentum in it. He could not think, or feel, or purpose, or act, without a huge quantity of motion ; without being energetic and demonstrative ; he could do nothing feebly or tamely ; hence all his feelings and moods, genial

and ungenial, were conspicuous, and showed their utmost. Hence too often arose exaggerated impressions in regard to his real feelings.

His intellect was simply gigantic ; had it been free from the clogs of nervous and other bodily suffering to which I have referred, this would have been more fully evinced by enduring printed monuments. But the pen was irksome to him, and cramped the free play of his powers. To a memory most capacious and retentive, was added extraordinary intuitive insight ; and to this a high power of generalization and logical reasoning ; of clear, profound, concatenated argument. I have never known a mind more capable of disentangling the intricate and clearing the obscure, and of confirming its conclusions by a chain of compact, rigid, adamant logic. But the power of reasoning was equalled, even surpassed, by the splendor and opulence of his imagination, which irradiated his logic, and threw over the dry skeleton of mere argument those living flesh and blood hues, and that magnificence of illustration, which never failed to instruct and delight. Indeed, many were so impressed and even dazzled by the brilliance of his imagination, that they lost sight of and underrated his logical power, which, while it was only illuminated, they were fain to think was overshadowed by it. But this was a mistake. The greatness of the one did not belittle, it rather vivified the other. In these powers, thus blended and inter-

working, we find the resources of that electric oratory which so often instructed and kindled the popular heart. Judge Hopkins, of New York, characterized his eloquence as "logic set on fire."

To these were added a wonderful command of plain, pithy, and graphic English, which enabled him to say strong things in a strong way, and the best things in the best way. And to articulate all this, God gave him a voice which, in its best estate, was unmatched for compass, power and melody. The uniform testimony of all who knew him from the first was, that in consequence of being so severely taxed during his Temperance agency, his voice lost much of its original power and sweetness, which it never fully regained. I have heard of amazing effects produced by his mere vocalization.

Some time after his settlement in Fairfield, the late Judge Gould, one of the most eminent jurists the country ever produced, was affected to tears simply by hearing Dr. Hewit, before not known to him, read a hymn. At a great Sunday School celebration on the Battery, in New York, owing to some imperfection in the arrangements, it was found impossible to arrest noise and disorder. Dr. Hewit was called on to meet the difficulty. He rose and calmly proclaimed, "Let there be a great silence;" and the whole throng was hushed into deathlike stillness.

Not less marvellous was his eloquence. The late

Roger M. Sherman, himself one of the first orators and jurists of the country, and pronounced by high authority to be in his own profession second only to Daniel Webster in New England, sat under Dr. Hewit's preaching during the ten years of his ministry in Fairfield. He has told me that he had heard the noblest efforts of Drs. Dwight, Mason, and the other pulpit celebrities of our land ; but, added he, "I have often listened to flights and surges of eloquence from Dr. Hewit that I have never heard equalled by mortal man." A distinguished Unitarian preacher, who heard a series of sermons from him, in 1836, in support of doctrines which the former greatly disrelished, said that Dr. Hewit had no superior as a reasoner and orator, and that if he were at the bar, or in Congress, he would be the peer of Webster and Clay. Rev. Daniel A. Clark, himself distinguished for pulpit eloquence, said of a Temperance address delivered by Dr. Hewit in Amherst, "There fell great hail for the space of two hours, and every stone was about the weight of a talent."

Such testimonies might be indefinitely multiplied.* But enough ; I must hasten forward to call attention to his MORAL AND CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, which, after all, was his crowning gift and ornament. He was a man naturally of intense moral convictions and deepest earnestness of character. It was not in his nature to be untrue to his princi-

* For more of them, see Appendix.

ples. He was bound to go wherever they led him. He had a deep sense of personal sinfulness, guilt, helplessness, dependence on sovereign and almighty grace for deliverance from sin, and personal justification before God. His assurance was equally strong of the sufficiency, freeness, completeness of salvation through the blood and righteousness and Spirit of Christ, for all who will accept it. So his whole life in the flesh was one of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved him and gave himself for him. In this faith he lived and died, and wrestled and conquered; and his communion was with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

This faith was the centre and circumference of his theology, his preaching, and his teaching. Whatever else in theology he held or maintained was, to his mind, vitally implicated with this, and stood or fell with it. This determined not only his private and pastoral life, but his course in public controversies. Whether he always rightly conceived the views of antagonists or not, it is out of place here to discuss. What I mean to say, and saying, know whereof I affirm, is, that he was actuated in all the conflicts of his public life by no lower motive than a holy jealousy of God's truth, and honor, and glory, and a desire to preserve intact and entire that truth as it is in Jesus, which is according to godliness, and is the life of the soul's life. His theology and his experience in his inner life mutually interpenetrated and shaped each other.

As to what this theology was, we describe it in the shortest and truest way, a way perfectly intelligible and unambiguous withal, when we say, first, that it involved the infallible inspiration and binding authority of the Holy Scriptures ; and, secondly, the doctrines of the Westminster Catechisms, in their literal import, as a true summation of the teachings of that word. In short, he was a sincere, tenacious, unbending adherent of the Reformed and Puritan theology, and a valiant and mighty defender of it. In this he never wavered ; and his judgment as to where and how this could be best maintained in its purity and integrity, is the true key to his whole career, including all its vicissitudes, relations, and aspects, controversial and ecclesiastical. He solemnly affirmed during his last sickness, that he held fast the gospel of Christ which he had professed and preached so many years ; and that he did not regret the doctrinal attitude which he had maintained, believing the Westminster standards to harmonize fully with the Word of God.

When Dr. Hewit was convinced that any given course was right and pleasing to God, not earth nor hell could swerve him from it. This you know full well. When he had raised an opposition to himself in his parish by his early sermons on Temperance, he faced it with a memorable discourse, which he commenced thus : "I have known poverty ; I am not afraid of that. I have felt the finger

of scorn ; I am not afraid of that. I have been slandered by wicked men and misapprehended by good men ; I am not afraid of that. I have known what it is to be under the wrath and curse of God ; of that I am afraid !” The very timbers of the house seemed aghast with awe. When preaching on Temperance in Charleston, S. C., and cautioned to be careful about hitting slavery, his instantaneous answer was, “I shall not bow down to your Dagon !”

One of our great millionaire speculators happened once to hear him preach. He said that a sermon of two hours “seemed hardly twenty minutes ;” and further, “had that man lived in the days of the fagot and stake, he would have been burned !” But I will not expatiate on what you know so well ; and those that knew him, know as surely, that while his courage was heroic, and feared not the face of clay, he was nevertheless one of the humblest of men. The following memoranda, kindly furnished me by his colleague and successor, are but fresh exemplifications of what those familiar with him have well known to enter into his habitual experience.

“The last time that he walked down town he called at the office of a friend, and in the course of conversation spoke to this effect : ‘I had, last night, an overwhelming sense of my vileness in the sight of the holy One. It kept me awake for hours, and forced me to cry : Look not on me ! look not

on me, but look on thy glorified Son, at thy right hand!

“To one who visited him in his sick bed-chamber, and said to him, ‘I should probably have gone down to a drunkard’s grave, but for one of your sermons on Temperance to which I listened.’ He replied, ‘Yes, we read that a goose was once the means of saving Rome!’

“Dr. H. once remarked to me that he had been greatly dependent for encouragement in the ministry upon words of commendation from pious and judicious persons. On more than one occasion, when he had almost determined to abandon the pulpit, he was led to take heart and go forward by the assurance coming from some unexpected quarter, that his efforts were not altogether in vain.”

Need I say that he was a man of prayer, and mighty in it? He dwelt in the secret place of the most High, under the shadow of the Almighty, and in the very Holy of Holies. And how wonderful were these sacred outpourings in the closet, the family, the familiar meeting, the pulpit! How vain would it be to describe them! You know them better than any words can tell you. I can only say that I have heard public prayers offered by him, which I have not seen equalled in human language. I recollect once at a funeral of a minister’s wife, in a neighboring congregation, he followed a sermon preached by me with a prayer,

which seemed to lift us all from the earth and the earthy, to the third heavens where God resides.

But the time hurries me to his more private and personal relations. As a husband, father, kinsman, friend, he was a model of Christian love, faithfulness, patriarchal dignity blended with the simplicity and playfulness of a child. Here again I speak from personal knowledge, having enjoyed the most intimate relations with him in his own household.

His conversational powers fully equalled, even if they did not surpass, his powers of public teaching and address. And I question, if the influence exerted by him in this way, were not quite equal to that achieved by his public efforts. His power to enlighten, interest, fascinate, and enchain in private intercourse, when he was in his finer moods, was quite unrivalled. In this manner he exerted vast influence in two ways. First, in personal intercourse with souls exercised with concern and anxiety, or dejected by spiritual distress and melancholy. In this he was incomparable. Having been himself, through his physical temperament, at times reduced to religious melancholy, and found the way of escape from it through Christ, he knew how to comfort souls similarly distressed, "with the comfort wherewith he was comforted of God." He was resorted to by persons thus afflicted far and near—from neighboring parishes and from more distant places. And many are the souls, through the

land, relieved by the skill with which he has applied to them the medication of the Great Physician, who will rise up and call him blessed. Seldom does any age or country produce a man who was at once such a son of thunder to the hardened and presumptuous, and such a son of consolation to wounded and contrite spirits.

Another great medium of this private personal agency was with ministers and men of influence, whom he instructed and moulded by the light and power, with which he set forth high truths and formidable questions in theology and casuistry. His magnetic power over such can be understood only by those who felt it. He planted in many such the seeds of immortal truths, and not a few now live to maintain and propagate—some of them in high stations—principles, for the germs of which they are, under God, indebted to him. So, “being dead he yet speaketh.”

And now what shall I say more? His work is done. That mighty frame, so long a temple of the Holy Ghost, lies dead before us, and we are about to commit it to its native dust—to be evoked in immortal beauty and glory, by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. One of his last utterances, on a beautiful morning, was: “How much more beautiful than this the resurrection morn.” Again, he, with his household, offered prayer for all the congregations and people, including their children and children’s children, that had been under

his ministry—(who does not crave such a benediction?)—and then he gradually fell asleep in Jesus. Not he, but “death itself there dies.” He has gone to dwell with Christ in Paradise. Thither, God, of his infinite grace, grant that we may all follow him, and shine with him in bliss and glory evermore.

APPENDIX.

A.—Page 14.

THE following appeared many years ago in the *New York Evangelist*, from a writer of a series of sketches of distinguished advocates of Total Abstinence :

“Many years ago, one Sabbath evening, the writer went into the Brick Church, (Rev. Dr. Spring’s,) which was open for divine worship. We were ignorant of the occasion, whether it was an ordinary or a special service ; and of the preacher, whether he was the pastor or a stranger. After the usual introductory services, which we think were conducted by the pastor, a stranger arose. We were not probably attracted by his appearance or manner at the beginning, nor did we at once see the drift of his discourse ; but as he proceeded, he kindled and unfolded his theme with a clear and masterly eloquence. The theme was an unusual one. We had never heard it handled in the pulpit before — it was *the evils of Intemperance*. The preacher had but one eye, but it flashed like the evening star in the deep heavens. He seemed to labor under a momentous mission which he had undertaken alone, putting his trust in God. Like

Howard, he measured a great woe which oppressed humanity, and he had braced himself up to the great work of removing it. Never shall we forget that discourse ; remarkable alike for the clearness of its statements, the boldness of its positions, the force of its reasonings, the power of its imagery, the unction, and spirit-stirring energy of its delivery. That was Nathaniel Hewit's first sermon in the city of New York on the subject of his great mission. Before we left our seat we were convinced, and our resolution taken. We met him afterwards, when he went through the land assailing the evil under every form and degree with his resistless eloquence, and aided him in the formation of at least one successful Temperance Society. We have heard him on other occasions, and have watched the spread of the doctrines which he promulgated. We believe him to be the first great reformer in this field of labor ; and if any man is entitled to be called 'the apostle of Temperance,' it is Nathaniel Hewit."

Extract from a letter from Rev. Mark Hopkins, D. D., President of Williams College, to Rev. Edward W. Hooker, D. D. :

"It was, I believe, the first time this community had ever been addressed on that subject, and the effect was most extraordinary. The week before, the rum traffic had been undisturbed ; but the Monday after, I think it was, every store in town

stopped, and from that time to this there has not been a store here where it has been sold. The taverns were not quite so prompt in stopping, but they soon came into it ; and have since been kept, and for the most part honestly, on temperance principles. The sermons came on the community like a clap of thunder, and did the work at once. Nobody with whom I have spoken seems to remember exactly what Dr. Griffin said ; but, I know there was a current report of his saying, ‘It was like lightning striking on one side and the other.’ An impression so powerful has seldom been made by two discourses. And aside from the conversion of souls, which I have no doubt has been the indirect result, I know of no instance in which so much and so permanent good has been done.”

Statement of Chief Justice Parker, of Massachusetts :

“I should think the change was more thorough in Berkshire than anywhere else ; and it has probably been more aided by the efforts of associations and individuals. Among other instruments, the missionary labors of a Mr. Hewit are spoken of as highly efficacious. This gentleman has visited many towns ; and being gifted with a zeal which knows no relaxation, an eloquence which cannot be resisted, he has produced a powerful effect on communities, and has turned some of the most incorrigible drunkards from the evil of their ways.

From what I have heard of this gentleman, and his wonderful success in this good cause, I should denominate him the apostle of temperance."

The Executive Committee of the New York City Temperance Society, publishing in, 1829, their "Views of the Temperance Reformation," remark :

"Some years before the American Temperance Society was formed, the Rev. Nathaniel Hewit had turned his attention to the subject, and excited some wonder and endured much obloquy by advancing the doctrine of total abstinence, as affording the only security to the temperate, and the only deliverance to the intemperate. Where this gentleman's private character is known, there is no need of the testimony which every *honest* man who knows him is prepared to give, to the strictness of his integrity, the purity of his zeal, the consistency of his life, and his earnest efforts for the best interests of his fellow-men. The success which has everywhere attended his efforts, evince with how much ability he has pleaded the cause of Temperance ; and shows, better than a thousand lectures on prudence, the wisdom of that bold and uncompromising attack upon the evil, which he adopted at first and has uniformly continued. Immediately after their appointment, the Executive Committee engaged Mr. Hewit to labor in the city as long as he could be spared from the more extensive plans of the parent society. He spent several

weeks among us ; and besides public addresses, preached in many of our churches ; always with acceptance and with known and marked success. The effect of his eloquent appeals, in opening men's minds and changing their habits, is without a parallel among us."

A correspondent from Baltimore, describing the effects of a four-weeks visit of Dr. Hewit to that city in 1830, says :

"He preached in the churches of at least *five* denominations ; and was heard by individuals of all. He preached with great power and persuasion ; as a man deeply conscious of the benevolence of his motives, the goodness of his cause, and the immense importance of its success. Multitudes have heard the thunder of his utterance, and many have felt the lightning of his argument."

The Rev. Edward W. Hooker, D. D., observes :

"The effect of Dr. Hewit's discourses, not only at the time and on the spot, but afterward, and upon the surrounding community, through the report thereof, was such as might be expected from eloquence having such characteristics. Not only would those who were present and heard him be full of his subject, and take vivid impression of his thoughts, but so much would they be able to report to others of what they had heard, and so strong were the impressions thus made even at second

hand upon the absent, that they almost seemed to themselves to have heard him with their own ears. In illustration of this remark, a gentleman high in the walks of learning, and at the head of one of our New England colleges, on being recently asked for his reminiscences and impressions of the discourses of Dr. Hewit, delivered in the place of his residence in the year 1827, remarks in a letter to the writer of this sketch: 'A curious delusion I have been in. It has been my impression for a long time that I heard these discourses of Dr. Hewit; but on comparing dates, I am inclined to think that I must have come to confuse the impressions I had received from others with my own recollections.' That must be eloquence indeed, the powerful impressions of which are so vividly and impressively transferred from mind to mind."

B.—Page 15.

The following extract from this speech appeared in the *Religious Intelligencer* of New Haven:

"The speaker desired to know whether all professors of religion, now engaged in the traffic or manufacture of distilled spirits, would not feel themselves bound by a sense of Christian duty to abandon it, if it could be done at a trifling sacrifice." "You admit you would be criminal in refusing to make a sacrifice of a few dollars—but

if *any* number of dollars are to turn the scale and decide your course of conduct, who is your god? Is it Mammon, or is it Christ? Robert Walpole declared that every man had his price. That profligate statesman, moving in a corrupt court, found that the vote and influence of almost any man might be purchased at some price. One man he could purchase at fifty guineas; another cost him a thousand; another, ten thousand. Some must be bought by an earldom; others by a bishopric. Some men were cheaper, and some were dearer. But all were in the market at some price. Robert Walpole, like all others who trafficked in the souls of men, learned his ethics and his tactics from the arch-fiend, who well knew that almost every man has his price; who could compute the price of Walpole himself; and who once vainly attempted to estimate the price of even the Son of God, when he sought to bribe him with the offer of all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. Such a being he did not expect to secure at a meaner price; though Judas, he knew, could be bought for thirty pieces of silver. Christian! what is the price of thy soul? Twenty dollars?—fifty?—one hundred dollars? Oh, no! You shudder at the thought of selling yourself so cheap. What, then, is your price? Can you sacrifice five hundred thousand dollars? You hesitate—you cannot do it. The bargain then is closed, and you sell your soul for that sum.”