

THE LIFE

OF

JOSEPH ADDISON ALEXANDER, D.D.,

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

BY

HENRY CARRINGTON ALEXANDER.

VOLUME I.

NEW YORK:

CHARLES SCRIBNER & COMPANY.

1870.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1869,

By CHARLES SCRIBNER & CO.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Southern District of New York.

gation; but let the rest go hang. I am glad to see you disapprove the dash. I loathe it as it is used by ——, e. g. : ‘This work—and we wish we could say other works—came forth,’ &c. No such form of a sentence should be tolerated. Dr. Johnson never used even a parenthesis. There is little news stirring. The family are well. * * * * William sends you the Report of the Colonization Society, and wishes you to read Vroom’s address and give your opinion.

“Yours ever,

“A.”

I have been so successful as to find the poem referred to in this letter, in an old brown fragment of the newspaper in which it originally appeared. The piece had been carefully hoarded by one of the author’s playmates and oldest admirers. It possesses a high dramatic and exegetical interest, and is unlike anything else from Mr. Alexander’s pen. It will be remarked that notwithstanding the protest in the letter to his brother he has not discarded the dash or the parenthesis. The piece sheds some light, too, on his own character. He too was one day to be seen in tears and helplessness—“*his mighty frame*” also “shuddering in anguish”; and was to excite a similar surprise. He too “loved not to be scanned so searchingly.” It had been too long and injuriously thought of him that “from an eye so hard, so diamond-like, infusible, though bright, the kindly drops of pity, love, or grief, ne’er found a vent.” “Yet have I seen him weep * * * and heard him cry aloud in sorrow, as a child.”

The difference was this, Esau was really hard-hearted; but Addison Alexander, with all his force and brilliancy of character, had also the gentleness and softness of a girl.

THE TEARS OF ESAU.

[From an unpublished Drama.]

GENESIS, xxvii: 30—41.

Mark yon tall chief returning from the chase :
 Canst thou not read in that deep wrinkled brow,
 That quivering lip, that fiercely flashing eye,
 The mingled characters of smothered grief

And rankling discontent? Thou readest well.
'Tis Esau, first-born of the ancient Isaac,
And monarch of the chase. There! did'st thou see
The sudden gleam his eye shot forth upon us?
Approach him not too nearly: drop thine eyes:
He loves not to be scanned so searchingly.
Yet men have guessed in vain what hidden crime
Preys on his soul, and makes his eye a coward.
The story which thou readest in his aspect
Is written in the process of his life,
And stamped on all his deeds. Proud, fearless, fierce,
Relentless—ever mindful of his wrongs,
Forgetful of the kindness which repays them.
Who would not say that from an eye so hard,
So diamond-like, infusible, though bright,
The kindly drops of pity, love, or grief,
Ne'er found a vent! Yet have I seen him weep,
Ay, seen him weep, and heard him cry aloud
In sorrow, as a child. 'Twas on that day,
When Jacob—but you know the tale of old.
Ah, Arioeh! 'twas a sight to chill the blood,
I scarce believed it; though I stood in service
Upon the dying bed of Isaac. There
The rugged hunter knelt, and when he heard—
The savoury food still smoking in his hand,
And gently offered to his father's taste—
Yes, when he heard the old man's faltering tongue
In broken accents tell the treachery;
And saw those sightless eyes, with bursting tears
Of agony distended; and that hand,
That withered hand, whose hallowed imposition
Had laid on Jacob's head the promised blessing—
When its cold trembling touch, reminded him
Of all that he had lost—what did he then?
I stood in staring terror to behold
The wild and fearful bursting of his wrath
Come forth in frenzied action: but it came not;
I looked again: for how could I believe,
That Esau, the fierce hunter—that the Esau,
Whom I had known so terrible in anger,
Should bear his griefs thus meekly? When I looked,
His head was bowed upon his father's hand.
His own concealed his face; his mighty frame

Was shuddering in anguish : but anon,
 Between his fingers, drop by drop I marked
 The scalding tears were oozing, and I heard
 Those strong convulsive sobs, which more than tears
 Betray a *man's* proud grief. I could have wept
 To see *him* humbled thus. The gentler Jacob
 Might weep, and who would mark it ? 'Tis his nature.
 But to see tears upon the manlier cheek
 Of rugged Esau—'twas a moving sight.
 Long did he weep in silence, but at last
 There came from him a wild and bitter cry,
 And then in deep and hollow tones he said,
 "Hast thou for me no blessing, O my father !"
 What could the old man say ? Before him knelt
 The eldest born—his best beloved son,
 Him whom he would have blessed, but for the arts
 Of Jacob and his mother. Once again,
 He murmured forth "thy brother—'twas thy brother."
 Again wept Esau, and again he asked,
 "Hast thou reserved no blessing for thy son ?
 Thine Esau, Oh my father !" Then once more
 The biting, blasting thought, that he had lost
 That mystic benediction, by whose virtue,
 The favour of Jehovah seemed ensured,
 Rose on his mind ; and as it rose he cried
 In bitterness of soul. But with that cry,
 His weakness ended, and his agony
 Passed from him as a dream. Across his brow,
 He drew his hand impatiently, then sprang,
 As if in anger, to his feet. His eyes,
 No longer bathed in grief, were fired with rage ;
 And on his quivering lip there seemed to hang,
 Unutterable things. The child was gone,
 And vengeful Esau was himself again.

ALLI.

During the year 1828 in the intervals of study he was also a frequent writer for the "Philadelphia Monthly Magazine," edited by Dr. Isaac C. Snowden.* Some of these contributions were in verse. The world of romantic literature, and especially poetry, and the world of severe scholarship, seemed now to press their conflicting claims upon him. He may be thought to have stood for a moment as if irresolute, like Gar-