

MEMOIRS

OF THE

REV. ROBERT FINLEY, D.D.

LATE PASTOR

OF

THE PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION

AT BAY BRIDGE NEW-JERSEY,

AND

PRESIDENT OF FRANKLIN COLLEGE,

LOCATED AT ATHENS, IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA.

WITH 2

BRIEF SKETCHES

OF SOME OF HIS COTEMPORARIES,

AND

NUMEROUS NOTES

BY THE REV. ISAAC V. BROWN, A. M.

NEW-BRUNSWICK :

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1918

DISTRICT OF NEW-JERSEY, ss.

L.S. **B**E it remembered, that on the twelfth day of April, in the forty-third year of the independence of the United States of America, ISAAC V. BROWN, of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit:—
“Memoirs of the Rev Robert Finley, D. D. late Pastor of the Presbyterian Congregation at Basking Ridge, New Jersey, and President of Franklin College, located at Athens, in the state of Georgia; with brief Sketches of some of his contemporaries, and numerous Notes. By the Rev. Isaac V. Brown, A. M.”
In conformity to an act of the Congress of the United States entitled an act for the encouragement of learning by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned; and also to the act, entitled an act supplementary to the act entitled an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, etching and engraving historical and other prints.

WILLIAM PENNINGTON,
Clerk of the District of New-Jersey.

217-114
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charity, all who appeared to be the sincere disciples of his blessed Saviour.

Extract from a sermon delivered at the funeral of the Rev. James F. Armstrong, late pastor of the presbyterian church in this city by the Rev. Dr. Miller of Princeton.

With regard to the reverend and respected brother, whose remains now lie before us, about to be deposited in the house appointed for all living, he is gone beyond the reach of our eulogies and our memorials. He needs not the praise of men. While we bend over his lifeless corpse, with tender and mournful recollections, his disenthralled and sanctified spirit is enjoying, we humbly trust, the presence and the smiles of his God and Saviour. He was well known to you all; to many of you longer and more intimately than to the speaker. There is therefore the less occasion of my dwelling long on the circumstances of his life, or upon his general character.

Your departed pastor was a native of the state of Maryland, where he was born in the year 1750. His parents were highly respectable, and in particular eminent for their piety. They trained up this their son in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and at a very early period of life he received those religious impressions, which concurring with the earnest wishes of a pious father, determined him to consecrate himself to the work of the gospel ministry. After making the usual preliminary acquirements, he entered the college of New-Jersey; and having completed the course of study in that institution, he received its honours in the Autumn of the year 1773.

In a short time after leaving college, he entered on his theological studies under the direction of the venerable Dr. Witherspoon, and completed them just about the commencement of the revolutionary war; when, fired with that patriotic ardour, which distinguished him throughout life, he determined to join the army, which was fighting the battles of his country. He accordingly entered it in the capacity of a chaplain; in which capacity he served with fidelity and reputation, during the whole of the revolutionary contest.

At the close of the war, he formed a matrimonial connexion with the family of Robert James Livingston, Esq. of the state of New-York, soon after which he was engaged for more than a year in ministering to the church in Elizabeth-Town, in this state. In the year 1785, the church in this city, which had become, a short time before, vacant by the decease of the Rev. Dr. Spencer, invited him to take the pastoral charge of it, in connexion with that of Maidenhead. He accepted the call, and was settled as the pastor of these united congregations, in the course of that year.

In 1799, he was elected a trustee of the College of New-Jersey, in which office he continued till his death. And few of the members of that board, as long as he enjoyed a tolerable share of health, were more punctual in their attendance on its meetings, or more ardent in their zeal for the interests of the institution, than your deceased pastor.

He had been seven or eight years settled in this place, when he was attacked by that distressing and obstinate disease, which was the burden of all his after life; and by which a frame, once the most athletic and vigorous, was gradually enfeebled, borne down, and finally

brought to the dust. The foundation of this disease was supposed to have been laid, at least in part, by the privations and sufferings which he underwent during his connexion with the army. It is certain, that through the whole of that connexion, his enterprise and bravery led him to encounter, with cheerfulness, and even beyond what his official duty demanded, every hardship incident to military life.

With respect to the character and the success of his labours among you, my brethren, there needs no testimony from me. You have seen him, for near thirty years, going in and out before you, labouring with assiduity, and during a great part of the time, under the pressure of disease, for your spiritual welfare. You have seen him addressing you with affectionate earnestness, when his enfeebled frame was scarcely able to maintain an erect posture in the sacred desk. You have heard him lamenting, in the tenderest terms, his inability to serve you in a more active manner. And you have seen him manifesting with frequency his earnest desire to promote your best interest, even when weakness compelled him to be absent from the solemn assembly.

But why enlarge on these topics, before those who knew him so well? Or why dwell upon points of excellence in his character, which all acknowledged? The warmth of his friendship; his peculiar urbanity; his domestic virtues; his attachment to evangelical truth; his decided friendliness to vital piety; his punctuality, as long as he had strength to go abroad, in attending on the judicatories of the church:—these, among the many excellent traits of character exhibited by the pastor of whom you have just taken leave, will no doubt be re-

membered with respect and with mournful pleasure, for a long time to come.

More than once have I witnessed, during his weakness and decline, not only the anxious exercises of one who watched over the interests of his own soul with a sacred jealousy ; but also the affectionate aspirations of his heart for the eternal welfare of his family and flock. Farewell ! afflicted, beloved man, farewell ! We shall see thee again ! see thee, we trust, no more the pale victim of weakness, disease and death ; but in the image and the train of our blessed Master, and in all the immortal youth and health and lustre of his glorified family !— May it then, O may it then appear, that all thine anxious prayers, and all thine indefatigable labours for the spiritual benefit of those who were so dear to thine heart, have not been in vain in the Lord !