

A
COLLECTION
OF
AMERICAN EPITAPHS
AND
INSCRIPTIONS,
WITH
OCCASIONAL NOTES.

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BY REV. TIMOTHY ALDEN, A. M. 1771-1857
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DEDICAT.

TIMOTHEUS. ALDEN.



[The first edition of the first volume of this Collection was printed, in four numbers, in 1812. A variety of circumstances, not of sufficient importance to be mentioned in this notice, has retarded the completion of this series, which is to consist of five volumes, any former intimation to the contrary notwithstanding. It is now thought adviseable not to continue a division of the work into numbers, as the captions of those numbers would, in the aggregate, exclude several pages of matter. Should this series meet with a favourable reception, it is probable that, a few years hence, *Deo volente*, a second may make its appearance, with a greater proportion of biographical and historical details, in reference to characters and events in the southern and western parts of the United States, than is to be found in the first pentade.

It having been occasionally suggested, in the first volume of this Collection, that its author was preparing a History of the state of New-Jersey, it is deemed proper here to add, that he has abandoned that work for want of encouragement.

New-York, 20 June, 1814.]

A COLLECTION OF AMERICAN EPI-
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CASIONAL NOTES, BY REV. TIMOTHY
ALDEN.

ANDOVER, MASS.

ARTICLE 286. Mat. 7. 7. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Sacred to the memory of the rev. JONATHAN FRENCH, ordained pastor of the church and congregation in the south parish in Andover, 23 September, 1772, died, 28 July, 1809, ætat. 70. Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord. They rest from their labours and their works do follow them.

Note.—A family, by the name of *French*, came to New-England, probably, in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The christian names of the heads of this family the writer of these memoirs has not been able to ascertain. They brought with them three sons, Samuel, John, and Thomas. Another was born to them, on their passage across the Atlantick, whom, in grateful acknowledgment of the good providence of God, on whose protection and favour they depended in removing to this distant country, they named Dependence. Thomas

settled in Braintree, near Boston, as did also his son Moses.

In the maternal line, the ancestors of the rev. mr. French are traced to the honourable John Alden, one of the pilgrims of Leyden, who came to Plymouth, in 1620, who was assistant to all the governours of the Old Colony, except the first, and who died at Duxborough, in 1688, at the age of about eighty-nine years. John Bass, of Braintree, now Quincy, married Ruth, one of the daughters of John Alden. Sarah, a daughter of mr. Bass, was the wife of Ephraim Thayer. This happy couple, another Zecharias and Elizabeth, as to their life and conversation, were blessed with a numerous family of children, remarkable for their piety. They were indulged the peculiar satisfaction of living to see fourteen children arrive at years of maturity, enter a family state, and, unanimously, make the noble resolution of Joshua ; *as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*. On one communion occasion, they enjoyed the singular felicity of presenting themselves, with the fourteen children, God had graciously given them, at the table of the Lord, to receive the emblems of redeeming love! A similar instance has seldom been found in the annals of the christian church.

Esther, the ninth of these children, was the wife of Moses French, before named, who died, 19 September, 1768, in the sixty-ninth year of his age. She survived her husband to the 15 of December, 1800, having entered upon her ninety-sixth year.--

They were both eminent for their uniformly pious deportment.

The eldest son of Moses and Esther French was Moses, who died at Braintree, 19 January, 1807, in the seventy-sixth year of his age. He was, for a long time, deacon of the church in that place, and was employed in several of the useful and important, though not elevated, departments of publick life. He was noted for his attachment to evangelical truth, for the sanctity of his deportment, and for the integrity, with which he discharged the various trusts with which he was honoured. Elisha, the second son, with a taste for reading, which he has advantageously indulged amid his agricultural and mechanical pursuits, and a mind early impressed with the reality and the importance of religion, is passing the evening of his life in the humble shades of retirement. There were three daughters; Esther, the eldest, who was the wife of Richard Thayer, of Braintree; Deliverance, the youngest, who was the first wife of rev. dr. Emmons, of Franklin; and another, who died unmarried. Jonathan, the youngest son, and the youngest of the family, except mrs. Emmons, is the subject of these memoirs.

The reverend Jonathan French, descended from ancestors eminent for that evangelical faith and practice, which distinguished many of the fathers of New-England, was born at Braintree, on the 30 of January, 1740. He lived with his parents, following the occupation of his father, who was a farmer, till he was about seventeen years old. At

this time he enlisted as a private soldier, in the army employed against the French and Indians, and in March, 1757, repaired to fort Edward. In August following, he was taken with the small-pox, and on his recovery from that disorder, being seized with the fever and ague, he was unable to perform duty, obtained a discharge, and returned home in October.

The tumult and temptations of the camp did not obliterate the serious instructions, which he had received from his pious parents. It appears from his journal, that he was observant of religious duties, and that he gladly improved every opportunity to attend publick worship. He constantly made a memorandum of the texts, which were used by the chaplains, and other ministers, who occasionally visited the army.

Soon after his return, he was stationed at Castle William, in the capacity of a sergeant. As the superior officers were often absent, the chief care of the garrison in such case, devolved upon Mr. French; so that the office he sustained was then of considerable importance to so young a man. He had also the charge of the sutler's store.

Twice, during his residence on this island, his life was in great jeopardy.

An Indian, who was a servant at the castle, applied to him at the store, on a certain time, for some rum, which he refused to let him have; supposing, from his appearance, that he had already drank more than was proper. A few days after, as he was walking alone, he met the Indian, who ad-

vanced towards him in a menacing attitude, with a drawn knife. There being no way to avoid an encounter, he took what advantage he could of the ground, which was sloping, and, by a sudden and vigorous stroke with his foot against the heels, and his hand against the neck of the Indian, brought him to the earth. Seizing a hoop-pole, which, providentially, lay near, he threatened the Indian's life, unless he would solemnly promise to conduct well for the future. The Indian seemed to be overwhelmed with astonishment that he should, on any condition, spare him, and ever after, with the liveliest gratitude, as if he owed his life to Mr. French, was ready, on all occasions, to do him any service in his power.

In the other instance, an Indian prisoner had found means to escape from confinement; but, not being able to get clear of the guard, which pursued him, he resorted to a narrow passage in the castle, and, having previously armed himself with a large club, swore he would kill any one, who should attempt to take him. Mr. French was directed to conduct a file of men to the place and seize him; but none of the soldiers had courage to approach him under such circumstances. Mr. French, being at that time small of stature, was not eyed with so much fear by the Indian, as were his soldiers. While he was talking to his men, and giving them directions, he watched for an opportunity, which he presently had, when the Indian's attention was somewhat diverted, and, springing, with much

agility, a number of feet, caught hold of the club, and, in a moment, with the assistance of his soldiers, secured the prisoner.

While at the castle, he was honoured with the acquaintance and friendship of many literary and other respectable characters in Boston and its vicinity. From childhood he had a fondness for books, and sedulously improved in this situation the advantages, which refined society, and his opportunities for reading, afforded. For mathematical and philosophical researches he had a natural propensity. He, however, devoted his leisure principally to the study of physick and surgery; contemplating the healing art, for a considerable time, as the profession he was to follow in life. To this the benevolent bias of his mind strongly urged him, and his station at the garrison was favourable for gaining the necessary instruction. Under the direction of the surgeon of this post, an English gentleman, by the name of Crosier, if the writer mistake not, and the friendly aid of doctors Whitworth and Jeffries, he soon made such proficiency in the acquirement of medical knowledge, and had so much the confidence of the faculty, that the medicines and care of the sick were often intrusted solely to him.

He was ever a man of great resolution and perseverance; and it was always a maxim with him in every station of life, to do what was to be done, as soon as he consistently could. No small difficulties nor dangers ever deterred him from the discharge of

duty. The following anecdote is offered as an exemplification of this trait in his character.

A man belonging to the garrison was afflicted with a dangerous ulcer. Mr. French, on examining it, found there were appearances of a mortification. He repaired to the medicine chest; but, on searching, could find no such dressings as he thought the case required. The surgeon, who had been expected, was unable to come by reason of a sudden change in the weather, which had so frozen the water in Boston harbour, as to prevent the passing of a boat, but not so as to make it safe for any one on foot. Mr. French not being able to procure a man, who was willing to venture over, in his zeal, furnished himself with a pole, and, holding it horizontally, that it might facilitate his getting out if he should fall through the ice, travelled to Boston, though often in great danger; procured the necessary articles, returned, and was undoubtedly the instrument, under providence, of saving the patient's life.

The physicians before mentioned, particularly, recommended it to him to pursue the profession he had contemplated, and promised to afford him every aid in their power towards his establishment in Boston. They considered him as having peculiar talents for eminence in that line; but the great Head of the church had other purposes respecting him. He had even so far listened to the advice of friends, as to determine upon a settlement in the practice of physick, and to enter into a family

state; having, for about four years, formed an acquaintance with a view to marriage, with the lady, who afterwards became the companion of his life.

About this time, however, he received such encouragement from several literary friends, as led him to resolve upon a collegiate education. The lady, to whom he was engaged, concurred with him in the plan, and urged him to perseverance in it, as she thought it afforded a prospect of his greater usefulness in life.

Messrs. Davis and Phillips, who were chaplains at the castle, assisted him in his studies preparatory for admission into the college. Several gentlemen, and particularly Mr. Bernard, son of the governour, furnished him with books for the purpose.

He continued at Castle William, discharging the duties of his station, till ready to commence his residence at college. On the last day of his service at the garrison, he waited on the governour and other company, as commanding officer for the day, gave up his commission, presented his sword to his successor, repaired to Harvard university, became subject to authority, and, in the evening, rung the bell as butler's freshman.

Being considerably advanced in years, he was indulged with greater intimacy with the officers of college, and other gentlemen of Cambridge, than is usual for under-graduates, and he possessed, in an uncommon degree, the confidence and friendship of his instructors and fellow-students. While a

member of this institution, he took great satisfaction in visiting the clergy of the vicinity. He also associated much with persons of piety, and especially with the serious young gentlemen of the college, for the purposes of devotion and religious improvement.

He often remarked, that, having had the command of others, he was much impressed with a sense of the necessity of order and subordination; and no one ever set a better example of obedience to the government of a college. He was distinguished, not only for conformity to the laws of the seminary, and for a diligent attention to study, but was subject to no fine nor censure during his collegiate life.

He was graduated, in 1771, but still continued at Cambridge, where he devoted himself to the study of divinity. He now resided in the family of Mrs. Holyoke, who honoured him with her friendship, as her husband, the president, in his life, had also done.

While an under-graduate, Mr. French was one of the most active and most skilful members of a private anatomical society, which was in existence for many years previous to the present respectable establishment, which is under the direction of Dr. John Warren. This society is said to have been destroyed about the year, 1784.

His name also appears among the projectors of a once private literary society, within the walls of Harvard, which was of advantage to many, be-

fore the professorship of rhetorick and oratory was founded.

Mr. French's prospects would have been flattering, as to this world, if he had finally determined on the profession, which he originally had in view. But having, by the kindness of heaven, obtained a publick education, and given himself up to his divine Lord and Master, he glowed with zeal to be employed in his service for the good of precious and immortal souls. No worldly emoluments could have satisfied him, like the ministry of the cross. This was the darling object of his heart; and, for distinguished usefulness in this noble and important, but arduous and self-humbling employment, he was eminently qualified.

His desire and intention were to have spent his life, as a missionary among the poor natives of the wilderness; but solicitations from Andover, and other places, to preach as a candidate, induced him to relinquish that purpose. After preaching for some time in the south parish of Andover, he received the united invitation of the church and congregation to take the pastoral oversight of them; and was, accordingly, ordained, on the 22 of September, 1772.

Having entered on the duties of his parochial charge, he was married to miss Abigail Richards, 26 August, 1773. Her father, Benjamin Richards, was a physician, in Weymouth, adjoining Braintree, who was eminent for his skill in the treatment of the throat distemper; a disorder, which

first appeared in New-England, in 1735. Her mother was Abigail, the youngest of the children of Ephraim Thayer, of whose family some account has already been given. The parents of mrs. French, like those of her excellent husband, were esteemed, in their day, as patterns of piety. The children of mr. French were Sarah, who died in infancy; Abigail, the consort of rev. Samuel Stearns, of Bedford, in Massachusetts; Jonathan, the pastor of the church and congregation of North-Hampton, in New-Hampshire; and Maria Holyoke, the consort of rev. Ebenezer P. Sperry of Dunstable.

Mr. French's ministry was laborious, as his parish was extensive; and, unless prevented by ill health, he was assiduous in the performance of duty, both publick and private. His sermons were usually written at large, though he sometimes extemporized; and his chirography was better in the latter, than in the former part of his ministry. He wrote more discourses, than the generality of his cotemporaries, but did not number them after he had completed a thousand. For many years he was in the habit of writing and delivering an exposition upon the chapters, which he read, from sabbath to sabbath, to his congregation. This was ever a very acceptable source of instruction to his hearers. His occasional publications were respectable productions; but his great object in preparing to address his people, was to be useful rather than elegant; and to offer the plain and momentous truths

of the gospel in a language, which all might understand. His time was ever too much occupied about the numerous and pressing duties of his station, to be very particular as to the embellishments of style. His manner of preaching was serious, solemn, and impressive. He had a strong, pleasant, and piercing voice, which he well knew how to manage. He was strongly solicited, some years since, to furnish for the press, a volume of his sermons ; but a multiplicity of cares precluded him the opportunity.

The baptisms during his ministry amounted to 1444 ; and the admissions into his church, including forty-seven from other churches, to 506. The greatest number admitted in one year was thirty-five, in 1773, besides eleven from sister churches.

He annually catechised the children in the seven school districts, into which his parish was divided ; and always used the Assembly's Catechism, which he preferred before any other. His discourse to the lambs of his flock, on such occasions, was remarkably appropriate and impressive, and, in several instances, had considerable effect, not only on the children, but on their parents, from the account of it which they gave to their parents. There were some instances of persons, who dated their awakenings from this source.

Twice a year, he formally visited all the schools in his parish. His ardent supplications to the throne of grace, and his tender addresses to these little nurseries of science, made an impression upon many, which will never be forgotten. He frequent-

ly preached lectures in various places among the people of his charge, and to the young gentlemen of Phillips' academy. Of this highly respectable seminary he was, from its establishment to the day of his death, one of the trustees, and also the clerk of the board.

He was serviceable to his people as a physician, especially in the early periods of his ministry, when there were not many of this profession in that part of the country. His attentions, however, in this character, and his medicines, were always gratuitous. Seldom was any minister ever more universally beloved, esteemed, and venerated by his parishioners, than was Mr. French. They constantly applied to him for counsel in all their difficulties, temporal as well as spiritual.

He was one of the founders of the society in Massachusetts, for promoting christian knowledge. He began to record remarks on the weather from the time he went into the army. His thermometrical and meteorological register, kept with great care for many years, would be a valuable acquisition to the cabinet of any philosophical association and is to be deposited in the archives of the New-York Historical Society.

Having in early life taken the sword in defence, and to secure the rights, he was ever an ardent friend of his country. During the revolutionary war, he exerted his influence, and did much to encourage his people in the noble cause of liberty and independence. On hearing of the battle, as it is

commonly called, of Bunker's Hill, he immediately set off with his gun and surgical instruments for the army. Although he did not reach the heights of Charlestown soon enough so use the former ; yet, for the latter, he was in season to have occasion, and was of much assistance in dressing and binding up the wounds of those, who had bled in that severe engagement.

The rev. Samuel Phillips, the first pastor of the south parish in Andover, was his immediate predecessor. He departed this life, 5 June, 1771, in the eighty-second year of his age, after a faithful ministry of sixty years' continuance. He was the progenitor of those distinguished worthies, bearing the same family name, who have merited the gratitude of the present and future generations, by their uncommon munificence for the promotion of literature, science, and religion, in this western world.

Mr. French had one encouragement in his ministry, which many of the faithful servants of the Redeemer have not. The leading characters in his parish were persons of exemplary piety. They strengthened his hands by their liberal bestowments upon him and his family ; and they gave him, and the cause, in which he was embarked, the weight of their influence.

His salary was small ; he, however, had the use of a valuable parsonage, and he availed himself of some aid by boarding a number of young gentlemen of the academy. He had many pious friends in Boston and other places, of whose kindly deeds he

often spoke with gratitude. Among the living it would be improper to particularize; but it would be inexcusable not to mention, in these memoirs, the name of the late lieut. governour Samuel Phillips, a grandson of his venerable predecessor. This gentleman was one of the truly excellent of the earth, and his praise will long be in the churches of New-England. He was his class-mate at college, his parishioner, benefactor, and intimate friend. With his confidence Mr. French was always honoured, and with him he often took sweet counsel respecting the things, which pertained to the best interests of his country, the advancement of the most useful science, and the promoting of the Redeemer's kingdom.

No minister was ever more given to hospitality, than was the subject of these memoirs. His social and friendly disposition endeared him to all his acquaintances. Though, from his situation, and the lively interest he took in the literary and religious institutions within the limits of his parish, his life was a continued scene of fatigue; yet at almost all seasons he was remarkably cheerful, entertaining, and instructive. His company was eagerly sought by the young and the old, and his house was the abode of friendship, harmony, and love. All, who resorted to his hospitable mansion, were certain of a most cordial welcome.

“He lov’d his friends with such a warmth of heart,
 So clear of interest, so devoid of art;
 Such generous freedom, such unshaken zeal—
 No words can speak it, but our tears may tell.”

Mr. French was also much esteemed by the churches of New-England, as a wise, prudent, and judicious counsellor, and was often instrumental of settling unhappy ecclesiastical difficulties. During his ministry, he received seventy eight letters missive, inviting him to attend ordaining and other councils. Many young gentlemen, preparing for the gospel ministry, had the benefit of his instructions and the use of his library; and these were, in every instance, gratuitous. With respect to the ministry, it was an opinion with him, which he often expressed, that all candidates for it, in a manner, had very inadequate ideas of its arduous duties, and great trials; that they, who entered it with a view to promote Christ's kingdom and the good of souls, would be willing, relying on the sufficiency of divine grace, to bear its trials; and that they, who engaged in it with a view merely to a subsistence and to worldly ease, would deserve, as they might expect, to find themselves under a great mistake,

In religious sentiment, he was decidedly such a Calvinist as the first fathers of New-England. Watts and Doddridge were his favourite authors. Though he was never fond of controversy, and had charity for many, who differed from him in opinion; yet he was much averse from those extremes, which have divided the christian world. In a particular manner, he viewed, with painful emotions, that laxity of sentiment, which has, of late years, made such an alarming progress.

On the mysterious subjects of the gospel, he

thought it wrong to attempt to be wise above what is written. What God had declared, he maintained, was to be implicitly believed, notwithstanding it might not be comprehended by finite minds.

He sought instruction and improvement from the best sources he could find. It appears, by some letters, discovered among his papers, that he was favoured with an epistolary correspondence, on religious subjects, with the late president Edwards.

He had a happy faculty of silencing the cavils of the censorious and supercilious. A person of this character, once interrogating him, with a captious spirit, about some of the most abstruse points in religion, he said to the inquirer, do not the scriptures explain these great truths to your satisfaction? to which he replied, they do not. Surely then, said Mr. French, you cannot suppose that I am able to explain them. These are the revealed truths of God's word; and, as such, are to be received and believed, though neither you nor I may hope fully to understand them in this world.

His different situations and occupations in life, were conducive to his acquiring a more, than ordinary knowledge of human nature.

His temper was naturally quick, but he was enabled, by the gracious influence of the gospel upon his heart, to exhibit, on the most trying occasions, great self-possession. His sensibilities were uncommonly keen. Whenever called so scenes of distress, his sympathy was instantly awake: yet he ever had so far a self-command, that he was

able, like a workman, who needeth not to be ashamed, in the most kindly manner, to administer the balm of consolation.

When addressing his beloved church, at the communion table; when speaking to the sons and daughters of affliction; or, when preaching upon some of the most interesting truths of the gospel, he often remarked, that it was with the greatest difficulty he could, in his own apprehension, attempt to utter a word, so tenderly was he affected; yet, he would express himself in a manner, so happily adapted to the occasion, that he seemed like one inspired. His words were like *apples of gold in pictures of silver*.

On the evening before his death, he agreed with professor Woods, that the conference meetings of the young gentlemen of the Theological seminary, and those among his parishioners, should be united, as there was already a hopeful and increasing attention to religion in the place, and as they mutually thought greater benefit would result from such a union. Thus, so long as he had the power, he spent his life in the service of his Master.

On the morning after this conversation, he was suddenly attacked with a paralytick affection. During the day he was able to say but little, which could be understood; but, at some lucid intervals, had so far the exercise of his reason and speech, as to give testimony to the truth of the gospel he had preached, and to express a becoming resignation to the will of God. Doctor Griffin prayed with him

a little before the last scene, for which he expressed his thanks, in broken language, to the professor, and fell asleep in Jesus.

He died on friday, the 28 of July, 1809, in the seventieth year of his age, and the thirty seventh of his ministry. His funeral was attended on the monday following, by a numerous concourse of people, in whose countenances it was plainly depicted how greatly they sorrowed, that they should hang upon his lips, that they should profit by his instructions, and that they should see his face no more. A sermon was delivered on the occasion, from John 14. 28, by the rev. Eliab Stone, of Reading, the senior minister of the Andover Association.
