

"American Biography." After an active and useful life, consecrated to the advancement of knowledge, freedom and religion, he was suddenly removed to another world, June 20, 1798. Such are the chief facts: yet the minor incidents connected with them are frequently of a very interesting character, and the extracts from Dr. B.'s letters and other documents contain so much sound sense, practical wisdom, and genuine Christian sentiment, that we have perused the volume with great pleasure, and regard it as one of the few really useful and instructive biographies.

We will justify this opinion by two or three brief extracts. The following are from his letters:—

"If we must give implicit faith to the determination of fathers and councils, let us throw away the Bible at once, and adopt the infallible decrees of Trent, Nice, Dort, and Boston, as the pure, uncorrupted Catholic faith. For, allowing the members who composed all these celebrated councils aforesaid to have been honest, guileless, unprejudiced men, there is as much reason to adopt the decrees of one as of the other, however absurd and contradictory. But I think it is time that the Scripture should be regarded as the only infallible form of sound words, and all trimming and temporising and truckling to the humour of a depraved world entirely laid aside by the professors and preachers of a gospel which owes its origin to an independent God."

"Divinity is the knowledge of divine things, not human opinions; therefore, in the pursuit of this noble science, you must take this for your motto, Isa. ii. 22, 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?'

"Would you know the virtue of any particular sort of water, it would be more irrational to seek it in the muddy streams, than in the pure original fount: so, if you would know the truth as it is in Jesus, you must not seek it in the writings of uninspired men, but in the oracles of unerring truth. Divinity is not the art of disputing about divine truth, nor of puzzling yourself and others with metaphysical subtleties; but it is the knowledge of God and Christ, and the Gospel. And where is this to be found, but

in the revelation which God has made to the world?"

"A minister must not only know divine truth as a distant speculative notion, but have it in his heart as a living, operative principle. There is a coarse proverb somewhere, that sound may pass through a ram's horn without straightening it, which may be very well applied to many that preach the gospel now-a-days: they only are instruments of conveying sound to the ears of their auditors, and that sound affects themselves no more than if it were of no importance. The Lord keep you and me from being of this unhappy number."

In a Sermon preached before the Convention of the Clergy, at Boston, May 20, 1796, Dr. Belknap observed:—

"There is a monopolising spirit in some politicians, which would exclude clergymen from all attention to matters of state and government; which would prohibit us from bringing political subjects into the pulpit, and even threaten us with the loss of our livings if we move at all in the political sphere. But, my brethren, I consider politics as indirectly connected with morality, and both with religion. If the political character of a people is bad, their morals are equally bad, and their religion is good for nothing. The same man who appears in the character of a politician is also a subject of moral government, and a candidate for immortality. Therefore, if he act right or wrong as a politician, he acts equally right or wrong as a subject of God's moral government; his character as a politician will be brought into the grand review at the last day, and his future state will be determined accordingly. This doctrine, I am sensible, is not agreeable to the practice of some men, who act with a tolerable regard to the principles of morality in their common business; but, when they get into a political body, relax their ideas of morality, and endeavor to carry a point by any means whatever. Against such an idea of politics I think it my duty to protest; for I believe that honesty is the best policy, both in public and private life."

Some of the anecdotes are worth preserving:—