THE

UNION SEMINARY MAGAZINE

NO. 3—JAN.-FEB., 1894.

I. LITERARY.

THE EARLY DAYS OF UNION SEMINARY.

Rev. ROBERT BURWELL, D. D.

[The following paper was prepared by Rev. Dr. Robert Burwell, of Raleigh, N. C., and was to have been read by him in person at the celebration of the seventieth anniversary exercises of Union Theological Seminary on the evening of January 4th, 1894. As he was prevented at the last moment by indisposition from being present this duty was performed by Prof. T. C. Johnson. It may lend an additional interest to this excellent paper to know that it was prepared by a gentleman *ninety-two* years of age, who at considerable disadvantage to himself has labored thus to set forth his recollections of the Seminary as it was seventy years ago.—Ed.]

I accept with pleasure your invitation to take part in these services by furnishing reminiscences of the early days of Union Seminary and of Dr. Rice, who, by his efforts and self-sacrifice, was the main agent in establishing this school of the prophets.

In performing the task you have assigned me, I have to rely on my memory, and seventy years is a long period, and many things are forgotten which should be remembered, and even those events that are remembered are seen in a dim light.

Sad thoughts naturally come over me, as I recall these scenes, but on these I will not dwell. This is a day of rejoicing—a festive occasion, when we assemble to give thanks for the past, and to indulge in hope as we look to the future. In the cheerful and inspiring words of the Psalmist I would say, "Come, let us sing a new song. Praise ye the Lord.

AN ADDRESS.

REV. MOSES D. HOGE, D. D.

The following is a stenographic report of an address delivered in the Seminary Chapel on the evening of January 4th, by the Rev. Moses D. Hoge, D. D., of Richmond. The fact that the speaker had no suspicion of its being asked for publication will account for the freedom and familiarity with which some portions of it are discussed. In fact he had never committed it to paper and it is only under his protest that we have secured it for our readers. Writing privately, he says: "It is still my opinion that it is not worth publishing, and I only consent because others want to see it in the Seminary Magazine."

Dr. Hoge said: Nothing could be kinder than what my honored brother has said in the way of introduction, nothing is truer than what he has said as to my pre-occupation and the constant strain under which I have been laboring for the last two months. I tried to be excused from performing this service, and I only came upon one distinct understanding, that I was not to make any preparation for an address, but should only say what the occasion might prompt, and now as I have so large a liberty, I do not feel at all embarrassed. I have not his aversion for what Mr. Randolph used to stigmatize as "a set speech", but I am going to say what is suggested by this occasion, this Chapel, this Seminary, this College, and my memories of other days, some of which may be new and interesting to you.

There is no one living who is related to this Seminary by more personal ties than myself, not one. While my venerable grand-father was laboring in the valley of the Shenandoah, he conceived the idea of a Theological School for Virginia. He began to teach students, and as he had opportunity prepared them for the gospel ministry. He was a little seminary himself. Sometimes the class consisted of one. But the idea of an organized institution grew upon him, and he would often talk and write about it. When he was elected to the presidency of Hampden-Sidney, the main inducement pressed on him was that as the head of the College he might also be the professor of Theology. It was in the year 1807 that he entered upon his work in this double capacity as College President and

as the first teacher of Theology appointed by the Synod of Virginia.

Well, that is one tie, and another is, that so many of my relations of a former generation were educated here. My father was a professor in the college and I was born in one of the buildings on this hill. My dear and only brother served three happy years in this seminary as professor, until the Rev. Dr. Spring, instead of writing, came all the way from New York to beg him to become his co-pastor, and would take no denial. It was indeed a brief ministry that he exercised there, but a memorable one. Ominous clouds were gathering along the horizon, and the mutterings of the gathering storm were already sounding in the distance. He hoped that by excluding all secular themes from the pulpit and making Christ and him crucified his chief theme, and the theme that gave sacredness to all others, he might continue to fulfill the duties of a gospel minister undisturbed by political conflicts. How mistaken he was some of you know. I have no desire to dwell on the causes which constrained him to resign his office as co-pastor of a church in the city of New York. After the secession of Virginia he announced his purpose to go in person where his heart already was, and where so many of his kindred were in the army.

After his settlement as pastor of the Tabb Street church in Petersburg, his labors among the troops in the vicinity were unremitting. The church in which he ministered was so frequented by soldiers, that in the capacious gallery, when they stood up to unite in singing, they looked like a regiment on dress parade. Such was his ardor, leading him to overtax his strength in the prosecution of his work, and such his readiness to expose himself to all the inclemencies of the weather, that his naturally fine constitution gave way and he succumbed to the malady that ended his life.

I am bound to this institution by family ties running through three generations, and had my beloved nephew, Dr. Peyton Hoge, of Wilmington, been able to see his way clear to accept the flattering call to a chair in this Seminary, in which his father had been a professor, there would have been another link, one connecting it with the fourth generation of my family.

The providence of God in bringing about results in his own wise and strange way, leads me to tell you of the manner in

which this Seminary once gained a valuable acquisition. While my venerable grand-father was training young men for the gospel ministry, it pleased the Lord to introduce three of his own sons into the sacred office. Dr. James Hoge, the eldest son, determined to be a missionary in the Far West, and what do you think was regarded at that day as the Far West? It was the State of Ohio! He settled on the Scioto river in the frontier town of Franklinton. Owning some land on the opposite side of the river, he built a house there, and the city of Columbus grew up under his eye. (He celebrated his golden wedding and the 50th anniversary of his pastorate in Columbus). He persuaded his younger brother (my father) to go to Ohio, and he became a Professor in the University of that State—and in this connection I have something interesting to relate, probably not known to a single person in this audience, as to the way this Seminary obtained one of its most honored professors. While my father was prosecuting his work in the University, he felt a great interest in a young man, Elisha Ballantine by name, took him into his family and virtually adopted him. When his young *protege* decided to become a minister of the gospel, my father, who had never lost his affection for Virginia or for this Seminary, sent him here, having given him a letter of introduction to Dr. Rice. I need not tell you that Mr. Ballantine ultimately became one of the most beloved, learned and efficient of the professors who have served this institution. His brother, Henry Ballantine, who also became a member of my father's household, finished his noble life as a missionary for Christ at Bombay.

To show how true my statement was that no one living sustains such relations to this Seminary as myself, I may add that both Dr. and Mrs. Rice were relatives of my mother, Mrs. Rice being her first cousin and daughter of Major John Morton, whose *nom de guerre* during the Revolution was "Old Solid Column", as indicative of his intrepidity and steadfast courage.

The providence of God that brought Dr. Rice to Richmond was a very remarkable one. It was the burning of the Richmond theatre, an event which sent a thrill of sympathetic sorrow throughout the length and breadth of the land, because of the eminence of the people consumed by that fire; the genius, the wealth, the social standing, the fashion, the beauty, that perished in that night of terror.

There was a great reaction against immorality and frivolity, and the Christian people were greatly stirred up. The conviction deepened that the Presbyterian church in Richmond needed a thoroughly organized church under the care of a pastor who could devote his whole time to its development, and it was under influences like these that Dr. Rice received and accepted the call. I need not refer to his successes there, and to the esteem and affection in which he was held.

In the tribute to his memory which you have just heard, from the pen of the venerable Dr. Burwell, this has been abundantly illustrated. I doubt whether any of us can appreciate the peculiar trials Dr. Rice encountered in the early history of the Seminary. We easily comprehend the character of his self-denials and privations and of his unparalleled labors, but who can estimate the dreadful discouragement of being hampered and hindred all the while by men who could not comprehend his high and wide reaching plans; men in whom he could not awaken any enthusiasm; because they clung to the old, not because it was good, but because it was old and opposed the new only because it was not the way from the beginning. Then he had opposition from unexpected quarters. When it was proposed to get an act passed incorporating the Seminary, the Legislature refused to grant it, although it was not a general act of incorporation that was sought, but only legal authority for the protection of the property and funds of the institution. Then as Dr. Rice prosecuted his agency for the endowments, there were those who intimated that he had a sinister purpose in collecting those funds; that out of the contributions gathered, he would enrich himself. I have a moderately good knowledge of the English language, and I am familiar with some English epithets. I have also a smatterring of two or three foreign languages, but I do not know an epithet that could express my horror of the man who could bring such a charge against one whose disinterestedness, self-sacrifice, broad and splendid generosity were the prominent traits of character. When Dr. Rice died, a slip of paper was found in his pocket, and on it there were these words, "It is necessary that I die poor." What a pathos is in that line—"necessary that I die poor." He did die poor—all his wife's patrimony and his own went to supplement his meagre salary and for the support of the institution to which he had consecrated everything.

Not only was Dr. Rice a profound theologian, but he revelled in the study of the ancient classics and was equally familiar with the elegant literature of the day. In this connection I may be permitted to state an incident, and not of the gravest character either. The Waverly novels were just coming out, and were exciting universal interest. I do not remember whether it was the "Monastery", or the "Heart of Midlothian", or which one of the Waverly series, but on a Saturday morning it came from Richmond. Seizing it with avidity, he commenced its perusal. He became absorbed fascinated; time flew, the afternoon came and then the night. The Doctor read, read, and read on. Presently he heard the clock strike twelve. Saturday night! He suddenly shut the book and laid it down, possibly with some compunction. He had to preach next day. The next morning he went into the pulpit and preached one of his noblest discourses. When the services ended, an old colored woman came up to him, and grasping his hand she said, "I knew we were going to have a good sermon to-day, for late last night as I was passing your house I saw the light burning in your study, and I said there is my pastor hard at work while other people are asleep; there is my dear pastor beating *ile* for the sanctuary". The story was too good even for the oil beater to keep to himself. We may be sure he did not tell it as an illustration "of the way young men should prepare for the pulpit."

When the labors of Dr. Rice terminated, and when all that was mortal was conveyed to the old family burying ground at Willington, the residence of Major Morton, the father of Mrs. Dr. Rice, in the procession were all the students of the Seminary. It so happened that there had been an unusual attention to vocal music among them that session, and a choir had been formed and trained of rare proficiency. My uncle, the late Dr. Drury Lacy, told me that these young men stood around the grave, and when the body was lowered to its resting place, they sang the hymn, "Why do we mourn departed friends", to the old tune of "China", and lover of music as he was, he declared that he had never heard anything comparable to it when that company of trained singers with their well modulated, manly voices united in singing that funeral hymn to the plaintive tune of China, and that he could imagine nothing so impressive as that service, in the open air, under the

blue sky, while nature smiled, and men and women wept around the grave of one so inexpressibly dear.

Dr. Baxter was Senior Professor in this Seminary when I came as a student to Hampden-Sidney College. That picture (pointing to the portrait on the wall) does not give a correct idea of the face or form of that noble man. It fails to represent the majesty of his real presence. Nor do the fragments of his writings which have been preserved give any adequate idea of his intellectual power. How much it is to be regretted that he did not commit to writing the great thoughts which gave such dignity and impressiveness to his extempore discourses. There were heroes before Agamemnon, but "they had no poet, and they died". Baxter had no reporter and the world is poorer because his discourses have not been transmitted to us. It has been my privilege to hear many of the most distinguished divines in our own and in foreign lands. I have heard few who surpassed Dr. Baxter in argumentative force, in pathos, or in pulpit effectiveness. He had one unique peculiarity. Often in the midst of a logical passage, his cheek would flush, his face quiver, and great tears would flow down his manly face. What in the world could be so strangely effecting Dr. Baxter in that argumentative paragraph? It was that he possessed a wonderful power of *anticipating* what he was going to say. Before he had finished the logical discussion he was thinking of some tender scene in the life of our Lord which he intended to depict. Before he got to the place he was trembling with emotion at the sight of the dear, sad cross, standing full in his view, in its mournful unutterable glory, and then flowed the irrepressible tears—tears that touched all hearts and prepared them for what was coming. I do not know of any other speaker who ever affected his hearers in a similar way. As a teacher in the class room his method was peculiar. If a young man stated an untenable position, and especially if he was self-confident, it was the Doctor's method never to answer him at all, but to ask him question after question as a lawyer would cross question a witness, until he made him wind himself up completely and so discovered his error, and then the good Doctor would shake all over with a gentle laugh, not derisive, but kindly (he weighed between two and three hundred), and his end was gained and the pupil loved the preceptor all the more for the kindly confutation. But here I must arrest my reminiscences, and I would say in conclusion that you can-

not judge of an institution, a college, a seminary, by its buildings, by its equipment, its constitution, or by its charter. The only way you can determine its value is by ascertaining what kind of men it is sending out. The chief end of a theological seminary is to make good preachers. May we bring this Seminary to that test? It has already been stated that the most important churches in Virginia and North Carolina are filled with the graduates of this school. What can we say of them?

[Then Dr. Hoge bore his emphatic testimony to the efficiency of the graduates of Union Seminary.]

It is sometimes said that the pulpit is losing its power.

There is a sense in which it cannot lose its power, because the pulpit is a divinely ordained instrumentality. It may have its power diminished, however, by the mistakes and incompetence of some of the men who fill it. If some of them have not fulfilled the expectation of their friends it has not been because they did not have sufficient talent, or that they were not well instructed, but because when they got into the ministry they relaxed their diligence in study. I stand here to declare that whenever a minister ceases to study, he ceases to grow, and fails to fulfil the hopes of the friends who predicted his success. Our young man goes, we will say, into a village church. His education is superior to that of the great majority of his hearers. He commends himself to them by the attractive qualities he possesses. They listen to him by their hearts rather than by their intellects, and presently he says, "What is the use of my working so hard to please this people"? I need not tell you of the sequel.

I cannot say anything more important to my young friends who are now engaged in preparation for the ministry than this: As eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, so incessant study is the price of success, so far as mental training is concerned. Injudicious friends sometimes say; "don't wear yourself out by excessive toil." Few commit suicide in that way.

The men who toil most earnestly, ordinarily live the longest. Three years ago the three greatest workers and the three greatest men in the world were over eighty years of age; Von Moltke, Tennyson, and Gladstone, who still lives and celebrated his eighty-fourth birthday last week. Statistics show that ministers of the gospel lead all the professions in longevity. And yet ministers now have to work harder than ever before. The press has come largely to occupy the attention

of the public that was once monopolized by the pulpit. We do not fear that the press will ever supplant the pulpit. Why does the Mahommedan put a man on the top of the minaret? He thought of the trumpet that once summoned the congregation of Israel to worship; he thought of the bells that still summon Christian people to worship; but at last he thought of the human voice! Those of you who have visited oriental cities recollect how often your attention was lifted from the earth, skyward, by that clear, sweet, sonorous voice, clear as a clarion, soft as a lute, calling the multitude to prayer.

There is nothing like the human voice for impressing human hearts. So it will be until the end of time. All the printed literature of the world will never take the place of the man that speaks to his fellow men, face to face, whether in tones tender or triumphant in tones trembling with emotion, full of sympathy, persuasiveness and unmistakable solicitude.

No extempore speaker, if conscientious, will be less careful in the preparation of his discourses than the writer of sermons. While his supreme regard will be for the thought, he will not be indifferent to the style in which thought is expressed. No classic book has come down to modern times, no matter how weighty its thought, which has not been arrayed in the perpetuating grace of captivating style. Style is the crystallization of thought. Royal thoughts ought to wear royal robes.

A noble thought, nobly expressed goes down to the heart of the hearer as dew into the heart of the rose, imparting freshness and gathering sweetness.

But, while style is to be cultivated, let it be ever remembered that the result of the finest cultivation is simplicity.

A speaker in the midst of the most animated discourse, when about to use a latinized, derivative word, perfectly familiar to himself, should remember that it may convey no meaning to an uncultured hearer, and, should instantly substitute for it some honest Anglo-Saxon word.

Style cannot be too simple. Often-times we wonder why we fail to make the impression desired. It is because we are not sufficiently intelligible.

In the *ante bellum* days one of our preachers commenced his sermon to a colored congregation thus: "As in physics, so in ethics, like causes produce like effects." It is true, the statement elicited responses of admiration, and a good old

aunty cried out, "bless the Lord for that," but such happy results are rare.

One of the wandering clerical missionaries, not so common now as formerly, once came into a Sunday School, and asked the superintendent if he might make some remarks. Receiving permission, he began by saying, "I am going to give you a summary of the lesson which you have just been studying. But it may be that you do not know what a summary is. If you do not I will elucidate. A summary is a compendium, my little dears; it is a synopsis; it is an epitome; it is a syllabus.

An English Dean less recently published a charming book, and in his chapter on the power of a simple style he says, one of the divines of the church of England was addressing a rural audience, and among other things he said to his rustic hearers—"You are at this moment surrounded by the apodeikneusis of theopratic omnipotence." In this instance fact is stronger than fiction, for the Dean. quotes it from the extract of a sermon by a great English theologian, published in the London Times.

While delivering this address I have kept my eye on the clock, and I am reminded by the lateness of the hour that I am committing one of the sins which so often impair the good impressions of a sermon—the sin of excessive length.

A lady accompanied the late Dr. Magee, Bishop of Peterborough, to church. There was a very fine discourse delivered. As they came out, the lady said, "O, what a saint that was in the pulpit!" And the Bishop replied, "O, what a martyr there was in the pew.!"

When the English Lord Chancellor Halsbury was asked by a young curate, what he thought of his sermon, he said: "There were two things I want never to hear in another sermon." The curate asked what these two things were, and the answer was: "I heard the clock strike twice."

Rare Ben Johnson said whenever Bacon made a speech he thought sadly that by and by it must come to an end. But, need I tell you, my young friends, that speeches do not always cause their hearers the sadness of fearing a too speedy end.

Some one asked Mr. Spurgeon what he should preach about, and the answer was, "preach *about thirty minutes*, with a leaning to the side of mercy."

[Dr. Hoge then with changed tune and manner spoke of the spiritual preparation essential to true efficiency in the pulpit and of the blessed compensations to be anticipated by the Pastor who preached Christ fervently, simply, tenderly, and lovingly, with dependence on the Spirit of all grace to make his sermons messages of salvation to his hearers, and closed by saying]:

If we thus fill up the measure of our days and through God's mercy at last reach heaven should we meet any there who will bless God for salvation and then bless us as the instruments of that salvation, such a discovery will add a new beam even to heavens brightness and a new thrill to heavens bliss.

May the benediction of God ever rest on this Seminary upon its Professors, upon its students and upon its friends.