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INDEX VOL. XXIV. 1912-13.

LITERARY.

	Page
Alexander McLaren's Contribution to Expository Preaching—T. H. Rice, D. D.....	389
Apostles Creed, The—James Stalker, D. D.....	362
Bristol Assembly, The—A. B. Curry, D. D.....	157
Centennial Celebration, The.....	9
Centennial Poem—W. H. Woods, D. D.....	96
Christ Our Model—D. J. Burrell, D. D.....	185
Christ Our Model—D. J. Burrell, D. D.....	296
Christianity and Creed—E. C. Gordon, D. D.....	395
Conserving Revival Results—R. O. Flinn, D. D.....	278
Elephantine, and The Priest Code Theory—P. P. Flournoy, D. D.....	285
Evolution of the Institutional Mission Church, The—A. F. Schauffler, D. D.....	380
First Fifty Years, The—W. W. Moore, D. D., LL. D.....	14
Greetings of Austin Theological Seminary—R. E. Vinson, D. D.....	131
Greetings of Columbia Theological Seminary—W. M. McPheeters, D. D., LL. D.....	128
Immortality—R. L. Benn.....	370
James Sprunt Lectureship and Dr. Burrell's Lectures—Russell Cecil, D. D.....	310
Last Fifty Years, The—W. L. Lingle, D. D.....	48
League of Worshipping Children—W. L. Lingle, D. D.....	362
Letters of Congratulation.....	136
Message and the Method in Revival Preaching, The—Melton Clark, D. D.....	264
Need of Revivals, The—C. R. Nisbet, D. D.....	254
Old Evangelism, The—W. M. Anderson, D. D.....	202
Personal Work in Evangelism—L. S. Chafer.....	270
Prayer—Thornton S. Wilson, D. D.....	76
Prayer—Peyton H. Hoge, D. D.....	107
Preparation for a Revival—J. E. Thacker, D. D.....	261
Religious Life of Theological Students, The—B. B. Warfield, D. D., LL. D.....	208
Revelation: Inspiration: The Record—R. A. Webb, D. D.....	194
Sources of Our Bible, The—Margaret D. Gibson, LL. D.....	303
Symposium on Revivals, A.....	253
Union Seminary in Foreign Missions—James I. Vance, D. D.....	117
Union Seminary in Home Missions—Egbert W. Smith, D. D.....	109
Union Seminary in Religious Journalism—David M. Sweets, D. D.....	86
Union Seminary in the Pastorate—Robert F. Campbell, D. D.....	78
Union Seminary in Theological Education and Religious Thought—Theron H. Rice, D. D.....	100

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INDEX.

1912-13	MISSIONARY.	Page
Calvinism and Missions—W. R. Henderson, D. D.....		403
Japanese Theological Student and His Problems, The—W. H. Myers. . .		223
Nestorian Relics in North Kiangsu—B. C. Patterson.....		321
Revolution in China and Its Effects, The—S. I. Woodbridge, D. D.....		313
Translation of the Bible into the Buluba Language—W. M. Morrison, D. D.....		414

BOOK REVIEWS.

Address to Young Converts, An—D. W. Dodge.....	345
Afterglow of God, The—Sunday Evenings in a Glasgow Pulpit—R. F. Campbell.....	335
At Our Own Door—Thos. C. Johnson.....	341
Authority of Religious Experience, The—Charles Lewis Slattery, D. D. .	433
Baptism in the Apostolic Age—LeRoy Gresham.....	444
Beatitudes, The—R. F. Campbell.....	235
Biblical and Theological Studies—G. B. Strickler.....	244
Book of Job and the Problem of Human Suffering, The—Jas. I. Vance..	242
Catch-My-Pal—D. Clay Lilly.....	342
Christ on Parnassus—R. F. Campbell.....	437
Christian Conception of God, The—Thos. C. Johnson.....	340
Church and the New Age, The—Walter L. Lingle.....	247
College of Hampden-Sidney, The—J. Gray McAllister.....	450
Coming to the Communion—Thos. C. Johnson.....	448
Cry for Justice, A—R. F. Campbell.....	235
Devotional Hours with the Bible—J. B. Massey.....	348
Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, The—W. H. Frazer.....	325
Dry Dock of a Thousand Wrecks, The—J. B. Massey.....	351
Efficiency in the Sunday School—Walter L. Lingle.....	338
Efficient Religion—E. C. Murray.....	445
Gospel of the Lilies, The—E. C. Murray.....	329
Heart of the Bible, The—T. H. Rice.....	429
Heart of the Christian Message, The—T. R. English.....	443
Historic Jesus, The—Walter L. Lingle.....	337
Holy Bible, The.....	435
Holy Gospel, The—Juan Orts.....	251
Home Beautiful, The—D. W. Dodge.....	347
Home Training in Religion—D. W. Dodge.....	345
Idyll of the Shepherd, The—John G. Garth.....	436
Infant Salvation and Confessional Revision—J. B. Massey.....	245
Intermediate Catechism, The—Thos. C. Johnson.....	448
International Lesson System, The—Juan Orts.....	343
Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament, An—T. R. Eng- lish.....	237

Jesus—T. R. English.....	441
Lenten Psalms, The—R. F. Campbell.....	235
Life of Dr. J. R. Miller, The—T. H. Rice.....	426
Making of a Nation, The—Jno. I. Armstrong.....	331
Man with a Conscience, The—Jno. I. Armstrong.....	248
Marriage—D. Clay Lilly.....	431
Minister and the Boy, The—Melton Clark.....	344
Minister as Shepherd, The—T. H. Rice.....	427
Mysteries of Grace, The—Walter L. Lingle.....	246
McLaren of Manchester, Dr.—T. H. Rice.....	425
New Conscience and an Ancient Evil, A—Jno. I. Armstrong.....	248
New Testament Law of Marriage and Divorce, The—G. B. Strickler.....	245
One Hundred Bible Studies—G. B. Strickler.....	430
One Hundred Prayer Meeting Talks and Plans—D. Clay Lilly.....	452
Oracles in the New Testament, The—T. R. English.....	240
Ordinary Man and the Extraordinary Thing, The—D. Clay Lilly.....	342
Outlines of Missionary History—Thos. C. Johnson.....	447
Parish of the Pines, The—D. W. Dodge.....	348
Pastor His Own Evangelist, The—D. Clay Lilly.....	451
Poets of the Old Testament, The—W. W. Moore.....	249
Prayer and the Human Problem—Jno. I. Armstrong.....	330
Prayer Changes Things—T. H. Rice.....	430
Preacher, The: His Life and Work—R. F. Campbell.....	232
Presbyterian Churches, The—T. C. Johnson.....	449
Presbyterian Handbook, The—T. C. Johnson.....	449
Progress in Christian Culture—D. W. Dodge.....	346
Psychology of the New Testament, The—T. R. English.....	439
Public Worship for Non-Liturgical Churches—T. H. Rice.....	428
Reasons and Reasons—A. M. McGeachy.....	250
Road of Life, The—E. C. Murray.....	328
Rule of Faith, The—Juan Orts.....	431
Seed Thoughts for Right Living—J. B. Massey.....	349
Spirit and the Bride, The—Robt. E. Zeigler.....	243
Spiritual Surgery—R. F. Campbell.....	334
St. Paul—T. R. English.....	440
Unification of the Churches, The—Juan Orts.....	252
Way Everlasting, The—Walter L. Lingle.....	336
What I Tell My Junior Congregation—Walter L. Lingle.....	338
Why Does Not God Intervene.—D. Clay Lilly.....	332
World Work of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, The—T. C. Johnson.....	447

Union Theological Seminary in Virginia

Centennial Celebration

**OCTOBER THIRTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH,
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TWELVE.**



**RICHMOND, VIRGINIA
1912.**

**Union Theological Seminary
in Virginia**

Centennial Celebration

CONTENTS.

THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION.....	9
THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS.	
The Rev. Pres. Walter W. Moore, D. D., LL. D.....	14
THE LAST FIFTY YEARS.	
The Rev. Prof. Walter L. Lingle, D. D.....	48
PRAYER.	
The Rev. Thornton S. Wilson, D. D.....	76
UNION SEMINARY IN THE PASTORATE.	
The Rev. Robert F. Campbell, D. D.....	78
UNION SEMINARY IN RELIGIOUS JOURNALISM.	
The Rev. David M. Sweets, D. D.....	86
CENTENNIAL POEM.	
The Rev. William Hervey Woods, D. D.....	96
UNION SEMINARY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.	
The Rev. Prof. Theron H. Rice, D. D.....	100
PRAYER.	
The Rev. Peyton H. Hoge, D. D.....	107
UNION SEMINARY IN HOME MISSIONS.	
The Rev. Egbert W. Smith, D. D.....	109
UNION SEMINARY IN FOREIGN MISSIONS.	
THE REV. JAMES I. VANCE, D. D.....	117
GREETINGS OF COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.	
The Rev. William M. McPheeters, D. D., LL. D.....	128
GREETINGS OF AUSTIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.	
The Rev. Pres. Robert E. Vinson, D. D.....	131
LETTERS OF CONGRATULATION.....	136

ILLUSTRATIONS.

WATTS HALL.....	Frontispiece
THE SYNOD OF VIRGINIA.....	Opposite page 11
THE SYNOD OF NORTH CAROLINA.....	15
MOSES HOGE.....	21
JOHN HOLT RICE.....	29
SEMINARY BUILDING AT HAMPDEN-SIDNEY	31
BENJAMIN M. SMITH.....	41
ROBERT L. DABNEY.....	43
THOMAS E. PECK.....	45
CYRUS H. McCORMICK.....	55
HENRY C. ALEXANDER.....	59
JAMES F. LATIMER.....	61
WALTER W. MOORE.....	63
CHARLES C. HERSMAN.....	65
THOMAS C. JOHNSON.....	67
THOMAS R. ENGLISH.....	69
GIVENS B. STRICKLER.....	71
GEORGE W. WATTS.....	79
WILLIAM W. SPENCE.....	87
WATTS CHAPEL AND WESTMINSTER HALL.....	97
SPENCE LIBRARY.....	111
RICHMOND HALL.....	119
THERON H. RICE.....	129
WALTER L. LINGLE.....	133
MR. JAMES SPRUNT.....	137
VIEW FROM TOWER.....	143
WESTWOOD.....	151

UNION SEMINARY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

Fathers and Brethren of the Controlling Synods, Genial and Gracious Friends of the Community and Beyond, Greeting:

In using the twenty minutes allotted to this address I conceive that something better must be attempted than a mere enumeration of names and the titles of books and pamphlets—something which shall tend more to warm our hearts, kindle our gratitude and quicken our prayers. My subject may seem to many of you to promise little in this direction; it may suggest the abstract, the metaphysical, the dry, that which lies remote from men's "business and bosoms," far from the practical and pressing interests of daily life. Let me ask you to suspend your judgment for, if I am not very much mistaken, the facts will make a very different showing.

An educational institution like ours acquires in the course of time a sort of personality. It is, in fact, the distilled essence of many personalities who have united to build it up. It is the fused product of a multitude of minds and hearts who have wrought together for the creation of its ideals and achievements. This personality of the institution, as truly as that of the individual, is something distinct, peculiar, its own. Now we know that Christ recognizes the differences subsisting among his people—differences in endowments, aptitudes, temperaments, in short, differences in personality; and through these very differences accomplishes the vastly complex work of his body, the Church. No two Christians have precisely the same function to discharge, hence no two Christians have precisely the same equipment and qualifications. "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the

grace given unto us. . . .” This being true, it behooves every member of the Church to take account of the distinct and peculiar gifts which God has distributed to him in order that he may know what service he is best qualified to render, and how he may make the largest contribution possible to the efficiency of the whole. May not the same thing be true of an institution like our Seminary? If it be true, that she too, has a character of her own, determined for and impressed on her at her origin and developed during the course of her providential history, may she not wisely examine herself in order to discover just the task God has called and qualified her for and the particular contribution she is fitted to make to the welfare of the universal Church? Such a survey of her history and estimate of her work need not be in the slightest degree invidious or vainglorious, it ought rather to issue in gratitude, humility and a keen sense of her responsibility.

When we survey the century of life just closing two things stand out prominently as characteristics of Union Seminary, one is her ideal and the other is her method. She reveals a strongly marked personality both in her conception of her task and in her way of accomplishing it. As to her aim it has been to train a ministry of all-round efficiency, qualified to bring the gospel home with saving power to the world of sinning, suffering men. As to her way of doing this, it has been by the close personal contact of the teachers and the students, the hand-to-hand dealing of men with men.

These general statements may be illustrated by three eminent men who in three successive eras of the Seminary's history have embodied with striking completeness both the institution's ideal and her method.

Look first of all at Dr. John Holt Rice, who represents the foundation stage. He was a man of creative power. As Dr. Moore has pointed out, this exuberant creative energy issued in at least five great effects: (1) A Church-wide Foreign Mission policy; (2) a Men's Organization for Home Missions; (3) a Bible Society for the distribution of the Scriptures; (4) the Weekly Religious Journal, and (5) Union Theological Seminary.

Now all that I can pause to point out is that every one of

these fruits of Dr. Rice's labors was an expression of a passionate desire for the dissemination of the gospel and the salvation of men. When, therefore, he came to preside over the infant Seminary, we are not surprised to find him impressing upon it his own controlling ideal and yearning that it might train a ministry which should save souls. This breathes in the letter from his sick bed to the students of the Seminary, in which he reminds them of how much the *salvation of souls* is going to depend on their diligence and success in their studies. It was not an accident, but divine providence, which ordained that our founder should be such a man. The lifelong effort of Union Seminary has been to do what he so nobly did—to harness the most ardent zeal for God's saving truth to the wisest methods of practical efficiency.

Coming next to the middle period of the history—the time during which, having come to her maturity, she developed and displayed her inborn tendencies, and attained to a distinct consciousness of herself and her place in the Church and her mission among men—the man who dominates that era is Dr. Robert Lewis Dabney. As Dr. Rice was eminently the builder, so Dr. Dabney was eminently the thinker. But just as Dr. Rice did not lack learning and the power of vigorous thought, so Dr. Dabney was by no means deficient in practical talent. Hence he was not only the greatest of our theologians, he was the most effective of teachers. In the first place, theology was to Dr. Dabney himself a matter of vital personal concern. His studies were not pursued in the cool temper of the theorist. He did not merely take other men's views. He must know at first hand—for he was learning for his very life and soul. Hence his system is no mere echo. His teaching is a living voice. He reminds me as I follow him of the stripped athlete closing with his problem in a grapple tremendously earnest and winning the truth in the agony of strong labor. And as to his teaching—why, one could never imagine Dr. Dabney's teaching as a mere academic exercise. He glowed, he flamed, he thundered in the classroom—nobler, yet he travailed with infinite patience and tenderness to make the truth the actual possession of his students; he brooded over their minds, wooing them to work and think,

and insinuating the precious truth by a wealth of skillful devices into the most obtuse minds.

And so in her princely teacher, no less than in her able founder, the Seminary stands revealed in that fine and fruitful blending of high thinking and efficient doing, that embodiment of the noblest ideals in the most practical service, which has been her glory from the beginning.

Coming finally to the present or modern era, the period of expansion and readjustment—it was to be expected that God would have a man qualified for its peculiar necessities. It would have been strange, indeed, if an institution so blessed in the past and the heir of so many and such mighty prayers should have been left without the leader which at this crisis she required. The man whom God raised up is sitting on this platform today. Called into the service of his Alma Mater when a mere youth, he began his labors for her welfare as an adjunct professor in the department of Hebrew. Since he entered her walls as a teacher he has given his whole energies to her welfare with as single-hearted devotion as Alfred Tennyson yielded to his vocation as poet. His life work has been the upbuilding of the institution. He took high rank from the very first as a captivating teacher, making the elements of Hebrew actually interesting, to some students positively fascinating. As he gradually assumed the exegetical work of his chair his lectures on the Old Testament books opened for his students sparkling springs in what had been arid deserts of uncomprehended or misunderstood Scripture. He was winning his spurs in his chosen specialty of Biblical Archæology, and his attainments had been recognized by his being invited to lecture on the Stone Foundation at Princeton—for which service that institution had imported such celebrities as Abram Kuyper and James Orr. But circumstances were making it evident that Union Seminary must change her residence if she was to continue to serve the Church to the measure of her power and the Church's growing needs. Seeing this fact with an insight and foresight worthy of John Holt Rice, The Second, Dr. Moore threw himself into the difficult and delicate task of accomplishing safely the transplanting of the ancient school from Hampden-Sidney to Richmond. When this had been

accomplished the need for an executive head of the institution developed, and he was called to the Presidency; he made the choice of his life, surrendering all dreams of the leisure necessary to the cultivation of scholarship and plunging into the details of administration during the difficult era of readjustment to new surroundings and to the modern conditions of the Church's life at large. How patiently and well he has wrought I need not tell this audience, which had watched the prosperity of the institution for the past twenty years. It has been no easy task. To meet misapprehensions with a sweet spirit, to extricate the institution from financial difficulties, to attract to her large endowments, to keep her abreast of the age, while heartily and thoroughly loyal to our confessional theology, has needed a worthy successor of the master builders who had gone before. Right nobly has he served us and we ought to say it. This centennial is his crowning day, and we ought to proclaim it so.

Let us not fail to notice, however, that in our third exponent of Union Seminary's distinctive character there shines out as conspicuously as in either of the others the blending of the ideal and the practical, the making of scholarship tributary to efficient service in the actual conditions of human life.

When we turn from her conception of her task to our Seminary's method of accomplishing it we find that in all stages of her career she has employed the same. We may call it the method of fellowship. Dr. Rice, writing to his wife from a sick bed away from home, sends his love to the students and an affectionate piece of fatherly council. The Seminary instruction was begun in a cozy corner of a hospitable kitchen. Dr. Dabney was noted for nothing more than for the cordial sympathy he lavished on his students; he grappled his young brethren to him with hooks of steel. In the modern era of our Seminary life the relationship between professors and students is cordial and free. There has always been in the Seminary a genial atmosphere. And the professors at Union have not so much attempted to write books as to make men. They have poured themselves into their students and written themselves on their characters and lives; their method has followed that of Jesus with the Twelve.

As a consequence Union Seminary has not influenced religious thought so much by her output of books and through her training of living voices for Christ. Yet it would be unfair to leave the impression that her professors and her sons have done no literary work in their time.

The following imperfect enumeration of those who have wrought with their pens will relieve that impression.

In the department of *Exegetical Work* we have Dr. Sampson's Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews; Dr. B. M. Smith's Commentary on Proverbs in Jamieson, Fawcett and Brown; Dr. Peck's Commentary on Acts; Dr. Stuart Robinson's Discourses on Redemption; Dr. W. A. Campbell's Commentary on Mark; Dr. J. B. Shearer's Syllabus of Bible Study and A Study of the Sermon on the Mount; and Hebrew Institutions; Dr. A. R. Cocke's Epistle to the Ephesians and Epistles of John; Dr. Grinnan's Epistle to the Ephesians in Japanese.

In *Historical Writing* (including biography) we have Dr. T. C. Johnson's History of Southern Presbyterianism, Biographies of Dabney and Palmer and John Calvin, A History of Missions; Dr. R. C. Reed, Presbyterian Churches of the World; Dr. Robert P. Kerr, Presbyterianism for the People and God in History; Dr. Peyton H. Hoge, A Life of Moses D. Hoge, D. D., LL. D.; and Drs. Henry and George White, A Biography of Dr. Wm. S. White; Dr. Henry A. White's Volume of Presbyterian Worthies.

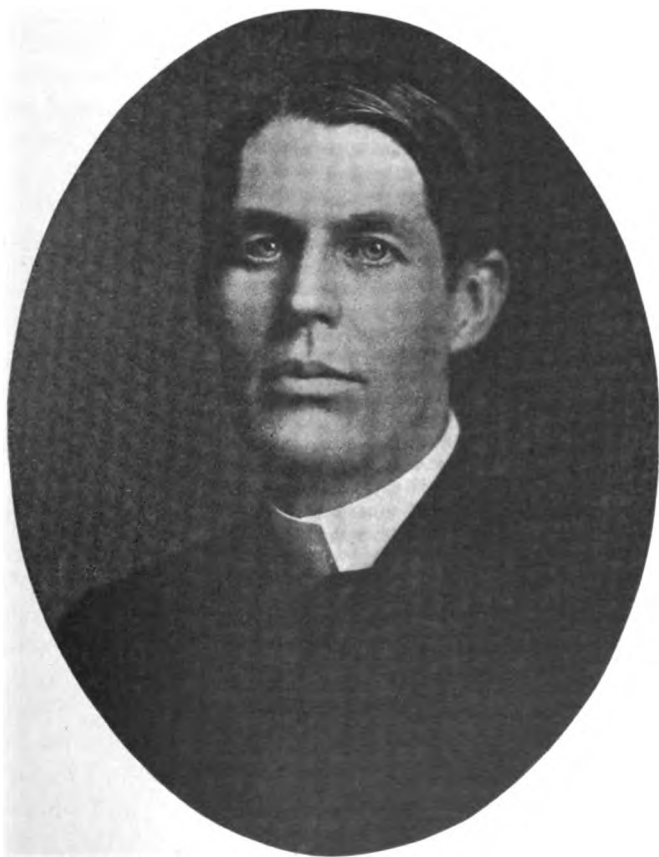
In *Systematic Theology* we can enumerate such names as Dabney, Peck, Vaughan, Armstrong, Strickler, Egbert Smith, Shaw.

In *Miscellaneous Religious Literature* we may mention Dr. Flournoy, in Archaeology; Dr. Reynolds, who translated the Bible into Korean; Dr. H. M. Woods, who annotated for Chinese students some of the works of their great Confucius; Dr. James P. Smith, who wrote the Brightside Idylls, and Dr. James I. Vance, who has issued a group of inspirational books like Royal Manhood; Dr. Richard McIlwaine, who wrote a volume of Reminiscences of a Long Life; Dr. Woods, our poet, and Dr. W. S. Lacy, Dr. E. T. Wellford, Dr. A. W. Pitzer, Dr. J. B. Converse, Dr. T. M. McConnell, Rev. Luther Link, and Dr. Juan Ortz.

Such is the merest sketch of the pen work of some of our more

notable men. And many more doubtless too modest to be conspicuous have served the truth by this means, and left thus their impress and that of our noble old Seminary on the religious thought of the age.

Union Seminary is also represented on the faculties of all our other Southern Seminaries: by Drs. McPheeters, Reed and H. A. White of Columbia; by Dr. J. Gray McAllister, of Louisville; by Drs. Rosebro and Somerville, of Clarksville; and by Drs. Vincent (the president), Sampson and Caldwell, of Austin



THERON H. RICE.