

TIMOTHY DWIGHT AS A TEACHER.

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MORE than forty years have now elapsed since the Rev. Timothy Dwight, D. D., President of Yale College, closed his earthly labors; but there still survive numbers of his former pupils, who are never weary of quoting his authority to the youth of the present generation, or of expressing their unbounded admiration of his character as a Teacher. Numerous memoirs of President Dwight have been published, and high encomiums have been passed upon him as an instructor and governor of youth. In the present article, my views are more limited. I do not propose to write his biography, but to analyze, more fully than has hitherto been done, his character as a TEACHER; to inquire what were the elements that were combined in him to form so exalted a model; and to explain his method of teaching, or mode of conducting, practically, the education of youth.

It was my good fortune to come under the instruction of President Dwight when he was at his culminating point. The class of 1813, to which I belonged, was the last, or last but one, which he taught before his health began to decline; and he died in January, 1817, after great sufferings, protracted through the two preceding years. But during the senior year of the class of 1813, nothing could exceed the vigor of mind and body which he exhibited, and his energies were put forth with unequalled power and zeal in our instruction. He was then a little turned of sixty, but entered into every duty with untiring industry, and unabated vigor. It was a mystery to us how he could feel so deep an interest in going over ground, from day to day, which we well knew must have been reiterated successively for many previous years. I think, however, we shall be able to clear up this mystery, as we analyze more fully the peculiar characteristics of his mind and heart. In the autumn of 1815, I entered upon the office of Tutor, and for a year and a half observed him in the government, as I had before known him chiefly in the instruction, of the college. From these favored opportunities of being personally acquainted with the President, and from having been near him during his last sickness,

and at the time of his death, I hope I may, without impropriety, speak often from my own recollections. This, I suppose, will be thought more allowable, since the number of his pupils who still survive are dwindled to a small remnant, and will soon have passed away.

It is, we have said, the main object of this article to portray the character of President Dwight as a *teacher*; but since every quality of his mind and heart helped to form that character, it is essential to the full development of our subject, to review, briefly, his peculiar intellectual and moral constitution, which we shall endeavor to show to have been singularly adapted to form the great teacher. We shall also pass in review his course of life, previous to his entering on the presidency of Yale College, and show how every thing contributed to qualify him for that exalted station.

It can not be doubted that Dr. Dwight possessed by nature one of the highest order of minds; a mind in which the faculties were all great, and all in harmonious proportion. It afforded one of the finest examples I have known of the "well-balanced mind." Genius is often characterized by the great predominance of some individual faculty, as an extraordinary memory, or a remarkable mechanical talent, while the other mental powers are quite ordinary, and even sometimes deficient. One has a vivid imagination, but has little taste or talent for scientific truth. He may be a poet, but can hardly be a philosopher. Another has a mighty intellect, but is destitute of a sense of the sublime and beautiful, in nature and art. He may be a mathematician, but can hardly be a poet or an artist. It is the union of intellect and imagination, both strong and in due proportion, that constitutes the well-balanced mind.* In an instructor of youth, no quality is more valuable than this; and if we analyze carefully the mental and moral constitution of President Dwight, we shall find unequivocal marks of the happiest union of all these noble elements.

First, let us view him as a man of INTELLECT. From infancy he evinced *great aptness to learn*. Under the guidance of a mother who was among the most distinguished of her sex for strength and cultivation, (daughter of the great President Edwards,) the nursery itself was his earliest school-room. She began to instruct him almost as soon as he was able to speak; and such was his eagerness, as well as his capacity for improvement, that he learned the alphabet at a single lesson, and before he was four years old was able to read the Bible with ease and correctness. A great proportion of the instruction which he received before he was six years old, was at home with his mother. Twice every day she heard him repeat his lesson. When

this was recited, he was permitted to read such books as he chose, until the limited period was expired. During these intervals he often read over the historical parts of the Bible, and gave an account of them to his mother. So deep and distinct were the impressions which these narrations then made upon his mind, that their minutest incidents were indelibly fixed upon his memory.* At the age of six, he was sent to the grammar school, where he early began to importune his father to permit him to study Latin. This was denied, from an impression that he was too young to profit by studies of that description; and the master was charged not to suffer him to engage in them. It was soon found to be in vain to prohibit him; his zeal was too great to be controlled. Not owning the necessary books, he availed himself of the opportunity, when the elder boys were at play, to borrow theirs; and, in this way, without the father's knowledge or the master's consent, he studied through the Latin grammar twice. When the master discovered the progress he had made, he applied earnestly to his father, and finally obtained a reluctant consent that he might proceed, though every effort short of compulsion was used to discourage him. He pursued the study of the languages with great alacrity, and would have been prepared for admission into college at eight years of age, had not a discontinuance of the school interrupted his progress, and rendered it necessary for him to be taken home, and placed again under the instruction of his mother.† Throughout the subsequent course of his academic education, and in all his future life, he evinced the same extraordinary aptness to learn.

Power of application was another trait which indicated that his was one of the higher order of minds. The President himself thought so highly of this feature as characteristic of a superior mind, that it was a favorite saying of his that "genius is nothing but the power of application." In his own case, this power was exhibited in its highest intensity, first in the school boy, then in the college student, and afterward in the professional man. When engaged in the composition of sermons, or any other literary performance, not only did the conversation of those around him not interrupt his course of thinking, but, while waiting for his amanuensis to finish the sentence which he had last dictated, he would spend the interval in conversing with his family or his friends, without the least embarrassment, delay, or confusion of thought. His mind took such firm hold of the subject which principally occupied it, that no ordinary force could separate it from its grasp. He was always conscious of the exact progress he had made in every subject. When company or any other occurrence

* Memoir prefixed to Dwight's "Theology" † Memoir.

compelled him to break off suddenly, it would sometimes happen that he did not return to his employment until after the expiration of several days. On resuming his labors, all he required of his amanuensis was to read the last word or clause that had been written, and he instantly would proceed to dictate, as if no interruption had occurred. In several instances he was compelled to dictate a letter at the same time that he was dictating a sermon. In one instance, a pressing necessity obliged him to dictate three letters at the same time. Each of the amanuenses was fully occupied, and the letters required no correction.*

The power of *retaining* what he had once learned, President Dwight possessed in an equally remarkable degree. The art of methodizing, as he asserted, lay at the foundation of this power; and no man, it is believed, ever availed himself more fully of the advantages of this art. His own acquisitions were laid up in separate compartments of the mind, like the wares of a merchant on his shelves, and he could, with equal readiness, lay his hand on his mental stores, and bring them out at a moment's warning. It was his practice, after short intervals, perhaps every evening, to distribute his new acquisitions in a manner like that of a compositor in restoring his types to their appropriate cells. It was an evidence of the vigor with which his own thoughts were conceived that, when once digested into the form of a discourse or an essay, and methodically arranged, he never forgot them. A sermon composed, but not written, and laid up in his mind, was ready to be summoned into use at any future time, and could be recalled, after a long interval, with hardly the loss of an idea that entered into its original structure. For a great portion of his life, from his youth upward, he was unable to use his eyes for reading or writing. To a mind less given to meditation, or less eager for knowledge, this loss might have been fatal to aspirations after high intellectual attainments; but to him, perhaps, it was hardly a misfortune, urging him, as it did, to cultivate to their highest degrees of perfection the powers of reflection and the art of methodizing. But while we may justly ascribe to these aids much influence, yet it can hardly be doubted that he possessed by nature unusual strength and tenacity of memory, as was evinced in childhood by his learning the alphabet at a single lesson, and in youth by the rapidity with which he acquired knowledge, and throughout his life by the unflinching certainty with which he retained what he had once learned.

Intense love of knowledge, another characteristic of great minds, was also exhibited by President Dwight in its highest degree. The

* *Memoir.*
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ardor with which he sought for it, in every useful form, might be compared to that of the miser for gold, so far as it was the original bent of his mind; but in regard to the high uses he always had in view, as a minister of the gospel, and as a teacher, it more resembled the effort of the philanthropist to acquire wealth, in order that he may relieve want, and save the souls of men. This universal thirst for knowledge led him to imbibe it from every source. Hence the variety and extent of his knowledge on every point that became the subject of discussion, or the topic of conversation, amazed every body. One who had attended on his instructions during the senior year, and had often admired his inexhaustible stores of information on the highest subjects of education, finding him equally at home in theology and ethics, in natural philosophy and geography, in history and statistics, in poetry and philology, would have his admiration heightened, if he chanced to visit him, as it was my good fortune to do, in his garden, and heard him discourse on gardening and the cultivation of fruit trees. This unbounded love of knowledge, in every form, attended as it was by a due estimate of the relative value of each kind, fulfilled one of the highest requisites for the President of a college, both as it fitted him to appreciate the importance of all the separate departments of instruction, respectively, and as it prepared him to impart to those under his immediate instruction a boundless variety of useful information.

The *reasoning powers* of President Dwight were such as became a mind of the highest order. His sermons and other published works afford evidence of this; but his pupils received a still stronger impression of his powers of argument in the recitation room, particularly in his decisions of questions debated before him, where a course of reasoning was conducted with every advantage which could be derived from an array of all the most important facts that bore upon the case, from great felicity of illustration, from the most lucid arrangement, and from the severest logic.

Such were the leading characteristics of President Dwight as a man of *intellect*, each of which, it will readily be perceived, had a most important bearing on the character which it is our main purpose to delineate, namely, that of the great teacher. Next, let us view him as a man of *IMAGINATION*. It is well known that in early life Dr. Dwight figured as a poet. Indeed, his "*Conquest of Canaan*," a sacred epic poem, in eleven books, written before he was twenty years of age, evinced a strong native bent for works of imagination. A dissertation, delivered at the public commencement of Yale College, on taking his master's degree, on the "*History, Eloquence, and Poetry of the*

Bible," was received with extraordinary favor. A copy was immediately requested for the press, and it was afterward republished, both in this country and in Europe. His patriotic songs, composed during the revolutionary war, some of which were great favorites with the army; his "*Greenfield Hill*," published during his residence at that place; and his hymns, which are still sung with delight in our sacred choirs, afford the most satisfactory evidence that he was a man of lofty imagination as well as of profound intellect.

About the year 1770, commenced a great era in the history of the study of polite literature in Yale College,—an era initiated by four remarkable geniuses, Trumbull, Dwight, Humphreys, and Barlow. Trumbull was of the class of 1767, Dwight of the class of '69, Humphreys of the class of '71, and Barlow of the class of '78. Trumbull and Dwight were colleague tutors, and a congeniality of taste for classical studies and the muses produced a strong intimacy between them. Humphreys and Barlow, though a little later, fell into the same circle, and cultivated with the others the belles lettres studies. Trumbull's "*M'Fingal*" justly acquired for him a celebrity above that of the others; but they each and all contributed to create and diffuse a taste for elegant literature among their countrymen, and especially in Yale College. Previous to that period, after the college had been in operation full seventy years, no attention was paid to English literature. The course of studies consisted of the dead languages, mathematics, syllogistic logic, and scholastic theology. The style of composition, even of the officers of the college, was stiff and pedantic, and savored of the quaintness of the old theologians. The college had never produced a single poet, or an elegant writer.* The study of rhetoric had till then been almost entirely neglected. Through the influence of three contemporary tutors, Howe, Trumbull, and Dwight, a taste for those pursuits was excited, and the art of speaking began, for the first time in the history of the college, to be cultivated. Dwight, especially, both by his example and his instructions, produced a great reform in the style of writing and speaking. He delivered to the students a series of lectures on style and composition, on a plan very similar to that contained in Blair's lectures, which were not published until a considerable time afterward.

Of the constellation of poets which arose simultaneously at this period, Trumbull, no doubt, was the principal star. But several circumstances contributed, at the time of the publication of Dwight's "*Conquest of Canaan*," to render it less popular than it deserved to be. The country contained but few persons of cultivated imagina-

* Governor Livingston, of New Jersey, of the class of 1741, ought, perhaps, to be excepted.

tion, and few lovers of sacred poetry especially. There was, in fact, among our leading men, in civil life particularly, a strong bias toward infidelity. Moreover, on literary as on other subjects, the United States had not, until a much later period, begun to exercise for herself an independent judgment, but took her lead from the decisions of the British press; and it was long the practice of British critics to treat every literary effort of Americans with contempt. Hence a strong prejudice was imbibed against the poetical merit of the "*Conquest of Canaan*," on its first publication; and this sentiment became hereditary, and has descended to the present day. Even now every body condemns, while nobody reads, the "*Conquest of Canaan*." Having myself attentively read it more than once, I feel authorized to claim that, whatever blemishes it may have in some nice points of taste, it affords abundant evidence of a vivid imagination, great facility in versifying, and a high power of appreciating the sublime in sentiment, and the beautiful in nature and art. Were it my purpose to criticise this neglected poem, I should insist upon the poetical merit of many individual passages; but all I propose at present, is to view President Dwight as a man of imagination, in contradistinction to the man of mere intellect. Of this element in his character, as forming a part of a well-balanced mind, and one of the highest order of minds, I feel safe in claiming his poetry as affording abundant evidence. Were further proof necessary, I might adduce his fondness for natural scenery, and his delight in ornamental gardening. A warm imagination is obvious enough in his prose writings, and is even recognized in his sermons, especially where the subject admits of figurative language and flights of fancy. It is not, however, inconsistent with our views of what constitutes the well-balanced mind, to admit that, in the mental constitution of President Dwight, the intellect greatly preponderated over the imagination.

But it will be proper, secondly, to estimate the MORAL no less than the mental constitution of President Dwight, in its bearing upon the character of the great teacher. It was not until he had reached the age of twenty-two years, while he was Tutor in college, that he made a public profession of religion; but the basis of his moral character was laid in early childhood, by the influence and counsels of his gifted mother. "She taught him," says his biographer, "from the very dawn of his reason, to fear God, and keep his commandments; to be conscientiously just, kind, affectionate, charitable, and forgiving; to preserve, on all occasions, the most sacred regard to truth; and to relieve the distresses and supply the wants of the poor and unfortunate. She aimed, at a very early period, to enlighten his conscience, to make

him afraid to sin, and to teach him to hope for pardon only through the righteousness of Christ. The impressions thus made upon his mind in infancy were never effaced." He seemed to possess an innate love of truth, which exhibited itself to his pupils in what sometimes appeared to them an almost over nicety in regard to all the minute and exact circumstances attending the facts on which his statements were made, and in his particularity in mentioning his authorities when the facts were derived from the statements of others. "Tell truth to a hair's breadth," was a precept which he ever enjoined on his pupils.

President Dwight was also a man of warm attachments and most tender sympathies. Nothing could exceed the strength of his domestic affections. But his heart was too large to confine its exercises to the family circle. The same kind affection glowed, in proportionate measure, toward his pupils, and toward numerous private friends whom he had bound to himself in every stage of life. When they were afflicted, he was moved to tears; when they were prosperous, he shared in their joy. I remember an instance of his tenderness on the occasion of the death of one of the Tutors, Mr. Mills Day. The President was absent at an ecclesiastical meeting, returning a few hours after his death. As he came into the chapel to attend evening prayers, and passed by the seat where Mr. Day usually sat, his countenance changed, and his tears began to flow. In reading the Bible before prayers, his voice was tremulous; and when he came, in the course of his prayer, to allude to the mournful event, he was so overcome that his voice nearly failed him, and his cheeks were wet with tears. In a funeral prayer at the house of a friend, who had lost a son of much promise, he was equally overcome. Indeed, it was not uncommon for him to betray deep emotion in the recitation room, when relating an instance of suffering or sorrow. Above all this native tenderness, ruled the most expansive benevolence,—the benevolence of the gospel,—embracing within its boundless sphere every thing susceptible of happiness or misery, and ever yearning for the promotion among men of freedom, knowledge, happiness, and pure religion.

Such was the intellectual, and such the moral constitution which lay at the foundation of that character, which the whole education or course of life of President Dwight helped to mould into the great teacher. Let us therefore, thirdly, pass in review his peculiar *mode of life, or education*, so far as it contributed to form and perfect that character.

The manner in which he himself was taught, from infancy, by a mother so singularly qualified to direct the early education of a child of genius, was ever present to his mind as a model. He was almost

born a teacher, for I once heard his sister relate that, when only four years old, he was found in a retired place teaching a company of little boys lessons from the Bible. His father was an educated man, but the cares of business called him so much from home that the care and instruction of the children devolved chiefly on the mother. His house, however, was the resort of much company of the most elevated class, and their conversation inspired our young scholar with the love of general knowledge, and every fragment of valuable information was treasured up and never lost. These opportunities helped to form his taste for those topics which enter into intelligent conversation, such as public affairs, and the reigning matters of discussion of the day. Here, perhaps, he first caught the inspiration which in after years animated his own love of intelligent conversation, which he ever named among his highest sources of enjoyment. It was all the recreation he needed from severe study; and of all his powers those of conversation were among the most extraordinary. He entered college at thirteen, having made acquisitions considerably in advance of those required at that time for admission. For the first two years of his college life, the institution was in an unsettled state, with its study and discipline much impaired, and he always regarded this period of his education as almost lost, having contracted a fondness for games and other idle amusements; but, through the influence of a wise and zealous tutor, he was roused to nobler aspirations. At the beginning of his junior year, being fifteen years old, he engaged in his studies with excessive application, extending them into regions far beyond the college curriculum. At the close of his academic course, the President sent for Dwight and Strong,* and informed them that in view of the officers of the college they were at the head of the class, and equally deserving of the highest honor; but, as Strong was the elder of the two, it would be given to him at that time, and to Dwight on taking his master's degree.

He had no sooner completed his college course than he entered at once on the life of a teacher, at the early age of seventeen, a profession which he pursued with but little interruption for fifty years. His first essay was at a grammar school, at New Haven, which he kept for two years with great success, securing the strongest attachment of the pupils, and the highest approbation of their parents. During these two years he made great advancement in literature and science, dividing every day according to an exact method, of which six hours were spent in school, and eight hours in the severest application to study, leaving only ten hours for all other purposes. His studies

* The late Rev. Nathan Strong, D. D., of Hartford.

embraced a wide range of subjects, scientific as well as literary, comprehending several branches then scarcely known in this country, among which were the Calculus and Newton's Principia. But his talents, as an instructor, met with a more appropriate field in the situation of Tutor in Yale College, to which place he was elected in September, 1771, being then past nineteen years of age. The period of his tutorship continued for six years, and he ever afterward referred to it as a most important epoch of his life. Here his great powers of teaching were fully developed. "When he entered upon the office, more than half the members of his class were older than himself; and the freshman who waited on him was thirty-two years of age. Notwithstanding a circumstance generally so disadvantageous, he proceeded in the discharge of his official duties with firmness and assiduity; and in a short time gained a reputation for skill in the government and instruction of his class, rarely known in the former experience of the college."* We have already adverted to the agency which he and his associate instructors, especially Howe and Trumbull, exerted in inspiring a new taste for the studies of eloquence and polite literature. The "*Conquest of Canaan*" was one of the fruits of this period, having been commenced in 1771, when he was only nineteen years of age, and finished in 1774, at the age of twenty-two.

The first class which he instructed graduated in 1775; the year before the Declaration of Independence. "At that time he delivered a valedictory address, every where sparkling indeed with brilliant imagery, but every where, also, fraught with strong thoughts and noble conceptions. In two points of view it deserves notice. It unfolds to his pupils the duty of fixing on a very high standard of character, as intelligent and as moral beings, in a manner which proves at once that this was literally the rule which governed his own conduct, and that he was admirably qualified to influence others to adopt it. It also communicates to them views of the growth and ultimate importance of this country, which were at once new, noble, and prophetic.

"In March, 1777, he was married to Miss Mary Woolsey, the daughter of Benjamin Woolsey, Esq., of Long Island, the class-mate, room-mate, and intimate friend of his father. They had eight sons, of whom six survived their father.†

"In May, 1777, the college was broken up. The students left New Haven at the commencement of the vacation, and pursued their studies, during the summer, under their respective Tutors, in places

* Memoir.

† Two only still survive: James Dwight, Esq., of New Haven, and Rev. William T. Dwight, D. D., of Portland, Me.

less exposed to the sudden incursions of the enemy. Mr. Dwight retired with his class to Weathersfield, and remained with them till September. Early in June, he was licensed as a preacher, and, besides instructing his class, he supplied the pulpit of the neighboring village of Kensington. It being understood that the existing head of the college would relinquish his connection with it, the students, as a body, drew up and signed a petition to the Corporation, that Mr. Dwight might be elected to the Presidency. This evinced an extraordinary respect for his character as a teacher, being then only twenty-five years of age. It was owing to his own interference that the application was not formally made."*

The country was now in the midst of the revolutionary war. Eager to have some part in the public service, Mr. Dwight accepted the appointment of chaplain to General Parsons' brigade, which was part of General Putnam's division in the army of the United States. He sedulously devoted himself to his appropriate duties. The troops who composed the brigade were mostly Connecticut farmers; men who had been religiously educated, and who were willing to listen to the truths of the gospel even in a camp. On the Sabbath they heard him with profound attention. During the week they beheld him exerting himself, as far as lay in his power, to instruct them in morals and religion. Several of his discourses delivered to the whole army, owing partly to their intrinsic merit, and partly to the feelings of the times, gained him high reputation with the American public. He also wrote several patriotic songs, which were universally popular. His connection with the army enabled him to form an acquaintance with many officers of distinction, and among them he had the satisfaction to rank the Commander-in-Chief. That great man honored him with flattering attentions. Mr. Dwight ever remembered his kindness with lively gratitude, and entertained for his character and services, military and civil, the highest respect and veneration.† His experience in this situation was by no means fruitless in reference to his subsequent life as a teacher. The examples of dignified manners with which he had been conversant among the officers of the army, especially in the person of Washington, contributed, no doubt, to the formation of his own manners and address, so much more courtly than usually belong to academic men or recluse scholars, and the wisdom and prudence which were so fully set before him in the councils of the Father of his Country, had their influence upon his own administration as President of Yale College. His pupils can not fail to remember how often he drew his illustrations and arguments from

*Memoir. 11b.

the observations he had made, and the experience he had gained, while serving as chaplain in the army.

The occasion of his leaving the army was one that subjected him to new and unexpected trials. His father was removed by death, while on a business tour in a distant part of the country, leaving a widow and thirteen children, of whom he was the eldest. On him devolved the interesting but self-denying duty of devoting himself to the aid of his mother, in supporting and educating his younger brothers and sisters, of whom he was constituted the guardian. On receiving intelligence of his father's death, he immediately removed to Northampton, where the family resided, and entered on the duties providentially assigned to him, with the greatest promptitude and cheerfulness. "In this situation (says his biographer,) he passed five years of the most interesting period of his life; performing in an exemplary manner the offices of a son and a brother, and of a guardian to the younger children. Here he was emphatically the staff and stay of the family. The government and education of the children, as well as the daily provision for their wants, depended almost exclusively on his exertions. The elder as well as the younger were committed to his care, and loved and obeyed him as a father. The filial affection and dutiful respect and obedience which he exhibited toward his mother, and the more than fraternal kindness with which he watched over the well-being of his brothers and sisters, deserve the most honorable remembrance. To accomplish the object, he postponed his own establishment for life, and a provision for his family. To accomplish it, though destitute of property, he relinquished in their favor his own proportion of the family estate, and labored constantly for five years, with a diligence and alacrity rarely exemplified. His mother ever acknowledged, in language of eloquent affection and gratitude, his kindness, faithfulness, and honorable generosity to her and to her children. The respect which she felt and manifested toward him, though perhaps not inferior in native powers of mind, resembled the affection of a dutiful child toward her father, rather than the feelings of a mother for her son. During this period he labored through the week upon the farm, and preached on the Sabbath to different vacant congregations in the neighboring towns. He also established a school at Northampton, for the instruction of youth of both sexes, which was almost immediately resorted to by such a number of pupils, that he was under the necessity of employing two assistants. At the same time, owing to the dispersed condition of the college at New Haven, during the war, and to his established character as an instructor, a part of one of the classes repaired to North-

ampton, and placed themselves under his instruction. To them he devoted his own immediate attention, until they had completed their regular course of collegiate studies." *

The load of domestic care he had sustained during this period, unusual for one so young, was not without its use in qualifying him for the post he was ultimately to occupy. While still within the precincts of youth, the care and education of brothers and sisters of different ages, some nearly as old as himself, was well suited to mature his character and ripen it into full manhood. He exhibited at once a beautiful example of filial piety and fraternal wisdom. Nor was the self-denial imposed on his ambition, and the necessity of relinquishing, or at least of postponing, all his flattering prospects of rising in the world, lost upon him as a means of moral discipline. At the age of thirty he had reached a dignity of deportment, and a maturity of wisdom, usually associated with advanced years and the largest experience. These five years spent in earnest efforts to alleviate a mother's cares, to form and mould the characters of such numbers who looked to him as a father, and the self-denial and laborious exertions, both bodily and mental, which he was compelled to exercise to provide the means of their support, formed together a miniature of those trials and responsibilities which he afterward sustained as President of Yale College.

Let us next attend him into *political* life, where he was gaining new and most important experience for the office of teacher. A strong disposition was manifested, from time to time, by the inhabitants of Northampton, to employ him in civil life. In the county conventions of Hampshire, he twice represented the town. Twice also he consented to serve the town as their representative in the state legislature. This was in the years 1781 and 1782, just before the close of the war of Independence, when the distresses and moral evils occasioned by a state of war imposed on the state governments most difficult and responsible duties. Inexperienced as he was in the business of a politician or a legislator, he at once became a leading member of the house, and was greatly distinguished and admired for his talents and eloquence. All his exertions were on the side of good order and good morals, and indicated a steady attachment to the principles of rational liberty, and decided hostility to licentiousness. A favorable opportunity was afforded him to serve the cause of education, which was ever near his heart. A petition for a grant in favor of Harvard College was before the legislature. At that time such grants were unpopular. During his occasional absence from the

* Memoir.

house the petition had been called up ; and, after finding but few, and those not very warm advocates, had been generally negatived. On taking his seat, Mr. Dwight, learning what had occurred, moved a reconsideration of the vote. In a speech of about one hour in length, fraught with wit, with argument, and with eloquence, and received with marked applause on the spot, from the members and the spectators, he effectually changed the feelings of the house, and procured a nearly unanimous vote in favor of the grant. So marked was his success in this public career, that many citizens of distinction urged him to embark on the sea of political life, and a delegation of his native county earnestly requested him to become a candidate for election to the Continental Congress. He had made some progress in the study of law before he made choice of the clerical profession ; but, having solemnly dedicated himself to the ministry of the gospel, he could not be persuaded, by any prospects of civil promotion, to abandon the sacred calling.

In 1783, at the age of thirty-one years, he was settled over the church and congregation of Greenfield, a parish in the town of Fairfield, in Connecticut, where he continued the following twelve years.

It only remains, therefore, to view President Dwight as a *theologian* and a *parochial minister of the gospel*, in order to complete our survey of the training his course of life had involved for that peculiar office for which he was ultimately destined. When we reflect that the ministry of the gospel itself is only a more exalted kind of teaching, we can not doubt the preparation it affords for the highest exercise of that office. The study of the Bible is imbibing truth at its fountain, and nothing can be more appropriate to one whose mission afterward is to establish, upon the foundations of immutable truth, the characters of those who are to lead the councils of their country, or to influence the eternal destinies of their fellow-men. It was especially important for a teacher whose instructions, like his, lay to a great extent in the fields of theology and moral philosophy. Besides all this, the experience of the pastor of a people, fraught as it usually is with lessons of prudence, discretion, and the fruits of benevolent action, affords an excellent preparation for the office of President of a college. To President Dwight such a preparation was peculiarly appropriate, since he was called to fulfill the duties of chaplain and pastor, as well as of instructor and governor of the college. It is not the least of the advantages of the situation of the pastor of a people, as a preparation for the head of such an institution of learning, that it brings him into contact with every class of minds, and all shades of character, and thus makes him thoroughly acquainted with human

nature. Moreover, the life of a parish minister is itself a course of moral discipline well fitted to impart that prudence and self-control, which are important elements in the character of the instructor and governor of youth. But the actual exercise of the gift of teaching constituted, in connection with the pastoral office, an important part of the labors of Dr. Dwight, during the whole time that he resided at Greenfield. His native hospitality, the charms of his conversation, and his extensive acquaintance with men in professional and civil life, rendered his house a great resort of men of letters, of theologians, of eminent civilians, as well as of extensive family connections. Such an amount of company of course added greatly to the ordinary expenses of supporting a family, and both combined went far beyond the scanty salary of a parish minister. Hence, necessity conspired with his natural fondness for teaching, to induce him to open a school of the higher order, for the instruction of youth of both sexes. He erected, therefore, a small school-house on a commanding and beautiful site, overlooking the waters of Long Island Sound, for a long distance, and the bright villages on its margin,—a situation embracing scenery hardly surpassed in beauty by any in New England. This seminary he taught in person, devoting to it regularly six hours every day. In a short time, youths in great numbers, and of both sexes, not only from various parts of New England, but from the middle and southern states, as well as from abroad, resorted to his school. It was commenced and carried on absolutely without funds, and depended solely on his own character and exertions. He supported it, during his whole residence at Greenfield, with unexampled reputation. The entire number of pupils instructed here, within the period of twelve years, exceeded one thousand. Many of them were carried through the whole course of education customary at college. In my youth I was well acquainted with men of high intelligence and distinguished literary attainments, whose sole education had been acquired in the school at Greenfield Hill. This seminary also afforded, it is believed, the earliest example in our country, where females were instructed in the higher branches of academic learning. It is justly added by the biographer of President Dwight, that probably to the exertions and influence of no one individual are the ladies of our country so extensively indebted,—that no man thought more highly of the sex, no man loved better the company of women of refinement and intelligence, and no man did more to exalt the female character. In the class debates of the old question, on the relative ability of the sexes, the President always warmly insisted on the full equality of the female sex.

What a picture do the labors of Dr. Dwight, at Greenfield Hill, afford of the productiveness of learned industry! It was here that he digested his great System of Theology, and preached it twice in a series of sermons to his people, performing for them at the same time, with the greatest faithfulness, all his parochial duties. It was here that he composed the beautiful and instructive poem of "Greenfield Hill," chiefly as a pastime during his walks between his house and his school room. Six hours a day, also, were given to the fatiguing and exhausting labors of teaching different classes of pupils, in a great range and variety of studies. He cultivated, with his own hands, a large culinary, fruit, and flower garden; and he devoted a great amount of time, with the most unwearied hospitality, to the crowds of visitors that continually thronged his house. Prodigious as were the labors which we have already enumerated, yet it is but a partial list of all that he accomplished during this fruitful period of his life.

From the preceding sketch it is evident that the whole course of life of Dr. Dwight, from infancy to middle life, when he entered the Presidency of Yale College, was a continual training for that elevated station to which, on the death of President Stiles, he was transferred, in 1795. Those noble maternal influences which were shed upon his infant mind, like the dew of morning upon the opening flower; the habitual cultivation of all his faculties, of intellect and imagination, which formed the well-balanced mind; a heart fraught with every noble and exalted purpose, and deeply imbued with the faith and benevolence of the gospel, and the moral discipline he had received, as well as the valuable experience he had gained in the onerous duties he had discharged in his filial and fraternal relations; the life of chaplain in the army; the part he bore in public affairs, as a member of the legislature; the experience of a parish minister; the actual exercise of the gifts of teaching through every stage of life; and, finally, his multifarious learning, and boundless stores of knowledge: these all conspired to form an amount of preparation for the instruction and government of youth, and for superintending the various interests of a University, such as has seldom been brought to the same elevated station. A brief review of President Dwight's *method of teaching* will bring these remarks to a close.

Dr. Dwight, on his entering the Presidency, is said to have relaxed much from the ancient rigid forms of intercourse between the faculty and the students, where dignity was graduated by standard measures. In the old college laws it was enacted, among many other similar provisions for securing the respect of the students toward their officers,

that no freshman should wear his hat within ten rods of the President, eight rods of a Professor, and six rods of a Tutor. Yet his bearing was more stately than is common at the present day, and his courtesy, in returning the salutations of the students, had more the air of condescension than a reciprocation of kind and respectful feelings. With the senior class, who, in a body, exclusively fell under his immediate instruction, he was somewhat less distant, but even one of them could hardly feel at ease in his presence. Not that the preceptor was haughty, but the pupil was overawed. They met him daily in his lecture room, at eleven o'clock. When he entered the room, the most respectful silence was observed, and all remained standing until he was seated. There was much, both in his person and in the associations connected with him, to inspire them with profound respect. They saw before them, not a pedagogue, or a learned recluse, ignorant of the world and of human nature, but a man who had attained high celebrity even in his youth; the first of American divines; a compatriot of the heroes of the revolution; one who, by universal consent, held the first rank for splendor of talents and extent of erudition; an instructor whose pupils were numbered by thousands, many of them occupying the highest posts of honor and usefulness in the church and state. He appeared before them, too, in all the dignity of unsullied virtue, and armed with the panoply of a minister of Christ. His person was also large and commanding, his manners refined and courtly, his voice deep and melodious;—authority, as one born to command, seemed to invest his entire character.

The books recited to the President were Blair's Rhetoric, Locke on the Human Understanding, and Paley's Moral Philosophy. Every Wednesday and Saturday, a division of the class, consisting of eight or ten, read disputations on some question previously selected and approved by the President, on which, at the close of the discussion, he gave an elaborate decision. On Monday morning, in the place of a recitation, he gave a familiar discourse, founded on Vincent's Catechism, on the doctrines, duties, and evidences of Christianity. But the great value of senior year consisted not so much in the lessons learned and recited, as in the vast amount of instruction which fell from the lips of the instructor. It has with some reason been alledged, as a defect in his method of instruction, that the student was not laid under sufficient responsibility. Leading questions were asked, which only required to be affirmed or denied, and hence it was possible to pass both the daily recitations and the public examinations with but little study. Senior year was, therefore, just what each individual chose

to make of it. Those desirous of improving their time well, found it a most profitable year. They found their sum of knowledge daily increased; their moral principles formed and strengthened; from boys they became men, and rose to the full consciousness of manhood, and had their principles, literary, political, moral, and religious, settled for life. The majority carried in note-books, and recorded as many as possible of the President's remarks. Although the class met him but once a day, yet the interview was frequently prolonged from an hour and a half to two hours, and, on dispute days, occasionally still longer. Copious and able as were the instructions given by President Dwight, in connection with the text-books, it was in the ample and profound discussions of questions, whether philosophical, political, literary, or religious, that his great powers and resources as a teacher were most fully brought out. In these, according to the nature of the subject, appeared, by turns, the divine, the poet, the statesman, the patriot, the philanthropist. It was often evident that he came to the lecture room to attend these debates without any special preparation. Indeed, when, on account of the length of time occupied by the disputants, his decision was postponed, to be given at the close of the next recitation, he would sometimes require to be reminded of the question. But, after a moment's reflection, apparently throwing his ideas under numerical heads, he would enter with all his soul into the discussion, bringing forward in luminous order the most convincing arguments, embellishing by rhetorical figures, illustrating by pertinent anecdotes, enlivening by sallies of humor, and often warming up into a more glowing strain of eloquence than he ever exemplified in his public discourses. During the reading of the debates of the students, he often interspersed remarks suggested by some casual association, which led him at a distance from the main point in argument. But it was useful information, however discursive he might sometimes appear; and, by this practice, he touched upon so many of the exigencies of real life, that his pupils have been often heard to say, that hardly a day of their subsequent lives has passed without their recalling something said by President Dwight. The earnestness with which he engaged in the business of instruction, and in arguing questions in which important truths were to be established, never abated. It might be the twentieth or the thirtieth class of pupils now before him, and he might be reiterating the same ground for the thirtieth time, yet his zeal knew no satiety. Nothing could have so fully sustained his interest in these exercises, but a high appreciation of the value of the truths he taught, and a benevolent desire that his pupils should share with him so rich a treasure. The intensity of feeling

with which he engaged in the defense of the truth, when it was assailed or endangered, was strikingly evinced on an occasion when I was present. During his last sickness, a small class of students in theology recited to him once a week, and came to his house for that purpose only a week before he died. When they entered the room, the President was leaning back in his chair, with his head upon the wall, and with many indications of intense suffering.* It was one of his bad days, and Mrs. Dwight went to him and told him that the young men had come to recite, but besought him not to attempt to hear them. One of them was to read a dissertation on the doctrine of the Trinity. The President faintly replied that it would not hurt him to have the paper read, although he should probably not be able to make any remarks. The student began to read, and soon touched upon delicate points in the controversy then waging on this great subject. The face, before so pale and wan, began to brighten up; he leaned forward in his chair, took up several points in the argument, in opposition to the views of the writer, and, at length, altogether forgetting his bodily pain and weakness, entered fully into the question, and discoursed for an hour with his accustomed zeal and energy.

It was a melancholy satisfaction I enjoyed on the day after the decease of this venerated man, to watch over his lifeless remains. My mind was filled to overflowing with recollections of all I had seen and heard of the extraordinary personage whose form, majestic even in death, now lay before me. Retiring from the solemn chamber, I took my pen and wrote as follows: "Where among all the records of the many great and good, who have devoted themselves to the same dignified employment, can a man be found, who united in his own person a more wonderful assemblage of those qualities which fit one for forming the characters of youth? Who has ever united, in a higher degree, the dignity that commands respect, the accuracy that inspires confidence, the ardor that kindles animation, the kindness that wins affection, and has been able, at the same time, to exhibit before his pupils the fruits of long and profound research, of an extensive and profitable intercourse with the world, and of great experience in the business of instruction?"† After the lapse of forty years, and after much opportunity with many eminent instructors, this estimate seems to me entirely just, and President Dwight is ever present to my mind as the **GREAT MODEL TEACHER.**

* His disorder was an internal cancer, and his anguish extreme.

† This passage formed a part of a Memoir of Dr. Dwight, published in the "*Philadelphia Port-Folio*" for November, 1817.