REV. WILLIAM PITSER, D.D.

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WILBUR FISK.

Wilbur Fisk, late president of Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, was born at Brattleborough, Vermont, August 31st, 1792. His parents were highly intelligent and respectable, though not wealthy, and traced their pedigree to the early pilgrim stock. He was, from early infancy, afflicted with scrofula, which laid the foundation for a peculiar cough, which troubled him through life. At a very early age he exhibited remarkable precocity of intellect and aptitude for learning. While yet young, his father removed to Lyndon, Caledonia County, some forty miles south of the Canada line, then a new country. Here, amid the grandeur and beauty of mountain scenery, with a heart keenly alive to the glories of nature, young Fisk grew up, with but few opportunities of education, except from parental teachings, till his sixteenth year. Up to this time he had had, as he himself states, not more than three years' schooling in all. His parents, however, were well qualified to teach him, and his father possessed a small but well-selected library, which, in his fondness for books, he read and re-read many times. He was not, therefore, behind other boys of his age in general education, and in many particulars he was in advance of them. His ardor in the pursuit of knowledge was such that, when engaged in attending the lime-kilns, of which there were several on his father's farm, as well as when engaged in agricultural pursuits, he always kept his book with him, and this not a story or novel, but some text-book for study, and not unseldom did he become so much absorbed that the fire in the kiln had gone out long before he discovered it. When he was about seventeen years of age, his father, finding that he did not possess sufficient vigor of constitution for the arduous labor of a Vermont farmer, and that his thirst for knowledge was unquenchable, sent him, for three months, to the county grammar school at Peacham, some twenty miles from Lyndon. Here he made up his previous deficiencies in grammar and arithmetic. After his return home, he resumed his labor on the farm, studying, however, at all the intervals of toil,

* For a narrative of the many and important services rendered by Dr. Fisk to the large and influential denomination of christians with which he was connected, other than the promotion of their institutions of learning, we must refer our readers to the able and extended memoir of him by Professor Holdich.

till the autumn of 1810, when he again attended the grammar school for six weeks, and then took charge of a district school for the winter. His ambition was now roused to obtain a collegiate education, but his father's circumstances were not such as would enable him to support his son through a college course. Wilbur was not, however, to be denied on this ground. He offered to support himself through college by his own exertions; and having, by much entreaty, gained his father's permission, he commenced his Latin grammar in May, 1811, being then in his twentieth year. He fitted for college at Peacham, having among his classmates and intimate friends the Hon. Thaddeus Stevens, of Pennsylvania, and several other men who have since highly distinguished themselves. In August, 1812, just fifteen months from the time he commenced the study of Latin, he had fitted himself to enter the sophomore class of the University of Vermont. He seems to have distinguished himself here as a writer and speaker, but Burlington having become, in 1813, the head-quarters of the army, in the war with Great Britain, the college buildings were wanted for barracks, and the classes were broken up. After spending nearly a year at home, young Fisk entered the junior class of Brown University, in the summer of 1814. Here he won high reputation for the brilliancy and variety of his talents; in every study he ranked high, but exhibited a special fondness for belles-lettres. As an orator or a debater he had no equal in college. His extemporaneous powers were of a very high order. In addition to maintaining his position in his class, he found time for considerable reading, and the authors he read were such as made their impress upon his after life, and his style as a writer. Burke, Addison, Shakspeare, Johnson, Milton, Young, Beattie, and Scott, were the authors with whom he became most familiar; and a taste for legal study led him also to make himself acquainted with Vattel, Burlamaqui, and other expounders of international law. He was graduated in August, 1815, having one of the highest appointments in his class.

Having received his degree, and returned home, the next question to be determined was, what profession he should pursue. His parents were anxious that he should enter the ministry, but to this he was, for several reasons, averse, though strongly impelled to it by the convictions of duty. He finally commenced the study of law in the office of Hon. Isaac Fletcher, at Lyndon, and devoted all his energies to the attainment of a thorough knowledge of its great principles. He was still ill at ease, however, and dissatisfied with himself; and being, moreover, considerably in debt, he availed himself of a liberal offer, obtained through President Messer, of Brown University, to

become private tutor in the family of Colonel Ridgeley, near Baltimore. He did not, however, abandon the study of law, but continued it at his intervals of leisure. The large and well-selected library of Colonel Ridgeley, also afforded him opportunities for intellectual improvement. In the midst of these advantages, however, his health became seriously impaired. His lungs, always irritable, had been twice seriously affected while in college, and in March, 1817, he had a third attack, accompanied with alarming hemorrhage. His physicians recommended his return to his native climate, and in May he attempted the journey, but at Burlington was again prostrated by hemorrhage, and for some time little hope was entertained of his recovery. At length his symptoms became more favorable, and in June he reached home, though in a very feeble state. A revival, then in progress in Lyndon, was the means of deepening and intensifying his religious convictions; and, with returning health, he came to the decision to devote himself to the work of the ministry, and in connection with the Methodist church. The step was one requiring no ordinary courage and self-denial. That denomination, now so large and influential, and so active in the promotion of education, had then very few educated ministers in its ranks, and its membership, though active, devoted, and pious, were not generally composed of the more intelligent classes of society. Mr. Fisk, on the other hand, was an accomplished scholar, of refined tastes, and studious habits; he had already attained some reputation as an eloquent speaker and writer, and was not naturally devoid of ambition. To bury his brilliant talents in the Methodist connection, his friends urged, was a sacrifice to which he was not called. The struggle was a severe one, but the sincere and conscientious desire for usefulness, and that in the direction in which duty seemed to point, prevailed, and in March, 1818, he was licensed by the Quarterly Meeting Conference of Lyndon circuit, to preach. His first field of labor was Craftsbury circuit, some twenty-five or thirty miles from his father's residence. The succeeding year he was assigned to Charlestown, Mass., where he labored for two years with marked ability and success. His eloquence and earnestness attracted large congregations, and were the means of increasing the influence and strength of the society of which he was pastor. In the second year of his ministry at Charlestown, he was again prostrated by pulmonary hemorrhage, and for five months there seemed little hopes of his recovery. In May, 1821, he left Charlestown, and by slow and easy stages was conveyed to his father's house, which he reached in about a month. It was nearly a year from this time before he again ventured to preach, and then he was under the necessity of re-

straining any considerable emotional expression, in order to avoid a recurrence of the hemorrhage. But entire rest from public speaking, and constant exercise in the saddle, had so far restored his health that he was again anxious to be at work. During this period of forced inaction, his attention seems to have been specially turned toward the importance of establishing schools of high grade, and colleges, among the denomination with whom he had identified himself. The only academy at that time under the charge of the New England Conference, was one at Newmarket, New Hampshire, which had been founded some years previous, and had been dragging along a feeble and sickly existence since that time. Mr. Fisk, whose health did not yet admit of his taking a charge, was returned superannuated, and directed to do what he could toward raising funds for this Newmarket academy. This, however, he did not attempt; but finding himself, after some months, able to preach, supplied the place of a minister who was ill. On the 9th of June, 1823, he was married to Miss R. Peck, of Providence, Rhode Island, whose acquaintance he had formed while in college. At the next meeting of the New England Conference, the subject of the agency for the Newmarket academy was called up, and the inquiry made, why the agent has not raised funds? "Because," was his reply, "my conscience would not let me." Inquiry having been made into the cause of these conscientious scruples, and a change being suggested in the location of the academy, a committee, consisting of Mr. (afterward Bishop,) Hedding, Mr. Lindsey, and Mr. Fisk, were appointed, with authority to investigate the subject, and to adopt such measures as might be deemed expedient or necessary. The result of the action of this committee was an entirely new organization of the school, and its removal to Wilbraham, Mass.

For two years ensuing, Mr. Fisk acted as presiding elder over the Vermont district, a very laborious and, usually, a thankless post, since the necessary supervision over the ministers of the district, and the official report relative to the assignment of charges, very often gave real or fancied cause of offense; but the winning manners, the ready tact, and the evident interest in the welfare of each minister, which Mr. Fisk manifested, caused him to become very popular in this trying position.

The removal of the Newmarket academy to Wilbraham, Massachusetts, had been effected mainly through Mr. Fisk's influence. The people of North Wilbraham had offered to erect suitable buildings there, and to use their influence to promote the prosperity of the school, if located among them. An act of incorporation was obtained

from the legislature, in 1825, and the buildings commenced the same year. Amos Binney, Esq., of Boston, pledged $10,000 toward the enterprise, and Rev. John Lindsey was appointed agent to secure the remainder by subscription. In November, 1825, Mr. Fisk was elected principal of the academy by the trustees, having a short time previously delivered the address at the opening. During the winter, as he was still presiding elder of the Vermont district, he did not remove to Wilbraham, but left the academy under the charge of the assistant, Mr. N. Dunn, spending, however, such time there as he could spare from his other engagements. In the spring of 1826, the Conference recognized Mr. Fisk as principal of the academy, and, in May, he removed to Wilbraham with his family. Here he found ample employment for every moment. "The school," says Prof. Holdich, "was new, most of the persons concerned were inexperienced in their business, and the plan of the institution novel; facts which excluded, in no small degree, the advantages of a division of labor. Mr. Fisk was chief director every where. All looked up to him for counsel,—steward, teachers, and pupils. In addition, he had frequent calls abroad to preach, deliver addresses, and the like, besides conducting a very extended correspondence."

During the earlier part of Mr. Fisk's term of service at Wilbraham, the institution labored under serious pecuniary embarrassment. At one time the indebtedness was so heavy and so pressing, that some of the trustees feared that they should be imprisoned for the debts of the seminary. From this incumbrance it was relieved by the determined and persevering efforts of Mr. Fisk and Mr. Lindsey. Yet, during the five years in which he was at the head of the institution, his salary, owing to its limited income, was barely sufficient to defray his expenses, even with the most rigid economy. Yet, small as this pittance was, it did not prevent his laboring with all his powers for the promotion of the interests of the seminary. He organized and taught a theological class in addition to his other duties, and for two years supplied the Methodist church in the village, that the trustees might have funds enough for the salaries of the other teachers. Meanwhile, his reputation was constantly increasing. Humble and laborious as were his duties, his mode of performing them was so attractive, and his talents so evidently superior to the position he occupied, that numerous efforts were made to induce him to accept a higher post. In 1826, he was appointed to preach the election sermon to the legislature of his native state, and, immediately after its delivery, was chosen chaplain to the legislature. In 1829, he received the appointment of preacher of the election sermon to the

Massachusetts legislature. During his residence at Wilbraham, he was offered the presidency of Vermont University, and of La Grange College; was elected a professor in the University of Alabama, with a large salary and a prospect of the presidency of the university; and was also chosen bishop of the Methodist church in Canada. Of minor appointments, some of them with liberal salaries, there were not a few; but none of them could draw him from his favorite work as a teacher. The appointment of bishop, in Canada, the most laborious and least lucrative of the whole, was the only one he seriously considered, and this he finally declined, though regretfully, from a conviction that the interests of the academy would be periled by his leaving it. In 1829, Mr. Fisk received the degree of D. D., from Augusta College, Kentucky, and in 1835, it was also conferred by his alma mater, Brown University.

In addition to his other duties, Dr. Fisk, while at the head of the seminary at Wilbraham, was twice elected to the General Conference, the highest court of the Methodist church, and was a leading member of its most important committees, and an active debater and counselor in its discussions. As a member of the committee on education, he rendered great service in urging the necessity and importance of the establishment of schools of high grade throughout the connection, and the organization of colleges where they could be sustained.

Theological and reformatory controversies also occupied a considerable share of the age. The temperance movement was then commencing, and he entered into it with all the ardor of his nature; and some of his sermons and addresses on this subject are, to this day, among the most effective temperance documents in circulation.

Yet, amid these multifarious labors, he found time, or, rather, by his perfect system and order, he made time, to become one of the most accomplished teachers of his time. The seminary had opened with but seven scholars; during the first term the number rose to thirty, and the next year to seventy-five. At the end of three years the number in attendance was between two and three hundred. To all these he was a friend in whom they could confide; a parent on whose love and tenderness they could rely. He seldom used the rod, and the winning and affectionate manner he always manifested toward his pupils rendered its use almost unnecessary. Yet he never failed to maintain order and obedience in the schools. Like Dr. Arnold, he sought to inculcate a high standard of honor in his scholars, and few teachers have been able to rely with more certainty on the influence of moral principle in restraining and controlling their pupils. A lady,

who was associated with him as a teacher at Wilbraham, writing to his widow after his decease says: "He bore all our burdens, and was consulted on every occasion. All matters were referred to him, moral, intellectual, or physical. No circumstance, however trifling it might appear, if connected with the interests of the institution, was beneath his notice."

But the way was preparing for his entrance upon a higher and more extensive field of usefulness. He had toiled faithfully in his humble sphere, and now his opportunities for molding and influencing the moral character of the youth of the country were to be enlarged. We have already seen that, in his report as chairman of the committee on education at the General Conference, he had urged the establishment of two other colleges, to be under the patronage of the denomination. At that time (1828,) there were under the patronage of the Methodist church in the United States, seven schools in successful operation, and three more in an incipient condition; and there were also two colleges, viz., Augusta College, Kentucky, chartered in 1822, and Madison College, at Uniontown, Pennsylvania, chartered in 1827. Two others had been attempted, and failed.

As yet, however, the New York and New England Conferences had no institution of learning within their bounds, and as their membership was rapidly increasing, both in numbers and intelligence, the necessity of a college for the education of their children, and especially for the training of those who contemplated entering the ministry, was beginning to be evident.

In 1829, the buildings erected for the literary, scientific, and military academy, under Captain Partridge, at Middletown, Connecticut, became vacant. Overtures, at first made in jest, by the trustees, to some leading members of the Methodist church in Middletown, finally led to correspondence, to action on the part of the New York and New England Conferences, to overtures from other cities, and finally to the offering, on the part of the trustees and stockholders of the military academy, of the entire property, valued at about $30,000, and to an additional subscription of $18,000, on the part of the citizens of Middletown. This liberal offer was accepted, the organization effected, and the name of The Wesleyan University agreed upon. A charter was granted by the legislature of Connecticut, in 1831, granting university privileges and immunities, and making provision for placing the institution, should it become desirable, under the direction of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church.

In all these measures Dr. Fisk had taken an active part, incited not less by his zeal for the promotion of education generally, than by

the desire to provide the means of such education for the sons of the Methodist clergy, very few of whom could now obtain it, on account of the expense. Another object on which his heart was set, was to initiate efficient measures for the thorough training of young men who might engage in the work of foreign missions, which were now beginning to occupy a large place in the hearts of the members of the Methodist church.

At the first meeting of the Joint Board of Trustees and Visitors, August 24th, 1830, Dr. Fisk was elected president of the Wesleyan University. The appointment was not at all of his seeking; he hesitated for some time about accepting it, and was, indeed, on the point of declining; but, at last, convinced that it was a post of usefulness which he was called to occupy, he addressed the following letter to the Board, announcing his acceptance.

To the Joint Board of Trustees and Visitors of the Wesleyan University, now in Session in Middletown, Connecticut.

GENTLEMEN:—With a high sense of the confidence reposed in me by a majority of your Board, in electing me president of your proposed university, I tender you my sincere and grateful acknowledgments. I have a deep conviction of my own inability to perform the important and responsible duties connected with this appointment. In accordance, however, with the judgment of my friends, and in reliance upon the cordial and united aid of the Board, and of the colleagues which have been or may be appointed, and especially in an humble reliance upon Almighty God, without whose assistance the most gifted labor in vain, I will engage to the extent of my ability in the service of the Board, in the discharge of the duties assigned me, so soon as I can, in honor and justice, disengage myself from my present relation to another institution. W. FISK.

Dr. Fisk remained at Wilbraham till December, 1830. At the close of the autumn term, he delivered a farewell address, in which he reviewed the five years of his connection with the school. We subjoin a few paragraphs from this address, as exhibiting the spirit of the man and the progress of the institution.

Five years of labor and anxiety have deeply enlisted and closely connected every feeling of my heart in its (the institution's,) behalf. Such have been the variety and extent of my labors, that, contrary to general experience with respect to past time, the period seems, upon the review, like half an age, instead of *five years*. But in this retrospect I have nothing to regret, with respect to my connection with the school, but my own imperfections and mistakes; of these I have had an abundant share, and have needed the forbearance of the trustees and the charity of the public; aside from these, the review is, on the whole, pleasant.

My experience has been profitable. I have had an opportunity of taking many interesting lessons in studying the unsophisticated character of childhood and youth; I have become more interested in the improvement of the rising generation, and have gained a fixed purpose of devoting to this work, in connection with my ministerial duties, the little I have of talent or influence, and the remainder of a feeble constitution and short life.

I had rather have my name embalmed in the memory and affections of the rising generation, than to gather military honors in the field of battle, or civic wreaths in the senate house, or to have it emblazoned on the proudest escutcheons of this world's glory.

At the opening of this school we had seven scholars, since which time we have entered upon our books one thousand one hundred and fifty different scholars.

Of these, about thirty have entered the sacred ministry, a number are pursuing the study of law or physic, from twenty to thirty are now pursuing a college course, and from a hundred and thirty to a hundred and fifty have gone out of our seminary at different times as teachers.

Dr. Fisk came to Middletown himself in December, 1830, but did not remove his family there till the ensuing spring. For several months he was engaged in efforts to raise funds for the endowment of the university.

On the 21st September, 1831, the college was formally opened by public exercises. On this occasion Dr. Fisk delivered his inaugural address, in which he developed his views in regard to collegiate education. This address was published and widely circulated, and attracted much attention, from the vigor and originality of its positions. He proposed a different classification of students from that usually adopted; dividing them, not into classes according to the length of standing, but into sections according to their advancement. The diploma was to be received whenever the candidate was prepared for it, without reference to the time spent in college. Students who had passed that period of life when the ancient languages could be pursued to the greatest advantage were allowed to take a special or partial course in science and English literature, and to receive a certificate, or modified diploma, testifying their attainments in the branches they had studied. The study of ancient languages did not receive as high a comparative rank as in some colleges.

Here, as in Wilbraham, he found ample employment for every moment. "All called upon him for advice or other aid," says Professor Holdich, "and his supervision extended every where. He draughted rules for the university, and framed the regulations of the boarding department; he superintended the studies in the college, and the pecuniary arrangements of the prudential committee; he heard classes recite in Greek, Latin, and metaphysics, and listened to the petty details of the students' personal concerns; and while he aided the professors in the higher regions of mind, he often came down to the examination of the accounts of the institution in dollars and cents. He was remarkably fitted for this multiplicity of business, by his peculiar tact in management, his readiness and flexibility of mind, his knowledge of men, habits of order, and facility in executing his plans. He was never embarrassed, never out of temper. Skill in securing co-operation in his plans was one of his peculiar qualifications. All had confidence in his judgment, and, in most things, readily yielded to his views. His own mind seemed the center of light and influence, and its radiations illumined all who were about him."

In 1831, in connection with Rev. W. C. Woodbridge, Rev. E. Rob-

inson, and Rev. Dr. Gallaudet, Prof. Woolsey, and Drs. Milner and Maclay, he was engaged in a correspondence with distinguished friends of education in England and this country, on the use of the Bible, both in the original and in its English version, as a classical text-book.

The invitations to more lucrative fields of labor, which had been so frequent during his residence at Wilbraham, were still more numerous in his new position. Unsought by him, often regarded, indeed, in his humble estimate of his own powers, as far above his abilities, few men have had occasion to decline so many stations of honor and usefulness. But, waiving all other considerations, his convictions of his duty to the Wesleyan University forbade his leaving that post for any other, whatever might be its superiority in honor or emolument. Once and once only did he propose to resign the presidency of the university; but it was to go on a mission to Liberia; and so urgent were the friends of the college that he should not leave it, that he yielded to their wishes.

The college meanwhile was making good and satisfactory progress under his care. The number of students had increased to a hundred; and the standard of scholarship was equal to that of the other colleges of the northern states. In the government of the students, Dr. Fisk was remarkably successful. We often read, in catalogues or announcements of colleges and literary institutions of a high rank, that the government is strictly paternal. Yet, what judicious parent would institute, in his own family, the regulations and the strict surveillance which marks the government of many colleges? It can be said to the honor of Dr. Fisk that he *made* his government strictly paternal. The young men looked up to him with the affection and confidence of children to a parent. He took an interest in their concerns; if they erred he reproved them, but in a manner so tender and affectionate as to win them to penitence, not to harden them in crime. The number dismissed was remarkably small. The self-respect of the students was not wounded, and in time of trouble, sickness, or sorrow, they always found in him a warm and sympathizing friend.

It was a favorite idea with Dr. Fisk to connect theological with collegiate education in the case of those designing to enter upon ministerial or missionary labor, and he was opposed to the organization of separate theological institutions, as contrary to the Methodist policy.

Dr. Fisk's position and talents, not less than the earnestness and deep convictions of truth and duty which always actuated him, plunged him often into controversies, foreign to his genial nature, yet forced upon him by the circumstances in which he was placed.

These, in connection with his official duties, and his almost constant labor as a preacher, impaired his health, and compelled him, in the autumn of 1835, to seek for rest and relaxation in a voyage to Europe. He spent some fourteen months abroad; and, though suffering a part of the time from severe illness, he visited most of the prominent educational institutions of England and the continent, and, ever mindful of the prosperity of his beloved university, collected large additions to its library, cabinet, and apparatus, and noted whatever he thought might improve his own instructions, or add to the efficiency of the college.

During his absence in Europe, he was elected, by the General Conference, one of the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal church. This office he declined, in a letter so characteristic of the man in its modesty and self-sacrificing spirit, that we regret that our necessary restriction of this sketch to his educational career compels us to omit it.

Refreshed and invigorated by the season of rest and relaxation he had enjoyed, Dr. Fisk returned to his labors with renewed zeal and energy. He published one or two articles on the relations of the conference seminaries and academies to the colleges, urging the necessity of sending those students who were fitted for college to college, instead of retaining them in the academies, with a view to their entering some of the higher classes, and thus often preventing their taking a college course at all, or, at least, their deriving full benefit from it. This led to considerable correspondence with the principals of these academies. On the question of distinct theological schools, too, his opinion was again solicited, and given. The writing out a narrative of his travels, and one or two controversies, engaged all his leisure from his professional duties. His attendance upon the general and local conferences, was a heavy addition to the labors of a life already too busy. The strength temporarily restored by his European tour, began to give signs of yielding again, amid the pressure of duties so onerous. He returned from the New England Conference, at Boston, in the summer of 1838, sorely jaded in body and spirit, but after a few days rest he was again at work as diligently as ever. An extract from a letter, written about this time to a graduate of the university, who had been elected to the presidency of a southern college, will explain, in some degree, the secret of his success in the management of literary institutions.

I have another thought to suggest. You are aware, I presume, that southern colleges have suffered more from the officious interference of the trustees than from any other source. This is espeically true of the state institutions. When Mr. F. first wrote to me on the subject, I informed him I thought a man might be obtained who would suit them, provided they would permit him to have a controlling voice in the organization of the faculty and in the internal arrangement of the school. The reply was, that they should certainly be willing to do that, pro-

vided they had a man in whom they found they could confide. This is all we could expect.

Now the perfection of management in a principal or president, is to manage with such prudence and judgment as to be able to secure the co-operation of the Board in carrying out *his* plans. The truth is, a public institution will never flourish when the president is merely the instrument to carry out the details of the Board. The Board must be his instrument in carrying out *his* plans. I speak, of course, with respect to the government, the course of study, the organization of the faculty, &c. In money matters, of course, they are the legal organ. But even here the president must keep a good look-out, and assist in all matters of economy and finance, as far as he can. In short, the president must be the *head and soul*. A man that can not govern the faculty, the trustees, and the students, and all without seeming to *aspire to rule*, is hardly qualified for the place. This he will always be able to do, if his plans are wise, and are executed with prudence and moderation. And although your youth, and your northern birth and education, may prevent you from speaking and acting with so great freedom at first, yet you will have a countervailing advantage in the fact of its being a new institution, and of its coming into existence under your care. I would advise, then, that you get young men for your colleagues, so that you may mold them to your will; that you have few regulations in the form of trustee statutes. Require them, if they are inclined to make laws (except what relates to terms, &c.,) to let you experiment a little at first, and find out what you need; and, when you think you have gained their confidence, always evade, in the least offensive way possible, any interference of the Board in the government.

The commencement of the first of August, 1838, was the last which Dr. Fisk ever attended. To perform its duties, taxed sadly his waning strength, and roused the fear in the hearts of many, a fear which events justified, that he would not be able to participate in another. From a letter, addressed by him to Zion's Herald soon after, we learn that the whole number of students was one hundred and fifty-two, and that sixty entered the new class.

Still intent upon occupying his time, though very feeble, he addressed an appeal to the citizens of Connecticut in behalf of the university, which aided materially in procuring for it, at the next session of the legislature, a grant of $10,000. He also commenced two works, one on Mental and Moral Philosophy, and another on the Philosophy of Theology. Though unable to stand more than a few minutes, from weakness of his limbs, he preached three or four times, sitting in his chair, the last time being on the night of the new year. He also visited New York, on business relative to the Oregon and Liberia missions, and, though extremely feeble, delivered an eloquent and thrilling address in behalf of the latter. In January he wrote a series of letters for the press, on Protestant missions in France, and commenced a review, which he was unable to finish, of Dr. Bangs' "*History of the Methodist Church;*" and, with all his old ardor, entered into the plans for the celebration of the centenary of Wesleyan Methodism. But, with all the other objects which called for his attention, feeble as his health was, he did not forget or neglect the interests of the university. On the 14th of January, he was engaged nearly all day in sketching a plan for the new boarding hall; and, though suffering almost constantly from obstructed respiration, he visited, so late

as the 30th of January, a graduate, who was lying ill two or three miles distant. On the 5th of February, he dispatched thirty letters, all relating to the affairs of the college. This was his last labor. He was evidently sinking rapidly, and a consultation of physicians, held on the 8th of that month, gave a decision unfavorable to his recovery, or his long continuance in life. From this time, and, indeed, for some weeks previous, he was a great sufferer. Owing to his difficulty of breathing, he was obliged to remain in a sitting or standing posture nearly the whole time; and thus he became greatly wearied, while the paroxysms of difficult respiration would often involve the most intense suffering; yet amid it all he was ever patient, considerate of others, kind, and calm. For more than two weeks the spirit of the good man seemed pluming its wings for its departure, but the summons was delayed; and, though able to speak but slowly, and with great pain and difficulty, he summoned to his dying chamber, in turn, the friends of the university, its faculty, and the students, and expressed his views and wishes, and, in the tenderest manner, bade each adieu. To the New York Conference he sent, by his friend, Dr. Bangs, the message: "I give it as my dying request, that they nurse the Wesleyan University, that they must exert themselves to sustain and carry it forward." When the wandering of that noble intellect but too surely betokened that the final hour was approaching, his incoherent expressions indicated that it was still the college which was the subject of his thoughts; at one time he seemed to imagine himself arranging a class; at another, discussing some metaphysical point with his class. Thus was "the ruling passion strong in death." On the morning of the 22d of February, his spirit was at last released from the suffering and shattered body it had inhabited.

His funeral was attended by a vast concourse, and his virtues and abilities eloquently portrayed by Rev. Dr. Means, of Emory College, Georgia, who delivered the funeral address. He was buried in the college cemetery, where one of his fellow professors had preceded him. His age was forty-seven years and a half. A plain monumental shaft marks the place of his repose, bearing on one side the simple inscription

WILBUR FISK, S. T. D.,
FIRST PRESIDENT OF WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,

and on the reverse the dates of his birth and death.

Besides his travels, an octavo volume of seven hundred pages, Dr. Fisk published a very large number of essays, reviews, controversial pamphlets, sermons, and addresses; some of which have been preserved in more permanent form by the Methodist Book Concern. His educational publications are all, however, it is believed, out of print.

EXTRACT from a letter, by Rev. Dr. Cooke, president of Lawrence University, at Appleton, Wisconsin, October, 1858.

"To say that Dr. Fisk was a leading spirit in directing the educational efforts of his own denomination, or to say that he was an excellent president of a college, is not to present him as an inventor or originator of any thing useful. He should stand before the world, as the originator and father of a distinct class of literary institutions, now so very useful and widely extended throughout the Eastern, Middle, and Western States; I mean that grade of mixed schools, for the education of both sexes, generally known among the Methodists as "Seminaries"—and which might with propriety be called, *The People's Colleges.*

Prior to his time, there had existed two, and but two, classes of institutions of learning above the common school—the college and the old fashioned New England academy. The former, without exception, excluded females from the advantages they afforded, and besides they were not sufficiently democratic to reach very effectually the masses of the people. Higher education was confined almost exclusively to the learned professions. The other class, with but few exceptions, had sunk into a remarkable degree of inefficiency, and accomplished little more than to prepare a few boys for college.

Discovering at once the wants, not only of its Methodist public, but of the people generally, early in his ministry, he commenced the work of establishing an institution that should be better adapted to the masses, and be open to both sexes. His first efforts in that direction were, I think, put forth at New Market, N. H., but other portions of New England Methodists soon waking up to the importance of having literary institutions under the denominational control, Wilbraham, by a sort of compromise, was finally agreed upon as the more central location; thus arose the first institution of its grade, with Dr. Fisk as its head.

Under his skillful management, its experience proved sucessful beyond the expectations of friends; and a few years only sufficed to renew the experience at Readfield, Maine, and at Cazenovia and Lima, in the State of New York.

Up to this period, the new movements to cheapen and popularize higher education to the masses, have been almost exclusively confined to, and directed by, the rising zeal of the Methodists; but other denominations soon saw the success attending these mixed higher seminaries, and were not slow to imitate, in this particular, the original leaders of this new enterprise. And now, under the various denominations, and bearing the public sanctions won by the marked success that has attended them, these institutions are scattered through not New England alone, but also the Middle, Western, and North-Western States. They are every where cheapening education, stirring up the people to its importance, and reaching the masses, who would otherwise have been entirely overlooked.

Some of these institutions have an average attendance of five or six hundred pupils, have endowments and other facilities for imparting instruction scarcely inferior to many of our old and respectable colleges.

We by no means claim for these institutions, that they have been the best for all purposes, or that they have in all cases, like Old Phillips' Academy and others that might be named—*par nobile fratrum*—imparted the most thorough classical training to their pupils; but we do claim that they have specifically met the wants of the people as no others have, and that they are now accomplishing the greatest good for the greatest number.

For whatever of value this class of institutions has been, or shall be, to the cause of cheap and popular education, the world is indebted to the Methodists, who preceded other denominations by several years in their successful management. To the lamented Dr. Fisk, especially, does the world owe a debt of gratitude, not only as the founder of two of the most useful institutions of New England, but also as the originator of that class of seminaries, so deservedly popular, for the co-education of the sexes."