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A MEMORIAL ADDRESS

BY

PROF. WM. M. THORNTON,

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

(H. S. C., A. B. 1868, LL. D. 1890.)

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[NOTE.—On February 22nd, 1900, a portrait of Rev. J. M. P. ATKINSON, D. D., President, (1857-1883), was presented to Hampden-Sidney College by some of his old students and unveiled before a large and sympathetic audience with appropriate exercises. The address of Professor W. M. Thornton was listened to with rapt attention, and is published as an expression of warm regard for the noble man, whose character and work are so admirably portrayed and to meet the wishes not only of those who heard it but of a large circle of friends at a distance who were unable to be present.

HAMPDEN-SIDNEY, VIRGINIA.

R. M.]

March 2, 1900.

John Mayo Pleasants Atkinson.

“Ars utinam mores animumque effingere posset ;
Pulchrior in terris nulla tabella foret.”

—*Martial X, 32.*

Our lives are fragments of a whole. Born into a world of restless striving and unceasing change, ourselves the product of vital energies which drew inspiration from a still remoter past, we work upon a medium wherein pulse the thought and feeling of earlier generations, give to it the vital energies of our own natures, and then pass on to newer and younger hands the endless task of living.

“No man liveth unto himself,” wrote the sacred penman, “and no man dieth unto himself.” In a different sense and one not less true we may repeat the sententious phrase, as we see how mortal lives are builded into institutions, which live on to bless or to ban with an immortality of influence and of power.

I sat and let memory repaint on the spectral curtain of the past the form and figure of him, whom we meet this day to honor. From the unwritten annals of those distant college days it brought back one trait and then another—the manly stature, the tones, the gestures, the honest truthfulness of nature, the modest courage, the simple faith, the robust gentlemanhood, the unswerving rectitude, the undoubting conviction of the man. And as I gazed upon the portrait, it seemed to me that it were not to deal truly with history to tear this life from its setting—to picture it save in the light of that atmosphere wherein he breathed, in the colors of those skies beneath which he lived and worked.

President Atkinson came to the service of our Alma Mater not a mercenary soldier of fortune, but a loving and loyal son. The blood in his veins, the teaching of his youth, the labors of his early life united to fit him for his task. By right of heredity he was gentleman, scholar, patriot, churchman. On both sides he traced his descent from clergymen of the English church. His grand-father, Roger Atkinson, was a member of the first revolutionary convention held in May, 1769, at the house of Anthony

Hay, in Williamsburg, Virginia, and a year later had been one of the eighty-eight gentlemen and patriots who signed the non-impotation agreement at the Raleigh tavern. In his mother's veins was the blood of Peter Poytress of the convention of 1775-6, and of the cultured antiquary, Robert Bland, member of the Committee of Correspondence and Delegate from Virginia to the Provincial Congress. His home at Mansefield in Dinwiddie County, Virginia, where he was born January 10th, 1817, gave him social contact with what was best and gentlest in the Virginian life. Hampden Sidney had been his college, and he had been graduated from it in June, 1835. The church was his chosen vocation, and for its labors and duties he trained himself by three years at the Union Seminary, followed by two more of graduate study at Princeton. In May, 1841, after a preparation ample enough to satisfy the exactions of our own insistent age, he was ordained into his life's work. Sixteen years followed, spent in active ministerial duty—two in Texas, seven in Warrenton, Va., seven in Georgetown, D. C.,—when he passed in July, 1857, to the service of the college which was to engage all the remaining energies of his life. It was in this service that his nature found most congenial duty and amplest scope.

What was the origin, what the intrinsic spirit of the school, for which this life was henceforward to be spent? Here I think fidelity to the truth of history demands that we reverse the natural order of impulses and place first the churchly motive. It would be too long a digression for this occasion, if I should even briefly sketch the causes, which had alienated the heart of the Virginians from that historic church in which so many of them had been born, into which so many more might with graciousness and fidelity have been gathered. Enough to say that the alienation existed, that the intolerance which produced it had brought forth a resolute purpose to establish Presbyterianism forever in its Virginian home, and that an essential measure in that establishment was soon discerned to be the creation of colleges and schools. The labors of men like William Robinson and Samuel Davies and James Waddell had shown that a living, growing church means a learned, vital clergy, and a people fitted by training and taste to follow and sustain them. Such a clergy, such a people could be

secured in that slow-forming time only by fostering the church schools. Under this fostering colleges like Hampden-Sidney and Washington and Lee were born and nurtured into sturdy and enduring life. So it was that the Presbytery of Hanover on the fourteenth of October, 1774, resolves "to establish and patronize a publick seminary in Prince Edward or in the upper end of Cumberland;" and again, on the first of February, 1775, after above thirteen hundred pounds have been subscribed for the new school, order "that four hundred pounds (equivalent to \$4,000 at present prices) be applied to purchase such books and mathematical apparatus as are most immediately necessary," and on the next day "after viewing several places shown them by the gentlemen of the part, agree to build an academy house and a dwelling house for the superintendent, and other necessary houses, as far as the subscriptions will admit, at the head of Hudson's branch in Prince Edward County, on an hundred acres of land, given for their use by Mr. Peter Johnson." Direct and resolute men were our fathers, giving their scant funds so generously and building for future ages, even when the war clouds were thick about them and the lightning flashes of the regal fury were lurid in the eastern sky. They knew what they wanted and went straight to the task of securing it by the shortest way they could see.

But if the churchly motive were the central and main one, the patriotic purpose was an ardent and active sister. These men loved liberty more than life. They were of the stuff which Alcæus in the grand harmony of his heroic verse immortalized as the true constituents of the State,—

"Men, high minded men—men who their duties know,
But know their rights, and knowing dare maintain."

When we hear the names of Hampden and of Sidney, with which they baptized this infant nursery of learning in the Virginian wilds, when we read upon the roll of the first Board of Trustees such names as Patrick Henry and James Madison, not to speak of Morton and of Venable, of Carrington and of Read, of Watkins and of Cabell—names consecrated by sacrifice and suffering in the cause of Freedom—we can but know that the college over whose destiny these men presided would dedicate an altar to liberty, even while it built the shrine of a sound learning and a genuine

piety. We hear as no strange thing that after the academy was opened in January, 1776, the stir of the time penetrated even that sequestered grove at the head of Hudson's branch, and the youthful brother of the president "John Blair Smith was chosen captain of a company of students, about sixty-five in number, over sixteen years of age—Mr. David Witherspoon lieutenant, and Mr. Samuel Venable, son of Nathaniel, was chosen ensign; the students wearing uniform, viz: a hunting shirt dyed purple; and every student, although under sixteen years of age, was mustered every month." It seems a natural and simple thing that when a requisition for a company of militia from Prince Edward was sent out by Patrick Henry, Governor as well as Trustee, to march to Williamsburg in September, 1777, and oppose an expected invasion of the British, these manly lads marched away in their purple hunting shirts, and so many of them into Washington's devoted army, and down into the dim future, until lost to our ken forever. Yet, again, in 1781, when after the great day of Cowpens, the victorious patriots were retiring before overwhelming force and Cornwallis pressed hot-foot behind them, we meet John Blair Smith, now President of the College, hastening to join Capt. William Morton's company of friends and neighbors from Charlotte County, as they marched off to re-inforce the army of Greene upon the Dan. And to snatch one more picture from that heroic panorama, there rises before us the camp of Eggleston's Dragoons, part of Light Horse Harry's matchless legion—the company in which giant Peter Francisco was a private, when at Guilford they charged upon the Queen's Guard and great Peter's sabre gave account of three of his foes in that one charge and of eight more before the fight was done—and as we gaze there comes riding up little Peter Johnson, student, son of the donor of the college lands, and bare sixteen years old, and offers himself to be dragoon, too. And then being rejected as under age and under size, rides off again in search of Lee, and "was with some hesitation received." Valiant soldiers did both big Peter and little Peter make, as all men know, and know as well from whose veins flowed the blood that gave our own Joe Johnston his martial genius and dauntless valor. But we may not dwell too long on these gallant visions. Suffice it to say that all connected with the little

college were patriots—trustees and president and tutors and students—and if they labored for the church of their affections, they fought as well for the country that they loved. Some one has not inaptly characterized the Virginian cavaliers as “not godly but manly.” Doubtless there were some among the Virginians of that day who were godly and manly, too.

And then, to make up another current in the four-fold stream of influence which has flowed from the head of Hudson’s branch, comes the love of learning, passing from the ardent and saintly Samuel Stanhope Smith, first President of the college, into tutors and students, and as vivid, I doubt not, to-day as in those beginning years. The school was opened in January, 1776, and soon there was no room to hold the boys. Venable and Carrington got permission from the Trustees to build cabins for their sons. “In May” we are told “the walls of the academy were about three feet high, and on account of the scarcity of room for the students to study in, they obtained leave from Mr. Coleman, the undertaker, to erect little huts with the shingles that were intended to cover the academy. They were packed like a sugar loaf, with a plank for three or four boys to sit upon and in the night a candle being placed in each hut, it showed how intent the inhabitants were in studying till nine or ten o’clock at night. That year the students devoted their time to study. Very little was spent in recreation or amusement.” Even had we no such testimony from a sharer in those early labors, the uniform tradition of cultured zeal which clings to the memories of the men who made the college what it is would certify to us the soundness and vitality of their teaching. Samuel Stanhope Smith, the first President, was recalled to his own Alma Mater within three years as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Princeton. John Blair Smith, his brother, succeeded him and threw into his labors such fervor of piety and love of learning, that the infant school lived through the troubled years of the Revolution and after the close of hostilities, grew in fame and numbers until “the rooms in the college were as full as they could well contain;” in the words of Hoge, a later President, “he was, indeed, a burning and a shining light.” Archibald Alexander, who followed Smith in this illustrious succession, became beyond question or cavil the most learned divine

and the most profound theologian in America. And not to lengthen the catalogue tediously, I add but the one familiar reference to the successor of Alexander, the eloquent Moses Hoge, of whom John Randolph of Roanoke said he was "the one man in Virginia who ought to be allowed to preach." The genius, the memory, the spirit of such men made the College what it was and what it is. In our modern days of unbounded wealth, of exacting comfort, of lavish luxury, we are prone to forget what really makes a great and vital school. We look for stately architecture, for vast appliances, for princely endowments, for colossal numbers. And we fail to see that these very things may quench and deaden the true life of the spirit. Let us not forget the old log colleges of pre-revolutionary times, nor those shingle huts sheltered by the oaks that still look down upon us, nor the slender tapers burning late into the Southern night. It is not bricks and mortar nor sculptured marbles, nor doctor's hood and sweeping robes and cap and gown that make the school—not these but men; men filled with the spirit of learning and of culture, of love for their pupils and of "ghostly strength."

And last we come to that fourth current which made into our little stream. In this movement for education, as in all the great Virginian movements of that time, the gentlemen led the way. It had not then been discovered that education and culture make men visionary or pedantic, nor had the trained men of the country learned that politics must needs be a debasing and defiling conflict. In that earlier and simpler age whether it was a church to be built, or a school to be established, a convention to be assembled or an armed foe to be repelled, the gentry came to the front and their neighbors loyally and manfully sustained them. So the founders and trustees of our college were gentlemen, and the president and the tutors were cultured gentlemen, and I fancy that the lads crowded into those little shingle huts were largely sons of gentlemen, with that never counterfeited seal upon their foreheads, which comes from gentle birth and gentle nurture and from that alone. Surely it is not without warrant that we discern in the social traditions and social usages of the college the lasting grace of a genial spirit, which smiled upon its cradle, and shed benediction upon its youth. I have seen somewhat of the

social life of this old Commonwealth of ours, something of the social conditions in the broader life of our vast Republic. Nowhere have I found a finer courtesy, a more genuine refinement, a more gracious hospitality. That noble simplicity of living, that austere sweetness of manners, that stately deference of demeanor, familiar to me from my boyhood, seem to me better than all the artifices of fashion and truer than all the fastidiousness of social exclusion. They are of the things that wealth cannot purchase and tutors cannot teach, in which learning may be naked and piety may be poor—hereditary graces beyond the reach of rules and the scope of art. For a boy to breathe such an atmosphere is in itself a liberal education.

Into this life—a life whose ideals were piety and learning, whose models were the patriot and the gentleman—came the man to whose honored memory this day is dedicated. His immediate predecessor in the presidency had been endowed with rare gifts of government and administration and had been blessed with extraordinary success. President Green had come to a broken down college, with finances disorganized, income evanescent, twenty-seven rebellious students, and a factious faculty. By his personal charm, his intuitive knowledge of human nature, and the contagious sweetness of his temper he brought peace and order into the troubled academy. His business sagacity was quick to recognize the value of Professor Charles Martin's scholarship plan for the emergent needs of the college, and their united exertions saved the school from bankruptcy and added prosperity to peace. When his administration of eight years closed in 1856, the permanent endowment had been augmented by \$80,000, the number of students had risen to 150, and the tone of the entire college had gained in dignity, enthusiasm and manliness. It is a decided and emphatic testimony to the new president's academic wisdom and executive skill that in the years from 1857 to 1861 none of this momentum was lost. The college sailed on with the new helmsman as smoothly and as swiftly as ever.

But troubled waters were ahead. The storm of 1861 burst upon the South, and with it came the temporary wreck of every college for young men in Virginia. For these youths felt in their

bones the throbbing ardor inherited from revolutionary grand-sires, and sprang with one mind and one heart to the defence of their State. Atkinson himself organized his students into a company and marched away with them to the front. Their martial career was brief, though beautiful. A few weeks later, on 11th of July, 1861, they were captured at Rich Mountain by McClellan, who sent them all home again under parole with their brave old professor, admonishing him to take better care of the "seed corn."

The honorable history of this little company has, I believe, never been published. Surely it should be somewhere written down, that men may know in future ages of what stock our boys had come. I would commend to the students of this day the interesting and patriotic task. Such a memorial of that stirring epoch in the history of Hampden-Sidney would give permanent value to a number of your college magazine. Not to anticipate the results of such a study, I will simply assure you that you will find Capt. Atkinson's conduct full of soldierly virtue and hardihood. It lifts us even now to noble thoughts, just as it inspired his brave followers to deeds of fortitude and courage. Whether it were in the fatigues of the drill ground at Camp Lee, in the arduous march of one hundred and twenty-five miles through the Alleghanies, climbing mountains and fording rivers in the way, in the final conflict against overwhelming numbers or in the camp of the enemy as a prisoner, his conduct was marked by manliness and courage, by modesty and kindness. As we look back on the events we can see in abundant detail that the story is honorable alike to captain and to soldiers, to the conqueror and to the conquered. They were among the earliest captives, at a time when all minds were embittered and talk of treason and the death due to traitors was rife among the Federal troops. Yet they were treated by the victorious general with all the courtesies due to prisoners of war; the officers were permitted to retain their side-arms and to find quarters in the town of Beverly, near which the troops were camped; and the whole command was soon paroled and marched back by their own officers within the Confederate lines. Captain Atkinson was the Commandant of the prisoners, preached to them and to their cap-

tors on Sunday, prayed publicly for our generals and our armies and for "our enemies," was the spokesman of his men in all difficulties and so bore himself as to deserve and to win the respect of his foes as well as the affectionate confidence of his own boys.

Four years later peace returned, but to a devastated and impoverished land. The labor system of the South was irreparably shattered. The channels of business were choked with wrecks. Investments were either unproductive or absolute losses. The boys, who should have been in training for college discipline were either still untaught or were limping veterans, graduated from the school of battles. There was no money, no crop, no trade, no manufacturers—only grim courage and a great-hearted hope. Despite spirit-breaking drawbacks, the colleges all opened again, and with them Hampden-Sidney. The President and his faithful faculty were at their posts, and all who came—rich and poor alike—were welcomed, paying if they could, and when they could, and if never—then never. I have often wondered upon how little a college may be kept alive—in how many days the professor, left entirely without food, would starve. Hampden-Sidney must have been pretty close to the dead line in those rebuilding days.

It was shortly after this time that I knew the college, and no memories of my life are sweeter to me or more vivid than the memories of those days. The faces and the forms of my old professors come back to me, "in their habit as they walked." All are gone now from their accustomed seats. Save one, all have passed over to the great majority, which each of us must some day join. I see Holladay, always frank and kind, a lambent humor ever playing around his wise and simple talk, so abundant in knowledge, so ready to impart, so clear in exposition, so convincing in analysis; in our boyish judgment we put him first for alert, incisive intellect, and each student knew himself happy to be led into the halls of science by this gentle guide. I see Martin—him who saved the college from utter financial shipwreck by his wise schemes and canny labours—that genial professor of things in general, expounded through the medium of Attic Greek; who could have failed to love and indulge the warm hearted old man? Blair, too, I see,—him whom I then thought

and still think the most elegant Latinist in Virginia ; wondering the while whether this man had sinned, or his parents, that he was condemned to correct my Latin exercises. And Kemper, my Master in Geometry, half soldier and half professor, mixing anecdotes of Archimedes with stories from his own wars, then an interested and clear expounder of his science ; I rejoice to lay this tiny wreath in honor and loving memory upon his new made grave. And last, Atkinson, the President, with his manly bearing, his high-bred courtesy, his gentle stoicism—the man who claimed our united reverence and love and fear—who has ever stood to me as the incarnation of the genuine spirit of the college, as he was for so many years the exponent of her methods and the spokesman of her cause.

How shall I speak of him? As I stand before this audience, many of whom knew him longer and better than I, the thought comes to me that mine is a superfluous and perhaps an ungracious task. But I remind myself that I am speaking not to the present only, but to the future—to men who knew him not, and will value him at our estimate—and that it is my function to speak forth, as truly as I may, what I trust shall be our united thoughts. The brave, frank nature of the man about whom we speak calls for truth in all its whiteness. And if what I shall strive to utter with full fidelity falls short of unbounded and unmixed eulogy, let it be remembered that I would as soon speak evil of my own father's memory, as come short in loyal reverence for the teacher at whose feet I studied, for the noble gentleman whose bread I have eaten, whose cup I have shared, whose friendship I cherished as a proud and honorable possession.

As president of the college in a most trying epoch, Atkinson has always seemed to me a sagacious and conservative chief. "During his administration," writes President McIlwaine, "the funds of the college were increased from \$70,000 to \$115,000. A second professor in the department of ancient languages was added, instruction in German and French was introduced, the Bible course was established, and the professorship of English and History was created." Those who have endured the heart-sickening labors attendant upon expanding the field of collegiate

instruction to meet the demands of modern growth and doing it with inadequate means will best understand how much this concise catalogue means. Nor should we forget the troubled times, the general disorganization of business throughout the South, and that stern patriot pride of Virginians, who would not stoop to show their unhealed wounds and beg or borrow from the North. When in the years before 1873 some semblance of prosperity began to blossom forth, the wild financial storm followed which swept it all away. The more southern states also about this time were re-opening their own wrecked seats of learning; Agricultural and Mechanical colleges, sustained by federal grants, were created in all the states; and thus it befell that at every Virginian college without exception there was a falling off in the number of Southern students and a hard struggle to make domestic growth keep pace with foreign loss. There was much that the college needed, as we all knew; some things that I rejoice to add have been achieved by it since that time. But the President knew them as well as we did, I doubt not, and saw the wants as clearly then as we see them now. Looking back upon those difficult years from the vantage ground of fuller experience, chastened by the memory of our own efforts and our own failures, I think we must all feel proudly and gratefully that President Atkinson filled his office as executive of the college with such success as few would have equalled—as it may be none would have surpassed.

I find it hard to speak of Atkinson as a disciplinarian for a reason that would sound fantastic or insincere in the ears of almost every college man. But the truth is that in the Hampden-Sidney of my day there was no discipline, nor need of any. There were no women, no wines, no cards. I never saw a card or a die, nor heard of a case of gambling during my years at college. I never saw or smelt or heard of a drop of whiskey. There were some idle boys 'tis true. But they were mostly poor dull lads who were idle in a sort of mute despair, while those good professors with block and tackle and jackscrews of repeated re-examinations hoisted them over the bastions of Science, and so out into the world of college-stamped men. We were not all hard students, by any means. But the life of the college was a clean,

thoughtful life, given largely to things intellectual, and rarely free from the turbulent elements which so often infest the academic grove. Every student belonged to a literary society, and we took unbounded interest in such exercises. Both societies had good libraries, and we read freely and largely in them. We were blessed beyond the students of this time in the absence of that pestiferous multiplicity of subjects which makes intolerable claims on time and strength; of that exactingness, which knows in science neither great nor small, and magnifies a bacterium into a behemoth. Some incredulous persons may ask me to explain the existence of this Arcadia. I do not offer to explain—I simply state the plainest truth. Perhaps the curious may find the key in the fact that the students were few and of two classes—young lads fresh from home, and men mature enough to have served in the army of the Confederacy. "*Maxima reverentia pueris debetur*," said the satirist Juvenal; and it is a base man who does not feel and act upon the truth of this maxim. My own belief is that the secret of this spirit of order and self-discipline is to be discerned entirely in the commanding influence of a few of these older men. Without any purpose to give to others among my fellow-students less than their due meed of praise, I feel convinced that the real discipline of the college at that time rested in the hands of the senior class. In my first year, 1866-67, they were with a single exception men of comparative maturity. Without exception they were men, who would not only themselves have disdained any act of vandalism, but would with a strong hand have repressed it in others. If there were among the lower classes disorderly or vicious spirits—and doubtless there were some—they promptly felt the compulsion of this nobler and truer feeling. No purpose to defy it, no impulse to disdain it ever appeared upon the surface. Nor can the younger students who were brought under this influence and formed by its sway, ever sufficiently repay or acknowledge their debt. They gained what was of far more lasting worth than all that philosophy and letters and science can teach. Lamentable is the state of that college where the academic life is not a training in manliness and honesty and honor; where baseness passes without rebuke and coward outrage is greeted with a smile. The

wide freedom of college and university life is a purposed appeal to the worthier elements of the human character, and the hope of academic training is found in the fact that this appeal meets as a rule with a noble and a true response. The lesson which I then learned of the commanding efficacy of personal influence in college life has been enforced with irresistible power by all my later experience in academic government. The life of the college is always what its best men make it. If they are brave, true, high-minded, relentless in rebuking baseness and falseness and cowardice, open and outspoken in their scorn for all that is secret and mean and low, the tone of the college will be like their own. Our Alma Mater was blessed in that day with a few such leading spirits, and to them, I believe, was due the rare nobleness of tone which then prevailed.

Be this as it may, the state of affairs which I have described reduced to a minimum the disciplinary perplexities of the President and his coadjutors. I remember that one of the soberest of our budding theologians, disgusted at the total absence of criminal statistics, wrote a note in what till then had been thought the inimitable Egyptian hand of the President, and therewith enticed into the faculty meeting a youth who was known to have cut a goodly number of recitations; but with that harmless jest the history of our college crimes, as far as I can recall, is written. We ask ourselves the question, Would Atkinson have been a successful governor of a less orderly school? A fruitless sort of query this. But if an answer were to be made I should incline to doubt it. His austere virtue, the clear whiteness of his own life, the unbendingness of his rectitude, would I fancy have made it hard for him to exert that sympathetic control by influence rather than by authority, which seems to be the secret of academic government. But for the little realm, where he was king, his method seemed to leave nothing to be desired. No student whose conscience was not clear could face unflinching the penetrating gaze of the clear, brown eye; the severe rectitude of those close drawn lips, forgetful of the wonted sweetness of their smile; the unspoken reproach of a life dedicated without reserve to duty and to labour. He governed earnestly, yet benignantly, and no rebellious impulse stirred the area of his sway.

As a professor in his classroom he was always ready, always frank and modest and unpretending, always punctilious in courtesy and exacting of order and dignity in the exercises of the day. His work was done in the main by textbook, with little of comment and exposition, and no discursiveness. Upon this topic I desire to speak with a sincerely modest diffidence; yet speaking in this spirit I may say that in such subjects as were committed to him this is hardly the best method. The aim of the great teachers of Philosophy is to train men to think rather than to know. More freedom and fluidity is to be preferred, where the object is less to give positive, dogmatic instruction than to communicate to young minds the impulse to philosophy and the methods of philosophic thought. Nor were the textbooks available such as lent themselves happily to this rigid method. While I doubt not that Dr. Atkinson with his immense conscientiousness choose the best within his reach, it is also true that the grim rigours of Mill's Logic and Butler's Analogy were as ill-matched with the tawdry rhetoric of Haven's Mental Philosophy, as with the transparent fluency of Jouffroy's Ethics and Alexander's Moral Science; we had served up to us in one course meat for strong men, milk for babes, and taffy for boarding-school misses. A man with a more flexible intelligence and a more facile utterance, even if of less robust and manly intellect, might perhaps have moulded these unequal elements into uniformity by oral exposition, and thus given a course with more of stimulus and not less of instruction. We must not ignore the fact, however, that this difficulty is fundamental in the teaching of philosophy. Dr. Atkinson was neither unconscious nor oblivious of it, and he exerted himself in various ways to meet it. For his senior class he conducted a *Seminarium* in which the more difficult and unsettled points of this intricate science were freely debated between students and professor. From time to time essays were assigned to the class, in which some special section of his work was passed in review by each student and discussed with entire liberty of comment and criticism. The indulgence and respectful patience, with which our crude deliverances were received, even then seemed to me a beautiful victory of courtesy. Some of us were very young, "suddenly transported under another

climate," as Milton says, "to be tost and turmoiled with unballasted wits in fadomless and unquiet deeps of controversie," and much that might have been amended or otherwise handled with older men of ampler training could not be better done with "young unmatriculated Novices." Whatever may be said of Dr. Atkinson's method, his practice of it was above reproach. His preparation for the class exercise was invariably ample and thorough, displaying not only a full comprehension of the author and the topic under review, but a minute familiarity with form and phrase at every point.

With Dr. Atkinson's position as a speculative thinker I feel constrained to deal with even more of modesty and uncertainty. I was too young when I sat under him, and my classmates, were, as a rule, too young, to form any trustworthy judgment of his powers. On the other hand, the volume of his published writings is smaller than I should have fancied it would be, and no adequate means can be drawn from that source for correcting our early and fragmentary impressions. If for the sake of completeness anything is to be said upon this point, let it be fully accepted, not as a matured and competent judgment, but as the frank yet respectful statement of the mark left by the master on an unformed but not indocile mind. As I ask myself the significance of this imprint I find it to be briefly this—that Dr. Atkinson was by virtue of native taste and trained aptitude, not a metaphysician, but a moralist; that his insight into philosophy was not that of a prince and a possessor, who from some commanding height surveyed a realm perfectly under his intelligent sway; but of an explorer who, familiar with detail and particulars, had yet to reach that central station from which a comprehensive view of the whole range of philosophy was to be attained; that on the contrary the profound impression made upon his soul by the ennobling ethics of Christianity had co-operated with a genuine love of ethical study to expand and deepen and dignify his insight into the basic principles of the moral sciences, and had given him an assured grasp and illuminating apprehension of that division of his course of study, which was his strongest intellectual appeal to the sympathies and confidence of his pupils.

And now last of all we turn to Atkinson, the man—greater,

finer, sweeter than all his works. I have said that he has ever seemed to me the essential spirit of Hampden-Sidney manifested in the flesh. He was a gentleman to the core, "*intus et in cute*," to the tips of his fingers, to the bottom of his heart. Gentlemanhood was with him at once an inherited instinct and a practised rule. In every relation of life his courtesy was unflinching. It was as unforgetting in commendation as it was unwearying in reproof. It reigned in the class room as perfectly as in his own home. As teacher, as official, as host, as guest he displayed always that union of consideration for others and self-respecting dignity, which marked his order and gave its accent to the old régime in Virginia.

A truly patriotic man he was also, with that unconscious courage which is the best type of bravery. When Virginia called forth her sons for her defence, none was more prompt for service, more resolute to do and suffer for her sake. He mustered his young soldiers about him and marched away to the front. Yet there was never then or later any ostentation of irreconcilable animosity. No man heard from him in the blackest darkness of defeat a vindictive utterance. In the days when all the conditions of our political life seemed oppressive, he went quietly and hopefully to his appointed work. His patriot duty was to rehabilitate his college, to fill her halls again with students, to nurse her resources, to make the best use of her diminished funds. This he did, with such success as we have already heard. The Hampden-Sidney tradition of simple living and high thinking, of quiet resolve and undaunted perseverance, of "that service which is perfect freedom" suffered no impairment at his hands.

I fancy, moreover, that he must have been even to the end of his life a student, alertly interested in the literature of his subject and in all collateral themes. I remember speaking with him of Darwin's *Descent of Man* shortly after its appearance, when I had just been devouring the two epoch-making volumes, and finding him already familiar with the book, and full of interesting comment and criticism on Darwin's theory of the evolution of the moral sense. One of his last labours was a thoughtful review of Lecky's *History of European Morals*, an essay in which his general method of exposition, both as to fairness of temper and ad-

herence to traditional lines of argument is quite fully and clearly illustrated.

He was a man as we all know, of great simplicity in life and manners, a gentle Stoic, with a philosophic aversion to luxury and display. These qualities would be the natural product of a simple and unselfish soul. Yet it were no strange thing if in his veins there lingered some trace of influence from the three generations of Quakers whose name he bore. John Pleasants I. of Norwich, England, came to Virginia about 1665. He was baptized an Episcopalian but became a Quaker. The son John II. and the grandson John III. were also Friends, and suffered for their faith. Anne Pleasants, daughter of John III. was grandmother to John Mayo Pleasants Atkinson. Perhaps the name brought with it some of the devout simplicity of that persecuted sect.

A man so sound and sincere in nature could not have borne the sacred offices of his church without a profound faith in her doctrines and an affectionate adherence to her rites. He told once with pleasant humor his own reply to his brother Thomas Atkinson, who was a distinguished clergyman of the Episcopal Church and had just been elevated to the bishopric of North Carolina. The new bishop wrote to his brother telling him of his recent dignities, and inviting his congratulations. "I congratulate you with all my heart," replied the Doctor, "that you have now worthily attained an eminence equal to my own. I have been a bishop since 1841." With all his unswerving loyalty to faith and strict adherence to doctrine he seemed to me essentially a liberal man, setting conduct above dogma, and catholic beyond many of his brethren. His sermons were earnest, practical and forcible. There was none of the magnetic effluence of the orator and little grace of elocution or of action. But all that he said was pregnant with reasonableness and conviction, and sweetened by a devout and lofty spirit.

Yet after all, the real sermon which he preached to us was his daily life. There, writ large and clear, to be seen and read of all of us, was the best message he had to give. It imposed no yoke of duty which his own neck did not bear. It pointed to no heights of self-renunciation which his own feet had not trod. It

summoned to no deeds of courage which his own heart had not fulfilled. It taught no faith save that which his own soul had tested amidst the losses and infelicities of the passing years. Silent, calm, resigned, it seemed to speak to our inmost hearts the noble ethics of Heinzelmann : "Be poor and continue poor, young man, while others around you grow rich by fraud and disloyalty. Be without place or power, while others beg their way upward. Bear the pain of disappointed hopes, while others gain the accomplishment of theirs by flattery. Wrap yourself in your own virtue, and seek a friend and daily bread. If in such a course you have grown grey with unblenched honor, bless God and die." In the language of his colleague and friend, Professor Blair, "he lived in the steady and constant view of the purest and highest ideals." Nothing is to be added to such a eulogy; nothing in it is to be altered. Words piled on words could say no more.

As we gaze upon the portrait which stands before us, the noble prayer of Tacitus to the enfranchised spirit of his father-in-law comes to our memories. "Exalt our minds from fond regret and unavailing grief to the contemplation of your virtues. Those we must not lament; it were impiety to sully them with a tear. To cherish their memory, to embalm them with our praises, and if our frail condition will permit, to emulate your bright example, will be the truest mark of our respect, the best tribute we can offer. By dwelling constantly on your words and actions, we shall have an illustrious character before our eyes, and not content with the bare image of your mortal frame, we shall have what is more valuable, the form and features of your mind. I do not mean by this to censure the custom of preserving in brass or marble the shape and image of eminent men. But busts and statues, like their originals, are frail and perishable. The soul is formed of finer elements, and its inward form is not to be expressed by the hand of an artist with unconscious matter. Our manners and our morals may in some degree trace the resemblance. All of Agricola, that gained our love and raised our admiration, still subsists and will ever subsist, preserved in the minds of men, the register of ages, and the records of fame."

In the papers of Thomas Carlyle were found after his death

certain Reminiscences of his father, written with a rugged tenderness, which gave the world a new revelation of that stormy soul. One brief sentence from them I would like to see inscribed beneath the picture on which we gaze :

“Let me not mourn for my father ; let me do worthily of him.”

I desire to make grateful acknowledgement for aid in the preparation of this paper to President McIlwaine for documents which simply reprinted would have made the writing of it needless ; to Mr. Alfred J. Morrison for biographical data heretofore unpublished ; and to the invaluable volumes of Foote's Sketches of Virginia.

W. M. T.

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.
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