



THE REV. DR. EDWARD B. HODGE

JOURNAL

OF THE

Presbyterian Historical Society

VOL. IV.

SEPTEMBER, 1907.

No. 3.

EDWARD BLANCHARD HODGE:

1841—1906.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM P. FINNEY.

The Hodge family trace their ancestral line back to three brothers of Scotch-Irish stock, who emigrated from the north of Ireland about 1730, and settled in Philadelphia. Andrew, one of the three brothers, in 1739, married Jane McCulloch, and the sixth of their nine children was Hugh, who received a classical education, graduating from Princeton in 1773. He became a physician of note, and in 1790 married Miss Mary Blanchard, of Boston, whom, a few years later, he left a widow with two infant children, Hugh Lenox and Charles. The latter became the great theologian, and Nestor of American Presbyterianism in his day, while the former followed his father in choosing medicine as his profession, and became eminent as a physician and surgeon. Hugh Lenox graduated from Princeton in 1814, pursued his medical studies in the University of Pennsylvania, and in 1828 was married to Miss Margaret Aspinwall, of New York. This union was blessed with seven sons, of whom the sixth was Edward Blanchard, the subject of this sketch. His birth occurred on February 5, 1841, in Philadelphia, and his father, in making note of the event, remarks that Edward was "a strong, plump boy, and proved to be of fair complexion, and, as he grew, he had more bloom in his cheeks than his predecessors."

It is said that as a boy he was particularly attractive and handsome—a characteristic which, refined as it was by grace, and chastened by affliction, was not outgrown in his maturer years. As illustrating this, the incident is told of a lady, who had lost her hearing, but who nevertheless claimed great satisfaction in attending upon his ministry, for, as she said, “though I cannot hear him, I can see him.” It is further related that in the Chinese colony, in Philadelphia, in whose welfare Dr. Hodge was much interested, he was familiarly known as “the man with the Jesus face.”

The religious nurture was early begun, the rite of baptism being received at the hands of the Rev. Cornelius C. Cuyler. Since the father was a communicant in the Second Presbyterian Church, and the mother in St. Andrew’s Protestant Episcopal Church, it was the custom of the sons to attend Sunday school and morning service at St. Andrew’s, and service in the afternoon at the Presbyterian Church. Edward is remembered by those who knew him in those early years as “a good and conscientious child, smart rather than precocious or brilliant.” The childhood years were largely spent in acquiring knowledge in the private schools of Philadelphia, and at the early age of fourteen he entered the University of Pennsylvania. In reaching the decision to send his sons to this institution rather than his own alma mater, Dr. H. L. Hodge thus writes:

“As my brother and myself had graduated at Princeton, where my father and uncle had also been taught, I was quite desirous to send my boys to that well-established college. Nevertheless, I could not tolerate the idea of exposing my children to such temptations as college life implies, at a time when their principles had hardly been formed or strengthened. Home influence, especially that of their mother, I deemed of paramount importance.”

Shortly before entering the university, Edward made a public profession of his faith in Christ, and united with the Second Presbyterian Church, then under the pastoral care of Rev. Charles W. Shields. The college years passed quickly, and without special incident; and when the honors were

announced at the graduation of the class of 1859, it was found that Edward Blanchard Hodge had been awarded first place, although only a few months past his eighteenth birthday. His mind turned toward the ministerial calling, but on account of his youth, a year was spent in reading and studying, and in attending upon certain of the lecture courses in the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania.

In September of 1860, he entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton, and for four years (he took a post-graduate year after completing the regular course in 1863) he enjoyed the privilege of being one of the family circle of his uncle, Charles Hodge. Members of that circle still recall "the impression of his lovely character, which was as marked in his youth as it was in his later manhood." A glimpse of his Princeton years may be had from the following tribute from one of his classmates, the Rev. George S. Bishop, D. D.:

"How deeply engraven in my memory are the form and character of my beloved and intimate friend, the late Dr. Edward B. Hodge. We were in the Seminary together, and knit a growing friendship. Of handsome presence, always dignified, and yet most cordial and affectionate, Edward Hodge shed around him the charm and atmosphere of a lovely holiness. A fine scholar, and accurate in all his statements, he breathed at its best the spirit of the teachings of our great preceptor, and his own uncle, the venerable Dr. Charles Hodge. If one would wish for a bright example of what the principles of the Word of God, as set forth in the Princeton Theology might be, he could find it nowhere more beautifully impressive than in my friend. He was more meditative than active, as a student. A prayerful, thoughtful man, he was interested in all religious meetings and gatherings of the students, but rather quiet than demonstrative."

With the completion of his education in the spring of 1864, he began to look forward to taking up the duties of the pastorate, and as a guide in the matter, it is said that he determined to accept the first call which came to him. He did not have long to wait. A call was presented by the First Presbyterian Church of Burlington, N. J., and true to his determination, he promptly notified the congregation of his acceptance. He had scarcely acted, however, before the

mail brought him another call, this one from the First Presbyterian Church of Morristown, N. J., and apparently a much more attractive one in every way. For at this time the church at Burlington was utterly out of repair, and the congregation was worshipping in the basement of the library. Moreover, the salary was but \$500 a year. But the first decision was unhesitatingly maintained, and on April 28th, 1864, Mr. Hodge was ordained to the gospel ministry, and installed as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Burlington, N. J. At the time of the reunion of the Old School and New School branches of the Presbyterian Church, in 1870, the Presbytery of Burlington was merged into the Presbytery of Monmouth, and was henceforth called by the latter name; and in this same body Dr. Hodge maintained his ecclesiastical relation during the entire period of his ministerial life. In subsequent years, Dr. Hodge was heard many times to express his satisfaction with his acceptance of the call to the Burlington Church. At first, it is true, there was much to discourage. But the faithful and devoted efforts of the earnest young pastor, together with the coöperation of the people, soon began to tell; and the succeeding twenty-nine years of fruitful and blessed service are the sufficient testimonial to the success of this happy pastorate. Some of the more important features of his ministry may be mentioned.

As a pastor, he was indefatigable in his ministrations to, and visitations among, the flock. By means of prayer and conversation, parents were brought face to face with their privileges and duties; by winsome word and manner, the affections and hearts of the young were won, and in not a few homes, among the keepsakes which are still treasured, are the Scripture cards with picture and verse, which were a gift from Dr. Hodge in childhood's years. The sick were his constant care, and their homes an open door of possible opportunity. Peculiarly acceptable and tender were his ministrations in the hour of bereavement and death. He early suffered himself, and, therefore, was able to sympathize truly with those to whom like experience came. With characteristic thoroughness, the work of the congregation was

organized, and in all its branches Dr. Hodge's faithful oversight and inspiring influence prevailed. The Sunday school was his delight, and most important did he regard the work of unfolding to the scholars the way of life. To this end he formed communicants' classes, and prepared brief catechisms for those intending to receive the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. In after years, these catechisms found wide circulation outside of his own parish.

As a preacher, Dr. Hodge may be said to have been a literal follower of the counsel of St. Paul to Timothy in his exhortation: "Preach the word." The Word of God, as written in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, was very precious to him. He made these Scriptures, in the original Hebrew and Greek, his daily and life-long study. He loved the doctrines which Christ and St. Paul preached, and he preached them himself, in earnestness and love. He rested absolutely in the doctrines of God's sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness. He once said that if he had the power, he would not change the will of God one inch. He was happily at rest in the faith once for all delivered to the saints. His confidence was supreme that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." And he preached and wrought that those whom God had given him might be brought, every one, to the saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. If one might attempt to single out any particular doctrines which Dr. Hodge loved to preach more than others, a mistake could scarcely be made in laying the emphasis on the Atonement—salvation only through the atoning merits of the blood of Jesus Christ, and perseverance—our blessed assurance, and union with the risen Christ, now and for ever. His sermons were prepared with care, were ordinarily written out in full, but in his later years especially were usually preached without manuscript.

The influence of Dr. Hodge as a citizen was probably second to none other in the community. Quiet, courteous, dignified, courting no notoriety, he was yet watchful, alert and active for the best interests and well-being of those

amongst whom he lived. One of the special objects of his interest was the Burlington Library, of which he was a director, and the purchaser of the books for many years. He also established and maintained a Free Reading Room for men. As the city enlarged, and manufacturing interests came in, bringing with them in considerable numbers workmen and their families, Dr. Hodge sought them out, and in course of time secured the necessary funds to build a suitable place of worship for their use, which was known as the East Burlington Chapel. Here he ministered for a number of years, adapting himself with no less ease to the congregations which assembled than to those which greeted him in his own church.

The domestic life of Dr. Hodge at Burlington was one of singular beauty and pathos. In 1868 he married Miss Alice Cogswell Van Rensselaer, the gifted and accomplished daughter of Rev. Cortlandt Van Rensselaer, D. D., who was founder, first pastor, and life-long father and friend of the Burlington church. This union was most happy, and for ten years the young pastor found a true helpmeet in his wife. Then came the crushing blow of her untimely death, and the husband found himself bereft, with four little ones depending upon his care. For a moment he was almost stunned by the blow. But his confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God speedily reasserted itself, and with renewed consecration and purpose, he summoned himself to the duties of life, and to the nurture of his motherless children. And no one during those childhood years, who spent a day or a night in the Presbyterian parsonage at Burlington, can fail to recall the tender, yearning love with which that father mothered his offspring.

Busy and occupied as Dr. Hodge was with his many interests and cares at Burlington, it is nevertheless not to be supposed that his thought and effort extended no farther. On the contrary, early in his ministry he began to discern the spiritual needs of the neighboring towns and surrounding country, and by preaching services in schoolhouses, friendly visitation, administration of the ordinances of reli-

gion, and other means, he became a sort of pastor-at-large over a wide section. The history of the Presbyterian churches at Bordentown, Columbus, Jacksonville, and Bustleton, not to mention other places, could not well be written without making large mention of Dr. Hodge's fostering care and oversight. As years went by, this interest in the religious needs of the rural and largely mission Presbytery of Monmouth widened, until it reached its farthest bounds. For many years a member of the Presbytery's Committee on Synodical Home Missions, he sat in council upon this important work, and in many perplexing situations his wisdom pointed the way. Especially did he enter most sympathetically into the self-denying lives of the missionary pastors and their families. In later years, when freed from pastoral duties, it was his delight to employ his Sabbaths in preaching the pure and simple gospel of Jesus Christ in the pulpits of his fellow presbyters. On special occasions among them, his presence was commonly sought. He frequently officiated at the marriage of the living, he baptized the children, he buried the dead. His memory will long be hallowed in those homes.

In the course of his prosperous and fruitful pastorate at Burlington, Dr. Hodge was approached from time to time with suggestions and invitations to enter upon other fields of service. To these, in general, he gave a respectful hearing, but scant encouragement. Among these invitations, one, however, gave him considerable debate in his own mind, but after having been urged almost to the point of acceptance, he finally declined. As time revealed to him the apparent wisdom of this course, he ever after referred to this episode as the great temptation of his life. The call was from the newly organized Presbyterian Church of New Haven, Conn., which, had it been accepted, would in all probability have turned his feet aside from the paths in which, with such success and satisfaction, they afterwards trod. For eventually there came a call, which sounded imperatively in his ears, and superseded the one which had brought him to Burlington twenty-nine years before.

On October 30, 1893, Dr. Hodge was elected correspond-

ing secretary of the Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. For a number of years previous he had been a member of the Board, and had taken a peculiar interest in the work, both for the work's sake, and because Dr. Van Rensselaer, his father-in-law, had for fourteen years been secretary of the same Board. After careful and prayerful consideration, this call was accepted. The breaking of the pastoral tie with the Burlington congregation cost a severe wrench, but the important and congenial task of fostering the work of ministerial education stirred to renewed enthusiasm and energy. Dr. Hodge secured the dissolution of the pastoral relation at Burlington from the Presbytery of Monmouth on December 4, 1893, and promptly entered upon his new duties, the office of the Board being then located at 1334 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia. Two and a half years later he moved with his family to Philadelphia, and continued to reside there until his death.

For a period of almost thirteen years he was permitted to carry forward the work now committed to his care. Both by nature and by circumstance he possessed a peculiar fitness for this work. Not only were his counsel and advice constantly availed of by the Board in deliberating upon the business which claimed its attention, but in the important matter of personal visitation among, and contact with, the hundreds of students under the care of the Board, the wisdom, tact, and deep spirituality of Dr. Hodge were invaluable. Young men seeking the calling of the holy ministry could scarcely have had set before them a truer type of what the thoroughly furnished, well-rounded minister should be, than was Dr. Hodge himself. Moreover, his wide acquaintance throughout the Church, and the confidence and affection which he so generally inspired were of material advantage to the Board. Not once nor twice, but again and again, when the funds of the Board failed, or were not available, Dr. Hodge, through friends and donors, or by his own generous hand, was able to supply the lack in cases of need.

But Dr. Hodge's sympathies were so broad, and his interest in the affairs of the Kingdom so deep, that, even as at

Burlington his energies had overflowed the bounds of his parish, so now he found time for other matters besides ministerial education. Elected a trustee of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1889, and a director of the same institution in 1899, he became a valuable member of both bodies, and doubly so because of his membership in each.

In April, 1895, he was elected a member of The Presbyterian Historical Society, and developed a conspicuous and increasing interest in its objects and welfare until his death. In January, 1899, he was elected to the Executive Council, and served also for some years as chairman of the Membership Committee. In the latter capacity he was particularly active in securing many new members for the Society. He was also a member of the Committee on Museum and Gallery, was a frequent visitor to the rooms and library of the Society himself, and delighted to bring friends and visitors with him. The Society has had few members who were more constant and faithful in its behalf, and at the time of his death, Dr. Hodge was its first vice-president. Another trust which shared his attention was a place in the directorate of the Presbyterian Ministers' Fund.

Beyond these specific lines of useful occupation and endeavor, Dr. Hodge gave much thought to the current problems of the religious world, and particularly those of his own denomination. On the death of the editor of *The Presbyterian* in 1905, he accepted the supervising editorship of that paper, and in presenting the topics which came up for discussion, he did so with discrimination, with courtesy, and with conscientious conviction. In his general attitude, he was described by some of his friends as an open-minded conservative, tenacious of the truth as he understood it and had loyally accepted it, but at the same time open to the presentation of new facts, and to the adjustment of his conclusions thereto.

There is one other service worthy of mention, which this faithful servant of God rendered, and which the Church is not likely soon to forget, and that was the rearing, and training and dedication of a noble son to the work of Christ on

the foreign field. Cortlandt Van Rensselaer, eldest son of Dr. Hodge, was commissioned in 1899, by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, as a medical missionary to China. In March of the same year, with his wife, Elsie Campbell Sinclair, he sailed for his post of duty. But one year later, in the Boxer troubles which arose, his young and promising life was ended in the awful martyrdom of Paoting-Fu. The suspense and grief which attended this tragic event caused a wound to the father's heart which he carried with him to his grave, though he did not for a moment question God's wisdom or doubt His goodness.

Dr. Hodge was held in high esteem among his brethren, and by many of them his excellent counsel and well-balanced judgment were much sought. Many honors were bestowed upon him; among them, the College of New Jersey (Princeton) conferred the title of Doctor of Divinity in 1892, and on three occasions his Presbytery made him a commissioner to the General Assembly.

The end came rather suddenly and unexpectedly to this busy and useful life. On Monday, June 11, 1906, he was in his accustomed place, and apparently in his accustomed health, at the regular meeting of the Board of Education, and was reelected corresponding secretary for another year. As late as Wednesday afternoon of that week he was in his office, busily occupied with his work. During that night he suffered an acute attack from an internal disorder, and next day was hurriedly taken to the Presbyterian Hospital, Philadelphia, where on the following day, June 15, 1906, he died, in his sixty-sixth year. The funeral services were held June 18th, at three p. m., in the Woodland Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, and he was laid to rest in Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia.

As one said of him in death: "Godly ancestry, noble example, inspiring traditions, high ideals, careful culture, exalted fellowship, largest opportunity and weighty responsibility, these were the things which combined to bring to their highest development his natural qualities of mind, heart and will. Gifted by nature, blessed by Providence, he was perfected by grace, and is now crowned with glory."