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I.—LITERARY.

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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF UNION THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY.

BY PROF. W. W. MOORE.

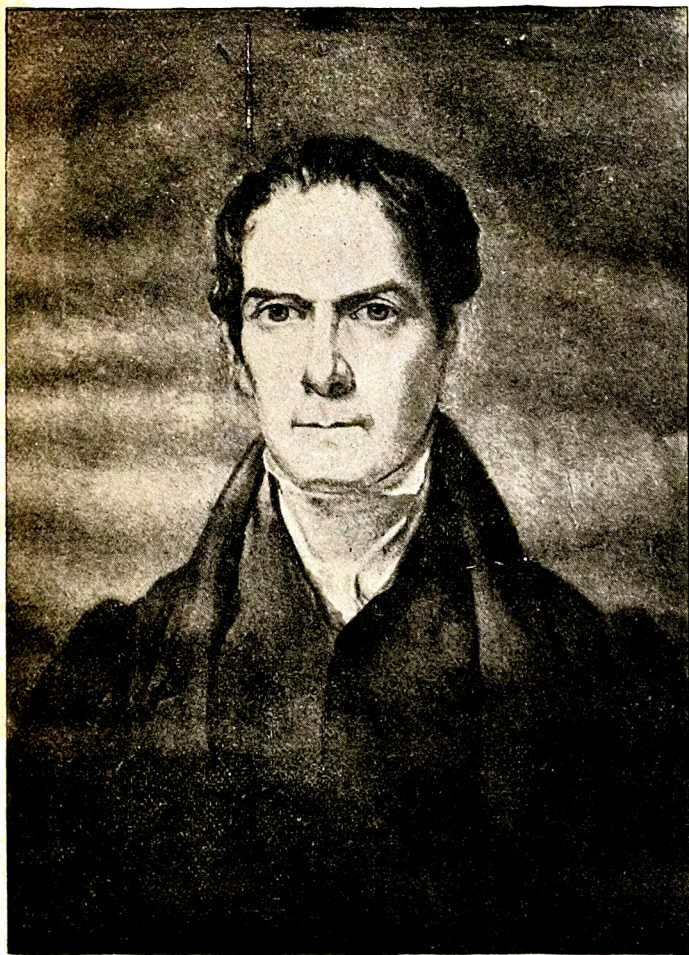
I. THE BEGINNING, 1812-1823.

The Presbyterian Church in America was composed originally of emigrants from Great Britain and Ireland, and for a number of years the ministers of their various congregations were drawn from beyond the seas. As the church grew, however, and the population of the country increased, the supply thus obtained proved to be inadequate, and the necessity for a native ministry became more and more apparent. Academies and colleges were accordingly established from time to time during the eighteenth century at various places, such as Princeton, Lexington and Hampden-Sidney; and the candidates educated in these institutions received their theological training from the president of the college, when he chanced to be a minister (as was commonly the case), or from other approved divines here and there throughout the country. But not until 1812, the year of our second war with England, did the church establish an institution to be devoted exclusively to theological education. In that year Princeton Seminary was founded, with the Rev. Archibald Alexander (formerly President of Hampden-Sidney College) as its organizer and first professor. In the same memorable year the Synod of Virginia adopted the plan of a Seminary to be located within her bounds, inaugurated measures to raise funds for its sup-

## DR. JOHN H. RICE.

BY PROF. W. W. MOORE.

JOHN HOLT RICE, the founder of Union Theological Seminary, was born near New London, in Bedford County, Virginia, on the 28th of November, 1777. His father, Benjamin Rice, though an intelligent and popular man, a lawyer and deputy clerk of the court, and a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church, had but little success in a worldly sense, and the home of the future theologian was one at first of only moderate comfort and afterwards of downright poverty. His mother was a cultivated, amiable, and pious woman, sister of the Rev. John White Holt, a clergyman of the Church of England, for whom the subject of our sketch was named. John, the third of six children, was a very delicate infant, and at one time, when about two years of age, he was actually thought to be dying, so that he was "taken up out of his cradle and laid upon the bed to expire with more ease." His recovery was so surprising that his uncle, who with his mother stood watching him, declared that God must have some great work for the boy to do, charged his mother to train him up with that in view, and offered to assist her in giving him an education. His precocity as a student seemed to confirm his uncle's prediction. He manifested even in infancy that passion for books which distinguished him throughout his life. Before he was four years old he had read a considerable portion of the Bible and all of Watts' Psalms and Hymns. Another interesting proof of the proverb that "the boy is the father of the man" was afforded by his custom of gathering the other children, white and black, into a congregation, and conducting, with much solemnity, a religious service, doubtless in imitation of his clerical uncle. He seems to have experienced a change of heart in childhood, and to have given increasingly strong evidence of being a true disciple of Christ. When he was about twelve years of age he experienced the greatest sorrow of his life, perhaps, in the death of his mother, an event which was followed by pathetic but salutary hardships. His father's circumstances became more and more straitened, and the eldest



DR. JOHN HOLT RICE.

sister, Edith, to whom the chief care of the family now fell, had to do all the hard work of the house. This grieved John far more than any of his own privations and toils, and "to lighten her burden, he would often help her to milk the cows, wash the clothes, and scour and rub the floors." His father's second marriage only served to render the lot of the children harder than it was before, as their step-mother treated them with great rigor, John being the special victim of her harsh and jealous temper. When he came home from school at night, she would set him to "his regular task of picking cotton," and then send him up to bed without a candle. But the instinct of the scholar was strong within him, and while his step-mother thought he was fast asleep, he would be reading his Horace by the blaze of the light-wood which he had hidden away for this purpose, and when the light-wood gave out he would go on reading by the fire alone, bending over the book lying on the hearth, "till he would almost singe his hair in the act."

At fifteen years of age he made public confession of faith in Christ and was received into full communion of the Church. About this time he spent a year and a half in Liberty Hall Academy (now Washington and Lee University). When his father could no longer afford to keep him at this institution and was about to bring him home, a young man named George A. Baxter, who was then teaching an academy near New London, sent him a generous invitation to come and pursue his studies with him. He came at once, and together these two kindred spirits trod the great highways of literature for a year and a half. It is hardly necessary to state that this discerning young teacher afterwards became pastor of the church at Lexington, then President of Washington College, and finally Professor of Theology in Union Seminary, thus becoming the successor of his former pupil.

In his eighteenth year young Rice obtained a position as teacher in the family of Mr. Nelson, a gentleman of wealth and cultivation, at Malvern Hill, below Richmond. Just before starting for his new home, he was one day introduced by his father in the court yard at Liberty, to Patrick Henry, with the words: "Here, Mr. Henry, is my young son, who is about to set out to try his fortune in the world." The great orator took him kindly by the hand and told him to be of good courage, adding: "Be sure, my son, to remember that the best men

always make themselves"—a sentence which, falling from such a man, made a deep impression upon his mind, says his biographer, "and often recurred to his recollection, to rally his resolution, and stimulate his diligence, when he found himself tempted to indulge his besetting sin of indolence." Shortly afterwards he set out for Malvern Hill, his whole outfit being \$1.75 and a handkerchief full of clothes. The young tutor won the favorable regard of all with whom he was brought into contact during his residence of eighteen months in this fashionable circle, but the gay and semi-skeptical society had an unhappy effect on his spiritual life, and for a time his heart was chilled with a strange coldness towards God and indifference towards his fellow-men. In returning home for a visit he travelled up the river in an open boat and, being exposed to the summer sun, fell ill of a fever which brought him to the brink of the grave. "But in this affliction of the body he experienced the healing of his soul."

On recovering from his double malady of body and spirit he began to cast about for employment, and chanced to see in a newspaper an advertisement for a tutor in Hampden-Sidney College. He at once set out on foot and walked the whole distance, more than seventy miles, to offer his services, but on his arrival he was mortified to learn that the position had already been offered to Rev. Robert Logan, of Fincastle, who, however, had not signified his acceptance of it. Mr. Rice immediately started again on foot, made the return journey of sixty or seventy miles, with only twelve and a-half cents to defray his expenses, saw Mr. Logan and obtained his answer to the trustees, declining their invitation, and then came once more to Hampden-Sidney, where he entered upon the duties of his well-earned position. This was in 1797. He was then nineteen years of age, tall, slender, sallow, "rather awkward in his carriage and very shabby in his dress." Moreover, he was depressed by the thought of a small debt which he had incurred while a student at Lexington and had not been able to pay. The College itself was in a low state, both as to funds and students. Such were the unpromising conditions under which he began his career on "the hill." But, through the warm and generous friendship of Major James Morton, of Willington, who advanced him the means to pay his debt and replace his threadbare clothes with a more becoming suit, these external disadvantages were speedily overcome, and it

soon became evident that in this young tutor the College had made a most valuable acquisition. Shortly after his arrival the Rev. Archibald Alexander was elected to the presidency of the institution, and the Rev. Conrad Speece was associated with him in the work of instruction. These able and godly young ministers exercised a strong influence upon Mr. Rice, while they in turn received a distinct impression of his talents and spirit. Dr. Alexander informs us that at this time he was remarkable for (1) independence and careful deliberation in the formation and expression of his opinions. "He knew how to exercise that species of self denial, so difficult to most young men, of suspending his judgment on any subject until he should have the opportunity of contemplating it in all its relations." (2) Insatiable thirst for knowledge, united with a sound and discriminating judgment which prevented his vast accumulation of ideas from becoming an undigested, unwieldy and useless mass. (3) A fondness for and facility in the use of his pen. It was his habit to write something every day. (4) A distaste for metaphysical discussions. He was thoroughly practical, and, as a teacher, he was accurate and skillful.

In the spring of 1799 he resigned his position, at the request of Major Morton, and took charge of a small school of girls at Willington, one of whom was Anne, the daughter of his friend and host, and afterwards his wife. After a year here he went to Powhatan county for the purpose of studying medicine, but in the fall of 1800 he was induced by urgent invitations to resume his tutorship in the College, and shortly afterwards he gave himself to the service of God as a minister of the Gospel and began the study of theology under his friend and teacher, Dr. Alexander. He was licensed by Hanover Presbytery, September 12th, 1803. After preaching a year on probation in a missionary field covering parts of Prince Edward, Campbell and Charlotte counties, he was ordained and installed pastor of Cub Creek Church, where he remained for eight years.

In the autumn of 1811 the Presbyterians of Richmond, feeling that the time had come for the organization and equipment of an evangelical church of their faith in that city, invited Mr. Rice to become their pastor and leader in that important enterprise. In 1812, shortly after the appalling dispensation of Providence by which so many valuable lives were lost in the burning of the Richmond theatre, he moved to the

capital, and on October 17th of the same year effected the organization of the First Presbyterian Church of that city.\* Here he prosecuted a busy and fruitful pastorate for ten years.

In 1818 he founded the *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine*, which he continued to edit for a number of years with characteristic energy and skill. In 1822 he was elected almost simultaneously to two positions of conspicuous honor and usefulness, viz: the presidency of Princeton College and the professorship of Theology in the seminary which it was proposed to establish in Prince Edward County. After mature deliberation he declined the call to New Jersey, though at a great pecuniary sacrifice, and accepted the appointment to the work in Prince Edward. He was then just recovering from a severe and protracted illness, and, with a view to recruiting his health, he made a journey by sea to New York, travelling thence to Saratoga Springs and other points, and improving the opportunity thus afforded to raise funds for the proposed seminary; and therefore did not reach Hampden-Sidney till the autumn (1823). Finding that no accommodations had yet been provided for him, he accepted the invitation of President Cushing of the College to lodge with him temporarily, and soon after opened his school of the prophets with three students in one end of President Cushing's kitchen. On Thursday, January 1st, 1824, the Board of Trustees of the Theological Seminary met in the College church, and in the presence of a large congregation, the institution was formally opened, Dr. Rice was regularly installed as Professor, and delivered a discourse appropriate to the occasion, based upon II Tim., 3: 16, 17.

We cannot follow in detail the history of those seven crowd-

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\* Says Dr. Moses D. Hoge: "The providence of God that brought Dr. Rice to Richmond was a very remarkable one. It was the burning of the Richmond theatre, an event which sent a thrill of sympathetic sorrow throughout the length and breadth of the land, because of the eminence of the people consumed by the fire; the genius, the wealth, the social standing, the fashion, the beauty, that perished in that night of terror.

There was a great reaction against immorality and frivolity, and the Christian people were greatly stirred up. The conviction deepened that the Presbyterian Church in Richmond needed a thoroughly organized church under the care of a pastor who could devote his whole time to its development, and it was under influences like these that Dr. Rice received and accepted the call. I need not refer to his success there, and to the esteem and affection in which he was held."

ed years during which he created from almost nothing a large and pretty well equipped theological seminary. This achievement itself is enough to show that the father of Union Seminary was an epoch-making man, wise, large-minded, loving, a scholar of rich and varied attainments, a prophet of clear and far-reaching vision, a man "that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do," a leader of extraordinary enterprise and skill in practical affairs. The institution began, as we have seen, without buildings or adequate equipment of any kind, but by his ability, energy and heroic faith, he carried it to speedy and splendid success, making it in an almost incredibly short time one of the leading theological schools of the country. Within seven years it had secured a library, a building for lecture rooms, chapel, and dormitories, and two residences, and had three instructors and nearly forty students.

In the Seminary chapel is a chaste marble tablet, containing in gilt letters the following modest summary of his noble and fruitful life :

IN  
MEMORY OF  
REV. JOHN HOLT RICE, D. D.,  
BORN IN BEDFORD CO., VA., NOV. 28, 1777 ;  
TUTOR IN HAMPDEN-SIDNEY COLLEGE,  
1797—1804 ;  
PASTOR CUB CREEK CHURCH,  
1804—1812 ;  
PASTOR FIRST CHURCH, RICHMOND,  
1812—1823 ;  
PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN  
UNION SEMINARY,  
1822 TO HIS DEATH, SEPT. 3, 1831.

EMINENT AND EFFICIENT IN EVERY OFFICE,  
THIS SEMINARY, FOUNDED BY HIS LABORS,  
IS HIS LASTING  
MONUMENT.

The following personal recollections, given at the Septuagesimal celebration of the Seminary in 1894, by the late Dr. Robert Burwell, a member of the first class taught by Dr. Rice, are of peculiar interest.

"Dr. Rice, in form and appearance, was a man who would at once attract attention. He was tall, and his bodily frame well proportioned to his height. His face, though grave, and



at times sad, was often full of smiles. Although not reared in an aristocratic circle, yet by his long residence in Richmond, and intercourse with the refined society of that city, he had acquired an ease and polish of manners that made him appear well in every company. His moods were variable; sometimes he sat silent, absorbed in thought; at other times he was full of life, and then, by his playful remarks and jests, he caused many a happy smile. His jests had sometimes a sting in them, but his smile and kind words soon relieved the pain. His catholic spirit was well known. A Presbyterian by birth and conviction, he was no bigot, but cordially received as his brethren all who loved the Saviour. He was emphatically a man of peace, but when the truth was assailed he girded on his armor and gave stunning blows.

As a scholar and learned man, he stood very high in his day. He was well known in this country. He corresponded with distinguished men in Europe, and I remember he frequently gave us Dr. Chalmers' letters to read. He was familiar with English literature. He kept up his reading and study with the times in which he lived.

He was from his youth a diligent student, and loved books. No avaricious Shylock rejoiced more over his ducats than Dr. Rice did over his books. They were his friends and constant companions. In every literary enterprise he took a deep interest. I remember with what gladness he welcomed the *Andover Review*, the first of the kind published in this country. He urged his class to take it, saying, in a playful way, "even if you have to sell the buttons off your coats." As a professor, he was faithful, and did all one man could do. He manifested a deep interest in his students; loved and treated them as his children. By precept and by his own example, he urged on them the importance of thorough preparation for the work in which they were to be engaged. Earnestly did he urge his pupils to study the Word of God, to make it their rule of life as well as their guide in preaching, and especially did he dwell on the advantage of studying the Word in the language in which the inspired men spoke and wrote. On this latter point he was enthusiastic, at the same time he extolled our glorious old English translation. In his lectures, so hastily written, he dwelt on pastoral duties, of which he knew so much from his own experience, and on the manner and style of preaching, of which he was a bright example. In the pul-

pit his appearance attracted and secured the attention of the people. He was grave, solemn and dignified. His face and his manner in the pulpit showed that he felt as one should feel when speaking as an ambassador of Christ and addressing men on the most important subject. His gestures, though not always according to the rules of elocution, were not grotesque; his voice, not as ringing as some, was yet clear, and the utterance of his words so distinct that he was heard even when he spoke in the open air. He was always in earnest, sometimes terribly so, and I have heard him when he rose to the height of true eloquence. He was spiritual and practical in his preaching. The Bible was his book of instructions, and, as an ambassador of Christ, he dared not go beyond it. He preached the word. He dwelt much on the duties of Christians, resting his earnest appeals on the great truths of the Bible. He never read his sermons; he usually spoke without notes, though sometimes he used a brief outline. He prepared for preaching by careful thought on his subject. All his sermons gave evidence of this, and he was ready to preach when any sudden emergency arose. On one occasion he did this: The Bible Society of Prince Edward met in the College church, and a Methodist minister was to preach the annual sermon. A large congregation had assembled, and were anxiously waiting, when the news came that the minister expected was sick, and could not fulfil his engagement. The committee having charge of the services went to Dr. Rice and asked him to preach. He went into the pulpit, took his text, and preached one of his best sermons. Dr. Rice was always ready when the Bible and its circulation was the subject.

He was *plain*, and always aimed to be understood. A little incident will illustrate this: He had made an engagement to preach in an adjoining county; notice was given that Dr. Rice, Professor in the Seminary, would preach, and a large congregation assembled to hear how a Doctor of Divinity and professor would preach. (In a lecture delivered to his class inculcating the importance of preaching so as to be understood, he narrated the incident.) He said that after the services were ended, as he was going to the place where his horse was, he passed a group earnestly discussing some question. As he passed he heard one man exclaim, "Was that Dr. Rice? Why, I understood every word he said." Dr. Rice had the power of going down to the level of his audience so as to be

understood by all. The common people heard him gladly. But in his preaching he never used slang words, never told anecdotes to cause a sensation or provoke a smile. He had no clap-trap device to attract and stir the crowd."

Dr. Moses D. Hoge, in his address on the same occasion (the celebration of the Seventieth Anniversary of the founding of the Seminary), said: "I doubt whether any of us can appreciate the peculiar trials Dr. Rice encountered in the early history of the Seminary. We easily comprehend the character of his self-denials and privations, and of his unparalleled labors, but who can estimate the dreadful discouragements of being hampered and hindered all the while by men who could not comprehend his high and wide-reaching plans; men in whom he could not awaken any enthusiasm because they clung to the old, not because it was good, but because it was old, and and opposed the new only because it was not the way from the beginning? Then, as Dr. Rice prosecuted his agency for the endowments, there were those who intimated that he had a sinister purpose in collecting those funds; that out of the contributions gathered he would enrich himself. I have a moderately good knowledge of the English language, and I am familiar with some English epithets; I have also a smattering of two or three foreign languages, but I do not know an epithet that could express my horror of the man who could bring such a charge against one whose disinterestedness, self-sacrifice, broad and splendid generosity were the prominent traits of character.

Not only was Dr. Rice a profound theologian, but he revealed in the study of the ancient classics, and was equally familiar with the elegant literature of the day. In this connection I may be permitted to state an incident, and not of the gravest character either. The Waverly novels were just coming out, and were exciting universal interest. I do not remember whether it was the "Monastery," or the "Heart of Midlothian," or which one of the Waverly series, but on a Saturday morning it came from Richmond. Seizing it with avidity, he commenced its perusal. He became absorbed, fascinated; time flew, the afternoon came and then the night. The Doctor read, read, and read on. Presently he heard the clock strike twelve. Saturday night! He suddenly shut the book and laid it down, possibly with some compunction. He had to preach the next day. The next morning he went into the pul-

pit and preached one of his noblest discourses. When the services ended, an old colored woman came up to him, and grasping his hand she said, "I knew we were going to have a good sermon to-day, for late last night as I was passing your house I saw the light burning in your study, and I said, there is my pastor hard at work while other people are asleep; there is my dear pastor beating *ile* for the sanctuary." The story was too good even for the oil-beater to keep to himself. We may be sure he did not tell it as an illustration "of the way young men should prepare for the pulpit."

When the labors of Dr. Rice terminated, and when all that was mortal was conveyed to the old family burying-ground at Willington, the residence of Major Morton, the father of Mrs. Dr. Rice, in the procession were all the students of the Seminary. It so happened that there had been an unusual attention to vocal music among them that session, and a choir had been formed and trained of rare proficiency. My uncle, the late Dr. Drury Lacy, told me that these young men stood around the grave, and when the body was lowered to its resting-place they sang the hymn, "Why do we mourn departed friends," to the old tune of "China," and, lover of music as he was, he declared that he had never heard anything comparable to it when that company of trained singers with their well-modulated, manly voices united in singing that funeral hymn to the plaintive tune of "China," and that he could imagine nothing so impressive as that service, in the open air, under the blue sky, while nature smiled, and men and women wept around the grave of one so inexpressibly dear."

Some years ago Dr. Rice's remains were brought from Willington and re-interred in the Seminary grave-yard at Hampden-Sidney.

