



Yours most truly & faithfully,
Abner S. Hoff

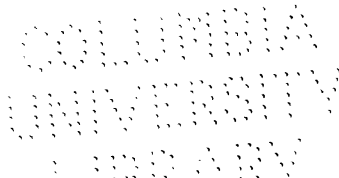
Moses Drury Hoge:

Life and Letters.

*Moses Drury Hoge,
Dec 1899*

BY HIS NEPHEW,

PEYTON HARRISON HOGE.



RICHMOND, VA.:

PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

938.21
H67

43-3181



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PRINTED BY
WHITTET & SHEPPERSON,
RICHMOND, VA.

BOUND BY
WEYMOUTH, MEISTER & SMETHIE,
RICHMOND, VA.

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With the masterly address of Dr. Moore we close; with only this prayer: that if those of us who survive cannot be as great, we may be as faithful; and if our light shine not so far, it may at least shine as true.

ADDRESS OF REV. DR. W. W. MOORE.

Few men in any walk of life have ever so deeply impressed an entire community with the power of a noble personality as the lamented servant of God whose virtues and labors we commemorate to-day. Certainly no minister of the gospel in all the history of this ancient commonwealth was ever accorded a position so eminent by the public at large. This popular estimate was deliberate and exact. The people knew him. For more than fifty years, through storm and sunshine, in war and peace, they had studied his character and watched his work, and they have rendered their verdict: that Moses D. Hoge was a man; a strong, wise, high-minded, great-hearted, heroic man; that through all these years of stress and toil and publicity he wore the white flower of a blameless life; and that he preached the gospel of the grace of God with a dignity and authority and tenderness, with a beauty and pathos and power which have rarely, if ever, been surpassed in the annals of the American pulpit.

Long before the close of his consecrated career he had taken his place in public interest even by the side of those stately memorials of this historic city which men have come from the ends of the earth to see—the bronze and marble reminders of the men who have forever associated the name of Virginia with eloquence and virtue and valor. No visitor who had come from a distant State or a land beyond the seas, to look upon these memorials of the great Virginians of former days, felt that his visit to Richmond was complete till he had seen and heard the man who, though an humble minister of the Cross, was by common consent the most eminent living citizen of a commonwealth which has always

been peculiarly rich in gifted sons. It was his privilege to preach to a larger number of the men whose commanding influence in public life, in the learned professions, or in the business world, had conferred prosperity and honor upon the State, than any other spiritual teacher of the time. He was more frequently the spokesman of the people on great public occasions than any other man whom Richmond has delighted to honor. He was more frequently the subject of conversation in the social circle than any other member of this cosmopolitan community. In every community where he once appeared his name was thenceforth a household word. It is not my province at present to speak of these things. I allude to them only in order to emphasize the fact that the explanation of this preëminence in public esteem lay largely in the character of his work in the pulpit. That was his throne. There he was king.

In attempting to comply with the request of the session of his church to say something to-day in regard to this outstanding feature of Dr. Hoge's work, a feeling of peculiar sadness comes over my heart. It will be many a long day before any man who knew him can stand in this pulpit without a sense of wistful loneliness at thought of that venerated figure, with its resolute attitudes and ringing tones, which for fifty-four fruitful years stood in this place as God's ambassador, laying the multitude under the enchantment of his eloquence, diffusing through this sanctuary the aroma of his piety, and lifting sad and weary hearts to heaven on the wings of his wonderful prayers. As some one has said of the death of another illustrious preacher, we feel like children who had long sheltered under a mighty oak; and now the old oak has gone down and we are out in the open sun. We hardly knew, till he fell, how much we had sheltered under him. His presence was a protection. His voice was a power. His long-established leadership was a rallying centre for the disheartened soldiers of the cross.

We do not murmur at the dispensation which has taken him from us—

“But oh for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still.”

There were certain *physical* features of his preaching which are perfectly familiar to all who have heard him even once, and which will be remembered by them forever, but which cannot be made known by description to those who have not. When he rose in the pulpit, tall, straight, slender, sinewy, commanding, with something vital and electric in his very movements, yet singularly deliberate, and, lifting his chin from his collar with a peculiar movement, surveyed the people before him and on either side, with his grave, intellectual face and almost melancholy eyes, no one needed to be told that there stood a master of assemblies. The attention was riveted by his appearance and manner before he had uttered a word.

As soon as he began to speak, the clear, rich and resonant tones, reaching without effort to the limits of the largest assembly, revealed to every hearer another element of his power to move and mould the hearts of men. To few of the world's masters of discourse has it been given to demonstrate as he did the music and spell of the human voice. It was a voice in a million—flexible, magnetic, thrilling, clear as a clarion, by turns tranquil and soothing, strenuous and stirring, as the speaker willed, now mellow as a cathedral bell heard in the twilight, now ringing like a trumpet or rolling through the building like melodious thunder, with an occasional impassioned crash like artillery, accompanied by a resounding stamp of his foot on the floor; but never unpleasant or uncontrolled or overstrained; no one ever heard him scream or tear his throat. Some of his cadences in the utterance of particular words or sentiments lingered on the ear and haunted the memory for years like a strain of exquisite music. As you listened to his voice in prayer, “there ran through its pathetic fall a vibration as though the min-

ister's heart was singing like an Æolian harp as the breath of the Spirit of God blew through its strings." It was a voice that adapted itself with equal felicity to all occasions. When he preached to the whole of General D. H. Hill's division in the open air, it rang like a bugle to the outermost verge of his vast congregation. When he stood on the slope of Mt. Ebal in Palestine and recited the twenty-third Psalm, it was heard distinctly by the English clergyman on the other side of the valley, three-quarters of a mile away. When the body of an eminent statesman and ruling elder in his church was borne into this building and laid before the pulpit, and the preacher rose and said, "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace," the sympathetic intonations fell like healing balm on wounded hearts. When he stood in the Senate Chamber at Washington beside the mortal remains of the Carolinian, and said to the assembled representatives of the greatness of this nation and of the world, "There is nothing great but God;" the voice and the words alike impressed the insignificance of all human concerns as compared with religion. When he stood in the chancel of St. Paul's and stretched his hand over the casket containing the pallid form of "the daughter of the Confederacy," and said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," it had the authority and tenderness of a prophet's benediction.

Of the *intellectual* qualities of his preaching, the first that impressed the hearer was the exquisite phrasing. He was a marvellous magician with words. He was the prince of pulpit rhetoricians. He had made himself a master of the art of verbal expression, because, to use his own words, he knew that "style was the crystallization of thought," and he believed that "royal thoughts ought to wear royal robes." The splendid powers with which he was endowed by nature had been at once enriched and chastened by the strenuous study of the world's best books. Every cultivated person recognized the flavor of ripe scholarship in his diction and

even those devoid of culture felt its charm without being able to define it. The mellow splendor of his rhetoric captivated all classes of hearers. This rare beauty of his language, this exquisite drapery of his thoughts, sometimes tempted superficial hearers to regard him as merely a skilful phrase-maker. Nothing could be farther from the truth. He was a superb rhetorician because he was a true scholar and a profound theologian. His rhetoric drew deep. The ocean greyhound, which seems to skim the billows, does in fact plow deep beneath their surface, and hence the *safety* of her cargo of human lives and precious wares. This masterful preacher *was* easy and swift—he distanced all his brethren—but he was always safe, and his ministry had the momentum which only *weight* can give. All his life long he was a student—a student of books, a student of men, a student of the deep things of God. When men beheld the external splendor of the temple of Jerusalem, with its walls and roofs of white marble, surmounted with plates and spikes of glittering gold, they sometimes forgot the immense substructions built deep into the ground and resting upon the everlasting rock; but without that cyclopean masonry hidden from view, those snowy walls of marble and those sky-piercing pinnacles of gold could not have been. Dr. Hoge's surpassing beauty of statement was bottomed on eternal truth.

He was, therefore, not only an orator, but a teacher. His sermons were not only brilliant in form, but rich in truth. So that not only in point of finish, but also in point of force he ranks with the masters of the contemporary pulpit. It is true that many of his later discourses were somewhat discursive in treatment, necessarily so because of the innumerable demands upon his time, but he never failed to bring beaten oil to the sanctuary when it was possible, and he never for a moment relinquished or lowered his conception of the teaching function of the ministry. His people were not only interested and entertained, but they were fed and nourished

with truth. The lecture which he delivered at the University of Virginia forty-nine years ago on "The Success of Christianity, an Evidence of its Divine Origin," and known to some of you from its publication in the portly volume entitled *Evidences of Christianity*, is a noble specimen of the kind of work he was capable of when he was at his best. I venture the assertion, though it seems a sweeping one, that in the whole realm of apologetic literature there is not a more polished or more powerful demonstration of the truth of Christianity. I have often wished that it might be published separately and thus given a wider circulation.

His substantial attainments, then, were no less remarkable than his graces of speech; but here we have sighted a subject too large for the limits of this address. To use Dr. Breed's figure, a small island can be explored in a few hours, but not a wide continent. The one may be characterized in a word, but not the other. This island is a bank of sand, that one a smiling pasture, a third a mass of cliffs, a fourth a mountain peak; but the continent is a vast combination of all these features, indefinitely multiplied. So the gifts of some men are insular and may be summed up in a few words, but the gifts of the man in whose memory we are assembled to-day were continental. Every one that had heard him even once saw that there were here peaceful valleys where the grass grew green, and the sweet flowers bloomed, and streams ran rippling; but those who sailed farther along shore found that there were also mighty cliffs where his convictions defied the waves of passing opinion; and when they pushed their explorations into the interior, they came upon great uplands of philosophy, where the granite of a strong theology protruded, and where the snows of doctrine lay deep; but the thoughtful explorer knew well that the granite was essential to the solidity of those towering heights and that without those snows upon the peaks there would have been no streams in the valleys, no broad reaches of meadow, no blooming flowers. He was indeed a superb rhetorician, with

a marvellous wealth of diction, a phenomenal power of description, and a rare felicity of illustration; but rhetoric in the pulpit has no abiding charm apart from truth. Strong men and thoughtful women do not sit for fifty-four years in ever-increasing numbers under a ministry which has not in it the strength of Divine truth, deeply studied, sincerely believed, and earnestly proclaimed.

We have now seen something of what he was in his preaching as a man, and something of what he was as a scholar, but after all the hiding of his power lay in what he was as a saint. Nature had done much for him. Cultivation had done much; but grace had done most of all. He preached from a true and profound experience of the mercy and power of God. He knew the deadly evil of sin. He knew the saving grace of Christ. He knew the brooding sorrows of the human heart. He knew the comfort of communion with God. He knew that the gospel was God's supreme answer to man's supreme need; and the crowning glory of this pulpit is that, from the first day of its occupancy to the last, it rang true to that evangel: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." There was never a day in all these fifty-four years when men could not have pointed to him as to the original of Cowper's immortal portrait—

“There stands the messenger of truth: there stands
 The legate of the skies!—his theme divine,
 His office sacred, his credentials clear.
 By him the violated law speaks out
 Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet
 As angels use, the gospel whispers peace.
 He stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
 Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart.
 And, arm'd himself in panoply complete
 Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms
 Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule
 Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
 The sacramental host of God's elect!”