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## REV. WILLIAM WILLIAMS, D.D., LL.D.

BY GEORGE BOARDMAN EAGER.

Thirty-six years ago last autumn, in the late summer of 1872, a young man fresh from college and a year's course in "swamp theology," left the Mississippi bottom bent on taking a Seminary course. He had examined the claims of several schools, Newton, Hamilton, Rochester and Crozer, and had deliberately decided in favor of Greenville. He had corresponded with Dr. Broadus, had read in the *Religious Herald* the editorials and articles signed by the familiar initials "J. A. B.", especially certain "Letters of Travel" from Palestine and the Orient that had lately appeared; and the name of Broadus more than all others was the magnetism and charm that drew him. He had not been long in the little mountain city, then the home of the Seminary, before he was knocking at the door of the great teacher. He was the proud possessor of an affectionate letter of introduction from a relative of Dr. Broadus, who was a Mississippi bottom planter. He had rung the door bell, and had been standing there a bit with beating heart, letter in hand, when who should open the door but the great man himself, in dressing-gown and slippers, with a student's shade over his keen, black, overtaxed eyes! The young man forgot the letter, told who he was in blunt and broken speech, and soon found himself received like a kinsman, as informally and almost as affectionately; and there and then was established the tie between him and the immortal founders of the Seminary which, in the judgment of the faculty, entitles him to the unique privilege of standing here in this honored succession. So it is he who is to speak to you to-day through the lips of the gray-haired professor with whom you are familiar.

I have no words to express my appreciation of the signal honor thus done me by my beloved colleagues. I have no conscious fitness for the task assigned me, that of dealing with the

remaining one of the illustrious four who are reckoned as founders of our beloved Seminary, Dr. William Williams, except that I knew him personally and as preceptor, that I came to know him somewhat intimately at last, and that I stood later in friendly and pastoral relation to his relatives in Alabama and to the honored church that called him to ordination.

I vividly recall my first glimpses of the Seminary and one by one of its professors. It was then ensconced in the classic and typically Southern town that was the place of its birth.

Greenville was beautiful for situation, a sort of Athens and Jerusalem in one to the Baptists of the Palmetto State; spread out in pleasing Southern fashion over several attractive hills. Through the midst of it flowed the sparkling Reedy River, a branch of the Saluda, forming there a considerable fall, and supplying power for a number of busy mills. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so were the mountains round about Greenville as I saw it that first time. The noble Blue Ridge, with its soft sapphire outlines, beautiful proportions and ever-changing charms of color, was in full view, though some thirty miles away; and the neighboring hills, including beautiful Paris mountain, gave it a jewel-like setting, completely redeeming it from the commonplace. The buildings of the little city were in the main attractive and ample. Conspicuous among them were the Baptist Church and the group of Furman University buildings, occupying sites on opposite sides of the river, admirable alike for their architectural symmetry and situation. Dr. Boyce's typical Southern home, with its large and airy wooden house, spacious lawn, grand old forest trees, and ample gardens, once the home of the famous General Waddy Thompson, was one of the suburban attractions. The citizens of Greenville were in unusual proportion people of intelligence and refinement. The place was certainly in many respects finely suited to be, what it then was, an educational center—the seat of a university, a large college for young women and a theological seminary.

I desire to speak today of this least known of the founders with some informality, freedom and fulness; but with modesty and entire respect for the judgment of others who may have

known Dr. Williams and the rest of the founders better than I did. In the nature of the case I will have to deal largely in personal reminiscences, but I would not devote the precious time allotted me to mere word pictures or panegyric. I will give, first, a sketch of the life of Dr. Williams, and then attempt a characterization and estimate of him, in the words of others as well as my own, first as a man, then as a preacher, and lastly as professor and teacher in the Seminary.

I.—*Sketch of His Life.*

William Williams was born in Eatonton, Ga., March 15, 1821. When he was twelve years old his father, also named William Williams, moved to Athens, destined to be the educational center of the State. Here he built a cotton-mill and became a man of wealth, according to the estimate of those days, and was able to care liberally for his growing family. Young Williams was reared here in a home of comparative wealth and of real piety and culture. His father and mother were people of refinement and social standing, but devout, godly people. Family worship was regularly and reverently observed, and young Williams, who became a Christian in early life, was often called on to conduct the worship. Here, too, in his seventeenth year, he entered Franklin College, afterwards the University of Georgia, graduating in 1840 when only nineteen, with the highest honors of his class. We should give due honor to his schools and school-masters, but, after all, his mother and father held the place of chief honor and influence among them all. The training of that Christian home shone through all the rest—adorned and glorified all the rest. After graduation, as his father's health had begun to fail, he, with an older brother, took charge of the cotton-mill and for two years he continued in that position, showing considerable aptitude for business. But he was not content—he had other ambitions and visions. In 1845 he was married. Shortly afterward he elected law as his vocation, and, in order to secure the best preparation possible, took his young wife to Boston and matriculated in the Law School of Harvard University. Here he remained three years, graduating with distinguished honor, and was about to settle as an attorney in Boston when his wife was seized with an

acute attack of pleurisy, and upon the advice of his physician he returned South. A little later he went to Montgomery, Ala., where an older brother had settled and where he lived for many years, and there he began the practice of his profession. Soon after he hung out his shingle a term of court was held, but the young attorney was without a case. A true bill was brought in against a young Negro girl for strangling a white babe she had in charge. As she appeared without attorney, the Court courteously requested "the young lawyer from Boston" to conduct the defense. The trial consumed the day and the testimony was very damaging, proving indeed the guilt of the defendant. The only hope was to appeal to the sympathies of the jury in behalf of the young girl. The argument was to be heard the next morning. The young attorney worked hard on his appeal that night, and did his best in delivering it. At the close of it a glance at the judge and the lawyers in the court-room revealed them with their heads bowed and their faces covered. Like a flash it occurred to the modest young man that they were ashamed, or making fun of him. He sat down abruptly and in confusion. But he had won his case. The judge, the lawyers, the jury and the large audience that packed the court-room were in tears. The judge submitted the case in a few words, and the jury at once retired. Soon they returned and the verdict was announced, "Not guilty". The applause that followed was deafening, and the young lawyer was lifted from his feet by his enthusiastic friends and fellow-attorneys. The news spread like wildfire, it was written up in all the papers, and tradition says it was a case referred to with interest for a generation. The presiding judge, afterwards a distinguished member of Congress, then and there predicted for the young man a splendid career. At any rate, this success gave him a winning start in the practice of his profession; his office was soon crowded with clients, and for five years he was a brilliant success at law, and men came to speak of him as one who was destined to sit upon the bench.

But man proposes, God disposes. At this very time he was greatly troubled in mind and heart by an ineradicable conviction that he should give his life to preaching the gospel. The

mental conflict was terrific. At times he would weep like a broken-hearted boy at the very thought of abandoning his chosen profession. He often talked it over in tears with his beloved and faithful wife. Finally God conquered. He yielded to his convictions and made known his decision to enter the ministry. At the request of the First Baptist Church of Montgomery he preached his first sermon for them, August, 1850, from John 7:46, "Never man spake like this man", having in his audience many of his friends at the bar. The church was without a pastor and he was immediately urged to accept the call. This he promptly declined to do, declaring that he knew law, but did not know theology. He preferred a quieter field that he might study theology as he had studied law. Accordingly, he accepted a call to Auburn, Ala., to serve the church there in connection with one or two country churches, and there received ordination that year. He was not yet thirty years of age. He entered with glowing zeal and great industry upon his work, and continued there for five years his laborious double work as student and pastor. In 1856 he was called to the chair of Theology in Mercer University, then at Penfield, Ga., to succeed the venerable Dr. Dagg, who had been elected president of the institution. He accepted, and his scholarly habits, fine acquisitions and exceptional ability as teacher and preacher soon commanded the enthusiastic admiration of his pupils and a growing circle of acquaintances in his native State. Indeed, it is said that his rare gifts and power in the pulpit soon placed him in the front rank of the ministry of the State.

When the last of the now historic series of educational conventions for the purpose of establishing a general Baptist Theological Seminary in the South was held in Greenville, S. C., May 1, 1858, Professor William Williams of Mercer University was one of two present from the far South, the other being from Louisiana. The object of this convention was to adopt a plan of organization and elect professors. Prof. Williams was on the Nominating Committee upon whose report the Convention unanimously elected four professors—James P. Boyce, John A. Broadus, Basil Manly, Jr., and E. T. Winkler. It has often been said, and no doubt truly, that but for the presence of

William Williams upon this Nominating Committee he would at the outset have been nominated and elected professor. As it was, Winkler was elected but declined, and before the Seminary opened Williams was elected in his stead, and thus became one of "the original four". He resigned his professorship in Mercer University and at thirty-eight, in the full maturity of his powers, accepted the new work offered him, though he felt compelled to write: "I had not expected or thought of it, and my mind is not so clear as I would like it to be, and as it always has been in settling any important question of duty. I hope I may not have erred."

It may be noted here in passing that all the professors when elected were young men—Prof. Williams was the oldest of the four, and none had received the degree of D.D. But, as Dr. Broadus facetiously wrote afterwards, the Baptist colleges of the South amiably recognized their destitution of all titles of dignity, and made each of them a D.D. Prof. Williams' degree of D.D. was conferred by Mercer University. Later Richmond College gave him the degree of LL.D. From that time to his death—for the interregnum of the Civil War was simply a forced vacation devoted largely to pastoral duties and studies connected with his chosen work—Dr. Williams gave himself with characteristic ardor and industry to the varied and exacting duties of his new and high position. Taxed with overwork he went down at last in February, 1876, with incipient consumption. In my note-book on Pastoral Duties, under date of March 3, 1876, I find this record: "Dr. Williams left the last of February for Florida on account of sickness, and on March 3rd Dr. Broadus took the class." In spite of his most conscientious efforts to resist the ravages of the fatal disease, the progress was sadly rapid, and on the 20th of February, 1877, he died at Aiken, S. C., in the last month of his 56th year. The funeral services were held in Greenville, S. C., and were conducted by Dr. J. C. Hiden, who had been for several years his beloved and loving pastor. Dr. Broadus preached the sermon, from a text suggested by Dr. Williams himself in one of the last letters he ever wrote, from the familiar paraphrase of the Psalm beginning: "My times are in thy hand, Lord I would *have* them there."

II.—*Dr. Williams as a Man.*

This is one of the matters about which many men know more than any man. You have a right to know, so far as I can vouch for it, what other people thought of him also. So, instead of giving simply my own recollection and estimates, I shall give some from others who knew him as well or better than I did. It is one proof of his greatness and many-sidedness, I take it, that the impressions received of him so many are to this day so clear, abiding and vivid.

The first time I ever saw Dr. Williams I was not impressed with his greatness. He did not appeal to my imagination. He was not prepossessing in personal appearance or manner. His once black hair was already silver gray. His complexion was swarthy and he had the general appearance of one somewhat out of health, or emaciated by overwork. He certainly did not seem to me to have the physical equipment, or the personal qualities that point one out and fit him for leadership. Indeed, it was true of him, as of Dr. Broadus, he was not a "leader" in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Dr. C. C. Brown, of Sumter, S. C., says of him, in terms that are perhaps a little exaggerative: "I remember Dr. Williams as well as I remember any man I knew in that long past day. He resembled a farmer more than a great teacher. One meeting him on the street might have thought he had come to town to sell grain or potatoes. He had a slight stoop in the shoulders, was broad between the ears, had a dark muddy complexion, and a chin which was inclined to be sharp (as I remember it, it was rather of the square, military type)." It was not surprising that a man of Dr. J. C. Hiden's candor should say, even at the funeral, something to the same effect. "I remember," he said, "the first time I ever saw Dr. Williams. It was at a convention in North Carolina. I heard that he was to preach and at the appointed hour I went around. A small, rather insignificant looking man entered the pulpit. When he gave out his hymn there was nothing peculiar; but when he read the Scriptures I found myself taking notice and listening intently. Then he took a text, and it was one I had been studying for years without getting the meaning satisfactorily. Dr. Williams took it



and with easy mastery laid it open before us until we could see it as though under a sunbeam in all its parts and bearings; and he did it, too, in just thirty minutes."

I need hardly say the sequel with me was as with Dr. Hiden. The preacher at first loomed larger than the man, but the man grew upon me apace. I came to recognize the sallow complexion as of the kind that often accompanies and betokens the nervous organization and great mental intensity, and the manner but one expression of his modesty. I soon saw the light of a glorious intellect shining through and illuminating the dull but translucent mask, and even his manner became winning to me. Who that ever observed him in the genial glow of conversation, or under the excitement of public speech can forget the changeful, meaningful brightness of his dark, wonderful eyes, now suffused with the kindest light and anon blazing with electric brilliance and force? Dr. Brown well says: "His dark, hazel eyes were the glory of his face, crowned, as it was when you and I knew him, with hair that hung rather long and had begun to silver." A good idea of his face and eyes may be gotten from the portrait of him that hangs here on our chapel wall.

Even in youth he exhibited the qualities of mind and character which shone resplendent in his manhood. Dr. J. L. M. Curry, who was a fellow-student in Franklin College, said of him: "In his classes he was easily first, and the first honor he attained at graduation was proof of his industry and attainments in the college course. The qualifications of mind which gave him success in the class room gave him success also in the debating society; and at that period debating societies were conducted with an enthusiasm, an interest, a devotion, an emulation, that I have not known elsewhere or since. His power of analysis, his keen and thorough perception, his clearness of statement, his discrimination between the true and the false, the genuine and the specious, his apt and concise language, and his honesty of thinking, made him even then a master in debate. No one who knew him in college life was surprised at his remarkable career as a lawyer, a preacher and a teacher."

But besides his high intellectual powers, his character was

such, Dr. Broadus well says, as to command profound respect and warm affection. While modest and undemonstrative in manner, and scorning all pretense, you needed to know him only fairly well to love him warmly and admire him greatly. Dr. Broadus, after years of intimate knowledge of him, may well ask: "Whoever knew a man more completely genuine, more thoroughly sincere, more conscientious in all his doings?"

His constancy and decision of character are well illustrated by numerous incidents that I could mention; for instance, by the story of his marriage, and later by the way he spent the interregnum during the war. His first and only sweetheart, so goes the story by a reliable authority, was a beautiful black-eyed girl who was a member of a mission Sunday School class of which he was teacher. He fell in love with her, and in spite of the difference in education and station, and over the protest of his family and friends, married her. When he started North to take his course in law, shortly after this, he took the young wife along and placed her in Mt. Holyoke Seminary, so that for three years, while he studied at Harvard, she studied at Holyoke. Those of us who knew her afterwards, I may add, know that she developed into a character as beautiful as was her person, and made him a most faithful and devoted wife.

During the war Dr. Williams' course was thoroughly characteristic. When the Seminary closed he took his servants, rented a plantation in Abbeville District and became a farmer and country preacher. But all the while he clung loyally in mind to his chosen work as Seminary professor, and heroically kept up his studies in the face of all interruptions. I might give as another instance of his independence and decision of character his gentle but firm refusal in after years to accede to Dr. Boyce's request to teach Homiletics, when the circumstances seemed to demand it. He said with decision, "No! I can preach after a fashion, but I cannot tell others how to preach. If a man brings me a bad sermon, I can sit down and write him a better one, but I can't tell him how to make his sermon better. I can't make my mind work in other men's lines." He was quite willing to do what he could do, but would utterly refuse to attempt what he knew he could not do.

Dr. A. J. S. Thomas, of South Carolina, a student of Furman University at the time of which he speaks, says: "I was never under Dr. Williams as a pupil, but I was frequently in his home. He took almost the same interest in me as a friend of his boys that he took in his own sons. I shall never cease to be grateful for the fine healthful influence he exerted over me as a boy and chum of his son Charles in his happy home—and his was indeed in all respects a bright, cheerful, charming home." I, myself, I may add, can give like testimony and can say with him: "Blessings upon the memory of the good man and his wife—a model wife and mother—for the kindness they showed me in my college days,"—only I would say "My Seminary days." As I recall Dr. Williams in the home, he was an ideal father; one in whom the utmost tenderness was mingled with firmness, who showed utter self-sacrifice, tireless love and constant care toward wife and children. His sweetness of temper was remarkable, and his *camaraderie* beautiful to behold. Moreover, here his fine vein of humor shone as nowhere else, and his delicate badinage, especially with his lady friends.

Gen. L. M. Ayer, of Anderson, S. C., who had known many of the great men of that day in Congress and out, said to Dr. T. P. Bell once, when Dr. Williams was under discussion: "Dr. Williams was one of the greatest men I ever met, and one peculiarity about him was that he was so absolutely unconscious of the fact that he was great." To my mind he was an embodiment and shining illustration of Dr. Broadus's aptly expressed idea of an educated man: "An educated man can speak plainly, modestly, in sympathy with unlearned men, and be all things to all men. While the uninstructed man cannot reach his cultivated hearers—he is debarred from one class, and the more influential—the educated man has free access to both." Dr. Williams was the most unassuming and accessible great man I ever knew, and he seemed to find easy access to minds and hearts of people of all sorts, children and country folks included, in private and in public. Dr. Hiden writes: "As his pastor I became intimately acquainted with this remarkable man. One of his most striking characteristics was

his simplicity. He was as natural and unaffected as a four-year-old child. In the social circle he was a charming companion—an admirable though not a voluble talker. He would expect you to do your share of the talking, for he was not given to monologue."

It may be said of him as truly as it was said of Dr. Boyce: "He grew up in the Golden Age of the Southern nobility, in a region where some of its best types were supplied." He was himself, as truly as was Dr. Boyce, a gentleman of the old school, "to the manner born." One marked feature of his character was its elevation. True, he had great simplicity, but at the same time vigorous sturdiness. He had convictions and the courage of them. He was as gentle as a lamb, rather conservative, but thoroughly reasonable and hospitable to new truth. Nature made him great, and grace made him greater. It was no way of his to say or do things hastily, without honest, hard thinking back of them. It has been said, "The fundamental elements of a strong character are a clear mind, a pure heart and a powerful will." All these were notably present in Dr. Williams.

### III.—*As Preacher and Lecturer.*

My first acquaintance with Dr. Williams as a preacher was on this wise. It was in Greenville, shortly after my first session there had opened. It was noised abroad on a Sunday that Dr. Williams was to preach that morning at the Presbyterian church. "Will Landrum," as we familiarly called him in those days, a Georgian of the Georgians, and interested in everything and everybody Georgian, busied himself announcing it, reminding us that Alexander Stephens had said that William Williams was "the Daniel Webster of the American pulpit." A little before the appointed hour I entered the church to find it already well filled and the students almost to a man there. I recall nothing about the service, except the simplicity and informality of the preacher in conducting it, until in a voice a little metallic, but singularly clear and earnest, he announced his text, "Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again." Immediately my attention was fixed, I cannot tell exactly why, and soon my inter-

est was thoroughly aroused. I followed him with growing impression of his lucidity, earnestness, self-possession and power as a preacher unto the climactic, unexpected, but most effective close. Nothing could have been more unpretentiously conversational than his opening sentences, nothing more satisfying than his conclusion; for, as Dr. Hiden suggests in the case he cites, he laid bare the subject as under a search-light. Moreover, he deftly eliminated all unnecessary and irrelevant questions about the *mystery*, and shut us up to the consideration of the *nature* and *necessity* of the new birth. He impressed me as singularly clear, exact and specific in his thinking. I heard him lecture and preach often after that, but only to have the impressions of that hour confirmed and deepened. His lectures in the class-room possessed regularly all the shining merits of the sermon. I can never forget the marked and abiding effect produced on my mind and heart by the last sermon I ever heard him preach. It was in the First Baptist Church at Greenville during my closing session at the Seminary, after consumption had laid its fatal hold upon him. His text was, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Before daylight the next morning the fire bells rang out, and it was found that Dr. Williams's house was in flames. When all had been done that was possible by students, firemen and neighbors to save the building and its contents, but all in vain, Dr. Williams was found standing among the onlookers as serene and brave and bright as he was the day before in the pulpit. I recall that I turned to him and said, "Well, Doctor, I reckon you little thought you would be called so soon to illustrate your sermon in this way"—to which he cheerily replied, "It's all right. Though he slay me, yet *will* I trust him." Dr. Landrum, writing of the event, says: "Have you forgotten how, standing with us boys, who were powerless to help him, he smiled sweetly as the flames consumed his property and said: 'It's all right, brethren; and I hope I shall learn the lesson this providence teaches me, and shall make it of some value to my pupils?'"

Dr. Broadus, as his letters still show, never tired of praising his beloved colleague; and the same is true of Dr. Boyce. "He had extraordinary power," Dr. Broadus used to delight to say

of him, "in the clear and terse statement of truth." "His legal studies and practice had disciplined his great mental acuteness, and when kindled in preaching or lecturing he spoke with an intensity and power which is rarely equalled." Dr. Hiden says: "As a preacher he was superb in his sphere—exposition. His style was so limpid as to make you lose sight of the 'style,' and occupy yourself with the thought alone—the very ideal of style. His mind was decidedly analytical. Like Paul he reasoned out of the Scriptures. His preaching was especially noted for condensation. His sermons seldom exceeded thirty-five minutes; and yet, outside of Bishop Butler's works, I am sure that I can recall no sermons that contained more matter in the same space. He did not take his professorship into the pulpit. His preaching was essentially popular, not professional. Though highly intellectual in the best sense, it was intensely spiritual. It was not especially distinguished by the presence of the emotional element, but appealed rather to the understanding and the conscience. Upon the whole, Dr. Williams was one of the most interesting preachers I ever heard. His delivery was thoroughly natural and conversational in tone. He had none of the so-called 'graces' of the popular 'orator'; but he was not awkward. He was an extempore speaker; but his thinking was far from extempore. He gave you not the show, but the results of scholarly thinking. While listening to his preaching, indeed, you hardly ever thought of him as a scholar. While deeply and manifestly in earnest, he did not rant. The incisive and clear-cut thought emphasized itself. His articulation was admirable, his voice clear and ringing, but never noticeably loud. I have never heard any man who seemed to speak with more ease to himself." It will not be amiss to let Dr. Hiden add here: "It was a rare stimulus to me to have such listeners as C. H. Toy, John A. Broadus, Wm. Whitsitt, C. H. Judson, Reynolds, Furman and Williams; but of all that splendid galaxy there was not one whose listening helped me more than did that of William Williams." Dr. C. C. Brown says: "Both in the lecturer's chair and the pulpit Dr. Williams's strong point was his marked simplicity of mental method and his perspicuity of style. He used but few words

and they the commonest and simplest he could find. Many put him alongside of Dr. Broadus in the pulpit, a few put him ahead of him. He had not the same sort of pathos that Broadus had, but a pathos all his own and peculiar to him. I once heard him say that he first preached his sermon and then wrote it out, but that he did not recommend this method to his pupils." Dr. Broadus, in his *Memoir of Boyce*, says, however: "Dr. Williams liked best to prepare his sermons by carefully writing them in full; then, leaving the manuscript at home, and making no attempt at recitation, he spoke freely. By this means he secured the condensation and terseness in which he so delighted and excelled, and yet the delivery was living speech." The one may give the rule, the other the exception. It is no wonder that Dr. Broadus said also: "It would be a good thing for our ministry if a volume of Dr. Williams's sermons could be published and widely scattered."

Dr. E. J. Forrester, now occupying the chair that Dr. Williams used to occupy in Mercer University, writes: "I never heard him preach while I was a student at Furman. Every sentence was a rifle ball that went straight to the mark. While so different from Dr. Broadus, he was not regarded by any of us as at all inferior." Some have said that he did his best preaching in his country fields and among plain country people. Dr. T. P. Bell, who followed him as the pastor of Standing Spring Church, near Greenville, says he found that he was greatly honored and beloved by the people there. They used to tell it that after he was called to the church he served a whole year and went every time he came to the same house. It seems that the people were a little afraid of the famous Seminary professor and hesitated to ask him to their homes. But he was unanimously re-called at the end of the year, and in accepting said with a fine twinkle of the eye and that sweet smile of his: "I suspect you wonder why I have gone to Bro. H.'s every time I came. I just wish to say it was because nobody else asked me." After that he was the loved and welcomed guest in many a humble home in the community.

Dr. E. C. Dargan, Dr. Broadus' honored successor in the chair of Homiletics, now pastor at Macon, Ga., knew Dr.

Williams well as preacher and teacher. He writes: "My impressions of Dr. Williams as a preacher are vivid, and, though received with the hearty and affectionate enthusiasm of youth, would probably be but little modified if I could hear him now. He was not as gifted in imagination and pathos as Broadus, but he had enough of both to serve the purposes of preaching, and he used them effectively. Nor was he as technical and broad a scholar as his great colleague, but his exegesis was accurate and well balanced. He shunned strange interpretations as much as anybody could. His language was clear, winsome, easy—sometimes carelessly so. Wit betimes spontaneously came, but there was a consuming earnestness that glowed in all his speech, and shone with splendor in the intense light of his wonderful eyes and the strong lines of his rugged but intellectual face. His gesture was not overabundant, but sufficient, expressive and thoroughly his own. His voice was penetrating and ringing, but not deep, nor loud, nor specially sweet. His main characteristics were the depth and fervor of his convictions and the remarkable clarity of his thinking and reasoning. This notable combination gave him an eloquence that was the delight of his audiences. I have often said that he came nearer being the perfect embodiment to me than any preacher whom I can recall of Brougham's famous definition of eloquence—"Logic on fire." I think I heard Dr. Broadus say that Dr. Williams excelled, as did Daniel Webster, in so clearly stating his case as almost to render argument unnecessary. Surely he did not use arguments that had not passed through the alembic of his own intellect and wrought conviction in his own soul; and so he made his hearers feel that what he was saying was not only true in itself as truth, but was personally and feelingly true for himself, and ought to be potently true for them also." "Alas," Dr. Dargan may well add, "How futile thus to attempt to tell of one of the noblest preachers we have ever heard. Would there were more of his kind today!"

IV.—*As Seminary Professor and Teacher.*

As we have seen, Dr. Williams was one of "the original four" now cherished as founders and first professors of the Seminary. We have seen also something of his native fitness, rare qualifi-



cations and special preparation for the duties of this high station. What it cost him and his colleagues to turn aside in the prime of their splendid young manhood, from the inviting careers and sunlit prospects that beckoned them in other directions, to launch out on untried and threatening seas in this new and then problematical enterprise, we can never fully know. What they gave up at the outset, and what, when once they had consecrated their lives to this enterprise, they endured for its sake, in times that tried men's souls, is part of the history of which Dr. Boyce said: "It never can be written in full and never ought to be." Over much of this we would, and we must, draw the veil. But surely it was eminently fit that this Founder's Day should be established and should be devoted to "calling to remembrance" the immortal four and the historic "former days" of our beloved Seminary. There are many things concerning the men and the early days of the Institution that we should not willingly let die. We should recall them and recount them over and over—

"Lest we forget, lest we forget."

We should not lose sight, for instance, of the fact that the original founders were *four*. There can be no difference of opinion here as to who should occupy the first place. One name and life are basal to this enterprise. Dr. Burrows is right, if ever God raised up a man to meet the conditions of an altering age, he raised up James P. Boyce. It was as direct and imperial a call as that given to Saul of Tarsus. But, in the long run, and in their degree, Broadus, and Manly and Williams yielded themselves and their lives to a call no less real and imperative. Touching Dr. Williams, an honored brother, after hearing that I was appointed to this sacred task, wrote: "Surely the subject deserves all the devotion and care and garnishing that you can bestow upon it. Do you know that I feel somehow that William Williams has not received his meed of honor and praise from us? We should even up the score. The memory of his great qualities, no less than those of the other immortals, should be kept ever green in the

Seminary he so cherished and adorned. He should never become the victim of his own shrinking and unostentatious nature." I had felt something of that kind myself, as others had also. And, certainly, while as far as possible from the faintest desire to rob any of the others of their due meed of praise, I would say Amen to this proposal. I trust some fitter hand may yet put itself to the further fulfillment of the sacred task.

It is not generally known that Dr. Williams, like each of the other professors of the Seminary, was called, first and last, to teach a variety of theological subjects; and he showed his many-sidedness, versatility and training in teaching all of them well. At first Dr. Williams was assigned to the Chair of Church History and what was then known as Church Government and Pastoral Duties. Scores are living today who can tell what a master he was in these schools. Later he taught Systematic Theology, as he had previously done at Mercer, and at odd times Senior Greek, Latin Theology, Polemics and, possibly, temporarily, some other subjects. In 1870 and '71, when Dr. Broadus was traveling in the Orient, Dr. Williams took his class in Senior Greek.

Dr. C. C. Brown says, "In his hands it seemed to be a sort of child's play; he had no trouble with it, his pupils had none, they seemed to know it all. But alas, he adds, when examination came three-fourths of them failed to pass. The teacher had made the study too easy and they had presumed too largely upon their knowledge."

In 1872 objection was made in some quarters to certain teachings of Dr. Williams in the class of Church Government on what is now known as the "alien immersion" question. Dr. Boyce wrote to Dr. Broadus at the time: "I do not fear the badgering of Williams. If any one badgers let him fight. We need not fear the consequences. I think some eyes would be opened to see that much could be said on the other side of a question on which they speak so dogmatically. Perhaps Williams could ask them some hard questions." Dr. Broadus wrote: "The kind of opposition encountered is very depressing. But life is always a battle. . . . Opposition—every good thing en-

counters opposition. Think of Paul and Jesus!" Rev. W. A. Mason, of Mississippi, wrote Dr. Broadus about this time, pleading for a representative of the Seminary to be sent to the forthcoming Baptist State Convention: "The chief opposition to the Seminary arises from a gross misapprehension of the way things are carried on there, and the indifference is simply ignorance. Some think you are slighting the Southwest in never sending a representative farther west than Alabama." A little later Dr. Boyce wrote: "I am anxious for Williams to go to Mississippi. If they should treat him badly I shall be sorry on his account and theirs, but it will help us. Soul liberty is worth more than "alien immersion" even with landmarks." Dr. Williams did attend the Mississippi Convention, and according to Dr. Broadus was received with uniform kindness. It may be added that both he and Dr. Broadus went to Texas the same year and were most generously treated. But after the battle for liberty of teaching about subjects on which the denomination was divided was won, Dr. Boyce did what he could without a surrender of principle to conciliate the opposition. He proposed to Dr. Williams to change subjects with him, knowing that his own views of Church Government would be less objectionable than those of Dr. Williams in the quarters indicated, and that Dr. Williams greatly preferred to teach Systematic Theology. As a matter of fact, Dr. Boyce had to be so continuously absent on his agency work in raising the endowment and effecting the removal, that Dr. Williams continued to teach his former subject as well as Systematic Theology without further trouble. It was this double work, the toiling on under the burden of these two great departments, as we have seen, that wore him out and alas! hastened the untimely end of his youthful life.

Dr. Boyce's idea was that the Seminary should attract to its class rooms and privileges all sorts of Baptists from every part of our Southland, and should not be looked upon as representing one party in opposition to some other party, and this spirit pervaded the entire institution. He would not sacrifice Williams to the clamor of the faction, but he would sacrifice his preference for Systematic Theology, and himself, if need be,

for the sake of the Seminary. But in that controversy, and all through the years, Dr. Boyce and his colleagues all stood, as their successors stand today, for liberty of thought and liberty of teaching, on questions not involving essential principles about which the denomination may be divided.

Dr. Broadus says of Dr. Williams' lectures on Systematic Theology: "They were of an excellence rarely equaled for their exact definition, their closely concatenated arguments and their profound spiritual sympathy, and they were most highly valued by the students."

Dr. T. P. Bell, who took this study under him, says: "Here, as everywhere else, he was to my mind the clearest thinker I have ever listened to. Even when dealing with the great fundamental doctrines of grace he used definitions so clear as to shed light upon those that were darker and more difficult to comprehend." Dr. Brown truly says, "As a teacher his *forte* was Systematic Theology. The darkest doctrines glowed under his touch. He was a born analyst. All that he said hung together as if put into one by a master hand. And yet there seemed to be no mechanism or effort." Dr. Hiden gives his estimate thus: "His clearness, vigor, and point as a teacher were proverbial. As a theologian he might rank as a moderate Calvinist. The purely speculative parts of what is called 'Theology' were not his *forte*. If he could not give solid Scriptural reasons for any 'article of faith', that 'article' made little impression upon him." I may add, in view of the attack made upon him at that time, that Dr. Hiden gives this testimony concerning his Baptist views: "They were distinct and pronounced, but not fierce; and in arguing for them he never forgot to be the Christian and the gentleman."

When Dr. Williams gave up at last, exhausted with overwork and lung trouble, and went to winter at Aiken, S. C., Dr. Broadus wrote of him: "I greatly fear he will never teach again. He is a noble man, of great abilities, and is the finest lecturer I have ever known. His lectures on Systematic Theology the last two or three years were something wonderful for clearness, terseness and power." Scores of others since then have given kindred testimony and estimates. Dr. T. P. Bell

tells of Dr. Broadus saying of him once that it seemed to him when Dr. Williams presented a subject he never used a word that might be left out, and never left out one that ought to be put in. "Dr. Williams was to me particularly fine," he adds, "in definition and in his treatment of the attributes of God"; and he gives this striking story as a case in point: "A number of years after I left the Seminary I was with a prominent Baptist minister who had been with me there. He had been greatly influenced in his thinking by Horace Bushnell. He had gone so far as to say that the idea of a blood atonement was horrible to him. A short time afterwards he wrote and asked me to lend him my notes on Dr. Williams' lectures, as he wanted to preach a series of sermons on the attributes of God. When he returned the book he said: 'The study of these great subjects as presented by Dr. Williams had led me to plant my feet on the old doctrines and stand where I had stood in the years before.'"

Dr. Brown brings out some characteristics and mannerisms of the great preacher that accord perfectly with my recollection of him. "He was altogether unpretentious," he says, "and while he was freely willing to give his opinions, and to abide by them, he did so without any air of pride, and in what seemed to be self-distrust. He used his long index finger much while lecturing, and seemed to clinch his points with the point of his finger. At times while lecturing his earnestness would become intense and would bear him and his pupils away into the realm of feeling where cold dogmatics died away, the spirit of didactics fled, and the lecturer resolved himself into an exhorter unto righteousness. He was, moreover, merciful to his students. He spoke slowly, and always repeated important definitions or propositions so that the class could get them in their notebooks word for word. He laid but little stress upon 'first' and 'second' and 'third.' He did not have to fasten his propositions to each other by a crude sort of mechanism—a wooden method. They were born in a well ordered brain, and each one, as it came into being, reached forth and grasped the hand of its predecessor. They were like drilled soldiers who never broke step."

Dr. W. R. L. Smith, of Virginia, fairly glows as he writes about him: "Out of the fields of memory his great kindly

beaming face shines upon me yet in unspent radiance. You and I and all the boys loved him—yes, genuinely and truly loved him. Our cordial admiration of the luminous teacher, pronounced as it was, hardly kept pace with the true affection that we gave to the winsome, noble man. In the class room we saw the clear shining of his lustrous intellect on all problems, exegetical, speculative and practical. Loyalty to truth, keen insight, brevity and power of statement, with absolute fairness and kindness, these were the qualities of his sweet, undogmatic spirit. How lovely and unconstrained was his abounding courtesy, and how humbly he did decline the office of omniscience. With what patience he waited on the slow apprehension of the student, and how genially but effectively he could dispose of the stupid or impertinent questioner. Everywhere, on the street, in the class room and in his hospitable home, he dealt with us as beloved younger brethren. His presence was summer-time to our hearts, and in our hearts he held an undisputed throne. I fear sometimes he never knew how unreservedly and tenderly we loved him. I never saw a fault in him. I never heard a student smite him with an ungentle word."

And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell the whole marvelous story of the man and of the way he achieved this sacred mission of his. Surely these four, who laid the foundations of this school, belong to that immortal band who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in conflict, turned to flight the armies of the aliens—"of whom the world was not worthy." Long live their memories and their influence, and long live this noble monument in building, which, with mortar mixed with their life blood, they builded better than they knew.

We can say of them all in substance, and of the institution they established, what Dr. Burrows so fitly said while the body of the hero and martyr, Boyce, was being borne upon the heaving billows of the sea to quiet sepulture in beautiful Cave Hill, they leave no place to be filled. Their work is triumphantly finished. The Seminary is no longer an experiment. There is

to-day no threatening of an uncertain future. With the influential pulpits of the South graced by men who are and shall be the flower of its body and heroic toil, the opposition born of ignorance and prejudice will die in obscurity. Out of the ranks of its own alumni many a trained and brilliant mind will be drafted to teach within its class rooms. It will no longer need those brave voices that so often grew tremulous in pleading for it. Nor the precious mortal frames now crumbled back to dust that failed before their normal time from incessant and exhausting labors in its establishment and upbuilding. In God's name their work is done, and will stand through enduring time a noble monument to their Christ-like devotion and faithfulness.

True, for many long years the course of the Seminary was laid across stormy seas; and not even yet can we say unqualifiedly, "all the clouds that lowered upon our ship are now in the deep bosom of the ocean buried." But our year of jubilee has come, and it is bound, unless all signs fail, to usher in a new era of progress and prosperity. We begin to see that we belong to what Mr. William James has called "the great international cosmopolitan party of conscience and intelligence the world over." It has absorbed us. We are indeed only a part of its American section, carrying on here the war against the powers of darkness; but we are playing our part in the long, long campaign for truth and righteousness and fair dealing which must go on in all the countries of the world until the end of time. This is the war in which there is no discharge. Let us, therefore, with unfaltering faith, bravely, cheerfully settle into our places and do our part of the interminable task. After all, everywhere it is the same great struggle under various names—light against darkness, right against might, truth against falsehood, love against hate. The Lord of Light and Life is with us, and we cannot ultimately fail. His voice sounds out above the dull roar of the receding storm:

" 'Tis I who led the steps aright,  
'Tis I who gave thy blind eyes sight,  
'Tis I thy Lord, thy Life, thy Light,—  
'Tis I, be not afraid.

*Rev. William Williams, D. D., LL. D.*

These raging winds, this surging sea,  
Bear not a breath of wrath to thee,  
That storm has all been spent on me, —  
'Tis I, be not afraid."