

President Hyde and the American College

I. *Collegiate Magnanimity*

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IN ENGLAND in the late Middle Ages, the college and the university grew up in close contiguity, each fostering the other while zealously maintaining its own function. In America that fruitful association could not be reproduced. First came the college, painfully working the provincial soil for two hundred years. Then, under sudden and crude conditions of fertility, the university rose like a mushroom, in some respects like a toadstool. Our colleges, while modelled on those of Oxford and Cambridge, could not cluster at two great national centres or provide university training for their advanced students. They were scattered and intellectually limited like the young States they served. About the middle of the nineteenth century they had become awkwardly aware of their own provinciality. Presently a number of them, stirred by the quick growth of natural science in Europe and of wealth and population in America, began to transform themselves all too recklessly into universities. Thus

the American university received in embryo that stamp of *nouveau riche* which it exhibits now, and so vividly, in its youth (only a hopeless cynic would say, in its manhood). And thus the American college, instead of being long and wisely stimulated, has been quickly and vulgarly overshadowed, by the university. The college in relation to the university in these United States recalls the little bird besung by the Fool as emblematic of King Lear in relation to his daughters:

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long
That it had it(s) head bit off by it(s) young.

That sparrow, however, appears to have had a mental apparatus hardly worth retaining. Not so Lear himself, at least in the Fool's opinion. Not so the American college, in the opinion of a good many educators who are no fools and who have recently been expressing themselves strongly on this subject. The college has a head worth saving. Its characteristic outlook is badly needed in the very land in which it has been so badly impaired. For the past fifty years the college in America has brooded far too meekly on university eggs. It has been abashed and dictated to, though not officially deposed, by its overweening daughters. The American university, a thing of swift and enormous growth like the towns in which it is usually situated, is the offspring of the struggling little college of a century ago, and nominally it has retained and nourished its kind mother within its precincts. Actually its treatment of her has been—well, generously matricidal. It has fattened her, with cannibalistic motives. It has progressively extended her body and dispelled her soul.

This process has now reached its culminating stage. It has gone on in recent years with such acceleration and such glamour that its real nature has not yet appeared to the public. They have seen the wonderful expansion of the university, not the fateful decline of the proper function of the college, though this comes closer to their vital interests. On the other hand, and very significantly, a number of scholars and educators not primarily interested in the college have become alarmed for the university. One of these is Professor Robert Shafer. In his vigorous articles in *The Bookman* two years ago* he has shown how the university, while blindly expanding in quantity, has narrowed and weakened her human quality by undermining her own foundation, the college. He hopes for the revival and reconstitution of the college within, rather than outside, the university walls. Here one may recall the old legends of the corpse that would freely bleed, but not come really alive again, in the presence of its murderer. May the omen perish! May the university-college experience a quick and joyful resurrection! But her strategic position just now seems less favourable than that of the independent college—the small and privately endowed institution, usually situated in a village or small town, and not connected with any university. It is often called “the small college”—rather tautologically, since the college is by nature small. The independent college, as well as the university-college, has been heavily affected by notions and methods that are proper only to the university. And in the work of casting these off, she is hampered by a certain provincial tenacity and slowness of movement.

* May, June, July, 1931.

Perhaps before she succeeds in recovering her true self, her sister in the university may rise agilely from her bier. One would like to see a friendly competition between them on behalf of the collegiate idea. But the main outlines of that idea, at the present moment, are more clearly discernible in the independent college.

It was to this type of institution that William DeWitt Hyde devoted his life. He was president of Bowdoin College from 1885 until his death in 1917. The view of him here given is based, partly on personal knowledge of him in the last four years of his life, largely on the biography of him by Professor Burnett, his colleague and friend for thirteen years*. Mr. Burnett points out that early in his career Hyde expressed the sincere conviction that "the peculiar function of the college is likely to be performed better in isolation from the universities", and that "not the country college but its university counterpart has most to fear from the growth of the universities". Some may dismiss this prophecy as a piece of special pleading. Some may regard it as a true reading of modern conditions in American education. In any case, Hyde was undoubtedly one of the few great collegians who have so far appeared in America, within or without the university walls. And he deeply affected the destiny of the American college—largely for good but not altogether so—during its period of expansion under the influence of the new universities.

Gifted as administrator, teacher, writer, preacher, and public speaker, Hyde might easily have occupied positions far more striking to the American public eye

* HYDE OF BOWDOIN by Charles T. Burnett with an Introduction by George Herbert Palmer (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN, 1931)

than that of head of a "country college", as he called it affectionately. His beginnings in the ministry in Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey had appeared to promise him high advancement in the Protestant church. But when the headship of Bowdoin was offered him at the age of twenty-seven, through the extraordinary efforts of a single admirer on the board of trustees, he accepted with full conviction. Nor subsequently could he be lured from his post by opportunities in public life or by offers of university presidencies in the growing West. The fact is, he was a born collegian. He gave to the college, and achieved for himself within the college, a rare fullness of life. "It is probable", says Mr. Burnett in his preface, "that all my efforts will not produce in most readers the creative sweep of imagination necessary to comprehend the sting and excitement, the risk and romance, and the persistent valour packed into the fifty-nine years of conspicuously academic life here recounted. . . . Hyde made no parade of his inner life. The cult of self-control permits no joyful shouts nor woeful cries, and he was a master in that cult." Certainly the biographer's task was a hard one, but he has performed it well. Some passages in his book are too local in their interest for readers outside the Bowdoin circle. Sometimes, on the other hand, Hyde's personality is not rendered with the direct intimacy of insight that the case demands. This is partly due to the author's modesty, which is very real and refreshing, and to his efforts at an entirely unbiased presentation. He is not sufficiently critical, I think, of Hyde's way of "liberalizing" the college curriculum—a serious matter, to be dealt with later on. But he gives us continual hints of

the President's limitations in other respects, while weaving together with lively sympathy the inner and outer threads of a career in which ideas came out into conduct with singular purity. He has built a fair memorial to one who showed how large life could be in a small college, and how interesting the pursuit of high quality could be in a land whose higher education, even, is drugged with the lust of quantity.

The hard but not inglorious task of the college in America is to fight false magnitude, in all its alluring guises, and to build up a real magnanimity. Here the example of Hyde, for the most part, is a tower of strength. His work in moral philosophy, finely summed up by Mr. Burnett, has the large simplicity of spirit that ought to characterize the college. "What Hyde had learned from the masters he passed on with a new-persuasiveness to his contemporaries." In one respect, the contemporaries were too much for the masters. Hyde's writings have a strain of too fluent optimism belonging to the pre-War age—begotten by the American gospel of social service from the German philosophy of absolute idealism. But these two phenomena did not affect him deeply. They were countered by his sense of humour and his shrewd moral insight. Hegel and Harvard Hegelianism (he was a Harvard graduate) did him no real harm. Always suspicious of metaphysical theories, he wore "the Absolute" in his buttonhole while applying his hand to what he called "*practical* idealism". As for the current ideal of "service", he tried to draw it into the service of the good life, the service of God. He was warmly interested in social institutions but, as Mr. Burnett says, he never found in them a "substitute for

self-control". He opposed Prohibition. In woman suffrage he saw the working of a false democratic ideal—"a stupid equality with interchange of imitated functions". Against the grain of the times he preached: "Sin is the most universal, the most stubborn, the most cruel, the most ineradicable element in human nature. . . . When a man or church or generation loses the sense of sin, it is a sure sign of the loss of the vision of God." Such facts he had learned from his own strivings, in deep humility, towards moral perfection. And he had learned them at the same time from the great masters of religion and morals. He was speaking from personal experience when, a few months before his death, he urged Yale students to face the problem of life "not in conceited and futile independence but in all the light the masters of reflection can lend". In an age increasingly devoted to cheap freedom and originality, he showed the kind of freedom that may be won from an original study of ethical masterpieces.

"Personality", he says in a passage interpreting Aristotle, "is not an entity we carry around in our spiritual pockets: it is an energy no whit larger or smaller than the ends it aims at and the work it does." This strict axiom, finely blended with Christian charity, governed his work as administrator. His emphasis was first of all on personality. The college as distinguished from other institutions of learning was for him a personal organism, not an organization. When he announced to the students in regard to their conduct, "At Bowdoin there are no rules until you break them", this was not just a picturesque attitude. It was a sober and characteristic principle of the college. It was designed for the moral education of a small, intimate, and

select society. And Hyde showed that in the right hands it could work successfully. At first his attitude met with misunderstanding and opposition, nor was his practice free from errors. But as the years went on he was able to demonstrate that the outer morality of the college could be sufficiently preserved, and its inner morality steadily advanced, with the minimum of formal rules and penalties and the maximum of personal pressures. These were exerted through casual interviews with undergraduates. The weak were advised without being threatened, except in desperate cases, and the strong were commended, and encouraged to help the weak.

Hyde's concern was for persons, not for procedures. He had no official air, no symptom of the disease that a wit has called "presidentitis", not even those occasional touches of laboured geniality that show that one is not entirely immune. His geniality like his dignity was wholly native. To others, though not to himself, he appeared to be so much larger than his office that in him the official was entirely submerged in the man. He walked the campus with head erect, springy gait, and eager eyes, not as boss of the college but as one who was proud and glad to be a member of it. He comported himself towards the youngest and greenest members of his Faculty as colleague and counsellor, and as one who was always anxious to learn something from them for the good of the college. And he made the college lovely in their eyes. He wanted them to serve the college, not him. The result was that they served him even more than the college, and often they overworked themselves in this double cause. A certain young instructor, fresh from a university

where he had been bossed by pedants, waited on Hyde for commands, and showed embarrassment when all he got was questions, directed as from an interested novice to an expert. "We hope", said Hyde laughing, "that you will do your best in your own best way, so that we shan't have to 'fire' you." He gently compelled one to be free.

There was no cry on the Bowdoin campus for academic freedom. Hyde provided more of it than the college knew how to use, in the hope that the college would learn to use it better. "Autocracy tempered by assassination", he once wrote in his jocular vein, "is the ideal college government." But his own autocracy was unofficial. It consisted of personal superiority combined with unfailing modesty. Listening carefully to every opinion, he wanted his own to prevail only (with a very few exceptions) when he could thoroughly persuade the college that it was the best. And when his position was well established, he deliberately opened himself to "assassination". He instituted an annual private meeting of instructors with representatives of the trustees, so that grievances could be aired and opinions exchanged behind his back. This bold stroke cut the taproot of administrative autocracy, the president's secrecy of access to the financial masters of the college. Of course Hyde had secrets as a great man must, but as a skilful administrator he appeared to have none. In all matters of academic policy he made the Faculty free and supreme, or made them feel so, acting merely as their chairman and introducing his own views with casual modesty. He would endure any setback of his cherished plans rather than show the cloven hoof of the official ruler. For the

plan he cherished most was that of the college as a beloved community, wherein each member, student or teacher, should have the maximum of freedom and of personal responsibility.

But he saw the danger of such a community. It might easily become an association for the mutual protection of petty personal outlooks, a hotbed of picayune activity and important indolence. He wanted it to be a little image of a mighty world—the world of universal ideas. Hence his associates, who for the most part had to be younger or lesser men than he, felt in him often a puzzling aloofness. They had a curious feeling that he was much more interested in them than in being with them. Callers found that his small talk, though wittier than theirs while it lasted, was far less extensive. The sharp concision of his anecdotes stood out in dismaying contrast with that elaboration of leisurely detail encouraged in rural New England. The talk, if confined to personalities, would soon begin to wane. The look of detachment in the President's eye would deepen. One evening he was asked by an uneasy visitor whether he liked to write in the evenings. "Oh no," was the mild but distant reply, "I only turn over in my mind the ideas I'm going to write about next morning." He would not obtrude his ideas in conversation nor open them to a merely conventional questioner. But if one could show a real interest in them, the President's eye would brighten and the talk would take on fresh ardour. Any notion, indeed, that anyone held with real conviction would excite his interest.

For sheer intellectual sword-play, on the other hand, he had little sympathy, too little. He could

throw himself heartily into many sports, from golf to banter, but not into that which delighted Doctor Johnson, the sport of "talking for victory". Johnson, too, was an earnest Christian but his conscience was not made in New England. Hyde's mind, when not completely relaxed, was morally on the job. His appreciation of art was slight unless it obviously illustrated morals. His mind was not at home in the recreative middle ground between jest and earnest. That region, which may become a protectorate of Truth if traversed by excellent minds, ought not to be abandoned to the merely smart. Here was a defect in Hyde from the standpoint of the college. But the compensation was ample. His everyday demeanour, if one came to understand it—his lively if somewhat impersonal interest in persons, his air of reserve that was never dreamy or self-centred, his vital detachment, so to call it—conveyed the sense that the little world of the college was penetrated, for him, by the unseen world of great ideas and principles.

His effort to insinuate fresh ideas into a small college without shocking its nervous system involved a good deal of gentle indirection. And this method of procedure could be misleading when, as occasionally happened, he cherished a partial view or misjudged a person. The difficulty, which might have been ventilated by heated declarations, duly repented of later on, was obscured by a blend of politic and Christian politeness on the part of Hyde. But in the main he was right. He knew that in the realm of the college, revolutionary attitudes and personal hostilities do not merely cause trouble: they cause inanition. They make the college ridiculous, not just by disturbing

her politeness, but by sapping her proper strength. They breed small-mindedness in an institution whose function is the enlargement of mind. Hence collegiate policies that are large in theory are not so in reality unless they comprise the spirit of patience and persuasiveness that belongs to magnanimity. And if Hyde's conduct could seem at times "an ungodly mixture", as one critic termed it, of idealism and tactics, it was on the whole a blessed union of principles and persuasion. He persuaded the college toward magnanimity.

In public he could utter sharp words arousing storms of resentment—as when he declared that an intellectual softening in Protestant seminaries was responsible for "the dreary drivelling of rant and cant that invades the pulpit like a flood"; or when he assailed the example of a well known college graduate who had made money by dishonest means and secured the tolerance of other alumni by pleasant generousities. But in private, among his colleagues, he set aside his gift of satiric epigram and subdued his warmth of temper. His serenity cost him much effort, which he well concealed, though in his last years his face would sometimes flush with a quick, silent struggle for charitable words. Self-critical as he was and thoroughly conversant with the academic nature, he would not try to reduce a colleague's egoism by anything that looked like direct assault. He came around it with telling questions and looked into it with unforgettable glances. One caught the gleam of his spectacles as the foursquare, bearded face—beard parted neatly in the middle—took a slight tilt to one side, quizzically. And then one met, for a moment, the

austere meekness of the eyes. The look might say: "You're quite a person, doubtless, in your own way, but you and I have to remember that personality is no whit larger than the ends it aims at and the work it does."

He persuaded the Faculty to allow him to engage occasional speakers from other institutions. This policy is now quite general, but it needs to be carried out far more fully and systematically in our independent colleges, where the indigenous professor is apt to suffer sadly—or flourish gladly—for lack of effective comparisons. However, Hyde's main corrective for collegiate littleness was his own example as a scholar. He stemmed the rising tendency of the American college president to become a mere executive, an edition in duodecimo of the new-university president. He saw that this tendency was a fateful contravention of the distinctive nature of the college. As a closely knit personal organism in which the force of example was at the maximum, how well could it grow intellectually if its leader should exemplify an arrested mental development? Hyde was a profound believer in the slow power of example. And he was free from that American lust for busy activities and palpable effects that has half spoiled our colleges. He felt he could best help to develop the college by developing his own mind and art.

Too modest and wary to flaunt this conviction, he quietly put it into action. Throughout his career he devoted his mornings almost entirely to meditation and the writing of books, postponing executive duties till the afternoon. His post-meridian labour increased with the size of the college, and though he accom-

plished it with remarkable despatch, it overloaded him and probably helped to bring on his untimely death. He needed, what every college president should have, a vice-president to relieve him of executive details. But to the end he succeeded in making administration a subordinate matter. He was first of all a vital person and a humane scholar. He did more than deplore the fussy, gregarious mediocrity of American college life. Many deplore it while aggravating it in their own refined way. But Hyde counteracted it by daily withdrawing from it into his study, and by bringing thence a renewed largeness of thought for the college. His associates could see his mind growing through the years and were affected by his example unawares. The younger members of the Faculty knew that the keen interest he took in the private work of each of them was that of a co-labourer. They were deeply and abidingly influenced by the fact that their President, for the best part of every day, presided in scholarly solitude, in strenuous and independent "leisure".

The right collegiate independence which he thus exemplified in his own practice, he inculcated in chapel and classroom. He gave a small portion of his time to classwork and made his students feel that this was an animated episode, by no means an objective-point, in the course of his own studies and theirs. He helped them to become mature and earnest by treating them as such. The class meeting was a consultation of responsible persons with a modest expert. He wrote against professors who "overload with ready-made answers youths who have never put the corresponding questions to themselves—professors who regard their mission as agitators on behalf of their

own peculiar views as prior to their obligation to the proportions of truth". But he equally condemned the modern opinion that a professor of the humanities may have no personal convictions, or should conceal them from his students in the supposed interests of truth.

The warm and difficult task of the college was to develop personal convictions while pointing ever to the beautiful standard of "the proportions of truth". Hyde required his students to win a fair knowledge of religious and ethical thought, pre-eminently of great ideas that were held in common by diverse masters in widely separated lands and times. But in the classroom he brought to the forefront "vital choices" (as Mr. Burnett says) for free discussion. And while eliciting the views of the students he gave his own, quietly and firmly. He created a demand for his convictions by not obtruding them, by never concealing them, and by constantly living them. One of his students said in after years: "There are many of us who still think of him almost daily and ask ourselves how he would have decided this or that problem. *What we decide* he would have done, *generally* rules." (Italics mine.) Such was the attitude of Hyde himself towards his own masters. In one of his books, *God's Education of Man*, he remarks: "An intelligent and thoughtful student of the New Testament ought to be able in any circumstance of life to know with substantial accuracy what Jesus would say and do were he placed in that situation." Hyde's work as a teacher was built on an old educational principle that ought to dominate the college—the principle of right and free imitation.

He fostered free decision and he was quick to take note of those youngsters who gave signs, in his own or other classes, of sound and original ability. He would invite them to private conversation in his study and help them to elevate and stabilize their purposes. One of them, now an influential professor of economics in a large university, recalls his "poised and informed attitude towards the world" and his "keen interest in human beings", and concludes with this significant sentence: "I do not remember what we talked about except that it had to do in part with unemployment and peace, but I left his study that evening with the feeling that I had indeed been thinking and talking on a higher level than I ever had before." In these informal talks with youths who were likely to become leaders, Hyde accomplished a great and quiet work for America. He would not spend his private time on students who were unmistakably mediocre. The aloofness of his attitude to them, intellectually, brought him at first a painful unpopularity. This was relieved as time revealed the deeper truth of his charity and the largeness of his educational aims.

His stress on the need of "aristocracy" in American higher education, instead of "democratic uniformity", increased with the years. In 1902 he declared that the "besetting sin" of our colleges was their addiction to "devices which get something out of everybody, instead of putting the best things into the few who are able to receive them". He persuaded a number of his Faculty to reduce their lecture-hours and to meet their students, once a week or so, in small conference groups where individual abilities could have freer scope. He publicly advocated "Pullman courses", as

he dubbed them humorously, for the mentally opulent. By 1912 he was able to establish at Bowdoin an advanced course (says Mr. Burnett) "open to some half-dozen carefully selected students, and taught in sequence by about the same number of instructors, picked for excellence from the entire Faculty". The instructors, representing various departments, agreed to centre their efforts in a subject of common interest, the writing of English, and to meet once a month in committee of the whole with the students for the open discussion of opinions and results. The most eager and comprehensive member of the group was Hyde himself.

That course was merely one of his efforts to countervail modern specialism, to foster humane excellence, to set quality above quantity. He saw that this task, under American conditions, was the crying duty of the small and privately endowed institution. He predicted, with an accuracy not yet properly appreciated by those concerned, that this type of institution must follow its manifest destiny far more boldly if it was to maintain a position of real significance "in the crush and competition to which it will be subjected in the course of educational reconstruction". The independent college should sharply distinguish itself from the general run of our educational institutions by being a place where, in an atmosphere of right freedom and leisure, "good work gets just as real a premium for its quality as passable work gets for its quantity". He might have said, "a *higher* premium". But he shrewdly preferred to set before the college a lower and more obvious test, which it has not yet passed.

Chapel, for Hyde, was the centre of the college. It was a regular and needful assembly of the academic community in the presence of its own highest purposes. The perennial discontent of undergraduates regarding this institution was quiescent in his régime. He kept before them in his brief talks the fact that "enjoyable, effective, complete life" is the end of education and of morals. He made them feel that morality and vitality, if conceived in a manly fashion, were synonyms. He brought before them their own vital needs, surprisingly illumined with timely instances. He appealed to their youthful courage and chivalry. While rousing their charity for the sins and sorrows of the world outside the college, he showed them that a very special quality of living was demanded of them as college men. Such and such a fault, he was fond of saying, could find such and such excuses in young persons at large—not in those who had accepted the privileges of the college. Collegiate priggishness was of course a danger, but rather easily avoidable today. The real danger, the deep shame, lay in submission to the easy standards of the world. College men in America, if they were not to be snug and self-deceiving poltroons, must strive to be more or less exemplary.

His approach to religion was ethical and experimental, as it must be for the most part in the modern college, and as it had been in his own case. After a hard and perplexed boyhood in middle Massachusetts, and with the words of a gloomy uncle ringing in his ears, "Stop your gabble and study your Bible", Hyde stood apart from Christianity during most of his undergraduate career, at the same time scorning "gab-

ble". Striving to find the right use for his energy, he took a hearty part in college life even while deprecating its "contemptible details and worthless successes", as he termed them. He was embarrassed when he found himself increasingly regarded as a leader and sought as a counsellor in things of the mind and spirit. He searched his heart more deeply. And one notes in his letters to those at home, amid outbursts of healthy boyishness, such confessions as these: "Let us not waste our time over this worthless gossip about my individual success: I have never succeeded yet in any sense, and the only sense in which I have any hope or desire to succeed is in growing wiser, better, and more useful, not in *being thought* wise and useful by those as ignorant and useless as myself. . . . It seems as though I had a peculiar work to do . . . but I am never very happy myself and so cannot make anyone else so. . . . I feel that I know little of myself, less of God, and nothing of the proper relation between us."

Gradually he was led back to Christianity, and forward to a fresher and broader conception of it, by a plain, humble sense of moral need—assisted, without, by two or three wise teachers and, within, by what used to be called "special grace". He found the divine power at work in himself; but he found it circumspectly. He mistrusted religious feelings even more than bigoted dogmas. In his mature writings he tried to reinstate the idea of dogma in religion, pointing out that the current reaction from it was a piece of baneful sentimentalism. But in his life as a whole nothing stands out so much as his quick and free testing of dogmas and sentiments alike in the light of

everyday experience. Always he is aware of the "danger of not converting our insight into life". He writes that "the raw material of the religious life is the distinction between right and wrong", and that the main purpose of thought is to keep this distinction "sharp and clear and bright and sensitive".

In the Bowdoin chapel the good life and the daily moral efforts that it requires were kept in the foreground. God, so to speak, was religiously kept in the background. Cant and sentimentality were starved out. But at the same time the religious imagination was underfed. This obdurate result of New England Dissent is significant in an educator so catholic as Hyde, so determined that the college, free from all narrow traditions, should foster in her undergraduates all the normal human instincts.

No one was more tolerant than he in regard to religious forms. He nicely defined sectarianism as a state of mind in which "differences of apprehension count for more than the object apprehended". A pioneer among American Protestants in practical work for church federation, and in the greater cause of Christian unity of spirit, he centred his efforts in the college. For example, he surprised the students in his classroom—Protestants, Catholics, agnostics, atheists—by successfully luring them to construct a humane creed agreeable to all. The creed was published in *The Outlook*, and widely copied and discussed, in good American fashion. Yet Hyde was well aware of the dangers of popular toleration and wished the college to work against them—soft compromise, mental and spiritual laziness, pride of supposed enlightenment, loss of rooted religious values. The college, in

the American turmoil of different races and religions, must redouble her efforts to define "the object apprehended" without sapping the life from "differences of apprehension". She must set herself to cherish what was best in each way of approaching God. Hyde watched with clear appreciation the spread of Roman Catholicism in America in consequence of the growth of our foreign population. He remarked shrewdly: "The American idea of free, secular education will stay, and [therefore] the religious methods of both natives and foreigners will have to be modified to endure: Catholics must grow less authoritarian, natives must grow less sectarian." He criticized his own sect with the same charitable perspicuity that he applied to the others. National attention was aroused by his article in *The Forum* for June, 1892, on "Impending Paganism in New England". He saw that the native church of that region was failing to regain the vital grip on the community which she had lost in the decline of Puritanism. In his last years he was heard to quote with smiling appreciation a wit's remark that the interior of a Congregational church "looked too hortatory, not enough precatory". Devotion could be aided, he knew, by rich forms of worship.

But while appreciating the adventitious value of such forms, his inbred aloofness from them prevented him from really understanding their originaive power—the unction and divine sanction which is in them at their best. When he spoke appreciatively of the religious rites and imaginative concepts that stand out in human history, his attitude, without his intention, was often that of patronage rather than of realization. Here

one felt that he was caught in the Emersonian tradition, though in admiring that master he had no desire to imitate his deficiency in religious humility. The religious images that have swayed mankind were for Hyde mere, rather than real, symbols. In his view they did not much partake of the Reality which they symbolized. His treatment of them, while often morally penetrating, was lacking in real awe. In brief, he showed how the college could take a fresh hold of religion—not how religion could take a strong hold on the college. He showed how individual members of the college, under modern American conditions, could re-approach religion with freedom and veracity. He left the future to find how the college as a community, and in vital relation to the community at large, could again become, through imaginational development as well as moral earnestness, a power for true and full religion.

In the Bowdoin chapel, says his biographer, “one worshipped somewhat by proxy, perhaps, but in the presence of a real worshipper”. The mode of worship was bleak—not so the inmost spirit of the leader. His private devotions, one soon came to feel, must have a certain fullness, a rich and embracing awareness of the “Real Presence”, not well conveyed by the services he was conducting. And this discrepancy, I think, helps to account for the touch of constraint and melancholy which marked his demeanour at the reading-desk, and which could not be attributed entirely to academic shyness. His dominant tone in chapel as in everyday life was one of free and steady cheerfulness, in keeping with his humane principles. But often his earnest face would peer along the lines of youthful

faces before him with a sort of veiled yearning—a yearning, one felt, for a fuller communion, for more concrete and compelling ways of religious expression. His was a large and social spirit of devotion employing religious forms that no longer appeared to be large and social.

However, one saw that Hyde was a worshipper so fresh and real as to be extraordinary in the modern academic world. It is impossible to convey to those who never heard him the devotional conviction with which he could charge, for attentive spirits, such plain utterances as these: "There is a Good Will at work among us—let us work today with that. . . . A sufficient prayer for today is the third petition of the Lord's Prayer, if only we will try to put it into action today." As previously suggested, his academic congregation, very diverse in their religious opinions and increasingly hostile to conventional Christianity, could not complain that the God of the Christians was obtruded upon them by the President of the college. At the same time, his brief and occasional words on the subject of Deity were notable for an unabashed directness that could rouse the wonder of those who knew how subtly he could reason in his classroom, and how conversant he was with modern philosophy and the problems raised by science. Gradually one came to see the explanation: Hyde feared God so well that he had no fear of theistic ingenuousness. This second fear, with ill results for college undergraduates, has obsessed many modern educators. But Hyde, more learned than most in skeptical philosophy, old and new, was also wiser and more faithful. His faith, or his expression of it, was constricted imaginatively,

but not abashed religiously and befuddled mentally, by Protestant modernism—or (if the phrase is more exact) post-Protestant rationalism. He knew only too well how much the gods are the creations of man. But he also knew, unequivocally, the “givenness” of God, as it is now being termed by certain leading thinkers, notably A. E. Taylor in his excellent work, *The Faith of a Moralist*. “The Infinite Being”, says Hyde in one of his books, “is there of itself”—a given reality, not only presupposed but really experienced in “finite things and finite thoughts and finite beings”.

His college audience saw that the “finite things”, the everyday moral experiences, which he kept so vividly in the foreground had always for him a divine background more real than they, though never realizable in any worthwhile sense apart from them. Turning to his writings one received the same impression. Their dominant theme was practical ethics. The ground-tone, rising here and there into memorable phrases, was the sense of “a perpetual presence, the abiding secret of all our peace and the permanent source of all our power”. That “presence” was the source and could be the fulfiller of our daily needs and efforts. These were real because it was real, and its reality could be firmly apprehended through these and through these alone. Thus one came to see the ground of Hyde’s sustained vitality; of “the sting and excitement” that the little episodes of the academic world could have for him; of the peace and power that made themselves felt in his daily life. One perceived in him a daily inward working.

Moral and intellectual efforts went hand in hand in his case to an extraordinary degree. It was this that

enabled him to keep philosophy and religion so closely associated and yet so clearly distinct. That task, which surely stands in the forefront of college problems to-day, proves too much, continually, for academic thinkers. Many of them sidestep it prudently. A few dismiss it rashly, pursuing some metaphysical notion that appears to unify the universe, at least for undergraduates, till jostled into the background by some other hasty notion. Others attempt the right task but with a kind of devastating circumspection—collegiate conscientiousness, mental persistence, and spiritual inertness. For, living as they do in a morally protected atmosphere, impeccably enough, they are apt to be deficient in vital moral energy and therefore out of touch with the real working of the religious forces which they are trying to clarify in the light of philosophic thought. The net result for the college of these three attitudes is a Pyrrhonism all the more debilitating because not clearly avowed, and because it has an air of large-minded superiority to common opinion. Hyde fought that Pyrrhonism. Above its "large-mindedness" he planted the standard of a real magnanimity.

A *collegiate* magnanimity it may be called, without contradiction in terms, for it was proper to and appropriate by the college community. It was imitable and infectious. For it was due, not to rare intellectual gifts, but to Hyde's use of his gifts with rare dedication. Collegiate complacency of every kind was rebuked by his example. In his neighbourhood, stationary moral propriety could not comfortably identify itself with morality. Spiritual dullness or laziness could not masquerade as true tolerance or intellectuality. The divergency of religion and philosophy could not

be slurred over. Nor on the other hand could it be made a matter for mental preoccupation, as though it were a problem to be solved by busy classroom minds. It had to be regarded as a stimulus for that inner moral effort, that daily striving of the lower self towards the higher self, from which alone the deepest insights come. One saw that the light of his own striving illumined for Hyde both philosophy and religion. It enabled him, though he had plenty of limitations in each of those two realms, to use both of them fruitfully, passing freely from one to the other. With the conviction of personal experience, he could write in this manner: "The scholar lives in intimate and conscious presence of a thought larger, higher, holier than his own. . . ." And also in this: "It may be a help toward a truer apprehension of God's attitude toward us to think of him as the patient and faithful, firm and friendly Teacher, who first constrains our wills to learn unwelcome lessons of obedience to law; then wins our hearts to voluntary allegiance by the manifestations of his grace; and finally leaves us to work out largely for ourselves, in original and independent ways, that character which comes through loving service and which is perfect freedom."

(To be concluded)

The Blind Poet: Sidney Lanier

ROBERT PENN WARREN

MORE than half a century has elapsed since the death of Sidney Clopton Lanier, a period sufficient for the ordinary sifting of literary reputation. His body was interred in the Greenwood Cemetery of Baltimore in September, 1881; his fame has been entrusted to the usual repositories. He has had his biography, his official edition of prose and verse, his courteous commentary in the textbooks, and even a circle of pious enthusiasts. It is doubtful if his new biography will augment his fame.*

It is doubtful, in the first place, because the biographer, Aubrey Harrison Starke, has nothing important to add to the body of common discussion. Certainly he has assembled a mass of material more formidable than has been previously accessible, but this material is, generally, of only corroborative value. It alters in neither outline nor meaning the more expert presentation made by Edwin Mims in his biography of Lanier, on which, as a matter of fact, the present writer seems sometimes to lean too heavily: Lanier's character remains unchanged for our contemplation.

In the second place, Mr. Starke entices with no novelty or acuteness of interpretation. "Professor Mims's biography makes beautifully clear the relation of Lanier to the South," Mr. Starke remarks, "but the

*SIDNEY LANIER, A BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICAL STUDY by *Aubrey Harrison Starke* (UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS. \$5.00)