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[Illustration: THEODORE LEDYARD CUYLER]

RECOLLECTIONS OF A LONG LIFE

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY THEODORE LEDYARD CUYLER, D.D., LL.D. \_Author of "God's Light on  
Dark  
Clouds," "Heart Life," Etc.\_

1902.

CONTENTS

I

BOYHOOD AND COLLEGE LIFE

II

GREAT BRITAIN SIXTY YEARS AGO

\_Wordsworth--Dickens--The Land of Burns, etc.\_

III

GREAT BRITAIN SIXTY YEARS AGO (Continued)

\_Carlyle--Mrs. Baillie--The Young Queen--Napoleon\_

IV

HYMN-WRITERS I HAVE KNOWN

\_Montgomery--Bonar--Bowring--Palmer and others\_.

V

THE TEMPERANCE REFORM AND MY CO-WORKERS

VI

WORK IN THE PULPIT

VII

EXPERIENCE IN REVIVALS

VIII

AUTHORSHIP

IX

SOME FAMOUS PEOPLE ABROAD

\_Gladstone--Dr. Brown--Dean Stanley--Shaftesbury, etc.\_

X

SOME FAMOUS PEOPLE AT HOME

\_Irving--Whittier--Webster--Greeley, etc.\_

XI

THE CIVIL WAR AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN

XII

PASTORAL WORK

XIII

SOME FAMOUS PREACHERS IN BRITAIN

\_Binney--Hamilton--Guthrie--Hall--Spurgeon--Duff and others\_.

XIV

SOME FAMOUS AMERICAN PREACHERS

\_The Alexanders--Dr. Tyng--Dr. Cox--Dr. Adams  
--Dr. Storrs--Mr. Beecher, Mr. Finney and Dr. B.M. Palmer\_.

XV

SUMMERING AT SARATOGA AND MOHONK

\_Bishop Haven--Dr. Schaff--President McCook\_.

XVI

A RETROSPECT

XVII

A RETROSPECT (Continued)

XVIII

HOME LIFE

XIX

LIFE AT HOME AND FRIENDS ABROAD

XX

THE JOYS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

\_A Valedictory Discourse Delivered to the  
Lafayette Avenue Church, April\_ 6, 1890.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

THEODORE LEDYARD CUYLER

DR. CUYLER WHEN PASTOR OF THE MARKET ST. CHURCH

DR CUYLER AT 50

LAFAYETTE AVENUE CHURCH

DR. CUYLER AT 80

## RECOLLECTIONS OF A LONG LIFE

### CHAPTER I

#### MY BOYHOOD AND COLLEGE LIFE

Washington Irving has somewhere said that it is a happy thing to have been born near some noble mountain or attractive river or lake, which should be a landmark through all the journey of life, and to which we could tether our memory. I have always been thankful that the place of my nativity was the beautiful village of Aurora, on the shores of the Cayuga Lake in Western New York. My great-grandfather, General Benjamin Ledyard, was one of its first settlers, and came there in 1794. He was a native of New London County, Ct., a nephew of Col. William Ledyard, the heroic martyr of Fort Griswold, and the cousin of John Ledyard, the celebrated traveller, whose biography was written by Jared Sparks. When General Ledyard came to Aurora some of the Cayuga tribe of Indians were still lingering along the lakeside, and an Indian chief said to my great-grandfather, "General Ledyard, I see that your daughters are very pretty squaws." The eldest of these comely daughters, Mary Forman Ledyard, was married to my grandfather, Glen Cuyler, who was the principal lawyer of the village, and their eldest son was my father, Benjamin Ledyard Cuyler. He became a student of Hamilton College, excelled in elocution, and was a room-mate of the Hon. Gerrit Smith, afterward eminent as the champion of anti-slavery. On a certain Sabbath, the student just home from college was called upon to read a sermon in the village church of Aurora, in the absence of the pastor, and his handsome visage and graceful delivery won the admiration of a young lady of sixteen, who was on a visit to Aurora. Three years afterward they were married. My mother, Louisa Frances Morrell, was a native of Morristown, New Jersey; and her ancestors were among the founders of that beautiful town. Her maternal great-grandfather was the Rev. Dr. Timothy Johnes, the pastor of the Presbyterian Church, who administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to General Washington. Her paternal great-grandfather was the Rev. Azariah Horton, pastor of a church near Morristown, and an intimate friend of the great President Edwards. The early settlers of Aurora were people of culture and refinement; and the village is now widely known as the site of Wells College, among whose graduates is the popular wife of ex-President Cleveland.

In the days of my childhood the march of modern improvements had hardly begun. There was a small steamboat plying on the Cayuga Lake. There was not a single railway in the whole State. When I went away to school in New Jersey, at the age of thirteen, the tedious journey by the

stagecoach required three days and two nights; every letter from home cost eighteen cents for postage; and the youngsters pored over Webster's spelling-books and Morse's geography by tallow candles; for no gas lamps had been dreamed of and the wood fires were covered, in most houses, by nine o'clock on a winter evening. There was plain living then, but not a little high thinking. If books were not so superabundant as in these days, they were more thoroughly appreciated and digested.

My father, who was just winning a brilliant position at the Cayuga County Bar, died in June, 1826, at the early age of twenty-eight, when I was but four and one-half years old. The only distinct recollections that I have of him are his leading me to school in the morning, and that he once punished me for using a profane word that I had heard from some rough boys. That wholesome bit of discipline kept me from ever breaking the Third Commandment again. After his death, I passed entirely into the care of one of the best mothers that God ever gave to an only son. She was more to me than school, pastor or church, or all combined. God made mothers before He made ministers; the progress of Christ's kingdom depends more upon the influence of faithful, wise, and pious mothers than upon any other human agency.

As I was an only child, my widowed mother gave up her house and took me to the pleasant home of her father, Mr. Charles Horton Morrell, on the banks of the lake, a few miles south of Aurora. How thankful I have always been that the next seven or eight years of my happy childhood were spent on the beautiful farm of my grandfather! I had the free pure air of the country, and the simple pleasures of the farmhouse; my grandfather was a cultured gentleman with a good library, and at his fireside was plenty of profitable conversation. Out of school hours I did some work on the farm that suited a boy; I drove the cows to the pasture, and rode the horses sometimes in the hay-field, and carried in the stock of firewood on winter afternoons. My intimate friends were the house-dog, the chickens, the kittens and a few pet sheep in my grandfather's flocks. That early work on the farm did much toward providing a stock of physical health that has enabled me to preach for fifty-six years without ever having spent a single Sabbath on a sick-bed!

My Sabbaths in that rural home were like the good old Puritan Sabbaths, serene and sacred, with neither work nor play. Our church (Presbyterian) was three miles away, and in the winter our family often fought our way through deep mud, or through snow-drifts piled as high as the fences. I was the only child among grown-up uncles and aunts, and the first Sunday-school that I ever attended had only one scholar, and my good mother was the superintendent. She gave me several verses of the Bible to commit thoroughly to memory and explained them to me; I also studied the Westminster Catechism. I was expected to study God's Book for myself, and not to sit and be crammed by a teacher, after the fashion of too many Sunday-schools in these days, where the scholars swallow down what the teacher brings to them, as young birds open their mouths and

swallow what the old bird brings to the nest. There is a lamentable ignorance of the language of Scripture among the rising generation of America, and too often among the children of professedly Christian families.

The books that I had to feast on in the long winter evenings were "Robinson Crusoe," "Sanford and Merton," "The Pilgrim's Progress," and the few volumes in my grandfather's library that were within the comprehension of a child of eight or ten years old. I wept over "Paul and Virginia," and laughed over "John Gilpin," the scene of whose memorable ride I have since visited at the "Bell of Edmonton," During the first quarter of the nineteenth century drunkenness was fearfully prevalent in America; and the drinking customs wrought their sad havoc in every circle of society. My grandfather was one of the first agriculturists to banish intoxicants from his farm, and I signed a pledge of total abstinence when I was only ten or eleven years old. Previously to that, I had got a taste of "prohibition" that made a profound impression on me. One day I discovered some "cherrybounce" in a wine-glass on my grandfather's sideboard, and I ventured to swallow the tempting liquor. When my vigilant mother discovered what I had done, she administered a dose of Solomon's regimen in a way that made me "bounce" most merrily. That wholesome chastisement for an act of disobedience, and in the direction of tipping, made me a teetotaller for life; and, let me add, that the first public address I ever delivered was at a great temperance gathering (with Father Theobald Mathew) in the City Hall of Glasgow during the summer of 1842. My mother's discipline was loving but thorough; she never bribed me to good conduct with sugar-plums; she praised every commendable deed heartily, for she held that an ounce of honest praise is often worth more than many pounds of punishment.

During my infancy that godly mother had dedicated me to the Lord, as truly as Hannah ever dedicated her son Samuel. When my paternal grandfather, who was a lawyer, offered to bequeath his law-library to me, my mother declined the tempting offer, and said to him: "I fully expect that my little boy will yet be a minister." This was her constant aim and perpetual prayer, and God graciously answered her prayer of faith in His own good time and way. I cannot now name any time, day, or place when I was converted. It was my faithful mother's steady and constant influence that led me gradually along, and I grew into a religious life under her potent training, and by the power of the Holy Spirit working through her agency. A few years ago I gratefully placed in that noble "Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church" of Brooklyn (of which I was the founder and pastor for thirty years) a beautiful memorial window to my beloved mother representing Hannah and her child Samuel, and the fitting inscription: "As long as he liveth I have lent him to the Lord."

For several good reasons I did not make a public profession of my faith in Jesus Christ until I left school and entered the college at

Princeton, New Jersey. The religious impressions that began at home continued and deepened until I united, at the age of seventeen, with the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. As an effectual instruction in righteousness, my faithful mother's letters to me when a schoolboy were more than any sermons that I heard during all those years. I feel now that the happy fifty-six years that I have spent in the glorious ministry of the Gospel of Redemption is the direct outcome of that beloved mother's prayers, teaching example, and holy influence.

My preparation for college was partly under the private tutorship of the good old Dutch dominie, the Rev. Gerrit Mandeville, who smoked his pipe tranquilly while I recited to him my lessons in Caesar's Commentaries, and Virgil; and partly in the well-known Hill Top School, at Mendham, N.J. I entered Princeton college at the age of sixteen and graduated at nineteen, for in those days the curriculum in our schools and universities was more brief than at present. The Princeton college to which I came was rather a primitive institution in comparison with the splendid structures that now crown the University heights. There were only seven or eight plain buildings surrounding the campus, the two society-halls being the only ones that boasted architectural beauty. In endowments the college was as poor as a church mouse. There were no college clubs, no inter-collegiate games, thronged by thousands of people from all over the land; but the period of my connection with the college was really a golden period in its history. Never were its chairs held by more distinguished occupants. The president of the college was Dr. Carnahan, who, although without a spark of genius, was yet a man of huge common sense, kindness of heart and excellent executive ability. In the chair of the vice-president sat dear old "Uncle Johnny" McLean, the best-loved man that ever trod the streets of Princeton. He was the policeman of the faculty, and his astuteness in detecting the pranks of the students was only equalled by his anxiety to befriend them after they were detected. The polished culture of Dr. James W. Alexander then adorned the Chair of the Latin Language and English Literature. Dr. John Torrey held the chemical professorship. He was engaged with Dr. Gray in preparing the history of American Flora. Stephen Alexander's modest eye had watched Orion and the Seven Stars through the telescope of the astronomer; the flashing wit and silvery voice of Albert B. Dod, then in his splendid prime, threw a magnetic charm over the higher mathematics. And in that old laboratory, with negro "Sam" as his assistant, reigned Joseph Henry, the acknowledged king of American scientists. When, soon after, he gave me a note of Introduction to Sir Michael Faraday, Faraday said to me: "By far the greatest man of science your country has produced since Benjamin Franklin is Professor Henry." With Professor Henry I formed a very intimate friendship, and after he became the head of the Smithsonian Institution I found a home with him whenever I went to Washington.

Our class, which graduated in 1841, contained several members who have since made a deep mark in church and commonwealth. Professor Archibald Alexander Hodge was one of us. He inherited the name and much of the

power of his distinguished father. Also General Francis P. Blair, who rendered heroic service on the battle-field. John T. Nixon brought to the bench of the United States Court, and Edward W. Scudder brought to the Supreme Court Bench of New Jersey, legal learning and Christian consciences. Richard W. Walker became a distinguished man in the Southern Confederacy. Our class sent four men to professor's chairs in Princeton. My best beloved classmate was John T. Duffield, who, after a half century of service as professor of mathematics in the University, closed his noble and beneficent career on the 10th of April, 1901. I delivered the memorial tribute to him soon afterward in the Second Presbyterian Church in the presence of the authorities of the University. Another intimate friend was the Hon. Amzi Dodd, ex-chancellor of New Jersey and the ex-president of the New Jersey Life Insurance Company. He is still a resident of that State. During the past three-score years it has been my privilege to deliver between sixty and seventy sermons or addresses in Princeton, either to the students of the University or of the Theological Seminary, or to the residents of the town. The place has become inexpressibly dear to me as a magnificent stronghold of Christian culture and orthodox faith, on the walls of whose institutions the smile of God gleams like the light of the morning. O Princeton, Princeton! in the name of the thousands of thy loyal sons, let me gratefully say, "If we forget thee, may our right hands forget their cunning, and our tongues cleave to the roofs of our mouths!"

## CHAPTER II

### GREAT BRITAIN SIXTY YEARS AGO

\_Wordsworth--Dickens--The Land of Burns, etc.\_

The year after leaving college I made a visit to Europe, which, in those days, was a notable event. As the stormy Atlantic had not yet been carpeted by six-day steamers, I crossed in a fine new packet-ship, the "Patrick Henry," of the Grinnell & Minturn Line. Captain Joseph C. Delano was a gentleman of high intelligence and culture who, after he had abandoned salt water, became an active member of the American Association of Science. After twenty-one days under canvas and the instructions of the captain, I learned more of nautical affairs and of the ocean and its ways than in a dozen subsequent passages in the steamships.

On the second morning after our arrival in Liverpool I breakfasted with that eminent clergyman, Dr. Raffles, who boasted the possession of one of the finest collections of autographs in England. He showed me the signature of John Bunyan; the original manuscript of one of Sir Walter

Scott's novels; the original of Burns' poem addressed to the parasite on a lady's bonnet, which contained the famous lines:

"Oh wad some power the giftie gie us  
To see our sel's as others see us,"

besides several other manuscripts by the same poet, and also the autograph of a challenge sent by Byron to Lord Brougham for alleged insult, a fact to which no reference has been made in Byron's biography. From Liverpool, with my friends Professor Renwick and Professor Cuninghame, I set out on a journey to the lakes of England. We reached Bowness, on Lake Windermere, in the evening. The next morning we went up to Elleray, the country residence of Professor Wilson ("Christopher North"), who, unfortunately, was absent in Edinburgh. We hired a boatman to row us through exquisitely beautiful Windermere, and in the evening reached the Salutation Inn, at the foot of the lake. My great interest in visiting Ambleside was to see the venerable poet, Wordsworth, who lived about a mile from the village. I happened, just before supper, to look out of the window of the traveller's room and espied an old man in a blue cloak and Glengarry cap, with a bunch of heather stuck jauntily in the top, driving by in a little brown phaeton from Rydal Mount. "Perhaps," thought I to myself, "that may be the patriarch himself," and sure enough it was. For, when I inquired about Mr. Wordsworth, the landlord said to me, "A few minutes ago he went by here in his little carriage." The next morning I called upon him. The walk to his cottage was delightful, with the dew still lingering in the shady nooks by the roadside, and the morning songs of thanksgiving bursting forth from every grove. At the summit of a deeply shaded hill I found "Rydal Mount" cottage. I was shown, at once, into the sitting-room, where I found him with his wife, who sat sewing beside him. The old man rose and received me graciously. By his appearance I was somewhat startled. Instead of a grave recluse in scholastic black, whom I expected to see, I found an affable and lovable old man dressed in the roughest coat of blue with metal buttons, and checked trousers, more like a New York farmer than an English poet. His nose was very large, his forehead a lofty dome of thought, and his long white locks hung over his stooping shoulders; his eyes presented a singular, half closed appearance. We entered at once into a delightful conversation. He made many inquiries about Irving, Mrs. Sigourney and our other American authors, and spoke, with great vehemence, in favor of an international copyright law. He said that at one time he had hoped to visit America, but the duties of a small office which he held (Distributer of Stamps), and upon which he was partly dependent, prevented the undertaking. He occasionally made a trip to London to see the few survivors of the friends of his early days, but he told me that his last excursion had proved a wearisome effort. His library was small but select. He took down an American edition of his works, edited by Professor Reed, and told me that London had never produced an edition equal to it. When I was about to leave, the good old poet got his broad slouched hat and put on his double purple glasses to protect his eyes, and we went out to enjoy the neighboring views. We

walked about from one point to another and kept up a lively conversation. He displayed such a winning familiarity that, in the language of his own poem, we seemed

"A pair of friends, though I was young,  
And he was seventy-four."

From the rear of his court-yard he showed me Rydal Water, a little lake about a mile long, the beautiful church, and beyond it, Grassmere, and still further beyond, Helvelyn, the mountain-king with a retinue of a hundred hills. I might have spent the whole day in delightful intercourse with the old man, but my fellow-travellers were going, and I could make no longer inroads upon their time. When we returned to the door of his cottage, he gave me a parting blessing; he picked a small yellow flower and handed it to me, and I still preserve it in my edition of his works, as a relic of the most profound and the most sublime poet that England has produced during the nineteenth century I know of but one other living American who has ever visited Wordsworth at Rydal Mount.

After passing through Keswick, where the venerable poet Southey was still lingering in sadly failing intelligence, we reached Carlisle the same evening. From Carlisle we took the mail-coach for Edinburgh by the same route over which Sir Walter Scott was accustomed to make his journeys up to London. The driver, who might have answered to Washington Irving's description, pointed out to me Netherby Hall, the mansion of the Grahams, on "Cannobie lea," over which the young Lochinvar bore away his stolen bride. We passed also Branksome Tower, the scene of the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," and reached Selkirk in the early evening. The next day I spent at Abbotsford. The Great Magician had been dead only ten years, and his family still occupied the house with some of his old employees who figure in Lockhart's biography. I sat in the great arm-chair where Sir Walter Scott wrote many of his novels, and looked out of the window of his bedchamber, through which came the rippling murmurs of the Tweed, that consoled his dying hours. I heartily subscribe to the opinion, expressed by Tennyson, that Sir Walter Scott was the most extraordinary man in British literature since the days of Shakespeare.

After reaching Glasgow I made a brief trip into the Land of Burns. At the town of Ayr I found an omnibus waiting to take me down to the birthplace of the poet. At that time the number of visitors to these regions was comparatively few, and the birthplace of the poet had not been transformed, as now, into a crowded museum. On reaching a slight elevation, since consecrated by the muse of Burns, there broke upon the view his monument, his native cottage, Alloway Kirk, the scene of the inimitable Tam o' Shanter, and behind them all the "Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon." I went first to the monument, within which on a centre table are the two volumes of the Bible given by Burns to Highland Mary when they "lived one day of parting love" beneath the hawthorn of

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