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ORMOND BEATTY.

1815--1890.

A  
BRIEF SKETCH  
OF THE  
LIFE AND CHARACTER  
OF  
ORMOND BEATTY, LL.D.,  
LATE PRESIDENT OF CENTRE COLLEGE.

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THE SYNOD OF KENTUCKY.

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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It has long been the custom of the Synod of Kentucky to have biographical notices of its ministers prepared on their decease. These are read before the Synod and then filed away by the Stated Clerk in manuscript. Dr. Beatty was a Ruling Elder, not a Minister, though often supposed to be one; but because of his peculiar relation to the Synod and his rightful eminence, it was determined at the meeting following his decease that such a notice should be prepared of him. The action of the Synod was as follows: "On motion a committee was appointed to prepare a minute concerning O. Beatty, LL. D., so long a servant of the Synod as President of Centre College, consisting of S. Yerkes, J. S. Hays and J. McC. Blayney." In accordance with this action, the following sketch of the life and character of Dr. Beatty was prepared and read in Synod, Oct. 12th, 1892. The paper "was approved and referred to a committee consisting of E. W. C. Humphrey, A. B. Nelson and R. J. Menefee for publication and distribution to the alumni of Centre College and the members of Synod."

There has been some delay in publishing the sketch, but for this the committee to which was assigned the duty of publishing and distributing it, is not responsible.

## DR. ORMOND BEATTY.

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Ormond Beatty was born, August 13th, 1815, and died the 24th. of June, 1890, in the seventy-fifth year of his age. He was the son of judge Adam Beatty of Mason county, who came from Frederick county, Md., to Lexington, Ky., about the beginning of the present century, soon after reaching his majority. The family came originally from Scotland, one member of which, William Beatty, purchased land and settled in Frederick county, Md., about the year 1730, and there resided till his death. His son, William Beatty Jr., married when eighteen years old and became the father of twelve sons and four daughters, all of whom grew up to maturity. The eldest of these sons held a commission in the regular army of the Revolution and was killed in battle. Judge Adam Beatty was the twelfth child of this numerous family. An older brother, Cornelius, was already engaged in business in Lexington when Adam removed thither. The latter, while assisting his brother in his business, became a student of law in the office of judge James Brown. After admission to the bar, he commenced

the practice of his profession in Washington, the county-town of Mason county. That he soon achieved distinction in his profession is evident from the fact that he was appointed circuit judge of the district in which he lived, in 1811, when he was thirty-four years of age. Soon after receiving this honorable appointment, he removed to his farm close-by Washington, where, says one, "he lived the rest of his long life, a happy, useful, studious and distinguished man; and for many of his last years, a religious man." Here Dr. Ormond Beatty was born, the fourth of a family of five sons, all of whom rose to eminence, and all in the legal profession except himself; and, "no doubt, this would have been his own chosen profession, had not his mind at a critical moment in his history been turned in another direction. Had he made the law his profession, those most competent to judge are fully persuaded he would have ranked among the most eminent jurists our country has produced. His moral and mental characteristics and his habits of study could not have failed to secure such a result.

In early life he enjoyed the unspeakable benefit of a home presided over by wise and pious parents—a home of culture and refinement. To the lessons inculcated in that home, and especially to the management and training of a judicious, thoughtful mother, he owed a debt that never was forgotten. He was prepared for college mainly at the old Franklin Acad-

erly in the town of Washington. When the time came for him to go to college, his trunk was packed with the expectation that he would accompany another youth of the neighborhood to the University of Ohio at Athens; but at the last moment, and by the merest chance, as we say, his destination was changed and he came to Danville. This was the turning point in his career. Danville became the place of his residence from that hour to the day of his death—fifty-eight years in all; and here, as we shall see presently, he was brought under influences that shaped his earthly lot in a fashion so different from that of his father and his four brothers, and from what he had probably once laid out for himself. How wonderful the providence of God! We may all look back and see how the most trivial incidents—or at least what appeared to be such at the time—determined our destiny for time, and, perhaps, for eternity as well.

In 1832 Dr. Beatty entered the Freshman class in Centre College, and, in course, he should have been graduated in 1836; but having been advanced to the Sophomore class during his Freshman year, he was graduated with the class of 1835. Before his graduation, the President of the College, Dr. John C. Young, offered him the professorship of Chemistry and Natural Philosophy. After much consideration this offer was accepted; but before attempting to discharge the functions of the office, he spent a year at Yale College in spe-

cial preparation, chiefly in the laboratory of the distinguished professor Silliman. It was here that the writer of this sketch first met him. Being at that time, 1835-36, a member of the Junior class in Yale College, he attended with Dr. Beatty the very extended course of lectures delivered by Prof. Silliman—six lectures a week for seven months, with a weekly examination.

At the opening of the scholastic year of 1836-'37, when just twenty-one years old, he entered on his duties as a professor in Centre College—a relation he held to that institution till the close of his long and useful life. In 1847 he was transferred to the chair of Mathematics, but was restored to his former chair in 1852. These changes were made to suit the convenience of the College, Dr. Beatty always cheerfully sacrificing his preferences for the good of the institution. In this position he remained till 1870, when he was elected President of the College and professor of Metaphysics and Political Science.

In 1886, after fifty years of continuous service as an officer of the College, he tendered his resignation. He had accepted the Presidency with great reluctance and only after persistent urgency on the part of the President and other members of the Board of Trustees. His resignation was finally accepted, to take effect upon the qualification of his successor; but he had to wait two years before he was released from the cares and responsibilities incident to the office,

which had become very oppressive to him as he had now passed beyond the allotted period of three-score years and ten. With the election of his successor, Dr. William C. Young, in 1888, his term of office expired according to the condition upon which his resignation had been accepted. But the Trustees were unwilling that the institution should lose altogether the name and influence, the instructions and counsels, the fatherly concern and loving care of one who had been so long and so honorably identified with its history, and who had spared neither himself, nor his time, nor his money, in its behalf. Hence he was immediately reelected to the chair of Metaphysics, but with the distinct understanding that he should not be expected to labor in the class-room more than one hour a day. So for two years longer, and till suddenly called from all the concerns of earth and time, he discharged the duties of this professor-ship.

Dr. Beatty was married three times. His first wife was Miss Sallie Lewis Rochester, who died a year or two after their marriage, leaving one son, Charles R. Beatty, who recently died in Texas. Miss Rochester was remotely connected with him, one of his father's sisters having married Col. Nathan Rochester, the founder of the city of that name in the state of New York. His second wife was Miss Ann Bell, the daughter of Mr. David Bell, one of the oldest and best-known citizens of Danville. The fruit of this



marriage was one daughter, the present Mrs. Pattie Quisenberry, with whom and her husband, Mr. John A. Quisenberry, Dr. Beatty made his home after retiring from the Presidency of the College. Here he enjoyed all the attention and care and sweet companionship that filial affection could lavish upon him the last few years of his life. In 1879, he contracted a third marriage. It was with Mrs. Elizabeth O. Boyle, widow of the late Gen. Jere T. Boyle. She died in 1886, and so for the third time he was left a widower.

Dr. Beatty united with the Presbyterian church of Danville in 1835, was elected a ruling elder in 1844, and continued to act as such in the First or Second church of Danville to the end of his life. He was a commissioner to the General Assembly a number of times, and was appointed on important committees by that body on several occasions. And as indicative of the estimation in which he was held touching matters ecclesiastical, it should be stated here in particular that in 1866 he was a member of the committee appointed by the Old School Assembly to confer with a similar committee from the New School Assembly on the subject of reunion; and that in 1883 he was a member of the committee of seven appointed by our Assembly to confer with a similar committee of the Southern Presbyterian church, in regard to any plans or methods of co operation in any part of the work

of the churches which could be more effectively accomplished by friendly co-operation than by separate and independent action. He was also appointed by the General Assembly one of the representatives of his church in the first and second General Councils of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the World holding the Presbyterian System. For a long time he was both a Director and a Trustee of the Danville Theological Seminary, and for two sessions, at the earnest request of his brethren and to meet an emergency, he filled the chair of Biblical History in that institution. This may serve as an illustration of his varied attainments. He was a good theologian and well-read in the history of the church, and kept himself abreast of the current of thought and discussion in ecclesiastical circles. In his later years he was a person of commanding influence in the Presbytery and Synod whenever he attended. *No one*, we say it advisedly, was listened to with more serious attention; no one's opinions had greater weight. In 1863 he was appointed by President Lincoln one of the visitors to the Military Academy at West Point. In 1868 the honorary degree of LL. D. was conferred upon him by the college at Princeton, N. J.; and we do not hesitate to say that few men have been more worthy of the honor than he. In this opinion the members of this body will most cordially concur.

But this brief sketch of the history of this eminent

man contributes but little to the knowledge of the man himself. Dr. Beatty led a singularly pure and blameless life, in harmony with what is required of a good citizen and a good Christian. This was manifested not only in abstaining from evil, but also in doing well. Though a modest, diffident man, he was not a negative character. The writer of this sketch associated intimately with him in times of high excitement in both church and state, and for nearly three years was a member of his household, yet never heard him indulge in harsh language or express severe judgments concerning the character or conduct of others, though ready, on proper occasions, to controvert their opinions and withstand their efforts. The breath of slander never ventured to sully the purity of his life. No stain ever rested upon his honor or rectitude in his business dealings with his fellow men. He was given to hospitality, and always exhibited genuine politeness in striving to put his guests at their ease and make them feel at home. In ordinary social intercourse his bearing was ever that of an unobtrusive, cultivated gentleman, whether mingling with the rich and great or the humblest of his fellow citizens. He did not hesitate to sacrifice his own ease and comfort to the welfare of others. Born to respectability, and ever holding a high place in the regard of those among whom he dwelt for more than half a century, arrogance and self-assertion were

utterly alien to his nature. He recognized in his heart and in his life the brotherhood of humanity, and so was more than the merely polite gentleman. He was a truly *benevolent* man, taking part in all laudable efforts to promote the well-being whether of individuals or of the community. He responded with a noble generosity to the demands made upon his time and means in behalf of the church and its institutions. Those acquainted with church and educational interests in Danville, know well that no man surpassed Dr. Beatty in the liberality of his gifts or in personal attention to such matters. The truth is hardly any one equalled him in either respect. With no needless talk, with no magnifying of self, with no assumption of superior knowledge or wisdom, he quietly but earnestly addressed himself to the up-building of the church and its interests. But his benefactions to the needy students of the College deserve particular notice, especially after he succeeded to the Presidency. They were constant, and very large for his income. No one, we suppose, ever knew what they amounted to yearly or in the aggregate. Probably he did not know precisely himself; for he observed better than most persons the injunction of our Lord, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." By gifts and by loans he was continually ministering to the necessitous. Another point or two on the moral side of Dr. Beat-

ty's character should be adverted to. One of these is conscientious fidelity to duty—fidelity in things small as well as in great. He often spoke of *a sense of duty* as the controlling force in the moral machinery. Whatever was imposed upon him in virtue of the offices he held, whether as a professor or as the President of the College, or as an elder in the church, or as a member of the Social and Literary Club, or as a bank director,—in one and all, the most scrupulous fidelity to all the obligations incurred characterized his conduct. Another striking quality was his equability of temper. His self-control was well-nigh perfect. How far this may have been due to his natural constitution, we shall not attempt to determine: one thing is certain—he had the mastery of himself. He was, in this respect, a counterpart to the venerable man who presided over Yale College when he was a student there. Indeed he resembled that calm, wise, simple, unostentatious man, in many ways. In a word, his was a rounded character of remarkable excellence.

It remains to speak of Dr. Beatty as a scholar, a teacher, and a man of intellect. It is hardly necessary to say he was a diligent and a thorough student, and his knowledge both broad and accurate. He was, without doubt, one of the best educated men of his day. He taught at one time or another the entire college curriculum with the exception of the languages. In history and general literature his ac-

quisitions were of a high order. In 1886, on the completion of his fiftieth year of service as a professor in the college, a number of the alumni determined to celebrate that event by publicly presenting to him a testimonial of their regard. A fund of a thousand dollars was raised among his old pupils to constitute "The Ormond Beatty Prize," and the Hon. John F. Phillips, of Missouri, was appointed to make the presentation address. On that occasion Mr. Phillips said: "There doubtless have been and are men your superiors in specialties, but I trust you will take no offense at what your known modesty may deem excessive laudation, when I speak my honest convictions in saying that I much question whether there lives to-day a man of letters who has exhibited such versatility of learning with so much of completeness in different branches of scholarship as yourself." This judgment respecting his acquirements will be ratified by his friends and pupils generally. He always made the impression in the class-room that he fully understood what he undertook to teach, being prompt to answer objections made to the views he maintained. His hearers felt there was much in reserve that time forbade him to present. He was an independent thinker who looked all round the subject under consideration, and presented his ideas of it with remarkable clearness and cogency. He was not a mere retailer of other men's ideas. He made

himself *master* of the subject; and so, when he differed from the text book, he was prepared to give his reasons for doing it. But he was no captious critic of the text-book, endeavoring to show off his own learning and ability at the expense of the author. And nothing was more characteristic of him than his singular patience and courtesy in discussions with his pupils in the class-room. His evident aim was to vindicate the truth and present it clearly and fairly before their minds. He may not have stimulated the mental faculties and fired the enthusiasm of those under his tuition to the same degree as some other great teachers; but if so, it was due mainly to the constitution and training of the man. Though not destitute of warm affections in the various relationships of life, his was not an emotional nature; or if so, the passions were kept under the strictest control. It was his habit of mind to look at things in the cold light of reason—calmly, earnestly, persistently. And when he had reached a mature conclusion, he held the truth, as he apprehended it, with a firm grasp, and was ready to stand by it. He was a clear-headed and a level-headed man, with natural abilities of a superior order. Nice discrimination and clearness of thought were characteristic of his intellectual operations; and his style in both oral and written discourse was pure and simple—an admirable vehicle for conveying clearly a clear thought. With-

out artistic finish, without labored rhetorical ornamentation, it served all the better the purpose of transmitting thought from mind to mind. Dr. Beatty was anything in the world but an aggressive man, yet he had the courage of his convictions; and when occasion required the presentation and defense of those convictions, he did not hesitate to meet the mightiest antagonist. Those present will not forget the day when he joined issue with the ablest man, as most of us believe, that ever sat in the Synod of Kentucky. He was indeed a great debater. His friend and colleague, Prof. Nelson, wrote very justly of him immediately after his death, as follows:

“On the 27th. of December, 1889, he was the central figure of the celebration of the semi-centennial anniversary of the ‘Anaconda Club,’ of which he was the only surviving original member. It was at the meetings of this Club that he seemed to find his highest social and intellectual enjoyment and recreation. It was here that he was seen at his best as the affable host, the instructive talker, the charming *raconteur*, the able and adroit debater. It was here that the Hon. Joshua F. Bell used to say that he ‘had heard speeches from Dr. Beatty, any one of which, if made in the United States Senate, would have won a national reputation in a single week.’”

The affection, the veneration, the high estimate of him entertained by hundreds of his pupils scattered



all over the land, many of whom have themselves attained eminent station and distinction, bear unequivocal testimony to his scholarship, his success as a teacher, the excellence of his character, and the strength of his intellect. One additional fact should be mentioned because indicative of the position he held in his native Kentucky as an educator: when, a few years since, there was formed an Association of the Colleges of the State, he was chosen the first President of it.

As stated already, Dr. Beatty died the 24th. of June, 1890. For three or four years before his decease, he had become aware that his system was suffering under an insidious disease which might prove very dangerous. He had been under medical treatment for a considerable time, but had never intermitted his ordinary duties. Only a few months before he died, he told a friend that his physician had assured him the disease was under control; that while probably he would never be entirely rid of it, with proper care it would not give him serious trouble. Yet it carried him off at no distant day. But he died with the harness on, as, no doubt, he would have wished. The afternoon of the day before the end came, he attended a meeting of the College Faculty, and in the evening rode with his daughter till an hour after sunset. Early the following morning he was attacked with severe pain, but it soon passed off; in an hour

or two, however, the attack was renewed with greater violence, and physicians were immediately summoned. He suffered intensely, and it soon became necessary to administer opiates quite freely. About one o'clock in the afternoon he fell into a deep sleep, says one of the attending physicians, from which he partially awoke at intervals, and breathed his last at ten minutes past four o'clock. Before it was known in the town that he was ill, he was already in the very jaws of death. The last conscious act of his life, save as he may have been in communion with the divine Redeemer, was to press to his heart the daughter he loved so devotedly.

Thus passed away one who had spent a long and laborious life in the service of the church and in the cause of Christian education. And in looking over his life-work and trying to estimate aright its value, it is our sincere conviction that few men have served their generation better than he. No one has rendered to either church or state a more unselfish, a more generous, a nobler offering of what he was and what he had. It may be justly said of him, as it is of the poet-king of Israel, "After he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep and was laid to his fathers." He had attained to a good old age. His work was done, and well done. Had this Synod been in session at the time of his death, and had its Moderator announced to his brethren that Dr. Beatty had

gone the way of all flesh, every heart in the assembly would have felt a pang of sorrow, and every tongue joined in saying, "There is a prince and a great man fallen this day."

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The funeral of Dr. Beatty took place at the Second Presbyterian church of Danville, Thursday afternoon, June 26th, at five o'clock. The services were conducted by his pastor, the Rev. Dr. C. B. H. Martin, in which he was assisted by Drs. Young, McKee and Yerkes. A vast concourse of people assembled to pay a last tribute of respect and affection to his memory. All felt that a loss of unusual magnitude had befallen the community. The Danville ADVOCATE of the following Saturday says, "The remains were followed to the cemetery by the largest funeral procession that ever went within the portals of the Danville cemetery." There they rest to-day, awaiting the resurrection of the just, under a monument of singular beauty and appropriateness, with the simple inscription—

ORMOND BEATTY,

August 13, 1815—June 24, 1890.