RECOLLECTIONS OF BOYHOOD YEARS IN SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA, 1788-1804

WILLIAM WINANS

Before the author of these recollections is permitted to speak for himself, he must be introduced to western Pennsylvania readers. Although he was born on Chestnut Ridge, in 1788, and lived with his family at one or another place in southwestern Pennsylvania until he was sixteen, William Winans spent the rest of his life in the Middle West and South. Starting as an itinerant Methodist preacher in communities of the lower Ohio Valley, he pioneered in the spread and culture of Methodism in Mississippi and Louisiana and became the outstanding Methodist leader of his time in that region, as well as a figure of sectional and even national prominence.

One may well leave to his telling the story of his early years in Pennsylvania, except that a word may be advanced about his parents and about the supposed occasion for his family's removal from these parts. Of his father, whom he lost at the age of two, nothing appears to be known, but of his mother it is said that she was descended from Stephen Hopkins, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The latter, as will presently appear, was a devout Methodist, and because her youngest son, William, was at first a bit wayward, it has been surmised that the family's removal to Clermont County, Ohio, in 1804, was prompted by her desire to get him away from certain associations that she, and later he, too, regarded as evil.

Perhaps even more effective than this change of scene were the stirrings of an innate sense of decency and rectitude in young Winans, for he was shortly to be found securing his release from an apprenticeship to a "House-joiner," largely because the work "exposed one to so much rude and wicked company." Followed then, in quick succession, his conversion and entrance into the ministry, first as an "Exhorter," and then, in 1808,
as a member of the “Itinerant Connection.” He was ordained deacon in 1812, elder in 1814, and in 1821 received from Baton Rouge College the degree of Doctor of Divinity, the first such degree ever conferred, it is said, upon an American Methodist minister, and an honor duplicated in later years by Randolph-Macon College.

The scenes of Dr. Winans’ labors during the first five years of his ministry were on the Limestone Circuit in southern Ohio and northern Kentucky; the Vincennes Circuit, which embraced the settlements along the Wabash and White rivers from the Indiana line to the Ohio River; and the Natchez, Claiborne, and Wilkinson circuits in the then territory of Mississippi. In the winter and spring of 1813-14 he broke ground for the permanent establishment, a few years later, of Methodism in New Orleans, by holding preaching services, and teaching school for a livelihood, until about the first of July, when he returned to the Natchez and Claiborne circuits for the balance of the conference year. Incidentally, this return trip was made in part on the pioneer river steamboat “New Orleans,” or “Orleans” as Dr. Winans has it, about three years after its construction and launching at Pittsburgh.

After that, for about five years, he retired from active ministerial service on account of throat trouble, and during this interval he married, settled near Centerville, Mississippi, and engaged successively in plantation management, farming on his own, and teaching school, as well as in the organization and promotion of a local literary and debating society.

In 1820 he returned to the itinerancy and continued in that connection in various capacities until his death in 1857. He was presiding elder of the Mississippi District, intermittently, for a number of years; of the New Orleans District, five years; of the Washington District, six years; and of the Natchez District, six years. He served as superintendent of the Choctaw Mission of the Mississippi Conference in 1824; as trustee of Elizabeth Female Academy and Centenary College for eight years; and as field representative of Centenary College in 1845 and 1849. He was a delegate to nine general conferences; a member of the convention that organized the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1845; and thrice a delegate to general conferences of the latter body. At the same time he took an active interest in politics, once running for Congress himself, and he supported the American Colonization Society and its plan for solving
In a word, the unschooled lad from the mountains of southwestern Pennsylvania through his own efforts became a man of considerable learning, an eloquent preacher, an able debater, and an outstanding leader, not only in his church, but also in the larger community within the sphere of his broad influence.

In 1855, at the age of sixty-seven, Dr. Winans started to write the story of his life, but death intervened after he had brought the account up to the year 1825, and the task of preparing a complete biography was left, under the terms of his will, to the Reverend Dr. William Hamilton Watkins, a ministerial associate. For certain good reasons the latter left the task unfinished, and his grandson, the Honorable William H. Watkins of Jackson, Mississippi, chairman of the board of trustees of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, has undertaken to complete the biography, in collaboration with Mr. Ray Holder of Duke University, who as a student at the University of Mississippi presented as a master's thesis a transcript of "The Autobiography of William Winans," with a biographical introduction.

For the opportunity to publish the Pennsylvania portion of the autobiography, the original of which, with many other Winans papers, is in the keeping of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the editor is indebted to Mr. Watkins, who supplied a copy of that portion, together with much supplementary information; to Dr. William D. McCain, director of the department, who loaned a copy of Mr. Holder's thesis; and to Dr. Sylvester K. Stevens, historian of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, through whom this most interesting document was brought to the attention of the editor in the first place.

The following rendition of the Pennsylvania portion of the document

1 To a short biography of Dr. Winans in the Dictionary of American Biography (20:373) are appended the following references to published materials: J. G. Jones, A Complete History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, two volumes (1908); C. F. Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism for 1855 (1856); Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1845-57 (1859); Abel Stevens, History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, four volumes (1864-67); J. J. Tigert, A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism (1904); L. C. Matlack, The History of American Slavery and Methodism from 1780 to 1849 (1849); and Daily Picayune (New Orleans), September 5, 1857. To the list may be added T. L. Mellen, editor, In Memoriam: Life and Labors of the Rev. William Hamilton Watkins, D.D. (1886).
is based on Mr. Holder's transcript and is intended to follow it faithfully, except for liberties taken in the paragraphing of long stretches of text, and for choices made in a few instances between alternative interpretations of illegible words.

DR. WINANS' NARRATIVE

I was born on the Chestnut Ridge in the State of Pennsylvania on the third day of November, 1788. I was the youngest of five children, three females and two males. When I was two years old we were left, by a painful dispensation, fatherless, and in poverty. It followed naturally that I was early rendered familiar with hardships and privations. The privations I felt most severely, even in childhood, and the only one which has been painful to me in retrospect was that of the means of acquiring a liberal education. All the advantages I ever derived from regular school instruction was in etymology, orthography, and such a knowledge of arithmetic as could be imparted to me in thirteen and one half days. By far the greater portion of etymological and orthographical education was received at home by snatches in the intervals of toil, from my mother, and from my sisters and brother. I have no distinct recollection how or when I learned to spell or read—both exercises are among my earliest reminiscences. From my brother, who was four years older than myself, I learned the art of writing, that is, he set me copies and gave me such instruction in the art as his own very limited acquaintance with it enabled him to give; and by dint of much practice I acquired so far that important art as to be able, with considerable facility, to write legibly, but not elegantly.

I had a turn, perhaps I should say a genius for arithmetical calculations. In the thirteen days and a half which I devoted to arithmetic under the instruction of a teacher I mastered all the primary rules, including decimal and vulgar fractions, and made considerable progress in the Single Rule of Three, having commenced in Notation. Dilworth's Arithmetic was, I think, the text book we used. This is a progress which I have never known equaled by any student besides. That my progress was sure as well as rapid, is evident from the fact, that, when I com-

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2 According to Mr. Holder, the place was near Braddock's Grave.
menced operations under any new rule or case, I almost always performed the first independently of any instruction from the teacher. Upon examining my work, he would frequently say, "You have the right answer, but you have obtained it by a process with which I am unacquainted." He would then instruct me in the mode of operating Secundem Artem, in the rule or case to which my sum belonged, after which, I had no other labor to perform under that rule or case than to make and combine the figures necessary in the operation of the various sums given to be operated. I have often regretted that circumstances did not permit my testing the force of my genius for Mathematics. I feel assured that, if I could have excelled in anything, it would have been in Mathematical Science. But, Providence had ordered [other] wise; and, to repine would therefore be impious. I had the pleasure of returning the obligation I had received from my brother in the instruction he gave me in the Art of Writing: for I taught him Arithmetic.

The English Grammer [sic] was not taught in any schools within my knowledge, during my minority. My own mode of acquiring a knowledge of it is somewhat curious. I read Systems of Grammar, as I read other books, with a view to the acquisition of general principles. I did not even know that the proper method was to commit to memory the various rules and principles; and then in parsing, to apply them to the analysis of the language. Indeed, I was nearly thirty years of age before I ever attempted to parse a sentence. Yet my acquaintance with the Philosophy of Grammar was allowed, by highly reputed Professors of that branch of Literature, to be at once extensive and critical. Indeed, I am of opinion that I may, by having studied Grammar as a Science rather than as an Art, have rendered my acquisitions in it, more philosophical than they would have been, had I studied it after the ordinary method.

My Mother, who was pious and intellectual, tho [sic] possessed of very few literary advantages, supplied, as she was able, the instruction which her means did not enable her to procure for her children from others. She was especially assiduous in her endeavors to imbue her children with correct moral and religious sentiments and principles. She taught us at the earliest practicable moment to abhor a lie, and to fear
an oath. And, she so far succeeded, that I remember to have uttered very few falsehoods at anytime in my life—one, when I was a young boy, I recollect to have uttered to avoid giving pain and offence to a kindhearted woman, at the same time that I might escape from drinking milk that was excessively filthy. I was in her employment; and, at meal-time, observing that I did not drink the milk that she had placed before me, she asked me if I did not like the milk. I replied that I did not: whereas, I was, as I have ever since been, exceedingly fond of that article of food. My lie, on this occasion, was the occasion of another being told. The old lady related my repugnance to milk to a young woman, who well knew my fondness for milk, and the state of the old lady's dairy, and expressed her surprise that a boy of my age should dislike an article of which children usually are fond. The young woman promptly affirmed that I had that strange repugnance. My position on that occasion was a trying one. I had not skill to evade the old lady's question, nor had I hardihood to avow the true reason of my rejecting the provision which the old lady had kindly supplied. I cannot, however, justify the falsehood—it occasioned another; and no lie, perhaps, was ever without mischievous results in some form.

I have never in my life sworn a profane oath—not that I have been too good to do it, for Alas! I have often committed other offences equally heinous, perhaps much more so. I ascribe my refraining from that odious vice to the horror at it with which my mother inspired me at a very early period of my childhood. I also never heard an oath from one of my Mother's children, save once, when I heard my brother swear most profanely. My sensations at hearing him were quite as distressing and gloomy as they would have been had I seen him dead. The nearest approach I ever made to this vice, was the result of association with a very profane boy of about my own age. He was boasting to me of some great exploit which he had performed. I believed he was lying and exclaimed, with a mixture of indignation and contempt, "The devil you did!" My heart immediately smote me; and tho I fully expected chastisement, I hastened to my Mother and told her what I had done. She prudently told me that, as I had voluntarily informed against myself and was penitent for my fault, she would not punish me
for it. My conscience was not, however, well instructed in regard to the spirit of this vice. There were modes of expression which I used freely, which contained the spirit of profanity, and served the purpose of venting the violent feeling which lies at the source of every profane word which is not a meaningless expletive. I could and often did say, with intense bitterness of feeling, "Confound the thing, himself or you!"—a mode of expression probably in no degree less wicked than the uglier imprecations that make up so large a portion of the vocabulary of profane language.

Though thus preserved from addictedness to two prevalent vices, by the influence of my pious, careful Mother, I was very far from being an innocent boy. Before I was fifteen years old, I was frequently drunk; and I loved card-playing more than I did to eat. Sabbath-breaking was almost a weekly offense with me. Into these vices, I was led by evil example and association. I lived in a region abounding in furnaces and forges for the manufacture of iron, and was frequently employed in them, at such labor as I could perform. The eldest son of a proprietor of one of these Furnaces was my most pestiferous example and companion. He was nearly of my own age, a very sprightly boy, who had had greatly superior advantages of education to any I had enjoyed. He was an exceedingly wicked boy, tho as amiable as considerable aristocratic assumption would allow him to be. His example had more influence with me than that of any other of my associates, and it was decidedly pernicious.

I scarcely need single out any individual, however, as the whole of society was, with very few exceptions, about as wicked as fallen human beings can be, on this side of utter perdition. Female seduction was frequent, quarreling and fighting decidedly customary—drunkenness almost universal, and therefore scarcely a matter of reproach. It was customary to the men of the neighborhood to meet at a little town, half a mile from my Mother's residence, on Saturday afternoon, to drink, to settle their differences, and to try their manhood in personal conflict. And many were the black eyes and bitten members which were the fruits of these hebdomadal reunions of the neighborhood. It must be said to their praise that the man who would have carried into these con-
flicts, bludgeons, sword, knife or pistol, would have been utterly disgraced as a coward as well as a murderer.

The last time I played cards was on the Sabbath. Myself and three others went into the forest immediately after breakfast, and played till it was so dark that we could no longer distinguish the cards. Two of my associates were grown up men—one of them, I think, nearly thirty years of age. By some means, how, I never knew, my Mother obtained a knowledge of what I had done. On Monday morning, she called me to account, in the presence of one of the men who had been my companion in playing the day before. After verifying the truth of her information by my own confession, and after setting before me the wickedness of my conduct in its proper colors, she gave me a severe whipping, demanded my cards, and required of me a solemn promise that I would never again play at cards. She destroyed my cards in my presence, applying some of them to the purpose of making boxes to hold small matters, and scattering others to the winds. I consider the whipping I received on that occasion, as among the greatest benefits ever conferred upon me by a kind and provident parent. It might not have been the blessing it was to me, had I been able to detect anything like anger or a delight in inflicting pain or exerting authority, in the motive by which my Mother was actuated in administering it. But, I clearly saw that the chastisement she was inflicting on me was as painful to her as it was to myself. Her streaming eyes told me that her heart was bleeding at the cruel necessity I had imposed upon her thus to castigate her son. As it was, I have reason to thank God for a Mother who had principle and firmness enough to arrest me thus sternly in my downward course; and tenderness enough to inspire me with confidence that my good was the aim of the pain and dishonor to which she subjected me.

It may be well in this place to advert to the great importance there is in a Mother's establishing her authority over her children very early in life, so that when more advanced in years, they may find it difficult, nay morally impossible to resist it. Thus did my Mother. I was about fifteen years of age, and large for my years, when this important chastisement was inflicted; yet the thought of resisting or escaping never, for a moment, entered my mind. And, even at a later period, and that
too, when I knew I was innocent of the offense for which she was about to inflict punishment upon me, I respectfully told her that I was not guilty, but submitted to the chastisement she thought it her duty to inflict. I knew she believed me guilty, and considered herself obliged to administer correction and this was enough to secure my unresisting submission.

It may be in place also to remark on the vast importance of early and habitual regard to the Sacred obligation of truth. The promise of my Mother obtained from me, never again to play at cards, was too sacred in my eyes to be violated, though many strong temptations solicited me to do so. But for this, I think it exceedingly probable that I should have been a black-leg child of perdition, as I had a very strong proclivity to card playing. My Mother believed it her duty to chastise her children, and that it would be for their advantage that she should chastise them for their faults, and she did it. But then she lived anterior to this enlightened age, when the wisdom of Solomon, and indeed of all antiquity is but doting grandamism, compared with that of modern investigation into human nature and the influences proper to operate upon it. She would chastise her delinquent children with the rod; but then, she was one of the most tender, kindhearted and affectionate Mothers I have ever known. This was never more apparent than when she was in the very act of inflicting the chastisement she believed we merited, and which she considered it her duty and for our good to inflict. How often have I seen her, while wielding the rod with all the authority of a parent, at the same time weeping with all a Mother’s tenderness; and indeed, so far as I at least was concerned, the tears I saw her shed were the severest instruments of my chastisement. They seemed to fall upon my heart as drops of seething oil: they inflamed my sense of guilt to agony by the evidence they afforded me of the suffering I had occasioned my loving Mother. Most fervently do I thank God for a Mother who had sufficient principle to counterwork weakness—the usual attendant of great tenderness, so as to inflict needed chastisement on the children she tenderly loved!

My first removal took place when I was about two years of age; this removal transferred me from the place of my birth to Ten-Mile Creek in Green[e] County, Pennsylvania. Here we remained about seven
years; here my two oldest sisters were married—both of them unhappily. This of course greatly aggravated the discomfort of our Mother, whose lot had ever been one of great hardness and affliction. Her fortitude, however, never gave way, and she was sustained under burdens that appeared sufficient to crush any human being, not divinely supported.

While we resided on Ten Mile Creek the Whiskey Insurrection occurred. I have a pretty vivid recollection of that early exhibition of Young America’s filibustering propensity. I suppose the impression of this event was rendered deep and lasting by my own participation in its guilt and punishment. In imitation of my seniors I had erected a Liberty pole, which by its streamers flaunted defiance to the oppressive Federal Government, who had determined that a prevalent and degrading vice should either be abandoned or should contribute its full proportion of funds to support a Government for the common good. True, I knew as little as most of those who clamored against the Tariffs of '24, and '28, of the scope and bearing of the obnoxious measure; but like them, I could and did catch the spirit of the Demagogues, who arraigned that measure. When the soldiers of the Federal Government came into the district of country in which I lived, I was terribly alarmed, and I accordingly advanced backward as rapidly, but silently as possible. I soon prostrated the honors of my Liberty pole in the dust, and assumed the aspect of a submissive citizen, subject to the “powers that were.”

We had a neighbor, a young Dutchman, who tho kind of heart, delighted to tease; he knew that I had hoarded a considerable treasure in walnuts. Coming to me soon after the appearance of the soldiers in the country, he gravely depicted the calamities to which the Insurrection had exposed its votaries, and their utter inability to protect themselves against those calamities. He then expatiated on the duty of every good citizen, especially in bringing to condign punishment such as had arrayed themselves against the Government. By this time, I was painfully aware that I was in his power; I plead for his mercy, but he was too good a citizen to withhold from the proper authorities, my delinquency, tho he appeared to feel much compassion for my distress and danger. After thus exciting my apprehensions to a painful height, he hinted that I might buy off my danger with my walnuts; I eagerly offered a considerable number,
which were accepted, and his silence promised. After apparently deep thought on the subject, he returned the walnuts, assuring me that on reflection he could not thus compromise his duty. I doubled the bribe, and was again for the time successful; his compunctious visitings returned, and he returned my bribe, and thus he proceeded until I was glad to purchase his silence with my entire hoard of walnuts. Such was the result of my only act of Nullification. Would it not be well if every nullifier were compelled to surrender all his walnuts or receive the public punishment due to every disturber of the public peace?

While we resided here, in 1796, my acquaintance with Methodist preaching commenced. Valentine Cook, James Smith and James Latimus were the preachers whom I remember. They preached at the house of a Mr. Heaton, a neighbor of my Mother's—a very pious and upright man who was leader of the little class which was formed in the neighborhood. I was too young to know anything of the comparative abilities of these three preachers. Smith, however, was decidedly my favorite. I suppose because he was an uncommonly fine looking man. Cook I rated much above Latimus who, I thought, was commonplace and prosy, compared with the other two. I afterwards learned that Cook was Smith's superior in talents, and fully his equal in worth. My estimate of Latimus was, I presume, about correct, as I have never heard him mentioned as at all distinguished. So great was my veneration for, and admiration of these devoted Servants of Christ, that I not only then wished and endeavored to be like them, but even now, after a lapse of more than fifty years, retain a vivid recollection of their countenance, dress and even their manners of walking. Smith, as he appeared when he once paid a pastoral visit to my Mother, who was a member of the Church, dwells in my memory, as the very beau ideal of ministerial excellence. Smith was large, well proportioned, well dressed, with a pleasant countenance and amiable manners. Cook, rawboned and slovenly, and Latimus grave perhaps to gloominess, could not rival Smith in the admiration and love of childhood. Of their doctrines or their talents I could of course form no judgment; but, of the tone of feeling which they evinced, none, perhaps, could judge more correctly than a child; and it was this which gave Smith and Cook so strong a hold on my affection, my imagination
and my memory. In them was gravity mingled with sweetness; solemnity with cheerfulness, and dignity in every expression of their countenance, and was whispered in every tone of their voice.³

My Mother had been a Methodist before I was born. In 1796, as I have said, I heard Valentine Cook, James Smith, and James Latimus preach at the dwelling house of a neighbor, where there was a small society. From this time till 1803 or 4, my acquaintance with the Methodists was interrupted by our removal to Fayette County, five miles from Union or Beeson Town, the County Seat of that County. In 1803, a young Methodist Preacher named Davidson, came to my Mother’s and proposed to establish preaching at her house. To this, she joyfully assented. He, however, returned no more, being seized with violent fever a few days after leaving us; and being brought near the gates of death by his disease, and by some error in the process of blood-letting which was resorted to. We afterwards learned that he lost the use of his arm in consequence of that error. But though he came no more, the appointment he had made was filled by Andrew Hemphill, then a young man of imposing appearance and fascinating manners—of great readiness of speech, and very respectable powers of interesting and moving his auditors. He was succeeded, in 1804, by William Hunter and Simon Gillespie, both, I think, Irishmen. The former was bold, bluff, and somewhat pretentious; the latter retiring, grave and perhaps a little dull.

During this year, I became a probationer in the Methodist Society, in the character of a Seeker of Salvation. This step exposed me to a good deal of petty persecution among my former juvenile associates; and to an elaborate effort on the part of our landlord, Mr. J. Kinnison, an old man of seventy years, to pervert me to Universalism. Many an obstinate controversy was held between the old man and the boy, with no other result than that which usually follows controversies on almost

³ Dr. Jacob S. Payton, in his story of the founding of Methodism in western Pennsylvania, entitled Our Fathers Have Told Us (1938), refers frequently to Valentine Cook and devotes several pages to an account of his labors in western Pennsylvania and Kentucky. Brief mention is also made of James Smith and James Latimus, or Lattomus, as Dr. Payton has it.
all subjects—that each was confirmed in his own views, of one instance, of the petty persecution to which my accession to the Church exposed me, I have a distinct and somewhat ludicrous recollection. The recollection is ludicrous, but the experience was painful enough to task my fortitude pretty severely.

In that country, it was a general custom when the flax was ready for harvesting, for the young people of both sexes inhabiting a small district of country, to meet successively at the various farms where the article was grown, and mutually to assist each other in pulling the flax from the ground. These flax-pullings, as meetings for this purpose were called, were generally terminated with a dance among the young people. In flax-pulling, as in graver matters, there is no little emulation, and he or she who excels in it, has importance for the time being among his co-workers.

It happened that, in the neighborhood in which I lived, a young girl about my own age and myself were acknowledged to be superior to all others; and the first place in the field was, by universal agreement accordingly assigned to us. Side by side, we led the field, and we were so equally matched that we literally worked side by side throughout the day. She was pretty and piquant with a considerable spice of coquetry in her temperament. One day, when we were thus employed, she told me she had selected me for her partner in the evening dance. The time had been when I should have felt flattered and delighted by her declaration, and should have eagerly embraced her offer. But, I was now sincerely desirous to be a Christian, and firmly believed as I have ever since believed, that there is nothing more utterly inconsistent with a Christian spirit—more utterly preventive of success in becoming or remaining a Christian, than this fashionable amusement. I therefore declined the honor she intended me, but declined it in the least offensive manner of which I was capable. She was by no means satisfied, and urged my compliance with considerable pertinacity. She reasoned, she coaxed, she ridiculed, she pouted: but I remained firm in declining to dance. At last, when she despaired of shaking my determination, she said with an air and tone in which indignation and scorn were pre-
dominant, "If you will not be my partner in the dance, I will call you a Methodist preachment."

They only, who are, as I always have been, in a high degree, susceptible of female influence, can appreciate the difficulty of my situation on this occasion. I could, with far less difficulty, have faced the coarse and rude hostility of a host of male opposers. The struggle to maintain my integrity against the magic influence of female solicitation, was a very severe one; and the scorn with which I was regarded by this girl, when she saw her solicitations to be unavailing, was more painful to me than would have been contempt and hatred of all of my young associates of my own sex. I was not the first to feel the force of female influence in solicitations to wrong-doing, to be difficult to be resisted. Milton, speaking of Adam's seduction into crime, represents him to have been

"Not by stronger reason moved,
But fondly overcome, by female charms."

And many a one, between Adam's day and mine, have found female allurements to vice the sorest temptation and most difficult to be resisted of any by which they have been assailed. I have cause to be devoutly thankful to God, that, in this trial, I was enabled to stand firm; but the victory was not gained without sore conflict.

At the iron-works, in which I was at this time employed I met with daily annoyances in my capacity as a religious aspirant. But, all that I suffered from those who made no profession of religion was as nothing compared to that which resulted from the incongruous deportment of the only other Methodist employed in the same works with myself. He was the Foreman, or Keeper in the Furnace. There was nothing flagitiously wicked in his conduct; but he was addicted to petty meanness, which rendered him an object of general contempt, and reflected contempt on the Church to which he belonged, in the estimation of such as knew the Church only by his representation of its character.

One instance of his meanness had myself for its object. I was employed to perform certain definite portions of the work, under his general supervision, and my compensation was graduated to the amount of labor required of me. The work of his department was of much higher
grade than mine, and his compensation was proportionately greater. His duties were as strictly defined as mine were. At first, he would request me to afford him some temporary assistance in his department. This I did cheerfully—gratified that I could be of any service to my only Christian brother, and looking for, and desiring no remuneration. But, by degrees, as he saw me qualified for the task, he devolved upon me nearly the whole of his right duties. At that time, I had no labor of my own to perform. As I had commenced obliging him in the unsuspecting confidence of brotherhood, and as he insensibly increased his claims upon my assistance, I never stipulated for any compensation; tho I almost daily performed his labor, from the hour at which the other Day-hands retired, till midnight. As no stipulation had been made, he had the meanness thus to receive my services, without ever offering me remuneration or scarcely thanks. This was sufficiently known, as well as many other instances of his measures, to render him an object of general contempt or abhorrence; and, as he was a Methodist, to cast odium on that Church, then very little known in that country.

Though a member of the Church, my religious advantages were few and inadequate to the wants of my condition; and consequently, my progress toward becoming a Christian was very slow, if indeed, I made any progress at all in that direction. My Mother’s home not being an eligible place for preaching, the appointment was removed to a distance greater than I could conveniently travel, and the preaching being on the working day, my engagement in the Furnace would not allow of my attending often. Of Class-meeting, too, without frequent attendance on which I have never known Methodists to prosper in vital Religion, I had very seldom an opportunity of enjoying the advantage.

While yet the preaching continued to be at my Mother’s house, I attended the first Love-Feast I ever witnessed. It was holden in Union Town. When I arrived the door was closed, but one of the preachers, who had been at my Mother’s and knew the distance I had come to attend the meeting, seeing me without called me to the Pulpit Window and drew me in. It was a season of great refreshing to many; and I looked upon that Love Feast as by no means a bad representation of
heaven itself. I recollect no particular of importance: but I do well re-
member that love, and joy, and brotherly kindness appeared to me to
abound in a very remarkable degree, lighting up the countenance with
heavenly radiance, and kindling the eye with rapture in many a happy
face in that meeting. No after scene of a similar kind, has displaced the
impression which this First witnessed Feast of love made upon my mind
and my heart. It dwells in my memory as a sacred reminiscence. But
I was too much occupied with the interest of what was passing around,
and sympathized too keenly in the happiness of those who rejoiced unto
God on that occasion, to have much self-communing, or to derive much
spiritual advantage from the meeting. I was as one who is rapt by the
sweet and swelling tones of the organ, too much pleased to be devout
—too much drawn out of myself to care for my own moral condition
and spiritual interests. Hence, my spiritual profiting was small.

I remember being specially struck by the exhibition of deep and
ardent piety in a black man, who was one of those that related a re-
ligious experience on the occasion. I had previously seen not more than
probably a half-dozen of Africa's children. But I had learned somehow
to consider them an inferior race of human beings, and I was at once
astonished and delighted to witness in this man, a capacity for and an
enjoyment of what I then considered the highest attainment to which
man can aspire in his present state. Many, very many instances have
since that time, assured me that, in regard to this, "God is no respector
of persons," colors, or conditions. Among the most deeply pious Chris-
tians whom I have known, have been many black people—who, ignor-
ant in other matters, degraded in condition—many of them Slaves,
were children of God by Faith, and heirs of the promise of life eternal
through Christ Jesus.

About this time also, I attended the first Camp-meeting I was ever
at. It was held on Pike River, some three miles from Brownsville, or
Redstone Old Fort, on the opposite side of the Monongahela River.
The accommodations were very efficient, I think there was neither
camp nor tent on the ground, nor do I recollect that there was any-
thing like a table for eating purposes. Those who had wagons or carts
occupied them as dormitories. Those who had not wagons or carts, as most had not, bivouacked, under perhaps a sheet or blanket. The concourse of people was immensely great; so much as that, on the Sabbath it was necessary to divide the congregation, as no preacher was able to make all hear. At the Sacrament, upwards of four hundred communicants were counted.

There was a great out-pouring of the spirit. Many conversions and some striking instances of entire sanctifications occurred. I recollect one in particular, having been an attentive and curious observer of the subject of that change for several hours. It was a lady, who was the subject of this remarkable visitation of saving Grace. She lay, in appearance as if she were dead, for eight hours. Many, both religious and irreligious, examined her condition critically. The greater number believed and pronounced her dead. She was without respiration, without pulse, and without animal heat, except that some ladies who made an examination, said there was some warmth over the region of the heart. I remained by her, as I have observed, for several hours. I was induced to do so, by the declaration of one of the Preachers, who in reply to a confident assertion that she was dead, affirmed that she was not; that she was at that time undergoing an important spiritual change. That she would, in due time, be restored to consciousness and action—and that the first word she would utter when thus restored, would be "glory."

There was a crowd around her at the time of her revivescence. I stood very near her. She had scarcely respired freely, when it was apparent that she was laboring to speak. I listened with intense interest, and her first articulation, which seemed to proceed from her chest, was glory! Her utterance became more distinct, and glory! glory! glory! till the whole forest seemed to ring with her exultant shout. I marked the process of her recovery minutely. The first indication of it that was perceived, was a quivering of the eyelids—then a fluttering pulsation of the heart—then a heaving of the chest, as the lungs resumed their long suspended activity—then an effort to speak. In an incredibly short time, after suspended animation through eight hours, she became strong and active, sprang to her feet, clapped her hands with vigor, leaped with
agility and shouted, loud and long, "glory! glory!" She professed, on this occasion, to have received the witness of entire sanctification—the blessing of perfect love. Those who believed in the attainment to that Christian State by an instantaneous operation of the Divine Spirit, believed her testimony—those who did not thus believe, and had witnessed the phenomena of her case were awed and confounded, and went away feeling, if they did not say, "We have seen strange things today."

Much disorder prevailed in the neighborhood of this place of worship. "Rude Fellows of the baser sort," tho some of them had the dress and air of Gentlemen, were congregated at those pestiferous establishments, called places of refreshment, and there imbibed sufficient courage to display the folly and the wickedness proper to their base nature, and to trample on all the decencies of gentlemanly deportment and all the gallantries of chivalric bearing towards female sensibility, that they might give vent to their deep and virulent malignity to vital and soul-transforming religion. It was a matter of very great astonishment, to my young and inexperienced mind, that men, who looked as if they would be incapable of such degradation, descending to low, coarse, vulgar buffoonry [sic], with a view exclusively as it appeared to disturb and annoy peaceable persons, against whom they could have no grounds of personal ill-will. I beheld them not only with astonishment, but with fear, disgust, and horror, as I would have looked upon some ghastly monster, some loathsome exhibition, or some hideous portent of coming calamity.

I remember with still vivid disgust, a gentlemanly looking man, throwing himself into an attitude of passionate feeling, and singing, to a tune then rife in religious meetings where excitement prevailed, a string of foolish and ludicrous verses, commencing, "I wish I had a load of poles, to fence my garden in." I at that time, was not sufficiently acquainted with human nature, to assign any motive for conduct so utterly derogatory to the dignity of a rational and moral being. I had not, as yet, learned to understand the Apostle’s meaning, in its bearing upon human conduct, when he says, "The carnal mind is enmity against
I have since witnessed many similar exhibitions of folly and malignity, with less surprise it is true, but with equal disgust and abhorrence; and have never been able to account for them otherwise than by referring them to the intense and stultifying influence which the enmity of the carnal mind exerts upon those who yield themselves up to its diabolical control. It is true, that all irreligious persons do not thus evince hostility to serious godliness. Men, having any just notions of what is due to self-respect, or of the claims which men in society have upon one another, would scorn thus to degrade themselves, and, on merely social principles would respect the rights and feelings of their fellow-men too much thus to disturb and annoy them. Besides, the enmity of the carnal mind is, in most men, counter-worked by gracious influence to a greater or less extent. It is only the intensely wicked, who, having grieved and resisted the Holy Ghost, till he has left them to follow the perverse tendency of their own corrupt natures, that are capable of exhibiting themselves in a point of view so humiliating to their own dignity, so wanting in consideration of the rights and feeling of others.

It is hard, I think, to form a conception of deeper degradation of more utterly base wickedness than conduct of this kind. The villian [sic] that robs a henroost, or a sheepfold, has appetite, perhaps hunger, to plead in extenuation of his offence against social order and human rights: but, what plea can he advance, who wantonly disturbs a Religious meeting—who insults unoffending men, alarms and outrages the sensibilities of women and produces disorder and confusion into an assembly, whose proceedings, if not beneficial, are, at least, not injurious to society?

The practice of disturbing Religious assemblies is not only basely and wantonly wicked, but as cowardly as it is wicked. The miserable poltroons, who are guilty of this practice, know that the avowed principle of those whom they thus annoy and insult, forbid revenge. And, be-
sides, there are exceedingly few of this class who have hardihood to engage in this course, except when they have prepared themselves by imbibing ardent spirits; and even then, when they can cover themselves from general observation by the shades of night. I have seen such, the day after some outbreak against the peace of a religious meeting, and when their artificial courage had exhausted itself; and, no sheep-killing dog I ever saw would slink from observation, with a more manifest consciousness of self-degradation than they. Only a very small number of such men have I known, who had sunk so low, and become so hardened against manly sensibility, as not to cower, abashed and confounded, when sober and in broad day-light, under the eyes of every decent, respectable man who they knew was a witness of their nocturnal degradation. Only love of wickedness, for its own sake, and intense malignity against God and his service can account for such a vile perversion, such an unutterable abasement of rational and moral nature.

While we resided in Fayette County, I think in 1802, there was a very great Religious excitement among the Baptists and Presbyterians, in that part of Pennsylvania. These two sects held union Prayer-meetings once or twice every week, for a considerable time. These meetings assembled in the dwelling-homes most convenient for the purpose, of those who were favorable to the Revival. Multitudes attended these meetings—many from the distance five miles and even a greater distance.

The *Jerks* was a prevailing exercise throughout the whole of this excitement. Neither the cause nor nature of this exercise was ever satisfactorily explained. It evidently was not affected by those who were its subjects. It could not have been affected. No histrionic aptitude could have imitated what was common to men, women and children, of all sorts of talent and temperament. There is reason to believe that it was not the influence of infernal agency; for, many of the deeply pious, freely yielded themselves up to it, without detriment to their piety. Neither, I think, could it be attributed to religious influence; for many of its subjects were openly wicked when it befell them; and, neither while they were under its influence nor afterwards, did it appear to be,
in their case, at all connected with any tendency to penitence, reformation or piety.

At the time, various opinions in regard to it were entertained. Some thought it was a work of the Devil, designed to bring a reproach upon religion—others considered it the result of sympathy—a spasmodic affection of the muscles, excited, through the nervous system, by the imagination of the subject so affected. Much the greater portion of the religious community, however, accredited it confidently to Religious influence.

I remember to have heard a Presbyterian Minister of some note, preach two Sermons, to establish the religious character and tendency of this exercise from the Text, Acts XIII. 41. "Behold, ye dispersers [sic]! and wonder and perish: for, I work a work in your days, which ye in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." In this favorable view of the matter, I heartily concurred at the time,—sincerely believing the Jerks to be an indication of a Pentecostal season "of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." But, when I came to test the claims of this mysterious affection by the Gospel touchstone—"By their fruits shall ye know them," I was compelled to abandon this opinion, and admit that it was among those things for which I could assign no cause. I could not perceive that after an extensive and long continued prevalence, it had accomplished any change in the moral condition of those upon whom it had operated.

The prevalence of this exercise among the Baptists and Presbyterians—my persuasion that it was a gracious work of God—and my earnest desire to be a Christian, would probably have drawn me into one or other of these communities, had it not been for the invincible repugnance with which I regarded that part of their creed which ascribes all things that come to pass to the unconditional Decree of a just, wise and benevolent God. This feature of Calvinism stood out in much bolder relief in those days than it does now, or than public opinion even in the churches which still retain it in their creed, would at all tolerate. This doctrine, at fourteen years of age, revolted my mind with horror—a horror in no degree lessened by the experience, reading and reflection
of more than fifty years. The repulsive influence of this doctrine, so inconsistent with reason and justice and so dishonorable to God, as it seemed to me, would not permit my accession to either of these Churches, strongly as my feelings inclined me to them, for reasons heretofore stated.

About this time, I witnessed the first instance of death in a human being that I ever saw. The victim was a man of middle age, who had lived remote from his neighbors. His disease was consumption; and he was so wasted by its ravages that he could truly say "my bones stick out"; for his hip bones were protruded through the shrunken skin to a considerable extent. I had gone to watch with him on the night on which he died. It was evident that he was, in this hour of extremity, "without God in the world." O, how it grieved me that there was no one to point out to this darkling wanderer "the way of salvation!" He was dying like the brute that perishes, yet, there was no one so to "care for his soul," as to endeavor to snatch him, "as a brand from the burning." Boy, and without religious experience as I was, I was strongly moved to speak to him on the subject. But, the fact that I was but a boy deterred me from yielding to the impulse.

To have witnessed the death of a fellow-creature, in any circumstances, would have been harrowing to my feelings. But, to see one thus "depart in darkness—ignorant and thoughtless of God, with no apparent thought of a future State, and without one gleam of hope, to illumine the gloom of his long journey, rendered the scene one of intense anguish—of deep, unmitigated horror. It was long ere my spirits recovered the shock of that terrible night, and, even now, after the lapse of more than fifty years, the reminiscence is painfully distinct. A Baptist Clergyman of much eminence, Dr. Hearry, preached the Funeral of this man, from a Text in Job—"Man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he." The text was exceedingly appropriate: but, I have no recollection of the sermon itself.

I think it was in 1804, that my Mother resolved to remove to the State of Ohio, then just relieved from the horrors of Indian hostilities.
For this purpose, she and all the rest of our family, except myself, embarked on the Monongahela, in a *family flat-boat*. I remained behind to wind up some unsettled business. Having accomplished this, I followed, after ten days, in a *Trading flat-boat*, whose destination was New Orleans. This boat was commanded, and, I believe, partly owned by a Mr. Fleeson, with whom I had had no previous acquaintance. The first night I slept on the boat, while we were lying at the shore off Brownsville, we had considerable wind and rough water. The consequence was that I was violently *sea-sick*. Perhaps no poor creature tossed in the Bay of Biscay, ever suffered more severely from that disease, in the same length of time, than I did on this occasion. My suffering was, however, of very short duration; as the following day was still and pleasant, and as the river glided smoothly and tranquilly on its course.

When we arrived off Pittsburg[h], Mr. Fleeson, not wishing to land the *Flat-boat*, and very much indisposed to do himself what he could have done by another, sent me ashore for a Rifle which he had some time previously left there. I believe I had never in my life before undertaken the task of *paddling a canoe*. I was detained for some time, by the business on which I was sent; and, when I returned to the canoe, the *Boat* was out of sight. I hurried after her, with all the speed I could make by vigorous paddling, till I came to the Junction of the Alleghany with the Monongahela. The former River being much flusber than the latter, shot entirely accross [*sic*] it, driving to the opposite shore the current, which here ran with the rapidity of a mill-race. Just when in the midst of this fierce rush of water, I found that the canoe, which I had not skill nor, perhaps strength to manage, was in imminent danger of being violently dashed against a log. To prevent this, I thrust out a *Setting-pole*, which had scarcely taken hold on a point of resistance, when I was jerked some ten feet from the canoe, and whelmed in the boiling, rushing water of the River. I made shift, by some means, how I know not, to regain the canoe, and clamber into it. It was becoming late in the afternoon, when I reached the head of an Island, whence, tho I could see some distance down on both sides of the Island, I could
not see our Boat. Utterly at a loss which side of the Island the Boat had taken, ignorant also of the length of the Island, I was sorely puzzled to determine whether to go to the right or the left. I took the right channel, and dashed ahead with might and main, not without some fear, however, that I might reach the foot of the Island too soon to see the Boat, if she had taken the other channel, and thus lose her by getting in advance of her.

Seldom, if ever, have I passed three hours in as great anxiety as on this occasion. Very late in the afternoon, I regained the Boat, weary enough. I have no doubt that my feelings, in seeing the Boat, were much like those of the immortal Ten Thousand Greeks, under the conduct of Xenophon, when, from the top of the mountain, they beheld the Mediterranean, and shouted with rapture, "The Sea! The Sea!" This may be said to have been my first adventure; and, as it was the first, tho I can now smile at the recollection of it, it was quite a serious affair at the time.

I believe it was the day after this adventure that our boat ran upon a log and could not be gotten off till a considerable part of the loading was taken out. This mishap was, I know now how justly, charged to the carelessness or negligence of the Steersman or Mate of the Boat. Soon after getting clear of this difficulty, as we were landing, this same Steersman, who was then pulling one of the bow-oars, in drawing in his oar, thrust the end of it against the head of a barrel of whiskey, staving it in, and thus discharging the precious contents into the bilge-water in the bottom of the Boat. He was drunk at the time, and I presume, angry because of the censure that Fleeson had cast upon him for the misadventure of running upon the log.

Fleeson determined to degrade him from the dignity of Mate, as he could no longer trust him with the safety of the Boat. This was certainly a wise step: but, what followed was of at least very doubtful prudence. I was but a Boy, whom he had never seen till a few days previously, and utterly unacquainted with the River and with the management of a Boat. Still, he gave me the charge of the Boat during half the night, tho there were several sober, steady watermen on Board, and subjected those bearded and experienced men to my orders. This was
a hazardous step: but, I determined that, if care and diligence, on my part, could justify it, he should never have cause to repent the trust he had reposed in me. And, while the Boat was in my charge, no accident of any kind occurred, to derogate from Mr. Fleeson's prudence, in appointing me to a situation of so much responsibility, and for which my qualifications were so wholly inadequate.

Tho thus elevated, at night, to the dignity of second in the command of the Boat, I was not released, in the Day-time, from the humble duties of Cook. This was my original position in the Boat; and, tho I myself was abundantly aware of my want of the proper qualifications for the situation, no disposition was evinced to remove me from it. Indeed, incompetent as I must have been to the duties of my official situation, I acquitted myself, in it, much more to my own satisfaction than I did in my culinary department. I could not, for instance, bake biscuit, without having one side, I forget whether its upper or its lower surface burned, more or less, before the other was sufficiently baked. Washing the Dishes, etc., was another part of my duties, as Cook, in which I did not arrive at excellence, or even at mediocrity. I have a suspicion that I did not make the water in which I washed them, sufficiently warm. At all events, there always would be a feeling of more or less unctuousness about them, after I had done the best with them I knew how.

By strange oversight, there had been no understanding among us, in regard to the place where I should find my Mother and the rest of our family. I knew not where they would land, and they were equally without the means of ascertaining the boat in which I was descending the River, or the precise time when I might be expected to arrive off their landing-place. This was exceedingly embarrassing. I might pass them during the night. Late one afternoon, I think it was Sunday—we were floating, calmly and slowly, with the current, when we were hailed from the shore by a Female voice, which eagerly enquired whether William Winans were aboard the Boat. It was my eldest Sister who called. I hastily took leave of my companions, and went ashore, to rejoin my family.

I have ever considered my reunion with my family mercifully provi-
I might have passed in the night—in a storm of rain—when the family were eating, or otherwise prevented from observing the passing of my boat—or the family might have seen the boat, and let it pass without hailing, as probably in many instances was the case. But it was, I believe, providentially ordered that our Boat should be passing on a lovely afternoon—that my Sister should just then be at the Water’s edge—and that it should occur to her to make the inquiring she did make. Had not the inquiring been made, I should, in all probability, have made the run to New Orleans.

Young as I was, and debauching as were the influences and associates on the River, such a trip would probably have been my ruin. Nine times in ten, if not in a much greater proportion, those who embarked in this business, became dissipated, debauched, worthless; and after a short career of vice and infamy, finished their inglorious course, by a death alike inglorious as it was premature. Thanks be to God, that he so kindly watched over the safety of a young, inexperienced lad. A Mother’s fervent, effectual prayers, doubtless availed much toward procuring this “Providential interference,” in my behalf. I often shudder when I think of the imminent danger to which I was exposed at this eventful period of my life; and my heart swells within me at the recollection how that danger was kindly turned away.

Only those who lived in the times of which I have been speaking, which may be regarded as having come down to the period at which Steamboats had, in a great measure, superseded transportation by Flatboats, can form any just conception of Flat-boat-men as a class. The tedious navigation, accumulated in them an immense amount of excitability; which had no ordinary and respectable modes of expending itself. This prepared them to yield to any form of excitement within reach of their peculiar condition. This usually led them to drinking, gambling, boxing matches and other “fierce vanities.”

They were almost entirely secluded from decent Female Society during the whole length of their voyage, both going and returning, which usually occupied months. The absence of this powerful conservative influence, without which man almost always degenerates into a rude savage, or a lawless contemner of decorum, was a chief cause why
these Boatmen became rude in manners and abandoned in morals. The females, with whom they did associate, so far from exercising a conservative influence, were among the most effective instruments of their degradation and ruin. At every principal landing-place on the whole route, these obscene Harpies were congregated, awaiting their opportunity to pounce upon and gobble up the prey which came within reach of their infernal talons; and at New Orleans, the principal Depot of Flat-boat transportation, their number was Legion.

Add to these circumstances that the Boatmen were, while on their long voyage, utterly destitute of the advantages resulting from attendance on Religious instruction, and Religious ordinances. The Sabbath, with them, was in all respects, confounded with the other days of the week; losing, thus, all its sanctity and all its hallowing influences upon their hearts and their lives. Its return, no longer revived in their hearts a sense of responsibility to God, nor awakened in their bosoms the desire of securing a participation in that “rest which remaineth for the people of God.” Its morning beams, no more kindled devotion to God in their spirits.

Their absence from all who knew them and who took an interest in what regarded their well-being and character, and whose appreciation of their character was matter of any concern to them, removed, almost entirely, the restraining influence of public opinion, which in many instances, is a sort of conscience, acting, within its own sphere, as a conservative influence—promoting, if not genuine moral rectitude, at least a regard to decency and social order. When, therefore, the Flatboatmen cast loose from their port of departure, they, for the most part, in a great measure, cast off the restraints of moral obligation and social influence; and abandoned themselves to the impulse of unbridled and headlong passion, or to what is perhaps still more deleterious—the control of “Evil communications,” which ninety-nine times in every hundred, “corrupt good manners.”

An escape from pollution, degradation and ruin, in these circumstances, would have been little less remarkable or miraculous, than that of Shadrack, Meshack [sic], and Abednego, without being harmed, from the “burning fiery furnace” into which they were plunged by the
furious bigotry of the despotic Nebuchadnezzar. Abandoned to the full force of inborn corruption, strengthened and rendered more than natively impetuous and overbearing by social example and encouragement, relaxed from all the restraints of conservative influence, how, but by supernatural control could the young, inexperienced adventurer escape? The hazard would be great, and against incalculable odds. And, I therefore, would render most fervent thanks to that Gracious Providence which preserved me from going in a way of such imminent peril, by bringing about this reunion with my family; as, if I had passed them, it is probable, I repeat, that I should, poor, friendless and inexperienced as I was, have cast in my lot with my companions on the Boat, become a Boatman, and so have made shipwreck of moral principle, respectability, health, life and Soul, as thousands at that day did, on the waters of the Mississippi River.