HARRIS, WILLIAM L., BISHOP

Bishop William L. Stillman was born near Gallipolis, O., November 14, 1827, the son of a prominent lawyer. He was educated at Yale College, graduated in 1849, and received his doctorate in 1854. In 1857, he was ordained a deacon. In 1858, he was ordained a priest. In 1860, he was consecrated a bishop. He served in various capacities, including a professor at Union Theological Seminary.

Soon after his consecration, he entered New York City, where he was active in the Episcopal Church, contributing to the healing of the city and the improvement of its poor.

After leaving the seminary, he studied for a short time in London. In 1859, he was elected to a major position in the Episcopal Church, which he held until his death in 1885.

After leaving school, he entered various positions in the Episcopal Church, including a professor at Union Theological Seminary, and later, in 1871, he was elected to the position of Bishop of New York. In 1873, he was elected to the presidency of the Episcopal Church, which position he held for eight years.

In 1868, he was elected by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, and in 1871, he was elected to the presidency of the Episcopal Church. In 1872, he was elected Bishop of New York, a position he held until his death.
...estimated the measure of his powers and the practical value of his industry. As a preacher he was always thoughtful, earnest, expressive, and instructive. In exercises of statement, direction of oral and in fortifying his positions by the application of scriptural texts, he was not excelled.

As a scholar and as a teacher in institutions of learning he received very favorable mention. Technically speaking, he was not what we call a scholar. But while it was not possible for him to be completely given to scholarly methods he always had at command the best practical results of scholarship.

Troser, he had not the advantages of a collegiate training, and was not graduated from any college, he supplied this lack by the most persistent study of the college curriculum, at such odd hours and days as he could save from professional duty, until he well mastered all its subjects. His powers of acquisition were very, very great; his perception were quick and clear; his memory would take imprints and his reasoning close and correct. Few men could more readily master the central idea of a subject, and, when necessary, acquaint themselves most fully with its details.

His great method of study gave zest to his work as a teacher. He strove to make his students comprehend the principles, the controlling and outlining ideas of a subject, in its general scope and drift, rather than make a statement of recorded facts or of unspoken details. He was emphatic in declaring, he held out or drew out the student's powers, and helped him to define and clear conception; to express them in his own language, and stimulate him to independent effort and original investigation. But in his work as a teacher the scholar and method were not equal to the man—the personality. His energy and force of character were never more manifest and needing than in those days when he daily went in and out before large classes of young men.

He was the prince of health and personification of courage. As some of the strongest voices wound on him, "He was a very whirlwind of activity." He seemed the living representative of energy, force, conquering push, and irresistible effort. He was never regular with the busy student, but he was no understander of disease, and an inflicting power to the earnest and indomitable. His sympathy with higher education and with young people, his tact in teaching; his delight in the growth of mind and in the development of character; made the work of instruction a great pleasure to him. He was ever benedict to remark that the one aspect of his education with a certain of knowing was the most appetizing portion of his life.

In his private character, as a person of pleasure, it would seem that the clerical work and period of his life ought to have been a time of great activity and leisure. He was eight years a success at the North Ohio Conference, and afterward at the C, S, L. office until he declined further re-election. The Church only lost an ideal General Conference Secretary when he came to office. His great frame and great endurance, his powerful
voice, his unflagging attention, quick perception, and rapid execution, thoroughly adapted him to this position. No man ever excelled him in gathering and recording the facts; in careful, deliberate, close, clear, distinct, and incisive presentations of his work.

We doubt whether the Church at large has fully appreciated, or could fully appreciate, the services he rendered as Secretary. In presenting the names of the Society to the Annual Conferences he was called to take the place of Dr. Durban, the ideal organizer of the missionary spirit and enthusiasm of the Church and the matchless prophet and prophet-actor. But in adaptability to all the demands of the great office there has been no secretary superior to Dr. Harris. His trained, sound judgment, knowledge of men, of methods, and of promising fields of effort, his business sagacity, and accuracy, his comprehensive and lucid reports to the Missionary Committee, and his clear, crisp statements or explanations of facts and of reasons for or against pending propositions, were invaluable to the Church and could be appreciated only by those having knowledge of the needs and specific work of the Missionary Society. I think it may be safely said that no man in the whole history of the Church ever had a fuller knowledge of our many missionary fields, and no one ever so fully established a personal connection between them and the home Church.

Into the Episcopal office Bishop Harris brought mental qualities and a discipline of mind peculiarly fitted for the work of a General Superintendent. The ability he possessed for the office and the services he rendered in it were well defined. He was a man emphatically of one work in the office. To the work to which the Church had called him he gave all his time and thought. He did not simply give preference, but also all his strength, to purely official duties. The many manifold, and varying demands necessarily made of a chief pastor led him as a rule to decline all invitations to perform unofficial services. In this high office he particularly excelled as an administrator and a parliamentarian. In caring for and directing the general interests of the Church the legal cast of his mind became more preeminently manifest.

Any analysis of the powers of Bishop Harris would be very incomplete without special reference to his. It was often remarked, especially in his earlier activities, that nature seemed to have designed him for the profession of law. After entering the ministry he read the standard authorities in law literature and acquired a knowledge that greatly served him and advantaged the interests of the whole Church, in his administration and his work as a general and a local presiding elder. His ability to grasp both principles and details was nowhere better illustrated than in his knowledge of law, both constitutional and statutory, civil and criminal. He insisted on definite legislation and the codification of essential principles in law forms, and then, which is much more, in a faithful application of those principles. His ad-
curate knowledge of law and his studied application of its principles were recognized by the entire Church, and gave him exceptional influence as a counselor, legislator, and administrator. His knowledge of ecclesiastical and parliamentary law seemed complete and always at his command. In this he was an authority long before he came into the Episcopacy. Perhaps no one was ever more at home in the presidency of a great deliberative body or in watching and sharing in its proceedings. He was especially in demand when a crisis, a tangle, a dilemma, or a delicate and rugged difficulty required an exposition of law or the citation of precedents. His aptness in this regard sometimes saved the Church from much disturbing debate and needless controversy.

Yet it does not follow that he was always the happiest presiding officer. His natural love for controversy, his intense interest in debate, something like impatience at the ignorance and misstatements of participants, and his own clear convictions and conclusions led him sometimes to lose sight of his relations as a judge and to manifest the qualities of an advocate.

Bishop Harris was a man of decided and clear convictions. In them he was always definite, positive, powerful, and uncompromising. He always knew, and those associated with him always knew, what he believed and desired. Sometimes he thundered the delivery of his convictions with marvelous emphasis. Because he saw so clearly he believed it his duty to make others see and to obey, not him, but the truth. The clearness of his conceptions, the strength of his convictions, and the earnestness of his advocacy sometimes gave the appearance of abruptness in manner and quickness in temper; but his transparency, integrity, and generosity shone through in the end the greatness of his soul, the kindness of his sympathies, and the warmth of his friendship. His Christianity was of a manly type. It was a religion of principles rather than of manifested emotions. In my earlier acquaintance with him it did not seem to me that his nature was of any especial form and strength, his positive and mental tendencies, his authoritative disposition, and his exuberant spirits were under the full control of divine grace; but when I saw, as it was my privilege, his home life, heard him pray at his family altar, and learned the motives that controlled his conduct in his daily life, then I well knew the thoroughness of his consecration and depth of his spirituality.

Bishop Harris belonged to three Annual Conferences, and yet was never transferred. His itinerant ministry covered half a century.

Sept. 6, 1887, he entered the traveling connection in the Michigan Conference, and September 6, 1887, he was borne to the place appointed for all the living.

In 1886 the North Ohio and Central Ohio Conferences invited him to hold their sessions in 1887 and celebrate with them the centenial of his ministry. His colleagues sympathized with the request and kindly arranged his work accordingly. During the intervening months he looked forward to the ap-
providing occasion with unusual pleasure. Every thing seemed providentially opportune. Not a few friends of his early minis-
try gratefully awaited his coming. The North Ohio Conference
was to hold its session at Cuyahoga Falls within six miles of the
place of his birth, and on the very spot where he was converted,
and formed a part of the old camp upon which he was licensed
to preach. In writing to a friend and accepting the hospitality
of his horse he said: "I cannot express the satisfaction with
which I anticipate a visit to your town."

But life is largely made up of unexpected changes and sudden
transitions. He had spent the summer abroad in rest and recov-
ery and seemed in better health. But suddenly an alarming
telegram came to him from the steamer through which the home-
ward voyage was accomplished. When he reached his home then his family, his friends, and the
Church breathed more deeply. But it was soon apparent that an
ailing Providence had brought him home only to take him from
those he loved best, and in their presence pass triumphantly into his rest.

In some respects Bishop Harris holds a unique place in our
history as a Church. It is indisputable to others to say that,
in knowledge of ecclesiastical law, in acquaintance with the
history of the Church, in knowledge of the details of its
work, and in the extent of his travels and supervision, he has
not been surpassed. He gave the Church fifty years of un-
interrupted service: of active, eminently practical, efficient service.
His life will stand out boldly in the history of the Church as one
of infinite toil and rigorous execution of great tasks. His name
and services are known in all the Churches and have had world-wide
recognition. But his work on earth is done. He will go in and
out before us no more. It seems well-nigh impossible to realize
that we have seen his face, heard his voice, and received his bless-
ing for the last time. But we will praise the great Head of the
Church for the long life and abundant work of his servant, we
will cherish his memory, strive to imitate his excellences, and re-
joice in the hope we have of meeting and greeting him in the
great future.
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