

VI

ALLEGHENY PROFESSOR

FROM the time of his appointment until the opening of the summer term at Allegheny College in May, Matthew Simpson had two and one-half months to prepare for his classes. Uncle Matthew was not in the "least doubtful" that his nephew would rise in eminence "equal to any in the U.S.," but he thought he should have at least a month's practice in chemistry. How else he could demonstrate the experiments with credit, Uncle Matthew was at a loss to know.¹

Young Matthew read feverishly and made extensive notations. He listed the "instruments" he must have: "Prism-lamps, thermometer, glass tubes, concave tin mirrors, Ball & ring, pyrometer, tubes with balls, fine tube with ball, differential thermometer, cryophorus wire with copper & zinc pieces—electro magnetic rotation."

With an eye to the wizardry of the "test tube and the flame, he jotted down experiments, such sleight-of-hand performances as would quicken the pulse of his students as well as illustrate the characteristics and properties of cohesion, color, oxygen, hydrogen, and other phenomena and elements of natural philosophy. "Blow out lighted candle and it will catch in oxygen," he noted. "Fill a jar with nitrogen, dip a taper it is extinguished." "Pour a few drams of colored ether into thin glass tube of half inch. Mix one or two parts sulph acid with 5 of water, dip the tube & ebullition [bubbling up]." ²

Leaving Ellen in Pittsburgh to await the birth of their first child, Matthew went to Meadville early in May of 1837. He tramped about the streets, keeping an eye out for a house and noting the relation of town to college; but he was listless. He could not get his mind off Ellen. He knew that she was better off with her par-

ents in Pittsburgh; but, Providence permitting, in two weeks he would make the hundred-mile trip down to see her.³

He found most of the fifteen hundred people of the village scattered about the floor of the valley along French Creek. Allegheny College was on a hill above the town, and a half-mile from it. Following the slender path through the woods from the town to the college, Matthew came quickly to the crest of the hill. Bentley Hall was visible through the trees before he reached the campus: a handsome three-story, red brick building ornamented with white cut stone. Of colonial design, one hundred and twenty feet long and sixty feet wide, topped with a lofty bell tower, it was a monument to the labor and the taste of Timothy Alden, the founder of the college. The first story contained classrooms; the second, a chapel, a library, and a laboratory with chemical and "philosophical" apparatus. The third floor consisted of two large and well furnished halls for the literary societies. To the rear, visible from the window, two low wooden sheds stretched as left and right wings from the main building to house the college steward and to provide rooms for the self-boarding students.⁴

Matthew examined the philosophical apparatus and found it good; but he was more interested in the library. The collection of books amazed him: eight thousand volumes, "well selected" and containing many "rare and valuable works" that Timothy Alden had persuaded New England friends to give to his western college: Isaiah Thomas, founder of the American Antiquarian Society, Dr. William Bentley of Salem, and Judge James Winthrop of Cambridge. Thomas Jefferson had praised Dr. Alden for his collection of books, and the words were written down for every man to see: "I had not expected that there was such a private collection in the U.S." ⁵

In the opening days of the term Matthew met his classes, assigned readings in the textbooks, and heard recitations; he re-examined the philosophical apparatus and conducted a few simple experiments. The college had scarcely fifty students, and the preparatory school only a few more. His own classes were small and informal. He could easily go to Ellen when the time came.

Late in June he received the word and hurried down to Pittsburgh to be present when Ellen gave birth to a son. He proudly held in his arms the small warm bundle of his own flesh, and named

him James, for his own father, James Simpson, dead these many years.

Ellen recovered rapidly, and Matthew returned to Meadville to prepare for his family. Once more he was all energy, his mind crammed with the work of the college and the details of moving. He rented the house of Dr. Ruter, president, who had resigned to go as a missionary to Texas. He bought a carpet that was on the floor and arranged to have his own household goods moved in as soon as the house was vacant. He instructed Ellen to purchase some additional carpets and rugs and smaller items of furniture, but no dishes or looking glasses. The box of cupboard ware that they had shipped from Williamsport was pretty badly broken, and they had better buy in Meadville whatever more they wanted. She should get some Chinese cement, however, for they might be able to repair a few of the pieces.

He knew that the fifty dollars he had left would not go far, especially after she paid William Hunter the twenty dollars they owed him. He had drawn on the treasury at the college about as heavily as he could, but if she needed it he would find more money in some way. He was sensitive to the contrast between his own low financial estate and the comfortable income of Ellen's parents, especially when her brother, who was not sympathetic to the church, taunted her. Matthew warned her that she *must not* ask her father for help, nor discuss the particulars of their circumstances. But if her father *offered* help *voluntarily*, she need not refuse.

It was impossible to put into words his happiness at knowing that she was up and around. Only a short while, and they would be together at Meadville. In the meantime, he missed her very much, and could be solaced only by hearing from her. She must sit down the *very* same day she received his letter and answer him. "*Do-do-do-do* write," he begged.⁶

In a few days Ellen was ill again, prostrated by fever. Matthew, who had already arranged to be absent from the campus for his ordination at the annual session of the Conference, stopped over at Pittsburgh until she showed signs of recovery. Then he returned to his duties at Meadville, reluctantly. He conjured up a thousand fears. Perhaps she had had a relapse, or caught cold in the rainy weather, or eaten something that disagreed with her, or was again

sick—and yet perhaps, perhaps, it was not so. Thus between fear and hope he passed the days waiting to hear from her.¹

A week after his return to Meadville there was still no word from Ellen. Her father had promised to write on Thursday, and he should have had the letter by Monday; but here it was Thursday a week, and still he had not heard. Three days of restless anxiety. He felt both perplexed and grieved: perplexed because he feared that she might be ill, grieved because his happiness was so unimportant to her. Could she not relieve his agony by a single line? If she was well he wanted to know it, and be relieved of his fears; if she was sick he wanted to know it, so that he might sympathize and weep and pray. Would she keep him longer in suspense? ²

Her letter came at last. She was mending rapidly, was nearly well. Soon she and James would join him at Meadville. Relieved, Matthew turned with vigor and enthusiasm to his classes and his study.

He taught chiefly from textbooks: Cavallo on natural philosophy for the freshmen; Keith on the globes for sophomores; Turner on chemistry for the juniors; and, for the seniors, Jameson on rocks and minerals, and astronomy with globes.³

Cavallo was an old acquaintance to whom Matthew turned with affection. Many hours he had spent in Cadiz thumbing the pages of *The Elements of Natural or Experimental Philosophy* and exploring the meanings of the physical universe. Heat, said Cavallo, was a "subtile and elastic" fluid called *caloric*, definite quantities of which were added to or subtracted from bodies when they became hot or cold. Temperature was simply the measure of the quantity of caloric. Light, as Newton taught in his corpuscular theory, was the sensation produced when minute particles, issuing from a luminous body, entered the eyes. Magnetism and electricity, like heat, were subtile and "imponderable" fluids, having no weight.¹⁰

From Keith the student learned the use of the globes, not merely by twirling them around and working a few problems, but by understanding the principles of geography and astronomy. Keith began, therefore, with definitions. The student must know the meaning of the Terrestrial Globe, the Celestial Globe, the Axis

of the Earth, the Poles of the Earth, the Zodiac with its spring, summer, autumnal, and winter signs, an apparent solar day, a mean solar day, the astronomical day, the artificial day, the civil day, and the sidereal day. He must be able to define "horizon" and to distinguish between the Sensible, or visible, horizon and the Rational, or true, horizon, and so on through 123 terms in the first chapter.¹¹

All knowledge was of God, Matthew believed; and to learn was to know God more fully. All knowledge when properly understood would confirm the Scriptures. It was therefore incumbent upon the student to learn as much of science as his program would permit, and on the teacher to relate science to God. In the hands of the proper teacher the textbooks, premised upon the ultimate authority of the Bible, could be made to subserve the purposes of religion. Keith was especially clear and forceful in his recognition of the hand of Providence. Did he wish to prove that the mountains had existed from the foundations of the world? He cited as proof the argument that they were needed *before* as well as *after* the flood "to display the goodness and beneficence of the Deity." Uncle Matthew was right: the schools ought to have Christian men to teach the principles of science. How else could a class get a satisfactory answer to the question which one of Matthew's geology students raised: Where did the waters of the Deluge come from? ¹²

On Saturdays he met his students in the laboratory for experimentation with the electrical machine, the air pump, the test tube. He generated gas, activated the galvanic battery, mixed prussiate of potash and sulphate iron to produce a deep blue color, pasted bits of white paper to the globes which he then twirled in an unforgettable exhibition of changing geographical relationships.¹³

Matthew regularly taught six classes—not only natural philosophy, but mathematics or Latin or French or German, as the need might arise. Because of the distance of the campus from the town, and the long and severe winters, the faculty scheduled only one daily session of six hours, from early morning until early afternoon. To him, after his years in the ministry, the teaching day was short, and the library down the hall from his classroom was most inviting. He read particularly from the church fathers, translating rapidly from the Latin or the Greek; he took copious notes on Origen's *De Principiis* and his reply to Celsus, and on Sale's *Koran*. He read from George Whitefield, Francis Asbury's *Journal*,

Jonathan Edwards, Lyman Beecher. Greatly intrigued by Josiah Priest's *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*, he carefully turned over in his mind the author's speculation concerning the origin of the American Indian, as well as of the Negro and the White. Shem, Ham, and Japheth—Brown, Black, and White, Shem the father of the American Indian as proved by the derivation of the word! ¹⁴

From his reading and conversation he continued to collect odd facts of science, noting that a "razor shell, found in Italy, bores into rocks, must be dug out," and that the thermometer in Sweden on Feb. 1, 1571, was 57° below zero." He heard it said that orchardists in Ohio had proved that apples "pulled" in the dark of the moon decayed less quickly. Not much truth in that old wives' tale, he guessed. Dissatisfied with his lack of system, he began to paste clippings into scrapbooks under such titles as "Medical Scraps," "Botany," "Chemistry," "Mineralogy," "Geology," "Geography," "Astronomy," "Ornithology," "Zoology," "Biography," "Theological," "Classical Ancient," "Classical Modern," "Mechanical," "Theological Anecdote," "Wit and Repartee." He purchased an *Index Rerum* for 1837 and began minute listings of unusual facts and details:

Anabasis—not written by Zenophon, but by Themistogines of Syracuse—

Prideaux Con. Vol 1 p. 33.

Academy of Sciences at Paris—formed 1666. Hallam, His. Lit. v. 2.

Arcadians pretend they existed before the moon. Herodotus Note to V 3 p. 177.¹⁵

As a student of science Matthew modestly admitted to himself that he was "advancing tolerably well." However, he could not say so much of his progress in religion. "I am indeed in religion, a mystery of mysteries," he lamented. His chief reason for flailing himself was his "slothfulness," or "procrastination," or inability, when he was impatient to get at his studies, to excuse himself from the tedious and unprofitable company which often ran away with his time. "It seems," he said, "impolite to leave, and it murders time to sit and hear them whining." ¹⁶

Some of the distraction from study arose from his administrative responsibilities. He had not been at the school six months when he was named vice president and made a member of the board of

trustees. The board, chiefly concerned with problems of finance, devised plans to raise money, through the legislature and through the Methodist conferences. It charged the new vice president with the responsibility of writing reports, visiting conferences and churches, and otherwise representing the institution; it also instructed him to supervise the college commons, which had been instituted on his recommendation. He was a member of numerous committees: one to look into establishing a "primary department" to be located in the "Borough" of Meadville; another to consider "the propriety" of erecting a new building; others still to supervise the painting of window frames, to keep the grounds in order, and to discipline the two rival literary societies when their interrelations reached such a pitch of animosity that the professors could not conduct classes.¹⁷

Matthew's teaching, reading, and administrative duties did not interfere with his preaching, despite his self-scourging. He visited "charges" from six to twenty miles from Meadville, assisted in quarterly and protracted meetings, in the founding and dedication of churches, introduced Methodism into Seagerstown, and was called upon to preach one of several funeral sermons at the death of the former president, Martin Ruter. He had not yet, however, attained any great powers as a preacher, as is indicated by the cryptic comment of Bishop Beverly Waugh. "Heard Prof. Simpson preach in the evening," confided the bishop to his journal; "it was only a tolerable performance."¹⁸

II

All his life, Simpson had identified himself with the interests of Methodism. When others lashed at the church he shrank from the cutting sting; when they praised it he grew warm with the sense of achievement. He took his bearings for his own destiny by the star of John Wesley, and he sailed, if somewhat unsteadily, in the course which the founder of Methodism had marked out. He kept a diary because Wesley had done so; he read Wesley's sermons and *Journal*; he defended him vigorously against the attacks of the Presbyterians; and he championed the conference course of study on the basis that John Wesley had honored scholarship.

At Allegheny College he gained a new perspective of Method-

ism. As a boy at Cadiz, as a circuit rider, and as a preacher at Pittsburgh, he had seen chiefly the immediate responsibility of the church: the saving of souls. Only now and then had he caught a brief glimpse of the vastness and diversity of Methodism. The college rose like a pinnacle above local interests and differences. Gordon Battelle and F. H. Pierpoint, outstanding young men from western Virginia, Calvin Kingsley, promising young student and tutor from Lake Erie, a score of men from western Pennsylvania and New York, and a like number from the region south of the Ohio—these students, some Whigs, some Democrats, might quarrel over politics or differ on issues of slavery and the national bank, but they were one in their devotion to Methodism.

Quizzing students on their textbooks, tramping through the woods with them in search of specimens, or repairing the electrical machine for the Saturday morning experiments, Matthew Simpson felt a new devotion—a dedication of himself to the cause of learning among Methodist youth. He began to understand as never before the importance of Methodist unity. The Pittsburgh Annual Conference, stretching out into three states, partly free, partly slave, if it divided over political issues, could not support its college or attend to the central responsibility of saving souls. So he began to reassess the problem of slavery and the activities of northern abolitionists.

Soon he began to imbibe some of the antiabolition spirit of the faculty and the students. He sharpened his conviction that abolitionism was allied with the Presbyterian Church, and was inimical to the unity and mission of Methodism. He began to look upon the abolitionists as a little bit ridiculous and upon their tactics as quite transparent. Slightly amused, he mockingly drafted a prospectus for a society of his own—an "Anti-Cannibal Society." Ought there not be one? There were societies concerned with Sabbath breaking, intemperance, slavery. Why not with cannibalism? He would draw up a prospectus and launch a seven-point program: 1) collect facts; 2) employ agents; 3) distribute tracts with pictures; 4) get cooperation of ecclesiastical bodies; 5) use no force but moral suasion; 6) have both male and female join; 7) brand those who do not join as pro-cannibals.¹⁹

He let some months pass before mentioning the subject to Uncle Matthew. He sensed a storm brewing and sought to steer

clear of it as long as possible. Then he protested the political tactics of the abolitionist preachers in the Methodist church. He thought it strange that they should openly campaign for their own delegates to the next General Conference, selecting men not for their ability but for their willingness to vote for abolitionist measures.

Uncle Matthew did not think it strange at all. The abolitionists believed that slaveholding was a great sin. They loved the old church. Ought they not, therefore, to seek to turn her from her evil ways?

The issue was clearly joined. That slavery was a great evil, Matthew did not doubt for a moment. Often, perhaps usually, it was a sin, a great sin. But the Bible sanctioned it. Was slavery, therefore, always wrong in itself?

Uncle Matthew, totally unprepared for defection in his own family, was humiliated, crushed. "Slavery not wrong in its self," he exclaimed, weeping as he wrote. "No words ever brought so many tears to my eyes. . . . I abhor them on the paper before me my tears would wash them out. In some weak moment the enemy gained an advantage over your intellect." Surely God in whom were all the treasures of wisdom could save him from such delusion.²⁰

Matthew was deeply hurt, not so much by the reproof on slavery as by his uncle's manifest lack of confidence. Never in the long years of close association had he brought his uncle to such pain. Ought not Uncle Matthew to have confidence in him? Ought he not to trust his intellectual integrity? It was not, he wrote, that he favored slavery; he was in fact much closer to his uncle's position than to that of the antiabolitionist, but he did believe that slavery was sanctioned by the Bible and therefore could not be "wrong in itself."²¹

Uncle Matthew carefully separated the issues: he had not for a moment lost confidence in his nephew; but surely young Matthew would not ask him to believe that he was incapable of erring in sentiment on a moral or religious subject. "And if in my judgment," wrote Uncle Matthew, "you had fallen into an error highly injurious . . . ought my tears . . . not be considered evidence of never failing confidence?"

On slavery's not being wrong in itself, he argued from the premise of *higher law*. The Bible countenanced some things that

were wrong in themselves—killing, for example, which was condemned by the law of Moses but was permitted, even commanded, of Saul when he held the Amalekites prisoners. Why these things were countenanced, he did not know, for they were "justifiable only for reasons known to God and not always obvious to us."

On the whole, the old man wrote, his grief was assuaged by his nephew's letter: "You are far nearer to us than to our opponents. . . . If you act on your principles you will be a pretty good Abolitionist." He was glad to know that Matthew and Ellen and little James planned to visit the family at Wellsville. He would be glad to see little James, who would not be an antiabolitionist; and he would be glad to see James's papa and mamma "just as they are." ²²

The exchange prompted young Matthew to further reflection on slavery. Slavery as it existed generally in the South was a sin. That much he would grant; but some men living in this legalized system might hold slaves without criminality. Therefore, the abolitionist doctrine that slavery was sin *per se* was false. However, he should like to see slavery in the South cease immediately. Northerners might, if they could hit upon the right plan, exercise some influence over the South "by reasoning and expostulation," but it would have to be without bitterness. On the other hand, there certainly ought to be no interference with the political rights of free men, such as petitioning of Congress; and the power of Congress to regulate trade ought to be interpreted as permitting control of the interstate slave traffic. The rules of the Methodist discipline against buying or selling slaves ought to be strictly enforced. He was inclined to accept some of the principles of abolitionism "without approving of the *shaking* or *agitating* part of it." ²³ He favored abolishing slavery so long as it did not injure the institution of Methodism.

In the summer of 1838 the Pittsburgh Conference, paying lip service to the disciplinary doctrine that slavery was a great evil, declared it incompatible with the duties and obligations of Methodist preachers for them to deliver abolition lectures, attend abolition conventions, or circulate abolition papers. In the East the gag rule of the bishops was effectively silencing the abolitionist agitation.

Young Matthew, still uneasy of conscience in the presence of

his uncle, took refuge in the action of the church: he would not, himself, have dealt so severely with the abolitionists, but as a Methodist preacher he had the duty to uphold and defend the institution of the church. Uncle Matthew taunted him: he had better take heed to himself and his doctrine. "To defend the powers that be whether in Church or State so far as they go right is patriotic and commendable: To defend their wrong doing is mean and servile (mark well my words)." ²⁴

III

The years at Allegheny College were fruitful and profitable to Matthew Simpson, but they were not altogether happy.

The severity of the first winter was such that in February and March Ellen and little James returned to Pittsburgh for the warmth and comfort of her parents' home. Again Matthew suffered from loneliness. Things went badly in his housekeeping. The girl who was helping quit, and Eliza, the "black woman," could not come for ten days. He and the students who lived with him were boarding at the college for breakfast and dinner and eating "a piece" at home at night. He sold the cow for \$15, a dollar less than he had paid for her, but he had made a bargain of it even so! It cost him \$1.50 to mend the sleigh. The weather was bitterly cold, nineteen degrees below zero. Nearly everything in the cellar froze, and the ice on the creek was two feet thick. The winter dragged on, and some snow remained on the ground until the middle of May. His health was poor; he suffered much from a cough and trouble with his chest. ²⁵

Even more disturbing was the problem of personal finances. Matthew had gone to the college with the promise of a salary of \$550; but he was unable to collect it. At the same time he was proud. He did not care to have Ellen embarrassed in the presence of her family—her brother especially. There was only a "dull chance" of sending any money to her: the treasury was empty. He had tried in vain to borrow. Therefore she should "make a bill" wherever she was acquainted, get whatever things she wanted to be "perfectly independent." ²⁶

There were also troubles at the college. The president appeared to be a poor administrator; some of the students were guilty of bad conduct, and there was general dissatisfaction with one of

the professors. More than half the students had threatened to leave the school, and three had already withdrawn. He thought that one of the professors would be removed, and that he would have to give up his own classes in science to take over the instruction in mathematics. After a few days the trouble blew over, and the students settled down with only minor notes of dissatisfaction. But Matthew could not forget the incident and wrote to Ellen, "I felt dissatisfied with myself and almost every body else." ²⁷

Meanwhile, Charles Elliott, editor of *Western Christian Advocate* in Cincinnati, had been made Doctor of Divinity by Allegheny College. To the leaders of the Indiana Conference who were establishing a college, he praised Simpson mightily. In consequence, the board of trustees elected him professor of mathematics at a salary of \$800, and tempted him with the promise: "Some two or three years hence we shall want a president, and if you are the man that Dr. Elliott represents you to be, I see no reason, why you may not be promoted to that station." ²⁸

Uncle Matthew and other friends counseled against going. The position was no great advancement, and he still might be forced to play second role. None the less, after refusing the offer, Matthew was soon lamenting to Ellen that he had not gone: "I long for greater pecuniary freedom. It is exceedingly trying on my feelings to endure insinuations such as are occasionally used from some quarters." ²⁹ The allusion to Ellen's "unsaved" brother was perfectly clear.

The following winter, the Indiana officials notified Matthew that he had been elected president and professor of mathematics at a salary of eleven hundred dollars. Again the winter had been severe; his health was poor and his finances "precarious." His friends advised him to accept the offer, and he concurred. The board of trustees at Allegheny College expressed its appreciation and its regrets. Each of the literary societies voted to have his portrait painted—an honor which he declined. He arranged for subsequent payment of his Allegheny salary, and contracted to have his household goods sent as quickly as possible to Terre Haute, by way of the Allegheny, Ohio, and Wabash rivers. He and his family took the boat to Cincinnati and the stage to Indianapolis. His new duties were to begin with the spring term.

VII

THE MIND'S THE MEASURE

MATTHEW SIMPSON had a fight on his hands when he moved to Indiana, and he knew it; but it was the kind of battle he loved—for God and Methodism. The Presbyterians controlled both the board of trustees and the faculty of the state university at Bloomington, which had opened in 1828. In addition, the New School and Old School Presbyterians had established colleges at Wabash and Hanover.

The first generation of American Methodists had opposed higher education as a matter of self-defense; hearty yeomen, come-outers from the established church, they had found their commission to preach in the grace of God and not in book learning. But by 1830, although still opposing "manufactories for preachers," they perceived that higher education was indispensable to their church. How else were Methodist lawyers, Methodist teachers, Methodist doctors, and Methodist sons in general to get their college training without endangering their Methodist faith? ¹ Moreover, some of the circuit riders themselves, fed upon the rich journals of John Wesley and the commentaries of Adam Clarke, were as hungry for knowledge as they were for power.

Protesting against the domination of the state university by "one religious sect," the Methodists sought to gain representation on the board and the faculty. Outnumbering the Presbyterians in Indiana four to one, they attempted in 1834 the stratagem of placing the election of the hitherto self-perpetuating university board in the hands of the legislature. In the angry debate which ensued Samuel Bigger, a Presbyterian lawyer from Rushville, laughed the Methodists out of court. He doubted their competence to manage a "literary institution." When Ohio University wished to get a Methodist professor, he said, "they had to send to Europe for him." ²

Bigger's contempt was not altogether unfounded, for there was not one Methodist preacher in Indiana who was a college graduate. And he secured the overwhelming support of his fellow legislators in moving to lay the Methodist proposal on the table.

The Methodists, however, were considerably stirred up. "Why don't we start a school of our own?" demanded "Indiana Itinerant" in the *Western Christian Advocate*. The Presbyterians of Indiana had 4,000 members, he argued, and controlled three schools; the Methodists had 24,000 members and "no voice in any."³

The Indiana Annual Conference, formed in 1832, had in fact recommended at its first session the establishment of a college. Next to the religion of the Son of God, said the committee on education, the "lights of Science" were "best calculated to lessen human woe and to increase the sum of human happiness"; moreover, in an institution of their own, Methodists could exclude doctrines which they considered "dangerous" and "incompatible with . . . revelation."⁴

After the defeat in the legislature, the Methodists hesitated no longer; they ordered the establishment of a college, chose a site at Greencastle, secured a charter, and, in 1837, established a grammar school. The following year they opened a preparatory department. In the spring of 1839 the board elected Matthew Simpson to the presidency and announced that college classes would begin in the summer term.

II

From Cincinnati to Indianapolis and Putnamville, President elect Simpson, with his wife and two-year-old son James, traveled overland. The National Road was "execrably bad." When it rained in Indiana, said a friend, the land did not "flow with milk and honey so much as with mud."⁵ The stage jolted over long stretches of corduroy turnpike and occasionally, where much travel had broken or wrenched the logs out of place, a wheel would drop suddenly and jarringly into a mudhole. Once the stage upset, shaking up the Simpsons considerably, although without any serious consequence to Ellen or James.

Greencastle, a village of five hundred, was not on the National Road, and so the Simpsons took a "private conveyance" at Putnam-

ville for the last six miles. They arrived on a Saturday afternoon in late April. Court was in session; the village was crowded with lawyers and their clients, and no rooms were available in the two-story log hotel. Ellen, who was soon to bear her second child, was exhausted; little James was tired and cross, and Matthew himself was depressed by the long ride and the drab town. He went unhappily to a second hotel, a small frame building on the public square. It was full also; but several guests were to leave that evening, and the landlord promised a room. The floors were being scrubbed, however, and so the family was shown to the back porch to wait for the court to adjourn and the floors to dry.

Fretful with the delay, he pressed his claims; and, learning that a lawyer from a near-by town occupied one of the better rooms, he commandeered it after promising the reluctant landlord that he would assume the responsibility for entrance. Having found a place for Ellen to rest, he returned to the porch to await the lawyer.

Before him, as he sat there that afternoon and evening, were the unpainted houses of the town, and the irregular clearings still cluttered with ugly stumps and fallen logs. Beyond was the intense beauty of the Indiana countryside. Late in April the gently rolling hills were already dark green with underbrush; the willows were in the first pale green leaf, and the sycamores stood white-trunked and stark against the great elms and beeches. The crisp, fresh evening air bore the "bass hootings of the night-owl and the weird treble of the whippoorwill," even the lyrical note of the mockingbird. But Matthew Simpson had no eyes or ears for beauty. Despondent, he saw only the small, one-story frame houses and heard only the harsh tones of the hotel's cracked dinner bell.⁶

Restlessly, he walked about the village, down the muddy, ungraded streets, seeking the university. The fifteen-acre campus offered no salve for his depression. Covered with underbrush and scattered locust trees, bounded on one side by dense woods and cut off from the village by a deep gully, it was still unimproved, save for the partially raised brick walls of one building.⁷

The university was temporarily in a small two-story brick house with two rooms below and one above—the building to which young Tommy Goodwin had been directed a year and a half earlier when he arrived at Greencastle with dreams of a stately campus presided over by a corps of learned men.

"I don't know for certain," a local resident had said in answer to Tommy's question about the university. "It was, last summer, at the deestrick schoolhouse, but I have hearn that they have moved it to the county siminary. . . . You will not find it much of a university, I reckon." *

It was not much of a university; but it was the kind Matthew Simpson understood and could fight for, once he recovered from fatigue and depression. As the day wore on, word that the new president of Indiana Asbury University was at the hotel got about. The lawyer, when he at last came in from the court, proved to be "exceedingly polite" and kind. A little later, a trustee of the university learned of the Simpsons' arrival and hurried over to insist that they come to his house and live with his family until they could find a place to rent. In the friendly atmosphere of a Methodist home, filled with Methodist talk and Methodist hope, Matthew and Ellen Simpson's spirits began to rise.

Matthew heard in detail the story of the opening of the school and the report of the forty or fifty boys in the preparatory department. In a few days, at the opening of summer term on the first Monday of May, nearly eighty students enrolled in the preparatory school, and eleven in the college. The new president, much encouraged, took over the upper room of the academy building for the advanced students and began "to lay a foundation for the future." *

III

While young Matthew Simpson surveyed the prospects of his university with none too light a heart, his Methodist brethren were carefully taking his measure. Before electing him they had, with high aspiration, invited the two most prominent Methodist educators to the presidency of their new college; but both had declined. Even with the fulsome praise of Charles Elliott, they had chosen Matthew Simpson somewhat reluctantly.

Now they shook their heads with surprise and disappointment. He was but twenty-seven years of age, and younger in appearance. Tall, slender, and slightly stooped, he moved awkwardly and with a certain shyness. His face was rather thin and small, and his reddish brown hair lay low on his forehead. To men who, influenced

by phrenology, equated high foreheads and intelligence, he did not look much like a college president.

The handsome Edward R. Ames, later bishop and long-time friend and frequent competitor of Simpson, took one look at him and said, "We'll have to discount Elliott's recommendation twenty percent." ¹⁰

One trustee said to another, "I thought to see in the new president a man, but found only a stripling." ¹¹

The blunt Allen Wiley, one of the older members of the conference, and the man delegated to carry on the correspondence which had led to the selection of a president, frankly said to Simpson himself that he was "disappointed." "You look much younger than I thought you would," he said.

Simpson, his blue eyes sparkling with good humor, replied, "That is a difficulty which time will help to cure." ¹²

One Sunday morning after his arrival in Greencastle, he stood trial before his first Indiana congregation. The people had flocked in great numbers to their places on movable benches in the unfinished, unpainted Methodist chapel. The men, if they were typical Methodists of their era, crowded together on one side of the aisle, rolled their quids about in their mouths, and spat quizzically as they took the measure of the new president. The women, across the aisle, peered out from under their bonnets in critical appraisal. They all had seen him before the service, and already there were whispers that "he won't do." But from the rostrum, where his tall frame towered above the roughhewn pulpit, his high musical voice rang out in praise to God and in confidence for the future, his face lighted up—aglow, men said, with the spirit of God—and his peculiar eloquence laid a spell on the congregation. The questioning looks changed to smiles, and the whisperings to murmurs, "He will do," "He will do." ¹³

All that summer Matthew Simpson taught at the university and preached in and near Greencastle. Once he met a few of the preachers at Indianapolis and preached to the people there. His first major test with Methodists generally was in the fall at Lawrenceburg during the Indiana Annual Conference. The preachers, about one hundred and fifty in number, gathered from all over the state and from southern Michigan. The majority came on horseback, and many traveled more than two hundred miles.

A few had heard the new university president at Greencastle, and the word of his eloquence was abroad. When both Bishop Robert R. Roberts and Thomas A. Morris, presiding officers at the conference, declined the request to make the address celebrating the hundredth anniversary of John Wesley's foundation of the Methodist society, the young president, as the next highest official of the church in attendance, received the call. No theme was more to his liking than the one hundred years' march of Methodism.

The exercises were held on Friday morning in the little brick church, with two aisles and a narrow, high pulpit. The Methodists of the surrounding communities, excluded from the business meetings of the conference, crowded into the chapel with their preachers, making an audience of about five hundred. The occasion was dramatic—the centennial of the founding of Methodism; and it was the first opportunity many of them had had to hear the new president of their college. Moreover, they were aroused by the rapid spread of "Millerism," and were interested in the prospect of some great moral victory, perhaps even the triumphant second coming of Christ.²⁴

Matthew Simpson chose for his discourse the first nine verses of the forty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel. The chapter records a part of the vision of the prophet, who as a captive in Babylon dreamed that the Lord escorted him through a temple newly erected on the site of the old one. When the prophet reached the door and looked to the east he saw a stream of water issuing from the threshold. A man with a line in his hand measured out the waters, and after each measurement of a thousand cubits he led the prophet through the stream. At first the water reached only to the prophet's ankles; then, to his knees, to his loins; and at last they were a mighty river that he could not pass over. The stream poured forth into the desert, and all that it touched was healed; and "every thing shall live whither the river cometh."

To Simpson the Scripture was a symbol, a flash of insight, a spark struck by the juxtaposition of the prophet's words and the history of Methodism. The meaningless fragments of his own knowledge and experience, thus illuminated, fell into their place in the Great Design. He perceived the force of Uncle Matthew's argument that the operations of God were not confined to the salvation of souls and the providential decisions of humble Christians, but

were manifest in history, in the discovery of America, and in the march of Methodism. God had opened up a new land of Canaan and raised up a new Chosen People.

He painted in vivid pictures the humble beginnings of Christianity and of Methodism, the first tiny trickles of the stream, the struggles against persecution and hardship, the gradual increase, and then the unbelievable growth and spread of Methodism and its life-giving institutions.

He had a "wonderful expression" as he seemed to take onto himself the role of the prophet and to wade into the waters to his ankles, to his knees, to his loins. "His great soul came into his face . . . Light seemed to flash from side to side." The tide of emotions quickly rose to "an uncontrollable pitch." He had scarcely finished his introduction when a woman, the wife of one of the wealthiest citizens of the community, could stand the emotion no longer. She rose, stepped to the middle aisle, and waved her hand above her head, exclaiming, "Sun, stand thou still and let the moon pass by." Simpson paused, and another preacher began the singing of a hymn while friends led the woman from the church.

When Simpson resumed his theme the resistance of the audience was broken, and emotion was at a new high level. With every "fresh unfolding of the subject," every new interpretation of the symbol, came a "fresh gust of tears and shouting." The preachers were so overcome as almost to drown out the voice of the speaker. The circuit rider beside James Hill could not keep quiet. He stamped on the floor and shouted, "Did you ever hear the like?" Hill, distressed, tried to quiet the fellow by pressing on his knees. At last he forced the man's head down between the seats and pounded him on the back.

On went the stream, and Simpson from the mountain top pointed out its course to the congregation. It was at last a mighty torrent, "sweeping everything before it, cutting for itself a deep and wide channel, carrying huge rocks and giant trees in its course," spreading over the plains, where it left its healing waters, its rich verdure and fruitage.

With one voice the Methodists of Indiana voted Professor Simpson the "prince of pulpit orators." As for himself, Simpson had found both the theme and the method to suit his needs and to move the people.

IV

No less important to Matthew Simpson in establishing himself with Indiana Methodists was his inaugural address as president of Indiana Asbury University. The event was postponed in order to allow the completion of a part of the building.

Before the summer was half gone, Uncle Matthew was worrying: "Don't forget the inaugural address; your duty and reputation both require attention to that."

Young Matthew worried too. Ellen and James and baby Charles, who had been born shortly after their arrival in Indiana, were visiting in Pittsburgh, and he had to add household tasks to his college teaching and administrative duties.

It was too bad, Uncle Matthew thought. He had no doubt that others who had made such "luminous addresses" had had leisure for preparation. None the less, he was confident. His nephew might not rate so high as other educators in speech making (the family had had no first-hand report of the conference sermon), but there were very few men, if any, who had had "greater facility in acquiring a knowledge of literature, languages, and science than yourself." He had no doubt that the address would be "good and fully equal to what the best of them at your age and experience could have made."¹⁵

By late July the first draft of the address was completed, and sent to the uncle for criticism. It was good, Uncle Matthew said, save that some generalizations ought to be qualified and some definitions made clear. The nephew carefully noted these as he began the process of refining.

The commencement and the inauguration were set for September 13, 1840, just before the Indiana annual conference was to meet at Indianapolis. Methodist preachers and members, friends of the college, officials of the school and state, gathered at Greencastle for the exercises. Henry Ward Beecher, the twenty-six-year-old pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, who was scheduled to address the literary society in the evening, came early for the commencement and inaugural exercises. Governor David Wallace, in a highly embellished address of welcome, praised the work of Indiana pioneers and Methodist circuit riders, and then turned the keys of the institution over to President Simpson.

The young president stepped forward to deliver his address. The chapel of the new building was packed: most of the preachers who had been at last year's conference were present, and members of the Board of Trustees had a prominent place; friends of the institution, men who had struggled to place Methodism in the front ranks of western education, eagerly waited to hear what he had to say. There were still some who were a little suspicious—Indiana Methodists who, nurtured by the circuit riders and still unweaned from frontier ways, looked with doubt upon higher education and "larnin" among preachers, even though the committee of the conference had promised that the college should not be a "manufactory in which preachers are made."

Uncle Matthew had warned that the effect of the address would determine the people's judgment of the college. "Speak as if you are perfectly sure of the correctness, propriety, and importance of every sentence," he wrote. "If the speaker . . . is sure he is right, the hearers will be so too."¹⁶

The president began with the story of an ancient Greek artist to whom a visitor expressed wonder that he should work so hard to perfect his productions. He answered, "I paint for eternity." Why, the speaker asked now, had so much time and effort been spent in erecting this edifice, why was there on this day "such a congregation of the talents and beauty of our enterprising, though youthful state—and why such a deep interest . . . in the exercises of this day? . . . 'We paint for eternity.'"¹⁷

The critical question, to which he addressed himself, was: Why should these efforts be devoted to education? In the manner of John Locke, he answered that in the first place man is the creature of his education. A beaver might build a dam like his sires, without alteration or improvement; but man, according to his learning, built for himself a hovel, or a wigwam, or the "rock-hewn palaces of Petra, or the hundred-pillared domes of Thebes." Not only was he a creature of education, but he was continually receiving an education. Whether he was a child at play, a student at his books, or a young man at work, he was subject to lessons which would determine his future. Man had an insatiable desire to learn, an unquenchable thirst implanted by God. The only power of the parents, then, was to choose in what the youth should be educated. The negligent parent allowed his child to learn the science of wickedness—the "foolish jest, the impure song, and the profane exclaima-

tion." The responsible parent directed his son's desire for knowledge toward the proper objects.

He insisted further that individual character depended upon the kind of instruction received, that national character was similarly determined, and that "true fame and prosperity" were dependent upon "intellectual and moral culture." He cited the instances of Washington, of Hannibal, of the Indian stalking his game or his enemy; he contrasted Sparta and Athens, Carthage and Rome, Egypt and Israel, Russia and Britain, and extolled the wisdom of the Pilgrim Fathers in planting church and school on the American continent.

Having thus argued, generally, the importance of education, he turned to a consideration of colleges and universities. He praised them first because they supplied the outlines of general knowledge. They taught the student the principles of chemistry, of mineralogy, of geology. They instructed him in natural philosophy, in the motions of nature—from the movements of the birds in the air to the ships upon the sea—the propagation of sound, the flash of the lightning, "the colors that sparkle in the dewdrop as it glistens on the trembling leaf."

But colleges taught the student not only the nature of the world in which he lived, but the history of man, the principles which had raised and overthrown nations, the actions of the good and the great as opposed to the conduct of the bad; they explained to him the strange phenomena of the mind, the laws of being, and taught him to think with accuracy and precision. And above all, in thus leading him through every department of nature, they showed him the "grand design of the Supreme Creator."

He praised the colleges, again, because one of their grandest objects was to teach students to write and speak, to communicate interestingly and successfully. In America every man was by birth-right an orator; he was at birth "invested with the attributes of sovereignty." Few men were orators by nature. Few there were who would not profit from the periodic exercises in writing and declamation, the studies in logic, in structure and analysis of language, in style, and more especially in foreign languages. However popular it was to declaim against study of the classics, no man, he said, could obtain a mastery of his own tongue, or aspire to true scholarship without studying Latin and Greek.

He praised the colleges because they taught students to seek

amelioration of the condition of man. "Moral Science shows that man to be a criminal who does not employ himself in labors of benevolence." He praised them also because they elevated the standards of professional achievement, and because they contributed largely to the effectiveness of the common schools.

His greatest praise for the colleges was that they had always been precursors of great improvements, of the progress of mankind, whether in government or in the arts of civilization. He eulogized Charlemagne and King Alfred for their encouragement of learning; he traced the early history of universities, and found in them the awakening mind of the Renaissance, the spread of the ideas of justice and liberty, the crumbling and decay of tyranny. In the advancement of knowledge through the universities, he saw the rise of the idea of popular rights, the signing of the Magna Charta, and the formation of the American Constitution, "that noblest work of man."

"Yet," he said, rising to a brief but scornful denunciation of those who opposed education, "some there are, even in this favored land, so ignorant of history, and so grovelling in all their conceptions, that they publicly declaim against colleges as fostering aristocracy." Such men would, in other days, have been the first "to strangle liberty in her cradle, and, bowing their own neck to the foot of the despot, to swear allegiance to his throne."

He thought the universities likewise instrumental in bringing about the Reformation in religion. Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Whitefield, all were university men. The college in America, far from being the nursery of vice and infidelity as some men supposed, was favorable to religious instruction. Students were required to observe the Sabbath; they listened daily to the reading of the Scriptures, and their preceptors were men of "irreproachable habits and unblemished piety." Even more important, an enlargement of knowledge gave a clearer idea of the greatness of Deity. Man's only concept of infinite holiness, of spotless purity, was inseparably associated with infinite wisdom. How did man, at the time of creation, differ from the animals? Not that he was purer, but simply that he was wiser. If then man, within his sphere, should seek to be like God, "he must seek not only for spotless purity, but also for extensive knowledge."

President Simpson now had spoken for nearly two hours, with

an amazing display of erudition. He had laid down the premises of his argument carefully and clearly, and had heaped upon them an abundance of illustration from history, biography, science, and the Bible. He had relieved the argument with a score of sharp, vivid pictures: Luther casually taking the Scriptures from the shelves of a library for the first time; the Carthaginians scaling the mountain heights of Italy and pouring down upon the fair plains, only to be checked by their ignorant fear of a storm; the dust of a plant carelessly brushed away, but seen through the microscope as a crowded city of living beings.

Considering in conclusion the argument that Indiana already had too many literary institutions, and therefore ought not to establish another for sectarian purposes, he denied it. A new institution would not damage those already existing. "A star hitherto invisible, when it suddenly shines brightly in the heavens, robs not other luminaries of their glory, but only augments the splendor of the sky." Indiana, with a great deal more territory and more than twice the population of Connecticut, had but one-fifth the number of college students. Parents of the West wished their sons to be educated in Western institutions where they could become attached to the customs and be identified with the interests of their own people.

As for the cry of "sectarianism," young men enrolled at Indiana Asbury University would be subject to no proselyting. However, if the critics meant by sectarianism that the professors were religious men and, as such, had "settled views upon Christian character and duty," then he hoped the institution would ever be sectarian. "Education without morals is pernicious, and to have morals without religious instruction is impossible."

Ardent as he was for Methodism and its schools, he was not unmindful of the fact that many potential patrons of the school were not affiliated with any church. Praising, therefore, the projectors and founders of the college, he referred to them as "friends of this university," and "people in all parts of the state." His flights of eloquence and periods of approbation had been for his country and his state, not for his denomination. He had mentioned religion, but he had eulogized learning.

The people were profoundly moved. John Hammond was so highly delighted that he immediately decided to send his son to

Indiana Asbury University; Henry Ward Beecher said that a copy of the address should be sent to every family in Indiana; the board of trustees directed the printing of a thousand copies; and Edward R. Ames, who was not easily excited over the achievement of others, insisted on "quick publication," and said that he would look after arrangements even though he had already been criticized for meddling. "By the help of God," he declared, "we will scatter it to every nook and corner of the State." The address, printed with that of Governor Wallace, was distributed in pamphlet form to the people.¹⁸

Uncle Matthew reported some weeks later that Charles Eliott thought the inaugural was "great": in some places "it might have been improved, but it was such as he could not make." Leonidas L. Hamline, who was soon to be elected bishop, believed it "upon the whole . . . the best inaugural made by any Methodist preacher at the head of a college." Uncle Matthew himself was "exceedingly joyful at the success of performance," but he admonished young Matthew to remember in deep humility "whence cometh thy strength." Nor should he forget that "popularity of any kind is uncertain."¹⁹

Nearly a year after the address William Hunter, the former editor of the *Pittsburgh Conference Journal*, who had long meditated upon "epistleizing" his old friend, wrote that it was not a "slow speech." "If I had been an editor I would have given it a 'puff.' I am not surprised to hear that you are marvellous popular out there."²⁰

As L. L. Hamline said, the address, although not above criticism, was of a sort to "command an unbounded respect." It brought to the young president the substantial reputation he needed in launching upon an educational career. A year and a half before, the Methodists of Indiana had looked doubtfully upon the tall, slightly stooped youth who had come to head their university; but now the reputation of Matthew Simpson, preacher and educator, was secure. As a layman said, after mistaking the older and much more handsome college agent, Samuel Cooper, for the president and Simpson for some young itinerant, "Ah, I see the wisdom of Dr. Watts's saying, 'The mind's the measure of the man.'"²¹