Biographies

and

Miscellaneous.
John Howard Harris, Ph. D., LL. D.

"Of studie took he most care and most hede.
Not oo word spak he more than was neede;
And that was seid in form and reverence,
And short and quyk and ful of heye sentence.
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speech,
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche."

John Howard Harris was born in 1847, in Indiana County, Pennsylvania. His father was a farmer, and the future college president lived on the old homestead until his thirteenth year, attending the public school in the winter and working on the farm during the summer. When he was fifteen years old he taught his first school. During this period he also attended the academy at Mechanicsburg, Pa.

His studies were interrupted, however, by the "call for volunteers," and, though only sixteen years of age, he enlisted, and served as a private soldier in the Second Battalion, U. S. Volunteers, in West Virginia; and afterwards, as a sergeant in Company H, 206th Pennsylvania Volunteers, in front of Richmond, from August, 1864, until the fall of the city; and, then, in Lynchburg, Virginia, until "mustered out." While waiting for General Lee to surrender, amid the confusion and revelry of camp life, he continued his studies and completed his preparatory course.

In 1865, he entered the University at Lewisburg, now Bucknell, and was graduated in 1869, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts. While at College he was baptized into the fellowship of the Baptist church, though having been converted several years before. He was a member of the Sigma Chi Fraternity, and took an active part in the literary societies of the College, developing great talent as a debater. He had purposed to be a lawyer, but near the close of his college course decided to study for the ministry.
Immediately after his graduation he was asked to take charge of Keystone Academy, a school then about to be opened for the first time, at Factoryville, Pa. He accepted the position, and while the necessary buildings were being completed, the school was held in the basement of the Baptist church building at that place. He began the school with only sixteen pupils, one of whom was Miss Lucy Bailey, his present wife.

As principal of the Academy, he now entered upon what he believed would be his life work, and he devoted all his energy to the task of making Keystone Academy an educational centre. Year after year the work grew, more teachers were engaged and new buildings erected. In his work he showed the highest wisdom; he sought to found the Academy not merely in the beautiful grove at Factoryville, but first upon the hearts of the people, and he succeeded. The confidence of the people was his; their money, his; and throughout his whole career as Principal, so entirely did he have their confidence, they followed his leadership with unwavering faith. As a teacher, he was thorough, earnest and inspiring. In many a young man and woman he kindled a love for knowledge, and often the disheartened student, by his words of sympathy and encouragement, has been kept from giving up the race. Although a strict disciplinarian, he trusted his students, and, as is always the case, he was seldom deceived by them.

In June, 1872, he was ordained a Baptist preacher, and in the following year he married Mary E. Mace. In 1880 his wife died, and in the same year he became pastor of the Factoryville Baptist church, thus taking upon himself new and additional duties. His splendid physical strength enabled him to carry burdens that would have crushed many men, and for nine years he continued to serve as Principal and teacher in the Academy, and as pastor of a church numbering at the close of his pastorate over four hundred members.
As a preacher he was simple, yet forcible. His sermons combined two qualities seldom united—simplicity and strength. He was immovably centered in the simple, grand truths of the gospel, and he always preached from the heart. His pastorate was eminently successful, the membership being doubled during the nine years.

In 1883 Lafayette College conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. In 1889 he was offered the Presidency of Bucknell University, and, after some hesitation, he severed his connection with Keystone Academy and the church at Factoryville and was inaugurated President of the University in June of the same year. In 1890 Dickinson College and Colgate University both bestowed upon President Harris the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

President Harris brought to Bucknell a profound scholarship, thorough business training and a clear understanding of his duties, and his administration has been marked by great progress along all lines. The attendance has been increased from seventy-one, in 1889, to one hundred and twenty-seven in 1891. The requirements for admission have been raised; the curricula revised, and several electives added to them. The Institute and Academic departments have been reorganized, and the annual catalogue shows an attendance, at present, in all departments of three hundred and thirty-nine. An additional endowment of $100,000 is now nearly completed.

Doctor Harris does not court popularity, but is exceedingly modest. When requested to give some facts concerning his life, the characteristic reply was: "I was born in 1847, the date of my death is unknown." He is a deep thinker and a ready writer, and it is a cause of regret to many of his friends that he does not put some of his thoughts in a form suitably for preservation. He is now in the prime of life, and occupies a position in the educational world of which Bucknell may well be proud.