

## JAMES McCOSH, PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON COLLEGE.



WHO distinguished Scotchmen have served Princeton College in the office of President. But by a striking paradox they have both been more thoroughly American than if born to the manner. John Witherspoon, chosen in 1768 to the seemingly unimportant office, at first declined; but learning later from Richard Stockton of the potential influence of such a position, accepted. With the blood of John Knox in his veins, he discovered, on his arrival, with the prophetic vision of his ancestor the deep meaning of the contest between the colonies and their infatuated masters, the king and parliament. His record as an ardent American patriot, as the instructor of James Madison in the formative principles of the Constitution, as a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and as a leader in molding public opinion throughout the war of the Revolution, fills a splendid page of American history. His services to the college were scarcely less splendid than those to his adopted country. He reorganized its teaching body, increased its funds, and paid its debts. His great reputation as a statesman and a divine attracted to Princeton sons of many of the most distinguished families in the land. The list of graduates during the twenty-five years of his presidency is not less a matter of pride to the country than to the college. To the names of Ephraim Brevard, Philip Freneau, James Madison, Aaron Burr, Henry Brockholst Livingston, Gunning Bedford, and Jonathan Dayton might be added many others of scarcely inferior fame. Of the fifty-five members of the convention which framed the Constitution, Princeton furnished nine, and five of these had been personally taught by Witherspoon. Of his other pupils, sixteen sat in the Senate, forty in the House, four were cabinet-officers, four governors, nine presidents of colleges, and an equal number occupants of various professional chairs.

Perhaps it was the memory of such achievements, perhaps it was the same instinct with which good society recognizes its own, that led the trustees of the college, a hundred years later, to look over sea for another President. Be that as it may, it was exactly a century after Witherspoon's inauguration that James McCosh entered upon the duties of the same office.

We are having serious contentions about

the environment of men, and its effect on character. One thing is certain, that many of the foremost Americans have emerged from very un-American surroundings and training. There is a certain type of intellect and mold of character which belongs here. It makes little difference whether it develops by Swiss lakes and mountains, as did that of Agassiz; whether it acquires consistency on the flat marshes of Prussia or amid the thunders of Waterloo, as did that of Francis Lieber; or whether it grows by merchandising on the banks of the Garonne and at the wharves of Bordeaux, as did that of Stephen Girard,—the American world finds place and scope for it in its varied interests and knows it as essentially its own.

This was true in a high degree of the Scotchman from Brechin and Belfast. And he knew it as well as those who called him. In the early days it was no reproach to be a foreigner in a community where the preceding generation had been one of immigrants. Four generations later it was quite different, and no little courage was and is required for one not born on our shores to accept a public position of the first importance. What is said to be a characteristic anecdote is told by some of Doctor McCosh's first American pupils. At the close of his first class-room lecture there was an outburst of somewhat undignified but honest applause. Veteran teacher as he was, he misunderstood it—very probably from the exaggerated accounts of student waywardness which college-bred men are so fond of repeating. But with the fearlessness of his conviction that such demeanor was but an excrescence on American manners, he checked it successfully with the quiet and stern remark, "I am not to come to you, gentlemen; it is you who will come to me." The instinct of his mind was true. The mutual interchange of relationships has brought the college to him in many high senses, and even more certainly has fastened his name and fame in the most enduring bond to those of the institution for which he has labored in season and out of season with abiding devotion for nearly a score of years.

The success of Doctor McCosh's administration as presiding officer of the College of New Jersey is already well known to the public. One is almost tempted to say too well known, for it has happened to him as to other successful organizers that his results have been prematurely judged as complete, and his final

aims marred by well-meant but cruel exaggerations. At least that is what we seem to read between the lines of his recent pamphlet on education. Like his great predecessor he has strengthened the traditional spirit of his college, rallied to its support its hereditary friends and gathered many new ones, amplified and reinforced the course of study, and brought its system into prominence as a leading candidate for the favor of the great public. It has been the repetition of the old experience that with the Time came the Man. The stream of liberality which was ready to break forth at the sufficient incentive found its release in the confidence of the public in his management and that of the corporation, and in the high purposes which were revealed by his untiring agitation of educational themes.

What is of primary importance is that in this great work the jealous American spirit has not been roused to any opposition or anxiety by the use of foreign methods or the display of any but the most American feelings and tendencies. While the press utters its warnings as to foreign mannerisms and foreign teachings in other prominent colleges, and spares nothing of its watchfulness and advice with regard to Princeton, at least it never has even hinted at foreign invasion, where, under a Scotch executive, it might most be expected. This is perhaps the more interesting because the personality of Doctor McCosh is thoroughly Scotch, and his address very impressive — not to say aggressive. With a massive but spare frame which, when his mind is roused, abandons its scholarly stoop and towers above expectation, is combined an unusual nervous force which often manifests itself in vigorous gestures. His head and brow are even more expressive of power; even to the usual observer the broad forehead and keen eyes bring into prominence his well-known capacity for an impetuous, unyielding, intellectual onset. But in repose the philosopher and the divine stand revealed in the bowed and meditative attitude which is customary, and in the wrapt, abstracted expression of the features, and in the contemplative poise of the head so familiar to all who have paused to observe him in his daily walks.

The streets of Princeton form lovely vistas of deep shade and glancing sunlight. Old and mossy mansions of colonial days still linger among the massive self-asserting structures of modern architecture, and old Nassau itself muses upon the changes of nearly two centuries. An academic air pervades the whole town, and during the hours elsewhere given to the stir of labor and business, the wide avenues and broad lawns wear the same studied repose which in life so often overlies

activity and ambition and unrest. The hidden life only appears at midday and in the evening when the streets resound to the tramp of the students' constitutional and the distant shouts of the playing-fields. There is no need to fill in the outlines of the familiar picture. Its colors, like those of the old masters, mellow and soften with age. But it will be somber and dusky enough to some of us when we make our annual pilgrimage and miss the familiar form of the master from among his colleagues and his boys. We will forget his austerity in the faithfulness with which he reproved the *vitium regere non posse impetum*. Our awe will melt with affection, and our respect for his wisdom and knowledge will awaken memories both lasting and beneficent.

The public knows Doctor McCosh as the author of erudite and recondite philosophical treatises. It stands in no little awe of him as a defender of old-fashioned doctrines in the pulpit, in the press, and even in the hostile circles of the "liberal" clubs. It pictures him as an intrepid explorer for benevolence, who traverses the wilderness of worldliness and defies the sultry heats of indifference to reach the hidden fountains of good-will and make known their virtue to the world. Such a reputation is enviable enough, but it is not half of the whole, and an old pupil could not attempt a portrayal of the man without falling into something of the sentiment which his personal traits develop in all who come in contact with him. Even his polemic is imaginative, as will be admitted by all who are familiar with the style of his philosophical writings. When a candidate for the professorship of mental science in Queen's College, Belfast, some friends sent a copy of his first book, "The Method of the Divine Government," to Lord Clarendon. That eminently practical statesman has left on record that he spent the night in reading the book, and gave the appointment to its author on the following day. This was the occasion of those scornful lines of Master Molloy Molony which Thackeray preserved for us:

"As I think of the insult that's done to this nation  
Red tears of riving from me faytures I wash,  
And uphold in this pome to the world's detestaytion  
The sleeves that appointed Professor McCosh.

Is it thus that you praych me?  
I think all your Queen's Universities bosh;  
And if you've no neetive professor to taych me  
I scawurn to be learned by the Saxon McCosh."

If we have long neglected our Scott, the conception of geniality as a necessary characteristic of the Scotch is not always clear. But James McCosh was born in Ayrshire, the land of Burns. His father was a wealthy farmer, and in the days before the Washing-

tonian movement had penetrated the valley of the Doon, no doubt those who had known the great poet often clinked glasses with the lad. It would have been strange if the Ness Glen, the Braes of Ballochmyle, and all the romantic scenery of the Doon and the Ayr which roused the plaintive muse of Burns should have left untouched the more restrained but youthful and susceptible mind of his countryman. As a matter of fact, the deepest impressions were left on the young man's temperament by the scenery of his early home. His theory of æsthetics is ever illustrated by references to nature, and the art in which he seeks his favorite relaxation is that of the landscape gardener. The experiences of his boyhood have left a clear stamp on his memory, and in the familiar talk which at times interrupts the dignity of a lecture or the solemnity of a sermon, frequently serve to point a moral. One of the most humorous is very characteristic. On a certain day about his ninth or tenth year, his mother was to make her regular visit to the nearest market town. Her younger son was to enjoy the dignity of escorting her as a reward for good behavior. The drive was delightful, and the sense of merit and importance grew stronger and stronger in the child's mind. Arrived in the main street, the horses and carriage were sent to the inn stables, and the shopping tour began. Before long the boy began to suffer somewhat, as do most of his sex under similar circumstances. He was stationed accordingly at the door of the shop with strict injunctions to keep his hands off the tempting wares exhibited at the door of the grocer. Before long a sweep with all his sooty armor spied in the doorway the small but important figure, somewhat conscious of his first-best clothes, and began a series of those insulting gestures with which street gamins express disdain and sportive contempt. For a time the young countryman forbore, but he had been "brought up on gude parritch," and could at last endure no more. He accordingly attacked and thoroughly thrashed the mocking sweep before his mother, attracted by the gathering crowd, could interfere. What was his dismay when, instead of the approbation which he felt he had earned, the crowd broke out into laughter at the sight of his sooty and smutty face and garments. The carriage was instantly recalled, the bedraggled victor hurried into it, and the eagerly expected day of pleasure turned into one of humiliation by the long and dreary home-ward journey and the reproofs of his father.

He received a sound and thorough education at the two most famous Scotch universities, those of Glasgow and Edinburgh, residing five years at each. The teaching in both was

solid rather than brilliant. Adam Smith and Thomas Reid were long since in their graves, but the teachings and traditions of such men live after them, and their impulse was not yet spent in Glasgow. No doubt the young student was deeply influenced and the natural inclination of his mind strengthened by the great past of his first university. And when afterwards he went, in 1830, to study theology at Edinburgh under Chalmers and Welsh, he found there the young Sir William Hamilton, who, although not yet in the chair of logic and metaphysics, was writing his philosophical essays for the "Edinburgh Review," and delivering stirring lectures on civil history and literature. It was doubtless Hamilton's appreciation of an essay written by McCosh on the Stoic philosophy which led the university to reward it by giving an honorary degree of Master of Arts to its author. But this success did not tempt him from his chosen profession. From 1834 to 1843 he was a pastor in the Established Church, first at Arbroath Abbey, and afterwards at Brechin.

It was in the latter place that he was first called to exhibit the qualities which endeared him to those of his own denomination in America and afterwards identified him with their thought and work. He had long been a prominent member of the Evangelical or Reforming party in the Scottish Church under the leadership of the distinguished Chalmers. That movement came to a climax in 1843. McCosh at once threw up his valuable living, joined the ranks which organized as the Free Church, and founded many societies of those who wished to be independent of royal interference in the exercise of their religious liberty. He was active throughout the counties of Angus and Mearns, and in Brechin itself established a large church, of which he was the successful pastor until 1852. His career as an author began somewhat earlier, first in contributions to the reviews, and in 1850 by the publication of his first book, which the University of Aberdeen rewarded by conferring on him the degree of Doctor of Laws.

His life work as a teacher and writer began when in his forty-first year he accepted the chair of Logic and Metaphysics in Queens College, Belfast. From that time forward his contributions to philosophical and religious literature have not ceased to grow in number and importance, and his seventy-fifth year finds his mind and pen in constant activity. The work which spread his fame most widely and put him among the leaders of the Intuitionist School was written at Belfast. In the "Intuitions of the Mind Inductively Investigated" the author is at his best both as a thinker and a writer. His reasoning is vigorous and his

logic unassailable, if his premises be once granted; while his style is direct, easy, and elegant, and, without being florid, adorned and enlivened by abundant metaphor and illustration. His public life in Ireland was quite as active and influential as his leadership had been in Scotland. He was an adroit and successful advocate for the national system of education, was called to assist in the organization of the English Civil Service, and, true to his instinct of civil and ecclesiastical freedom, agitated and prepared the disestablishment of the Irish Presbyterian Church. What better training for American life could he have received, or what greater aptitude for its duties and prerogatives could he have manifested?

One of the greatest events in the history of the Reformed churches for fifty years was the organization of the Presbyterian Alliance and Council. While the idea was not entirely new, the first productive discussion of the subject was that of Doctor McCosh before the representative body of American Presbyterians in 1870. Two years later was celebrated in Philadelphia the three hundredth anniversary of the Reformation in Scotland. On that occasion he presented a complete scheme of organization, and three years later was chairman of the conference in London which realized the project. Since that time his work has been devoted almost exclusively to the interests of his adopted country. He has made addresses before the great teachers' associations; written review articles that have attracted wide attention; written seven of the long series of his philosophical works, while simultaneously strengthening and directing the interests of the educational system of which he is the head.

Already in the United States we begin to say: There were giants in those days. Every new generation is driven to closer specialization by the increase of knowledge and by the crowds which jostle for a place in the professions and in business. So while we perhaps build higher, we have not so wide a pedestal for our shaft. The wonder concerning men eminent in one department and strong in many is how they do it; where they find time, humor, mood for such diversified work. Those who have ever been active in the stirring life of Princeton College could not explain it in the case of Doctor McCosh. He is seen about the college yard from early chapel till midnight or later. Except from three to five in the afternoon he is never denied to any caller, however unimportant his errand. The parent or casual visitor who would like a little attention always gets it. The students are always welcome whether they earnestly seek for advice and instruction, or

in some captious mood lay down a plan to revolutionize college government, to change systems of instruction, or to have their own way in whatsoever direction. He is constant in his attendance at faculty and committee meetings, presides at the public lectures, makes long journeys to stimulate and guide the alumni, and is a close observer of all intellectual and educational progress. But he will turn from conversation to his writing-desk without an interval. The change from one intense occupation to another is his rest. The pseudo-psychologists of modern literature have flattered the yearning public into the belief that there is not and was not what is commonly called genius. Perhaps they are right. Let us take them at their word and substitute for genius, capacity for productive work. Both sides will be content.

Very little has been said of President McCosh's relations to his students as a teacher and a friend. That side of his character cannot yet be fairly depicted. Strong natures are apt to be aggressive, and no doubt there are many men of middle and older age who have felt the brunt of his attack. But in his dealings with the young there is little or none of that. Beyond the strength which is necessary to faithfulness, his unconscious method is persuasive. His study has seen the beginning of new purpose and strength in many a wayward lad. The man will not perhaps tell the story of pleading and fatherly reproof till old age makes him retrospective. But the work of McCosh's class-room will always have an important place in the history of philosophy in America. It is doubtful if any university—even in the old world—can show a more wide-spread interest in philosophy among its undergraduates. This is shown not so much by the philosophical chairs which are now held by his pupils, nor even by the great size of the classes which voluntarily attend his lectures, but rather by what are called his library-meetings. Here are read, about once a fortnight throughout the autumn and winter, papers in all departments of metaphysics, commonly written by the younger claimants for the ear of the public. The hearers, composed largely of the intellectual aristocracy of the Junior and Senior classes and the Divinity School community, number fifty and upward. The essay, however able, is often the most unimportant feature of the evening. But it presents the subject of discussion and controversy, which, stimulated and guided by the President and his professors, furnishes the opportunity for many a fledgeling to try his wings and often encourages him to further effort. Time alone will show how fruitful this peculiar feature of Doctor McCosh's teaching is to be,

but the thing itself is enough to put him in the first rank of great teachers. The system of philosophy which he expounds is partly that of the Scotch school, but also in great part his own. Its conscious influence in the history

of American thought has already been great, its unconscious influence even greater. In the philosophic record of our somewhat unphilosophic times his name is sure to have a prominent position.

*John van Cleave.*

## TOPICS OF THE TIME.

### National Strength and National Weakness.

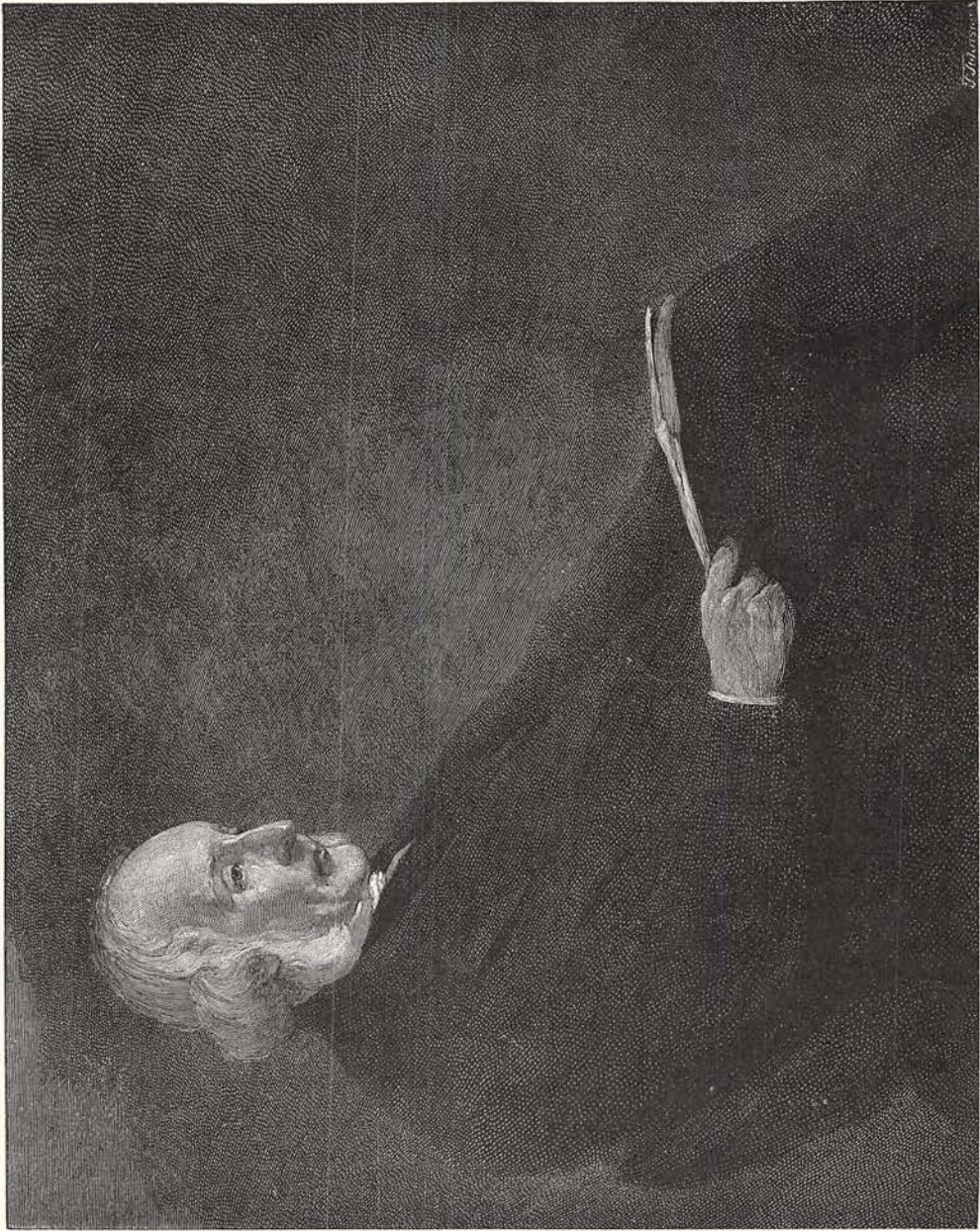
MR. ATKINSON'S studies in the application of statistics to social science, the second of which is published in *THE CENTURY* for this month, are the culmination of a process which the author's readers must have noticed in his previous work. He is not peculiar among economic writers for the relentlessness with which he follows out comparisons of results so much as for his energy and persistence in seeking accuracy of definition in the preliminary statistics. The modern introduction of graphic methods into statistics has enabled him to reduce facts which are in themselves too large to handle into a shape in which they are easy to grasp; and to deduce therefrom conclusions which the business man can no more resist than he can deny the result of an accurate balance-sheet.

No stronger or sounder plea has been made for the application of common sense to national concerns, for the abandonment of the old notion that a nation lives for the gratification of national greed or "glory," and for the substitution of the prosperity and happiness of the people as the end of national existence. It is not easy to realize the strong hold which the residuum of ancient ideas retains in the countries in which, to adopt one of Mr. Atkinson's felicitous antitheses, dynastic principles still contest the field with democracy. Even where the people have obtained more or less control of the government, the mouth-pieces of public opinion remain bound by the spirit of the past. The knight-errant still tilts full-armed through the columns of the daily press, careers through the aisles of parliamentary bodies, and too often usurps the place of the proper occupant of the pulpit. Why is the pressure to look upon every trespass as an insult to some piece of bunting, deserving only of an instant declaration of war, so strong among the armed nations of Europe? It is not from love for the true interests of the people: peace is the one thing needful for them. It is because the nightmare of obsolete ideas still rides the expression of public opinion.

Individual life has been compared to a game of chess with an invisible antagonist, who knows every move on the board and takes remorseless advantage of a false move to crush the one who makes it. Nations must pay the same penalty. The growing commercial wealth of Europe has been made an instrument of gratifying national vanity, and of all the foibles of the modern representatives of the former privileged classes. And thus the race between European peoples has been brought to a deadlock; the contestants, with energies chilled and congested by debts, taxation, and the nameless weights arising from uncertainty of

peace, are unable either to proceed or to get out of the way of others. Their natural development has been arrested; and their time is occupied in watching one another, and in holding every muscle in tense readiness to spring at some neighbor's throat at the first sign of hostility. Is this the true end of national life? And a new participant in the race has appeared from beyond the Atlantic; his energies are not weighted as are those of his competitors; and his increasing speed is carrying him swiftly past them. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but the lesson of these articles is that, unless Bismarckism and Czarism and Chauvinism cease to control the peoples of Europe, they must lose even what they now have to the unnumbered American racer.

We may see, too, the absolute profit of the enormous expenditure of our Civil War. The reason for it was the blind but correct national instinct that the introduction of independent States, international relations, and dynastic ideas into the territory now occupied by the United States must be prevented at any cost, for the sake of the people to all future generations. The justification of the national instinct needs no more than Mr. Atkinson's methods. He puts the cost of the war at about \$1,135,000,000 per annum for the seven years' period of actual warfare and the settlement of terms of peace. It is now a time of profound peace in Europe. Even the Servians are quiet for the time. And yet there are now in active service, in the armies and navies of Europe, over four million men, who do no work except to undergo drill and look warlike. Even Portugal, not quite as large as the State of Indiana, must have its standing army of thirty-four thousand men, about as many as the whole United States army, and thirty-nine vessels in its navy. All this, it must be remembered, is what they call peace in Europe; it is not a circumstance to the mustering of men that would follow the first shot of actual warfare when the 10,129,541 reserves are called out. The direct annual money expenditure upon all these armies and navies in time of peace is about \$750,000,000; and if we include the indirect losses and the effects on the amount of the civil list, as in the estimates for the American war period, the amount would approach \$1,000,000,000 per annum. The somewhat startling conclusion is that the seven years during which we waged a tremendous war and settled the terms of peace really cost us, after all, no more than eight years of the present profound peace costs in Europe under the modern system of international suspicion and armament. By approaching the European standard for seven years, we obtained a permanent insurance against the necessity of any future approach to it.



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