The life of Joseph Franklin Deans, D. D., pioneer in secondary education in Virginia

Claud Minton Whitley

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.richmond.edu/honors-theses

Recommended Citation
The Life of Joseph Franklin Deans, D. D.,
Pioneer in Secondary Education in Virginia

by Claud Minton Whitley

History Thesis
Dr. R. C. McDanel
May 15, 1935.
Bibliography

Deans, Joseph F., Diary.

Deans, Joseph F., Correspondence.

United States War Department, War Vol. 4

State Library of Virginia, Revolutionary Archives,
War Department Files.

Norfolk County Marriage Bonds, Clerks Office.

The Suffolk Herald. February 6, 1903.

The Times. Richmond, December 31, 1901.

Taylor, George Braxton, Virginia Baptist Ministers,
1902-1914. J. P. Bell Co. Inc. Lynchburg,
1915.

Wise, Jennings Copper, Colonel John Wise of England
and Virginia. The Bell Book and Publishing
Company, Richmond, 1918.

Deans, Mrs. Joseph F.

Deans, Colonel Parke P.


Minutes of Middle District Baptist Association, Virginia, 1861-1880. Virginia Baptist Historical Society, Richmond.


The Religious Herald. Vols. 69, 70, 74, 76.
Joseph Franklin Deans was born May 20th, 1839, on a farm, "Spring Hill", one mile north of Churchland in Norfolk County, Virginia. He was a son of William Deans, the grandson of Joseph Deans, a revolutionary soldier and Sarah Graham. His mother was Elizabeth Mary Wise, the daughter of Tully Robinsen Wise, the senior son of "Craney Island George."

On May 20th, 1854, at the age of fifteen years, Dr. Deans began a diary in this manner:

"This is the beginning of my journal, Father, Mother and Sister, read it through, if you want, I hope that you will, but never show this to anyone except yourselves, Keep this particular."

Joseph F. Deans

This shows in youth the modesty that prevailed throughout his life. I quote his beginning as follows:

"Spring Hill, May 20th, 1854.

This being my birthday on which I am 15 years old, and thinking that it will be for my good and welfare, and a pleasure to my relations and friends in after years, I have come to the conclusion that I will endeavor to write down from day to day, in a book prepared for it, the things that I have done during the day and seen and heard. In commencing this my feelings and sympathies go back to last year, when I used to go to school to my Dear friend and teacher, Mr. Josiah Ryland. I believe that it is through his advice that I commence this now. Through his prayers and my own may it result in good to me. May I often thank God for his kind advice and instruction. I exceedingly regret that I have not commenced this delightful exercise before.

1-U. S. War Dept., War pp. 155-158
2-Marriage Bond in Clerks Office of Norfolk County.
4-J. F. Deans, Diary. May 20, 1854.
This is Saturday and I am not at school. It is a beautiful day, the sun rose and set fair. I rose up this morning and after thanking God for watching over me and preserving me through the past night, I helped my father to feed his things. After that I read some in The Wide Wide World before breakfast and some after breakfast; in which I was deeply interested. After dinner I went out and helped my father to set out sprouts. After supper I looked over a little of my Sunday school lesson. After that I read a Chapter in the Bible as usual; which was the last Chapter in the "Psalms". So I commit myself in the hands of the Lord for this ends my Birthday with the last Chapter of "Psalms."

Evidently he was precocious in his studies. At the age of fifteen he wrote:

"May 23, 1854 - Today has been a very fine day but rather cold for the time of year. I went to school today, but it was late when Mr. Hannaford (my teacher) arrived, so our morning lessons were broken, but we only wrote off some exercises in Greek. This evening we said a lesson in indeterminate coefficients. After school I returned home. (This is all that happened worth notice).

"May 26, 1854 - Also a very fine day but the sun was eclipsed. There was no one in my class today also, I finished the Eclogues and recited a series in Algebra. In the evening I went to Yates lower Academy, where we formed a debating society among the boys, consisting of ten members. It is to be called the "Youths Debating Society.""

Previous to this session he had as a teacher Josiah Ryland of Richmond and John R. Bagby of Powhatan. Throughout his life he corresponded with Ryland.

In his diary dated June 27, 1854, he wrote of these two teachers:

"Today has indeed been a very warm day. I helped to shear some sheep this morning. This evening I planted some pop corn, (although it is late). About sunset I went up to store and I was greatly pleased to receive a

5-Ibid.
6-Ibid. May 26.
7-Ibid. June 27.
letter from my old teacher and friend, Mr. John Bagby. It is not in my power to tell my love and affection for him. Oftentimes when thinking of my present state compared with that of last year when I sat under his and the much beloved Mr. Rylands instructions, the bar of affection and sorrow flows. I look upon last year as a golden spot in my life and it seems to me that my love for these men could not be greater if they were my own brothers. Their kind advice I hope I shall always follow and my sincere prayer is that success may follow them through life."

In his diary of September 8, 1854, he wrote further of his teachers.

"This evening I rode up to the store and found out that they had employed us two teachers, a Mr. Robert Williams, a graduate of Richmond College, Va as principal and Mr. Moses Heath graduate of Madison University, New York, I believe as assistant. Both are very competent teachers. I hope we will have a fine school."9

It was in this year that he became a Christian, joining Shoulder's Hill Baptist Church (now Churchland). The spirit which pervaded in his life is clearly shown in his diary of August 17, 1854.

"Today, as I mentioned yesterday, I was baptized about nine o'clock at my uncles, Joseph Deans. In doing it I felt it was my duty, I wished to obey my dear Saviour, although I do not feel as well as I should like for, yet it is my ardent and hopeful desire that I am not deceived. If I am it is through doing what I hoped to be my duty. Oh may I from this day be as humble and devout Christian, that I instead of being a dishonor may be an honor to the cause of Christ. May it be a prayerful duty with me what the Lord wishes me to do."10

He never worked in his diary on Sunday. Always on Mondays he would record the happenings of the day before.

His interest in public affairs appeared early as is shown in his diary of September 16, 1854.

8-Ibid.
9-Ibid. Sept. 8
10-Ibid. Aug. 17
"**I went out to the school house where an election took place for school commissioners."**

On May 24, 1855, he wrote:

"I went to school this morning as I usually do, but school broke up about eleven o'clock on account of the election for state officials of different kinds. Henry A. Wise, the Democrat Candidate, won out, 8027 votes."**

At the age of fifteen Dr. Deans was studying Latin (Virgil), Greek, (Grammar and reader), Geometry (Davies), and Algebra, and had about finished reading "Sallust" and "Xenophon."**

On September 20th, 1855, at nine o'clock P. M., Dr. Deans boarded the steamboat, "North Carolina" for Washington, D. C. to enroll as a pupil at Columbian College, afterwards Columbian University. He graduated with an A. B. degree in 1859. He received his M. A. in 1866 from the same institution. He was a classmate of John T. Griffin, farmer and capitalist of Norfolk County. He was associated here with John Pollard D. D. (once professor of English at Richmond College and father of Ex-Governor John Garland Pollard), Wayland F. Dunaway and William L. Wilson, (Governor of West Virginia, Author of Wilson Bill in United States Congress and Post Master General under President Cleveland).

He attended the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, in October, 1867, and room-mate of William H. Whitsitt and William Harrison Williams, two noted Baptists divines.

---

12-Ibid. Sept. 16
13-Ibid. May 24, 1855
14-Ibid. Oct. 3, 1854
15-Ibid. Nov. 8.
He received his Th. G. degree in 1868. An account of the period is well told by Dr. William H. Whit-  
sitt.

"When I entered the Theological Seminary at Greenville in October, 1867, I found him among the students. He had been educated at Columbian College, and was one of the best prepared minds. We had famous teachers, and felt that we had a chance in life, notwithstanding the pall of reconstruction that rested so darkly over the land. There were six and twenty of us. My Chief distinction was that I was the first student to hail from Tennessee; but nobody realized upon what ideas and influences I had turned my back forever to reach the place.

Deans and William Harrison Williams were room-mates and bosom friends. The same was true of Luther Broaddus and H. C. Townsend. I have no catalogue at hand but I can recall the names of H. F. Sproles, W. B. Jones, W. C. Lindsay, John Stout, W. E. Loyd, F. R. Underwood, R. J. Towell, and others.

Death has harvested busily among us. Possibly more than half of the original number have already passed away. Dr. Deans is the last one to take his departure, and we are all awaiting the summons.

Possibly Deans was the most safely balanced character in our circle. He was not aggressive, but he was always vigorous. He was not brilliant, but he was efficient. The spirits of many were oppressed by dark days and trying experiences, but his view of life was hopeful. His type of dignity became him admirably. It was genuine, unassuming, and kindly. His modesty sometimes appeared too large, but it was never paired with weakness. He possessed a singular knack of winning the respect and esteem of men. The secret of establishing and maintaining influence was one of his native endowments. He was a religious man, full of tender and thoughtful devotness. There were few more valuable ministers in the Baptist pulpit of Virginia. He will be widely and sincerely missed from the pulpit.

But his most important and enduring work was accomplished in the school room, where for twenty-five years he gave his energies to the cause of secondary education. There are few choicer fields of usefulness, and he made the best of his opportunities. The Baptist of Virginia, and Richmond College in particular, owe him a large debt of gratitude. He served his generation faithfully and effectively. The men whom he formed and trained for useful lives are in many

places and vocations. Truly may it be said that he, being dead, yet speaketh. His influence will live through his students and increase for generations yet to be.

My relations with him were tender and endearing, but for a number of years they could not be as intimate as I desired. We were situated far apart, and I rarely enjoyed the pleasure of personal association. But I followed his career with pride, and was thankful for his wide and useful activity. Once, in day of trial, he sought me out to speak some quiet words of confidence and courage that were exceedingly grateful to my feelings, and as long as I live in the world I shall bless his memory for the consolation.20

He was greatly impressed by some of his teachers while attending the Seminary, mainly Basil Manly, J. P. Boyce and John A. Broaddus, particularly fond of the latter. Often to his pupils he would refer to him as a man, a teacher, and a preacher. Upon the death of Broaddus, Dr. Deans grieved greatly, separating from his family and remaining with his "memories." He wrote of Broaddus' influence to Claude W. Duke, then a pupil at the Seminary, who was a pallbearer of Broaddus and Editor-in-Chief of the Seminary Magazine, his letter was printed by Duke in the Magazine.21

Rev. Deans was licensed to preach in December 1858 at Churchland, Norfolk County, and was ordained to the work of the ministry December 6, 1863, at the Second Baptist Church of Petersburg.22 He was a Chaplain in the Confederate Army from 1862 to 1865.

The following is a copy of his war record; direct from War Dept. in Washington:

"The records show that Joseph F. Deans was appointed Chaplain, Confederate States Army, November 1, 1862, and assigned to the 61 Regiment Virginia Infantry for duty.

21-Colonel Parke P. Deans.
22-J. E. Booker "True Man Translated," Suffolk Herald, Feb. 6, 1903.
He was assigned to duty as Post Chaplain at Weldon, North Carolina, June 20, 1863.

He was paroled at Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1865, in accordance with the terms of a military convention entered into April 26, 1865."

One of his experiences while a Chaplain is related in the following excerpt from a letter written by him to his sister, dated, Weldon, North Carolina, March 1, 1864.

"On Thursday of this week I have an appointment to baptize two men who are now under sentence of death. What a novel sight this will be! And especially too, as they are my first. I expect a large number to witness the ordinance, as there has never been such an ordinance administered at this place." 24

He was a pastor of Baptist Churches from 1865 until his death, the pastorates he held are as follows: Weldon, North Carolina, 1865-66; Northwest Baptist Church in Norfolk County, 1866; Manchester, 1869-72; Berkeley Avenue, 1873-74; Smithfield 1875-79; South Quay, 1878-83; Great Fork, 1884-90; Black Creek, 1881-93; Whitehead's Grove, 1876-1903; Windsor, 1879-91 and 1894-1903; Tuckertor Swamp, 1890-1903; Ivor, Va. 1898-99. 25

He made the address at Berkeley Avenue Church on its twenty-fifth anniversary, his son on the fiftieth anniversary.

Dr. Deans was pastor of Whitehead's Grove Church for more than twenty-five years. The twentieth and twenty-fifth anniversary being an occasion of great celebrations. We quote the following from The Religious Herald concerning the twentieth anniversary:

24-Letter of J. F. Deans to sister. March 1, 1864.
"On the fourth Sunday in May, 1896, the Whitehead's Grove Baptist Church in the County of Isle of Wight, celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the pastorate of Rev. Joseph F. Deans. When Bro. Deans took charge of the Church twenty years ago, it was a very feeble body, worshipping in a very ordinary house; but his coming infused new hope and inspired new vigor in the small band, and in a short while they obtained a beautiful spot of ground from Mr. Whitehead, who was not a Baptist, and because of his liberal gift the Church changed its name to Whitehead's Grove. A good house was built which has since been enlarged and beautified. The Church has been greatly blessed under the labors of Bro. Deans, and now there are 163 members, and they are prosperous and happy. The Church has great influence in the Community, and Bro. Deans is more beloved and admired today than he has ever been. It is a real joy to find a pastor who can successfully serve a church with increasing power and influence for twenty years, in these days of change.

The morning of the day appointed by the Church for the celebration was draped in clouds, and the rain came in a constant downpour; but about 10 o'clock the clouds passed away, and the remainder of the day was beautiful and balmy. A great multitude came to the Church. Wisely the brethren had built a large shed, which kept the ground and tables under it dry."

The article tells of the full program, including the singing of the anniversary hymn written by Claude W. Duke, one of Virginia's most gifted sons and now pastor of the First Baptist Church in Tampa, Florida, the reading of a historical sketch of the Church by Mr. C. C. Channell, the senior deacon, and preaching of the sermon by A. E. Owen, pastor of Court Street Baptist Church, Portsmouth, Virginia.

Pastors of all creeds in the neighborhood were present and made short talks. Among them were, Rev. Mr. Lane of the Christian Church, Rev. Mr. Scott of the Episcopal Church, Rev. Mr. Green of the Methodist Church, Rev. C. B. Jones of the Baptist Church, Rev. Mr. Baughn of Benns Methodist Church and Mr. McLeod of Western Branch and Colosse Churches.

29-Ibid.
Concerning the twenty-fifth anniversary the following article is given.

"Sunday, the 26th, (May 26, 1901), the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dr. J. F. Deans with the Whitehead's Grove Church was celebrated****The following is an extract from a sketch of the growth and prosperity of the Church, during the last twenty-five eventful years, prepared and read by Deacon C. C. Channell:

"To sum up the work for the last twenty-five years, the membership when Bro. Deans came among us was 33. Of this number eight are now with us. About 300 persons have been received into the Church during the present pastorate. Present membership, 182, with representatives who have gone from us by letter to strengthen the cause in Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Smithfield, Newport News, and many country Churches, and a long list of sainted dead****The Church now has property worth $2,000. Bro. Deans served the Church in 1876 and 1877 as State Missionary. The Church must feel under lasting obligations to the State Mission Board for the timely aid rendered****. The Pastor early began to impress upon his flock here that they ought not to confine their efforts to home work, but that the field of the Church was the world, and in 1866 the contributions of the Church were enough to entitle it to two representatives in the Virginia Baptist General Association, and Brethren B. F. Latimer and C. C. Channell were the first representatives from the Church to that body. Since then the Church has been developing along that line until the contributions now amount to about $100.00 per annum. The pastor has grown upon the people as the years have gone by. They know that he has made pecuniary and physical sacrifices in order to serve them. He has buried their dead, has married their young people, has received by baptism and otherwise, all of the present membership of the Church, but seven. He has spent twenty five years of his life in the service of the Church. Verily, if Bro. Deans has done nothing else for the Master than the work he has achieved here in his name, it must immortalize him as long as this Church exists on earth or its representatives in heaven. True, the pastor is twenty five years older than he was when he first broke the bread of life to them, and one fourth of a century has made its mark upon him in silvering his hair; ***** but as an expounder of the Word he seems to be constantly renewing his youth; and, while he has fearlessly proclaimed our peculiar denominational principles, he

has done so in such a Christlike spirit as to gain for him the esteem and affection of the lovers of Christ of all denominations, and for his Charge here the respect and an influence among the masses second to no Church organization in this section. Truly, the Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

Dr. Deans was once Vice-President of the Baptist General Association and was moderator for five years of the old Portsmouth Association. He was first made moderator at his old home Church (Churchland Baptist Church). He was Clerk of the Association in 1868, and was once Clerk of the Middle District Association. At the Centennial of the Portsmouth Baptist Association in 1891, he made one of the two principal addresses on the "Influence of the Baptist." The other address was by Tiberius Gracchus Jones, D. D.

In 1897, Richmond College conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity upon him.

On October 3rd, 1872, Dr. Deans married Bettie Lightfoot Poindexter, (whose Poindexter forebearer was George of Middle Plantation, now Williamsburg, and whose mother was a Hundley of Amelia County.) Two children survive by his marriage, Parke Poindexter Deans (Chairman of Industrial Commission of Virginia, former President of the International Association of Accident Boards and Commissions and Grand Sire of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows of the World) and Ethel Louise Deans, postmistress of Windsor, Virginia.

31-Ibid.
33-Minutes of Portsmouth Baptist Ass'n of Va. 1880-1899. 104 sess.
34-Ibid. 1841-1880. 77 sess.
35-Middle District Baptist Ass'n. 1881-1880. 87 sess.
36-Minutes of Portsmouth Baptist Ass'n. 1881-1900. 100 sess.
38-Mrs. Joseph F. Deans.
Heretofore this sketch has been confined to Dr. Deans as a student and his interest in his school teachers. Reference should be made of his efforts to assist in the advancement of schools of higher learning. He always took an active part in all campaigns for their enlargement. It can be better told by one incident where he was trying to aid Rev. William E. Hatcher, D. D. for the increased endowment of University of Richmond, then Richmond College. In 1901, a campaign was for seventy five thousand dollars. "The Times" dated December 31, 1901, carried the following article, (the headlines and part of story is taken from the front page.)

"Money Will Be Ready for Him

Mr. Rockefeller's Offer made Available

Sum Nearly Raised
Conservatively Estimated that $17,000 is in Hand

What Dr. Deans Went Through
He Cracked Ice and Strewed Sand in Order to Get to Church and Take up a Collection - Member of Church of England Contributes - Large Gifts From Newport News and Hampton People

"The beginning of the New Year, among other things, will make an epoch in the history of Richmond College. With the close of today, the time limit set by Mr. John D. Rockefeller for the raising of the $75,000 necessary to secure the $25,000 offered by himself will have expired. The money in hand, and the endowment of the institution will be increased by one hundred thousand dollars.*****

Dr. Deans Experience

Another little incident exhibiting the determination of those working for the college has just been brought to light. Dr. Joseph F. Deans is principal of the Windsor Academy and is also pastor of two or three country churches in Isle of Wight. On Sunday, December 22, the weather was bitter cold, and wherever water had been there ice was. But for the fact that he was to take up a collection for the college that day, Dr. Deans would not have ventured out. The Church at which he was to preach was distant about ten miles. He had proceeded about two miles when he reached a part of the country where a marsh had been, but which was now a sheet of ice. The horse refused to budge when he saw what was before him. Dr. Deans dismounted, got hold of a log or two, and smashed away at the ice until he broke it up sufficiently to get through with his horse. Then he trotted along again until they came to a second sheet of ice, and there the horse braced his front feet forward and his hind feet backward again. This time Dr. Deans could not crack the ice, because it was too thick. After much consideration, he remembered that it was a sandy country and what that meant. He got together a lot of sand and strewed it along on the ice sufficiently to satisfy the horse, and then the two walked over it together. When Dr. Deans at last got to the Church he found his congregation there and started to work on them. He made an earnest appeal for the college, and told his people the experience through which he had just passed. The result was that the Baptist Church at Whitehead's Grove, in Isle of Wight County, gave to the college considerably more than was asked of it."40

40-Ibid.
In 1878 the educational facilities of Eastern Virginia were very poor, particularly so, in Isle of Wight, Nansemond and Southampton Counties. While Dr. Deans was pastor of the Smithfield Baptist Church, he was induced by A. H. Ashburn to go to Windsor in Isle of Wight County, to become pastor of the Churches in that part of the County and to establish a school. It was considered the first two room school in the County. It was first known as the Windsor Male and Female Academy, and in latter years as Windsor Academy. Boys and girls of the three counties came, boarded in his home and attended school. At one time the school was considered as one of the best feeder schools to Richmond College. Young men received their early education to become preachers, doctors, and lawyers, while some of the young ladies are today teaching in schools and colleges. Among his pupils were Dr. Jay Hubbell of University of North Carolina, George B. Ish, principal of Portsmouth, Virginia High School, Claude W. Duke, D. D. of Tampa, Florida, Sidney T. Matthews, D. D. of Richmond, Virginia, William L. Prince of University of Richmond, Dr. C. P. Nebblel of Sussex County, State Senator E. E. Mathews, W. F. Hines, D. D. of Georgia, and many others.

His pupils will remember one thing Dr. Deans would do each year at the beginning of the school session. He would assemble all of his pupils together on the opening day of school and give them a talk, his only rule for them was "to be young gentlemen and ladies," and then he would turn to the blackboard and write the word "Think."

42-Ibid.
44-Colonel Parke P. Deans.
It would remain there throughout the session. Often he would point to it as his pupils showed signs of non-attention.

Among the teachers at Windsor Academy were William L. Prince of University of Richmond, Hugh G. Noffsinger, President of Virginia Intermont College, Claude W. Duke, D. D., Tampa, Florida, and W. T. Creath of Halifax County, Virginia.

J. E. Booker in the Suffolk Herald wrote: "The influences for good which he exerted upon the students of his school during all these years will be fully revealed in eternity." Dr. J. M. Pilcher wrote in the Religious Herald:

"The school was opened in 1878, and has steadily grown in influence and in the estimation of our denomination in the State. The authorities of Richmond College rate it as the best academy in the State, it having furnished to the College more students and better equipped than any other academy, and having sent out a large number of young ministers."

Dr. Samuel Chiles Mitchell of the University of Richmond delivered the commencement address several times.

From the Religious Herald can be found an old Students Tribute by Rev. J. Theodore Bowden. It is as follows:

"I want to speak a few words about Dr. J. P. Deans as the young man's friend. Much of what I shall say can be endorsed by many throughout Virginia and other States. There was nothing that gave him greater pleasure than to help poor struggling boys. He sought more ways and found more opportunities to bless humanity in this way than any man I ever knew. There are ministers, physicians, lawyers, merchants, and almost every class of business who can rise up and call him blessed. I well remember twelve years ago, when he took me from my father's home on the farm and put me in his academy. I had no money, but because of my willingness to do what I could in looking after the school buildings and going on errands about his home, he permitted me to stay in his school three years. During all this time, never did he

45-Ibid
46-Ibid
allow me to want for one needed thing. When the time came for me to enter Richmond College, he opened the way and took a father's interest in my welfare. More than once did I have him to come into my room, while on his visits to the city, and take from his pocket his book and write me a check sufficient to settle all of my indebtedness. After going out from College, I sheltered for two years under his roof and ate at his table, while preaching near Windsor. He continued my counsellor and friend, often taking me into his confidence. Since I have been in the Seminary, I have not had a closer friend, a more loyal supporter. His last words to me were, "God bless you, my boy." He was indeed a father to me in the ministry. I greatly miss him. I shall always miss him.

The world will never know the good he has done, so quiet and unpretentious were his ways of working. He has gone home to receive the crown of righteousness. I rejoice that Mrs. Deans is to continue the school. She is a mother in Israel and every (young man) boy may count it a privilege to come under her gentle touch. With her son Parke and the strong teachers, I am sure the work of Windsor Academy will go on."

I have requested three of his former pupils to give their opinions. The first from Claude W. Duke, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tampa, Florida,

"Perhaps the most potent personality in influencing my early life was that of Rev. J. F. Deans, D. D. of Windsor, Virginia. I knew him both as a gospel minister and a school teacher. While he was never actually my pastor, yet I often sat at his feet and listened with bated breath to his presentation of the gospel. I remember him as a man of unusual spiritual power. He had much to do with my entering the ministry and, of course, took the leading part in my ordination at Western Branch Church.

But I knew him most intimately as a school teacher. Dr. Deans loved young people and seemed to have a genius for developing and calling out the best that was in them. It is remarkable to recall how many of his students became ministers of the Gospel. When I was a boy of thirteen, my father sent me to Windsor Academy. Dr. Deans at once became a second father to me and guided my foot-steps through every adversity with a skillful and steadfast hand.

50—Religious Herald, March 5, 1903.
When financial reverses compelled my father to take me from school and use me on the farm in the spring time, Dr. Deans allowed him to send me twice every week to his academy and he gave me special instruction, without financial returns. He even allowed me to take my examinations in regular form and generously promoted me.

When I had finished my academic work, Dr. Doans directed the arrangements for my entering Richmond College as a ministerial student. My own illness, however, soon took me away. When this was followed by the death of my father, he invited me to become a member of his faculty in the Windsor Academy and for two years I lived in his home. He treated me as if I were one of his own children and was a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. His conception of the sanctity of the gospel ministry was an inspiration and a benediction. He never failed to keep religion in the forefront of his home, his school and his community. Modesty was one of his most impressive graces. His own ambition seemed to be, not for himself to shine, but to help others to shine. Only heaven can reveal the full impact of this man's life upon the generation that received his benediction. Nothing seemed to give him as much happiness as did bestowing an honor upon someone else.

It was my sad, yet grateful, privilege to take part in conducting his funeral. I can never forget the tearful faces of that group of loved ones, of friends and admirers, because through the tears, there shone a radiance of appreciation and an adoration that furnished a foretaste of Heaven. The benediction of his massive and unselfish life, and of his ministry, will abide throughout that community and will radiate wide over our country—yes, around the world. Few men have ever succeeded so admirably in transplanting into others their graces as did Rev. J. F. Deans."51

The next from Percy S. Stephenson, a prominent attorney of Norfolk, Virginia.

"I attended Dr. Deans School at Windsor, known as the Windsor Male and Female Academy for two terms, 1882-1883 and 1883-1884. Dr. Deans was a most unusual person and interested me very much.

Coming into the counties of Southampton, Isle of Wight, and Nansemond, not very long after the war between the States, he served these communities in a most unusual way. There was a great dearth of educational opportunities in the Isle of Wight-Southampton section at that time, and there was also a scarcity of Baptist preachers to serve the several Baptist churches there, and by the combination of his accomplishments, that is, as a very learned and well trained educator, and a very instructive and interesting preacher, he was able to minister to these people and at the same time, maintain himself in a very comfortable way.

This contact gave him an acquaintance with almost every man and woman, who lived there, and enabled him to choose the most promising boys and girls as pupils for his school. He was not only a good preacher, a good teacher, but a man of great thrift and business sagacity, and this qualified him to be everybody's advisor, upon almost any subject.

He served, from time to time, among other Baptist Churches, the Church at Windsor, Whitehead's Grove, Western Branch, Black Creek and Tucker Swamp.

To have known him, it was also necessary to have been acquainted with the people of the Churchland Community, from which he sprang.

Soon after I took my master's degree at William and Mary College, I had the good fortune to teach school at Churchland, and in this connection, I was given an opportunity of knowing the people of that section, and I had for them the greatest admiration and affection. The majority of them came from a long line of respectable ancestry, Dr. Deans was through his mother connected with the Virginia Wises. The people of this community were entirely sure of themselves, and were, as a whole, the most intelligent and highminded type of people, I have ever known. Before the days of railroads, their proximity to Hampton Roads gave them the opportunity of engaging in a most scientific and highly profitable form of agriculture, by reason of their ability to reach the Northern markets with their garden
products by the steamships, running out of Norfolk.

Dr. Deans was an outgrowth of these surroundings. His agricultural skill was of great service to his people in the Isle of Wight and Southampton section. He had very great breadth of vision, was sympathetic and tactful; his people brought him their controversies, which he adjusted. He deserved the blessedness of the peacemaker."52

Now the words of Rev. Beecher L. Rhodes, pastor of Berkley Avenue Baptist Church, Norfolk, Virginia.

"It is my impression that no man in Eastern Virginia during the past generation exerted a more profound influence upon the educational life of the people than Dr. Deans. He established Windsor Academy at a time when there were no high school facilities in the rural sections, and scores of boys and girls were able to secure a preparation for college who otherwise would not have had the privilege. He was unusually considerate, with a boy or girl who had no funds. He would loan them money, and after finishing school they would teach or secure some other position, and refund the money back to him. The last year of his life he said to me, that it was a very rare exception that the student would not repay the amount in full.

I should say that the outstanding characteristics of Dr. Deans useful life and ministry were, first, his profound interest in education, and second, his abiding concern in character building, and third, his desire to instill in the students life a desire for the noblest and highest ideals, and an ambition to obtain them. His influence in tidewater Virginia will be as immortal as the streams of life which continue to flow."53

Dr. Deans died suddenly on February 4th, 1903, of acute indigestion, followed by congestion. His body was taken to Churchland on February 6 for burial. A special car was attached to the train at Windsor and was filled with friends. J. M. Pilcher, his nearest friend, conducted the services. Hymns were read by W. V. Savage and J. K. Goode; selections of Scripture were read by C. W. Duke and J. J. Taylor;

prayers were offered by A. B. Dunaway, W. F. Fisher, and L. E. Barton; addresses were made by J. M. Pilcher, A. E. Owen, W. P. Hines, and E. E. Dudley, and the services were closed by W. A. Snyder. The active pall-bearers were: John Bell; A. J. Stephenson; R. M. Herrin; John Holland; C. F. Joyner; W. L. Prince; Harrison Lee; John W. Bidgood and J. T. Griffin.54