

THE CHALLENGE OF
A HEROIC PAST-

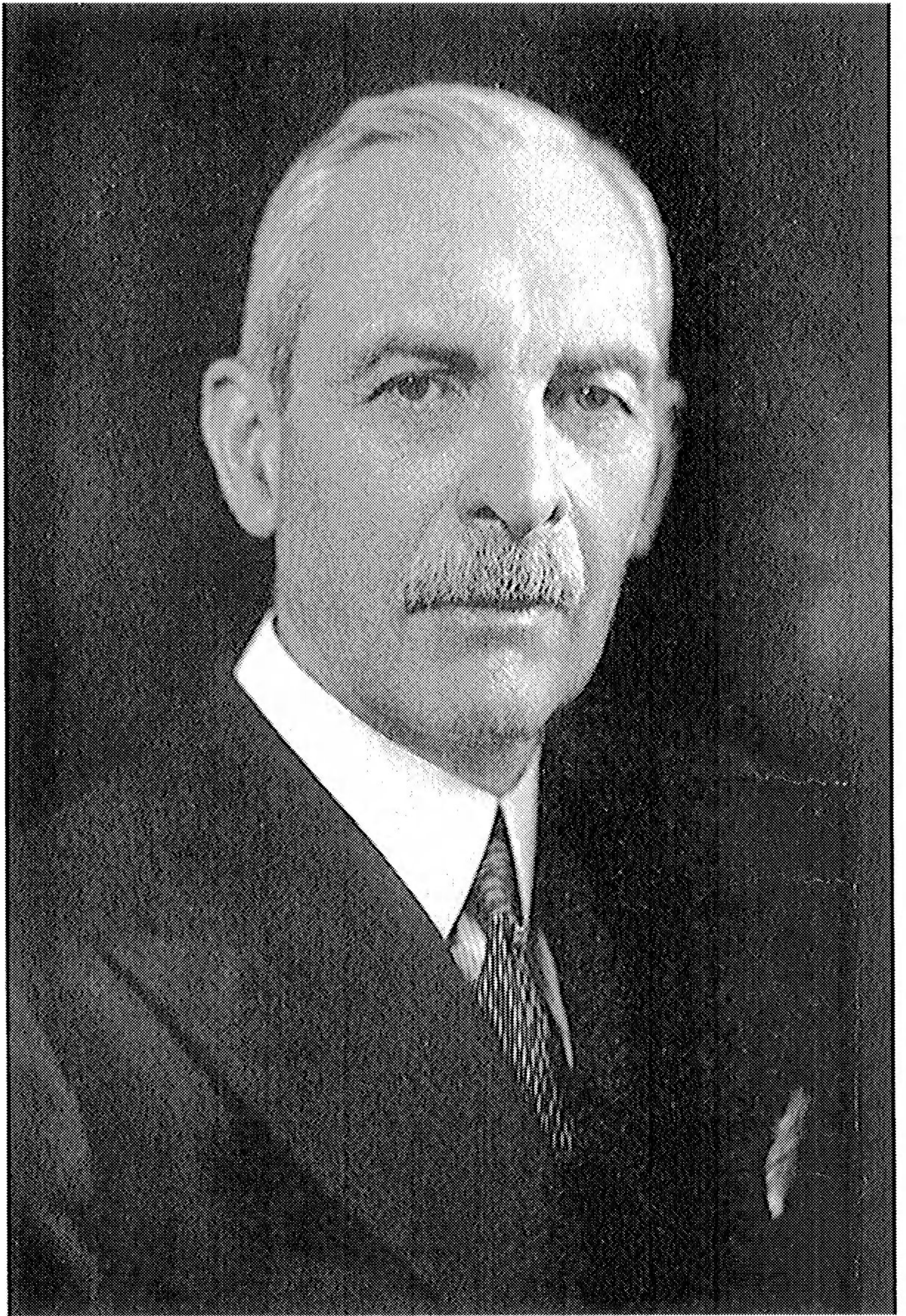
*The Story of
The Establishment of the
Western Theological Seminary*



BY

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BACHRACH

PRESIDENT JAMES A. KELSO, PH.D., LL.D.
Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Literature, 1901 —
President, Western Theological Seminary, 1909 —

THE CHALLENGE OF A HEROIC PAST

ONE of the laudable and distinctive achievements of Pittsburgh Presbyterians was the establishment of the Western Theological Seminary along the north side of the Allegheny River. Though the decision "to establish a Theological Seminary in the West" was the action of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, yet the original suggestion, the final choice of location, and the triumphing over persistent difficulties are to be credited to a group of Presbyterian ministers and laymen in Pittsburgh and its immediate environs.

*A Pittsburgh
Achievement*

Pittsburgh for many years has merited the proud title "A Presbyterian City." It is the recognized center of Presbyterian activity and includes more Presbyterian churches and communicants than any other metropolis in the United States. The Pittsburgh Presbytery, which covers approximately the geographical limits of Allegheny County, is now the leading Presbytery in the entire denomination. Annually it reports the largest church and Sunday school membership and the greatest total of contributions for all religious purposes.

Yet in the year 1825, when the General Assembly took formal action looking toward the creation of a theological seminary in the developing district west of the Allegheny mountains. Pittsburgh Presbyterianism was only a nascent force in a frontier community that but recently had developed into a city of 10,000 population.

Though the seeds of Presbyterianism had been planted in Pittsburgh as early as 1772 by the Reverend David McClure

and his associate the Reverend Levi Frisbee, and though faithful pastors had at varied intervals diligently tilled the soil, the resulting growth had been discouragingly slow. Two small churches had been organized; but in 1810 they could report a membership of only sixty-five in the First Church and thirty in the Second Church.

During the ensuing fifteen years Pittsburgh Presbyterianism expanded rapidly both in numbers and in effectiveness, the First Church reporting a net membership of 219 and the Second Church reflecting similar growth in its 225 members. That notable advance was due largely to the consecrated and creative labors of Dr. Francis Herron and Dr. Elisha P. Swift, two of the most gifted and dominating personalities to serve in any Presbyterian pulpit.

Dr. Herron was in the prime of his long pastorate in the First Church, which extended from 1811 to 1851. Dr. Swift was a younger man who had come to Pittsburgh in 1819. He remained the cherished pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church until he resigned in 1833 to devote three vigorous years to the cause of Foreign Missions, and then to spend his remaining ministry as the resident pastor in the adjoining community of Alleghentown.

These two mighty clergymen coöperated in perfect harmony and understanding and gave Pittsburgh a spiritual leadership that was felt, not only throughout the growing city, but in the entire work of the Presbyterian denomination at home and abroad. The establishment of the Western Theological Seminary and the creation of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions were largely the results of their outstanding services.

Across the Allegheny River lay a third Presbyterian Church in a small residential village that was later to develop into the north side of Pittsburgh. Here since 1812 the Reverend Joseph Stockton had labored in the joint capacity of pastor of a struggling Presbyterian Church and as principal of the Pittsburgh Academy and later of a similar school which he organized in Alleghentown. Mr. Stockton was a versatile genius of broad

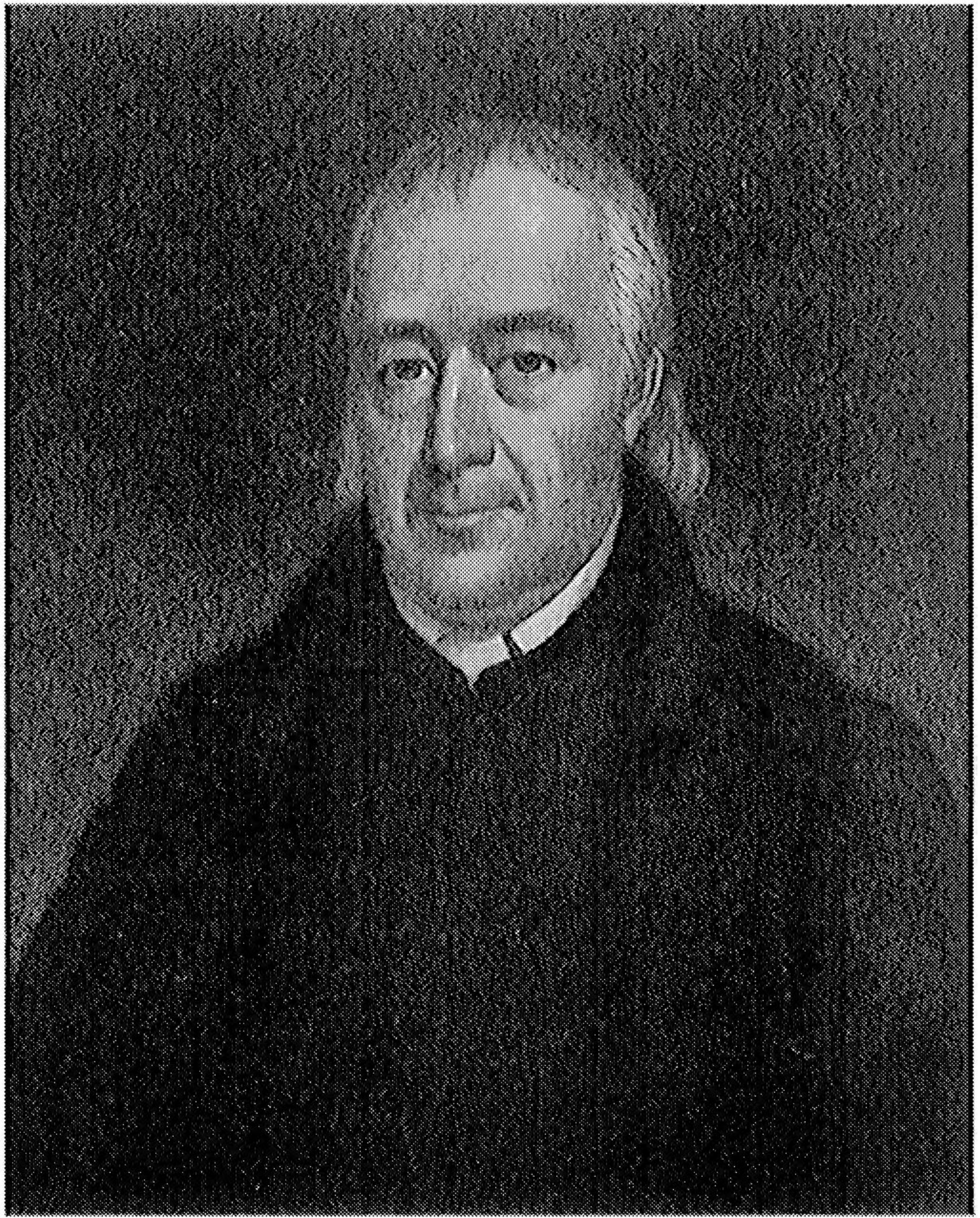
human sympathies and a wide range of knowledge. He was a professor, preacher and physician, equally at home in classroom, pulpit and sickroom. He served as one of the first instructors in the Seminary and to the end of his days contributed sacrificially of his talents to further the best interests of the educational institution which was closest to his heart.

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA Presbyterianism has reason to be proud of its early and consistent emphasis upon education, of which the development of the Western Theological Seminary was simply a culminating manifestation. The four pioneering Presbyterian ministers who in 1781 organized Redstone Presbytery were all graduates of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton). They were cultured men who realized the essential values of education and who believed that a very important part of their ministry lay in the field of education. All taught school in a zealous effort to impart to promising youths in their congregations the rudiments of a classical education.

*Presbyterians
Pioneer in
Education*

They were concerned especially with inspiring and training capable young men to preach the gospel and to serve as efficient church workers. "From the outset they prudently resolved to create a ministry in the country," observed Dr. Doddridge, "and accordingly established their grammar schools at their own homes or in their immediate neighborhoods." They heeded the advice which Dr. McMillan quotes his theological instructor as having given to him previous to his departure to the Western frontier: "When I had determined to come to this country, Dr. Smith enjoined it unto me to look out for some pious young men and educate them for the ministry, 'for,' said he, 'though some men of piety and talents may go to the new country at first, yet if they are not careful to raise up others, the country will not be well supplied.' "

All four pioneers zealously obeyed similar counsel; so that it is needless to argue whether the honor or priority in establishing schools in the wilderness of Western Pennsylvania



REVEREND JOHN McMILLAN, D.D.
Pioneer Preacher and Educator, 1752-1833

should be accorded to the Reverend John McMillan or to Reverend Thaddeus Dodd, or to Reverend James Power or to Reverend Joseph Smith. Much has been written in support of rival claims put forth by appreciative admirers of these four founders of Presbyterian churches and educational institutions, but no clear consensus of opinion has been formed by the discussion. All worked in perfect harmony in rather widely separate fields and there is no evidence of any rivalry or jealousy in developing their agencies of education.

Dr. McMillan's labors, however, covered a longer period

than those of his early ministerial comrades and were directed more definitely along theological lines. His Log College was, in fact, an embryo theological seminary from which numerous young preachers went forth to the Christian ministry. It is estimated by Dr. Matthew Brown, the first president of Washington College, that no less than a hundred ministers received their theological training under the guidance of Dr. McMillan. His prestige as a teacher of theology was recognized by Canonsburg College. When that institution developed from an academy into a college in 1802, he was appointed its "professor of divinity."

HIS preeminence as a teacher of candidates for the ministry received wider recognition in the action of the Synod of Pittsburgh in 1821. The Theological Seminary at Princeton, N. J., had been established by the General Assembly in 1812 as the official denominational agency for the specialized training of its ministers. But travel was slow and costly and Princeton seemed too far removed from Western Pennsylvania. Synod felt that similar opportunities of theological education should be available nearer home. The first step was to purchase and accumulate a library where students might read and reason under the guidance of a skilled teacher. Accordingly, Synod took this memorable action, which was to eventuate a few years later in the establishment of the Western Theological Seminary:

*Synod Seeks
a Seminary*

Whereas, it appears to this Synod that a number of promising young men, who are setting their faces towards the Gospel ministry, are not in circumstances to attend the Theological Seminary at Princeton; therefore, Resolved, That this Synod take measures for procuring a library for the benefit of such, to be under the control and direction of this Synod. That it be recommended to every member to solicit books or moneys for this important purpose, and that this library be located at present in the edifice of Jefferson College at Canonsburg, and placed under the care of Reverend John McMillan, D.D., Professor of Theology in that Seminary.

The next year a committee was appointed to consider the

advisability of further action. This committee was impressed with the need of a theological seminary nearer Pittsburgh and recommended the adoption of the following resolutions:

That in the opinion of your committee, the Seminary at Princeton presents advantages to theological students far superior to any that we can hope to realize for many years to come, in a similar Institution, yet to be established in the West. And knowing that a number of promising young men graduated from year to year at the colleges within our bounds, who have the gospel ministry in view, but are not in possession of sufficient means to support them in Princeton, we feel it a duty incumbent on this Synod to provide the best means of instruction our circumstances will admit for students of Divinity who cannot go abroad. To attain this object, your committee beg leave to recommend the following resolutions, viz.:

1. Resolved, That a Theological School, for the above purposes, be established by this Synod, the present site of which to be at Jefferson College.

2. Resolved, That this Synod appoint an agent in each Presbytery, to solicit donations in books and money for said school; and report to Synod at their next meeting.

3. Resolved, That a letter be addressed to the Synod of Ohio, stating the reasons at large why this Synod think it most expedient at present to adopt this course.

Synod as a whole, however, was not quite ready for this new venture of faith and feared that the necessary resources were not available. The hope was expressed that the Synod of Ohio might be willing to unite with the Synod of Pittsburgh in the suggested undertaking. It was felt that by combining the resources of these two Synods the creation of a seminary might be possible. And so a committee was appointed "to confer with a similar committee, if appointed by the Synod of Ohio, on the expediency and practicability of establishing a theological seminary in the Western country and report at the next meeting of Synod."

The personnel of that committee is significant and suggests the creative influence of Pittsburgh ministers in arousing the Synod to a realization of the importance of a seminary in Western Pennsylvania. The committee was composed of Dr. Herron

and Dr. Swift, the two Pittsburgh pastors, and Reverend Obadiah Jennings, the retiring moderator of Synod that year. But the Ohio Synod did not appear responsive and the following year the committee was compelled to report no progress.

The Synod of Pittsburgh refused to become discouraged so easily, and suggested that perhaps commissioners to the General Assembly might be interested if the Ohio Synod was unresponsive. And so the committee was reappointed with the following instructions:

That the Rev. Messrs. Francis Herron, Elisha P. Swift and Obadiah Jennings, be a committee to correspond with the Synod of Ohio, and that they avail themselves of the opportunity which the next meeting of the General Assembly will afford, to have an interchange of sentiment with the commissioners from the bounds of that Synod on this important subject. That the foregoing committee be instructed to address a communication to the Synod of Ohio with as little delay as practicable, requesting that Synod take such order on the subject, as the commissioners to the next General Assembly from the bounds of the two Synods, may be enabled to report to their respective Synods at their meetings in 1824.

Again the Synod of Ohio was loath to join the Synod of Pittsburgh in any coöperative effort to develop a new seminary. But the efforts of the zealous leaders in the Pittsburgh Synod were not in vain. Nothing was done in 1824, except to stimulate the growth of sentiment for a new seminary. The following year, however, the General Assembly recognized the need of action. In response to the suggestion of Dr. Swift and Dr. Herron, of Pittsburgh, this important resolution was adopted:

The General Assembly taking into consideration the numerous and rapidly increasing population of that part of the United States and their territories situated in the great Valley of the Mississippi, and believing that the interests of the Presbyterian Church require it, and that the Redeemer's kingdom will thereby be promoted, do resolve that it is expedient forthwith to establish a Theological Seminary in the West, under the supervision of the General Assembly.

The new seminary was to be styled "The Western Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States,"

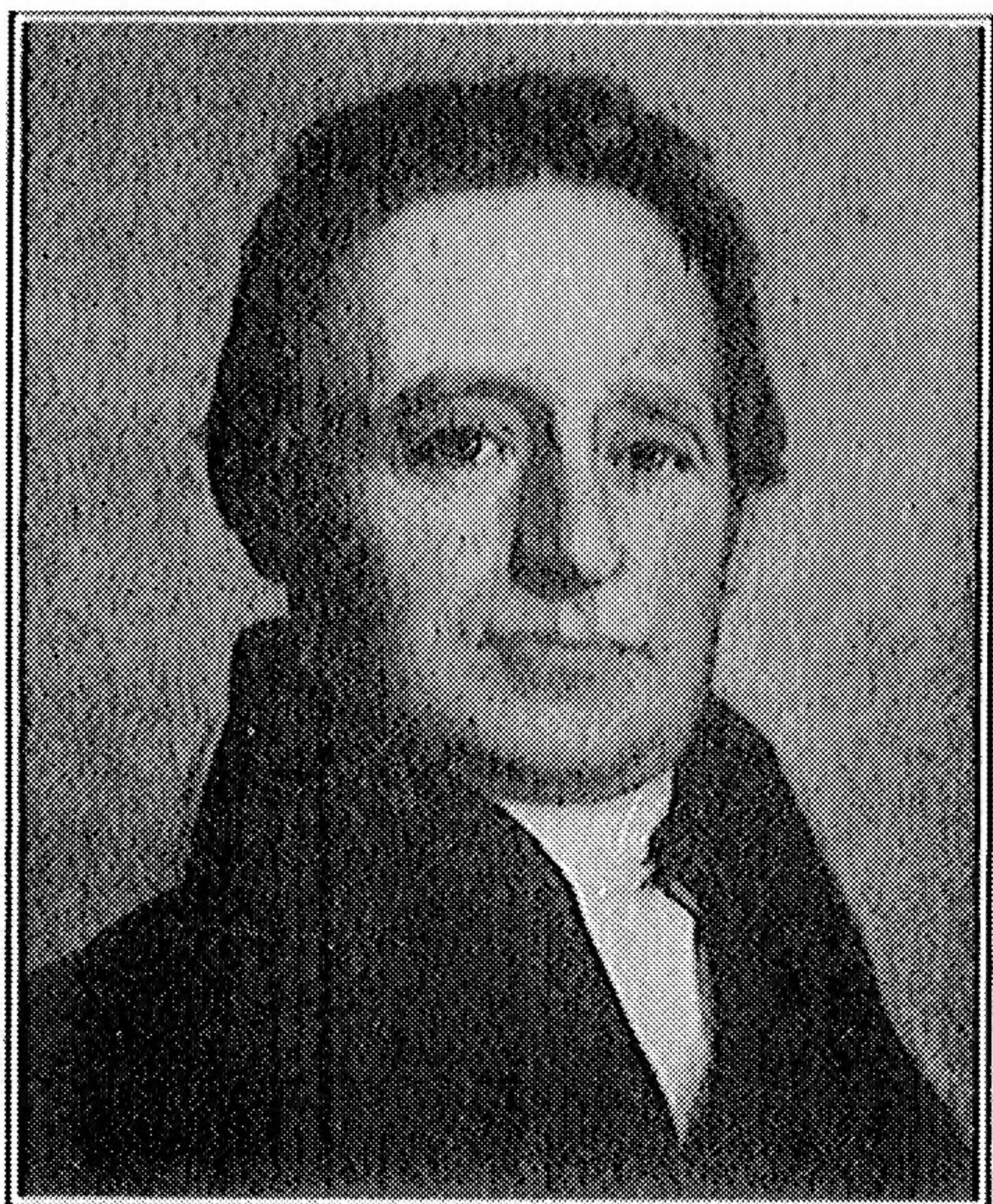
and was to be similar in scope and control to the older seminary at Princeton. A Board of Directors, consisting of twenty-one ministers and nine ruling elders, was elected for a period of one year. When the directors met there was perfect agreement on all details except the choice of location. Thirteen communities bid for the honor of housing the new seminary and offered inducements of land and money in varying amounts and claimed marked advantages in health and in facilities of communication.

The strength of Pittsburgh Presbyterianism was shown in the attractive bid put forth in the name of Alleghenytown. Apparently the political and financial influence of the two Pittsburgh clergymen, including also Reverend Joseph Stockton, of Allegheny, was quite strong. Alleghenytown bid the impressive sum of \$21,000, together with eighteen acres of land estimated to be worth \$20,000. The proffered land was part of the common ground in the reserved tract opposite Pittsburgh. The citizens officially voted the grant and the Legislature of Pennsylvania in 1827 confirmed their action, which suggests the dominant influence of the Pittsburgh Presbyterian clergymen in shaping public opinion at that time. Or the action of the citizens may have been motivated by the conviction that the prestige of a seminary and the money spent on its erection and maintenance was a sound financial investment for a community which was ambitious to grow and develop.

*Alleghenytown
is Chosen*

THE directors, by a vote of eight to five, recommended that the General Assembly accept the bid of Alleghenytown and locate there the proposed seminary. The recommendation stirred considerable discussion at the ensuing meeting of the Assembly in 1826 and marked differences of opinion developed. Many of the commissioners felt that either Cincinnati, Ohio, or Charlestown, Indiana, were preferable sites. The disagreement was so persistent that a motion was finally passed to postpone final choice of location until the following year.

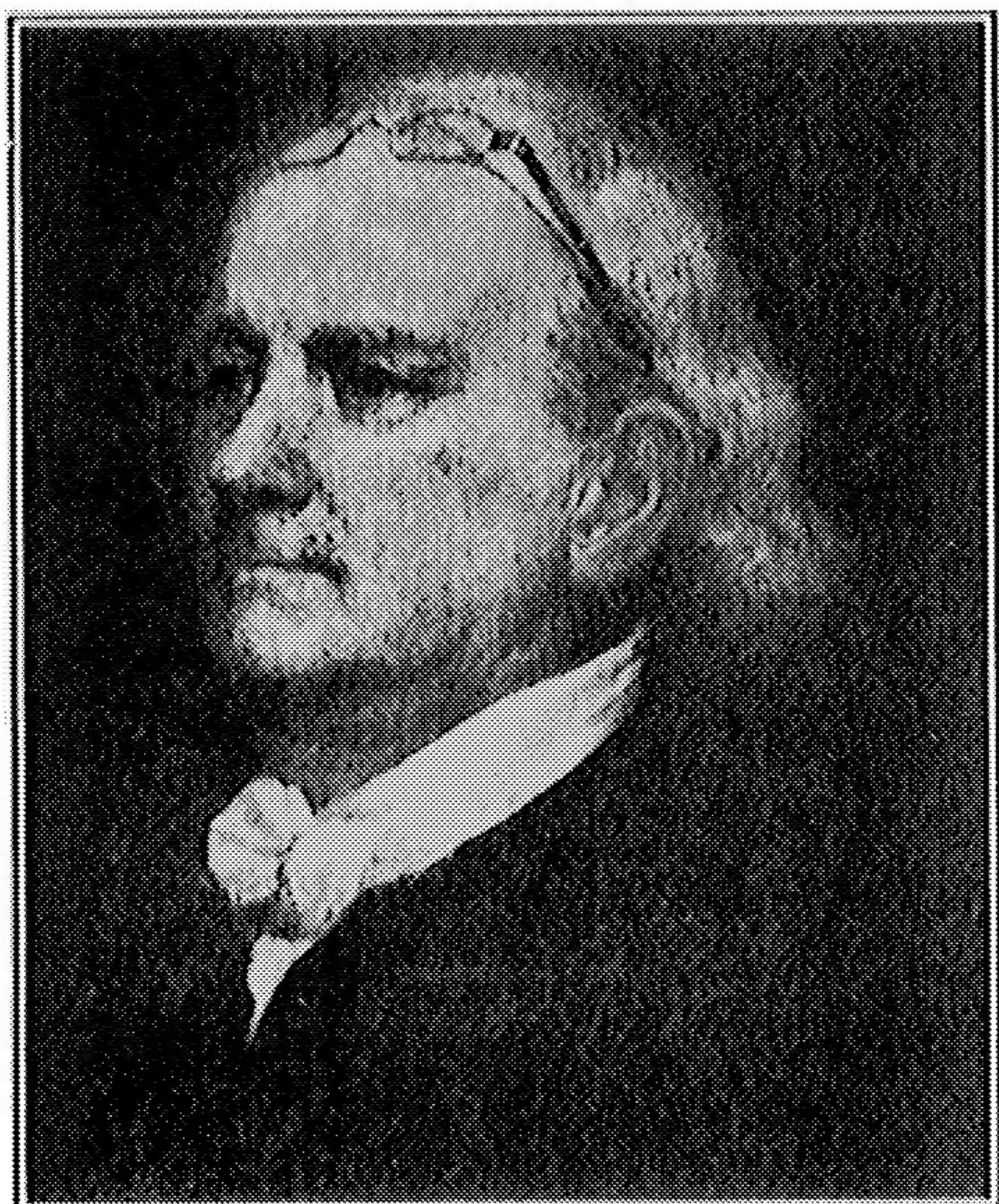
The assembly met the following year and still no agreement



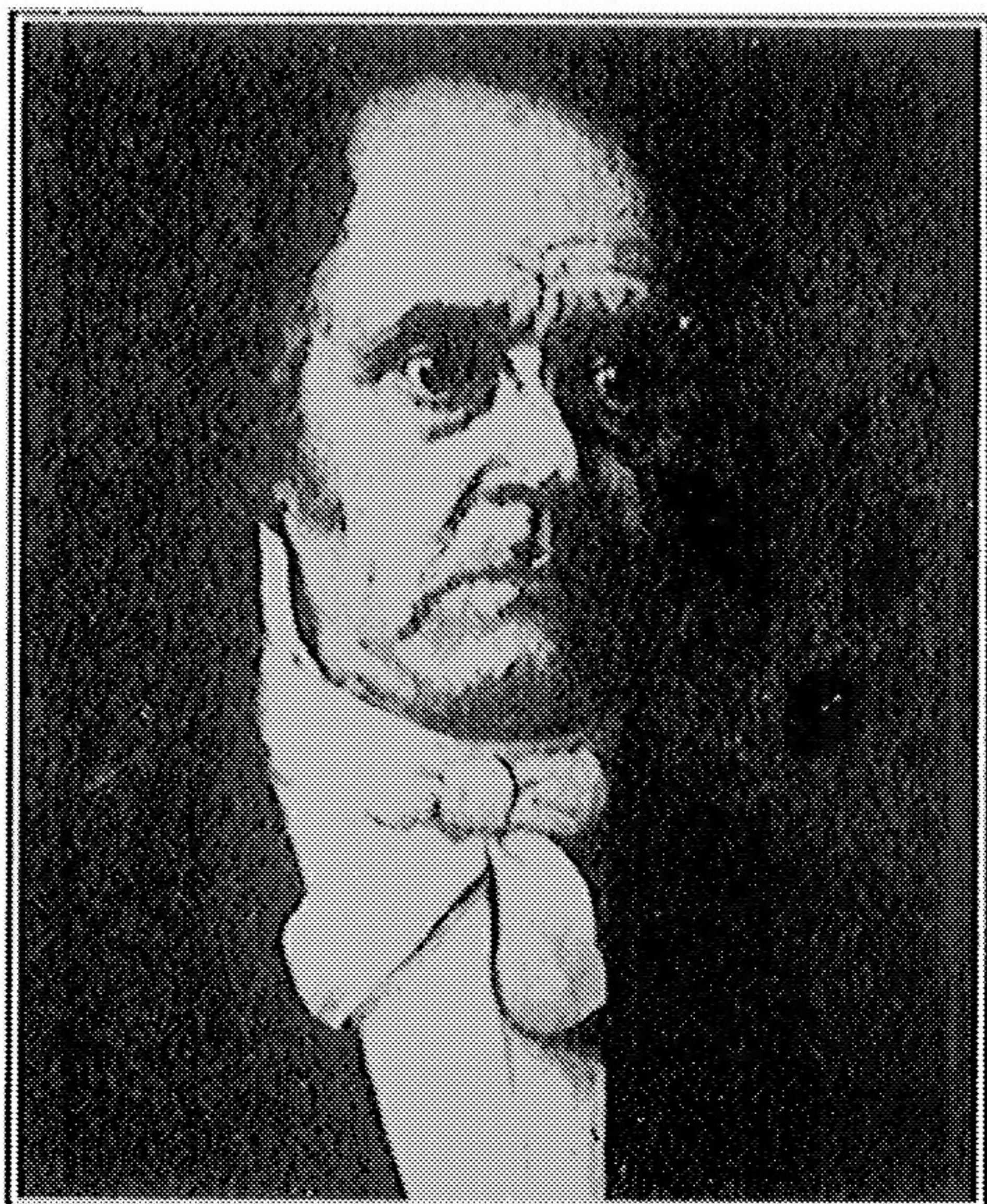
REVEREND JACOB J. JANEWAY, D.D.
Professor of Western Theological Seminary
Installed 1828. Resigned 1829



REVEREND JOHN WILLIAMSON NEVIN
Professor of Western Theological Seminary
Installed 1829. Resigned 1839.



REVEREND FRANCIS HERRON, D.D.
President of the Board of Directors of the
Western Theological Seminary, 1827-1860
Vice-President, 1825-1827



REVEREND ELISHA P. SWIFT, D.D.
Instructor in Theology, Western Theological
Seminary, 1827-1828.
Secretary, Board of Directors of
The Western Theological Seminary, 1827-1829
Vice-President, 1827-1860
President, 1860-1865

seemed at hand. Sectional pride and conflicting loyalties were in evidence. Dr. Herron, who was moderator of the General Assembly that year, requested the privilege of being released temporarily from the moderator's chair in order that he might urge the Assembly to select Alleghenytown as the site of the seminary. His logical and impassioned argument was followed immediately by a call for a vote. The Assembly, by the narrow margin of two votes, decided that the new seminary would be located in Alleghenytown rather than in Cincinnati, as many were urging. Dr. Herron, who, as an honored leader and an esteemed moderator, had great influence in the Assembly, had swayed sufficiently the sentiment of the commissioners.

The Pittsburgh group had won a cherished victory but, in so doing, had purchased for themselves a tremendous responsibility and a heavy burden which in the ensuing years was to test frequently the vigor of their faith and courage. Western Pennsylvania was still a frontier community both in resources and in disposition, and required much persistent education and exhorting before it was ready to support adequately a theological seminary. That fact, combined with the non-coöperative spirit of many leaders in those sections of the church which had urged the claims of other communities to be the seat of the new seminary made extremely difficult the task which the Pittsburgh ministers had assumed for themselves when they prematurely brought the Western Theological Seminary to the Pittsburgh district.

*The First
Professors*

THE same Assembly which located the Seminary at Alleghenytown also selected the board of directors and the first professor. The man selected for that latter responsibility was the Reverend Jacob Jones Janeway, D.D. He was a minister of eminent distinction, a former moderator of the General Assembly and pastor of the largest Presbyterian Church in the United States, the Arch Street Church of Philadelphia. His selection was a source of great encouragement to the directors who entered vigorously into the task of providing for him earnest stu-

dents and a place to teach. But he hesitated to accept and finally sent word to the directors that he felt impelled to decline the call. His refusal was a keen disappointment to the friends of the Seminary.

Nevertheless the directors felt they dare not postpone the opening of the new institution. They persuaded two local ministers to rally to the emergency, until General Assembly could elect a successor. Throughout the winter and spring terms Reverend Elisha P. Swift, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, served as instructor for the four students who formed the first class. Dr. Swift had been very active in arousing sentiment for the creation of a new seminary. Willingly he now assumed temporarily the duties of professor, lest delay might imperil the success of the new enterprise. During the summer term Reverend Joseph Stockton, of the Alleghentown Church, relieved him of his duties as teacher in order that he might canvass the Presbyterian churches in Pennsylvania and Ohio in an attempt to raise money for the embryonic seminary. Temporary quarters were found in the session room of the First Church.

Subsequently Dr. Janeway reconsidered his refusal. He arrived in Pittsburgh ready to teach at the opening of the second year in 1828, accompanied by his son, Thomas L. Janeway, who was the instructor in Hebrew. Very appropriately Dr. Swift was chosen to preach the sermon at the inauguration service of the new professor on October 16, 1828.

His discourse was a thoughtful exposition of "The Duties and Responsibilities of the Professorial Office in Theological Seminaries." It was the expression of a mind that perceived the absolute necessity of broad scholarship in the training of men who were to expound and defend a reasoned and intelligent Christian faith. Nay more, it was the uncompromising enunciation of the high ideals that were motivating the zeal of the noble men who were laying broad foundations for the theological Seminary of the West. It was a fervent plea to the Church to furnish the necessary support to bring those ideals

to practical fruitage in the faculty and student body of a mighty institution. Reaching a stirring oratorical climax he exclaimed:

If there ever was a cause for which it becomes us to be active and liberal and united; if there ever was one which earnestly addressed our feelings as Christian patriots, our denominational loyalty as Presbyterians and our compassion as Christians, surely this is the one. . . . We shall leave behind us on yonder hill already designated as the mount of Sacred Science and of Prayer an institution which shall there, for revolving ages, continue to bless the unborn generations of our children with the word of life; an institution whose massy structure, while it continues, as long as suns rise and set, to glitter in the earliest rays of nature's cloudless day, shall designate to the passing stranger, a Spiritual Fountain, whose beams of heavenly truth, go forth to the rising, and backward to the setting sun, diffusing the knowledge of the Son of Righteousness to the ends of the earth.

But Dr. Janeway was disheartened by finding only five students when he had expected a larger group. The crudities of Pittsburgh were offensive to his cultured tastes. The precarious future of the Seminary and the discomforts of semi-pioneer life did not appeal to him or to his wife. And so he resigned after less than a year of service, leaving the Seminary without a faculty and necessitating the dismissal of classes for the summer.

The Assembly's next choice of a professor was more lasting. He served until 1837. The new professor was the Reverend Dr. Luther Halsey, at that time professor of Natural Philosophy in Princeton College. To assist him the Board of Directors selected Reverend John W. Nevin, a young man who for two years had been substituting as an instructor in Princeton Theological Seminary. The Seminary was now entering its third year of service in 1829, with two professors and fifteen students. The prospects for the future were brightening, although financial clouds still hovered low over the struggling institution. Under the direction of Dr. Halsey and Mr. Nevin, the enlarging student body entered upon a three-year course of study that was somewhat limited in scope, but carefully directed toward a clearly defined purpose.

“It is our wish,” exclaimed Dr. Halsey in outlining the objectives of the curriculum, “that every student who finishes an entire course in the Seminary shall have critically read the whole New Testament in Greek and most of the Hebrew Scriptures, besides being well grounded in Jewish and Christian Antiquities and the canons of criticism.” The first year’s class was called the Biblical Class and was taught by Mr. Nevin. Their Biblical studies were designed to lay a “thorough foundation in the study and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures which is the basis of all sound theological knowledge.” The report for the year 1829-1830 indicated that this group of six students had studied the first two parts of Jahn’s Archæology, had reviewed Sacred Geography, and had read twenty-three chapters of Genesis in Hebrew and I and II Corinthians and Hebrews in Greek. The second-year class, numbering four students, was known as the Theological Class and devoted special study to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. The third-year men included five students and were designated the Ecclesiastical Class. Their specialized work lay in the fields of Church History and Church Government. Hours were assigned, not only for lectures and recitations, but also for supervised study. Each student was required to engage in some healthful exercise each day in order to keep physically and mentally fit for the religious service to which he was dedicating his life. As a necessary measure of economy, ten of the students lived together and shared equally in the cost of the essentials of life. The total expense on that communal plan for boarding, washing, fuel and life did not exceed one dollar per week.

Meanwhile the directors were busy in a determined effort to solicit funds and to hasten the erection of the building. The Board of Directors consisted of twenty-one ministers and nine elders who had been elected by the General Assembly in 1827. At the first organizational meeting the stimulating leadership of the Pittsburgh pastors was recognized in the election of Reverend Francis Herron to the presidency of the Board and Reverend Elisha P. Swift to the secretaryship. Another Pitts-

burgher, Mr. Michael Allen, a member of the First Church, was chosen treasurer.

*The Glorious
Vision*

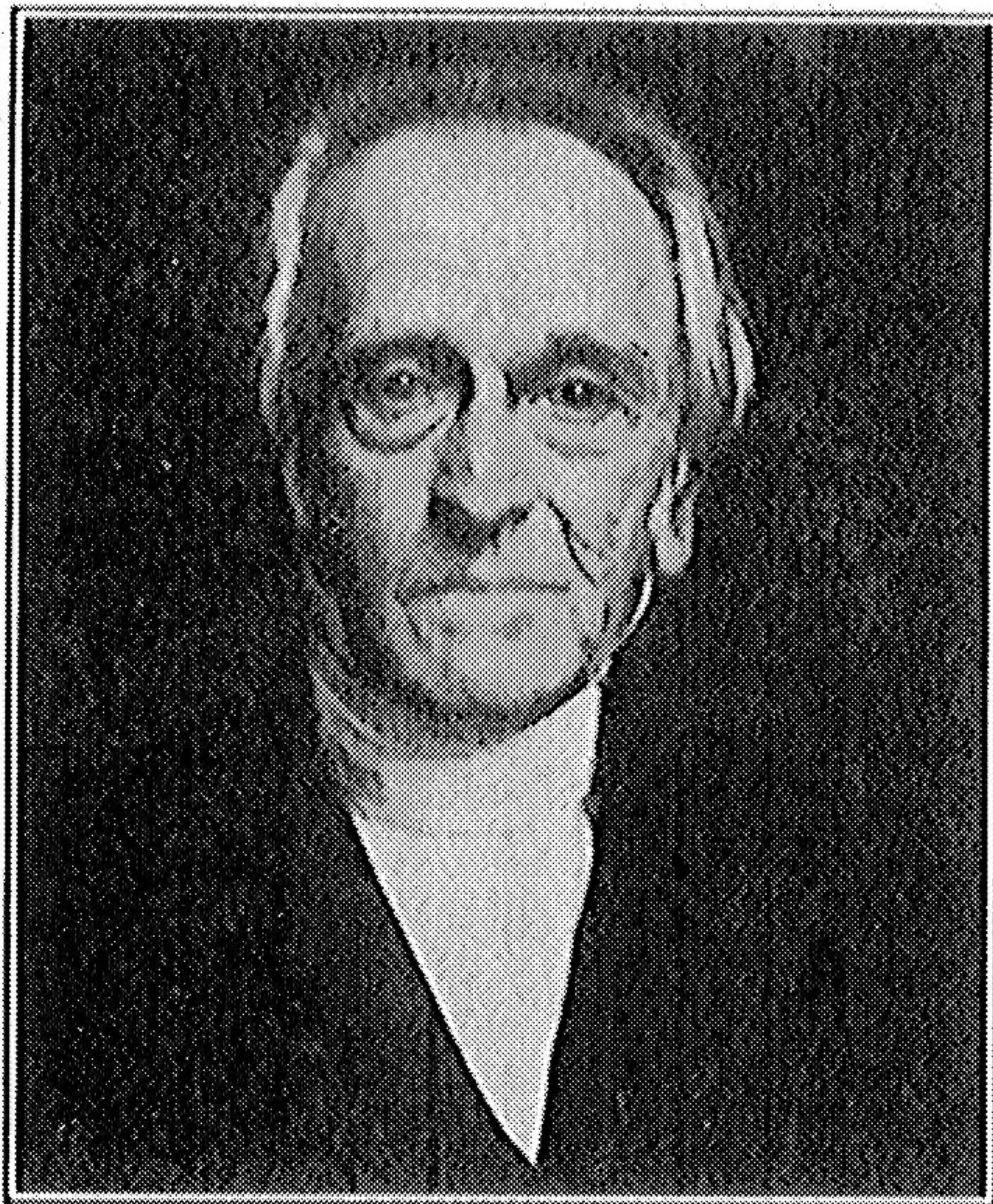
THE directors were men of faith and optimism. They saw visions of the expanding greatness of Western Pennsylvania, with churches multiplied in numbers and with an increasing demand for educated and consecrated ministers. They cherished the ideal of an impressive building crowning the summit of Monument Hill, which would be sloped with beautiful and productive gardens. They sought to give reality to those dreams by formulating plans which would both meet the needs of the future and represent in brick and stone something of the glory of religion.

The main building was to be of cut stone and rise four stories in height. Its contemplated dimensions were approximately 150 by 45 feet. It was to stand in the center at the top of the hill and be flanked on either side with other buildings, including homes for each of the professors. The ascent would be terraced and adorned with vines and ornamental shrubbery, while to the rear would be planted gardens and fruit yards which would have economic value. The level portions of the eighteen acres were to be sold as prices and population increased, thus providing a welcome source of sustaining revenue. To help substantiate these visions, Pittsburgh quickly subscribed \$12,000.

But hostility and indifference were soon to disturb the serenity of those dreams and to deter the realization of even restricted plans. Unexpected difficulties developed in the excavation work, which was begun in the spring of 1829. The denomination as a whole was unresponsive. Money was difficult to raise, even though the Synod of Pennsylvania passed resolutions of support and urged all the churches within the bounds of Synod to make sacrificial contributions. The walls were rising all too slowly throughout the summer of 1830, but the determined directors reported progress.

The following year the construction work on the main edi-

fice was almost complete. But it was not the building as originally planned. The central structure had been reduced to the more moderate size of 60 by 50 feet. Brick facing replaced the contemplated cut stone. Crude stone, taken from the excavation, was deemed sufficient for the interior walls. Two wings, each extending 50 feet from the central building, added to the available accommodations and furnished living quarters for the students, a



REV. DAVID ELLIOTT, D.D., LL.D.
Professor, Systematic Theology,
Western Theological Seminary, 1836-1871

chapel, 45 by 25 feet, and ample space for a library. Though unfinished, it was ready for use during the spring term of 1831.

Twenty students moved into the dormitories and received instruction in the recitation rooms of the two professors. A little less than \$10,000 had now been expended, but the building was neither finished nor paid for. Persistent pleas for money featured the annual reports both to the General Assembly and to the Synod. Year after year the directors faced crises and discouragements. At last some \$25,000 was raised and all bills were met for the erection of the buildings which housed the Seminary until the calamitous fire of 1854 left standing only the blackened stone and brick walls. The struggle to pay for the building had so drained the treasury that operating expenses exceeded the available revenue. Bills accumulated year by year, until in 1839 the Seminary was bankrupt. Debts, totaling more than \$7,800, faced the harassed institution. The end

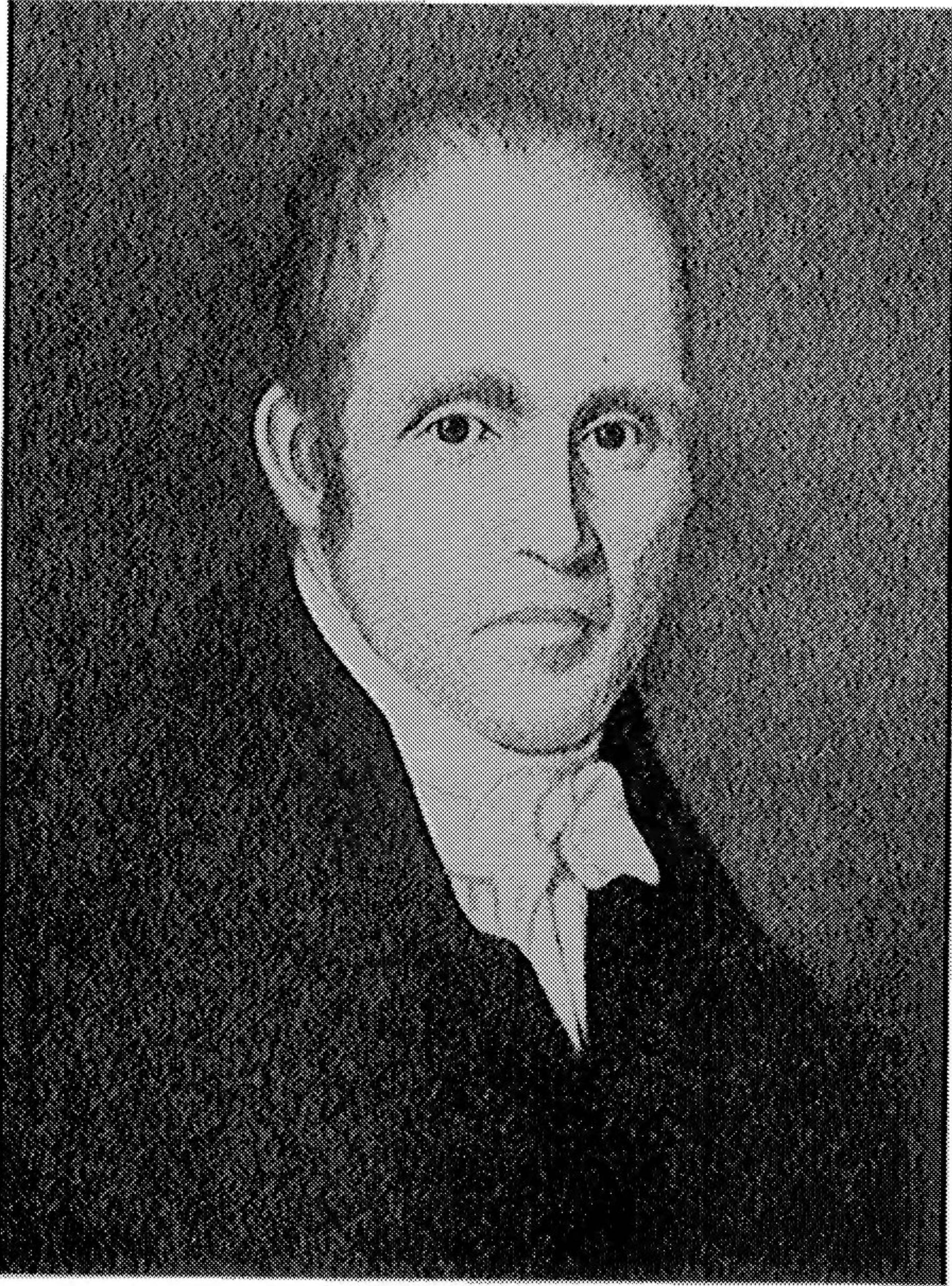
seemed almost at hand. The crisis, however, was avoided by the successful mission of Dr. Elliott to Philadelphia, where he raised \$5,256.00. The Synod of Pennsylvania then rallied to the support of the Seminary for five years of precarious existence. Another financial crisis confronted the harassed institution in 1842.

*Long
Litigation Over
Land Title*

THIS discouraging struggle for funds throughout these ten years was occasioned in part by two hampering difficulties which the directors could neither anticipate nor control. The first unforeseen difficulty was a prolonged series of litigations arising out of what seemed a defective title to the property. It prevented the Seminary from receiving urgently needed revenue from the sale or lease of any portion of the eighteen acres and necessitated the payment of numerous fees for legal services. What was regarded a remunerative gift in 1825 proved in subsequent years to be only a burdensome drain.

Undoubtedly it was the clear intention of the lot holders to give those eighteen acres of common pasture to the Seminary, both to insure the success of that institution and to induce the General Assembly to place the school in Alleghentown rather than in Cincinnati. Meetings of the lot holders were held for the purpose of transferring to the Seminary all claim to the property. Carefully Reverend Joseph Stockton and Harmar Denny had canvassed all known lot holders and had secured written releases from them.* On the assumption that all the lot holders had surrendered their claims to the use of these eighteen acres, the State Legislature had, by act of Assembly,

* The Act of Release by the lot holders was drawn up in these terms: "Know all men by these presents. That, whereas the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church have declared their intention of establishing somewhere in the Western Country a Theological Seminary of learning on a plan similar to the one now in operation in Princeton in the State of New Jersey, therefore we the subscribers, residents, lot holders and land owners in the town of Allegheny, opposite Pittsburgh in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, being duly sensible of the advantages that would result from the establishment of such an institution and as an inducement to its location on condition that the Seminary shall be established in said town of Allegheny, and so long as the same shall be continued there we the residents, lot holders and land owners at a public meeting held this day in said town of Allegheny for that purpose do hereby give, grant, assign and transfer unto the said General Assembly all our right, title and claim to the full,



REVEREND JOSEPH STOCKTON
Instructor, Western Theological Seminary, 1827-1828.

donated the property to the Seminary. Title to the property seemed doubly assured by that joint action, especially when a similar grant had been made for the erection of the State Penitentiary a few years earlier.

free and entire use and right and privilege of use to piece of ground on the public common of said town, containing 18 acres and 37 perches nearly, hereby giving and granting unto the said General Assembly as far as such right, use and privilege is in our power to grant and confer for the sole use and benefit of said Seminary shall be established thereon and that the same shall be commenced within four years. And we do hereby warrant and defend the grant and privilege hereby conferred unto the General Assembly aforesaid on the above conditions against us the subscribers, our heirs and assigns forever. In testimony whereof we hereunto set our hands and seal the 11th of November, A.D. 1825." Campbell, "The Founding and Early History of the Western Theological Seminary," *The Bulletin of the Western Theological Seminary*, October, 1927, p. 41f.

But human cupidity and unemployed lawyers form a militant and disturbing combination. Recurrent litigation with appeals to higher courts, animosities growing out of conflicting claims, and prolonged uncertainty preventing the erection of the professors' homes or the sale of desirable lots, resulted in years of turmoil and expense. The details of those suits and court decisions are of no permanent interest; but the recollection of them explains some of the troubles which tested the patience and determination of those leaders who struggled to create a worthy institution in the borough of Alleghenytown.

The long litigation ended at last in a compromise deed, dated December 3, 1849. By the terms of that agreement the Seminary surrendered its claim to the original grant of eighteen acres and received in exchange a clear title for the one acre upon which the Seminary buildings would stand. In addition, the city of Allegheny permanently indebted itself to the Seminary for an unpaid sum of \$35,000, upon which the city would pay to the Seminary interest charges of \$2,100. That agreement is still effective and on the first of January and July each year, Allegheny pays to the Seminary "in lawful silver dollars" the semi-annual interest of \$1,050.

*Hampering
Effects of
Schism*

THE second unanticipated difficulty was the embittering strife within the denomination which was to result in the Schism of 1837, and which for several years previously prevented united interest in the welfare of the Seminary. Unfortunately, at the very inception of the Seminary sympathetic support of the majority of the Presbyterian churches throughout the West and South had been alienated by the refusal of the Assembly to erect the new theological institution further west, in Cincinnati, as many had urged. Moreover, the wealthier churches in the East were prone to await the generous response of Presbyterians in Western Pennsylvania before making their contributions.

Time, which is a great healer, would probably have soothed the wounds caused by sectional pride and brought the entire

denomination to at least a measure of unified support of Western Seminary had the fires of theological controversy not burst forth in the Assemblies of the later years of the thirties. Men absorbed in zealous argument are tempted to overlook some phases of their benevolent responsibility and to center their enthusiasm upon causes which reflect their own view-points.

Much of the controversy centered around the theological convictions of the young ministers who were being sent forth as home missionaries in the new sections of the country. Should these men be trained in the more liberal or the more conservative seminaries? The liberal sentiment was uppermost throughout the Synods of New York and Ohio, while Pennsylvania and the Synods south of the Mason-Dixon line were conservative. The liberal Presbyterians were somewhat suspicious of the theology of any school established in Western Pennsylvania and so withheld support. On the other hand, Western Seminary had not been in existence long enough to prove its orthodoxy in the minds of hesitant men in the South. As a result the pleas of the infant Seminary fell on unresponsive ears and responsibility for its financial preservation was shifted very largely to the Synod of Pennsylvania.

The Seminary directors were cognizant of that unfortunate fact and formally resolved that "the Synod of Pittsburgh be respectfully requested to express an opinion as to their willingness to assume the care, management and support of the Western Theological Seminary." Synod was sympathetic to the suggestion but voted to postpone a definite decision until the following year. For several years the directors pondered the wisdom of urging the transfer of the Seminary to synodical control. They hesitated, hoping that the entire denomination would be aroused to the support of an institution it had founded. Finally, the long-pondered transfer was approved by the Synod itself, but General Assembly was too busy with doctrinal tribulations to give the problem serious thought.

When in 1837 the denomination split into the New School and Old School branches, the financial difficulties of the Semi-

nary were still further heightened. The Synod of Pittsburgh remained with the Old School branch. It officially recognized its obligation to the Seminary by pledging itself to support the theological institution which was within its territorial limits. That support, however, was more easily pledged than bestowed. The resulting contributions from the Church remained inadequate and discouraging to the loyal friends of that harassed institution.

*Changes in
the Faculty*

THIS continued financial embarrassment had a hampering effect upon the Seminary, preventing the employment of an adequate faculty and making difficult the retention of the professors who were appointed. Resignations threatened the continuity of the institution. Dr. Janeway resigned after less than a year of service. Dr. John McDowell, who was elected by the General Assembly in 1828, refused to accept the appointment. Financial stringency prevented the selection of a successor until five years later, when Dr. Ezra Fisk was chosen for the chair of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government. He accepted the new responsibility but died suddenly *en route* to Pittsburgh. Throughout those years the work of instruction was carried forward by Drs. Halsey and Nevin who were members of the faculty since 1829. In a true spirit of self-sacrifice they toiled on, dividing the entire curriculum between them and enduring the privations of small salary and irregular payments. Without their patience and forbearance, the institution could not have survived.

Temporary relief from the heavy teaching load came through the willingness of Reverend Allan D. Campbell to serve as an instructor. He was one of the original directors of the Seminary and, since 1831, had been the pastor of the Presbyterian Church of the Northern Liberties (now the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh). He came to help raise money for the Seminary and also to teach in the department of Church Government throughout the years 1836-1840.

But the remarkable addition to the faculty that same year

was the Reverend David Elliott. He had been elected to the chair of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government by the General Assembly in 1835. That field of instruction did not appeal to him and he hesitated to accept. Dr. Halsey, however, graciously offered to shift departments and urged Dr. Elliott to take the chair of Theology while he would teach History. Dr. Halsey was a very versatile and widely read scholar. He could teach with equal efficiency any part of the seminary curriculum and was reputed to be "the most learned man known to the public in the United States."

This rearrangement appealed to Dr. Elliott and he began his work at the Seminary in June of the following year. His inauguration was an outstanding event in the development of Western Seminary. As the brilliant pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Washington and as moderator of the General Assembly, he had achieved a prestige that brought needed financial support to the Seminary and which helped to preserve that institution during the stormy years that lay ahead. His long distinguished career at Western closed with his death in 1874 at the age of eighty-seven.

WITH a faculty complete for the first time in the person of four teachers, Dr. Halsey, Dr. Elliott, Dr. Nevin and Dr. Campbell, and with a student body which had grown to fifty men, the internal difficulties of the Seminary seemed to have reached a favorable ending. But that happy arrangement continued only a year. Financial embarrassment still cast its darkening shadows over the institution and prompted Dr. Halsey to present his resignation in order that he might accept a less sacrificial position on the faculty of Auburn Seminary.

It was a notorious fact that the salaries of the professors were often a whole year in arrears and that it was necessary for the professors to contribute annually from their meager salaries between \$100 and \$300 and to abridge their expenditures to the barest essentials. Moreover, Dr. Halsey had been severely criticized by his more orthodox brethren in the Pittsburgh

*Financial
Embarrassments*

district. Dr. Herron had rallied to his defense, but he did not feel fully in sympathy with the more zealous Old School leaders. He was convinced that the New School seminary at Auburn was more in harmony with his theological outlook than Western, which remained with the Old School. Yet he never lost his interest in the Pittsburgh institution where he had taught and had sacrificed for eight years. In 1852, he loaned to Western Seminary his personal library of 2,000 volumes, rich in patristic and Biblical literature. Some years later he made that loan a permanent gift.

Dr. Halsey's withdrawal from Western was followed three years later (1840) by the similar action of Dr. Nevin, who resigned in order to accept professorship in the Theological Seminary of the German Reformed Church at Mercersburg, Pa. He also had begun to chafe under the rigid orthodoxy of his Pittsburgh environment and welcomed a more liberal theological outlook. Moreover, he had grown weary and disheartened by the continued pecuniary hardships which the professors were compelled to undergo. He came to Western Seminary a young man with only the rank of an instructor. Throughout a period of ten years he taught in various departments and carried the full burden of a professor. Yet he never attained, nor would he accept, the professorial rank, preferring to leave with the academic title he had received during his first year. His subsequent career in the theological world was one of widening recognition and brilliant attainment. His removal from Pittsburgh was a loss to the Seminary but a broader opportunity for his own development.

That same year another instructor retired from Western, Dr. A. D. Campbell. His health had been impaired by his dual responsibility as a member of the faculty and as the traveling financial agent for the Seminary. He had served some four years, practically without salary. He now felt the renewed call of the pastorate and late in the year 1841 was installed pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Allegheny.

The discouraged frame of mind which had forced some of

these professors to leave Western Seminary is vividly revealed in the letter which Dr. Nevin wrote explaining his resignation. He felt that he had sacrificed sufficiently in struggling to save a seminary whose voice would soon be stilled in saddening silence. He was willing to continue on if he could see some signs of a restoration to vigorous service, but his ten years' experience had disheartened him. Mournfully he laments:

The Institution languishes for want of funds. All its operations drag, and are maintained from year to year with continual discouragement to the Professors. If there were any good prospect of its getting through these difficulties in a reasonable time, it might be well to continue the struggle with them still. Unless the Seminary can be put on a much better footing than it has been for years, it must in the end fail. Of what use then, to cling cold and wet to its leaky bottom, only to assist in keeping it above water a few years longer. As the case now stands, it seems to me much like throwing away both time and strength, to lay them out any further on a cause which, without a new kind of interest and new sort of action engaged for its support, may well be looked upon as desperate.

For some time past the Institution has been a full year behind with me, in the payment of my salary; and latterly the measure of this failure has been steadily on the increase. The arrearage is now upwards of two thousand dollars.

THE resignations of Dr. Halsey, Nevin and Campbell left Western Seminary with Dr. Elliott as the sole member of the faculty. It was a sadly shattered institution which faced a darkened future in 1840. Its supporting denomination was split with theological strife and torn in twain. The main building, begun in 1829, had required ten years to reach completion. The prestige of the struggling institution had been seriously lessened by the frequent withdrawals from its very limited faculty, causing even its best friends to distrust its stability and permanence. Debts, totaling \$5,000, hampered its credits. In all this there seemed to be but little material achievement to mark these thirteen years of persistent effort on the part of Pittsburgh Presbyterians.

*Persistence
Amid Discouragements*

With only the assistance of part-time service from the pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, Dr. Elliott met all the classes during the summer of 1840, hoping better days would soon dawn. Those better days did dawn. Western Seminary is now a thriving seminary. But the darkened gray of another decade of heartache and determined persistence must pass before the rising sun of promise could cheer the souls of Western's faithful friends.

Though the year 1840 closed in discouragement and meager material achievements, yet the labors of those previous thirteen years were not without visible gains. The annual enrollment had increased from four to fifty students. A large number of graduates had gone forth into Christian service and were occupying pulpits of varying prominence. Others had heard the first missionary call of the denomination and had laid down their lives in a sacrificial effort to plant the banner of Christ in India and Africa. Still others were developing in the practical work of the ministry and were laying foundations of expanding usefulness.

*Nucleus of
the Library*

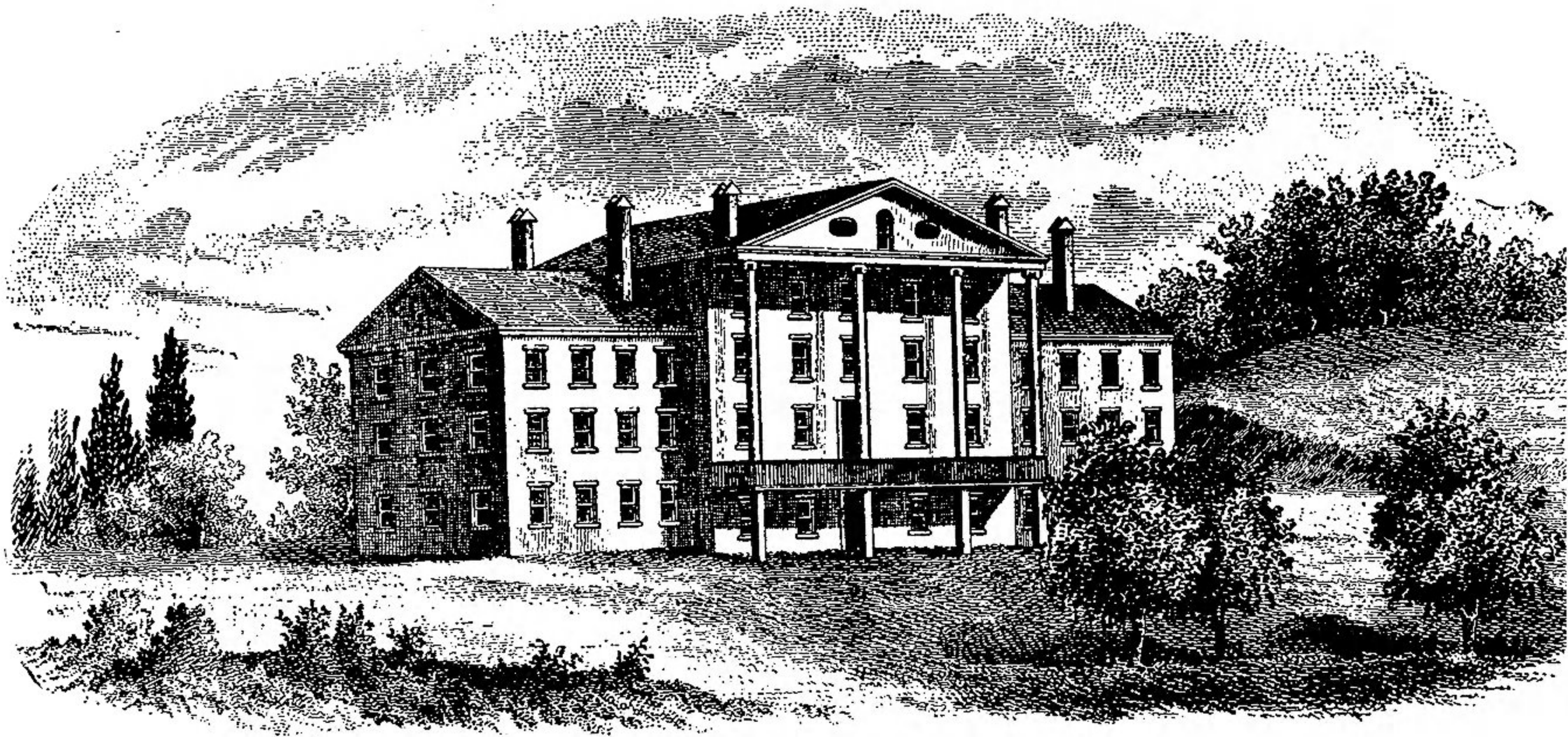
MOREOVER, the generous beginnings of a notable library had been accumulated. Before even the excavations for a building had been dug, Dr. Campbell had sailed for England and Scotland to solicit books for the nascent institution and returned with over 2,000 volumes. The persuasive appeal of Dr. Herron resulted in the gift to the Seminary by Alexander Henry of an extensive and valuable assortment of historical and exegetical works which previously had been gathered in Europe. Around these two central collections numerous other donations and purchases of usable books were accumulated, making the reading-room of the Seminary a source of inspiration and instruction for earnest students.

The sustaining interest and resourceful labors of Dr. Herron and Dr. Swift were other invaluable assets that must not be overlooked in evaluating the attainments of the first thirteen years of the Seminary's official life. In varied capacities, as sec-

retary, instructor, financial agent, and director and spiritual adviser, Dr. Swift had demonstrated an unswerving loyalty which foretold a brighter future for the Seminary. Dr. Herron, at the first meeting, was elected president of the Board of Directors and continued to hold that office by annual re-election until his death in 1860. He gave himself unsparingly to the Seminary he determined to create. From the church of which he was pastor there were raised for the Seminary contributions equaling in amount the total gifts of all the other churches in the Synod of Pittsburgh. Blessed by his influential and undeterred leadership, the Seminary had reason to anticipate added growth and prestige as the years passed. His memorable service was recorded in these fitting words of appreciation, written by the Board of Directors after his earthly labors had closed in death:

His eminent fidelity and usefulness as the chief officer of the Board we who remain desire here to attest and record. In its darkest days—when sanguine and liberal friends were ready to despair—when insuperable obstacles seemed to arise on every hand and peril the very existence of the Seminary—his faith failed not—he seemed to hope against hope. He was ever ready by renewed personal exertion, self-denial, and sacrifice to add effort to effort, and prayer to prayer, to save the school of the prophets. So effectually had he identified himself with the Institution, and incorporated it in his heart, that at home and abroad its advancement was a prominent theme of his thoughts, prayer, and conversation. When mingling with rich men of all classes, authors, or literary circles, he sought to turn the high regard he always commanded for himself to the advantage of the Seminary. The very last appeal he made on earth was for the Seminary, and rendered effective by this significant and solemn sentence, 'It is my dying request.'

A seminary which had enlisted the sacrificial loyalty of men of the standing of Dr. Herron and Dr. Swift, which had trained an increasing group of capable ministers, which had accumulated a substantial and useful library, which had erected an impressive and commodious building and which had retained on the faculty a professor of no less outstanding merit than the brilliant Dr. Elliott, had assets and achievements, after



First Building of the Western Theological Seminary,
Alleghenytown, Pa.

Erected 1831. Destroyed by fire 1854.

thirteen years of service, which ultimately were to insure the stability of the harassed institution.

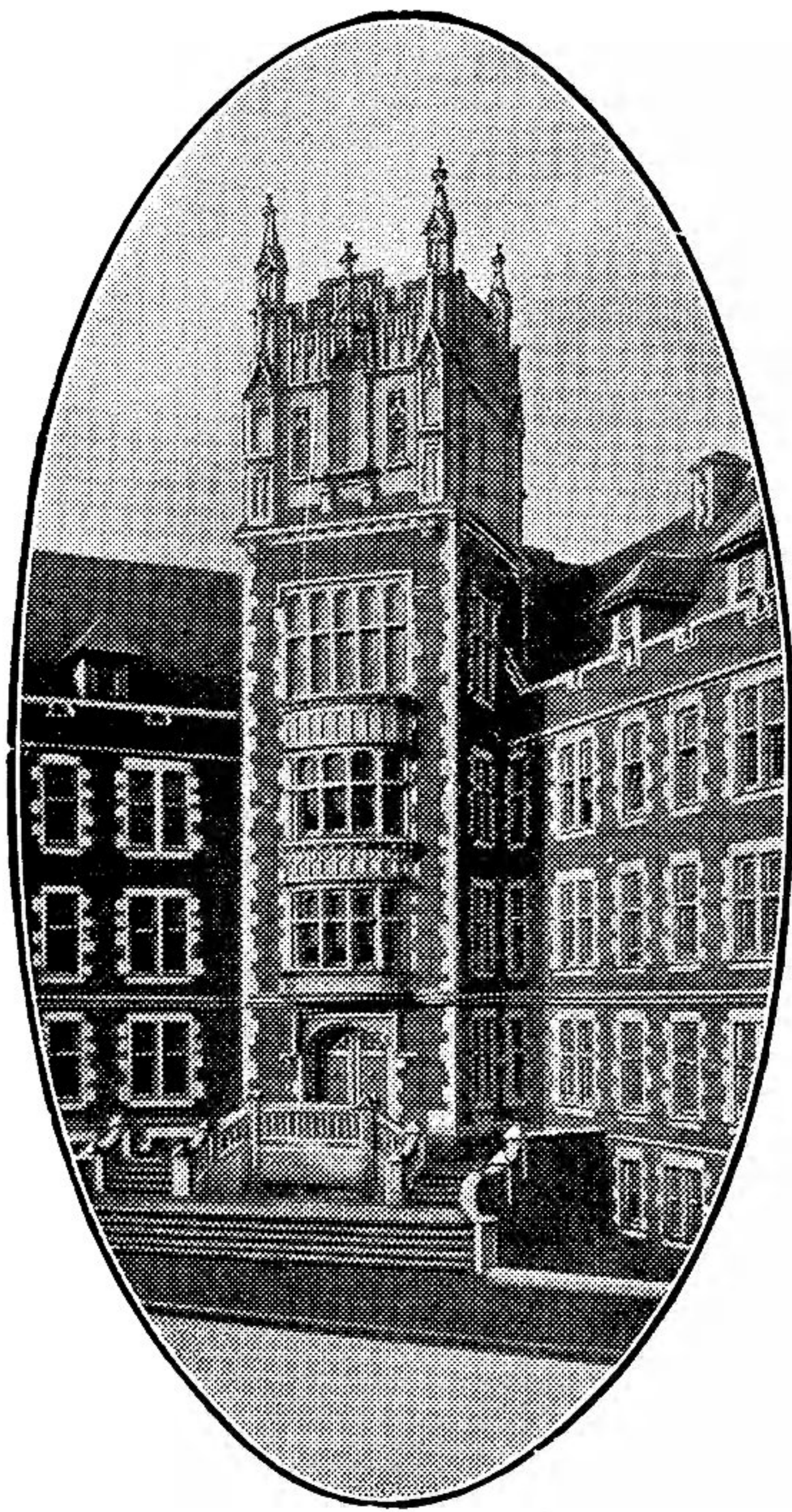
*The Challenge
of Service*

IN the face of great and unexpected obstacles, the Seminary had survived and had carried forward its work with persistent fortitude. The faith and courage of its founders had been tested again and again. Additional trials were to test them still further. Yet those very difficulties and discouragements had aroused within the leaders of Pittsburgh Presbyterianism a will to succeed and a determination to retain the material and intangible assets purchased by sacrificial effort. The Western Theological Seminary was preserved in spite of disheartening obstacles. It grew and expanded into a cherished and influential institution, and a mighty creative force in the religious life of Western Pennsylvania. It stands today as an enduring monument to the vision and faith of the early leaders in the Pittsburgh Presbyterian churches.

It is Pittsburgh's precious heritage from the early years of struggle and the subsequent century of glorious service to Christ in a most diverse field of Christian activity throughout

the entire world. The present vitality of Presbyterianism in Western Pennsylvania is in large measure the fruitage of the consecrative zeal of its faculty and graduates. To Western Seminary Pittsburgh owes a permanent debt of gratitude which must ever remain a convincing challenge to the generosity and gratitude of a Presbyterian community.

The light of Western, which has shone undimmed throughout nearly a century and a quarter of redemptive service must be similarly held aloft in our own day and generation as a guiding beacon of truth and faith in a world that is all too prone to seek other sources of illumination. The light of Western has never failed! It must never fail!



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