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UA37/44 Diary to Kelly

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January 6, 1970

With the death of Ed Diddle passed a phase of the life at Western that will probably never be again, a type of devotion to one's task as if it were indeed the only possible one. Nothing could have attracted Ed away from here; in fact, nothing could have hog-tied and bodily have taken him away. This was his place. Without in any way belittling his place, he accepted it and made it nationally famous. And only a small percentage of the ones who knew him in his early days could have believed that his career would have been what it became. The best of his friends will have to admit that his intellectual powers were only fairly good, that he somehow never learned the so-called ease of social life, that he literally never grew up. There was always about him something of the boyish enthusiasms that we associate with actual adolescents. But, with a small endowment and a not-too-promising career, he stayed here until even his enemies, if his less-ardent friends could be called that, had to admit that Ed had something, that a persistent devotion to one's work will ultimately pay rich dividends. If he had lived a hundred years ago, he could easily have become a good Horatio Alger figure; he had all the makings of a folk hero; in fact, it is already hard to disentangle the quaint Ed Diddle from the slightly-mythical one, the user of quaint expressions, the soft voice, and the red towel. I taught dozens of his boys, a good many majored with me, and I have sat on the sidelines for a whole generation and watched him as well as my other colleagues. Something very fine and not ever to be replaced died with him, a remnant of the old-fashioned dominie who became, even while living, a legend and a symbol. May he rest in peace, and may younger ones learn from his career that it doesn't take wealth, or brilliance, or political pull to have a career if one really wants to make a place and a name for himself.