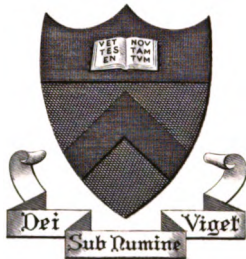


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THE FAITHFUL ELDER;

A MEMOIR

OF

DAVID M. WILSON;

FOR THIRTY YEARS A RULING ELDER IN THE FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AND IN THE WESTERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF THE CITY OF WASHINGTON.

BY

JOSHUA N. DANFORTH,

FIRST MINISTER OF THE FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

"I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."—PAUL.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY C. SHERMAN & SON.

1860:

gift

DEDICATION.

TO THE ELDERSHIP OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES
IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON :

DEAR BRETHREN,—

In compliance with the publicly expressed wish of your venerable body, in convention assembled, that a memoir of our departed brother Wilson should be prepared, and at the special request of his family that I would undertake the work, I present you this volume; which I would dedicate to the service and glory of our common Redeemer. No such testimony was needed to enhance your own sense of the great services performed by the deceased to the Church of God; but it was your unanimous opinion, that the record of such a life, written on so many hearts among us, should be committed to the press, that all might have access to a visible and tangible memorial of one, whom all confessed to be an extraordinary man, raised up to be an eminent blessing to the Church of which he was a member. It was not so much the splendor of his intellect, as the

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serene and steady light of his daily example we were called to admire. It was not by bold and extraordinary measures he arrested attention, but by unceasing and indefatigable perseverance in the direct line of Christian duty; by the strength of his faith in all that God has revealed for the salvation of man; by a resolute determination to be always abounding in the work of the Lord; thus, in every suitable way, magnifying the office of a CHRISTIAN ELDER. You can attest that, while he was conscientiously devoted to his own branch of the Church, he had a higher devotion for the Church universal; while he plied his consecrated labors most diligently within his own ecclesiastical sphere, he was ever ready to co-operate with equal zeal in the wide circle which embraces all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity, not sectarianism, was the grand idea that filled his mind and fired his soul. Salvation, not proselytism, was the end of his faith and the object of his labors. He sought for jewels, not to decorate any earthly brow, but to sparkle in the diadem of the Redeemer. To every faithful minister of Christ, to every brother Elder, he gave his hand and his heart; to all, he lived to do good, and when he died, he died in harness. The last remnants of his strength were spent for the poor and needy, for the bodies and souls of his fellow-men; and his last, his dying message, was conveyed in these memorable words: "Tell the brethren to think more of the REALITIES OF ETERNITY."

It is fitting that a permanent memorial of so good and useful a man should be prepared and preserved, as an encouragement to all Elders and all Christians to aim, not at greatness, but at great usefulness; for, while many things the world admires are not within our reach, all, by "prayer and painstaking," may attain to high usefulness. Indeed, John Elliot said, those two graces would accomplish anything, by the blessing of God. Genius may be a rare gift; talent may be a perverted gift; learning may lead astray; accomplishments may be superficial in their nature, or transient in their effects; fame is but an empty echo; a brilliant reputation may be but a pander to pride, and the precursor of a deplorable downfall; but true prayer and painstaking, like charity, will never fail. It is, indeed, the highest charity. It was so in our brother Wilson. Love to God and man was inscribed on every feature of his intellect, on every fibre of his heart, on all his public and private walks. He was not born to be great; but, by the grace of God, he was "full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith," and was the means of "adding much people to the Lord." By striving for a little at a time, as the bee gathers and garners its honey, he effected much in the aggregate. He would willingly spend an hour to make an incipient impression on the mind of a thoughtless sinner; and the moment he perceived the footsteps of the Spirit within the chamber, or even the vestibule of the soul, he would "follow up" the impression, until that Spirit be-

came a welcome guest, or a grieved exile. What he did, all can do, who will seek and find like communion with God and with men, for such "have power with God and with men."

In the following pages, I have not dealt in fanciful conceptions, but in plain facts, of many of which yourselves were witnesses. His golden pitcher was continually replenished at the wells of salvation. Hence, he was ever fresh and vigorous for the work of the field. Even when he was weak, he was strong; for he took hold of the strength of God. That we may all attain to his spirit, and share in his triumphs through infinite grace, is the prayer of your friend and fellow-servant in the kingdom and patience of Jesus.

J. N. DANFORTH.

NEWCASTLE, Del., December 1, 1859.

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THE FAITHFUL ELDER.

CHAPTER I.

DAVID M. WILSON, the subject of this memoir, was born January 13, 1798, in Somerset County, Maryland, and was the son of pious and praying parents. His father was an elder, and his mother a member of the Presbyterian Church in Princess Ann, one of the oldest churches of the Eastern Shore. Though grace is not hereditary, who can deny the connection between a pious ancestry and a pious posterity? God has instituted a moral relation, which holds good under a general law, and the history of pious families is a perpetual commentary on the faithfulness of the unchangeable covenant of God.

I do not introduce to my readers a statesman, who has founded empires; a warrior, with laurels bathed in blood; an orator, swaying by his eloquence listening senates; but an humble mechanic, whose whole life, interior and outward, might be condensed into one word,—FAITH. There was a simplicity, a majesty, a positive impressiveness in it, which deeply affected all who beheld the living illustration of that imperial grace. At an early age, he became apprentice to a hatter in Georgetown, D. C. At the age of

eighteen, without any marked experience, he united himself to the Presbyterian Church, of which the venerable Dr. BALCH was pastor.

Such a step is an era in a man's life, whatever be the state of his heart. If he be true and sincere, he commences a career of light and glory. If false, or deceived, he enters a gate, which leads to endless darkness. That David had not drunk deeply of the true spirit of piety, is evident from the fact that on returning to Maryland, he yielded so easily to the allurements that surrounded him. Youth, high spirits, an impulsive nature, especially when joined to an unconquerable resoluteness of will, are dangerous elements of character, when not controlled by the higher sanctions of religion.

David became remiss in duty, self-reliant, if not self-righteous, fond of amusements, forgetful of his covenant vows—in a word, he was beginning to backslide. Among the dangerous and exciting amusements, by which he was allured, was the chase, which exactly suited his wild and impetuous temperament. The convivial glass came in to augment the pernicious influences which were drawing him away from truth, love, and duty; and if he did not make an utter wreck of the hopes he had so fondly entertained, it was all of grace. Grace first found him, watched over him, prevented him, urged him on, and finally saved him. Such impulsive youth are perpetually rushing into danger. He often wondered he was not killed. He was hurled, in the chase, from his horse, and dashed breathless to the ground. He was well-nigh being drowned, and in various ways seemed to escape the very jaws of death.

Thus was he "immortal till his work was done;" and a great work it was that Providence had reserved for him.

One Sabbath morning, he attended the Methodist Church. It was communion day. A preacher of ordinary ability occupied the pulpit, but he grasped the sword of the Spirit with a rough energy. He rung out that note of the Gospel trumpet, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?" "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." The Spirit of God was with the word. The backslider stood aghast. Conviction flashed anew upon his conscience. His sins rose in dark array before him. The weight of guilt pressed heavily on his heart. He had once named the name of Christ, but had forgotten his vows, and rushed into the polluting embrace of the world! Now commenced a thorough work in his soul. He lay a penitent suppliant at the foot of the cross. While Justice displayed its terrors, Mercy stood weeping and pleading in its awful shadow: Let the sinner live! And the sinner awoke as from a painful dream.

And yet it was a reality. Sin was a reality. The violation of vows was no dream. Eternity was no unsubstantial vision. Life itself was full of the true, the real, the eternal. Henceforward all the powers of his mind, all the affections of his heart, all the energies of the renovated man, must be devoted to the service of God. Having emerged from those depths of distress, out of which he cried unto the Lord, his path henceforward was to be in the sunlight of God's presence. Upon frames and feelings he seemed to place little reliance. If doubt attempted to insinuate itself into his experience, it was dismissed by an instant exercise of faith. If fears began to rise, they were promptly dissipated by the breath of prayer. The world was before him, not as a field in which to cultivate his own pleasures; to seek wealth; to pursue the phantoms of ambi-

tion ; to form alliances for the gratification of the common passions of our selfish nature ; but as a theatre to DO GOOD. He might not be able to do all he desired for the salvation of men, but he would do "what he could" for the honor of a pardoning God and an atoning Saviour. He had not education, he had not extensive reading, he possessed no rich gifts of utterance, no natural, fluent, sweeping oratory—qualities which have distinguished some men of slender intellectual attainments—but he had a soul of love, in which dwelt a strong sense of DUTY, combined with a burning enthusiasm, which was perpetually kindled at the altar of God. He trusted to no visions, built his faith on no suggestions, listened to no imaginary voices, pretended to no false ecstasies, but clung steadily to the living oracles of God, as the standard by which all spiritual experiences are to be measured, and all personal evidences to be settled.

Indeed, his religion was very little of the *subjective* type. It was rather *objective* in its character. I do not mean that he was not the subject of deep heavenly exercises, but he dwelt little on frames and feelings. Still less did he dwell amid those shadows of the inner life, which have hung like heavy drapery around the souls of so many pensive pilgrims, who, in the strong language of Robert Hall, have appeared to be "asking pardon of everybody that they live in this world."

Meekness and humility were, indeed, leading and living elements of his character, but still he walked among men as one who had duties to discharge to them, and as one who, in attempting duty, might safely trust in the strength of God. The high spiritual obligation enjoined by Paul in those words, "Quit yourselves like men," was continually pressing on his heart. His sense of responsibility made

him solemn, but not melancholy. No morbid habits were created by the constant reflex action of the sensibilities upon their source, though he possessed a highly sensitive nature. The contemplation of the simple probability of bringing a sinner to God was sufficient to nerve him for action, and even to fill his soul with gladness, for to him it became a moral certainty, the pledge of which was found in faith and prayer; faith in the power and willingness of God, prayer through the intercession of the Son, whom the Father always heareth. He said to me once: "If I can prevail on an impenitent sinner to bend his knee before God, unseen by the world, and if I can have the privilege of kneeling with him, and praying for him, I have such confidence in the readiness of God to save, that I expect his conversion." He thought not of himself in that remark, but of the exuberant mercy of God. And for the most part, it was unto him according to his faith. His whole life was a record of such answers to prayer. He set to work in the family where he boarded, and among the first fruits of his labors was the conversion of the landlady of the house. Her sister was also deeply impressed, and afterwards converted in his own house. If he was not effecting such results, so far as human agency can contribute to them, he felt he was living to little purpose.

CHAPTER II.

IN 1821, Mr. Wilson entered into the matrimonial state with Miss Bidley Waller, who heartily sympathized with his Christian views and feelings, and whose sisters were hopefully converted through his instrumentality. This union brought them continual felicity, until the trying hour, when his own death severed the sacred tie that bound them to each other as congenial spirits, walking together in the faith of the Gospel.

While he continued in Maryland, he did good as he had opportunity, and such an one ever finds or makes opportunities. Upon the family altar he kept the fire glowing; the closet witnessed his wrestlings with God; the prayer-meeting was the delight of his soul; every Sabbath was a high day, reflecting the glory of heaven into the sanctuary below; the strains of sacred music animated his heart, and elevated all his affections; his eye, small, but expressive, kindling with emotion, disclosed the secret raptures of the inner man, while his thoughts rose to God, or gathered intensely around the impenitent, to whom the Gospel was preached. But he was not content with the luxury of simple or complex emotions. He was bent on action. *Personal effort* for the salvation of sinners was not with him a pleasant theory, but a positive duty, carrying with it its own perpetual reward. He was avaricious of the gold of the Gospel, of those heavenly pearls which constitute the revenues of the Prince of Peace. Like a good merchantman, he sought to gather them for the diadem of Christ. His eye was watchful to detect the first symptoms of seri-

ous reflection in an immortal being, and if the most solemn, tearful, and tender appeals to the awakened one could avail to deepen that reflection, or to augment incipient conviction, they were never wanting.

In the providence of God he was soon to remove from Maryland, and enter a more stirring sphere of life. If it be "not in man that walketh to direct his steps," and if "the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord," then may he in true faith pray: "Order my steps in Thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me;" let no sinister motives impel me to that course of action which I choose. In the year 1823, conducted by that Providence on whose steps he ever waited, he was led with his family to take up his abode in the city of Washington, and engage in his trade as a hatter. Promptly seeking religious associations, as should every Christian who emigrates to a new place, he united with the Second Presbyterian Church in that city, then under the care of the Rev. Daniel Baker, so widely known in the Church of God as a minister of rare abilities in the pulpit, and in the evangelical field at large, whose labors were crowned with extraordinary success, whose name is as "ointment poured forth." Their hearts met, their hands clasped, they saw eye to eye, their communion was a constant feast. Great national men attended that church, men of intellect and eloquence, but none affected its fortunes like the humble hatter, none exerted such an influence on the highest interests of the city as the praying Wilson.

He began to associate himself with Christians in every practicable way of doing good. A leader in the Sabbath-school of his own church; the founder of the first colored Sunday-school; originator and sustainer of prayer-meet-

ings among the colored people, as among the destitute white population ; a seizer of all available occasions for direct and pungent conversation with the neglecters of religion ; an indefatigable messenger of invitations to absentees from the house of God ; in short, a missionary of all work, where much work was to be done, with few to do it. With such responsibilities and advantages for doing good, he entered on the work with alacrity, and prosecuted it with a purpose that never faltered, an industry that never tired, and a zeal that burned night and day with more than vestal brightness. The love of Christ fed that sacred flame. Diligent in business, he sought not wealth, but simply the means of support, while all his available time and strength were devoted to the spiritual improvement of his fellowmen. Washington had then but a fourth of its present amount of population, a city of magnificent outline, which has been steadily filling up to this day, and is continually progressive, contrary to the predictions of its foes, and beyond the expectations of its friends as entertained thirty years since. A noble field it was in which to plant good seed ; a rare spot in which to lay foundations ; a grand central point, at which to collect and consolidate influences and institutions, which should tell upon the interests of the whole Republic. How often was it observed that his fervent prayers embraced that even then vast circumference—now how enlarged ! Let not the Christian in prayer forget this fact. Our WHOLE country, it must be saved “by the Word of God and prayer.” That was the period, when in the now beautiful West End of the Metropolis, there might have been seen long and frequent rows of young trees, then recently planted by the fostering hand of the Government, but now towering on every side, lifting their majestic

branches, to be nurtured by the light of day and the dews of night, and spreading their grateful shade over the eager visitor, or the wearied governmental officer, who loves to linger amid the charms of rural scenery, that remind one rather of the country than the town. Or to change the illustration, then and since were laid the foundations of edifices, whose solid arches, towering columns, and magnificent apartments have commanded the admiration of strangers from every clime. And thus is it of the moral structures raised by Wilson and his likeminded associates. At first feeble, and scarcely noticed, they have grown, expanded, and matured, until thousands have felt their reviving influence, or taken refuge as in some ample and hospitable mansion. If the elements of material growth in the city of Washington have awakened the interest and admiration of American citizens, the phenomena of spiritual progress are no less interesting to the friends of the Redeemer. Its churches, so many of which have been erected in part by contributions from abroad, have ever been open to the use of American citizens, and the spiritual ministrations in them extensively enjoyed by visitors. In the work of welcoming such guests, our friend was ever, in a double sense, a *host*; for while he delighted to entertain all strangers at the feasts of Zion, his ubiquitous activity insured to all a comfortable seat at the common board. I confess to a feeling of sadness at the thought that we shall no more see that agile form and that benignant countenance, the one moving lightly up and down the aisles, the other smiling a serene welcome to the visitor at church.

CHAPTER III.

IN the year 1828, the Rev. Daniel Baker, having been called to Savannah, the pulpit of the Second Presbyterian Church became vacant, and there was a division in the congregation touching the election of a successor. Such was the intensity of feeling on the subject, involving as much the question of measures as of men, that an actual separation became inevitable. A portion of the church withdrew under certificates of good and regular standing, with the view of forming a new society under the designation of the **FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**. Among these was Mr. Wilson. He was, indeed, in a religious point of view, the soul of the enterprise. Formed for action, he had now an opportunity to act with vigor, and a necessity was laid upon him to act with wisdom and faith. The seceding company was few in numbers, small in public consideration, poor in the treasures of this world, without an organization, without a church edifice, without a minister, and without a congregation. Nothing was ready to their hand. Everything was to be created. Predictions were not wanting that so feeble a concern would soon glide into a natural death by inanition, and its memory become quietly extinguished. In these circumstances, **FAITH** in the resources of Heaven was the only thing left to them. This was all, and it was enough; it was everything to them. They drew largely upon the bounty of Heaven, and not a draft was dishonored.

Wilson entered into the work with characteristic spirit, never suffering the shadow of a doubt to cross his mind.

He was everywhere, cheering the little band, repeating promises, invigorating resolution, scattering fears, and confirming hope. But more than all was he with God, perpetually taking hold of his strength. Nothing to him was a sacrifice, everything in the way of duty a pleasure. The prayer-meeting he ever deemed a mighty engine of progress, as it is so eminently seen to be at this hour of the Church's prosperity, and he opened his doors to welcome the praying assemblage from time to time. At this crisis, the writer received a call to take the charge of the little congregation, with such assurances of support as could be offered out of the abundance of their poverty, with, it must be added, a liberality of heart and of port, that commended itself to his deepest affections, his profoundest gratitude. There did he learn a lesson never to be forgotten—a lesson, an example of the strong reaction of the faith and godliness of a church upon the heart, the hopes, and the happiness of the pastor. If the temporal support was, like their means, limited, it never failed. Punctuality kept even pace with promise. I quote this example to hold it up to richer and more negligent churches. But the best support was that of untiring prayer and ungrudging co-operation. What an elder said to the late pastor of the Western Church in Washington, before he took charge of it, while speaking of Mr. Wilson, who had transferred his relation to it, was eminently true: "If that man is to be associated with you in the work of planting a new church, he will break you down before you have become acclimated, for his zeal in evangelizing Washington knows no bounds."

Among the first meetings I was called to attend, was one for prayer at Mr. Wilson's own house, near Pennsylvania Avenue. It was a solemn scene; at least one hun-

dred and fifty persons were present, crowding all the available rooms, and even overflowing into the entry. The march of improvement has swept that house away, but the locality cannot soon be forgotten. The silence of death reigned, broken only by occasional sobs. Every eye was expectant, every heart trembled with anxiety. The soul of our friend was deeply exercised for the conversion of sinners. He longed intensely for the power of God, and the progress of his work. He "tried each art, reproved each dull delay," but found nothing equal to faith in God, and he lived by faith. To do the will of God was his meat and drink. He scarcely seemed to be in the body. He threw his soul into the work with, I had almost said, an angel's strength. He loved with all his heart. He labored with all his might. He was rewarded with anxious inquiries on every side. A work then commenced, which, with brief intervals, may be said to have continued to this day.

The instances of individual conversion were numerous and striking. There was one person, whose conversion seemed important to the progress of the work, to say nothing of its infinite consequences to himself. Wilson, another brother, and myself, were conversing upon the subject. One said, "Let us present his case to God." We knelt and prayed. As we rose from our knees, it was observed: "But we must work as well as pray. Our action must correspond to our prayer. One of us must go and converse with this man." The duty was assigned to the writer. It was felt to be a duty *now*. I hastened to seek the individual. Finding him in his office, I addressed him on the momentous concerns of eternity. He listened respectfully, even seriously; he said little, but indicated much by his manner. On learning the interest felt for his conversion, a deeper

shade of solemnity passed across his brow. The obligations to repentance were pressed upon his conscience: the tears were seen to burst from his eyes; he wept as a tender child would weep. He gave his heart to God!

All this time Wilson and his friend were engaged in prayer for him, and how soon came the answer from Heaven! Wilson was filled with joy, scarcely with surprise, for he had been *looking* for this result, and would have been disappointed had it turned out otherwise.

For thirty years has this conversion told upon the interests of that church.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the 16th of November, 1828, I preached my first sermon to the people who had sent for me, in a school-house situated on Ninth Street, above G, then on the boundary of the northern suburbs of the city. The house was crowded. The sun of that Sabbath rose on Wilson's praying circle. The Sun of righteousness arose with healing in his wings on the worshipping assembly that day. Through the whole of the succeeding week my friend was busily engaged, in all intervals available from the employments of his shop, in forwarding our new enterprise. I allude especially to its spiritual department. Others, resolute men, and men, too, of faith, attended more particularly to our material interests, for everything was to be *created* as well as arranged.

Business was dull. The tenure of office, on which so

many depended, began to be uncertain. Money was scarce, and rich men scarcer. We were compelled to select an undesirable location for the church edifice, which, indeed, corresponded with the general humility of our circumstances. This was a matter of chronic regret with many of our people, until the lapse of time unfolded and vindicated the wisdom of God's providence towards us, and reversed that regret, substituting in its place gratitude as well as gratification, that we were kept there to do the work there required. Independently of all spiritual considerations, it was seen that the building of a church edifice, even in a poor locality, is a temporal blessing. It stimulates enterprise all around it. It attracts population, enhances the value of property, repels the approach of vicious settlers, and encourages investments by solid and useful citizens.

It was on this principle that General Van Ness, Mayor of the city, pressed the sale of one of his lots in that vicinity upon the trustees of the church, offering, as he deemed, peculiar advantages and easy terms. Behold the result! The whole neighborhood has been revolutionized. The march of improvement has been marvellous. Whole blocks and squares of fine edifices have followed where this church led the way. "That a church could be built like this," says Dr. Smith, "and paid for by a small congregation, was indeed a new thing, and required strong faith and high courage. Since then, encouraged by our example, in fifteen years there have been built twenty-seven, and many of them in this very part, which, on the 1st of March, 1829, the day of the dedication of 'The Little White,' was a wild, neglected region." Some idea of the crude condition of the neighborhood may be formed from the fact that on a Sab-

bath night, after the dedication, a city hack, conveying a family to the church door, was upset in the mud of the street near the edifice. How different now that beautiful highway!

About this time, my friend would frequently give me his views on prayer and personal effort for the conversion of sinners; indeed, he had upon his heart as much the burden of preaching as the preacher himself. I quoted the case in one of our meetings of a ripe and devoted old saint, who was accustomed to rise at frequent times on a cold winter's night, and pray earnestly for the coming of the kingdom of Christ. I saw him die a victorious death; his chamber seemed the very vestibule of heaven; the temple of glory was before him; his progress through the dark valley, instead of being a terror, was a triumph; the world, death, and hell were as so many captives chained to his car, while the blossoms of hope and faith, like the flowers scattered on every side by the Roman conqueror on his triumphal march, gave forth a fragrance that savored less of earth than of heaven. I dwelt upon the widow's importunity to the unjust judge, as set forth by Christ. "How much more will God give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" The meeting grew deeply solemn. I saw that my friend's heart was agonizing for sinners, as if it was the seat of the intense intercessions of the Spirit. Those intercessions prevailed. At the close of the meeting, no less than six individuals knelt before God in anxious concern, some even in deep distress, and begged the prayers of Christians for their eternal salvation. It was a melting season, and we were convinced that God was indeed among us.

On recurring to my journal of that period, I find this entry: "Nov. 19. Three anxious persons visited me to be

conversed with. One of those last night distressed thinks she has obtained mercy. Thursday, 20th. Preached from James 4:14: 'For what is your life?' Showed 1. That it is the gift of God. 2. A brief and uncertain season. 3. A season of hope. 4. Of action. 5. A season of mercy. A number of Mr. Post's people, with himself, favored us with their presence and prayers. Seven or eight stayed after meeting to be prayed for. One of the leading men in the society, generous and active, but without religion, requested me to pray for him. Nov. 21st. Attended a meeting this evening in the northwestern part of the city. Full and interesting. I was favored with much freedom and spirit in speaking from, 'Surely I come quickly: Amen: Even so come, Lord Jesus.' In visiting during the day, I found as many as a dozen persons seriously impressed. May the Spirit visit us with a mighty shower. Oh, that God would make me the instrument of great good to souls! Related in meeting the case of a young woman in Brother Nevins's congregation, Baltimore, who on her dying bed said to her pastor, with all the deliberation of fixed and hopeless despair: 'I shall be lost!' Sabbath, 23d. Preached from, 'I have a message from God unto thee,' and from Prov. 29:1. The fatal and irremediable consequences of hardening the heart against God. House crowded. We sang and prayed after the regular service. Souls were in distress. The work is extending. The city is beginning to be moved. Christians from other churches mingle with us. Monday, 24th. Congregation met to elect trustees. Messrs. S., G., P——n, and P——s, were elected."

At this meeting, David M. Wilson was elected a Ruling Elder, with an unanimity and spirit that indicated how worthy of the office was the candidate, and how richly he

enjoyed the confidence of the church. The result was gratifying to him, chiefly because he believed the possession of the office would confer on him an additional power of doing good. He had no desire for office in Church or State, except as it would increase his opportunities of doing good. No morbid vanity, no thirst of power or pre-eminence afflicted his moral nature. If he desired the office, it was on account of the "good work" it implies and demands; nor did he shun it because of the *hard work* it involved in the estimation of a faithful elder. That was his delight. I can easily conceive what immense moral power would be added to the church, if all her elders were filled with the spirit which dwelt, and glowed, and burned in him to the last hour of his life.

He might have had faults, for who has not? But they "leaned to the side of virtue;" they might almost be said to be "for Zion's sake;" they were eliminated in the very process of a burning activity for the souls of men, not cherished with an obstinate self-conceit, nor denied with an incorrigible pertinacity. If, on the one hand, he was bold and faithful in administering reproof, on the other he was patient and good-tempered in receiving it. In all, the spirit of tenderness prevailed, as the writer has occasion to know, for we were sometimes obliged to exchange the unpleasant duty of correcting each other's faults. There are some negative virtues which have a positive excellence. The virtues of silence, of waiting, of abstinence, and the like, are sometimes difficult to be practised. To censure is easy, but to be silent, when we cannot speak good of the absent, is to many a difficult self-denial. That virtue was eminent in our departed friend. He had no tongue for censure. Few idle words were expended through that bit-

ter channel. All conversational impertinences of that character found no encouragement in his company. He always preferred charitable constructions. He was ever weaving at the mantle of charity, not patching up the many-colored rags of the opposite vice. He so thoroughly convinced people of the deep sincerity of his desires to do them good, that he obtained a candid hearing, and ever inspired respect, if he did not always awaken conviction.

After his appointment as elder, he renewed his labors with indefatigable zeal. He was present and actively participating in a prayer-meeting, of which my diary records the following: "Full, and the most solemn meeting we have attended. The Lord was evidently there. After service, we went round and conversed with the people. Many seemed seriously impressed, and I trust in God the work is going on. Nov. 28. Mr. — called up his family this morning at half-past six, and for the first time in his life on his birthday, being forty years old, conducted family worship. It was a tender and melting scene. Two others in his family are impressed. One day of this week (Tuesday) was set apart as a day of fasting and prayer, and I desire to record it to the honor of God, that he evidently blessed the day to us in impressing many souls, and his work is going on."

"Sabbath, Nov. 30. Preached three times. At night the house was excessively crowded."

The Sabbath last mentioned was appointed for the ordination of David M. Wilson to the office of Ruling Elder in the Fourth Presbyterian Church. At the close of the third service, he came forward, and took upon him the ordination vows of his office amid the profound attention of the numerous assembly. It was an era in his life. It was

an era in the history of our little church. God gave us one elder at a time, that we might more sensibly feel our dependence on Him. But he did the work of three. All the exercises of that day seemed to be blessed. At the inquiry meeting on Monday evening, thirty appeared to ask the way to Zion. Their concern for salvation was very great. One of the new converts made a short address, sincere, cheerful, though tearful, and very tender. Great was the effect.

“Dec. 1 (Diary). We have made a contract for building a church, to be finished by the 25th of January next. It is to be plain and convenient, and calculated for one thousand people.”

On Sabbath, December 7, there was good attendance, though the day was stormy. The communion was administered for the first time. Eight persons united with the church. I had drawn up a Confession of Faith and Covenant, to be used forever in the Fourth Church, and these were the first converts to adopt the former, and to take upon themselves the vows of the latter. What a numerous train have followed them! O Lord, may the names of them all be written in the Lamb's book of life!

The largest accessions to the communion in the subsequent history of the church were in February and April, 1843, that year of the right hand of the Most High, in two months of which were added to the roll of communicants one hundred and four names. On the Sabbath after communion, the attendance was still larger, and we continued to hear of newborn souls in the kingdom of our Lord. On Monday, upwards of twenty appeared at the anxious meeting, two or three in deep distress. Miss T. approached me in great agitation, and exclaimed, “Oh, do pray for

me!" We knelt before God, and I offered prayer. Miss T. and two or three others remained riveted to the floor, begging for mercy. I sent for Wilson and another friend. They came from the professors' prayer-meeting; for in those days Christians often assembled by themselves, as did the primitive disciples, to wait, and watch, and pray, while the preacher instructed the inquiring. We all prayed with them, which seemed to deepen their distress. "Let us retire," said I, "to the chamber, and continue instant in prayer." A human prop was thus knocked away from them. We began to plead with God. (Oh, how the Elder prayed!) "At the beginning of his supplication," as in the case of the beloved Daniel, there appeared, not an angel from Heaven, but a messenger equally welcome, bringing the good tidings that Miss T. was rejoicing! We thanked God, and continued to pray. Presently we were informed that Mrs. A. had yielded to God, and was overflowing with joy. We lifted our voices in thanksgiving and praise, and then supplicated the Lord to give to our prayers those that remained. Behold, how ready to hear! Soon we learned that Mrs. B. was liberated and happy. The elder continued wrestling with God until a full hour had expired, when, with hearts overwhelmed with the goodness and glory of God, we descended to the room below. What a spectacle greeted our eyes! Ransomed sinners ready to burst forth in songs of praise; others weeping under the burden of unforgiven sin, all anxious for themselves or others, none willing to leave the place, and carry with them unpardoned souls. Time glided insensibly away, and it was eleven o'clock before any were willing to leave. I have never witnessed a more striking manifestation of the

concentrated energies of the Divine Spirit. *Every* one present was deeply affected.

“Dec. 25. Preached on the message of the angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem. A crowded audience listened with solemn interest. All the meetings this week have been attended with power. Miss C., long a neglecter of Christ, and the preaching of Christ, being under agonizing conviction, sobbed aloud, and was with difficulty quieted. She went from the meeting in extreme anguish, but at midnight found peace, having in the solitude of her chamber submitted to God, when she became as happy as she was before miserable.” For this soul, also, the Elder had mightily wrestled with God, and prevailed. Many of the cases were strongly marked, and issued with the brightest promise. The lapse of years proved that they were real and useful conversions.

“Sabbath, Dec. 28. The largest assembly we have yet had convened to-day, above four hundred, and people went away because they cannot find room. Preached at night from Jonah 1 : 6—‘What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God,’ &c. The Spirit evidently blessed the word. Stillness and anxiety were manifest throughout the assembly. After the benediction was pronounced, the people were unwilling to disperse. Perceiving this reluctance, I invited those who desired an interest in the prayers of Christians to remain, and occupy the front seats. Thirteen for the first time came out from the congregation with deliberate step and downcast eyes, presenting an affecting spectacle. The impressions of many others seemed to be much deepened. The work has assumed a decided character. After suitable additional exercises, I with difficulty dismissed the people.”

And here I would remark a difference of opinion (quite

friendly) between my Elder and myself on the question of the *time* for dismissing an assembly in such circumstances. He was for encouraging them to stay, and for staying with them as long as they desired to remain. My judgment was, that it is preferable to dismiss an assembly even under the pressure of powerful feeling, rather than to permit their sensibilities to be exhausted by a prolonged excitement, ending in a collapse of interest, difficult to be regained. I remembered the remark of a distinguished evangelist of great experience, that having once dismissed the congregation amid a flood of apparent general conviction, their very contact with the various families they rejoined was followed by such an increase of interest, that the number of the awakened was vastly multiplied, so that in every house were found many "mourning apart." The thoughts of my friend, however, were less on ulterior influences than on present immediate action. He could not endure that an unpardoned sinner should leave the house of God with the mountain load of condemnation on his soul, nor that an anxious, weeping sinner should leave the sacred shrine of mercy without having his tears dried up, and his fears exchanged for the triumphant hopes of the Gospel. In point of fact, he has watched to many a late hour of the night with sin-sick souls, and after snatching brief sleep, in which his very dreams were prayers, has been up with the earliest birds, happier than even those winged denizens of the air, in the work of glorifying God.

"Monday, 29th. Between twenty and thirty at the anxious meeting. Impressions are extending and strengthening. At the close of the exercises, we had a jubilee of thanksgiving for ransomed sinners. Many hearts, hitherto hardened, began to give way. Four persons expressed

hope in Christ. One of these, Mr. O., was a Roman Catholic. Fearing to enter the house, he had listened at the door, when a passage of Scripture pierced his conscience, and he went away wounded and agonized for sin. Having once joined the assembly, he could never afterwards leave us. His wife also was converted.

“One night, after I had retired fatigued and unwell, Mr. S. brought me news that Miss R. was rejoicing. I could not sleep, though soothed with the sound of prayer in the room below. Presently another messenger came, announcing similar intelligence of another soul. I arose, dressed myself, and went below to participate in the joy of the solemn occasion, tempered, as it was, with the sight of others kneeling in distress. But the brethren ‘continued in prayer,’ and these sin-burdened souls also were liberated, the freshest feelings of those just converted being lavished upon them. Surely Heaven was thrilled with joy at that scene! And upon such scenes did the curtain of 1828 fall, impressing us with a lively sense of the fact, that nothing on earth is to be compared in interest with the presence of the Spirit of God in all the majesty of his Divinity, and all the reality of his power, accomplishing the conversion of sinners.”

CHAPTER V.

THE year 1829 opened upon us in beauty. Reflection lighted up the past with gladness and gratitude. On the future hope cast its cheering rays. None were in higher, none in more chastened enthusiasm than my friend Wilson,

who, ever auguring good in the darkest hours, now indulged the brightest visions of success in the work of the Lord. But those visions, however brilliant, never allured him from the path of present duty. Nor did he, amid all the rosy colorings of a fervid imagination, ever seem to forget that whether his day of life was to be long or short, it must be filled up with hard work. The rising sun of the new year beheld him in the prayer-meeting, surrounded by an humble and faithful band of Christians, pleading with God for richer blessings still to descend upon the people and the city.

My journal records: "In the evening I preached to a crowded assembly from Psalm 31 : 15,—‘My times are in thy hand.’ Many came up after dismissal to be prayed for.—Sabbath, Jan. 4. The work prospers. At night preached from the text: ‘Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.’ Many are *almost*, some *quite*, persuaded to be Christians. On Monday evening the monthly missionary concert was held. A number of anxious ones appeared, and two found peace in believing. On Sabbath, Jan. 11, the largest assembly we have had convened, when I discoursed to them from Hosea 13 : 9,—‘O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help.’ I could with difficulty make my way to the pulpit, but from that sacred eminence beheld the effects of the power of God. During the week ten inquirers have sought our instructions, one of whom, a Romanist, has been hopefully converted. This makes the fifth subject of the renewing grace of God from among the Roman Catholics since the work began."

These cases, and other additional ones, were indeed interesting, showing with what freshness and power the light of Divine truth entered minds that had been darkened by

the shadows and confused with the fictions of a system that perverts the great central truths of Christianity, and substitutes the traditions of men for the commandments of God. One of these converts observed she had for years been hungering for the bread of life, while feeding on empty husks, and that now her soul was filled with peace and joy. The religious separation from her mother was peculiarly affecting. There was no impairing of filial affection, no rude sundering of natural ties on her part, but both mother and daughter felt that their paths were now diverging in different directions. Her husband also renounced Romanism, and embraced the Gospel of Christ. These, and many like cases, were the result of the simple preaching of Gospel truth, in connection with personal effort and special prayer. My journal thus alludes to an incident of a prayer-meeting at a private house:—

“I opened it with an address and prayer. A young woman was in great agony, the daughter of a Catholic. She was heard suppressing her feelings repeatedly; at length they became so powerful I was obliged to break off my discourse, and we betook ourselves to prayer. In the course of half an hour she had found peace of mind. Others around her were much affected and weeping, one of whom obtained hope that night after she went home. After meeting, which was with difficulty dismissed at half past nine o'clock, Brother Wilson, with two other brethren, accompanied me to my study, where we continued praying until eleven o'clock. The next day, in visiting, I found three cases of rejoicing sinners unknown before. Calling at another house, I found Mrs. C. in great anxiety of mind, who had been awakened under the first sermon I had preached at Brother Post's church, but had not made

known her convictions. Here I met Brother Wilson, who was pleading with her to be reconciled to God, while she was weeping bitterly. After a succession of inward struggles, which she vainly endeavored to repress, she yielded her soul to God, and burst into animated exclamations: 'Oh, blessed Redeemer! blessed Redeemer! Oh, my husband! my husband! Would he were here! I wish he was here—now, now!' It was a sight for the joy and song of angels. Lord, keep her precious soul! At night, I went to visit a Catholic gentleman, who had laughed at the 'fuss,' as he called it, which we were making about religion, and said to his mother-in-law, a woman mighty in prayer, 'If ever you see me whining and crying in the way I've seen some, you may laugh at me.' But he came to see me this afternoon in great anguish of soul. Though a proud man, yet he seems very much humbled. When I began to converse with him, he burst into tears. We knelt to pray. He did not rise with the rest of us, but continued in the kneeling posture. His wife was weeping sore by his side, I trust for her sins.

"18th. A man fell on Saturday from the rafters of the new church to the joists of the ground floor, without disabling himself so much as to prevent him from reascending to continue his work! A striking providential protection.

"Sabbath, 25th. Both morning and night the fullest meetings yet enjoyed. I do think the Lord will raise up a large congregation here. May it be a spiritual one!

"Thursday, 29th. Meeting full and solemn. A reviving power was present. Four new persons solicited our prayers. On Tuesday, the Presbytery of the District of Columbia met at Georgetown to receive our application to be taken under its care. Messrs. S. and G. were the com-

missioners on the part of the people. The petition, signed by about thirty communicants, was presented and read. The congregation was duly received under the care of the Presbytery, and leave was given them to employ me until the next regular meeting of Presbytery. The title given to us was that of the *Fourth Presbyterian Church and Congregation in the City of Washington*. The Presbyters present were Rev. I. L. Skinner and Brackenridge, Doctors Balch and Laurie, and Rev. Messrs. Post, Harrison, Walton, and Campbell, besides elders. [Of these ministers, all but Doctors Harrison and Campbell have rested from their labors, and entered upon their reward.] We came home with thankful hearts, and each of us (the two commissioners and Mr. Wilson, with myself) offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God, and invoked the blessing of the Head of the Church on the transactions of the day.

“Wednesday, 28th. Mr. S. and myself having resolved to open a private prayer-meeting for members of Congress, who might be inclined to attend, we held our second one to-night at the house of Mr. G. A few of the more serious members attended. A fervent prayer was offered by Senator Swift, of Vermont. At the next meeting were present Mr. Chilton, of Kentucky, and the noted Davy Crockett, of Tennessee, the latter under conviction of sin, and manifesting an earnest desire to find the salvation of the Lord. He seemed much crushed in spirit, spoke of the temptations that had assailed him in this city, the snares spread by gamblers to rob and ruin him, and the too great success that had attended their efforts by reason of his yielding disposition. He seems an honest, simple-minded man, with many of the salient points of the Western hunter, but is evidently out of his proper sphere in this city. He is im-

pressed with the belief that religion alone can make him happy, and being a man of undoubted courage, would not be afraid openly to confess Christ before a scoffing world. His present circumstances would require a full exercise of that quality, considered as a high moral sentiment.

“Feb. 16. About twenty inquirers. Within the week five or six individuals have, as they trust, given themselves to the Lord. There is nothing like fasting and prayer. The sisters in the church have observed private seasons of the same with the best results.

“18th. Among those at the Congressional prayer-meeting were Mr. Culpeper, of N. C., Dr. Condict, of N. J., and Mr. Davenport, of Ohio, two of whom took part in the exercises.

“Thursday night. After lecture I saw a woman much distressed, whose soul was awakened to its everlasting interests by a very simple circumstance. A person went home from our last anxious meeting and told her of the conversion of one or two sinners. It took such hold of her mind that she dreamed that night of the judgment with all its terrific array, and has been very much concerned.

“Sabbath, 22d. Weather severely cold. Great exertions are making to supply the suffering poor. Dr. Ely preached in the Capitol this morning. My sermon was from Rom. 10 : 1,—‘Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God,’ &c. Meeting very solemn. A young convert solicited that a prayer-meeting should be appointed, to commence after morning service, and continue till night, the people coming in and retiring as they felt disposed. It was well attended and enjoyed. One poor dissipated man, with a mutilated arm, appeared in great trouble, and eagerly wished to be prayed for. There was much weep-

ing in the house, though a reluctance to come out on the Lord's side. But we have a great work yet to be done.

“Monday, 23d. Large meeting of the Washington Bible Society. Professor Ruggles, Rev. Walter Colton, Rev. Mr. Post, Jeremiah Evarts, Esq., and myself, addressed the meeting.”

In the progress and prosperity of this institution, Mr. Wilson ever felt and manifested the deepest interest, and, as we shall see, became its zealous and successful agent in the metropolis.

CHAPTER VI.

THE dedication of a new house of worship, under any circumstances, is a deeply interesting event, even to an old congregation, but where everything, as in the present case, is new and even experimental, the interest is greatly increased. Our house was humble in its structure, built of wood on the most economical principles, and by no means of spacious dimensions. Pulpit and pews were all plain, and even plastering was for the present wanting, by reason of the cold weather. But it was an offering of love, if not the product of wealth, and as it could accommodate the people, we felt it our duty to occupy it without delay. - Not the Israelites in the palmy days of Solomon could have anticipated the dedication of their splendid temple with a livelier expectation or a deeper joy, than did my humble flock on the first Sabbath of March, 1829, when for the first time they were to assemble in their new place of worship.

If the material glory of the ancient temple had no place there, the brighter glory of the spiritual presence of Christ might be expected, for He has said: "This is my rest forever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision. I will satisfy her poor with bread." These heavenly promises were fulfilled.

The Rev. John Breckinridge, of Baltimore, was invited to preach the dedicatory sermon, which invitation he accepted, and took for his text 1 Peter 2: 9,—“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,” &c. The discourse, which occupied an hour and thirty minutes, was addressed to a crowded congregation, and was in the best style of that eminent divine and eloquent orator, who combined the energies of a brilliant intellect with the sensibilities of a most emotional nature, and the spiritualities of a great and loving heart. He died, alas! in the prime of life, and in the meridian of active usefulness for the Church of God on a wide and extended scale. But the sweet savor of his name still lingers in that church, and is as “ointment poured forth.”

The exercises of the day were salutary in a high degree, and none enjoyed them more than our departed friend Wilson, who constantly contemplated them not so much as an end, as the means of greater results in the conversion of sinners to God. In the evening, Rev. Walter Colton preached to a full house. On the following Sabbath, the communion of the Lord's Supper was for the first time administered in the new house, Rev. W. C. Walton, of Alexandria, preaching in the morning, and Rev. James Douglass in the evening of the previous day, and the latter also on Sabbath morning. Thirty-three persons united with the church on that day, five of whom were received by

letter, and thirteen were heads of families. Of those gathered in, a number had been Roman Catholics, now convinced of their error, and rejoicing in the peace of God, which passeth understanding.

Among the donors to the building of our church was President John Quincy Adams, who, when called on, said he never *subscribed* to benevolent objects, but would give twenty-five dollars, for which he promptly drew his check. This was no sudden impulse with him, but the habit of his life. How liberally he dealt with the Rev. Daniel Baker, the memoir of the life of that devoted preacher has testified to the world. At our interview he expressed his willingness, on our application, to order a detachment of the marine guard to attend at the jail, while we collected the prisoners to preach to them the Gospel.

From the elegant diary of a Christian friend, who took a deep interest in the work narrated in the preceding pages, I am permitted to make some extracts :—

“ At Mr. Preston’s, on Friday evening (Dec. 19), Miss T. manifested great sensibility to the word, and Miss — was so powerfully wrought upon during prayer, that she burst forth into a loud and doleful cry, followed by deep sobbing and broken words of anguish, mingled with cries for mercy. Mr. D. went and spoke to her for some time, after which we all prayed for her in succession. I afterwards learned that she went home with a fixed determination to seek Christ with all her soul, and not to lie down till she had found a resting-place for her soul. She accordingly remained in fervent, agonizing prayers and cries till past midnight, when the light of heaven broke in upon her misery, and her groans and tears were turned into thanksgiving and songs of praise. She called up her sister

to help her to praise and thank God for his great mercy, and early next morning she went to all her friends, rejoicing with them over the treasure she had found."

Of the events of a prayer-meeting at Elder Wilson's on the following Monday evening, this brother says:—

"We witnessed a scene that breathed of heaven. Miss — was in a state of mind which no language can fully describe. Never did I before witness the full effect of the passion of joy. She fell alternately on the necks of her companions, kissing them, and uttering such sounds of blissful contentment as were enough to dissolve the most stoical bosom. The two others were in a like state, though not quite so far raised above earth and earthly things. They were congratulating each other, and thanking us, till the overflowings of nature had in some degree found vent, and the loaded heart began to breathe more freely. But then the most solemn part of the scene presented itself. Three of the others still remained in anguish, now deepened by contrast. At their side the touch of Divine mercy had released their companions in misery, while they still remained in bondage to inexpressible distress and woe. We conversed long and earnestly with these, and then went to prayer. While we were praying, her sister (the happy one) hung around the neck of the distressed one, weeping, covering her with kisses, and begging her to surrender up her heart, and hold out no longer. It was an awful scene, such a scene as I never witnessed before, and could not have realized had I not been actually present. The seraphic joy of the one sister, and the deep, despairing anguish of the other; the tones of persuading, of pleading love and pity; the tears of joy and sorrow, of gratitude on the one side, and of deep despondence on the other; the heart-

etched sighs and groans, amidst smiles and gestures of thanksgiving,—all taken together, presented a scene of moral interest such as has rarely been surpassed. The march of time was unheeded and forgotten in a more absorbing interest. At length we separated with reluctance, some to sit up till the day dawned, giving praise and thanks to God, others in earnest and sorrowful supplication, myself to broken slumbers, often interrupted by the images which still glowed before the eye of the mind, and which no sleep could blot out."

That happy sister is happier now, for she has long since exchanged the cares of earth for the repose of heaven. Even the transporting joys of conversion have acquired a sweeter relish amid those scenes of celestial beauty and immortal blessedness, that now surround her emancipated spirit in the world of unclouded light and undying love. To such glory as this is prayer dedicated. For such felicity as this does the anxious, tender-hearted, weeping Christian plead with sinners. For so grand and noble a consummation is the ministry of reconciliation instituted of God, while in his name that ministry utters its hallowed, affectionate, awful warnings to sinners to flee from the wrath to come! I am sure those scenes can never fade from my memory, and if they melt away, it is only in a brighter vision of those heavenly glories which they typify. There faith finds its everlasting Rock. Hope there casts its anchor. There Love mounts in a flame of glory, and burns with inextinguishable brightness on the high altar of Heaven!

"Monday evening. Concert of prayer at Mr. Wilson's. After prayer went to Mr. G.'s, where the good Lord once more gave us a good and happy season. Fifteen persons

were on their knees, some of them much exercised, especially Miss E., who appears in great agony of soul, weeping, mourning, and praying incessantly, and with great earnestness. We all prayed for them, and then conversed. The Spirit of the great God was there in his power, moving on the face of many souls. We prayed again, Mr. D., then Mr. Wilson, and then myself. While these words were uttered: 'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink,' one of the convicted souls bounded from the place where she had been humbling her soul with tears and supplications before God, and with a countenance radiant with hope and joy, broke forth into thanksgivings and praises. We joined with her in humble acknowledgments for the Divine grace, and continued to labor with increased earnestness, and before we retired from this often-favored spot, had the comfort to witness the happy release of Miss E., whose soul was as much overwhelmed with gratitude and surprise as it had before been by extreme grief. She continued to pour forth in feeble tones her thanks, mingled with confessions and the most earnest and tender supplications for her friends."

She was a Sunday-school teacher, and had now realized the blessedness of the truths she had been teaching others. What multitudes have been converted in the same circumstances! What an innumerable company will bless that institution in heaven forever!

On a Tuesday evening meeting at Mr. Wilson's, whose domestic hearth, like his closet, was consecrated to prayer, a number of lads were assembled, awakening in us a lively interest. We conversed with them in this, the early morning of their life, for they were very young buds of immor-

tality. Might not the dew of heaven descend upon them? Might not one of them at least be chosen, like the stripling David, to lead the hosts of the Lord? So it proved. One of those youths is now, in the maturity of manhood, preaching the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. If some of the changes of life are sad, others are very beautiful; none more so than that in which the electric, sparkling, impetuous, impenitent boy is transformed into a serious, believing, praying, devoted man, perhaps eloquent preacher. Such transformations cause old age to look upon the cradle with profoundest interest, for "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." I have seen a generation come and go, and if God permits me still to live, it is, I trust, to show to the coming generation the glory he has gained from the last.

Mr. Wilson, a friend, and myself spent an hour in prayer for those dear youth, towards whom his heart yearned with godly tenderness, and the Lord was graciously pleased to answer our prayers. When, indeed, in that memorable period in the spiritual history of Washington, was not prayer answered? Even before they called, God heard those who truly prayed. The past year has but reiterated those scenes on a large scale, on a scale of grandeur which could only have been set forth by such a spectacle as we have seen—the consolidated columns of the sacramental host going up under one standard to take possession of the heights of Zion.

During another prayer-meeting at Mr. Wilson's, while he was wrestling with God, Mrs. O., the wife of a Roman Catholic, and herself one, burst the bonds of sin, rather with a calm and holy determination, than with a rush of joy or a shock of wonder. Mr. P., a leading man among us, was there, and much interested. An Englishman by

birth, he was generous by nature, and more so in practice, putting a strong and steady shoulder to our uphill burdens, and always ready to help according to his ability, which is all the Master requires. Who would not pray for such a man? Little was he aware of the extent and tenderness of the interest felt for his conversion. When God's people see a man industriously working on the scaffolding of the temple, they long to draw him into the inner sanctuary, and feast him on the heavenly manna there. So was Mr. P. drawn. The love of God melted him; he, too, joined the joyful band. He is now no more with us; but he is more than that,—a ripened saint in heaven. "I love," said he, years after, when I had risen from prayer in his sick-room, "I love to hear the sound of your voice once more. It is so natural. It takes me back to the days"—here he was choked with emotion. I knew *what days* he meant,—the day of his espousals to Christ. Not long did he survive. And a truer heart never beat—was never stilled by the hand of death. His memory is among the fragrant treasures bequeathed by the beloved dead, a legacy of inestimable value.

Again at Mr. Wilson's we found, amid the solemnities of an impressive meeting, a distressed soul, Miss T——n, whose sobs and stifled cries evidenced the struggle going on within. Many others were anxious; all were serious. Miss T. obtained deliverance without exuberant joy. Mr. ——, a Catholic, was ready to testify that he renounced that belief for Christ. A sick woman and her sister, of the same persuasion, became anxious for salvation.

CHAPTER VII.

THE night of the 17th of January, 1829, was distinguished for one of those giant snow storms which frequently prevailed at that period, and which of late years have been renewed in all their majesty and terrific beauty. The morning of the 18th, which was the Sabbath, opened upon the city in a "state of siege," by reason of the driving elements the previous night, which indeed continued the war into the day. Every window was decorated with fairy frostwork; the wind howled along Pennsylvania Avenue, and searched every street; the snow flew in horizontal lines, and drifted in the most grotesque masses; the cold was intense; no moving thing, no living being was seen in the streets until the hour of worship, and then but few waded to church. One woman near seventy was there; and after sermon the remainder of the day was spent in prayer till the service at night. Four hours were thus delightfully spent, and the spirit tired not. "A happier day," said one who was present, "I have seldom enjoyed." One person, long harassed with sin, and groaning under the burden of its guilt, found peace with God, and relief from the Comforter.

At the Monday night meeting, an orphan girl, living in Mr. Wilson's family, was on her knees in deep distress, and remained so to the end of the meeting, and indeed after the people retired. Pardoning mercy came to her relief, and thus another gem of beauty was set in the diadem of the Saviour through the instrumentality of our friend. Truly could he say: "For that child I prayed." Seldom did

any make his house their home, who did not find it the gate of heaven to their souls. He lived long enough to see all his children embrace the Saviour, and take their stations in the Church of God; and surely that was to live for a great purpose, and for a glorious end. Of his two sons, one is a preacher of the Gospel, the other holds the office of Deacon in the church his father founded, nursed, prayed for, and in whose service he died. A Christian friend, who once visited his family, was charmed with his spirituality of mind, and heard from his own lips the narrative of his conversion. These were the words of my friend: "From a state of open and daring wickedness, an open blasphemer, drunkard, and profane ridiculer and persecutor of God's people, he has been changed into one of the most loving and tender of Christians, a friend of man, a holy and devoted servant of God." Truly, "old things passed away, all things became new," and the latter were in every respect the marked and decided opposite of the former. Ever thereafter he cultivated everything that was "pure, lovely, and of good report." Grace did not, indeed, confer on him intellectual powers, imparted not the education neglected in early life, but it did marvellously supply many deficiencies, and made him a man of power among men in such way as to bring the greatest glory to God. It is the province of genius to create, to combine, to construct, to overcome difficulties, to accomplish great ends, and in all to reflect glory on its Creator, Inspirer, Upholder. Such was the genius of Wilson. Its energies were not frittered away on a thousand trivial objects, but uniformly and indefatigably directed to the elevation of the moral nature of man.

In contemplating his career, I have often called to mind

the striking delineation of Howard by Foster : " The energy of his determination was so great, that if, instead of being habitual, it had been shown only for a short time on particular occasions, it would have appeared a vehement impetuosity ; but by being unintermitted it had an equality of manner, which scarcely appeared to exceed the tone of a calm constancy, it was so really the reverse of anything like turbulence or agitation. It was the calmness of an intensity, kept uniform by the nature of the human mind forbidding it to be more, and by the character of the individual forbidding it to be less. The habitual passion of his mind was a measure of feeling almost equal to the temporary extremes and paroxysms of common minds ; as a great river in its customary state is equal to a small or moderate one when swollen to a torrent." Emphatically, was it his meat and drink to do the will of God. Whether as an Elder, as a laborer in the Tract cause, or as the messenger of the charities of the benevolent, he kept constantly at his work. It was in the service of the " Union Benevolent Association" for the relief of the poor, that he contracted the immediate disease which terminated in his death.

He found a soul in ruins. He never left it till he beheld it restored to the dignity of a new creation in Christ Jesus. This was the aim and the toil of his life, and we may add, its triumph.

See what an elder can do, and let the rising eldership of the Church take courage to accomplish that to which a " consecrated cobbler" (as the world jeeringly called the humble, but mighty Carey) called his brethren, when he exclaimed : " Expect great things : attempt great things."

I well remember the case of a married lady, the mother

of a large family, on whose conversion the heart of our friend was set, with whom he conversed long and ardently, as he was wont, and for whom he prayed, like one who had "power with God," until he saw her begging for mercy, as one under sentence of death and led out to execution might be supposed to do. It was while fervent prayer was in process of being offered to God, that her soul found peace in believing. How did the blessing descend to the children! One of them is now an elder in the Church.

Another woman of the Roman Catholic profession attracted our attention. She heard a sermon on the character and doom of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numb. 16); a fearful subject. She listened earnestly, but denied there was such a passage of history in the Bible. But, going home, she searched the Scriptures, and found it even so. Those "censers" of the rebels troubled her much. She had seen the incense in the hands of the priests! She was deeply affected, and the anguish of her mind robbed her of peace and health itself. She fell sick, and I visited her. She declared she had never heard the Gospel preached before. Presently she indulged a trembling hope, united with the Church, and lived like a Christian. Susannah B. (that was her name) afterwards died in peace and triumph, blessing the day she had "heard the Gospel."

Dr. John Breckinridge delivered, on a Sabbath evening, a striking exposition of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, having preached in the morning at Dr. Post's on the warning: "Prepare to meet thy God." In a social circle, the subject of the religious tendencies of some of our statesmen was broached in conversation. They had been made the subject of private prayer. It was stated on good authority, that on a recent Sabbath morning two of the

heads of departments met in their carriages and hailed each other. Mr. Clay inquired of his colleague whither he was riding? He replied he was taking a ride of relaxation, being jaded out by the drudgery of a very busy week. Mr. Clay replied: "Turn about, sir; you are driving the wrong way." "Why so?" his friend asked. "You are not going to church. Turn about, and go to church," replied the Secretary of State. "To church. Why? I want relaxation, and nobody will notice it," rejoined his friend. "Don't believe any such thing," responded Mr. Clay; "everybody notices what you do. And let me tell you, no man can sustain himself here who does not go to church. Public opinion will condemn him." A friend of mine related a conversation with Mr. Clay, in which he expressed an entire conviction of the truth and power of the revivals in Kentucky, having been himself present at one of their meetings, where penitents were invited up to be prayed for. He said that he had known some very profligate men to be suddenly converted in those meetings, who had ever since evinced a decidedly Christian character, and concluded the interview with expressing a hope and desire that he should himself one day become a Christian. So spake the eloquent orator of America, whose great intellect had such a large share in shaping the destinies of his country; and yet the flippant infidels of these modern days affect to deny the claims of Divine revelation on the soul of man.

To return to our humble labors. My friend, heretofore alluded to, writes in his journal: "Met Mr. D. and Mr. Wilson. We held a little council of war against Satan's empire, and after praying together resolved to go forth in the Lord's service; Mr. D. to visit communicants, and Mr.

W. and I to hunt up poor sinners. We accordingly first called at the house of Miss D. She had been at our anxious meeting, and therefore the subject of religion came in naturally. We both talked with her a long while, urging the necessity of immediate repentance and faith in Jesus. Mr. W. related a very solemn and affecting case of a young lady on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, whom he had often warned, but who slighted, and almost ridiculed his earnestness on her behalf. In a few months she was taken sick, slightly, as she supposed; but in a short time her physician told her he could do no more for her, and it would be her wisdom to turn her thoughts towards preparing for death. Suddenly and dreadfully alarmed, she sent for Mr. Wilson, told him that not a word he had said to her was then out of her remembrance, but mourned and bewailed her own rejection of his good advice; expressed the fullest conviction, but deepest despair, and continued to use the most awful and thrilling language throughout the residue of her sickness, and finally sank into death without the faintest ray of hope to break on the thick and murky horror of her mind. We then kneeled down and prayed, commending the souls of all present to God." These individuals were afterwards converted to God.

Mr. Wilson was incessant in the prosecution of such visits, even in places where all he met was repulsive. He found a family poor and dirty, but forgot all in the earnestness of his expostulations with them to be reconciled to God.

With Mr. Wilson, two other friends, and two converted Roman Catholics, I had a conference. We conversed about the best method of reaching the souls of the Catholics. These converts said that when they told one of their Catho-

lic friends, "You must be converted," he looked amazed, and asked, "What do you mean? Converted? How can it be necessary for me to be converted, who am a Catholic already, was born in the Catholic Church, and never went to any other in my life?" If he continued to insist that the Bible says he must be born again, or he cannot see the kingdom of heaven, his friend laughed him in the face and said: "Why, you talk just like a Methodist." When the priest heard they had attended another church, he told them: "Don't come to confession any more. If you go anywhere else, you must not come near me." Thus they are strangled in the first moments of conviction, and the faintest ray of light is sought to be intercepted on its way to their darkened souls. Several of those people came to our meetings, and left them weeping; but no sooner was the fact known, than their relatives and friends gathered round them, and by ridicule, threats, entreaties, and every possible means, sought to prevent them from entering our doors again. But all in vain. No less than eight individuals, subdued by the grace of God, melted to tears by the love of Jesus, renounced their errors, confessed their sins before God and man, and united with the praying people of God.

The Sabbath-school, which always engaged the diligent care of Elder Wilson, had now fifty-three teachers, and three hundred and sixty scholars. On a wintry day in March, though the roads were blocked up with snow, there was a goodly attendance, there being sixteen teachers present, and between thirty and forty children. How he watched for them, addressed them, prayed for them, hoped unto the end, and witnessed the transplantation of many of these flowers of immortality from this nursery into the gar-

den of God, the Church on earth, and many, too, thence into the Church above, the paradise of God! How many has he met there now, who are helping him to praise God and the Lamb, who go with him to the fountain of living waters, who walk with him in the light of God's countenance, amid the beatitudes of heaven! Earnestness was the salient quality he exhibited in all his Sabbath-school efforts. This noble system, which touches so many relations, which involves a quadruple blessing—a blessing upon the parent, the teacher, the pupil, and the Church, and through all these upon the vast interests of society itself—was the charm of his heart, the delight of his life. All his own children were nurtured in the Sabbath-school. Happy was the hour when any of them came to be teachers. He loved to gather scholars; he expected their conversion. He delighted to select a barren spot, overgrown with the thorns and briars of human depravity, to "make a clearing," put in the Gospel plough, summon laborers to his aid, and in the sweat of his brow effect a thorough moral renovation. The incitements were present and remote. Immediate instruction, immediate conversion, as well as remoter blessings, engaged his anxieties. In the vista that opened before him might be seen, among many pleasing objects, the church edifice rising in simple beauty to bless posterity. Such visions became realities. The "Glass-house" school ripened into a congregation. The English Hill school saw a church planted on its borders. The colored school in the West End grew into a flourishing church, whose pastor, John F. Cook, was an esteemed member of the District Presbytery, whose people are among the decorous and orderly dwellers in that part of the city, and in other parts of it. The temple of worship

for the colored Presbyterians rears its fair proportions in Fifteenth Street, a monument of Christian benevolence, which Wilson helped so much to warm and invigorate. For all these interests he prayed fervently to the end of his toilsome life.

At an evening prayer-meeting at Mr. Wilson's, Mr. W., a stout man, trembled like a leaf, and bowed his soul to God. Three others, for whom the Elder had labored and agonized, expressed their hearty joy in the Lord. Said one of them: "Oh, I have found him! I have found him! He is my king and my God!"

A difficulty arose about some of the internal arrangements of the congregation, Mr. Wilson's plan of action being opposed by some, who thought differently from himself. Evil consequences were threatened, but prayer was earnestly made that all difficulties might be obviated, and the Lord heard and answered. Mr. W. gave way, surrendered his own favorite plan, and let the wishes of others prevail, it not being a matter of conscience, but of expediency. An essentiality he would not resign. But for the honor of Christ and the peace of the church, he would concede his opinions, his comforts, his fond expectations—everything but conscience. *That* he aimed to preserve void of offence towards God and towards man. Reverses in business befell him. The tongue of calumny assailed him, as it often does the Christian professor who has become embarrassed in his pecuniary affairs; but, after a thorough official investigation of the matter, his character came out purged of all moral obliquity. With some a blunder is worse than a crime, if it can be made to tell against the character of a good man. We were greatly depressed by the untoward event, but threw ourselves on the providence

and grace of God, who brought us out into a large place. The Christian character, the good moral influence we could earn, were our chief reliance, next to faith in God, for progress and success in the community. Hence our solicitude. But God vindicated his servant and his cause, and to the end of life he enjoyed in an eminent degree the confidence of the community of Washington. How could it be otherwise, when men looked on such transparent sincerity, such disinterested devotion, such willing poverty in worldly circumstances, if he might be rich towards God; if he might bring the wealth of immortal treasures to the impoverished soul of the sinner. Silver and gold were of no account with him, except as they were subordinated to the upbuilding of the temple of the Lord. How finely was that beautiful thought of the Apostle exemplified: "As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

He frankly opened the state of his affairs to two or three friends. He stated how advantageous an offer he had received, if a certain sum could be raised, and that would require a good indorser. He would pledge all his stock in trade to secure such an indorser. A kind friend, himself dependent on his daily intellectual and manual labor for the support of himself and family, stepped forward and became responsible for the necessary amount. The Lord sent back the whole of that amount from an unexpected source to repay the offering of his servant. His motive for doing this act may be read in the following extract from his private diary, which I venture to copy without his consent: "While I do an essential service to a dear brother, and one of my Lord's most true, tried, and devoted servants, Lord, accept graciously this act, performed as in part ful-

filled to thee. Let me not suffer by this transaction; but if I do suffer, I am content to endure whatever thou shalt bring upon me on these principles. Thou hast wonderfully helped me, heaped up my lot with blessings, and made my cup to run over. Take, then, a little, a very little of the overflow, and use it for them that thou dost best love. I love Thee, and for thy sake love them; and while I can help them, am most ready to do so."

This same brother was deeply interested in our success. Watching, like Wilson, for the young, he sought to bring them to Christ. In his journal, he speaks of having "met little T. H., read and conversed earnestly with him, and concluded by prayer. I feel much affection for this boy: the child of a widow, and one of my Sabbath scholars. I have a vague impression that the Lord designs him for the ministry." And so it proved. He is a useful pastor in the Presbyterian Church. How many such have come forth from the Sabbath-schools of our land! Blessed be God for the reviving influence that has lately come over this cause! Affliction has its use for societies, communities, and nations, as well as individuals.

Although for some time after this the general influences of the Spirit in his reviving and converting power appeared to be withdrawn, I never knew a time when in the breast of our friend the holy fire did not seem to be burning, for it was fed at the fountain of love. He looked not to special scenes of interest to animate and invigorate him, but sought ever to have "the well of water within him, springing up into everlasting life." So he prayed, and continued to labor with individuals in the Sabbath-schools, in the highways and hedges, and wherever Divine truth and Christian affection might be brought to bear on a human

soul. He ever looked forward to greater and greater displays of the sovereign grace of God, and was ready to cooperate in all lawful and Scriptural measures to rouse a sleeping community to a sense of the realities of eternity.

CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY in April, 1831, it was concluded to hold what was then called a "four days' meeting," in the First Presbyterian Church of Washington (Rev. R. Post's), that help might be sought from God, and that Christians might "strengthen those things which remained, that were ready to die." That servant of the Lord was ever ready for special efforts for the salvation of sinners, as he was steady in his spiritual and pastoral work from day to day, and from year to year. His history is interwoven with that of the city of Washington in its infancy. He took a new and important location in the metropolis, and there toiled for the good of souls until called to Charleston, where he lived and died in the service of his Master. He dealt in plain and pungent truth, rejecting the flowers of the imagination, and was ever anxious for a lively state of feeling in his congregation. He was for many years Chaplain to Congress, and with his Congressional auditors he dealt as plainly as with the humblest of his ordinary hearers. He spared them not in his denunciations of sin, and showed them their tremendous responsibilities to the great Judge of quick and dead. A classmate of the celebrated LARNED, of New Orleans, at college, they both died of the same dis-

ease—yellow fever—but at what different ages! Larned at the age of twenty-four, Post at the age of sixty-seven. Doubtless they have met in heaven, to recount the mercies of God to their souls, and compare the results of their services.

Another friend of theirs, Rev. WILLIAM NEVINS, of Baltimore, whose graces shone out so brightly in the latter years of his life, appeared among us, and took part in the sacred services of those days. His heart was then mellowed by affliction. His health was not robust. He was looking steadily into eternity. He preached Christ as I had never heard him before. He had renounced those beautiful decorations with which he had formerly accompanied the body of his discourse, and delivered strong and naked truth in the most demonstrative manner. He sought, he strove to win not admiration, but the soul itself. There was a crystal clearness in his discourse, in which the truth, without refraction or distortion, was visible to the naked eye. In it, as in a mirror, the love of God, and the desperate depravity of the sinner's heart, were reflected with impressive effect upon the conscience. With such preaching, to which were added the calm and pungent reasonings of Rev. William C. Walton, of Alexandria, and the fervent prayers of a few engaged Christians, it was no wonder that sinners began to inquire what they must do to be saved.

The attendance on these meetings was excellent. Some minds began to be impressed. There was a fashionable young lady, whose beauty, accomplishments, and position secured for her a dangerous admiration among the gay and thoughtless lovers of pleasure. She was, indeed, one of two beautiful sisters, who moved in the high circles of Washington. A Christian friend, more courageous than

many, invited her to the house of God on one of these occasions. As a matter of novelty, or for the amusement of the thing, she accepted the invitation. It led to the acceptance of a higher invitation. Her attention was arrested by the solemnity of the place. God was there! Conviction, new and unwonted, sprang up in her heart. A tear of repentance trembled in her eye. Sighs of sorrow were heaved from the depths of her aching bosom. She gave her heart to God. She was in a new world. The change was as wondrous and as glorious as from a world of darkness to the light of heaven itself. To add to the interest of the event, her sister also found peace with God, and then their father, and all united with the Church of Christ. Who can describe the eternal results of "one honest effort" among Christians to save a soul from hell? These devotees of pleasure might have gone on in their gay and guilty career, until they had made shipwreck of all their hopes for eternity, had not a kindly warning voice been uttered in their ear; had not a friend, in the sweet spirit of Christian affection, whispered to them, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good;" and then the Divine Spirit, approving that fidelity, bid them to the heavenly feast: "This is the way, walk ye in it."

These conversions excited much remark in the fashionable saloons of the city, and the gay world seemed for a time to pause, but only to wonder, and forget, and despise the mercy of God. But we must not think it impossible with God, in this time of his power, to leaven the mass of gaiety and of greatness in Washington with the leaven of divine truth. Let but the Christian heart repose on the attributes of God with an unfaltering faith, and wait prayerfully for the manifestation of his glory. He can make

pleasure-loving sinners tremble amid their feasts, as they behold the handwriting on the wall: "Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting."

In view of the wide field opening before us, we resolved to invite that man of God, Rev. James Patterson, of Philadelphia, to assist in continuing the meetings at our church. In the face of many difficulties that bound him to his own people, he succeeded in securing time to come to our aid. Worn with fatigue, faint, yet pursuing, he threw himself into the work when mind and body needed repose, and wrought with an energy that almost defied exhaustion. Nor did he ever labor on this field without success. Wilson's spirit was congenial with his own. Hence the ease with which they labored together. They indeed resembled each other in the holy pertinacity, the indomitable hope with which they clung to a soul, on whose conversion they were bent. At my own table, has that devoted minister sat for an hour with his coffee untasted before him, while he was pleading with a soul to be reconciled to God. Men of faith only do this. Their meat and drink is to do the will of God. At one of our services he preached that mighty sermon from the text: "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth children." In this he set forth in burning characters the doctrine of the indissoluble connection between the spirit of prayer in the Church, and the conversion of sinners. On this he always insisted, and God blessed the doctrine. His great success proved its importance. Here was his strength. The vigor and originality of his mind were indeed great; his illustrations were vivid and impressive; his arguments strong; his eloquence melting, for he wept, and others wept with him: but the deepest secret, after all, was in the uncommon strength of his faith.

This was the passport to the court of Heaven and vestibule of glory. This was the key that unlocked the treasures of mercy, the hand that drew hope and power from the throne of God, and drove despair from the bosom of the sinner. "By his strength he had POWER WITH GOD; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him; he *found* him in Bethel." Often did he find him there, fulfilling the sacred promise: "*Then shall ye find me, when ye shall seek and search for me with all your heart.*" He prayed as we may suppose the prophet Elijah prayed upon the mount, when he bid Heaven's blessings descend upon the earth; and he preached as Elijah seems to have preached, when face to face with the enemies of God; when the battle-array was set between the Prince of light, and the principalities and powers of darkness, and the question was to be decided, Who is God? and who is on the Lord's side? "You tremble, smile, and weep alternately," said an intelligent hearer, "while he pours out the glowing thoughts that burn within him."

During this period of earnest spiritual labor, much prayer was offered to God, and many answers to prayer were received. The Elder never wearied, never doubted, never ceased pleading with God for sinners, and with sinners to be reconciled to God. He watched, he walked, he worked; he wept under the burden that was laid upon him, and sometimes seemed to forget the joy that bursts forth in the presence of the angels of God over the saved, in the intense and unintermitting search for those that were still lost. He was insatiate for souls. No effort was too exhausting, no sacrifice too costly to compass this end. Nor was it for a denomination, but for Christ. Some thought him too

liberal for his denomination's sake, but he was so for Christ's sake, that if "by any means he might save some."

Mr. Patterson preached twice, and even thrice a day, besides visiting numerous families, endeavoring to satisfy the thirst for knowledge of the way of salvation which prevailed around him, until he became too weak to stand in the pulpit; but having been accommodated with a high chair, he preached in a sitting posture. His nervous system was affected not only by his great labors, but by that want of sleep superinduced by the anxiety of his mind for the success of those labors. Are conversions the laurels of the faithful preacher? Then will his brows be thickly decorated with those brilliant honors, and all to the glory of Christ. His views of prayer were so broad, luminous, and rich in thought, that they poured a flood of light on many an unbelieving mind, and greatly quickened the people of God to the more faithful discharge of a long-neglected duty. He treated prayer as a doctrine, as well as a duty and feeling, and his reasonings overthrew the errors of a very intellectual gentleman, who deceived himself with the idea that he had the truth with him. "Heartily embracing the doctrine of decrees," said this gentleman, "I was settled in the faith that God, having laid a perfect plan for the government of his world, will steadily pursue it, and that none can turn him. Prayer I considered as a duty and a privilege, being a means of holding sanctifying intercourse with God, the fountain of life, but I never practically felt it to be a *means* of obtaining what God had promised. I had been taught to abhor the notion of *conditions*, in matters of religion, as being inconsistent with the idea of free grace, and I did, I find, practically believe that God would, for his own sake, give his people all needed good, whether they

prayed for it or not. I now perceive my error. Prayer has been made a condition by God's own appointment. After detailing his purposes of good, he adds: 'Nevertheless, for all these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them;' and through all the New Testament we find the Apostles using the phrase '*through your prayers*;' a word which teaches the same truth. Prayer is the medium, and blessings come *through* it. The prayer must go before the blessing. 'Seek, and ye shall find.' The evident and the instant answers to prayer confirm this; and sure I am, that had I acted years ago on this practical principle, the dark clouds that have obscured my religious day would have been driven far away."

The interest of our meetings so much increased, that they were prolonged far beyond the limit originally intended. For weeks a cloud of incense rose to God in the sanctuary. The Lord was in his holy temple. Sinners were pressing in at the gates of Zion. The work extended to other congregations, and there were some striking instances of omnipotent grace, victorious over rampant sin, that arrested universal attention. Confessions of the openly profligate and profane glorified God, and awakened wonder at the displays of his matchless love.

At the approaching communion of the Lord's Supper, May 8th, 1831, much interest was felt by the friends of Zion, that the fruits of recent prayers and labors might appear to the honor of God. Many came forward to be examined for admission into the Church; thirty-nine of whom united for the first time on the following Sabbath: a day of power and of prayer. In the afternoon, the communion was celebrated at Mr. Post's church, by the four Presbyterian churches united. Sitting side by side, they together celebrated the dying love of the Redeemer, heart

blending with heart, and by their mutual faith strengthening each other, while all acknowledged a common Lord. The scene was sublime, partaking more of heaven than of earth, raising the soul to God, and giving it a disrelish for the cares and employments of the world. Upwards of one hundred were received into the various communions that day, and there was scarcely room in the church for the crowd of communicants that assembled. A father, speaking of the occasion, said: "It was a sweet sight to me, to behold my eldest son, my hope, and so long the object of my anxieties and fears, coming forward before all men, to avouch God for his choice and portion." Mr. Patterson left on Tuesday, not to rest and recruit his wasted energies, but to extend his visit to Alexandria, and labor in that field for the salvation of souls. Meantime, the brethren at home were not idle. Such a scene as was witnessed on the preceding Sabbath, was fitted to keep alive the flame of zeal and devotion. The brethren had a meeting, distributed themselves into pairs, and commenced visiting the surrounding population. Elder Wilson, with a brother, entered into the work with all his heart. They moved upon "English Hill," to rouse its slumbers. A degraded population then inhabited that northeastern quarter of the city, but that was an attraction for Wilson's benevolence. Romanists abounded, and the visitors were indifferently welcome. One man bluntly said to them, "If I were to tell you what I think of you, you would not like it much." But they persevered, praying and exhorting wherever the door opened. At length they found a woman who was willing to open her house for a prayer-meeting. The Lord opened the heart of this woman, as he did that of Lydia, though her husband resented the intrusion of "the saints"

into his humble domicil. Wilson's companion had been desponding, but in the progress of this effort all his gloom was dissipated.

About this time we received a visit from Dr. Beman, of Troy, and from Dr. Ross, of Tennessee, who still live for the Church of Christ, north and south. They entered heartily into the work, and their labors were blessed. Dr. Beman preached a searching sermon from "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, *but*"—the sharp points of the sermon radiating from that last word, with which he swept away the excuses of sinners, even all their refuges of lies.

The truth was severe, the manner courteous, and fitted rather to make the hearer ashamed of his excuses and unreasonable objections, than to irritate him against his reprover. After the discourse, a number of persons asked the prayers of Christians for their souls. An attentive observer remarked, "Patterson is good to break up the tough sward; Beman to follow and plough the soil. Neither of them spares the weeds." At this time also, we visited Georgetown, the venerable Dr. Balch opening his church for a series of meetings. Messrs. Laurie, Walton, Post, Harrison, Hargrave, and young Mr. Nourse attended, and assisted the veteran, then on the verge of eighty years. With a single exception, they have all gone to join the spirits of the just made perfect. The effort was successful. There was good attendance; unity of feeling; plain preaching; solemn appeals; earnest prayers, and signal success. At the first invitation, some twenty individuals came forward for prayers, afterwards fifty, and finally one hundred. Dr. Post shone conspicuously in the work, being earnestly engaged in endeavoring to bring sinners to God, all his

powers and solitudes seeming to be tasked to the utmost. May he find his reward among the redeemed! How did Wilson, too, throw himself into this work in the church which he first joined!

In Washington, a sudden and affecting death took place; that of a man, who had frequently attended our meetings, and asked for prayers. In the midst of his anxieties, he was laid low, and had scarcely time to unveil the secrets of his heart to the minister, before death sealed his lips in perpetual silence. In the Sabbath-school, ever the cherished object of the Elder's attachment, there were cheering indications of the presence of the Spirit; a number of the scholars were asking the way to heaven, and all the teachers were greatly encouraged. Two teachers went out into the highways and hedges, and held meetings, praying, exhorting, and distributing tracts. Every such effort seemed to be blessed. As the old mothers in Israel used to say, "The Lord was on the giving hand," and those gifts were the "precious things of heaven." Many a soul will rise up in the great day, and bless the humble, benevolent Christians, who labored for their salvation. One of the brethren, now deceased, from whom until his conversion little was ever expected, in the way of adding to the happiness, or subtracting from the misery of the human race, after his spiritual baptism, disclosed a peculiar genius for tract distribution, so that he became known by the *sobriquet* of *Tract-Master-General*, a title which some of the modern superintendents and colporteurs have justly earned by their foresight, skill, and labor. He designated for himself seventy-five families, lent twenty tracts to each family, and thus secured fifteen hundred readings, and probably many more.

If each communicant were thus zealous and aggressive, what an immense amount of good would be accomplished! A friend observed, "At the Sabbath-school meeting, between forty and fifty scholars came forward to solicit prayers for their conversion. Wilson is much encouraged." Whatever the aspect of affairs, he always encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord his God; and when brilliant results greeted him, joy welled up in his heart indeed, but he never relaxed his strong intention, nor his indefatigable exertions to annex new trophies to the triumphs of Immanuel.

CHAPTER IX.

ON the 14th of April, 1832, Rev. MASON NOBLE, of Williamstown, Massachusetts, at my request visited Washington, and was invited by the Session to preach to the congregation. He came with reluctance and diffidence, especially in consideration of his extreme youth, but having informed him, as I had the people, of my intention to resign the spiritual charge of the congregation, for the purpose of entering the service of the American Colonization Society for the New England States, and having expressed my belief that his genius and attainments were suited to this position, he consented to visit the city, and preach in the pulpit about to be vacated. With remarkable unanimity, he was invited to become their pastor, and none received him with a deeper cordiality than Elder Wilson. We had strengthened our eldership by the election of Peter W. Gallaudet, Esq. (the father of Rev. Thomas H. Gallaudet,

the founder of the Deaf and Dumb Charity in this country), and of William Anderson, Esq., attached to the Treasury Department. Mr. Gallaudet was venerable in age, a wise counsellor, an exemplary Christian, respected in society, and was in various ways an acquisition to our feeble band, for we might still be considered in our infancy. But it was a day of thanksgiving with me, when I could count an ecclesiastical TRIUMVIRATE; when I could say I had three good elders of the people's choice. True; Wilson was a "host in himself," doing the work of half a dozen men; but then, two are better than one, and three sometimes improve even that. Here were blended three first class qualifications in the three men: profound wisdom, indomitable zeal, and extensive knowledge. So, when God in his infinite benevolence has determined to set up a Church for his glory, however poor and despised its beginnings, He will keep it, as the Watchman of Israel, and send it seasonable supplies when most needed. This has been the experience of the Fourth Church. Through all its struggles, and sometimes they were so severe that we could only sit down and weep, it was never forsaken by our Lord, in whom we trusted. Its history is, indeed, a volume of sacred providences, not written in tables of stone, but on the hearts of those who prayed her into existence, rocked her cradle, watched over her childhood, and attended her up to her adult and prosperous years.

Soon after the Rev. Mr. Noble commenced his labors, the cholera of 1832 broke out, and did a devastating work in the city. He was absent at the time in New England, and would have returned to attend the sick and dying, but his friends absolutely forbade it, declaring that to enter Washington then, would be to enter his tomb. There were,

I think, few cases connected with the congregation. Whithersoever duty called, Elder Wilson was ready to go; not shunning any danger, when duty pointed it out. And here I cannot better subserve the purpose of this biography, than to introduce the following communication, in answer to a request of mine, to furnish me with materials for as complete a portrait of our departed friend as we could execute.

CITY OF WASHINGTON, December 10, 1858.

MY DEAR BROTHER :—

You ask me to give you my views of the character of the late David M. Wilson, Ruling Elder in the Fourth Presbyterian Church of this city. I am sorry that my engagements are so numerous and all-absorbing, as to prevent me from sending you that minute and extended description which would do full justice to our brother as a man and a Christian. But I will say a few things, which may perhaps aid you in presenting his true portrait to the Christian community for whose benefit you are preparing his memoir.

My acquaintance with Mr. Wilson commenced in the spring of 1832. I had at that time just begun my labors as a preacher of the Gospel, and with six sermons fully written out, and a few "briefs," had consented to take upon me the duties of Pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Washington.

Fresh from my preparatory studies in theology, just passed my majority, and without experience, I found myself surrounded by an enterprising band of Christians, who took me immediately into their hearts, and gave me their warmest sympathies and earnest co-operation in every good work.

The eldership of the church consisted of the aged and

venerable P. W. Gallaudet, Esq., father of the late Rev. Thomas H. Gallaudet, of Hartford, Conn.; William Anderson, Esq., of the Treasury Department; and David M. Wilson, Esq. The two former were excellent in counsel, kindly affectioned towards their brethren, and ready to follow the lead of the more enterprising. But I soon found that Brother Wilson was a "prince among his peers," and more entirely consecrated to the great work for which the church had been organized three years previous. In a very short time he won my unhesitating confidence, and till my ministry closed among them—a period of more than seven years—there was a strong mutual affection between us that knew no abatement. He was, indeed, "my right hand man" always; and in a somewhat extended acquaintance with Ruling Elders, I have found no one equal to him in many of those qualities which render a Ruling Elder a true and efficient helper in the work of a Pastor.

I will mention some of his characteristics.

1. *He was a man of prayer.*

Every Christian is, of course, a man of prayer. But he was pre-eminently so. He not only retired frequently to his closet, and gathered his family regularly around the domestic altar, and mingled with his brethren in their social gatherings for united supplication, but he so arranged his business that he might be often alone with God for this purpose. He was Captain of the Police that guarded the United States Capitol, and his presence was necessary there at stated periods both by day and by night. Never was there a more faithful and efficient officer. But his multiplied and laborious duties made him feel only more deeply his need of Divine assistance, and prize more highly the privilege of prayer. To accomplish his purpose

in reference to secret prayer, he obtained the use of a room in a retired and quiet part of the Capitol. There he would go when other duties did not prevent, and plead with the Angel of the Covenant for the souls of men.

This room was one story higher than the Senate chamber; and in those memorable days of political strife, when Webster and Hayne were clashing their swords in the sight of the nation, and winning immortal laurels from their admiring countrymen, I have no doubt that angels looked down with tenfold more interest on the struggles of this man of God in his obscure retreat, and that they saw, too, more glorious consequences connected with them than with the debates of senates and the wisdom of legislators. One night, I can never forget, in that upper room, when in a crisis of spiritual affairs a few brethren met there, and spent the greater part of the night in earnest supplication.

But it was in the house of God, and on the Sabbath day, and in the midst of "protracted meetings," that this spirit of supplication took most complete possession of the man. It seems to me as I write that I can see him sitting at the head of his pew, in the attentive and solemn congregation, with his bright eyes fixed on the speaker, and his lips moving in silent and earnest prayer that men may listen and turn to God. Often have I felt that it was his prayers, and not my preaching, that secured the conversion of the hearers of the Word.

I scarcely need add in this connection, that

2. *He was an earnest man.*

No one doubted this fact who knew him even superficially. It manifested itself in his whole bearing,—the posture of his body, the flash of his eye, the intensity of the expression of his animated face, the tones of his voice, and

the rapidity of his gestures in conversation and in exhortation. But the more intimately you knew him, the more distinctly you saw the fires of holy zeal burning and glowing in the depths of his soul. Whoever else might be half-hearted, you felt that he was in earnest. To him hell was open, and sinners were plunging into its bottomless abyss. Christ was a Saviour ready and mighty to save. Probation was passing, and must be improved now or never! *Heaven might be won or lost the present hour!* These were facts in his mind as real as the sun in the heavens, and he went forth to his daily task under the abiding and solemn impression of such truths.

It is easy to exaggerate a man's virtues, and sketch a picture of the imagination such as we would rejoice to see realized in this world of imperfection. But I am stating a simple fact when I say, that during an intimacy of more than seven years I never saw him excited by politics, though his daily home was in the very whirlpool of political strife, and almost every man he met was a partisan. Though the Church in all our borders was divided, and every ecclesiastical meeting was a scene of discussion and suspicion, and the bitterness of theological controversy finally sundered the Church into two distinct denominations, yet the spirit of our brother was superior to it all. He scarcely, if ever, spoke of this strife in conversation or in public prayers. His mind was so absorbed by the great fundamental realities of the Gospel and the danger of the souls of men, that he could not be diverted from the work of leading sinners to Christ. He had his opinions and his preferences, and they were very clear and decided. But he would not stop to discuss them with those who differed from him. He would hurry away to the place of prayer,

or to an interview with an anxious sinner, and with his heart glowing with love to the Saviour, and with heaven and hell naked and open before him, he would beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.

With such zeal, burning on without intermission,

3. *He was ready for co-operation in every good work.*

There are not a few good men who are selfishly and obstinately attached to their own modes of working. If their particular views are not conformed to, they lose their interest, and sometimes are roused to unseemly and injurious opposition. Our brother had nothing of this spirit. He preferred certain means and measures. But if these were not adopted, he wept in secret, committed the matter to God in prayer, and worked on in the fulness of Christian love and with unquenched zeal. *Co-operation in the way that is possible* was his motto. *Let us save the souls of men in some way!* was the reigning sentiment of his heart. Hence his Pastor never had occasion to ask, Is brother Wilson ready? Whatever the work to be done, he knew that there was one man whose time and toil, and patience and energy and self-denial would be unsparingly given. The first tap of the drum brought this soldier of Christ to his feet, and he was instantly girded for the conflict. The trumpet of the Lord rolling its stirring notes over the camp of Israel roused all the holy energies of his soul, and he was immediately in the van of the sacramental host moving on to victory. Where the struggle was the hardest, there was his presence animating and cheering all the combatants for truth and Heaven. Not only his brethren felt the inspiration of his example and his sympathy, but his Pastor also. Were there even no Aaron to join him, he would

still stand by Moses in the spirit of Hur, and hold up the tired and falling hands of God's servant.

Another point illustrating his character should not be forgotten.

4. *He was a reliable man.*

Some men are sincere, and yet they cannot be trusted. Their temper is quick and fiery, and their good purposes and kind feelings are consumed in a moment, like flax in the fire. There are also gentle spirits, who have no firmness or decision of character. They will not stand up boldly and uncompromisingly for truth and principle. There are selfish men, whose hearts never throb with generous and disinterested emotions; and worldly men, who have no spiritual discernment. Happy indeed is that Pastor whose ministry is not seriously injured by such defects in those who surround him as helpers and rulers in the house of God.

But no such imperfection marred the character or impeded the usefulness of Elder Wilson. You knew not only "where to find him," but *what he would do*, and that he would do *exactly right*. He had strong feelings, but his holy charity habitually subjected them; so that a sharp word, or a sudden flash of anger, or a bitter and unkind reproach, never interrupted the harmony of social intercourse, or sent a sudden pang through the hearts of his brethren. You could rely with equal confidence on the gentleness of his spirit and his firmness of purpose. He was far removed from any little selfish ends of his own, and was in a most remarkable degree "crucified to the world." His Christian character was, indeed, so well balanced that you had no doubt or misgiving in relation to his course of action. He was at the appointed place of

meeting at the exact time: weather, health, convenience being very unimportant elements of obstruction in his judgment. There was always one man present to pray, to exhort, to sing. And so it was in all his relations and duties. The sun came to his appointed place in the heavens no more regularly, and was expected no more certainly than he.

5. *Mr. Wilson illustrated in his daily life, many of the virtues and graces of the Christian character.*

He was by nature modest and retiring, and the habitual sense of his deficiencies before a holy God rendered him self-renouncing and humble in all his intercourse with men. No one ever felt that he thrust himself forward to attract attention, or that he thought of himself in his prayers or exhortations. But with this modesty, there was mingled a holy boldness that knew no fear of man. He was, in fact, a moral hero, rebuking sin with a resolute and earnest gentleness that was beautiful to look upon. He was at the same time free from censoriousness. His voice was never lifted up in denunciation of his brethren; and if their errors, or deficiencies, or sins were mentioned by others, he could weep over them, and faithfully warn and rebuke, but it was done in secret places. He could not join in conversation with them who "eat up the sins of others as they eat bread." His charity "suffered long and was kind, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things." So deep and manifest was the kindness of his heart, that even the most depraved were attracted towards him, and would listen to his faithful warnings when others, as earnest and zealous as himself, would meet with bitter opposition.

With these virtues of modesty, humility, boldness, and all-embracing charity, he united the most open-hearted sin-

cerity. He was transparent as the glass. He was not suspicious of others, being conscious of no unworthy motive hidden in the depth of his own heart. The light of heaven shone into all the chambers of his soul, and as he walked among men, all knew that they saw to the very depths, and were at ease in his presence. He was never rude or discourteous, his natural refinement of manners having been perfected by the courtesies of true Christian benevolence. If you followed his footsteps day by day, you would have seen most striking illustrations of those truths, "a soft answer turneth away wrath," and "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

To crown the whole, his morals were without a stain. No one doubted his integrity, his honesty of purpose, or his truthfulness. He had no vices. His "light so shone before men, that they saw his good works, and glorified his Father which is in heaven."

Let no one suppose that I write thus, in relation to this man, to "make out a case." The simple fact is, that as I sit here in my study, meditating on this servant of God, my pen is writing down the impressions which his character has made on me for many years. But the true and great idea of Mr. Wilson's character is that—

6. *He was an indefatigable and successful laborer in the vineyard of the Lord.*

His prayerfulness, his earnestness, his candid spirit of co-operation with the good, his reliableness, and the rare virtues and graces illustrated in his daily life, were all consecrated to one simple and sublime end. His ruling passion was to do good to the souls of men. And this *was* a passion with him. Never did the man of business plan more

anxiously, think more intensely, and work more assiduously. Worldly ambition never urged a spirit devoted to human applause to more unwearied efforts. The intensity of his desire to lead sinful men to Christ, surpassed anything of the kind I have ever witnessed. It was all-absorbing and all-controlling. He was "*totus in illis*"—wholly intent on this one thing. The morning found him praying and working, and the evening did not see him folding his hands. The heats of summer never weakened his faith, or prostrated his energy; and the storms of winter did not turn him a moment from his onward course of duty.

When the Church was worldly, and sinners were crowding the way to death, unwarned and unalarmed, his apprehension of spiritual things did not grow dim, and his faithful voice was never silent. The years, as they passed on, revealing the instability and fitfulness of others, demonstrated that the holy ruling anxieties of his heart were like those of our Lord himself, when with his eye upon the cross, he exclaimed, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished."

Soon after my acquaintance with him commenced, he became deeply interested in the memoir of James Brainard Taylor, whose spirit of holy love and joyful assurance came upon the churches, about this time, like the breath of heaven. The early death of that remarkable Christian, as many well recollect, was a sad bereavement to the disciples of Christ, and yet, his removal to a higher scene of activity, was the occasion of revealing to thousands that inner spiritual life which had rendered him so eminently useful. Among others who contemplated this example of joyful assurance in Christ, to imitate it, was our brother. I think he never walked in spiritual darkness or doubt, from this period to the close of his earthly pilgrimage.

Another faithful man of God departed to his reward soon after James Brainard Taylor, and his memoir was the instrument which the great Head of the Church used to give a still higher and nobler impulse to his soul. I refer to Harlan Page. This earnest and useful man was, perhaps, more than any other, his model Christian. The *personal efforts to save men* which characterized Harlan Page, and the success attending such efforts, excited our brother to the highest degree. His humility led him to feel that he could never equal such a man; and yet he determined, in the fear of God, to do what he could. He had been zealous and useful before. But now his labors assumed a more definite form. He began to fix his attention on individual cases, and to concentrate his sympathies and prayers on a particular point,—an individual, or a family. He was plying them with tracts, inviting them to church, exhorting them in their own house, and praying in their presence, if possible, and then pouring out his supplications in secret.

But while the example of these men so greatly modified his Christian character, no one could be much in the company of brother Wilson, without perceiving that there was a more Divine principle still at work in the depths of his soul. To him "Christ was all and in all." The fulness of his mercy, his willingness to receive and pardon the chief of sinners, the sincerity of the invitation "now is the accepted time," were "first truths" with him. He believed, and therefore spoke. Christ was so precious to him that he felt constrained to beseech men in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. It was this which animated and sustained him in protracted and self-denying labors. It was this, indeed, that gave power to the examples of

such soldiers of Christ, as James Brainard Taylor and Harlan Page, and led him to follow in their footsteps in his mode of working.

As might have been expected, his labor was not in vain in the Lord. Scarcely a communion season passed without witnessing some of the trophies of his victorious faith and zeal, sealing their vows publicly at God's altar. And while scores of converts attributed their first serious impressions, if not their conversion to his fidelity, there was not a member of the Church who did not feel the blessed influence of his untiring zeal. He impressed himself on the very heart of that Christian band, and they became a *working* church. He not only aided me in my labors, but frequently gave that scope and direction to my efforts, which secured their success; and this he did without any assumption of superiority, or arrogance, or dictation; but in "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

The truth is, the Fourth Presbyterian Church owes its existence and its peculiar character to Mr. Wilson. Its devotion to "revivals of religion," its enterprise for God and the souls of men, its uninterrupted progress for a quarter of a century, in numbers and in spiritual strength, till it now stands "like a palace built for God," and blessing the city and the nation, may be traced back to the spiritual life which animated the whole being of this consecrated man. If asked to express, in one sentence, the success attending his labors, I should point to the Fourth Presbyterian Church, and say, *there is his monument!*

In saying this, I do not forget that company of devout and honorable women, whose weekly prayer-meeting diffused so sacred an influence on the families of the congregation,

nor his brethren in the eldership, with the faithful pastor who succeeded me.

I am certain that without these varied instrumentalities, the usefulness of this church could not have been secured in that remarkable degree which has ever been its glory. But without the spirit and presence of this brother, the church would have been deprived of one of its principal vital forces. He lived, and loved, and prayed, and wept, and toiled on for a score of years, for the enlargement and beauty of this Zion, and his labor was not in vain in the Lord.

In concluding this imperfect sketch, I cannot but add that

7. *Mr. Wilson enjoyed the confidence of the entire community in which he lived.*

Though a Presbyterian from education and from choice, he had no sympathy with sectarianism. He lived in union with all Christians, and was most cordial and sincere in his Christian fellowship. That spirituality of mind which derives its holy discernment and sweet affections and heavenly aspirations from union to Christ, was his habitual experience. He was through grace naturally at home among all the people of God. Such love necessarily begets love, and wherever he went he found a hearty welcome. As soon as the providence of God opened the way for his labors as city missionary, he found no obstacle to his labors such as any other man in Washington would have encountered. A broad way had been opened before him by his universal charity. And not simply the Christian Church gave him their confidence. The entire community regarded him as a good man, and were ready to aid a cause which engaged his sympathies. Men of the world

did not stop to investigate the merits of an object which he presented to their charities. It was enough for them that David M. Wilson was toiling for it, and considered it worthy. They felt that money was not only safe in his hands, but was sure to accomplish some good. This universal confidence rendered him very efficient as colporteur, Bible agent, collector of missionary funds, and distributor of blessings among the poor, while it was in itself one of the most beautiful illustrations of the effect which his virtues had produced in a community where he had been thoroughly known during thirty years.

When his work was finally done, and he was summoned to his reward in Heaven, there was a more profound sensation of grief experienced among all classes than has ever been witnessed in Washington at the death of any man in the more private walks of life. I was myself absent at the time in a foreign land. But I have been informed that on the day of his burial, though a cold and driving storm rendered the streets almost impassable, yet the sanctuary was crowded with mourners from all classes of people, and that the testimonies to his worth were of the most affecting character. But of this others will doubtless speak in an appropriate manner, and I allude to it here only as the expression of a sentiment of affectionate regard with which the entire community had been inspired for many years by the distinguished excellence of our Christian brother's character and life.

The effect of the decease of such a man on the highest and best interests of society it is difficult to describe. You go into the garden of God, and you see a clear living spring closed up, and hermetically sealed forever. You walk forth among the green fields of the Church, and the crystal

stream which had flashed in the sunlight and made melody and beauty in its onward course, has suddenly vanished, and dust and stones are in the channel. You look up to the glorious sky, and one of the bright familiar stars that has often cheered you on your way has fallen from its place, and its light is extinguished forever.

But our consolation in relation to him, in the midst of all, is the same which sustained the Prophet Daniel, when he "shut up the words and sealed his book to the time of the end." They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.

Hoping that you may have much grace given you, in the responsible work of placing a true view of this eminent servant of God before His Church,

I am very truly yours,

MASON NOBLE.

Rev. JOSHUA N. DANFORTH, D.D., Newcastle, Del.

CHAPTER X.

IN November, 1834, it was resolved to hold a series of religious meetings for the purpose of stirring up the minds of the Lord's people to lay hold on his strength, and of alarming the consciences of sinners, who stood loitering on the brink of eternal woe. Rev. Herman Norton, of New York, was invited to enter the field, and co-operate with Rev. Mr. Noble and his people. Mr. N. wrote that "he had laid the case before the Lord, and after solemn consideration and

much prayer, had, though with trembling, arrived at the conclusion that it was his duty to comply with the request."

Tuesday, November 5, was observed as a day of solemn fasting and humiliation before God. In some houses, a more solemn day was never known. Divisional prayer-meetings were held in various places that day and night. A tender state of feeling began to prevail.

Mr. Norton arrived on Wednesday, November 6, and entered into the work with deep solemnity and fidelity. A friend observed: "His style is rigidly plain, uniformly solemn, and ever directed to the conscience, which he awes and rouses more than any other preacher which it has ever been my lot to hear. His constant drift is to convince men of sin, and drive them to immediate repentance. He has much more of John the Baptist than of John the Evangelist. He unveils the law, and points its thunders with a masterly hand."

The opening sermon of this series of meetings was from that memorable text, Rom. 9 : 1, 2,—“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart,”—an admirable key-note for a discourse, or series of discourses, for the spirit of a prayer-meeting, or any convocation that contemplates the conversion of sinners, or the interests of a dying world. No created mind has ever sounded the depths of that emotion indicated by this inspired passage. The muse of poetry never reached it with her line. It is a current that flows directly from the fountain of infinite compassion itself. Let the spirit that breathes in this Divine sentiment possess and hallow the hearts of God's people, and what power would invest their prayers, and be reflected on the preacher

and the Word he preaches ! This was that which filled the soul of Moses, when he lay prostrate before God, pleading for the deliverance of Israel from destruction ; which melted the heart of the Psalmist, when he cried : “ Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law ; ” which dissolved the sensibilities of the weeping Jeremiah, when he gave vent to the tender aspiration : “ Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people ! ” But the fullest, the most wondrous development of that sacred, that awful emotion, which contemplates the salvation of a lost world, was reserved for that “ hour ” when in Gethsemane the stricken Saviour cried out in anguish : “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death ! ” What mortal thought can ever measure the breadth of that deadly sorrow ? The lost soul of man is the object of its contemplation, intense and unearthly.

“ Weep not, sad moralist, o'er desert plains,
 Strewed with the wrecks of grandeur—mouldering fanes,
 Arches of triumph, long with weeds o'ergrown,
 And regal cities, now the serpent's own ;
 Earth has more awful ruins—ONE LOST MIND,
 Whose star is quenched, hath lessons for mankind
 Of deeper import than each prostrate dome,
 Mingling its marble with the dust of Rome.”

How noble, then, the work of saving souls, of reconstructing this stupendous ruin, and adorning it with the colors of heaven ; shed down, as they are, at the voice of prayer, by the Spirit of beauty and of holiness upon this “ new creation in Christ Jesus,” this “ temple of the Holy Ghost ! ” This indeed is celestial architecture, “ made

without hands," but not without the faith of the heart, the labor of the soul, the intensity of prayer, and all crowned with the benediction of Heaven!

Sunrise prayer-meetings had been customary with us from the beginning of our work, and they were held during the progress of these meetings. Prayer was also offered previous to the preaching, for the people became truly anxious that the Spirit should accompany the preaching of the Word.

Mr. Norton's second sermon was on *Unbelief in the Church* (Heb. 3 : 12),—"Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." He set forth in striking terms the guilt and danger of unbelief among Christians. He then made the opposite virtue of *Faith* the theme of another discourse (Heb. 11 : 6); heightening the effect by contrast. Afterwards, on Matt. 22 : 12,—"*And he was speechless,*"—he tore the excuses of sinners into a thousand shreds. The baptism of prayer bedewed every sermon; great solemnity pervaded the congregation; at times there was that deep and dread silence, which may be felt, evincing the awful presence of the Most High God. Conviction seized on many minds, though there was a reluctance to manifest it. This might have been an evidence of its deeper sincerity, for real humility is retiring. An afflicted woman from Texas, whose husband had been shot down in battle, causing her to fly for life with an infant in her arms, was powerfully moved, wept bitterly, and from her earthly losses turned to the compassionate Saviour.

At this time, Mr. Norton gave an account of the gracious work of God in my congregation at Lee, in Berkshire, where he and Brother Helffenstein, of Germantown,

labored with such signal success. At the first meeting for inquirers, more than one hundred persons were present under religious exercise.

In the afternoon of Friday, Mr. Norton addressed an assembly of wives and mothers. He pressed the duty of the mother conducting family worship, if the father refused. The wife of a slave-dealer, who hated religion, was so strongly convinced of duty, that she set up the family altar despite the wrath of her ungodly partner. She called together her children, and though the man was at first violent, he seemed to become disarmed, and even urged his son, a graceless boy, to go in and listen to the prayers of his mother. Such is the might and the majesty of faith. She walked with God, and he took knowledge of it.

In the evening, Mr. Norton discoursed on "Covering sin" (Prov. 28 : 13), to a crowded house. Much silent prayer was offered, and many wept bitterly. He related instances of the power of conscience in uncovering sin, and forcing the transgressor to a full confession and entire restoration.

On Saturday morning, another solemn and searching sermon was preached on "Judgment beginning at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4 : 17), which wrought effectually in the hearts of Christians, and a day of fasting and prayer was appointed. In the evening, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16 : 30) was urged with still more awful effect; until the pressure on the consciences of convicted men seemed almost intolerable. A brother said: "It was fearful to be there; yet I would rather spend one such evening than enjoy years of the world's pleasure. No words can describe my feelings. Anxiety rose to agony, and I poured out my whole soul to God in prayer for his blessing on the word, and his blessing came." The ice

was completely broken. All hearts gave way, and on the first invitation to come forward for prayers, the line of seats was filled with earnest suppliants, among them some church members under powerful convictions.

On the Sabbath there was a melting season in the Sabbath-school. All were dissolved in tears and prayer, and the lessons were for once exchanged for incessant supplication. That was a favorite field of the Elder, and there some of his richest harvests were reaped. In these and subsequent efforts for the promotion of the salvation of sinners, there was among the people an earnestness, an untiring perseverance, which deserves to be held up as an example to other churches. If they were not *growing*, they scarcely deemed themselves *living*. The spirit of the Elder communicated itself to those with whom he came in contact, and he never thought of pausing until Death sealed his lips in that last silence. Aye, and "being dead, he speaketh" to me who write, to you who read, to all whose faithful memory treasures up the image of his tall form; his teeming soul, looking with such life out of that small dark eye; his voice, hoarse with usage and disease, for he inhaled the atmosphere of all weathers; his tones of prayer, earnest, pleading, agonizing; in a word, all that constituted the man and the Christian elder, as he moved about on that field, where such and so many trophies were gathered to the glory of Christ. Sometimes, when thinking of him, I have fallen into a reverie, and there seemed to be before me the images of Love, Hope, and Faith, weeping for the loss of one who so beautifully exemplified their power on earth. I said to myself, "Love and Hope are the two wings of the soul, with which the Christian flies towards heaven, while Faith keeps it steady in its brilliant path. Without Love, the soul would fall into the terrors of spiri-

tual bondage, for 'perfect love casteth out fear.' Without Hope, it would plunge into the darkness of spiritual despair. Without Faith, it would wander into the icy regions of a frowning infidelity. 'These three' are not mere 'graces,' or emotions, but are in the highest degree real and practical. LOVE is always ingenious to please its object, to defend it, to exalt it; if capable of receiving a benefit, to confer it. It is an essentially *working principle*. Behold a mother's love, as God hath made it. Can anything be more refined, more efficient, more exactly adapted to its sphere? What so vigilant, so tender, so anxious, so inextinguishable! It is not an emotion only. It is always at work. HOPE also is active. Its watchword is '*Forward.*' A traveller hopes to reach home that night. He does not turn into the first inn, and go to sleep. He travels on until the object of his hope is attained. 'So run that ye may obtain.' A lover hopes to obtain the object of his affections. His attentions are most assiduous. Constancy, self-denial, obedience, and exertion, are all easy, because his *heart* is engaged." Such was the love of the Elder for souls. Such his hope for their salvation.

FAITH is also operative. It is self-evident that the more firmly a man believes he will reach an object, the more earnestly he will strive after it. To construct a railroad three hundred miles in length, requires a stronger belief of its practicability, than to dig a well. Every step of such an enterprise must be accompanied with a belief, that not only will the immediate obstacles be overcome, but that all possible obstacles will be surmounted. If there is no action, we may certainly infer there is no faith. Hence, unbelief paralyzes the soul. Hence, the Elder fought against it, and always carried the SHIELD OF FAITH.

How wisely has God distributed and diversified his gifts among men! If all men were imaginative, we should exist in a kind of unreal world, where theories would take the place of facts, dreams that of realities, and intellectual vagaries that of common sense. If all were philosophers, the common affairs of life would be neglected. If all were cool mathematical reasoners, the progress of these affairs would be slow, as they depend chiefly on probabilities. If all were contemplative, who would be active? If the sanguine were not corrected by the phlegmatic, how would the happy medium, so much praised, be secured? If, in the search after truth, the same proposition should be seen alike by every mind, there would be an end of all discussion, and of course no new light would be struck out. In practical life, as in the intellectual world, the same principle of distribution is developed. In one character, is exhibited an irresistible and unquenchable ardor; in another, a serene, steady, and most impressive amiableness; in a third, the deep imprint of never-failing good sense; in a fourth, unconquerable perseverance; in a fifth, the habitual love of systematic labor in the field of knowledge. I have not spoken of genius or brilliant talent, which the world is apt to admire; often useful, but often, too, destructive to him who possesses, and him who encounters it. God has more glorified himself in making use of *good* men than of *great* men to execute his high purposes. Rev. Mr. Jermaine, in delineating the character of that distinguished physician, Dr. John Mason Good, remarks, that his life and death teach the insignificance of the highest mental endowments and a most extensive erudition, when compared with Christian character, and an experimental knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; that the greatest attainment of

man is a conformity to the Divine image; and his highest destiny is to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

The circumstances of our own country demand a practical eldership, for we are a practical nation. Good natural abilities, a sound physical constitution, plain good sense, a thorough knowledge of the Bible, and a deep and devoted piety, are the main qualifications.

John Frederick Oberlin studied a colloquial plainness, interspersing his discourses with figures and allusions; he would frequently introduce biographical anecdotes of persons distinguished for their piety, and all the operations of Nature furnished him with illustrations of spiritual things. But the Bible itself was the grand source from which he drew the matter of his instruction. It formed the study of his life, and he was in the habit of citing very largely from the Scriptures, as best adapted to feed the flock. The learned Salmasius, when dying, said, "Oh, I have lost a world of time; time, the most precious thing in the world; whereof, had I but one year more, it should be spent in David's Psalms, and Paul's epistles."

A deep acquaintance with the Bible, especially with its spirit, has made many a plain layman mighty in the work of God. His usefulness may be said to be illimitable, for it ceaseth not with death. Baxter says, "There are good works in heaven, and far more and better than on earth. There will be more life and power for action, more love to God, and one another, to excite to action; more likeness to God and Christ in doing good, as well as being good; more union with the beneficent Jesus, to make us also beneficent; and more communion, by each contributing to the

welfare of the whole, and sharing in their common returns to God."

Among the secrets of the Elder's success, if secrets they may be called, are the following: 1. A settled determination to leave no lawful means untried for promoting the salvation of sinners. Much time is lost by not moving straight forward in the line of duty, using such means as are adapted to produce the end in view. A show of opposition deters some. Prompt action is often powerful action. He that delays in a good cause loses half the battle.

" All indecision brings its own delays,
And days are lost, lamenting over days.
Are you in earnest? Seize the very minute.
What you can do, or think you can, begin it;
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

Faith in God has more. It secures His blessing. This is the Scriptural boldness with which we are exhorted to come to the throne of grace.

2. He was *definite* in his aims and in his applications. Beginning with the sinfulness and misery of men, he looked up to the MERCY of God as a remedy, and pointed out the *way of that mercy* as by Jesus Christ. He pressed these points on the consciences of sinners with marvellous success. He became familiar with the excuses of sinners, and learned to answer them with consummate skill, always possessing his soul in patience, and aiming at the "gentleness of Christ."

3. The Elder set others to work. "My friends," said he, "we must all do something. What are we worth to the world, if we benefit nobody? Let every one ask himself, How can I be useful to-day? Go, hold a prayer-meeting

in such a part of the city. See that such a person promises to come to church next Sabbath. Go out, and fill up your Sabbath-school class from such a neighborhood."

He always relied for help, and seldom in vain, upon the sisters in the church who walked with God. There was one, now no more on earth, a glorified spirit in heaven, who was to him, to us all, as a right hand, or as a guardian spirit. I allude to Mrs. MARY GIDEON, one of the most efficient of her sex known to the church; one of the little band of primitive seceders, and a leader among the sisters; her house ever open to Christ and his people, so that it might be said to become a house of prayer; her heart in every good work; her hand ever ready to answer the calls of charity; her head ever devising schemes of usefulness; and heart, hand, and head all conspiring to devote their powers and resources to the upbuilding of the cause of Christ in Washington. Sincerity and devotion were eminent in all she did, and she never caused a friend to mourn until she died. Deep was the loss the Fourth Church sustained in her death. The loss was great to Zion. Her funeral day was emphatically a day of mourning. Crowds came to pay the last tribute to her precious memory, among them her *three* pastors, who had so often leaned on the arm of her faith, and been encouraged by her ever-cheering words. Among those at her funeral was noticed the President of the United States, who was no stranger to the virtues of this mother in Israel, whose "price was far above rubies." Without pomp or parade, General Pierce came with noiseless step, among other visitors, into the parlor, where the coffined remains of our lamented sister reposed. All felt that a great breach had been made in Zion, that the grave seldom closes over the form of a more exemplary

Christian, or a more useful saint on earth. But she lived long enough to see many prayers answered, many of her own anxious hopes fulfilled; charities to the bodies and souls of the poor established and maintained; churches built in Washington, and fixed on a firm foundation, to which she had contributed liberally both of her money and her prayers; her own dear Zion raised from feeble beginnings to a strong and active church; colonies going forth from it, which she ever favored; in a word, on the vision of that dear departing saint were shed not only the glories of an opening heaven, but the reflected brightness of a heavenly life on earth, consecrated to the honor of Christ's kingdom, and constantly illumined with the light of his love. Oh, what prayers have gone up from the retirements of that house to the throne of God for poor lost sinners! How many souls have, in answer to these prayers, been converted to God! A Lydia she was, opening her heart and house to the service of God. A Deborah she was, who arose, a mother in Israel, to fight the battles of the Lord against spiritual foes, and to sing the song of triumph, whose closing strain was: "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

4. As working without praying would produce only spurious results, the Elder prayed much himself, strenuously urged secret devotion on Christians, and assisted them to pray to advantage in social meetings. He would have many prayers in quick succession, because, 1. Many minds, hearts, and lips would be brought into action. 2. Responsibility would rest on a great number. 3. The practice of praying in the session-room strengthened the brethren for the work of leading elsewhere, in destitute

neighborhoods, when all the services might devolve on them. 4. Variety is essential to sustaining an interest in the minds of beings constituted like us. 5. Scripture prayers are generally short, very special and august occasions excepted, as the dedication of the temple, &c.

Elder Wilson approved, indeed loved protracted meetings, a mode of doing good which concentrates the labors and prayers of so many. He would not condemn a measure simply because it was *new*, provided it was Scriptural, appropriate, or well suited to the great end of converting sinners. But he never denounced others for not thinking and acting with him. He could not be prevailed on to unloose the censorious tongue, even to lash those who evidently opposed the work of God. His dependence on the Divine Spirit was of the most simple, fervent, and unwavering kind. He waited for His coming, but, like the anxious Psalmist, "watching for the morning." It was a dependence full of hope, of expectation, of activity. None believed more firmly in the sovereignty of God, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things;" none held more strongly to the obligations and responsibilities of man as a moral agent, placed under the moral government of that Divine Sovereign. Because he is such an *agent*, he insisted that he should *act* for eternity, as responsible to the moral government of God; that he should work out his salvation with fear and trembling, while God is working in him both to will and to do.

Many wholesome truths, much tender experience did he derive from affliction, which, says Matthew Henry, "is the discipline of God's school, whereby his children are trained up in the way they should go. And it is *necessary*, as needful as weeding is to the garden, as pruning to the vine,

as physic to the body. Do not expect to find it all carpet-way to heaven. Stormy weather makes the harbor desirable." Or if we take the beautiful illustration of Oberlin: "I have before me two stones, which are an imitation of precious stones. They are both perfectly alike in color; they are of the same water, clear, pure, and clean. Yet there is a marked difference between them as to their lustre and brilliancy. One has a dazzling brightness, while the other is dull, so that the eye passes over it and derives no pleasure from the sight. What can be the reason of this difference? It is this. One is cut in but a few *facets*. The other has ten times as many. These facets are produced by a very violent operation. It is requisite to cut, to smooth, and to polish. Could the stones *feel* the operation, the one which has received eighty *facets* would have thought itself very unhappy, and would have envied the fate of the other, which, having received but eight, endured but a tenth part of its sufferings. Nevertheless, the operation being over, it is done forever. The difference between the two stones always remains strongly marked. That which has suffered but little, is entirely eclipsed by the other, which alone is held in estimation, and attracts attention. May not this serve to explain the saying of our Saviour, whose words always have reference to eternity, '*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted?*' Blessed, whether we contemplate them apart, or in comparison with those who have not passed through so many trials." Ministers and Elders must be taught by painful and practical lessons how to draw comfort from the heavenly fountain; how to submit to the discipline and bless the dealings of the "Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we

may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble by the comfort *wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*"

The writer has recently been anew subjected to this discipline. The turf is just green upon the grave of a lovely daughter, the child of his heart; one of the most tender, gentle, affectionate beings that ever gladdened a father's heart; she has faded away like a summer cloud, leaving us desolate indeed, but for the inspiring hope of the Gospel, which teaches that Jesus Christ hath "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light." We have enjoyed the rich sympathies of Christian friends, and are prepared more than ever to sympathize with the bereaved and the disconsolate, who will never cease from the earth.

Wilson passed through the deep waters, but a secret hand upheld him; he was bid to walk in the furnace, but "the form of the fourth," even the Son of God walked with him. In whatever condition of life he was, he was ever bent on the conversion of sinners, and no affliction was so great to him as the absence of conversions in the congregation.

"Let me abound in good works," said Melancthon, "and I care not who abounds in riches." Whatever contributed to the advancement, or the retardation of the Redeemer's kingdom, either in his own heart, or in the hearts of others, could not fail to attract the attention of David M. Wilson.

Of Hooper it was said, that "he had a sound judgment and a good conscience, was sparing of his diet and his words, but still more so of his time, yet was hospitable and liberal." So of our brother. Whether he eat or drank, or whatever he did, it was for the glory of God. If he was less sparing of words, it is because out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth spoke, and by few words

could he be condemned. He never tired of talking to sinners of the love of Jesus. He spared no words of warning to the carnal slumberer. If the deep cells of the United States Capitol could speak, they would testify how often and how long their walls resounded to the voice of prayer, as it came up from the depths of his heart. In that profound seclusion, he wrestled with the angel of the Covenant many an anxious hour. It was a Patmos to his soul, where he held high converse with the Redeemer. At the Capitol, where official duties as Captain of the Guard kept him, he was surrounded with the din of politics, but it had no attraction for him. He lived in purity amid a polluted atmosphere. Faithful to a punctilio, in the discharge of the duties assigned him by the Government, he never yielded to the peculiar temptations which sometimes beset men in the employment of the Government, but habitually preserved a quiet dignity. But he was quick to discern, among the thousands of visitors whom he conducted around the Capitol, those select ones, who loved Christ, and showed by their deportment that they were not ashamed of him.

He was no jester. He was a *serious* man. The courtly and classic ADDISON said, "It must, indeed, be confessed, that levity of temper takes a man off his guard, and opens a pass to his soul for any temptation that assails it. It favors all the approaches of vice, and weakens all the resistance of virtue. For which reason, a renowned statesman in Queen Elizabeth's days, after having retired from Court and public business, in order to give himself up to the duties of religion, when any of his old friends used to visit him, had still this word of advice in his mouth, 'Be serious.' . . . A man should not live as if there were no

God in the world; nor at the same time as if there were no men in it." Our friend and brother lived as under the united influence of both these views; and as a result, deduced from them the duty of laboring for the reconciliation of men to God. He seemed habitually impressed with the force of that weighty injunction :

"Live, live for God, and toil a world to save,
 Live, live for God, nor heed the coming grave;
 The time, the place, the way—He knows them all;
 Do well thy work to-day, and wait his call!"

To the last hour of his life, that sentiment seemed ingrained into his soul. Were this the predominant, practical feeling of our thousands of elders in the land, what life and power would be infused into the moral action of the churches! How would they shine forth as an army with banners! Come, Spirit Divine, and kindle the fire of love in all their hearts! Great Head of the Church, let the spirit of Christ dwell within them!

One could have wished that Elder Wilson had practised a little more self-denial in one department—that of excessive labor. There is no doubt he wore himself out. Mrs. Wilson often remonstrated with him for overtasking his fragile frame. But the mind was too active to submit to formal restraints. The Church has had many voluntary martyrs of this type. Humanity and Christianity have blended their tears over the costly sacrifices made on this altar. Is the Christian exempted from the obligation to obey the laws and the calls of Nature? In proportion to his piety and zeal, is usually the *run* on his constitution, until, its powers exhausted, he sinks from the midst of usefulness into a premature grave. One of those who committed this

mistake, said to a divinity student, "A merciful man regardeth the life of his beast, and you must be merciful to your beast; or as Mr. M. would say, to your 'animal.' Remember that it is your Master's property, and he will no more thank you for driving it to death, than an earthly master would thank a servant for riding a valuable horse to death, under pretence of zeal for his interest. The truth is, I am afraid Satan has jumped into the saddle, and when he is there, in the guise of an angel of light, he whips and spurs at a most unmerciful rate, as every joint in my poor, broken-winded animal can testify from woful experience. He has temptations for the conscience, as Mr. Newton well observes; and when other temptations fail, he makes great use of them." Mrs. Wilson observed to me, she has often seen him, on a hot summer's day, come home with his bundle of tracts still heavy on his arm, though he had travelled far, and distributed many. She feared a fit of sickness, and indeed he was visited in that way, but was impatient to recover, and re-enter the field.

I saw him one morning, at the meeting of Presbytery, while business had not yet commenced, stretch himself on a bench, overcome with weakness, while his whole system was feverish, and he fit only to be in bed. Yet, that day he was out at work among the morally needy and destitute of the metropolis. Such a spirit seems almost to disdain the bounds of the flesh, to forget the infirmities of the physical man, and to dare what the very angels that "excel in strength," might shrink from doing. There was no minister that could compete with him in powers of endurance, even when mental exhaustion was involved, which is known to be more severe and perilous than any other kind. He thought where souls were to be saved, there must be living

sacrifices. And he loved that idea; not as a romantic dream, but as something to be realized in some form by himself. I doubt not he would have laid down his life had the sacrifice been required, to save a sinner from the horrors of the second death, and bring him into the life and liberty of the Gospel. The spirit of Christ, the sufferer for others, was in him, and so continued until his latest breath. Welcome was he to kindred souls in heaven, for whose salvation he had been in an agony of prayer on earth.

The doctrine of immediate repentance was all-important in his view. Indeed, all useful men of his stamp seem to have held to it. We well remember what the eminently pious and successful NETTLETON said nearly forty years ago, for we took it down from his lips: "Christians often tell sinners to 'wait God's time.' Now what do you mean by this? Do you mean that God is not ready? What! would *you* say this when God says: '*All things are ready?*' If you mean that God is not ready now, then tell me when he will be ready. Tell the sinner, if you undertake to administer consolation to him, when God's time is, if it is not *now*. Be careful how you interpose between the Spirit of God and the heart of the sinner. Never tell him to be patient, to wait God's time, unless you can tell when that time is. It will certainly never come, so long as the sinner remains in his sins: and yet you tell him to be *patient*—in what? In his sins? Yes, and he may be *patient* till he dies, and God's time will never come, and certainly not in hell. You encourage him in his sins. Sinners are told that 'if God has begun a good work in their souls, he will carry it on.' Now I would ask you how you know this? How do you know he has begun a good work in the sinner, when he is in a state of impenitence and rebellion against God?" His object was to strip the sinner of all excuses before God

and his own conscience, and to hasten the hour of his joyful submission. Eminently were his labors blessed. Such will be the view taken by all those who seek to win back disloyal sinners to the government of God.

A great many obstacles might, to the soul of a procrastinating sinner, seem insurmountable. The novelty of the thing, nay its impossibility, have been pleaded. I have pleasures yet untasted, plans yet unaccomplished; besides, I am not to be converted when I please. I must wait God's time for it. In fact, I have little to do with it. So does the delaying soul flatter itself, until its iniquity be found hateful. These and numerous other excuses the Elder would patiently hear, and promptly answer, then pour the soul of a burning exhortation on the conscience of the loiterer in the plains of Sodom. How could men escape such passionate importunity? The very fact that such strange anxieties were heaped on their guilty heads, was fitted to rouse them to reflection, and then the passage is easy to resolution, which presently terminates in action. But he held all these things in subservience to the sovereign prerogatives of the Divine Spirit, whose province it is to create the soul anew in Christ Jesus, to call it from darkness to light, to turn it from the power of Satan unto God. Oh, wondrous work! to be contemplated with gratitude and rapture in heaven forever! To this blessedness has the Elder gone. He mingles with the spirits of the holy and the happy, with the redeemed from all nations, with the sainted ones, for whose salvation he spent busy days and sleepless nights, if by any means he might bring them to glory.

Touching the general spirit of his life and the temper of his soul amid many trials, it may be observed that our be-

loved friend maintained an equanimity which, beyond doubt, was wrought in him by the Spirit. Of a sensitive nature, he would have fallen, like some people, into habits of misanthropy, of querulousness, of fault-finding, had not his mind been filled with better influences. Having formed the unchangeable habit of seeking the glory of God by doing good to his creatures, it became expulsive of all habits of an opposite character. Thus numerous vexations were avoided. He acted on the precepts of Cotton Mather to his son: "It may not be amiss for you to have two heaps: a heap of *unintelligibles* and a heap of *incurables*. Every now and then you will meet with something or other that may pretty much disturb your thoughts; but the shortest way with the vexations will be to throw them into the heap they belong to, and be no more distressed about them. You will meet with some unaccountable and incomprehensible things, particularly in the conduct of many people. Throw these into the heap of *unintelligibles*. Leave them there. Trouble your mind no further. Hope the best, or think no more about them. You will meet with some *unpersuadable* people. No counsel, no reason will do anything upon the obstinate, especially as to the making of due submission upon offences. Throw them into the heap of *incurables*. Let not the crooked things that cannot be made straight incumber you." A church officer has need of such a spirit as this.

Mr. Wilson ever leaned to the side of the most favorable constructions. The spirit of charity was always in him; he could not be a severe disciplinarian. He relied much on the inner work of the heart. Perhaps he expected too little from the outer discipline of the visible church. He was overwhelmed with a sense of the greatness of the

work, by which a fallen creature is to become holy. "I must tell you," said the dying Usher to a friend, "we do not well understand what sanctification and the new creature are. It is no less than for a man to be brought to an entire resignation of his own to the will of God, and to live in the offering up of his soul continually in the flames of love, as a whole burnt-offering to Christ. And oh, how many who profess Christianity are unacquainted experimentally with this great work upon their souls!"

But the wheat and tares must grow together until the great separating day. Then shall we "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between those that serve God and those that serve him not." It is not for us to discern the spirits. Let our own be in subjection to the law of Christ. Then will He bring forth our light as the noon-day. Love is the all-conquering element. It lives and burns in the bosom of the child of God, pours forth its brightness around the pillow of death, sheds its holy light upon the darkness of the grave, and sings its triumphal song at the gate of Heaven. Love shall endure there forever. All trials surmounted, all afflictions accomplished, all imperfections done with, all sins cast into the depths of the sea, all tears wiped from every eye, the soul will return to its everlasting rest, and walk forever in the light of God's countenance.

CHAPTER XI.

IN September, 1839, Rev. John C. Smith, D.D., was called to the pastorate of the Fourth Church, vacated by the removal of Rev. Mason Noble to New York, who there established a church in the vicinity of Tompkins' Square, on which the rich blessing of Heaven has often and copiously descended. Dr. S. declares, in his discourse on the twenty-seventh anniversary of the founding of the church, delivered in 1855, that he "met a kind, cordial, and unanimous welcome from the people of God, many of whom (alas for us!) are not now present, for God has taken them to be with Christ. * * * The spirit that met me was a confiding, earnest, prayerful spirit; a spirit that longed to see the church built up in the faith, and large numbers added to the saved. There was a simplicity, a directness in the efforts made to accomplish these results, that cheered my heart, and were an earnest of good things. * * My manner of life and labor was so adapted to those of my predecessors, that it was a movement along the same line of operations. This is a beautiful fact in the history of the church. There has been no diversity of operations, and but one spirit in the three pastors."

That one spirit was eminently promoted by the example, the communion, the prayers of David M. Wilson, the ever faithful Elder, whose influence on the pulpit was so marked and so salutary. He was the watchman of the watchmen, not to spy out faults, and dwell on them to the disadvantage of the pastor, but to detect fidelity; to find reasons

for praying for him ; to assist in advising him ; to encourage and strengthen him in every practicable way.

A series of evening meetings was soon commenced, and the people were ready for the work. The glory of God appeared again among them, the spirit of prayer was reinvigorated, the work of grace commenced again, and forty-six members were added to the church.

The question, which had much exercised the mind of the previous pastor, Rev. M. Noble, "Ought a new church edifice to be built?" and which to some extent had been the subject of conversation among the people, was now revived in earnest, and it was resolved to "arise and build." Two subscriptions of one thousand dollars each were made by two Elders of the church, one of whom, the simple-hearted Preston (and I cannot recall him without the tribute of a tear), went to his eternal rest in 1843; a man almost without a fault, yet none more tenderly thankful for the grace that saved him from sin and death; ever seeming to feel, "Oh, to grace how great a debtor!" He was a pillar among us, in which to the last no flaw was detected. He had an interest in the first and the second temple, which no lapse of time could abate. He even sought his dwelling-place in the old frame church, after it was converted into two pleasant tenements. There I offered my last prayer with him, when he was declining to the tomb; and a consecrated spot it seemed, for there the Lord had often commanded his blessing, even life forevermore. A short way it seemed to heaven through that gate. To lose such a man was indeed an affliction; but our dear Church not seldom drank that cup. Her mission was to assist in recruiting the forces of the heavenly host, and well may she say: "These are my jewels."

It was resolved that the church edifice should not be dedicated until it was paid for; and this resolution was carried into effect. The payment having been made, the house was dedicated on the 20th June, 1841, to the service and glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and so continues to this day. Here the holy fire has descended; it has caught from heart to heart; it has kindled the burning flame of love in the bosoms of the people of God; it has warmed dead sinners into life; the joy of the redeemed has burst forth into songs of praise; the scenes of other days have been renewed in all their brightness; in a word, the work has been progressive to this hour. Like the flowing stream, which rises in small and obscure sources, it has gathered strength and volume as it proceeded; and though at times meeting with obstructions, and seeming to show back-currents, yet in the main channel it has kept steadily onward; and upon its sacred bosom how many happy souls have been borne on to the "shining shores" of glory. The dedication sermon was preached by Rev. Edward N. Kirk, of Boston.

Previously to the dedication, thirty-nine more had been added to the communion. The Spirit was habitually present in the convocations of the Lord's people. At the communion seasons, in February and April, 1843, one hundred and four individuals united with the church. Of these, many have taken their dismissal to the Church triumphant in heaven. They have died in the faith of the Gospel, and have gone to join the spirits of just men made perfect in that pure world, where the redeemed shall meet out of every kindred and nation under heaven. The pastor has embalmed their names in a precious record, entitled "Memorials of our Departed." Sacred memorials! The voice

of each departed one, though silent in the grave, "yet speaketh" to the living, warning them to make sure their names are written in the "Lamb's Book of Life."

For the work of the ministry, a goodly number of young men have been raised up in this congregation, among them Mr. Wilson's own son, once a ruling elder in the Fourth Church, now pastor of a church in the city of Baltimore. Large numbers of persons have also been dismissed to found colonies, and build up new churches. The Sabbath-school of the church was a nursery from which many plants were transplanted into the Church on earth, and not a few to the paradise above. Over this institution Elder Wilson presided for twenty years; watching, praying, weeping, hoping, planning, exhorting; in a word, diligently using all means which he thought adapted to produce the highest and broadest benefits to the cause. Within the church is a Junior Missionary Society, to aid the foreign missionary cause; a Union Home Missionary Society, and a Ladies' Home Missionary Society, who support a missionary in the State of Illinois. He (Rev. G. F. Davis) has established five churches, and erected three houses of worship. While the friends of Zion were liberal to churches abroad, they were blessed at home. From 1828 to 1839, there were built in Washington five churches. From 1840 to 1855, twenty-seven houses of worship were erected. In this great progress of the word and work of God, our friend ever rejoiced, whatever his share in the immediate work. There was nothing that touched the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, with which he did not feel a lively sympathy. His life was devoted to the salvation of the metropolis of his country. His love flowed out through the length and breadth of the land.

It must have been observed, that I have exhibited no diary of the personal Christian experience of the subject of this sketch. I have found none among his papers, and if he kept one, it must have been destroyed, as intended solely for his own eye, and not for the inspection of the public. This, indeed, is the true idea of a private diary. It is not presumed to be written for the public, though often given to the press. The example of the holy Brainerd has lent its force to the practice, and there is a natural curiosity to become acquainted with the secret exercises of eminently pious Christians. The perusal, too, often deeply affects us. Our emotions are stirred, and we are perhaps incited to emulate those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. But when, again, we consider the complexion that frequently attaches to such diaries; when we perceive in what a melancholy strain they are sometimes written; what minute particulars are given, that are chiefly interesting to the writer; how much of self there must necessarily be in them; how much time must have been spent in doubting about one's own condition, that might have been devoted to active efforts in promoting the kingdom of the Redeemer; when, in a word, the experience of the most eminent Christian is not prescribed to us as a standard, it will be conceded that a private diary is not of essential importance in making up an estimate of the character of any servant of God. If it be much extended, it is apt to be a repetition of the same ideas, and we must come back to the final unerring rule of the Saviour: "By their fruits shall ye know them."

Elder Wilson's piety was less of the *subjective*, than of the *objective* type. Frames, feelings, emotions, exercises, were little to him, except as they impelled to action. Re-

flex acts of the soul, indeed, he felt to be necessary, for he had been early taught to look into his own heart, but he would not linger over its emotions, when so much sin and misery existed without, to awaken the spirit of benevolent effort. Hence, his forgetfulness of self; his anxieties for others; his incessant endeavors to do good; his indomitable expectation of success; his love of prayer, as drawing down the power of God; his indifference as to his field of labor, so that it had *souls* in it; in fine, the efficient faith which carried victory in its every aspect, and assured it in all its final results. (1 John 5 : 4.) The spirit which he so assiduously cultivated, was that which had POWER WITH GOD (Hos. 12 : 3, 4), the virtue of which has not even yet been tried to its utmost extent, glorious as has been the outpouring of the Spirit for the last few years; mighty, especially, as have been the exhibitions of Divine grace for the last two years. How has his spirit rejoiced, amid the glories of the beatific vision; rejoiced with exultant angels over the multitude of converts that have flocked to the gates of Zion in this great revival!

CHAPTER XII.

[THE writer has preferred, in constructing the closing chapter, to present a large extract from the discourse of Rev. T. N. Haskell, delivered at the funeral of Elder Wilson, instead of any sketch of his own. The portraiture is true, rich, and full of verisimilitude. Any additional remarks of his own would not increase the impression fitted to be made by this able discourse.

To this is added the funeral address of Rev. Dr. Sunderland.]

We find him, in 1824, associated with Christians in a great variety of religious and benevolent efforts for the moral improvement and temporal comfort of the masses. He was a leader in the Sabbath-school of his own church; he organized and sustained the first colored Sunday-school in the city; commenced and sustained weekly prayer-meetings among the neglected colored people, and in various destitute neighborhoods of the white population; planted the germs and watered with his tears the growing vines of several churches; was interested and active in every department of city missions within his range; was a superior collector for the Church; an excellent spiritual counsellor in the session; a remarkable devotee to early prayer. He knew God had said, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters;" so he sought to do good by all legitimate means, and found the promised blessing always in his cup of joy. In all departments of effort he worked hard and well: from the first to the last he was instant in season; out of season, faithful, self-sacrificing, even unto death.

1. His worldly pursuits may not be made prominent, for they were never his idols; nor should they be omitted, for they were subordinately sacred; and he was never a man "slothful in business," but "his own hands ministered to his necessities." Being by trade a hatter, he labored as such for several years after his first settlement in Washington, exhibiting the three noble traits of the mechanic—honesty, industry, and frugality. His confinement at this work, and his exertions on the Sabbath, and times of night services, were undermining his constitution: the confine-

ment of his trade especially was manifestly hastening the progress of pulmonary disease to which he was constitutionally predisposed. His health became at length so precarious that he was induced to go to sea for his recovery. He went first on a voyage to Cuba, which proved so beneficial, that he hoped by another of similar length he might wholly regain the health and vigor which he sought. Accordingly he made arrangements to sail again, and repeat the painful absence of several months from his family and those religious associations which were to him so dear. He was to sail from the port of New York on the morning of a given day; his appointment to the office of assistant clerk of the vessel was already secured, and he was on hand at New York in due time to enter upon the duties of his office; but by the fraud of the captain, who had just before met a nephew whom he wished to have the benefits of the appointment, Mr. Wilson was unable to procure access to his post in the true sphere of his commission. He was thus compelled to abandon his voyage or submit to a menial position, and spend the whole time of the expedition under the arbitrary control of the man who dared, in the New York harbor, and in open day, to perpetrate upon him an act of cruel robbery. Of course he chose to stay upon the land and trust to Providence, rather than submit himself to the treacherous sea, under the command of a still more treacherous captain. The vessel sailed without him. He stood upon the wharf, in feeble health, among strangers, wounded by cruel disappointment and a sense of personal and unmerited injury inflicted on him without cause; and he saw the vessel shove off to sea, and her spread sails pass beneath the visible horizon—then he turned to ask, “*What shall I do?*”

The Angel of the Covenant, who stood by Cornelius in his family worship, and spake to Ananias in the blindness of Saul, was evidently near him, saying, "Go into such a street, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do." He obeyed at least a providential suggestion, and soon met in the street a gentleman from Boston with whom he had held sweet intercourse in this city, who became immediately his benefactor. This coincident resulted in his establishment in a prominent, and, for several years, successful business on Pennsylvania Avenue. He was immediately provided with a competency for his family, and the means of contributing liberally of time and money to benevolent objects, and even largely to the erection of the church in which he worshipped, and for the ingathering of the congregation and support of the minister. In the meantime, intelligence came from that vessel in which he had hoped perfectly to recover his health. It had been visited with the severest scourge. The captain and his nephew and many of the crew died of yellow fever, and were buried in a foreign port. He had been excluded from such a fate by the rude hand of an ungodly wretch—nay, he had been held back from it in the hand of God his Father; his life was spared; his spheres of usefulness enlarged and multiplied; he had suffered disappointment for the best results. He learned by that momentary reversion of his prospects to confide more fully in an All-wise Providence, who shapes events so that all things work together for good to his people; and that disappointment in a distant city, which led his steps in a new and nobler path, was in its results much like a later reversion in his financial prospects, which was really the transition to the brightest chapters of his life. During one of those terrible crises in which so many useful

business men have failed in the history of this country, his financial affairs became embarrassed, and he gave all his carefully-acquired and hard-earned effects to secure his creditors as far as possible against loss. One who was immediately involved in his embarrassments, and who was very familiar with his business habits, bears this testimony: "He was a man rigidly honest to the last farthing. In no instance did he resort to measures to extricate himself which were in the slightest degree of questionable honesty."

The reputation of the Christian name and the sacredness of unqualified virtue were more dear to him, and stood more commanding before him, than "houses or lands, wife or children—yea, than his own life also." In adversity as well as prosperity, he "shunned the very appearance of evil." He appreciated the highest order of realities—that virtue which is above price, and that wise providence which unfolds the unerring pleasure of God. At this time his undoubted integrity was all the fortune he had left him, and this commended him to men in every rank of life and circumstances. On account of it, his friends had little difficulty in securing his appointment under President Jackson as Captain of Police at the Capitol. This office he held until the Presidency of Mr. Polk. Whether his deposition from an office which he had so long held, and dignified by his example, and rendered important by his diligence, was right or not, is not a point for investigation now. However, many in Washington can appreciate the murmuring inquiry of Coleridge, when he says:—

"How seldom here an honest man inherits
Honor or wealth with all his worth and pains!
It sounds like stories from the land of spirits
If any man obtain that which he merits,
Or any merit that which he obtains."

Whether Mr. Wilson's successor was more deserving or not, it is certain that he gained a position which his predecessor had in part *elevated* to his aspirations, and had occupied so successfully that even a false witness could scarcely be suborned against him ; and he saw the deposed man left in a single hour with no money but the promissory notes of heaven, and no prospects but special providence. All these are like incidents too common to need our comment.

Mr. Wilson was turned out of office. He took one of those *conditional* promissory notes, signed by the Cashier of the Universe, and read it. It was this:—

“In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And He shall direct thy paths.”

He had seen this before—had often drawn upon it, and knew it good. It was enough for him.

“He committed his way unto the Lord,
And He directed his steps,”

And soon all doubts were removed. It was manifestly no longer the Divine pleasure to retain him as the paid guardian of politicians, and a guide of strangers who throng the Capitol to test the lotteries of office or ambition, or to exclaim, “See what manner of stones and what buildings are here !” He was to carry from house to house what the Holy Ghost brought to earth from heaven—“the Word of God”—“the love of Christ.”

The indications of Providence at this time were as definite to him as was the Saviour's first visit to the poor fishermen of Galilee, who were mending their tattered nets:

they left their nets immediately, and followed the Divine Being who had called them; *he* followed immediately a new line of providences, and was never left without a providence to follow. His secular employments had long been a part of his religion, and he knew how to "worship at work;" but now a new order of service is assigned him: his employment is religion indeed: his work is to worship. From house to house he bears the "Word of God and lifts the voice of prayer;" and, as he goes, men point to him, and say, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!"

2. "The Bible Society of Washington City" was at this time looking for a man of just his indomitable and consecrated energies, and he was disincumbered at the very time to serve them. While some men go mourning and murmuring all their days because they cannot find their sphere, or rise to their imagined level, he, having committed his way to the Lord, found his sphere always prepared before him, and a providence standing ready to guide his steps into it. The Executive Committee of the Bible Society elected Mr. Wilson as their visiting agent, and notified him of his appointment on the 5th of May, 1847, immediately subsequent to his deposition from office at the Capitol. The report of the Executive Committee, published May 29, informs that he "immediately entered upon his duties as agent," and in three weeks had canvassed the entire Fifth Ward; having visited, in that short time, five hundred and seventy-three families, and found ninety-two destitute of any portion of the sacred Scriptures. Of these destitute families, fourteen refused to receive any portion of the Bible, and seventy-eight purchased or received gratuitously, Bibles or New Testaments. Of the ninety-two

destitute families, fifty-four declared themselves in the habit of attending some place of public worship, and forty-eight not accustomed to meet with worshipping assemblies anywhere. One hundred children of suitable age to attend Sabbath-school were found, whose parents acknowledged they were not attending any such schools. He kept a journal exhibiting the names and precise residences of all the destitute families visited; the number of persons in each family; the number of readers in each; and the denomination and color; the apparent neglect of the intellectual and moral training of the children, and many other memoranda relating to the general domestic morals of the city. To be successful in this work, required a thorough, prudent, and deeply pious man. Such a person, even strangers, and those little acquainted with human nature, took the indefatigable Bible agent to be at the first interview; and the success which attended his first month's labor, was a suitable preface to the many months of unsurpassed usefulness which he afterwards spent in the service of the Society. It was not practicable for this Association, whose sphere was in a measure limited, to employ such a man permanently, for a long series of years; but when his usefulness was not augmented by engagements for other kindred societies, his services were eagerly sought by the Bible Society, and as cheerfully and efficiently rendered at appropriate intervals, until the last year of his life.

I find in a column of the public prints dated December 24, 1852, the following testimonial: "The Bible Society of this city has in employ as general agent, Mr. David M. Wilson, long, generally, and most favorably known throughout this city. He has completed the exploration of the First Ward; where, among one thousand one hundred and

sixty-eight families and places of business visited, he found one hundred and four families destitute of any portion of the sacred Scriptures, all of which, except fourteen that refused, were supplied by sale or gift. He also found in these families, one hundred and forty-two children of suitable age not attending any Sabbath-schools. The heads of about one-half of the destitute families professed to attend regularly some place of public worship; the others generally confessed that they did not, or but very seldom if ever attend. The Bibles and Testaments distributed, were received with apparently real desire to possess them, and with promises faithfully to use them. A number of interesting incidents resulting from his former supply of the same ward, have been met with by the agent, showing that the good seed then sown had yielded blessed fruit, rejoicing and cheering him in his work. He has commenced the exploration and supply of the Second Ward, and the Managers of the Society bespeak for him, in his benevolent mission to do good and to communicate, the kind reception and generous support of all whom he may visit. They feel called upon to acknowledge the general spirit of liberality manifested in their contributions by the citizens of the First Ward. The work now in progress is evidently necessary and proper; and though the compensation paid to the agent is small, yet enlarged contributions are necessary to purchase the great number of Bibles and Testaments required; while the surplus, if any, is immediately transmitted to the parent Society for the general supply." This introduces us at once to a series of reports in the handwriting of the Agent himself, which describe, ward by ward, his second exploration of the entire city. The results of his labors in the First Ward, are stated in

the quotation just given. In the Second Ward, he visited one thousand two hundred and thirty-three families and places of business. Of these, one hundred and three were found destitute; seventeen refused to receive on any terms (all but one Roman Catholics). The number of children not attending any Sabbath-school were one hundred and thirty-nine; the parents of seventy-two of these promised to send them to some place of Sabbath instruction soon; seventy-nine heads of the destitute families can read intelligently the Bibles furnished them; thirty-six said they attended public worship on the Sabbath, and sixty-seven acknowledged they did not.

In the Third Ward, the number of families and places of business visited was one thousand one hundred and sixty-eight. Of these he found one hundred and nine destitute of any part of the Bible; and twenty-six (all Roman Catholics but two), who called themselves "German Rationalists," refused to receive copies on any terms. Ninety children were found not connected with any Sunday-school, and the attendance of forty-eight of them was promised. Of the destitute families, forty-nine said they were attendants at the house of God on the Sabbath, and sixty declared they were not. In the families supplied, there were one hundred intelligent readers.

In the Fourth Ward, he visited one thousand six hundred and seventy families and places of business, and found one hundred and ninety-seven destitute; sixty-eight, all Romanists, refused to receive the Bible even as a present. Seventy-four of the destitute were accustomed to attend public worship, and one hundred and fifty-four could read. In that ward he found one hundred and twenty-nine children not attending Sunday-school. The parents of seventy-

one of them gave assurances that they should attend, and the parents of fifty-eight would make no promise concerning them.

The families and places of business visited in the Fifth Ward numbered one thousand and fifty. In these were one hundred and fourteen destitute of the Scriptures, thirty-one of whom, all Roman Catholics, refused to receive on any terms. In the families supplied, one hundred and thirty-two persons could read the inspired word left with them. Sixty-four of the destitute families said they did not attend church, and forty of them reported general attendance on the Sabbath. Ninety-four children were found in that ward not attending upon religious instruction even on the Sabbath, and the parents of forty-nine of these gave assurance that they should subsequently be sent to Sunday-schools.

In canvassing the Sixth Ward, he visited eight hundred and forty families and places of business; found sixty-nine destitute; seven refused to receive on any terms. Among those supplied were eighty-four readers, and in the ward were eighty-one children of proper age who did not attend Sabbath-schools, concerning the subsequent attendance of forty of whom assurances were given by the parents.

In the Seventh Ward, he visited one thousand three hundred and thirty families and places of business, finding one hundred and sixty-six destitute; furnishing gratuitously seventy Bibles and forty-four Testaments, and gaining assurances that eighty-three out of one hundred and forty-eight neglected children should be sent to Sabbath-school. Sixty of the destitute families said they were in the habit of attending public worship on the Lord's day, and one hundred and three by their own confession were found to be habitual neglectors of all public and private worship.

In the last of the reports from which these facts have been deduced, the agent concludes with these memorable words of thanksgiving: "In this brief report of the seventh and last ward, completing the visiting and supply of the entire city with the Word of God, I would, in conclusion, record my gratitude to the God of the Bible for preserving me to complete this vastly important work, and though I cannot hope that all has been accomplished that I have earnestly desired and sought, I have the fullest assurance that great good has been done, and much more abundant good will be secured by this agency. To Him whose work it is, and whose servants we are, to Him be all the praise forever."

Thus we have followed him through one of his faithful explorations of the whole Capitol of this great and nominally Christian nation; and the marginal table,* which I have computed from his own journal as reported, will give

* TABLE.

	1st Ward.	2d Ward.	3d Ward.	4th Ward.	5th Ward.	6th Ward.	7th Ward.	Total.
Families and places of business visited,	1168	1223	1168	1670	1050	840	1330	8459
Those destitute of the Word of God,	104	103	109	197	114	69	166	862
Those who refused copies on any terms,	14	17	26	68	31	7	12	176
The number of destitute readers supplied,	115	79	100	154	132	84	165	829
Children in no Sabbath-school,	142	139	90	129	94	81	148	823
The number of such whose future attendance was promised,	63	72	48	71	49	48	83	434
The number of the destitute who attend church,	51	36	49	74	40	35	60	345
The number of the destitute who do not attend,	39	67	60	80	64	50	103	463

the moral aspect of the metropolis in pretty true mathematical proportions as it was at that time.

3. We may next consider our brother's labors in connection with the City Missionary Society, which was really the offspring of his philanthropy, and the very soul of which was his ardent piety and zeal.

These discoveries made by him as agent of the City Bible Society, so affected the pious people, and especially the pastors of Washington, that the inquiry became general and earnest, "What shall be done to promote the cause of evangelical religion among the destitute of this city?" A similar question is proposed by every Christian citizen concerning the entire country, and especially by those residing in cities, concerning the cities in which they live. It is a solemn fact, deduced from the most reliable estimates, that not more than *one-third* of all the population of the United States are *ever*, on any one *pleasant* Sabbath, convened in places of public worship. In cities the ratio is still more forbidding. I might speak of London, in evangelical England, with her thirty thousand "Costers," who are as literal heathens as the Hindoos, and her many hundreds of thousands equally degraded, who never hear the Gospel, nor enter the house of God unless to pilfer or to beg. But my remarks are concerning our own cities, and Washington as the metropolis of the evangelical America. We need not go abroad for examples of moral want—our land is full. Illustrations might be gathered from the cities of the Pilgrims, of the Mississippi valley, or of the Southern States. But the city with whose moral aspect I am most familiar is New York; and the moral condition of that commercial emporium, numerically expressed, suggests what may yet be true of this metropolis, unless God shall

raise up many municipal benefactors like the deceased city missionary. In that city, at the time Mr. Wilson was canvassing Washington, I collected many facts like the following: At least one hundred thousand of her population had no stated places of worship. The houses of worship erected were so inadequate, that if all the people who were able to attend church (making all due allowance for the protection of residences, ministry to the sick, &c.) had convened for public religious services on any given day, there would have been at least one hundred thousand people who could not be seated in the sanctuary for want of room; making necessary one hundred new churches, competent to seat each one thousand persons, in order to meet a moral want which was then pressing upon that people. A numerical estimate of the city morals made a showing of more religious destitution than existed at the same time in the Sandwich Islands. In the latter an average of more than one in *five* persons represented the ratio of church membership, and in the former the average was only one member to *ten* citizens. In the five oldest wards of the city were eighty-four thousand people and but eighteen churches; and in the Sandwich Islands, with the same numerical population, were twenty-two churches and twenty-five ministers.

When adults were thus morally destitute, juvenile depravity was, of course, abundant. The grand jury reported that year: "Of the higher grades of felony, *four-fifths* of the complaints examined have been against *minors*." The schedule for the city prison under the same date showed sixteen thousand criminals; four thousand under twenty-one years of age, and *one thousand under fifteen years*. Out of twelve thousand children in *one* ward between the ages of five and sixteen, the captain of police

reported only seven thousand attending day-schools, and two thousand five hundred attending Sabbath-schools, leaving *five thousand* children in that ward without advantages of a common education, and *nine thousand* destitute of all public religious influence. In perfect keeping with this, was the official statement of the chief of police for the following year, showing that more than *four thousand commitments of minors*, and nearly *eight thousand* juvenile arrests had been made in twelve months.

These facts may seem foreign to my hearers and my subject, but they bear directly upon the importance of the question which Mr. Wilson's disclosures had started in the public mind in Washington. Thirty years before, New York was young, and Christian enterprise had centered there. Although there were some vile sections with destitute and abandoned people, it was believed the scum of vice and poverty would soon be cleansed, or float away through the various means of livelihood presented in our broad and sparsely populated country. The *results* in New York, however, showed differently, and they illustrate the importance of incessant effort. A general analogy of circumstances and of the relations of cause and effect, exists in all growing cities when compared with each other. In respect to morals, this is especially true of New York and Washington. Both are national centres, both have their causes, their captains and cadets of crime. The one is a grand ware and market-house of States and nations; the other is the Federal City, standing on a hill where it cannot be hid, and yet sitting beneath the eaves of the world, with every negative influence bearing down upon its private thrift and evangelical truthfulness and piety. The growing capitol of a great nation naturally attracts multitudes by the re-

wards of curiosity, and alienates them by the disappointment of baseless calculations. It calls many beneath its auspices, who wait in want till death for the anticipated benefactions. It presents a moral aspect, from its very incipency to the maturity of age and established customs, tinged with every variety of character, and influenced by every grade and condition of life. Such a city is, in all respects, the child of the nation of which it is the capitol. This may not be true of a commercial emporium; but it is true of this metropolis. Morally, Washington is at once the offspring and the representative of the entire confederacy, and it should be the child of prayers and liberal patronage throughout the nation; yet this does not excuse its citizens from the most direct and self-sacrificing local efforts. We cannot ask patronage abroad, when we do not exert ourselves at home. Such was the conviction of the few devoted men who met on the 28th of March, 1848, in the lecture-room of the E Street Baptist Church, to consider the remedy for those evils in our midst which the Bible agent had revealed. To this meeting had been invited, by public notice, the ministers and members of all the evangelical churches of the city, many of which were represented by a zealous delegation of pastors and laymen. A society was organized, denominated "The Washington City Union Missionary and Tract Society," by the adoption of a constitution, the fifth article of which was, that "the management of this Society shall be intrusted to an Executive Committee, composed of the president, secretary, and treasurer, and the pastors of the evangelical churches; five of whom shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. They shall appoint their own chairman, and make their own laws." The object of the Society was

declared to be "to promote the cause of evangelical religion among the destitute of this city;" and, to accomplish this object, Mr. Wilson was appointed by the Executive Committee visiting agent. This Society held its first public meeting in the F Street Presbyterian Church, on the 19th February, 1849. At this meeting, the agent gave his first annual report, including some nine months' labor. He entered at once upon his mission, after the organization of the Society, the March previous; he visited all parts of the city, especially those remote from places of public worship; and, by distributing tracts, reading the Bible, prayer, and religious conversation, labored to impress upon individuals and families the sanctifying truth of the Gospel. In his first general Report, he says:—

"I entered upon the work assigned me, going from family to family among the poor and destitute of the city, on Monday, April 3, 1848. I have, from that time to the 1st of February, 1849, made 2766 visits, engaged in prayer in these 990 times; distributed 3805 tracts, containing 24,300 pages.

"It has been most gratifying and cheering to me, to observe the very cordial manner in which I have been generally and almost universally received by the people. In all cases where circumstances permitted, I have, in the most personal and earnest manner, urged upon all the great concerns of their souls' salvation, beseeching and praying them in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God; and, relying alone upon Him, the good Spirit from on high has been present, making the truth reach the heart, evidenced by the tears coursing down the cheeks of many, which no effort of theirs could stay or conceal, and accompanied frequently by their own expression of their sense of guilt and danger.

“I have not failed to employ my utmost efforts to fix upon the minds of all the vast importance to themselves and families, of their becoming regular attendants upon some place of public worship ; that, from the mouth of God’s servants, the living ministry, they might hear the great truths of his Gospel, the ordained instrumentality for salvation to all that believe. I have used my best efforts to induce parents to send their children regularly to some Sabbath-school most convenient and agreeable to themselves, that they might have the privilege and advantage of enjoying the religious instruction which it is their aim and special object to communicate, and which, by the blessing of God, they have so successfully accomplished in the salvation of so many children and youth taught in them.

“On Friday evening, the 14th of April, I commenced a prayer-meeting at the Glass House ; visiting every family, and conversing and praying with them on the day of the meeting. I soon felt that previous Divine influences were resting upon and pervading the region, extending to almost every family in the neighborhood. The stillness and solemnity of the meeting equalled anything I had ever witnessed, though there were usually two or three mothers present, with their children in their arms.

“I soon invited those feeling themselves lost or ruined sinners, and determined now to seek the great salvation, to manifest it by rising or kneeling while a hymn was being sung. Two immediately arose, and on one occasion as many as eight. As the result in that neighborhood, sixteen have already united themselves with evangelical churches, all heads of families. In three cases, both husbands and wives have joined themselves to Christ and his

people in a spiritual union, which, if real, shall never be dissolved in time or eternity.

“The meeting on English Hill commenced the first Wednesday in July, and has been continued to this time. Soon the fiercest opposition was stirred up by an old woman, calling herself a Roman Catholic, who excited the half-grown boys to talk and be noisy about the door, and even to throw gravel against and into the house to disturb us. The man at whose house the meeting was held told me he was afraid to have it continued any longer, lest he should suffer injury. I told him not to fear; that *I could not think of letting the Devil drive me off the ground while doing my Master's work*; that I would get a police officer to see that we were not disturbed or annoyed in our worship. I received the services of one who most faithfully and successfully performed his duty, so that the meeting soon assumed a stillness and, to a considerable extent, the solemnity that became the place of prayer. Soon a few of those attending seemed evidently awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger, and were prepared to ask what they must do to be saved. They were made special subjects of prayer; and in a few weeks they gave evidence that they had passed from death unto life. Two of them have united themselves with the Church of God, and others will no doubt soon follow their example. Four others, in different parts of the city, in connection with my labors, have also professed religion, making, in all, twenty-two that have already united themselves with evangelical churches. None of them, when first visited, were in the regular habit of attending any place of worship; some not having attended for three, five, six, and, in one case, even eight years.

“The number of individuals and families that have been

induced by this means to become regular attendants upon the worship of God on the Sabbath I know to be large, but cannot state with certainty the precise number."

The Executive Committee have given most positive testimony to his usefulness. They testify, two years after the Society was organized, as follows :—

"With the evidences before them, the Committee cannot hesitate in expressing the opinion that much real good has been effected through the labors of the Agent. The instances alluded to are but a few, culled here and there from his monthly reports; and the reports themselves, abounding, as they do, in thrilling interest, are but selections from the indications of good which he meets with every month. There is every motive that can be derived both from faith and vision, to urge the friends of the Society to continued and renewed exertion. From the seed sown, much fruit has been already gathered; the field is a most encouraging one, and proofs of its fruitfulness are constantly multiplying.

"If any doubt the usefulness of the Society, and ask what are the evidences that it has as yet accomplished any substantial good, to such we say, go with us to one of the outskirts of the city, and we will show you there a house of worship which it has built, far from any other, and in which not less than twice a week the prayers of the children of God are mingled, and the voice of the ministry is heard; and then, if you can bear so long a walk, go with us to another remote section, and we will lead you to another building which it has erected, where also twice a week attentive congregations assemble for prayer, and to listen to the preaching of the Gospel; and if you can tarry there awhile, we will introduce you also to a flourishing Sabbath-school,

gathered through the same instrumentality. Besides this, if you will pass around on the Sabbath through the various churches and Sunday-schools, and ask of many who have commenced attending only during the last year or two, "Who are these, and whence came they?" you will learn that they have been persuaded to attend through the means of the Society; and if you will visit some of these churches at the solemn season of communion, you will behold, seated around the table of the Lord, a goodly number, who, until visited by the Agent of this society, were strangers to the Saviour and to his people. Through the instrumentality of the Society, thirty-four persons, nearly all of them heads of families, have united with different churches; four have died in the triumphs of faith, three of them before having had an opportunity to connect themselves with any church; and, in all, sixty-five have professed conversion.

"If you wish further evidence, and will accompany the Agent in any of his daily tours, he will introduce you to numerous families who, though poor in this world's goods, are rich in hope of an inheritance in heaven; and you may hear among them the voice of prayer, mingled with thanksgiving for the institution of this society, and imploring blessings upon all its friends. He will point you, among other instances of equal interest, to a family whose head, a little while since, was an intemperate man, and so violent and abusive that his wife and children were compelled to leave him, but who now is a sober and industrious citizen, his family living together in harmony, and among whom confusion has given place to peace, and fear been driven away by love.

"If not yet satisfied, we will refer you to the people themselves, among whom the Agent has visited, multitudes

of whom will testify, in the emphatic language which one of them used a year ago, 'Sir, I see you are doing much good in the neighborhood, and I can and do heartily wish you success. I will give you all the encouragement I can.'

"If to all this you reply, 'But the field is a small one, and therefore but little can be done,' we answer (without stopping to prove so easy a proposition as that where religious influence is exerted no field can be small) that the good done by the Society has already been carried beyond the limits of the corporation. A family moved into this city some time ago from Virginia, and was visited by the Agent; while here, one of the members of the family gave good evidence of having experienced a change of heart, and when about to return to Virginia, said to the Agent, 'I will employ my best efforts to get up a Sabbath-school in the neighborhood where I am going;' and with tears in her eyes, and a melting heart, asked him to join with her to pray for her brothers and the unconverted of her family. Who can limit religious influence, or stay its ever-widening circles? Who can say to it, Thus far shalt thou go, and no further; or mark out its metes and bounds?

"The Agent has been faithful in the discharge of his duties. While the extent of his influence and his success are not to be measured by arithmetical computation, it may yet indicate his efficiency to state that, during the two years in which the Society has been in existence, he has made more than five thousand visits; engaged in prayer, in the families which he has visited, nearly three thousand times; and distributed nearly seven thousand tracts, containing upwards of forty-four thousand pages. Among the persons whom he has visited, besides conversation and prayer, he has frequently read tracts and portions of Scripture. He

has often been sent for by individuals who were sick, and in many cases has been the means of obtaining for the poor needed assistance. He has not only himself attended the prayer-meetings near the Glass House and on English Hill, but has every week taken pains to secure the attendance of brethren from different churches, ministers, and often choirs of young persons. He distributes the notices of the meetings of the Executive Committee, attends their sessions, and prepares for them every month a written report of his proceedings. The labors specifically assigned to him by the Committee *he has voluntarily increased, and has toiled with an ardor and discretion of zeal which could have flowed only from love, and which will doubtless receive from the Society, as it has already done from the Executive Committee, the fullest approbation.*"

Of this Society he was the chief embodiment and efficiency till the 20th October, 1852, when, to meet the wants of those whom he found in his visits destitute of the Word of God, he again enlisted as agent of the City Bible Society, canvassing the whole city as before described, and even exploring nearly the entire county of Washington. In the meantime, his usefulness as a visiting agent and city missionary, had been reported to the secretaries of the American Tract Society residing at New York, and they were interested to appoint him to carry on his work under their directions, as a special visitor and agent of their Society. His interest in the tract cause made the appointment very congenial to his wishes, and he gladly accepted it; entering without delay upon their service in a manner very similar to his former missionary work.

4. Of the results of his labors for the American Tract Society, much more should be said and written than can be

at present. As when employed by the Union Missionary and Tract Society, he again went from family to family, with religious books and tracts; conversing, and so far as practicable, praying with the inmates of every dwelling. The chief object of the American Tract Society is, to reach those individuals and families with religious truth, who do not attend upon the public preaching of the Gospel, and are destitute of good religious reading.

This class of the American people is, as I have before stated, very numerous in all our States and cities; and if churches and a living ministry are essential to sound morality, civil freedom, and genuine salvation, this colporteur-work in some form is no less important, or even essential. In thinly populated regions, and in large or densely crowded cities, this work cannot be too highly esteemed. It is a work particularly necessary in the District of Columbia, and Elder Wilson was eminently qualified to prosecute it thoroughly. His labors in this sphere were indeed more abundant than many could endure, and more blessed than many would dare anticipate. The officers of the Society in New York were, in a measure, made aware of these facts by his statistical reports and other tokens of his eagerness to be useful. Personal interviews with the secretaries of the Society before his death, and their communications since, assure me that he was not unappreciated; and that they felt grateful for the providences which secured to the general tract cause, the services of so valuable a man. His facts also speak in unmistakable approval of his efficiency.

One of his statistical reports represents, in a concise tabular form, \$2435 80 received for sales; \$190 worth of books and tracts given to the destitute; two hundred pub-

lic meetings addressed, and prayer-meetings held by himself; one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine families destitute of all religious books except the Bible; five hundred and two families still found in the District of Columbia destitute of the Bible; one thousand six hundred and twenty-six habitually neglecting public evangelical worship; eight thousand five hundred and forty-six families visited; and six thousand five hundred and forty-five prayed with, or fervently addressed on matters of personal religion. The incidents given in connection with his statistical reports are, many of them, both thrilling and instructive, and indicate the earnestness and acceptance with which he preached Christ in the families which he visited. "The American Messenger" and "Child's Paper," the best periodicals of the kind published in the world, were often enriched by extracts from his concise and deeply pious sketches. Several of his reports, and a few of his filial letters have been sent me by mail during the week; and it is really affecting to trace, in his own trembling handwriting, his diligence in this cause. "He went about doing good." "It was his meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent him." How many families were visited in a year, and made better for his presence! How much more beautiful to him was the image of Christ reflected from the spirit of the Christian, clothed with Divine righteousness, than regular features and costly apparel! How much brighter to his eye were tears of penitence than costly gems or night's best shower of stars! Repentant tears were to him like the first dews of morning; like the light of heaven darting in through "the door of hope," and portraying, in the dark prison-walls of depraved hearts, the inverted images of glory. He was comforted by penitential sorrow, for he

knew "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit," and used often to say with assurance, "A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." He may have been *too* hopeful; if so, it was a good fault, for which no man might chide him. His own sketches indicate great hopefulness, sincerity, frankness, and *faithfulness*. He was often very forcible and convincing in his personal appeals. A few of the incidents recorded in his reports before the three societies already named should not be omitted here. They will reveal his spirit as a family visitor, and his success in reaching the hardest hearts.

When laboring for the City Bible Society, among a multitude of interesting sketches reported, I find an interview with a sick man nigh unto death, who had beside him on his couch a Bible which Mr. Wilson had furnished him six years before, and which, with the earnest entreaties made at the time the Bible was given, had been to him "the law that is perfect, converting the soul." The sacred present had become a bright light in "the dark valley," and the agent who, six years before, had visited him in time to give him the effectual warning, had now called again in time to record his dying testimony of hope and faith. Another visit to the sick is recorded in the same report, in which the sufferer was an aged colored woman, who was unable to read, and had no Bible, but was attended by her sister, who could read, and who had endeavored to procure a Testament, but was in such utter destitution as to render it impossible for her to pay for one in large type such as she needed. Mr. Wilson gave them a Bible, heard them read from it, and then urged them to an immediate preparation to meet God, and described to them the character and mission of Christ, as himself "the way, the truth, and

the life." The heartfelt gratitude which they expressed for such "glad tidings" was enough to shed light upon the Agent's path for many days.

I will quote from his own pen a few incidents, which will show his fidelity to all classes, and illustrate his mode of personal effort.

"In a house, neatly furnished, I asked the lady, herself richly attired, if she had a Bible. She said, 'No, indeed! and I do not want any!' She further said she was of no denomination, and attended no church. I offered to give her a Bible: she thanked me, and said, if she wanted one, she was able to buy it and pay for it. I asked her the cause of her hostility to the Bible. She replied, 'There are so many hypocritical professors of religion, that I want nothing to do with it in any form.' She illustrated what she meant by referring to her husband's mother, as having induced him to expend for her luxury what belonged strictly to his wife. I told her that what she had stated, and her present unhappy feelings, were proof that she needed the power of the Gospel before she could be peaceful in spirit—that God's testimony is, 'there is no peace to the wicked, who are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' I asked her if she did not find it true in her own experience? She said, 'Yes; I am far from being happy.' I answered, 'So it will be with you so long as you seek happiness in the world. The very friendship of the world is enmity with God.' I then urged her to seek peace by repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ—laying up better treasures than earth can give in heaven, at God's right hand, where are pleasures forevermore; and assuring her that where her treasure is, there her heart must be also. As I

left, she expressed deep gratitude for the interest in her which I had manifested."

"Another, a German Rationalist, whom I asked if he had a Bible, said he had none, and did not believe in it; that he knew enough of it, having been taught it in the schools in Germany, and proved it to be false in several parts of it. I told him the difficulty was not in the Bible, but in the depravity and wickedness of his own spirit, as the Bible truly testifies, 'the carnal heart is enmity against God, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' After further conversation, he admitted the Bible contains the purest morals known among men. I asked him how that could be, if, as he said, it taught falsehood. He stood embarrassed for an answer, when I told him I would leave him to settle the matter with his own heart, with a prayer in his behalf that the Lord would open his mind and heart to see, believe, and know the truth as it is in Jesus."

"I entered a house in which I found three Irish women. They said they had no Bible; that they were Roman Catholics, and did not need any; that they had their prayer-book, and such books as the church directed to be used. I opened my bundle, and offered to supply them with a Bible. They replied, No; they wanted none of my Protestant books in their house. One of them left the room and went up stairs, and invited down a rough-looking man, and then passing by me locked the front door. He stood in the door leading to the other part of the house, and, with angry countenance, said, 'How can you engage in such nefarious business as circulating a false version of the Bible?' I told him I had the true and best Bible in existence. He said, 'The circulation of the Protestant

Bible has caused more angry feelings and bloodshed than all other causes.' I replied, the Romish Church fears the Bible, and tries to conceal and keep it from the people, lest they become too enlightened to submit to her penances, confessionals, and oppressions, and has literally deluged the earth with the blood of the saints; that while we are talking, there are men and women incarcerated in loathsome prisons in Italy, subject to execution for no other offence but reading the Word of the living God, which he has given to make wise unto salvation and to make us free indeed. Finding me still unintimidated and faithful to tell him the truth, he asked me, in a calmer tone, how I knew this was the Word of God. I answered, I know it from the perfect portraiture which it exhibits of the secret workings and corruptions of the soul, such as none but the omniscient God could develop; and I know, from the fulfilment of prophecy, that it is the record of Him who knoweth all things from the beginning. I then read the 53d chapter of Isaiah. He took a seat and listened to it, and I asked him to whom he thought that referred. He said, 'Evidently to the Lord Jesus Christ.' I replied, in conclusion, that in Him is fulfilled all the law and the prophets, and He is the end of the law for righteousness to all that believe on Him. Having presented to them thus the doctrine of the supremacy of God's Word and salvation by faith, I bade them an affectionate farewell and departed."

"In another family, I asked the woman of the house if she had a Bible. 'A Bible!' said she; she did not know what I meant. I showed her one; and she said she never had anything like it. A lady present said, in explanation, 'We are Roman Catholics, and do not need or use the Bible; and would not be allowed to have it if we wanted it

ever so much.' I told them it was wicked to allow themselves to be robbed of the bread of life; that God would hold them individually accountable for their treatment of Him and His Word, given to teach them the way of eternal life; that God had given the Bible to us as our birthright; that the Saviour commanded them to 'search the Scriptures,' and that the Apostle commended the Bereans for searching the Scriptures, and that all true successors of the Apostles would do the same. I told them I would like to leave the Word of God with them, that they might see for themselves what it contained. They said they would surely read it if I would leave it, and take care of it till I should come again. I left them both reading the Bible, and offered a silent prayer that God would attend it with His blessing, and make it the wisdom of God and the power of God to their salvation."

"In one house I found a man sick with the consumption. He said, in answer to the inquiry if he was a Christian, 'In myself I am nothing, but on Christ I rely for salvation. I trust in Him as able and willing to save all that come to God by him.' After praying with him, he asked my name, and said he was glad to see me, to tell me of the happy influence of a Bible which I gave to his lame brother five years previous. He said, the conversation and prayer I had with him made an impression upon his mind, and he gradually became deeply interested in his Bible till it was his constant companion. He said, he had witnessed often the comfort it afforded him in his affliction, and beheld his ultimate peaceful death."

"A widowed mother, with four little children to support, said she was almost ashamed to tell me she had no Bible; that she would gladly buy one, but she had no money. I

handed her one, and told her, as agent of the Washington Bible Society, I was authorized to give it to her. She seemed truly grateful for it, and I asked her if she had seriously attended to her salvation. She replied, she had not. I sought to hold up to her view the nature of her guilt and danger as a sinner condemned already, and the wrath of God abiding on her, and the vast importance to herself and children of giving immediately her best energies to secure eternal life by embracing Jesus Christ as her Saviour. She seemed much interested in the words which I spoke and read. We knelt in prayer that God's Spirit might open her heart to receive the truth. Six or eight days after, when passing near her residence, another woman came calling after me, and said she had inquired of several to find where I lived; for a lady to whom I had given a Bible was very ill, and wished much to see me. I went immediately to see her, and found her dangerously ill with lung fever, but much alive to her guilty condition. She said she felt her sins burdening her, and knew not what to do. I pointed to Christ as able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him; as having borne her sins and carried her sorrows, and now saying, 'Come unto me.' These and other similar truths seemed to calm her troubled spirit. She asked me to pray for her, which I did with all my heart. Before I left, she said she felt peace in believing in Jesus. I visited her many times after that, and always found her submissive to the Divine will and at peace, ever glad to see me, and seeming literally to drink in the truth which I was kindly permitted to bear to her."

These extracts from his notes as Bible-agent, indicate his fitness to be a blessing to all classes in all circumstances.

The incidents found in his memoranda as city missionary, are more interesting in their detail than those already repeated; but the extracts given, when speaking of that department of his labor, and the large number of incidents from which to select a few as illustrative of his labors in the American tract cause, compel me to omit all his personal sketches when visiting for the Union Missionary Society.

As colporteur of the American Tract Society, he recorded many faithful interviews and acknowledged much fruit for his faithfulness. He says: "On one occasion, a Sabbath-school teacher told me that two of his class were first interested and awakened by reading the 'Scripture Biography' and 'Repository of Tracts' which I had furnished them, and were recently admitted to church-fellowship with himself." "A colored man told me that 'Romaine's Life of Faith' had given him much light on that difficult subject; that he had read it many times, and that he was striving to live by faith in the Son of God, and to bring forth fruits of piety."

"Four or five months since, I visited a family composed of father, mother, and son. As I did not succeed in selling any of my books, I gave them some tracts, and talked and prayed with them. A few days afterwards, the young man hailed me in the street, saying they had been so much interested in the tracts, that he wished to get something else of me. He purchased 'Pike's Persuasives to Early Piety,' and 'Baxter's Saints' Rest.' Some days after the family removed to the country, and I did not see any of them until two weeks since, when the son came up to me with every expression of pleasure and joy, shook me warmly by the hand, and began to tell what the Lord had done for

him. He said, 'Serious impressions were first made upon my mind by reading the tracts, and these impressions were matured by reading the books which I got from you, and my father, mother, and myself were led by them to the foot of the cross, where we found joy and peace in believing in Jesus: we are now members of an evangelical church near our home.' "

"A gentleman who purchased 'James's Anxious Inquirer,' 'Sabbath Manual,' &c., says: 'The reading of those books has entirely revolutionized the state of things in my family. Before that, none cared much for the Sabbath, church, or anything of the sort; but now all that can, attend church and esteem it a pleasant service, and two of us are so much interested in religious things, that we shall soon join the people of God.' I asked which of his family were particularly interested and weighing the subject of church-membership. He replied, 'Myself and my eldest daughter, and I hope there are others that will not tarry long behind.' "

"In my visits I met a young man from the country, and prevailed upon him to purchase 'Baxter's Call' and 'Harlan Page.' Some time after I saw him again, when he met me with so much pleasure and joy upon his countenance, that I was sure he had some good tidings to communicate. As soon as he could give expression to his feelings—for they seemed too big for utterance—he said, 'The books I purchased of you have been richly blessed to me, by arousing me to a sense of my lost condition as a sinner. For several days, I was much burdened and distressed on account of my sins, but I continued to read and to pray till light broke in upon my spirit. Since then I have been peaceful and happy. My mother and sister here are also much

interested in reading them, and are now seriously impressed. I wish to express my gratitude to you for having brought such a treasure to me.' He bought several other books—'Doddridge,' 'Flavel,' &c.—saying he expected they would continue to do good in his neighborhood."

"Some time since, I gave a youth of sixteen or seventeen years of age, the tract entitled 'Come to Jesus,' which he took home. He read it with such deep emotion as to be noticed by the other members of the family. From that time there was a marked change in him. He then began to attend one of the evangelical churches in the city, and was a regular attendant at the Sabbath-school, until prevented by sickness. His sickness terminated fatally in five weeks, but not until the spirit of faith, wrought in his heart by God's blessing upon the tract, had been developed. He repeated many times, he was not afraid to die; that he believed and trusted in Jesus as his only Saviour, and expressed much thankfulness that God had directed me to him. Just before he breathed his last, he made a most earnest and touching appeal to his sorrowing friends, urging them to prepare to meet him in heaven."

"A woman with a blind husband, told me I could never know, in this world, how much good I had done them by my weekly visits with tracts and spiritual counsel, which had been blessed in bringing them to behold wondrous things out of God's law, and leading them from their spiritual blindness into the marvellous light of the Gospel."

"An aged man said, 'For seventy years I have been neglecting and even scoffing at religion, but God in his great compassion has shown me my condition as a sinner when reading "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain."' Now he is a joyful Christian." "I presented a young man from

the country the little volume 'Young Man from Home.' He recently met me, and said the volume was exactly suited to his state of mind; it so fully exposed his imminent dangers, that he regarded it as a kind messenger sent from his Father in heaven to prevent his ruin. These impressions led him to the house of God, where the way of salvation was more clearly opened before him, and he was led to devote himself and all that he had to the service of Christ his Saviour." "Twenty-three persons professing conversion have communicated the fact that their first serious impressions were made by the silent messages of truth furnished in my visits to them. How many others may have been blessed in the same brief period, and by the same instrumentalities, eternity only can disclose." "I am thus constantly in part receiving the fruit of my labors; and though at times feeble in my bodily frame, my heart is rejoiced and strengthened in this good work."

I must not multiply incidents recorded by his own trembling hand in these reports. Two full chapters at least might be given to facts of the most interesting character had we time; but I must pass to notice—

5. His labors in the Sunday-school cause: And here the record is also too full, and it is to a large extent sealed up until the time of the end. Those added to the churches with which he has been associated, have in many instances attributed their first serious impression to the kindness of his entreaties, the tangible nature of his piety, and the earnestness of his prayers as a superintendent of Sabbath-schools.

In the first of his association with the Christian church, he evinced a fondness for the young persons in the congregation, which met a response from the hearts of parents

and children. Parents love the man who loves their children, and is willing to exert himself for their welfare; the children also loved him because he first loved them. These facts, connected with his ardent and inevitable punctuality, fitted him at once to superintend the Sabbath-school of the church in which he was an elder, and he was appointed to aid in this work in 1823, when connected with the Second Presbyterian Church, and continued an active and acceptable superintendent of schools until his decease. His influence in shaping and sustaining the Sabbath-school Union of this city, is familiar to the minds of all who have seen the tall slender frame and benign features of the man, as he marshalled the juvenile forces at annual meetings, and moved about a master spirit among them. His presence was always a token for good—his absence was a marvel.

In regard to his fitness for this work, and the past usefulness of his ministry to the young, one of his former pastors, who is now in a distant land, said to me more than a year since, "He is a most indefatigable man in his labors for the children of the congregation; and the result is, many are *converted* in the Sabbath-school, and others received the impressions which make them the ready subjects of revivals. Probably more persons were brought into the Fourth Presbyterian Church in this way than by the influence of any other one man."

Elder Wilson was for many years the life and soul of very important schools in this city. One intimately associated with him in his early labors of love in Washington, writes me as follows:—

"He was, as all know, a devoted friend to the Sunday-school cause. With few advantages of early education, and little *critical* acquaintance with the Scriptures, he

made, nevertheless, an impressive and profitable teacher ; dealing as he always did in the vital, fundamental truths of the Christian system, and watering as he did all his teaching with prayer, he succeeded in making a strong impression on the minds of the young. Then he was constitutionally and habitually *punctual*. His watch was always in his hand : whoever was behind the appointed hour, he was not.

“Brought up in the country, he had the habit of early rising ; and this helped to make him a great friend to early prayer-meetings. A prayer-meeting at sunrise, was one of the measures which marked the rise of the Fourth Church. I could relate instances of the open, obvious, undeniable, and immediate answers to prayer there offered which would surprise Christians, and which to worldly men or lukewarm professors, would be altogether incredible. I trembled while I beheld. O, that it were so always !”

6. This leads me to speak of his experience as a praying man, and his efforts to originate and sustain prayer-meetings, some of which resulted in the organization of Sunday-schools and churches.

While a member of the Second Church, and then of the Fourth, and finally of the Western Church, he was a man distinguished for his importunity, perseverance, and prevalence in prayer. In seasons of revival or great spiritual declension, he was often in an agony of prayer, which would accompany him for days, and detain him from both food and sleep. He was known at different times to spend the whole night in earnest supplication. The general interests of the Church, and the special necessities of individuals with whom he had conversed, were ever upon his heart, and he prayed for general and particular objects,

knowing what blessings he wanted, and for whose sake he desired them. The honor of Christ, through whose name and merits all blessings flow to men, furnished a sufficient argument for him before the mercy-seat. His public prayers were usually brief, but in social and secret worship he often lingered by the hour around the throne till he could touch the Divine sceptre, and move the arm that swayed it. He prayed not as if his prayers were meritorious, and would lay God under obligation to any of His creatures; but he prayed because his soul longed to have what God loves to give; prayer being, in his esteem, a going up toward God for the blessings which he is bowing the gentle heavens to offer. God had manifestly raised in Elder Wilson's spirit, the cry for many of the richest blessings which he ever bestowed upon our citizens or our country. His patriotism was inferior only to his piety; and his idea of a Christian nation, consecrated to God from its Capital to its circumference, was only surpassed by his certain hope, that the kingdom of Christ shall yet fill the earth. He was an humble loyal citizen, and his patriotism was not that of the partisan or the politician: it was more like that of Jesus and Jeremiah as they wept over Jerusalem, and of Abraham when he claimed the promised land, and offered his son within the bounds of its future capital, and upon the site of its future magnificent temple. His heart was large, and grasped with warm desire the interests of this land given by God to our fathers; his sympathy was deep, and reached to the lowest sons of want, and estimated them by what they cost the Son of God, and what they would become if sanctified through the truth. No immortal being was, therefore, esteemed lightly, or beneath his prayers and efforts.

Among the first of his labors to establish prayer-meetings, was the effort, in 1823, to extend the influences of religion among the neglected colored people of Washington, who were then in a very destitute condition, temporally and morally. He appointed a meeting at a private house on G Street, between Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets. All the inmates of the house were then impenitent, and there were few pious persons at first to attend his appointment. It is supposed to have been the first prayer-meeting of the kind ever held in Washington, and its utility was indeed a problem. A gentleman, addressing the monthly concert of the Sabbath-school Union many years afterwards, described the first three meetings in these plain terms: "The first meeting," said he, "was thinly attended; the second, all up and down stairs was full of black faces; and the third, in doors and all out of doors was one black cloud reaching far back."

Every one can see that this was one of the most hazardous undertakings at that time, and most difficult to manage, and of most doubtful promise; but to cultivate piety, and awaken an enlightened sense of accountability to God and man among these colored people, who were the moving monuments of the declaration, "No man hath cared for my soul," was to him a work of sufficient importance to authorize some risk. He felt called of God to make trial of the matter, and by his prudence and perseverance, under the Divine blessing, the meetings thus commenced, by their restrained and well-timed influence, in connection with a Sabbath-school (which he originated and conducted at the same time on H and Fourteenth Streets), resulted in the most useful and orderly colored church in this city, whose neat brick edifice is seen on Fifteenth Street. The late,

and very worthy pastor of that church, Rev. J. F. Cook, was converted through his instrumentality, when in his school and a member of his Bible class. Soon after this, Mr. Wilson was active in supporting a Union Sabbath prayer-meeting, in which all the evangelical denominations of Washington were represented. This meeting had much to do in bringing about that happy spirit of harmony which has rendered evangelical associations of the city so happy and efficient in their co-operations. Next is that morning prayer-meeting before mentioned, which so signalized the infancy of the Fourth Church; and a Congressional prayer-meeting, in which the humble, unpretending layman and the honorable, high-minded statesman knelt side by side, and followed each the other to the throne of grace. And finally, besides the meetings and Sunday-schools which he established on the "Island" and English Hill, should be mentioned the meeting near the "Glass House," and the small meeting-house which resulted from it, on the corner of E and Twenty-second Streets, which became the birth-place of the Western Presbyterian Church. [Other gentlemen co-operated with him in all these labors, nobly; and when they are also dead, what they did should be told as memorials of them: the names of no *living* men shall appear in this discourse, except as witnesses.] Elder David M. Wilson was the legitimate father of this church, and I thank God he was not away from home when he died!

Concerning his influence in the origin and training of the Fourth Church, several truly touching paragraphs have been addressed to me during the week. One extract from the lay testimony will suffice to show the high esteem in which he was held by the early founders of that church. A person who was from the first of that organization asso-

ciated with Mr. Wilson, writes: "I cannot do justice to the vehemence and activity with which he labored in that new enterprise. He beat up for recruits everywhere, entering into the lanes and outskirts of the city, and gathering strangers from every quarter. His pastor had no lack of hearers, and in a little time no lack of converts; and thus, under a marvellous blessing from Heaven, arose as from nothing that great interest known as the Fourth Presbyterian Church."

This testimony of laymen is fully approved by the first and second pastors of that church. Rev. Mason Noble, for years his affectionate minister, said to me a few weeks before he left for the Mediterranean, and I noted his words: "I congratulate you upon having so heavenly-minded and so efficient an Elder in your church. I know him well, and he is the truest man I ever knew. Whatever God has put into his heart to do, he will do; nothing will deter him from giving to his pastor the spiritual counsel which his office requires, just as it is in his own sincere and forgiving spirit. His name, experience, and power with God in prayer, eminently fit him to be the spiritual adviser and companion of a young minister. Indeed, I know no man on whose co-operation I could rely with more confidence."

Rev. Dr. J. N. Danforth, the first pastor of the Fourth Church, has given already his full and affectionate remembrance of Elder Wilson to the public. You have read it. He says: "The memory of Mr. Wilson needs no eulogy from me. His regenerate life was one long scene, I may almost say *agony*, of industrious effort for the salvation of sinners. He had a *passion* for individual conversions. Sacred, inextinguishable, fed at the fountain of infinite love, it impelled him to incessant and untiring efforts for

the conversion of men. When, in the year 1828, the Fourth Presbyterian Church was founded, all eyes were turned to him as the most suitable person to fill the office of its first Elder. If there be any act of my ministerial life on which I can reflect with unalloyed pleasure, it is that in which I laid the hand of ordination on the head of this devoted man, and set him apart with prayer to the great Head of the Church. Well and faithfully, from that hour, did he discharge the duties of his high office. Now with the pastor, now with the sick, with the Sabbath-school, or ministering to the afflicted, or seeking out the wandering, or finding the anxious, or rejoicing with the converted—and in all glorifying God. His life was a sustained enthusiasm of the most earnest and practical character. Nothing turned him aside from its grand object—the conversion of sinners. Probably few ministers have been the means of saving so many souls by direct personal effort with individuals.”

But I must stop taking testimony concerning his life. Ye all are his witnesses how unblamably he lived among you; and ye know how he exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory. (1 Thes., 2 chap.)

As he had been a blessed instrument in the germination of the First Colored Church, and in the origin and full development of the Fourth Church, so had he planted the germ of this Western Church, and watched it with an assiduity equalled only by his faith and hope. He regarded this church enterprise as the child of his prayers and co-operations, when conducting the meetings near the “Glass House,” and esteemed it the climax of his usefulness.

It is fit that the memorial of his life shall be fully given from the place where he enacted the best, the closing chapter. All that has been testified concerning him in other enterprises as a devoted, a "perfect and upright man," was fully verified the last year of his life. He was received as Elder of the Western Presbyterian Church January 13, 1855, and elected superintendent of the Sabbath-school the following Sabbath. Notwithstanding his other labors, no man could have been more faithful, more instant in season, more acceptable, more beloved. He became connected with the church when we worshipped in the small wooden house in the outskirts of the city, when the financial part of the enterprise, which had been so successfully launched, was run aground in a most severe monetary crisis, with a debt of thousands pressing upon it, and every known resource apparently exhausted. He lived to see the debts of the building committee as nearly paid up as they should be, it is believed, till the contract is completed; the church, at first numbering twenty-four, nearly doubled in its members; the congregation in this foretaste of the upper sanctuary, which will advance to completion as fast as the means are subscribed or the money invested, and the builder is willing to advance with it; and he lived to enjoy regularly for months this sacred platform as his place for secret prayer. As when he was employed at the Capitol he had his consecrated spot where he always prayed at midnight, so during his association with this house of worship, he used every morning, till after the opening of winter, to come here in solitude to pray. The key kept at his residence was always missing after breakfast, and here he opened the official labors of each day with secret prayer. Yes, my brethren, he lived to bear his last testimony

around the table of his Lord, where he had first beheld His divine glory. He asked confidently, and with deep emotion, the privilege of lay exhortation at the close of the last solemn feast which he celebrated here. It was granted promptly; fearing, as I did, that he might not be again with us. He made the closing appeal to the impenitent. It was affectionate, impressive: it was to several families here his last appeal. May it be the last you need, my friends, to win you to his footsteps.

7. His last engagement as agent of any society was made with the managers of the "Union Benevolent Society," organized for the relief of the poor—an engagement perfected but a few days before the communion Sabbath just described.

His day of life was nearly ended, and his efforts for this society were the last and well-timed efforts of the working man, as he gives his finishing strokes before retiring with his coat and sickle and his loaded sheaves in triumph from the field. At certain times he received and collected subscriptions for the Society; during given hours of each day he tarried at the society rooms to receive applications for food or fuel; and the rest of his time, some of which he should have spent in repose, he employed in seeking out the poor, investigating the merit of their appeals, and procuring and directing supplies. This was work which none understood better than Mr. Wilson, and yet a responsibility which required a man of giant frame and iron nerves—one who could bear exertion without fatigue, and excitement without anxiety. Mr. Wilson's sensibility was too acute, and his fund of vitality too near exhausted with life-long exertions, to bear the sight of human want in fierce succession, daily, hourly, and to tread unwonted depths of snow,

and face unheard of blasts of winter, in his efforts to alleviate suffering and loosen the grasp of utter destitution. It was too much: he fell a martyr to his own pity for the poor and sympathy with the suffering. He laid himself on the altar of suffering humanity, and his own sanctified sympathy held the sacrificial knife and fire, and he died a free-will offering for the destitute and the degraded in this the Capital of the United States. "In vain did we urge him, amid the inclemency of the winter, to rest his wearied frame, and give nature and nursing an opportunity to resist threatening disease. He *must* work, and did work till he could stand up no longer; and on the last day of the past memorable winter yielded his breath to God! After being thus assured how he *lived*, we scarcely need to ask how he *died*!" Yet he who teaches others how to live, is best qualified to teach us also how to die.

II. Let us, then, consider for a moment, the *death* of such a man: *his* death—for he is indeed dead! and his death may be a wise teacher. See him in his closing conflict, and mark the final triumph.

"Let not opinion make your judgment err,
It is the *evening* conquest crowns the conquerer."

His physician, qualified by medical skill and experience, by ardent piety and the deepest *filial affection*, to minister to him in his last sickness, gives the following account of the disease which terminated his life: "Mr. Wilson was attacked, about six weeks before his death, with a violent ulceration of the throat, contracted while in the discharge of his duties as agent of the 'Union Benevolent Society,' for the relief of the poor of Washington. Though suffer-

ing severely, he was unwilling to give up attending to the wants of the needy, and continued his efforts through the severest of the severe winter, until about three weeks before he died. The disease then assumed a typhoid character, indicated by great prostration of the system; and such was the intensity of the disease that he was unable to swallow anything but the mildest liquids. The more immediate cause of his death was the extension of the disease to the air-passages and lungs, constituting *inflammation of the lungs*, or *typhoid pneumonia*." He died on the morning of the 29th of February, the last morn of winter, and passed to that region of perennial spring where he had often seen

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green."

We look to those scenes, or try to behold them :

"The wide, unbounded prospect lies before us :
But shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it."

The parting veil was lifted before *him* in his last sickness, so that he saw clearly. Perhaps, if we go to his death-bed, we may, as the parting veil rises, catch some glimpses of eternal things.

Approach the scene, reverently and in silence :

"The chamber where the good man meets his end
Is privileged beyond the common walks
Of virtuous life—quite *in the verge of heaven!*"

Thus seemed his death-chamber. It was my privilege to be often with him there. Though unable to use freely his

vocal organs, and not at all without increased pain, still he loved religious conversation. His vision was clear and his sky unclouded. His path had been shining more and more unto the perfect day, and the meridian sunshine of heaven was, even in his agony, all beautiful before him in attractive glory. A friend who had called to comfort him expressed in his prayer the wish that God would remove all *doubts* from his mind, and the *clouds* which separated between him and heaven. As he arose, Mr. Wilson said to him, "There are no clouds in my religion; doubts have been all banished from my mind." "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; and I *know* there is a crown of righteousness laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day." At another time, one was telling him of death-bed scenes where he hoped he had been instrumental in bringing impenitent persons to death-bed repentance and joy. Said he, after listening for some time, "My brother, I had rather have a hope followed by a life of piety and walking with God, than all the *conceivable* paroxysms of joy flowing from death-bed repentance. Let the life be right, by a *living experience*, and the Good Shepherd will take care of the dark valley."

During all his sickness, prayer, which had so long been his "vital breath" and "native air," was his sweetest luxury. I could seldom enter his room without his uttering his spontaneous expression, "Have a word of prayer with me!" He literally "entered heaven with prayer." Although his own future was bright, and nothing dubious lingering about it, he was not free from anxiety at times for the living. He talked freely and cheerfully of the

exemplary and prayerful walk of the members generally of this church, and unbosomed himself completely concerning the necessity of strict discipline with the mature who are erring; and claimed that the purity of a church should be regarded as the measure of its strength. Aware of his own hopeful and forgiving spirit, he seemed to indulge a latent fear, that as a Ruling Elder he *had* inclined more to the side of mercy to the erring, than was well for the integrity of the Church of Christ. His views expressed to me on this subject, during his last sickness, will shed much light on my future course. The testimony of such a man at such a time, looking back upon such a life of spiritual responsibility, and forward to such a heaven of purity, is valuable indeed. His feeling was that the Church of Christ should be spotless, and without a just reproach.

The unfaithfulness of Christians was a thorn in his dying pillow. Another trial was, that he should be called to heaven without the intelligence that some in this congregation for whom he had long prayed had repented. This was even more painful than the thought of leaving his wife a widow, and his children fatherless. God had promised to be the God of the widow, and of the fatherless a Father; but from the necessity of his own nature and equity, which is inevitable, He must be "a consuming fire" to those who continue "out of Christ." In these anxieties, his bright visions of the future strengthened him. One time he exclaimed, in broken accents, "O, the imagery!—the bright imagery!" The night before he died, I asked him if the Saviour seemed precious to him, and if he could lean upon him confidently as ever. He replied, "O, yes; He does not forsake me!" and then added with difficulty, "While I have been detained from the public sanctuary, I have

had sweet communion here with Him and his people." I asked him how the future seemed—whether he could see any bright lights in the heavenly landing? He said, "Yes, indeed! God is my light! My God is all light!" I then asked him if he had any message for the brethren in the prayer-meeting, to which I was about to repair. He made great effort to speak, but at first articulated so indistinctly that I could not catch his words; but his closing sentence he uttered distinctly and with emphasis. Said he, "Tell them to think more of the *realities* of eternity!" These were the last words I heard him utter the night he died. The last word he spake audibly to any one, was the name of his youngest son, as if to say, "Son, behold thy mother!" or to leave his parting blessing with the one whom he bequeathed to this infant church of God.

See the dying man! See him! already fording the river of death! Speak to him! louder! he scarcely hears you! Call for his last words. Hark! hear them, as they echo from the bright hills on the other side of death!—"MY GOD IS ALL LIGHT! THINK MORE OF THE REALITIES OF ETERNITY!"

"Our souls much farther than our eyes can see," and in the pursuit of *him*, *our* spirits seem almost departed. He is now invisible—he is over—and these his last words come to us like the echo of his footsteps, as he walks the golden streets and enters that upper temple! Call him not back! *Wish* him not back! nor "tarry long gazing up into heaven!" His death as well as his life is our teacher.

III. What are the special lessons taught by his life and death? Such a character, developed before you by such a

life, and crowned by such an end, stands up like a monumental shaft, inscribed all over with lessons of wisdom.

1. He teaches that youthful extravagance is dangerous. He reached the verge of ruin himself, and came near passing it.

2. He teaches the worth of family religion, and its power to save the young; its effects upon himself and afterwards upon his own family are illustrations.

3. He teaches the worth of a *good name*; not simply the *untarnished* name which he inherited from his ancestors, but that which he won by his integrity. To be a man of "good report" is better than to be a man of wealth without right. "A name truly good is the aroma from virtuous character; it is such a name as is remembered not only on earth but in heaven." Its possession is wealth of the most sacred value, and it were easier to recover from utter financial bankruptcy with five thousand customers after you to snatch each hard-earned dollar, than to extricate one's self from bankruptcy of name and reputation. Let the young man—let all be careful never to defraud confidence. If you do in any case barter away your good name for any virtue, remember it is a jewel easier tarnished, lost, than brightened or restored. No person who has not this jewel—a good name—should ever be considered eligible to the sacred offices which he filled.

4. He teaches the importance of venerating usefulness, and regarding as a sacred thing the reputation of those appointed to responsible offices among men, and especially in the Christian church. His lips were never opened to give utterance to slander; and any act intended to defame the virtuous and retard the usefulness of consecrated men,

was to him a dastardly and cruel act, which he felt must be rebuked of God.

5. He taught the worth of simplicity of character. He was guileless and confiding, and that was noble. Happy is the man who is sure he can trust somebody; and happy is the youth who has yet learned to distrust nobody. The man is neither happy nor trustworthy, whose mind is ever on the lookout for tokens of treachery among his peers, and is most active to discover reasons for *withholding* confidence. Such a man will not be trusted—should not be. His chief study is to revolve the dark spots upon human nature, until he sees them first on every character, and thinks there is not one to trust, not even in Christendom. He analyzes vice rather than virtue, treachery rather than truthfulness, till treachery is his chief companion. He sits, a sly embodiment of sagacity on his brow, laughs in his heart at the spotless simplicity of the unsophisticated youth, and the virtuous unsuspecting man; but unhappy, self-conceited, the eye of practised virtue is on him betimes, and reads him through and through, and pronounces him at once a miserable, self-complacent fraction of a man, bearing on his deathless soul Satan's image and superscription!

How different such a character from the guileless, unsuspecting, and yet, in a peculiar sense, discriminating Elder Wilson! Himself above suspicion, he had nothing of the suspicious or deceptive in his nature. This does not imply that a man should reveal everything, having nothing to keep sacred. Transparency of character is not a mirror from which flash the faults and scandals of other men; nor a lens through which the rapacious may gaze upon all the treasures of God's inmost temple. The Saviour, in whose

lips there was no guile, escaped from the Jews *incognitus* when they sought to stone him, before his hour was come; and yet his character was the model of perfect sincerity and simplicity. He, as is every noble character, was frank, guileless, and confiding; and in these respects Mr. Wilson was unusually Christlike.

6. He commends all the evangelical movements of the day to our sympathy and support.

7. He suggests many things which are very important for Sabbath-school teachers; such as the dignity of their calling, the importance and power of faith, the necessity of prayer, punctuality, and a due sense of the worth of souls.

8. He suggests many things to the officers of the church. We are reminded at once that he is no more of our number. He is now a "king and a priest unto God in the general assembly and church of the first born," and will no more return to aid us at the communion table, or to appear in Presbytery. He attended the last meeting of the Presbytery of the District of Columbia, before his death, in this house; and though at the time his energies were prostrated by disease, he represented, in his usual nervous and decided manner, the interests of this church and Sabbath-school. He attended also the last meeting of the Synod of Virginia, sat on the same seat, in a part of his journey, with our deceased brother in the ministry, Rev. J. J. Royall. They were devoted to each other more tenderly than those who are merely kinsmen according to the flesh; and the first sentence brother Royall ever addressed to me was concerning the power which Elder Wilson seemed to have with God during the revivals in the Fourth Church, in which he had been called to be the assisting minister, and Mr. Wilson one of those to stay up his hands by prayer

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and personal effort. Mr. Wilson appeared in Synod, nominated the moderator of Synod, faithfully and earnestly represented the condition and claims of the church of which he was the Ruling Elder, and in his personal intercourse while there, won greatly upon the affection of those with whom he associated. His course was venerated by his pastor, who watched every movement as that of a servant of God, who was ripe for heaven and might soon be gathered home. His life and character were ever before me, and full of instruction. My brethren, in the official relations of the kingdom of Christ, his character, his life and death, are to us very suggestive; and because they are so instructive, we feel more keenly our loss. Mr. Wilson was a rare spiritual counsellor. He was almost a teaching and apostolic Elder, and had many excellencies, to imitate which would be worthy of our emulation. Remember, too, my Christian friends, as he left us when we most needed him, so you may be called hence when your associates are least ready to spare you, and when you least anticipate your summons.

9. He has a special lesson for this infant church. He will never sit before you—his brow, as it used often to be, all radiant with emotion as he drank in the Word and became too full for composure. His vacant seat will suggest our loss, and will long remind us of his punctuality in the prayer-meeting, Sabbath-school, and his faithful observance of all the ordinances and privileges of the church. On whom his mantle shall fall as your spiritual rulers, we know not; but of this we feel assured, that God is interested in this church, or he would scarcely have called so dear a servant to give to it the closing chapter of his life, topping the climax of his usefulness here, and making this

church the group of gazing disciples from whom he is taken into heaven. He in example is still with us, and to every one he says: "Be in your place, and fill it. Be not afraid of dying in the house of worship." "I would as soon die in the sanctuary," said he, "as anywhere." Follow him as he followed Christ; be as careful of evil speaking, of fault-finding as was he, and like him shun all *appearance* of evil, all the presumptions of indolence and indifference, and the God of peace stablish, strengthen, settle you, that men may know as well where always to find you. He speaks especially to parents, and says: "Be sure to come after me with your children!"

10. He teaches the value of benevolent institutions, and the necessity of looking after the morals of our city. He says: "Provide for the morally destitute!" "Remember the poor!" Much of his life was spent in efforts to elevate the degraded and alleviate the distressed. He loved to do good to the poor, for "God is their paymaster." He sympathized with the neglected, and even sacrificed his life for the destitute. His labors for them were well-timed and wisely directed. No man without heavenly wisdom and thorough discipline in the school of adversity could have accomplished what he performed in this metropolis. He was, in the truest sense, a wise man, estimating things according to their true value, and seeking the best ends and the best means. Shall I be contradicted when I say David M. Wilson was chief among the benefactors of Washington? However many and noble have been the defenders of the Capital of the United States, there has not arisen a better than he. Our city has been morally besieged, and the adversary's invading forces have threatened the prosperity, peace, and purity of the city.

“Now there was in the besieged city a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered that city ; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then, said I, Wisdom is better than strength ; nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.” “Wisdom is better than weapons of war ; but one sinner destroyeth much good.” (Eccl. 9 : 15.)

May the memory of this benefactor of the Federal City be cherished throughout the land with more veneration and regard than is common to the lot of unassuming benefactors !

11. He left for all decided testimony to the *realities* of our existence. After his conversion his life was no fiction or dreary sentimentalism, or visionary, fluctuating effort to do everything and accomplish nothing. He was eminently a practical man. His piety and discipline—his *life* was practical : it was a reality : his death was to him a glorious reality, and his last words were, “Think of the realities of eternity.”

“Life *is* real—life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal ;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.”

12. And finally, my friends, what does he teach us concerning affliction ?

“His character was formed by a severe discipline.” He was many times afflicted. He was called to follow in one week three of his children to the grave—to even close the eyes of one in death while the funeral services of another were in progress. Yet in all this he murmured not against God, nor spoke unadvisedly with his lips. When one that

was very dear to him was at the point of death, his hour for prayer arrived : he read the sacred Word, and, as was his custom, commenced to sing a hymn. His aged mother interrupted him by the exclamation, " My dear son, how can you sing when your child is so soon to die ? " He replied : "*Mother, I could sing praises to God if the world were on fire !*"

His afflictions had taught his dependence on God, and given assurance in the Divine promise ; he could, therefore, sing in his suffering, and praise God even in death : it had quickened his own exertions to do good, and taught him to exemplify the truth that personal effort is strictly compatible with Divine sovereignty. Life should be active, and God should be trusted. Let no one repine in affliction with such an example, nor live in constant dread of death. If you be fit to die, you will not live too long nor die too soon. If not prepared, the Son of God commands, " Be ye also ready."

To the immediate relatives he suggests at once the way to bear bereavements.

To his children, all of whom he led into the fold of Christ, and one of whom is already partaker of like precious office with himself, he says : " God is your Father ! that is enough. Trust and love Him ; for the Lord shall be thy light, ' and thy God thy glory.' "

Be not ashamed nor prodigal of your patrimony. Yours is a legacy greater than that of the millionaire. Through such a father you are elevated to the company of God's princes, and shall indeed be " kings and priests unto God."

Of the afflicted, heart-broken widow, who is unable to meet us here, what shall I say ?

There was once an aged woman who was God's adopted

child. She had been bereft of her only son ; and she, moreover, was a widow. The weeds of mourning had been long about her. She had no child nor consort. She was indeed afflicted, and men hid, as it were, their faces from her. Her eyes were dim with age and tears ; and soon the world was dark, for she was blind. Every dear object was banished from her sight ; the earth had vanished, and the sky was gone ; beauty and brightness were invisible ; the sun rose and set without her knowledge, and perpetual night reigned, cold and starless, and the darkness of the grave surrounded her. Time seemed at an end, for succession of days was to her no longer. The next light that should burst upon her vision was that from the eternal world, and the next morning that of the resurrection. Her afflictions were unrivalled by any earthly sorrow, and she seemed indeed disconsolate. Who *could* bring consolation to *such* a widow ? He alone who wept at the grave of Lazarus could do it. He had said to her, “ I will not leave you comfortless ! ” As the stars go out in daytime, and are seen best when the sun and moon are withdrawn from us, so the lights of heaven shone more clearly to this aged widow for the darkness of her night of years ; and the lights beyond the dark valley of the shadow of death were shining most distinctly before her mental vision, and her God was her light in all her darkness, her support in all her sorrow, her companion in all her loneliness ;—and He was the God of that widowed, childless, sightless mother, till her mind had almost lost connection with the outward world—till no human voice could wake her ; then, with the same word that shall wake the dead, He spake to her, and she, responsive, answered with her fluttering wings, and flew on angels’ pinions to the very home of Deity, where

God and the Lamb are the light thereof. If such be the comfort of one so near disconsolate, what shall I not send to the widow of our departed comrade? Tell her, ye, her children, these words of the "Comforter:" "Cast thy burden on the Lord! He shall sustain thee! Behold, thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name!" "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer."

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AGAIN—and it is yet again that we come to the burial of a standard-bearer in Israel. Oh! how inscrutable are the ways of God! My dear brother in the Lord, my dear friends of this flock of Christ, my dear friends of the family so suddenly bereaved—what shall I say? My own soul, bowed in sorrow four times during my brief pastorate in Washington at the loss of an Elder, this day can enter into your grief. Our father was all, humanly speaking, to us in the relations he sustained—the only Elder of this infant Church; a counsellor of the ministry, and a friend of the poor; a lover of Christ and his cause; a man of prayer and faith and all good works. He seemed a host in himself. But God has taken him—so long useful, so long honored, in labors abundant, in watchings continual, in prayers, and tears, and blessings. It is our loss: it is the loss of your pastor, of this Church, of all the churches—yea, and of the city itself. That benevolent organization of which he was so much the expression, the functionary;

they, too, have lost a strong man. Many a poor creature that needed help, and words of comfort, and light, and hope, and all heavenly things, has lost a friend indeed.

I cannot speak it as it is—but he loved to do good. It was his meat and drink to do the will of the great Master. Long years ago he had given up all selfish, secular pursuits. His very life was to do good to others. You all know it. It is written on the tablets of many hearts. I hope your pastor will write it in a book, and send it down to many generations. Let the surviving colporteurs have it—at once an illustration, proof, and impulse of their sublime mission to the needy. Oh, how he nursed and tended all the germs of this Church, away back there years ago, when he could not see what God had in reserve, and the way was dark. Before some of us ever came on this ground, he was here surveying, like Abraham of old, the promised land, and pitching the tent and rearing the altar where prayer went up. Would he might have lived to see the temple finished and filled with the glory of God, then to have said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

But God, who sees all things, knows best. The workmen cease, but the work shall go on. And he knew it all. He was submissive to the Divine word—like Moses, content to die in sight of Canaan, and be sepulchered where and as God should appoint. An aged man, venerable among all the children, ripe in the experience of Divine things, with a foretaste of heaven ever in his heart; no sacrifice too great, no labor too severe, to follow in the path of duty, the knowledge of which came to him so direct and clear from the communion with God, he did verily walk with God all the day. He was a practical

Christian, and had no time for anything but devotion to Jesus. And when the time came, he laid him down. He was ready to be offered; delightful views of Christ and heaven about him like radiant clouds gilding the sunset, and care for the dear church to the last. "Tell them," said he, "to think more of the realities of eternity;" and when he said it, he was all suffused with those realities. Heaven was no idle dream, nor his own hope in Jesus.

"While on his breast I lean my head
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

This he could say; ay, and felt to his inmost soul. Death had no terrors for such a man. He had long been ready for it, and his work was done every night, that if the Master called before the cock-crowing, he might be ready with his account, and say, delighted, "Here, Lord, am I." Oh! how he loved the sanctuary, the praises of Zion, and all there is in her courts; "the communion sweet and dear esteem" of God's people. I have seen him when his heart glowed, and he said, "This is the house of God, and the gate of heaven." Asleep in Jesus now! he rests from his labors, and his works do follow him. It was a life by faith; and by it, being dead, he yet speaketh, and so will speak in the latest history of the churches of Washington.

Probably no man ever lived or died in this city, who is so linked with all Christian memories and all works of self-sacrificing charity, as Elder David M. Wilson. If there be such, I have not known it. He was everywhere, where good was to be done. His argument for the Christian faith was one life-long service. He acted ever as though all was true and unquestionable that God had said. He never

doubted it. His spirit was that of Paul the Apostle—a strong apostolic spirit was always about him. He rejoiced in the kingdom of Christ, and heard that it extended, with sincere gratitude and delight. On this account, and because he was everywhere doing good, we shall miss the man—that aged form, spending its last remaining strength for Jesus. No place will be without some association of his name, and many shall call him blessed. Blessed now, indeed, for he has departed to be with Christ. The strait he was in, God's providence has solved at last. We can say nothing against it, though we weep. He was destined now to a nobler ministry, and his post is vacant. In looking round, we ask, Where is he on whose shoulders the mantle will descend? Who will be our Elder Wilson now? Who will look after the poor as he did? Who will scatter the bread of life among all the hungry people as he did? And when we try to answer, it is looking up—"Thou God only knowest!" Oh! how often we are driven to God only: and it is right. We ought to lean on the immortal arm, for only He, the Head over all, can help and succor us. Let us not despond under this blow: it is for the trial of our faith. God will send the form of the Fourth to be with us in this furnace of affliction. God will say to his people, Now your strong man is gone, lean on me! look up whence he and all my servants derived their help. It is a mysterious, but it is a still gracious economy. Let us trust it. And as we carry the sacred ashes of our venerated father to the grave, let us feel that we plant there in the fresh mould of consecrated ground a noble seed, that will spring up gloriously in the morning of the resurrection. And oh! may God this day warm our hearts by the spirit of sanctified memories which yet linger, and will ever linger,

hereabouts, of the beloved and now glorified Elder who lives in heaven.

My brethren and friends, I am come here almost from a sick bed, and from the recollection of similar scenes in my own church, to condole with you. I am not the one to speak of that whole history, now closed up for eternity. There are others here who will do justice to the life and worth of the departed man of God. To them I leave this work: to God I commend you.

APPENDIX.

At a meeting of Elders of the First, Second, F Street, Fourth, Assembly's, Sixth, and Seventh Street Presbyterian Churches, of Washington, D. C., held on Friday, March 14, 1856, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted.

MICH'L NOURSE, *Chairman.*

O. C. WIGHT,
CHARLES STOTT, } *Secretaries.*

Whereas, It has pleased the Great Head of the Church to remove, by death, from the midst of usefulness, our late fellow-laborer, David M. Wilson, who entered into his rest on the morning of the 29th of February, in the 59th year of his age, having served his Master with great fidelity and efficiency as a Ruling Elder in the Church of Christ; more than a quarter of a century in the Fourth, and at the time of his decease the only Elder in the Western Presbyterian Church of this city; a brother beloved by all who knew him; it is therefore deemed eminently proper for us, the Elders of the several Presbyterian Churches of this city, convened on this solemn occasion, to record some of his

prominent characteristics, and various and protracted labors in our city, that, in view of the magnitude of our loss, the living may be stimulated to greater diligence and to closer imitation of his noble example. Before his election to the office of Ruling Elder, and during his official service, till his decease, he was a man distinguished for his devotion to Christ. Zealous and untiring in his efforts to win souls to the truth of the Gospel, he sought the salvation of men by all the means which he thought God would honor; by inducing attendance on the preached Word; by instituting and maintaining meetings for social prayer; and, above all, by a life of such meekness, decision, and self-sacrifice, as convinced even the worldly and the wicked that he was a man of God. He was ever studious of the Divine will, and peculiarly distinguished by daring at all times to do his duty; being, indeed, steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For more than twenty years the Superintendent of one of the largest Sabbath-schools in this city, he was distinguished during all this time for promptness in his personal attendance, successful activity in attracting the young to the place of religious instruction, and by an earnest application of truth; admonishing the wayward, and encouraging by proper advice and fervent prayer those who desired the great salvation. For years he was the appropriate representative, the very embodiment of the City Missionary and Tract Society, sustained by various denominations of Christians; in which capacity he was instrumental in planting the germ, constantly watered by his prayers and tears, whence sprung the church organization with which he was more immediately connected, as well as large additions to other similar enterprises; repeatedly, also, the faithful and efficient Agent of

the Washington City Bible Society ; the Colporteur and Agent of the American Tract Society ; and, at the time of his death, the duly accredited Agent of the Ladies' Union Benevolent and Employment Society of this city, for the efficiency of which excellent institution, he devoted himself with unfaltering energy during most of the past winter of unparalleled inclemency, going about doing good—his fidelity in this last, as in all other capacities in which he acted, being manifest to all who had knowledge of his works, and also abundantly borne witness to by the societies in whose Christian and humane efforts he exerted and exhausted himself. Therefore, be it

Resolved, That while we bow in humble resignation to the Divine will, we mourn with no ordinary grief the loss thus sustained by the Church of Christ ; by the children and youth in the Sabbath-schools ; by those who labor and contribute to the circulation of the sacred Word ; by those who have been accustomed to receive from his hand, with a word of advice or prayer, the bound volumes of religious truth ; by those who would extend to their deserving and suffering fellow-men a helping hand in time of need ; in short, by all the interests, both of religion and benevolence in our city.

Resolved, That in view of their especial bereavement, we express our sincere sympathy with the family of our deceased brother, commending them to the grace of God, and the consolations of the Gospel.

Resolved, That in view of similar bereavement, we extend like sympathy to the Pastor and people of the Western Presbyterian Church, and pray that the Great Head of the Church may, in his own good time and way, provide for the one counsellors, and for the other, those to act as

rulers, overseers, and guides, who shall follow in the footsteps of our departed brother, as he followed Christ.

Resolved, That we feel called upon to render thanks to God for the holy life, "always abounding in the work of the Lord," and for the peaceful and happy death of our brother, and that we are thereby encouraged to persevere in every good word and work, that we may at last receive a crown of glory. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

Resolved, That in view of our relations, social and official, to the deceased, we recognize this dispensation as a special call to do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do—earnestly desiring to be accounted faithful to our sacred trusts, and to improve the solemn admonition, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

Resolved, That recognizing the healthful influence of such bright examples of active piety as are illustrated in the biographies of a Robert Raikes, a Harlan Page, and others of like deeds and virtues, we here express the desire that a similar sketch of our departed friend may be prepared by such persons as may be selected by his family, and published under the auspices of the American Tract Society, the American Sunday-school Union, or such other publishing house as may be by them selected.

Resolved, That a copy of the foregoing Preamble and Resolutions, signed by the officers of this meeting, be trans-

mitted to the family of our deceased brother, and be presented, with a request for publication, to the proprietors of the "New York Observer" and "New York Evangelist," New York; the "Christian Observer" and "Presbyterian," Philadelphia; and the "Union" and "National Intelligencer," of this city.

THE END.