

O the Blessed Dead.

THE BLESSED DEAD:

A Sermon

PREACHED OCTOBER SIXTH, 1878, IN THE REFORMED PRES-
BYTERIAN CHURCH, CORNWALLIS, N. S.

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF THE PASTOR,

REV. WILLIAM SOMMERVILLE, A. M.

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY

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*Given in the bones of Shiras -
Mr. Sommers*

TO THE
FAMILY AND CONGREGATION
OF THE LATE

REV. WM. SOMMERVILLE, A. M.

THIS MEMORIAL DISCOURSE, PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST, IS
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR FRIEND

A. McLEOD STAVELY,

The Blessed Dead.

REV. xiv. 13. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.

"Such honor have all His saints;" and what the writer of the book of Revelation says of his epistles may be said of the words now read as the subject of our present meditation. They were written that the Christian's joy may be full. With such a record as our text contains—present to the mind of the believer, he need not grieve immoderately for those loved ones who neither lived nor died in vain, and who at last have come to the grave, whether in the dew of youth, or in a full age, like a shock of corn in its season.

Now, surrounded by the falling leaves of an early autumn, we have committed to the dust and covered with the sod our beloved dead. The widow may weep, the son or daughter may weep, the relative or friend may weep, the congregation may weep, but not in hopeless sorrow; for that husband, that father, that friend, that pastor who has been taken from us still lives. Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me though he were dead yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?" And again, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

"Asleep in Jesus! blessed sleep,
From which none ever wakes to weep,
Asleep in Jesus! peaceful rest,
Whose waking is supremely blest."

There is something still in death, as the law of our fallen

being, which, disguise it as we will, leads us to regard it as a great calamity ; and if the aged believer, and especially the aged minister, is taken away from amongst the living, and we lose his instruction, his example, his influence and his prayers, we are ready to exclaim with the Psalmist : " Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth ; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." It has been well remarked that " the records of time are emphatically the records of death." When, however, our Christian friends and relatives die, they sleep in Jesus—put off this tabernacle, and rest from all the troubles of this world. Their end is peace. We are assured that whenever they cross the threshold of their Father's house they enter upon a state of perfect holiness and everlasting happiness, and are raised to the highest honor and glory. Our loss is indeed unspeakable gain to them, and the morning of the resurrection shall eventually succeed to the long night of the tomb.

" For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. * * * Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

Now we hear a voice—a loud and powerful voice it is that comes from heaven. It says, " Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

I shall, with the Divine aid, in briefly illustrating our text, call your attention—

FIRST—TO THE CONDITION AND PROSPECTS OF THOSE WHO ARE BLESSED.

SECOND—TO THE NATURE OF THEIR BLESSEDNESS.

THIRD—TO THE LIFE AND LABORS OF YOUR LATE PASTOR.

The State of the Righteous Dead.

1. *They are in the Lord.* Those who have the mind of the spirit can easily understand what is meant by this expression. And of all knowledge it is the most important for us to know that we are

in Christ. These words indicate that there is an intimate union between believers and their Saviour-God. Yes, even here through faith they are united to Him as the branches are to the living vine, as the stone in the building is to the foundation stone, or as the members of the body are to one another and to its life-giving head. They are a part of Himself, members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Their whole spiritual life is an abiding in Him. He and they are one. As the married pair are "no more twain but one flesh," so is Christ and the Church. Are they freed from condemnation? Do they become new creatures? It is because they are in Christ. When justice claimed satisfaction for our sins, as transgressors of the first covenant, He was made under the law to redeem us from the curse of the law, and now by His obedience, sufferings and death, a righteousness is provided and imputed by which the sinner is justified in the sight of a Holy God. Therefore, as the Apostle expresses it, "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Now in virtue of that finished work and complete atonement made known to us in the glorious gospel, the law is magnified, justice is satisfied, God is reconciled, the sinner is pardoned. Yes, the sinner is saved, and even death, which comes as the wages of sin, is abolished. All the blessings we need to make us meet for the heavenly inheritance are bestowed in the exercise of sovereign grace, and through faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

"His death your peace insures ;
Think of that grave where He was laid,
And calm descend to yours."

Oh let us ever remember, my dear brethren, that everything which concerns our present comfort and future glory flows from the love of God, in accordance with his eternal purpose, as the consequence of our being in Christ Jesus; and "He that spared not His own son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him, also, freely give us all things."

Christ is the head of that mystical body of which they are the members. In Him they are chosen from the foundation of the world according to the election of grace. In Him they are called. In Him they have peace. In Him they are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. In Him they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. In Him they have eternal life. "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." The apostle triumphantly exclaims, "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"

Even when the eyes of your late beloved pastor, whose body we have so very recently committed to the narrow house, are closed in death, and the shroud and the coffin and the dust cover him, he sleeps in Jesus, and where He is there shall also His servants be. As Christ is set on His Father's throne, so shall they also sit on His throne; and because He lives they live also.

' Forever with the Lord ;
Amen, so let it be.
Life from the dead is in that word,
Tis Immortality."

2. Our text refers to those who *die in the Lord*. To such as have their hope and portion in this world, death is still the king of terrors. It is far otherwise in the estimation of those who are prepared, through grace, for the sublime services of glory; what comes as a curse to others is enumerated among their blessings. Believers, "all things are yours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours." You can say with Paul, "to *us* to die is gain." Yes, death itself is yours; a part of that rich inheritance which God has provided for his saints. Surely, then, the prospect of dying in the Lord, and of being at once introduced to the blessed immortality of a future state, has reconciled believers in every age to their departure, and many of them have been enabled, on the shores of the Jordan

that separated them from the land of promise, to sing with an Old Testament saint, in thoughts which the Holy Spirit has dictated and delights to bless,

" Into thine hands I do commit
My spirit ; for thou art He,
O thou, Jehovah, God of truth,
That hast redeemed me."

Or again : " Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me."

Death to the believer is only a shadow and it has no sting. There is, indeed, no valley through which the believer is called to pass in which he has not the promised presence of Christ. " Fear not for I am with thee." " When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." " I will ransom thee from the power of the grave I will redeem thee from death. O, death, I will be thy plagues ; O, grave, I will be thy destruction." The weakest and humblest believer has therefore no real cause for fear, but every possible encouragement to hope and believe that He who orders every event of our personal history after the counsel of His own will can, and will, sanctify afflictions and make all things work together for the good of them that love God. Death, as we have seen, will be their gain, and though they must lie down in the grave to rise not again till the heavens are no more, over them the second death will have no power. In Christ, their federal head and representative, they died ; and because He is the living one and has the keys of hell and of death, they are alive forevermore.

Death makes no change in the relation which they bear to Him. " The souls of believers," as is well said in our Shorter Catechism, " are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory, their bodies being still united

to Christ do rest in their graves till the resurrection." Yes, their very dust is honorable and precious in His sight; and blessed beyond what the tongue of man can describe, or the heart of man conceive, are those who die in the Lord. We know, indeed, that some divines, seeking to be wise above what is written, and carried away with imaginary speculations have contended in opposition to the plain and uniform testimony of Scripture, that the soul of the Christian on its departure from the body sleeps till the morning of the resurrection. Our text leads us to suppose that the moment after a believer enters upon a disembodied state—"from henceforth, Yea, saith the Spirit"—he is blessed. The same idea is expressed in other portions of the word of God, the only source from which sure and certain information can be gathered, in our present imperfect state, regarding the future condition of the glorified saint.

I might, perhaps, appropriately introduce here a few ideas expressed on this subject by your own lamented pastor. "The truth is," said he, "I do not know much about heaven—its location, the appearance of its inhabitants, their special exercises and employments, and whether they sing at all, as we use the term. * * * * Lazarus was dead four days, but when raised he brought no tidings from the region of the dead; Paul was caught up to the third heavens but was unable, or forbidden, to report what he heard or saw. When I turn to the Scriptures for information respecting our future state, I find the glory of heaven as completely wrapped up in metaphor as was the mediatorial person and work of Christ in types under the former dispensation. It is represented by all that is valued, attractive and coveted in the world—gold, jewels, thrones, crowns, palms, white robes. To one thing a special emphasis is given: We shall be like the Lord Jesus and shall see Him as He is. I am satisfied to know this, and contented to be ignorant of 'what I shall be,' and of things subservient to His glory and my blessedness till the day shall disclose to my enraptured sight the glorious panorama."

Although we, too, like our deceased brother, who thus expressed himself, have reason to believe that little is revealed in Scripture concerning this blessedness; nevertheless, we are told that at death the body returns to its kindred dust and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Christ said to the dying thief, a wonderful trophy of Divine grace, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Our Lord, too, when reasoning with the Sadducees, who said that there was no resurrection, from these words, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," declared that "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." The Apostle, when drawing nigh to the time that, after the wear and tear of life, he should receive the martyr's crown, a crown of righteousness and of glory, takes comfort from the glorious gospel which can support us amidst the severest trials of this mortal state. He believed that, absent from the body he would be present with the Lord. Again, he says, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." The same idea is presented in another passage, 2 Cor. v. 6-9, "We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith and not by sight: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." Again, Paul in writing to the Hebrews speaks of "the spirits of just men made perfect." The proto-martyr Stephen, when dying in the confidence and joyfulness of a living faith, saw the heavens opened and the glory of God, and Jesus, the Son of man, standing on the right hand of God, and he prayed, "Lord Jesus. receive my spirit."

When death comes, the poor, pale, earthly tabernacle must lie down in the dark and cheerless grave, with corruption for its father and the worm for its sister and mother; but at the last day, when the trump of God and the voice of the archangel shall sound, the dust of the saints shall start into life to meet the Lord in the air; then soul and body shall be re-united to part no more; then what was sown in weakness shall be raised

in power, and what was sown in dishonor shall be raised in glory. The cheering thought that when they left this world they should be with Christ, comforted the ancient worthies, so that they were enabled to endure trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments, or to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods.

It strengthened the hearts of martyrs and confessors, in every age, at the gibbet and the stake, and made them sing praises like Paul and Silas when their feet were fast in the stocks, and rejoice like Peter and John that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the sake of Christ; knowing that when they reached the heavenly sanctuary, having escaped all the pains and trials of this life and joined the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, the Lamb in the midst of the throne would feed and lead them unto living fountains of water.

" 'Mong pastures green He'll lead His flock
Where living streams appear ;
And God the Lord from every eye
Shall wipe off every tear."

3. There is, then, *a desirable and blessed change in the state and condition of believers at death.* Were it otherwise, there would be no room for the exercise of faith and hope; all would be darkness and uncertainty as regards the future. But with such a clear and satisfactory revelation as we have, the Christian can now say, with Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth . . . yet in my flesh shall I see God;" or sing with Israel's shepherd, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." To all, indeed, who are in Christ, death is an event which may be contemplated without terror or alarm. Because of His dying in their stead, and their being in Him, and one with Him, they shall never come into condemnation. They died in His death and were made alive with Him in His resurrection; for them He now makes

intercession as an all-prevailing advocate before the throne. Thus, according to the arrangements of the everlasting covenant, they have that eternal life secured to them which is the reward of His all-perfect righteousness. Sin may abound in them, but grace much more abounds. Their complete redemption is secured, and whether they are gladdened when on earth with the sunshine of outward prosperity, or walk in a way that is darkened by the mists and clouds of personal and domestic affliction, or even the shadow of death itself, at last all will be well and heaven, with its joys and pleasures and songs of victory, will be theirs forever and ever.

Here they may be, and often are, called to drink deeply of the waters of Mara, but still there will be some clusters of the grapes of Eshcol, even in the wilderness, some dew from the darkest cloud in this dry and parched land, some door of hope in the valley of Achor.

The promises of eternal truth, applied to the heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit, give strength in the time of weakness, comfort in the season of sorrow, and joy in the hour of death, gilding the dark valley with the light of an eternal day.

Thus, when the mystery of Providence is unfolded, it will be seen that their kind and loving Father, who had all events under His control and at His disposal, has been exercising His own dear children with that wholesome discipline which was the wisest and the very best. Whether, therefore, on the troubled ocean of life, they passed through quiet waters, or were buffeted by the rough and angry waves of a tempestuous sea, they shall come at last to the haven, which they desired, in safety and peace. Thus the night of weeping shall be succeeded by a morning of joy and gladness, and their sun shall no more go down, sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and the days of their mourning shall be ended.

In the second division of our subject we propose, in accordance with the teaching of our text, to consider

The Blessedness of those who Die in the Lord.

1. *They rest from their labors.* This language, literally rendered, implies, that they give over their fatigues, and rest from all the troubles of this present evil world, in that state of consummate felicity which the Lord has provided for and promised to them that love Him. Here Christians, in their best estate, labor and are heavy laden. They have no exemption from the universal law. "Man is born to trouble." The present life, even in the experience of the children of God, is a life of sorrow. We are taught, indeed, that there are trials and anxieties peculiar to the life of faith. It is of the wicked that the Psalmist speaks when he says: "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men." Amidst the toils and conflicts of this present harrassing world, the good man is sometimes ready to say with the Patriarch of Uz: "I loathe it; I would not live alway." At last, however, whether prepared or unprepared, whether willing or unwilling, all must die. Every breath we draw, every step we take, brings us nearer to the tomb. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away." Yes, the anxious days and restless nights of time will soon, in the experience of every one of us, be brought to a close, and at the moment of death, the believer, instead of going away with the wicked into everlasting punishment, will be introduced to a glorious rest, that Sabbatism which remaineth for the people of God. Of it, the Christian may sing: "This is my rest, here still I'll stay, for I do like it well." It is quite evident, my friends, that the rest referred to in our text is not one of indolent repose.

"A want of occupation is not rest,
A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed."

As regards those who die in the Lord, there can be no doubt that after having borne the burden and heat of the day, their bodies lie down in peace; they take repose in the sleep of the grave, which Christ has hallowed by being Himself laid there, as a bed of rest for all his faithful followers. In this rest there is a cessation from the guilt and dominion of sin and from all disquietude and grief.

Still the soul does not rest from praising God continually, for His works of wonder done to the children of men. It serves Him day and night in His temple. In the holy exercises of the celestial world, it unites with all the loved and glorified saints, who, after the toils and tears of earth, have been brought to the fellowship and felicity of heaven. The Christian, in this world, is a soldier under the Captain of salvation fighting against his spiritual foes. Their name is legion, and they are not only very numerous but very powerful. Although he has many seasons of trial and temptation in the battle of life, he will at last come off more than a conqueror over every enemy. The Christian here is a traveler journeying to the better land. Sometimes, like the ancient Israelites, he is much discouraged because of the way, but trusting in the love and faithfulness of his covenant God, he pursues an onward, ever onward course, which, to use a similitude of scripture, is as "the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"—a day which no cloud shall ever overcast, and on which the dim shades of evening shall never close. Since, then, the soldier's arduous fight, and the traveler's wearisome journey, shall alike, after, at most, a few summer days or a few winter nights, come to a close, who would not pray: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Ah! if you wish to die the death of the righteous, however paradoxical the language may appear, you must be crucified with Christ, and nevertheless, live the life of the Christian. You must die unto sin live unto righteousness, and have your fruit unto holiness. Then, and only then, will you die the death of the righteous.

Then, and only then, will you inherit and enjoy that blessedness spoken of in our text.

2. We are here taught concerning the blessed dead that *their works do follow them*. From the connection which these words have with the other part of the verse it is not difficult to understand their meaning and importance. You believe, my brethren, that salvation is, from its Alpha to its Omega, a work of pure and unmerited mercy; it is all of grace, and no atonement for sin can be found in any works of the law or in any of our own works. Indeed, the idea of worth and merit, as connected with anything that we have done or can do, in the matter of our justification before God, is nowhere recognized in the sacred scriptures. To many, nevertheless, the doctrine of human inability is altogether unreasonable, but however this doctrine may be grossly misunderstood by some, and obstinately denied by others, it is still true, true as the word of God can make it, that none but He who doeth all things after the counsel of His own will can bring the soul from darkness to light, from bondage to liberty, and from the power of Satan to the kingdom of God.

When, however, God gives grace to justify, he also gives grace to sanctify. The Christian, therefore, is careful to maintain good works, for it is only the pure in heart that can see God, and "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

In accordance with these views, the works spoken of in our text prove the reality of our Christian profession, honor the religion of Jesus, benefit our fellow men, and are well pleasing in the sight of God. They are indeed inseparably connected with the blessedness of a future state, for "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." We are told that at the last day many will say to Christ, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" to whom He will say, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Those at the same time who have died in the Lord, in accordance with the spirit and meaning of our text, will have this gracious invitation, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

If it be still asked in what sense it is true that their works do follow the blessed dead, we answer, in this at least, as regards faithful ministers, that those converts they have made, those souls they have built up in faith, holiness, or hope, those mourners whom they have comforted shall follow them to heaven; and with them shall be carried along those works and labors of love, located for a time on earth in visible form, but having a place in the souls of the saved and translated to the land of immortality, as trophies to the honor of those agents by whom God had accomplished His purposes of grace and salvation.

Without however enlarging in the way of more fully illustrating this subject, we shall now turn your attention to the matter of the life and labors of our dear departed friend.

Biographical Sketch.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Such were the words of inspiration which first came to my mind when I received tidings, not certainly unexpected, of the death of that faithful, honored and lamented minister of the gospel who has been recently called to his reward, whose shrouded remains we saw so lately committed to the peaceful rest of the silent grave, and whose removal from amongst the living we all so deeply feel this day. "Ye are witnesses how holily, and justly, and unblamably he behaved himself among you that believe, exhorting and comforting and charging every one of you as a father doth his children;" "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

For myself, I can most sincerely adopt the passionate

exclamation of David over Jonathan: "I am distressed for thee, my brother; very pleasant hast thou been unto me." Whilst I dare not pour out all the fullness of my heart in expressions of regard for him; yet, to gratify to some extent the wishes of this mourning congregation, and of those loving relatives and friends who knew him so well, and to whom his memory will ever be so dear; above all to magnify that grace which made him what he was, and to encourage the living to be followers of him, even as he also was of Christ, it devolves on me to make some special reference in improving this solemn dispensation—and I regret that my sketch must necessarily be so imperfect—to a few of the leading incidents in the life and character of your deceased Pastor. He has indeed put off the earthly house of this tabernacle; but when we sorrow most of all that we shall see his face and hear his voice no more in the land of the living, that which the voice from heaven proclaimed to John in the Isle of Patmos—that lonely rock of the Ægean sea—that which the servant of Christ recorded and the spirit of God enforced, is written for the consolation and encouragement of those who mourn the pious dead.

Seeing, then, that it is so, let us rejoice that we have only committed to the dust all that is mortal of this departed follower of the Lamb. Having throughout a long and laborious ministry endeared himself, not only to his own flock—all the flock—but to the church of Christ in this and in other lands; having been made wise in his day and generation in winning souls to Christ, and faithful in turning many to righteousness, he now shines as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever.

His ransomed spirit has, we doubt not, entered the courts of the celestial temple; and, whilst we mourn here on earth, there, where parting and death are unknown, where sorrow comes not, where sighing is never heard and pain is never felt, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the patriarchs, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the

apostles, and the noble army of the martyrs, saints of every age and dispensation, the sacramental hosts of chosen ones gathered from the four winds of heaven, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands wearing crowns of glory upon their heads, and having harps and palms of victory in their hands, he sings the song of salvation, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

It would be arrogance in me to attempt to describe, because it doth not yet appear what we shall be, what the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him. Permit me, however, in seeking to improve this sad bereavement, which has gathered, in addition to the immediate members of this congregation, such a large assembly of sympathizing friends here to-day, to refer, more particularly, to a few facts and features in the life and character of one of the church's princes, and to his noble, self-denied and devoted labors in the Master's cause. Some one has said, "There are so many ways of writing biography, that it is vain to inquire which is the best. One canon, however, may be safely insisted on; namely, that the record of a man's career should correspond in tone to the character of him whose life it chronicles."

The subject of this sketch was born in the farm house of Aughnavalog, parish of Drum, Ballyrone, County Down,

Ireland, on the 1st of July, 1800. His parents were William and Jane Sommerville. His mother's maiden name was Kirk. He was their first-born child, and an only son. They had, beside, two daughters, Margaret and Susanna Jane. Of these, the latter came, after marriage, with her husband, Mr. William Maclean, to Upper Canada, and died there at a comparatively early age.

The other sister referred to, is Mrs. Moffet, Drumdrinagh, County Down, and she, with her husband and their family, are, we believe, the only immediate relatives of the deceased now living in that part of the country where Mr. Sommerville was born. At the time of his birth there was no settled pastor in the church with which his parents were connected, and it was on a Sabbath when the Rev. William Stavely, latterly of Kells-water, preached, and preached on this occasion in the open air, that William Sommerville received at his hand the sprinkling of symbolic water in the ordinance of baptism. His parents were in comfortable circumstances, and greatly esteemed members of the Reformed Presbyterian congregation of Rathfriland. They, indeed, ranked amongst the saints of the earth and the excellent, and are still spoken of in the neighborhood where they so long resided, for their intelligence and worth. They were distinguished for the same mental and moral qualities which so pre-eminently characterized their son—intellectual power, candor, deep social sympathies and most unobtrusive piety.

Mr. Sommerville, it is said, feared the Lord from his youth. Naturally he was blessed with a very cheerful and happy disposition, and is described by his associates as remarkable for that vivacity, warm-hearted affection, integrity and delight in social intercourse which made him a universal favorite with the old and young. These were the very qualities which adorned the character of our respected and revered friend in after life, and even to the end of his days, reminding us that "the child is father of the man."

At a very early period we are told that he took much delight in study and especially in the study of the sacred scriptures, and gave evidence of superior mental endowments. His parents were able and disposed to gratify his taste for learning, and he had therefore the privilege of attending the best schools in the district where they resided. We were informed by Mr. Sommerville himself that, previous to entering college, his classical teachers were the Rev. John Stewart, then the respected minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation of Rathfriland, and the Rev. David McKee, secession minister of Anaghlonge, a man of genius and great originality of mind. His son, the Rev. D. McKee, is now pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Rutland Square, Dublin. We have often heard our deceased friend speak with much respect and affection of his teachers, when discoursing of the experience of early life, or narrating, as he liked sometimes pleasantly to relate, anecdotes of his childhood and youth. It is evident that whether from natural talent or a close application to study he profited in learning above many others of like age. His acquaintance with English literature and with the elements of the classical language was accurate and extensive, as was afterwards shown in his Collegiate course, and in his work as a public teacher and an author. We have heard him at one time say that he was often told he should study for a lawyer, and I have no doubt that the suggestion was made from the delight which he took in controversy, and the primary indications of that intellectual acumen for which he was afterwards so remarkable. He was likewise possessed of a very logical mind. As an illustration of this he used to tell how one of his professors said to him "William, you never open your mouth in prayer without beginning to reason." Although some other profession might have presented a prospect of greater worldly advantages and preferment, his thoughts were, it appears, early turned to the gospel ministry. "The merchandise of wisdom was to him better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold."

After having finished his preparatory course of education, he entered the university of Glasgow in the year 1816, being then only in the seventeenth year of his age. Of this early period of his life we however know comparatively little. We have, indeed, heard him tell of the many days it sometimes took to pass over in a sailing vessel from Ireland to Scotland and of one occasion when he had to travel many weary miles on foot to Glasgow, from the ship in which he had taken his passage arriving at a port different from the one intended.

At college he appears to have been specially interested in the study of mathematics; and also in logic, metaphysics and moral philosophy, he occupied a place superior to many of his fellow students. He prosecuted his collegiate education with so much diligence, and had such success in his studies that at the close of his fourth session, he took, with honorable distinction, the degree of Master of Arts. His theological course was prosecuted in Scotland, under the venerable Dr. Andrew Symington. In it he profited not a little, acquiring especially an extensive acquaintance with the sacred originals, which he afterwards carefully cultivated amidst the engrossing engagements of pastoral and missionary labors. After having completed his sessions at the Divinity Hall, and given the usual trial discourses with approbation before Presbytery, he was licensed to preach the everlasting Gospel.

An extract from his diary which has been preserved in his own hand-writing, will serve to illustrate the hidden life, by exhibiting a correct and pleasing idea of his feelings and resolutions at this interesting period of his history.

“At Newton Hamilton, on the 5th day of December, A. D., 1826. Having entered upon the sixth month of my 27th year, I obtained license from the Southern Reformed Presbytery to preach the Gospel of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Teach me, O, my God, the awful responsibility of the office, and to discharge the duties of it with diligence, with zeal, and with love to Thee, for whose glory and the manifestation of whose mercy, a gospel ministry was instituted.”

“Enable me, O, my God, to feel the power on my own heart of that great mystery of godliness which I am called to preach to others, to know the value of that Saviour I must recommend, and to maintain at all times a walk and conversation becoming an ambassador of the meek and lowly Jesus. Our whole dependence, O Blessed Saviour, is in Thee. Our strength is in Thee. O, strengthen me by Thy Spirit dwelling in me, and I beseech Thee to fulfil Thy promise to me which Thou didst condescend to make to the Apostles when authorizing them to go forth and teach all nations, and to observe all things whatsoever Thou didst command them. Precious promise! Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

As a preacher Mr. Sommerville was at once greatly esteemed throughout the church for the solidity of his judgment and the originality of his matter. As a scribe well instructed in the Kingdom of God, he brought from the treasury of Scripture things new and old, realizing very closely the preacher Cowper thus describes :

“Simple, grave, sincere,
 In doctrine uncorrupt, in language plain ;
 And plain in manner. Decent, sober, chaste,
 And natural in gesture.”

In the year 1831, the late Rev. Alex. Clarke, (afterwards Dr. Clarke) of Amherst, Nova Scotia, who had been sent out about five years previously, by the Synod of our church in Ireland, to these provinces, was urging that some promising young man should come across the Atlantic to assist in this extensive mission field, for then, as it is still, the harvest was great and the laborers few. Mr. Sommerville, who was already greatly distinguished for his talent, piety, diligence, and zeal, combined with his strong attachment to Reformation principles was unanimously chosen for this important mission.

The Rev. Professor Houston, D. D., a life-long and sin-

cerely attached friend of Mr. Sommerville, will best describe the circumstances which relate to his appointment and coming out to these provinces. He thus kindly writes me: "I became first intimately acquainted with Mr. Sommerville as a preacher, shortly before my own settlement in the ministry. I recollect that he was greatly spoken of throughout the church as a faithful and able expounder of the word. Being secretary of the Board of Missions, and having earnestly presented to the different licentiates the claims of the British North American Colonies as a desirable field of Missions, I hailed with no ordinary gratification his offer to become a missionary to the few Covenanters and scattered Presbyterians in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick."

His bodily vigor and manly independence of mind, his devotedness of purpose, and genial, loving spirit, showed him to be singularly fitted for such an undertaking. The ordination of Mr. Sommerville, as a missionary to the colonies, took place at Ballylane, on Tuesday, the 31st of May, 1831. The solemn services were conducted in the open air in the presence of a large assemblage collected, many from distant places, among whom were a number of ministers of various ecclesiastical bodies. These services were conducted by the Southern Presbytery, assisted by a deputation from the Board of Missions, consisting of the Rev. Messrs. Alexander, Dick and Houston. The Rev. John Stewart preached an able discourse, which was singularly adapted to the occasion, from Acts xx. 24: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." The sermon was replete with lofty views of the Christian ministry and faithful counsels and admonition, suited to a missionary in entering on a field of arduous labor. After the act of ordination Mr. Houston addressed an affectionate charge to the missionary, and the Rev. John Alexander preached from Isaiah lii. 7.

On this solemn occasion Mr. Sommerville again wrote in his diary as follows :

"O, Thou true and eternal God, who art our Creator and hast an absolute right to dispose of all Thy works as Thou pleasest, to Thee would we, in the strength of Thy grace, desire to devote the remainder of our days in the service of the gospel of Thy beloved Son, and our only Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. I resolve, therefore, to study Thy holy word with all diligence and perseverance, that by the assistance of Thy Holy Spirit, accompanying the exercise of those powers which Thou hast bestowed, I may be qualified to teach the way of truth with understanding, to preach the word with all fidelity, according to that measure of fortitude which thou dost impart, without regard to the fear or favor of man, desirous only of bringing the people amongst whom my ministry may be exercised, into subjection to the Gospel of Christ, in subserviency to the extension of the Messiah's Kingdom, and the advancement of Thy declarative glory. Accept, O Lord God, of my unworthy offering, and grant me wisdom, and grace, and strength continually to perform this my vow.--W. S." Surely we may here today, in this house of prayer, where he so long preached, and addressing, as we do, those who have had so many opportunities of witnessing his faithful and devoted labors, thank God that during a ministry of forty-seven years he was enabled, through grace, so faithfully to fulfil his ordination covenant.

In the summer of 1831, Mr. Sommerville sailed from Londonderry, Ireland, in a merchant ship, and after a stormy passage of six weeks, on the 16th of August, in the fall of the same year, he arrived at St. John, as a missionary to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. He was accompanied in his passage thither by Mr. (now Dr.) Andrew Stevenson, of New York, who was sent out by the Board of Missions to the colonies as a catechist and teach-

er. Between him and Mr. Sommerville there was formed a cordial fraternal attachment, which was influential in leading Mr. Stevenson to prosecute studies for the ministry and in preparing him for much usefulness and success during a lengthened pastorate. The design of the church in sending out Mr. Sommerville was chiefly that he might minister to the members and friends of our church in St. John and other parts of New Brunswick, as these alone were known at the time as petitioners for a pastor and the regular supply of gospel ordinances.

He, therefore, was engaged in preaching, after his arrival, at several places, as a desire was expressed to hear him, in the neighboring province; and for several months he exercised his ministry at Hopewell, or Chepody, in Westmoreland Co., N. B. We have often heard him speak of his visits to different settlements of New Brunswick, especially St. John, Neripis, Londonderry, Jerusalem, Southstream, now called Barnesville, Salt-springs, and other places, in several of which there are now regularly established congregations. In some of these flourishing districts of our Dominion, we know that there are some still living who would cheerfully bear testimony to his energy, perseverance and constancy, amidst difficulties and discouragements of various kinds. There were doubtless many in the days of other years, now, perhaps, his joy and crown, who, without his presence amongst them, when their home was amidst the forests of a strange land, would seldom or never have heard a gospel sermon. In the settlements which he visited, as the Head of the Church opened a door for him, he imparted religious and moral instruction to the old and the young, wherever for the time his lot was cast.

After itinerating in New Brunswick for such a period as we have just referred to, Mr. Sommerville was constrained, by urgent calls for help, to come over to Nova Scotia, an older and more thickly settled province, here to break up new ground by preaching the gospel and displaying a banner for the truth throughout many districts of this beautiful country. To the

great work in which he was engaged he willingly devoted all his energies, and prosecuted it with untiring diligence, fervent love, heartfelt interest, irrepressible enthusiasm and unwavering faith, amidst privations and reproaches, in vigorous manhood and declining years, till the Master whom he loved so well laid him aside from active service.

It is impossible for us to estimate—eternity alone can tell, for the harvest is not yet all gathered, how much good was effected by these early pioneers, the first sent out by any section of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, to look after the spiritual interests of their expatriated countrymen and others on this side of the great waters, and who cheerfully accepted the missionary work which God gave them, adopting as their motto, "This one thing I do."

"Though seed lie buried long in dust,
It shan't deceive their hopes."

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

It is, perhaps, allowable here to refer to matters of more private interpretation when describing, to some extent, the history of our deceased friend. In the year 1832 he was united in marriage to Sarah Barry, daughter of Robert McGowan Dickey, Esq., of Amherst, N. S., one of the representatives from the county of Cumberland in the House of Assembly, a gentleman of high social position, well-known and respected in the neighborhood where he resided till a good old age. By this marriage Mr. Sommerville had ten children. Two of these died in early life, and eight, four sons and four daughters, are still living. The amiable and excellent mother of this large family died, after a short illness, in the month of February, 1853. One of the sons just referred to, you all favorably know, as he was co-pastor with his venerated father for several years, and is now minister of the Second Reformed Presbyterian Congregation of New York. This son in the gospel, although

not here to mingle his regrets with those of other relatives, will doubtless feel to day that he has lost not only a loving parent, but his constant counselor and best earthly friend. We have reason to believe that since he left his native province he has always looked to his father for advice, in reference to the discharge of those duties connected with the important ecclesiastical position he now occupies, as successor to the Rev. Dr. Stevenson, of whom we have just spoken.

We may further mention that Mr. Sommerville was subsequently united in marriage in September, 1854, to Jane Elizabeth, widow of the late Mr. John Woodworth, and daughter of Mr. Joseph Caldwell, a much respected elder of the Horton branch of this congregation. Four children were born as the issue of this peculiarly happy union. Two of them were called away in early life, and one son and one daughter are still living. Our departed friend has therefore left a widow and five sons and five daughters, with several grandchildren to mourn the loss of *such* a husband and *such* a father.

But to return to our narrative. Some time after Mr. Sommerville's first marriage, he was asked by the leading members connected with the old Presbyterian Church of Horton, Kings Co., to come and settle there. They promised him the use of a free house and garden, then owned by the congregation, and such a monetary salary as they could afford to give for preaching every alternate Sabbath. The correspondence on this subject; which had already passed between him and the congregation, was laid before Presbytery. He accepted the invitation and commenced his ministry in Horton, May, 1833. He was then in the prime of life, and there is every reason to believe that he was thus, in the providence of God, called to labor amongst those who greatly valued him as their faithful and devoted pastor.

During the early period of his settlement in this place, Mr. John Allen, of Handley Mountain, Wilmot, a covenanter from the north of Ireland, having heard that a Reformed Presby-

terian minister was preaching at Horton, made a visit there to see him. In those days, as no railways were established in any part of the country, traveling such a distance involved much toil and fatigue. At Mr. Allen's request, however, Mr. Sommerville visited Wilmot, calling on his way at Cornwallis West. This visit led to the commencement of the congregation of which afterwards, and till lately, the Rev. Robert Stewart was pastor.

At the time referred to, Mr. Sommerville received a cordial invitation to supply the pulpit of the Presbyterian church in Lower Cornwallis, and we have his own authority for saying that he labored there as a preacher once a month for two years with general acceptance, and with good reason to hope that his ministerial exertions for the spiritual welfare of the people were honored with the Divine blessing.

In May, 1835, a call was presented to him, through Presbytery, from the western part of the township of Cornwallis, for a portion of his time, and was accepted, so that from this date till the end of his ministry, he was pastor of the united congregation of Horton and Cornwallis. For a long time in Horton, where he resided till 1845, in Woodside, from which he removed in 1856, and in Somerset, his home from that period till the time of his death, he was engaged, in addition to his pastoral duties, in teaching school. He taught altogether not less than twenty years. Mr. Sommerville possessed in an eminent degree the faculty of communicating instruction. He was not only well acquainted with what he undertook to teach, but was singularly successful in securing the attention of the young, and in giving to others a clear understanding of any subject brought under their attention. Many now living in different professions throughout the province and elsewhere, attribute to his strict discipline in school, and to his skilful and careful training their present success in life. As an instance of the hardships he endured, and the self-denial exercised, that he might advance the cause he so much loved, he

is known to have gone for one winter, once a fortnight, to Horton to preach, and after preaching two, and often three times on Sabbath, to have left for home in the dark, cold night of a Canadian winter, or at an unusually early hour on Monday morning, so as to be in time for his school. There he would faithfully labor all day, though he had enjoyed scarcely any sleep the previous night.

The large Bible-class which met every Lord's day for many years in this church, had the benefit of his instructions. You know, also, that he had a similar class numerously attended, which assembled weekly at his own house until a few months ago, when, by his growing physical infirmities he was prevented from meeting with it. This class consisted of the young people, and many even in advanced life, of all and every denomination from the neighborhood round about Somerset where he resided.

Speaking of Mr. Sommerville as a pastor, we might say that next to his intense love to Christ, his attachment to the people of his charge was his ruling principle during the whole of his ministerial life, and his ruling passion even in the immediate prospect of death.

One of the last, probably the very last note he wrote was for the purpose of making inquiries respecting the supply of the congregation, and, when unable to write with his own hand, he directed a note to be addressed to Presbytery, expressing his desire that a meeting should be held in the bounds of Horton and Cornwallis congregation to make arrangements for the ministration of gospel ordinances. It is, indeed, a somewhat remarkable fact that the time appointed by Presbytery for its meeting here, in accordance with his wish was, as you are aware, the same day during the past week on which we were all assembled in the adjoining grave-yard to commit his body to its kindred dust. The Presbytery carried out the suggestion of your late pastor, it fulfilled his last request and met here, but alas! it was immediately after his funeral.

We hasten, however, to bring before you a few more features of his character, and incidents of his life.

Mr. Sommerville had a very genial and lively disposition, and in his conversation and intercourse with ministerial brethren, or literary and religious men with whom he came in contact, he had an easy and agreeable manner which made a most favorable impression on the minds of all those with whom he associated. When any topic of discussion came up there was always a freshness and originality in his way of advocating what he regarded as the right side of the question. He was a very acute reasoner, and possessed, as we have already hinted, of a very logical mind. His logic, too, was of a trenchant character, and generally based upon some declaration of Scripture, to which he always bowed with supreme reverence. Whilst in matters of indifference, or of doubtful disputation, he was never tenacious of his own opinion; in matters of principle you always knew where to find him. In deed, he was regarded wherever he was known, and especially where he was best known, as one that was valiant for the truth, and not content to abate one jot or tittle of what is not ours, but God's—the faith once delivered to the saints.

As contrasted with all this, those public discussions in which he had occasion to engage were conducted on rather a severe and forcible style, not always, we are certain, agreeable to his opponents. As an illustration of this we may mention that once, not many years ago, certain errorists visited Kings Co., and were allowed for some time to have it all their own way. Many friends of the truth saw that some were in danger of being thus influenced to turn aside from the faith, yet felt unable to cope with them in their delusive reasonings. However, it was agreed to invite Mr. Sommerville to deliver a lecture in opposition to the erroneous views they were endeavoring to circulate. As may be supposed, he readily accepted the invitation. At the close of his address he could not forbear to give it as his judgment that there would be far less danger of

wandering heretics doing harm in a community, if the professed followers of Christ were to take higher ground themselves, and to manifest greater fidelity in the maintenance of the truth. He did it in this way: Those whose views he had been combating were before him taking notes of all he said, and, after closing his lecture he remarked, looking down at them from the pulpit, "You seem to me like a parcel of woodpeckers—they never attack a sound tree, but always those that are unhealthy."

Mr. Sommerville's publications from the press, whether in separate volumes, lectures delivered on several interesting occasions, or frequent articles in periodicals written for the vindication of precious truth, were distinguished for lofty conceptions and freshness of thought, sound logic, fearless intrepidity, and at the same time by a candid, generous spirit, which opponents were compelled to respect. When it is considered that these productions were emitted amidst incessant labors, with little leisure for study and little access to books, they bear evidence of mental abilities of the highest order, and of power of expression and cogency of reasoning seldom equaled in our day. His views on the Baptist controversy are well known, and by some may be regarded as extreme. He was led, we think, to give great attention to this subject from the fact that he met with some, in his visits to different parts of these provinces, who maintained that baptism by sprinkling is not baptism at all, and who therefore refused to receive into the membership of the visible church those who had thus been dedicated to God in their infancy without the initiatory ordinance being repeated by immersion in their adult years. Believing, as he did, that there could not be produced a single instance of immersion in the New Testament, he, as a Paedo baptist, argued for baptism by sprinkling. As regards the subjects of baptism, he believed that this sacrament is properly administered to adults on their making a credible profession of their faith, and to the infant offspring of

such as are members of the visible church, on the ground of their being born members of the Kingdom.

On this subject Mr. Sommerville published several pamphlets, and so lately as 1866 a work from his pen, entitled "A Dissertation on the Nature and Administration of the Ordinance of Baptism," was printed in Scotland. This treatise was widely circulated, and very favorably reviewed in some of the leading periodicals of the British Isles.*

Though some of the controversial writings referred to in our previous remarks may have appeared to his opponents to evidence a spirit of acrimony, you will justify me in saying that those whose views differed most from his on several doctrinal points, such as we have alluded to, esteemed and respected him for the straight-forward consistency and independence of his Christian character, for the sacredness in which he held the personal reputation of all those with whom he was engaged in controversy, for his genuine personal piety, for his unbending integrity and the evident sincerity of his views with regard to those great principles which he believed and taught. None indeed, perhaps, beyond his own people, lament more deeply than they do the loss sustained by his death.

The funeral procession which a few days ago accompanied the remains of your much loved pastor to their last earthly resting place was more than a mile in length, and is said to have been probably the largest and longest procession ever seen in Kings Co. Thus all classes and denominations freely testified their affectionate regard and esteem for the deceased. Indeed it seems to be the general belief, for we have heard the testimony of many to this effect, that his death is a great

* Of lectures published on different subjects we might mention, among others, "The Rule of Faith," delivered before the Protestant Alliance, in Halifax, 1859; "Southern Slavery not Founded on Scripture Warrant," delivered before the Acadian Lyceum, Wolfville, 1864; "Study of the Bible;" "Family;" "Social Position of Reformed Presbyterians," &c.

public loss, especially to this part of the province where he lived so long and died so much regretted by all those who had the privilege of knowing his worth.

Mr. Sommerville's views on the subject of Psalmody are, like his views on Baptism, familiar to you all. We may remark that in that part of the country where he first settled, Watts's imitation of the Psalms of David was generally used by Presbyterians in public worship. He himself refers fully to this in some of his publications, and we will best present the facts referred to in his own words: "As soon," says he, "as I had been introduced to the Presbyterian families in Horton, the Psalms engaged my attention. Proceeding from house to house, and conversing with the people on this subject, all manifested a willingness to have our version of the Psalms introduced, provided it might be done harmoniously and without alienating the affections of one from another. Of this I gave them assurance, as from the beginning I gave them reason to believe, that if they did not agree respecting this matter we must part company. The next step was to give body to their consent, and for this purpose I carried round a paper for signatures adapted to the lowest case of consent: 'We whose names are subscribed, members or adherents of the Presbyterian Church of Horton, fully persuaded that there is no impropriety in the introduction of the Scottish version of the Psalms of David, it being a literal translation of inspired Scripture, and aware that there are many who conscientiously object to the use of psalms composed by uninspired men, however excellent and pious, and also that with the exception of three or four congregations in this province, none else than the Scottish version of Scripture psalms is used by the Presbyterians in the British Dominions, do agree, for the relief of such as conscientiously prefer them, and to promote uniformity among the Presbyterians, already too much divided, to the introduction of this literal version of the Psalms, praying that the Head of the Church may afford us His countenance and blessing, as we desire to promote His glory.'" None refused to sign.

He published in 1834 a pamphlet entitled, "The Psalms of David, designed for standing use in the Church." In 1855, a volume from his pen was issued on the same subject, entitled, "The Exclusive Claims of David's Psalms;" he assigning as a reason for this additional publication, that the title of the smaller work did not express all that was intended by it. Mr. Sommerville's own words are: "God has been pleased to furnish us, by inspiration, with a collection of songs; not songs scattered up and down in the Bible, to be collected according to our judgment and taste, but a collection of which some songs are found which we meet with in other parts of Scripture, while some are excluded—a collection as well-defined as Moses and the Prophets, and recognized by our Lord as a specific section of the inspired volume." The "Exclusive Claims," referred to above, may all be briefly condensed into a single syllogism. God gave an inspired psalmody to the Church, to be used in the ordinance of praise under the Old Testament dispensation. God has never given, since that time, any other psalmody. It follows, therefore, as a matter of necessity, that the inspired psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, should still be used in the praises of the Church.

It is likewise well known, to those acquainted with his views of religious worship, that he always conscientiously opposed the use of instrumental music, and regarded this as an innovation not authorized by the infallible rule, which is not the word of man, but in truth the word of God. A characteristic illustration of this was furnished during his last visit to St. John, about a year ago. Having engaged to preach in the forenoon for the pastor of the "St. John Presbyterian Church," the use of which house of worship, after the great fire a few weeks before, was kindly granted to the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation for an afternoon service every Sabbath, Mr. Sommerville was just about to leave the session room for the pulpit when all at once he said to the pastor, "But, Dr. Bennet, you use an organ in your church!" "Yes," was the reply.

“Then,” said Mr. Sommerville, “I cannot preach for you, I will be a listener and you will preach yourself.” Quite a colloquy took place between the two reverend gentlemen regarding the difficulty, Mr. Sommerville urging his conscientious scruples and also the necessity of consistency with the stand he had always taken against the use of such accompaniments in public worship. The pastor of the church proposed to call the precentor that he might lay the case before him. He again could say nothing about it, till he would consult the choir as to whether they could sing wanting an instrument. The precentor at last returned with the satisfactory announcement that the choir would attempt to conduct the service of praise at that diet of worship without the organ. The matter being thus amicably arranged, the waiting congregation was at once relieved from any further anxiety, and Mr. Sommerville, after briefly explaining the morning psalm, as was generally the custom amongst Presbyterians in former times, that the worshiper might be taught to sing with the understanding, preached with his usual vigor and earnestness a very instructive evangelical sermon.

Were I now, in a few words, to express my estimate of our greatly respected father and friend, after an intimate acquaintance of some thirty-seven years, I would say that few ministers of any branch of the Christian church equaled, and I certainly think that few, if any, excelled him in those natural and acquired intellectual accomplishments for which he was so distinguished. As a theologian, he was a Calvinist and an able divine. As an ecclesiastic, he was a Presbyterian of the stricter sort. In his preaching he was Puritanic; faithful, zealous and devoted as a pastor, and fearless, manly, and uncompromising in advocating, whether by speech or pen, the cause of truth, or what he regarded and believed to be the truth, whenever or wherever it was assailed. As a teacher, he was gifted with talents of a very high order; as a husband and father, he was thoughtful, affectionate and kind; as a friend,

he was genial, constant and generous, one who could be implicitly relied on, and who never wounded your feelings by coldness or indifference; as a man and a Christian, he had a warm heart and an open hand for every brother in need. You know that in every relation of life he was faithful and conscientious. One distinguishing feature of his character, to which we have not referred, was his humility. This grace, priceless as the gold of Ophir, he possessed in an eminent degree. Such was his lowliness of mind, that he was ever ready to put himself out of sight that Christ might be exalted. At one time, a few years ago, when he was in a very feeble state of health, I delicately asked him, by letter, for some items of his personal history. After referring to this part of my correspondence, he modestly gave the characteristic reply: "I can only answer you in a few words—William Sommerville was born July 1, 1800. He died ———, a sinner saved by grace."

It is not, indeed, too much to say of this departed servant of Christ, in the words of Rev. Dr. Houston, "In all his work, Mr. Sommerville manifested a noble, heroic, Christian spirit, characterized by eminent fidelity to his Master's cause, and strong fraternal love to all the true servants of Christ. An intelligent, faithful attachment to a covenanted testimony was one of the most prominent features of his life, as zeal for its advancement was with him an absorbing and consuming passion."

Dr. H. further adds: "In one of his communications, when speaking on public questions relating to church profession, he remarked, that much as he valued our principles, he rejoiced more to see them gradually leavening communities, civil and ecclesiastical, than in the addition of members to his own flock, or to the church with which he was connected, as thus there was opened up a brighter prospect of their universal ascendancy and triumph." On another occasion he writes: "His letters to me, frequently written after exhausting labors and amid scenes of pastoral and domestic joys and sorrows, were truly *Cardiphonia* letters—the outpouring of the heart. By

one marked feature they were ever distinguished, a generous forgetfulness of himself in the deepest sympathy for others and the most intense concern for their welfare. The love of Christ constrained him, not to live to himself, but to his blessed Master and for His cause and servants. To him, indeed, to live was Christ and to die was his unspeakable gain."

As an illustration of his undying attachment to the principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, I will, by permission, furnish a brief extract from his last will and testament, written in 1875. He says: "After many years of study and labor and experience of the trials and privations arising out of the maintenance and the efforts to advance the Reformed Presbyterian testimony, I would not abate in any degree my earnest advocacy of the same principles, being fully persuaded of their scriptural character and confident of their ultimate triumph."

Mr. Sommerville was indeed a covenanter of the good old type and mould, a man of true honor and independence of spirit, who, doubtless, like many of whom the world was not worthy in the olden times, would have laid down his life on the altar of principle, if called thereto, rather than cast off his allegiance to Him who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

To the land of his nativity, which he visited in 1840 and 1858—twice since he came to these provinces—he ever cherished the deepest love as a patriot and a Christian. I may here mention an incident connected with his last return visit to Ireland, which illustrates his popularity wherever he preached Christ. An address of thanks was presented to him after the Sabbath service on board the steamer, signed by fifty-three fellow passengers, expressing in the highest terms their obligations for pleasant and profitable intercourse with him, and for the religious services which he had conducted.

To the church of which he was a minister, and by which he was ever regarded as one of her most faithful standard bear-

ers he cherished a very devoted attachment. In the last conversations I had with him on my farewell visit to his dying bed, he referred with much affectionate tenderness to the names of those brethren in the British Isles with whom he was most intimately acquainted, and then added: "Tell them I am strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." The high estimation in which he was held by the Reformed Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, with which he was so long ecclesiastically connected, was shown, as I can truly testify from being present at the time, by a resolution of heartfelt sympathy and respect proposed by the Rev. Dr. Houston, and unanimously and cordially adopted at its last meeting in Belfast, June, 1878, when tidings had just been received of his very serious illness. The resolution is thus recorded in the minutes of Synod:

"The Synod, having heard with much concern of the affliction, apparently unto death, of their brother, the Rev. W. Sommerville, take leave to express thus publicly unfeigned thanks to God for the grace given to their beloved brother, shown in the wisdom, fidelity, and heroic spirit, amid manifold labors and trials, which he evinced during so many years of an earnest ministry. They declare, moreover, their high appreciation of the invaluable service which he rendered to the cause of a Covenanted testimony, by preaching, pastoral labors, and able and seasonable meetings. Should it be the will of the exalted Master whom he so ardently loved, and faithfully served, to remove him now from his earthly labors, we would commend him in prayer to His Covenant care and support, in the earnest desire and assured hope that there shall be ministered to him an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

With the close of his life and ministry, many of you are probably as well acquainted as I am. It may not, however, be unprofitable to notice here a few of the cherished sayings which he uttered during his sickness and towards the close of his earthly pilgrimage.

During his illness he turned eagerly to the Psalms which he always loved so well, and for the exclusive use of which in the worship of God he contended so faithfully. The xxxii., li., and cxxx. were special favorites. He would have them read over to him again and again. Very precious to him was the Gospel of Saint John, xiv.—xvii., inclusive. He frequently repeated the opening verses of that famous farewell discourse, and talked with himself about the house with its many mansions. On one occasion, a few days before his death, his faithful and devoted wife heard him repeat the single word "Bring," again and again, with great earnestness. She waited till he would express his desire more intelligently, and he then proceeded with the words, "Bring me to Thy holy hill even where Thy dwellings be."

"Often," says his son Robert in writing to me of his last visit to the sick bed of his dying parent,—“Often during the few days I was with Father I heard him murmur as he fell asleep, ‘where I am ;’ showing that his mind was dwelling on his favorite theme. On Sabbath night, the last I was to spend with him before returning to my field of labor, he requested me to read to him the valedictory discourse of the Saviour, and his wonderful intercessory prayer. I did so, and he would frequently say, ‘read it again,’ and ‘then it becomes you and me to meditate on these great truths. At 14th chapter, 13th verse, 15th chapter, 16th verse, 16th chapter, 23rd and 24th verses, he interrupted me to lift up his heart in gratitude and praise for such gracious assurances. Even when least conscious of what was going on around him, his thoughts were evidently engaged upon those matters which pertained to the glory of the Redeemer, and which had occupied his mind during a long and laborious ministry. When greatly distressed for breath he would be constantly engaged in audible prayer for himself. An oft-repeated expression was, ‘Oh that I might know Him in the power of His resurrection.’ Then he would say, ‘The Lord is very near to them that call upon him.’ His prayers,

whether offered when asleep or awake, were in the words of scripture. His confidence in the Saviour never failed. The last words that fell from his lips, when I said good-bye, were, "His grace is sufficient for me. We will meet again." Once, when a stranger spoke to him about his prospect, the short reply was. "That is a matter which was settled long ago." To a christian friend who called and asked him how he was, he answered, 'very near heaven.'

How well, my dear brethren, do such comforting words and hopeful thoughts as these remind us of the sayings of Christ : "If a man keep my sayings he shall never see death ;" "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you." What sweet, tender and consolatory promises are these. Are they not exceedingly great and precious? Are they not full of truth and beauty? They are as the dew of Hermon, the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion, and with them God commands his blessing, even life that shall never end; for "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

Thus concludes our brief record of this eminent servant of Christ, who, having served his generation by the will of God, without a struggle or a sigh, gently fell asleep on the morning of Saturday, the 28th of September, aged 78 years. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

His life's work is finished, and he now rests from his labors in the everlasting mansion which our ever-living, ever-loving Redeemer has gone to prepare in the kingdom of glory for all those who are faithful, as we believe he was, unto death.

But "he, being dead, yet speaketh." As we looked on the shrouded remains of your beloved pastor prepared for burial, we thought that his serene, dignified and expressive countenance, even in death, seemed to represent his noble character in life. There he lay, like a christian warrior taking his rest, but his ransomed spirit had already gone to dwell in the house

of the Lord forever. Still, we felt as if a voice addressed us from that cold and lifeless clay, saying, "Weep not for me; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, I have received the conqueror's crown, I enjoy the conqueror's rest."

"Thou art gone to the grave, but we will not deplore thee.
 Though sorrow and darkness encompass the tomb;
 The Saviour has passed through its portals before thee,
 And the lamp of His love was thy guide through the gloom.
 Thou art gone to the grave, it were wrong to deplore thee
 When God was thy ransom, thy guardian, thy guide;
 He gave thee and took thee, and soon will restore thee
 Where death has no sting since the Saviour has died."

"Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Thus, walking in the footsteps of those, who, like the departed servant of Christ of whom we have spoken, through faith and patience inherit eternal life, we shall be brought to meet him again in the full enjoyment of that kingdom of glory prepared for all the followers of the Lamb.

Then our text, so full of promise, may animate and encourage you all your journey through life, comfort you in death, when taking a last, fond farewell of those weeping relatives you are never to see again in this world; and, after death has passed on you, as it has on many once-valued members of this bereaved congregation, these words will furnish a most appropriate epitaph for the monument, which dear and loving friends may erect, in token of the affection which they bore to you in life, and of the hope, the good hope, which sustains them and cheers them, even when they mourn your death: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." Amen.

Appendix.

Minute of a meeting of the Reformed Presbytery of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, held at Cornwallis, N. S., on Tuesday, 1st Oct., 1878, in reference to the death of Rev. Wm. Sommerville.

WHEREAS, it has pleased Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, to call very recently from service on earth to the higher service of Heaven our esteemed and dearly-beloved brother the Rev. WM. SOMMERVILLE, we embrace this, the earliest opportunity, in our united capacity, to express our great veneration for his character, and our sense of the irreparable loss we have sustained by his removal.

A true friend, a cheerful companion, a confidential and judicious counsellor, a self-sacrificing missionary and a valiant defender of the distinctive principles and position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, he was peculiarly dear to all his brethren.

He has fallen at his post, and long will his name be fragrant and his memory sweet to those who knew him and could rightly appreciate his eminent virtues. May we who survive him have grace to walk in his footsteps that, when we have finished our course we may receive the "well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord."

A. MCLEOD STAVELY, *Moderator.*

J. R. LAWSON, *Clerk.*

The following extracts from a letter addressed a few years ago to one of the members of the Society of Littleton, Me., U. S., are valuable as showing the deep interest which Mr. Sommerville, one whom we were accustomed to speak of as "the Father of our Mission," always took in the missionary stations connected with the Reformed Presbyterian Church:

"I have to thank you and the other members of the Society for the kind reception I had from you during my visit in the month of June.

I was much gratified to find their steadfast adherence to the principles which they have professed, and hope they will still not only cleave to them but carefully instruct their children in them, and endeavor also to make them known in the place where Providence has cast their lot.

"The principles you have espoused are recommended by the blood of the martyrs of Scotland, but their special recommendation is that they are the principles of the Divine Word and the testimony of Jesus Christ. The best recommendation of your profession will consist in a holy and blameless life that you may adorn the doctrine of the blessed Saviour.

"No arguments will sustain your cause if your godly deportment does not second your profession. You will have many difficulties to contend with, but so had the faithful followers of Christ in every age. Your principles are unpopular and you will have to bear the reproach of singularity and uncharitableness. It will strengthen you to call to mind the Saviour who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. The thought of this will keep you from being weary and faint in your minds. You will sometimes be almost discouraged with the fear that being few you are not likely soon to have a minister and the regular dispensation of gospel ordinances. Many, in some localities, despairing of this have abandoned their profession and gone into other bodies. I hope you will be enabled to wait. See that your faith fail not. God is able to bring others to you. You are set for a light and I hope your light will so shine that your good works will be seen and your Father glorified. Others will tell you that there is no hope and advise you to join them. God is able to send you help sooner than you could expect.

"After the Revolution the covenanters in Scotland were without a minister for sixteen years, and they had no visible prospect of having one; but their principles were too valuable to be given up, and they waited and prayed, prayed and waited, and God heard them and raised them up a helper where it was least expected. Now there are ministers and people holding their testimony in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America. If these people had given up in despair, for aught we can see, there would not have been a covenanter in all those places.

"For you to give up would be like putting out the lamp of Reformation principles where you live.

"Your Society meetings will be a blessed means of keeping alive the

fire in the smoking flax. I hope that these societies will be regularly kept up, and that old and young will not cease to pray and encourage one another, till God be pleased to visit you.

"Small, comparatively, as you are now, God, who called Abraham alone and blessed and increased him, is able to make you a great multitude, and a blessing to all around you."

The following reference to the character and work of Mr. Sommerville is taken from a notice of his death in the *Witness* (Bellfast, Ireland) of October 25th, 1878 :

"The principal sphere of Mr. Sommerville's extensive labors was the province of Nova Scotia.

"Into this field Mr. Sommerville entered as a stranger, having very few adherents of the covenanted cause to welcome him, and hardly any others to offer him encouragement in his arduous enterprise. His abilities as a powerful evangelical preacher, and a resolute defender of Scripture doctrine, his manly genial spirit, and warm-hearted benevolence won for him in a short time general esteem, and attracted considerable numbers in various parts of the province to embrace the cause which he advocated. For a period of more than forty-six years he labored with unabated vigor to diffuse the truths of the Gospel, and the grand principles of the Covenanted Reformation; and he enjoyed the high reward of not only gathering under his ministry in various scattered congregations and societies a flock who were devotedly attached to him, but also of witnessing the doctrines and order for which he contended, embraced to a considerable extent throughout surrounding ecclesiastical communities.

"Besides his manifold labors as a missionary and a pastor, Mr. Sommerville was an author of doctrinal and controversial works of sterling excellence. A work which he early published on the "Exclusive Use of the Psalms of David in Worship" reached a third edition in America; and as a tribute to its superior ability, several ecclesiastical bodies in the United States in their periodicals claimed the honor of the author being connected with them in fellowship. 'A Dissertation on the Nature and Administration of the Ordinance of Baptism, in Two Parts,' was reprinted in Scotland in 1866. Of this work, the late Dr. Wilson, of the General Assembly's College, testifies in his able book on 'Baptism,' that it is characterized by singular acuteness and ability.

In addition to these, Mr. Sommerville emitted several pamphlets, and was a frequent contributor to provincial papers and periodicals of articles on religious, ecclesiastical, and educational subjects. His controversial works were uniformly characterized by such clearness and force of argument, and such candor and generosity of feeling, that opponents were constrained to respect and admire him. Amidst his arduous and incessant labors it was matter of wonder to those who were favored with his acquaintance and friendship, that he was able to keep abreast of the literature of the day, and to write so much that exhibited accurate and lofty thought, ardent and intelligent zeal for the truth, and that possesses far beyond an ephemeral value.

"The chief excellence of his character and work as a missionary and pastor lay in his fervent love to Christ, and his earnest desire to gather souls, not to swell a party, but as jewels for the Mediator's crown. During his lengthened ministry, not a few testified in life and at death that they had received saving benefits through his instrumentality. His memory will be long fragrant in the colonies through which he labored, and in the United States, where he was well known and cordially esteemed. His latter end was consistent with his life of faith and of active and self-denied benevolence. In death he was sustained by the assured joyful hope of the Gospel."