

IN MEMORIAM:

REMARKS

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

General Samuel L. Williams.

BY HIS NEPHEW,
JOHN AUGUSTUS WILLIAMS,
OF DAUGHTER'S COLLEGE, KY.

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In Memoriam.

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if found in the way of righteousness."—PROV. xvi. 31.

I am here to-day, my brethren, not to preach a *funeral discourse*, in the sense in which that phrase is sometimes used; but to moralize, for your benefit and my own, upon the life and character of one who, as a citizen and neighbor and friend, lived long enough among us, and, surely, well enough, to leave behind him a name that may fitly *point a moral*.

I had the fortune, a few years ago, to stand here and meditate with you upon the life and character of another — of one who had lived and labored among you for many years as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and an advocate of the Ancient Gospel. To-day, we meet to remember one who was ever a *Jonathan* to your *David*; who supported him with his strong arm; who battled with him against error; and who finally confessed that same Christ whose Church he had long befriended.

You all remember the occasion, when, on the third Lord's day in October—this very day, now many years ago,—JOHN SMITH preached from this stand the funeral of that good woman, Aunt Fanny. It was on that day that our deceased brother and kinsman, having buried his wife, accepted Jesus as his Lord, and gave to his Savior a heart stricken with grief, and enriched by the experience of more than three score years and ten.

What a scene was that for you, my older brethren ! Here, on this very spot, that veteran of the Cross, JOHN SMITH, embraced as a brother our veteran of the farm, the field, and the forum ! Their lives had started on different planes—they had long lived in different spheres—yet, converging ever, they met at last at the foot of the Cross, and found in each other more than the friendship of forty years—they found a common hope, a common faith, and a common love ! Here they wept together, clasped, like little children, in each other's arms !

Let us rest to-day in the pleasant faith that they who were at last thus united in their lives, in their death are not divided !

The untimely death of the young and hopeful always yields a profitable lesson: the departure of a mature man in the midst of his years from business and family and all the blessedness of the earthly life, is full of solemn instruction ; but the ripe dropping of

an old man into the tomb,—the quiet demise of one who has lived out his full life, and outlived his generation,—is the most profitable of all life's solemn lessons.

We often see the bud, rich in promise, blighted by an early frost; we sometimes see the green tree, with all its pride of foliage and fruit, riven by the thunderbolt, or uprooted by the tornado; but we stand with a peculiar, mournful interest by the aged oak that, having seen a hundred springs blossom and fade around it, and having braved the fury of a hundred storms among its branches, yields at last to the influence of time, and drops amid the stillness of the forest—the memorial of an age that has passed away!

The subject of our address was an old man, very venerable with years. He knew your fathers while yet they slept unconscious in their cradles; he was a guest at your ancestral homes while yet the almost unbroken forest and matted cane closed round their humble but hospitable cabins. Yonder, on one spot, almost in sight, he lived for eighty years! For a while he was a subject of George III, then a citizen of free America; first he was a resident of Virginia, then of Kentucky; first of Fayette, then of Bourbon, then of Clark, then of Montgomery. Two governments claimed him—two states enrolled him—five counties taxed him; and yet the old patriarch, during all these mutations in governmental affairs, changed but once the place of his

abode! He lived and died, at more than four score years and ten, amid the veritable scenes of his childhood!

How peculiar must have been the feelings with which the old man looked, in his last years, upon the generation that now gather around his tomb! There is but little sympathy, brethren, between the present and the past; and he who lives beyond man's allotted time, finds himself at last a stranger among his kindred—a stranger in the very land of his birth!

The young press forward in their race, and crowd upon the old, seemingly impatient for their departure; while the old, losing their hold on the concerns of life, retire first from business, then from society, and, at last, from life itself, finding only in the tomb that dreamless respite from care which the toils of many years always make so welcome.

And so shall it soon be with us, my younger brethren! We have taken in our hands all the business of life: church and state, commerce and agriculture, the civilization of the age—all are now in our hands; and we move on with the years, carrying these varied interests with us. But, in a few days, we will be overtaken by the pursuing host of a younger people; we will resign our work into other hands; we will linger awhile as idle spectators of new scenes, in which we

can take no part, and then, resting for a time in the calm of our firesides, find in welcome graves the end of life's fitful dream !

No man, permitted to live as long as our brother, can be said to have lived in vain. His life, contemplated from a moral and religious point of view, is full of instruction.

In him we saw, in all the strength of their maturity, some of those noble old virtues that have well nigh become obsolete with us. For Virtue, while it is ever the same in itself and in the sight of God, loses and regains her popularity according to the fluctuations of human tastes and interests. There are some virtues which we of this generation call old-fashioned ; there are some men that have outlived their times, whom we denominate men of the olden school.

Such was our brother. Reared to manhood in the century that has gone by, he brought down and exemplified to us some of the noblest virtues of the past.

We have advanced in science ; we have improved in art ; we have gone forward in the march of a material civilization ; but it is a question whether we have not lost somewhat in virtue as we have gained in splendor.

I.

Our brother was frugal, without parsimony; he was economical, without meanness. He saved, not to hoard, but to secure a competency; and with that he was content. Too often our *economy* is a weakness, if not a vice; and our industry, instead of being healthful and provident labor, is insane speculation, ever fired with the greed of gain.

How seldom do we see a man of our day quietly reap the fruits of his earlier toils, and then sit down satisfied and content with a moderate income! Industry is bloated into enterprise; competency has overleaped its limits, and the maxim of frugality is to gain what you can, and to hoard what you gain.

How instructive in this regard is the life of one who, in the midst of a money-making and money-loving people, exemplified for us the simple, prudential virtues of a less avaricious age! Would that the men of our time could exchange their ambition to be rich for this manly spirit of independence and content! Greed for more than we can enjoy, is the idlest of all passions, and the parent of a whole progeny of follies.

II.

Another of the now decaying virtues which so distinguished our fathers, was simplicity of life and manners. We are growing every year more and more artificial, conventional, and ceremonious. I doubt, indeed, whether we could engraft upon our age the natural, disingenuous, and unaffected manners of the past. But surely we often lose in loveliness what we gain in ostentation. *Our* ambition is to appear—*theirs* was to be;—and what they were, too, all around them knew. Now it is hard sometimes to know a neighbor. Men disguise themselves, and society has become a sort of masquerade. We try to impose, — to display, — to strike with appearances. We are gorgeous in apparel, sumptuous in table, elaborate in toilet, ceremonious in manner, and ambitious even in our hospitality. How striking is the contrast between all this, and the plain, the wholesome, the simple, the sincere, and the genuine, that characterized the manners of our good old fathers!

I do not condemn the culture and taste of modern times, nor lament the disappearance of what may have been harsh and rude in their manners or customs; but surely the taste of these times has so adulterated itself

with pride, that we too often seek to adorn merely for display.

III.

Another sterling quality of the gentleman of the olden school, was a broad-minded, warm-hearted, and open-handed hospitality. That trait early distinguished the citizens of our noble old Commonwealth. KENTUCKY was famed abroad, not only among her sister States, but almost throughout the civilized world, for her cordial reception of the stranger, and for the genial fellowship of her citizens,—for their open doors, their broad tables, and their ample firesides.

And in all this State, there was not a host or hostess, whose heart leaped with a more cordial welcome at the approach of friend or stranger than that of the dear old man in whose memory we meet to-day, and of the dear old woman whose memory is forever linked with his! All the resources of good cheer without, and all the fund of social pleasantries within, were expended without stint, to make their house *the home* of their guest, whether he were rich or poor.

But even this most beautiful of social virtues is growing obsolete with the change of times, and the introduction of other ideas and customs. And, unless the expansive power of Christ's religion shall warm our

hearts and broaden our charity, we fear that the old-fashioned hospitality of our fathers will cool and contract into a selfish formalism or a heartless etiquette.

Death is rapidly taking from us our old men and women. You may not, my young friends, miss their personal presence, for they were almost lost to your society ; but we, their successors and children, may yet lose the generous influence of their lives and virtues. Let us hope, however, for better things. Let us cherish their memory, and meditate on their lives ; let us emulate their example, and preserve in ourselves the manly and womanly graces that adorned their characters.

IV.

Again, how rare, in this wrangling and unstable generation, is that noble old virtue—strict probity, and stern, inflexible integrity of character ! I do not mean simple veracity, or mere truthfulness of utterance ; but that more comprehensive truthfulness that glorifies the whole man. I mean sincerity of profession, fidelity to principle, and a sacred regard for every promise and plighted word. I mean consistency of life and harmony of character. In a word, I mean that true and lofty *honor*, which loathes the false, the pretentious, the meretricious, and the mean ; which scorns the petty de-

vices of narrow policy, and which, in all the details of public and private life,—in adverse and in prosperous times, in calms and in storms,—renders a man absolutely trustworthy and safe.

And how conspicuous did this cardinal virtue shine forth in the life of our venerable brother! True to himself and to principle, he lived in resolute harmony with all that he professed. If faithfulness to any conviction threatened him with loss, he hastened to meet, rather than to avert, the consequences. If friends threatened to turn from him, he let them go, but never without some tender emotion. If danger, like an armed angel, stood in his pathway, to arrest or to divert his course, he went forward still, without concern or alarm. If, in fidelity to truth, he must give up party and all the patronage and honors of party, and stand alone, or in honest alliance with former enemies, he never hesitated to abandon party and preserve his integrity and self-respect.

We must lament, however, the seeming decadence, in our times, of this fundamental element of true manhood. It may be, fellow-citizens, that in a popular government like ours, political corruption, bred from the ambition of small men, is unavoidable; that the social purity is corrupted by the strategy and finesse of political rings; and that the disastrous consequences,

extending to all spheres of life, infect, at last, the character of a whole people.

Be the cause what it may, we have to regret that truth in high places, and too often in the humbler walks of life,—truth as the distinguishing virtue of a generation—shines not with that simple, unobscured splendor that was the glory of the age that has departed.

We feel to-day, with a peculiar force, the truth of David's declaration :

“ It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man ;

“ It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.”

In commercial dealings, in friendships, in declarations, in professions, in offices of trust, in the most sacred functions of fiduciary service, how often do we say, or hear it said, We know not in whom to trust, what to believe, or what to expect ! The times change, and we change with them ; the wind veers, and we veer with it ; the current eddies, or drives, or stands, and men, without fixedness of principle or the sublime constancy of truth, whirl or rush, pause or go back on themselves, with all the varying currents of petty incident or petty interest.

But I believe, my brethren, with you, that Truth in all her beautiful phases, whether as probity of character, or as the wisdom that comes from above, will be

again unveiled to our vision ; that men will again hold, as they have held in a less artificial age, that to be true to self, to man, and to God, is the only foundation of an honorable and virtuous manhood.

V.

But if there was one trait of the olden character that distinguished our brother more than another, it was his *moral courage*—his readiness to expose himself to personal danger, and to every form and degree of self-sacrifice, in the defense or maintenance of a righteous cause.

There are two kinds of heroes in this world. Some men are bold and reckless of life in the pursuit of a selfish end—in the hunt for wealth, or in the chase for fame. Avarice has emboldened men to deeds of self-denial and daring worthy of a nobler passion. Ambition has made heroes on the land and on the sea. These lower principles have peopled the earth with giants, and gilded the pages of history with an attractive but illusive splendor.

But the moral hero is of a nobler stock. He is brave for the right ; he gives up wealth and fame, and life, too, if needs be, for the truth's sake. Whether on

the tented field, or in the grave assembly, or in the ordinary walks of men, he fights, and talks, and works, not to build up self, but unselfishly to build up a cause.

The striking exemplifications of this sort of courage, to be found in the life of our brother, are numerous—too numerous, in fact, to mention. I might refer to many passages during his seventeen years of civil life in the legislative halls of the State ; I might cite you to unrecorded deeds and sufferings amid the scenes of the second war with England ; to the toilsome and bloody campaign of Winchester, in the Northwest, and to the horrible scenes of Raisin and Fort Malden. I might cite you to many an incident illustrative of his prowess, like that related recently by one of his old soldiers,—how that, when, on a certain occasion, at the head of a detachment, having discovered the enemy in a strong inclosure, he rushed forward alone, regardless of their superior number and their position, and tearing away the palisades, leaped in at the breach, exclaiming, “ Come on, my men ! ”—sublimely courageous toward the foe, and sublimely trustful in the courage of his men.

But I choose to pass by all these reminiscences of his civil and military life, and, as illustrative of his moral courage, cite you to his conduct, when JOHN SMITH, in a nobler strife than that with England, burst the bands of an ecclesiastical tyranny, and, amid ridi-

cule and scorn, and persecution, declared that the children of God were free, that the Word was every man's creed, and the right to interpret that Word for himself was inherent and inalienable.

Do you remember, my old brethren, the first mutterings of that storm, which was brewed right here in your very midst, and which, in a few years, swept over the State with a rage that uprooted churches, distracted society, and almost kindled the torch of ecclesiastical war? It cost much in that day to belong to Smith's forlorn hope. He that would *God speed* the despised heretic, must make up his mind to suffer all that bigotry could inflict. Whether professing religion or not, he must suffer proscription, the loss of friends, of business, and of reputation.

Gen. SAMUEL L. WILLIAMS was raised a Calvinist of the strictest sect. All his religious ideas were formed, and his entire religious character was molded, by the dogmas of that extraordinary creed as they were then expounded. Yet when he grew to manhood, and began, with his strong, natural sense, to think for himself, he rejected the doctrine of the day as inconsistent with the Divine character, and incompatible with his ideas of justice and goodness.

Consequently, he never sought religion as it was then presented, nor did he ever *wish* to seek it. It was to him a thing without truth and attractiveness. He

was therefore an opponent of the strict dogma of the times; but he was always an admirer of the religion of Jesus as it was taught in his Word and exemplified in his wondrously beautiful life.

When JOHN SMITH began to preach the ancient gospel and to teach Christianity among you, General WILLIAMS heard and approved. From that day, though not for some time afterward obedient to the faith, he became its advocate. He stepped forth from the ranks of a popular orthodoxy, and stood by the side of him who was already covered with contumely and sneers. He gave up friendships; he threw business and office and reputation into the scale; and he resolved to stand by his bold and honest friend, though they should perish together.

He gave to SMITH all the support that he could. No man ventured to speak a word against him in the hearing of his friend. He gave to him, in personal danger, his strong arm; in pecuniary straits, his purse; and at all times his influence and entire support; and that, too, when it was infamous, socially and religiously, to befriend such a man.

This was courage, my brethren, moral courage, almost sublime. The success of the cause we love is, in this section of the State at least, more indebted to the old man, whom we remember to-day, than to any other that had as yet made no profession of religion.

But, it may be asked, are not all these virtues, which we have predicated of the *old Kentucky* gentleman, equally the characteristics of a *Christian* gentleman? Most assuredly they are. Yet it is equally true that one may have all these and not be a Christian. It is true that all these graces are the fruits of Christianity, but CHRIST is not always acknowledged as the Vine that produces them. The sun shines, and thousands of things put on beauty and sweetness which see not the sun. They are glorified by a reflected but unacknowledged light. And so Christ shines upon the world. Some receive the influence of his life consciously and gratefully; others receive that influence indirectly and unconsciously. They have light only as it is reflected from parental example, or national institutions, or civil legislation. They erroneously ascribe to civilization or to education the light which comes only from the Christ. Hence there is in the world an unconscious Christianity, or morality rather, as well as a true Christianity that confesses and honors the Christ.

The virtues that so nobly adorned our fathers were, indeed, the fruits of that truth which began to shine when the Sun of Righteousness first arose with healing in his beams. But those good men did not always feel or acknowledge their indebtedness to CHRIST. They blindly or arrogantly claimed all their goodness as their own.

It is in this very respect that the Christian is distinguished from the upright, moral man of *our* times. The one arrogates, the other believes; the one trusts in himself, the other in Christ; the one says, "I can do all things," the other says, "Not I, but the Christ in me;" the one indulges in self-praise for his many virtues, the other ascribes all praise to God the Father, who redeemed him from ignorance and sin through Jesus Christ, the Immanuel.

We would err, therefore, were we to claim that because our venerable brother was, in his earlier life, an upright and honorable man; because he was frugal in habit and contented in disposition; because he was a trustworthy and patriotic citizen, a brave and humane soldier, a hospitable neighbor, and truly courageous;—that because he was distinguished by all these excellencies of character, *therefore* he was a Christian. We have not so learned the Christ.

VII.

And this brings us to the consideration of another phase of his life, from which we may derive the most important lesson that he has left behind, and by which he has bequeathed the richest of legacies to his children and his children's children.

While living in the habitual practice of all the virtues that define a noble man, *he was not at peace with himself*. There was an undefined and restless want that he long tried in vain to satisfy. If man's highest happiness can be found in a thrifty, healthy family, the father was blessed; if it can be found in a faithful, affectionate and competent helpmeet the husband was truly blessed; if it be found in a prosperous business and a sufficiency of this world's goods, he had all that heart could crave; if, in the patriotic service of his country, in field or in council, and in a country's gratitude, he could ask for no more: yet he had all these things, and was still *unsatisfied*. He tried every form of life's honorable experience; he grew gray in the vain attempt to satisfy an immortal spirit with the pleasures and honors and service of a life that is earthly and brief; and, having tasted every worldly cup, he turned at last to that Fountain of which, if a man drink, he shall never thirst again.

Dear old man! we thank thee for all thy sterling virtues; for thine inflexible truth, thy generous hospitality, thy moral courage, thy simple-hearted content, thy public service, and thy perfect trustworthiness in all the relations of life: but we thank thee most—and we gratefully bless thee this day—that thou hast taught us, by thine own experience and thy last best example,

that true honor and peace can be found only in the acknowledgment and loving service of the "Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world!"

Let this suffice! Thou hast not lived thy long and wearisome life in vain, if thou hast taught us, the children of another generation, this lesson: That faith in Jesus is the only victory and peace, the only crown of excellency to a virtuous manhood, and the only hope of glory in the life to come.

And may our Heavenly Father impress the lesson of the hour upon the hearts of all! May he bless it to you, my old brethren, who can not long stay behind. This world is now of little worth to you. You have drunk the cup of the earthly life, and only the dregs are left. Friends have dropped away from you,—love's charmed circle has been broken again and again,—and now, I know, you feel your loneliness. In vain you try to catch the spirit of the on-coming age. Your voyage here is over; you must cast your anchor in the seas beyond. Let go, then, your heart's hold on the life that is, and seize the eternal world that dawns upon you. Rest in Christ, and, soon, sweet will be your sleep; and your awakening will be to a life that never ends,—to a youth that knows no age,—to a bliss that is without alloy,—and to a glory that is unfading and eternal in the heavens!

And may all the virtues of a father's character descend and abide on you, my young kinsmen, as the richest portion of your patrimony! Your father bequeathed to you strong minds and strong bodies; accept, also, the best legacy that a father can leave to his children,—the example of a soul strong in manly purpose, true to principle, pure in honor, but resting, at last, like a trustful child, in the blessedness of Jesus' love.

Of a numerous and robust family, only one* is left! And more than three score years and ten have wasted his vigor and bent his form. In a few years, at most, he, too, will fall asleep, and be gathered to his fathers! It is hard for us, my young brethren, to enter into full sympathy with such a man,—left alone in the world, the solitary representative of a large family;—father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all the companions and friends of his early life, gone to their graves!

May our Heavenly Father give to him, daily, glimpses of the beautiful hereafter,—foretastes of the good things to come,—strength to bear his loneliness, and patience to await his change!

The Smiths, the Williamses, the Hathaways, the Stoners, the Allens, the Joneses, the Lanes, the Brutons, the McDanolds, the Carringtons, the Jamesons, the

*Dr. Charles E. Williams.

Highlands, the Phelps, and others,—all are gone, or soon must go! And what will then become of SOMERSET, dear old SOMERSET? Where will then be her sweet old songs, her cordial fellowship, her simple worship, and her burning zeal?

Brethren of Somerset! you are the eldest daughter of the Reformation. Awake! arise! and may God help you to maintain here the doctrine and practice of the early saints, and to be always, as you have been, the salt of the earth, and the light of the world! Amen.