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Selections.

From the A. R. Presbyterian.
"Mark the Perfect Man and Behold the Upright; for the end of that Man is Peace."—Psalms xxxvii, 37.

The latter end of good men affords us a subject for study, at once pleasing and profitable. To know what thoughts occupy their minds, as they draw near the confines of Eternity—to learn what hopes animate, or what doubts and fears distress them, as they grapple with the last great enemy—to be told what their experiences are as these frail tabernacles of clay are crumbling, and the soul is struggling for release, and about to wing its flight into the realms of the unknown, untried future—this can never cease to interest and profit the church and people of God.

With me it has always been a delightful task to read of the dying experience of the saints. One of my very earliest recollections is the death bed scene of a dear uncle, that venerable man of God, Dr. Isaac Grier, of blessed memory, whose name is so intimately connected with the early history of the A. R. Church, and whose labors, in planting and watering, this and other western congregations, are well remembered by some of you, still living, and present to-day. Too young to understand or remember anything that was said—any words of counsel, or of hope, that may have fallen from his lips; the externals of the scene are yet fresh in memory, as though they occurred but yesterday. The chamber where he lay, the couch in its centre, the venerable form stretched upon it, his snow-white locks falling over his marble brow and pallid cheeks, the large circle that stood around, composed of his weeping children and relatives, his sorrowing neighbors, and many distressed members of the flock he had served for over 30 years, in the gospel of Christ—all these things are degenerated on my soul, there to remain, while mind and memory continue to perform their office. Since that day it has been my melancholy pleasure, to witness the peaceful, or the triumphant departure of other friends, dear to memory and dear to God; and to read of the last hours of many others, whose personal acquaintance I never enjoyed.

I have been especially, an interesting subject with me, to contrast the dying experience of good men with that of bad men, of the truly religious with that of the irreligious, of the righteous with that of the wicked. Nothing in my view, more clearly proves the reality and sustaining power of the religion of Christ. Nothing more completely substantiates and establishes the truth of christianity. In all the wide field of evidence, nothing is more weighty or important.

If we will take the trouble to read of the last hours of eminently bad men—of infidels, scoffers and blasphemers, we will find, almost without exception, that their latter end was wretchedness and misery—we will find their minds in the near prospect of death, filled with bitter regrets and remorse for the past, and terror for the future—we will find them, renouncing their boasted anti-christian principles, and calling for mercy, with strong crying and tears, on that God whom they had blasphemed, and on that very Saviour, whose religion they had all their lives long

attempted to overthrow and destroy.

On the other hand, if we will examine the annals of christianity from the day of Abraham, down to the present day we will find that none who gave satisfactory evidence in their lives of true piety—of true faith in, and love to the Saviour, have ever been left to die wretched, or even uncomfortable deaths. Not that we would intimate that religion makes its possessors wholly indifferent to life, or takes from them generally all fear of death. There is among all men, even the best, a natural dread of death—an instinctive shrinking back from the narrow house which is so deep, so damp, so dark. And it is well this is so. It is a wise provision of our all-wise Creator that this feeling is so widespread and universal. It greatly tends to preserve human life, and prevent acts of self-destruction. It belongs to God's people as well as others, and is not usually taken entirely away till God is about to set them free from the bondage of the flesh. The following testimony of Dr. Gill, has been confirmed by multitudes: "Though a believer," says he, "may have his darkness, doubts and fears, and many conflicts of soul, while on his dying bed; yet usually these are all over and gone, before his last moments come, and death does its office and work upon him. From the precious promises of God to be with his people even until death; from the Scriptural account of dying saints; and from the observations I have made during my life, I am of the opinion, that generally speaking the spirit of God, die comfortably; their spiritual enemies being made to be still as a stone while they pass through Jordan or the stream of death."

To real christians dying grace is given for a dying hour. The tenderness of Christ, to his sick and dying servants is very great. In their time of need He will not fail or forsake them. Says a great and good man still living at a green ripe old age: "For a long time I have visited, as I had opportunity, the sick and suffering people of God, without regard to age, sin, rank, complexion or denomination. The result is that I have never known one who had made so credible a profession of christianity as to secure the confidence of christians of the vicinage, left to die an undesirable death. Some endured great bodily pain, but God was with them. Some left the world in a state of unconsciousness, but their last moments of rationality were cheered by blessed rays of light from heaven. Early in their sickness, some were sorely tempted, but the victory came at last. Some had been subject to mental derangement, but they were permitted to enter Eternity without a cloud over their reason. Yet, had they died maniacs, the promises would not have failed. Some were young in years and in christian experience, but the good Shepherd gathered them like lambs in his arms, and carried them in his bosom. Some were in middle life, and left helpless children behind them, but I have seen the dying mother kiss her little babe and bid the world farewell with entire composure. The peace of God ruled her heart by Jesus Christ. Some were old, nervous, and on other subjects, full of fancies; but Christ the Rock, followed them to Canaan. God's people have left the world in various ways. Some have died violent and ignominious deaths, and some have died in their beds. Some have had long notice and others hardly any. Some have died old, some in the midst of their days, and some in the morning of existence, yet they have commonly agreed in leaving an animating testimony of the power of Christ's grace to their departing spirits."

He whose loss we have been recently called to mourn, is no exception to this rule. He did indeed leave an animating testimony of the power of Christ's grace—one that gladdened the hearts of sorrowing friends, and made some of us feel like the disciples on the Mount, that it was good to be there. I feel constrained to say that it was no mean privilege to see and hear what some of us saw and heard around the couch of that dying saint. It was as if he had said in the language of the Psalmist: "Come all ye that love the Lord, hear, and I will tell what God hath done for my soul." It was a striking exemplification of the poet's words:

Hasten wait not the last moment; own her friend.
On this side death, and points them out to men
A lecture, silent, but of sovereign power;
To vice, confusion; and to virtue, peace.

My object in this service is to relate some of the dying sayings and thoughts of our departed friend. I say some of them, for even if memory enabled me to tell, you would not have the patience to hear all that he said. It is not a thing left optionally with me to do this or decline to do it. But it was virtually though not positively by express command enjoined upon me to tell these things especially to the young and unconverted of this community. Let it be distinctly understood that our design is not to eulogize the dead, but to benefit the living. We praise not the man, but the grace of God in him which enabled him to present such cheering evidences, that death may be disarmed, and the grave despoiled of its victory.

At 3 o'clock, on the morning of the last day, but one, that he lived on earth, he sent for me. Responding with all due haste to the message, I reached and entered his chamber in the early morning twilight. Stooping gently over his emaciated form, I offered him my hand. He grasped it with warmth and force, and spoke in substance, and as far as memory serves, in the following words. "My dear Pastor, I am glad to see you. I am much worse than I was. My condition is becoming critical. There is to be a consultation of physicians about my case and until that is had, I desire not to talk, or in any way exert my self. If the physicians hold out no hope of recovery, I then want to talk some to you. There are, I fear, some young people in the community who doubt the reality of religion. For their sakes, I want to say some things. And my desire and prayer is that God may give me strength to do it. Maudlin, I want you to pray for me." As it wanted but little to the hour for family worship, I sat by him engaged in silent prayer. He lay apparently rapt in thoughts and presently used this remark: "How few," said he, "properly understand and realize what it is to be a good man," which showed that his mind was of the nature of the christian's high and holy vocation. In a few moments the family assembled and we bore him and his condition, as best we could in the arms of faith and prayer, before the mercy-seat. Remembering his expressed wish, not to talk or exert himself, I sat by his couch silently wrestling in spirit with God, that it might please Him to spare so valuable a life, one so full of hope and promise to the church. After a time this silence was broken by his repeating twice with emphasis the words, *This year thou shalt die*, quoting the text from which you were all addressed on the 1st Sabbath of this present year. Upon my saying I did not remember that you were present at the time or heard that sermon: "Oh yes," he replied, with earnestness, "I heard it, I heard it and remembered it, it has been ringing in my ears like the sounds of a bell from that day to this. And it seems that God in his all-wise Providence is applying it to my case, and that this year I must die." Upon my remarking that though we call it death, yet in the case of all true believers it was more properly the beginning of life, he made a cheerful and hearty assent, being apparently too much exhausted to speak more. He then lay quiet for a little while, till about 10 o'clock, he began that remarkable address or exhortation, lasting an hour or more and interrupted only by sufficient pauses to call for water to wet his parched lips. Surely none present will ever forget the impression produced, thought many of his thoughts and much of his language may have been already forgotten.

We can only notice some of the prominent points in this address. And first, he lamented his unprofitableness in the Master's service. He more than once said, "I regret that I have done so little for Christ and his cause. I had formed plans by which I hoped to accumulate some means, and it was my purpose and desire, if successful, to come and settle down here in the church of my father, and employ, liberally, what means God in his Providence might bestow in promoting his glory and building up the church. But God, in his wise though inscrutable purpose, is cutting me off in the midst of these unexecuted plans." How ought this to operate as a spur to all of us who survive!

How ought it to stimulate us to increased effort—to increased liberality—to constant, increasing labor in the Master's vineyard!

In connection with this subject, he also spoke strongly and feelingly of his great unprofitableness. On this point, he quoted, as no doubt expressive of his own feelings, several verses of the familiar hymn,

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou wilt be gone to me,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Again he gave us his dying estimate of the comparative value of religion and worldly possessions. "He had formed plans," he said to accumulate something of this world's goods. He had labored to make some money, and had at times found his plans defeated—his hopes disappointed, and by reason of such disappointment had been brought into some trouble and perplexity of mind. But, added at all such times, I have found in my religion an unshaking resource. Here was something I could always rely upon for comfort and support, and that failed me not in my time of greatest need. Oh, how rich, exclaimed he, is that man or woman, whatever their outward lot may be, who has an interest in Christ and a title to heaven. But how poor, ah, how poor is that man who, though he possessed millions of universes, such as this is, without God and without hope in the world. For, added he, if riches are not taken away from their possessors, the possessors themselves will soon be taken away from their riches. Think of this, all ye that are pushing and striving after this world to the neglect of religion, and the best interests of your souls. Think how soon all earthly possessions may be swept from you, or you may be snatched from them, and they, how sad, how melancholy, how hopeless will be your condition without Christ and without a hope of heaven. Think how it will embitter a dying hour to reflect that in grasping at the world, you lost it, and lost your souls too. Will houses and lands, will herds and flocks, will millions of stocks and bonds or heaps of gold and silver afford you comfort and support, when the hand of Death arrests you and snatches you away from them all! Alas! my friends, when shall we all learn that the world is nothing, and Christ and His religion everything. I beseech you all, as you would consult your own peace and comfort in a dying hour, as you value the word of God and the experience of dying saints, to let go this world and lay hold on eternal life. Oh, heed the voice of true wisdom, and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness—make sure your eternal interests as your first great concern, and then thankfully accept and wisely use whatever of this world's good God may be pleased to grant in return for honest toil and effort.

But our dying friend not only spoke of the value of earthly possessions as compared with religion, but also taught the proper use of the former, by urging his brothers and all about him to use their means liberally for the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom. He lamented that diffidence and timidity which keeps so many professing christians from the performance of family worship, and from engaging in the exercises of the public prayer meeting—urged all christians, private members, office bearers and ministers to greater zeal, earnestness, and labor for the conversion and salvation of sinners. He especially urged upon all around his bed the religious instruction and training of children, expressed surprise that any christian could reconcile it with his conscience to neglect the Sabbath-school—and earnestly enjoined upon all to look up poor neglected and ragged children, and, if need be, provide them with clothing, and send them to the Sabbath-school, there to be trained for God and heaven. His earnest heart felt desires for a thorough revival of religion, he expressed in the following words: "I desire," said he, "before I die, to impress upon the community the absolute necessity for a genuine revival of religion. It is too much the way of the country, and this does not hold good of Hopewell only, or of McCain's, or of Reese's, (two neighboring churches) but it is too much the way all over the country for people to go to church to see and be seen, or from custom or for

form and fashion's sake. But it is no part of religion to dress finely or appear vainly, but rather to go to church decently clad, soberly behaved, and to live the life and perform the duties of a christian." This is religion, and oh that we had more of it in all our churches.

But if his dying concern for the church was great, his concern for his unconverted friends, individually, was greater. To several of them who approached his bedside he addressed direct personal appeals beseeching them with his dying breath to attend to the interests of their souls; to repent and turn to God and to seek an interest in the Saviour. He enquired for the health of one whom he knew to be seriously ill, and then sent him this message, and I wish you all my unconverted friends to consider it as addressed to you: "Tell him," said he, "not to be too much taken up about this world, it will not satisfy the wants of the soul. Tell him though he may have long neglected the Saviour it is not yet too late to find him. Tell him God's mercy is boundless; that the same mercy which pardoned—the same blood which saved the dying thief, can pardon and save him or any other sinner. Tell him to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, to work out his salvation with fear and trembling. Tell him so long as the door of mercy stands open he is invited and entreated to enter. He has no reason that I know of to suppose that the door is closed against him. Tell him, therefore, to strive to struggle, to agonize, to enter in while yet he may." Oh, my unbelieving friends, I beseech you to take this advice to yourselves! Take it as a voice from the dead; take it as the last legacy of a friend who would bequeath to you his dying blessing; take it as an echo from the eternal world; take it as a friendly message coming back to you from the very portals of Paradise, into which the spirit of our departed friend was just about to enter. Oh take it of the last wish, and the last word of a comrade and friend, who longed and prayed to meet all his friends in that blessed world where pain, parting, and death shall be no more; oh take it, and so act upon it, that it shall be well with you, when called to grapple with the King of Terrors, and to stand before the bar of God in judgment.

The charge of our dying friend to his Brothers was very touching and tender, moving all present to tears; it was, I believe, at the close of this he said, "I want you all, my friends, to live in peace, and love one another. Let us all love each other. In heaven all is Love."

What I have related thus far, of the last sayings of this good man, has reference to his concern for the church, and friends he was leaving behind. But he also said a great deal about the state of his own mind, and his hopes in prospect of death. At one time he exclaimed with much earnestness, "Oh what a bright, what a glorious day will that be when a sinner saved by grace is permitted to see the face of a reconciled God in peace, and to dwell eternally in his presence."

At another time as we sat rubbing his wrists and ankles to restore the circulation, he said to us: "All this is for nothing—all for nothing. My work is done. My days are numbered. My time is almost up. This body must soon, very soon, go down to the grave. But I have a life within the veil that shall never end. Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Looking one time, very intently into the face of a very dear aunt, he said, "You are a fine simile of my sainted mother. I am to be cut down like a flower in the morning of life, while you are left to struggle on a little longer with the trials of life, and the temptations of a wicked world. You long have tried to love and serve God. Continue to love and serve him, and he will not leave, nor forsake you. You have given many faithful warnings to the careless, and though they may not have heeded such warning, yet you shall assuredly not lose your reward. Christ will in the end, say to you, 'Well done thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of the joy of thy Lord.' Oh what an encouragement, fellow christians, does this afford you all, to warn your careless children, and friends, so that if they will persist in sin and perish, their blood will not be required at your hands.

Once after lying for a while in thoughtful mood, he commenced repeating slowly and solemnly the 23d Psalm in our own familiar version, a psalm which had probably been taught him on his mother's knee before he could read a syllable.

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,
He makes me down to lie—
—And so on to the end. Then after a thoughtful pause folding his hands over his breast and looking upwards he exclaimed, "Oh what a thought, to dwell in the house of God—to dwell forever in the house of God, oh what a delightful thought!"

Once he raised his feeble arm and pointing upward with his thin long finger, accompanied by a look that seemed to penetrate the ceiling of his room, nay the very skies, while methought there was something of Heaven's own light reflected in that look, he said: "You see me look up here, and with good reason. For my home is up there. I have a strong, a lively hope of a home in the skies, of a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, when this frail tabernacle shall have been dissolved. God grant that I may have a home in heaven. God grant that all my friends may find a home in heaven." These are some, and only some, of the sayings, that fell from his lips at intervals during Tuesday. During most of that night he rested quietly enjoying some refreshing sleep. On Wednesday morning, his symptoms seemed a little more favorable, awakening in us some faint hope of his recovery. But as the day wore on, even this faint shadow of hope vanished. During this the last day of his life, he talked some, but it was not my privilege to be present. Only this much has been reported to me as among his last utterances on Wednesday evening: "I see," said he, "My mother and aunt Galloway, walking the battlements of heaven, and I too shall soon be with them there." He seemed even then to have an antepast of the glory, that was about to be revealed to him. He seemed even then to have a bright vision of the white-robed throng, he was so soon to join. He seemed even then to be gazing through the gates into the celestial city. He seemed even then to have a sweet foretaste of a blessed reunion with loved ones gone before. He seemed to have something of the same experience with the dying Payson, when he exclaimed, "The celestial city is full in view—its odours are wafted to me, its breezes fan me, its sounds strike upon my ears and its spirit is breathed into my soul"—or of Thomas Scott, when he said just before death: "This is heaven begun on earth. I have done with darkness forever and nothing remains but salvation with eternal glory."

Blessed be God for his goodness and grace to his dying saints. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." In any one disposed to say with respect to his last expression that it must have been a delusion as the effect of heated imagination, for how could he see his mother or any one else, since no object was visible to others. I answer, it was by Faith, just as Stephen saw Heaven open, and beheld the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and just as many other dying Saints have enjoyed visions of coming blessedness.

Are any ready to suppose that partially on my part towards a warm personal friend and companion of my college hours has led me to give too high a coloring to this closing scene? Then ask other witnesses present and they will tell you that the half has not been told.

Will any, in order to find some feeble prop for their skepticism on the subject of religion, and some color of excuse for neglecting it, try to say that all this results from a mind affected by disease? Then ask his Physicians, and they will tell you that he retained to the last full possession of his mental faculties; here was no mental delirium; here was no raving of a fevered, disordered brain. No, no, this clear, polished intellect shone with undimmed lustre, as long as the Spirit retained possession of its clay tenement. He knew well what he was saying, and knew what he said to be true. There is one way, and only one, of accounting for the animating hope, the bright prospects that cheered and sustained him in view of a near and certain death. And that is by ad-

mitting, that religion is a reality, and that his religion was real. If anything was wanting in his life and character to prove this, it was certainly furnished by his death. True there was enough in his life and conversation to satisfy me, to satisfy any reasonable man on this point—and had he been stricken speechless at the very first, and never uttered a single syllable I should have had no more doubt than I now have about his future happiness; for has not God, who can not lie, said it shall be well with the righteous. But it pleased God to give him strength and speech to tell of his hopes, and to leave a noble testimony to the truth, reality, and sustaining power of the religion of Jesus. And by this testimony he being dead yet speaketh—speaketh to this whole community and especially to the unconverted, unbelieving members thereof; speaketh as with a voice from the grave or from the land of spirits. The substance of that testimony is that religion is a reality, and that it makes its possessor happy in life, happy in death, and what is more than all and greater than all, happy beyond death. This is the truth our departed friend wished to have burned into the minds—to use one of his own earnest expressions—of all his unconverted friends, whom he was so suddenly and unexpectedly called to leave behind him. He found in his experience that religion was real—was the first thing, the great thing, the only thing, every, everything. He tasted its pleasures in life; he felt its support in death; hence his earnest desire that all his friends might taste and feel the same. Hence it was, my unconverted friends, that in his dying moments, he felt so much concern and anxiety for your spiritual welfare; hence his dying prayers ascended for you; hence he spoke so many things for your benefit when speaking of his own painful effort; hence he commissioned me to tell you, as I have feebly attempted to do, what great things God had done for his soul, and what bright hopes He was affording him of yet greater things to be enjoyed in the future.

In conclusion, my dear unconverted friends, let me say that I can wish for you no greater happiness than to live the life and die the death of him whose loss we are to-day called to mourn. As to his life, I need not speak of that. For his manner of life, from very childhood, has been seen and observed by you all. His meekness, humility, gentleness, modesty, unobtrusive piety and godly walk has been known and read of all men. And what has been related in this discourse, has shown that his latter end was peace. You are all certainly convinced by this time that religion is a reality, and is necessary to your happiness, both here and hereafter. Then, I beseech you, no longer slight it, no longer neglect it, no longer put off its claims. But seek it, seek it now, seek it always, seek it earnestly and prayerfully, till you have found Jesus the pearl of great price, and his religion the one thing needful, that can never be taken from you. I know, my unconverted friends, you do not wish or expect to die without religion and an interest in Christ. But you are putting off attention to this all-important matter, and persuading yourselves that you can attend to it at another time. Now this providence powerfully condemns the folly of such a course. It tells you that the outstretched arms of the Saviour, do not delude yourselves with the absurd notion that a few hasty confessions and regrets and tears and prayers and cries for mercy in a dying hour will save you. No, no. It was not such things as these that imparted peace and hope to our departed friend; very far from it. His peaceful end was the close of a short but a humble, pious, godly life. So if you would die the death of the righteous, and have your latter end like his, you must live a life of faith and holy obedience. Then give up, and give up now, the world for Christ. Give up and give up now, your sinful pleasures and enjoyments for Christ. Come and come now to Jesus. Yield and yield now your hearts to his love and service. Repent, believe and begin now to live to God. Heed and heed now the warning voice which comes to you from the dying chamber and to the new-made grave of comrade and friend, and which says to you all in the most emphatic manner, "Prepare to meet thy God." "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man shall come."