

Honorable Old Age.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE FUNERAL

OF

CAPT. BENJAMIN SHEPPARD,

IN THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

RICHMOND, VA.

BY

REV. MOSES D. HOGE.

Published by Request.

RICHMOND:

H. K. ELLYSON'S STEAM PRESSES, 147 MAIN STREET.
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11-12-84

RICHMOND, June 22d, 1855.

At a meeting of the dealers in Tobacco, held at Shockoe Warehouse, this morning, Mr. JNO. CASKIE in the chair, Mr. WM. D. GIBSON announced the death of Capt. BENJAMIN SHEPPARD, late first inspector at Shockoe Warehouse, and on his motion a Committee was appointed to draft resolutions expressive of the sense of the meeting on the melancholy event. The Chairman appointed the following gentlemen: Messrs. JAMES SCOTT, THOS. VADEN, Sr., JAMES H. GRANT, F. BRANSFORD, WM. D. GIBSON, and JOHN JONES.

The Committee, through their Chairman, presented the following resolutions:

1st. *Resolved*, That the melancholy intelligence of the death of Capt. BENJAMIN SHEPPARD is received by all present with feelings of profound regret; the depth of those sentiments is only equalled by the high admiration we entertain for his character as a citizen, and our confidence in his fidelity as a public officer.

2nd. *Resolved*, That we attend his funeral in a body.

3rd. *Resolved*, That a copy of these resolutions be presented to the bereaved family, as a feeble testimony of our sympathy.

4th. *Resolved*, That the editors of the daily papers be requested to publish the foregoing.

JOHN CASKIE, Chairman.

JAMES A. SCOTT, Secretary.

11-12-84

CORRESPONDENCE.

RICHMOND, 18th July, 1855.

REV. DR. HOGG,

Dear Sir:—It having been suggested that the publication of your sermon, delivered on the occasion of the death of Capt. BENJAMIN SHEPPARD, might be productive of much good, and a source of gratification not only to his immediate family but to a large circle of friends, the undersigned would very respectfully ask a copy for the press.

Your Obedt Servants,

JOHN CARRIE,	JAMES SCOTT,
JAS. H. GRANT,	FRED. BRANSFORD,
WM. D. GIBSON,	JNO. JONES,
THOS. VADEN, Sr.	

RICHMOND, July 18th, 1855.

Gentlemen:—

In compliance with the request conveyed to me by your note of this morning, I place at your disposal the discourse to which you refer.

Very respectfully and truly yours,

M. D. HOGG.

Messrs. JOHN CARRIE,
JAMES SCOTT, and others.

SERMON.

PROVERBS XVI—31.

THE HOARY HEAD IS A CROWN OF GLORY, IF IT BE FOUND IN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

WERE a stranger to our city now to enter this church, he could perceive, without being informed of the fact, that some Providence of more than ordinary interest and solemnity had assembled us together. At a glance he would understand, that to-day, this house of God was a house of mourning.

The grief of these bereaved relatives, the sadness reflected from every countenance in this crowded assembly, would assure him that some event had occurred, strongly to arrest the attention and deeply to move the heart of this whole community.

Those of you who were acquainted with the private and public life of the venerable man whose mortal remains now repose beneath this pulpit, are not surprised at any demonstrations of affection and respect which his fellow-citizens and fellow-christians manifest on this occasion.

You feel that he was worthy of all, and that our commendations and our tears, render a just and becoming, though inadequate tribute to his virtues.

It is not always true that the deep personal interest which a speaker feels in his subject, gives effect and impressiveness to his discourse. There are times when the strength and tenderness of his emotions, obstruct the utterance and impede the full expression of the sentiments which fill his heart.

To-day I feel my inability to discharge, as I would, the mournful duty assigned to me. It is my office to comfort others, and I myself am one of the bereaved; for since the day of my coming to this city I have had no friend more true, more steadfast and affectionate; and while with characteristic humility he revered the sacred relation which I bore to him as Pastor, with that respect he always mingled the love and tenderness of a father.

This church cannot hereafter be to me just what it has been. It matters not by whom or by how many its walls may be filled—still one venerated form will be missed—for, since the Sabbath of its dedication, *there*, just at my right hand, and leaning against that pillar, have I been accustomed to see one whose beaming face, and quivering lip, and tearful eye, gave expressive and touching evidence of the emotion with which he listened to the blessed truths of that gospel which was to him so inspiring in its hopes, so rich in its consolations.

He is here again, once more—but now neither the melodies of Zion, nor the sweet accents of gospel grace penetrate the ear which death has sealed, or stir the heart which death has stilled—and yet, this is speaking after the manner of men; this is true only of the mortal part. The *immortal* is not here! The spirit of our revered father and friend has not been shrouded or made ready for the grave—it lives forevermore! It has exchanged, as we hope and believe, this earthly temple for the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and there hears, and feels, and rejoices in the sublime homage which the saints in glory render to the King of kings.

Listen, my brethren, to the consolatory voice which God's holy word addresses to his church in all generations; the voice which speaks to you: "I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

My hearers, in whatever light we contemplate our holy religion, we find it to be worthy of its divine origin, and perfectly adapted to the character and condition of man. While it reveals the blessedness which God has prepared for his children in a future state, it also conducts the soul to sources of unfailing consolation amidst the trials and sorrows incident to the present life.

Even the pathway of tribulation has its comforts to the humble disciple who goes through the wilderness leaning on the arm of his beloved; and though he be but a pilgrim, as his fathers were, yet, as he pursues his toilsome journey, he is often refreshed by the fountains which gush up from the sands of the desert, and he is sometimes permitted to pluck golden fruits from the trees of life which bend over him, affording both shade and refreshment.

It is delightful to contemplate the complete adaptation of the gospel to all the infirmities and trials, to all the wants and woes of our fallen humanity. These provisions are suited to every exigency and to every period of life.

Infancy, youth, middle life, and old age, each and all, are tenderly remembered, and made the subjects of special promise in the scheme of the Divine mercy.

With respect to infancy, the voice of the gospel is: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." To youth is the assurance made: "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." To those who are burdened by the weighty responsibilities and pressing cares of mature life, the invitation comes: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee." And when the sorrows and infirmities of old age arrive, then the most precious assurances of the Divine care and compassion begin to entrance the ear: "Even to your old age (saith God) I am He, and even to hoary hairs will I carry you; I have made and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." "Thine age shall be clearer than the noonday: thou shalt shine forth: thou shalt be as the morning."

"Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season."

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."

These voices of scripture are beautifully paraphrased in that favorite hymn of the church, (in which the very sweetness of the gospel promises is distilled,) commencing,

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word;"

and especially in the stanza which has cheered and comforted many an aged saint:

"E'en down to old age all my people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne."

And yet, my hearers, old age exhibits itself in the world under two very different aspects.

Exclude the light of revelation, strip from declining years the comforts and the hopes which the gospel imparts, disprove the scripture doctrine of immortality, and then what spectacle is more

dreary, cheerless, and melancholy than old age! In this total eclipse of the light of revelation, let us for a moment contemplate the evening of life, and behold the awful and mysterious shadows which gather and darken around it.

The time has arrived when the buoyancy and vigor of youth, the strength and energy of manhood, have been exchanged for decrepitude and helplessness. The eye has grown dim, the ear is dull, the voice is tremulous, the step is cautious, slow and tottering, the long staff upon which the old man leans affords an uncertain support, the enfeebled body bends toward the earth, as in anticipation of the time when it must rest beneath the clods of the valley, there to moulder and mingle with its kindred dust.

But a mental decay, more saddening, has kept pace with this decline in bodily vigor. The understanding, which once was only invigorated by grappling with the most intricate problems, and which readily forced its way through all opposing difficulties to a just and happy conclusion, now succumbs to the most trifling obstacle. The imagination which once plumed its daring pinion for a flight above the heavens, now folds its drooping wing in eternal inactivity. The memory, which once treasured up the minutest events, now becomes oblivious to the most transcendent realities. The history of the preceding day is forgotten, the names of children are miscalled, the most familiar faces are no longer recognized.

And there is one other mournful incident in the history of the aged man. He has outlived the companions of his youth. Even she, who was to him as another soul, whose unwearied, fond, devoted affection, taught him with each revolving year, "how much the wife was dearer than the bride," has long since passed from his arms into the cold embrace of death.

One by one he has seen those who were endeared to him at the time when attachments are most easily formed, and when they are most lasting, fall, and swept away "like leaves in wintry weather;" and he is left standing alone like some aged forest tree, which, though thunder-scared and stripped of its branches by many a pitiless tempest, still rears its head among the uprooted and decaying trunks which lie mouldering around it.

In a word, the old man is the original of the graphic picture which the wisest of men drew with a pencil dipped in the sad colors of actual observation, when he said, the years shall draw nigh when

thou shalt have no pleasure in them, when thick and gloomy clouds shall obstruct the beams of the sun by day, and of the moon and stars by night; and when sorrow succeeds pain as the clouds which seemed to have dispersed ~~are~~ return again after the rain; when the strong arms, the keepers of the house, shall tremble; when the eyes, the clear windows of the soul, shall be darkened; when the unrefreshing slumbers of the night shall be broken, even by the light twitter of the bird; when, through prostration of resolution and hope, there shall be dread of that which is high; when, through needless apprehension, fears shall be in the way; when the almond tree shall flourish, and white hairs, those prophetic cemetery flowers, shall displace the raven locks; when through very feebleness, the grasshopper shall be a burden; when through exhaustion of passion and appetite, desire shall fail; and when the tuneless ear shall no longer miss the minstrelsy of all the daughters of music brought low.

After this, but a single disruption remains—the severing of the silver cord and the breaking of the golden bowl; and when the dust returns to the earth, from whence it came, the curtain will fall upon the earthly history, nevermore to rise, and all is shrouded in rayless, hopeless, impenetrable night. Such, my hearers, is a truthful picture of the old age with its accumulating infirmities and sorrows, and its dreary close, when we exclude from it the hallowed light of revelation, when we deny it the consolation and support of the gospel, and when we deprive it of the hopes of a blessed immortality.

But, O! be compassionate to the poor old man; take not from him heavenly consolation and heavenly hope, for these are his all, and without these he has nothing left. Permit celestial light once more to shine upon that hoary head; place in the trembling hands of that old man the rod and the staff of gospel promise; infuse into his heart the sweet assurance of present grace and future glory; and then how is the aspect of old age changed! how dignified in its repose, how graceful in its decline, how touching in its dependence!

The venerable saint, whose privilege it is to turn to the scriptures for instruction and consolation, there finds the explanation of every mystery connected with his present condition of weakness and pain; and his very infirmities and sorrows are so many prophetic pledges of the blessings which shall be bestowed on him hereafter by the

covenant-keeping God, who loves him with a tender and with an unchanging love.

His bodily and mental decay, his want of interest in the scenes which once so attracted him, his loneliness in the world from having outlived the friends of his early life—all these instruct him as to present duty, all these point him to the future as the season in which he is to find his recompenses and the fulfilment of the hopes which earth could never satisfy. Does he find his bodily strength declining and almost gone? then he may say with a confidence which he could not have entertained in early life: "Thou art my hope, O Lord God. Thou art my trust, even from my youth. I am a wonder unto many, but thou art my strong refuge. My mouth shall be filled with thy praise and with thy honor all the day long; for thou wilt not cast me off in the time of old age, nor forsake me when my strength faileth." Conscious of his weakness, he now learns simply to depend on God. Unable to walk by sight, he learns to walk by faith. The natural eye grows dim, but before the eye of faith open up vistas of beauty and glory, infinitely transcending the brightest scenes of earth. The eye of faith is never dimmed by time. It can ever rove over those sweet fields of living green which lie beyond the flood; and often does it brighten at the anticipation of soon reclining there beside the still waters, whose banks are shadowed and fringed by the trees of immortality. The hand may be weak and trembling, but it is still grasped by the strong hand of Him who has said: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Thus, as the senses grow dull, and communication with the external world difficult, the life of the old man becomes more spiritual. He walks in a dim cathedral twilight; he shuns the loud noises of the world; he loves seclusion, repose, and self-communion; and thus his daily and common life begins to resemble that of some aged priest, in the ancient temple, who scarcely left its courts. The world has become to him such a temple—shadowy, solemn, still. There he dwells, and leaning upon the top of his staff he worships, waiting until he shall be called to the services of the upper sanctuary.

The failure, too, of the powers of his mind, and his want of interest in the ordinary affairs of life, suggest some tender and consolatory reflections. Has his memory grown treacherous? well, he has now but little use for the facts and events of the past. God is gently detaching him from the world, and leading him to feel that his inter-

ests lie in the future. Have his tastes changed? this is all the better. His spirit has outgrown the pleasures which once satisfied it. In childhood the earth was to him only a play ground; in middle life it was only a merchants' exchange—a mart of business; but now he stands reverently upon it as upon the broad floor of a temple not made with hands.

Do people say of him that he is in his second childhood? be it so, for there is sweet comfort in the thought that the second childhood of a good old man is but the infancy of a happy immortality.*

Again, is he lonely because so few of the companions and friends of his youth survive? well, just so sure as there is a heaven for his faith, there are friends there for his love.† He is now standing by a door which is about to open and admit him to the society of the dear departed—his heart's treasures, whom he is once more to gain, and nevermore to lose. And though now the cup of his earthly comfort be empty and dry, it matters not—in a little while he will fill it from the fountain of living waters to which the Lamb shall lead him.

My hearers, in this exhibition of the consolations of the gospel in their peculiar adaptation to the trials and sorrows of old age, I have purposely regarded that period of life as one destitute of present usefulness and present enjoyment. Were it so, still the comforts of our holy religion would be sufficient to cheer and brighten the evening of life. But God, in his overflowing kindness, often permits his aged servants to enjoy the blessings of both worlds. He frequently unites present happiness and present usefulness with the most animating prospects of future blessedness.

Though the old man has outlived the beloved companions of his youth, their places are supplied by the children and grand-children, who surround him, and who vie with each other in rendering to him the most considerate and gentle kindnesses. Not only in the immediate circle of his own descendants, but neighbors, friends, and even strangers, treat him with respect and deference—for it is a dictate of nature, no less than of revelation, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man." Nor has the aged servant of God outlived the period of his usefulness. He may think so, and often lament that the days of active service are over; but there is another kind of service which he may still render to God

* Mountford's Euthanasia. †Ibid.

and man. The veneration which gray hairs command, the reverential love which virtuous age attracts, necessarily give to the old a position and an influence which no other period of life can claim. "Length of days shall speak, and the multitude of years teach wisdom"—the inestimable wisdom which long experience imparts.

The very presence of such a man is a silent and eloquent appeal in behalf of truth and God. Before him vice shrinks abashed—and even the frivolous and the dissolute render silent homage to the majesty of virtue, and feel "how awful goodness is." And so long has the whole community been accustomed to respect his character and opinions, that when he passes away he is more missed, and his loss is perhaps more sensibly felt, than the death of any one of his active descendants would be.

Thus is verified the promise of holy writ: "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age"—fruits fair to the sight and pleasant to the taste; and thus does the aged believer resemble some venerable oak—hoary and gnarled, yet healthful and green—a beautiful object to the eye, and affording pleasant shade, in whose spreading branches the birds build their nests, and among whose lofty boughs the winds of heaven find a voice, and murmur a grateful song.

O, yes, the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness. God has so constituted us that we render an involuntary homage to the man whose piety has kept pace with his advancing years; and it matters not what his profession or calling may be—whether he be the upright man of business, or the war-worn veteran who has braved the shock of battle and periled life in defence of his country, or the aged statesman, with silvery locks, retiring from long and useful services to the land of his birth, or the aged minister of the gospel, grown prematurely gray in labors for the cause of his Master,—of all such it is true that the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

We gaze upon such an one with tearful admiration; we minister to him with filial love; we fancy that we see a ray of light celestial playing upon those silver locks, and we know that when the hour of parting comes, death will be to him but "the beautiful gate of the temple," to admit him to the society of patriarchs and prophets—to the general assembly of the church of the first born—to the innu-

merable company of angels, among whom he shall walk a justified spirit made perfect.

Beloved hearers! there are cases when the hearts of ministers of the gospel, in delivering funeral discourses, are filled with sadness and pain, when the period arrives for personal allusion to the deceased. And, in the cases referred to, the cause of this sinking of heart is the knowledge of the fact that there was so little, either in the natural or christian character of the departed to furnish any topic for pleasant or consolatory reflections. And then, the preacher must be silent, or, if he speak at all, he must deal in vague generalities; for though his sensibilities may incline him to administer consolation to the bereaved, he dare not comfort even the mourner at the expense of truth.

My friends, how different is my position now! I can freely speak to you out of the abundance of a full heart, of the lovely character, the heroic life, and christian virtues of our venerable father, and from your hearts the approving response will come back to me.

Before any Richmond audience, I may frankly say, that there was not another man in this community who occupied such a place in the public mind and heart as Capt. BENJAMIN SHEPPARD. There may be some among us who are as warmly admired and loved in the circles of which they are the ornament, but no other man in this city was so *generally* revered; none possessed so much of the confidence and affection of all classes in the community. In the vast circle of his acquaintance he had not a single enemy; in this vast circle every acquaintance was a friend; and now that he is gone, every friend is a mourner. The death of such a man is not a family affliction only; it is *city* bereavement, and throughout the commonwealth the tidings of this decease will carry sorrow to many a heart, and the tears of grief will bedew many a manly cheek.

BENJAMIN SHEPPARD was born in the county of Hanover, on the 11th of May, 1778. He was the youngest of three brothers, all of whom greatly resembled each other in character and disposition.

While a boy at school, an event occurred which seems to have made a deep impression on his mind, and to which he made allusion during his last illness. This was a visit which General Washington

paid to the neighborhood where he then resided. As Washington approached the school house, the boys were drawn up before it in a line, and in passing, the General paused, and addressed to them some kind remarks. These words of admonition and advice were never forgotten, and Capt. SHEPPARD cherished the memory of that interview throughout life.

Truly did one of our city papers of yesterday morning remark, that in the death of Capt. SHEPPARD another of the links is broken which united the present generation to the high toned race of a former and nobler era. It was something to have seen and heard WASHINGTON!

In 1794 he entered upon the active duties of life in connection with Mr. Tho's Prosser, sheriff of Henrico county. In this service some of those traits of character were developed, for which he became so conspicuous in after years,—energy, resolution, integrity, and a courage which was often tried, but never found wanting, mingled with a gentleness and amiability which is generally the accompaniment of a truly gallant spirit.

It often happened, in the discharge of his official duties, that he came in contact with lawless and desperate men, and such was his gentle and unassuming manner, that one unacquainted with him might suppose that he would not be equal to the emergency which demanded the promptest and the sternest personal courage. There never was a greater mistake, as every man found out who ever had the presumption to put him to the test.

Capt. SHEPPARD filled many public stations, occupied many positions requiring decision, fidelity, fortitude, judgment, and integrity; and the records of the county court will show that he was the man to whom his fellow-citizens seemed most naturally to look for the discharge of any public duty of a responsible character; and the testimony of all impartial men, for more than half a century, has been unvarying—that no confidence reposed in him, of any kind, was ever misplaced, and that while he was honored with many a trust, he himself reflected honor on every office conferred on him.

The year of 1807 was a memorable one in the annals of Virginia. The arrogant pretensions of Great Britain, with regard to the right of search as then asserted, and the impressment of American seamen, had greatly exasperated the minds of our citizens against the mother country. England seemed to cherish the flattering delusion

that the very tides of sea could not move except to the measure of "*Rule Britannia*," for she had not then been as fully taught as she afterward was, that the waves of the ocean could also occasionally beat time to the thrilling music of the American quick step. In the midst of this excited state of public feeling, an outrage occurred which aroused the popular mind to burning indignation. On the 22d of June, the Chesapeake frigate, of 40 guns, bearing the broad pennant of Commodore Barron, got under way from Hampton Roads, bound for the Mediterranean. The frigate *Leopard*, of 50 guns, belonging to the British fleet, anchored at Lynnhaven Bay, weighed anchor at the same time, followed the Chesapeake, and in the offing, near Cape Henry, fired first one gun, and then poured a broadside into the Chesapeake, killing and wounding several men, and cutting up her spars and rigging. The American ship, being totally unprepared for action, lowered her flag, and was obliged to submit to the impressment and abduction of four of her crew.

The news of this outrage kindled a flame of resentment all over the commonwealth, and excited public meetings were held in nearly every town and county. The citizens of Richmond assembled at the capitol—Judge Roane presiding—and adopted resolutions and an address to be forwarded to the President of the United States, tendering him all possible aid in vindicating the honor of the country. A day or two before this assemblage, a meeting of the Richmond Troop of Cavalry, then commanded by Capt. SHEPPARD, was held, and a committee was appointed to make to the President of the United States a tender of the services of the troop whenever he chose to demand them. President Jefferson promptly issued a proclamation, ordering British vessels to leave the American waters, and calling upon the citizens to resist the landing of any of the enemies' boats, for the purpose of obtaining provisions or supplies of any kind from our shores.

From the city of Richmond three companies were ordered to march to Norfolk—the Light Infantry Blues, Capt. Wm. Richardson; the Republican Blues, Capt. Peyton Randolph; and the Troop of Cavalry, Capt. Benj. Sheppard. Orders were also issued from the war department, to the governors of the several states, making a requisition of one hundred thousand militia, to be ready to take the field at a moment's warning. And thus every preparation was made for the war, which then seemed inevitable, but which, as you

know, was avoided by skilful diplomacy for a few years longer.

Capt. SHEPPARD returned to Richmond after a month's absence, and in 1812 he was commissioned—not as a soldier—but as a justice of the peace, by James Barbour, Governor of Virginia. I here state, on the authority of an old and distinguished citizen, once a member of the bar, that no magistrate ever presided in any of our courts with more dignity, impartiality, patience, and courtesy, than Capt. SHEPPARD. His long practical acquaintance with the practice of the courts, his sound sense, his sterling honesty, his love of justice, eminently qualified him to become just what he was, one of the most efficient magistrates that ever sat on the bench. On the 31st of December, 1830, he was commissioned high sheriff of Henrico, by John Floyd, which office he filled until the 8th day of Jan., 1833, when he was qualified as Inspector in Shockoe warehouse.

As a body, no more high-minded, intelligent, and honorable merchants have ever lived, than those who daily frequent this warehouse, and among no other body of men was Capt. SHEPPARD ever more thoroughly appreciated. An hundred men could rise in this audience and bear their hearty testimony to the affectionate regard entertained for him, by the planters, manufacturers, and tobacco buyers of this city and state.

It may be truly said of him that he was a man whom the citizens delighted to honor. On all occasions of public interest, requiring a civic and military display, he was called upon to act as chief marshal. And many of you will remember, that so recently as the visit of the late President Taylor to this city, when Capt. SHEPPARD declined to act in his usual capacity, in consequence of his age and infirmities, he was persuaded to take his usual position, and two young men, selected for the purpose, were placed on either side to aid and protect him; for it was felt that the pageant would not be complete, unless his venerable form was seen at the head, to grace and lead the procession.

In his domestic relations he was eminently happy. On the 10th of July, 1802, he was united in marriage to Miss Sarah Garland Young, with whom he lived in unbroken concord until the day of her death, in December, 1841. His grief for this loss was in a measure assuaged by the devoted love of three sons and three daughters, with their children, all of whom regarded him with the profoundest veneration and the tenderest affection. On the 14th of

January, 1842, he united with the First Presbyterian church, of this city, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Dr. Plumer. Previous to this public profession of his faith, he was, and had been for years, a man of the most unblemished morality. At the time when racing was one of the most popular of Virginia vices, and when he was under some peculiar temptations to devote himself to what are called the "sports of the turf,"—sports which have proved sad and ruinous enough to many a worthy man in this Commonwealth—by a decisive act, attended with pecuniary sacrifice, he cut himself off from all connection with this dangerous and demoralizing pastime. If at any time of his life he was profane, it was before he became a father. With many temptations to convivial pleasures, he shunned and abhorred dissipation in every form. And though he was possessed of a courage of the highest order, I question whether at any period of his life he would have sent or accepted a challenge. His bravery was very different from the bloody bravery of the duelist.

But while from principle he cultivated the most elevated morality, he did not rely on his natural virtues as the ground of his acceptance before God. He knew himself to be a sinner, and amenable to a stricter, purer law than any of mortal framing, and cast himself on the divine mercy, in humble reliance on the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ. He loved the day, the house, the ministers, the ordinances, and the people of God. He was one of the hearers whom it was most pleasant to address from the pulpit. Not only did he listen to the proclamations of the gospel with fixed attention, but with an emotion which was evident to others. Often have I seen him here, weeping at the story of the cross, and drinking in the rich consolations of gospel grace. O, may I see him again rejoicing in the sublimer worship of the heavenly temple! His final visit to this church was on the Sabbath of our last sacramental communion;—a privilege which he greatly prized—but what privilege was this, compared to that of mingling in the eternal festival of love, which the redeemed in glory celebrate as they sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb?

The illness which terminated his life was characterized by many circumstances of mercy. He was wonderfully exempted from bodily suffering, and his soul was filled with the peace of God. His interviews and partings with his old friends were deeply affecting—and none of them more so than one which I witnessed when he took

his final leave of one whom I now see sitting in the servants' gallery. I refer to upright and respected AARON,* for so many years his trustworthy attendant in Shockoe warehouse, to whose long tried worth I take pleasure in bearing this public testimony.

During the whole of Capt. SHEPPARD'S last illness he maintained the most cheerful and unwavering confidence in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. At times, when conversing about his death, he would shed tears, he would beg his friends not to attribute those tears to any fear or unwillingness to die—so desirous was he to magnify the grace which he found by his own delightful experience to be sufficient for him.

The last words he addressed to me were: "*Pray for me.*" Venerable father! no longer need I pray for you—but I will praise for you—praise God that he spared you to us so long; that at last he so gently removed you from earthly toils to the heavenly rest; from a bed of tedious illness to the bowers of immortality; from a world of imperfection, and darkness, and sorrow, to a world of beauty, and light, and unmingled felicity, where God wipes all tears from every eye, and where the days of mourning are forever ended.

To you, his bereaved children and descendants, he has left the rich legacy of an untarnished name; the example of an honorable, useful, and pious life. O, walk in his footsteps, as he followed Christ—and so live, that when the circle on earth is broken up, it may be reformed in heaven—each member of your several households constituting a link in that celestial chain—and so to be forever with one another and with the Lord.

Permit me to say a parting word to you, the aged companions and friends of the deceased. Revered fathers! in what terms of respectful and affectionate exhortation may I address you?

Solemnly do the providences of God remind you that your pilgrimage of life is almost ended. The shades of departed friends encompass you around like a cloud of witnesses, and point you to the goal which you have almost won. Doubtless, you often walk in silent, solemn meditation, on the shore of that vast, eternal ocean you must sail so soon. If prepared for your translation, blessed are you, for soon you will hear the invitation: "Come, ye blessed of my

* Aaron is a colored man, who has been living at Shockoe warehouse for about 50 years. One of his duties has been to make deposits in Bank and to draw money for the Inspectors. In this way probably millions of dollars have passed through his hands. His character for integrity has always been above suspicion. In the good old age to which he has attained, he enjoys the confidence and respect of the entire community.

Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Soon the hoary head, which is now to you as a crown of honor, will brighten into a crown of immortality.

But if any of you, my aged hearers, have lived to this hour without God and without a well grounded hope of salvation, then I would solemnly remind you, that the hoary head is *not* a crown of glory, if it be found in the ways of *sin*. It is a crown of shame and dishonor. It is the badge of a life which failed to attain the true and noblest end of life. It is the proclamation of ingratitude to a heavenly benefactor. It is the avowal of a long career of sin unpardoned. Reverend vice, gray iniquity, hoary impiety, aged impenitence—what shocking epithets are these! Oh! what appalling woes must gather around the destiny which shrouds the aged man who has passed through all the successive stages of life, attending to every thing, except the great business for which God made him!

The plain unequivocal language of scripture is: "though the sinner" die, "being an hundred years old, he shall be accursed"—

"Behold the aged sinner goes,
Laden with guilt and heavy woes,
Down to the regions of the dead,
With endless curses on his head."

Shuddering, we turn away from a contemplation so appalling, to a brighter spectacle. Blessed be God! there is a delightful sun-lit, heaven-illuminated contrast to this picture. For "the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." Such was the way, along which our beloved friend and father walked, until he reached the boundary line, where heaven and earth meet and mingle, and where pausing for a moment, he could say: "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day."

"Soldier of Christ, well done!
Praise be thy new employ,
And while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Savior's joy."

"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."