

The Covenanter Witness

"THE FIELD IS THE WORLD, THE SEED IS THE WORD OF GOD" ©

VOLUME XLVII

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1951

NUMBER 15



The Late Thomas Melville Slater, D.D.

Some Loving Tributes to Dr. T. M. Slater

A Rich Legacy to the Church

In Glasgow's History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America (p.671) there is a very modest biography—14 lines—of a certain William Slater, son of James and Martha (Thompson) Slater. Note those two names. This son William Slater was for forty-four years pastor of the Miller's Run Congregation. History says that Miller's Run Congregation no longer exists, but that is not quite so. William Slater had a brother Thomas who had a son Thomas Melville who passed away June 5, 1951, of whose life we are giving some glimpses in this number of the Witness. William Slater also had a sister Jane who became the mother of the Georges, (R. J. George) and the grandmother of Georges, Slaters, Colemans' Taggarts, Carithers, (ministers and missionaries of the Church), and others. Millers Run also gave the Thompsons, the McBurneys, the Robbs, the Scotts, the Connors, and many, many worthy laymen and women.

Is Miller's Run dead? Read the partial answer in the undying influence of Thomas Melville Slater.

Dr. Slater

The Reverend Thomas Melville Slater, D.D., died June 5 in Mountainside Hospital, Montclair, N. J., at the age of 82. He and his wife, the former Annabelle Hunter, lived at 6 Carteret St., Upper Montclair, N. J.

Mr. Slater, was born near Canonsburg, Washington Co., Pa. He attended Jefferson Academy in that town, graduated from Geneva College in 1892 and the Covenanter Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh in 1897. He was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Geneva College.

In 1897 he was installed as pastor of the Covenanter congregation at Bovina, N. Y. In 1904 he was released from that pastorate and was pastor of the Seattle, Washington, congregation. After seventeen years there, he accepted charge of the Montclair, N. J., congregation in 1921. He retired four years ago because of poor health.

Dr. Slater was a member of the Covenanter Board of Foreign Missions and a member of the Board of Trustees of Geneva College and was Moderator of Synod in 1921.

After retiring, he wrote on the subject of Lodges and Secret Societies and published pamphlets at his own expense.

His wife, a daughter Mary (Mrs. Robert Ward), Bloomfield, N. J., two sons John Slater and Thomas Slater, survive him.

Another Course Finished

W. J. McKnight, D.D.

Thomas Melville Slater was born in 1869, completed his College work with honors in 1892, graduated from the Theological Seminary in 1897, and finished his course in 1951. In annotating a few characteristics of this man of God one could not do better perhaps than to avail oneself of Paul's method of procedure—first, "that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."

A radius of about forty years—forty-three, to be exact—would run a rim around a little group of us and enclose us within a circumference of many cherished episodes and no end of pleasant memories. Of the group in mind but two of us still await the summons to shuffle off this mortal coil. The recent departure of T. M. Slater—we called him "Mel"—sets in motion the usual list of questions common to such occasions. Was he a happy, joyful sort of person, or was he prevailingly serious? What kind of neighbor did he prove himself to be? Was he genial, cheerful, companionable, or preponderantly sedate and given to gravity? To hear him speaking from the pulpit, or in religious gatherings, a casual listener might be led to think that in things of lighter vein he would perhaps be lacking. On crossing his threshold, however, any illusion of that description would evaporate and vanish before the door was closed. He was a jovial host and a welcome guest. It was the same to the end. His radiant countenance wore "the years like a beatitude." It was his conviction that the Lord Jesus, in giving us life, has given us "all things richly to enjoy."

From the other angle the vista is equally clear. No one who knew Thomas Melville Slater could ever doubt his right to say with David, "I have walked in mine integrity." He had none of the "double minded man" in his makeup. He knew what he believed. He knew why he believed it. His convictions were founded on the Word of God. Ingrained in his creed and manner of living were such precepts as these: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." "Turn not aside from (the commandment) to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper." "As for God, His way is perfect." "The redeemed shall walk there." Any movement to sell out the principles of Revealed Religion for "a morsel of meat" was abhorrent to him. His dreams were of a piece with Jacob's at Bethel, linked with the incorruptible "inheritance" of eternity. In so far as he was concerned Esau was welcome to his little "mess of pottage." He was severely stricken a few years ago at Winona Lake. We all thought it was the end. But he mounted up again on wings as an eagle. He plunged forward into a field of labor for which his equipment was still intact. The work was so well done that it caught the eye of a total stranger in a distant city who sent him a thousand dollars to encourage him in his worthy task. And this by the way, if we stop to think of it, is by no means a common phenomenon. It is a providential mode of saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Compromising "spectres of the mind" had no fascination for him. How near he could come to giving up his covenanted profession of faith without doing it merited nothing from him but his sovereign contempt. The promise upon which he laid hold was specific — "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." His characteristic excellencies, accordingly, (in Browning's phrase),

"Lead him at his grandest to the grave."

FAREWELL, GOOD SOLDIER, THE REST OF
YOUR GROUP WILL SOON BE WITH YOU.