

Memorial Sketch

OF THE LATE

Wm. B. Morton,

Ruling Elder in the

Church of Roanoke, Va.

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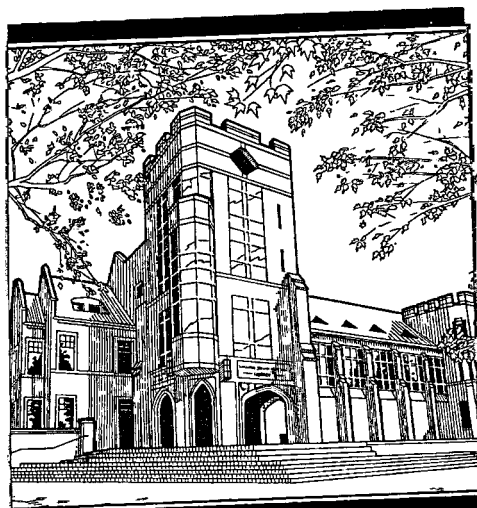
REV. C. R. VAUGHAN, D. D.

Written to Aid

Ruling Elders.



Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond, Va.



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Union Presbyterian Seminary
Richmond, Virginia

MEMORIAL SKETCH
OF THE LATE
WILLIAM B. MORTON,
RULING ELDER
IN
THE CHURCH OF ROANOKE,
IN THE COUNTY OF CHARLOTTE, VA.

Written to aid Ruling Elders.

BY
REV. C. R. VAUGHAN, D. D.

RICHMOND, VA. :
PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.
1886.

MEMORIAL SKETCH.

THE death of WILLIAM B. MORTON, ESQ., of Wards' Neck, in the county of Charlotte, Virginia, occurred from gangrene and the effects of amputation, on the 22d of July in the year 1885. His character as a Christian, and his extraordinary usefulness as an Elder in the Church, were so remarkable as to make some more extended memorial than an ordinary obituary, not only a mark of propriety in itself, but a promise of usefulness, especially to the class of officers to which he belonged. As a Christian, he was eminently worthy of special remembrance; but his career as an elder was something so unusual, and so far apart from the common manifestations of fidelity and useful service in that valuable class of officers in the Presbyterian system, it would be something very much like a censurable limitation of the value of the gracious gifts bestowed upon him, to neglect to give the Church, and especially his brother elders, the advantage of a true picture of his official fidelity, and his success in the Master's service.

William Booker Morton was the son of Wm. B. Morton and Lucy Farish Flournoy, of the county of Charlotte, in Virginia. He was born in the bounds of the old Cub Creek Presbyterian congregation, on the 1st day of May, in the year 1811. He was descended from the blood of the Scotchman and the Huguenot. His Morton name and lineage were Scotch, and the Scottish characteristics were marked strongly in his physical appearance. But the sunny and gay blood of his Huguenot ancestry was the predominant element in his nature, coming not only on the mother's side, who descended from the French family of the Flournoy's, but also on the female branch of his father's ancestors. He was three-fourths Huguenot-French. A very interesting narrative of the history of his family on the female side of his father's ancestry was published a few years ago in the *Christian Observer*. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, by Louis XIV. of France, brought immeasurable sorrow on the most valuable class of his subjects, and an irreparable injury to his kingdom. Under the guaranties of that Edict, issued by Henry of Navarre, the Huguenot Prince, who obtained the crown of France by the abjuration of the Protestant faith in which he was bred, the Protestants of France had for many years lived in peace and enjoyed the liberty of the exercise of their faith. So long as Henry lived they were un-

disturbed. After his death, the intrigues of the Catholic party, with the Jesuits in the lead, were resolutely addressed to the purpose of securing the revocation of the edict which gave security to the Huguenots and vitality to the Protestant cause. At last they succeeded. In the year 1685 the edict was revoked, and the tempest of persecution broke unrestrained upon the Protestants of France. Their churches were destroyed, their ministers banished, their religious rites were suppressed, and all their sacred religious privileges were abolished. Half a million of the most skillful artisans of France at once departed the country. Seeing the irreparable public injury involved in this exodus, strenuous measures were adopted to put an end to it. All removal from the country was prohibited; every road was put under military surveillance; and the unhappy remnant who had delayed their flight were compelled to abide the tyranny of a persecuting church and crown, or escape as criminals by secret means. In the beautiful city of Sedan, a considerable number of the population was Protestant. Among them was a family bearing the name Rochette. Anxious to place his children beyond the merciless tyranny which devoted them to the corrupting and soul-destroying heresies of Rome, Abraham Rochette determined to send his three young daughters into Holland by the secret agents who bravely ventured

the hazardous business of aiding the escape of the unhappy Huguenots. The first attempt failed, and his youngest daughter, Susannah, with the companions of her flight, was seized, imprisoned and afterwards compelled to return to the house of her father. A second attempt was made, in which the two elder daughters succeeded in entering the Dutch frontiers. They then wrote back to their abandoned home for their father to send them "the little night-cap" they had left behind. This quaint phrase designated their younger sister, whose attempt to escape had been frustrated. The child was placed in a hog-head, and carried on board a trading vessel, marked as merchandise, and removed as soon as the vessel was fairly at sea. She reached her sisters in safety, and in that land of Protestant freedom grew to maturity, amid many a hardship. All three of the sisters married—the two elder removing to the West Indies, where all knowledge of their future history has been lost. Susannah Rochette married a Huguenot refugee, and after becoming the mother of six children, removed with her husband to Virginia. The family landed in Stafford county, on the banks of the Potomac; and after a few years' stay in that section, removed to the settlement of a number of Huguenot refugees on James river, called Manakin town, where they spent the balance of their lives prosperous and happy. Six more children were

born to them in Virginia; and from the high respectability of their descendants, it is evident the godly parents did not forfeit the blessings of the covenant by unfaithfulness in the training of their children. Five sons and seven daughters laid the foundation of a large and respectable lineage, by marriages with the Woodsons, Mortons, Venables, Watkins, Flournoys and Carringtons—names ranking among the best in the Old Dominion. Agnes Micheaux, the eleventh child of Abraham Micheaux and Susannah Rochette, married Richard Woodson. This pair had a daughter named for her mother, Agnes, who married a gentleman of Scottish descent, named Joseph Morton, and removed with him to the present county of Charlotte, then included in the frontier county of Lunenburg, which embraced an undefined territory of unlimited extent. The husband of Agnes Woodson settled at Little Roanoke Bridge, on a property still in the hands of his family. He was a surveyor by profession, and is known in the history of Charlotte county as "little Joe Morton.* Dr. Foote curiously enough confounded this sobriquet, descriptive probably of his size, with the colloquial contraction of his name, and calls him "Little Joe" Morton.† His name was Joseph Mor-

* See Life of Dr. Archibald Alexander, pp. 180, 181.

† See also Foote's "Sketches of Virginia," Second Series, p. 53.

ton—a name of Scotch descent, a person of resolute and enterprising character, and a staunch adherent of the then established Episcopal Church of the colony of Virginia. On one of Rev. Samuel Davies's missionary tours through the outlying districts of his colonial bounds, he was conducted by John Morton, who was himself a son of a granddaughter of Abraham and Susannah Micheaux, to the house of Joseph Morton of Little Roanoke Bridge. He was hospitably received; but when the new light preacher requested permission to preach that night, the rigid churchman demurred. But on consultation with his wife, who was delighted to see in her frontier home a minister holding the old faith of her Huguenot fathers, he consented to gratify her. Messengers were sent round to the neighbors, and Davies preached with all the power and pathos of his astonishing eloquence. Joseph Morton and his wife were so powerfully impressed by a living gospel, they resolved to go on with Mr. Davies the next day to the county of Cumberland, thirty miles distant, where a sacramental service was to be held. There Mr. Morton united with his wife in the sacred rite, and from that time to the end of his long and useful life, Joseph Morton was the leader of the Presbyterian communities of Charlotte and Prince Edward counties. He became an elder in the Briery Church, and for many years, in the absence of a minister, led the devotions

of the congregation, reading a sermon, catechising the children, and aiming in every way to build up the interests of a pure gospel faith. From this man and his Huguenot wife have descended many families now living in the old Lunenburg district, and many more scattered over the whole country, the great bulk of whom have remained staunch adherents of the Presbyterian faith. From him the subject of this sketch descended in a direct line. His father, William Booker Morton, was the grandson of Joseph Morton and Agnes Woodson, the granddaughter of Susannah Rochette, the little fugitive from Sedan during the tyrannical religious policy of Louis XIV. of France. His mother was Lucy Farish Flournoy, also of French-Huguenot descent.

The family of Joseph Morton, of Little Roanoke Bridge, furnished a number of valuable citizens to the county of Charlotte, down through the third and fourth generation to the present day. The home of the first William B. Morton was established within the bounds of the old Cub Creek congregation, and there he died, leaving a widow, three daughters and an only son, the subject of this memorial. His widow, Lucy Flournoy Morton, subsequently married Col. Maurice Hamner, a prominent member of the Cub Creek Church, and died in 1836, leaving a single son, as the issue of her second marriage—Thomas Flournoy Hamner, who died in the county

of Pittsylvania within a few years past. Mr. Morton, of Ward's Neck, was the last of his family, with a single exception: one sister, Mrs. Mary Barksdale, of the county of Halifax, is the only one left.

The religious history of Wm. B. Morton begins in the quiet, regular training of his father's godly household, and under the sound and steady ministry of the Rev. Clement Read, for many years the staunch pastor of Cub-Creek and Bethesda Presbyterian churches in the county of Charlotte. It is known he was brought into the communion of the Church under the ministry of Mr. Read; and from the beginning of his Christian career maintained the characteristic marks of his peculiar Christian character—consistency, steadiness, intense sympathy, and cheerful devotion. It is not exactly known when his conversion took place, but it was in the morning of his life; and the writer of this sketch—a grandson of his step-father, Col. Maurice Hamner, by a first marriage—well remembers his gay and sunny face, his jaunty step, his merry and contagious laughter, his fondness for some of the gentler field-sports, his fondness for music, especially for the songs of the sanctuary, his love for children, his devotion to flowers, and the innocent pleasures of social intercourse, his evident and hearty delight in public worship. He was at that time between twenty-four and twenty-five years of age. He was

about medium height, well and squarely built, sound in health and full of joyous life. His physique was strongly Scottish in its marks; the traditional red Scottish hair was softened into a silky auburn; reddish eyebrows hung thick over a deep blue eye, radiant with merriment and kindness; a genial smile lighted up the high-colored and handsome face; and his jaunty elastic step was the natural expression of the sunny spirit within.

Such was the figure of the venerable elder who was lately borne to his grave when in the early morning of his manhood; happy in the temperament created by his gay French blood, in full health, in an untainted moral character, in rich sympathies with all pleasant things, and, above all, in a joyous gospel hope, and the exercise of lively Christian sympathies. Mr. Morton, about this period of his life, gained the richest addition to his overflowing joyousness in a happy and fortunate marriage.

The lady who was to constitute the chief element of his domestic comfort down to old age, was a remarkable woman, who deserves a high place in the record of her pious husband. Margaret Irene Elliott was the daughter of Dr. Thomas Elliott and Irene Jemmison, his wife. She was somewhat the senior of her husband in age. Left an orphan in early life, she was received and reared in the family of Judge Paul Carrington, of Sylvan Hill, in the

county of Charlotte. She was thus eminently favored in the circumstances under which she was brought up. Her kinswoman, Mrs. Carrington, was a woman of great intelligence and decided Christian character. Her orphan protegee was brought to womanhood, through a thorough education, and, above all value, under thorough Christian training. She emerged into a character at once so substantial and so winning as to give fair promise at the outset—a promise fully redeemed—of a life of extraordinary usefulness. She was uncommonly handsome in person, but her chief social charm was a conversational eloquence of a very remarkable description. Sprightly, well informed, witty and humorous, endowed with keen powers of observation, and a great command of language, Margaret Elliott was in her early womanhood one of the most fascinating persons of her time. She was at the same time a decided Christian; but her joyous temperament was subject to fluctuations of feeling, which often darkened her life with periods of fear and melancholy anticipation. Her Christian character was not only a sound, but an uncommonly vigorous one; ardent, high-principled, capable of any exertion and of any amount of self-denial. No one ever doubted her piety but herself; but she often wrote bitter things against her own hopes, and was especially, for long periods of her life, in bondage to the fear

of death. But whether walking in the darkness of the shadow of death or rejoicing in hope, she was always the prompt and unfailing servant of every duty.

To this lovely Christian woman Mr. Morton was united in marriage in the year 1836. Shortly afterwards the young couple removed from the county of Charlotte to the county of Botetourt, where they made their home for more than forty years. There seven sons were born to them. There the most remarkable traits in her character were developed in the single-eyed devotion of a mother who proved herself to be one in ten thousand. There the long and active life of her husband, as a Christian and an elder, received its development, and grew more and more devoted down to the end of his days.

Mrs. Morton was remarkable for the Christian energy and devotion which she displayed in all the relations of life, but especially in her wisdom and fidelity as a mother. As a wife, she was the charm of her husband's life. As a mistress, she was singularly faithful in her care for the welfare of her servants, and especially for their religious interests, devoting large portions of her time to their instruction in the principles of the gospel. As a neighbor, full of sympathy for the joys as well as the sorrows of her associates and her neighbors of every class. As a member of the Church, devoted to its interests,

an ardent friend of the ministry, keenly alive to the interests of souls, active in every work tending to the up-building of the kingdom, and full of prayers and labors for its increase. But it was as a mother she was pre-eminently conspicuous, and deserves to be held up to the imitation of that all-powerful class of society. She was a good manager of her worldly affairs; but these were in a genuine practice, not less than theory, placed in absolute subordination to the higher intellectual and spiritual well-being of the family. Her husband's views were exactly coincident with her own in this point; and we have never seen any Christian household in which the superiority of the higher interests was so practically realized in a regular and systematic habit of domestic life. She was all alive to the physical comfort and welfare of the family; her table was always abundantly spread with well-prepared food; her chambers plainly furnished, but neatly kept; she studied closely, and applied well the laws of hygiene in the management of her children. But everything was subordinated to the higher interests of her sons. She devoted herself with unwearying fidelity to their education and Christian nurture. She often took them, one by one, into her closet, and prayed in intense earnestness for them. She taught them the Christian faith in all its ramifications. She governed and disciplined them with a rare firmness and judg-

ment. She never allowed the fire on the family altar to run down, and in the absence of her husband, always conducted the family worship herself. The Sabbath was a consecrated day always, and her children were never suffered to be absent from the public worship of the sanctuary when it was at all practicable to reach it.

The result of all this was just what might have been expected; her seven sons, one by one, became Christians; three of them entered the ministry; the others, as elders in the Church, equally manifest the power of a Christian education, the influence of a godly parentage, and the grace and faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God. The blessing continues to descend in the families of her sons; and none can measure the influence of a mother so wise, so faithful, and so full of intense desire for the spiritual concerns of those given into her charge. Her reward was given her in part even in this world; and not only in the Christian walk of her sons, but in their devoted and unsparing efforts to cheer all the last years of her devoted life, she tasted the rich fruits of well-spent labor. Margaret Morton went into the sweet rest of the righteous on the 3d day of June, 1883, in the home to which she had returned in the county of her nativity, somewhere near the eightieth year of her age. Her death disappointed her life-long dread of the great mystery, as it always

does, where the children of God, in spite of the provision of grace to deliver them, allow themselves to go all this lifetime in bondage to the fear of death; she passed in peace into the vision of God.

To say that Mr. Morton was a husband worthy of so noble a Christian wife, is certainly high praise; but to say he was in his character as a Christian elder, even more remarkable than she in her character as a Christian mother, is to say what is simply true. There are few such mothers as Margaret Morton; but they are more numerous than such elders as her husband. She was one of two or three wise and faithful Christian mothers whom we have seen. He was the best Christian elder we have ever known.

We have not been able to lay hand on any authentic statement of the time and place when William Morton was ordained to the Christian Ruling Elder's office. He left the county of Charlotte some two years or less after his marriage. He was then about twenty-eight years of age. He may have been made an elder before that time; and if so, commenced his career official in the old Cub Creek Church, within whose covenant bounds he was born. But our conviction is that he was appointed and ordained after his removal to the county of Botetourt; and while a member of the Fincastle Church, and under

the pastoral care of Rev. Stephen Cocke.* However this may be, his official career was from the beginning unique, even in the noble class of Christian officers to which he belonged. In order to comprehend it, it will be necessary to look at the leading traits of his personal nature. Natural gifts are not abolished by the reign of grace; they are qualified by it, and the resultant character is the outcome of the combination of the two, in proportions varying with the energy of either or of both.

It has already been stated that the prominent characteristics of Mr. Morton, as they pressed on the notice of even a casual observer, were cheerfulness, quick sympathies, and a joyous relish of all pleasant and innocent things. This diagnosis of the man was absolutely correct, and these traits never deserted him to the day of his death. To those who knew him best, these qualities showed strength and vigor, not less than obviousness. It was hard to quench his native sunny outlook upon things. His feelings were keen; and grief, when it came, pressed severely for a time; but his unflinching faith in God, blending its power with the native cheerfulness of his spirit, soon conquered sorrow. His constitution was an exceptionally fine one; his

* Since writing the above, we have learned he was ordained at Mountain Union at its organization, about forty years ago.

health, all along his advanced life, was excellent well nigh to the very close; his domestic life was a happy one; and all these blended influences constituted one of the most effective sources of his religious influence. Ever bubbling to the surface, incapable of concealment, his ardent piety showed so joyous a face to all whom he met, it created a rare attraction, as sweet and seductive as it was uncommon.

Hence, too, the secret of his acceptance with the young, and especially with young men. Religion was seen to be no enemy to a happy enjoyment of this present life, and many a young heart was drawn towards the Christian service by this manly and wholesome joyousness in this ardent Christian. His merry and contagious laughter, his appreciation of all innocent fun, his ready part taken in healthful pastimes, all colored by a living and wide-awake piety, made him singularly influential in his exemplification of the Christian life. His sympathies with the trials and sorrows of those about him were as lively as his sympathies with their enjoyments. He did really rejoice with those who rejoiced, and wept with those who wept. If he heard a neighbor was sick, he was soon at the bed-side. If some incurable sorrow had fallen, his visits were steadily repeated until time was clearly softening the bitterness. He would frequently ride miles on these sweet missions

of Christian sympathy. No want in a poor neighbor ever existed as long as he could help it. There was no social discrimination in the flow of these feelings. He was as prompt at the bed-side and in the hour of trouble of his rich and cultivated neighbors and parishioners, as in the trials of the poor. He was universally recognized as a true *Elder* in the Church of God, the ready, warm-hearted, loving friend of every member of the congregation, rich or poor, black or white. The first and the most universal testimony given by any congregation he ever served as elder, would be to this over-mastering and beautiful trait in his character, his intense, loving sympathy with and for every member of his official charge and for every member of the community generally; even for those whose criminal career he was obliged to condemn.

Mr. Morton's lively capacity of enjoying pleasant things was another marked trait in his sunny and affectionate nature. A picture of him in his early manhood, riding over the brown autumn fields, with his partridge-nets tied to the saddle, rises to the view of the writer. He delighted in social pleasures. His fondness for flowers was a passion, and no professional builder of bouquets in a city florist's emporium of art could surpass him in the exquisite combination of his beautiful favorites. He delighted in everything pleasant to eat or drink, except those

beverages which were prohibited by his strong principles of total abstinence. He would sometimes, in the exuberant days of his early and middle manhood, taste something at an ordinary meal, which would so touch his sense of enjoyment, that he would drop his knife and fork, bow over his plate, drum with his fingers on the table, and utter some quaint sentiment of wonder at the goodness and inventiveness of the Creator, in giving so many varieties of good things to man. When such a scene occurred, it was irresistibly amusing. He delighted in gardening, and was very skillful in the management of vegetables as well as flowers. There was no limit to his industry in attending to this favorite pursuit, and to the management of his domestic fowls. He was only an ordinary farmer, so far as his general business was concerned, and his comparative failure here was due, not to lack of knowledge, industry, or interest, but solely to the influence of his genial and good-humored temperament, which rendered him unable to govern his slaves with the decision and sternness often essential to success. He would work himself with unflinching resolution, but could not so well make others work. His delight in pleasant sensations often took an odd shape; sometimes when hot and reeking with a few hours' labor in his garden, he would suddenly stop, take his religious newspaper, go to the branch, spread himself at full length in the

cooling current, put his head on a rock, and with his *Central Presbyterian* open before him, cool off in prompt fashion. This same delight in pleasant things made him keen in susceptibility to music, to the curiosities of nature, and to the charms of literature. Blending with this love of music especially, his piety delighted in the songs of the sanctuary. His own voice was a pleasant one, and for many years he led the service of song in the small country churches of Mountain Union and Amsterdam.

Along with these more pronounced and obvious peculiarities of his character, Mr. Morton was a man of strong and decided principles in politics, in morals and in his religious convictions. This underlying strength gave steadiness to all the manifestations of his character, and impressed a remarkable consistency and uniformity upon them. This strength was mainly moral, not intellectual. He was not a man of remarkable talents, and his success was not due to those exceptional abilities which might have made his example less imitable by the average ruling elder of the Church. His mind was the average good common sense understanding of the average man, sufficient for good counsel and for the safe guidance of all ordinary affairs. His strength was in the uncommon vigor of his moral perceptions. He made conscience of everything, and this absolute subservience to *right* made him independent in the forma-

tion of his views, and steady in his adherence to them. A conviction of duty defined a permanent law to his convictions of truth and to his line of conduct. This steadiness of character was all the more remarkable, because he was not distinguished by system in the management of affairs; yet it secured the final results of more systematic exertion. Laying down one thing to take up another before the first was finished, he would tenaciously return to it and work it out. This element of strength and moral tenacity sustained his active sympathies of every kind in a consistent and permanent energy, and prevented that fluctuation which often disfigures the character of many good men, presenting them *now* as in a glow of practical sympathy, ready for any demand, and *then* as entirely devoid of it. He was instant in season and out of season, always ready for every good word and work.

This quality of moral stability was one of the secrets of his success as an elder. He never wearied of his work. He never lost his sense of satisfaction in it. He often experienced the highest delight in it. A revived state of religious interest in his charge never took him unawares, or found him unprepared for it. He was busy in the ordinary state of feeling in visiting, in talking to the unconverted and to Christians, and in praying for the success of the gospel. Consequently a revival only had the appa-

rent effect of quickening his labor in view of more immediate results, and of raising his always cheerful piety into a higher grade of delight. His activity in a revival was remarkable. Few ministers equalled him in trying to turn the gracious season to the best account. He would not only converse eagerly with inquirers, but be busy speaking to unconcerned people on the ground; and often in the intervals of the regular services mount his horse and pay special visits to particular persons. He was eager to have special services held, and protracted in the community. He was associated with Rev. C. M. Howard, the evangelist, in many of his protracted meetings, and was eminently serviceable in them all. Mr. Howard says of him:

"I have a great affection for Brother Morton. I have sustained a great loss by his death. Probably I never had a better friend. I think he wrote me near a dozen letters urging me to come to his county and preach. I believe he attended seven or eight meetings, and at some of them was with me every day; and no doubt the success I met with was largely owing to his efforts and prayers. He was in his element when in a revival; wanted to be in one all the time, he said, and to die in one. He was eminently fitted by his loving nature to do good. He was always ready to speak a word for Jesus, and so naturally and lovingly. He used to throw his arms

around me, and embrace me when we met. The last time I saw him, he rode a long distance, at the risk of his life, to look in upon us and refresh his soul, as he said; and begged me to come to his church, Roanoke, and hold one meeting more with him 'as a preparation for heaven.' Oh! that I could find some one to take his place, and travel with me constantly,—probably twice as much would be accomplished!"

The same kind of activity in revival work shown in the later periods of his life was displayed all along the course of it. Years before the war he had removed temporarily from his home in Botetourt county to the town of Lexington, for the education of his sons in Washington College. He at once identified himself with the Christian work of the Presbyterian Church, in the town there, under the care of Rev. Wm. S. White, D. D., with his characteristic far-sightedness and energy. He sought the friendship and confidence of the students of the college and the Virginia Military Institute. He would give little sociable parties at his house, and invite them. He would often be seen lying on the grass of the lawn with a group around him. He would use his influence, thus gained, with consummate effect.

A crisis came at last; one of the college students, a nephew of his wife, was accidentally killed by a

pistol shot; and the Spirit of God turned the startling event to a remarkable account. A revival of religion ensued, of great power, and Mr. Morton at once used his deeply meditated influence over the students to the best advantage. He visited them in their rooms; he urged, instructed and encouraged them in their search for light, and was directly instrumental in leading many of them to the cross. Rev. Anthony Graybill, now a missionary in Mexico, ascribes his conversion to the influence of this active elder. Many of his neighbors in Botetourt owe him the same priceless obligation. During the powerful work of grace in that county, under the preaching of Dr. Stiles, his activity was unbounded. He attended the evangelist all over the country wherever he preached, and seconded his efforts from the beginning to the end. Dr. Stile's judgment of his character was in these words: "He is one of the most godly men I have ever known."

Another minister, Rev. Richard Reed, of the county of Charlotte, who had witnessed his energy in several of the meetings held by Mr. Howard, and also in his own charge, and who preached his funeral sermon, remarked of him in that discourse, that "he was one of the happiest Christians he ever saw," and that he was "never so happy as in a revival of religion." The testimony is always the same. At every period of his life, in every place, among

every community in which he ever lived, the same strong, steady, persistent manifestations of affectionate sympathy, zeal and activity in the interests of vital religion made their appearance. It continued down to the end.

A few days before his death, an aged neighbor visited him, and as the old man sat by the bedside, the now dying elder was overheard urging pathetically upon him the claims of the gospel. The last work he did was to send messengers to call the congregation of Roanoke, long without a pastor, together on the coming Sabbath, to hear a sermon in the church, and then to attend a second service in the afternoon in his own house, where he could take part in it. The service was held in the church, but not in his chamber. Before that Sabbath came, he was attending a higher and nobler assembly in the courts of heaven.

Mr. Morton seemed to realize the responsibility of the Ruling Elder in conducting religious services during a pastoral interregnum. If the pulpit was vacant, he acknowledged the obligation of the Session to call the congregation together for divine service on the Sabbath day; and after the minister of the church at Roanoke, Dr. Drew, went to Richmond, he, although past his seventieth year, would mount his horse, ride five miles, superintend the Sunday-school, and then, after participating with the

brethren in prayer and praise, would read a sermon to the assembled congregation. In Botetourt he once enlisted the efforts of Christian brethren in a protracted prayer-meeting at a school-house in an obscure neighborhood, where he participated in an afternoon Sabbath-school. These brethren met for prayer nightly for nearly two weeks, and these means of grace were blessed of God to the conversion of many souls.

The privilege and obligation of attending the courts of the Church was recognized by the subject of this sketch, and he was a deeply interested member in many sessions of Montgomery and Roanoke Presbyteries, of the Synod of Virginia, and of the General Assembly which convened at Little Rock, Ark., in 1873, and Staunton, Va., in 1881.

It goes without saying, Mr. Morton was a man of prayer. His household altar never paled its fires. His prayers were distinguished for simplicity and tenderness, fervor and Scriptural sentiment; and sometimes when pleading for the conversion of his children and friends, would become intense in the pathos of his plea. He was greatly given to deliberate prayer in secret, and to ejaculatory prayer at all times. He took full part in the public social prayers of the Church; and in his visits of sympathy to the sick or sorrowing made appeal, whenever it

was practicable, to the God of all comfort in their behalf.

During the late long and terrible struggle of the Southern people, he took his part, with all his heart, in the interests of his own section. He gave five of his carefully trained sons to the army of his country, and spared no sacrifice of property, time or labor which he could render to assist the cause, to care for the sick and wounded soldiers, and to cheer those upon whom fatal bereavement had fallen. The tremendous ordeal wakened the spirit of prayer in him to intense and persistent fervor. The wide wastes of war, the peril of all the high interests of the country, the universal reign of intense anxiety, and the peril of souls, touched his tender heart and searched it as with fire. One who knew his history at that period well says: "He freely offered his sons, and endured the anguish of suspense and separation with a patient, prayerful heart. When the soldiers came near his home, he sought them out, and treated them with the greatest kindness and consideration.

"In 1862 many members of Gen. Wharton's brigade were lying sick with measles at Bonsacks, Botetourt county; he secured the assistance of the neighbors, and, gathering up a quantity of delicacies for the poor patients, carried them up in his carriage, ten miles, to the hospitals. Now he would be at the bedside of some army invalid, and again riding over

rough roads to tell some poor parents of their soldier-boy's death, to mingle his tears with theirs, and suffer with them in their bereavement. Thus he did, from year to year, until the agony was over. 'Truly his was a noble work!'

But it is time to bring this brief memorial of a noble Christian life to a close. As one of Mr. Morton's long-loved friends truly says: "If one-half of his spiritual and temporal charities were written, it would make quite a book."* The record is accurately kept in the books which will be opened hereafter. Now the full detail is lost to human knowledge; but enough is known to certify the reality and the unspeakable value of a Christian elder who made a full proof of his ministry. But all the glory and sweetness of good things in an evil world are transitory in their active influence, and death quells the soldier of Christ for a time, as it does all other things in this mysterious scene. The messenger with the golden token was lately on a visit to the beloved elder of Roanoke, and he departed in company with this herald of his reward.

From the 5th day of October, 1836, to the 3d day of June, 1883, the happy marriage of William Morton and Margaret Elliott continued in unbroken harmony. On the latter date, the good wife was called

* Col. Sperry, of Botetourt.

away, and the good husband was left to bear the burden of bereavement for the balance of his days. He bore it bravely, as a Christian should; but none can ever know the record of a husband's thoughts under such a case. His faith did not fail; his sunny spirits did not darken; his industrious hand, feeling the fetters of advancing age, did not quit his work; and his eager piety only gathered strength and increasing beauty under the shadow. He lived in expectation of a not far distant reunion; and he was not disappointed.

During the winter of the present year, 1885, a mysterious disease made its appearance in the great toe of his right foot. It hampered the good man's movements; and as it defied all remedy and puzzled the judgment to know what it was, it soon confined him to the house and to his chair. It at last appeared to be a dangerous gangrene. In spite of skillful treatment, it continued to spread along the foot, and began to ascend the ankle. It soon became obvious that the only chance for his life lay in an amputation of the foot. Competent surgeons were secured, and the day appointed for the operation.

It was a sad trial to the affectionate family. Several of his sons and his only surviving sister gathered into the shadowed home. Every heart was oppressed with pain except the calm old man himself.

When everything was ready, he was told the time was come. "Are you ready? Well, wait until I pray a little." There, in the united company of the surgeons and attendants, his voice rose in calm tones to the Lord of his mercies, in whom he and his godly fathers had trusted. He acknowledged all the past goodness of God to him and his; he confessed the Lord's faithfulness; he expressed his unfaltering confidence in the Lord's wisdom; he yielded himself up to the Lord's will; he prayed for his children, his descendants, his friends, his church, and for his surgeons. Then leaving his petition in the hands of God, the calm, pathetic utterance came to a close. "Now, he said to the surgeons, "do what you choose." He was at once placed on the table, but before the chloroform was applied, he inquired "if they had provided clothes enough to prevent the floors being stained with blood." He was assured of this, and at once yielded himself to the stern ordeal. He was soon insensible to pain; the knife and the saw were applied, and the diseased limb severed at some distance above the ankle, where, to the consternation of his surgeons, the arteries were discovered to be in an advanced stage of ossification. This not only rendered the tying of the arteries peculiarly difficult, but rendered the promise of relief from the operation exceedingly precarious, if not altogether hopeless. Repeated attempts to tie

the severed arteries failed, the ossified material breaking under pressure. At last it was accomplished; the chloroform was removed, and consciousness returned to the venerable patient. He was told that all was over, and expressed surprise; he said he had felt no pain, and felt comfortable then, remarking that the Lord had brought him through once more. When removed back to his bed, he said he would like to take a smoke. This was a touch of his characteristic sense of enjoyment, strong to the last. A cigar was given him, and he smoked and talked pleasantly for a while, and then sank to sleep.

These events took place on Monday, the 20th of July; and for many hours there seemed to be room for hope. This continued until Wednesday morning, when an unfavorable symptom suddenly appeared, and the issue rushed with surprising rapidity to its close. The family was hastily summoned about eleven o'clock that night, but before all of them could reach the room, the end came, and the good elder walked in Paradise.

Shortly before he breathed his last, he asked if he was dying. He was answered, and immediately was asked if he was afraid to die. He replied in his usual calm tone, "No, no; I am not afraid to die! I know in whom I have believed." At another time, almost overcome with pain and weakness, he sighed wearily, "Oh! I wish it was all over, and I

was safe in heaven with Jesus and Margaret," (his wife.) He soon after sank into sleep and waked in the other life. Verily the chamber where the good man meets his fate is privileged beyond the common walks of this strange human scene.

The death of Mr. Morton awakened one universal sentiment of grief in his own community, and wherever he was known. The bereavement was felt to be a general loss to every family, as well as to the church of God.

His funeral service was held in his own beloved house of worship, crowded by the assembled neighborhood and others from a distance. His body was borne by the hands of friends indiscriminately selected from every rank in the social scale—from the ranks of the church, and from the ranks of the world outside—a fitting arrangement for an elder of the house of God, whose whole official career had shown indiscriminating fidelity to every class over which he had been called to exercise his noble office.

From this narrative, the secret of Mr. Morton's remarkable efficiency and success as an *elder* may be discovered. It was due to the combination of good sense and unaffected kindness and simplicity of manners; to his wonderfully rounded sympathetic nature; to his strong faith in all the revelations of the Bible; to his prayerful spirit; to his in-

tense eagerness for the salvation of souls; to his boldness and tact in approaching men with direct but wisely managed personal appeals; to the unsullied integrity of his whole character as a man and a Christian; to his social disposition, and the energy with which he denied himself and sought to turn every occasion and circumstance to account. His happy piety, so ardent and so cheerful, so readily accommodating his address to the young and the irreligious, yet so easily and naturally turning to the most earnest appeals on the subject of religion, added wonderfully to his influence. The transition from his merry and contagious laughter, to a voice full of kindness and earnest solicitude for the spiritual well-being of a young mind, was so simple, so natural, so obviously the fruit of unaffected and heart-felt feeling, that it seemed to flank all the usual feelings of awkwardness and reluctance which spring up under a personal appeal on religion less wisely managed and less happily combined with something positively attractive. Many a young and many an irreligious mind of mature age has found itself drawn into a free conversation with Mr. Morton, with hardly a remembrance of former reluctance and difficulty in speaking on the subject of personal religion. Many a one who has shrunk from the idea of personal piety as involving so much of gloom and unpleasant experience, has had the whole conception

of the subject reversed by contact with Mr. Morton's cheerful and happy representation of it in his own character, and learned to desire eagerly to be such a Christian as he was. Truly "the joy of the Lord was his strength," not only to bear his own trials, and to do his own work, but to influence others of every class, especially the young and sanguine. If all the elders of the Presbyterian system were even approximately like him, there would be no assignable limits to its progress. If they were all like him, no investment with official functions would carry more of usefulness to the Church, or more of personal blessedness to the officer himself. He would be thrice blessed; a blessing to the Church, a blessing to the world, and a blessing to his own soul. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for his path is as the shining light, which shineth more and more until the day is full; and his end is peace.