

SAMUEL C. ANDERSON, OF PRINCE EDWARD.¹

Every Presbyterian of intelligence, who visited the neighborhood of Hampden Sidney about the years 1835 to 1840, carried away with him, among his most pleasing recollections, the memories of the hospitable mansion of Mr. Anderson. He was then in the prime of his corporeal and intellectual powers, and of his Christian influence: a leading elder in the College Church, and trustee of the College, the foremost advocate at the bar of his county; and the honored and trusted adviser of its people. His house during all these years, was frequented with delight by young and old, and was the center of a wide circle of cultivated, Christian society; where Mr. Anderson, assisted by his accomplished wife, and his lovely adopted daughter, dispensed a professional income almost princely, in unbounded hospitalities and charities. His noble person and countenance will not speedily be forgotten by any, who saw him in the animation of social converse, or in the flow of his masculine and impetuous oratory. He was, in every sense, a man of nature's noblest mould.

Amidst the horrors and confusions attending the closing campaign of General Lee upon the Appomattox, the death of this venerable servant of God has perhaps passed unnoted by many of his former friends. The suspension of the circulation of the religious journals has also delayed the publication of the usual tribute to his memory. This will now be attempted, in the form of a brief narrative.

Mr. Anderson was the son of a respectable planter upon Willis' River, in the county of Cumberland, where he was born July 21st, 1788. Up to approaching manhood, he received only the plain education of the old-field-school: when he was seized with an irresistible desire for a liberal education. There was an excellent classical school six or seven miles distant; but his father declared that, while he might be able to pay his tuition,

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his limited circumstances forbade his assuming the expense of his boarding abroad. The youth declared that he would frequent the school daily from home, notwithstanding the distance. His father supposed that he would soon weary of this undertaking, but gave his consent to the experiment. He joyfully accepted the opportunity; and for several years was the most punctual pupil at the school. Taking his breakfast with the dawn, he might be seen every morning before the sun, setting out afoot upon his daily journey, and he was usually the first scholar at the school-house. Here he gained a solid training in the classics, and some of the rudiments of science; and this was the only patrimony he ever received from his father.

While still a youth, he went to the county of Powhatan, where for four years he taught a country school. In this avocation his success was so great, that old Dr. Lacy (Silver-fist), himself a famous teacher, declared he ought to be compelled to follow it for life, for the public good. His talent of command and force of character were here strongly developed. His diligence and punctuality were unflinching, and such was the industry and subordination he inspired, that a lazy or bad boy was unknown in his school. After the good, old Virginian fashion, the boys and girls of the neighborhood were taught together: a custom which did much to foster that courtesy, mutual respect, and purity, which so highly distinguished the intercourse of the sexes among us. In these schools, under the eye of a watchful teacher, the young learned from childhood the proper "metes and bounds" of virtuous intercourse, and grew up from little gentlemen and ladies. Mr. Anderson was peculiarly watchful in guarding this intercourse, and exacting of the boys a punctilious respect for their female associates. He said that the greatest whipping he ever gave, was to a gawky youth (as big as himself) for entering the school-room on a sultry afternoon, without his coat (clothed in the other garments, shirt, vest, trousers, etc.)

Having served two campaigns with credit in the State forces, during the war of 1812, he returned to civil life, and studied the science of law with Captain Henry E. Watkins, of Prince Edward, his life-long friend, and co-elder. He commenced the practice of this profession in the year 1816, at Prince Edward Court House. Here he married, settled, and

spent his life. His diligence, integrity, and forensic eloquence speedily raised him to the head of his profession: a post which he did not fail to maintain, to the end of his active life. As a lawyer, he was quick, ready, full of resource in debate, impatient of the labor of preliminary research, but overpowering in rejoinder. His generous sympathies and ardent nature caused him to identify himself warmly with his clients: so that he was always a zealous advocate. His comrades, knowing the influence of forensic strife in rousing his powers, and the force of his oratory upon juries, always sought to give him the closing speech in important cases. The best judges have said that, in those years, Samuel C. Anderson, in the bar of Prince Edward or Buckingham, exposing some artful fraud, or pleading the aspersed honor of innocent woman, was the noblest specimen of manly beauty, power, and eloquence, ever seen in that region.

Upon the retirement of John Randolph, of Roanoke, from Congress, the leading citizens of his party urged Mr. Anderson to become a candidate for that place, with the certainty of being elected his successor. He declined the proposal, in favor of Judge Bouldin; who served for a short time with great distinction, and died in his seat in the House, of apoplexy. The reason assigned by Mr. Anderson for refusing political honors at that time, was worthy of the consideration of every young man. He said that he had a liberal professional income, with free and hospitable habits of living, without private estate. Hence, as his attention to public affairs must diminish his earnings, he could not at once maintain his domestic establishment, and his pecuniary independence. But no man, he judged, should be entrusted with the interests of his country, whose personal independence was encumbered with any financial shackles: lest they should become a temptation to tarnish that bright purity of action, which the public servant should ever possess.

In the year 1828 the visit of Dr. Nettleton to Virginia occurred, which resulted in so remarkable and permanent a work of grace. On the invitation of Dr. John H. Rice, this eloquent and holy man visited the region about the College; and his labors were instrumental in bringing into the church a large number of the first men of the country, of whom many have

fallen asleep; but some yet remain to adorn their profession. Among these converts was Mr. Anderson. He had lived hitherto, strictly honorable and virtuous after the world's standard, but "without God in the world," and in the very luxuriance of his health, prosperity, and manly energies. The word of God now took hold upon him with giant power. He declared that although, in one sense, he had heard many able preachers, whose sermons his retentive memory would have enabled him to repeat almost entire, in another sense, he had never heard a sermon before. The nature of God's law, his relations to it, and his wants as a sinner, were now seen by him in as new a light, as though he had been hitherto one of Paul's Athenian hearers upon Areopagus. With an overpowering conviction of his guilt and misery fixed in his soul, he determined that he would at once seek its salvation with all his might. Dr. Nettleton was holding private meetings for special instruction, in the parlor of Dr. Rice (in the northeastern corner of the Seminary building, then just partly erected) similar to what are now called inquiry-meetings: and all those who desired more particular knowledge of 'what they must do to be saved,' were invited to attend there in the evening. Many powerful impulses of pride and false shame deterred Mr. Anderson from attending. The evil principles within him pleaded: "What will your gay, professional comrades say, when they hear that the lofty head of Samuel C. Anderson is bowed in such a meeting, amidst a cluster of weeping school-boys and girls, confessing his sins to a parson?" As he rode to the place, his breast was in a tumult of strife; and when he came to the door of the room, saw the lights within, and the solemn stillness of the company, so powerful was the struggle between the evil and the good within him, that, he declared, it was as though some invisible, but adamant bar had been placed across the door of the room, which resisted his entrance with a palpable force. But he bethought himself that this reluctance to enter was prompted by sinful affections, seconded most probably by Satan: that he needed the instruction he sought there; and that if he now yielded to a false impulse, and retired, it would be a virtual turning of his back upon Christ and duty, for the sake of sin, and might be the sealing of his impenitence forever. He therefore nerved himself with an almost desperate resolve, and literally broke

through into the room, where he took his seat among the penitents. This decisive moment seemed to be the turning point with his soul, and he speedily found peace in believing. The determination to cast all sinful and Satanic obstacles behind him, in pursuing those means of grace which he felt to be appropriate to his wants and duty, was probably nothing else than the initial acting of faith and repentance, in embracing Christ, and his service: although at first he knew it not as such. He soon enrolled himself among God's people; and such was his Christian walk, that after a few years, he was elected one of their elders: an office which he filled with increasing piety to his death.

His abilities and decision speedily made him a man of mark in the Presbyterian Church. He cultivated an ardent friendship for her leading ministers, and especially for Drs. Rice and Baxter, whose steady coadjutor and adviser he was, in all their labors for Zion. With his usual liberality, he now set apart one-third of his income, the whole of which proceeded from his professional labor, for the service of the church; and during his prosperous years, this portion was expended in charities, in sustaining the religious press, and in other Christian enterprises, besides the sums lavished in his unflinching hospitalities.

The most signal service which he rendered to the church, in the estimation of the public at large, was his famous speech in the Assembly of 1837, in support of the, so-called, excinding acts. Dr. Baxter and he were among the commissioners from West Hanover Presbytery to that body: in which the former was the acknowledged leader of the old school. It was in Baxter's capacious mind that the plan originated, after all other expedients seemed hopeless, of ridding the church of the incubus of the new measures and theology, by declaring the Plan of Union unconstitutional. During the sessions of the Assembly he came to Mr. Anderson and asked him briefly: "If a legislative proceeding be found unconstitutional, what becomes of the executive and administrative acts which are grounded on it?" "They are all," said Mr. Anderson, "null and void, in law." "Then," said Dr. Baxter, "prepare yourself to prove it in the Assembly." The doctor, having explained his views to the old-school men, in their nightly convention, or caucus,

moved them the next day, in the house, in a short series of propositions, whose logic was built together like an arch of stone; and then remitted the discussion mainly to younger and more forward men. The chief debaters of the two parties now waged, for several days, a forensic war of the giants. The New School relied upon an elder from Pennsylvania, who was also a distinguished judge at law, to assail the legal principles of Dr. Baxter's plan. Mr. Anderson went to him, and politely indicated his wish to take part in the discussion on the other side, requesting the use of the legal authorities introduced into the case. This the judge politely accorded; and it may be added that, in the subsequent discussion, the two maintained towards each other a forensic courtesy, by which the acrimony of many of the clergy was put to shame. The judge also suggested that Mr. Anderson, if he could succeed in getting the floor in the general eagerness to speak, at the end of his speech, should make the closing reply. The latter could not but indulge an inward smile, as he said to himself: "Had you known the estimate of my peculiar forte held by my legal brethren at home, you would hardly have volunteered this proposal." The judge, with the customary self-esteem of his section, evidently regarded his proposed antagonist from the South, as the reverse of formidable.

Meantime, the clerical leaders of the Old School, had laid out their parliamentary tactics for the day, designing to put up one of their leading debaters to reply to the legal argument of the judge, and selecting an active man, at the close of that speech, to spring to his feet, secure the floor, and demand the previous question. But when the judge finished, to their great chagrin, Mr. Anderson obtained the floor, instead of their champion. Their faces showed mortification; those of the larger number displayed wonder, who this unknown combatant could be who thus thrust himself into the war of the princes; and Dr. Baxter, who knew his man, was suffused with a smile of quiet enjoyment. When Mr. Anderson found that the Moderator had recognized him, all his self-possession for a moment deserted him: He, who was perfectly collected in the stormier forums of the bar and hustings, now found himself without a single idea, in this novel arena, before the vast audience collected from every part of the Union, and especially at the

thought of the anxious and sympathizing countenance of his beloved wife, which he well knew, was bent upon him from some retired nook of the galleries. But he said that he be-thought himself to fill up a minute with some commonplaces about his respect for the Moderator and the body, and his diffidence, until his self-possession returned to him: and after this exordium, he was conscious that he had regained the full poise of all his faculties. As he proceeded in his rejoinder, the impatience of the house was replaced by surprise, and by delight. Whispers of, "Who is he?" "Who is he?" ran over the audience. He proceeded, with just such vigorous and courteous logic as he was accustomed to employ in the courts of Virginia, intermingled with happy repartee and luxuriant humor, to turn the legal argument of the New School inside out, to overthrow their positions with their own authorities, and to sweep away their arguments, like the wind the chaff of the threshing floor. It was manifest that he was making a profound impression on the house, and that his argument must be decisive of the vote. Dr. Absalom Peters, the Ajax of the New School, writhing like a culprit upon the rack, at the demolition of his cause, could contain himself no longer; but springing to his feet interrupted Mr. Anderson, and announcing again a position which he seemed to regard as the very citadel of his strength, said tauntingly, "I should like to hear the gentleman come to that topic." "I shall come to that soon enough for you," replied he, shaking his finger at him in acceptance of his challenge. His Old School friends almost held their breaths with anxiety, as they said to themselves: "Will his performance be, indeed, able to come up to this audacious pledge?" But when, in the regular order of his reply, he reached the favorite premise of Dr. Peters, he exploded it with a happy power, and clear light, which formed the climax of his victory, and silenced his adversary effectually. Meantime he took occasion to exact of Dr. Peters a good natured revenge for his discourtesy. Seeing him anxiously fumbling a law-book introduced by the judge, and by him promised to Mr. Anderson, he reached his hand for it, saying in a sotto-voce audible to the whole house: "Give it me: raw hands ought not to meddle with edged tools." At this, the inimitable humor of his expressive countenance convulsed the audience with laughter.

When he closed his remarks, the person selected by the Old School to ask the previous question, felt that no other argument could be so effective, and at once performed his appointed task. The house was apparently satisfied also: the call was granted, and the majority which voted with the Old School showed, that Mr. Anderson had decided every mind which wavered. All, except Virginians, were startled and amazed at this display of his powers. The Northern people about the Assembly, especially, asked themselves: How comes it that this great master of debate has been hitherto unheard of by us? They said, his powers, like those of Pallas, must have sprung at one leap from their infancy to their adult vigor. But this was all mistaken. Mr. Anderson now exhibited no other powers, than those which, in his happier occasions, his compeers were often accustomed to witness in him at the bar of Prince Edward. In this ecclesiastical debate, he had a subject suited to his faculties and taste: a great principle of constitutional law. His mastery over it, and the amazing contrast between his handling of it and that of his Northern adversaries, was but an illustration of the superior civic culture prevalent among the gentlemen of Virginia, and, yet more, of their deeper veneration for constitutional bonds.

This interesting incident has been described at this length, only because of its eclat without his own circle. In the Synod of Virginia, he sustained the reforms of 1837, with equal eloquence. For a number of years, indeed, as long as health allowed, he was an interested and influential member of church courts in his own State, and his helping hand was in every good work. Thus he passed along for fifteen years more, busy in his laborious profession, and frequently charged with public trusts for church and State.

About the year 1852, his robust frame was shattered by an attack of paralysis. For a time, he lay motionless, and incapable of speech, and, as others supposed, unconscious. But he said afterwards, that the sense of hearing, the powers of thought, and the sensibility to pain, were even unnaturally active: and at the very moment that he heard the anxious friends around his bed congratulating him on this sad advantage, that he was at least insensible to suffering, he was enduring not only bodily pain, but a wringing of the nerves unspeakably more

agonizing than mere pain. His experience suggests the truth, which nurses and ministers of religion should bear in mind, that oftentimes consciousness and the powers of attention are awake in the sick, where they have the ability to "give no sign." Had the consolations of religion been addressed to Mr. Anderson at that hour, he would have appreciated them fully, although utterly unable to signify it, by voice, or motion of an eyelid, or a muscle. This alarming disease was, however, arrested, and by virtue of his temperance and sanity of constitution, it left no after-consequences, except a tremor of the hands, which gradually grew with the advances of age.

Mr. Anderson at once felt this, as a distinct summons to "set his house in order." He did not demit any of the active duties of life; but anticipating some sudden return of his malady, he made his account to die with his harness on. Yet there was a great increase of the depth, tenderness, and devotion of his Christian character. He still frequented, as before, the old law office in the corner of his shrubbery, which had for so long been the scene of active bustle, and the haunt of a throng of clients. But his tremulous hand refused even to write a legal instrument: and the laborious duties of his profession were turned over to a young kinsman, who had become his partner, afterwards known and lamented, as the distinguished Colonel John S. Thornton. Those who visited Mr. Anderson, in these later years, in his office, were almost sure to find him reading his old quarto Bible. This became the constant, the almost exclusive occupation of his leisure. Pencil in hand, he dwelt deliberately upon each clause, signifying his appreciation of those which struck him as peculiarly weighty, by a broad mark drawn underneath. Going over his Bible thus, again and again, it gradually became blackened all over with these marks, to an almost incredible extent. This old Bible is now treasured up, as a curious and affecting memorial of his diligence in the study of the Word. The maturing of grace in his character was also most marked in his prayers, at the domestic altar, and in the prayer meetings of the church, which he so much loved to frequent, as long as his infirmities allowed. His devotions were peculiar for the profound, and yet triumphant tone of reverence and adoration, and the holy importunity, which pervaded them more and more. To every spiritually-minded Christian,

it was a treat, a refreshment, to hear Mr. Anderson lead in prayer.

When his infirmities increased, a transaction occurred between him and his law-partner, Mr. Thornton, equally honorable to both. He had taken this young kinsman into his office when he was first licensed; and he had rapidly grown into high favor with the people. Mr. Anderson now volunteered to declare to him, that their partnership must be dissolved. "I am but a burden to you now," he added. "You do all the work, and endure the hardships: you are virtually supporting my family, as well as your own; and it is not just that I should allow you to burden yourself with such an incubus, in your ascending career. You must set up for yourself, so as to advance unimpeded by me." When Mr. Anderson proposed this, he well knew that its execution would consign him almost to penury: for his generous and almost profuse spirit had left him no accumulations from his years of arduous labor. But Mr. Thornton positively refused to accede to the dissolution of the partnership; urging that Mr. Anderson's present enjoyment of the moiety of the earnings of the firm was but a just return for his princely generosity, in according to him the same share, at the beginning; when he was but a stripling, without professional patronage or experience; and that, if Mr. Anderson no longer did his half of the riding, writing, and speaking, yet his wisdom in counsel, and his moral weight, were still richly worth their pay. In this generous strife, both seemed for a time equally obstinate; but at last the obstinacy of Thornton prevailed; and amidst Mr. Anderson's growing infirmities, the partnership continued, until the approach of the war indicated that the former was to be called to other scenes of usefulness.

In this great contest for the independence of Virginia, Mr. Anderson was a consistent and ardent supporter of his native State. Just in proportion to his piety, ripening for heaven, was the clearness and steadfastness of his devotion to the great constitutional rights, which, he believed, were about to be overthrown. His embarrassed affairs and growing decrepitude left him little else that he could do for his country, except to counsel, to pray, and to suffer. Most nobly did he do all these; and especially the latter. To his friends, it was one of the most touching incidents of the calamities of the country, to see such

a man, whose liberal hand had solaced so many, reduced, by the depreciation of the currency, and other difficulties of the time, to the verge of want. But he bore every privation with a cheerful, modest dignity, beautiful to behold, and instructive to all younger men. Always hopeful, ever courageous, he was a stay and stimulus to all whom he met; and when he crept out to the Court House hard by, leaning on his staff, to speak a word of cheer to the people, and leave his benediction with them, the fire of better years was rekindled in his eye, and the old walls recognized again the sonorous echo of that voice, which was wont to peal there, when the lion of the bar had trodden his stage, and shaken his kingly mane at the enemies of country and right, in the days of his strength. But that mane was now white as the snows of the hoary Alps; and the tread of his stalwart limbs was slower and slower. His orb was steadily approaching its western horizon, serenely, and brightly, despite the war-clouds whose angry and thickening folds had usurped the place of that peaceful, glowing sunset, which we would have desired to close the evening of such a career as his. Then came suddenly, the fall of his country; and at that blow, his spirit said, "It is enough," and sank instantly to its rest: to rise again in the eternal heavens.

On the night of Sunday, April 2nd, General Lee silently evacuated Richmond and Petersburg, and began his arduous and doubtful retreat towards the waters of the Roanoke. Mr. Anderson heard even this appalling news, with a steadfast heart: he still refused to despair of the Republic: and in the immediate prospect of passing, with his home and family, into the lines of the enemy, his spirit was as unshaken and composed as ever. The morning of Friday, the 7th, the quiet village was overwhelmed by the sudden irruption of the Federal cavalry, who, in an instant, spread themselves everywhere, plundering and ravaging. Mr. Anderson was arrested, and led across the street before one of their generals, who attempted to carry him through a harsh and unfeeling catechism concerning the movements of the retreating Confederates, and the routes of the country. He answered, with quiet dignity, that if they would observe him, his obvious infirmities, at least, would show them a reason why such information should not be demanded of him. Brutality itself could find no pretext to harrass such a victim,

and he was coldly dismissed. He returned to his dwelling to find it filled from garret to cellar, with a rabble of troopers, defiling and pilfering everything with their unclean hands. Seeing that corporeal resistance was simply mad, and that there was no spark of principle or compunction in such breasts, to which to appeal, he judged that his self-respect would be best consulted by perfect quiet. Where a righteous defense was impossible, he disdained to complain. But the insult, the unutterable indignation, were too much for his tottering frame. He was soon no longer able to direct his steps, and betook himself to his bed. Here he lay, with a quiet spirit, engaged in silent prayer, receiving the cares of his beloved wife and sister with a tender and gushing thankfulness, still hiding them to her of good courage in their God. The neighborhood was so filled, and every house so beset, during all these days, with plunderers, that it was almost impossible for the few males out of the army, to leave their own doors, to render the common offices of humanity to a neighbor. But the chivalrous women braved every inconvenience, and gave the needed assistance. On the next Tuesday, the news of General Lee's final surrender was brought to Mr. Anderson. This was, literally, the final blow to his feeble body. Thenceforward, the expectation and the desire of life were extinguished—he calmly said: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth to him good"; and, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Yes, in peace! although the ruins of a fallen country were crashing around his dying bed. Thus, on Tuesday, the 18th of April, he calmly and devoutly committed his soul to God, gave up the ghost, and was gathered unto his fathers.

A few days after (it was the very day that the pompous obsequies of Lincoln, and the popular phrensy were filling Washington City with tumult); a handful of his neighbors, with the pastors and elders, sadly and silently conveyed his venerable remains to their resting place at the College Church. In peaceful times, his fellow citizens would have delighted to honor him with such a funeral cortege as country places had rarely witnessed. Now, there was none; the people had just been robbed of every beast of burden; and the young men were either in bloody graves, or in captivity, or fleeing before their enemies. But it is sufficient consolation to know, that the song

of the angels was not therefore the less rapturous, as his ransomed spirit entered heaven's gates: and that the hallowed dust sleeps none the less safely in the Redeemer's keeping, until the resurrection.

To human apprehension, it would have been happy for Mr. Anderson to live until the deliverance of the country he loved so ardently was accomplished: and to render up his rejoicing spirit to God amidst peaceful liberty. But seeing it has been determined by his sovereign and awful Providence, that Virginia should submit to bondage, the time of our friend's departure was most excellently chosen. He went away to the mightily dead with the vanishing glories of his country. The great Deliverer stepped in, and with his imperial sceptre, forbade that any bonds should alight upon his free spirit. He had ever lived a freeman; and now he was forever enfranchised by death. How much are they to be envied, who having been made meet for "the inheritance of the saints in light," are permitted thus to receive the fulfillment of the prayer of Jackson: "that we may not be required to survive the independence of our country."

When the convulsions of the times permitted it, the most honorable testimonials to his memory were adopted by the Session of his church, the court and bar of Prince Edward county, and the other public bodies with which he had been connected.