

## VII.—THE LAST OF EARTH.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course."—II Timothy iv:7.

"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—Matthew xxv:23.

"Let me die the death of the righteous."—Numbers xxiii:10.

"I will add a stone to his cairn."—Scotch Proverb.

OLD age had come upon father. The strong frame could not always withstand the weight of years, the effects of incessant toil and multiplied trials. The end drew nigh and he was soon to hear the glad message: "Child of earth, thy labors and sorrows are done." One night in October of 1834, three weeks after his return from Montreal, he awoke very ill with asthma. We feared he could not live until morning. A complication of diseases set in and he suffered intensely. For eleven months he sat in his chair, unable to lie down or to be left alone one moment. He never murmured and the slightest attention pleased him. Often he would say: "I have a kind family and friends to nurse me, but Jesus had not where to lay his head." These months of agony exemplified his wonderful patience and sublime fortitude. His faith never wavered, for "he knew in whom he had believed." Rev. Mr. McLaghlan of Carleton Place, who visited him frequently, used to say: "I came to give Mr. Buchanan consolation in his great suffering, but he has given me comfort and instruction." His mind was serene, his confidence unshaken and his conversation most edifying.

Rev. William Bell and Rev. Thomas Wilson of Perth came to see him whenever possible. Rev. John Fairbairn of Ramsay spent an hour occasionally in the sick chamber. Rev. Jonathan Short, the Episcopal rector of Franktown, was tireless in his kind ministrations. To a woman who spoke of his good work in Beckwith father said: "If that were what I had to depend upon, I would be undone. I have no righteousness of my own to commend me to God, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." He delighted to speak of the atonement and the Saviour's wonderful love. His face would brighten as he talked of the Son of God, "bleeding and dying to save a lost world." Once he said to us: "My dear children, think of the infinite compassion of Jesus. We are healed meritoriously by His blood, having offered Himself a sacrifice for sin, and efficaciously by the Holy Spirit,

sanctifying and purifying our souls and delivering us from the power and dominion of sin. Very soon I shall behold my Saviour face to face."

For three days before the end he took no nourishment except a spoonful of water. When urged to swallow a morsel of food he replied: "I am feeding on the bread of Heaven. I know that the angel of the covenant, true to his promise, will be with me at the last solemn hour to gild the dark valley and conduct me safely to the regions of glory, beyond the reach of sin and sorrow. I am ready to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." The last forenoon of his stay on earth he bade us come near, saying: "I am going home, are you all here?" Mother answering that we were all beside him, he looked at us intently and whispered: "Farewell, my beloved family, meet me in Heaven." His mind had never wandered one instant during his illness. He remained quiet a few moments, then opened his eyes, looked around and said distinctly: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." These were his last words. A moment later the happy spirit, released from the tenement of clay, had taken its flight and we were fatherless. Thus died George Buchanan, the first minister of Beckwith, at noon on September 12th, 1835, in the seventy-fourth year of his age and forty-fifth of his ministry. Its peaceful, triumphant close befitted the useful, unselfish, exemplary life.

"He gave his body to the pleasant country's earth,  
And his pure soul unto his captain, Christ,  
Under whose colors he had fought so long."

By his own request he was buried in Perth, beside his eldest daughter, who died in 1830. Rev. Mr. Short conducted funeral services at the house. Instead of reading from the prayer-book, he delivered an impressive address and prayed fervently. His whole eulogy found an echo in every heart. Rain fell in torrents and the roads were almost impassable. Yet the elders and a goodly company of friends went with us all the way to Perth. On the border of the town the Perth ministers met the cortege. The coffin was lifted from the wagon—there was no hearse in the county then—and borne on men's shoulders to the grave. Of father, as of Stephen, it could be said: "And devout men carried him to his burial." Amid the tears and lamentations of many sincere mourners, the precious burden was lowered, a short prayer was offered, the earth was shovelled in and a fresh mound in the lonely graveyard marked the resting-place of God's honored servant. Only those who have consigned loved ones to the tomb can understand how we grieved over the loss of such a parent. Words cannot tell how empty the house appeared without his familiar presence, and how sadly he was missed for many a day and year.

Numerous tributes of respect were paid the worthy dead. The congregation erected a tablet at the grave, which crumbled away in the course of years, when his family and descendants provided a marble shaft. The Bathurst Courier, started in 1834 by John Cameron, printed an appreciative obituary. The Presbytery and Synod passed appropriate resolutions, expressing a high sense of his character and services and regretting the death of a venerable father of the Presbyterian church in Canada. The whole community was profoundly moved. Humanity and religion had lost a friend whose place could not be filled. Under the title of "The Christian's Deathbed," my sister Ann wrote these memorial lines:

"How calm, how tranquil is the scene  
Where lies a Christian on the bed of death!  
He has experienced many changes in his pilgrimage  
Through life, which now draws near a close.  
Sometimes adversity had been his lot,  
But he had learned with fortitude to bear its ills;  
He viewed them all as coming from the hand of Him  
Who mingles mercy in His children's cup of woe.  
He, too, had felt the sunshine of prosperity,  
And raised his humble heart in grateful thanks  
Of adoration to that God  
Whose favors are so free, whose bounty is so large,  
Whose tender mercies over all His works extend."

"And now one scene, one solemn change,  
Remains for him—the last, the most important  
Change of all. Yes, he must pass death's gloomy vale;  
But, oh! his hopes are full of immortality.  
He leans upon the Saviour's gentle arm,  
He feels supported by His staff and rod,  
And therefore fears no ill.  
With triumph he can look on death and say:  
'Oh, Death! Where is thy sting?'  
With sweet composure view the grave  
And ask: 'Where is thy victory now?'  
He longs to be set free from sin and pain  
And dwell in the abode of perfect peace,  
Yet waits with cheerful resignation  
The sovereign will of Heaven."

"Now the last scene is o'er:  
While weeping friends surround the bed of death  
And their sad loss deplore,  
His spirit takes its flight, unconscious of a pain,  
And wings its way to mansions of eternal rest.  
And, oh! if there was joy in Heaven  
When first he left the ways of sin and turned to God,  
If then the angelic host attuned their harps anew  
And raised a higher note of praise  
To Him who washed and who redeemed  
A sinner with His precious blood,  
How great must be their joy  
When they behold him safe arrived in bliss,  
More than a conqueror o'er all the powers  
Of Satan, Death and Hell!"

The snows of thirty winters had drifted over his grave, most of his contemporaries had gone to their long home, all the family had left

the place many years before and a new generation had appeared, when a grandson visited the scene of father's labors and death. Here is what he wrote about it: "A strong desire to see the place where grandfather lived and died impelled me to visit Beckwith. Although he had passed away years before my birth and the people were utter strangers, yet my dear mother had told me so much concerning him and them that they seemed like personal friends. Probably a day would suffice to call upon the few who still remembered the family. Driving to Carleton Place in the evening, my first night was spent at Archibald McArthur's. We sat until past midnight, so pleased was my host to talk of persons and things that held a warm corner in his manly heart. Next forenoon he went with me to various houses. Robert Bell and others received me most cordially. Evening found me beneath Duncan Cram's hospitable roof. The good man, confined to his room by illness, wept with joy to behold a descendant of his old pastor. The second day was devoted to calls and the sight of the old homestead, ending at Robert Kennedy's singing-school. To my surprise the young people spoke lovingly of grandfather and his children, saying their parents often referred to them in kindest terms. Word of my arrival went through the township and scores of aged folk came to meet a near relative of Dr. Buchanan. One dying patriarch, near the end of his earthly pilgrimage, sent a message imploring me to see him. He clasped my hand in his and said: 'I wanted to look into the face of Ann Buchanan's bairn, the grandchild of my auld minister.' He gave me his blessing, while his wife and family shed tears at the affecting scene. That delightful week, which memory will ever cherish, demonstrated forcibly how enduring was the affection of the Beckwith settlers for their first minister. Verily 'the righteous shall be kept in everlasting remembrance.' Few men are privileged so deeply to impress a wide community for good that one of their posterity, paying his first visit to the neighborhood three decades after they have crossed the Great Divide, should meet with a reception a prince might covet."

In the spring of 1836 mother went to Scotland with my elder brother, David, who desired to enter Edinburgh University and study for the ministry. She remained a year, spending the greater part of the time with an aged sister. During her absence my sister Catharine died in Montreal, the third break in the family circle. Other sisters had married, some taught school, and my younger brother preferred commercial life to agriculture. Eventually it was decided to dispose of the farm, hallowed by many sacred associations, and mother took up her abode at Vankleek Hill, Prescott county, with her daughter Ann and son George. There she stayed until her death, on the fourteenth

of January, 1849, in the seventy-fourth year of her age. She bore six weeks of painful suffering with admirable courage. Her funeral, attended by over eight-hundred people, was the largest the little village had ever seen. Loving hands laid her to rest in the Presbyterian graveyard, close to the church. Thirty years later the body, still completely preserved, was buried in the cemetery two miles from town. Mother was a genuine Christian, a noble woman and a worthy helpmeet. She brought up her family "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Her excellent domestic management tided us over many difficulties, and "her children shall rise up and call her blessed."

"Yet thou wear'st the glory of the sky,  
Wilt thou not keep the same beloved name,  
The same fair, thoughtful brow and gentle eye,  
Lovelier in heaven's sweet climate, yet the same?"

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### YEARNINGS.

Fain would I rest—  
The years have bro't regrets,  
My spirit chafes and frets,  
For life has had its share  
Of sorrow, strife and care—  
But God knows best.

My yearning soul,  
Sad, lonely and forlorn,  
Glad if the coming morn,  
Falling to find me here,  
Beheld me on my bier,  
Would reach the goal.

My task complete,  
The weary, heavy heart  
Longs to resign its part,  
To burst its prison-bars,  
To rise above the stars  
And cease to beat.

My good right hand,  
Once ready, strong and bold,  
Is palsied, trembling, old;  
My tott'ring footsteps wait  
The opening of the Gate  
At God's command.

My eyes are dim,  
So oft hot tears they shed  
For lov'd ones with the dead;  
My feeble strength is spent,  
I shall be well content,  
To go to Him.

I would lay down,  
Whenever God shall will,  
This load of grief and ill;  
Pleas'd to put earth aside,  
To cross the Great Divide  
And wear the crown.

—John J. McLaurin.

MRS. JOHN MacLAREN AND HER FIVE DAUGHTERS AND FOUR SONS.



HELEN. JENNIE B. MRS. MacLAREN. ISABELLA. BESSIE M. JEAN B.



ARCHIBALD. JAMES B. ALEXANDER F. JOHN F. MacLAREN.