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He will give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.

REV. F. BARTLETT CONVERSE, D. D.

In our last week's issue, a brief notice appeared of the sudden translation of our editor in chief, the Rev. Francis Bartlett Converse, D. D. We then promised a more exhaustive memorial in this week's *Observer*, and the following lines are written, as a loving tribute, by one of our editorial contributors, who for several years has been associated with our beloved leader in reaching the thousands of hearts and homes to whom the *Observer* comes from week to week as a welcome visitor.

Dr. Converse, at the time of his death, was the oldest editor, as regards years of service, of any religious periodical in the country; and he was the editor in chief of the oldest religious newspaper in the world. No small honor indeed!

In his veins flowed the blood of a family whose record goes back, without a break, to the dim period of the Norman invasion of England. He was the son of that heroic pioneer of the American religious press, whose name is enshrined in the hearts of every true lover of the Southland, and who bore without flinching the heavy burden of a long and wearisome day, in which his strength and courage were often tried as by fire. It is no small honor to be the son of such a father. In the exhaustive record of the Converse family, compiled and edited by Charles Allen Converse, and printed by Eben Putnam, of Boston, Mass., in 1905, twenty-four quarto pages are dedicated to the life of Amasa Converse, and every line of it is the inspiring recital of a truly royal character, a man of God and a man of men, a laborer that needed not to be ashamed.

Breaking loose from the barren environment of a New England home, thirsting for knowledge, he hewed out for himself a way to an apparently unattainable higher education, till, as a man of twenty-seven, he finally graduated from Dartmouth College. Steeled by the privations and struggles of his early life, he fought the unequal battle, with dauntless courage, till, in his course of study in Princeton Seminary, the hand of death seemed to be upon him and he was compelled to relinquish his further studies, and, at the advice of Dr. Archibald Alexander, he sought health and a new life in the balmy air of the Southland.

Thus it pleased God to engraft a scion of the sturdy New England stock on the Southern vine. His health restored, he preached the Gospel for a while in the large mission field of Nottoway county, Virginia, till God assigned him the larger task of reaching the masses through the then comparatively unknown channel of the religious press. The man who discovered him and brought him in touch with his true life work, was Dr. John Holt Rice, till then the editor of the *Family Visitor* and the *Literary and Evangelical Magazine*. Becoming the owner of both, in July, 1828, he soon suspended the publication of the magazine and concentrated all his efforts on the *Visitor*, which, having absorbed the *North Carolina Telegraph*, thenceforth appeared under the name of the *Visitor and Telegraph*. With incredible courage and tireless industry he succeeded in firmly establishing his paper. Through it he wielded a tremendous influence in the crisis which led to the division of the Presbyterian Church in 1837. Meanwhile he had married in Brunswick county, Virginia, in 1828, Miss Flavia Booth. Of this union,

Francis Bartlett Converse was born in Richmond, June 23, 1836.

When he was but three years old, his father removed to Philadelphia, where he united the *Telegraph* with the *Philadelphia Observer*. The combination paper since 1839 bore the new name *Christian Observer*, and for the last sixty-eight years it has proudly and unflinchingly borne the banner in the thickest of the fight, always standing by the ideals of Dr. Amasa Converse and upholding the motto of the original Virginia publication—*Speaking the truth in love*.

Dr. Francis Bartlett Converse was trained in the schools of Philadelphia, and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1856. He was a student in Princeton Seminary when the clash of arms of the Civil War broke upon the nation's ear, like a mighty peal of thunder, whose distant rumbling had been heard for years; a war which was to test the patience and courage and loyalty to principle of the Converse to the breaking point. Two years later, as a youth just attaining to full-fledged manhood, he became associated with his father in the editorial management of the *Observer*, and thus he spent almost a full half century of unbroken toil in the editorship of this paper.

As he touchingly tells us in the columns of this paper, January 4, 1905, he had "had an opportunity, even from childhood, to learn how to do every kind of work that is done in the composing room, press-room, mailing room, business office and editorial sanctum."

With his father he bore the brunt of a series of almost crushing adversities. When eighteen years old he stood by the ruins of the Philadelphia plant, which had been licked up by the tongue of a mighty conflagration, and, as he tells us, he was able, after the fire to replace from memory almost the entire mailing-list of 3,000 names.

During the stress of the abolition struggle, in which the elder Converse took a conspicuous part, he had learned to lean on the young arm of his oldest son. Hotter raged the passions, ever hotter, till, in the searing heat of their fury, the tenderest ties of love and trust and brotherhood were consumed. With untiring consistency, the *Observer* continued to witness for the right, as it saw the fight, till official wrath was kindled by the backbitings of a venomous spite and the heavy hand of the government fell on it. Its publication was suspended, its property confiscated, its editor remanded to prison.

From the last indignity, however, he was saved, but broken in fortune, though with undaunted courage, he turned his face to Richmond, Virginia, whither the younger Converse had preceded him. And there, three weeks after its suspension, the *Observer* rose like a phoenix from its ashes.

From this time on the younger Converse began to take a more active part in the management of the new venture. Says he, in his own account of the matter—"Providence had a larger work for it to do in the service of the Southern Presbyterian Church than it could have done in Philadelphia, and we recognize His hand in what seemed a crushing reverse." During all the bitter struggle of the years that followed, drenched in blood and made hideous by unspeakable suffering on every hand, the *Observer* continued to speak for the right, as it had done in the bitter days of the abolition excitement in Philadelphia. It was found in the hands of the soldier in camp, it steeled his

heart for the struggle of the morrow, it smoothed his pillow in the hospital, it was found by the side of the dying, it solaced the prisoner in his misery, and it sounded the note of conversatism and loyalty in things spiritual and things temporal.

In all that time it never missed a single issue, although it took all the energy and courage and optimism of its editors to continue it. There was little or no money, and a

then had the largest circulation of any paper in the Church, was a heavy one for a young man and he accepted it with great diffidence, but with the earnest prayer that its course might ever be directed by a wisdom that is wiser than a man's wisdom."

For six years he was aided, in the editorship, by his brother, Rev. James B. Converse; and then for a quarter of a century by another brother, Dr. Thomas E. Converse, who re-

he performed, in the last hours of life, was the writing of an unfinished editorial, which is found in another column.* He was deeply interested in the crisis through which we are passing in this city, and to that feeling he gave vent in the last lines which his hand was ever to pen on earth.

In an unprinted article from his pen, which was to have appeared last month on the *Birth-day of the Observer*, he wrote: "In a little over three months, the senior editor will have completed a half century of uninterrupted editorial work on the same paper. Kind Providence has spared his life to make a record, as to length of continued service, which is rarely given, in one sphere of labor, to His laborers. The question has been suggested whether there should be some kind of celebration of that semi-centennial."

Yes, there will be a celebration, but not here below, but in that upper sphere, when the Master's hand is lovingly laid on the head of the faithful laborer with a—*Well done*.

He fell asleep suddenly, almost without warning, and knew little or nothing of the bitterness of death. God took him and gave him the much needed rest, which too often he had denied himself, during his long and un-sparing devotion to a strenuous life.

And now that he has gone, what impressions has he left?

As those, who know him best, will testify, he was a man of humble mien, who never thrust himself into the fore front of things. Self-effacement seemed to be his prevailing tendency. But behind this modesty lay unquestioned ability. Many of the ablest editorials in this paper, for many years, came from his pen, and in the power of clear statement he proved himself a master.

His long and intimate relation to the great movements of our political and ecclesiastical history had given him unusual power in associating the past with the present. To this was due his wide editorial vision and his easy grasp of the trend and providential significance of events. It also served to keep alive a spirit of fearless optimism. No one ever heard him counsel a retreat, or counsel to stand still. Many a discouraged pastor can bear record to the new inspiration for his work which he received from a free and sympathetic conversation with him at church courts, or in the editorial office.

His tireless devotion to newspaper work did not serve to lessen his keen interest in the problems of pastoral experience, and his editorial treatment of the duties of the active pastor and preacher were never marred by impractical and stilted theories, but were marked by the heartbeats of genuine and helpful sympathy.

Any estimate of him must avoid the overstatement of any one quality, for the most striking feature of his character was its well rounded and many-sided fulness. Like a monolith of just proportions, his varied qualities combined to make a man of even temperament and strong and symmetrical character. The circumstances of his death serve to illustrate his entire life. He died in his home, which he loved and graced; his last hours were busy ones; and his closing labor was in behalf of the kingdom of God as it is found in the daily life of his fellowmen. It was an ideal way to go—only to lay down the well used implements of his Master's service below to quickly enter the joy of the services above.

Surely it was no buried talent which he returned to his Lord, nor was it a spirit which had murmured at the hardships of service; for though his long and laborious life had been full of vicissitudes, disappointments and struggles, his heart was not soured by these experiences, and he remained an optimist to the last.

His friends, who knew him well, learned to love him devotedly. To us who knew him intimately, he was known at his best, and his leaving us, leaves a great void. And thus we reverently lay a crown of immortelles on his grave and write there—

REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

*See page 11.



religious paper, in a sense, was a luxury; but they braved the ebbing tide and conquered it.

At the close of the war, the office of the *Observer*, with all it contained, was once more wiped out by the great fire, that destroyed the entire business portion of Richmond.

But once again the courage of the Converses was greater than the power of adversity and six weeks later the *Observer* appeared again. In the terrible days of the Reconstruction, it sounded the note of patience and hope, and, notwithstanding the unspeakable hardships of the times, its subscription list steadily increased till it had reached the 5,000 mark. The load now rested heavily on the shoulders of the younger man, and when the paper finally moved to Louisville, in 1869, to absorb the *Free Christian Commonwealth*, Dr. Stuart Robinson's organ, Dr. Amasa Converse was an old man of seventy-four years, though full of life and vigor till the last. His last years were the best; the day had largely been cloudy and stormy, but when the sunset came, there was perfect peace and a cloudless sky. He fell asleep in Christ, December 9, 1872, in the seventy-eighth year of his age.

Thus the burden was shifted entirely to the shoulders of the younger man. Says he himself—"The task of determining the spirit and tone and conduct of the paper, which even

tired from the paper in June, 1904.

Eleven years earlier our beloved and lamented Dr. Francis R. Beattie had become associate editor of the *Observer*, and the tie between him and the other editors was specially strong and tender.

Eight years ago his son, Harry P. Converse, became associated with him, devoting his business talents to the upbuilding of the paper, and three years ago he transferred to the younger shoulders of this son practically the entire management of the business. Their efforts during this time have been crowned with success, and though progress was writ largely over all the later years of the *Observer*, it has remained loyal to itself and to its past, and to the cause of the Church, which it so widely represents. Its motto still is unchanged from that of the *Telegraph* in Richmond,—*Speaking the truth in love*.

Under Dr. Converse's leadership, the issues, that from time to time arose, were squarely met, and whilst the *Observer* stood for the principles of the fathers, due consideration was given to the changed aspect of many questions, under entirely new conditions and in an entirely new environment. To the end of his life Dr. Converse devoted himself to the best interests of the paper, to whose success his whole soul was wedded. The last labor,