

REV. F. B. CONVERSE, D. D.

It is with feelings of profound sadness that we announce to the many readers of the "Christian Observer" the sudden death of its editor, Rev. Francis Bartlett Converse, D. D. On Saturday he was in the editorial office in his usual spirits, but not quite as strong as usual; in the evening he was discussing with vigor and interest the civic and moral problems involved in the approaching municipal election in Louisville, and read aloud to members of the family circle an editorial, which he was preparing and had not quite completed, on the proposed repeal of the Sabbath laws. At 10:30 p. m., he was stricken with a mortal illness and in four hours had passed away, to spend as his first day in Heaven the holy Sabbath, for whose honor and authority he had been using his latest thought and strength.

Dr. Converse was born on June 23, 1836, in Richmond, Va., where his father, Rev. Amasa Converse, D. D., was editing a religious weekly called the "Visitor and Telegraph." Three years later Dr. Amasa Converse was called to the editorial charge of a religious paper in Philadelphia, founded in 1813, at the instance of Dr. Archibald Alexander, to which at this time the name of "Christian Observer" was given. So that Francis Bartlett grew up in the city of Philadelphia, completed the course of study at its High School in 1853, and three years later had earned the degrees of B. A. and M. A. in the University of Pennsylvania. On January 1, 1857, he became an associate of his father in the management of the "Observer," and had been actively connected with the paper from that date to the day of his death. He took his course of theological study in Princeton Seminary.

But, in 1861, the "Christian Observer" was suppressed by military orders because of its Southern views, and the paper was removed to Richmond, Va., where after a suspension of three weeks it was again issued by the energy of father and son. In the following month young Converse was ordained to the ministry by the Presbytery of Hanover.

On May 3, 1866, he was married to Miss Ellen Elizabeth Pollard of Hanover county, Va., who survives him, together with six children; Mrs. Charles Hodge, of Philadelphia, Dr. F. Edwards Converse, of Batesville, Ark., Frank B. Converse, Jr., of New Haven, Conn., Bernard T. Converse, of Philadelphia, Harry P. Converse and Miss Ellen E. Converse, of Louisville, Ky. He is survived by two brothers, Rev. James B. Converse, of Morristown, Tenn., and Rev. Thos. E. Converse, D. D., of Atlanta, Ga.

Dr. Converse was the oldest editor of a religious paper in our land, having served in this capacity for more than fifty years. He had the practical and intellectual gifts demanded by such a work. He was a clearheaded and judicious man of business, a ready and forcible writer, a wise and capable manager, a hearty and thorough going Presbyterian, and a man in touch with all the forward movements of the time. Conservative in faith and progressive in method, he made his paper the leader among Presbyterian weeklies.

He was a man of domestic tastes, loving his home and devoted to his wife and children. His faith in Calvinism was strong; his faith in a personal Saviour still more strong.

A more extended review of his life and Christian character will be given later by one more competent to speak. The readers of the "Observer" will miss in its columns

The touch of a vanish'd hand
And the sound of a voice that is still.

THE LAST EDITORIAL OF DR.
CONVERSE.

After supper, on the evening preceding Dr. Converse's death, he made the following rough draft of an editorial and read it to the home circle. In his enthusiasm he explained what further ideas it would contain, and how it would be put in finished form before its publication. It breaks off in the middle of a sentence, and is here published as he left it—the last words from his pen.

Shall the Sabbath Laws be Repealed?

The citizens of Louisville will answer this question, either in the affirmative or negative, by their votes. The issue is more important than any ordinary political question. It is of vital consequence to the city, and to all the families in the city. Shall Louisville go on record as desiring the repeal of those laws on the statute book, which recognize the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship and which require the cessation from unnecessary secular labors, and especially the closing of the saloon? Or shall she place herself on record as favoring the opening on the Sabbath day of the liquor saloons, and gambling dens, and theatres, and places of amusement and resorts of shame? Shall the civil power be used to destroy the Sabbath, and to encourage lawlessness and crime or the reverse?

The city of Louisville has suffered seriously by the acts of officials who have pandered to vice and crime, and have made an unenviable reputation for corruption. We have before us the police returns for the year ending August 1, while the Sabbath laws were not enforced and the saloons and all the forms of wickedness which they represent were given full sway. They present a deplorable picture of the morals of Louisville, especially of the men. There are probably a little more than 80,000 adult males in the city. During the year, there were seven thousand men arrested for criminal offences. One-twelfth as many men arraigned for crime in a single year as there are men in the city!

The saloon is responsible for a large proportion of their crimes. Among those arraigned in the police court were nearly 1,400 whose drunken orgies brought them there, and nearly three thousand more whose disorderly conduct was chargeable in many cases to the saloon. The record for deeds of violence, too, is a horrible one. More than 600 were arrested for malicious cutting and shooting, and attempts to maim or to kill others, besides thirty-four who actually murdered their victims. Is it conceivable that one of every hundred and fifty of the men in this city are as blood-thirsty as these figures would indicate!

A very large proportion of these crimes were committed by men under the influence of liquor—many of them kind-hearted men—who had no thought of evil to any one before they went to the saloon in search of good company and a good time. Before they realized what they were doing they were for the time deprived of reason and prepared for deeds, which in sober moments they would abhor. But still this is the record.

The Annual Report of the Health Department is also before us. It says "Of the twenty large cities in the United States, Louisville has the lowest morality." This is a misprint, but the statement as printed is too near an approach to the truth. According to the report, 2,019 males died during the year. About 1,500 of these were adults and "Homicide was the cause of death of forty-eight cases." That is about one in thirty of the men who died in the city last year were killed by others! For four or five weeks of the year the saloons were closed on Sundays, and did not furnish their usual quota of homicides. The record then for the year is forty-eight murders in forty-eight weeks. Of the men who died in Louisville last year about one in