

# THE WEST SHORE.

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## WILLIAM STEEL.

We give on this page the picture of one of nature's noblemen, WILLIAM STEEL, who was born on the Clyde, at Biggar, Scotland, in 1809. His mother was a cousin of Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, the present Premier of England. When but nine years of age Mr. Steel came with his parents to America. His first home on this side the Atlantic was at Winchester, Va. The family removed in a few years to Ross county, Ohio. When Mr. Steel was about 14 years of age, he went to live with his uncle, John Gibson, at Barnesville in S. E. Ohio, where he remained until 1832, in which year he was married. In the same year he settled in Woodsfield, Ohio, where he engaged in the mercantile business. In a short time he secured, and held for years, a leading position in trade, and became, for that day, a man of large means, which, added to his sterling qualities of character, gave him great influence and power throughout the entire south-eastern part of Ohio. In 1844 he removed to Stafford, in the same state. With the years came financial disaster. By the failure of friends for whom he had endorsed, Mr. Steel saw the fortune which he had spent a lifetime in accumulating, swept away as in a night. After his failure, he again spent a short time in Woodsfield, Ohio, in Pittsburg, and then a few years in Kansas, and finally removed to Oregon in 1872, where he spent the sunset days of his earnest, honest life with his sons. Wednesday, Jan. 5th, at 6:30 o'clock P. M., at the ripe age of three score and eleven years, he exchanged this earth for heaven.

It is written of one of old-time that he so lived that, "being dead he yet speaketh." So lived William Steel. We do well to listen to such "voices from the grave."

What were the characteristics of his life? He put

### PRINCIPLE FIRST.

With a keen sense of justice, and a burning indignation against wrong, however popular that wrong might be, his whole life was given to moral reforms. Benjamin West said that his mother's kiss made him a painter. The tears of William Steel's mother made him a reformer. There lies before the writer a little pencil sketch, from his own hand, in which he says: "I became an Abolitionist when I was only nine years of age. One beautiful Sabbath morning, a large cofflegang of slaves, chained hand to hand, passed our house in Virginia; the front ones were forced to carry an American flag, while two men drove

them, like so many beasts, through the street with heavy whips. When my mother saw it she wept very much, and those tears made me hate slavery intensely from that moment."

When the years of manhood came, this hatred of slavery took a very practical form. He was one of the pioneers of the anti-slavery agitation, entering upon this his great life-work with intense earnestness, and with undaunted courage, periling his life, and property, and good name, bearing the trials, and cares, and anxieties of that unequal contest, when with Landy, Garrison, Phillips, Lovejoy, and a few other brave souls, the old "Liberty Guard," fought the slave power single handed. William Steel soon became the recognized leader and master spirit of the Abolitionists in south-eastern Ohio. In 1842, Ohio passed a law making it a penal offense to aid or harbor fugitive slaves, thus ante-dating the Fugitive Slave Law. To disobey the law was to face the peni-

arms of the great slave power. When war came, though his heart bled for desolate homes and for his country, still he rejoiced. He felt, with the poet—

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord; He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword,

His truth is marching on."

And he never doubted the result of the war. He knew that principle must prevail, because God reigned.

But not to the negro alone, but to all the oppressed, his heart was open and his hand ready to work. He was foremost in all moral reforms. Temperance found in him an early, earnest, consistent advocate and worker. He was the friend of education, and gave to it thought, time and money. The Church found in him a strong support and steady worker. But everywhere, in all

fields of active reform-work, principle guided his action. "Policy" was an unknown word to William Steel. His was, also, a

### LIFE OF STRICT INTEGRITY.

No man living ever questioned William Steel's honesty. For years an active politician, at one time a candidate for Congress, he was that rarest of all men, an *honest politician*. He told no lies, stuffed no ballot-boxes, packed no caucuses, bought no votes, and never used the grog-shop. And yet he lived to see the party he helped organize, sweep the country and hold the reins of power for twenty years. In the very hottest fire of the old slavery contest, though he was always at the front, and was hated most bitterly for his energy, activity, and boldness, still, even his political enemies honored him as a man, never questioned his integrity, and were quick to do him a favor.

As in politics, so in business life: The leading business man of his county, and the wealthiest, by the failure of others he felt the ground give way, and himself swept down to financial bankruptcy. The law gave him his comfortable homestead, but William Steel counted honor of more worth than money or a home. Taking his brave wife by the hand, he went out from his home, in his old age, to begin the battle of life anew, penniless, but rich in the sight of God.

### William Steel was

#### A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

So far as others were concerned, his Christianity was summed up in the Golden Rule. So far as his

own heart was concerned he rested firmly in two thoughts: 1. Himself a sinner; 2. Christ a Savior. Two of David's Psalms—the 51st, that wonderful penitential heart-throb, and the 103rd, that song of triumphant assurance—were written on his memory. Men saw his Christianity in an earnestness that took the form of deeds and not words; in an evenness and absence of spasms; in a cheerfulness, born of a living faith.

The rich, full sheaf was at last ripe. God harvested it.

The world will always be better because William Steel lived in it.

J. A. G.



WILLIAM STEEL.

tentiary; but William Steel openly defied the law, clinging to principle even though it imperilled his liberty. He organized the famous "Underground Railway," became its "Superintendent" and "General Passenger Agent," and aided hundreds of fugitives to gain their liberty. Some slave-owners in Virginia offered a reward of \$5,000 for the arrest of William Steel on slave soil. William Steel boldly answered—"that if they would deposit half that sum in an Ohio bank to his credit he would meet them at any place named in Virginia." The deposit never was made.

In the darkest hour he never doubted the triumph of right. Years before it came he predicted war, and the consequent downfall by force of