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## I. Literary.

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### WILLIAM WALLACE SPENCE.

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NOTWITHSTANDING all that has been said about our age as an era of young men, it is undeniable that much of the world's best work is still done by men who are well advanced in years. The adage, "Old men for counsel, young men for war," while true in general, cannot be taken literally, as many of our most useful men of action are old men. Longfellow, in his *Morituri Salutamus*, recognized this fact in his catalogue of literary achievements by the elderly:

"Cato learned Greek at eighty; Sophocles  
Wrote his grand *Œdipus*, and Simonides  
Bore off the prize of verse from his compeers,  
When each had numbered more than fourscore years,  
And Theophrastus, at fourscore and ten,  
Had but begun his *Characters of Men*;  
Chaucer, at Woodstock with the nightingales,  
At sixty wrote the *Canterbury Tales*;  
Goethe at Weimar, toiling to the last,  
Completed *Faust* when eighty years were past."

Von Moltke, Bismarck, Gladstone, Hannibal Hamlin, Justin Morrill, John Hall, Moses Hoge, William Henry Green, John I. Blair, of New Jersey, and Charles Reid, of Norfolk, are examples of immensely active old age from the recent past, while we still have with us such leaders in public life as Lord Salisbury, such preëminent soldiers as Lord Roberts, such teachers as Pro-

fessor Killen, who at ninety-six presided at the recent commencement of our theological college at Belfast, such vigorous veterans in the ministry as Benjamin M. Palmer and Theodore L. Cuyler, and such masterful spirits in the business world as the honored citizen of Baltimore whose name stands at the head of this article.

When it is remembered that Mr. Spence is now eighty-six years of age, the following list of his personal offices at the present time will strike the reader as a remarkable illustration of our opening proposition. He is the senior elder in the First Presbyterian church; president of the Presbyterian Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital; president of the trustees of the Aged Men's Home; president of the trustees of the Aged Women's Home; treasurer of the Egenton Orphan Asylum; manager of the Home for Incurables; vice-president of the Mercantile Trust and Deposit Company; vice-president of the Baltimore and Annapolis Short Line Railroad; director of the Baltimore and Lehigh Railroad, the Eutaw Savings Bank, the First National Bank, and the Consolidated Gas Company.

These multifarious activities at his time of life sufficiently attest his extraordinary capacity for business and his abiding interest in philanthropic and religious work. They witness also to the unique position which he holds in the confidence and esteem of his fellow-men. His long and honored preëminence in business affairs and Christian work, the rare combination of intellectual force and moral principle involved in such a career, and the variety and munificence of his private and public benefactions, characterized as they have been in every case by enlightened views and sound judgment, all mark him as a large-hearted and large-minded man, whose antecedents and work are well worth the study of young men, especially at a time when business success is so often sought by unworthy methods and so often used for unworthy ends.

William Wallace Spence was born in the city of Edinburgh in the year 1815. His father was John Spence, a highly respected physician of that city, famous then, as now, for the learning and skill of its medical faculties. His mother was Sarah Dickson, of Prestonpans, where the Young Pretender and his Highlanders won their delusive victory in 1745, and close to Dunbar, where a century earlier Cromwell won his decisive

victory over the Covenanters. The story of these stirring events, and many others like them in the strenuous history of his country, must have soon become familiar to the boy to whom his parents had given the name of Scotland's national hero, and must have contributed to the formation of a strong and self-reliant character, capable alike of high enthusiasm and of patient and persistent pursuit of a purpose. No history is better fitted than that of Scotland to inspire a boy with both of these contrasted qualities. The names of heroes like Wallace and Bruce, reformers like Knox and Hamilton, poets like Burns and Scott, and preachers like Rutherford and Chalmers, are associated forever with her mountains and moors and lochs, her cities and towns and clachans, and are a perpetual inspiration to her youth. The influence of such a history upon a boy of young Spence's antecedents, training and natural intelligence, must have been a considerable factor in the formation of his character. But his best heritage was the robust faith of a long line of godly forebears. For generations his ancestors had cherished the intelligent and sturdy piety which has been Scotland's crowning glory. His parents bottomed his character on the Word of God and the Shorter Catechism, and his subsequent life testifies to the thoroughness with which he learned that "man's chief end is to glorify God."

The city of Edinburgh in the time of Mr. Spence's boyhood was one of the chief literary centers of the world. Her great university, her magisterial quarterly, her command of the trenchant pens of Jeffrey, Macaulay, Carlyle and Wilson, the surviving influence of Burns, the magical genius of Scott, the pulpit eloquence of Chalmers and Gordon, and the general pre-eminence of her poets, philosophers, theologians and critics, created a unique literary atmosphere about him, the influence of which he has never ceased to feel, as all know who have talked with him about books or browsed in his well-stocked library.

At the age of eighteen he resolved to come to America, and in the winter of 1833 he set sail for New York. After six months there he came to Norfolk, Va., sharing the then general belief that this city, by reason of its fine location and splendid harbor, was destined shortly to become one of the leading Atlantic ports, possibly second only to New York itself. He was fortunate in getting a situation as clerk in the well-known house

of Robert Soutter & Sons, a firm having a large trade with the West Indies and other foreign lands. The knowledge and experience gained by Mr. Spence during his stay with this house, from 1834 to 1839, may be said to have laid the ground-work of his subsequent success in business. He became so familiar with the West India trade, having supplemented his knowledge of it by spending some months in the various islands for that purpose, that at the end of four years he felt justified in beginning business on his own account. For two years more he conducted his business at Norfolk, and then, despairing of the city's reaching the commercial importance which had been predicted for it, and which it is only now beginning rapidly to attain, he removed to Baltimore, whose foreign and domestic trade had just received a fresh impetus from new western connections, which gave it special importance as a grain, sugar and coffee market. In connection with his brother, John F. Spence, he began business in Baltimore under the firm-name of W. W. Spence & Co. His former experience had developed in him the essential qualities of quick perception, sound judgment and fearless action, and he soon took a leading position in the trade. The shipping merchants of Baltimore recognized at once that a new force had appeared among them. At the end of eight years, when the house had become permanently established and had acquired a high reputation, extending to all the countries with which Baltimore had commercial dealings, Mr. John F. Spence went to San Francisco to open a house there and take advantage of the commercial importance to which that city had been raised by the successful termination of the Mexican war and the discovery of gold on the Pacific coast. And so, in 1849, Mr. Andrew Reid, of Norfolk, a gentleman of remarkable business ability, who in association with his brother, Mr. Charles Reid, had gained a valuable knowledge of the shipping and commission trade, came to Baltimore and united with Mr. Spence, thus forming the firm so long and widely known as Spence & Reid. The two partners were admirably adapted to each other, the business grew and prospered, the firm establishing extensive connections in Great Britain, the British provinces, South America and the West Indies, sustaining always the highest credit and exemplifying the happy combination of dignified conservatism with alert enterprise.

In 1862 the civil war jeopardized a portion of their extensive business. On one occasion one of their regular coffee packets on her return trip from Rio de Janeiro was captured by a Confederate cruiser, and, on her release, was seized again by a Federal cruiser, and obtained her final release only after much expense and difficulty. Chiefly on account of the liability of such occurrences the branch house of Spence, Montague & Co. was established in New York, James C. Spence and D. P. Montague being made the resident partners.

The success of the firm was such that by 1874, after twenty-five years of happy association, both partners felt justified in withdrawing from general business.

The wealth and prominence achieved by Mr. Spence have brought to him opportunities for doing good which he has recognized and improved in a large-hearted and open-handed manner. Besides his generous support of the regular work of his church and his frequent special contributions to its equipment for its great work in Baltimore, including the gift of the exceptionally sweet-toned pipe-organ which leads its music, and besides his interest in educational enterprises and his active part in the organization and management of benevolent and charitable institutions, he has, in many ways unknown to the world, brought relief to perplexed hearts and comfort to sorrowing homes.

While cultivating his own taste for the fine arts, he has been a liberal patron of artists by generous purchases and by organizing art exhibitions. In 1893 he presented to the city of Baltimore the colossal bronze statue of Scotland's national hero, Sir William Wallace, which stands with uplifted sword at the western extremity of the lake in Druid Hill Park, and is daily admired by hundreds of visitors. Three years later he presented to the Johns Hopkins Hospital a marble replica of Thorwaldsen's "Christ the Divine Healer." It stands in the centre of the main hall, under the great dome, so that, as the donor said on the day of the unveiling, "To every weary sufferer entering these doors the first object presented to him is this benign, gracious figure, looking down with pitying eyes and outstretched arms, as if it were saying to him, Come unto me and I will give you rest." Mr. Spence has made frequent gifts to the Johns Hopkins University. But the benefaction for which he will be most gratefully remembered throughout the South was his gift

of \$30,000 to Union Theological Seminary for the erection of the beautiful fire-proof library to which the seminary has given his name. An excellent oil portrait of Mr. Spence occupies the place of honor on the walls of the elegant reading-room of this building, so that all coming generations of our young ministers may become familiar with the strong and kindly face of the Christian gentleman whose enlightened liberality has so greatly promoted the comfort and effectiveness of their preparation for their great work in life.

It is sometimes supposed that those who attain to wealth and high position miss the best things in life in the way of personal friendships, or that, at least, they cannot be sure that those who profess to be their friends are so in fact, as it is inevitable that men of means and power will be sought by some for their influence and aid rather than for themselves. Mr. Spence has probably had his full shares of such experiences, but no man ever had truer friends or less doubt of their sincere attachment, and none ever derived more true pleasure from his friendships. A quiet, undemonstrative, dignified gentleman, with the proverbial caution and discrimination of his race, he does not form friendships hastily, yet he has the faculty of attracting to himself choice and congenial spirits, who, under the influence of his genuine kindness, thoughtfulness and comradeship, soon pass from the stage of pleasant acquaintance to that of warm and abiding friendship. It is difficult for any one who knows Mr. Spence intimately to write of him without falling into the strain of apparently indiscriminating eulogy. But surely no language would overstate the case as to his genius for hospitality. In 1866 he purchased "Bolton," the famous and beautiful residence on Hoffman street, which was erected more than a century ago, and in the drawing-room of which Jerome Bonaparte in 1804 met the lovely Betty Patterson, whom he afterwards married. Mr. Spence added to the house a third story and two wings, and here, aided by his gentle and winsome wife, an "elect lady" indeed, whose recent death was one of the heaviest sorrows of his life, and by his daughters and granddaughters, he dispensed for thirty-five years the most delightful hospitality, making "Bolton" the constant centre of a charming social and intellectual life and the occasional scene of the most elegant and elaborate functions. He has recently sold this fine old place to the State of Maryland as

a site for the Fifth Regiment Armory, but has carried to his new home on St. Paul street the old "Bolton" atmosphere of comfort, refinement and cordial hospitality. To chat with him there through a winter evening on matters grave or gay; to sail or drive with him at Mount Desert through a summer morning; to hear him read to a small circle of guests, selections from *Scotch Wit and Humor*, or describe to some favored friend his boyhood in the old country, or his coming to America; to listen to his devout recognition of the gracious Providence which directed his movements in the beginning of his business career; to follow his reminiscences of Dr. Chalmers, whom the boy Spence knew in Edinburgh, and of Dr. William S. White, from whom the youth Spence received his deepest religious impressions in Virginia, and of Dr. Backus, to whom, as his pastor and friend, the man Spence gave his full confidence, tender affection and hearty and steadfast support in Baltimore—any one of these experiences reveals new and attractive phases of a clear and powerful mind, a strong and well-balanced character, a warm and loving heart, and a deep and thoughtful piety.

We have thought it right, though without his knowledge or permission, to publish in this magazine, which is read by so many of his friends, this brief account of the outward facts of his life and the qualities of mind and heart which have determined his beautiful and beneficent career, and made him so conspicuous an example of eminent and honorable success in business, combined with Christian benevolence and manifold and far-reaching usefulness.