

## [Van Schaack, Stephen]

### Some Notices of Some Prominent Laymen Deceased

STEPHEN VAN SCHAACK of New York City died while visiting at the home of his son-in-law, William Savery, Esq., in South Carver, Mass., July 5, 1876, in the eighty-fourth year of his age. He was a native of New York, and belonged to one of the old Dutch families of that once Dutch city, and was brought up, of course, in what was formerly called the Dutch Reformed, now known as the Reformed Church, and educated in the most rigid principles of Calvinism, such as were propounded in the famous Council of Dort in 1618-19. Mr. Van Schaack had already attained the age of manhood before his attention was called to Universalism; but when he became acquainted with its claims, its character, its evidences, he embraced it with all his heart, for it satisfied his intellect and answered all the affections and desires of his soul. "Thenceforth" (says Rev. Dr. [Thomas J.] Sawyer, to whom we are indebted for the materials of this notice), "its spirit became the indwelling and controlling principle of his life, and seldom have I seen it so steadily or beautifully carried out in life. Mr. Van Schaack's religion was no Sunday affair, to be put on and off like a garment. It was equally bright and active at all times and under all circumstances, as well in the market as in the church. It penetrated his whole being, polarized his thought, and gave tone and direction to his entire life. He was at the head of the Albany parish in 1830, when I first became acquainted with him. In this position he continued through the long and successful ministry of Rev. Dr. [Isaac D.] Williamson, and also that of Rev. Stephen R. Smith. Nor was his influence confined to that parish. He held a prominent place in the Hudson River Association, to which his parish belonged, and through it in the New York Convention. When the bequest of Col. Harsen, the far-seeing and provident friend of our cause in New York, came into the keeping of the Convention, Mr. Van Schaack was made one of the permanent trustees of the fund, and held this important charge to the close of his life, or till the infirmities of age induced him to resign it, and enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing the \$6,000, of which it consisted, not only increased more than fivefold, but accomplishing, year after year, an ever-increasing amount of good.

"His financial misfortunes were a calamity to the parish in Albany and to our cause generally. Having accumulated a handsome competence, he sold out to a well-established and profitable business and retired, to be not long after ruined by some unfortunate indorsements. This event, disastrous as it was, seemed to have very slight effect upon his happiness. He valued wealth chiefly for the power it conferred of doing good, and as its possession added no intrinsic worth to his character, so its loss detracted nothing from the dignity of an upright man. He removed, soon after this loss of his fortune, to New York, where, without a murmur at the change in his external

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fortunes, or a shadow on his cheerful face, he assumed the duties of a clerk, and spent the remainder of his days—the decline of his life—in an honorable, because useful, profession.

“Altogether, the subject of this notice was a remarkable man,—remarkable for his goodness and fidelity, and equally remarkable for his devotion to the interests of religion and truth. He lived to the age of about eighty-three years, and died, we are sure, without an enemy. For the last year of his life, his health had sensibly failed, and his decline was perhaps hastened by the death of two of his sons, the eldest residing in Central or Western New York, and another, who had risen to distinction as a lawyer, and at the time of his death held the important office of Surrogate of the City and County of New York. Leaving the city, Mr. Van Schaack closed his days peacefully at the residence of his eldest daughter, Mrs. Savery, in the town of Carver, Mass.

“His wife, a most estimable woman and devoted Christian, had passed away many years before, and he leaves several children to mourn the loss of an honored and beloved father, but to find consolation in the faith he cherished and in a thousand grateful and sustaining memories.”

*The Universalist Register*, Boston MA, 1877, pp. 119-21

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