

Address

Delivered at the Funeral Services in Memory of

Dr. Samuel Bancroft Barlow,

In the South Reformed Church, N. Y.

By Rev. E. P. Rogers, D. D.

March 2d, 1876.

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(PRINTED BY REQUEST.)

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IT is a natural and universal instinct which prompts us to honor the dead. In all ages, and among all nations, Death has hallowed all that it has touched. And when they whom we have loved, and honored, fall by the hand of the Great Reaper, affection, in its deep tenderness and hearty reverence, longs to express, in some appropriate form, its regard for the departed, and its own sense of personal bereavement. When the spirit which animated the mortal body is gone beyond the reach of the murmurings of love, or the ministrations of kindness, then the affection of surviving friends lingers fondly around even the frail and dissolving tabernacle of clay, and with every demonstration of regard, and every expression of fond remembrance, seeks to accompany it to its final rest.

Simply to enshrine the departed in our affections, or to hold them ever so steadfastly in our memories, does not fully satisfy the enacting demands of a loving and aching heart. We naturally desire to signalize the sad

event which has darkened our homes, and shrouded our hearts with sadness, with some appropriate service, which shall mark our love for the friends who are gone, shall express our reverence for their memory, shall gather up the sweet recollections of a happy past, or illustrate our exulting hopes of a happier future.

It is not strange, then, that in all ages, and among all nations, this profound and universal instinct should have found free expression, and that from the time when men began to die, there should have been funeral rites, and memorials for the dead. It is not strange that men have bestowed much loving thought and care even upon the narrow houses which they have built for the departed, when their "earthly house of this tabernacle" has been dissolved. The aching heart must leave its mark of sorrow somewhere, and mitigates its grief by rearing some visible memorial of its lost one. And so "matter and space, rock and flower, and drooping bough, murmuring winds and silent skies, combine with sculptured stone to record the loss which, alas! they cannot restore." So Abraham chose that beautiful spot described as "the field, and the cave that was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, and in all the border round about," as a fitting place to lay the precious dust of his beloved Sarah. And so Joseph of Arimathea hastened to offer

that new tomb in the garden, for the last resting-place of the body of his crucified Lord.

Our holy religion does not rebuke this natural and universal instinct. She acknowledges and sanctifies it. If even the untutored heathen, without the knowledge of "life and immortality," deems it fitting to pay some funeral honors to his dead, much more they who have been taught the true value of a human body, as the divinely constructed residence of an immortal spirit, sharing with its illustrious tenant in the blessings of the Great Redemption !

When his young companions were about to take up the bier on which lay the mortal remains of a son of the late Rev. Dr. Mason, the grief-stricken father said, "Tread lightly, young men, ye bear the temple of the Lord." "Know ye not," saith the Apostle, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" We, who have so often heard those sublime words of the great Conqueror over death, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die," alone can rightly estimate that humanity which He took into such close kinship with His own Divinity, and which He has promised to rescue from the foul dishonors of the sepulcher, that He may "change

our vile bodies, and make them like unto His own glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power by which He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." If, as we firmly believe, the sleeping dust beneath the clods of the valley is to garnish the robes of the saints in glory, if this corruptible is to put on incorruption, if this mortal is to be clothed with immortality, if that which is sown in weakness is to be raised in power, if when the angel's trump shall wake the sleepers, "in that hour of awful fusion and glorious re-organization, when this old earth yields to a new economy, and the dissolving heavens give place to brighter skies," these buried forms shall rise again in perpetual youth and immortal beauty, then surely we may commit these bodies to the ground, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," looking for the glorious resurrection, and the life of the world to come, when the sanctified spirit, united forever to the glorified body, shall enter triumphantly into "the joy of its Lord."

Such services, therefore, as the deepest and finest instincts of our nature suggest, and as the spirit of our divine religion approves, we come to pay at this time at the bier of our departed friend.

In all lands where the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ is known, these services are generally committed

to the Christian church. So that this is not a pageant, or a spectacle, intended to minister to human pride by any gorgeous ceremonial, elaborate eulogy, or magnificent display. We come in the faith of Jesus and the Resurrection to speak a few words, and to pay the simple offices of faith and love in memory of a Christian friend. This is all that he would have desired. This is all that we propose to render.

The history of this life, which had reached nearly to the extraordinary period of four-score years, may be simply and briefly told.

SAMUEL BANCROFT BARLOW was of English ancestry, and immediately descended from men who, after the removal of the family to this country, did good service in its cause, both in the Colonial and Revolutionary wars. He was born in East Granville, Mass., in 1798, and reared amid the quiet scenes and favorable influences of a primitive New England village. His fondness for learning, which, from his earliest years, was a passion with him, led him to desire and seek a liberal education. He was graduated at the Medical School of Yale College in 1822, and, we may well believe, with that honor which his studious tastes and habits would command. He then entered upon the study of medicine, under such instructors as Silliman, Knight, Smith, and Ives, who became not only his teach-

ers, but his intimate, life-long friends ; and after receiving his diploma, he entered at once upon its diligent, faithful, and successful practice, to which he devoted himself with enthusiasm for more than fifty years. In his native State, in Orange County in this State, and for more than thirty-five years in this city, he pursued his calling, blending the enthusiasm of the scientific student with the devoted, kind, and well-appreciated labors of the general practitioner. In common with his brethren of that most ancient, necessary, and benevolent calling, we may say that, in humble imitation of the Great Physician, he spent his life in "going about doing good." Few men are more worthy of being thus characterized than good physicians. Their calling is as old as sin, as universal as suffering, as necessary as life, and as benevolent as religion. It is more closely allied to that of the minister of the Gospel, whose duty it is to heal the broken-hearted, and to seek and save that which is lost. Both may claim the sanction of the Word of God, where one of the inspired evangelists will be forever known as "Luke, the beloved physician;" and where the Great Redeemer himself is represented as the Healer alike of the maladies of the body and of the soul. Indeed, in remote ages they were both practiced by the same person, and to the priest was often committed the double responsibility of prescribing for a

suffering body and a sinful soul. Only since the days of Æsculapius has medicine, as a distinct study and pursuit, been confined exclusively to a single class. The profession of the physician seems in itself to be almost a religious calling. He is constantly engaged in studying the noblest work of God, man, made in the Divine image. And from this springs his most solemn responsibility. "An unskillful sculptor spoils a block of marble; an unskillful physician spoils a man;" and a man is God's noblest work. His professional investigations into the realms of anatomy and physiology bring him face to face with such wonderful marks of the skill and power of the Great Creator, as made Galen himself a believer,* and warrants the conclusion that the skeptical physician, like "the undevout astronomer, is mad"!

The benevolent and self-denying nature of his calling also gives it a religious character. He must go at the call of suffering to the hut of the pauper as readily as to the mansion of the rich; he must go at the midnight hour, regardless of fatigue, exposure, or toil; he must brave the dangers of contagion, and confront the King of Terrors, where he reigns supreme, amid the horrors of the pestilence. He must be alive to the needs of the guilty and

* It is said that Galen was converted to Christianity by the examination of a skeleton.

the outcast, no less than to those of the virtuous and the reputable. Wherever the cry of suffering calls him, he must hasten to relieve. His toils may be remunerated or not, appreciated or despised, but he still must toil in heat or cold, by day or by night; he must often have no Sabbath, no periodic season of rest or refreshment; he must literally "spend and be spent" for the good of others, and must make his learning, his skill, his time, and his strength a continued offering to the cause of useful science, and the claims of suffering humanity. I know of no calling which, when faithfully pursued, furnishes finer illustrations of the self-denying and benevolent spirit of true religion.

Our departed friend always took this lofty view of his chosen calling. For more than fifty years he gave himself to its study and practice with unremitting ardor and fidelity. Especially did he acknowledge the paramount claims of the sick poor. It was his delight to go to the homes of the lowly, to relieve those pangs which are aggravated by poverty and want, and it may be said that his last professional labors were for the benefit of these.

Yet in the midst of the responsible and engrossing pursuits of his calling, as a practitioner and a professor, he found time for extensive general reading and antiquarian research. Few men have an intenser thirst for

knowledge, and more laborious habits of literary inquiry. He was especially interested in the study of Archæology, Numismatics and Philology, in which he made no ordinary attainments, and he retained his interest in these important departments of science to the very last. I received a communication from him on one of these subjects, within a few days of his decease, when his manuscript showed that his trembling hand was scarcely able to perform its task.

In his studies he did not forget the study of the Bible. He was a close and thorough student of the Word of God. Many times during his life he read it carefully, from beginning to end. He fully believed it to be the truth of God, and few theologians are as well versed in its contents. His religious impressions were received in his youth, in his New England home, and they never left him. There were mental peculiarities and habits, and other circumstances, which prevented him from making an outward profession of his religious faith till late in life. But in all those years he studied the Scriptures with a reverent faith, and tried to embody their vital truths in his daily life. At last, in his old age, with his faith matured by long experience, he came forward and identified himself fully with this Christian church, and found in her sacraments and services great comfort and peace in his last days.

There is something, my friends, very touching and impressive in the death of an old physician. It is a solemn and impressive thought, that the old warrior, who has so long and so bravely fought for others against the forces of disease and death, must yield at last to the inexorable foe. He, whose coming with skill and power to relieve suffering and repel disease, has been so longed for, and so welcomed by thousands of sufferers, has fallen at last on the field where the bravest and best must be ultimately overcome. But though such an one must rest from his labors, his works follow him. I think of the homes of suffering to which this good man brought relief during those fifty years of honorable and faithful practice. I think of the pale cheeks that have blushed with pleasure at his kindly approach ; of the trembling hands which have found new strength from his friendly grasp ; I think of the dark shadows which have clouded a thousand homes which he was enabled to drive away, and the many agonizing apprehensions of bereavement which he was the instrument of changing into broken utterances of thankfulness and joy. These are his trophies ; and his memorial to-day is as much nobler and more blessed than that which the warrior seeks, as health and life are better than pain and death, and to save is more glorious than to destroy.

And thus, having served his generation faithfully in his most honorable, useful, and benevolent calling; having gone about for fifty years doing good; having been a benediction to many homes and many hearts; having finished his work; having sought healing for his own soul-sickness from the Great Physician, and enrolled himself as a believing disciple in the school of Christ; revered and lamented by a bereaved household; respected and honored by his professional brethren; remembered with heartfelt gratitude by multitudes of those to whom his cares and toils were given,—nothing was left for our friend but to lay his worn and wearied form in the arms of Jesus, and go to that land where “the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick;” where “there shall be no more pain,” and where “God shall wipe away all tears from his eyes.”

“I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write! Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth! Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.”

“Life’s duty done, as sinks the clay,
Light from its load, the spirit flies,
While heaven and earth combine to say,
How blest the righteous when he dies.”

