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Tenth Anniversary Memorial

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHRISTIAN UNION

OF THE

United Presbyterian and Associate Reformed Presbyterian Churches

OF NORTH AMERICA

1889 - 1899

" Whose I Am and Whom I Serve "

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Monument and the Man.

BY PROFESSOR JOHN M'NAUGHER, D. D.

It was Hawthorne who wrote: "No man who needs a monument ever ought to have one." From that severe sentence there may be caught the significance of the memorial the dedication of which has gathered this assemblage. Reared not by vainglorious pride, nor even by family affection, it is the loving, free-will tribute of those who feel themselves debtors to the dead, and is a symbol of the worth, the beauty, of a vanished life. He who was a prince among us by reason of a strong, rich nature, by the range of his abilities, by the devotion with which he gave himself to God and men, has a name imprinted in the annals of the Church, and in the memories of thousands. To remembrance like this an epitaph graven upon stone adds nothing. James McFarland Fulton would be neither unhonored nor forgotten among United Presbyterians, though his resting-place were as unmarked as that of Israel's leader in Moab, or Calvin's at Geneva. His works praise him, and the tender outreach of many hearts is toward him at this very hour. And yet, just because he has obtained such a good report, just because his commanding personality is woven into the web of our denominational traditions, just because the earth and the kingdom here below were poorer for his going home, it is fitting that our esteem voice itself in tangible form. Needing no monument, he deserves one. Whether it be appreciated or not, this modest shaft commemorates a truer glory, according to the divine measure, than does the stately pillar in Trafalgar Square, which immortalizes Nelson's victories on the sea, or the Column Vendome, which celebrates the triumphs of Napoleon on the land. The world's applause hails the genius of the warrior, the statesman, the scholar, and in this verdict we may often join. But let a more reverent homage be paid those who have been moved to lay rare qualities of mind upon the altar of sacred service and sacrifice. Weighed in the flawless balances of heaven, there are results and values here that dwarf all other accomplishment. And he whose recollection we treasure is to be classed among this elect company. His was one of those individualities which are exceptional in the Christian circle, because of peculiar virtues and endowments. Men such as he cannot be mustered in regiments; they are too few. Of beautiful disposition, clothed with uncommon capacities, surrendered to his Lord's use—does he not stand in the front rank of those whom we should delight to honor?

This is not the time for any large review of Dr. Fulton, and I must

not forget his abhorrence of false eulogy. But it were disloyal to a dear friend, and to the grace that made him great, to pass unmentioned the excellencies which they who knew him admired. These may be dwelt on briefly without the risk that his figure will grow to undue proportions. Many of them are summed up when I say that this monument is a testimonial to a Christ-like manhood. He whose redeemed body lies beneath the green turf before us matched his high office with a high character. The organizing element of his life was piety, spirituality. He carried with him the subtle fragrance belonging to them who walk with God. Constant contact with his Saviour thrilled Dr. Fulton's soul and freshened it. In the uplifting experience of prayer and holy thought is found the secret of his devoutness, of his dignified bearing, of his helpful companionship, of the power and wisdom which were his equipment. And, as well, his calm submission to hard providential discipline bespoke a filial spirit buoyed up by communion with Him who is invisible. Faith shone out under the sharp trials of bereavement and of an illness against which he struggled through weary years. It was with an unflinching trust that he endured all the anguish and the pain that smote him, never worn into soreness, into bitterness. Exhausted and broken in the very midst of the race, with all laudable ambition baffled, he was able to turn aside without complaint from his more active ministry in the Fourth church, a ministry which he had entered with supreme desire, and prosecuted with eminent success. Ah, the pathos of that crisis! But with a grateful sense that he was graciously led; he resigned his loved charge, and then resigned himself to be made "perfect through sufferings." And when at length the day was far spent for him, the gloaming brought no gloom. In fixed confidence, with brightening, wistful hope, he waited bravely and patiently until God soothed him into sleep. Surely such quiet resignation can only be explained by close fellowship with God.

And thence in part proceeded another trait distinguishing him. It was the same which made Luther's appearance before the diet of Worms one of the finest scenes in history—moral courage. There is a nobler granite than that of Vermont quarries. It is stern, invincible fidelity to conscience and truth. While far from being of narrow, intolerant turn, Dr. Fulton was positive in his views, and abode by them at all hazards. None can tax him with unfaithfulness, with hedging, with cowardice in declaring what men needed to hear. None can allege that he ever made his convictions chattels or commodities. None can say that he ever abandoned a weak cause, if it was right, or that he ever yielded to popular outcry. Fearless and free, firm-rooted in his beliefs, he set his course by the polar star of duty, and held to that course without swerving.

But, withal, his conscientiousness did not render him angular or forbidding. Well poised and rounded, how lovable and engagingly human he was, after the fashion of Jesus! Strangers were struck with this tone in his writings, but it was in personal intercourse that it became most evident. As a pastor, his people learned to greet him with some-

thing more than mere respect. All his relations with them were warmed with the glow of sincere friendship. By his happy, genial temperament he drew to himself both young and old. They who went to him with questions of the soul had an adviser whose concern was brotherly. Those in affliction were met with a sympathy, the throb of which was itself comfort. The wayward and fallen were entreated with a pleading tenderness that melted resistance. No wonder that Dr. Fulton was so vitally interlocked with the membership of his congregation. No wonder that he inspired great love toward himself, and that his grave awakens tearful emotion in many.

Crowning all, he gave himself without grudging, without stint, to the work of Christ. He held a Pauline conception of the ministry, and labored with a zeal which was like a consuming fire. Every day had its task, and it was invariably performed. Beyond the care of his own large flock, he was absorbed in other manifold activities. The missionary, the educational, the Sabbath school interests of the Church enlisted his hearty and unflagging co-operation. Whatever philanthropic enterprises were practical had his best support, and so had the leading reforms, particularly the temperance reform. When he was fettered by increasing infirmity, still with indomitable, eager will he tried to redeem every opportunity of service, doing with his might what his weakening hand found to do. Forced at last to quit the pastorate, with ardor unquenched he wrought a while in the Southland among the children of the Freedmen. And even when physical debility forbade all other effort, he continued to pen from his retirement in Ohio, down to the very week of his death, a series of telling articles for young people, which appeared in the *Christian Union Herald*. A life abundant in good deeds unselfishly rendered closed when Dr. Fulton passed to his reward. Such is part of the story. Does it not justify the assertion that this monument is a testimonial to Christ-like manhood?

But further. It is a tribute also to consecrated talent. Dr. Fulton was set apart from most of his fellows by certain superior gifts, and these he employed unreservedly as a laborer together with God. He was a trumpet-tongued, impassioned speaker, for whom pulpit or platform was a throne. For eloquence he had few rivals. Intense in feeling, vigorous intellectually, rapid in his mental processes, imaginative and emotional, earnest in voice and gesture, wrapt in his themes, he possessed all the requisites of genuine oratory. He knew how to finger the chords of the human breast and stir soul-life to its depths. When fully aroused, his words flashed like lightning, and his appeals electrified. There was a magic in his presence, a magic in his luminous eye, a magic in his accent, a magic in his every action, which charmed his hearers. Under cover of the fascination thus exerted, he unfolded his argument and urged his plea with the skill of a practiced advocate. Logical, rhetorical, and persuasive, he was unusually well dowered for public speech. And the gift, which would have brought station and wealth had it been exercised in other fields, was all made over cheer-

fully to Christ. It was used by the ambassador in lodging his Master's message in the understandings and hearts of men.

But Dr. Fulton was notable not only as a preacher of sovereign power. He had also a native talent for organization and able leadership which God consecrated. There was with him a clearness of perception that discovered the needs and possibilities of every situation; and then he had the executive faculty by which these possibilities were seized and utilized. Whatever measures were concerted, he never failed in rallying helpers. He seemed a very center of inspirations, kindling enthusiasm and perseverance in all with whom he came in touch. Believing that good works were among the ordinances of God's house, he made his congregation a committee of the whole for aggressive effort, and it became one of the most influential religious bodies in this community. Outside the limits of his own parish, he gave birth and impulse to a number of the Church's most important agencies. These can only be enumerated. He conceived the idea which had its development in the forming of the United Presbyterian Women's Association, and the establishing of the three institutions for helpless humanity under its management—the Orphans' Home, the Memorial Hospital, and the Home for the Aged. With these noble charities, which have brought blessing to so many, his name will be forever linked. One of the most touching incidents at his funeral was the sight of the children from the orphanage passing his bier, looking into the unspeaking face of their benefactor, that face on which the peace of Christ was resting, and dropping each a flower upon the moveless form. Dr. Fulton was also the projector of the Women's Board, by which the women's missionary and benevolent work throughout the whole Church has been compacted into a well-adjusted unity. In connection with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of the United Presbyterian Church, he was prominent in the counsels of the Quarter-Centennial Commission, and in the raising of the memorial fund. His main achievement, however, was the founding of the Young People's Christian Union, that society which has had such phenomenal growth, and which has contributed so mightily to the spiritual life, the effectiveness, and the prospects of our Zion. Another who was associated with him has spoken in detail of this, and told how he planned the first convention in 1889, and aided later in the forming of the permanent organization. Suffice it to say, that with abiding gratitude and benediction the Church will think of him with whom the young people's movement originated, who gave it direction and impetus, and laid broad and deep the foundations of its future.

But we may not prolong these remarks. Pondering the heroic worker and his work, remembering the far reach of his strong, consecrated life, let us proceed to the special duty of this occasion. In 1897, the General Committee, at the request of numerous societies and brethren, appointed a special committee, charged with the erection of a suitable monument in honor of Dr. Fulton. Thus the undertaking was set on foot. The purpose was that the cost be provided by spontaneous, informal offer-

ings from young people's societies throughout the Church. The amount secured from this source was liberal, one hundred and fifty unions responding. It was supplemented, however, by the generosity of local contributors, in order that the memorial might be thoroughly representative in its proportions and workmanship. With the means at hand, the project has been forwarded to completion. In this hallowed spot there rises before you a massive, well-designed shaft of chiseled granite, lettered with the familiar name of him whom we loved as a man and followed as a leader. And now, as chairman of the committee, fulfilling the trust reposed with us, and on behalf of all whom the testimonial represents, I dedicate this monument to the memory of our friend and brother. Let it be the durable seal by which we stamp our approval upon his finished record. Let it express our estimate of his unpretending greatness, of his singular devotedness to Christ. Let its unfading inscription attest to coming generations that here is the dust of one who shared royally in the advance of the kingdom of righteousness and redemption.

And may it be that we who have participated in this simple ceremony have had a new summons from our hidden Lord. The farewell hour of the tenth anniversary convention is nearing. Let us, grouped about the grave of this faithful man of God, who being dead yet speaketh, resolve afresh for further and untiring toil. Let the magnificent lesson of that Christian life, which is the Church's legacy, prompt us to pledge that we will press along the way that Dr. Fulton trod, that we will be one with him in his love of holy things, and in his settled aim of glorifying Christ. Then when the period of earthly service and cross-bearing shall have closed, we, too, shall hear what he heard early on a November morning in '96—the joy-bells of heaven giving welcome, and the King's "Well done."



