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Alexander

Purves

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AN ADDRESS DELIVERED
IN THE CHAPEL OF PRINCE-
TON UNIVERSITY AT THE
FUNERAL SERVICES OF
HENRY M. ALEXANDER,

BY THE

Rev. George J. Purves
D. D., LL. D.





IT is fitting for this service to be held here. We bring these mortal remains back to the place of Mr. Alexander's birth and childhood, to the town made famous as the home of religion and scholarship by the labors of his father and brothers, to the University from which he graduated fifty-nine years ago, and of which he has long been the wise counsellor and devoted supporter, on our way to the sacred enclosure where most of his immediate family already rest. Mr. Alexander's life has been from beginning to end intimately associated with the history of Princeton. Here he received those impressions which were fundamental in his character. From her best

traditions he never departed. He has watched with deep interest her progress; and in the recent splendid growth of the University he himself has had no small share. Her life has been part of his life. Her influence has been his delight. Her needs have been his anxieties. It is surely meet that we should lay his body by the side of those he loved, within sound of the bell which has ever called him to work and duty.

We stand today at the close of a long and happy, an honored and useful life. It was not his lot, like others of his family, to live in the quiet pursuit of learning or to speak from the pulpit the truths of God. He was called into the rushing activity of a business and professional career; to live in the open glare of the world's criticism; to enter on the fierce competition for success which so often makes men hard and unspiritual. Such a position is exposed to strong tempta-

tions. It is unprotected by the seclusion of the study or the sanctity of the pulpit. But Mr. Alexander not only achieved success in his profession, but won also a place of affection in the hearts of many of his fellow-men. His way was marked by many kind deeds, and there are those today, whom you do not know, who mourn in him the loss of their sympathetic counsellor and liberal helper. Strong and clear in his judgment, he gave the benefit of it to those that were in need. As he won increasing success he was glad to be able to serve others the more. Out of a long career of incessant industry and professional activity he has come with a stainless character and has merited the honor not only of his household and friends but of his co-workers.

Mr. Alexander also never ceased, in spite of his active professional career, to have purely intellectual interests. Himself a constant reader of books, he realized that intellectual

forces are the most fundamental in society, and that it is part of the duty of the educated man to direct and re-enforce them. This side of his life is illustrated by his devotion to Princeton University. He gave to her his best thought and unremitting service. He was the friend and supporter of her Presidents. He never failed to attend conscientiously upon the discharge of his duties as Trustee of the University. This was not merely the result of natural affection for his *Alma Mater*. It was also because of his conviction that in serving her he served his country and the Church. He was never touched by the prevalent materialism. He knew that the interests of education were supremely important for the well-being of his fellowmen ; and rejoiced in the opportunity thus afforded him of continuing the support which in other ways had been the joy and pride of the older members of his family.

But, besides this, it is our privilege to bear testimony to Mr. Alexander's sincere and evangelical religious faith. He loved the Bible. He believed in it as the very word of God. He began each day by reading it. He accepted in its completeness the way of salvation which the Bible teaches. He did so with the utmost intelligence and after considerable hesitation in his early days. He evinced the same cool judgment and rational conviction in regard to religion that were characteristic of him in other matters; but having accepted the Saviour as presented in Scripture he never swerved from his allegiance. I have often admired in him a self-depreciation and humility of mind which were the evident result of the sense of sin out of which arose his reliance on the Redeemer. I have been told that in his youth he went on one occasion to his honored father with the fear that he did not have sufficient sense of sin to be a true believer. Dr. Alexander's wise

reply was: "You only need enough sense of sin to make you feel your need of Christ." The son acted on that counsel, and, as so often happens, the sense of sin increased with the better knowledge of Christ and with the growth of Christian experience, so that in his later years he could depend with more simplicity of trust than ever on the Sacrifice of Calvary. And so the graces of the Spirit shone through his growing life and prepared him for the end. I am not praising. He would rebuke me, did he know that I attempted it. I am only saying a few of the things which make us glad as we bear him to his place of rest. It was the crowning favor that he was permitted to pass away peacefully and without a struggle, cheered by the touch of the hand most loved on earth, and swiftly, like a tropic twilight, because the long day was fully done.

It is therefore our privilege to utter words of joy, and even of triumph, as we journey

to the grave and lay him in the spot already sacred by the presence of illustrious dead. We know that death is but the portal to glorious life. We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, there is a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. We know that our Redeemer liveth. We know that if we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true. We know that the blessed dead have gone to be with Christ, which is far better. We *know* these things. We have gone beyond hoping and guessing, and can say "we know". Even the sorrow of bereavement is no black pall cast over the brightness of our Christian lives. It glows with the light which shines from the world beyond. Amid the stillness we hear the praises of the glorified about the Saviour's

throne. Our tears are dried as we reflect that there "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." And if the earthly life has been long and full of the works of the Spirit of Christ, its close becomes a veritable triumph into the long-expected city of the great king. Let then, my friends, the comfort of God be yours. He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust; and his sustaining grace will be to you as "everlasting arms" to support and guide you. Out of the rich experiences of his love and wisdom you will be able to say with the Apostle: "Blessed be God, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation." He has given you in the life which now is ended a new inspiration to fidelity and hope in your own lives. The blessing of the covenant, in which your father believed and for the fulfilment of which to his children he ever prayed, will be upon you.

The break in the home will not really separate you from him ; for he and you are still bound together in Christ. God will be your refuge and strength, till for you too the morning breaks and the shadows flee away.



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