

1852.2

# A S E R M O N

OCCASIONED BY THE

## DEATH OF DANIEL WEBSTER,

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY,

ON THE MORNING OF OCT. 31, AND REPEATED BY REQUEST IN THE  
SAME PLACE NOV. 14, 1852.

BY REV. JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D. D.

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NEWARK, Nov. 15, 1852.

REV. JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D. D.:

*Dear Sir*—We had the pleasure of being among those who listened, last evening, to your admirable sermon on the death of Mr. Webster, and believing that its circulation through the press would greatly conduce to the benefit of our community and to a proper appreciation of the value to our country of her illustrious men, we would, on behalf of the young men of our city, respectfully request of you a copy for publication.

We remain, very respectfully and truly :

CORTLANDT PARKER,	JOSEPH P. BRADLEY,	GEO. M. ROBESON,
J. VAN ARSDALE,	S. G. CROWELL,	A. PARKHURST.
AMZI DODD,	MARTIN R. DENNIS,	F. H. TESSER.
THOS. T. KINNEY,	JOSEPH N. TUTTLE,	GEORGE B. HALSTED,
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S. P. SMITH,	HENRY J. MILLS,	ADRIAN V. S. SCHENCK,
JOHN WHITEHEAD,	OLIVER B. BALDWIN,	JAMES MILLER.

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NEWARK, Nov. 16, 1852.

MESSRS. CORTLANDT PARKER, JOSEPH P. BRADLEY, GEORGE M. ROBESON, and others,  
on behalf of the Young Men of Newark :

*Gentlemen*—Your approval of the sentiments contained in my discourse on the death of the late distinguished Secretary of State, is highly gratifying to me. With all its deficiencies I cannot hesitate, in compliance with the request with which you have honored me, to place the copy at your disposal. That the young men of our city may continue to prove themselves among the strong supports of our beloved country is the sincere prayer of

Yours, with high respect and esteem,

J. F. STEARNS.

# S E R M O N .

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*II. Samuel, III: 38-39.*—And the King said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel? And I am this day weak, though anointed King.

It is unnecessary that I should explain to you, brethren and friends, the reasons which have led me to select these words as the theme of my discourse this morning. When the heart of an entire nation is beating heavily, oppressed with the sense of a bereavement such as seldom befalls more than once during any century, it would seem unfitting that the pulpit should pass on with its accustomed course, without calling upon the Christian assemblies met together to receive its admonitions, to “hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.”

This is by no means the time or the place to pronounce a eulogy; and I stand not here to review the eventful life, the noble achievements, and the sentiments of profound wisdom pertinently and most effectively expressed, which are now, and will remain to distant generations associated with the name of DANIEL WEB-

STER. That will be done by other tongues and pens. Yea, the hearts of a whole people are doing it, at this moment, in silent admiration and grief.

My object is, to seize on this occasion, when the feelings of neither you nor me will allow us to turn away from the event referred to, in order to impress some truths naturally suggested by it, which may be of use to us, both as citizens and as creatures of God, passing away to an immortal existence. My subject will be, GREAT MEN, in their relations both to God and to mankind.

The occasion on which the words of our text were uttered, is probably familiar to most of you. Abner was the prime minister in the court of Saul, and the commander-in-chief of his armies. Though he never wielded, in his own name, the sceptre of administration, his counsels had had great influence in giving shape to the destinies of his country; and so great and well acknowledged was his eminence, that even the leader of the party opposite to his own, although triumphant, through the success granted him by Providence, was constrained to say, in view of the fall of such a man, "I am this day weak, though anointed king." To the case before us the same words seem obviously pertinent. Not only he who now occupies the Presidential chair, but he likewise who shall next ascend to that responsible position, must find occasion enough to adopt similar language with reference to the death of our late illustrious fellow-citizen.

I. But to come directly to the subject before us, I observe, in the first place, that the class of men now re-

ferred to, are to be regarded as among God's special gifts. And here let me explain, before I proceed further, what is to be understood by the term GREAT, as I here use it.

By a GREAT MAN, I do not mean simply a good man, in the highest sense of that expression ; though goodness is unquestionably among the marks of the truest greatness, and, where it is combined with eminent powers, gives to greatness its noblest direction. Still less do I intend by those terms, to denote men of mere brilliancy or splendid achievements, without regard to the aim at which those achievements were directed. Cæsar and Napoleon lacked some important elements of greatness ; while Washington, though far less brilliant than either of them, possessed that combination of strong and benignant qualities which enable a man to accomplish, not only the most remarkable, but the best ends. There are doubtless different forms and developments of greatness—greatness of heart, greatness of genius, greatness of comprehension and action. But, by a great man, as I now use the expression, I intend one who combines all those great qualities which go to constitute eminent wisdom ; who, with great thoughts and fertile invention, possesses at once the judgment to discern, the firmness and singleness of heart to pursue, and the skill and energy to secure the best interests of his country and his fellow-men. Such men are few, and when they appear, every true Christian ought to regard them as among God's special favors to mankind.

I cannot for a moment admit the notion, that there

are not original and broadly distinguishing differences in the powers with which men are endowed. The sapling may indeed become an oak by proper culture, and the oak might have remained a shrub, had not proper circumstances favored its development. But then the qualities of the oak must have been lodged originally in the sapling, or else no circumstances and no skill in training could ever make it become the monarch of the forest. Much has been said, in recent times, of "self-made men;" and so far as the object has been to encourage effort on the part of all classes, to attain eminence according to the degree designed for them by Providence, the motive has been laudable. But in strict truth, there neither are, nor ever will be, self-made men. The powers of man may be developed and improved, but not produced, by human expedients. The maker of a plain gold ring might just as well ascribe its value to his own workmanship. It is the precious metal, out of which the ornament was wrought, which gives it, when completed, superior worth to one of iron or brass. Let honorable and persevering effort have its praise; let culture be esteemed according to its real value; but let not God's best, natural work, with its rich varieties of form and beauty, be ascribed to any of man's limited processes. Depend upon it, the truly great man, as was said justly in ancient times, of the great poet, is "BORN and not MADE," either by himself or others.

We carry our notions of equality quite too far, when we deny this most obvious and most reasonable position. And we inflict a real injury on our youth, when

we train them up in the belief that they were all created originally to stand upon a common level, and that therefore the highest ranks of influence and authority are of right open to the most adroit or fortunate competitor. Do not say that the opposite doctrine makes all human positions a matter of accident. Not so. There is a niche prepared for every man, where he may adorn his race, if only he will attain and stand in it. And as to native differences, they are by no means to be referred to chance or circumstances. They are a divine ordination, just as much as the creative word, which made "the sun to rule by day and the moon and stars to give light by night." This idea, is, in fact, inwrought into our very language. Not only religious men, but all who use our mother tongue, call mental abilities GIFTS, TALENTS. Whose gifts, do you suppose? Ah, many of us forget that, when we use the word. And why speak we of TALENTS, but in distinct acknowledgment, that all these things have been distributed from the court of Heaven, just as HE chose, who giveth to one man "five talents, to another two, and to another one."

Such is, unquestionably, the doctrine of the sacred Scriptures, from the beginning to the end. The same power which gave to Solomon a "wise and understanding heart," taught David's "hands to war and his fingers to fight." Yea, the skill with which Bezaleel and Aholiab were fitted "to work all manner of work of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer," proceeded, as we are explicitly informed, from the very same hand which "touched Isaiah's hal-



lowed lips with fire." If circumstances have any influence on the result, if human efforts conspire to develop original endowments, if the times seem fitted to the man, as we often find them, no less than the man to the times, it is all of the same far-seeing, comprehensive, divine Providence, who knows equally how to PRODUCE and to FIT the proper instrument for the work which He designs to accomplish.

II. I pass, then, to observe, in the second place, that the influence of such men on the destinies of their fellow-citizens and of the world, is generally underrated rather than exaggerated.

It has been truly and pertinently said, that "God never made an INDEPENDENT man." We are linked together, both as a race and as generations, as smaller communities and as States and Empires, by ten thousand ties as complicated and untraceable as those that bind the human heart to the brain, and the brain to the entire vital organism. Nor is the influence of any one man, however small or obscure, lost upon the sum of human destiny, nor unappreciable, at least by Him who numbers the very hairs upon our heads. Apart from contributions made in this obscure way, by common men, the influence of the great and wise and energetic leaders of their race would lack its proper material, and so fail of its end.

But on the other hand, it is with equal truth to be affirmed, that but for the influence of these great leaders, all the contributions of the general mass, were they a thousand fold greater than they are, could not, or-

dinarily, be combined to the accomplishment of any great and useful result. There are many workmen, who can hew timber well in the forests, or dig stones from the quarry. There are again others who can fit stone to stone, and joint timber to timber; and still again, those that have skill in working curious ornaments, adorning a capitol or fitting and polishing an architrave; but still, where were the stately palace to be reared—where the lofty and sublime temple—unless the architect, in whose gifted brain the entire plan was conceived and still resides, give the word and the law which shall make all these scattered and disconnected products one great whole?

Among the functions of human society, some of the most important are, undoubtedly, performed within a very narrow sphere. The family circle, which is the smallest, may likewise justly be regarded as the most benign and useful of social organizations. And here the circle is so small, and the combining force of nature works so powerfully, that almost any man, not disordered or imbecile in his mental faculties, may, by proper care and consideration, guide its affairs with discretion. But when a thousand or ten thousand families, with all their variety of separate interest and characters, are to be combined into one MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY, and made to co-operate for the common benefit without encroachment on their individual good, the exigency requires powers far more comprehensive and energetic. And passing on to the guidance of a State or nation, with its complicated internal arrangements and external relations, it needs no argument to

show, that, but for men of more than ordinary capacity and attainments, such vast interests cannot be skillfully guided. True, it may often happen, that men of second and third-rate powers may carry on the government of a vast nation with success for a considerable period, even as a machine, well constructed and put in motion, may be tended and regulated by those who could never have made or invented it. So the IDEAS, which owe their birth only to some great mind, may be adopted and applied by men of very inferior capacity. The man who drafts the bill, or introduces the resolution, may plume himself upon the excellence of his measure; while he whom the superficial condemn as having originated nothing, but who is really the fountain of other men's supposed originality, stands nobly in the back ground, content if only the good result may be accomplished, and caring little to whose agency the credit may be given. But trace, to their true and primal source, the ideas whose application has given a nation honor and prosperity, and always, you will find it in some mind, capable of comprehending, in one view, a nation's character, condition and relations.

Hence it is, that in great crises, requiring a new resort to fundamental principles, the powers of such men are always put in requisition; or if they are not to be found, the cause fails. It may seem like arrogance in the great Chatham, when at a period of the utmost national peril, he said to one of the nobles of England: "My Lord, I am sure that I can save this country, and that nobody else can." And yet, I dare say, that a careful search of the course of events would show, that

there was far more truth than boasting in those remarkable words. At such times, small men feel that they have stretched their own line to its full length—that the borrowed maxims and rules and precedents by which they have succeeded hitherto, are no longer applicable to the exigencies of the community—the machine will no longer do its work without a change of construction, or the application of some new principle, and they are glad therefore to give it over into hands gifted with inventive skill.

But what is true in the affairs of State, is equally true in other departments of human thought and action. We do not need many of what may be called great thinkers or great scholars in ordinary circumstances. We take our opinions and our arguments as we do our coin, from the common circulating currency, and while the supply is sufficient, and the stamp unquestioned, we feel no necessity for recurring to the mint where it received its impression, or the mine out of whose rich depths the ore was extracted. Every day men are using, all over the land or even the world—using happily and usefully—perhaps scarcely doubting that they themselves are the authors of them, or calling them their own because they do not know who has a better right to claim them as original—thoughts, which once came forth fresh and new—from the brain of some great master of mental, moral, or theological science. Even our common-places, those truths which nobody claims, because they are so obvious and familiar, were, in many instances the result of painful birth-throes, on the part of mighty thinkers, in days of doubt and perplexity.

In ordinary times, by aid of these, men of common abilities will occupy the pulpit or the teacher's chair, or go through the routine of a profession quite as well as the original thinker. But let a crisis arise, let new forms of disease show themselves in the medical department, new heresies in the theological, or cases setting at defiance old precedents and familiar analogies in the law, and then the resort must be to minds capable of dealing with first principles, and comprehending in one view a complicated system of thought.

There is moreover, a diffused influence proceeding from such men, which like the diffused light with which men ordinarily see, is not the less salutary because its beams do not flash directly from their original source. We get them reflected and refracted from all the objects around us, while, as to their origin, too many of us reason much like the simpleton, who said "he did wonder why the sun would not shine by night, and not keep shining up there all day, when it was light enough to see without him." Few are aware, I apprehend, how much they are indebted either directly or indirectly, to the illustrious poets, artists, orators, philosophers and divines, whose works lie upon the shelves of our libraries or adorn the walls of our apartments. The circulation of their great thoughts, which pass from mouth to mouth, recited by the schoolboy, new dressed and re-produced by the pretender to literary distinction, and treasured up and silently mused upon in the minds of the thoughtful, are all the while moulding men's actions and characters. Even the common spirit of the age lacks an appropriate voice, till some such

man gives it utterance ; and thoughts which float vaguely in the common mind, products of general advancement, obtain a new power and permanence among the elements of human progress, when such an utterance has given them authority. The living presence of one such man may be sufficient to enlighten and stimulate an entire community, while the choice spirits will be drawn forth and put in motion by it, like steel filings by the attraction of the magnet. If good, as well as great, the very sight of him and his ways, the daily household words he utters, will make men grow, by imperceptible and unconscious processes, wiser and better ; and happy is he who may have had his mind and heart trained in such a presence !

I will not say as one has said, that “universal history—the history of what has man accomplished in this world, is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here.” That may be an exaggeration. But I must say, that the amount contributed to the world’s history by men on whom God has stamped visibly the marks of native nobility, as men born to guide other men’s thoughts and actions, is of far greater importance than the vulgar herd are willing to acknowledge. The names of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Isaiah, and Daniel, under the ancient Jewish dispensation ; and of John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Peter and Paul under the new, hardly stand, if we except their inspiration, in more important relations to the men of their own and succeeding times, than those of Athanasius and Augustine, Huss and Wicliffe, Luther and Calvin, Bacon and Milton, Con-

stantine, Alfred and Washington, since the Christian era. It is by the gift of such men, that a propitious Providence oftenest manifests his disposition to befriend a community. As it was in the days of old, when prayer was offered in a time of general distress, and "the Lord gave Israel a Saviour," so have we often found it in the history of the Church and of nations.

So it was in the days of our own American Revolution, a period, probably, in which more fervent and importunate prayer was offered for national blessings, both from closets and from pulpits all over the land, than at any other, since the first planting of our colonies. Then the Lord showed his merciful kindness by giving to this country a Washington, a MAN, an INDIVIDUAL, yet one who proved not only a saviour to his country by his success in arms, but a living embodiment of the very spirit by which her institutions should be animated.

So was it in the period of the Protestant Reformation. The influence of that one mighty champion, Martin Luther, is of itself sufficient to prove the truth of my position. When, on the evening of the thirty-first of October, 1517, just three hundred and thirty-five years ago to-day, he quietly walked out, paper in hand, amidst crowds of excited devotees who had flocked together on the festival of "All-Saints," in expectation of a plenary indulgence; and upon the door of the church in Wittenburg, made peculiarly sacred in the eyes of the superstitious throng by the accumulation of holy relics that filled it, affixed those ninety-five theses, impugning the abuses of the

Church of Rome, which he pledged himself to defend in public the next day against all opposers, there was probably not another man in all Germany, who would have dared thus to throw down the gauntlet before a tyrant hierarchy. And yet, on that bold act, and the succeeding manifestations of high and holy resolve on the part of that wonderful man, hung, under God, the entire series of changes which gave the world both the Reformation itself, and the blessed fruits of liberty which have followed it. Meet it is, that this day should be observed annually, as it is throughout Protestant Germany, in commemoration of that most pregnant transaction. And meet it is, that the name of MARTIN LUTHER should be cherished and pronounced with praises to God wherever a free-born Christian is to be found.

It ill becomes us to worship great names, or fawn on those whom the world has agreed to make its favorites. That is a vulgar propensity. But the affectation of admiring nothing, and treating real eminence as though it were no higher than the common level—an affectation too characteristic of our times and country—is in my judgment, to say the least, equally offensive. There is an affectionate admiration for distinguished talents worthily applied, which is generous and becoming, and likely to be felt in its fullest measure by those who have themselves a kindred nature. Only a vulgar mind can fail to catch something of its inspiration. It is an admiration for one of God's best gifts, the noblest earthly product of creative power—an admiration, whose most appropriate incentive is gratitude, and



which, properly controlled and chastened, has an affinity with the best and holiest impulses of the Christian heart.

III. But I proceed to observe, in the third place, that the position and destiny of such men, notwithstanding all their greatness, is in the hands of a power far above their control.

The insufficiency of mere natural endowments to secure ultimate success, has become proverbial. The Roman Marius, and the modern Napoleon, were both great men, as the world usually estimates greatness. Yet the image of the one, sitting in desolate grandeur on the ruins of Carthage, and the other, wearing out his last days on a lonely rock of the ocean, are beacons in history, warning all men of the danger of such greatness.

And even where natural endowments are combined with those higher moral qualities, which are essential to constitute true wisdom, they cannot be with certainty relied upon for the attainment of those ends which their possessor proposes to himself. God has marked out for every man only a limited sphere, and all beyond that he holds in his own wise but inscrutable disposal. Forming our plans with reference to what seems the truest and best interests of that sphere, it often happens that our aim conflicts with that more comprehensive aim by which the best interests of the vast universe are promoted, and then, of course, our designs have to be frustrated. Could we even suppose in any one man such comprehensive and far reaching

wisdom, as would enable him to see with certainty under all circumstances, the course of prudence for an entire community, so as to commit no mistakes which might be the foundation of disappointment; yet perhaps a doom has gone forth from the court of heaven against that community; and, as a medium of its execution, wise counsels are to fail of their accomplishment, or be rejected by an infatuated people. Like Cassandra in the classic fable, it is their destiny to speak words of truth to minds pre-determined to reject them; or with Isaiah, they seem to have received as their commission, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed." And when the inquiry is made, "Lord, how long?" the answer is, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." Thus has many a true patriot sunk away into sorrowful retirement, or died almost broken-hearted, because an ungrateful or deluded people knew not what belonged to their true peace, and would rush on to a yet unmanifested destiny. And thus doth the Supreme Ruler of the nations "destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

It generally is found to be the fact, that men of this character have some ambitious aims of their own, which they desire to accomplish. Though in the main disinterested and patriotic, they have come to regard their own elevation to posts of influence and power as in a

measure identified with the success of patriotic and benevolent ends. Nor is this only and always a censurable egotism. The pilot who has planned the voyage may well desire to have the helm under his own management in critical moments. And, let carping mediocrity say what it will, there are men occupying confessedly such positions in the eye of their country, that to pass them by in the choice of its leaders, is to inflict upon them an indignity—a wound which the most generous and unselfish natures are often the quickest to feel. Nor can it be denied that through the infirmity which attaches itself to humanity in its best specimens, the hearts of such men are often strongly set on the attainment of personal eminence. In some, this desire goes so far, as to absorb and neutralize some of the most worthy original purposes.

But the history of the world, no less than the lessons of Holy Writ, teaches us, that there is no combination of the most brilliant and vigorous powers, which can secure human ambition from the probabilities of a disappointment. How remarkably is this truth exemplified in the case of the three illustrious statesmen, whose names History will link together as the richest ornaments of our country in the present generation! The ability of each of them to occupy the highest station in this great Republic, and even to add to it a dignity scarcely attained hitherto, not a man probably of any party doubted for a moment. In the parties to which they respectively belonged, not a man doubted that their administration, could they be placed there, would be most benign and glorious in its effects upon

the country. And yet with sadness, yes, with admiring grief, must we record the fact, that CALHOUN, CLAY, WEBSTER, all three—suns as they were in our political firmament, died at an advanced age, disappointed men. All their life long they had toiled, 'with honorable ambition surely, if ever it is right to couple those two words, to attain the post of highest honor and power, over a country which I verily believe they loved more than their ambition, or, at least, so identified with it, that the attainment of the one would not have been deemed by them worth the seeking without the prosperity of the other; and yet, after having again and again ALMOST attained their object, each, in succession, went to his honored grave, in the grief or bitterness of a darling wish hopelessly frustrated. Oh, ambition, learn here, beside these graves, one salutary lesson! Generous, noble-minded, patriotic ambition, come and see what a mere bubble thou pursuest! Men of no mark, men, comparatively at least, as all acknowledge, of very small pretensions to the honor, have one after another, been almost taken by surprise, at finding themselves in the chair of office; but CALHOUN, CLAY and WEBSTER, men on whom all eyes have been resting for a half a century, have at length finished their career, and left their great names inscribed nowhere above a secondary position.

Nor can the most splendid abilities, as the course of the world is, secure their possessor from being the mark for slander. On the contrary, they serve to make him so. Envy is gratified by obscuring what seems too brilliant for its composure; and selfishness

finds its account in traducing what it cannot subordinate. So is the great man of his time doomed not only to have

“—— all his faults observed,  
Set in a note-book, learned and conned by rote,”

but to have all the faults that really belong to him grossly exaggerated, the motives of his best actions vilified, and faults ascribed to him, and confidently asserted and heralded from shore to shore, of which perhaps he is as innocent as the infant sleeping in the cradle. And though posterity generally sees justice done to men of real worth, yet its verdict comes late; and long before it comes, the pangs of the great heart that felt the sting, have obtained ease in the grave.

The grave! yes, the grave! And this suggests another thought pertinent to our present subject. Although success, in its largest measure, should be their fortune, the greatest of their race must at length die. We hear a voice, which calls to us not only from the fresh graves which have just closed over the forms of our own departed statesmen, but from out the depths of long past generations—from the tombs where lie the dust of heroes, patriots, sages, eloquent orators, and ministers of the holy gospel. “Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?” “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help; his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.”

“Princes, this clay must be your bed  
 In spite of all your towers,  
 The tall, the wise, the reverend head  
 Must lie as low as ours.”

How like a dream does all earthly greatness vanish !  
 How little does even the most splendid life appear  
 when we come to look in upon the eternity which is  
 before us ! Verily, there is no trusting in an arm of  
 flesh, however strong. The tolling bells, the flags at  
 half mast, the interminable procession, the streets and  
 edifices all draped with black, the mournful pageant,  
 the costly and enduring monument, all speak one voice.  
 It is the voice of the inspired oracles. “I have said  
 ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most  
 High ; but ye shall die like men and fall like one of  
 the princes. Arise, O Lord, judge the earth, for Thou  
 shalt inherit all nations.” And happy, alone happy  
 is the man who has his trust centered firmly on the  
 ever-living and true God.

The event to which reference has been had in this  
 discourse, is one, as I have said, of no ordinary interest.  
 The news that our great statesman was dead, sunk as  
 lead, cold and heavy, upon the hearts of the people.  
 I know not how others may regard the matter, but for  
 myself, though my personal acquaintance with the illus-  
 trious deceased scarcely extended beyond a casual intro-  
 duction, and a passing shake of the hand, I may affirm,  
 without the least affectation, that I have felt this be-  
 reavement with something extremely like a deep per-  
 sonal sorrow. Ever since I can remember, even from  
 early childhood, that bright particular star has been in

our American sky. As a son of New England, I have seen in him many of the strong, deep, earnest qualities which distinguished the noble ancestry to which I am proud to trace my lineage. As a citizen of Massachusetts, I have felt his name to be among the brightest of the many bright gems that adorn the brow of my native State. That name has been scarcely less familiar, and had scarcely less of a homelike sound, than that of father or brother. Well I remember with what eagerness we college-lads watched for the papers that contained those great speeches in the discussion with Hayne—how, with forms bending forward, and lips half apart, the youthful group drank in the soul stirring eloquence, and strove to fathom the deep reasoning of the giant Statesman, as one of our number read aloud for the benefit of the rest—and how we, Massachusetts boys fancied ourselves taller by some inches, and our dear native State, with her Plymouth Rock and her Bunker Hill, seemed dearer than ever to our heart of hearts. It is impossible for a man to contemplate, with any true approbation, such an object from his youth up, and not feel his heart gradually growing to it with something like filial affection: and I confess, whatever others may think, and however it may require the spirit of indulgence on the part of some to bear with me in saying it in this place, I have believed, and do believe this day, that not an honester and more true-hearted patriot ever trod the soil of glorious America, than he who has just now gathered himself up for his last sleep within her faithful bosom.

Mr. WEBSTER was no merely sectional or partizan

politician. A Whig from principle, and by all the instincts of his moral and intellectual nature, he could yet spring generously to the defense of measures of the opposite party, whenever the country's good seemed plainly to demand their support. Party men have, more than once, been disappointed in him, because his aim was to be, in the largest sense of the word, a NATIONAL statesman. He was indeed, as I have intimated, a New England man—from stem to stern, a ship of the New England built, with timbers hewn out of the tough oak of her noble hills, seasoned from the beginning in her wholesome discipline, and bolted through and through with her puritan principles; yet bravely did that good ship sail on the broad sea of the nations, and the flag that ever floated at her mast-head was—"Our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country."

With Mr. WEBSTER the preservation and prosperity of this glorious Union was almost a passion. It has been charged against him, that he was willing to sacrifice cherished interests, rather than hazard it. Some zealous advocates of emancipation have striven to clothe his history with obloquy, because, having, all his life, stood firmly for the liberty of the enslaved, he at last, under an alarm of approaching disunion, consented to measures which might seem adapted to thwart the desired object. But, with him, it must be borne in mind, the union of these States was regarded as fundamental, in the pursuit of all other desirable public ends. You know the burning words which fell from his lips in the year 1839, when, in the Senate of the



United States, he stood up and said: "I profess, Sir, in my career hitherto, I have kept steadily in view, the preservation of our Federal Union. It is to that Union we are chiefly indebted for whatever makes us most proud of our country. While the Union lasts, we have high, exciting, gratifying prospects spread out before us. Beyond that, I seek not to penetrate the veil. God grant, that, on my vision, may never be opened, what lies behind. When my eyes shall turn to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on States dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood!" Even sweet Liberty, the American's first love, he would not woo except with favor of that honored matron, MOTHER of Liberty. "Not Liberty first and Union afterwards," even for the white man, even for himself and his children, would he choose to inscribe upon our banner; "but that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart, 'Liberty AND Union,' now and forever, one and inseparable."

It is not for me to discuss the question, whether the Union was really in danger, when the measures into which our two most eminent and most experienced Statesmen threw themselves so eagerly, were adopted. Suffice it to say, they, in common with thousands of the most judicious observers, North and South, fully believed so. And with such views, who shall charge inconsistency upon even the professed friend of emancipation for consenting to their adoption? Alas! for

the poor bondman, if North and South should become separate nations ! In the wreck which might ensue, ruin would fall first and surest on his defenseless head. The same blow which cuts the Union of these States, will doubtless rivet the chains of the poor negro's bondage, and fix upon him, for a long half century at least, the hopeless alternative of slavery or death. The illustrious Senator would have belied his whole past history, had he been willing to promote Liberty at the expense of Union.

The patriotism of Mr. WEBSTER was eminently a conservative patriotism ; and hence, in part at least, his failure to secure popular favor. In a community whose every passion is lashed up to the intensest excitement, where all sails are set to catch the freshest gale, and the ship is dashing on over the waters with a wizard's speed, reckless of rocks and shoals, the man whose mission is rather to steady, guide, and sometimes hold back, than to impel, can seldom count on being a general favorite. And yet the functions of such men are of pre-eminent importance, in such circumstances, for the general welfare. In the great movements of the material universe, astronomers reckon two opposite forces, the centripetal and the centrifugal. One is the force of progress, the other of steady, well proportioned, definitely aimed progress ; and it would be difficult to say which might easiest be dispensed with. So, in human society. No one who carefully reviews our history for the last fifty years, especially during the period in which the illustrious deceased stood upon the stage, could hesitate to say which class of forces were

most rare, and therefore most to be sought after by the judicious philanthropist. Onward, ever onward, is the general spirit of the age. As a people, we cannot hold back, and we shall not hold back ; it is not in us. Like the foaming rapids above the cataract of Niagara, we whirl and rage and force our way forward, thoughtless often to what precipice the rushing waters are approaching. To regulate, to control, to direct to right ends, that is the problem—the problem of usefulness, I mean, but not the problem of popularity. Our far-seeing Statesman knew too well, that this was not the road to favor with the multitude. The loud huzzas, echoing from Maine to California, were not for him, or such as he. Even the support of thinking men, on whom he did count, was given not seldom, however reluctantly, to different leaders.

Mr. WEBSTER was a man of indefatigable industry. An incident related in his address on History, last winter, shows that conclusively ; and there are other anecdotes of his life equally significant. Thus it was, that his great capacities became filled, and his great powers were brought into readiness for worthy action. Thus became he, what he has been so beautifully described to be by an eloquent eulogist, “chief by a two-fold eminence, eminence of the very highest rank in a two-fold field of intellectual and public display—the profession of the law and the profession of statesmanship, of which it would not be easy to recall a parallel in the biography of illustrious men.”\* In the latter

\* Rufus Choate.

department, I presume he had no rival on the stage, in any country, at the time of his decease.

Mr. WEBSTER was a man of warm domestic affections, as appears plainly: enough from the touching letter, relating to his early life, and the memory of his lamented brother, published since his decease. The world in general, seldom see much of this part of the character and life of public men. It is often a distinct sphere, almost a separate world, into which none enter but those who belong to it, and very little is suffered to transpire for public observation. Happy is it, when by the few glimpses which we now and then gain, we see revealed so beautiful a picture.

But I must touch briefly on one further aspect of his character. Mr. WEBSTER was a professor of religion from his youth, in the communion of a Church holding essentially the same great Christian truths with ourselves; and as such, was accustomed, from time to time, during his life, to commemorate, in the sacrament of the Supper, the great mystery of the Saviour's death. What were his inward experiences, and how far his outward life adorned his profession, I know not. The life of our public men is, unquestionably, a theatre of the fiercest temptations; and if Christians would be more earnest in prayer for them, and less severe in censure, less uncharitable in suspicion—remembering that, with all their faults, some of them may have overcome greater moral foes than we ever encountered, better and holier ends would be attained. The faults of the deceased have been, I have reason to believe, in many instances, grossly exaggerated; while the conflicts he

may have had with evil, the tears he may have shed in secret, the victories which, through grace, he may have gained, are known only to the Searcher of hearts. No man ever heard him speak disrespectfully of any feature of our holy religion. On the contrary, he bore his free and full testimony to its truth, its sacredness and its NECESSITY. And if, as we have learned from one who knew his ways, and spoke in the presence of many witnesses in the scene of his burial, he was a man of prayer—carrying his griefs and burdens to the throne of grace, and, as the priest of his own household, officiating at the family altar, we need not wonder at the beautiful and holy serenity, which seems to have filled his soul in his departing moments. With all the faculties of his great mind in complete exercise, with a full knowledge, such as from his early training he must have had, of what is needful in a preparation for death, clearly apprised that the last messenger was at the door, and that, to-morrow at the very latest, all that was mortal of DANIEL WEBSTER would be no more, how calmly did he bid farewell to loved ones, and put his soul in order for its final flight!

“Then, I am to lie patiently to the end. If it be so, may it come soon.” How deeply impressive is that earnest response to the recital by his devout physician, of the beautiful words of holy writ—“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me,”—a response evincing at once his sense of dependence and his deep longing for something SURE to depend upon—“the fact, the fact!”—the

great soul-sustaining fact which underlies and is expressed by those beautiful words,—“that is what I want”—what I need, and all I need—“Thy rod, Thy rod—Thy staff, Thy staff!” And sweet to the heart of every Christian must be the recollection of that prayer, closing audibly with “Heavenly Father, forgive my sins and receive me to Thyself, through Christ Jesus.” And who needs doubt, who can consent to doubt, that the sins of the great Statesman, whatsoever they may have been, were forgiven; not for his greatness’ sake, not on account of their fewness or his many counterbalancing virtues, but for the sake of that all-merciful, atoning Lamb of God, of whose mediation that last prayer made mention, and whose blood alone “taketh away the sin of the world?”

So died the illustrious, peerless Statesman of this western hemisphere! America has lost none greater. Gone, gone, forever, from our sky, is that bright luminary! That eloquent tongue is silent! The light of that eagle eye is quenched! That noble brow, on which commanding intellect sat visibly enthroned, is cold as the marble of his tomb! That giant frame will be crumbling soon, among the clods of the valley! Farewell, illustrious spirit! Long will it be ere thy place among us will be filled! Mad faction may distract the members of this great Republic, and storms of war may again lower over the Atlantic, but we shall have no WEBSTER then, to say to the one, “Peace, ye are brethren,” or to avert the other by his prudent and skillful negotiations. Henceforth, our country must pursue her way WITHOUT HIM.

His body sleeps amidst hallowed scenes. The Ocean that once bore the Mayflower to these shores, sings its requiem near his tomb. The air which received the Pilgrims' breath of prayer, when they first landed, floats around and over it. He lies amidst the green graves of those venerable sires, and not far off is PLYMOUTH ROCK. Fit resting place! May we meet both him and them at the resurrection of the just!

And now, for a short season longer we sojourn among living men. The country which the good old Puritans, Huguenots, Hollanders, and Scotch and Irish Covenanters first planted; into whose institutions glorious WASHINGTON breathed his patriotic spirit; which Franklin, Adams, Henry, Rutledge, and their noble compeers rescued from dependence and subserviency; which Marshall, Madison, Hamilton, Pinckney and Jay adorned and built up into a mighty nation; and where, from age to age, the blessed Gospel of our Lord was preached by Cotton, Willard, Davies, Witherspoon, Mason, and, worthiest of all, by that great scholar and divine, than whom America inscribes no nobler name upon her rolls, Jonathan Edwards, is now for a little season committed to the faithfulness of us of this passing generation. To the exercise of this faithfulness, the death of our great men loudly summons us. Every one of those strong and wise pilots who are taken away, leaves so much heavier a responsibility upon the mass of citizens. And shall it fail to be discharged? I call upon the young men of our country, for on them devolves a special responsibility. Let young America awake, and gird herself with holy courage for her work. If any

nation should be cherished in her people's heart, it is our own. If patriotism were ever a Christian virtue, it is here. We owe a debt to our ancestors which can be discharged only by patriotism. We owe a debt to posterity, and can discharge it only by transmitting unimpaired the sacred legacy which our and their ancestors intended for them. We owe a debt to our race; and in what way can we pay it so surely as by keeping open here a fountain of pure influences and a free ASYLUM for the OPPRESSED?

Let the young men of our country stand fast by the union of these States! The spirit that would rend the sacred sisterhood is no friendly spirit. The party that would separate, to gain control of one of the fragments, and not rather relinquish the whole into other hands than sever in twain the living organism, is manifestly a destructive party. The genius of America weeps at the very thought of such a catastrophe. When the sword is drawn for the murderous deed, watch and see who it is that says, "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it." Watch and see whose maternal heart shudders instinctively at the base suggestion. And when you see her forego all else rather than that, give the living child, America, with all its young hopes, into her hands, "for she is the mother thereof."

Young Americans, let the ideal which you place constantly before you, and strive ever to realize in your own character, be CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM. Assume as the guide of your public acts, no narrow and partial principles, even though they may appear to be moral principles. Look broadly over the fair face of this



goodly nation. Contemplate earnestly, and study carefully both its external relations and the mutual obligations of its parts and members. Study the history, the genius, the true mission and the probable destiny of your country. Deposit your votes, come what will, at the time of voting, in the fear of God. And when you pray, commend constantly and with no formal service, your dear native land to the God of your fathers.

But not alone for our country's service does the departure of our honored fellow-citizens bid us be ready. There is a better country—better far than even our own loved America, to which, as destined to an immortal being, we owe our loyalty. The melancholy voice which echoes now from shore to shore of the land, bids every man, high or low, bear in mind, that he has here upon this earthly ground, “no continuing city.” Our chief citizenship is in another clime. With rapid course we all pass on toward the judgment-seat of Christ. There all mankind must stand upon a common level. Politicians and their constituents will meet there, and every intrigue will be exposed; yes, and pastors and their people will meet there, and all the conduct and motives of their intercourse will be brought under review.

And here the ministers of the Gospel ought to receive an admonition, not only from the DEATH, but from the recorded WORDS of the departed Statesman. As though a voice spoke to ME from beyond the grave, would I pause thoughtfully over the mighty lesson. “When I attend upon the preaching of the Gospel, I wish to have it made a personal matter—yes, a PERSONAL matter—a personal matter.” How scorching is

the rebuke to those who merit it! "They take a text from Paul and preach from the newspapers. When they do so, I prefer to enjoy my own thoughts rather than listen." And who blames him? "I want my minister," he says, "to come to me in the spirit of the Gospel, saying, 'You are mortal. Your probation is brief. Your work must be done quickly. You are immortal too. You are hastening to the bar of God. The Judge standeth at the door.'"

Ah, THAT is the ONLY true method for a Christian minister. When ever I come to speak in this sacred place, O, let the impression henceforth be stamped deeper than ever on my heart: I must make the transaction in which I now engage with these immortal souls, "a personal matter—yes, a personal matter—a personal matter." And, brethren and friends, let those other words just recited, sink deep likewise into all your hearts. Receive them as if spoken to you, through me, by one "who being dead yet speaketh," aye, who "still lives"—lives in the affections of his countrymen—lives in the worthy deeds and worthy sentiments he has left behind—lives as an immortal SPIRIT, just over there, on the other side of the border between time and eternity. "You are mortal. Your probation is brief. Your work must be done speedily. You are immortal too. You are hastening to the bar of God. The Judge standeth at the door." Prepare, O ye mortal, yet immortal beings, prepare now for a happy immortality. AMEN.

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