



Rev. John Bancroft Devins, D.D., LL.D.

John Bancroft Devins

A TRUE GREATHEART

Reminiscences by

REV. E. C. RAY, D.D.

With Supplementary Chapters

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PREFATORY NOTE

The reminiscences in this book are not a biography, but a record of the salient events and characteristics of Dr. Devins's life and personality as recalled by a close friend of many years, the Reverend E. C. Ray, D.D., of Santa Barbara, California; a series of "moving pictures" rather than a meticulous and balanced history. The writer desires to acknowledge gratefully his obligation to Mrs. Devins for the greatest possible assistance; and to express his hope that the reminiscences, though unworthy of their great subject, may yet be useful in recalling to his friends some vivid memories, and in suggesting to others how a life encompassed with difficulties may be made glorious and happy and filled with the spirit and the works of Jesus Christ. Details of his earlier years, so amazing, so pathetic, so sad to those to whom Dr. Devins was most dear — just as the long past sufferings of our Lord, essential to His power and glory, hurt our hearts now — are given, in connection with what he afterwards accomplished only as an inspiration to those who are handicapped at the start. As Dr. Devins shrank from exploit-

ing his own story, these things would never have been written were it not that he expressed to his wife, and in a letter to the writer, his willingness that after his death these reminiscences be written for the benefit of those who begin life under similar disadvantages.

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CHAPTER I

THE START AND THE FINISH

A sturdy lad walked into the hamlet of Vernon Center, Oneida County, New York, on a March morning in 1873. He had walked far, carrying all his worldly possessions, easily, in a very small bundle. He had left home because home failed to give him two things he resolved to have — religion and education. Religion he had, deep down in the heart of him; but he had not the forms of it and did not know that he had it at all, and he would have it or die. He walked on the quest of the Holy Grail. Of education he had but little; but the root of it was in him, that unappeasable hunger, combined with unalterable resolution and willingness to work like a slave, lacking in so many who have all opportunities. This is the pledge of power for those who are born with it or have it awakened in them. He was out walking for wisdom.

What else had he in capital to make a career for himself? A name? Half of one. He was John. John what? His adoptive parents, who had taken him an in-

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fant from the Home for the Friendless in New York City, had given him their last name, and with that name he walked into Vernon Center. Let us call it Pachman — John Pachman. No, he had no capital but himself. Not trying now to look inside of the boy, into his brain and heart, but letting them speak for themselves in these reminiscences, let us inventory his external assets at that time. Clothes — nothing good to be said; they were few, cheap, misfits, worn. Body — short, square built, stocky, muscles of size and of steel, shoulders of Atlas, a shock of reddish hair cut under a bowl, a pervasive crop of large freckles, head rather small and not at all promising, shy manner, extraordinary capability for blushing and none for taking care of his hands and feet in social groups containing well-dressed or female persons, a very rapid, half-articulated speech difficult to understand.

But he had two things that distinguished him from most other people and suggested the promise of all that he was to be. His form was always erect and his carriage free, unlike the attitudes and gaits usually acquired in farm occupations. He never slouched in his life. He stood up, sat down, walked, ran, fell, got up again, all with the graceful power of an athlete. There was nobody else

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in the community like him. Physical perfection, perfect health, mental balance and moral strength seemed to shout themselves through him to the world. Everybody felt, unconsciously, the message his body spoke. It won instant respect, awing the lawless, winning the well-meaning, inspiring confidence in everyone.

But his wonderful eyes! Of a soft dark brown and very large, their first noticeable characteristic was their extraordinary beauty, unsurpassed, in the judgment of his friends, by any other eyes. Next, everybody felt that they were clean, transparent windows of his soul, capable of expressing any emotion possible to a human spirit. They could flash with anger like lightning strokes, showing a furnace of wrath within. They could speak a scorn as biting as *aqua fortis*. But they commonly glowed with kindness, unspeakable affection and good-will, honesty unquestionable and absolutely firm, truthfulness as clear as heaven's blue, and courage that no one looking into them would think of trying to weaken. What a great, strong, soaring, self-controlled, trusty, dependable, loving soul looked out of those windows! Everybody felt that at once all through his life.

What had the little hamlet, nine miles from its railroad station at Oneida, to offer this

lad? Two general stores, a smithy, a tiny post-office in the tailor's shop, Methodist and Presbyterian churches on adjacent corners facing the small central square, a tavern of bad repute, a few modest dwellings with one comparatively palatial one — the summer home of a rich distiller from Buffalo — and farmhouses on all the out-radiating roads. What did John make of his opportunities?

He worked his way through New York University and Union Theological Seminary, later receiving earned degrees of A.B. and A.M. from the former institution, and from other institutions the honorary degrees of Doctor of Divinity and Doctor of Laws. He was a member of the city staff, *New York Tribune*, 1880-8; corresponding secretary, American Institute of Christian Philosophy, and editor of its magazine, *Christian Thought*, 1890-6; chairman Sub-committee on Sanitation, East Side Relief Work, 1893-4; founder and first president, Federation of East Side Workers, 1894; founder and president, New York Employment Society, 1894; chairman, Cooper Union Labor Bureau, 1895; manager, New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, 1895; member Public Lecture Corps, New York Board of Education, 1896; member National Federation of Churches and Christian Workers,

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1901-8; managing editor, *New York Observer*, 1898-1902; editor and president, *New York Observer* Company, 1902; member National Civic Federation, 1902; official representative, Evangelistic Committee of General Assembly, Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., on trip around the world, 1903-4; speaker of International Sunday School Committee at Jerusalem Convention, 1904; member General Assembly's Committee on Seamen and Soldiers, 1904-8; first fraternal delegate of New York Presbytery to Central Federated Labor Union, 1904-8; managing editor, *The Bible Record*, 1904-6; trustee (by appointment of the Governor), New York State Hospital for Incipient Pulmonary Tuberculosis, Ray Brook, N. Y., 1905-1910; and secretary of the Board, 1906-8; member Executive Committee, Inter-church Conference on Federation, and chairman of its Press Committee, 1903; member Child Labor Committee, 1906; member the College Board of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., 1906-8; life member American Bible Society, 1907; member National Vacation Bible School Committee, 1907; trustee and vice-president, Industrial Christian Alliance for the U. S. A., 1907; secretary, Presbyterian Union of New York, 1907; trustee, Evangelical Alliance, U. S. A., 1907; manager,

Tribune Fresh Air Fund, 1907; chairman, Committee on Literature and Education, Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, 1908; corporate member, China Industrial Union, 1908; counselor, Female Guardian Society and Home for the Friendless, 1908; advisory member, Working Girls' Vacation Society, 1908; trustee, American Seamen's Friend Society, 1908; member National Geographical Society, Washington, 1908; member Victoria Institute, London, 1908; organizer Orient Travel League for Bible Students and Travelers, 1909; member Bible Study Union, 1909. Initial dates for the following are lacking: Member Central Bureau of Colored Fresh Air Agencies; trustee, Christ's Mission; chairman, Prison Gate Mission; lecturer of the New York Board of Education on Sociology, Literature and Travel; manager, New York Sunday School Association, and chairman of its Committee on Public Buildings; honorary secretary for New York-Egypt Exploration Fund; author of "Blind Jennie," "The Church and the City Problem" (1895), "An Observer in the Philippines" (1905), "On the Way to Hwai Yuen, or a Mule Ride in China" (1906), "The Classic Mediterranean" (1910), and the hymn, "Jesus, Saviour, We Would See Thee," collaborator in "The Life of Dwight

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L. Moody," "Christ and the Church" and "Proceedings of the Federal Council of the Churches." He was never a member of any board, committee, association or group of workers into which he did not throw his whole soul and ability to work.

One who knew him from his Vernon Center appearance until his disappearance when a cloud received him out of our sight will try to tell in these pages some of the characteristic and romantic incidents of his development. There will be no effort to magnify his character or achievements, or to glorify his memory, but only to tell the story simply and truthfully so that others may get help from it. We shall tell about "John" as we knew him.

CHAPTER II

GETTING RELIGION

So John Pachman walked into Vernon Center that March day of 1873, in his seventeenth year, his worldly poverty in a small bundle in his hand, talent, if not genius, seething not understood in his brain, his big heart confident and unafraid walking out into life with a firm, ambitious tread, his head high, his hopes higher, seeking two things — religion and education. He felt that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, as all wise men have felt even before Solomon. So he sought religion first, leaving education for later consideration; thus, consciously or unconsciously, taking the first necessary step toward sound education. He hired himself out to Mr. Young, an elder in the Presbyterian Church, as farm hand, with a small monthly stipend “and found.” This was happy for both parties. Mr. Young thus entertained an angel unawares. John found a warm home, a fine Christian friend in the young farmer, a sister’s sympathetic help in the farmer’s lovely wife, and two dear little children, girls, upon whom he could

practice some of the love and kindness with which his heart overflowed. He went to the Presbyterian Church with these friends his first Sunday in his new home.

That same week another young man, seven years older than John, as tall as John was then short, as anemic and thin as John was ruddy and stocky, having a few more clothes than John and a good many more books, and a license from the Presbytery to exercise his gifts, and an invitation from the church at the Center, had come in on the stage from Oneida, lodged lonely in the little manse, and began with fear and trembling to try to make sermons and friends. He made one lifelong friend the first Sunday — John. John felt in the first two sermons all that the immature young seminarian longed to express in them and could not. They talked half that Sunday night. “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out”; no other text was needed. John needed no one to lead him to the Saviour he was seeking with all his heart, only someone to call his attention to that Saviour’s instant and eternal acceptance of him. The young minister declined to discuss Presbyterianism or any other ism, because our Church welcomes all who trust and love and desire to follow the Saviour, and all questions beyond that could be postponed; the

Great Teacher would not fail to teach all things in due time, by the Spirit of truth, to an earnest disciple and follower. John acted upon this truth instantly; it settled the matter for him forever; it was never again in his life, I believe, open to doubt. That was an early prophecy of greatness, that instant decision of a great question never to be reopened. Is there not some greatness in a comparatively untaught soul that can in an hour appreciate the incomparable truth of Jesus Christ and rely absolutely, with never a hesitation, fear or regret, upon His word? There was earnest prayer, and hand grips, and "good-night" and "God bless you!" So John accomplished his first adventure, his walking in search of the Holy Grail; he got religion.

And what religion he got! The following Wednesday night the usual mid-week meeting was held in the little basement room that might possibly hold a crowded twenty or thirty — but was never called upon to do that at prayer meeting; a dozen was a large attendance. John was there. At the first opportunity he was down upon his knees, trying to pray. He mumbled indistinguishable words a minute or two and then ceased. The embarrassed young preacher knew not what to say to him at the close of the meet-

ing; could only grasp his hand and try to look love and courage into his eyes. An answering grip of the hand and the wonderful eyes spoke gratitude, love and courage better than words could have done it. The next Wednesday night John was there, and at the first opportunity on his knees again trying to pray. He was there every Wednesday night, the first to pray. Presently his words could be distinguished; simple prayers like a child's, but also like a man's, full of intensest devotion, resolution, fire of purpose, with humility, trust, practicality. He never failed to be present and to pray, and he never failed of a petition for foreign missions. Dr. A. W. Halsey, secretary of our Board of Foreign Missions, began his article about John in *The Assembly Herald* with these words: "The mission cause never had a better friend than the editor of *The New York Observer*, whose sudden death on August 26, 1911, brought sorrow to many hearts in many lands." It began in that little prayer meeting at the Center. It was favorable soil for such devotion. The little church had sent fully a dozen of its young men to Hamilton College, only four miles away, over the hills, and through Auburn Seminary into the ministry, two of them later going to Chile as missionaries under our foreign board,

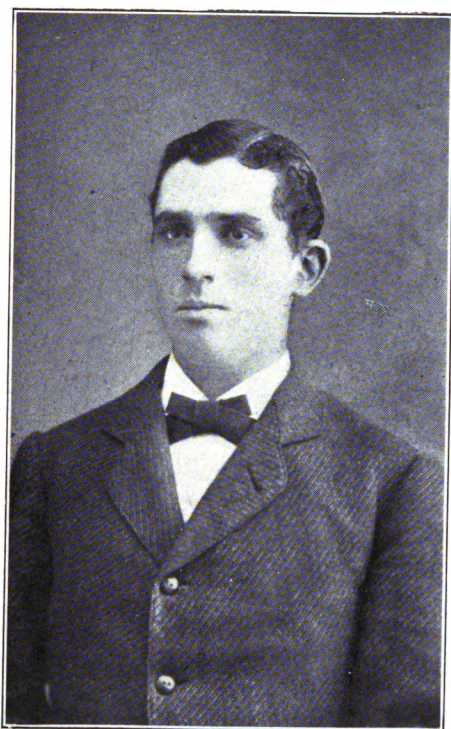
I have never known anyone between whose intellectual convictions and daily conduct there was closer connection than was the case with John, always. He attended unfailingly every church service or other function, in every one doing what he could to help. He did not attend them for social pleasure, for he seldom attended merely social gatherings. He was too serious, felt his handicaps too keenly, was too intent on getting religion and education, to take time for mere pleasure; and he was too shy in social groups to seek them for pleasure. But he felt that as a follower of Christ, as a member of the church into which he was received and baptized at the first communion, it was his business to take part in every phase of the church's life, and he did it. That spirit characterized all his later relations in life. He was absolutely faithful and consecrated. He accepted no position on board, committee, directorate, and no title or degree, as a merited honor, but always as an added responsibility, an opportunity for earnest service, another call upon the great love and devotion of his heart, brain and hands. His religion was not merely the most important thing in his character and life; it permeated, colored, shaped, glorified every ounce, atom and ion of him. It was no fire insurance against

eternal damnation, such as when one tries to get the largest possible amount of assurance against loss and damage by fire for the smallest possible premium payments. It was union of mind, heart and life with the Lord Jesus Christ, blood brotherhood with Him; the past forgiven and the future safe, the present full of glorious possibilities of fellowship, service, growth, gladness, life and life more abundantly. Constant companionship with such a soul was more educational and more heartening to the young parson than all his theological years had been. Has anyone ever kept close to John for any length of time without a similar experience? "There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The same came for a witness to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. . . . He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a time to rejoice in his light."

CHAPTER III

GETTING EDUCATION

“Getting Education Into Him” would have to be the title of this chapter in the life of the ordinary boy. When Sidis Boris methods become general perhaps boys will try to get education instead of requiring that it be coaxed, wheedled, argued, scolded and pounded into them; but at present the boy who sets out for himself to get education is extraordinary. He gets it. Hence, however it may have seemed to John, it was really of slight importance to him that the young minister was present to lend a hand in the matter: John would have got education all the same some other way; but it was of immense importance to the young minister that the great privilege fell to him. School was out of the question; neither of them had money for it. Nor was regular recitation possible; John’s time was his employer’s and the minister’s was everybody’s. But the small well selected library was there, and books were chosen for John to read as he could, then to be talked over between them as opportunity offered. John read slowly at



John at the Age of 19.

first, handicapped by inexperience as well as by lack of knowledge. But he read doggedly. He never slept many hours a night, but he slept soundly. He did thoroughly everything that he undertook. He read every spare minute; mornings, noons, nights; driving to the nine-mile distant railroad station; many hours on Sundays, and in those multitudinous odd times when most boys do anything else but read. In discussing what he read he soon shook off his first embarrassment of poverty of information and began to ask questions going down to the roots of things and up to their tendencies.

Autumn brought to the Center a young man from a nearby town, gifted with ambition and a little schooling, who had acquired, by pushing his hair up and back, a noble brow, and a manner of oppressive dignity. He opened in the enlarged basement of our church a private school where, at small charges, our youth could get education supposedly better and loftier than the district school afforded. John arranged to do chores for his employer during the winter for his board and put his savings into a few books and tuition in the private school. Probably fifteen or twenty subjects were taught in the school — and John took them. The quality of the teaching may be judged from this:

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The teacher engaged the young minister to give him lessons in beginning Latin five days a week before breakfast; and it was considerably later that the minister learned that these lessons were given an hour later to pupils in the school, and when the minister was absent at Presbytery or the like, the Latin class was excused that day, of course with no reference to the minister's absence. John took everything except the Latin, which began late in the term. He bought with his own money candles for study in the night. He attacked each subject as if it were the one lion in his path of education. What horrors of discouragement he met in that first climbing of the rugged path to knowledge! But he was never discouraged for a moment; difficulty meant to him only harder fighting. "Let courage rise with danger, and strength to strength oppose"; he liked to sing that; he lived it daily. He came out of that winter a man. All he learned from books and teacher was little compared with the education he got from the struggle itself; the really vital part of education for life, and the part that the ordinary boy never gets at all.

Three years after John came to the Center the young minister removed from Vernon Center to enter a pastorate in New Jersey. He had always known from John's prayers

that he wanted to be a foreign missionary, but had never spoken of it to John. He never tried to force John's confidence on any subject, or to give him unasked advice; and their growing friendship was thus kept on a basis of comradeship; and why use "come on" methods with one whom the Spirit of God was clearly leading better than a man could do it? But now John opened his heart on the subject. For once, he was discouraged. He had hoped, but he saw no way to get all the vast education his felt ignorance told him he needed, and he spoke of missionarying only as of a dream broken, an illusion dispelled. The minister, of course, could open vistas of hope to him. It was arranged that a school should be found where John could work his way, wholly or in part, until the minister got settled down somewhere and the minister's wife could invite John to become a member of their family. In the fall of 1876 accordingly he entered Whitestown Academy, a very fine school at Utica. Here he worked at gardening, care of horse and cow, sweeping out, sawing and splitting wood and building fires, and the like, at twelve and one-half cents an hour during the school year. He had to borrow some money on his personal notes, and he found no trouble in doing so; who that ever knew him

well could ever entertain a doubt as to either his honesty or his ability to repay? But such easy money never led him to relax an atom of his rigid economy. Money in his pocket stayed there, in spite of all the temptations that usually evaporate it out of boys' pockets, until the sternest necessity brought it out.

John stood fairly in his classes that year. But he had no decent preparation for the work; time and strength were poured out for twelve and one-half cents an hour to keep him along, and he took nearly twice as many studies as others attempted. When the summer vacation came, John had covered, in a term or so of rural district school years before, in the winter private school at the Center and the one year at Whitestown Academy, and in his solitary reading helped a little by the young minister, the education that is usually acquired, with far less thoroughness and usefulness, in the eight grades of the common school. And he had secured the real education which knits character, gives it will and strength, endurance and power. He was now ready to accept the young minister's invitation to his home in New Jersey.

CHAPTER IV

LOOKING BACKWARD

While John is taking his brief but momentous journey from the country to the metropolis, we shall find extraordinary interest in looking backward over his life to note some things which he has recorded. Quotation marks, unless otherwise indicated, enclose his own words.

He was born in New York City, September 26, 1856. "About my parentage and early life the little I have been able to learn is contained in the records of the Home for the Friendless. My father, John Devins, was Irish Catholic, as was my mother, Ann Mahan, before her marriage. My father disappeared six months after their marriage and had not been heard from since by his wife in 1859. My mother was then in service at 10 Washington Place, which was then the home of Commodore Vanderbilt. About a year after my birth, a French woman, Mrs. Marie, a widow and a Catholic, adopted me. Two years later, in April 1859, my mother and Mrs. Marie legally surrendered me to the Home for the Friendless, parting with me, the record of the Home

says, with great affection and many tears. After diligent use of every means of search I have been unable to learn anything more regarding my parents, their connections, or Mrs. Marie. Just three months after entering the Home, I was, on July 26, 1859, 'dismissed to the parental care' of Mr. and Mrs. Pachman, of Oneida County, New York. My memory does not go back of that summer morning when I was carried by Mr. Pachman, my foster-father, from the depot to his home. On receipt of constant good reports from the foster parents I was legally indentured to them on April 26, 1860." The foster parents were plain farming people in humble circumstances. They loved John. The mother was always kind to him, the father kind in his rough way in the earlier years.

"I was sent to school before I was five years old. I grew tired and devised every possible means of running away from school. To cure me of the habit, one day when I reached home father placed me under a large hogshead and sat on it until I promised never to play truant again. I remained in my not uncomfortable quarters for an hour and after due deliberation decided to go to school, and from that time gave no further trouble in that respect. My education, thus happily

begun, was doomed by force of circumstances to be interrupted." When John once told this story someone remarked, "I suppose your father sat on the hogshead and read his paper." John replied, "No, he could not read." The family became poor and poorer. The farm was sold and the proceeds quickly spent. The farmer became a laborer; his temper, manners and language deteriorated. Before John was six years old, they intoxicated him with brandy prescribed for his father's illness, and enjoyed the result. This set his heart firmly against alcohol and against his father's violent ways and language, and against his political party! Between his sixth and twelfth years things happened that both showed and shaped his remarkable character.

The family were once dispossessed for non-payment of rent. John knew the sheriff was coming, locked the door and stood before it with the key in his pocket. When the sheriff came John told him that the family needed the house and that if he wanted the key to put them out he must get it if he could. The sheriff left and the family remained. The little lad was early put to work and thenceforth contributed largely to the support of the family until he left home at seventeen years of age. He

did chores for neighbors, sometimes for his board, that he might attend school in the winter. He broke colts, worked as a farm hand in a lumber yard, in a tannery. For three months he worked in a saw mill; the owner failed, owing John forty-five dollars and leaving him in debt for his board. "My entire wardrobe one summer for work, church, visiting, etc., was one straw hat, one jean frock and one pair of jean overalls — nothing else." He was such a forlorn looking boy that some of the older boys kept harassing him. He stood it for a long time, then seized the biggest bully and held his head under the pump and gave him a good drenching. After that he was highly respected.

One winter, to get time for school, he rose at three o'clock in the morning, ate a scanty cold breakfast and did the chores at his own home; walked more than a mile to clean a neighbor's stable, curry the horses and milk the cows; repeated this for a third family farther on, and reached school before nine o'clock. Long before that the memory of his breakfast had vanished and he was ravenously hungry and ate up his luncheon. At noon this sturdy boy, doing the work of three men — he did the work of at least five men during his manhood years — says he would have starved had not his fellow schoolmates

given generously of their nuts and apples. Evidently he was the John we knew in later years and to the end; for anyone who knew him well would have been happy to make any sacrifice for him if his independence would accept it. "I went to the village store nights and began to smoke there." A man whom he respected spoke to him about it one night. "I threw away the cigar that I had lighted and have never wanted one since."

In 1872, being sixteen years old, he told his foster-father that he must have an education; that they were well and strong and able to support themselves; that he would work there one year more and give them all that he earned; and after that start out for himself. He carried out his program, as he always carried out his programs.

The beginning of John's feeling after God and of his religious life are interesting. He went to church and Sunday-school when he was permitted to do so. "When about fourteen years old I learned that the Sabbath should be hallowed. I had many scoldings, not a few oaths and one terrible whipping with a strap because I did not wish to work on Sunday." Two years later a schoolmate said to him, as they walked home from the village store one night, "John, do you know

that the Bible says that if you believe in Jesus and confess Him here, He will confess you before the angels when you die?" John said that he had never heard of such a thing in the Bible. Will replied, "Well, it is there, and if you want to enter heaven you must confess Christ before you die." John instantly decided that he would confess Christ when occasion offered. At the meetings during the week of prayer he went forward one night for prayer and spoke a few times. "But," he says, "I had no religious education except that God was angry with wicked boys every day and that a very wicked boy was buttoned up in John's jacket — when he had one. Of Jesus and His love for me I knew absolutely nothing."

An incident decisive in the formation of John's character had occurred a few days before this. He was doing chores for his board during the winter of 1872-73, and was attending a private school with four other pupils. On New Year's day the family went visiting, leaving John and Will at home. The boys in a playful scuffle spilled the contents of an ink bottle on the carpet. They made the stain worse by trying to rub it out, and had guilty and heavy hearts in the school room the next day. The teacher said, "John, I would like to see you a moment be-

fore you go home." His heart sank; but she began the interview by asking what he was going to make of himself, and in the course of the talk urged him to go to college and to fit himself for the ministry or some other profession to make his life the most valuable possible for God and the world. She never spoke of the stained carpet. Thenceforth John dreamed of college.

That teacher was a graduate of Mt. Holyoke, where she was a classmate of the lady whom John later married. She became a medical missionary in China and Japan, Adeline D. H. Kelsey, now living in Westdale, New York. She writes in part as follows: "A child of ten years, I was looking for the little boy who had been brought to the next farm from the Home for the Friendless in New York. There he sat on the gate post, a chubby, sturdy little fellow with short, tight curls all over his head. The lady who brought John said she never felt so badly at leaving a child as she felt at leaving John in such surroundings. His foster parents were not proper people to have the care of an immortal little being. At fifteen when I taught him, he was an uncouth, unmannerly, and unattractive boy, having been brought up in an unmoral home with no advantages. He had not sufficient

clothing to be clean or comfortable. But his whole nature responded to a good thought as soon as it was presented. I had a Christmas tree for my pupils, a most simple affair. My little nieces, in white and wearing evergreen wreaths, distributed the poor little gifts. John received a little present. Twenty years after that, John told me that Christmas eve was to him like a foretaste of heaven; he had never dreamed of anything so lovely, and his soul responded and expanded. I next heard from him when I was in China, a most astonishing letter that filled my heart with humble thanksgiving that I had been an instrument to help such a soul. He said that whatever success in life he might be able to accomplish he would owe to me, under God, for the words spoken after the incident of the ink bottle."

The innate nobility of soul of our dear friend showed in his treatment of his foster parents. He earned money for them from his childhood by the hardest toil. As soon as he had anything to spare after leaving them, he sent it to them. When his foster-father died, John met all the expense of doctor and undertaker. He supported his foster-mother until she married again, and honored her by attending her funeral. During all my life and experiences with men and

women of all classes and many races, I have never met with one human being that so quickly responded to every higher impulse, as though his very soul were hungry for goodness and righteousness, as our friend John B. Devins.

It was in the spring following the incident of the ink bottle, in March, 1873, that John left his home and went to Vernon Center.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST DAY IN NEW YORK

Very early on an October morning in 1876 I met Mr. Devins at the Erie Railroad station in Jersey City. His appearance was not attractive to a casual glance. His abundant hair, not cut in New York style, hung about a sunburned and freckled face. His clothes of the cheapest sort were much worn and had no fit. He carried in one hand an immense old-fashioned enameled cloth satchel, worn white at innumerable cracks and collapsed, except for a few things in the bottom of it; and in the other hand the traditional faded green cotton umbrella with great bulging whalebone ribs. But to anyone who knew him and to discerning eyes such as two that looked upon him that afternoon, as we shall see, he was a hero and a youth moving forward into a great career. After breakfast I told him that we could spend the day as he pleased and asked him where he would like to go. "Central Park," he said. He always knew his own mind instantly and could speak it in few words. After Central Park and lunch, asked

where he would spend the afternoon, he replied instantly, "Home for the Friendless." We went in by the Thirtieth Street entrance to the home, which extended through from Twenty-ninth Street, where the Martha Washington Hotel now stands. A young lady, sitting at her desk in the reception room, came forward to ask what she could do for us. Seven years later Mr. Devins married her. Hers were immortal eyes; indescribable as Mr. Devins', they saw through the shabby appearance of the young man to the great mind and heart of him.

She was the widow of the Rev. Thornton B. Penfield, who had written on a piece of paper when ten years old, "Dr. Scudder asked me to be a missionary and to go to India and help him, and I intend to," and signed his name. He worked his way through college, and the young married couple went to the Madura mission in southern India, only seven degrees north of the equator.

There they passed through a cholera epidemic, forty-eight miles from the central station and a doctor. Feeling that this was their opportunity to gain the people's confidence by showing sympathy and readiness to aid them, they threw themselves into the work. Mr. Penfield had a slight attack of

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cholera and never recovered from the effects, dying one year later. Three hours before he died their third child was born, dying three months later. Then Mrs. Penfield came home with a son of four and a daughter of two years. They lived in Montclair with her father, Joel Miller Hubbard, who, by the way, had effected the purchase, for the ladies of the Home for the Friendless, of the land on which the Twenty-ninth Street building stood. His wife, Mrs. Penfield's mother, was one of the corporate members of the American Female Guardian Society and Home for the Friendless, and had been on the executive committee and was corresponding secretary for years.

Mrs. S. R. I. Bennett was secretary at the time we called and Mrs. Penfield was assistant secretary. Her parents cared for her little ones so that she could go into the city for daily service in her office. She already knew all about Mr. Devins, for she had written letters to him and about him and was deeply interested in him, as anyone must be who knew his story. Her first personal letter to him signed by herself had been written from the Home at Mrs. Bennett's request a few weeks before. That letter, which lies before me, had brave golden words in it, fitted to fill Mr. Devins' heart with even

stronger desire to be a missionary, with even greater courage and faith for the years before him and with a holy admiration for the woman who could write it. I had also corresponded with Mrs. Penfield about Mr. Devins and had talked with her about him. We were therefore like three old friends.

Mrs. Penfield showed us over the Home. I can see Mr. Devins' face to-day as I saw it then. As he looked upon the little children studying and playing, and thought how he had been one of them seventeen years before, the tears rolled down his cheeks unknown to him and he walked as in a dream. His love for the organization which had sheltered him, though only for three months, which had suffered him to go and remain in a home of poverty and illiteracy, never lessened. He was aware that the extraordinary care which the Society practices in placing its children and always looking after them had been singularly thwarted in its purpose in his case and apparently without anybody's fault or intention. He knew that the letters from his foster parents which had induced the Home to send him to them had been written for them by humble neighbors, as they themselves could not write; and that the statements in those first letters and throughout the official correspondence every year, as

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the Society tried to watch over his welfare, had been truthful from the point of view of those who wrote them, though greatly misleading when interpreted from the point of view of people in higher social and financial position. He understood that it was one of those curious cases of unintentional misunderstanding depending upon a conjunction of circumstances, very likely unique, perhaps never to happen again in the history of the Society. He, therefore, and rightly, judged the Society in its relation to him by its tender intentions and faithful watch and care through the years, and not by its extraordinary partial failure to secure for him what it supposed it was effecting.

From this time forward Mr. Devins' relations to the Society and the Home were constant, close and helpful. At the first opportunity to get into New York again he called at the Home, and Mrs. Penfield showed him all the records regarding himself, including copies of all letters about him. He never failed from that time until his death to visit the Home often. He loved to look upon those little orphans and talk with them. His great heart almost burst with tenderness for them. He loved to speak about the Home and its work to others in private and in public. How much he gave to it and how

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much he secured for it through the years no one knows. He was elected a counselor of the Society in 1906. Of course, he instantly assumed all possible responsibility, as he did in every trusteeship, directorate or committee membership that came to him, and always without assumption of authority. He found that a Christian gentleman had offered to give toward the Endowment Fund of this institution the sum of \$20,000, provided an equal amount be raised before April 1, 1909. He would also duplicate, dollar for dollar, any sum to the amount of \$100,000 raised before June 1, 1909. After studying the situation thoroughly Dr. Devins suggested to the counselors that they should become responsible for \$1,000 toward the \$20,000 needed to secure the \$20,000 conditionally offered. The counselors acted upon this suggestion. The late Dr. H. B. Silliman, immediately on Dr. Devins asking him for aid for the purpose, gave him \$9,000. The remaining amount was soon secured, adding \$40,000 to the endowment of the Home; and in a short time a total of \$64,502 was raised, which, duplicated by the generous offerer, increased the endowment by \$129,004.

CHAPTER VI

LIFE IN ELIZABETH, N. J.

Mr. Devins' home in Elizabeth was in the manse of the Third Presbyterian church. The mistress of the manse, who had learned to love and admire him and to call him "Brother John" in Vernon Center, was delighted to receive him into the family and to help him, as an older sister might, to learn such of the conventionalities of society as he happened not to know. He never needed reproof or admonition. His alert eyes forestalled his ears in making acquaintance with such things. A hint at the most was all that was ever required. His love, his devotion, his alert thoughtfulness, his courtesy and helpfulness enriched the life of the manse. The two babies and the passing of one of them to the better home influenced deeply his mind and heart. He met also in that home visitors whom to know was worth while for him. Dr. Everard Kempshall and Dr. W. C. Roberts, pastors of the First and Westminster churches in Elizabeth, Dr. John Hall, Dr. A. F. Schaufler, Mr. Edward Kimball, and many others, were guests there.



Little Mattie Ray and "Uncle My Don."
(This picture of Mr. Devins is taken from an old and
much prized tintype)

Mr. and Mrs. George Muller, of England and of "The Kingdom of Answered Prayer," were entertained there for a week, and not a few home and foreign missionaries.

The Rev. John F. Pingry, D.D., of holy and happy memory, received Mr. Devins into his notable preparatory school, limited to one hundred boys, and made it possible for him to earn his tuition and most of his school books by janitor and other service; but this kindness, great as it was, was not to be compared with the warm friendship that the blessed doctor bestowed upon him.

Mr. Devins' church relations in Elizabeth strongly influenced his character. Had he been a member of either the First or Second or Westminster church he might have gone through his educational course into the ministry in parlor-car style; for those churches had wealth in a worldly as well as a heavenly sense, and would have admired and helped him without limit. The Third Church had no worldly wealth, little style and but one college graduate in its pews; but it had heavenly wealth in extraordinary measure. It was a church chiefly of young people beginning to make their way in the world, and making their way toward higher things at a rare rate of advance. They were devoted students of the Bible, devoted workers in the

vineyard of their Lord, and most self-sacrificing givers to it; that small church carried on three missions in different portions of Elizabeth. Fellowship in work and worship, in thought and prayer, with such a company of people, with whose spirit he was in such absolute sympathy, was invaluable to him. Those people recognized his worth and loveliness. Almost every organization in the church contributed what it could to make his home in the manse possible and to meet his simple necessities. Words cannot tell how it irked him to receive "charity." He would a thousand times rather have declined any help; but so compelling was the heavenly call to foreign mission work that he forced himself to bear that cross of "charity" for two years longer. Then he threw it off, as we shall see later, and at the earliest possible moment repaid everybody who had helped him with money, an overestimated amount with interest up to the date of payment.

He always attended every church meeting of every kind; on Sunday the young men's meeting before service, the regular service and the Sunday-school, where he soon had a class of boys; in the afternoon he taught in the Sunday-school of the Third Avenue Mission, called upon the parents of his scholars and others and attended the evening meet-

ing at the mission, in which he at once began to speak and then regularly preached until he left Elizabeth. Every week he attended the church and Third Avenue Mission prayer meetings, the teachers' training class and everything that was going on in the church. Every vacation he worked at Ocean Grove, where the family had a summer cottage, one summer having charge of the ice business there. There he was a universal friend and favorite. In the surf he was the strongest and kindest of helpers to women and children, giving his attention not only to his friends, but to anybody who needed help — and among the many thousands who picnicked there constantly there were plenty who were steadied, or picked up, or helped in or out by his strong arm, or encouraged or soothed by his rich voice. He loved especially to forget everything else in the world in looking after the "kiddies," although they were not called by that title at that time.

He lived on the run. *The Commercial Advertiser* of New York published the following paragraph in 1901: "An interesting story is told in connection with the bestowal by Center College, Kentucky, of the degree of doctor of divinity on the Rev. John Bancroft Devins, of *The Observer*. It seems that when Dr. Devins was a schoolboy he

used to pass several times a day the house of the Rev. Dr. William C. Roberts, now president of Center College. The young student always went with a rush. Dr. Roberts, observing young Devins daily, finally inquired who he was, and remarked: 'We'll hear from that boy one of these days.' The eminent divine kept his eyes on the diligent lad in his after career, and last week had the pleasure of conferring the highest honors of the college on him." If one cared to imagine Mr. Devins' occupations and activities in Elizabeth, adding to those already listed the studying he did to be prepared to enter college with less than two school years of actual work, and his constant doing of time-taking courtesies and kindnesses for everybody, one would not be surprised that he broke down. The doctor sent him off in midwinter to chop down trees and then to chop them up in his old home, and in the spring to go into farm work for some months. John was impatient through it all. There are two kinds of impatience. One is that of the little, unreasonable mind; the other, temperamental, psychologists tell us, is one of the notes of a strong character which feels compelled to be doing things and doing them now. It required some argument and appeal to his highest ideals to hold him away

from books all that time; but he had that sublime patience, the patience of an impatient man ruling his own spirit, that is great. He came back from the woods and farm with reinforced vitality that never failed him again until near the end.

CHAPTER VII

THE UNIVERSITY

Mr. Devins entered the Freshman class of New York University in the fall of 1878, going in five or six days a week from Elizabeth. In a few weeks he announced that he would henceforth live in New York and would accept no more gifts of money from us or from anyone. He said he was sure that if his Master desired him to be a foreign missionary he would help him to work his own way and to pay back all that he had so far received in charity. He must have had very little money in his pocket, but he declined to accept more. He rented an unfurnished room on West Ninth Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues; and this room, his chosen home for some years, is worth describing. In the attic of the four-story and basement house the only window was a small skylight in the center of the flat roof, which could be opened and closed by a cord hanging down. The room, three or four yards square, had rough board walls running from the floor to the roof and covered with wall paper. Mr. Devins fur-

nished it with a cot and bedding, a small table, a chair and a lamp, all from a second hand store, and his trunk. His only outlook from the room was to the stars, to which he hitched his wagon. Here I usually saw him on Mondays when I went over to Ministers' Meeting. He never talked much about himself and I never asked many questions. On one of the first Mondays he told me that he had written to Mr. Whitelaw Reid of *The Tribune*, stating his position and his desire to get into newspaper work for self-support while going through the university. Mr. Reid replied with a note making an appointment at his office. There, after a little talk, Mr. Reid introduced him to the city editor-in-chief, asking that he be given work. He was told to send in local news and he would receive at the rate of six dollars a column for as much of it as should be printed. That was his means of support until the next midsummer. He had had a trifle of experience in reporting in Elizabeth, sending *The Elizabeth Journal* frequent reports of my sermons. He took notes during the preaching and corrected them after church by my manuscript of the sermon. That was excellent training so far as it went; for he resolutely pursued that course instead of using the manuscript without previous

notes of his own, as most busy young men would have done — a strong indication of a great personality. He sent *The Tribune* such daily items as he could pick up at the university and elsewhere, and some of them were printed. He thus earned sixty dollars in the first seven or eight months, and he kept his expenses within his income.

A characteristic and decisive event occurred early in his experience as a reporter. One Monday morning he showed me a scribbled note from his chief, the paper bearing also a paragraph clipped from *The Tribune* and pasted on. The paragraph referred to a new conservatory of music. The scribbling said that there was no such conservatory, and that accuracy was expected of reporters. I said that was rather rough. He replied: "It is rather rough on the editor! There is such a new conservatory. I shall interview the president of it after classes to-day and have a column about it in *The Tribune* to-morrow morning." He found the conservatory in a new handsome building uptown, having a corps of forty professors, one of them being Mr. Theodore Thomas. He showed the editor's letter to the president and said: "If you will show me over the building, give me your printed matter and talk to me about the conserva-

tory I will have a column about it in *The Tribune* to-morrow."

When they returned to the office the president said: "Shall you really have a column about us in *The Tribune*?" "Yes." "Well, that will be worth a great deal to us." "I am not doing it for you, but for myself; I want to get right with the city editor and I want the six dollars." The president wrote at his desk a minute and handed Mr. Devins an order for anyone whose name should be written in by Mr. Devins to take the courses of the conservatory free. He was warmly thanked, the order was handed back to him, and he was told that Mr. Devins expected to support himself by reporting for a few years and had decided that he must accept no gifts from those about whom he wrote. Mr. Devins went away and the president put on his hat and went to see his friend, Mr. Whitelaw Reid, to tell him the story. When Mr. Devins reached *The Tribune* office that evening he was told that they had given him a regular assignment on the staff.

He made most of his living, such as it was, in this way for three years. He borrowed on his personal notes from some of those well-known New York givers who were accustomed to make such advances to students

in whom they believed. He repaid these loans a few years later with interest. The pleased and commendatory letters of the givers acknowledging payments are before me. The givers were his staunch friends as long as they or he lived. The little-schooled, tremendously-overworked young student could not wholly satisfy the editor-in-chief. Mr. Devins wrote him in the following April asking an appointment as reporter during the summer vacation. The editor's reply lies before me. It is exceedingly kind with the kindness of a tender parent who takes his boy and a strap out to the woodshed. Their staff is over-full. Even if it were not, Mr. Devins could not be engaged, for his style is crude and rough and careless. He has not the qualities for success in journalism — all written with sincere regret that it must be so. Mr. Devins interviewed him at once. He was inexorable, said that it was a pity to spoil a good mechanic or farmer to make a poor literary man — it was a sheer waste of time.

Mr. Devins was depressed but not daunted. He secured files of *The Tribune* and for two months made such a desperately concentrated thorough study of them as few other men could have made even if they had nothing else to do. Then he wrote

to the city editor-in-chief again, thanking him for his affectionate chastisement by which he had profited greatly, stating that he had tried to improve himself — but not telling of his study of *The Tribune* columns — and begging the privilege of reporting the approaching commencement exercises of New York University. The editor summoned him to the office, seemed amazed at his temerity, really taken off his feet. He asked him if he had a dress suit. Of course the poor fellow had none. But the editor assigned him the Baccalaureate sermon and some part in all the other exercises of the week, and in a few weeks placed him permanently on the reportorial staff at a salary of a thousand dollars a year.

CHAPTER VIII

THE "TRIBUNE"

Mr. Devins rapidly grew in favor with *The Tribune*. Letters from the city editor-in-chief, running through the years, show that Mr. Devins was increasingly given assignments of especial importance, delicacy, difficulty and urgency, and those on which other reporters "fell down." At the time of the Yorktown centennial celebration, in October, 1881, the French government sent the Marquis de Rochambeau, a descendant of Lafayette, at the head of a notable delegation, with suitable retinue, to represent that country. *The Tribune* detailed Mr. Devins to go down the bay with a tugboat to welcome the delegation; and also to accompany them during their stay in this country, reporting daily to *The Tribune* by mail and telegraph. The Marquis and his wife became exceedingly fond of Mr. Devins. They were appalled that a young man of such extraordinary gifts and character should have to throw so much time and energy into work for food and clothes, and they besought him to return to Paris with them and live in their family as

their son until his education should be finished. They were not singular in that kind desire. His professors in university and theological seminary constantly urged him to accept assistance to free him from outside work; their expressions in letters now before me are exceedingly kind and emphatic. At least four distinguished clergymen, Dr. Howard Crosby, Dr. John Hall, Dr. William M. Paxton and Dr. Charles S. Robinson, besides not a few laymen and women desired him to live in their homes and accept their assistance until ready for the ministry, but none of these things moved him.

The Tribune sent him as its representative to Saratoga in 1883 to report the General Assembly every day by post and wire. Toward the close of the Assembly Dr. Howard Crosby wrote a letter to Mr. Whitelaw Reid of *The Tribune*, thanking him that for the first time a newspaper had sent a reporter to an Assembly not in its own city, and for the conspicuous fullness, fairness and uniform high excellence of the reports. Dr. Crosby secured the willing signatures of all leading ministers and laymen of the Assembly to this letter. Thenceforth Mr. Devins attended and reported every Assembly excepting that of 1909 at Denver, twenty-eight in all. He reported them not

only for *The Tribune*, but also for such papers as the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Record-Herald*, *Indianapolis Journal*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Springfield Republican*, *Toledo Blade*, *Cincinnati Gazette*, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, *Omaha Bee*, and others, as well as for many religious weeklies of various denominations. He usually took stenographers and typewriters with him and employed others locally. I was often awed when I watched him at night at the Assemblies, handling easily his masses of carbon copies of reports and addresses, the minutes of the clerks and his own notes, dictating as many as seven different reports for different papers at the same time, each giving just the sort of news and at the length that paper wanted, all admirable. Sometimes he reported for several papers in the same city — three once in Chicago, I remember — no two of the reports resembling each other. In his many reports for secular and religious papers during the long excessive heats of the Briggs and Smith controversies, extreme partisans of either side accused him of unfairness as against their side; but fair-minded men of all parties took pains to express to him their warm approval of his work.

When Mr. Devins was regularly placed

on *The Tribune* reportorial staff at a salary of \$1,000, he became a favorite with everybody in the office; but he never wasted time there. He asked permission to fill in spare minutes editing copy, and that he did for some time without additional pay. This hard-driven theological student by that time married, and having two step-children to support, apparently could not find enough to do. Result; a break-down? Not at all: a going up. A vacancy occurring, he was appointed night editor, being the only man who had fitted himself for the place; and that position he held as long as he remained with *The Tribune*. He studied by day and worked at *The Tribune* office at night. He reached home from the office between two and three o'clock in the morning and slept until ten. Then Mrs. Devins awakened him, gave him his breakfast and said good-by as he rushed up to Union Seminary to study and recite there until six o'clock. Mrs. Devins met him there and then dined with him at a restaurant, accompanied him to *The Tribune* office — about the only time they had for visiting — and went home alone while he took up his night work. So the years went by.

During his services as a reporter he was assigned to all notable Sunday services and

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had charge of everything pertaining to ecclesiastical matters, charities and corrections and the public parks. For many years he filled the weekly column, "What a Pastor Sees and Hears," in *The Tribune*. He also wrote innumerable sketches and lives of prominent people, either for immediate use or for burial in the office "graveyard," whence they were resurrected for memorial or other exigencies. He became acquainted with practically all people in New York best worth knowing; a knowledge of great value when he later became editor of *The Observer*. As an incidental and valuable result of his newspaper experience he was able to guide his step-son in working his passage over the wide and stormy sea of university and seminary education.

CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE AND SEMINARY

As already related in these reminiscences, when Mr. Devins called at the Home for the Friendless on the first day in New York, he was received by the Assistant Secretary, Mrs. Charlotte E. Penfield, who, after the death of her husband, the Rev. Thornton B. Penfield, at their foreign mission station in India, had returned with her two little children to the home of her parents in Montclair. Whenever he was in New York he called at the Home where it was Mrs. Penfield's duty to receive him. After he entered New York University and went to live in New York City, he often dropped in at the Home, usually with a bit of news concerning his affairs. He attended every public reception and always loved an opportunity to see the children and speak to them and with them. If Mrs. Penfield was not at hand when he called, she was sent for, as the ladies seemed to place the responsibility of his entertainment on her. She soon found how helpful he was, always to be relied upon to do what was needful. At a meeting of the executive

committee a legal question arose and Mrs. Penfield was asked to find out about it. She asked Mr. Devins, a Harvard law student, a full-fledged lawyer, and a business man, and said to the chairman of the committee, "You mark my words, the replies will come in in the order named." And so they did; first Mr. Devins' with the desired information, full, clear and satisfactory; the others following later, but none with sufficient information.

This state of things lasted more than six years; she was "Sister" and he was "Brother," and "Uncle John" to her children. He visited at her home in Montclair. She was the best friend in the world to him and the most helpful. Her lucid mind, college training, wide travel and reading, foreign missionary experiences, bereavements, cares and responsibilities, and her great heart and childlike faith like his, united to make her the one woman in the world for him. Her father died; then her mother. She had a critical illness, pneumonia. Mr. Devins was full of sympathy, distress, devotion and helpfulness. They read their own hearts truly then, and each other's. They were married on October 18, 1883.

Mr. Devins then took up again his interrupted course in Union Theological Seminary

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and carried it to completion, meantime acting also as night editor on *The Tribune* staff. He was constantly busy with an extraordinary activity and success. He was restless and impatient, not with a nervous fussy habit but with intense desire to repay all who had ever given him financial help, and to get quickly into some mission field. He was constantly thinking out plans to shorten his course at one point or another and constantly, after consideration, continuing in the usual theological course and doing two or three men's work in addition for *The Tribune*, for the Fresh Air Work, and giving a hand to help over the stile every lame dog he came across. The inexhaustible love of his great heart, fed by the love of God within him, a well of water springing up into everlasting life, flowed abundantly, refreshingly, enrichingly, to every human heart he touched or heard of. He had a terrible time with Hebrew. He wanted to be excused from it, but the Seminary faculty would not excuse him. Was he incapable of conquering Hebrew? Remember the enormous work he was doing outside of the Seminary. When the faculty gave their ultimatum,—Hebrew or quit,—he took hold of Hebrew with both hands and all his heart and in a short time passed a successful examination.

Mr. Devins took his theology from Doctor Howard Crosby, and I doubt if it was modified — only filled out — during his seminary course or in later years. He understood it and the arguments for it, and stored it up in his mind as a standard by which to test all theological views that might afterwards come to his notice. Remember that he had no time as other seminary students had to discuss the work of the class-room. I doubt if he ever re-opened theological questions after that. He sincerely received and adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith as a summary of scriptural teaching. But his actual working creed was very brief. He lived by faith in the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him, that giving being constant every moment. He became as a little child and saw the kingdom of heaven, and entered more wholly into it year by year to the last. The time and thought and nervous energy that most of us ministers give to vexed questions of theology, he poured during every waking moment into devout Christ-like service to every person and every cause that he could help. He found in unremitting, self-denying work for the poor and the humble, an infinitely higher satisfaction than men ever gain from their restless wonderings and wanderings in theo-

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logical fields. He lived a life of prayer. I do not know that he ever "agonized in prayer," but the presence, love and goodness of God were as simply and naturally real and vital to him as were each day's supply of atmosphere, food and opportunity, and each night's rest.

Possibly these facts sufficiently account for his tolerance. It began early and increased to the last. He judged no one, hated no one, opposed no one, on account of theological differences. He applied to preachers the only test which his Lord said should be applied to them: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Where Mr. Devins saw the Christ-like spirit and Christ-like labors, he ignored creedal differences. He held his own theological views with that invincible tenacity which was an element of his greatness, but he never made them a test of fellowship. Service for God and men was his test. He did not like theological discussion; he saw no use in it. He loved and worked; that was sufficient.

It seemed part of his character that while his ethical standards were very high and his ethical judgments exceedingly severe, and he hated, loathed and abhorred sin and every sin, in regarding each individual sinner he was the most forgiving, helpful and hopeful man I have ever met,

CHAPTER X

HOPE CHAPEL

Graduating from Union Theological Seminary in 1887, several considerations forbade Mr. Devins' going to a foreign mission field. Opportunities of service in different states were offered him, but his heart drew him with irresistible attraction to the region where he had been born, to a life-work among the teeming multitudes of the lower East Side of New York, and there he lived during all but the last year or two of his life. He became pastor of Hope Chapel in East Fourth Street near Avenue D in December, 1888. The chapel work was carried on, as it had been for many years, by the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church of which Dr. Howard Crosby was pastor and Mr. Devins had been a member more than four years. What the ministers of New York thought of him may be seen in the fact that Dr. R. S. MacArthur of Calvary Baptist Church preached the sermon, Dr. Henry Van Dyke of the Brick Church gave the charge to the people and Dr. Crosby gave the charge to the pastor. Doctor Crosby's charge began



Mr. Devins at 32.

with the following paragraph: "It is with more than ordinary emotion that I perform this duty to-night. I have known you for many years; you have struggled against heavy odds at times; you have been in positions when nothing but a courageous heart could have carried you through. You have been a faithful man, never afraid of toil, and always looking forward to your ministerial experience which begins to-night. You have not only excited my admiration, but the tenderest emotions of love. Hence it is that I take such a high pleasure in welcoming you to this pulpit."

Mr. Devins and his family occupied the upper floor of the chapel building, erected for the Dry Dock Savings Bank and occupied by the bank until it removed to the Bowery, when the Fourth Avenue Church purchased it for its mission. There was a constant stream of callers on business or pleasure bent, for a thousand families whom Mr. Devins reckoned in his pastorate had many needs for help; and while the rooms were not attractive, Mr. and Mrs. Devins were, and their friends were willing to climb innumerable stairs to find them. Mr. Devins' activities in the Hope Chapel work and for that vast East Side population were extraordinary. A mere catalogue of them would be wearisome.

It is safe to say that no form or method of mission work practiced among such a population was not thoroughly studied by him and put into operation if it had been proved successful; and that he originated and brought to success not a few additional methods of serving such populations.

Notes for his first report to the Fourth Avenue Church after five months of service mentioned five hundred pastoral calls; two sermons, Sunday-school and prayer meeting on Sundays; week day evening meetings; cottage prayer meetings; the Penny Bank with over four hundred depositors averaging \$1.00 each; administration of the Deacon's Fund; collection and distributing of clothing and furniture; "Blind Jennie's" classes of children; sewing school; fresh-air work for the children; building up the music fund; Christian Endeavor Society, and efforts to bring the chapel to self-support. That was just a beginning. I shall speak only of some of the more remarkable things incident to his pastorate.

In the terrible winter of 1893-4 when the out-of-works were innumerable and the suffering intense, Mr. Devins threw himself and was thrown into the work of relief. He suggested to the New York Presbytery that a committee be appointed to secure funds

sufficient to enable the Presbyterian churches of the city to take entire charge of their own poor and to give as much as possible to the rest of the city's poor. His final report as secretary of that committee said that every call for aid from every church and mission had been met; and that no Presbyterian had appealed for aid to any charitable organization.

The mayor, who had great confidence in Mr. Devins, appointed him to administer the "Mayor's Fund" for his portion of the city. During seventeen weeks, 7,000 men applied for work at the chapel and more than \$40,000 was disbursed to them. None of it was given. They earned it. Nobody was pauperized. Five hundred different men were employed at street sweeping, about one hundred and eighteen each day, leaving their brooms in the chapel yard at night. Two hundred women a week cut out garments in a room of the chapel. Many men were employed in sanitation work in the tenements, kalsomining and whitewashing seven hundred houses, including three thousand rooms, eight hundred halls, five hundred and fifty cellars and two hundred and fifty stables, lofts, areas, et cetera, and cleansing and scrubbing six hundred and fifty houses, twenty-five hundred halls, twenty-two hundred rooms. But

the filthy cellars, yards and areas had to be cleaned out. From those cellars were removed more than four thousand barrels of refuse, one hundred of old bones, fifty-seven of leather shoes, et cetera, forty-four of wet straw, forty-one of excelsior, fifty-seven of old tin and iron, eighteen of broken glass, one hundred and fifty of ashes, and great quantities of dead animals, decomposed rags, garbage, sauerkraut, meat and milk, mattresses, bedding, et cetera. Mr. Devins employed in this work only heads of families. Each one had his dollar at night. Two of the chapel people acted as captains under Mr. Devins' generalship and a few of the laborers were made lieutenants at \$1.25 a day. So shrewd was Mr. Devins' choice of lieutenants that in handling \$40,000 only \$2.50 was unaccounted for, and one of the lieutenants came a few weeks later to return that money saying that he had stolen it but was sorry.

Now the men who did the work were not street sweepers and garbage men. They were clerks and merchants who had received good salaries, but from whom the hard times had taken their occupation, their little bank savings, and one by one their articles of furniture and clothing until they could not provide food for their families. I was visiting Mr. Devins at the time and every morning before

light I saw the brooms, shovels, pails, mops, distributed to the hundreds of men in the streets. Hardly a man had an overcoat or rubbers, few had gloves, evidently most of them had no underclothing, and the cold wind with a mercury far below freezing was very bitter. They were not used to such work and their muscles and hands were tender. There was often blood on their broom handles when they brought them back at night. Those men might all have secured free coal and food from *The Tribune*, free clothing from *The Herald*, and free bread from *The World* or from the city authorities; but they were not paupers and they preferred to do that dreadful work rather than to receive charity. Their manhood was maintained, their self-respect not lowered.

That was Mr. Devins' idea of helping people — helping them to help themselves whenever that was possible, but giving freely when necessity required. The following spring he organized the New York Employment Society. He had watched, as we all had, the failure of the free employment bureaus to accomplish the end desired, so he organized this on a new principle: everyone who applied for work was listed and asked for references, giving his work and his character

during recent years. All references were interviewed or corresponded with. Only men whose record for both good work and trustworthy character was satisfactory were recommended to employers. Seventy-five hundred men applied for work at the office of the Society during the first year. Many of them refused to give references and hotly cursed a bureau that would not find them work without investigating them. They were ready to pay a fee but not to have their records known. No fees were asked of anyone. Mr. Devins would not ask anyone to finance this novel employment bureau until it had proved its value; he carried it for a year at an expense of about two thousand dollars out of his own pocket.

Was it successful? Mr. Devins saw employers, securing the custom of many. For instance, Mr. Wanamaker, when opening his New York store, took men from the bureau as far as possible, as did many others. The son-in-law of Peter Cooper, Mr. Edward R. Hewitt, who was managing Cooper Union, had been for years looking for a practicable free labor bureau idea. He watched this one a year and then Cooper Union took it over, making Mr. Devins a director of the Union and Chairman of its Committee on Free Employment Bureau. This position he

held many years until improved business conditions and advance by other charitable agencies rendered the work of the bureau no longer necessary.

CHAPTER XI

THE HUNGARIAN WIDOW

While Irma Szedmaky was a school girl in Hungary she fell in love with Gustav Szabo Erdelyi, a young and handsome fellow whom all the girls in the town were after. Within a week of their second meeting they were engaged. But she was too good for such a mesalliance; her family was noble and wealthy,—one uncle a bishop, another the first Minister-President of Hungary; she must marry a young Count famous in the Revolution, and he was more than willing. She would not marry where she did not love. So she was immured in a convent whose abbess was a relative. One day a young engineer smiled at her and she returned the smile. They corresponded clandestinely. She escaped from the convent and married him. He died after fifteen years. Meantime Erdelyi married happily, but lost his property and his wife and came to New York where, after working two years as a laborer and then in the office of a Hungarian newspaper, the *Amerikai Nemzetor*, he became its editor and proprietor. When the en-

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gineer died, Erdelyi began correspondence with his former sweetheart who came to New York in 1894 and married him. Erdelyi's health failed and he died after six months. Meantime Mrs. Erdelyi had first helped him to run the paper, then took entire charge, having a considerable staff under her.

Erdelyi had been widely known and loved among Hungarians, and his funeral near Hope Chapel was a wonder. There were several Hungarian bands from New York and other states, and a concourse of thousands of his countrymen and countrywomen. The hour named for the service passed, but no priest appeared. Mrs. Erdelyi asked her husband's closest friend and lawyer, a Hungarian Hebrew, to go for the belated priest. The priest was away from home. Several were visited, the last of whom said that the Archbishop, because Erdelyi had been too liberal-minded, had forbidden any priest to officiate. "Get me a Protestant minister," said the widow. "Whom shall I get?" asked the lawyer. "I know none; get anyone," Mrs. Erdelyi replied. The lawyer knew Mr. Devins and got him. He conducted a sympathetic service, interpreted by the lawyer; for although Mrs. Erdelyi could speak five languages, English was not one of them. The service concluded, the widow

asked that the casket be opened. Then she took the crucifix from the dead hands of her husband and threw it on the floor. "I renounce the church that would not bury my dear husband," she said; and to Mr. Devins, "What is your church?" "The Presbyterian," he said. "What does 'Presbyterian' mean?" she asked. "Governed by representatives of the members, chosen by them." "I like that. What are its doctrines?" "The doctrines of John Huss," said Mr. Devins — just the perfect words to say to her. "I like that," she said. "Can I join your church?" An appointment was made for Mr. and Mrs. Devins to call on her the next day, the lawyer to be present to interpret. After the brief service at the cemetery she again asked that the casket be opened, knowing that the Catholic undertaker had replaced the crucifix in it and again she took it out, broke it, threw it down and trampled on it, saying, "I knew what I was doing at the house. I mean it. I renounce the Catholic Church!"

Mrs. Erdelyi appeared with an interpreter before the Chapel session. They were conservative men and Mr. Devins felt a little afraid. The examination began: "Madam, are you a Christian?" She smiled. "Oh, yes, I feel that every person with sense must

love Jesus Christ." "Do you pray?" "Oh, yes, I could not live without prayer." "How often?" "Morning and night and many, many times a day I pray little prayers." "To whom do you pray?" "Why, to God, and Jesus Christ, and the Virgin Mary, and the saints." "Just so, but to whom do you like best to pray?" "That seems a singular question," she said. "Of course I pray to the Virgin and the saints because I was taught to; but when I pray to God and Jesus Christ I feel here"—she laid her hand on her heart—"that they answer me. Of course I like that best. Is it not so with you too, gentlemen?" By this time the elders were greatly moved and she was duly received. She desired to make a public, and thoroughly public, confession. Mr. Devins prepared a four-page program, pages eight by eleven inches; first page: "Welcome — Willkommen — Isten Hozta;" a picture of the chapel, the date, etc. Second page: program, including the most informing gospel passages, four hymns, other music, reception, addresses, etc., all repeated in German on the third page and in Hungarian on the fourth. She became a faithful and happy member of the Chapel.

Immediately began a bitter persecution, taking many forms. Threatening and ob-

scene postal cards were sent her in great numbers, scandalous stories about her were put in circulation wherever in America Hungarians could be found, and in Hungary. The Hungarian government was induced to put an interdict on her paper. When she went out of town to secure subscriptions, trumped-up suits were brought against her before Catholic justices and she was mulcted in considerable sums, so that presently her funds were depleted; and several times her life was attempted, once by a brick flung through her office window at night, seriously injuring her forehead, once with a knife that cut her severely. She bore herself sweetly and bravely. After she attended a communion at the Chapel the persecution broke out with renewed violence. Mr. Devins bought the *Amerikai Nemzetor* plant of her for a dollar; and when in her next absence from the city suit was brought against her, he attended to it and she lost no more money in that way. Then a Hungarian priest came to her home and told her that the mother church was willing to forget the past and to receive her again, and all persecution would cease. She indignantly refused to return to the Catholic Church. The priest then cursed, raved, stormed, threatened; said that if she did not return they would destroy her

good name, her property and her life. She hurried to Mr. Devins and told him. "Did anyone hear the priest?" "Yes, my servant heard it all." "Very well," said he, "I will stop the persecution." He went to the mayor and secured his backing if that should be necessary; then to the police inspector in his district. He told the story and said, "Please tell that priest to stop all persecution at once." "Why, Mr. Devins, I should like to oblige you, but I am a parishioner of that priest; how can I say such a thing to him?" "Very well," said Dr. Devins, "all he said was heard by a witness. He made himself responsible for the persecution. I shall put him in state's prison and the mayor says he will back me." The inspector saw light and went to the priest and the persecution ceased at once.

CHAPTER XII

HUNGARY

Mr. Devins tried to secure a Hungarian Protestant minister for the service at which Mrs. Erdelyi was to confess Christ. None could be had. Two in western Pennsylvania were too distant. Of forty thousand Hungarians in New York City, five thousand were Protestants and had neither church nor minister. The few Protestant Hungarian ministers in America belonged to other denominations and were engaged in other states. On a showing of these facts, the Presbytery of New York appointed a committee to act with the Board of Home Missions in providing for Hungarian services, accepting an offer of Hope Chapel for the purpose. Mr. and Mrs. Devins decided to take for their summer vacation a trip to Hungary to accomplish three ends beside the recreative one: To find a minister for the Hungarian work at the Chapel, and to arrange for future similar supplies as the work might extend; to get the interdict against Mrs. Erdelyi's paper removed; and to try to reconcile Mrs. Erdelyi's relatives and

friends to her Protestant church membership. The three ends were gained with some interesting concomitants.

The Hungarian Hebrew lawyer who had been Mr. Erdelyi's attorney and close friend and held the same relations to Mrs. Erdelyi, came to Mr. Devins to ask a singular favor: "Mr. Devins, will you get a chicken slaughter house for us? You can do it and nobody else can." He said that every Jew was obliged by his religion to use chicken once a week as part of a meal, and it must be "Kosher," killed by a priest according to the ritual. But it was illegal in New York to kill a chicken excepting at an authorized slaughter house. The only one was far down town, and was practically inaccessible for the poor Jews who could afford neither car-fares nor hours to go there every week. The statutes forbade killing a fowl in a tenement, or even carrying a live fowl into a tenement; yet so great was the faithfulness of the poor people to their religious requirements that many simply had to smuggle live fowls into their tenements, where the priests, risking fine and imprisonment, killed them in Kosher manner. Now the Hebrews had long before bought a suitable piece of ground not far from Hope Chapel, had money in bank to build the slaughter house, had plans

complying with all civic requirements, and had often begged the Common Council to grant permission to build. They could get no action, could not get the Council interested. "Mr. Devins, you are the one man who can put this thing through for us. Will you do it?" He would try; and he succeeded and soon the slaughter house was built.

When it became known that Mr. and Mrs. Devins were going to Hungary on their errands of good will, the lawyer, and hosts of other Hungarians and Jews, gave them letters of introduction to influential Europeans and showed them a hundred kindnesses. It was Mr. Devins' first trip to Europe, but I could never get him to discuss the trip excepting as it affected his special purposes. At Budapest he established Mrs. Devins at a hotel and called immediately at the office of the Secretary of State, or whatever he is called there. The Secretary was out of the city, and Mr. Devins sent in his card to the next in authority. A cold and haughty gentleman appeared to ask his wishes. Mr. Devins presented a letter of introduction and said that he wished to get the interdict removed from the *Amerikai Nemzetor*. "How long would he be in Budapest?" "A day or two." "Oh, nothing could be

done. It would take weeks, perhaps months, and probably it could not be accomplished at all." Then the gentleman looked at Mr. Devins' card more attentively, lifted an amazed face, put out a glad hand and cried, "Are you the man that had the funeral? I am proud to shake hands with the man who was brave enough to conduct that funeral when all others refused." He overflowed with enthusiastic cordiality. He was a Catholic, he said, but not that kind of a Catholic who did not admire the Erdelyis and Mr. Devins. He would see what could be done about the interdict. He regretted that the absence of his wife from the city forbade his asking Mr. and Mrs. Devins to be his guests. "Please dine with us at our hotel to-night," Mr. Devins said. He accepted instantly, again with enthusiasm. Long before dinner hour he rushed in upon them holding his hat high in air, almost dancing with excitement, happy as a boy, waving an official document and crying out, "I have it! I have it!" He had secured the removal of the interdict. The efforts to secure a Hungarian Protestant minister and to reconcile Mrs. Erdelyi's friends to her attitude were equally successful.

Not long after Mr. and Mrs. Devins returned from Hungary I read one morning in

my Chicago paper a three-quarter column Associated Press dispatch from New York, stating that the people of the East Side had presented to the mayor a monster petition, signed by many thousands of every race and religion and of no religion, begging him to appoint Mr. Devins a member of the Board of Education about to be formed under the new city charter. The mayor, said the dispatch, replied that he knew Mr. Devins very well and esteemed him as highly as any man he knew, but he would never put a clergyman on the Board of Education, for all clergymen were cranks in such positions. However, such was his absolute confidence in Mr. Devins, that if he would name to the mayor a suitable man on the East Side for the position, that man should be appointed. Mr. Devins' first knowledge of the whole matter came to him as he read his morning *Tribune* at breakfast that day. He went at once to the mayor's office, laid *The Tribune* before him and asked if the article were entirely correct. The mayor said that it was. "Then," said Mr. Devins, laying a slip of paper before the mayor, "here is the man who should be appointed." "I do now appoint him," said the mayor.

CHAPTER XIII

FEDERATION

“There is no better authority on work on the East Side of New York than the Rev. John B. Devins, the tireless pastor of Hope Chapel,” said an editorial in *The Outlook* of January 23, 1897. “Mr. Devins is more than simply a mission worker; he is an intelligent and earnest student of the life of the East Side, and has done as much if not more than anyone else to perfect The Federation of East Side Workers,” and it gives a long account of the organization.

In all his work for the people of his parish, and especially in the sorrowful times of the winter of 1893-4 when Mr. Devins was giving about seventeen hours a day to relief work alone in addition to his ordinary Chapel duties, he felt increasingly the need of some cooperative organized work in behalf of the poor, and especially of organized cooperative effort to prevent poverty by giving information to the ignorant and timely aid to self-help for those who were tending to poverty but might be saved to self-support. It is probable that from the point of view of the

future historian of social movements in New York City the organization and development of The Federation of East Side Workers will be regarded as Mr. Devins' most original, distinguished, statesmanlike and fruitful work in the world. It was original in conception, boldly innovating in theory, requiring almost superhuman courage to attempt it and long, patient, tactful, undiscouraged labor, with unsurpassed diplomacy in handling the antagonistic elements whose fusion was essential for its success. In Mr. Devins' words: "It is not an effort to bring about church union, though Protestants, Romanists and Hebrews cooperate. It is not an organization to give one benevolent society an advantage over another. It is not a relief-giving society. It is not a rival of any existing agencies. It is an honest effort on the part of those living or working in the district to cooperate along lines upon which there is a general agreement. It is an earnest effort to bring into active cooperation all of the pastors, regardless of creed, and representatives of all charitable societies, whatever their object."

And he succeeded in making that vision, that dream, that apparently impossible Utopian project a success at the start and year after year! No one else could have done it. He had been in Hope Chapel only six or

seven years; he was very young; he had no previous experience in such work; there was nowhere in the world a model for him to imitate. How dared he try to weld official representatives of all churches and synagogues below Fourteenth Street, between Broadway and the East River, and of all charitable organizations there of every sort, into a compact, cooperating, friendly, efficient organization? It was a stupendous dream — and the realization actually fell nothing short of the vision. He dreamed practically. Every line in his dream-plans was drawn only when he was certain that it was practicable. When the vision was complete as a pictured ideal, each item as carefully and scientifically worked out as the lines and figures in an architect's blue-print, he went to work to realize it in practice. Doggedly, persistently, without haste and without rest, he worked, adding to all his other duties and ventures this amazing dream. A thousand partial failures never troubled him more than a few minutes; "Up and at them" was his working motto. He felt his hand in God's. It was not his work at all; it was God's work, and it was God's work for the countless needy children around him. Few believed that he could succeed. It seemed chimerical — but not to him. And

he did it. Try to visualize what he did. Think of his actually overcoming all obstacles, surmounting all prejudices, arguing away all objections made by practically everybody he approached. Get Protestants, Romanists, Hebrews, charitable societies of every name and sort, lodges, clubs, anarchists, everybody, to work in official cooperation! Believe it possible who could!

Upon what did he rely for success? Not upon miraculous divine aid; not — modest man that he was — on his own powers; but he reckoned upon that human sense and sympathy with need which he believed to be in everyone engaged in East Side helpful work, ready to respond to a reasonable stimulus. He showed them all — parsons, priests, rabbis, philanthropists, and just simple human helpers of others — that it could be done and would pay for the doing; and they did it. Thus for the first time in human history such cooperative effort on a noble scale was organized, successful, practical. It taught the world a needed lesson which it is slowly learning. When the Lower East Side, having one-tenth of the city's area and at that time one-fourth of its population, a half-million souls, learned by doing it, that cooperation in charitable and preventive work was practicable, delightful, efficient, the world

waked up. *The Outlook* article quoted at the beginning of this paper concluded with these words: "The Federation of East Side Workers ought to be extended to take in the whole city, or rather there should be other federations which should cooperate and so cover the whole city. Organizations cannot do everything but proper organization increases power."

The details of the organization and its methods of work cannot be adequately suggested here, or the practical results of it for the East Side. But two practical results of far-reaching importance must be noted. First came the larger federation of Christian forces in New York City which has now these many years produced incomparable fruitage; then came the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the cooperative work of thirty-three of the leading denominations of the country. Not only did Dr. Devins have important and distinguished offices in connection with the Inter-Church Conference on Federation in 1905 which resulted in the organization of the Federal Council, and equally responsible and taxing positions under the Council up to the time of his death, but three of the leading speakers on the platform of the Inter-Church Conference ascribed to Dr. Devins the high honor

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and distinguished merit of having done the pioneer work which both blazed the trail and cleared the path into the heart of the wilderness of denominational rivalry, interference, confusion and hindrance in Christian work, and thus prepared for the glorious Federation which now puts heart and hope into everyone who longs for the doing of our Father's will on earth as it is done in heaven. This notable service of Dr. Devins to the kingdom of God is fully recognized in the tribute to his memory, unanimously adopted by the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, at a meeting held on November 8, 1911, and placed upon its minutes.

CHAPTER XIV

PERSONAL WORK

“Who are you?” said Mayor Gaynor a few months ago addressing, by invitation, the Congregational clergymen of New York City. “Who are you? How far does your influence extend? Do you reach out among the people? Who are you? Do you reach out among the unfortunate and the lowly and those that want to be lifted up? Who are you? Does the great heart of Jesus throb in you — the One who took all the lowly by the hand and said, ‘Come unto Me and I will help you’?” When I read those fine words I answered at once: John Bancroft Devins! How inevitably, when we read of this minister’s eloquent sermons, of that one’s growing congregations and budgets, and of the other one’s new church edifice, we feel that all these may possibly mean chiefly ability and ambition; and we want to ask, if we do not know him personally, “Who are you? What is your heart? Do you reach out, and down? How far does your influence reach downward? The heart of Jesus — is it yours?”

Mr. Devins' habit of personal work began when he was a boy and lasted through life. While a student in the university he saw in the Grand Central Station, a man evidently much distressed, and asked if he could be of assistance to him; his habit of offering help, not waiting to be asked, was a notable characteristic. The man had just landed from Europe, planning to settle in the West, bringing his gun and dogs with him. Unexpected revenue duties collected on these, and other unexpected expenses, had consumed the money he had intended to use for travel westward, and he was stranded, friendless. Mr. Devins gave him what he had with him, enough to take him to his destination. Some years later came a happy letter from the man, enclosing the loan and heavy interest and expressions of gratitude.

He was always eager for personal touch with the particularly needy. His heart ached for each one, opened wide to each one; his time, money, love, prayers, sympathy, help of every imaginable sort belonged to each one. It never occurred to him to ask if people were "worthy," "deserving," any more than Christ asks that about us; the only question was, "Can I be of use to them?" Literally hundreds of illustrative incidents occur to me, from which I select typical ones.

There was nothing formal, perfunctory, professional, about his Hope Chapel work; it was every bit personal work.

The sky-apartments over the Chapel were consecrated to personal work. His idea of a home, which never changed, was written to Mrs. Devins some years later: "While we cannot make a home for the Master in visible form as the Bethany sisters did, let us see to it that we shall here display that spirit which will make Him the unseen guest with those whom in His name we shall receive here." We used to feel sorry for Mrs. Devins when, so often, the domestics were apparently selected because they needed friendly help rather than for help they were competent to render; but Mrs. Devins did not seem sorry for herself. Delicate in health, often suffering, apparently with little strength, she devoted herself absolutely; and she accomplished wonders to make most healthy Christian women feel very small. She was the helpmeet for him. The boys' club, aimed to keep "the gang" off the streets evenings, had a room in the Chapel with books, games, entertainments; but the toughest ones—"Pepper" and "Lemons" and "Buttons" and "Job Lots" and so on—were turned over to Mrs. Devins to be entertained in her parlor with games and

the like, and special ones were permitted to sit by her at prayer meetings. Mr. Devins' influence with them was great. For years afterward, when one of them got into trouble, "the gang" would come for Mr. Devins and he would appear in court, become sponsor for good behavior, pay fines, get them reinstated in their own respect.

Every child in Sunday-school had its turn at good times in that parlor. A few classes at a time were given a happy evening with games, refreshments, friendship; and for years afterwards those "parties" were heard of reminiscently and gratefully. A Bible class of twenty or thirty old ladies had their annual parties in the parlor, and every summer Mr. Devins took them — where do you suppose? to Coney Island! I remember vividly the first time he gave those dear elderly women the time of their lives. They saw everything, and rode seraphically on the merry-go-round, and played in the sand, and had delicious ice cream and lemonade with their lunches, and got home crying with weariness and perfect bliss. Who but one who had loved himself clear into their worn old hearts could have imagined the one perfect outing for them? He gave the choir treats; took them to an oratorio, "The Messiah," at Carnegie Hall, and the like.

He guarded his flock as the Good Shepherd does His. When he took the trip in 1895 to England, France, Hungary, he entered a protest, before going, against any saloon license being granted in his district until he should return. When he got home there were a lot waiting to open up. He objected and backed up the objection with unanswerable arguments, and no licenses were granted. Day after day the would-be saloon keepers came to beg him to let them have licenses. He would talk long and friendly with them and go with them to the authorities with his map, and show the number and locations of too many saloons already in the district. Of course his life was threatened. That did not trouble him. His friends begged him not to go out nights alone or without a heavy cane; but he could not wait for guards or remember the cane. When one saloon keeper had threatened his life, he went at once and had a friendly talk with him. And, of course, the saloon keepers, being human, liked him and constantly came to him for help when they got into trouble.

He had everything possible to help his people; Christian Endeavor, Chautauqua Circle, gymnasium, always something new. But note this: he never got tired of the old

methods if they did good. He had no rage for novelty; he was looking about and experimenting to find the best things. He sent large groups of girls to Northfield and similar places every summer, some paying their own way wholly or in part, he paying what was lacking. He went with them. A photograph lies before me, the first group, forty, I think, that went to Northfield, Mr. Devins and his two loyal helpers, Mrs. Devins and his step-son, Thornton Penfield, in the front row. There were girls who had never been out of New York City before, and all of them were hard-working girls. What a glorious thing to do for them, how enlarging and renovating to life and character! It should be noted that in all this work Mr. Devins was struggling against fearful comparative odds. The elders of the Fourth Avenue Church who were responsible for the conduct of the Hope Chapel work were salt of the earth; salt is conserving—and they were thoroughly conservative! They had no confidence in modern methods of conducting city missions; two preachings and Sunday-school, and mid-week prayer meeting, and a summer picnic, and constant help to the poor, with extra gifts all around at Christmas—that was their program. Anything else was looked at

askance. They would not appropriate funds for other purposes. So Mr. Devins did extra work on *The Tribune* nights, and reported General Assemblies and the like to earn money for the Chapel work. He lived in the simplest manner possible, at the least expense. He put more cash into the Chapel year by year than he received in salary as its pastor. It is easy to account for five thousand dollars and more of remembered expenditures of the kind, and nobody knows how much is not remembered.

Some good people ask, as cases present themselves, "How much must I give? How much must I do? What does the Lord require of me? What will be expected? What is my share? What is the least that will satisfy my conscience?" They do good, and get good in doing it, and very likely at the same time get an enormous amount of conceited satisfaction. I believe that Mr. Devins never asked one of those questions. For according to his power, I bear witness, yes and beyond his power, he gave of his own accord, beseeching everybody with much entreaty to accept his grace and fellowship in so ministering; and this, not as some are proud to do, but first gave his own self to the Lord, and to everybody through the will of God. "What can I do for you?" was his

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constant question; and if you had no answer ready, he would suggest one! He never "went out of his way" to do anyone good; for his way always was His way whom he loved and served in serving His children, the way of Him "Who went about doing good." And he was very, very happy.



Dr. Devins at 44.

CHAPTER XV

MORE PERSONAL WORK

The variety of Mr. Devins' personal work, its extent, some of its characteristics and some of its successes, should be more fully illustrated. In a long, wide and more or less intimate acquaintance with great men of affairs in the Presbyterian Church I have not met one, unless possibly Dr. John Hall, whose mind, heart and efforts embraced so many, so different, so taxing, so time-taking persons, causes, movements. I am quite sure of the literal truth of this statement; that he never neglected, slighted or failed in deep sympathy and constant effort regarding any one of them. No wonder Mr. Whitelaw Reid said of him that *The Tribune* had no more faithful, dependable and efficient assistant; and *The Tribune* was never more than a side-line, though a most useful one, to Mr. Devins' life work.

Mr. Devins was one of the earliest, busiest and most popular of the Public Lecture Corps of the Board of Education of the City of New York. I attended some of his lectures with him. They were given in public schools

all over the city, evenings, and were freely open to pupils and their parents and friends. He had lectures on a wide variety of topics, which he was constantly giving also in churches and elsewhere as they were called for. He threw his soul into each one, and got into the souls of his audience. Stereopticon slides, anecdotes, wit, pathos, all helped; but chiefest was his soul moving those souls before him. It was a thrilling thing to watch. The people crowded about him afterward, to take his hand, to hear his voice, to tell him their souls, to get next to his soul — and everyone of them did it. His soul was open to every human being. He never, I think, pretended deep interest in anyone, because he did not have to; he had the interest. I do not know that he ever said *Nihil humanum a me suto*, but he lived it.

Dr. Charles S. Stoddard wrote his "Augustus" letter for *The Observer* of March 19, 1896, on "A Personally Conducted Tour." That was long before Mr. Devins became connected with *The Observer*. The article tells how Mr. Devins, "who is rapidly developing into a first-class practical philanthropist" led a party of members of the Housing Conference in New York, to see things on the East Side, Dr. Stoddard accompanying them by special invitation. Mr.

Devins led hosts of such parties; sometimes a few personal friends, sometimes a professor from Yale or some other college, and his class in sociology, sometimes distinguished foreigners of world-wide renown in philanthropy or reform. The things to see and to hear about were absorbingly interesting, but I always noticed that the personally conducted people were as interested in the personality of the conductor as in the things he showed or told them. He was so deeply moved himself by the things he saw every day, so tender for the poor and ignorant, so fierce in his rages against injustice, against rich selfishness, flushing deeply, clenching his fists, breaking off his sentences; it was all personal to him.

A note of the wideness of his sympathies appears in the article he wrote for *The Christian at Work* years ago about the "Sisterhood of Personal Service," a work of Hebrew ladies much like that of the King's Daughters. It was purposed to give here a list of causes that he personally worked for, but the number is so incredibly large that it cannot be done. Four or five striking illustrations of his personal work with individuals are worth more.

In an article entitled "Merry Christmas in the Tenements," in the December *Century* of

1898, Mr. Jacob A. Riis tells of a call on Mr. Devins at Hope Chapel. "Of the kind of problems that beset its pastor," he says, "I caught a glimpse the other day when as I entered his room, a rough looking man went out. 'One of my cares,' said Mr. Devins, looking after him with contracted brow. 'He has spent two Christmas days of twenty-three out of jail. He is a burglar, or was. His daughter has brought him around. She is a seamstress. For three months, now, she has been keeping him and the home, working nights. If I could only get him a job! He won't stay honest long without it; but who wants a burglar for a watchman?' " Mr. Devins had always scores of such people on his hands and heart. His patience and courtesy with such people, with all people, were un-failing. A former gifted minister who had fallen far down and was still young came to me several times for help. Every time it cost me a night of grief because I could not, somehow, get near him or be of any real help. But he went down to Dr. Devins' office and straightway began a steady upward course that has made him one of the best and most useful men in America.

He found a man with a large family of small children, out of work, discouraged. He had been promised a position on the

police force, but was rejected because his teeth were poor. He was too poor to have them repaired. Mr. Devins sent the man to his own dentist and paid the bill. The overjoyed man went to his examination, but was rejected because he was slightly under height! "Have you not been tramping about considerably?" "Yes, all day." "This is Friday. Go home and rest over Sunday and come again." He did so and on Monday measured an inch above the required mark and received his appointment. He duly repaid Mr. Devins the amount of the dentist bill and was an honored member of the force.

An anarchist on the East Side, a close friend of Johann Most, had a young daughter who was a cigar maker and also kept the motherless home. She attended Hope Chapel Sunday-school. Her father swore that he would throw her out of the house if she united with the church. She did and he did as he promised. Mrs. Devins took her into that plain little heaven up over the Chapel. She was aided to go to Northfield and to the Moody Institute in Chicago to study to become a missionary. She worked among the freedmen and was about to go as a missionary to Africa when tuberculosis seized her. Again she was received into that Christlike home. At the cemetery after the

funeral, her father said to Mr. Devins: "Whatever you tell me to do, I will do." He gave up a saloon which he had secured by marrying its proprietor; he kept his word, fully.

A letter came recently to Mrs. Devins from a stranger, saying in part: "Dr. Devins is accountable for the fact that I am a useful citizen. He put out the hand of understanding fellowship when I sorely needed it. He counseled me and encouraged me aright when everything looked black. He was *sui generis*, a kind represented only by himself, and if I may be so bold, I will say he was the best man I ever came in contact with. His soul was kindly, and despite the fact that he carried on his broad shoulders and in his great heart a load of responsibility that would have staggered anybody else, he had always time to cheer a fellow when he needed it. . . . I am not a professing Christian, but if there is any power that could convert me it would be the wonderful example of Dr. Devins and his practical methods of working." To this correspondent, who is the son of a former great man and United States Senator, Mrs. Devins at once directed a friend who lived near him. The friend called, explained to him the way of life; and he accepted the Saviour and purposed to take up as far as

possible the work of helping "the other fellow" and so perpetuate the influence of Dr. Devins. This was within a week after Dr. Devins' death.

The Rev. Charles Stelzle, whose name and fame and power are in all the world, was a member of Hope Chapel while he was a young workingman, and became Dr. Devins' successor in the pastorate of the Chapel. He said in part at the funeral services: "I am very glad on this occasion to speak of my personal appreciation of what Dr. Devins meant to me. When Dr. Devins came to Hope Chapel I was a young fellow just about entering a machine shop on the East Side of New York City, not having many opportunities of education and some other things which I have since enjoyed. I recall all that Dr. Devins meant to me, say at the age of fifteen and sixteen to twenty-one. You know what a friend means to a fellow of that sort — Dr. Devins was that kind. I was not afraid to come to him with anything; he knew more of the secrets of my life than any man in this world. I told him freely because he was a friend, because of that sympathy which was so manifest in every relationship of life. In spite of that strong frame of his, he was tender as a child; he sympathized most lovingly, for he himself had passed through those

afflictions — he was kin to all men. I remember well how as a boy he led me, through the Christian Endeavor Society, the Sunday-school and through the organization of Hope Chapel. When I felt I must study for the ministry, even though I was a member of another church at that time in another city, I went to Dr. Devins and told him that I wanted to study for the ministry. It was Dr. Devins who helped me to enter the Moody School in Chicago, and I recall also that Dr. Devins loaned me the fare to go to Chicago to begin my work of preparation for the Gospel ministry when so few other people thought I would ever amount to anything in the work of Jesus Christ; it was Dr. Devins that helped me and pushed me forward and encouraged me to go on in the way I felt God had called me.”

Mr. Stelzle is probably the most illustrious, on earth, of the fruitage of Dr. Devins' personal work. But what a record of it all there is above! Dr. Devins lived poor and died poor. Is he one of the richest up there?

CHAPTER XVI

THE FINISH AND THE NEW START

“John Bancroft Devins — that is a name honored in Presbyterianism as but few names are honored, honored throughout the Christian church and honored in all circles of life where he is known.” So Dr. John F. Carson, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, began his notable address at Dr. Devins’ funeral in Dr. Carson’s own church in Brooklyn. No attempt can be made to quote the other notable things said and written about Dr. Devins since his death as well as before it. They would easily occupy a volume. No attempt can be made to relate and estimate his years of work on *The Observer*; his trip around the world and his later Mediterranean trip; the observant, scholarly, popular books he wrote about the two trips; the constant widening of his sympathies with many kinds of philanthropic effort, his official relations to organizations seeking their promotion, his constantly augmenting burdens of responsibility and expenditure of time, money, strength, in connection with them; his helpful relations to in-

dividuals, organizations, movements, causes in the Presbyterian Church, in many other denominations, unconnected with denominations; his constant correspondence and conferences with leaders in the world's work for the unevangelized, the poor, the oppressed, the ignorant, the unfortunate in many lands; his never failing faithfulness to his family circle, to his friends, to his former parishioners on the East Side, to an ever widening circle. The study of these things, item by item, and classified and massed, leaves me bewildered and marveling at the almost unbelievable total and the complexity of it. I watched him at close range during the last six years, our offices in the same building and our talk about all these things going on almost daily, but I did not apprehend the amazing total of his labors.

I think it best, in the close affectionate spirit of these pages and so most likely to meet the wishes of Dr. Devins' friends, to dwell now upon only a single phase of his life work, and upon the ending of it. This phase of his work was one that engaged him deeply from his first life in the vicinity of New York City, and with increasing devotion and practical consecration to it, until the end. It was the first public philanthropic work he engaged in, and was the last work that he did

on earth; and, so far as we can judge, he sacrificed, at the last, in that work and his total devotion to it, what might perhaps have been, without that sacrifice, more years of earthly life. I refer of course, to the work of the Tribune Fresh Air Fund, which every summer gives country outings of generous length to children of the tenements.

From the beginning of student days in New York young Devins fell in love with that beautiful and practical charity, and served it in every possible way for many years without any financial compensation — and that during just the years when his struggle to find means to keep him alive for his studies was most terrific. Every year saw him giving more thought and service to this cause, and every year the service was of a higher and more valuable sort; yet never, to the last day of his life, did he lessen his earlier habit of the closest possible touch with the individual children and his interest in every smallest thing that affected their happiness and welfare. I think that a moment's meditation over that last sentence may be most illuminating regarding the extraordinary characteristics of his philanthropic work, differentiating him from most even of the best of philanthropic workers.

When the Rev. Willard Parsons, the or-

iginator and long time Manager of the Tribune Fresh Air Fund, laid down his work in 1906, Dr. Devins was chosen to succeed him, and at once entered upon the duties of the office. He displayed at once the largest statesmanship regarding the work. *The Tribune* said of this, after his death:

“ Amid the successes of the year the Tribune Fresh Air Fund suffered one irreparable loss in the death of the man who for five years had so ably directed its activities, the Rev. Dr. John Bancroft Devins. No man ever brought to his work a heart more devoted nor a genius better adapted to its requirements than did this truly great man. Taking hold of the Fresh Air work at the point where his predecessor, the Rev. Willard Parsons, had left it, he continued and augmented its success. What executive ability he combined with his greatness of heart is shown by the things in the work that are peculiarly his. He found the Tribune Fund a great organization for sending children to the country, but he was not content to continue it with that one aim. He felt that there were to be found among the multitudes of the poor, little children whose cases were deserving of special attention. Starting with this idea, he was led by a careful study of conditions to institute what might be called a policy of

specialization. The result of this was the establishment of the home for undernourished children at Shokan, the homes for convalescents at Middletown and Deposit, and the homes for older girls and boys at Chapel Hill and Bethany. The point to which above all others, however, Dr. Devins directed his attention was the increasing of the revenues of the Fund. He so systematized this matter that during each year of his incumbency the number of contributors went up by leaps and bounds. It is sufficient to say in this regard that in five years the number of people giving annually to the cause which lay so near the heart of the great leader has been increased from 891 to 3,301." He wrote September 1, 1910: "I have prayed for big tasks, and I have one; now I pray for money to pay the bills."

He remained at his post during the entire hot summer of 1911, in his *Observer* office every morning, at his Fresh Air Fund office in *The Tribune* building every afternoon and night, usually until midnight or later. There were a thousand details of the work upon which he felt that he must keep his hand, thousands of poor children who could not have their fortnight in the country unless he secured more funds. Mrs. Devins, too ill to be away from home, was with him until Mon-

day, August 21, when he took her to Northfield, spent a single hour there and returned to his office. Tuesday and Wednesday were spent in the two offices until after midnight. He posted a brief and characteristic note to Mrs. Devins as he left the office Wednesday night signing it, "Your sleepy, loving John." He was taken ill on the trolley car to his Brooklyn home, and was very ill after reaching there, so that the faithful and devoted housekeeper summoned a doctor at once, who presently called another. All day Thursday he sat propped with cushions in a steamer chair, the telephone in his hand much of the time, his secretary and helper from his two offices often with him, directing *The Observer* and Fresh Air Fund work. On Friday he was weaker, often dozing, but working steadily. He was unconscious Friday night. Mrs. Devins was telegraphed for, a trained nurse secured, the doctors constant in attendance; and at six o'clock he passed unexpectedly and quietly from earth. Mrs. Devins arriving from Northfield later, and met by a friend who did not know of the end, entered his room to find him dead. May God comfort her! He does.

The New Start. Every letter he wrote in those last days seems to have been full of his heart hunger to help more of "his children"

to God's out-of-doors. One of the many before me, written to a friend in Philadelphia, gives the longest of its three brief paragraphs to that: "I take great pleasure in seeing the children go to the country, although it means few hours of sleep during July and August, but it means a great many hours of pleasure to the children."

Regarding his New Start in his Father's House, who can help applying to him these words which he spoke not long before at the funeral of his long-time friend, the Rev. Dr. O'Connor: "What a beautiful thing to finish your life work and stop! So many men and women have finished their work and are now existing. You can't imagine Dr. O'Connor not working. He is doing something now. He was a man by the side of the road helping the fellow who needed his help the most. Dr. O'Connor was faithful to every call. I can't imagine Dr. O'Connor turning anyone away who needed help. You can't help men by hating them. He loved men. He was not holding up a hierarchy, he was holding up Christ. Here at his coffin I pledge myself to a nobler, purer work for Jesus Christ. Will you?"

CHAPTER XVII

TRIBUTES

Like the beauty and perfume of chosen flowers sent by friends, like the assuaging balm of soft music in the dark, like a touch of a tender hand when words fail; being indeed the sympathy of God Himself ministered from the other room of our Father's house, where our friend had gone to stay, through His children's tender-hearted fellow-feeling; alleviating grief and quickening courage; were the words spoken, written, printed, which came innumerable, blessing, heartening. A volume would not hold them, although a heart can. They have been studied, classified, and from selected ones of each class sentences have been chosen to illustrate the wideness of appreciation and sympathy manifested, and, especially, the extraordinary variety of the interests, devotions and achievements of Dr. Devins. The first of these, published in *The Continent*, was entitled, "The Passing of a Greatheart Soul" and read:

For years no news more startling to the Presbyterian Church has gone abroad through

its fellowship than the announcement on Saturday last of the death of Dr. John Bancroft Devins, the editor of *The New York Observer*. Among the self-made men whom America is proud to claim as a characteristic glory of the republic, not one has ever shown a more splendid pluck and steadfastness of purpose than John Bancroft Devins. Born fifty-five years ago in the city of New York, in poverty that would submerge any but the most heroic soul, he fought his way to a position in life and an esteem among his fellows equally creditable to his intellectual quality and his spiritual mettle. Through a tremendous struggle, he obtained an education for the ministry, graduating from New York University in 1882 and Union Seminary in 1887. Ordained to the ministry in 1888, he served, with notable strength and success, ten years as pastor of Hope Chapel and four years as pastor of Broome Street Tabernacle, downtown churches in New York, feeling the full stress of the city problem.

In his student days Dr. Devins had largely supported himself by reportorial work on *The New York Tribune*, and this experience in journalism gave him the liking for printer's ink which, in the year 1898, occasioned his joining the staff of *The New York Observer*, the famous Presbyterian paper identified with

the influential Prime and Stoddard families. Four years later he became the editor of the paper, and has conducted it ever since in loyal devotion to the highest purposes of religious journalism.

But his editorial labors could not exhaust the abundant vitality of the man, and an ineradicable sense of affiliation with the poor of New York, whose trial and privation he had once shared, expressed itself through an active and laborious interest in almost every form of civic charity known to the great metropolis. He was a strong helper in the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor and in the Home for the Friendless, the latter of which was much enlarged through gifts that he secured. But the interest which most of all consumed him was the Tribune Fresh Air Fund, of which he has been since 1907 the manager. To give the boys and girls of New York slums an annual taste of God's free air in the country became a passion to him, and to that undoubtedly Dr. Devins sacrificed his life; for without question the explanation of his untimely decease is his tremendous overwork of the past summer in superintending this very practical charity.

Nor did organizational philanthropy compass the kindness of his heart. Dr. Devins

wherever he went, was the most thoughtful and helpful of men. When reproached for apparently indiscriminate giving to beggars, he only replied: "You never knew yourself what it means to be hungry." The working people of the Presbyterian building, where he has had his office for many years, were devotedly attached to him because they had all had experience of his personal kindness. A true Greatheart, full of the tenderness and loving kindness of his Master, Dr. Devins has enshrined in thousands of hearts a memory that is as noble an epitaph as any human life may win.—From *The Continent*.

* * *

We left our table at the General Assembly last May, at the close of a weary morning session, forgetting to take with us our friend, the fountain pen. We remembered ere half the distance down the "steel pier" had been traversed and hurried back to the table of *The Continent*. No pen was visible. Some lover of relics had gathered it in. The call on the attendants brought no results. An advertisement from the Assembly rostrum in the afternoon was heard by all present, for the assistant stated clerk gave it, but, alas! was answered by none. The pen had gone.

Two days later there came to our table a

man carrying in his hand two pens. "Have you found your pen?" he asked. A negative head shake was the answer. "Try these," said the man. We obeyed. "Which is the better?" he inquired. We held up one. "My compliments," said the man, and turned to go. "Wait!" we called. "This is not a new pen. It bears the marks of use. It is your own. We cannot take this." "My compliments," he repeated: "glad to serve you." And he hurried away.

The man was Dr. John Bancroft Devins, and the pen is now writing this little story.

Now for the point. On the Monday after the sudden death of the lamented editor of *The New York Observer*, we called at *The Observer* office in the Presbyterian building, New York, where for years he had wrought. We offered our word of sympathy to the one who had been editorial assistant and, among other things, we spoke of this gift of the pen. "Yes," was the reply, "I knew. The doctor came over from you that day and said, 'Well, I've given Dr. Holmes my pen.' 'What?' I answered. 'Your pet pen?' 'Yes.' 'Why, what will you do?' I asked again. 'You have written with that pen for years.' 'Oh, well, that's nothing. He needs it. He'll make better use of it than I.'"

Simple story. In that was the spirit of

Sir Philip Sidney at Zutphen enacted once more. It was a simple act, but life's greatest acts are simple. There are many people in the city of New York who can tell similar stories about Dr. Devins. He had thoroughly learned the lesson of need and sacrifice. A man must have suffered himself or he cannot know how to draw nigh to suffering with needed aid. At some time or in some degree one must have been "down and out," if he is to be of real service in helping others "up and in." One need not have been an awful sinner in order to have been on "the lower side of things." Birth may have put him there. Our country has produced many, both men and women, who were born "down" and died "up." The man who surmounts inherited difficulty is one of Carlyle's kings. Of such was he with the pen and the genial wave of the hand and the words not soon to be forgotten, "My compliments."

Chivalry in its best days did nothing finer. Larger, no doubt, but not finer. We write advisedly. Jesus is on record in the matter of a woman who gave two mites to the temple treasury. "More than they all," he said. His was a spiritual measuring line. Look at this gift of a pen from a spiritual point of view. A writer's pen to which he

has become wedded is like the pocket knife of a whittler. It grows to the hand that holds it. No other pen feels like it; no other will write like it. One almost dares to add, no other can think like it. Good paper, good ink, and a pen which fits the hand! Who can tell what the outcome of such a combination will be? Dr. Devins was parting with an editorial asset when he said with such nonchalance, "My compliments."

This little story of Dr. Devins is, like the pen of which it tells, nothing without its point. That point is that the value of benevolence is not in size or amount, but in devotion to Jesus Christ which underlies it. We wish the world had kept no record of the sum total of the money value of the gifts given by men and women of wealth. There are people living to-day who have given away more than they at the present time possess.

The old Latin word *sacer* is the basis of the word sacrifice. A sacrifice is something that has been made over to God by an oath. Its eye (surely the figure is legitimate) looks out toward God, and its mouth says, "I and my maker are thine." How much looking toward God is there in the money which is dropped, nickels and dimes, into the Sunday collection plate? The officiating clergymen must perforce see the

plates as the offering gatherers stand before the pulpit waiting for the prayer of consecration. The faces on the coins look up toward the preacher or down into the bottom of the plate and not a glance says, "We represent a sacrifice." The minister, if he were honest, might well pray, "Lord, here are pennies, nickels, dimes, representing the abundance that thou hast given us. We had these in our pockets; our checkbooks we have left at home." The prayer would tell the truth, but the minister would be asked by a grieved people to seek another field.

Are we allowing our pen to wander from its point? Not in the least. The pen in our hand is our ever-present reminder of the sacrifice that made it ours. Sacrifice without cost is impossible. There must be death of sentiment of some kind. The writer is swayed by sentiment. He grows to love his pen. The large-hearted man who said, "My compliments," was parting with that which had become identified with himself. Had he written with it his interesting letters of travel? Did it trace the lines of the books he made? Did it make appeals in behalf of the army of children who owed to its wielder their trips to the country when the hot summer days came? It was not his brain that Dr. Devins passed so generously to a friend. It was the

instrument of his power, around which the tendrils of sentiment had twined. We did not know what the gift meant to the giver on the day he placed it in our hand. Since we have learned, we write with a new understanding of the word sacrifice.

R. S. H.

* * *

“New York City has lost one of its best citizens in the sudden death of Dr. John Bancroft Devins. His first charge, in East Fourth Street Presbyterian Chapel, was among the poor, and he gave himself to it with the industry and resourcefulness that marked all his activities. He promoted the Federation of East Side Workers, because he saw that wretchedness knew no denominational bounds. The Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor found use for his talents as manager of its employment bureau. Later he was the English pastor of Broome Street Tabernacle. And all the time he was lifting in every cause which had at heart the social or spiritual welfare of the plain people of Manhattan. Naturally enough he was selected to manage the noble charity known as ‘The Tribune Fresh Air Fund’ when its originator laid it down a few years ago. A thoroughly trained journalist, Dr. Devins had written for and edited peri-

odicals of many sorts when he came to the managing editorship of *The New York Observer*, in 1898. Since 1902 he has been the editor of this staunch Presbyterian weekly, our nearest neighbor. Firm in the faith, scrupulously fair to his opponents, studiously striving to serve Presbyterianism, and through it the whole cause of evangelical Christianity, Dr. Devins has been a worthy successor of the great editorial line of *The Observer*." — *The Christian Advocate*.

* * *

"The mission cause never had a better friend than the editor of *The New York Observer*, whose sudden death on August 26th, 1911, brought sorrow to many hearts in many lands.

"John Bancroft Devins by voice and pen, through secular and religious press, by personal visitation and letter was known and loved throughout the world. We can well believe that hundreds of missionaries who have gone out under the Presbyterian Board during the last few years will recall with pleasure the delightful hours spent as guests of the Presbyterian Union during the annual June reception for newly appointed missionaries. These hours were made delightful largely by the painstaking care and unselfish service, the scrupulous attention to details, on

the part of Dr. Devins. In every way he was the friend of the missionary. In his trip around the world he spent most of his time with missionaries. His pen was ever ready to defend their cause, make known their wants, spread about the wondrous story of their devotion. He had a vision of things at home and of things abroad. He plead for the Bowery outcast and the consumptive in the East Side tenement. His appeal for the children 'soaked in the city's slime,' asking that a breath of fresh air might be given them, linked Dr. Devins with fresh air work the country over. But this did not stop his ear to the cry of the famine-stricken ones in An Hui, China, nor stay his hand for the castaway children of the Ganges, nor harden his heart to the needs of the dark-skinned waifs of Uncle Sam in the Philippines. He had the Christlike spirit which knew no geographical, racial, or social boundaries.

"In behalf of the missionary we place today a wreath of loving, loyal affection, to the memory of John Bancroft Devins."

From *The Assembly Herald*.

* * *

"The sudden death last week at his home in Brooklyn from an attack of acute indigestion of the Rev. Dr. John Bancroft Devins, editor of the *New York Observer*, startled

and greatly grieved his wide circle of friends. Dr. Devins was at his office on Wednesday, and on Saturday morning his death was announced. To his position as editor of the *Observer* he brought considerable journalistic experience gained from his connection for several years with the reportorial staff of *The New York Tribune*. His editorship of *The Observer* was marked with acknowledged efficiency, his aim being to collect the religious news of the country as fully and completely as the newspapers collect the daily happenings in the world at large. In 1903-4, while on a tour of the world he remained in the Philippines long enough to complete a book of 'Observations' on the islands which he dedicated to Col. Roosevelt, and which contained a foreword written by President Taft. In recent years, besides engaging in his editorial work, Dr. Devins has had charge of several funds raised to send children from the East Side to the country for the summer months. He was cut down in the midst of his great usefulness, and 'the mourners go about the streets.' *The Intelligencer* assures his bereaved family and *The Observer* of sincere sympathy."

* * *

"John Bancroft Devins, whose sudden death is recorded elsewhere in our columns,

enriched the world by his life, and leaves in his death a distinct sense of loss. As a practical newspaper man of much versatility and energy, as a Christian pastor and preacher, as manager of the Tribune Fresh Air Fund and in various other labors, public and private, he served his day and generation with singular sincerity and faithfulness and with a more than ordinary degree of efficiency. He commanded the confidence and affection of his associates, and he leaves behind him among a multitude the memory of a blameless character and a useful career."—*The New York Tribune*.

* * *

“ Profound sorrow has been expressed during the week at the sudden death of the Rev. Dr. John Bancroft Devins, editor of *The New York Observer*, philanthropist and publicist. Dr. Devins was one of the strong men of the Presbyterian Church locally, and was known and loved by a large part of the membership. He had as many friends among the multi-races of the East Side through his settlement work and management of fresh air work. He had a breadth uncommon in a denominational editor and a love for his fellow man which kept his hand constantly giving to the unfortunate. Reproved once for indiscriminate giving, when he had been appealed to

by a down-and-out man, he said to his critic: 'You never knew what it was to be hungry and broke.' The secret was that he knew this of his own experience and he felt for every one in need and gave freely."— From *The New York Mail*.

* * *

"The death of Dr. Devins was so sudden that the church is only beginning to realize its loss. He will be missed in his ministry to thousands of New York's poor children through the Tribune Fresh Air Fund. He will be missed as the secretary of the New York Presbyterian Social Union, of which he was the mainstay. He will be missed in the Presbytery and the many philanthropic institutions of which he was a director. He will be missed as editor of his paper. But perhaps he will be missed the most, next to his home, by his friends. Big as was his body, his heart was bigger."— *The Continent*.

* * *

"The Rev. Dr. John Bancroft Devins, editor and proprietor of *The New York Observer*, suddenly ceased to work and live, on August 26, in the prime of his vigorous, energetic, busy, useful life. We learned to know and love this good man during our Northfield days, when he was pastor of the Broome Street Tabernacle in New York City, and

on the reportorial staff of *The New York Tribune*. Few men have come up to the chief editorship of a great religious journal with such a full, all-round training as did Dr. Devins, when he succeeded his great editorial predecessors of *The New York Observer*. And what an editor he was! His life was crowded with incessant activities for the good of others. He had enormous working capacity, and covered a wide range of good works. He was editor, author, lecturer, preacher, pastor, traveler, manager, director, counselor, 'and at all times the friend of the poor and the needy.'—*The Harrisburg Evangelical*.

* ` * *

“ The loss which your paper has sustained has been felt by the entire religious press of America and by none more than by us of the old *Christian Intelligencer*, whose associations with your editors from the Drs. Prime to Dr. Devins have been so close and so cordial. With much sympathy we are,

“ Yours fraternally,

“ The Editors of *The Christian Intelligencer*.”

CHAPTER XVIII

MEMORIAL SERVICES

The funeral services were held on the evening of August 28 in the Central Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, N. Y., with which Dr. and Mrs. Devins were connected. They were most impressive — made so by the large attendance of friends and fellow-workers, by the wealth of the floral tributes adorning the casket and platform, and by the character of the occasion. The services were conducted by the Rev. John F. Carson, D. D., pastor of the church and then moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly. After the invocation and the reading of the Scriptures by President Calvin H. French, D. D., of Huron College, South Dakota, Dr. Carson said:

“The solo which is to be sung was very dear to the heart of our beloved brother, who long ago intimated that it might be sung on such an occasion as this. After the rendering of that solo prayer will be offered by Dr. W. H. Foulkes, of the Rutgers Church of New York.”

The solo sung was the hymn entitled “Only Remembered,” and beginning:

“Fading away like the stars of the morning,” the words being by Horatius Bonar and the music by Ira D. Sankey. Dr. Foulkes then led in prayer.

Addresses were made by the Rev. Charles Augustus Stoddard, D. D., the former editor and owner of *The New York Observer*; the Rev. Charles Stelzle, superintendent of the Department of Church and Labor of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, and Dr. Carson.

Dr. Stoddard said among other things:

“If ever there was one who lived an unselfish, and in that sense Christlike life, Dr. Devins was that man; self was the last thing that he thought of, everybody else came first, before he even sought his daily food or rest at night.

“I ought to say something of our relations together; it is almost too sacred now that he is gone — about some of our mutual confidences. He was to me, whose sons had been taken away in their childhood, as a son, always careful of my needs and shielding me as the years went on, from a great many things which would have been very trying. There was no reason for his doing this, except that he loved me and I loved him. In all of our relations through these many years, I cannot think of any occasion when there was

a shadow of misapprehension, misunderstanding in opinions or unfriendliness in all of our associations.

“ Now, some of you know something about editorial work and the obstacles of newspaper life, and how hard it is to come to a conclusion about important matters, and how good men will differ in regard to things. In sincerity and truth I can say that there was never a shadow of unkindness between Dr. Devins and myself in all those years — everything was as Christian and courteous and loving as it was possible to be between two men. And I think the reason was, aside from his unselfishness, which I think was born in him, that he was a sincere Christian. He had Christ for his motto, he tried to live like Christ and speak as Christ would, and act as Christ would have done. In all of our editorial relations, difficult times and years of anxiety, when he was in the midst of things that would upset a great many men, he was faithful to all his promises; he was forceful and successful in all that he undertook, and he did a great and good work through *The New York Observer* during the years in which he was associated with it. The work that he did went out into this land, into all lands; it was a joy and delight to me to see this young, strong man going forward in the

course which I knew was to be not only for his own advancement, but for the benefit of all connected with him. He thought out new ways of presenting the truth — he said, 'Let us keep our standard high, clear, strong and bright — let us give new illustrations in all our Christian work and Christian thought,' and he was earnest and unflinching to those ends.

"When Dr. Devins entered the service of *The Observer*, he made one request of me — almost a condition — that he might be allowed to carry on what might be called his charitable work. If I had had any idea of the expansive force which was to be given to that simple statement — 'charitable work' — I should have said to him, 'My dear son, don't touch *The Observer*, put your whole strength into charitable work, and you will do more good than you can do here. He did both well; those of you who have noticed the way in which he conducted the paper have been satisfied that it was well done, and I am sure that those who have known anything of the many kinds of charitable work that he did, know how well they were done. Think of raising \$49,000 to send 11,000 children into country homes. This he did through the agency of the Tribune Fresh Air Fund, of which he was manager, and which

he conducted in a most systematic and businesslike way — without any fuss, without the loss of a single penny to the work, without serious accident or without any gain to himself, except from the reward of doing good. If I may judge by the sorrow that fills my own heart and of that which must come to those who are deeply interested, I can only say with the loving, earnest prayers of our brother, Dr. Foulkes: ‘May these stricken hearts be comforted — may we who have suffered so suddenly and so seriously by this bereavement know how to bear it and improve it.’ I thought I was dumb and could not open my mouth, but I thank God He has permitted me to lay here this tribute on the casket of my friend. May God bless and sanctify this sorrow and this service to us.”

* * *

The tribute of the Rev. Charles Stelzle was in substance as follows:

“I think I can understand why so many Hope Chapel people are here to-night. I can recall very distinctly, it seems to me it must be about twenty-three years ago, when Dr. Devins came to Hope Chapel — when I was a boy there.

“Dr. Stoddard spoke of Dr. Devins’ charitable work; he never spoke of it as ‘charitable work’ when he did it — that was

the fine thing about him. He did much more than will ever be known this side of glory for our people on the East Side of New York. I would not try to give any figures because those that come to me in these moments seem so large you could scarcely believe them, but thousands and thousands of dollars were literally given out of his own pocket — sometimes more than the salary that was paid him — to the people among whom he labored. I know what Dr. Devins meant to the people here to-night, and I know there is many an aching heart as now our thoughts turn to the friend who has gone beyond.

“ I am very glad on this occasion to speak of my personal appreciation of what Dr. Devins meant to me. When Dr. Devins came to Hope Chapel I was a young fellow, just about entering the machine shop on the East Side of New York City, not having many opportunities of education and some other things which I have since enjoyed. I recall all that Dr. Devins meant to me, say at the age of fifteen and sixteen to twenty-one. You know what a friend means to a fellow of that sort — Dr. Devins was that kind. I was not afraid to come to him with anything; he knew more of the secrets of my life than any man in this world. I told him freely because he was a friend, because of

that sympathy which was so manifest in every relationship of life. In spite of that strong frame of his, he was tender as a child; he sympathized most lovingly, for he himself had passed through those afflictions — he was kin to all men. I remember well how as a boy he led me through the Christian Endeavor Society, the Sunday-school and through the organizations of Hope Chapel.

“When I felt I must study for the ministry, even though I was a member of another church at that time in another city, I went to Dr. Devins and told him that I wanted to study for the ministry. It was Dr. Devins who helped me to enter the Moody School in Chicago, and I recall also that Dr. Devins loaned me the fare to go to Chicago to begin my work of preparation for the Gospel ministry when so few other people thought I would ever amount to anything in the work of Jesus Christ; it was Dr. Devins that helped me and pushed me forward and encouraged me to go on in the way I felt God had called me.

“When Dr. Devins went to *The New York Observer* and I was called from a little church in Minneapolis to succeed him at Hope Chapel I felt honored, for during all those early days it was Dr. Devins who gave me my ideal for social service. I do not hesitate

to say that in my ministry to the common people during the twelve years, the formative period of my life, that it was Dr. Devins who gave me that ideal, through his own personal work and his conversation and the many things that he wrote in *The Observer* and elsewhere. There was no one man who gave me larger vision of social service than Dr. Devins.

“As a pastor, I remember the first Sunday that I came to the Chapel Dr. Devins came up to me and said: ‘Now, Mr. Stelzle, if you want me to go away from here, I will go;’ he knew all of the possible embarrassment which he might be to me a young man coming to New York to a church of which he had been the pastor. I said to him: ‘No, never, stay here with me.’ Dr. Devins and his family came for two years or more to the chapel where I went as a boy; he came faithfully every Sunday morning, whereas he might have gone to an uptown church — it would have been far more comfortable, and the preaching would have been better there, but instead he sat as my friend and my inspirer as I preached to the people in Hope Chapel. There are other things of which I might speak, but I know what Dr. Devins means to you, my friends, as you know what he has meant to me.”

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We give the tribute of the Rev. John F. Carson, D. D., in full:

“ John Bancroft Devins — that is a name honored in Presbyterianism as but few names are honored, honored throughout the Christian Church and honored in all the circles of life where he is known.

“ As I think of Dr. Devins to-night, letting my mind go back over the years in which it was our privilege to have such close and intimate fellowship, I think I can sum it up in a few sentences. He was a man of untiring energy, an energy that was devoted and consecrated to definite issues; he was a ceaseless worker, inspired by a holy ambition to serve His Master. When he determined upon a college course, he entered the New York University, from which he graduated and as a writer on the newspaper he provided for himself the means which made possible his university and theological education. Graduating from Union Seminary, he had with him that splendid consciousness which comes to a man who has made his own way by honorable means. He sought no easy place of service, but went yonder to Hope Chapel, called as he knew of God, into the service of those to whom the Master would bid him almost specially to preach. From Hope Chapel he went to Broome Street Tabernacle,

putting his life at the service of the people. To-night, as Dr. Stoddard has said, we, who knew of his Christlike ministry, have come here to call him blessed.

“He enters the editorial office, but he is not content to spend his time and energy in the tasks, however arduous they may be, of the editor’s position. Looking out upon the great city of New York with its teeming millions of children, his heart and his thought go out to them, and he puts himself back of that Fresh Air Fund that makes possible a holiday this year for about eleven thousand children of the poor. My friends, if the Tribune Fund has done a service for the children of New York City, it has done it because John B. Devins largely made it possible.

“This morning I took up the latest number of *The New York Observer*, I read through its pages — I read its editorials and then I came to the report of this year’s work of the Fresh Air Fund. It was only last Wednesday that I received a letter from our brother, typewritten as Dr. Stoddard said his was, but after he had signed it, in his own handwriting he added this postscript: ‘I have had a great time this summer with our children.’ That was like John B. Devins, not the children of New York, oh, not such

a far reach as that, but 'our children.' That is the man all through; he identified himself with the interests in which he was engaged. As I came to the close of that report, I read this sentence: 'If anything goes wrong and the children do not reach the train — but things do not go wrong and the train is not missed.' My friends, the things did not go wrong and the train was not missed, because there was a man there, who put every atom of his strength and the whole range of his thought and the full measure of his love into the service for 'our children.' He was a true Greatheart.

"In a letter which I received from him when I was at Northfield, not more than two weeks ago, he wrote me of the large work of this Fresh Air Fund and the burden of it, but also the joy in knowing that there were children receiving an outing who would not were it not for the fund. A man of untiring energy, John Bancroft Devins, was a man of deep sympathy, but his sympathy was not sentimental. There was nothing of that about this world man, this big man, this man of giant strength — nothing that was sentimental in the sense of being effervescent, but no one came into close touch with him without knowing that he had a heart as big as his body. Dr. Stoddard has told us there was

not an atom of selfishness in the whole big make up of the man.

“ My relation with him for the past few years has been that of pastor; I do not know whether he was my pastor or I was his, but I do know that no man ever had a brother who loved him as John B. Devins loved me, and I loved him in return. As I came into the pulpit Sabbath after Sabbath, it got to be a habit for me to look down into the center aisle to see if he was there, for I knew that if he were there, somehow the sermon was going to go. As I looked down, and saw in the play of his face responsiveness that was pictured there, I felt the chord and bond of sympathy and got the inspiration that made it possible — I was going to say, to preach. Oh, my brethren in the ministry, and there are many of you I see here to-night, here was a man who knew a pastor's heart and life, and if ever man had a friend who loved to have him do his best and work for results, I had it in this beloved brother. He was a faithful friend, and if at times there would be some things in the church that were a little burdensome, Dr. Devins would come up and put his arms around me and say, ‘ It is all right, it will come out all right.’ Just a little while ago I got a little pessimistic, and you will remember at the close of a com-

munion Sabbath I was a little sad because there were not more results in the lives of the people. After the service, he led me into the side room and talked it all out and I lost my pessimism in the buoyancy and the optimism of this man's soul — that is friendship — and he was a friend. But I am not sorrowing to-night, I have not lost him, you have not lost him. I shall not take time to speak of him in his Christian faith; it was deep as his experiences were deep — he knew his God and his Saviour.

“ I hold here a little hymn which he composed some years ago, the music of which is written by our sainted Ira D. Sankey. In the fourth verse of this hymn he speaks of the thought, ‘ We would see Jesus — We would hear Jesus — We would serve Jesus ’ — then he combines them all into this last line — ‘ Seeing, hearing, learning, speaking,’ but there it does not end, then the man of it comes in.

“ ‘ Serving daily, faithfully;
 May men see in us, Thy brethren,
 All that Thou wouldst have us be.’

“ That was his one great thought as a Christian man — a reflection of the life of Christ within. He lived a very large life, this man of God, and it worked itself out in

so varied a service — a pastor, a preacher and an editor, a traveler — an author, a philanthropist. Let us underscore that last word, a philanthropist; no, he did not give away large sums of money — if he had it, he would have given it all away, but he gave himself away to the services of the needy. I do not think he only is a philanthropist who has large wealth to distribute; fine and glorious as that is, it is utterly insignificant when compared with the splendid service of this man, who gave himself so devotedly to the cause of the needy and the suffering, anywhere, everywhere, and so he came to be honored by all men. Institutions of learning honored him, his own alma mater, the University of New York, gave him a degree. Center College in Kentucky gave him the degree of Doctor of Divinity — Huron College in South Dakota gave him the degree of Doctor of Laws — why? Because his life and ministry had touched in knowledge at least all these institutions, and they loved to put on him their distinction because it brought to them distinction and honor. I have known men, I have come into close touch with men in the twenty-six years that I have lived and labored in this Greater City of New York, and there have been but few men whom I would place side by side with this big, brainy,

Jesus, Saviour, We Would See Thee.

"We would see Jesus."—JOHN 12: 21.

REV. JOHN BANCROFT DEVINS.

IRA D. SANKEY.

1. Je-sus, Sav-iour, we would see Thee, Lift-ed high up - on the tree;
 2. Je-sus, Teacher we would hear Thee, Hear Thy voice and it a - lone;
 3. Je-sus, Master, we would serve Thee, Fill each day with lov-ing deeds;
 4. Seeing, hearing, learning, speaking, Serving dai - ly, faith - ful - ly;

Bear-ing there our sins and sor-rows, Set-ting us for - ev - er free.
 Learn the lessons Thou wouldst teach us, Speak the words that Thou wilt own.
 Comfort those whose hearts are weary, Like Thy-self sup-ply their needs.
 May men see in us, Thy brethren, All that Thou wouldst have us be.

CHORUS.

We would see Jesus, we would see Jesus; He is our Saviour, and glorious King;

Him would we follow, thro' sunshine and shadow; Now and forever His praises will
 [sing.]

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great-hearted, superb and loving man — John Bancroft Devins. He has entered into glory — fifty-five years old, cut off in the midst of his day — oh! what a poor thing that would be to say. If it is true we live in deeds, what a long stretch of life this man had. His physician said on Saturday morning, ‘He has just worked himself out’ — just worked himself out — that is what he wanted to do, and he wanted to die just as he did die — in the midst of his labors.

“There are just two passages of Scripture that I would quote with reference to him. First, ‘He went about doing good’ — the other, that passage which the Master spoke when He was on the earth, which, oh, I believe, I know that He spoke to this ransomed spirit when it came into His presence — ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’ He went into that glory, the finest, the highest, the greatest glory that can come to a redeemed spirit — Jesus knew what he was talking about — the glory that comes to a life that loses itself in the service of humanity.

“My beloved friends, he lives to-night and in his fellowship we will continue to live. May God grant unto us to follow him as he always followed Christ Jesus, and grant unto

these beloved ones and immediate fellow-workers in service, the consolation of His grace and His love."

The services closed with the benediction by Dr. Stoddard.

A public memorial service in memory of Dr. Devins was held in the Central Presbyterian Church of New York City on the afternoon of Sunday October 8, 1911. On the pulpit platform were the Rev. George Alexander, D. D., moderator of the Presbytery of New York; the Rev. Jesse F. Forbes, D. D., stated clerk of the Presbytery; the Rev. David G. Wylie, D. D., the Rev. Henry Mottet, D. D., rector of the Church of the Holy Communion, and the Rev. Wilton-Merle Smith, D. D., pastor of the Central Church.

Dr. Forbes led the devotional exercises and read a tribute to Dr. Devins written by the Rev. Charles Augustus Stoddard, D. D., and Dr. Wylie read a tribute from Dr. Carson, the moderator of the General Assembly.

Mr. James Yereance, an elder in the Central Church, read letters from John E. Parsons, Jacob A. Riis and the Rev. Henry T. McEwen, D. D., of Amsterdam, N. Y. Dr. Alexander spoke with deep feeling of Dr. Devins as a Presbyterian and emphasized those qualities of deep sympathy and unflinch-

ing loyalty to duty that characterized him, both as editor and pastor, in the midst of mountainous responsibilities. He also told of Dr. Devins' personal life and showed how his experiences had fitted him as few men are prepared, to do a work characterized by loving insight into the needs of humanity.

The Rev. Henry Mottet, D. D., said in part:

“Very judiciously and wisely have the various aspects of the late Dr. Devins' life been assigned to different friends, in the consciousness that to-day and here each of these friends would present one of the many and rare characteristics which explained all the nobility and the richness of that rare life. It is my privilege to speak a word bearing upon his relation to the Tribune Fresh Air Work. His predecessor had brought this to a notable state of usefulness; and when he was taken away, the question passed from lip to lip was, whether the man was living who possessed the ability and courage to take up so heavy a burden. When the call came to Dr. Devins and he had accepted, he realized absolutely that the call came from his Master, that the work was for his Master, and that the thousands and ten thousands of women and children and convalescents whom this work could and must reach

were all of them the Master's care. He was confident that He who called him would also stand by him. He had learned practically the chiefest of all lessons that the man who wholly forgets self in his care for others becomes ever the special care of his Father in Heaven.

"Dr. Devins was wonderfully blessed and prospered in this work in which he had been engaged not quite five brief years.

"He gave special attention to the increase of financial aid, mindful that the greater the pecuniary resource, the larger the good to be accomplished. He did not depend wholly on *The Tribune* subscribers. He exercised the courage to make personal presentation of the cause to many who could and who did assist with exceptionally large contributions.

"Under him were developed the special home for boys, also one for girls, and a new, separate home for those of tubercular tendency — who lived all day and slept all night in the open.

"One of the twelve separate establishments he enlarged so that instead of one hundred it now houses two hundred children. Another of the homes he doubled in size so that now it welcomes and provides comfort for one hundred guests.

"He created another feature of boundless

blessing — a home for girls from twelve to sixteen years of age.

“ He collected this season a little short of \$49,000, and he cared for almost 11,000 women and children.

“ All this is only the most meager outline; but the outline does not represent the finest, the most uplifting and exalted part of that great man’s work. He did all this for love of God and love of his fellows. He sought — he lived to minister to men’s bodies, for the opportunity so presented of lifting them into everlasting fellowship with God their Father.

* * *

The Rev. Dr. Wilton-Merle Smith said in part:—

“ It is said that Francis Xavier, greatly fatigued with his labors, once said to his attendant: ‘ Allow no one to awaken me ’; after a little he came back to the attendant and said: ‘ If a child comes, you may awaken me.’

“ It was the appeal of the child to the heart of John Devins that marked the true nobility of his character. A little child could lead him anywhere. In physical proportions he was great, but his heart was a great deal bigger. I have seldom known a man who had such a heart.

“ John Devins was always open-hearted to the cry of a child, always open-hearted to the cry of any need. I think that the poem by Sam Walter Foss would be a suitable epitaph for the tombstone of John Devins:

“ Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
 Where the race of men go by;
 They are good, they are bad, they are weak, they
 are strong,
 Wise, foolish — and so am I.
 Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat,
 Or hurl the cynic's ban?
 Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
 And be a friend to man.”

That was John Devins — more wonderfully did he exemplify the great-hearted friendliness for human beings than any man in our Presbytery, I venture to say.

“ You remember that other poem, when the angel came to Abou Ben Adhem, who had asked: ‘ Write me as one that loved his fellowman.’ And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest! It was even so with our dear friend.

“ You will go far to find a more beautiful life than the life which is held in retrospect to-day. He was open to every appeal of need, with a heart gentle as a woman, and

yet not that alone, with courage inflexible — a great, strong, nobly built man. His was a life that had worked its way in the struggle against obstacles, with a courage which would never say die. In his earlier days, when a boy, he took a chance and worked out his own education. He not only had gentleness and loveliness of heart, but the strong, inflexible character of manhood. He bore the great rugged features of strength and courage and manhood that distinguished him to the very end of his days.

“ I love to think of my own intimacy with John Devins, and I think the most intimate part of it was in those days at Northfield, when as a Presbytery we went to the Conference and learned to look each other in the face after days of distress and controversy. I think in those days of intimacy with John Devins these two things stood out in the man: the lovable gentleness and the strong inflexible courage. No one could turn him from the path that he thought to be right.

“ As Dr. McEwen wrote, ‘ There never was a false note in anything which he said.’

“ There is a tradition of the early Church, that if one of the Christian leaders died, some friend stepped forward and was baptized and

re-admitted into the Church under the name of the one who had gone, with the thought that thus being baptized, he might be baptized into his spirit to carry on the work and live the life of the one who had gone. Now that Dr. Devins has passed on, there is a call for some of us to be baptized, baptized with the spirit of his wide and almost unlimited philanthropy, baptized into the spirit of brotherhood and love for the friendless that so characterized his life — to be baptized in the spirit of God and of the work of Christ Jesus which so distinguished his character."

At Hope Chapel, 339 East Fourth Street, New York, a memorial service for Dr. Devins, was also held Thursday, October 19. Dr. Devins was pastor of Hope Chapel for ten years and the people who worshiped there under his leadership gathered to add their tribute of esteem and love. Several earnest addresses were given by former fellow-workers who had labored with Dr. Devins on the East Side.

CHAPTER XIX

RESOLUTIONS AND LETTERS

Among other organizations, the following, with which Dr. Devins was identified either as a manager, director or active worker, passed resolutions of sorrow, appreciation and sympathy: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church; the New York Presbytery; the New York Tribune Fresh Air Fund; the Presbyterian Union of New York; the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions; the Board of Counselors of the American Female Guardian Society, the Executive Council and the Board of Managers of the same; the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ; the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor; the Board of Directors of the New York State Hospital for Incipient Pulmonary Tuberculosis; the American Seamen's Friend Society; the Tent Evangel Committee of New York; the Twenty-third Street Presbyterian Church of New York City; the Seventh Presbyterian Church of New York City, and the Negro Fresh Air Fund. These minutes contain much of significance but cannot be reproduced in this volume. The minute adopted by the Presbyterian

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General Assembly was prepared by the Rev. Dr. Richard S. Holmes of Philadelphia, who has since died, and was as follows:

“The One Hundred and Twenty-fourth General Assembly in an hour of solemn memory of those servants of God, ministers of our Church, who have been taken from our number during the past year, adopts the following Memorial Minute with reference to the life and services of the late John Bancroft Devins, D. D., editor of the *New York Observer*, who for twenty-eight years faithfully and efficiently reported the proceedings of the Assembly.

Resolved, That the General Assembly puts on record its high appreciation of the late John Bancroft Devins, D. D., pastor, journalist and Christian gentleman, who gave the whole of a singularly unselfish life to the cause of Christ. His service to the Church, to the neglected children of the poor in New York, and to the interests of truth, are worthy of a praise we cannot speak, and we offer to Mrs. Devins and her bereaved circle the sympathy of a Church that had learned to love and prize Dr. Devins, not only for what he was, but for what he strove to be.”

At a meeting of the Tribune Fresh Air Fund Aid Society, held February 2, 1912, the following minute was unanimously adopted:

“The Rev. John Bancroft Devins, D. D., LL. D., manager of the Tribune Fresh Air Fund Aid Society of the City of New York, closed his life of usefulness in the fifty-fifth year of his age on August 26, 1911, to the great loss of the Society and the grief of its Trustees, with whom he had been associated since 1907.

His activities and interests reached round the globe and touched everywhere the hearts of men of all sorts and conditions. Nothing that concerned the betterment of his fellow man failed to attract his sympathy, which did not spend itself in mere sentiment, but found expression in active and efficient helpfulness.

His life upon earth is ended, but its record and remembrance will continue long to excite the gratitude of the multitudes whom he helped and to keep alive the high regard of those with whom he cooperated in good works.

Such a record will be the special inspiration of his family, to whom the Trustees of the Tribune Fresh Air Fund Aid Society respectfully extend their sympathy.

By direction of the Board.”

(Signed)

WHITELAW REID,
President.

(Signed)

E. L. ROSSITER,
Secretary.

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The Presbyterian Union of New York, by its Executive Committee, unanimously adopted the following minute "in grateful appreciation of the efficient services of our late secretary and treasurer, the Rev. John Bancroft Devins, D. D., LL.D., who was called to his rest and reward on August 26, after but two days' illness."

"Dr. Devins was born in this city on September 26, 1856; received his early education in Camden, N. Y., and at Elizabeth, N. J., worked his way through college as a reporter on *The Tribune*; graduated from New York University in 1882 and from The Union Theological Seminary in 1887; licensed by New York Presbytery, May, 1887; ordained June, 1888; pastor of Hope Chapel, 1888; in 1901 he took charge of the English work of the Broome Street Tabernacle. In 1898 he became managing editor of *The New York Observer*, and in May, 1905, its proprietor. In 1907 he became also manager of the Tribune Fresh Air Fund. The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by Center College, Danville, Ky., in June, 1901; that of M. A., by his Alma Mater in 1903, and that of Doctor of Laws by Huron College in 1909.

His published works are 'An Observer in the Philippines,' 'On the Way to Hwai

Yuen' and 'The Classic Mediterranean.' He was also the author of the hymn, 'Jesus Saviour, We Would See Thee.'

Dr. Devins was an indefatigable worker, and withal preserved a sweet Christian spirit, which led him to become to his brethren 'John the Beloved.'

We shall greatly miss him and his painstaking work that contributed largely to the success of the Union in recent years.

The whole Church will miss him and his efficient services by voice and pen; the 11,000 poor children of the tenements who were annually sent to the country by him as manager of the Tribune Fresh Air Fund are weeping for him, and the many societies with which he was identified will feel his loss.

He realized his cherished wish that he 'die in the harness,' and his transition from an overworked brain and heart to the rest and joy of the Master's presence was sudden and unexpected.

We shall not forget his unobtrusive Christian character, his unselfish devotion, his sincere consecration and his conspicuous loyalty in connection with every branch of church or philanthropic work with which he associated himself. We thank God for Dr. Devins and the splendid work He wrought in him and by him.

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We would not bring him back; but our hearts go out in loving sympathy to the devoted wife and step-son who remain, and with them we say of our friend:

Good-night, beloved; we will meet you in the morning."

JAMES YEREANCE
SILAS F. HALLOCK
FLEMING H. REVELL
Committee on Minute.

Sept. 15, 1911.

Only a few extracts can be given from the letters that have poured in upon Mrs. Devins from all parts of the world as the news of the death of Dr. Devins traveled to those in distant lands where his occasional presence and help had meant so much to toilers in loneliness and obscurity as well as from the heart of the great city where he lived and labored. One or two however must be given at length:

"Dr. Devins' translation is a calamity to our Church at this juncture. His wise course in the *Observer* has done much to help to peace and rest."

* * *

"I want to say first that while I sorrow, I cannot feel one regret for Dr. Devins. He lived a wonderful, a glorious life, and it ended most enviably — a brief transit from fullness of vigor and service to fullness of

eternal life and perfect service. His life was not brief. He lived, really lived, at least the lives of five or six ordinarily successful men. We do not regret that our Lord lived on earth so many years less than Dr. Devins did; nor that he lived on earth so many years less than some of us are living. Thousands of good and successful men work on to seventy, eighty, ninety years, without doing a hundredth part the good that Dr. Devins did. He is living on earth to-day in thousands of characters made happier, better, more useful because he lived — because he lived they live also.

Possibly, I do not know, he might have been with us yet many years if it had been possible for him to think chiefly of himself, to forget his passion for others in taking care of his health, but who could wish it so? The very power of his passion to work for the world gave him power not otherwise possible over others, other events, other institutions. Sacrifice is as essential to great service as Calvary is to the salvation of the world. Dr. Devins, forgetting his work in taking care of himself, would have been another man than he was, one we do not know when we think of him, not the man who molded men and shaped affairs and always for the divine kingdom. Suppose he had de-

clined the Fresh Air Fund Work this year, would it have been better for him to stay here longer, doing unspeakably less, than it is for him to go with the love and gratitude of the seven or eight thousand poor little ones he sent into God's fields this summer? God's acre where you will lay the worn-out, splendid machine to rest after its fully doing its glorious work in the world, will be God's acre indeed to one who rests there after leading the poor children, His little ones, out into the open acres of God's world commonly closed to them. I say it is a shining and glorious close to a life to which also those great adjectives belong. I say he is enviable.

'The world will be so much poorer for his going,' we say in such a case. Will it? I cannot feel sure it will. After the tidings came this morning, I went out of doors and gave my mind leave to follow its own devices for an hour or more. It went back over the wonderful years, made wonderful so largely by the presence of Dr. Devins in them. Seen in the light that floods out of the disciple's grave, each incident took new meaning and power. The meditation of the hour — and it will be so of many future hours — found a mordant in the sorrowful news to fix it forever deeply in mind, heart, character. The death of such a man, like the death of

our Lord, instantly and forever magnifies a thousand times the power of his work and example.

Because Dr. Devins has been led out into the fresher air, the lovely fields, the fuller service and glory of the Land that is fairer than day, how many who have watched him and shared in some degree the spirit he stirred in them, will now say: 'Well, then, since he has laid down the tools, I must do more, much more, in the work he gave himself to!' Will ten say so? a score? a hundred? a thousand? That last number is a minimum, I think. 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' As with the Master, so with the servant.

His distinguishing qualities throughout his life were unflinching courtesy with all his downright force, sympathy ready, deep, lasting, and always a passion of love and loyalty, — wonderful loyalty — to his Lord and all his own nearest — and among those we must reckon always the under dog in the fight, the handicapped, the poor and lonely, the ones, in short, to whom his Master would have been most loyal. Ah, how one loved him who knew him!"

* * *

"This is the tribute not of an intimate

friend, but of a comparative stranger. Ten thousand men, doubtless, have as much claim to be counted in the circle of his friends as I have. I have known of him and esteemed him highly for his work's sake many years, but came into personal converse with him only a few times.

The first time I ever saw him was at a meeting of the Presbyterian General Assembly — whether at the meeting held in Cleveland or Philadelphia or Saratoga I cannot recall. I was a commissioner, and he was reporting, I presume, for *The New York Tribune*. In order to hear the speakers from the platform and the floor to the best advantage I moved up into the seat assigned to the newspaper reporters. With some misgivings as to whether I was not intruding upon forbidden territory, I took my seat next to a hearty looking young man — who looked up from his notes, gave me a welcome and made me feel at home. At proper intervals we fell into conversation and plied each other with questions about men and measures before the Assembly. It might be said we became well acquainted, though we did not know each other's name. All I knew was that he was a reporter for a New York paper, and that he seemed to have more than a reportorial interest in the proceedings of the

Assembly. I did not identify him until years afterwards — perhaps twenty — and then it was at Lake Mohonk. Then I said to myself:

‘John B. Devins, sitting on the right hand end of the speakers’ and chairman’s table, and reporting the proceedings of this conference for the Associated Press is the man who extended to me the hospitality of a seat at the reporters’ table in the General Assembly many years ago.’ Thereupon, at the close of the morning session, I sought him out, and we exchanged the right hand of fellowship.

Another glimpse I had of him was on the Ulster & Delaware Railroad. He was on one of his errands of mercy in behalf of the Fresh Air Fund and his destination was, I believe, Shokan; soon to be annihilated, with other villages, by the vast Ashokan reservoir. He saluted me with the caption under which I was occasionally writing for *The Observer*, and then began to question me in regard to my past, present and future. Did he not have the happy faculty of making a man feel that he was interested in him? At least, after conversing with him, I concluded that he was as familiar with the resorts and retreats in the Catskills as with the streets of New York. And through him many city

children were made acquainted with the green pastures and mountain brooks of this unsurpassed summer resort. Was he not a good shepherd?

The last time I met him was at the close of a Mohonk conference, on the Walkill Valley Railroad, when we were all *en route* to our several homes. His wife and other members of his household were with him. So it was not as the editor of *The New York Observer*, nor superintendent of the Fresh Air Fund, nor secretary of the Mohonk conference, but as a family man I saw him. Having introduced him to my wife, he in turn introduced her to Mrs. Devins and daughter, Mrs. Penfield; and a most charming visit all the way to Kingston ensued. How happy he seemed! He reminded one of a bird let out of a cage, or a boy set free from school. He impressed me as a man who, if he enjoyed himself much, enjoyed his family more, and rejoiced in the Lord always! And his joy he communicated to others.

To my long-standing admiration for him I that day added love. And now to love is added the hope that we shall meet again in the City where the Lamb is the light thereof and His servants — with His name in their foreheads — joyfully and forever serve Him.”

“ We mourn Dr. Devins as truly as though he were our own brother. In the Auditorium at Northfield Dr. Frances paid a beautiful tribute to Dr. Devins’ work for Northfield, helping for years to spread the Gospel here preached to others, no small share of the success being through him. The Rev. John McDowell spoke of his ministry to the children, saying ‘ he believed Dr. Devins had really laid down his life for others.’ I can well believe that, for I know of his devotion to the various homes and institutions for the relief of suffering ones. He surely fought a good fight and is now entered into his rest. But we will all be so lonely without him here; for this we mourn. But for him ‘ to be with Christ is far better.’ ”

* * *

“ I remember that Dr. Devins toiled long and hard at work which sorely taxes strength. I never knew him to lower the flag in our battle. He was a prince among men. How he loved to uplift all who were cast down. The last time we talked together he expressed the firm determination, if ever he were permitted to minister to a church again, to be a most faithful pastor. That is the phase of work in the churches which he felt was often sadly neglected. Some men shrivel and harden as the years fly by. He

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grew stronger and tenderer. If the hour of his home-going had come, as we most reverently believe, then how kind it was of the Heavenly Father to take him, without long suffering, from the activities here to those yonder."

* * *

"It is hard to realize that Dr. Devins' work here is over. He was the friend of so many. He has made rough paths smooth and crooked paths straight and has shown others, by his works, what a glorious thing it is to know and love God. Thousands of little children he has made so happy. We can surely say, 'The world is better for his having been in it.' The world will miss him sorely. No one went to him in vain. There was always a ready smile, a warm hand-clasp, and no matter how busy he might be, one was made to feel welcome. Dr. Devins certainly helped to make our life brighter and smoother. The word friend has taken a new meaning."

* * *

"A noble character has passed on to the higher service. No words can adequately express the personal characteristic which we esteem the most. We may number the years from the day of one's birth to the day of one's death — we may mention the deeds

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which seem most noteworthy — the struggles and successes which are most interesting and characteristic — and after all we have to say, there remains the painful consciousness that the best is still unspoken.

“ ‘ We cannot think of him as idle ;
He must be a toiler still ;
God giveth that work to the angels,
Who fittest the task fulfill.

“ ‘ And somewhere yet in the hill-tops,
Of the city that hath no pain
He will wait in the Heavenly mansion,
To bid us a welcome again.’ ”

* * *

“ Ever since we were associated in the work of the East Side Federation and in the relief operation of 1903-4, of which Dr. Devins was the heart and the head in the district about Hope Chapel, I have esteemed him as a king among men and one of New York's best citizens. We all have the comforting and inspiring memory of a helpful and brotherly life.”

* * *

“ Dr. Devins is remembered for his large work on the East Side, as well as in other parts of the city, but particularly by us of the City Mission because of his work in connec-

tion with Broome Street Tabernacle. While all of our workers held him in highest esteem, it is at Broome Street and the Italian West Side Mission that the people have special affection for him because of what he has done for the members of those two churches and their children. Everywhere I go among our Italian people I hear from young and old expressions of affection for him who lived so well and did so much.

I am just home from a long journey and my first greeting was, 'Dr. Devins has passed away.' He was my true friend and in ways of which the world did not know he helped me. I had for him the sincerest affection. The Church has lost a great man and *The Observer* has had its heart taken away. I wish I could pay a just tribute to Dr. Devins' greatness and goodness. I consider him one of the truest men I have ever known."

* * *

"When three thousand miles away on the way home and looking forward to seeing and telling Dr. Devins all about it, the wire brought me the sad news of his death. That I could not grasp his hand again was almost unbelievable. It was hard to realize that one of the kindest hearts that ever beat was stilled.

For twelve years one of my chief joys

has been a close and constant association with the well-loved man who had just laid down his earthly tasks, so many and so hard and every one having as its ultimate aim the good of some one else."

* * *

"Everything that has been written by appreciative friends is true. What then was his peculiar charm under the spell of which we all came? He was courteous — yes, always, not with a superficial courtesy of manner only but the true courtesy of a kind heart. He was unselfish; it was his nature to consider others first and no matter what stress was upon him he ever made time to listen and to advise and to help. It was these splendid qualities of courtesy, of absolute forgetfulness of self and of kindness of heart that, welded together into a true and all-embracing sympathy, made those who knew him love him. A dear friend has gone and the passing years will but serve to show how much he was to me and memory will keep the picture of our association together as one of its choicest gems."

HIS FAVORITE POEM

Dr. Devins carried much poetry in his memory, often repeating certain favorite stanzas on occasions, when they best ex-

pressed his convictions or emotions. This poem of Whittier's probably found most frequent use as expressing the deepest currents of his life endeavor and feeling.

MY TRIUMPH

The autumn-time has come ;
On woods that dream of bloom,
And over purpling vines,
The low sun fainter shines.

Let the thick curtain fall ;
I better know than all
How little I have gained,
How vast the unattained.

Others shall sing the song,
Others shall right the wrong,
Finish what I begin,
And all I fail of win.

What matter, I or they ?
Mine or another's day,
So the right word is said
And life the sweeter made ?

THE END

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