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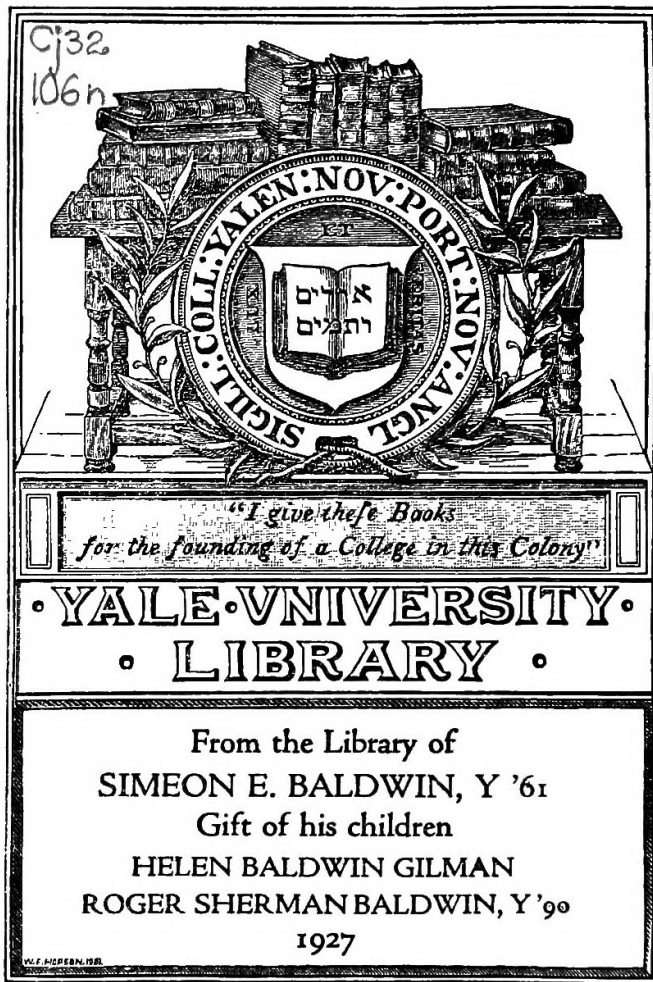
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Smith, Asa D.

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New York, 1851.

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*Wm. A. S. Boldwin
with the respects of
James Brewster*

THE GUILLESS ISRAELITE.



A

SERMON

ON OCCASION OF THE

DEATH OF MR. JOSEPH BREWSTER.



BY REV. ASA D. SMITH, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE FOURTEENTH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.



THE GUILLESS ISRAELITE.

A

S E R M O N

ON OCCASION OF THE

DEATH OF MR. JOSEPH BREWSTER,

DELIVERED IN THE

FOURTEENTH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

NEW YORK, JUNE 29, 1851.

BY

REV. ASA D. SMITH, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

NEW YORK:

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH, 669 BROADWAY.

1851.

NEW YORK, JULY 12, 1851.

REV. ASA D. SMITH, D. D.

DEAR SIR :—The relatives of our brother, the late JOSEPH BREWSTER, wishing to preserve some memento of his excellent and useful life, we ask the favor, on their behalf, that you will permit the discourse you recently preached on occasion of his death, to be published.

With great respect, yours, most truly,

JAMES BREWSTER,
LEMUEL BREWSTER.

NEW YORK, JULY 18, 1851.

JAMES and LEMUEL BREWSTER, Esq's.

GENTLEMEN :—Your request respecting the sermon occasioned by the death of your brother, I cannot refuse. Ever shall I regard it as one of the choicest privileges of my life, to have been so long intimately associated with him ; and I esteem it a privilege now, to aid, in however humble a manner, in preserving and diffusing the sweet and precious savour of his memory.

Yours, very truly,
ASA D. SMITH.

S E R M O N .

JOHN i. 47.—“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”

OF the cast of character here indicated, every day's experience gives us a higher appreciation. In early childhood, the judgments formed of men and things are marked by an unbounded credulity. Seeming is synonymous with being. The stars are within reach; all that glistens is gold; every smile is an honest one; and on every word there is the impress of truth. But as time rolls away, not only does it correct errors of less consequence, it rectifies those which pertain to human conduct. As we are compelled to ask, is the coin proffered us genuine?—do we look on the paste diamond, or the real gem?—so as to character. How earnestly do we inquire, after many a sad disappointment, is integrity its fundamental element—is sincerity its crowning grace?

So in respect to character generally, but with greater reason in regard to the Christian life. False seeming in other directions may do comparatively little harm. But let our religion be marked by unsoundness, and the evil is extensive as the range of

our influence, and momentous as the destinies of eternity. How we love to perceive, both for the sake of the exemplar and the example, what our Lord, in the text, recognized in Nathaniel. "Behold," said he, noting as well his inmost heart as his outward demeanor, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

It is an honest piety alone that has power with God.
Men may

———. "display to congregations wide,
Devotion's every grace except the heart."

Withfluency of speech, and the gush of animal feeling, they may bow in the closet. They may even give their goods to feed the poor, and their bodies to be burned. Yet if God behold in them the taint of insincerity, they shall be "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." The mute unconscious worship of the dumb creation, yea, of the inanimate world, shall be dearer to him. No dews of divine grace shall descend upon their own souls; no saving influences shall they call down upon the world.—Nor is the loss in this direction more apparent than in another. It is only an unquestionable piety that can properly commend religion to men's consciences. Let it be widely felt, in respect to one whose name is on the church-roll, and who sits at the communion-table, that his religious character is, after all, very doubtful, and so far from being won by his example, men are repelled. We rejoice, then, in every instance of piety so decided and whole-hearted

as to be known and read of all men. We bless God for the proof thus afforded to men of skeptical tendency, that heaven is true, and that some beginnings of it are known on earth. How much more effective this than any merely abstract presentation. Give me but one church member of whom all the ungodly are compelled to say, "that is an honest man—however it may be with others, he is indeed a Christian;" and you have put into my hands an argument which I would not exchange for a whole library of apologies and defences.

Another view here suggests itself. Disordered and marred in all its departments is our fallen humanity; yet is there great diversity of natural character—a diversity referable in part, doubtless, to differing grades of sinfulness, but more, perhaps, to constitutional causes, and to the influence of circumstances. Some men, truly pious in the sight of God, have so much to contend with, so many infelicities of temperament and habit, that by their acquaintances in general they are underrated. They are naturally rude, or austere, or morose, or gloomy and reserved, or sensitive and irritable. Grace struggles for the mastery, and mainly secures it. Victories are gained, of which the superficial observer may have little thought, but which are known and commended in heaven, yea, held in higher esteem than the easier triumphs of men of happier mould. Yet, the old, rude, ungainly stock is apt to be more in men's minds, than the graft of holiness.

They look at the unsymmetrical, uncomely casket, and forget the jewel it contains. Religion, on the other hand, is peculiarly attractive when conjoined with a felicitous natural character. When with true piety is connected an original urbanity and dignity of manners, a bland and even temper, a delicate sensibility, kind and generous impulses, largeness and loftiness of mind—when these and other attractive traits are the fitting counterpart of the spiritual, the appropriate setting of the picture, the beautiful trellis-work, around which the tendrils of grace may entwine themselves and its flowers bloom—how is religion honored and commended. When, especially, there is great directness and transparency of character—all artifice, management, and concealment apart—the inner man unequivocally revealed in every movement of the outer, as was not unlikely the case with Nathaniel—what superadded reason to exclaim, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile !”

The bearing of these remarks, my hearers, you already perceive, as well as the pertinency of the text. To the character of him who has recently been taken from us, and to whose life our thoughts are now to be turned, no passage within the lids of the Bible is more appropriate. We cannot, indeed, like the divine Redeemer, search the heart. But he has said, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” And who that had intercourse with **JOSEPH BREWSTER** could fail to understand his character? His heart shone out

ever in his countenance ; his words were the very echoes of his thought. At the greatest possible remove was he from deception and double dealing. So readily, indeed, did his warm affections gush forth, that it was scarce possible for him to conceal or disguise them. Let us muse this morning on his example, let us call to mind its singular combinations of excellence ; that we may follow him as he followed Christ—above all, that we may glorify God in him.

There is something worthy of note in the lineage of our departed brother. Though every man must stand on the foundation of his own character, yet a godly ancestry is ever a ground of thankfulness. Largely do their prayers avail for those who come after them, and a blessed influence has their memory. As replete with true Christian feeling, as with tender and graceful natural affection, are those lines of Cowper :—

“My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth ;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,
The son of parents past into the skies.”

Joseph Brewster was a descendant in the sixth generation from Elder William Brewster, a prominent actor, you need not be told, in the early scenes of New England's history. This excellent man was for a time, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, one of the under Secretaries of State. He afterwards retired to the

obscure village of Scrooby, in Nottinghamshire, and there took a leading part in the formation of a Puritan church—the very church which subsequently emigrated to Holland, and came at length in the Mayflower to New England. It was formed in his house, and by an English writer has been not inaptly called “Brewster’s Church.” Says Governor Bradford, “He was a special stay and help to them. They ordinarily met at his house on the Lord’s day, * * and with great love he entertained them when they came, making provision for them to his great charge, and continued to do so while they could stay in England.” Nor was he less efficient in the founding of the Plymouth colony. Brewster and Bradford have been appropriately called “the Aaron and Moses of the enterprise.” While the latter presided in its secular affairs, the former took the lead in its ecclesiastical. In all the train of events, indeed, from which that colony sprang, Brewster has not without reason been represented as the prime mover.

I have been the more particular in these references, from the impression, I think not a fanciful one, that in the beloved elder whose departure we now mourn, there was, in certain leading points of character, a striking resemblance to his distinguished ancestor. His memory has, in more than one respect, the fragrance of the Mayflower. In illustration of this remark, let me quote briefly from Bradford’s Memoir of Elder William Brewster. “He did much good,” says

Bradford, concerning his residence at Scrooby, “in the county where he lived, in promoting and furthering religion, and not only by his practice and example, and provoking and encouraging of others, but by procuring of good preachers to all places thereabouts, and drawing on of others to assist, and help to forward in such a work ; he himself most commonly deepest in the charge, and sometimes above his ability.” Amid his many trials in Holland, “he ever bore his condition with much cheerfulness and contentation.” In the new world, “he was no way unwilling to take his part and to bear his burden with the rest ; . . . he would labor with his hands in the field as long as he was able.” “He was,” adds his biographer, “of a very cheerful spirit, very sociable and pleasant amongst his friends ; of an humble and modest mind, of a peaceable disposition, undervaluing himself and his own abilities, and sometimes overvaluing others ; inoffensive and innocent in his life and conversation, which gained him the love of those without as well as those within. Yet he would tell them plainly of their faults and evils, both publicly and privately ; but in such a manner as was usually well taken from him. He was tender-hearted and compassionate of such as were in misery. . . . In teaching he was very stirring and moving the affections. . . . He had a singular good gift in prayer, both public and private, in ripping up the heart and conscience before God, in the humble confession of sin, and begging the mercies of God in Christ for the pardon thereof.”

Joseph Brewster, the eldest of eight children, was born in New Preston, Conn., May 28th, 1787. His father, a man of great natural sensibility and kindness, had at one time a large estate. During the signal commercial embarrassments of the year 1800, however, he was subjected to great losses; so that at his death, which took place when Joseph was quite young, no wealthy patrimony descended to his children. They were thus, happily perhaps for them, thrown the more entirely on their own resources. The other parent of our deceased brother still survives. Bending under the weight of many years toward her own grave—missing the strong staff on which she had so long and so fondly leaned—she now,

——— “Reversed our nature’s kindlier doom,
Pours forth a *mother’s* sorrows o’er his tomb.”

She was not, in his childhood, a professor of religion, though such she has been for many years past. Yet her children testify that her influence was, in respect even to religious matters, very salutary. Since her infirmities have forbidden her being here to listen, and since, on the borders of eternity, she will not be harmed by the echoes of what I utter, I may freely repeat their testimony. She was “instant, in season, and out of season,” in storing their minds with divine truth. “My earliest recollections,” says one of them, “are of my mother teaching us prayers and hymns, and the Assembly’s Catechism, which were thus written,

as it were, with a diamond upon my heart, and are vivid in my memory to this day." He refers especially to that familiar stanza, "Now I lay me down to sleep;" a stanza which, simple and brief though it is, will be more fondly remembered and more highly esteemed in heaven, than many a volume of world-renowned poetry. The seed she thus sowed was not scattered in vain. Of the son who has just departed we are to speak at length; but of the other children who survive it must suffice to say, they are all professedly the followers of Christ. Deeply sensible was Joseph ever of his obligations to his excellent mother. Even when an unconverted and worldly-minded young man, her word was a law to him. Ever did he treat her with the utmost kindness and respect. Some of you remember well how his face shone with gladness, as, leaning on his arm, she walked with him to the sanctuary, the last Sabbath he spent on earth.

He learned the handicraft of a hatter in Norwich, Conn., in the service—it may not be amiss to remark in passing—of Capt. David Nevins, father of the late Dr. William Nevins, of Baltimore, and of the late Mr. Rufus Neyins, an esteemed elder of the Central Presbyterian Church, in this city. Some years after the close of his apprenticeship, he was employed as a journeyman for a time in Northampton, Mass. About the year 1813, he commenced business for himself in Maiden Lane, in this city.

The early life of Mr. Brewster was marked by the

same traits of natural character which were so apparent in later years. He was active, energetic, and persevering in business; frank, prompt, and decided; of a sanguine temperament, a sympathetic and generous disposition. Of a companionable and vivacious turn, his company was much sought by young men of like spirit. Away from the direct influence of his mother, and unrestrained by a principle of godliness, he may have fallen into some of the follies to which youth is so liable. It certainly pained him as a Christian, to think of those years of unregeneracy. But there is one form of evil—sadly prevalent in those days, and not now wholly obsolete—from which he was happily preserved. I allude to the vice of intemperance. Fellow-apprentices and fellow-journeymen he had, addicted to it; but he followed not their pernicious example—in spite of no little derision, he took a decided stand against it. This may be partly ascribed, perhaps, to his mother's influence; but "he seemed," a near relative testifies, "to have always a natural antipathy to intoxicating drink." His steadfast and ardent devotedness, in later years, to the cause of temperance, was no new-born zeal; it had connection as well with early impressions and inclinations, as with more matured convictions.

In 1815, he took a seat in the Cedar street Church, where then the Rev. Dr. Romeyn officiated. It was while in attendance there he became deeply interested in the subject of religion. His spiritual exercises were

marked by the same intensity which had characterized his whole life. Under his convictions of sin, it is remembered, as he listened to Dr. Romeyn, he trembled so violently as to shake the seat on which he sat. A good law-work—ever apt to be followed by a good gospel-work ! Hope from the cross soon beamed upon his troubled spirit, and he joyfully consecrated himself to the service of Christ. Attractive as his natural character in many respects was, there was a great change in him. The sentiment of his heart seemed to be

“ Love I much ? I’ve much forgiven.”

His early youth had been spent in sin, and now he would redeem the time. As he had been whole-souled in worldliness, so would he be whole-souled in his religion. He made no reserves. Intent he was upon doing good. Hardness for the cause of Christ he was willing to endure. In season and out of season did he delight to labor for the salvation of souls and the glory of God. It was in the year 1822 he made a public profession of his faith ; and from that day to the hour when he was taken from us, his purpose never faltered. We claim not for him sinless perfection ; he was at the farthest possible remove from claiming it for himself. We remember with what emotion he used to sing :—

“ O, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I’m constrained to be !”

But surely his path was “as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

In the year 1826, he became a member of the Bleeker Street Church, of which he was afterwards chosen an elder. That church was then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Matthias Bruen, that bright star, removed too soon for earth's dimness to the upper firmament. Ardently did Mr. Brewster love him, and fully was that love reciprocated. He was scarce willing to leave his pastor's dying-bed. And when the man of God bade our brother farewell, laying his hand upon his head, he said, with peculiar emphasis, “I shall meet *you* in heaven.” They have met in heaven, and with that other servant of Christ, the lamented Mason, they are praising him in glory, whom together they loved to magnify on earth.

In 1834, one of the two elders of the recently formed Brainerd Church, the excellent Harlan Page, was called to his rest. It was felt then in our city, more than now, that missionary service should neither be confined to the clergy nor to heathen ground. Some friends of the bereaved church, accordingly, having knowledge of Mr. Brewster's spirit, made a formal appeal to him to take the vacant place in the new enterprise. They found him in his spacious and well furnished mansion, in one of the most pleasant parts of the city. They found him too in agreeable and profitable church relations. They laid their case before him. He took it into serious consideration ;

and with his usual promptness, he soon announced to them his determination to sever the ties which bound him to his present place of worship, and enter the field opened before him. He joined the Brainerd Church Nov. 9th, 1834; and on the 30th of the same month, he was installed as an elder. In connection with this enterprise, as everywhere else, he did nothing by halves. He not only gave liberally of his substance, he threw his whole soul into the work. Nor was he content to labor at arm's length. He did what too seldom is done—he made his domestic arrangements subservient to the building up of Christ's kingdom. Like his God, he “loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” He transferred his residence to his new field of labor. He left his pleasant mansion in Fourth street, and fixed his abode under the very shadow of the newly erected sanctuary. There, for more than half the period of his Christian life, he served God and his generation, how zealously and faithfully you who knew him scarce need be reminded.

- A few years after he connected himself with the Brainerd Church, an event occurred, on many accounts memorable in his history. By unwearied diligence and good management, he had, from small beginnings, risen to affluence. In the year 1837, however, a tempest of commercial embarrassment swept over the land, beneath which, while wrecks were scattered all around him, the fabric of his own fortunes trembled to

its very foundation. By the aid of kind friends—such as it was not possible he should ever lack—the dreaded catastrophe was delayed, but not averted. In 1838, he came to the conclusion, more terrible than death to a heart sensitive as his both by nature and by grace, that he must fail in business. I well remember the day when, under the crushing weight of that certainly, he came early home from his store, and sought opportunity to unbosom himself to me as his pastor. The tears he shed then like rain-drops were those of a man, it is true, but they were those of a Christian also. It was not the mere loss of money he cared for. The fear that racked him was, that just claims upon him would not be met, and that others would suffer. His keen sense of honor was wounded; and his heart was pained by the thought that the cause of Christ might be dishonored. Could he have been assured, that though his remaining days must be passed in poverty, all his obligations would be promptly and fully discharged, the agony of his soul would have been changed to gladness.

It is well known that with this failure certain speculative transactions, though their effect has by some, probably, been exaggerated, were yet more or less concerned. A passing glance at this aspect of the matter may not be amiss. As in case of civil insurrection, it depends often on the success of the undertaking, whether it be glorious revolution or infamous rebellion, somewhat so is it, I have observed, with

adventurous movements in business. He who prospers in them, though it be even in spite of a thousand blunders, is apt to be deemed a sagacious man, a man worthy of all regard and confidence. But he who fails, be he even a Necker or a Rothschild, may deem himself happy if nothing worse be imputed to him than a want of financial skill. In the case of Joseph Brewster, no one could suspect a lack of integrity. That he misjudged in some of the matters referred to, he himself afterwards deeply felt; nor would we attempt to establish the contrary. We are not concerned to prove him perfect in wisdom. Say he was deluded, if you please; yet what fellowship had he in that delusion—of some of the wisest and best men in the land. Nor may we forget the unquestionable purity and nobleness of his motives. It was from no low, sordid purpose, no mere lust of gain, no desire of personal aggrandizement, that he turned any portion of his resources into other than the ordinary courses of business. It was not that he might hoard, but that he might scatter—that he might have still more ample means of supplying the wants of the poor, and of diffusing through a thousand channels the blessings of the gospel. I know, indeed, that under a plea of this sort, the rankest worldliness may take shelter. Yet it is not difficult here to discriminate. The man who, while he enlarges his already engrossing business, giving it new and perhaps hazardous directions, and talks much of the good he designs to do, yet holds his

present means as with a miser's grasp, we may be well assured knows not what manner of spirit he is of. Were he really under the influence of the motive he speaks of, we should see evidence of it *now*. But the man who, like Joseph Brewster in the days of his prosperity, is giving month by month with a princely liberality, may well be acquitted of the charge of insincerity, when, even in unduly extending his affairs, or in entering into unwise speculations, he avows as his motive a desire to do good. I have, in my own thought, a short method with men's purposes; I judge of what they mean to do, *by what they are now doing*.

The business errors of Mr. Brewster—for some such, like other men, he doubtless committed—had ordinarily, indeed, a leaning to virtue's side. Upright and generous himself, he was in some cases, it may be, too confiding. He was even misled at times, perhaps, by a certain buoyant and rejoicing trust in Providence. Those opposite elements, faith and sense, it is one of the hardest things in the world to bring together in business matters. Sense slowly calculates; faith begins with conclusions. Sense sails by soundings; faith by the stars. Sense trembles at molehills; faith smiles at mountains. Sense cries, "See here what perils beset us—we shall surely perish." "Nay," responds faith, "The angels will help us—yea, the Lord of the angels." There is, in truth, a possible harmony between the two; they should be combined, as the terrestrial and celestial charts for the use of the

mariner. Yet how liable to extremes, here as elsewhere, is human nature in its best estate. If there must be such extremes, they are certainly loveliest and safest when on the side of faith. When Mr. Brewster, not very long before his death, to the suggestion of a friend that it would be well for him to take out a policy of life insurance, earnestly responded that it would show a distrust of Providence,—though the answer did not perhaps indicate the height of worldly prudence, there was yet evident in its spirit much of the wisdom that cometh from above. A spirit like that, whatever we may think of a decision of the judgment here and there, must ever command our love and admiration. That was no ordinary eulogium passed by a shrewd observer on our sainted brother, when he said, after mentioning a few points in which he thought he had misjudged respecting his business, “His was one of the rare cases in which men manage their spiritual affairs better than their temporal.”

Six weeks ago to-day, having bidden farewell to his old place of worship, he united with others in forming here the Fourteenth Street Presbyterian Church. It was delightful to see how his Christian affections clustered around this new sanctuary and his new associates. He loved the place where so many years he had attended God’s ordinances, and many were the parting tears he shed. But his was not a religion of circumstances, a piety so frail or so volatile that it would scarce bear transportation. He was not one

of those who only “in this mountain” or “at Jerusalem” can “worship the Father.” He could listen with gladness to the Gospel, wherever and by whomsoever it might be uttered. He loved the image of Christ, wherever he recognized it. He could hold fellowship with the people of God, of whatever nation, or kindred, or tongue, or people. “What a blessed day,” he said to one of our number on the Sabbath this church was organized, “has this been in Zion—*in our Zion!*” I remember with what cordiality and animation of manner he congratulated one of the building committee on the success of their labors. You recall his fervent exhortation the last Sabbath evening he spent with us, the radiance of his countenance whenever he worshiped here, and his incipient labors for the advancement of this enterprise. Nor am I forbidden to mention this morning, what has been often repeated, and will still bear rehearsal, that remark of his the evening before his death, “There is but one place more pleasant to me than that Lecture-Room—that place is heaven.”

Having thus traced the mere outline of his earthly career, let us pause now, ere we conclude, to contemplate more particularly some of the leading traits of his character.

We may not omit, in the survey, his peculiar *courtesy*. Few have exemplified more fully that “unbought grace of life.” It was not with him the mere varnish of art or custom; it was a beauty that pertained to the very grain of his character. It resulted from the

delicacy of his sensibilities, and his spontaneous regard for the feelings of others, as felicitously conjoined with his speaking countenance, and his elastic physical frame. A gentleman he was both by nature and by grace. He deemed not beneath him an accomplishment which Inspiration has made a duty. How observant was he of conventional proprieties—how attentive to every one's convenience—how careful that none should be slighted or offended!

How full was his heart of *all benevolence*. In his original temperament there was much of kindness, but grace had wrought mightily in the same line. How readily and tenderly did he sympathize with the sick and the afflicted. Whatever pressure of business might keep him from others, he was sure to visit them. Nor, if the case required something more than sympathy, was he apt to go empty-handed. The very day preceding his death, as he called on the member of this church whose decease has this morning been announced, he promised to bring her, on the *next day*, some little delicacy that might tempt a flagging appetite. Greatly was her heart moved on hearing that on that next day he went before her to heaven. She had hoped, she said, to welcome him there. Ever did he rejoice to relieve the distresses of the poor. Among my earliest pastoral recollections of him, is that of his giving me money for distribution among them; and among my last, that of his gathering funds for a kindred object. There lies on my desk a letter of

condolence to a surviving friend of his, from a widow, who years ago, and when his own circumstances were somewhat straitened, was relieved by his timely interposition from utter temporal ruin. Deep was his interest as well in the secular as the spiritual prosperity of those in his service. Often, when business lagged, fearing they might suffer, he would give them work at a loss or a risk he could ill afford. Where need was not, how did he scatter kind words as pearls in his pathway. I cannot forbear to repeat that testimony of his Catholic domestic, uttered amid her falling tears :—"I have been three years with him, and never has he spoken an unkind word to me ; never have I seen a frown upon his brow."

He embraced in the circle of his beneficence all worthy objects, but especially those which pertained directly to the advancement of Christianity. Zion was his chief delight, and in her, he believed, were the springs of all good. It was the charm of his benevolence that he gave so *cheerfully*. Who can doubt that God loved him? Never was he heard to complain of the frequency of the calls for charity ; never, after the manner of some, did he speak of the agent of a benevolent society as coming on a beggar's errand. He esteemed such a one, rather, as Christ's agent and almoner, and judged it a privilege to respond to his appeal. At the manner of his giving as much admiration was sometimes called forth as at the measure. The late Rev. Dr. White, when many years ago he

was an agent of the Education Society, made application to him. He apologized for being unable to do much, as he had recently been starting an establishment at New Orleans, but said he would give a trifle. The Doctor, of course, expected but a few dollars; but, to his surprise, Mr. Brewster handed him a hundred dollar bill, and then, as he was apt to do in like cases, *thanked him for calling*. Soon after he made a profession of religion, the late Dr. John Holt Rice came to this city to solicit funds for the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. By the advice of a friend, he visited our brother Brewster—then doing a comparatively limited business in Broadway—with the hope of obtaining a small donation. Mr. Brewster was in a back shop, engaged with his workmen; and, being called in, the Doctor introduced himself. “I am happy to see you, Dr. Rice,” said Mr. Brewster. The Doctor then began to lay before him the object of his visit, and had uttered but a few words when he was interrupted by his auditor. “It is a very good object, Dr. Rice; I had the pleasure of hearing you yesterday, and know all about it.” The Doctor resumed, apparently fearful of failing in his application—and supposing, perhaps, that here, as in too many other cases, he must make his way to the heart-strings and the purse-strings by the most powerful appeals—when he was again kindly but courteously cut short. “It is a very good object, Dr. Rice, and I suppose you have a little book. My men are waiting for me; you will therefore

please excuse me." The Doctor handed him the "little book," and, to his astonishment, it was returned with a subscription of *one hundred dollars*. He was wont, ever afterwards, to speak with enthusiasm of "that pious hatter!" These are but specimens. For years he contributed six hundred dollars annually to the American Home Missionary Society, to sustain one of their agents at the West. At the time the Rev. Dr. Parker went to New Orleans, the firm of J. & L. Brewster gave *six thousand dollars* towards the erection of the church in which he preached there, and in which the Rev. Dr. Scott is now laboring with such abundant usefulness. Among the last of his larger benefactions before his failure, I have heard the following mentioned. The Rev. Dr. Proudfit, then Agent of the Colonization Society, was desirous of raising twenty thousand dollars to purchase a certain extent of the African coast, with the view, among other things, of cutting off the slave trade. He applied to Mr. Brewster. "I," replied he, "will be one of twenty to furnish that sum." The other nineteen were not to be found—I believe not one of them. Yet our brother, at some inconvenience, out of regard both for the object and the applicant, paid his thousand dollars. Of such a true Christian royalty was his benevolence; and his only regret was, when his property was gone, that he had not given more!

It is worthy of special note, that Mr. Brewster had grace to honor God *both in prosperity and adversity*. It is no easy thing to walk with God when the world

around us wears its brightest garb. How perilous the heights both of honor and of affluence, the admonitions of the Bible show us. Yet many a man who has apparently run well in prosperity, has been found wanting when tried by trouble. Not so with our brother. The dross was purged away, but the gold shone the brighter. Like Job, he “sinned not, neither charged God foolishly”—in all temptation he maintained his integrity. I heard lately, from the lips of one who was intimately conversant with his affairs, through the whole period of their greatest perplexity, the emphatic testimony, that not a single transaction had he ever discovered in which he had the least reason to think Mr. Brewster had not been conscientious. There has been handed me this morning his “Discharge in Bankruptcy,” and my attention has been called to an endorsement upon the envelope, in his own hand-writing, singularly illustrative of his character. The first part of it is—“*Free legally, but not so morally.*” I rejoice to hold up this inscription—so honorable at once to him, and to the religion he professed—before this business community. While his piety shone forth thus in the sphere of social obligation, the latter part of the endorsement exhibits that same symmetrical piety in its more direct relations to God:—“This instrument, bearing date 27th June, 1842, was handed me on board the steamboat American Eagle, on Wednesday, 29th June, 1842. *To be kept as a memento of the interpositions of a kind Providence.*” In the practice of a rigid economy, and the

most untiring devotion to business, he was ever afterward striving to liquidate the claims from which he was thus set “free legally, but not so morally.” A considerable amount he actually paid; and the hope of paying all was fondly cherished by him to the latest hour of his life.

He did, indeed, at times, severely reproach himself. It was touching to see him thus humbling himself “under the mighty hand of God.” To a friend who met him soon after his failure, he spoke with great fervor of the kindness of his Heavenly Father in thus administering to him what He saw to be a needed discipline, and suddenly taking out of his pocket a small, well-worn Testament, he opened it and said, —“Did I ever read *this* before? Did I know it was here?—‘Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.’ I now feel as if I know what this means. My heavenly Father saw that I was making an idol of wealth, and that I did not give it as I ought to the cause of benevolence, and He has sent this to discipline me, and bring me back to him.”†

Deeply though he felt his losses, for the reasons that have been stated, yet his habitual temper was that of meek submission to the Divine will. Many of us can never forget how in the prayer-meeting, as well as the private interview, he was wont to bless God for his afflictions. A testimony did he bear, also, to the power and preciousness of religion, such as could never proceed from the halls of wealth or the bowers of ease. Thus both in gladness and in sorrow did he honor Christ; and how, according to one of his favorite scriptures, hath the Father now honored him!

There are many other points on which I would gladly have enlarged—such as the happy balance of his character—his habitual joyfulness as a Christian—and his felicitous union of fervency^s in spirit with diligence in business. Happily did he exemplify that injunction:

“ Discharge aright
The simple dues with which each day is rife,
Yea, in thy might.
Ere perfect scheme of action thou devise,
Will life be fled;
While he who ever acts as conscience cries,
Still lives though dead.”

But I can only advert, in conclusion, to his *eminent fidelity to souls*. It was a general rule with him never to allow a favorable opportunity for admonishing an unconverted man to pass unimproved. Many of those present will remember with what inimitable earnestness and tenderness he was wont to say, “Have you

been so happy as to give your heart to Christ?" Almost never did his appeals give offence; and in many an instance, there is reason to believe they were made of God efficacious unto salvation. Of such cases, let me give a single specimen. Some twenty years ago, at a refectory where he dined, he became interested in a young man, a clerk, to whom he was accustomed to make payment for his meals. That young man was a stranger in the city, and his health was somewhat impaired. By taking an interest in his temporal welfare, and dropping as he could, in his brief interviews with him, a word on religion, Mr. Brewster soon won his heart not to himself alone, but to the Saviour of sinners. The young man made a profession of religion, and is now, with most if not all of his family, in connection with one of the evangelical churches of our city. Further I may not speak of him. For I have reason to believe, though I know not his countenance, that he is here to-day, to thank God with us for the grace He was pleased to bestow on our beloved and now glorified brother.

But I must stay the current of my thoughts and feelings, lest I read a book rather than utter a sermon. Very precious is the memory of him whom we all mourn! Dear was he to his Pastor's heart. With my earliest ministerial labors—with all the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows that clustered around them—is his image associated. I can scarce feel that he is indeed gone. I behold him again, as I used to meet

him, in his hospitable mansion. Again do his sympathetic tones fall on my ear, as he bends over my bed of sickness. I see him still as he used to sit in his pew, his whole soul concentrated in his steady gaze. I hear his voice again in the Lecture-Room—in that prayer of heavenly fervor—that exhortation of impassioned earnestness. But he is not here—for God hath taken him! We will give ourselves to the work of life the more earnestly for his example; and the heaven to which he has gone—chiefly desirable because of Christ's presence—shall be still more precious to us because he is there in whom Christ is so glorified.

APPENDIX.

It has been thought proper to subjoin here the substance of certain statements and remarks embraced in the extended address at the funeral of Mr. Brewster, but which, for obvious reasons, were not repeated in the preceding Discourse. To this will be added such other facts and views as may give to this necessarily brief memorial somewhat greater completeness.

Of his *courtesy and affability*, so intimately connected with the unaffected kindness of his heart, something has been said. Wealthy and influential Christians are sometimes accused of a supercilious and haughty reserve. Against him, it is believed, no such charge was ever preferred. He was accessible to all—he had ever a nod or a smile or a word of recognition for all. A new attendant at the church, if in a pew near his, was not likely to remain long unnoticed by him. He had a facility and felicity of address in this respect, with which few are endowed. Though he had no children of his own, he entered readily into the sympathies of the young. A large circle of nephews and nieces were wont to look up to him with a tenderness of regard and a fullness of confidence, little short of filial. Even at the height of his worldly prosperity, he condescended “to men of low estate.” It was affecting, at the funeral, to see with what emotion some of the poorer members of the church took their last look at that countenance, by the kindly radiance of which they had so often been cheered and comforted.

Allusion has been made to the remarkable *equipoise of his character*. Naturally ardent though he was, his zeal had no tinge either of fanaticism or bitterness. He kept himself, on either side, from unwise and unprofitable extremes. He shunned, on the one hand, that conservatism, falsely so called,

which bows in stupid idolatry of the past, which trembles at all change, and would dwell in a world of petrifications ; and that blind, credulous radicalism, on the other, which would sweep away all existing realities, to people the vacancy with its own vain dreams. Nor did this cast of character result from any extraordinary natural sagacity, or comprehensive-ness of mind. It came of the purity and depth of his piety, a piety so symmetrical because cast in the unwarped moulds of the Gospel. God's word was pre-eminently his study and his joy ; hence the happy adjustment and balance of his Christian character.

There were scarce an end to the illustrations which might be given of his *Christian liberality*. A lady from a neighboring city was present at the funeral, to whom, some twenty years ago, when she was in great straits, though not personally acquainted with her, yet, on the representation of her case, he sent twenty dollars. But an hour before the service, she heard of his death, and hastened to the church to shed the tears of mingled gratitude and grief at the bier of her kind benefactor. I have heard that in one of the congregations with which he was connected, a debt having occasioned much embarrassment, and there being a lack of readiness and liberality in furnishing the means to remove it, he, at one of the meetings, promptly and nobly offered to take the whole upon himself. This of course, by others as able as he, was not allowed.

His zeal and constancy in *attendance upon all the means of grace*, is worthy of special note. His general rule was, to be in his place in the sanctuary, if able to be at his business. Whoever might be absent from the prayer-meeting, no one expected, save in case of sickness, to see his seat vacant. His frequent remarks and exhortations there, though not extraordinary in an intellectual point of view, were always delightful and impressive, from their obvious sincerity, frankness, and earnestness, and the holy pathos which pervaded them. Certain familiar scriptures he was accustomed often to repeat, such as, " Except a man be born again he cannot see

the kingdom of God," "My son, give me thy heart," "Freely ye have received, freely give," and—as he used to quote—"He that honoreth me, him shall the Father honor." Yet as they fell from his lips, they seemed always new. The commonest thoughts, indeed, as tinged by his deep emotion, seemed to lose all their triteness. Who that used to hear him, but hears him still, repeating these oft quoted stanzas?—

"Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live:
'Tis religion can supply
Solid comfort when we die."

Especially interesting was he apt to be in the Sabbath evening prayer-meeting, elevated as his affections had become under the ministrations of the sanctuary, luminous as his face had grown amid his unbroken communion with God. Those who knew him will understand a remark made by a plain woman who one evening heard him for the first time. "I never cried before," said she, "in a Presbyterian meeting; but when that old gentleman got up, I could not help it." In the Sabbath School he was a faithful laborer—the oldest, yet prompt and energetic as the youngest—during most of the period of his connection with the Brainerd church. The latter part of the time, his health not being very good, he intermitted his services as a teacher. But the very day before his death, he told a friend that he intended to go into the Sabbath School of the Fourteenth Street church. He meant to work, he said, till he was called home.

All this activity in religious matters, it should be remembered, was connected with constant and even intense devotedness to business. Many and urgent were the cares both of prosperity and adversity. Yet he could find time for devotion, both in the closet and the family. He could find time for the prayer-meeting, and the weekly lecture. He could find time to visit the sick and the afflicted—for religious visits

in other directions—and for many additional labors of Christian benevolence. All this, because he had singleness of purpose, with a habit of “redeeming the time,” and of doing every duty just as it presented itself.

His *fidelity to souls*, already adverted to, deserves further notice. Though his address was affectionate, it was not only characterized by directness, but where the case required it, by unflinching boldness. He was walking in the city, some years ago, with a friend, when a young man passed them using profane language. Mr. Brewster stepped forward, and tapping him on the shoulder, uttered a few words of gentle reproof. Resuming his walk with his friend, he remarked that he never omitted speaking to those he heard using profane language, and that he never met with a rebuff.—It will be recollected by some of the former members of the Brainerd Church, that early in its history there was a liquor establishment near it, notorious for its Sabbath day gatherings. Into this establishment, pained at its desecrations, he one Sabbath entered, “girt about with truth,” and having the sword of the “Spirit which is the word of God.” It was called, I think, “Fort Washington;” and never was fort more gallantly stormed. The revelers, it is believed, quailed before his pungent appeals.—The love he bore for souls was ever manifesting itself. But a few Sabbaths before his death, he met in the Brainerd Church a gentleman and his wife who formerly had seats there—the latter a professor, the former unconverted. After cordially greeting them, he said to the lady, aside, “Has your husband given his heart to the Saviour yet?” Her husband, overhearing this inquiry, was melted to tears, and the next day spoke of it with deep emotion.—Mr. Brewster was fertile in expedients for reaching the hearts of men. I have even heard of his putting religious tracts into the hats he sold. In his silent example, indeed, there was power to save. The case has been mentioned to me of a young man, once a Universalist, who, from merely observing his daily walk, became convinced that it was shaped by motives to which he was himself a stranger. As the result, he left his

former place of worship for an evangelical church, and became at length a decided follower of Christ. Both himself and his companion are now consistent and influential members of the church.

The development of his character under *affliction*, was most delightful. At times he suffered keenly; he would be ready to exclaim "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me." Yet his resort would be the throne of grace; and he would soon come forth with renewed peace and strength, to bear testimony to God's goodness. So that his habitual joyfulness as a Christian was scarce interrupted. In the year 1839, after his failure, a destructive fire occurred one Saturday night, by which his store and its contents were consumed. He stood by till the Sabbath dawned; then, while others were mourning their losses, he calmly walked home, and having repaired to his closet, called together his family for the morning sacrifice. At the appointed time he met his Sabbath School class, and afterwards engaged as usual in the worship of the sanctuary. Those who observed him during the day, were struck with his peculiar serenity and Christian cheerfulness. He enjoyed greatly the privileges of the day, rejoicing apparently in the thought, that though the flames had touched his earthly possessions, his heavenly inheritance was still unharmed. Much good as he would unquestionably have done had his wealth been spared to him, I cannot doubt that, on the whole, his losses were a gain even in a point of usefulness. They deepened, under God, his Christian experience. They brought him nearer to his Saviour. They gave occasion for a bright display of patience, resignation, and Christian integrity. They enabled him to bear, as has been remarked, a peculiarly precious testimony to the power of the Gospel. Few hearts could be unmoved, as rising in the prayer-meeting he praised God, at once for the afflictions with which he had been visited, and the grace by which he had been sustained.

It is evident in the review of the last years of his life, that he was fast *ripening for heaven*. Some of the profoundest

views of Christian experience, and some of the loftiest conceptions of Christian duty, was he wont to express. He said much of the importance of honoring Christ—of making this a chief aim in religion. Most admirable and searching discriminations have I heard him make between the religious feeling which comes of nature, and that which grace engenders. There is a joyfulness, he used to remark—he feared his own had sometimes been of that sort—which springs from worldly rather than spiritual prosperity. It is joy in the creature, rather than the Creator. In the dark night of trial, he had evidently learned to say, as never before, “ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him ; ” “ Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

I have been permitted to read what is supposed to be the last letter he ever wrote, except on business. It was to a niece engaged in teaching, and bears date June 10, 1851, the day but one before his death. As it is very characteristic, I make a few extracts from it :—

“ I am pleased at the manner in which you view the hand of an all-wise and kind Providence, in placing you in your present position ; and do hope you may have grace given you so to discharge your duties to the children of your charge, as shall be for their best good, for your own spiritual improvement, and as shall redound to *the glory of the precious Saviour*. If this principle could actuate us in all our duties and relations in life, we should have comparatively but little solicitude where we are ; and not only so, but we should rejoice in every situation in which a kind and gracious Providence might place us. The great and prominent aim of every true follower of the blessed Jesus should be the promotion of his glory. If this were our governing principle, we should have but little solicitude for self. And why should this not be our governing principle ? For we are not our own, but

are bought with a price ; and should ever strive to be in that frame of mind which would enable us to say, ‘ Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done.’ . . . If you are faithful to the dear children committed to your charge, you may be the honored instrument of inducing them to accept the proffered mercy of a Saviour’s pardoning love. This is the greatest honor that ever was conferred upon a mortal. How can it be otherwise, when our blessed Master says, ‘ There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.’ Let us strive ever to act on the principle, ‘ Freely ye have received, freely give.’ ” In the same letter, after expressing his fears that a certain Christian friend had declined somewhat in spirituality, he adds, “ *No Christian can prosper spiritually, who suffers any idol in the heart.*”

It is ground of thankfulness to Mr. Brewster’s friends, that the last months of his life seemed to be marked by unusual comfort and joyfulness. His health was good. His business was uncommonly prosperous. He had removed to a new and pleasant residence, near to his beloved church. The firmament of God’s love was unclouded above him. Meet he was to live to the praise of his Saviour ; but meet also for “ the inheritance of the saints in light.” On the day of his death, Thursday, June 12th, he arose, as his custom was, very early in the morning. For the last time he visited that little room where he was wont to engage in his private devotions. He spent some time, as he often did, in pleasant labor among the flowers in his garden ; and having breakfasted cheerfully with his family, he passed, with his usual buoyancy of spirits and elasticity of step to his place of business. Little did he think it was his “ coronation day.” About 8 o’clock, A. M., he had occasion to go down to the ship Challenge, lying at the foot of Wall-street for the purpose of looking after the stowage of some goods. Passing between decks, where it was not very light—the upper hatchway being closed—he, by some misstep, was precipitated through the lower hatchway into the hold, a distance of some fourteen feet. A compound fracture of the skull was produced, and after lying

about two hours in a state of unconsciousness, he passed to his rest!

To the eye of sense, there was something sad in the manner of his departure. It was painful to think he was so suddenly taken, with no opportunity for preliminary thought, for parting exhortation, or for uttering his last farewell to those whom he loved; that he was taken too in the fullness of his Christian influence, when his very presence was a joy and an encouragement to every heart that loved righteousness. But the eye of sense is in its nature microscopic. Its survey is partial—hence, often, too sombre visions; as if, dwelling on the darker hues of a picture, one should see nothing but gloom and repulsiveness in the most splendid creation of genius. We should look on scenes like this, rather, with faith's larger view—a view which, in its measure like God's, takes in both the lights and the shades; yea, which sees in the shades a certain loveliness derived from the lights, and in the lights a superadded brightness strangely gathered even from the shades. We may thank God for gleams of divine wisdom and goodness, irradiating, to the eye of the thoughtful believer, even that vessel's dark and fatal hold!

Reasons not a few we can think of, why it was well, however painful to us, that our brother should be thus taken. He needed no additional evidence of discipleship; on that head there could be no shadow of doubt. Without guile, as he was—bearing about ever a window in his bosom—we could not mistake his character. By his fruits we knew him. Nor needed he, as some seem to do, a long continued discipline of sickness, to wean him from the world and mature his Christian graces. As to death-bed admonitions, he might well say, as Whitefield did, "I have borne my testimony in life—I shall die silent." He was spared, besides, the pain his susceptible, sympathizing heart might have felt in parting with his family. He was spared the oppressive consciousness of having come short of his favorite purpose—the liquidation of every just claim upon him. He was saved from the trial—a severe one he would have found it—of outliving his

usefulness. "I shall never," he once said, pleasantly, "have *old bones.*" This seemed to indicate as well his preference as his expectation. His death, too, was probably painless. His last consciousness on earth, we may presume, was that of falling—his next, that of heaven's blessedness. He seems to us as one translated! If that promise was not literally fulfilled—"He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone"—it was at least virtually accomplished. From that scene of death, angels did bear him up to glory! There are no images of sickness and languor and pain associated with his last hours; we think of him as but yesterday standing in health and joy among us—as to-day before God's throne. Had he lived, moreover, to decrepit old age, another generation would have arisen, not knowing "Joseph" as we have known him. A loss there would probably have been in respect to the influence of his remembered example. The very suddenness and strangeness of his death, besides, has called public attention to the excellence of his life. As Enoch was the more thought of because "God took him"—as Elijah's influence on survivors was the more potent because of that "chariot of fire"—somewhat so is it with our brother Brewster. Into the frame-work of this singular and startling providence has his example been set, that it might not only be noted now, but hold a chief place among the hallowed and venerated fixtures of memory.