

E 340
.W55 S9

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00005024924

SERMON

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE

LIFE, CHARACTER, AND SERVICES

OF THE

HON. ELISHA WHITTLESEY,

OF CANFIELD, OHIO,

DELIVERED IN

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D. C.,

ON

SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 10, 1864,

BY

THE PASTOR, REV. B. SUNDERLAND, D. D.

...

WASHINGTON, D. C. :

McGILL & WITHEROW, PRINTERS AND STEREOTYPERS.

1864.

S E R M O N

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE

LIFE, CHARACTER, AND SERVICES

OF THE

HON. ELISHA WHITTLESEY,

OF CANFIELD, OHIO,

DELIVERED IN

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D. C.,

ON

SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 10, 1864,

BY

THE PASTOR, REV. B. SUNDERLAND, D. D.

WASHINGTON, D. C. :

MCGILL & WITHEROW, PRINTERS AND STEREOTYPERS.

1864.

E 340
.W 5559

DEDICATION.

To the children of the honorable man deceased to his family kindred, to his fellow Christians and countrymen throughout the land, is this humble tribute to his memory earnestly subscribed, with the heartfelt prayer that his virtues may be emulated, and his example followed to the latest time.

B. SUNDERLAND.

Exchange
West. Res. Hist. Soc.
1915



SERMON.

Ps. cxii, 6.—“The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.”

Prov. x, 7.—“The memory of the just is blessed.”

Could the truth of these words penetrate every heart, and fashion the characters of men, the world would contain a noble race. Sometimes a signal example rises from among the multitudes, to give us a practical proof of its possibility. The men who, from time to time, thus appear upon the field of observation, deserve to be marked, as astronomers watch the coming and going of the stars for the perfection of their celestial science. A star is great in its physical aspects only; but how much greater is a human soul, full of the spirit and the light of God, emerging upon the stage of action, traveling upon its course through the cycle of time, and finally ascending in its august and eternal motion into some higher and grander orbit of the life that is immortal.

Such a man was ELISHA WHITTLESEY. His memory is blessed, and his name will be held in everlasting remembrance, for he was a just and righteous man; he was just such a man as we may conceive might be the fruit of a state of society bordering on the age, if not existing in the heart of the age, of the millennium itself. God gives us men like him, not for the mere purpose of idle eulogy, but to hold them up before us as illustrations of his own grace, and as examples for our imitation. And who that knew him would not say, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” The biography of the *good* is valuable for two reasons: human nature contemplates it with grateful pleasure, as exhibiting its own capability—and there is ever a stimulus in the voice which speaks from it to those who come after—“Go thou and do likewise.”

I shall speak of Mr. Whittlesey as to his *history* and *character*, with the hope of kindling in our minds a stronger desire and a

more unwavering purpose to tread the path he trod, and seek the aims he sought.

Mr. Elisha Whittlesey was born in the State of Connecticut, in the closing year of the war of the Revolution. His father, John Whittlesey, was a farmer on the Shipkog river, in Washington, New Preston Society, Litchfield county. The Rev. Jeremiah Day, father of President Day of Yale College, was then pastor of the church in that place, from whom Elisha in his infancy received the rite of baptism. From the farm to the church was a distance of four and a half miles, over a broken and rocky country. No vehicles were then in use except the rude sleighs of winter. According to Puritan practice, every member of the family, old enough and in health, was required to attend on the religious services of the Church. Those who had not horses went on foot. Of those who had horses, two rode together, the father and mother often each bearing a child. The church stood on a hill, and the school-house beyond it on Christian street. At an early age, Elisha was sent to school, receiving instruction in the church where school was kept a portion of the time, and another portion of the time in a cooper's shop near by, which was likewise used for the same purpose. When the lad was large and stout enough to stem the storms and stand the fatigue of the travel, he was sent on over to the school-house beyond. Mills Day, the youngest son of the pastor, being about the age of Elisha, they formed in their boyhood a close and affectionate intimacy. In 1792 the father of Elisha sold his farm in Washington, and bought another in Salisbury, distant 30 miles. The event of removal to this new home fell heavily on the young people. To prepare for a separation so painful, they held preliminary meetings for some weeks, and learned the "Farewell Anthem," which was sung in the midst of a weeping assembly as the carts were loaded, and the teams prepared to start. The New England custom then was, for boys to do farm-work in summer and attend school in winter. They remained at home evenings, in free, familiar family conversation, or reading, writing, and cyphering. The days chosen for recreation were set apart by law—days of election and military parade. The election day, however, was not for voting, but for the inauguration of the Governor. Elisha's early education was conducted under the eye of some of the most distinguished persons of that period. Among

his instructors, first and last, were Jeremiah Day, afterwards President of Yale; David Whittlesey, an older cousin; Thomas Tucker, the famous preceptor of Danbury. The day that bore him to this place was wet and gloomy; and here it was that, soaked with the rain and bespattered with the mire of the way, the lad was *homesick* for the first and last time. He was, while here, in the family of an older brother, Matthew B. Whittlesey, a lawyer. He was afterwards under the tuition of Professor Scofield; then of Mr. Robbins, Librarian of the State Historical Society; and, finally, of Moses Stuart, so long Professor in the Theological Seminary at Andover. In 1803 he commenced the study of the law, in the office of his brother Matthew; and in the March term of 1805 he passed the ordeal of admission to the bar of that noble profession, under the scrutiny of such men as Roger M. Sherman, Lewis B. Sturges, Asa Chapman, and David Daggett. His first practice was in New Milford, Litchfield county, and was of short duration; for, at that period, two gentlemen from Canfield, Trumbull county, Ohio, visited the place, and upon conversation with them the young lawyer decided to cross the Alleghanies, and plant himself upon the borders of the mighty West. But this step required the consent of a young lady, Miss P. Mygatt, who, preferring the chances of fortune thus held out, most readily acquiesced. On the 5th of January, 1806, they were united in marriage by the Rev. Mr. Ward, then pastor of the Danbury church.

In a Jersey covered wagon with a good pair of horses, they set out upon their journey the 3d of June following, and arrived at the place of destination, the town of Canfield, Trumbull county, Ohio, on the 27th of the same month. The record of that journey written in after years by his own hand, presents one of the most natural, life-like, and suggestive pictures of the then state of the country—the difficulties and perils of emigration—the tone of society—the manners, customs, and habits of the people I have ever seen. It would protract this discourse beyond all reasonable length to introduce it here; but the materials are already published, and as a portion of the voluminous writings he has left behind him, they reflect as from a mirror the light of the early days.

“The journey,” says he, “was ended on the 27th of June, in

a clear day, and the sun set as regularly in the west as at Danbury."

On the following August, 1806, he was admitted by the supreme court sitting at Warren, Trumbull county, Ohio, to practice law, assiduously following his profession with the exception of times when he was engaged in other labors and occupations, from that time onward to the date of his coming to Washington in 1841. But though the young lawyer was now fairly introduced in his new field to the professional life before him, he had a ready hand for whatever was necessary in manual labor; not disdaining, in the then state of the country, to use axe or hoe in the subjugation of the forest and the cultivation of the soil. He gave likewise a portion of his time to keeping school in the district for several years, and at a subsequent period his law office was the resort of many students, some of whom have since been among the most distinguished of our public men.

He was not long in establishing a reputation as a lawyer, for every qualification which can command the respect and confidence of the community as well as of the court, and his practice at the bar was only limited by his powers of locomotion and endurance. Aside from the immediate duties of his profession, he freely gave his services to the public and to his country in positions of responsibility both military and civil. There is an account left in his own hand writing of the military offices he filled, which is full of quiet humor, and from which we find that he began his military career as *corporal* in a militia company, Danbury, Connecticut, and he adds, "as my official services in that company were during the period when Mr. Jefferson said 'few officers die, and none resign,' I rose no higher than orderly sergeant, and to that eminence I think I attained!" In the autumn of the year after his arrival in Canfield, there was an election of officers, to fill vacancies in a company of infantry, and Mr. Whittlesey was elected Ensign: "and I equipped," says he, "in full uniform and feather!" It seems that having attended a military school in Connecticut, before his removal to Ohio, his familiarity with the manual of drill, &c., soon gave to him the discipline of the company, and in due time made him its captain—his commission as such being signed "by Thomas Kirker, Speaker of the Senate, and acting Governor of the State, and attested by William

Creighton, Secretary of State, on the 27th February, 1808, and of the independence of this State, the fifth!" Two years after he was appointed aid-de-camp to Major General Elijah Wadsworth, commanding the fourth division of Ohio militia, when he resigned his captaincy, and accepted his new position. Two years after this, August 22, 1812, he went with this rank into the service of the United States in the war with Great Britain. After this he was appointed to the rank of Brigade Major and Inspector, under General Perkins, and remained in the service till the spring of 1813, when he resigned. During the latter part of this period he was detailed to act as aid and private secretary to General Harrison, and it was then that their acquaintance was formed, with sentiments of mutual friendship and regard, which continued through life without abatement.

The first civil office of more public distinction held by Mr. Whittlesey, was that of district or prosecuting attorney for the county of Trumbull. He was appointed to this office by the court of common pleas, at the first full term after his admission to the bar in 1806, and continued to discharge its duties till the autumn of 1823, when he resigned. In the performance of these duties he is said never to have failed to convict the accused with one single exception, and that arose from his misuse of the term "were" for "are," in the indictment. This certainty of success arose from the care with which he took every step. His practice was to attend in person before the grand jury, and interrogate the witnesses. If he thought the fact and the law did not warrant a conviction, he so informed the jury. His aim was to punish crime, but not to use the power of prosecution for any private or selfish purposes. His whole fee for a term of court was no more than twenty-five dollars. What would our great lawyers now-a-days think of such a sum as that for services more exacting, more assiduous, and more exhausting than we usually look for now.

In addition to this office, he was twice elected to the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of Ohio; first in October, 1820, and again in 1821, when he was once more associated with his old friend, General William Henry Harrison, in the public service of the State. In October, 1822, he was first elected from his Congressional district a member of the House of

Representatives of the Congress of the United States, and took his seat in December, 1823, a member of the Eighteenth Congress, and was seven times thereafter in succession returned to his seat by his constituents, until in the latter part of the Twenty-fifth Congress, 1837, when he resigned with a view to escape the wasting excitement of public life, and to attend to his more private and family affairs.

The period of his Congressional life was one of an eventful and stormy character. It embraced the last two years of the second term of President Munroe, the four years of John Quincy Adams, the eight years of Andrew Jackson, and the first two years of Martin Van Buren. The Republic had grown to twenty-four States and three organized Territories, with ten millions of people. The end of this period showed a still further increase to twenty-seven States, with fourteen millions of people. The public archives exhibit a scroll of distinguished names in the executive, legislative, judicial, and military departments of the Government during this period rarely equaled and never surpassed in the history of any people or country on the globe. The measures before the country, the questions and issues of the time, were of the gravest character and enlisted the noblest talent, and brought out a display of civic and forensic power that makes this chapter of our national life one of the most illustrious in all its pages. Yet it was a period when the power of the people for self-government was subjected to the most rigid tests that can arise from a diversity of sectional interests, and political partizanship and ambition. We were occupied mainly by questions of internal economy—the financial system, the tariff, the policy of the public lands, manufactures, commerce, the banking system, State rights, the Federal Constitution, and the great questions, doctrines, and debates which rose upon them. When Mr. Whittlesey first took his seat in Congress, December, 1823, it required, perhaps even more than it now does, talent, moral worth, and unblenching integrity to secure this position, and to rise to commanding eminence and public confidence in it. At that time, Daniel D. Tompkins, as Vice-President presided in the Senate, composed of such men as Van Buren, Hayne, Macon, Johnson, Jackson, and Benton; and Henry Clay was made Speaker of the House, comprising such men as Webster, Cambreling, Randolph, Mangum,

McDuffie, Poinsett, and Houston. In the Cabinet were John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State; Crawford, of the Treasury; Calhoun, of War; Crowningshield, of the Navy; and Wm. Wirt, Attorney General. At the time Mr. Whittlesey retired from Congress, great changes had taken place, which we have no time to specify in detail. Van Buren was in the Presidential chair, and R. M. Johnson was Vice President, the presiding officer of the Senate. The Cabinet was composed of Forsythe, Secretary of State; Woodbury, of the Treasury; Poinsett, of War; Dickerson, of the Navy; Kendall, Postmaster General; and B. F. Butler, of New York, Attorney General. James K. Polk was Speaker of the House. Many of the great names had disappeared from the stage of public action; many more had changed their position. In the Senate were Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Benton, Preston, and their compeers; in the House were men no less conspicuous, among whom was ex-President John Quincy Adams. During this period, from 1823 to 1839, the great questions of internal improvements, of the public lands, of the increase of territory, of the Bank, of State rights, of the limits and powers of the Constitution, of nullification, and of the bank and Sub-Treasury schemes, had been thoroughly discussed and in part settled. It does not fall in my province now to attempt to give a history of these great, exciting issues. It was, no doubt, in the memorable debate in the Senate, and in the contest between Hayne and Webster, that the American forum rose to its highest pitch of power. It was in the mighty conflict with the United States Bank that the commercial and financial interests of the country passed through their greatest ordeal. It was in the comparative calm that followed these excitements, and before the next rising and more mighty wave which carried General Harrison into the Presidential chair, that Mr. Whittlesey resigned his seat in Congress, and sought once more the scenes of private life.

To speak of him in his congressional career, and in his position and influence relative to other distinguished men of the body of which he was so long a member and an ornament, it is but fair to state that he won and held his place among them rather by the solid and intrinsic worth of his character than by the more brilliant and popular qualities of transcendent genius. He never consumed the time of the House by long and frequent

speeches, and he never defrauded the country by want of diligence or inattention to the public business. He was, soon after taking his seat in Congress, appointed chairman of the Committee on Post Office and Post Roads, and subsequently placed on the Committee of Claims, and finally became its chairman, a position which he held to the day of his leaving the body. This committee, though not charged with those matters which would be likely to give notoriety and eclat to its members, yet so far as the interests of private and public justice were concerned, was one of the most important of all the committees of the House, requiring a clear head, a deep sense of equity, the strictest probity, and the most patient and assiduous industry. Its task was augmented by the very nature of the work assigned it, having so often to encounter the selfishness, the cupidity, and the passionate impatience of man. It was necessary to guard on the one hand that the Government should not be defrauded by extravagant and unfounded demands, and on the other that no wrong should be done to the private, and in many cases, poor and suffering claimants. And in this connection it has been well said of him by another, "that he was peculiarly qualified for the chairmanship of such a committee. He was gifted with that admirable courage which never quailed before the seductive blandishments of wealth, or the threatening importance of power. He never hesitated to espouse a cause simply represented by the weak. Strong combinations of men in position to carry a point which he believed to be wrong had no terrors for him."

One of the first great debates in which he participated arose upon the report of his committee on the claim of a person professing to be a citizen of New Orleans for indemnity for the impressment into the United States service of a negro claimed to be his slave, and it is curious to observe that after a discussion extending through some three weeks, and conducted by such men as Livingston, Owen, McDuffie, Everett, Randolph, and others, one of these gentlemen wound up with the complacent conclusion that it had been admitted on all hands not only that there is such a thing as property in man, that its character is inviolable, but also more especially that this Government can never disturb that question. What would the author of that speech, Owen of Alabama, think of it now in 1864. It is needless to

say that though the report of the committee was adverse to the claim, it was amended so as to pay the man, and give a more solemn sanction to the doctrine then set forth by a vote of the majority of the House, in violation of all the precedents and law in the case. Mr. Whittlesey resisted this result with all his might, but that was in 1828 instead of 1864.

In the year 1832, when it was feared, as afterward proved to be the case, that an awful scourge, the Asiatic cholera, then traveling westward in its circuit of the earth, would visit this western world and decimate our population, it had been suggested to President Jackson, by some Christian gentlemen, that it might be suitable for him to appoint a day of national fasting, humiliation, and prayer to Almighty God, that He would avert or mitigate its evils. This suggestion not being readily acted upon, a movement to the same end was initiated in the Senate, and under a joint resolution came into the House, whereupon a long and earnest debate sprang up, in which Mr. Whittlesey took the most lively interest. It called forth the most elaborate speeches from such men as Wickliffe, Bell, Burges, Adams, Polk, Mercer, Clay of Alabama, and others, some of whom opposed it on various grounds, but sustained by the fidelity and Christian sentiment of such men as Mr. Whittlesey, and those who acted with him, it was finally carried, thus saving the credit of the Federal Congress and setting an example to the nation. The only other debate to which I can now refer wherein he showed his great perseverance and fidelity to the cause of the people was that which sprung up on the right of petition in 1836, and which produced a long, angry, and most desperate conflict of years, in which such men as Wise and Marshall took the lead in endeavoring to stifle the prayers of the people, and John Quincy Adams led off as the old man eloquent in favor of the right. I need not add that in the sequel the champions of the people were triumphant, and the first great blow had been given to the arrogant despotism of a southern oligarchy.

In all these exciting scenes Mr. Whittlesey never lost sight of the responsibility or the decorum belonging to his position. He bore himself above all meanness and scurrility—always calm, deliberate, dignified—maintaining the greatest respect for his associates, and insisting that every propriety should be observed

toward the officers and members both of his own House and of the Senate, and of all the departments of the Government. His principle in all things was justice and equity to the humblest and the poorest, resistance to the most powerful when in the wrong, without the fear or favor of man before his eyes, strict attention to the public business, economy in the public disbursements, and purity in the public offices everywhere. He sympathized in general with what was known as the Whig Party in his day on the great questions of national policy, but he was never a partisan politician. He was a great friend and patron of the interests of this District and of this city, and advocated on all occasions all wise, just, and sound measures for the material growth and prosperity of the Capital of his country. He never sought office for the sake of emolument or personal aggrandizement, but only accepted it when freely tendered to him upon a principle favorite with him that every man owed a duty to his country which bound him, other things being equal, to fulfill to the best of his ability the obligations which his fellow countrymen might be disposed to lay officially upon him; and what is still more remarkable, he rivaled even Washington himself in the strictness and accuracy with which he kept his accounts between himself and the country he was called to serve. It has been recorded of him "as characteristic of his moral worth and strict integrity that the proper records will show that while in Congress, every day's absence from his seat was noted in his account for pay. If such absence was on committee or other duty connected with his office as a member of the House the fact was stated. If the absence was on his own private business the Government was credited with so much at the rate of eight dollars per day. The same scrupulous care in regard to mileage was exhibited. He never claimed more than for the actual distance by the most direct route from his home to the Capitol. It is believed that no other instance of such nicety is to be found in the congressional accounts of that period."

This was the kind of man that laid down his legislative robes, and after so long a service found rest in the more retired but not less congenial walks of his private, domestic, and social life at home. He returned to Canfield, Ohio, in July, 1838, where his family, consisting of wife and ten children—seven sons and three

daughters—some now grown to manhood and womanhood, still with one exception remained. Here he spent some three years, resuming the practice of his profession, and following the vocation likewise of a farmer, which was always agreeable to him, after the example of the Roman Cincinnatus.

In the month of February, 1841, General Harrison, his old friend having been elected to the Presidency, and about to be inaugurated in his office, wrote to Mr. Whittlesey, offering him a seat in his cabinet, which he in reply accepted, but which arrangement before the day of inauguration was overturned by the efforts of an Ohio politician. Subsequent to this, on the 17th of March, 1841, he was appointed to the office of Sixth Auditor, or Auditor of the Treasury for the Post Office Department, and entered immediately upon its duties. This position he accepted on two conditions, with both of which President Harrison complied—first, that no one was to be removed to make a place for him—second, that no clerk should be appointed or removed in the Bureau of which he was to be the head, without his concurrence. After the death of Harrison, his successor, President Tyler, confirmed the same conditions which were observed for more than two years, and then violated, as indeed were many other pledges of that most unhappy “Accident” as he was called. A clerk under Mr. Whittlesey was removed and another inexperienced in the business was put in his place without the Auditor’s consent. There being no satisfactory explanation of this act, Mr. Whittlesey resigned on the 30th of September, 1843, and again went into private life, choosing to maintain his principles rather than keep his place. He would not be tampered with in a matter of personal honor and the veracity of his word. Four years now passed away, at the end of which time he was called again to Washington in 1847, to act as General Agent of the Washington National Monument Association, and continued in this capacity till May, 1849, when he resigned the office, but was afterwards again called to manage the affairs of the Association as its president, and continued to do so without charge until 1855, when he was removed by a change of the political party in the municipal government of the Capital, and since then the great column has been standing where it was then

arrested, a silent reproof of the act which displaced such a man from the care of its rising to completion.

Time, however, had brought new changes over the nation, and Zachary Taylor, the hero of the Mexican war, had been advanced to the Presidential chair. In June, 1849, President Taylor appointed Mr. Whittlesey First Comptroller of the Treasury of the United States, and on the first of that month he entered upon his new and responsible duties. He held this office through the Taylor and Fillmore administrations, and on the accession of General Pierce as President, Mr. Whittlesey being opposed to the principles on which he had been elevated to the Chief Magistracy, resigned. The resignation, however, was refused, and Mr. Whittlesey was retained in office until Buchanan's accession, when for like reasons he again resigned, and this time his resignation was accepted. Again he went into retirement at his home in Canfield, now having been rendered desolate by the death of his beloved wife, which occurred in June, 1855, and by the dispersion of most of his children and the death of two—George B. and Elisha M. Whittlesey—a noble man long associated with his father in the business of the Comptroller's office. Those were the days of his sorrow and desolation. But ever active, ever engaged in useful occupations, he put his private business, long too much neglected by reason of his public service, thoroughly in order, and spent some time in traveling and visiting his now numerous and widely scattered relatives. It was, too, at this time, that an effort was made by certain parties of unprincipled men, whom, in the prior administration of the office of First Comptroller, he had offended by exposing and rejecting their unfounded claims for large sums of money upon the Treasury, attempted to give him trouble by holding him responsible in a civil suit at court in this District. The effort, however, totally failed to affect him in his character or reputation, and only served the more to manifest the recklessness and unscrupulous spirit by which they were animated.

One of the most noted of these cases was the Levy claim, for pretended losses of many thousands of dollars during the Mexican war, which, though long urged by all the ingenuity, persistence, and determination of shrewd advocates and cunning and bold associates, and showing a complication of testimony voluminous and

vexatious, he carefully sifted to the bottom, and resisted for its injustice to the end, setting forth the grounds of his decision in a document of many pages, most carefully and elaborately prepared. It was in this manner that, during his long career of public life, he had established a national reputation for untiring perseverance and scrupulous honesty. The Presidential election of 1860 brought to the head of the nation its present Chief Magistrate, who again, in May, 1861, called him from his retirement to resume the important duties of this office, which he had held so long, and in which he continued to act though at an advanced age, with slight interruptions, owing to the pressure of his duties and the infirmities of years, till the very day of his death, the 7th of January, 1863. Among the many commendations which were issued from the public press on the occasion of this appointment, reflecting credit alike on the President, Secretary of the Treasury, and Comptroller, I transcribe one, which, in giving a brief outline of his public life, says substantially, in words of perfect truth and soberness, as follows :

“The President of the United States has recalled to the office of Comptroller of the Treasury the Hon. Elisha Whittlesey, of Ohio, and that distinguished scholar and statesman has accepted the post of honor and responsibility assigned him. When it was first intimated that he would be recalled, we doubted if he would listen to it, for the reason that his increasing years had, as we supposed, suggested to him the expediency of passing into that comparative solitude which attends private or domestic life. The country, however, or at least all who are conversant with the life and character of Mr. Whittlesey, will rejoice that he has accepted the invitation. He is a remarkable and most wonderful man. It was he who, in the years of 1832-3, redeemed the Post Office Department from absolute chaos. He is endowed with talent and genius which most admirably fit him for the office of Comptroller, through whose hands every claim against the Government of the United States, real and unfounded, must pass. No just claim was ever rejected by him, and no unjust one ever succeeded in obtaining access to the National Treasury. Even the famous Gardiner claim was not allowed by him, and only succeeded for a time through the interference of a Congressional commission. He is passionately fond of investigation ; and no problem, however com-

plicated or abstruse, was ever found too tedious for his inquiring mind. If he had remained in his place during the last Administration he would unquestionably have saved the country millions of dollars, which were stolen by the desperadoes who found their way into the Cabinet."

And the very highest compliment, says another writer, was paid to him in the fact that those of more lax political and financial ethics long derisively styled him "the watch-dog of the Treasury." And yet no man was ever more careful of the character and good name of his fellow-men, and especially of those who were in any way connected with or employed in the Department. An instance of this I venture here to relate. During the last year of his life, I was led to preach a discourse on honesty, in which I took occasion to express the dangers of public corruption and official bribery in these tumultuous times; and without calling names, I related an instance of an audacious attempt to bribe a public officer, which had then recently been communicated to me, and commended the stern and more than Roman virtue of that officer for having resented, as I was told he did, the despicable offer. Somehow, Mr. Whittlesey, who listened to the discourse, received the impression that I had reference to some one in the Department of the Treasury, and the next day I received from him a letter, couched in terms of the greatest courtesy, affection, and regard—this was always his style—in which he entered into an explanation to show that, by the rules of the Department, no such instance could have occurred, and that I must have been misinformed; and the point of his letter seemed to be an exceeding sensibility even to the suspicion of the possibility of such an occurrence. I was only too glad to hasten to relieve his mind, by informing him that the occurrence to which I alluded took place in another Department altogether, as I was informed; and that if he derived the impression from my remarks in the sermon that it had occurred in his Department, I had been unfortunate in not making myself fully understood. His great capabilities were thus equally exerted to prevent fraud and dishonesty in the vile, and to repel the suspicions of it in the upright and the good.

Beside all these public labors, Mr. Whittlesey was ever a friend of the great and noble charities which spring from the church of God in the philanthropic and Christian associations that tend

to the amelioration of the condition of mankind. Having early in life made a public profession of the Christian faith by uniting with the church in his adopted town; and having ever a spirit of generous sympathy with all that is wise and good in the great schemes of Christian enterprise that have marked the present century, he was always ready to respond to the call of suffering humanity, and to aid by his utmost power in its progress and elevation. If he could not do all that his wide and genial nature prompted to be done, he contented himself with accomplishing whatever was practicable in a just comprehension of all the circumstances. It was thus that, actuated by such motives, he early became and ever continued a steadfast friend of the American Colonization cause, which, whatever may be said of its present relations to the subjects of its existence, must justly claim to have prepared the way and laid the foundations for a better and greater hope for the future of Africa. He saw from the beginning the importance of this great work, and more than thirty years ago he prepared and delivered a most elaborate, instructive, and powerful address upon the whole question, which had great influence in opening the eyes of the people, and in diffusing a better understanding of the objects proposed throughout the nation, and which is now treasured as one of its most valued documents in the archives of the Society. And since that day he has rendered to the cause most invaluable services, which were duly acknowledged in the following action of the Executive Committee :

“At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Colonization Society, on the evening of the 9th instant, the Corresponding Secretary, the Rev. R. R. Gurley, announced the sudden decease of the venerable Elisha Whittlesey, a Vice President of this Society, for several years chairman of the Executive Committee.

“The following resolutions were then submitted and unanimously adopted :

“*Resolved*, That, in this hour of national calamity and distress, this committee are affected by a grief not to be expressed, in the removal from their presence and counsels of the venerable Elisha Whittlesey, so long and so eminently devoted, in Congress and high offices of public trust, to the honor and welfare of our country, to this Society, and to the interests of human virtue, improvement, and happiness; and that our consolation under the loss we sustain must be derived alone from

resignation to the supreme Providence in which he ever confided, and which directed and supported him in his varied and multiplied exertions for mankind.

“*Resolved*, That the members of this committee, and the friends generally of the American Colonization Society, can never cease to cherish a warm and grateful remembrance of their departed friend for his early, constant, zealous, and able services for this institution, (both as for many years chairman of the Executive Committee and a Vice President of the Society,) to the progress of which he was permitted eminently to contribute during his long life by his writings, his counsels, his efforts, and his prayers.

“*Resolved*, That the preceding resolutions be published and communicated to the family of the deceased.”

Nor was his interest confined to this great work of human beneficence alone. He carried with him a deep and earnest sympathy for and an intelligent appreciation of the necessity and fundamental importance of maintaining the body, the doctrine, the ordinance, the law, the spirit, the mission of the Christian Church—and this alike whether at home or abroad. He thus gave a most substantial support to the cause of modern Christian missions—to all sound methods of personal and social reformation—to the Bible and Tract and Educational operations of the age. He favored all institutions and instrumentalities which had in view the purity of the public morals, the religious culture and proper discipline of children, and the general improvement of the temper and tone of the times; and through all his life he gave himself as much as possible personally to the work of serving and maintaining the march of a Christian civilization. Besides this he prepared many documents on miscellaneous subjects, and lectures of popular interest and concern. Among these was a historical address delivered on the occasion of the reunion of a large circle of his family kindred, which is replete with historical information of the early times of our fathers. In addition to all these labors he kept for many years a diary of current events, and a journal of autobiography, compiling with these an immense mass of material of the most valuable kind, on many subjects now to be found in the voluminous manuscript and printed papers he has left behind him. So that he probably approached as near as any other man of his time to the well-known habit of John Quincy Adams in recording from day to day the scenes of his experience, and the

subjects of his reading and observation. An affecting example of this is to be found in the last volume of his journal, on seven pages only of which did his hand trace the customary story of the day. I have had it in my possession in the preparation of this discourse. There it is, the close of the year 1862 and the beginning of the year 1863, written in his own hand, himself giving an account of his own rapid approach to the limits of his earthly life, up to the very last moment until the pen dropped from his fingers, the lamp of his evening labor was extinguished, he gathered up his feet into his bed and in an hour was sleeping in the slumber that knows no waking till the morning of the resurrection. All this is so characteristic of the man and of his departure from this world, that I venture to extract sentences here and there from his own pen during the last days of his living among us. I find, for example, an entry on Sunday, December 21, 1862, after his first attack, which was one week before—and was described by him as vertigo, in which he thought himself dying, but from which he so far recovered as to resume many of his daily habits of life—an entry like the following:

Sunday, December 21, 1862.—Referring to myself, as he was then unable to attend the public worship of the day, he says: “he has the belief that the rebellion and distresses of the country are the result of sin and the demoralization of the people; and he exerts himself to convince his hearers that the remedy is repentance. How few lay these things to heart. O Lord, *do* revive this work among us!”

“*Tuesday, December 23.*—I am much better this morning. I thank God for his goodness in the improvement of my health.

“*Wednesday, December 24.*—Rested very well during the night, but feel the effects of too much talking.

“*Wednesday, December 31, 1862.*—This is the last day of the year 1862, and I record the personal services of the Almighty toward me and toward my family. My personal affliction is light when compared with that of others.

“*Thursday, January 1, 1863.*—My thanks are due and given to God, the Author of my being; and although his afflictive hand is tenderly laid upon me, to remind me I am mortal and have but a few days remaining to prepare for an eternity that never ends, it is a mercy, and I devoutly ask for a resignation to the divine

will, for that due preparation and sanctification of heart which shall enable me to inquire, when the hour of death arrives, Oh death where is thy sting?"

So communing with himself each day, he lingered Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, January 7, 1863, and each day wrote a page of reflections on the preceding until the last. It is affecting to look at the last sentence, the last word, the last letter, the full dot at the end and very bottom of the page, and to know as we do that in two hours after that dot was made his spirit had taken its flight into eternity.

The appreciation of such a man, and the sorrow at his departure, was immediately manifest in the action of public bodies—in the Department of Government to which he belonged—in resolutions of associations—in articles of the press—in the funeral services both in Washington and at Canfield—and in the many testimonials of public sensibility upon the tidings of his departure from this world.

To the suggestions in a paper which was found in his office immediately after his death, written in his own hand and covered with an official envelope, directed to his children, and which appeared to have been prepared many months before, and left as though he had already received an admonition of the coming close of life, the funeral services were conformed and carried out. This paper is so characteristic of the man, that I venture to introduce it here :

“ WASHINGTON, *April 20, 1862.*

“MY DEAR CHILDREN: At my advanced age, I cannot reasonably expect to live much longer on earth, and I deem it proper to leave instructions in regard to my funeral in the event of death, and to the disposal of my person in the event of disability.

“If I decease in Washington, my wish is that this tabernacle of clay be removed to Canfield, and deposited north of the monument erected to the memory of your dear mother—my birth and death to be inscribed on the monument. Having lived an unostentatious life, my desire is that the funeral ceremonies and all the proceedings comport therewith.

“If I should be sick when in office, and incapacitated for transacting business, from the happening of either event, I wish the President of the United States to be informed of it, and that this is my resignation of the office of Comptroller, that he conferred by the advice of the Senate.

“As our family is widely separated, if I should die here, I suggest to you whether it would not be expedient to embalm my body.

“You will judge of having any other religious exercises here than prayer and singing.

“I know that those with whom I have lived so many years in Ohio in uninterrupted peace and harmony, will desire to pay the same respect to my memory that I have to their deceased relatives and friends, and it is proper that religious services be observed at Canfield.

“If in office, and from any cause unable to attend to its duties, it will be best to take me to Canfield immediately.

“My dear children, grand-children, and great-grand-children, my prayer is that we be prepared, through the mediation and atonement of Christ, to appear at the judgment seat at the last day.

“Affectionately,

“ELISHA WHITTLESEY.”

I have no intention to comment on the many subjects of profound interest which the life of such a man suggests, much less to attempt to pronounce an elaborate eulogy in memory of the dead. All that can be said has already been said by others, far better than it ever can be in my power to say it. A single extract from a letter written to me the last week only, and without the least idea on the part of its author that I should use it thus publicly, will serve to show the kind of man he was, and the impression he everywhere made of the great purity, elevation, and moral worth of his character. The writer says :

“My personal knowledge of the late Comptroller extends only from February, 1862, to the date of his death. But during that brief time, how full and rich are my recollections of him ! In the course of my experience I do not remember to have been more impressed by any man ; for, while no man could have been more unaffected or devoid of stateliness, so to speak, no one could possibly have been more dignified, or more kind and courteous. But it has seemed to me that the influence of his *example* was more to the purpose than even the admirable counsel and quiet wisdom which fell from his lips. For whose life could possibly have been more full of instruction than his ? And it was his consistent, ever-reliable, honorable life, which inspired a love of industry, order, and exemplary conduct in all who were daily associated with him. It was impossible to be inattentive, frivolous, or disrespectful in his presence. Habits of business with him were laws. His punctuality was never to be questioned. The duties of his office frequently demanded grave decisions upon questions of much

intricacy, involving interests of great magnitude. These decisions, after a rigid deliberation, were given with a firmness which never wavered. He sought out the truth, announced it, and held to it, no matter who opposed. He acquired the reputation and almost the fame of another Aristides."

It would be impossible for us to embrace here the numerous testimonies which show how deeply the character and life of Mr. Whittlesey have impressed the public mind and heart of the nation. Nor can we fully analyze the qualities of such a character, even to our own satisfaction; but there are some points of especial interest and importance which we would hold up for the regard and imitation of all our countrymen, and which can never be too strongly urged upon the attention of American youth—the rising element and force of coming generations.

1. There was in him great simplicity and dignity of manner. As has been well said none were more affable and kind, yet no one felt like trifling in his presence. Such an urbanity and sweet dignity flowed from him always, that every one approaching him immediately felt the air of it, and partook of the spirit of it.

2 There was in him a deep sense of justice and equity. How pure was his work and how firm was his purpose to maintain the right. Probably no man ever lived in this nation that excelled him in these particulars. Hence confidence in him was unbounded. His honesty passed into a proverb long before the mission of his life had closed.

3. He had a wonderful faculty for system, order, punctuality, and industry. All these qualities he daily illustrated down to the most minute details of life. And while he was every day doing great and solemn things in which the very honor and life of his country were involved, he walked in the pleasant garments of all kindly courtesies and all gentle amenities. It was often surprising to me how he could find time to do so much, and whence he had strength of body and mind for so many years day by day to be always at his word, and always where he had before arranged to be.

4. Whatever he did he did from principle, which filled him with a powerful sense of individual responsibility. When he assumed any relation in life he did it with a full purpose to fulfill all its obligations to the end. He did not believe in empty covenants

and idle promises. His engagements carried with them all there was of him to fulfill them; often when he could not be at the meetings of the church—by reason of providential hindrance—although his domicile and his church connection had never been transferred to this city, yet he took pains to send or make the explanation of his absence. It was a remarkable feature of his character, and as rare as it is remarkable. It ran through his whole life in all his social and public experience—as son, brother, husband, father, advocate, captain, church member, legislator, auditor, comptroller, member of this organization and of that—he held himself under obligations of duty, and when for any reason failing to fulfill it, he held himself accountable to his associates. In the use of all his faculties of body and mind, of all his possessions, offices, influence, and regard among men, he never forgot that he was a steward of God, and as such must render a faithful account of all that had been entrusted to him.

5. His nature was a deep fountain of the utmost tenderness, flowing from a mind and heart as firm as adamant in its sense of right and the determination to maintain it. And all this was enriched by a sound intellect, varied information, and long experience. So that he comprehended in deed the threefold names of the well known epigram of praise. He was truly “a gentleman, a scholar, and a Christian.” He was all this during the period of my acquaintance with him. I knew him only in his last years, and often thought of him as of a rare old man—the type of that manhood which we read of in the records of elder days—and one of the few links that bind us to the mighty generation of great and good men in the past.

6. But with all his virtues and amenities of life, nothing went deeper into his whole nature than his simple, earnest, cloudless, beautiful Christian faith. This was the chord, that once struck vibrated to the sweetest and holiest accents of his being. Often at the name of Christ his eye would fill with tears, and his voice pause while the heart was too full for utterance. In the pious and patriotic devotion of his life, probably no man of his generation surpassed him. He loved the church, he loved his country, and gloried as a Christian statesman in all the triumphs of the one, and in all the prosperity of the other.

And in these respects what a legacy has he bequeathed, not

only to his children and immediate family kindred, but to the Church of God on earth and the American nation. How bright is the page that contains his history, how unsullied the name and how pure the life that now he furnishes for the imitation of all who survive him. His name cannot be forgotten. The memory of the just is blessed, and the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 003 980 756 7