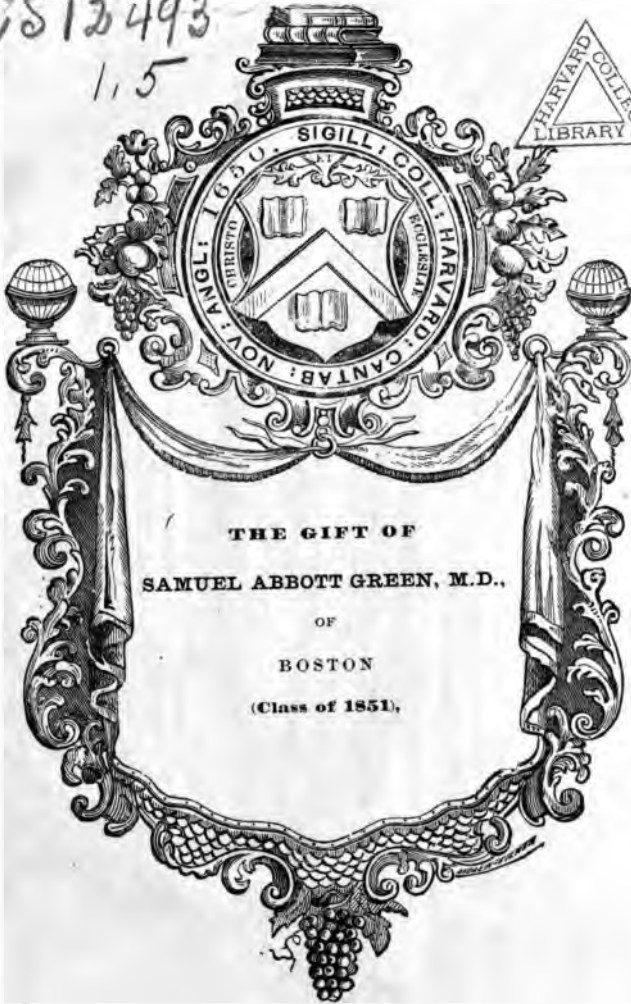


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THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN

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A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

First Congregational Church

BURLINGTON VERMONT

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 19th 1882

By L. G. WARE

BURLINGTON
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BURLINGTON, NOVEMBER 21st, 1882.

DEAR SIR :

At the request of many who heard your sermon on the 19th inst., relative to Dr. Thayer, and of many who were prevented from hearing it, we respectfully request a copy for publication. We are sure that it will be gratifying to the numerous friends of Dr. Thayer, here and elsewhere, that it should appear in print.

Very sincerely yours,

E. J. PHELPS,	E. W. PECK,	SAM'L HUNTINGTON,
A. C. TUTTLE,	B. B. SMALLEY,	ELIHU B. TAFT,
T. E. WALES,	HENRY LOOMIS,	HENRY GREENE.

The Rev. L. G. WARE.

43 WILLIAMS STREET, November 24.

DEAR FRIENDS :

Sermon is speech: and I think mine would better stay so ; for, separate from tone and action of the spoken word, I fear it may not answer its purpose as you kindly thought it did on Sunday.

Yet its purpose to speak our love and dear respect for Dr. Thayer may, though it falls short, give it welcome with some ; and so I send it you to print, if you think best.

With thanks and kind regard, I am

Yours, faithfully,

L. G. WARE.

To

E. J. PHELPS,	E. W. PECK,	SAM'L HUNTINGTON,
A. C. TUTTLE,	B. B. SMALLEY,	ELIHU B. TAFT,
T. E. WALES,	HENRY LOOMIS,	HENRY GREENE.

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SERMON.

Col. 4: 14.—“ *The Beloved Physician greets you.*”

Though dead, he yet speaketh. The clear, generous voice, which sounded the fit instrument of so generous a heart, is hushed for ever. But, out of so clear a memory as is his, of a kindness without fail and truth without shadow, he still speaks. And out of a life so full, diligence so active, a spirit so faithful, does he not speak to us for the hope which is ours in Christ, that, somewhere in the great universe of God and by His father-love, there must be place still for fidelity to continue, for usefulness not to die out, for such large humanity still to be a benefactor? Yes, though dead, he speaketh, and greets us out of a memory which we shall cherish long among our possessions of the dear affection and bright example which wait on goodness. Out of the hope he greets us, that of goodness the memorial is immortal, because it is known with God, as also with men. “When it is present men take example of it; and when it is gone, they desire it; it weareth a crown and triumpheth for ever, having gotten the victory, striving after undefiled rewards.”

To-day, while the sense of loss is fresh in the death of our dear friend and honored neighbor, Dr. Thayer, whoever shall turn to seek in Scripture a proper text to speak in one word the feeling of this community, will almost surely, I think, light upon this: "The beloved physician." For this will tell just his main distinction in his profession.

I say in his profession. For it is of him in his public capacity that I would speak, as he was known and read of all. Yet never, I believe, has public capacity followed the lead more closely or represented better the private heart. His public capacity? That was but the mirror of the capaciousness of his generous nature. His professional work reflected himself. Does talent, inevitably, smack of character? Our friend's conspicuous faculty and his high professional usefulness surely have borne witness always to a finer, better ability deeper in him. Through his work looked the man; looked and came forth the man, more helpful and efficient than his skill. His manhood, true and large and pure,—tender and sympathetic,—took the lead of his medical eminence, and was "in attendance" before it.

I do not forget how distinguished he was for his talent and wisdom in his profession, particularly in that branch which, as a surgeon of the best, he most professed. I remember how he was sought, far and near, for counsel or treatment, and the more where the case was a desperate one. I recall his pre-eminence among his brethren in these parts, and his notable good service

in the war, when his patriotism and his profession went hand in hand in invaluable helps of good judgment and far-reaching views, and of energy in carrying out his well-wrought plans of medical army-relief. I forget none of this, nor the more that is on record of his conspicuous ability in that more public field. And, in private, how many recall, to-day, with gratitude, his skill and care at the sick-bed of those dear to them, or in their own case! Yet we know him best in none of these things, though his services have been beyond count for value, and in some cases, I know, such as to be remembered best in our thanks to God. Not as skilful, or careful,—wise gifted, eminent,—but as “beloved,” since so we have known him best, shall we most remember him. I know not what may be inscribed upon his monument or headstone. Goodness is its own monument, and the inscription of kindness and fidelity is set in material softer and warmer than cold stone. On the tablets of many hearts may be read—and his epitaph may well copy an inscription so fit to his single-heartedness—

“The Beloved Physician.”

I do not stand here to eulogise him. In the solemn presence of death—(can “flattery soothe its dull cold ear?”)—I dare not try to be eulogistic ever. The departed go to judgment. As they have lived, so they die into the austere judgments of the All-Holy; and I dare

never set myself to eulogise. If now I speak in terms or suggestion of eulogy, it is because there are some men whom to name is to praise. I am but the mouth-piece of the general love. If I am right,—and all this community for thirty years will instruct me that I am,—right in making the love borne to him in his professional labours, his distinction in his profession, then, without wronging his unselfish spirit or doing violence to his modest self-estimation, I must appear to praise him. If there are those in our sick and sorrowing sinful earth, who manage to let their light so shine as a candle shines from its proper stand unto all that are in the house, showing good deeds in a naughty world to the praise of the Lord of all goodness, some of the light and of the praise must needs be reflected back upon themselves.

I am struck with the sincerity, simplicity and heart of love which speaks out from all who now talk of him. There is no seeking for nice phrases. Every time, the word touches him in the white—indeed, yes, in the white—of his character back of and within all that he professionally was. One, as we talked of him—a hard-working and much-taxed, unlettered woman—said simply: “He was a man!” leaving it there, and not knowing she was talking Shakespeare, and quoting him just where he makes a scholar and prince sum up the virtues of his royal father in the same words:

“He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.”

It is notable, the respect for him on the part of the poor and those who have little brightness in their lives. It is much respect, yet less respect paid than love given. Indeed, how vapid our thanks appear, the polite acknowledgments of the well-to-do, compared with the gratitude of those poor in pocket, but rich at heart, remembering a kindness long after the doer has forgot it, and, probably, much beyond its desert. From none of the crowd of needy persons whom he helped, could our friend ever hear: "Beggard that I am, I am poor in thanks." Of the kindness a physician is able to show, we can hardly say it can be thanked beyond its desert, so important is it and of so vital sort, the dear issues of life and death being wrapped up in it. Such kindnesses he had ample chance to show, and he scattered them amply, right and left, and up and down, without stint. His ear is closed, and he cannot hear the chorus of thanks which rises, among us and afar off, from a great multitude who recall the benefits which he made it a duty and his pleasure to forget. But they are not forgot, and their just praise is listened to now somewhere—Somewhere—to his credit and recompense.

It reached sometimes his living ear, however: and some of that which had a touch of humour in it he chose to remember. How it tickled his sense of humour, to hear it, once and again, from some of his—parishioners, it was on the tip of my tongue to say. And, truly, his was the cure of souls, as well as bodies. Was he not a real "minister," moving among his fellows, like his Mas-

ter, as he that serves? He was mightily amused once to hear one whom he had befriended say: "Ah, Doctor, when you die, you will have the biggest funeral ever seen in the town!" He was one to take in all the humoursomeness of this truly Irish praise, but treasuring the fun of it more than the praise.

Yet did it not come true, the other day, in good earnest, by that crowded church and long procession, this time of real mourners? But it came true less in the numbers gathered than in the hearts which went out to him in regret born of real love. There were all classes and ranks, all trades and occupations; all ages, too, as befitted the funeral-honors of a man who had seen an elder generation pass off the stage, another come to play their parts, and a third advancing whom he had helped, many of them, into life and breath, to live this strange and mingled, mysterious life of man. My eye rested with interest on the ingenuous student-youth who headed the long line with their military ranks; fit, I thought, with their fearless brows but arms untried, to do honor to this veteran reposing from the strife of life and at rest from its alarms. It was an unusual sight, too, to see there the members of his medical class, of an age not given to the melting mood, as becomes young men not expecting pretty things from life, but hardness, rather, and stress,—to see these each with a little bunch of flowers to cast into his grave. Such tribute is not given often to a white-haired man, full of years and more of cares. It is a tribute fit to children and the young,

whose life, untimely snapped, is better emblemed by the flower that fades. It belongs rather to some young girl, mourned by her companitons for her flower-like beauty of face and mind. Let her be

“ * * * allowed her virgin rites,
Her maiden-strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.”

But here it was given to this worn and tired man of long labours and many trials. Yet it was fit, and I liked the sentiment which found it manly to offer the graceful tribute. For, in the life which was ended, had been the fragrance of good deeds, many and many, of which those flowers, strewn on his last resting-place, were the type.

“ Only the actions of the just
Preserve in death a rich perfume,
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.”

More than any lawyer, the physician has his poor clients, and more than any parson or priest, his parish of the needy and distressed. The word most naturally spoken of him after his death, calling him the “beloved” physician, proves him to have come nearer home and closer to the hearts of people, almost than any minister. Being a loved and trusted man, the doctor comes nearer than almost any, to the privacies of our hearts and among our family secrets. I see the really “beloved” physician as a father-confessor more intimate than any priest. And it is his privilege to become intimate in the affections, as he does with the needs of many who can

never pay him for his care. The charity of the physician has an ample chance ; a chance which is fully recognized and improved by most in the profession. Many are those in it who profess not only their calling, but also its beneficent call, making themselves trustees of its great opportunity of doing good without hope of reward. Of our friend we may say that he did this, not so much without hope as without thought of reward. With all his sagacity and power to measure men and things and not to be taken in, his was a rare simplicity of nature. We rarely meet one so single-hearted. With his wisdom, there was the candor of a child, as also the tenderness of a woman. This candid simplicity helped his kind heart in dealing with the lowly and poor. It was not so much that he did not hope for reward, as that he never thought of it. His large charity became spontaneous. His was an unthinking habit of help. Helpfulness in him was like the conscience of the pure and just—infallible.

In his last, torturing illness, we often thought : If now all whom he has eased could take each his share of the fatigue and pain he suffers, how little it would be, shared among so many, and how ready all would be to take it, if that were possible. Of this multitude, many would have to remember that this little service paid would be all the pay they ever gave, and more than he ever asked. I remember, when he returned from London and Paris, the exorbitancy of the doctor's fees over there was a thing he could not, it seemed, get over or get along with. "It is not right," he said to me, in his grave way.

He spoke of it almost as an honest man speaks of cheating, or a humane man of cruelty. In his thoughtlessness of money, he was like the famous surgeon, Abernethy; and like him also in his thoughtfulness of the poor. I am sure, like Abernethy, he would have turned aside from his due visit to a royal duke, to go to the bedside of a man who he knew had nothing to pay, muttering as he drove off: "The duke of York can have twenty surgeons, if he wants."

Many were the droll compliments he got; like the old Irish woman's I quoted a moment ago. Once when he came back from Europe, he met one of his old pensioners, who was not slow to stop his chaise to greet him: "And so, Doctor, you've got home? And they say you've been a'most over all the world!" "Yes, Pat; and to Ireland, too, and I've seen Dublin." "Ah, but, Doctor, that's a fine city, Dublin!" "Yes, I saw many fine sights there." "And did you see anything finer than yourself, Doctor?"

Our Irish brethren have a good deal about them that is, to say the least, vexatious. Yet one might envy them this odd mingling of mother-wit and sentiment, which seems to be in their blood. It is a sort of race-mark, and makes them the wittiest and pleasantest complimenters in the world. "The Lord go with you," cried an old beggar after one who had given her sixpence, "The Lord go with you on your road, and may this your charity get to heaven before you—as it will!" The pretty compliment, almost too neat to be quite sincere,

does have in it, after all, the essence of our Christian faith that what is good is permanent, and that the fidelities of this mortal life are our immortality. It is but an echo, after all, of the solemn benediction on the departed who die in the Lord, the Lord of goodness and love, that "their works do follow them." If so, it is a long train which gets up and gathers together now out of all those thirty years, which we commemorate, of usefulness and kindly benefit, and which we see follow our friend now, to the new opportunities of use and benefaction above, which reward by continuing the fidelity he was so diligent in below.

He loved his art; honored his profession. His old teacher, now a venerable professor in the medical school in New York, said to the surgeons there met in consultation over his fatal case: "Be careful of him, gentlemen; you have no common man there. He is a power in Vermont." So he was a power among us; but for good, as of surgical name and repute. He honored his profession not more by his intelligence and skill, and by his zeal to keep abreast of the first men and first methods in it, than by the humanity which he brought to it. By nature and of conscience, he had that in him which, in any profession, would have made him "beloved." This quality, of integrity at one with a tender heart, made him to how many a minister of God to do them good! His sympathy kept him from mere officialism. He came to us as an attached friend. Of him, in his medical success, might

be quoted, changing the profession, the verse about the modest preacher who could

“excel
Ten metropolitans in preaching well.”

One felt himself safer in his hands than among ten of some doctors of city-practice and wider note. But the trust placed in the man was, at least, as helpful as the confidence had in the physician. His friendliness was something sanative. His kindness was as a rock to lean on, and his true-hearted sympathy a real solace.

The steel-like steadiness of the surgeon in him has been often remarked; his unflinching directness in delicate work, his absolute nerve of the born-operator. More often now is called up his extreme and tender considerateness. We knew the hand would be firm; but knew also the heart was tremulous. “My dear, I’ve got to hurt you dreadfully,” he said to a little child, and made the merciful wrench with all his surgical exactness; then in the next room, the moment after, shook like a leaf and wept more bitterly than the child.

His profession, as to so many in it, was a trust, and he was diligent in it. As the real nobleman, his nobility, so he felt his skill to be an obligation. Many are with him in this. I admire their professional industry; am grateful for their professional conscience. But his humanity was his distinction. His sympathy, tenderness, charity was so large and unfeigned that, often and often, especially in his older practice in our households,

his summons to the bed-side was but the message : "He whom thou lovest is sick."

I have harped on one string too much to leave room for many other friendly and admirable traits in our friend.

There was his companionableness. The company into which he came was sure to be entertained ; and after no commonplace fashion or mere gossipy sort. He had travelled much, and showed it to be true that travel expands the mind. He had widened his horizon, and liked to give others a chance at the wider space. Men and cities he had seen, adding broadness to his native strength of mind and scope to its aptness. His observation was of the quickest, and it went far and wide. He was full of information over a broad range of topics and experience ; his active mind taking interest in many things and his good judgment weighing them well. It was a matter of course that Bismarck, so sagacious and strong a brain, meeting him once, should have found him a congenial companion and competent instructor on some matters. The interest he took on every hand in his wide travels, and his store of fact, anecdote and discriminating comment made any hour's talk with him a privilege. With this went always that geniality, in the right sense of the abused word, which made it a charming as an improving hour.

His place in his profession I need but name, not dwell on. It is such as to honor the profession more than him, though he was one who valued highly his professional credit. Was it his failing that he did not make money by his profession? Then it was one of those failings which lean to virtue's side. Was there something almost morbid in his disregard of his just dues? If this were a fault, like all human faultiness it was a pity. But let us be glad that, once in a while, there lives among us,—lives and works, and works at the hardest,—one who finds his pay in the work, not in its emoluments. It was the very spirit of the scientist, of the lover of his work and eager worker at it for its own sake, which made Agassiz say he had no time to make money. Something of this spirit was in our friend, as also a good deal of the bashfulness of a kind heart which is shy of payment for its kindness. In this grabbing age of ours, I am not sure but, next to his loving trustiness, the highest pitch of his high example, at once of probity and kindness, is that he dies a poor man.

I must leave much unsaid that is in my mind to remember and my heart to honor. I have not meant to draw

“A faultless monster whom the world ne'er saw.”

I have but wished to say Hail and Farewell to a good and useful man, remembering of him and chiefly noting what is chief in the memory of those who, for many

years, have known him in the close relations which a friendly man and trusty physician knits with his families and patients. What is chief in this remembrance, and in the respect and affection that go with it? I hear your reply,—the answer given by thousands, since not to less did his care come and his goodness extend. Chief is that quality, that heart in Dr. Thayer, which, taking hold of many hearts, makes his record and our honor to him that of the Beloved Physician.

I have harped on one string: this one of the love which he leaves behind him,—and the reason why, which is that he loved us. One string I have struck, perhaps to monotony. But it is because the music of a good man's life is, after all and at best and sweetest, the music of the heart. And when that life is ended on the earth, we believe it goes sounding on as he joins that Choir Invisible

“ Whose music is the gladness of the world.”

Tender-hearted Robert Burns sings :

“ A heart benevolent and kind
The most resembles God.”

Without reaching to the height of that great argument of God-likeness, one may say that a kind and benevolent heart, a heart that with quick sympathies accords with,

thrills to the still sad music of humanity in its sicknesses and sorrows, a heart that has in it the strength of a true man and the tenderness of a gentle-man,—this heart, at least one may say, is the right medium, a quick-responsive instrument through which, amidst and above our human discords, clamors of strife and cries of distress, the divine sounds out the music of its consoling, healing Love.

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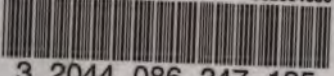
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