

FUNERAL SERMON.
Preached on the body of Captain Daniel Dobbin, in St. Paul's Church, Erie, Pa., by the Rev. John A. Bowman, on Sunday, March 2d, 1856.

It is not my custom, my friends, to preach funeral sermons; but perhaps you will allow me to break in upon this solemn burial service, on the present occasion, and to pay a passing tribute to the memory of our departed and much-loved Brother, the good old man whose body fills this coffin; even if that tribute should be but the heaving of a sigh, the dropping of a tear. And that is the best that this poor, stammering tongue can do for my venerable Brother, departed in the Lord; whose record and benediction I shall never see in his accustomed seat on my left here.

I was much with him during the last few weeks of his protracted illness, and it is not to be wondered that my heart should be for the present, in the coffin there, with him. "who has gone to his fathers in peace," and whom we are about to bury in a good old age."

This is neither the time nor place to eulogize the dead, and I have neither the ability, nor inclination to attempt it.

His memory needs no eulogy. The solemn facts which crowd this temple of the Lord—these citizens, who have come up here in soldiers' uniform, to honor the departed servant of his country,—these naval officers, these sailors and mariners from the U. S. government vessel stationed in our harbor,—this band of loving, sympathizing brotherhood, draped in the regalia of mourning, who have marched in procession with sorrowing hearts, bearing the coffin of my Brother, to do the last and offices to the remains of him who, years ago, worked with them in the solemn Masonic Rites in the Lodge Room,—this weeping, widowed and orphan family, clothed in the habiliments of woe,—these are a higher monument erected to the memory of the sterling virtues of our departed Brother than I can raise; more durable than marble slab or granite obelisk; more honorable than "studied eulogy," or "storiolized urn"; for his epitaph is written on the tablets of true and faithful hearts.

I will only for a few moments, call your attention to the fact which has suggested to me the words of my text, that the same Divine Providence, the same Heavenly Father, watched over, and took care of our departed Brother, all the days of his wanderings and pilgrimage on earth, to the heavenly Canaan, which had guided and guarded the journeyings of the good old patriarch Abraham; and the same Spirit who spoke to Abraham, and gave him the prophetic promise of his text, might have made more than half a century ago, the same beautiful prophecy, of this pilgrim, when sixty years ago, as a boy of nineteen, with his pack on his back and staff in hand, he left his home on the banks of the Juniata, to wander over the mountains, and through the wilderness of western Pennsylvania, to seek a home and resting place, and a grave on the banks of Lake Erie. "And thou shalt go to thy father's in peace; that should be buried in a good old age."

On the last of July, A. D. 1796, nearly thirty years ago, Captain Daniel Dobbin found himself standing, for the first time, on the site of our beautiful city. Half a dozen log cabins were dotted over the "Triangle," as the present county of Erie was then called, and the occupants, but recently come to this wild and gloomy forest, disputed, along with the Red man, their right to the soil, with the bear, the wolf, and the panther.

As immigration poured into the then settlement of Erie, he became a man of note and importance; and his skill as a navigator of the great chain of Lakes, together with his superior knowledge of all the harbors and ports on these waters recommended him to the attention of Government.—Accordingly on the breaking out of the late war with Great Britain he was employed to build vessels of war, and to transport men, arms, munitions, and provisions along the Lakes. On the 24th day of Oct. 1812 he cut the first stick of timber, by order of Com Perry, for Com Perry's fleet, among which vessels were the Lawrence and the Niagara. During the whole of that war he was constantly engaged in active service, perilous voyages, and dangerous enterprises.

Through all these scenes of hardship, danger, and peril, the hand of Providence guided him, and brought him safely till peace was declared. One incident alone, of his adventurous life, will illustrate my text.

At the breaking out of the war he was taken prisoner by the British and Indians at Mackinac, that slimy thule of the early settlement of our country, his vessel and crew taken from him. All the passengers and crew on board were set free, on giving their parole of honor not to take up arms against Great Britain during the war, and they were allowed to return home. But this sturdy hero of the Lakes refused to give his parole. Through the interference of a friend he was sent as a cartel in his own vessel to convey the prisoners to Malden. On his way to Malden, when opposite to Detroit, his vessel was fired into by order of Gen. Hull, and taken charge of by an American officer. Here he joined the American forces under Col. Cass, and was in Detroit at the time of its surrender. In a few days thereafter, Gen. Brock, the British Commander, was informed, falsely, that Captain Dobbin had given his parole at Mackinac not to take up arms during the war. And being taken in defense of Detroit, he would undoubtedly have been executed. But a Brother Mason, whom he had known before the war, Lieut Col. Robert Nichols, Q. M. Gen'l in the British Army, gave him private warning of his danger, secured him, and gave him a "Pass" to Cleveland. A reward was offered for his apprehension and capture, dead or alive; a price was set on his scalp; his savages were on his trail, scenting his blood-hounds, the anticipated blood of his scalp. There were, indeed, some who were disappointed there, were determined to be revenged now.

During his concealment and flight he suffered almost incredible hardships; and through the forest and on the beach, and on the water he made his escape. There was a Power above superior to British ingenuity and Indian sagacity; and during that flight, through sufferings and privations, perils and dangers, that Eye which never slumbered, which watched over Abram of old, watched over this brave man, and he escaped through all; and was brought, by a Divine Providence, back to the bosom of his anxious and distressed family, to engage in active and arduous duties against the enemy. His country needed his services, and he was spared for that purpose. It was written in the archives of heaven, that day when he was spared for that purpose. He should not die in war, that the tomahawk should not be stained with his blood, but that he should rest his scalp, till time should bare his bald head to the breeze of eighty winters; and that brave old man should "go to his fathers in peace;" and that he should be buried in a good old age."

For more than forty years after his escape he lived with his family in this city; most of that time holding a commission as Sailing Master from the government of the U. S.

At length admonished by the hand of time in his furrowed brow, his wrinkled cheek, his dimness of sight, his feeble, tottering step, as we have seen him walking up and down the streets, that the evil days of old age were drawing nigh, the rusty joints of nature's machinery began to creak, and to move in their sockets stiff and painful; his thoughts turned on death and eternity.

Febly burned his lamp of life, growing fainter and weaker each day, glimmering in the socket; and at "high twelve" on Friday last, (Feb. 29th, 1856), the "silver cord" of life was loosed, the "golden bowl broken, the light of life went out. As his spirit was going down into the dark valley of death, the Son of Righteousness, the "Light of the world," typified by the Sun of days as he went up meridian height, beamed upon his soul, and illumined the narrow passage out of this world, into the land of spirits.

During his long life he had ridden through many a storm, had been tossed on many a rude sea, had braved the dangers of many a rough sea, on our great chain of lakes, from Ontario to Michigan, both in peace and war; and, having weathered the storm of life, his brave heart has lain down to rest; his cast-off body, like the huge bulk of a worn-out man-of-war's man, lies on the brink of the grave, dismantled of life, to be given to the decaying hand of time: while his spirit floats calmly on the ocean of eternity,

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