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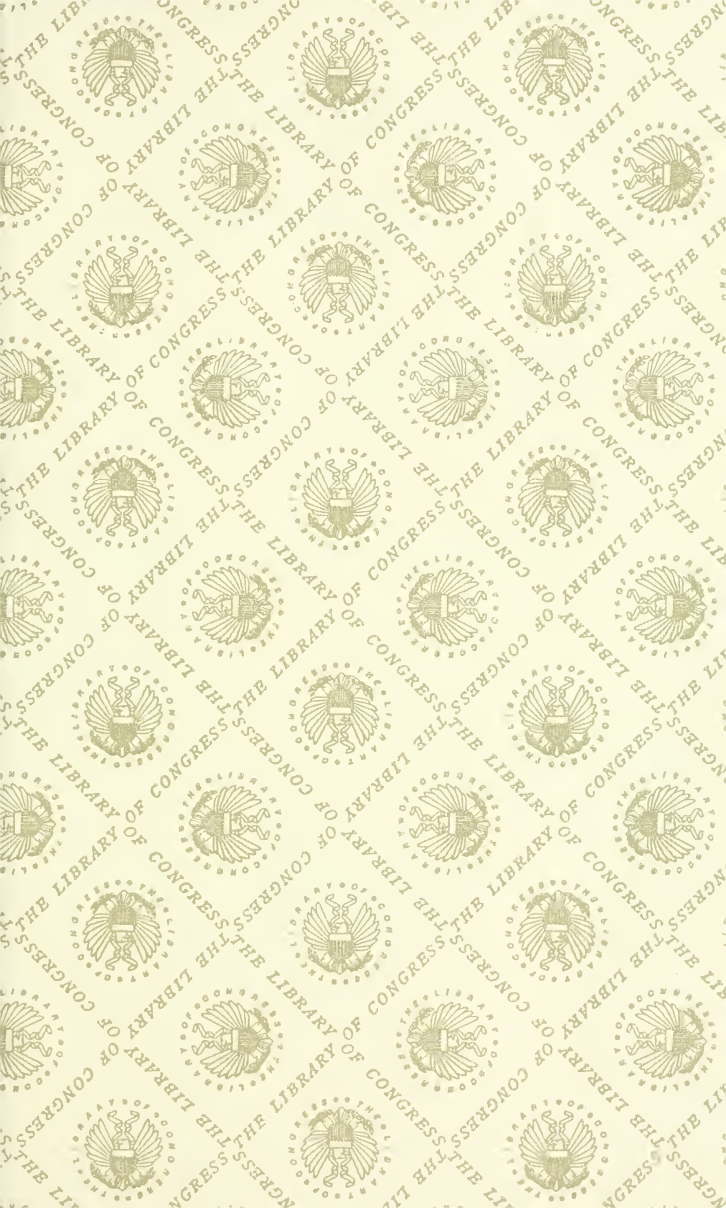
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EULOGY OF GARRISON

REMARKS

OF

WENDELL PHILLIPS

II

AT THE FUNERAL OF

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON



BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK
CHARLES T. DILLINGHAM
1884

F 429
18-284

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GARRISON.

REMARKS OF WENDELL PHILLIPS

AT THE

FUNERAL OF WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON,

Boston, May 28, 1879.

It has been well said that we are not here to weep, and neither are we here to praise. No life closes without sadness. Death, after all, no matter what hope or what memories surround it, is terrible and a mystery. We never part hands that have been clasped life-long in loving tenderness but the hour is sad; still, we do not come here to weep. In other moments, elsewhere, we can offer tender and loving sympathy to those whose roof-tree is so sadly bereaved. But in the spirit of the great life which we commemorate, this hour is for the utterance of a lesson; this hour is given to contemplate a grand example, a rich inheritance, a noble life worthily ended. You come together, not to pay tribute, even loving tribute, to the friend you have lost, whose features you will miss from daily life, but to remember the grand lesson of that career; to speak to each other, and to emphasize what that life teaches,—especially in the hearing of these young listeners, who did not see that marvellous

career ; in their hearing to construe the meaning of the great name which is borne world-wide, and tell them why on both sides the ocean, the news of his death is a matter of interest to every lover of his race. As my friend said, we have no right to be silent. Those of us who stood near him, who witnessed the secret springs of his action, the consistent inward and outward life, have no right to be silent. The largest contribution that will ever be made by any single man's life to the knowledge of the working of our institutions will be the picture of his career. He sounded the depths of the weakness, he proved the ultimate strength, of republican institutions ; he gave us to know the perils that confront us ; he taught us to rally the strength that lies hid.

To my mind there are three remarkable elements in his career. One is rare even among great men. It was his own moral nature, unaided, uninfluenced from outside, that consecrated him to a great idea. Other men ripen gradually. The youngest of the great American names that will be compared with his was between thirty and forty when his first anti-slavery word was uttered. Luther was thirty-four years old when an infamous enterprise woke him to indignation, and it then took two years more to reveal to him the mission God designed for him. This man was in jail for his opinions when he was just twenty-four. He had confronted a nation in the very bloom of his youth. It could be said of him more than of any other American in our day, and more than of any great leader that I chance now to remember in any epoch, that he did not need circumstances, outside influence, some great pregnant event to press him into service, to provoke him to thought, to kindle him into enthusiasm. His moral nature was as marvellous as was the intellect of Pascal. It seemed to be born fully equipped, "finely touched." Think of the mere dates ; think that at some twenty-four years old, while Christian-

ity and statesmanship, the experience, the genius of the land, were wandering in the desert, aghast, amazed, and confounded over a frightful evil, a great sin, this boy sounded, found, invented the talisman, "Immediate, unconditional emancipation on the soil." You may say he borrowed it — true enough — from the lips of a woman on the other side of the Atlantic; but he was the only American whose moral nature seemed, just on the edge of life, so perfectly open to duty and truth that it answered to the far-off bugle-note, and proclaimed it instantly as a complete solution of the problem.

Young men, you have no conception of the miracle of that insight; for it is not given to you to remember with any vividness the blackness of the darkness of ignorance and indifference which then brooded over what was called the moral and religious element of the American people. When I think of him, as Melancthon said of Luther, "day by day grows the wonder fresh" at the ripeness of the moral and intellectual life that God gave him at the very opening.

You hear that boy's lips announcing the statesmanlike solution which startled politicians and angered church and people. A year afterwards, with equally single-hearted devotion, in words that have been so often quoted, with those dungeon doors behind him, he enters on his career. In January, 1831, then twenty-five years old, he starts the publication of "The Liberator," advocating the immediate abolition of slavery; and, with the sublime pledge, "I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject I do not wish to speak or write with moderation. I will not equivocate — I will not excuse — I will not retreat a single inch — AND I WILL BE HEARD."

Then began an agitation which for the marvel of its origin, the majesty of its purpose, the earnestness, unself-

ishness and ability of its appeals, the vigor of its assault, the deep national convulsion it caused, the vast and beneficent changes it wrought, and its wide-spread, indirect influence on all kindred moral questions, is without a parallel in history since Luther. This boy created and marshalled it. His converts held it up and carried it on. Before this, all through the preceding century, there had been among us scattered and single abolitionists, earnest and able men; sometimes, like Wythe of Virginia, in high places. The Quakers and Covenanters had never intermitted their testimony against slavery. But Garrison was the first man to begin a *movement* designed to annihilate slavery. He announced the principle, arranged the method, gathered the forces, enkindled the zeal, started the argument, and finally marshalled the nation for and against the system in a conflict that came near rending the Union.

I marvel again at the instinctive sagacity which discerned the hidden forces fit for such a movement, called them forth, and wielded them to such prompt results. Archimedes said, "Give me a spot and I will move the world." O'Connell leaned back on three millions of Irishmen, all on fire with sympathy. Cobden's hands were held up by the whole manufacturing interest of Great Britain; his treasury was the wealth of the middle classes of the country, and behind him also, in fair proportion, stood the religious convictions of England. Marvellous was their agitation; as you gaze upon it in its successive stages and analyze it, you are astonished at what they invented for tools. But this boy stood alone; utterly alone, at first. There was no sympathy anywhere; his hands were empty; one single penniless comrade was his only helper. Starving on bread and water, he could command the use of types, that was all. Trade endeavored to crush him; the intellectual life of America disowned him.

My friend Weld has said the church was a thick bank of black cloud looming over him. Yes. But no sooner did the church discern the impetuous boy's purpose than out of that dead, sluggish cloud thundered and lightened a malignity which could not find words to express its hate. The very pulpit where I stand saw this apostle of liberty and justice sore beset, always in great need, and often in deadly peril; yet it never gave him one word of approval or sympathy. During all his weary struggle, Mr. Garrison felt its weight in the scale against him. In those years it led the sect which arrogates to itself the name of Liberal. If this was the bearing of so-called Liberals, what bitterness of opposition, judge ye, did not the others show? A mere boy confronts church, commerce, and college; a boy with neither training nor experience! Almost at once the assault tells; the whole country is hotly interested. What created such life under those ribs of death? Whence came that instinctive knowledge? Where did he get that sound common-sense? Whence did he summon that almost unerring sagacity which, starting agitation on an untried field, never committed an error, provoking year by year additional enthusiasm; gathering, as he advanced, helper after helper to his side! I marvel at the miraculous boy. He had no means. Where he got, whence he summoned, how he created, the elements which changed 1830 into 1835 — 1830 apathy, indifference, ignorance, icebergs, into 1835, every man intelligently hating him, and mobs assaulting him in every city — is a marvel which none but older men than I can adequately analyze and explain. He said to a friend who remonstrated with him on the heat and severity of his language, "Brother, I have need to be all on fire, for I have mountains of ice about me to melt." Well, that dungeon of 1830, that universal apathy, that deadness of soul, that contempt of what called itself intellect, in ten

years he changed into the whole country aflame. He made every single home, press, pulpit, and senate-chamber a debating society, with *his* right and wrong for the subject. And as was said of Luther, "God honored him by making all the worst men his enemies."

Fastened on that daily life was a malignant attention and criticism such as no American has ever endured. I will not call it a criticism of hate; that word is not strong enough. Malignity searched him with candles from the moment he uttered that God-given solution of the problem to the moment when he took the hand of the nation and wrote out the statute which made it law. Malignity searched those forty years with candles, and yet even malignity has never lisped a suspicion, much less a charge—never lisped a suspicion of anything mean, dishonorable, dishonest. No man, however mad with hate, however fierce in assault, ever dared to hint that there was anything low in motive, false in assertion, selfish in purpose, dishonest in method—never a stain on the thought, the word, or the deed.

Now contemplate this boy entering such an arena, confronting a nation and all its forces, utterly poor, with no sympathy from any quarter, conducting an angry, widespread, and profound agitation for ten, twenty, forty years, amid the hate of everything strong in American life, and the contempt of everything influential, and no stain, not the slightest shadow of one, rests on his escutcheon! Summon me the public men, the men who have put their hands to the helm of the vessel of state since 1789, of whom that can be said, although love and admiration, which almost culminated in worship, attended the steps of some of them.

Then look at the work he did. My friends have spoken of his influence. What American ever held his hand so long and so powerfully on the helm of social, intellectual,

and moral America? There have been giants in our day. Great men God has granted in widely different spheres; earnest men, men whom public admiration lifted early into power. I shall venture to name some of them. Perhaps you will say it is not usual on an occasion like this, but long-waiting truth needs to be uttered in an hour when this great example is still absolutely indispensable to inspire the effort, to guide the steps, to cheer the hope, of the nation not yet arrived in the promised land. I want to show you the vast breadth and depth that this man's name signifies. We have had Webster in the Senate; we have had Lyman Beecher in the pulpit; we have had Calhoun at the head of a section; we have had a philosopher at Concord with his inspiration penetrating the young mind of the Northern States. They are the four men that history, perhaps, will mention somewhere near the great force whose closing in this scene we commemorate to-day. Remember now not merely the inadequate means at this man's control, not simply the bitter hate that he confronted, not the vast work that he must be allowed to have done,—surely vast, when measured by the opposition he encountered and the strength he held in his hands,—but dismissing all those considerations, measuring nothing but the breadth and depth of his hold, his grasp on American character, social change, and general progress, what man's signet has been set so deep, planted so forever on the thoughts of his epoch? Trace home intelligently, trace home to their sources, the changes social, political, intellectual and religious, that have come over us during the last fifty years,—the volcanic convulsions, the stormy waves which have tossed and rocked our generation,—and you will find close at the sources of the Mississippi this boy with his proclamation!

The great party that put on record the statute of freedom was made up of men whose conscience he quickened and

whose intellect he inspired, and they long stood the tools of a public opinion that he created. The grandest name beside his in the America of our times is that of John Brown. Brown stood on the platform that Garrison built; and Mrs. Stowe herself charmed an audience that he gathered for her, with words which he inspired, from a heart that he kindled. Sitting at his feet were leaders born of "The Liberator," the guides of public sentiment. I know whereof I affirm. It was often a pleasant boast of Charles Sumner that he read "The Liberator" two years before I did, and among the great men who followed his lead and held up his hands in Massachusetts, where is the intellect, where is the heart that does not trace to this printer-boy the first pulse that bade him serve the slave? For myself, no words can adequately tell the measureless debt I owe him, the moral and intellectual life he opened to me. I feel like the old Greek, who, taught himself by Socrates, called his own scholars "the disciples of Socrates."

This is only another instance added to the roll of the Washingtons and the Hampdens, whose root is not ability, but *character*; that influence which, like the great Master's of Judea (humanly speaking), spreading through the centuries, testifies that the world suffers its grandest changes not by genius, but by the more potent control of *character*. His was an earnestness that would take no denial, that consumed opposition in the intensity of its convictions, that knew nothing but right. As friend after friend gathered slowly, one by one, to his side, in that very meeting of a dozen heroic men, to form the New England Anti-Slavery Society, it was his compelling hand, his resolute unwillingness to temper or qualify the utterance, that finally dedicated that first organized movement to the doctrine of immediate emancipation. He seems to have understood — this boy without experience — he seems to have understood by

instinct that righteousness is the only thing which will finally compel submission ; that one, with God, is always a majority. He seems to have known it at the very outset, taught of God, the herald and champion, God-endowed and God-sent to arouse a nation, that only by the most absolute assertion of the uttermost truth, without qualification or compromise, can a nation be waked to conscience or strengthened for duty. No man ever understood so thoroughly — not O'Connell, nor Cobden — the nature and needs of that *agitation* which alone, in our day, reforms states. In the darkest hour he never doubted the omnipotence of conscience and the moral sentiment.

And then look at the unquailing courage with which he faced the successive obstacles that confronted him ! Modest, believing at the outset that America could not be as corrupt as she seemed, he waits at the door of the churches, importunes leading elergymen, begs for a voice from the sanctuary, a consecrated protest on the pulpit. To his utter amazement, he learns, by ~~the~~ probing it, that the church will give him no help, but, on the contrary, surges into the movement in opposition. Serene, though astounded by the unexpected revelation, he simply turns his footsteps, and announces that “a Christianity which keeps peace with the oppressor is no Christianity,” and goes on his way to supplant the religious element which the church had allied with sin by a deeper religious faith. Yes, he sets himself to work, this stripling with his sling confronting the angry giant in complete steel, this solitary evangelist, to make Christians of twenty millions of people ! I am not exaggerating. You know, older men, who can go back to that period ; I know that when one, kindred to a voice that you have heard to-day, whose pathway Garrison's bloody feet had made easier for the treading, when he uttered in a pulpit in Boston only a few strong words, injected in the course

of a sermon, his venerable father, between seventy and eighty years, was met the next morning and his hand shaken by a much moved friend. "Colonel, you have my sympathy. I cannot tell you how much I pity you." "What," said the brusque old man, "what is your pity?" "Well, I hear your son went crazy at 'Church Green' yesterday." Such was the utter indifference. At that time, bloody feet had smoothed the pathway for other men to tread. Still, then and for years afterwards, insanity was the only kind-hearted excuse that partial friends could find for sympathy with such a madman!

If anything strikes one more prominently than another in this career—to your astonishment, young men, you may say—it is the plain, sober common-sense, the robust English element which underlay Cromwell, which explains Hampden, which gives the color that distinguishes 1640 in England from 1790 in France. Plain, robust, well-balanced common-sense. Nothing erratic; no enthusiasm which had lost its hold on firm earth; no mistake of method; no unmeasured confidence; no miscalculation of the enemy's strength. Whoever mistook, Garrison seldom mistook. Fewer mistakes in that long agitation of fifty years can be charged to his account than to any other American. Erratic as men supposed him, intemperate in utterance, mad in judgment, an enthusiast gone crazy, the moment you sat down at his side, patient in explanation, clear in statement, sound in judgment, studying carefully every step, calculating every assault, measuring the force to meet it, never in haste, always patient, waiting until the time ripened,—fit for a great leader. Cull, if you please, from the statesmen who obeyed him, whom he either whipped into submission or summoned into existence, cull from among them the man whose career, fairly examined, exhibits fewer miscalculations and fewer mistakes than this career which is just ended.

I know what I claim. As Mr. Weld has said, I am speaking to-day to men who judge by their ears, by rumors ; who see, not with their eyes, but with their prejudices. History, fifty years hence, dispelling your prejudices, will do justice to the grand sweep of the orbit which, as my friend said, to-day we are hardly in a position, or mood, to measure. As Coleridge avers, "The truth-haters of to-morrow will give the right name to the truth-haters of to-day, for even such men the stream of time bears onward." I do not fear that if my words are remembered by the next generation they will be thought unsupported or extravagant. When history seeks the sources of New England character, when men begin to open up and examine the hidden springs and note the convulsions and the throes of American life within the last half century, they will remember Parker, that Jupiter of the pulpit ; they will remember the long unheeded but measureless influence that came to us from the seclusion of Concord ; they will do justice to the masterly statesmanship which guided, during a part of his life, the efforts of Webster, but they will recognize that there was only one man north of Mason and Dixon's line who met squarely, with an absolute logic, the else impregnable position of John C. Calhoun ; only one brave, far-sighted, keen, logical intellect, which discerned that there were only two moral points in the universe, *right* and *wrong* ; that when one was asserted, subterfuge and evasion would be sure to end in defeat.

Here lies the brain and the heart ; here lies the statesman-like intellect, logical as Jonathan Edwards, brave as Luther, which confronted the logic of South Carolina with an assertion direct and broad enough to make an issue and necessitate a conflict of two civilizations. Calhoun said, Slavery is *right*. Webster and Clay shrunk from him and evaded his assertion. Garrison, alone at that time, met

him face to face, proclaiming slavery a sin and daring all the inferences. It is true, as New Orleans complains to-day in her journals, that this man brought upon America everything they call the disaster of the last twenty years; and it is equally true that if you seek through the hidden causes and unheeded events for the hand that wrote "emancipation" on the statute-book and on the flag, it lies still there to-day.

I have no time to number the many kindred reforms to which he lent as profound an earnestness and almost as large aid.

I hardly dare enter that home. There is one other marked, and, as it seems to me, unprecedented, element in this career. His was the happiest life I ever saw. No need for pity. Let no tear fall over his life. No man gathered into his bosom a fuller sheaf of blessing, delight, and joy. In his seventy years, there were not arrows enough in the whole quiver of the church or state to wound him. As Guizot once said from the tribune, "Gentlemen, you cannot get high enough to reach the level of my contempt." So Garrison, from the serene level of his daily life, from the faith that never faltered, was able to say to American hate, "You cannot reach up to the level of my home mood, my daily existence." I have seen him intimately for thirty years, while raining on his head was the hate of the community, when by every possible form of expression malignity let him know that it wished him all sorts of harm. I never saw him unhappy; I never saw the moment that serene, abounding faith in the rectitude of his motive, the soundness of his method, and the certainty of his success did not lift him above all possibility of being reached by any clamor about him. Every one of his near friends will agree with me that this was the happiest life God has granted in our day to any American standing in the foremost rank of influence and effort.

Adjourned from the stormiest meeting, where hot debate had roused all his powers as near to anger as his nature ever let him come, the music of a dozen voices—even of those who had just opposed him—or a piano, if the house held one, changed his mood in an instant, and made the hour laugh with more than content; unless indeed, a baby and playing with it proved metal even more attractive.

To champion wearisome causes, bear with disordered intellects, to shelter the wrecks of intemperance and fugitives whose pulse trembled at every touch on the door-latch—this was his home; keenly alive to human suffering, ever prompt to help relieve it, pouring out his means for that more lavishly than he ought—all this was no burden, never clouded or depressed the inextinguishable buoyancy and gladness of his nature. God ever held over him unclouded the sunlight of his countenance.

And he never grew old. The tabernacle of flesh grew feebler and the step was less elastic. But the ability to work, the serene faith and unflagging hope suffered no change. To the day of his death he was as ready as in his boyhood to confront and defy a mad majority. The keen insight and clear judgment never failed him. His tenacity of purpose never weakened. He showed nothing either of the intellectual sluggishness or the timidity of age. The bugle-call which, last year, woke the nation to its peril and duty on the Southern question, showed all the old fitness to lead and mould a people's course. Younger men might be confused or dazed by plausible pretensions, and half the North was befooled; but the old pioneer detected the false ring as quickly as in his youth. The words his dying hand traced, welcoming the Southern exodus and foretelling its result, had all the defiant courage and prophetic solemnity of his youngest and boldest days.

Serene, fearless, marvellous man! Mortal, with so few shortcomings!

Farewell, for a very little while, noblest of Christian men! Leader, brave, tireless, unselfish! When the ear heard thee, then it blessed thee; the eye that saw thee gave witness to thee. More truly than it could ever heretofore be said since the great patriarch wrote it, "the blessing of him that was ready to perish" was thine eternal great reward.

Though the clouds rest for a moment to-day on the great work that you set your heart to accomplish, you knew, God in his love let you see, that your work was done; that one thing, by his blessing on your efforts, is fixed beyond the possibility of change. While that ear could listen, God gave what He has so rarely given to man, the plaudits and prayers of four millions of victims, thanking you for emancipation, and through the clouds of to-day your heart, as it ceased to beat, felt certain, *certain*, that whether one flag or two shall rule this continent in time to come, one thing is settled—it never henceforth can be trodden by a slave!





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