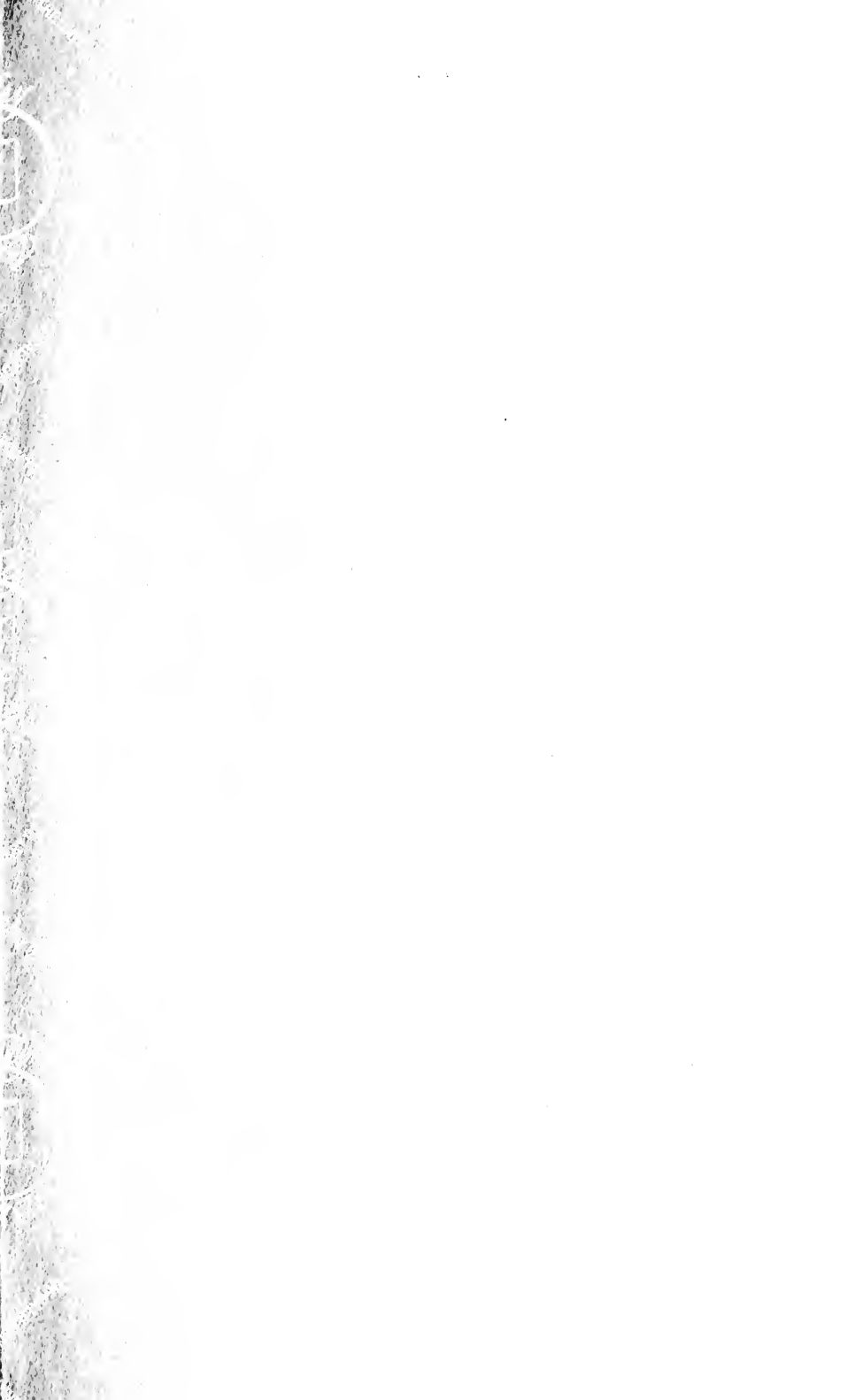


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GARFIELD
MEMORIAL ADDRESS.

DELIVERED AT THE

INDEPENDENT CHURCH, OAKLAND, CAL.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 25 1881,

BY

W. C. BARTLETT.

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ADDRESS.

IT was the custom of an ancient nation to try distinguished men after death. If no grave charges could be sustained against them, they were entitled to honorable sepulture. It was otherwise if they had been tyrants, or had denied justice to rich or poor. If our dead President could speak to-day, he might challenge the people to say if they had aught against him. If ever he had denied justice—had refused to champion the cause of the poor and the oppressed, or had feared any antagonist, either on the battlefield or in the forum. We cannot judge the living so well as the dead. They are too near to us. When they are gone we get a better perspective. If there were any little foibles or excrescence they die also. But all that was good and noble becomes immortal.

How slow the Nation was to judge Lincoln accurately while living! How many harsh and bitter criticisms were made of his public conduct, even by those who assumed to be his friends. We could not fathom the depth and height of such a character. He sometimes indulged in a jest or told an amusing story to keep his heart from breaking. It was not only the shadow of a national calamity, but the weight thereof which was upon his heart. When he had gone we saw him as he was—one of the grandest characters of the nineteenth century. We took no further account of his jests, his sometimes slow and hesitating ways; he was a man who met triumphantly one of the greatest exigencies in the history of civilization, and having accomplished his destiny, he went as a martyr to be crowned. A great character grows upon the public judgment after death. For that reason we have never been able to estimate the loss of Lincoln. Washington was greater at the expiration of half a century from his death than on the day he was laid away at Mount Vernon. Lincoln is greater now than when he was borne through the streets of mourning cities on his way to his final resting place. Garfield will be greater in public estimation half a century hence than he is to-day. We can not see him in perspective now. He is close to the hearts of

the nation. Our eyes are dim and our hearts are made tender by a great calamity, which none are now wise enough to estimate.

Some men are tried by fire in secret, and some openly before the world. Our dead President has been tried upon the battlefield, and he has been tried in his great office as few of his predecessors were ever tried. He came out of the crucible nobler and better than when he went in. A great character of inspired history declared that when Providence should try him he would come forth as gold. There never was a fire hot enough to burn out of a great character anything more than a little dross. President Garfield, a few months ago, came out of one of the most bitter contests ever known in the history of the country. No man was ever more fiercely assailed, and no man was ever so little harmed by calumny. There was no smell of fire upon his garments, nor was any taint of corruption found. How dead have all these miserable calumnies now become! There is not an honest man in the nation to give them any articulation now.

When the President was installed in office, all eyes were turned to him. There was the silent questioning of the Nation—the hunger of the people to know if the incumbent would be the same man in office that he was out of it? Not that they doubted the man; they had already said by their suffrages that they believed in his high integrity and in the strength of his manhood. They had vindicated him from all aspersions. For more than twenty years he had served the public without betraying a trust. He had been under fire; but they saw what a tremendous pressure had been brought to turn him from the path of a statesman to the temporary expedients of a politician. He could have temporized and he could have trimmed. But it was not in the man to do it. A weak man would have chosen a path lined with roses. A strong man, for the truth, would accept one lined with thorns. Yet, along that way this man went, self-reliant, greater in will power and simple force of character than was found in all the aggregate personality which antagonized every step of his way. There was not an hour when this calm, clear-eyed man was shaken in his purpose, or was made to swerve a hair's-breadth from his line of duty. He was master of the situation. He had won his position without a single unworthy device. He measured more than the original estimates. The hearts of the

people went out to him. On the morning when he was stricken down he knew that he had the country with him. He had an honest pride in the fact. A great man exercising a great office was greater even because he was good. It was not brain power alone which triumphed, but that moral constitution which has faith that right is eternal, that any great principle only needs time for its vindication. Now, when a man has so planted his feet he will finally have all the moral forces of the Universe at his back. A Divine Providence is at his side to marshal these forces. The man who rests upon temporary expedients in a great crisis, fails. The man who rests his conduct on any great principle never fails, though he may need some part of eternity for the final vindication. In that supreme hour when life and death were about to meet, it seemed as if all good things were possible. The President had before him the promise of the most prosperous administration the country had ever known. It is not given us to demonstrate what he would have done. The South was beginning to trust him, because he was just, and the breadth of his statesmanship lifted him above all narrow partisanship. His strong aspirations for peace, for a reign of justice, for the prosperity of the whole country, made him as much a friend of the South as of the North. It cannot be said that the loss of one group of States is greater than that of another. All party considerations sink out of sight. It is the loss of a nation, and of the civilized world. Strange that one who had offered his life so freely on the battle field, should lay it down finally at the beck of a miscreant so bankrupt that he has neither country nor God, and who cringes at the very thought of death! A brave man dies bravely, even if his life goes out silently. In all the long and weary days of suffering there is the simple heroism of patient endurance. He counted his life dear to him only as he might have further opportunity to serve his country. He was the highest type of a man. He had good blood in his veins. There are two strains of blood which have had more power than any other to develop a strong national character—the Huguenot and the Puritan. Garfield drew his strength from the latter. It was that which made him superior to the lowly condition in which he was born. The President was, in the canal boy, more truly than the perfect statue is in the block of marble. Great stress is often

laid upon environment, as if favorable outward conditions made the man. There have been no more lamentable failures in this world than where fortune came with birth, and all the outward conditions were perfect. The strongest men which the world has ever produced made their own environment. They did not even have the luck to be born with a silver spoon, nor so much as an iron spoon in their mouths. They made themselves superior to outward conditions. It is the domination of blood in the physical and moral constitution of the man, that initiates the long struggle for supremacy, beginning with the bare-footed boy and crowning a noble manhood. He feels it in his bones. It tingles in his veins. Nothing is too hard for such a one.

The nation was in profound sympathy with Lincoln because he came up from the humblest condition. What could environment do for a man when he was splitting rails? He was the type of the American fighting his way honestly to victory. Garfield was another. He was born to no inheritance but that of poverty. It is not the man at the foot of the mountain which so much interests us, as the man who has slowly and painfully cut his steps into the hard granite until he has reached the top. That kind of success comes from blood and iron tempered by hard trials. The many-handed, many-sided, versatile man comes from this stock. He has the capacity to do many things well. Heaven help the man who cannot do but one thing—who cannot drive a nail without mashing all his fingers. Our martyred President had the talent of doing many things well. It was more than a genius. As a canal boy, he drove his team well and made the bullies of the tow-path respect him. As a student, he went to the head of his class. He was a successful teacher, farmer, preacher, lawyer and statesman. In the National Convention, he made one of the most eloquent speeches heard there in behalf of his friend. A few hours later, he who had never been a candidate, and protested against the use of his name, was nominated for that high office. If any Providence shaped that result, it is all the more difficult to understand the Providence of his taking off. He had said that his life had been made up of surprises. Events were always hastening to a good consummation. After he was mortally stricken, he believed that he should live, though he was not greatly concerned about the issue. It was only with a shade of dis-

appointment that he said at last, "I fear the end is near." A great soul was in equipoise, and come life or death, he was prepared for it.

The simplicity of his life was another evidence of his greatness. His moderate homestead, near the obscure village of Mentor, satisfied him. It is good to have an earth hunger. It runs in Saxon blood. It is good also to have that hunger appeased. Before assuming office he went lovingly over his fields, communing with tree and shrub and flower. When mortally stricken, he wanted nothing so much as to be borne back to that simple country home. In the day of our mortal hurt, there is always some spot of friendly earth more precious than another. He had too the simplicity of faith. He had in his own way, been a preacher of righteousness. He was not ashamed to be a devout worshipper in the small congregation, nor to turn his footsteps as President to the "little church around the corner." It satisfied him better than the pomp and circumstance of cathedral worship. He was no greater among these disciples than the least. His religion was without ostentation. But his preaching by the silent force of example in his last days, was the best of his life. He had a large and loveable nature, finely toned and tempered by generous culture. His tastes were refined and scholarly. He had the magnanimity of soul which goes with greatness. He drew friends to him, and disarmed adversaries. He was ready to say a good word and extend a helping hand when it was needed, for the love of doing good. His political opponents liked the man. He was open as the day. He did not, and could not resort to tricks and subterfuges. It was because he strove lawfully for the mastery that he was crowned. There was no accident of success. He did not wake up on some particular morning and find himself famous. He won fame by hard toil in many weary days. He had a broad analytical and comprehensive judgment, which he applied to men.

Let a single incident serve by way of illustration.

The Federal Supreme Court in the winter term of 1876, officially noticed the death of Reverdy Johnson, once an Attorney-General, and one of the greatest lawyers the country has known. Among the eminent men who addressed the Court in commemoration of his life and services, was General Garfield. It is only a little more than five years since this utterance was made, "He being dead, yet speaketh." He said: "His fame as a citi-

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