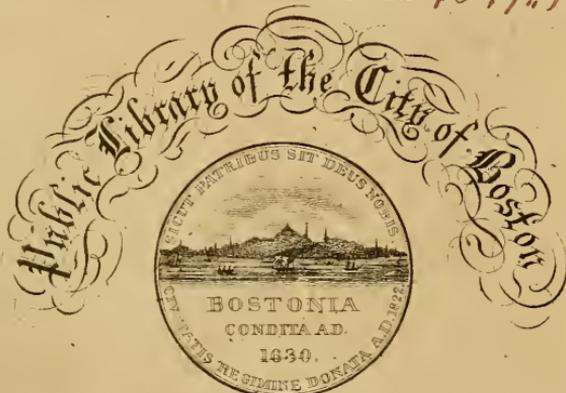


PRESENTED TO THE 4347.94



By Hon. W. Bennett.

Received Dec. 4, 1860

No. 43176

24-94. 12-1/2
THE GOOD PARISHIONER.

DISCOURSE

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

BENJAMIN RICH, ESQ.

DELIVERED IN

THE CHURCH ON CHURCH GREEN,

JUNE 8, 1851.

BY ALEXANDER YOUNG, D.D.

Printed by Request.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON & SON.

1851.

THE GOOD PARISHIONER.

A

DISCOURSE

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

BENJAMIN RICH, ESQ.

DELIVERED IN

THE CHURCH ON CHURCH GREEN,

JUNE 8, 1851.

BY ALEXANDER YOUNG, D.D.

Printed by Request.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON & SON.

1851.

DISCOURSE.

ACTS, XVIII. 7.

ONE THAT WORSHIPPED GOD, WHOSE HOUSE JOINED HARD TO THE SYNAGOGUE.

THE subject on which I propose to speak to you this morning is *The Character of the Good Parishioner*. I shall endeavour, as far as may be, to portray him from life, and describe his whole course of action, so far as it relates to the parish to which he belongs, and to the pastor on whose ministrations he attends.

The good parishioner, having connected himself with a parish, or having taken part in the call and settlement of a minister; feels that these acts have a definite purpose and meaning, and that there are certain duties growing out of the relations into which he has thus voluntarily entered. He joins a parish to aid in the support of the institutions of religion in that parish; and he assists in the call and settlement of a minister in a particular church, in order that the

Word of God may be regularly preached, and the ordinances of the Gospel be statedly administered, in that church. He is aware that a church is not a self-subsisting institution, and that the minister cannot fully discharge the various duties of his calling, nor exert the highest and best influences of his sacred office, without the sympathy and co-operation of those who have called him to the work, and who attend upon his ministrations. He feels, therefore, that he has a part to perform, as well as the minister, in sustaining the church, and in rendering the services of the sanctuary edifying and effective. He knows that a minister would be of no use without a congregation to preach to, and that a congregation would be of little use to the minister unless they attended regularly upon his preaching, and were disposed to profit by it, — unless they took an interest both in the spiritual welfare and the temporal prosperity of the parish.

The good parishioner, then, manifests the interest which he takes in the parish, by his constant attendance on the services of the sanctuary. The church he regards as his religious home, the tabernacle of his spiritual and devout affections. He is one who, in the words of the text, “worships God;” and whether his “house joins hard to the synagogue,” or is at a distance from it, he is always in his pew, punctually

and early, on the Lord's day, and on both parts of the day too. Illness is the only thing that keeps him away; so that, if the minister misses him from his accustomed seat, he is wont to call at his house on Monday morning to inquire what ails his good parishioner. The rain or the storm that would not prevent his going to his place of business on a week-day, is not allowed to keep him at home on Sunday; and he would feel ashamed of pleading, as an excuse for his absence from church, some frivolous pretext that does not keep him from the concert-room or the opera-house, even on a Saturday night.

He considers, too, that there is an implied compact between him and his minister on this very point, and a compact all the more binding for not being reduced to writing. The minister engages, on his part, to be always present in the pulpit on the Lord's day, either in person or by proxy, to dispense the Word and lead in the devotions of the sanctuary; and the parishioner engages, on his part, to be present in his pew, to hear the Word, and join in the devotions. Without such an implied compact, without some understanding of this sort, no minister, worthy of the pulpit, would be willing to accept a call and take the charge of a parish. The church is always open on the sabbath; and the preacher is always there, whether it rains or shines, whether it is fair weather or foul, whether he feels

well or not; and the good parishioner, too, is always there; for, if the preacher can be there, he sees no reason why the hearers may not be there likewise. He believes that his minister expects to see him, and wants to see him, and that he may perhaps be grieved and disheartened by his absence. If he has good reason for believing that his minister has spent the best part of the week in preparing for the services of the sabbath, he does not think it right or just that this preparation should be thrown away for lack of an audience. At any rate, he is determined that it shall not be by any fault or neglect of his, that the power of the pulpit is enfeebled or abridged.

But the good parishioner not only attends constantly himself at his parish church, — he is careful to see that his family and his children likewise attend constantly with him. He considers a regular attendance at church one of the best habits that can be formed in early life; and whatever may be the fashion of the day or the custom of the world, he has made up his mind, that, as for himself and his house, they will serve the Lord together. Accordingly, as he never deserts his own church on the sabbath, he allows no straggling in his family, no running after the theological planets or meteors of the day. He teaches them that the object of attending church is not novelty, not entertainment, not excitement, but

devotion, religious instruction, spiritual improvement ; and that these are more likely to be attained by a regular attendance on the same ministrations, than by a perpetual gadding from one church to another to hear the latest discovery in theology, or the most startling form of infidelity.

The good parishioner is not only a regular attendant in the Lord's house, but he is a sincere and devout worshipper there. He is personally interested and engaged in all parts of the service, and does not harbour the thought that he has hired his minister at so much a week, as his substitute, to perform his worship for him. He does not believe in the efficacy of this sort of vicarious devotion. He unites with the choir in singing the praises of the Most High, and with the minister in all the acts of worship. He joins, with reverent demeanor and fervent piety, in all the ascriptions of praise, in all the offerings of thanksgiving, in all the confessions of sin, and in all the petitions for spiritual guidance and help. He listens to the sermon, not to criticize it as a work of art, a mere literary composition, not to detect flaws in its logic or blemishes in its rhetoric, not to be entertained or excited ; but to be made better by it, to be seriously impressed, to be incited to duty, to be weaned from the vain pomp and glory of the world, to be fortified against its manifold temptations and sins, and to be fitted for the

glories and felicities of heaven. He listens to the sermon, as though it was addressed directly to himself; and yet, at the same time, he is not so foolish as to take offence at the preacher, and charge him with personality, if perchance, at times, his own failings, or even his besetting sins, are undesignedly portrayed, and set in array before him. As an old writer says, "It does not follow that the archer aimed, because the arrow hit. Rather our good parishioner reasoneth thus: If my sin be notorious, how could the minister miss it? if secret, how could he hit it without God's direction?"

Again. The good parishioner, taking it for granted that his minister is a right-minded and conscientious man, is not disposed to trammel him in the utterance of his opinions. He supposes that these opinions will be carefully and deliberately formed, after much study and reflection; and he is modest enough to think, that, on the great questions of theology and ethics, his minister may be reasonably supposed to be better informed than himself, — these being questions which it is his office and duty to ponder and investigate. "There is all the reason," says John Selden, "that you should believe your minister, unless you have studied divinity as well as he, or more than he." The good parishioner stands up for the liberty of preaching, as the good citizen does for the liberty

of speaking and of unlicensed printing; and he would feel ashamed of sitting under the ministrations of one who dared not speak his mind on all subjects which it was fitting for the pulpit to discuss.

The good parishioner takes a deep interest both in the spiritual welfare and in the temporal prosperity of the parish to which he belongs. Being a religious man himself, he is desirous of seeing religion not only respected and honored, but exercising its proper and legitimate influence in the church and in the world. He is a religious man inwardly; he has the religious spirit, the witness within himself; and he manifests this spirit in his consistent character and in the rectitude of his daily life. He shows it in the transactions of business, in his domestic relations, in his social intercourse, in his deeds of beneficence, in his comprehensive charity, in his world-embracing philanthropy.

He is also a religious man outwardly and visibly. He is not afraid or ashamed of being considered and called by the world a religious man. He confesses Christ openly before men, acknowledging his obligations and avowing his allegiance to him. He uses faithfully all the means of grace, and observes all the ordinances and rites of religion; bringing his children to the baptismal font, and commemorating the Saviour's death in the affecting service of the com-

munion. He is not deterred, from so doing by any vague doubts about the importance or utility of these observances. It is sufficient for him to know that they are appointed, having been instituted by Christ, or sanctioned by his use and example. He is desirous of obtaining all the holy influences they can impart to his soul; and he therefore observes them reverently and devoutly, nothing doubting.

But our good parishioner is interested not only in the spiritual, but in the temporal, prosperity of the church to which he belongs. He knows, that, in order that a religious society may prosper, its temporalities, its finances, must be attended to and cared for by some one. Accordingly he always consents to serve in any office to which he may be called by his fellow-worshippers, and is ever ready with his hand, his tongue, and his purse, to promote the interests of the parish. He contributes largely and cheerfully to all subscriptions made in the society for religious and benevolent purposes. He never grumbles about the small tax-bill that is presented to him quarterly, nor does he pay it grudgingly; considering, as he does, that the sum which he annually contributes to the support of the institutions of religion, and for the religious instruction of his whole family in the church and in the Sunday-school, may perhaps be less than a half, or even a quarter, of what he pays for the

education of a single son or daughter at school or in college. Considering, too, that the present mode of assessing church-rates is very unequal, the assessment not being made according to pecuniary ability, but falling most disproportionately on persons in moderate and humble circumstances, our good parishioner thinks that, when there is any extraordinary expense incurred in the parish, or any unusual contribution required for special purposes, it is no more than right and just, that, in order to compensate, as far as possible, for the above-mentioned inequality, the burden should fall exclusively on the wealthier portion of the parish; and, if he happens to be one of that class, he is ready to bear his part, and more than his part; and then he thinks that he has simply done his duty.

The good parishioner likewise sympathizes with his minister in the arduous and wearing duties of his office, and is disposed to co-operate with him, and, as far as he can, lighten the heavy load of his cares. He is always ready, when called upon, to lend a helping hand to carry forward any measures which the minister deems essential to the temporal or spiritual welfare of the church. He has faith enough in his good sense and sound judgment to believe, that he will devise and recommend nothing that will not prove salutary and beneficial. Accordingly, he does not hold back,

nor object, nor throw obstacles in the way, when any thing of this sort is proposed. There are many things to be done in a parish, which the minister may recommend, but which he cannot execute himself. Accordingly, there is wanted in every parish some one person, at least, who will stand ready to be the executive of the minister on these occasions. He must be a man of sound judgment, of prudence, of energy, of perseverance, who will carry out whatever he undertakes, will be disheartened by no rebuffs, chilled by no coldness, and put down by no opposition. Such an individual is invaluable in a parish; and the fact of its having such a one or not may be the turning-point in its fortunes,—“*articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ.*” Now, our good parishioner is precisely that sort of man, always ready to act when called upon, and always performing what he undertakes. The minister requests him to have a certain thing done. The good parishioner replies, “It shall be done.” And next week it is done.

Brethren, you must have perceived, long ere this, that the subject of my Discourse has been suggested by the recent death of one of the oldest and most valuable members of this Society. You must have felt, that, in describing the character of the Good Parishioner, I have been insensibly sketching the por-

trait of that worthy man, whose animated countenance and manly form we are no longer to behold in our sabbath-meetings. My friends, you all feel that we have sustained a great loss in the departure of our lamented fellow-worshipper; and you have a right to expect that this long-trying and faithful friend of the parish shall be suitably remembered here, in the church which he loved, and which he did so much to sustain and benefit. Whatever may be our deficiencies as a parish, the sin of insensibility to favors, or of ingratitude to our benefactors, shall not be charged upon us.

(The late BENJAMIN RICH was born on the 12th of December, 1775, in the town of Truro, near the extremity of Cape Cod, — that remarkable configuration of land which is both literally and morally the right arm of Massachusetts, and which, from its first discovery and settlement down to the present day, has been the nursery of hardy mariners and of intrepid and enterprising men. From his earliest years, as is the case with most of the youths who are born on the Cape, he took to the sea, going cabin-boy at the age of thirteen; and at the age of nineteen, on his fourth voyage, he had the command of a vessel. His voyages were chiefly to the West Indies, the Mediterranean, and the North of Europe. For twelve long years he pursued this hard and perilous vocation, — perilous

certainly to him in more ways than one; for, on one of his voyages, he was attacked, off Algiers, by two French privateers, both of which, with his characteristic intrepidity, he fought a whole summer's day; and at last, when his shot was all expended, and he had charged his cannon with whatever he could find on board, he succeeded in beating them off. He thus prepared himself, as many others of our eminent merchants have done, by personal observation of various parts of the world, and large intercourse with the inhabitants of other climes, and intimate acquaintance with the products of foreign lands, to engage understandingly in navigation and trade.

On retiring from sea in 1801, at the age of twenty-six, he settled in this city, and embarked in commerce, which he pursued uninterruptedly until some six years ago; when he retired, wisely and seasonably, to enjoy that leisure and repose which his advancing age required, and to which he had earned a fair and ample title by the labors of a long and industrious life. For nearly fifty years he was one of our most active and enterprising merchants, an ornament and honor to his calling, standing in this city among the foremost, if not at the very head, of that large and influential class of our citizens; and it was therefore a fitting and deserved tribute of respect, when the flags of the shipping were suspended at half-mast, on the

day after his death, in honor of one of the oldest ship-masters and ship-owners in the port.)

In 1800, the year previous to his retiring from sea, he married that excellent woman, who for forty-eight years contributed so much to make his home a happy one; and immediately joined this parish, then under the charge of the Rev. Dr. Kirkland. Here he has ever since continued for more than half a century, —

“Nor e'er has changed nor wished to change his place.”

During all this time, and until he was disabled by illness and infirmities, he has been one of the most faithful and efficient members of the parish. He was the model of the Good Parishioner described in the former part of this discourse, feeling a deep solicitude in the welfare of this church, and always ready to promote its interests by all the means in his power.

(Mr. Rich was a good parishioner, inasmuch as he was a religious man — not formally or ostentatiously, but humbly, sincerely, and earnestly. “He had not,” as Jeremy Taylor says, “very much of the forms and outsides of godliness, but he was hugely careful for the power of it, for the moral, essential, and useful parts; such which would make him be, not seem to be, religious.” The spirit of reverence was prominent in his nature, and the sentiment of piety was deeply seated in his breast, and grew stronger and warmer

the longer he lived. His religious affections were of the most tender, trustful, confiding nature. Religion was with him a pleasure and a privilege, rather than an obligation or a task. It touched his noble and generous feelings; it took hold of his warm and susceptible heart. He delighted in all its manifestations and exercises, — in prayers, in sermons, in spiritual songs, and in the solemn rites and ordinances of the church. For more than fifty years he has worshipped God in this place, — his house, as you remember, standing hard by the synagogue; and for more than thirty years he has been a communicant. He was a regular and constant attendant on the evening as well as on the morning service; and, as you all can bear witness, a most engaged worshipper, and, as I can testify, a most attentive hearer of the preached Word. And he came thus constantly to church, not from habit, nor from any superstitious feeling, nor from a sense of duty, nor to set an example, but because he loved to come. He “loved the habitation of God’s house, and the place where his honor dwelleth.” He loved holy times and places. He loved the sabbath and the sanctuary. He loved to hear the “bells knoll to church.” He loved to join with his brethren in social worship; he loved to sing the praises of the Lord in solemn hymns and anthems; he loved to hear the great truths of religion expounded and enforced; he

loved to commune at the table of the Redeemer. This church was to him a hallowed and beloved spot, his religious home; and to be kept away from it by illness or any necessity was to him a deprivation and disappointment.)

And he was religious, not only at church, but at home. Religion was a subject on which he thought much and felt deeply, and on which he loved to converse with his minister and others; and I can truly say that there was no family in the parish in which the subject of religion came up oftener, was more easily and naturally introduced, or more gladly welcomed, than in his. He "showed piety at home."

(Mr. Rich was a good parishioner, inasmuch as he took a lively interest in the prosperity of the parish, and gave largely of his time and his substance in superintending its affairs and promoting its welfare. For fourteen years he was a member of the Standing Committee of the Society, and, as his associates will testify, a most active and energetic member. Time would fail to tell all that he has done for this parish. Dwelling hard by the synagogue, it was always in his eye, and he watched over it with a religious care. He took a pride in having the church kept in decent order, in proper repair, and suitably embellished, — thinking that the Lord's house should be as well attended to as our private dwellings. He contributed

liberally to the purchase of that noble organ, which has added so much to the music of the church, and which is this day to chant his favorite anthem. To his foresight and decision mainly, seventeen years ago, we owe the preservation of our beautiful spire, which is an ornament not only to the church but to the city, and which was then tottering on its base; and to him solely are we indebted for raising the necessary funds to erect the graceful iron fence by which our church green is now protected and adorned. As long as it stands, it will be his monument.)

But Mr. Rich was not only a good parishioner, he was also a good citizen. Whilst diligently pursuing his private business, he was not unmindful of the claims which the community had upon his time, his services, and his means. He was a public-spirited man, and was always disposed to serve the public to the full extent of his ability. His singular energy, decision, perseverance, were ever ready to be embarked in the cause of humanity and philanthropy. Was any good work of this sort devised or set on foot by the merchants of Boston, — who have always been willing to pour out their resources like water, — Mr. Rich was usually the man called upon to take the laboring oar, to carry the work forward, and see it executed. And never, I believe, did he undertake a

work of this kind without carrying it through to its completion. He was born to command; he had, by nature, an executive will. He had a way, too, of appealing to the generous sympathies of his fellow-men that was perfectly irresistible. There was no escape, there was no retreat. You could not say No to a man whose heart evidently was in the work, who had himself already contributed to the full extent of his means, and who was laboring from no selfish motives, for no personal end. I doubt whether there was ever an individual in this city that obtained more by personal solicitation for objects of public and private charity. Let me mention a few instances.

He hears that one of his old companions in business has, by the reverses of trade, been stripped of his property, and, in his old age, is reduced to penury, with no home, and no means of support. Mr. Rich cannot rest till he has gone round among his friends, and raised a sum sufficient to purchase an annuity of six hundred dollars for this decayed merchant, which was sufficient to make his latter days comfortable. — A young lieutenant in the navy, a most accomplished and estimable man, connected with this parish, after having successfully surveyed the Jordan and the Dead Sea, dies on the slope of Mount Lebanon; and his young wife soon droops and follows him to the grave, leaving behind two interesting orphan boys, dependent

on the scanty pension granted to their mother. Mr. Rich, with the tender sympathy that always characterized him, immediately collected a fund, which, with the subsequent generous donations of a thousand dollars each from Lieutenant Lynch and Dr. Anderson, the companions of Mr. Dale in the expedition, will be sufficient, it is hoped, to provide for their education, and fit them for useful and honorable stations in life. — On the 3d of October, 1841, eight of the fishing-vessels of his native town were lost in a storm, with their crews, consisting of fifty-seven men; and, by this dreadful catastrophe, twenty-one wives and thirty-nine children were not only deprived of their natural protectors, but left utterly destitute of the means of living. Mr. Rich forthwith went round with his subscription paper among the merchants of Boston, and, by his touching appeals and persevering efforts, obtained between five and six thousand dollars for the distressed widows and orphans of Truro.)

I mention these few cases, among a hundred, merely as examples of his humane spirit and of his indomitable perseverance. He was never weary in well-doing; and whatever he undertook, of this nature, he carried through, without halting or hesitancy. The word *impossible* he had struck from his vocabulary. "It is a good work," he was accustomed to say; "therefore it can be done; it must be done; it shall

be done ;” and it always was done ; for men are ever ready to aid one whom they see determined to accomplish a good purpose.

(The word *fear*, too, was not to be found in his dictionary. He was a bold, brave man, of an impetuous spirit, and a firm, resolute will. In the performance of his duty, he was perfectly fearless of consequences ; and I should like to see the individual who had ever attempted to intimidate him when engaged in a good cause. He never could stand by, and see a fellow-being suffer ; but would instantly spring to his relief, with an intrepidity that no dangers could appal. When, in the month of May, 1818, the Canton Packet blew up in our harbor, Mr. Rich was the first to leap upon her blazing deck, to rescue the crew, utterly heedless of the possibility of another explosion.

With such feelings and dispositions, it was quite natural that he should take a deep and active interest in the objects and operations of the Humane Society of Massachusetts. For thirty-three years he was one of its Trustees, and for more than fifteen years its President. Whilst holding this office, he superintended the building and location of the eighteen life-boats provided by the Legislature in 1840 and 1841, and stationed along our coast from Martha’s Vineyard to Plum Island, and which have already rescued hun-

dreds of shipwrecked sailors from a watery grave. One of these boats alone — that stationed at Hull — has been the means of saving thirty-six lives, from four several vessels. The Committee of the Humane Society, in replying to his letter of resignation, in May, 1844, say to him: “ We refer with gratitude to your past connection with our institution. For the space of one third of a century, you have participated in the benevolent labors of the Society. Your kindness and activity have made you essentially the executive of its purposes and designs. You have carried out its objects. You have chiefly carried on its correspondence with the authorities on the coast, where our humane houses are located. You have been instrumental in providing for the wants and relief of the needy and shipwrecked mariner. You have superintended the building and the localities of our life-boats. To yourself and to the lamented Oxnard belongs emphatically the praise of this grand scheme of relief to the brave mariner in the hour of dreadful peril. Often have you been the advocate of the shipwrecked master’s or seaman’s widow, with open heart and open hand. Nearly half the period that you have been a member of the Humane Society, you have been its honored presiding officer. During all that time, you have directed and encouraged the trustees ; and the public owe you a debt of lasting grati-

tude. The trustees accord to you the deepest regard and respect. Take your just reward, — all we have to bestow, — our hearty approbation of your character and conduct. Enjoy the high estimate you hold in this community, as a merchant and a philanthropist. Accept our best wishes for your future happiness and usefulness; and, when your sun sets, may it be in the serenity of a ‘green old age’!”

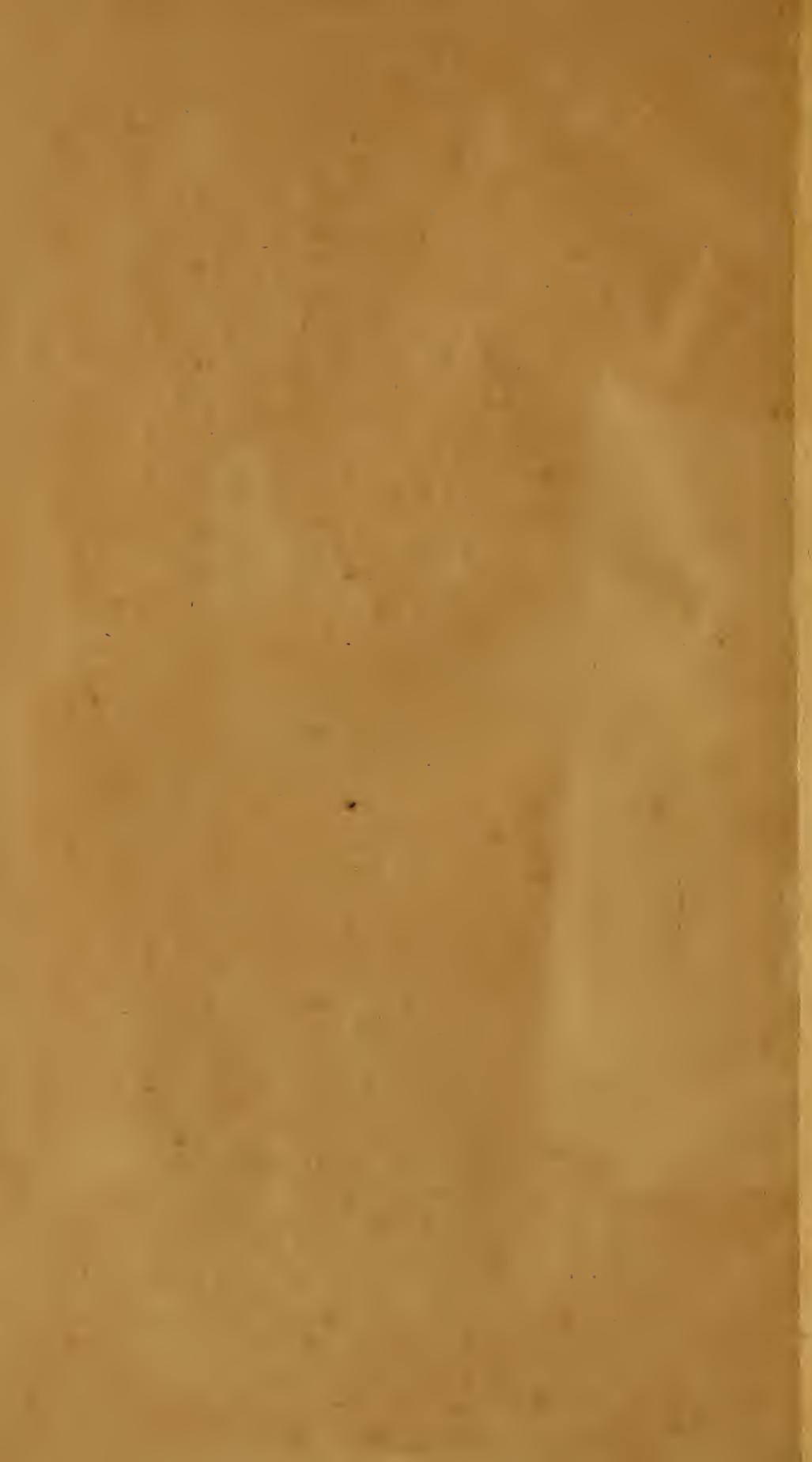
My friends, I trust you will pardon me, if, in speaking of the loss which the parish have sustained in the death of our revered fellow-worshipper, I allude briefly to my own personal loss. I feel that in his departure I have lost a stay and a staff, an invaluable counsellor, a steady and devoted friend. On my settlement in this church, more than twenty-six years ago, he was the first to take me by the hand in his warm-hearted and affectionate way; and, although an utter stranger to him, I felt, from that moment, that I knew him, that I could rely upon him, that I could call upon him, with entire confidence, whenever I needed counsel or help. And this confidence was not misplaced; this expectation was never disappointed. From that day forward, he proved a good parishioner, one of the best I ever had. He stood by me in good report and in evil report, in sunshine and in storm; encouraging, upholding me by his sympathy, his

energy, and his considerate kindness. His house was my home, and he has been to me as a father.

Having thus lived a useful, an honorable, and a happy life, he is summoned, in a good old age, to leave it. And he meets the summons with entire composure and resignation, "sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust." The few last weeks that he spent upon the earth were among the happiest of his life. It was a privilege to visit him in his sick chamber, — to see the power of faith triumphing over bodily pain, and the hope of immortality victorious over the fear of death.

"Cheerful he gave his being up, and went
To share the holy rest that waits a life well spent."

Brethren, I have left myself no time to moralize on the character which has now been portrayed. And it is not necessary. It speaks for itself; it tells its own lesson; it inculcates its own moral. It tells us of the power of Christian faith, and of the loveliness of Christian charity. It inculcates the great truth, that "pure and undefiled religion, in the sight of God our Father, is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world."





3 9999 06399 940 1

PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON.

ABBREVIATED REGULATIONS.

One volume can be taken at a time from the Lower Hall, and one from the Bates Hall.

Books can be kept out 14 days.

A fine of 2 cents for each volume will be incurred for each day a book is detained more than 14 days.

Any book detained more than a week beyond the time limited, will be sent for at the expense of the delinquent.

No book is to be lent out of the household of the borrower.

The Library hours for the delivery and return of books are from 10 o'clock, A. M., to 8 o'clock, P. M., in the Lower Hall; and from 10 o'clock, A. M., until one half hour before sunset in the Bates Hall.

Every book must, under penalty of one dollar, be returned to the Library at such time in August as shall be publicly announced.

The card must be presented whenever a book is returned. For renewing a book the card must be presented, together with the card, or with the shelf-numbers of the book.

