

**A SERMON IN  
COMMEMORATION OF REV.  
EDMUND SEARS:  
PREACHED AT WESTON, MASS.,  
ON SUNDAY, JAN. 23D, 1876**

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A Sermon in Commemoration of Rev. Edmund Sears: Preached at Weston, Mass., on Sunday, Jan. 23d, 1876 by Chandler Robbins

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**CHANDLER ROBBINS**

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# A SERMON

IN COMMEMORATION OF

REV. EDMUND HAMILTON SEARS,

PREACHED AT

WESTON, MASS.,

ON SUNDAY, JAN. 23d, 1876,

BY

CHANDLER ROBBINS.

ALSO,

THE LAST SERMON WRITTEN, BUT NOT PREACHED, BY MR. SEARS, AND A  
CHRISTMAS SONG, THE LAST OF HIS LYRICAL PIECES.

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PRINTED BY REQUEST.

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Society in Weston.

# SERMON.

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Hebrews xl. 4: HE BEING DEAD YET SPOAKETH.

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THERE is but one theme for to-day. It is suggested by every object that meets our eyes. By this lonely pulpit, mourning for a vanished form. By these forlorn walls, listening in vain for a silent voice. By these signs of sympathetic sorrow on every side; these saddened faces; these bowed heads; these tearful eyes. It occupies every mind. It possesses every heart. It draws away our thoughts from every other. It insists upon our attention. Divine Providence itself dictates it to the preacher. To do it justice is beyond my power. But it has fallen to my lot, unsought, to treat it. It has been assigned to me by this Church to whose service I am temporarily bound. It was committed to me, in anticipation of this hour, by the friend whose slightest wish would have with me now the force of law. As I cannot decline, so

I will not shrink from the duty, but trust that the unfeigned love with which it will be performed may cover all imperfections. I am encouraged also by another consideration. The character which I am to trace is so strongly marked, and in its grand and its beautiful features stands out so clearly before my mind's eye, and is held there with such sacred exclusiveness while I speak, that its own spirit must naturally influence my words, and its real image give to my humble portrait a stamp of truth.

The story of our prophet's outward life is very simple, and may be briefly told. It embraces no striking incidents, no great events. Few characters so far above the ordinary level of greatness were ever so independent of adventitious distinctions. Whatever dignity may attach to his image in our estimation, or in the judgment of posterity, it will borrow no glory from the gilded frame of circumstance.

EDMUND HAMILTON SEARS was born the sixth day of April, 1810, in the pleasant village of Sandisfield, embosomed in the charming hills of Berkshire,—those hills which he so fondly remembered; which he often revisited in his musings by day and his dreams by night; to which he turned with longing looks in hours of weariness and languor; which were associated with his childhood's purest fancies and aspirations; on whose summits, near as they seemed to heaven, he believed its bright-robed messengers



alighted and rested, as they came and went on their errands of love; those hills to which he so often referred in his conversation and his writings. His home was humble, but of the best New-England type, as well it might be, inasmuch as the family was in direct descent from one of the Pilgrims of John Robinson's own congregation, who landed at Plymouth in 1630. It was the abode of virtue, intelligence, diligence, peace, and practical religion. While it sheltered him from corrupting influences without, it furnished the best discipline within. It was a school of dutifulness, industry, unselfish service, simple manners, honest ways. It taught him true independence and self reliance. It taught him to love the right and hate the wrong; to be afraid of nothing but sin, and to live as in the presence of God. It laid, early and deep, the strong foundations of a manly character.

In 1831, in his 22d year, he entered Union College in Schenectady, New York. I have learned from one who knew him intimately at that period that he was a conscientious and indefatigable student; usually pursuing his studies till late in the night, and that his name was a proverb for integrity. We can see now how it was that there is such a deep, wide and rich background of various, almost universal, knowledge, disclosed or suggested in all his writings;—in his figures, his descriptions, his historical references, his illustrations from nature and art, and even in graceful turns of expression and classical words.

It is important that we should recognise and do justice to this patient and laborious study, as lying behind, and essential to, the richness, beauty, impressiveness, attractive and instructive power, of his writings, lest we should over-estimate his natural gifts, and undervalue the part which his own conscientious toil performed in accomplishing this felicitous result;—lest we should lose sight of the only consideration which makes his success truly honorable to himself and stimulating to us.

Having graduated in 1834, he entered his name as a student in the office of a lawyer in his native town, with a view to make law his profession. Happily, may we not say providentially, in less than a year he became convinced that a more sacred calling was better suited to his abilities, as well as more congenial to his tastes. Yet he never afterwards regarded the nine months he had spent in the study of Blackstone and books on the law of evidence as time lost, but rather gained, and of great value in view of his preparation for the Christian Ministry.

Many of the most eminent preachers have acknowledged a similiar indebtedness to legal studies, and earnestly recommend them to young students of divinity.

The peculiar benefits of such discipline in his own case may be judged of by the logical skill and power which appear in several of his sermons and other works. Although the connecting links of his reasoning may not always be apparent, being sometimes obscured by the depth at which they lie, sometimes difficult to discern

by reason of their fineness, and sometimes overlooked in admiration of the wealth of beauty with which they are entwined,—yet each link is strong and the logical chain perfect. Perhaps it is to this early legal training, as much as to his natural earnestness and the positiveness of his opinions, that we are to attribute an evident relish for argumentation and generous controversy, whenever a good cause offered, or a fair challenge was given by a worthy antagonist. He was indeed a bold and powerful disputant, although he never lost his temper nor lowered his dignity. In defence of a cherished belief, or in attacking a pernicious error, he wielded his pen like a sharp and flashing sword.

From 1834 to 1837 he was a student in the Theological School at Cambridge, then under the charge of the elder and younger Henry Ware and Dr. Palfrey,—“invaluable teachers” he called them; “best of pupils” was their testimony concerning him. The obligation was reciprocal. The help and encouragement was mutual. The honor should be shared equally.

Thoroughly furnished, and entirely devoted, he entered upon his sacred calling; with the loftiest aims, but with no self-seeking ambition: with enthusiasm and confidence, yet with true humility and a modest self-estimate: thinking of the greatness of his work, rather than of place: offering himself to his Heavenly Master girded for service, leaving it with Him to appoint the station.