

**A DISCOURSE, DELIVERED AT THE
FUNERAL OF REV. JOHN PIERCE, D.D.,
SENIOR PASTOR OF THE FIRST
CONGREGATIOAL CHURCH,
BROOKLINE, MASS., AUGUST 27, 1849**

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A Discourse, Delivered at the Funeral of Rev. John Pierce, D.D., Senior Pastor of the First Congregational church, Brookline, Mass., August 27, 1849 by Frederick N. Knapp

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FREDERICK N. KNAPP

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— *Neomane*
BY FREDERIC N. KNAPP,
Colleague.
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1849.

DISCOURSE.

It almost seems as if any words but those of prayer and of the Scriptures were untimely now, for he himself, around whom we have gathered, yet speaketh to us. But it was his desire that, according to the custom of former days, a discourse be given — feeling, as he said, that thereby his departure might, perhaps, be more effectually sanctified to his friends and people. And among his last requests, he said to me, ‘When you gather with my friends around my remains, read to them those cheering words of Jesus’ : — “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me,

shall never die." 'And say to my people,' he continued, 'that *my* faith and hope are there; that I do not feel that I shall ever die, but only pass on to a higher life. And beseech them,' he added, 'beseech them, if they love me, and would express their love, to do it by remembering me, while they seek Christ as their Saviour, and strive to live as his disciples.' — This is his message to you.

With those words, then, we will connect our thoughts at this time. They are recorded in the eleventh chapter of John, 25th and 26th verses. They are the words of Jesus, as he draws near, with Martha, to the grave of Lazarus.

This is his message to you. In accordance with which, I feel that we ought to make this an occasion for recalling, in the most simple manner, what we have loved and revered in him, that we may hear his voice still exhorting us, and learn its meaning. And thus we shall be led to ask concerning that faith, which gives such holiness to life, and such a joyful, childlike assurance

to the soul that lives in Christ, that it shall never die.

We turn then to the early life of him, who has entered upon that life where the spirit cannot grow old. For when one has gone on thus, bearing with him the years that reach back so far, it is something more than curiosity that leads us to turn our eye upon his past days. Early receiving the impressions which are cherished in a religious home, his youth was marked by that purity of life and kindness of heart, which never left him. An earnest love of knowledge and unwearied application enabled him to enter upon a college course, which he completed with especial honor, bearing with him an unblemished moral and religious character, the love of his fellow students, the esteem of his instructors, and the highest testimony of successful study.

He had early chosen the ministry as his profession. In fact, he states in his journal that he could scarcely look back to the time when it was not his highest thought and earnest desire to be a minister of Christ. But he points to the death

of his mother, which occurred during his last college year, as the time when he was called especially to consecrate his heart to the cause of religion; feeling that the voice, which he had loved on earth, now joined with voices from heaven. Many entries in his private papers, during these earlier years, reveal a most tender and watchful consciousness, and a constant recognition of his duty and relation to God.

After the usual preparation, he entered upon the ministry; and, about the same time, received an appointment to the office of Tutor in the University. Soon after he commenced preaching, a cordial invitation was given him, by this society, to settle with them. It was more than half a century ago. He entered upon his work with a prayerful sense of its obligations. His earnest and most heartfelt desire to bless his people then commenced, and has ever since continued; and now he has left them, not because his interest in them has failed, or their love of him has grown cold, but because Jesus had another home prepared for him, and so God

gently led him up thither. And you all know how trustingly he took the hand which was reached out thus to lead him. It was of a familiar presence. He had known God, had long been with him; had walked with Jesus, as he revealed the Father; known him so well, as to trust in him; so that his most frequent utterance of late has been, "Thy will be done;" — known God so well, and all his ministries, that he had learned to see in the dark-robed angels, bearers of love, heralds of glad tidings.

To the ministry upon which he entered, he brought those qualifications of heart to which we have referred. His mind was clear and strong, but more inclined to plain reasoning than metaphysical subtleties; more employed in gaining accurate and well arranged knowledge, than with the investigation of theories, seeking the experimental part of religion, rather than the philosophical.

The subjects that came before him he examined with candor, and decided upon with justice; and when circumstances made decision difficult,

he was always inclined to the side of charity. Benevolent and forgiving in temper, he had very many friends, and scarce any enemies. Cheerfulness and affability made him always a welcome visitor. His memory was remarkable for its strength and accuracy. It was often appealed to in social reminiscences and general inquiries, and received as having the certainty of a tabular record. To this was joined a peculiar fondness for statistical knowledge. And as this was so marked, it seems proper here to mention that it was not a mere love of recording facts and events, without the expectation that some good might come from it. Beside which, we are to notice, that in those copious records, though the world furnishes so much of evil and wrongdoing, which might be noted down against it, yet a great majority of his pages bear witness to the fact of how kind a heart dwelt within him, as he seemed to find his especial pleasure in recording good deeds, and expressions of love, and charitable works, and letters of friendship; always noting with peculiar care whatever he thought