

**THE VOICE OF DAYS. A COMMEMORATIVE
DISCOURSE, DELIVERED IN CHRIST CHURCH,
WATERTOWN, CONN., ON THE TWENTY-FIRST
SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, OCTOBER 28TH, 1855,
THE LAST OCCASION OF CELEBRATING DIVINE
WORSHIP IN THE OLD CHURCH**

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The Voice of Days. A Commemorative Discourse, Delivered in Christ Church, Watertown, Conn., on the twenty-first Sunday after trinity, October 28th, 1855, the last occasion of celebrating divine worship in the old church by Horace H. Reid

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HORACE H. REID

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A

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DELIVERED IN

CHRIST CHURCH, WATERTOWN, CONN.,

ON THE

Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity,

OCTOBER 28TH, 1855,

THE LAST OCCASION OF CELEBRATING DIVINE WORSHIP IN
THE OLD CHURCH.

BY THE

Rev. HORACE H. REID, M. A.,

RECTOR.

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E. B. COOKE AND COMPANY, PRINTERS,
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1855.

NOTE.

This Discourse is sent to the press, not without hesitancy, at the request of some who desire to preserve a record of the event which it commemorates.

In its historical details, it makes no pretensions to anything beyond a mere sketch, made up of such scraps of information as could be gathered from the recollections of the older members of the church, brief parish records, the (time-worn) MSS. of the first Rector, and such printed authorities as came to hand.

It is submitted to his parishioners as an humble keepsake, to remind them of their obligations to their "spiritual ancestry," and of their title to the communion and fellowship of God's elect, by their

FRIEND AND PASTOR.

RECTORY, WATERTOWN, }
ALL SAINTS' DAY, 1835. }

COMMEMORATIVE DISCOURSE.

"I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom."—JOB xxxii, 7.

REVERENCE for antiquity is a primal attribute of our nature, and a wise reference to the past is the conservative element in human character. Whether in national or individual, social or religious life, this attribute, implanted in the soul of man by the God of Nature, exhibits itself in many and various forms. A mysterious awe attaches to what is venerable. Nations, therefore, are proud to refer their existence back to a remote and obscure origin. Hence it is often difficult to distinguish between fabulous and authentic history. The ancient heathen mythology derived its prestige more from the prevalence of this element than from any other circumstance; and it cannot be denied that the famous republics of Greece and Rome owe to it much of their renown. The like sentiment is discoverable in more enlightened times. It permeates all classes of men, and all phases of opinion. In matters of literary taste, for instance, there are works which have come down to us from antiquity, in regard to which the world has given its sentence of approval, and from whose verdict there is no appeal. A Homer, from his

dateless throne, looks down on all succeeding centuries; and a Virgil claims, and has received from mankind, a sort of literary apotheosis.

As with national, so with individual life. We reverence age; a peculiar degree of interest attaches to old associations, old scenes, old places. The home of our childhood has a charm about it which belongs to no other spot. Lapse of years rather increases than diminishes our veneration for it. We may wander forth into the wide world, and long be absent from the parental roof,—perhaps, absorbed in schemes of pleasure, or the pursuits of ambition, scarcely even think of the objects we have left behind; but let us return to the familiar spot, and the simple sight of “the house, the garden, the tree, the rock, the brook, the hill, the meadow, where we played in childhood,” will call up sweet and precious memories, and draw from the fount of feeling a gush of tributary tears. The truth is, the works of Nature interest us not more from their beauty and grandeur, than from their antiquity. Age itself is venerable. As “the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork;” as “day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge,”—

“Publishing to every land,
The work of an Almighty hand,”—

so Nature, in her lengthened orbits, commands our veneration; and man himself is to be revered in his years. It is the depth of baseness to dishonor age. There is no sight so pitiable as a poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man. It is a vivid picture which the great dramatist draws, when he makes the frenzied

Lear, on the forlorn heath, in sublime apostrophe, reproach the raging elements for having, with his own ungrateful daughters, joined their

—— "high engendered battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as his,"

and well is it enjoined in one of the earliest written precepts of God's Word, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man."* Length of days, wherever and in whatever found, bespeaks a richness of quality, a ripeness of worth, a wealth of wisdom, which is more precious than rubies, and more to be esteemed than thousands of gold and silver. Thus, ordinarily, the hand of Time leaves upon whatever he touches a refined impress. Wine is not the only thing that improves by age. In relation to it, as in regard to friends, we may truly say, "The old is better."

The same feeling is exemplified in social life. There are customs handed down to us from the past which need nothing else to make them venerable. Such is the foundation of those laws which exist by prescriptive and immemorial usage. Not made the subject of formal enactment, the tacit sense of mankind gives them the force of direct statute. The institutions established by our ancestors, and bequeathed to us, their descendants, we feel under obligation to honor with strict observances. So it is with those celebrations which, originating with our sires, hallowed by recollections of the past, have been perpetuated in our own practice. As often as the anniversary of each returns, it brings vividly to

* LEVITICUS xix. 32.

view the virtues and deeds which it commemorates—moulding directly the public mind, and forming an important element of the public character; in their design and tendency, preserving the memory of our fathers, and by reference to what they have accomplished, stimulating us to an emulation of like glory and fame. Hence the propriety of the observance of the festivals and other holy days in the *Church's* calendar. Their high antiquity, as well as their commemorative character, renders them to us seasons of peculiar solemnity and joy.

There is, therefore, a sacred aspect in which reverence for the past exhibits itself. Our Holy Religion makes use of this sentiment in accomplishing the objects of her sublime and peaceful mission. Whatever comes down to us from a remote period, devoted to the service of piety, from the very circumstance of its origin, is invested with peculiar sacredness. It takes a powerful hold of the imagination, like objects seen in the twilight, magnified by distance above their relative proportions. With what feelings of awe and reverence does the Christian traveler gaze upon those famous works of art, in our fatherland, consecrated to purposes of Religion! How does his soul burn within him as he stands in contemplation of the old cathedral, moss-grown and ivy-mantled,

"With fretted arch and long-drawn aisle,"

and in "the organ's pealing notes," listens to melody which fell upon the ears, and attuned to harmony the hearts of those who were gathered there a hundred years ago! Perhaps his own ancestors once worshipped God in that very temple, and in the old

church-yard around, he sees the monuments erected over their sleeping dust. As he muses upon the past, and communes, as it were, with the dead, who shall describe the emotions which swell in his breast, and give unction to the life which he lives by the faith of the Son of God! True, our own land can boast no very ancient works of art devoted to religious uses. Comparing our sacred edifices with the numbers which exist on the Continent of Europe, whose ago is marked by centuries, the term "old" can hardly be applied to them. Those which we have, of any considerable antiquity, are generally frail wooden structures; and these are fast giving way to the ravages of Time, or the necessity for better and enlarged accommodations. It is a sad reflection that we shall soon have no old churches among us. At the same time, it is a happy, redeeming circumstance, that these, in the main, are being superseded by more costly and substantial structures, which are likely to endure like those in the Old World, and to excite in our posterity such sensations as are created by no other objects or scenes. But though our old church buildings have not yet attained to a great multitude of years, yet are they not incapable of exciting in us emotions of this character. It may be presumed that they have been felt in some measure at this time, and on this occasion.

A new era has dawned upon our parish, and our thoughts, to-day, naturally take a retrospective turn. We have reached a stand-point in our history, at which we feel impelled to pause, and, surveying the past, to gather up the instructive lessons which it unfolds. More than sixty years have passed away