

**AN ADDRESS, DELIVERED BEFORE THE
CITY GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS OF
ROXBURY, ON THE LIFE
AND CHARACTER OF THE LATE HENRY A.
S. DEARBORN, MAYOR OF THE CITY.
SEPTEMBER 3D, 1851**

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An Address, Delivered Before the City Government and Citizens of Roxbury, On the Life and Character of the Late Henry A. S. Dearborn, Mayor of the City. September 3d, 1851 by George Putnam

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GEORGE PUTNAM

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HENRY A. S. DEARBORN,

MAYOR OF THE CITY.

SEPTEMBER 3d, 1851.

BY GEORGE PUTNAM, D. D.

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Rev. John D. Wells (57)

CITY OF ROXBURY.

In Common Council, Sept. 15, 1861.

Ordered, That the thanks of the City Council be tendered to the Rev. GEORGE PUTNAM, D. D., for the very eloquent Address delivered before the City Council and citizens of this city, on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 3d, on the life, character and public services of the late General HENRY ALEXANDER SCAMMEL DEARBORN, Mayor of this City, and that he be requested to furnish a copy of the same for publication.

Passed, and sent up for concurrence.

JOSHUA SEAVER, *Clerk.*

In the Board of Aldermen, Sept. 15, 1861.

Concurred.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, *City Clerk.*

ADDRESS.



FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS,

MAGISTRATES AND CITIZENS OF ROXBURY:

OUR late Municipal Chief departed this life in the city of Portland on the 29th day of July last. His death was occasioned by a malignant disease suddenly developed, and took place under circumstances that imperatively forbade the observance here of those funereal rites that would be deemed appropriate to a man of his character and of his station. His remains passed through the streets of our city, silently attended by his associates in the government, to their final resting place. Debarred thus from an opportunity to pay the usual tokens of respect to the deceased at the time of his burial, the City Council, with many citizens and friends, have desired and claimed that a separate occasion should be set apart as early as practicable, for manifesting their appreciation of his character and public services, their sense of the bereavement which this city and the community have suffered, and by prayer and meditation in the sanctuary to renew and confirm in their own hearts the lessons of wisdom which the death of one so valued and so eminent amongst us, could not fail to inspire.

Therefore are we assembled here to-day. The perishing body is not here before us, awaiting its last rites of sepulture.

It has passed on, and sleeps beneath the beautiful shades of Forest Hills. It rests there in that well earned repose which shall never be disturbed by the hand of man; but his memory is with us,—that is not buried,—it is not dead. His mind, with all its attributes and its achievements, is still a living presence with us, and it is with that we would hold communion, and pay the just meed of grateful honor and affectionate remembrance. It is not too late for that. The pall, the hearse, the slow procession, and the open grave, are not necessary for that.

We do well, I think, to come together as we do this day, wisely omitting the external and secular parades that pertain to a funeral eulogy, and desiring only in quietness and simplicity to commemorate the man who has thus passed from amongst us—passed from the highest seat in our city, to take his place with the lowliest in the grave. We would consider what manner of man he was, and calling to mind the good traits that distinguished him, and the good services that he performed, do justice to them—the mind's justice, and the heart's justice—and find an example in them, and inspiration in them, and that moral quickening which always acquires new force in the presence of death, and amid the associations of sorrow. Human excellence is very various. It is never whole and perfect in any one man. It is distributed in diverse forms, in unequal proportions, and in manifold and ever novel combinations, even among good men. It exists only in fragments, in parcels, everywhere limited and incomplete; yet it does exist, and does appear all round, in men of every generation—an imperishable monument of God's grace, and a continual manifestation of His good spirit. And it is necessary for us, for the purposes of our own moral training, to see it, and seeing, to perceive it. It is a great incitement and an efficient help to our own virtue and wisdom to be able to discern virtue and wisdom, not only in abstract principles and formal precepts, but in the concrete, in living examples, in lives that pass or have passed before us, in deeds that we can see, in characters that shed their light upon our path.

We need to cultivate that genial and appreciating spirit that has an eye for what is beautiful and what is noble in human character, wherever it appears, in whatever forms, in whatever connections. No man is an example in every thing, but every portion of moral excellence is exemplified by somebody, and that, too, where we may see it, and derive light and strength from it, if we will. There are no good men, in the absolute sense of the term; but there are good traits and good deeds all around; and the heart that does not learn to revere and to love them, to separate them from the ever accompanying faults and imperfections, and to warm towards them, to enshrine them in its holy places, and to derive an incitement, a glow and an elevation from them, that heart will grow hard and cold—will lose its affinities with virtue, its aspirations for excellence, and find its bonds of loving brotherhood with the race become lax and weak. One reason for the gentle charity, the mild and lenient judgment which the gospel requires us to exercise, is, that we may not be deterred by a rigid, harsh, censorious spirit, from discerning with a loving and whole hearted appreciation the virtues of our fellow men. The Apostle carries this sentiment so far as to charge us to “honor all men.” Upon the most lax interpretation of the precept, we must regard it as a Christian duty, as it is certainly a means of moral improvement, to honor all that is good in man, to look for it, to delight in finding it, to make the most of it, and make the contemplation of it a means to expand the heart, and exalt our conceptions, and stimulate our virtuous endeavors.

It is because, and only because I see much to admire, to love, and to revere in the character of our late fellow citizen and chief magistrate, much that ought to have the inspiring influence of a good example, that I am willing to appear here to day, and speak of him in this public manner. I believe there are things in his life and character, the contemplation of which may be as profitable to our own hearts, as it is just to his memory. I am glad that his walk and station in society were so conspicuous as, in your judg-

ment, to authorize this public and unusual notice of the qualities and deeds of an individual man.

The informal nature of this occasion releases me from the duty of giving any complete biographical account of the deceased. A few dates and incidents may, however, be allowed.

Henry Alexander Scammel Dearborn was born March 3d, 1783, in Exeter, New Hampshire. He passed his boyhood on a farm, on the banks of the Kennebec, in Maine. He spent two years at Williams' College, in this State, but was graduated at William and Mary's College, in Virginia. He studied law three years in a southern State, and one year in the office of the late Judge Story, at Salem. At this time, his father being Secretary of War, and Mr. Jefferson President of the United States, he applied for a foreign diplomatic station. Mr. Jefferson said he should have one, and a good one; but advised him not to take it, saying that "no man ought to go to reside for any time abroad under the age of forty, for he would lose his American tastes and ideas, become wedded to foreign manners and institutions, and grow incapable of becoming a loyal, useful and contented citizen at home." The young applicant took the advice, and gave up the appointment. He then commenced the practice of the law in Salem, and afterwards continued it a little while in Portland, but he disliked the profession, and resolved to give it up as soon as possible. He said it obliged him to take money often from persons who stood in the greatest need of it themselves, and to whom he felt impelled to give something, rather than exact anything from them; he could not bear to get his living so. This reason for a change will strike every one who knew him as strongly characteristic of him. At this period he was appointed to superintend the erection of the forts in Portland harbor. He next became an officer in the Boston Custom house, where his father was Collector; and on the father's appointment to the command of the northern army, in the war with Great Britain, the son was made Collector of the Port in his stead. In 1812, he had the command of the troops

in Boston harbor. He was removed from the office of Collector in 1829. The same year he was chosen Representative from Roxbury, in the Legislature of Massachusetts, and was immediately transferred to the Executive Council. The next year he was Senator from Norfolk, and at the next election was chosen member of Congress from this district. Having served one term in Congress, he was soon after appointed Adjutant General of Massachusetts, in which office he continued till 1843. In 1847, he became Mayor of Roxbury, which place he held until his death.

It does not become me to speak of his official conduct in any of these public stations. I am neither competent to estimate, nor disposed to discuss the wisdom of the political opinions which he held, nor of the measures he advocated. I will only say that none ever doubted, so far as I know, his patriotism, diligence, and fidelity in every office of trust. None will believe or say that he ever sacrificed his convictions of right, his views of public interest, or any whit of his personal integrity to the desire of gain, or of political advancement. A thoroughly honest and high minded man he unquestionably was in every public function, as also in every private relation. The contrary, I presume, was never charged or suspected, even in any heat of party strife.

But there is another class of public services in which he bore a conspicuous part, that seems to me of a more interesting nature, and to have afforded a more appropriate and felicitous sphere for his peculiar endowments and tastes.

This occasion would have lacked its peculiar interest for me, and I doubt not for others also, if the subject of our commemoration had never been anything but a public functionary. He was more and higher than that. He interested himself, zealously and efficiently, apart from politics, in various enterprises for the public good. He was one of the early and enthusiastic promoters of those lines of internal communication which have since become so important. He was upon the State survey for a canal from Boston to the Hudson, and was pressing forward that enterprise when the railroad was projected in its stead.