

**THE PAST OF YPSILANTI: A
DISCOURSE DELIVERED ON
LEAVING THE OLD PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH EDIFICE, LORD'S DAY,
SEPTEMBER 20TH, 1857**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649250738

The Past of Ypsilanti: A Discourse Delivered on Leaving the Old Presbyterian Church Edifice,
Lord's day, September 20th, 1857 by G. L. Foster

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

G. L. FOSTER

**THE PAST OF YPSILANTI: A
DISCOURSE DELIVERED ON
LEAVING THE OLD PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH EDIFICE, LORD'S DAY,
SEPTEMBER 20TH, 1857**

THE



PAST OF YPSILANTI:

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED ON LEAVING THE OLD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH EDIFICE,
LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 20TH, 1857.

1858.

AN APPENDIX,

Containing a History of Schools, Secret Societies, &c.

BY G. L. FOSTER.

DETROIT:
FLEMING & DAVIS, BOOK PRINTERS,
No. 32 SHREVEY STREET.
1857.

6
F
574
Y86
F7

NOTE.

This Discourse and its Appendix will be chiefly of local interest. I publish them at the solicitation of many who heard the Discourse, and of many who were unable to get into the house at the time of its delivery, and of many who wish to retain some such history of the town in which they live as I have endeavored briefly to give. To do what has been done, required much more time than was at first anticipated. I have been much assisted by persons, sufficiently indicated, perhaps, without naming them here. I have exercised some patience in an endeavor to be accurate as to names and dates, hoping that many will be interested in what is here recorded, and that some stray copy will fall into the hands of him who writes the Oration of Ypsilanti's Centennial Celebration.

G. L. V.

DISCOURSE.

DEUT. VIII: 2. "AND THOU SHALT REMEMBER ALL THE WAY, WHICH THE LORD THY GOD LED THEE, THESE FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS.

Have you ever noticed that this word "*remember*" is a very common one in the Bible? Were we to search out the passages in which it occurs, we would be surprised to find how much it is used; and we would more than guess that we had better obey what it requires.

To remember seems an important part of human duty. God himself, in numerous instances, calls upon men to remember Him, His works of providence, and His wonders of grace. The Patriarchs were often telling to their sons what they would have remembered, and transmitted to generations following them. Every Prophet fulfilled his mission, in part, by calling upon the careless to remember the dealings of God with them, or with their fathers before them. The Royal Psalmist and the Royal Preacher both sing and preach of what would turn the mind, and engage it in a profitable review. This was the special work of John the Baptist—thus bringing men to repentance. This was, in part, the work of Jesus. He came to call thought back upon prophetic predictions, as well as to secure attention to the evidences of His character and work; and, so the Divine Spirit was to bring to remembrance, and make vivid those things about which men are ever prone to evince a criminal forgetfulness. The Apostles were ever calling upon those who were under their instructions, to remember how those going before

them secured the Divine smile or the Divine frown, or how themselves had been variously taught the Divine opinion of human conduct.

To remember seems to be important for such a being as Man. He ought to remember *now*, while he can rectify many of the mistakes of life. *To remember*, we have reason to believe, will be a part of his blessed or dreadful employment for ever. To call upon men to do this, should be a part of the work of the Christian Ministry, especially where the Gospel exists and has been long developing the fruits of its mission. Whoever can best make men remember what they already know—whoever can best engage them in hunting out in their minds what is already there, covered with rubbish,—is best qualified for usefulness, other things being *not very equal*. The *Philanthropist*, bending over the wretched objects of poverty and sin, can best secure attention and do his work, by bringing memory to his help. He can thus excite Repentance and Hope—twin sisters in rescuing the nearly lost. The *Patriot* can kindle a love of country in the hearts of his fellow-men, and prepare them “for victory or death,” by rehearsing the deeds of the noble who have gone before.

So, if one can bring to mind the principles and facts of the divine kingdom—things already known, but out of sight behind the clouds and dust of the passing present—he can do a blessed service. He can induce both repentance and hope, and excite in human hearts a zeal for God and His cause.

We have met this afternoon *to remember*. We meet to do this, in part, *whenever* we assemble for religious worship; but *especially* will our circumstances to-day suggest the propriety of our doing this. As a Church and Society, we have probably met here for the *last time*—this is to be our place of public worship *no more*—another temple, through the blessing of a gracious and helpful Providence, is waiting for our reception. Some of you, even now, may be anticipating your entrance there; you may be imagining where you will sit—what you will think—and how you will feel; your feet may almost start, with desire to

tread those beautiful courts: but we are *here* yet; and it will be most natural for us—just upon the eve of our departure—to look back upon the past, and thus become properly purposed for the future. A personal experience may have taught us that

"Tis wise to talk with one's past hours,
And ask what report they 've borne to heaven."

So may we be profited by such a brief review of the way in which we have been led as a Christian people.

The language of Moses in the text seems appropriately addressed to us: "Thou shalt remember all the way, which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years in the wilderness." Some of us have been nearly that length of time here; and some may expect that they have nearly done with this wilderness world, and are about to enter Canaan. We have been under the same Providential Guidance that Israel was. If our way has been crooked, it has been because of transgressions; and, if we ever see "the goodly land," it will be because we have had much forgiven us.

In order to remember the way in which we have been led as a Church and Society, it will be best to look back beyond the existence of Churches and Christian congregations. And as other Churches and Societies than our own have had an existence parallel with ours, it will be well to consider this, and whatever else may help in giving us a *moral and religious view* of the "thus far" in which the Lord has led us as a Christian people. Just *here* in time, as about one generation has passed away, I desire to chronicle what will be of more worth one hundred years hence, than now—more appreciated by our children's children than by ourselves. We would let them know of the toils, the trials, and the success of their fathers, in making this wilderness as a fruitful field. In respect to *names, dates, and facts*, I have spared no pains to be as accurate as may be. If in any of these I am mistaken, I will gladly be corrected.

YPSILANTI had not its beginning under the favorable circumstances which have blessed the planting of many Western towns.

It was not settled by "a colony" coming from the East—the choice siftings of some New England community—bringing their Minister and Teacher with them to lay foundations for God and coming generations; its elements were very fragmentary, coming together for many purposes—some of them excellent, and some worse than doubtful of good.

Although Detroit was one of the first settled places upon the great chain of American Lakes, this region, so near it, was left to the undisputed occupancy of the Indians until about the year 1809. At that time Gabriel Godfrey, a Frenchman, accompanied by Francis Pepin and Louis Le Shambre, established a trading-post. The building erected for this purpose stood upon the west side of the river, about where Mr. George Hill now resides. At that time, and previously, the Indians regarded these banks of the Huron with special favor. We can not wonder at the taste of those Sons of the Forest. They had a burying-ground there just at the foot of the hill, where they believed they had equipped many a warrior for the conflicts of his way towards a better land. There was another, just at the foot of the hill, near where Chauncey Joslin now lives, and where tradition hath it that a human victim was once offered in sacrifice: but this is not probable.

In the year 1811, about twenty-five hundred acres of land were patented to the owners of this trading-post, under the seal of President Madison, according to an Act of Congress applying to such cases. This tract is marked upon old maps as "*French Claims.*" At first, this trading-post was profitable in a bartering business with the Indians; but after a few years, according to treaty, they were removed so far to the westward that trade amounted to loss and less, until, in about 1820, it was entirely given up, though the original traders remained here most of the time. The place was then spoken of abroad as "Godfrey's on the Pottowottomie trail." This was Ypsilanti's first name.

In the spring of 1823, Major Benjamin Woodruff, Robert M. Stitts, John Thayer, and David Beverly came in as settlers; Jason and Daniel Cross, with their families, and Mr. Peck with

his, came in soon after. These all located about one mile southeast of the present village, where the farm of Chester Yost now is; and the settlement took the name of "Woodruff's Grove." David Beverly died during the following season—the first death of a white man in the county. All the above-named have gone to their final account, except Mr. Stitts, who is now living in Augusta, a few miles south of us.

These first settlers mostly came up the river, by the use of a flat-bottomed boat propelled by poles. For four or five years this boat was much used; but the knowledge of a wharf here, and notices that "Captain Stitts will leave" it on such a day, have long since passed away. In respect to navigation, the town has made no progress.

Soon after the settlement commenced at Woodruff's Grove, two families by the name of Hall settled upon the west side of the river, about opposite the Grove, who are said to have been very wild and savage-like, calling themselves "the Kings of the River."

In the autumn of 1823, Mr. John Bryan and family came in from Genesee, New York, with the first ox-team which ever came through direct from Detroit. As Mrs. Bryan has recently written an account of that journey, and of the state of things here at that time, I am permitted to quote. Mrs. Bryan says:

"After a wearisome journey of four days, through the thick woods and marshes—husband cutting the road before us with an ax—we arrived at night on the beautiful Huron, October 23d, 1823. We got the privilege of staying in a log cabin with another family, until we could build one, into which we moved the last day of December. Eight weeks after this (February 27th, 1824), my son Alpha was born. We called him *Alpha Washewan*—the latter name in honor of the county, and the former on account of his having been the first child born in the county. He was promised a lot of land, but never received it.*

* It is denied that this was the first born child—Captain Stitts claiming that a daughter of his was some six months older than Alpha W. Bryan.