

ACTION OF THE COUNCIL.

DEATH OF JOSEPH SARGENT, M.D.

AT a meeting held October 20, 1888, the President, STEPHEN SALISBURY, offered resolutions of respect, and said:—

It is my sad duty to call the attention of the Council to the death of Dr. Joseph Sargent, which occurred Oct. 13. Dr. Sargent was elected a member of our Society in October, 1860, and three years later he became a member of the Council, and has served the Society in that office since that time. Of the strong interest that he felt in all that concerned the American Antiquarian Society I do not need to remind you, for you yourselves are cognizant of it. The same fidelity he displayed in the discharge of his many professional and business obligations, he showed in full measure in the various societies and institutions with which he was connected. Dr. Sargent took especial delight in literature, and, an accomplished linguist and a writer of very graceful expression, he found in our Society and its associations what was most congenial to his refined and cultivated mind. His style as a writer was clear and terse. His easy familiarity with the Latin gave to all his productions a grace and directness which, united with a facility of composition and a quick mental process, caused him to be frequently called upon for literary service. He made the report of the Council in 1865, on "The Medical Department of the U. S. Army during the War of the Rebellion," a subject which his own observations in the field and in the hospital, during a portion of the war, made of great value to history. In

April, 1874, he made the report for the Council, choosing for his theme "The Angel of Bethesda" of Cotton Mather, which he considered from a medical point of view. This essay also attracted much attention. In April, 1878, he made his last report for the Council, on "the completion of the Library extension and the possible future of the Society." His feeling tribute to the memory of his friend the Hon. Henry Chapin, October 15, 1878, to the memory of our late President, Stephen Salisbury, in October, 1884, and to the memory of Dr. Rufus Woodward, in April, 1886, were among the more formal writings of our associate, published in our proceedings. It is fitting that our sentiments should find expression, and I offer for your consideration the following resolutions:—

Resolved: That in the death of Dr. Joseph Sargent, the Council of the American Antiquarian Society have lost an associate whose character and attainments qualified him, in an unusual degree, for the position which he has filled as an officer of this society, while his gifts of mind and heart endeared him to all the members of this board.

Resolved: That we desire to bear in mind that Dr. Sargent was always faithful to his obligations towards the society, and that we have observed the same punctilious service in his action as officer of other institutions with which he has been connected.

Resolved: That we recognize in Dr. Sargent to a remarkable degree that rare quality of mind which enabled him to consider both sides of a proposition, and that generosity of disposition which led him to endeavor to do justice to all, as nearly as imperfect human judgment would allow.

Resolved: That the Council feel deeply the loss of a friend ever ready to sympathize with others in their griefs, and quick to suggest consolation.

HON. JOHN D. WASHBURN seconded the resolutions, and said:—

Mr. President:—Many institutions of business or finance have, during the past week, paid and published their tributes to the memory of Dr. Sargent, their promoter, advocate or

adviser. That they should do so was natural and most fitting. Those tributes were marked by generous appreciation and feeling, with far less of perfunctory phrase of commendation than often attends expressions of this kind. It cannot be doubted that his connection with those institutions was very useful to them and to the community. The elevating and purifying influence of men of so dignified personal character, and so high standard of honor, tends to lift business out of the coarser and more sordid channels, refining its manners and elevating its morals. But business associations, however worthy, honorable or useful, were but the *incidents* not the *distinctions* of his life. Not slothful in these, his real activities, his liveliest interests were elsewhere. His true life moved along the higher walks of intellectual endeavor, and rested on the loftier planes. He called no man common or unclean, and his kindly courtesy was a proverb with all who knew him. But his chosen companionships, the companionships of his leisure (by which the true character and tastes of men may best be tested), were with intellectual and cultivated men, leaders of thought, students of the past and moulders of the future.

To the great University where he graduated nearly fifty-five years ago, his affectionate loyalty was unwavering, growing and strengthening with each advancing year. When the noon-day of their strength had passed, and with the lengthening shadows the evening of life drew near, the love of Sargent, and Hinckley, and Felton, and Donaldson, for each other and for their *Alma Mater*, glowed ever and ever warmer. To the new and rising University, of which he was one of the earliest selected as a Trustee, he gave his ripest thought, advancing views of singular clearness and wisdom. He was always on the most liberal side, always for placing the institution on the highest plane, where it should be the rival of none but command the good will of all, in honorable effort to be to all an aid, a light and an exemplar. To this Society, represent-

ing as it does so much of the sound learning and critical judgment of our community and State, and identified as it is in the minds of the scholars of the country with archæological research, and studies in American History, his relations were marked by the most constant and intelligent fidelity. For twenty-eight years a member, for twenty-five years a Councillor, I cannot remember a meeting of the Society or the Council, at which, if in the country, he was not present. His sagacious and frequent observations and criticisms upon papers submitted to the Council were always welcome and pertinent, sometimes invaluable. His own Council reports, of which formal notice will be taken in that to be submitted at the Annual Meeting, were listened to with the greatest interest, and have been cited as permanent authority on the questions with which they dealt. He was master of a clear and unambitious English style, sententious yet not unduly condensed, of logical order and easy, natural flow, worthy of the subjects he had in hand and of the character of the audience he addressed.

Of his professional attainments and distinction it is not becoming for one not a member of the same profession to speak with any attempt at technical detail. Yet some things, even in these relations, were so obvious to all men, and especially to those who, not of the faculty, were yet privileged to enjoy his intimate personal friendship, that they may, with every propriety, be spoken of here. Of the noble calling to which his life was devoted, he was by universal admission, and beyond a possible doubt, in this community, the head. He occupied that position more than thirty years ago, when I came to this city a young man, welcomed to his friendship, and he occupied it every moment from that time till his death. It is certainly the conviction of the community in general, and I think also that of his professional brethren, that, outside of the County of Suffolk, he had not his equal, upon the whole, in the faculty throughout the State. And the mere fact that

he held this recognized position and primacy, was not his highest triumph or his brightest crown. Thousands, indeed, will bless his name for relief and restoration in hours of danger and despair. His associates in all the professional organizations to which he at different times belonged, will bear unvarying testimony to the value of his co-operation, the tenor of his counsels, the strength and uplifting power of his leadership. But perhaps the greatest service he rendered the profession was in exalting it before the community, by his recognized head-ship and by the broad and generous influences which flowed down from him through all the veins and arteries of the body of the profession, permeating all its tissues and inspiring all its movements, both objective and subjective. He was raised above all jealousies, not by acquired distinction only and intellectual abilities, but by inherent greatness of nature. His judgment of his fellows was broad and generous. He lived among them in the perpetual sunshine of courtesy and sympathy. He welcomed every honorable young man to the profession, counselled, cheered to high aims, encouraged to hopeful endeavor. He saw the possibilities which wait on work and hope, believed in them, pressed them on aspiring youth, possibilities not of mere pecuniary success and sordid triumph, but of attainment, of usefulness, of honor. Thus he exalted his profession in the eyes of its votaries and before men, and blended its reputation, in our whole community, with their confidence in his own great heart, strong arm and skilful hand. He kept far in the van of thought and progress. He would not be a provincial practitioner, nor plod the dull round of the mere family or country doctor, nor drag about the rubbish of a rusty mind. His observation was broadened in foreign fields. He was not afraid of a little loss of practice or emoluments at home, so that, through absence, he might get larger views, and, albeit at temporary pecuniary sacrifice, bring fuller light into the professional world and larger prospect of relief and blessing to suffering and disease.

His sympathies were those of a nature not only noble but in the highest degree intelligent. His diagnosis was quick and accurate, and, far less than that of most practitioners, required the aid of the patient's spoken word. He could, in large measure, anticipate the want, explore each thought, explain the asking eye. He practised medicine with respect for his fellows and with reverence for the Unseen. Not in assertion or dogma, but with high and unaffected reverence, he recognized the religious element in life and death, and never excluded the Maker of the Universe from influence in its affairs. To him there was no element of idle superstition in the simple faith of that good and wise physician

“Who wrote from Susa's bloodstained field
‘I dressed the wound that God has healed.’”

The ready sympathy and tender sensibility of which I have spoken was the natural ally and outcome of the hearty and sincere good-fellowship with which his nature overflowed, and which so conspicuously marked his relations with his friends, and with the varied life of the community. This lovable and loving quality remained unimpaired by advancing years or decaying health. It never shone with sweeter and more attractive grace than but a few days before his death, in a small company of near friends, who will never forget those happy hours (alas! the last,) of reunion with him. Nor did he ever withdraw himself from our ancient local guild, whose sole bond of union, and *raison d'être*, is good-fellowship, nor fail in regular attendance at its quarterly meetings. And I think he would desire for himself, as earnestly as did Ben Adhem, the simple inscription, “He loved his fellow-men.”

The man whose heart was so large, and whose whole nature was so imbued with the generous affections, could not fail to co-operate with interest and enthusiasm in every reasonable scheme for the mitigation of human suffering, and the relief of human misfortune of every kind. The Lunatic Hospital

in his earlier years, the City Hospital in later, and in the last, perhaps the most interesting of all, the Memorial Hospital, were objects to him of deep interest, active co-operation and support, earnest and constant solicitude. Nor were his charities or sympathies limited by professional or semi-professional bounds. Few public gifts of this kind found themselves without his active and practical sympathy; and for all those private ministrations, the delicate adjustments and combination of pecuniary relief with gentle personal attentions, the consoling presence, the cheering word, the practical encouragement, the blessing of the widow and the fatherless will always rest upon him, for in each and all of these his life was one pure stream of love from fount to sea.

Nor was that noble heart less brave than tender, nor less true. His sympathies were outspoken with the down-trodden and oppressed. When to be a pronounced anti-slavery man endangered social prestige and often proved social ostracism, he was faithful to his heart's teachings, and dared to range himself with the advanced guard which led the way through fiery trial and National sacrifice to the final triumph of National virtue, and the emancipation of every bondman. The same warm, courageous heart was enlisted, in his earlier days, in the organization of a new religious society, and was one of the strongest supports of the youthful pastor to whom that most important charge was entrusted, and who always found in him a shield and tower of strength.

And yet it seems to me, looking at all his life and work, that the most beautiful things are to be found in his home, and in his private relations with intimate personal friends. Most gentle and loving they were, marked by all the charm of generous temperament, natural sunshine, "principles and purposes of affection." But on them at this time, it would not be becoming, nor should I dare trust myself to dwell.

REV. EDWARD E. HALE, D.D., said a few words to thank Col. Washburn for the tribute of respect that he had read, and expressing his own personal obligation to Dr. Sargent, when he first came to Worcester, more than forty years ago.

Hon. GEORGE F. HOAR spoke briefly of the merits of Dr. Sargent and of the long and intimate friendship that had existed between the Doctor and himself, fully agreeing with all that Mr. Washburn had said.

REV. ANDREW P. PEABODY, D.D., said :—

Mr. President:—I claim a special right to offer my tribute to the surpassing worth of our late associate, inasmuch as I was the earliest of his friends in the Council. He was my pupil in his Junior year in college. His class recited to me in sections of not more than twelve or thirteen, so that in the class-room his became to me a familiar presence, while my relations with the students outside of the class-room were such as brought me into frequent intercourse with them. I remember him well as an amiable, modest, thoroughly estimable youth. While not distinguished for brilliancy as a scholar, he was so for assiduity, diligence, and thoroughly faithful work. His early eminence in a profession in which such men as his preceptor, Dr. Jackson, furnished the standard for comparison, might have been readily predicted from his career in college, and none were so promptly assured of the foremost and extended reputation which he was destined to attain as those who could trace his course from his boyhood. While my opportunities of cultivating his intimate acquaintance have been few and rare, in my visits to Worcester I have seldom failed of an interview with him, and never of being refreshed and gladdened by tokens of his kind remembrance and friendly regard; all which were fully reciprocated while he was with us in this world, and are recalled with gratitude that will, I trust, be more than life-long, or rather, will last on into the life beyond the death-shadow.

SAMUEL S. GREEN, A.M., spoke as follows:—

Mr. President:—Some of the gentlemen present know that a new history of Worcester is preparing. Dr. Samuel B. Woodward has been engaged recently in writing the portion of it which relates to the history of medicine here, and has just finished his paper. I have had the pleasure of reading it in manuscript, and have found it to be an admirable piece of work. Dr. Woodward tells me that he never could have written this monograph without the assistance which he received from Dr. Sargent, in several long conversations. It is gratifying to me, and to all of you, to know that a part of that abundant store of knowledge regarding local medical history, and of pleasant reminiscences respecting physicians in Worcester, of which Dr. Sargent was the repository, has been preserved and will appear in print.

I had intended to remain silent this afternoon, but cannot help saying that Dr. Sargent has touched me several times by manifestations of his generous spirit. I can recall especially three occasions on which he took particular pains to express sympathy, and speak words of praise when I had met with successes in life. I belong, as you know, to one of the families which has been distinguished in Worcester for the eminence of members of it in the practice of medicine. When Mr. Washburn came to Worcester, thirty years ago, the last Dr. John Green to practise here, the most skilful practitioner, perhaps, in Central Massachusetts, had virtually retired from an active exercise of the duties of his profession. I fear, however, that in earlier days, when Dr. Sargent began his career here, Dr. Green and his brother-in-law, Dr. Heywood, did not give him a very hearty reception. They probably felt, as doctors in small places are apt to feel when in possession of the field, an unwillingness to relinquish any portion of it to a new comer.

Dr. John Homans was invited to settle in Worcester, by a prominent family here, but soon came to Dr. Green and told him that it had become apparent to him that there was

not room for him in this place. He went to Boston, as you know, and became there a very successful physician. Dr. Sargent remained in Worcester, and it is because my relations and connections did little to help him while he was struggling for position in the town, that I have felt especially appreciative of the kindly and generous spirit which he has shown in his intercourse with me.

Hon. P. EMORY ALDRICH said:—

In addition to what has been already said by other members of the Council, in just eulogy of our late associate, Dr. Sargent, permit me to speak very briefly of his conduct and character in another and *quasi* public relation, where his rare intelligence, conscientiousness and absolute loyalty to truth were conspicuous. During my practice at the Bar, I had occasion to call Dr. Sargent many times, as a medical witness and expert, and heard him testify often when called by others. And from him, as such witness, courts and jurors were sure to hear an impartial and luminous statement of the facts as he had observed and understood them; and if beyond a mere statement of facts, his opinion as a medical expert was called for, that opinion was invariably given with caution, and with no apparent desire to support either side of the controversy, beyond its just merits. His opinions, as a scientific witness, were never for sale, they could not be bought. He never took the witness stand as a partisan, or in the spirit of advocacy. When called upon to act as a witness in a case demanding superior knowledge and skill, he first investigated the facts of the case, with a thoroughness I seldom ever saw practised by any other member of his profession; and having done that, he frankly stated his opinions of the case, whether favorable or unfavorable to the party choosing to call him. He encouraged no false hopes, nor set up any fanciful theories, unsustained by facts, upon which it might be possible to win a cause. He never forgot his duty to science whose precious treas-

ures he possessed in a large measure, nor did he sacrifice the honor of a noble profession, for the sake of temporarily saving a party who had sought his aid and was willing to reward him for it. If all witnesses summoned as experts, in all departments of art and science, would imitate the lofty example of our late associate, expert testimony might be redeemed from the suspicion and disrepute which now lies upon it, in our courts of justice.

Dr. Sargent had a remarkably clear and forcible style or manner of stating facts and opinions, and he was never at a loss to give a reason for an opinion which he had once expressed. In giving his testimony he rarely ever used technical words; but his well-chosen language was such as to render his explanations and statements of récondite subjects plain to the learned and unlearned alike.

He had a wholesome contempt for all ostentatious displays of learning, and, although his knowledge of his profession was varied and profound, he kept his knowledge for use and not for show. His first statements of a case as a witness, were ordinarily so clear, full and fair, that no amount of cross-examination could change or essentially modify them.

Such a man, so abundant in learning, so filled with the love of truth, became a material assistant in the administration of justice in our Courts. And in closing this brief notice of him, I venture the affirmation, after having heard many of the most eminent members of the profession, as witnesses in the Courts, in all parts of the Commonwealth, that I remember no one who, in fulness and exactness of knowledge, in clearness and fairness of statement, was the superior of Dr. Sargent.

Brief eulogistic remarks were also made by Hon. EDWARD L. DAVIS.

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