

The ceremony of laying the corner stone took place on the 9th of November, 1843. Mr. Adams delivered an address on the occasion, replete with eloquence, wisdom, philosophy, and religion. The following beautiful extract will afford a specimen :—

“The various difficult, and, in many respects, opposite motives which have impelled mankind to the study of the stars, have had a singular effect in complicating and confounding the recommendation of the science. Religion, idolatry, superstition, curiosity, the thirst for knowledge, the passion for penetrating the secrets of nature, the warfare of the huntsman by night and by day against the beast of the forest and of the field, the meditations of the shepherd in the custody and wanderings of his flocks, the influence of the revolving seasons of the year, and the successive garniture of the firmament upon the labors of the husbandman, upon the seed time and the harvest, the blooming of flowers, the ripening of the vintage, the polar pilot of the navigator, and the mysterious magnet of the mariner—all, in harmonious action, stimulate the child of earth and of heaven to interrogate the dazzling splendors of the sky, to reveal to him the laws of their own existence.

“He has his own comforts, his own happiness, his own existence, identified with theirs. He sees the Creator in creation, and calls upon creation to declare the glory of the Creator. When Pythagoras, the philosopher of the Grecian schools, conceived that more than earthly idea of ‘the music of the spheres’—when the great dramatist of nature could inspire the lips of his lover on the moonlight green with the beloved of his soul, to say to her :—

‘Sit, Jessica.—Look how the floor of Heaven
Is thick inlaid with pattens of bright gold!
There’s not the smallest orb which thou beholdest,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still choiring to the young eyed cherubim!’

“Oh, who is the one with a heart, but almost wishes to cast off this muddy vesture of decay, to be admitted to the joy of listening to the celestial harmony!”

CHAPTER XV.

MR. ADAMS’ LAST APPEARANCE IN PUBLIC AT BOSTON—HIS HEALTH—LECTURES ON HIS JOURNEY TO WASHINGTON—REMOTE CAUSE OF HIS DECEASE—STRUCK WITH PARALYSIS—LEAVES QUINCY FOR WASHINGTON FOR THE LAST TIME—HIS FINAL SICKNESS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—HIS DEATH—THE FUNERAL AT WASHINGTON—REMOVAL OF THE BODY TO QUINCY—ITS INTERMENT.

The last time Mr. Adams appeared in public in Boston, he presided at a meeting of the citizens of that city, in Faneuil Hall. “A man had been kidnapped in Boston—kidnapped at noon-day, ‘on the high road between Faneuil Hall and old Quincy,’ and carried off to be a slave! New England hands had seized their brother, sold him into bondage forever, and his children after him. A meeting was called to talk the matter over, in a plain way, and look in one another’s faces. Who was fit to preside in such a case? That old man sat in the chair in Faneuil Hall. Above him was the image of his father and his own; around him were Hancock and the other Adams, and Washington, greatest of all. Before him were the men and women of Boston, met to consider the wrongs done to a miserable negro slave. The roof of the old Cradle of Liberty

spanned over them all. Forty years before, a young man and a Senator, he had taken the chair at a meeting called to consult on the wrong done to American seamen, violently impressed by the British from an American ship of war—the unlucky Chesapeake. Now an old man, clothed with half a century of honors, he sits in the same Hall, to preside over a meeting to consider the outrage done to a single slave. One was the first meeting of citizens he ever presided over; the other was the last: both for the same object—the defence of the eternal right !”*

Few men retain the health and vigor with which Mr. Adams was blessed in extreme old age. When most others are decrepit and helpless, he was in the enjoyment of meridian strength and energy, both of body and mind, and could endure labors which would prostrate many in the prime of manhood. An instance of his powers of endurance is furnished in his journey to Washington, to attend the opening of Congress, when in the 74th year of his age. On Monday morning he left Boston, and the same evening delivered a lecture before the Young Men’s Institute, in Hartford, Conn. The next day he proceeded to New Haven, and in the evening lectured before a similar Institute in that city. Wednesday he pursued his journey to New York, and in the evening lectured before the New York Lyceum, in the Broadway Tabernacle. Thursday evening he

* Theodore Parker.

delivered an address before an association in Brooklyn; and on Friday evening delivered a second lecture before the New York Lyceum. Here were labors which would seriously tax the constitution of vigorous youth; and yet Mr. Adams performed them with much comparative ease.

His great longevity, and his general good health, must be attributed, in no small degree, to his abstemious and temperate habits, early rising, and active exercise. He took pleasure in athletic amusements, and was exceedingly fond of walking. During his summer residence in Quincy, he has been known to walk to his son’s residence in Boston (seven miles,) before breakfast. “While President of the United States, he was probably the first man up in Washington, lighted his own fire, and was hard at work in his library, while sleep yet held in its obliviousness the great mass of his fellow-citizens.” He was an expert swimmer, and was in the constant habit of bathing, whenever circumstances would permit. Not unfrequently the first beams of the rising sun, as they fell upon the beautiful Potomac, would find Mr. Adams buffeting its waves with all the sportiveness and dexterity of boyhood, while a single attendant watched upon the shore. When in the Presidency, he sometimes made a journey from Washington to Quincy on horseback, as a simple citizen, accompanied only by a servant.

More than four score years had sprinkled their

frosts upon his brow, and still he was in the midst of his usefulness. Promptly at his post in the Hall of Representatives stood the veteran sentinel, watching vigilantly over the interests of his country. With an eye undimmed by age, a quick ear, a ready hand, an intellect unimpaired, he guarded the citadel of liberty, ever on the alert to detect, and mighty to repel, the approach of the foe, however covert or however open his attacks. Never did the Union, never did freedom, the world, more need his services than now. A large territory, of sufficient extent to form several States, had been blighted by slavery, and annexed to the United States. A sanguinary and expensive war, growing out of this strengthening of the slave power, had just terminated, adding to the Union still larger territories—now free soil indeed, but furnishing a field for renewed battles between slavery and liberty. New revolutions were about to break forth in Europe, to convulse the Eastern Hemisphere, and cause old thrones to totter and fall!

How momentous the era! How deeply fraught with the prosperity of the American Republic—with the progress of man—the freedom of nations—the happiness of succeeding generations! How could he, who for years had prominently and nobly stood forth, as the leader of the hosts contending for the rights and the liberties of humanity, be spared from his post at such a juncture? Who could put on his armor?—who wield his weapons?—who “lead a forlorn hope,” or

mount a deadly breach in battles which might yet be waged between the sons of freedom and the propagators of slavery? But the loss was to be experienced. A wise and good Providence had so ordered. The sands of his life had run out. A voice from on high called him away from earth's stormy struggles, to bright and peaceful scenes in the spirit land. He could no longer tarry. Death found the faithful veteran at his post, with his harness on. How applicable the words of Scott, on the departure of Pitt:—

“Hadst thou but lived, though stripp'd of power,
A watchman on the lonely tower,
Thy thrilling trump had roused the land,
When fraud or danger were at hand;
By thee, as by the beacon-light,
Our pilots had kept course aright;
As some proud column, though alone,
Thy strength had propp'd the tottering throne.
Now is the stately column broke,
The beacon-light is quenched in smoke,
The trumpet's silver sound is still,
The warder silent on the hill!
O think how, to his latest day,
When death, just hovering, claimed his prey,
With Palinure's unaltered mood,
Firm at his dangerous post he stood;
Each call for needful rest repell'd,
With dying hand the rudder held,
Till, in his fall, with fateful sway,
The steerage of the realm gave way.”

It has been supposed by some that the remote cause of Mr. Adams's death was a severe injury he received by a fall in the House of Representatives, in June,

1840. The accident is thus described by an eye witness :—

“It had been a very warm day, and the debates had partaken of extraordinary excitement, when, a few moments before sunset, the House adjourned, and most of the members had sought relief from an oppressive atmosphere, in the arbors and recesses of the adjoining Congressional gardens.

“At that time I held a subordinate clerkship in the House, which usually confined me, the larger portion of the day not devoted to debate, to one of the committee rooms; whilst the balance of the day I occupied as a reporter.

“Mr. Adams was always the first man in the House, and the last man out of it; and, as I usually detained myself an hour or more after adjournment, in writing up my notes, I often came in contact with him. He was pleased to call at my desk very often, before he went home, and indulge in some incidental, unimportant conversation. On the day referred to, just as the sun was setting, and was throwing his last rays through the murky hall, I looked up, and saw Mr. Adams approaching. He had almost reached my desk, and had uplifted his hand in friendly salutation, when he pitched headlong, some six or eight feet, and struck his head against the sharp corner of an iron rail that defended one of the entrance aisles leading to the circle within the bar, inflicting a heavy contusion on his forehead, and rendering him insensible. I instantly leaped from my seat, took the prostrate sufferer in my arms, and found that he was in a state of utter stupor and insensibility. Looking around for aid, I had the good fortune to find that Col. James Munroe, of the New York delegation, had just returned to his desk to procure a paper he had forgotten, when, giving the alarm, he flew to the rescue, manifesting the deepest solicitude for the welfare of the venerable statesman. Follansbee, the door-keeper, with two or more of his pages, came in next; and after we had applied a plentiful supply of cold water to the sufferer, he returned to consciousness, and requested that he might be taken to his residence. In less than five minutes, Mr. Moses H. Grinnell, Mr. George H. Profit, Mr. Ogden Hoffman, and Col. Christopher Williams, of Tennessee, were called in, a carriage was procured, and Mr. Adams was being conveyed to his residence in President

Square, when, it being ascertained that his shoulder was dislocated, the carriage was stopped at the door of the private hotel of Col. Munroe, in Pennsylvania Avenue, between Eleventh and Twelfth streets; the suffering, but not complaining statesman, was taken out, and surgical aid instantly put in requisition. Doctor Sewall was sent for; when it was ascertained that the left shoulder-joint was out of the socket; and, though Mr. Adams must have suffered intensely, he complained not—did not utter a groan or a murmur.

“More than an hour elapsed before the dislocated limb could be adjusted; and to effect which, his arm endured, in a concentrated and continued wrench or pull, many minutes at a time, the united strength of Messrs. Grinnell, Munroe, Profit, and Hoffman. Still Mr. Adams uttered not a murmur, though the great drops of sweat that rolled down his furrowed cheeks, or stood upon his brow, told but too well the physical agony he endured. As soon as his arm was adjusted, he insisted on being carried home, and his wishes were complied with.

“The next morning I was at the capitol at a very early hour, attending to some writing. I thought of, and lamented the accident that had befallen Mr. Adams, and had already commenced writing an account of it to a correspondent. At that instant I withdrew my eyes from the paper on which I was writing, and saw Mr. Adams standing a foot or two from me, carefully examining the carpeting. ‘Sir,’ said he, ‘I am looking for that place in the matting that last night tripped me. If it be not fastened down, it may kill some one.’ And then he continued his search for the trick-string matting.”

Mr. Adams after this accident did not enjoy as sound health as in previous years, yet was more active and vigorous than the majority of those who attain to his age. But on the 20th of November, 1846, he experienced the first blow of the fatal disease which eventually terminated his existence.

On the morning of that day, while sojourning at the residence of his son, in Boston, preparing to depart for

Washington, he was walking out with a friend to visit a new Medical College, and was struck with paralysis by the way. This affliction confined him several weeks, when he obtained sufficient strength to proceed to Washington, and enter upon his duties in the House of Representatives. He viewed this attack as the touch of death. An interregnum of nearly four months occurs in his journal. The next entry is under the head of "Posthumous Memoir." After describing his recent sickness, he continues:—"From that hour I date my decease, and consider myself, for every useful purpose, to myself and fellow-creatures, dead; and hence I call this, and what I may hereafter write, a *posthumous memoir*."

Although he was after this, regular in his attendance at the House of Representatives, yet he did not mingle as freely in debate as formerly. He passed the following summer, as usual, at his seat in Quincy. In November, he left his native town for Washington, to return no more in life!

On Sunday, the 20th of February, 1848, he appeared in unusual health. In the forenoon he attended public worship at the capitol, and in the afternoon at St. John's church. At nine o'clock in the evening he retired with his wife to his library, where she read to him a sermon of Bishop Wilberforce, on Time—"hovering, as he was, on the verge of eternity!" This was the last night he passed beneath his own roof.

Monday, the 21st, he rose at his usual very early

hour, and engaged in his accustomed occupations with his pen. An extraordinary alacrity pervaded his movements, and the cheerful step with which he ascended the steps of the capitol was remarked by his attendants. He occupied a portion of the forenoon in composing a few stanzas of poetry, at the request of a friend, and had signed his name twice for members who desired to obtain his autograph.

Mr. Chase had introduced a resolution of thanks to Generals Twiggs, Worth, Quitman, Pillow, Shields, Pearce, Cadwalader, and Smith, for their services in the Mexican war, and awarding them gold medals. Mr. Adams was in his seat, and voted on the two questions preliminary to ordering its engrossment, with an uncommonly emphatic tone of voice. About half past one o'clock, P. M., as the Speaker had risen to put another question to the House, the proceedings were suddenly interrupted by cries of "Stop!—stop!—Mr. Adams!" There was a quick movement towards the chair of Mr. Adams, by two or three members, and in a moment he was surrounded by a large number of Representatives, eagerly inquiring—"What's the matter?"—"Has he fainted?"—"Is he dead?" JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, while faithful at his post, and apparently about to rise to address the Speaker, had sunk into a state of unconsciousness! He had been struck a second time with paralysis. The scene was one of intense excitement. Pallor, anxiety, alarm, were depicted on every countenance. "Take him out,"—"Bring water,"—

exclaimed several voices. He had been prevented from falling to the floor by a member from Ohio, whose seat was near his—Mr. Fisher—who received him in his arms. Immediately Mr. Grinnell, one of his colleagues from Massachusetts, was by his side, keeping off a press of anxious friends, and bathing his face with iced water.

“He was immediately lifted into the area in front of the Clerk’s table. The Speaker instantly suggested that some gentleman move an adjournment, which being promptly done, the House adjourned. A sofa was brought, and Mr. Adams, in a state of perfect helplessness, though not of entire insensibility, was gently laid upon it. The sofa was then taken up and borne out of the Hall into the Rotunda, where it was set down, and the members of both Houses, and strangers, who were fast crowding around, were with some difficulty repressed, and an open space cleared in its immediate vicinity; but a medical gentleman, a member of the House, (who was prompt, active, and self-possessed throughout the whole painful scene,) advised that he be removed to the door of the Rotunda opening on the east portico, where a fresh wind was blowing. This was done; but the air being chilly and loaded with vapor, the sofa was, at the suggestion of Mr. Winthrop, once more taken up and removed to the Speaker’s apartment, the doors of which were forthwith closed to all but professional gentlemen and particular friends.”

The features of the dying patriarch were almost as rigid as though in death; but there was a serenity in his countenance which betokened an absence of pain. There were five physicians, members of the House, present, viz. :—Drs. Newell, Fries, Edwards, Jones of Georgia, and Lord. These gentlemen were unremitting in their attentions. Drs. Lindsley and Thomas, of the city, were also immediately called in. Under the advice of the medical gentlemen present, he was cupped, and mustard plasters were applied, which seemed to afford some relief. Reviving a little and recovering consciousness, Mr. Adams inquired for his wife. She was present, but in extreme illness, and suffering the most poignant sorrow. After a few moments’ interval he relapsed again into unconsciousness. A correspondent of the New York Express describes as follows the progress of these melancholy events:—

“*Half past one o’clock.*—Mr. Benton communicated to the Senate the notice of the sudden illness of Mr. Adams, and moved an adjournment of that body.

“*Quarter to two.*—Mr. Adams has several physicians with him, but exhibits no signs of returning consciousness. The report is that he is sinking.

“*Two o’clock.*—Mr. Giddings informs me that he shows signs of life. He has just now attempted to speak, but cannot articulate a word. Under medical advice he has submitted to leeching.

“*Half past two.*—Mrs. Adams and his niece and nephew are with him, and Mr. A. is no worse. The

reports, however, are quite contradictory, and many despair of his recovery.

"*Three o'clock.*—None but the physicians and the family are present, and the reports again become more and more doubtful. The physicians say that Mr. Adams may not live more than an hour, or he may live two or three days.

"His right side is wholly paralyzed, and the left not under control, there being continually involuntary motions of the muscles. Everything which medical aid can do, has been done for his relief. Briefly, just now, by close attention, he seemed anxious to 'thank the officers of the House.' Then, again, he was heard to say—'*This is the last of earth! I AM CONTENT!*' These were the last words which fell from the lips of 'the old man eloquent,' as his spirit plumed its pinions to soar to other worlds."

Mr. Adams lay in the Speaker's room, in a state of apparent unconsciousness, through the 22d and 23d, —Congress, in the meantime, assembling in respectful silence, and immediately adjourning from day to day. The struggles of contending parties ceased—the strife for interest, place, power, was hushed to repose. Silence reigned through the halls of the capitol, save the cautious tread and whispered inquiry of anxious questioners. The soul of a sage, a patriot, a Christian, is preparing to depart from the world!—no sound is heard to ruffle its sweet serenity!—a calmness and peace, fitting the momentous occasion, prevail around!

The elements of life and death continued their uncertain balance, until seven o'clock, on the evening of the 23d, when the spirit of JOHN QUINCY ADAMS bade adieu to earth forever, and winged its flight to God.

"Give forth thy chime, thou solemn bell,
Thou grave, unfold thy marble cell;
O earth! receive upon thy breast,
The weary traveller to his rest.

"O God! extend thy arms of love,
A spirit seeketh thee above!
Ye heav'nly palaces unclose,
Receive the weary to repose."

The tidings of Mr. Adams' death flew on electrical wings to every portion of the Union. A statesman, a philanthropist, a father of the Republic, had fallen. A nation heard, and were dissolved in tears!

In the history of American statesmen, none lived a life so long in the public service—none had trusts so numerous confided to their care—none died a death so glorious. Beneath the dome of the nation's capitol; in the midst of the field of his highest usefulness, where he had won fadeless laurels of renown; equipped with the armor in which he had fought so many battles for truth and freedom, he fell beneath the shaft of the king of terrors. And how bright, how enviable the reputation he left behind! As a man, pure, upright, benevolent, religious—his hand unstained by a drop of human blood; uncharged, unsuspected of crime, of premeditated wrong, of an immoral act, of an unchaste word

—as a statesman, lofty and patriotic in all his purposes; devoted to the interests of the people; sacredly exercising all power entrusted to his keeping for the good of the public alone, unmindful of personal interest and aggrandizement; an enthusiastic lover of liberty; a faithful, fearless defender of the rights of man! The sun of his life in its lengthened course through the political heavens, was unobscured by a spot, undimmed by a cloud; and when, at the close of the long day, it sank beneath the horizon, the whole firmament glowed with the brilliancy of its reflected glories! Rulers, statesmen, legislators! study and emulate such a life—seek after a character so beloved, a death so honorable, a fame so immortal. Like him—

“So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, that moves
To the pale realms of shade, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon; but, sustained, and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

On the day succeeding Mr. Adams' death, when the two Houses of Congress met, the full attendance of members, and a crowded auditory, attested the deep desire felt by all to witness the proceedings which would take place in relation to the death of one who had long occupied so high a place in the councils

of the Republic. As soon as the House of Representatives was called to order, the Speaker, (the Hon. Robert C. Winthrop of Massachusetts,) rose, and in a feeling manner addressed the House as follows:—

“*Gentlemen of the House of Representatives of the United States:* It has been thought fit that the Chair should announce officially to the House, an event already known to the members individually, and which has filled all our hearts with sadness. A seat on this floor has been vacated, toward which all eyes have been accustomed to turn with no common interest. A voice has been hushed forever in this Hall, to which all ears have been wont to listen with profound reverence. A venerable form has faded from our sight, around which we have daily clustered with an affectionate regard. A name has been stricken from the roll of the living statesmen of our land, which has been associated, for more than half a century, with the highest civil service, and the loftiest civil renown.

“On Monday, the 21st instant, JOHN QUINCY ADAMS sunk in his seat, in presence of us all, by a sudden illness, from which he never recovered; and he died, in the Speaker's room, at a quarter past seven o'clock last evening, with the officers of the House and the delegation of his own Massachusetts around him.

“Whatever advanced age, long experience, great ability, vast learning, accumulated public honors, a spotless private character, and a firm religious faith, could do, to render any one an object of interest, respect, and admiration, they had done for this distinguished person; and interest, respect, and admiration, are but feeble terms to express the feelings with which the members of this House and the people of the country have long regarded him.

“After a life of eighty years, devoted from its earliest maturity to the public service, he has at length gone to his rest. He has been privileged to die at his post; to fall while in the discharge of his duties; to expire beneath the roof of the capitol; and to have his last scene associated forever, in history, with the birthday of that illustrious patriot, whose just discernment brought him first into the service of his country.

“The close of such a life, under such circumstances, is not an event for unmingled emotions. We cannot find it in our hearts to