

Hon Daniel A. White
from his affectionate Son
E. A. Putnam

AN
ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE
CONSECRATION

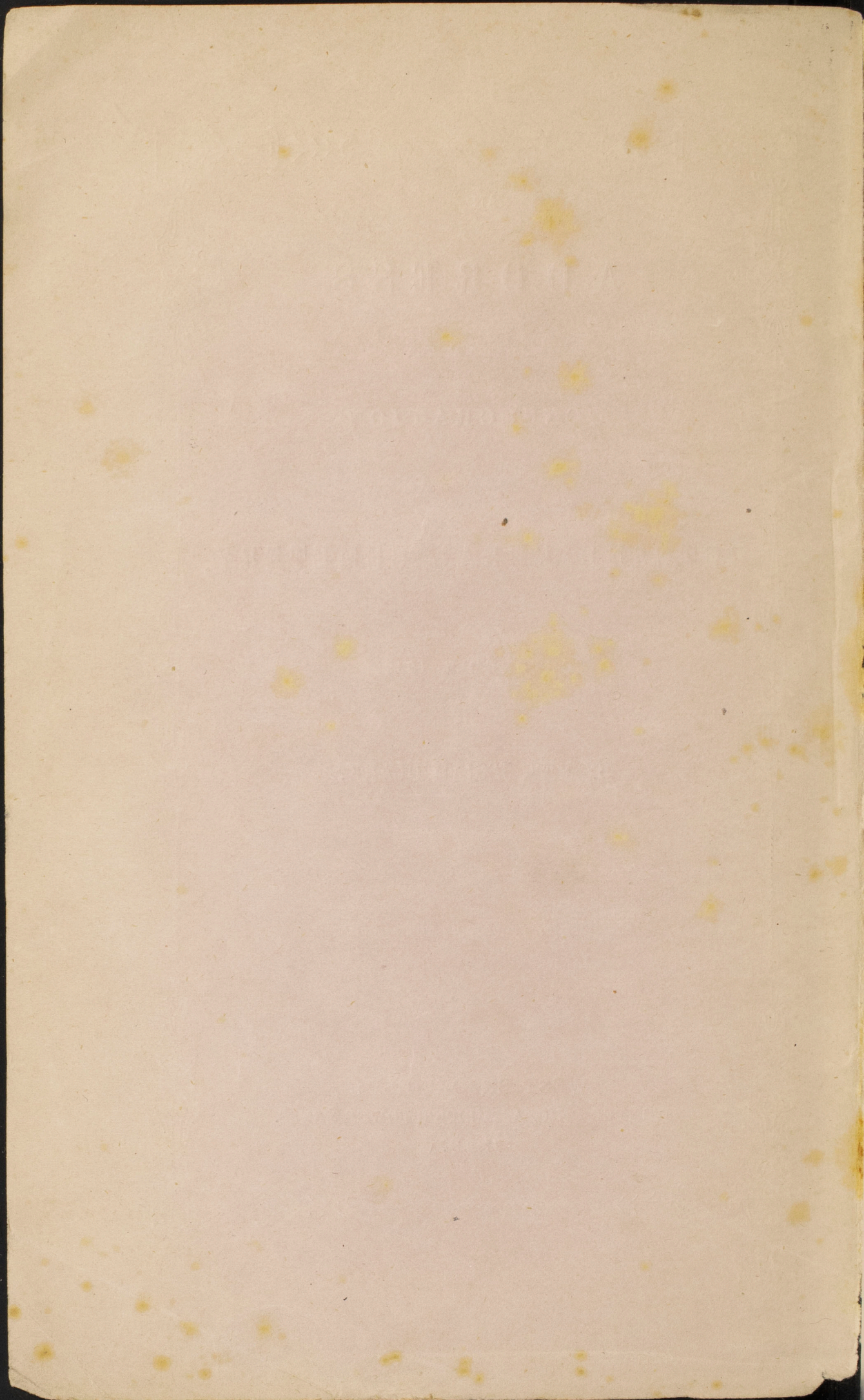
OF THE
RUTLAND RURAL CEMETERY,

OCTOBER 7, 1842.

BY REV. JOSIAH CLARK.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE ASSOCIATION.

WEST BROOKFIELD:
PRINTED ON C. A. MIRICK'S POWER PRESS.
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RUTLAND, OCTOBER 7, 1842.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

In behalf of the Rural Cemetery Association of Rutland, we present you their unfeigned thanks for the address this day delivered by you, at the Consecration of their Cemetery, and request a copy for the press.

Yours, with great esteem,

RUFUS PUTNAM,
SARDINE MUZZY,
EDWIN HENRY, } Committee.

ADDRESS.

THE occasion and the place, on which we have met, are peculiarly fitted to inspire solemnity of feeling. We have come to dedicate a spot to the purpose of being the future abode of these mortal bodies. It would be undesirable as well as impossible to forget, that these compact and exquisitely wrought frames must soon mingle with the dust under our feet. However pleasant the spot may be, we would not, if we could, divest it of that which irresistibly excites mournful associations. There are emotions of melancholy, which the christian delights to cherish. Like Hervey and Young, he has some of his most pleasant as well as most devout meditations among the tombs. Though here,

“Black melancholy sits, and round her throws

“A death-like silence, and a dread repose,”

though the flowers be shaded and the green darkened, and a sort of twilight gloom rests upon every object, the emotions excited are such as to

fling a holy calm over the soul, and bring us into communion with departed spirits. In such a place and with such associations it requires but little effort of the imagination, nothing but the carrying ourselves back on the current of the divine record, to see yonder a solemn procession following the remains of an only son of his mother, and she a widow—Jesus, apparently a stranger, approaches the procession, touches the bier, and says, young man arise,—or, on the credit of the same divine record, you may see this venerable person, bending over the grave of a friend. Behold he weeps, and cries with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth! But he, who thus calls the dead to life, is himself soon laid in a sepulchre, made sure, by sealing the great stone at the door, and guarded by a watch. The earth quakes, the angel of the Lord descends from heaven, and rolls back the stone, and *Jesus rises from the dead!*—who now would walk among the tombs with trembling, or contemplate death with unmingled gloom? With great emphasis it may be said life and immortality have been brought to light. Death has been robbed of its sting and the grave of its victory. As solemn as this place is, it is delightful to think that while

“An angel’s arm can’t snatch us from the grave,

“Legions of angels can’t confine us there.”

Surely the occasion and the place, while they demand sober reflection, are admirably fitted, not

only to hush every worldly passion, but to dispel from the mind every gloomy thought.

It is not at the call of ambition we come here to dedicate this cemetery. Higher and purer motives have brought us together. We come at the call of the best feelings of the heart. There is a something within us, which bids us *respect* the dead. We regard it as indicating a deeper depravity, and a greater hardihood of mind to violate the grave than to rob the dwellings of the living. And this feeling, inwoven into our very natures, has flung a stronger safe-guard around the grave of the most obscure, than the government can fling around our private mansions. Again, when one, whose conduct and principles did not harmonize with ours, is deposited in the grave, our antipathies lie buried with him. Enmity rarely becomes so malignant, as to urge one to pursue his antagonist beyond the grave. Indeed, he who dares even whisper aught against the dead, or wantonly attempts to rob him of his former good name, receives at once the rebuke of an indignant community. But this respect for the dead is seen also in the delicate attention to the remains of our friends both before and after they are deposited in the grave. The shroud, the coffin, and the funeral ceremonies, all show the attachment of the living to the dead. Even after dust is committed to dust,—the spot is frequently visited and watered with tears, and some durable Memorial, as a token of never dying

friendship, is soon erected. Hence from the very dawn of society, cemeteries and monuments have been provided, with greater or less taste, and with greater or less expense. Men who have distinguished themselves, as warriors or statesmen, have had high honors paid them at their death, and some costly monument erected as a memorial of their worth. Who can but honor the French people for the expense they cheerfully incurred, and the enthusiasm they exhibited, in transferring the remains of Napoleon, their idolized chieftain from a lonely rock in the ocean to a splendid Mausoleum in the capital of his own beloved empire. We say nothing of the moral character of this attachment to the warrior and the statesman. It is alluded to, merely to illustrate this principle of human nature. As forcible an illustration of this principle can be found in our own country, not only in the many monuments, in our cities, rising up to the skies in grateful remembrance of the Father of our Republic, but in the costly and appropriate sarcophagus provided for his remains. Reason as strongly as you may against this feeling—say, if you please, it is the offspring of ambition—that it does not arise so much from respect to the dead, as it does from a desire to gratify the pride of the living. It is yet a feeling not to be eradicated, for it is an indestructible element of the soul, a part of our very nature. We might as well reason against our own existence. Indeed

there is, and there can be no respect for him who would wantonly trifle with this feeling, and show that he is indifferent as to the disposal of the remains of his departed friends, is as willing they should be cast out for the vultures to destroy as to receive a decent burial.

The observing stranger passing through a village, judges the character of its inhabitants by the aspect of the burial ground. If that appears neglected, the "natural feeling will be contempt for the living, and compassion for the dead." But if it be neatly enclosed, interspersed with shrubbery and trees, and among them modest and appropriate monuments be seen, he will conclude that the inhabitants are kind and humane, and have a delicate and sacred regard both for the living and for the dead. So universal has been this feeling among all ages and nations, and so much attention has been paid to the mansions of death, that they have remained, while the most splendid and strongly built houses of the living have long since crumbled into ruins.

In yonder grave-yard, neglected as it is, you may find a record of those who have passed from the memory of man. Our village grave-yards can furnish as many materials for a correct history of our ancestors as can be found any where.

The moss-grown stone survives the most durable habitations of our fathers. It is said the tombs of some of the most wealthy citizens of ancient Rome have outlasted the palaces of the

Cæsars. And the tombs of the Egyptian kings, we are told, remain perfect, to this day. Hence much taste and judgment have ever been exhibited in selecting the spot in which to deposit the dead. The western savage will proudly point to his rural cemetery. And he fondly imagines, that, at twilight of evening, he can see the ghosts of his fathers flitting among the tall trees that overshadow their graves. Among some of the eastern nations, houses for the dead are built on the borders of their villages. They are hewn out of rocks, or are erected of this durable material. Hence the propriety of the language, "thou wilt bring me to the *house* appointed for all the living." Places on the pleasant bank of some stream, abounding with a variety of wood and scenery have been selected, and adorned and enriched by art. But too often in these places, has taste been sacrificed to ambition. The rules of harmony have been violated. Monuments have been erected, fitted to excite emotions totally inconsistent with the stillness and solemnity of the place. There is danger that an unhallowed ambition will create this incongruity in the beautiful cemetery at Mount Auburn. The finer and holier feelings of the soul are disturbed in beholding ambition with its lofty mien stalking among the lowly dead. Art should never attempt to out-vie the beauties of nature. Monuments there should be, but modest and tasteful. Every thing should be in sympathy and harmony

with the object to which the spot is to be devoted.

The story of Abraham's purchasing a burial ground is related with great simplicity. He would not take it as a gift, but chose to purchase it with all its trees in its limits and borders. This shows he had some regard for the beauty of the place in which to deposit the remains of his wife and family. And we see a strong attachment to the place where our kindred have been buried, in the earnest request that Jacob, when dying, made of his sons. Bury me with my fathers in the field which Abraham bought for a possession of a burial place ; Joseph exacted the same promise, which, more than two centuries after was most sacredly fulfilled by his posterity. This desire for an honorable burial, and if possible, among our kindred, is found in every bosom. The friends of Jesus thought they could not show him greater respect than by giving him an honorable burial. They went to Pilate, and begged the body, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews was to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre wherein was never man laid. There laid they Jesus. Did the disciples seem to think it was no matter where the dead were buried ? There was much good taste exhibited in the selection of the spot. It was a garden. It was a new sepulchre, hewn out of a rock. It

was owned by Joseph of Arimathea, a counselor, a good man and just. It was through his influence that the body escaped the fate of a common felon, and received a costly and appropriate burial. The religion of Jesus is the friend and the promoter of the most delicate and refined feeling, or rather it is the very source of a pure and correct taste. That which inculcates purity of thought, and enlarged views, must create a high relish for both the beauties of nature and of art. And we do religion great injury, and clothe her with the gloom of superstition, when we attempt to disconnect her from that which is tasteful and cheerful. A neat and appropriate church, adds much to our devotional feeling. So a grave-yard in which the loveliness of nature, and of art are happily combined, fills the soul with *holy* as well as with pleasing emotions. The beautiful Mount of Olives was a favorite place of retreat for our Savior. And in his discourses he makes frequent allusions to the beauties of nature. The richness and splendor of the temple, also frequently called forth his admiration, and he uttered a severe rebuke to those who made his Father's house, a house of merchandise. In making then our houses of public worship and our cemeteries pleasant and tasteful, if we do not violate the order of nature, we only obey the principles of our religion, and follow the example of our Savior and his disciples. But it is considered both by sacred and

profane writers as an indication of the displeasure of heaven, and as one of the severest judgments of God, to permit the remains of the dead to be mangled, or to lie unburied to be devoured by dogs and vultures. And it was generally supposed that the soul could have no rest, as long as the body lay unburied, or had not been consumed on the funeral pile and the ashes gathered into an urn. In the fatal encounter between Hector and Achilles, the heathen poet puts into the mouth of Hector the following dying request.

"Then Hector, fainting at the approach of death,
 "By thy own soul! by those who gave thee breath!
 "By all the sacred prevalence of prayer!
 "Ah, leave me not for Grecian dogs to tear!
 "The common rites of sepulture bestow—
 "To soothe a father's and a mother's woe,
 "Let their large gifts procure an urn at least
 "And Hector's ashes in his country rest."

"No, wretch accurst! relentless he replies,
 "(Flames as he spoke shot flashing from his eyes)
 "Not those who gave me birth should bid me spare,
 "Nor all the sacred prevalence of prayer,
 "Could I myself the bloody banquet join!
 "No—to the dogs that carcase I resign.
 "Should Troy to bribe me, bring forth all her store,
 "And giving thousands, offer thousands more,
 "Should Dardan Priam and his weeping dame
 "Drain their whole realm to buy one funeral flame,
 "Their Hector on the funeral pile they should not see,
 "Nor rob the vultures of one limb of thee."

Here we perceive the indomitable desire even in

death, of the common rites of sepulture ; and that no greater revenge can be exhibited, than a denial of this invaluable privilege.

The heaviest curse that the prophet pronounced upon the wicked family of Ahab, was that the dogs shall eat Jezebel, and the fowls of the air shall eat those that die of Ahab. But the prophet Isaiah has given a glowing view of this innate attachment to the rites of sepulture, in his poetical description of the downfall of the Assyrian king. He represents the whole earth as rejoicing in his overthrow. How hath the oppressor ceased, the golden city ceased. The fir trees rejoice, saying, Now thou art laid down, no feller shall come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee. It stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth. All they shall speak and say unto thee ; Art thou also become as weak as we ? Art thou become like unto us ? How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer ! And this once mighty prince is represented as cast out in the high-way, and visited with the greatest dishonor : as brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. And they that pass by look upon him, and tauntingly ask, is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms ; that made the world as a wilderness. But now he is cast out of the grave as an accursed thing. While the kings of the nations lie in glory, every one in his own house ; the Assyrian oppressor is represented

as being denied funeral honors to show the last vengeance of the Almighty.

Enough has been said to show that both nature and religion, the christian and the heathen, unite in the noble sentiment, *venerate the dead*. Let the place of their repose be such as to inspire calm and holy feeling. It should be so situated, so adapted by nature, and so adorned by art as to attract the living, and to induce them to resort to this solemn place to commune with their own souls, and to contemplate their future home with melancholy pleasure. There is nothing that so chills the heart, and casts such a gloom over the future, as a wet and dreary burying ground. As much as we should love to linger around the graves of our friends, we are denied this pleasure, when they are deposited in a place where every thing is forbidding. But let the place be retired, abounding with trees, where the birds of the air find a safe retreat, and make it vocal with their plaintive notes, then we should love to visit the graves of our friends, and indulge the feelings which such a place is fitted to inspire. But it is not mere feeling, that a tastefully selected and arranged cemetery would excite—its stillness and appropriateness might fill the soul with calm delight, but its associations would kindle the purest devotion, and afford the richest instruction. No one can take a walk among the tombs, and not have every earthly passion hushed. Here, it would be impossible for two enemies to meet,

however at variance they might hitherto have been, without the exercise of mutual and tender forgiveness. Pride and envy cannot be indulged in a place where all must meet on an equal footing, where our bodies must soon mingle together in the same dust. Surely then it is well worth the expense and trouble to make a cemetery that might be visited, not only to gratify a refined taste, but to excite holy feeling. No place of worship, not the family altar, not the consecrated spot for secret prayer, can kindle in the soul a purer flame of devotion, or lead to sublimer views of immortality. And I cannot but be devoutly grateful to God, and tender my thanks to the proprietors of this beautiful place, surrounded with an undulating scenery and the solemn grove, for the good taste and judgment they have manifested. I shall love to frequent this place, and when I shall have finished my course, I should rejoice to have my remains gently deposited here. And now as we consecrate this spot to its sacred purpose, let us solemnly look forward to the time, when this shall be our home. A few years more and this assembly and the speaker will have gone down to the grave. But why shrink from this? Why fear to die? What is there in death terrific? Who would not die to pass from earth to heaven, from sin to holiness, from perishing and unsatisfying pleasures to immortal glory? There is but a step between man and death—Nay there is but a step between him and

the very highest promotion. As pleasant as this spot truly is, and as delightful as it may be to contemplate this, as the future abode of our bodies, there is infinitely higher and purer joy, in looking with an eye of faith beyond the tomb, into those glorious mansions fitted up for all those, who love the Lord Jesus Christ. As much as we love the scenery of nature, and especially the delightful scenery around us, and the beauties of art, there is far sublimer pleasure in contemplating the splendors of that place, which is filled with the glory of God, and in which nothing that defileth can enter. Where the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed his followers, and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes. And let us not lose sight of that last, awfully grand scene, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, these graves shall burst—the dead shall be raised incorruptible. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with a voice of the Archangel, with the trump of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we, which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with him, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. Then we, ministers and people, who may be buried here, together, with her who* has lain

* " The widow of Simon Davis, jr. who died of the small pox, January 7th, 1760, and was buried on the farm on which the new cemetery is located, and near where the speaker stood.

nearly a century in that grave, shall rise from the dust, and ascend to the judgment seat, to receive our eternal destiny. The Lord grant that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

