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CHARITY NEVER FAILETH:

A

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

BY

REV. G. R. BRACKETT, D. D.

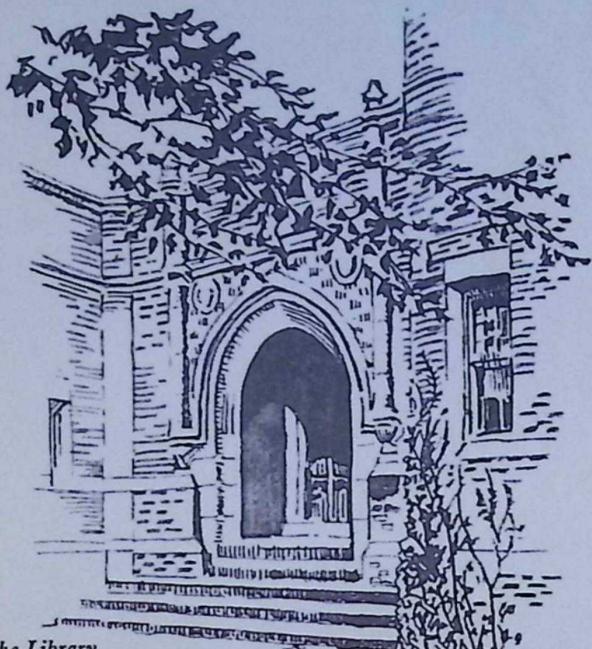
PASTOR OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA.

On the occasion of laying the Cornerstone
of the Memorial Hall, Thorn-
well Orphanage.

THORWELL ORPHANAGE PRESS,

CLINTON, S. C.

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It was a happy thought of the wise founder of this Institution to connect it with a great and honored name—*clarum et venerabile nomen*—the most illustrious, and most revered in our Southern Church. A simple shaft of stone marks the resting-place of James H. Thornwell, and comparatively few of his friends and admirers, will ever look upon the monument reared above his grave. But the hearts of the whole Southern Church, and of friends in distant states, and lands beyond the seas, are drawn towards the Charity that bears his name; and a thousand gifts of love from every quarter are flowing into the treasury of the Thornwell Orphanage. Thus are the numerous patrons of this noble charity unconsciously perpetuating the memory of the great Theologian, Philosopher and Philanthropist. Whatever be the immediate purpose of the erection of this ‘Memorial Hall,’ we cannot enlarge the facilities and scope of this beneficent enterprise, without adding lustre to the splendid name it bears. Better than any superb obelisk, or marble statue, better than the most eloquent, or idolatrous hero-worship, better than the ‘fame that spreads itself over two continents,’ is such a Memorial as this, which embodies our Blessed Saviour’s idea of true greatness. Were Dr. Thornwell present on this occasion, he could do no greater thing than to take these little children in his arms and bless them, and lend the influence of his great name to open a Fountain of Charity, whose blessed streams shall flow on from generation to generation, to gladden the orphan’s heart.

But we are, also, reminded, that this is the Centennial year of Presbyterianism in America, and that the Building, of which we lay the Cornerstone, to-day, is called ‘Memorial Hall,’ to commemorate this notable epoch in the history of our beloved Church. An Institution that bears the name of Thornwell is, thereby, pledged to the great principle of our Confession. Probably, no one has done so much as our modern Calvin, to develop that type of Presbyterianism, which the Southern Church is holding to with the tenacity of a death-struggle, and with the firmness of martyrs.

As we glance backward over our country’s history during the past hundred years, we see our Puritan an

cestors laying the granite foundations, hard and enduring at Plymouth Rock, of a mighty Republic, our Calvinistic Faith being the chief cornerstone. Amid the smoke of the battle field, we see the Banner of our Faith lifted high above the national ensign. Amid the roar of musketry, we hear the rallying cry—"The Bible is the religion of Protestants;" the creed of the English Puritans, of the Scotch-Irish, of the Dutch Calvinists and of the French Huguenots is for us the religion of the Bible, and this religious Faith is the one security for civil and religious liberty, the only foundation for national prosperity and greatness. The heroic age of Greece, says a writer, whose language we quote from memory, was a period of simplicity, strictness and hard ship, but she lost her intellectual vigor and moral stamina in the age of Alcibiades, when Greece worshipped beauty, and was enervated by æsthetic culture. Rome, struggling for a hundred and fifty years for independence, developed the virtues of courage, hope, patience, and religious faith. But the severe virtue, the sublime endurance and the moral grandeur of the Monarchy and the Republic, were followed by physical degeneracy, the moral corruption, and the religious scepticism of the prosperous and luxurious Empire. Such has been the fate of every nation that has not been built upon the foundations, and cemented with the masonry of a Protestant Christianity. "But for this religious faith," says Dr. Lord, "we should be compelled, so far as history teaches, to adapt the theory of Buckle and his school,—the necessary progress and decline of nations, the moving round, like systems of philosophy, in a perpetual circle. But with the indestructible ideas which the fathers planted, there must be a perpetual renovation, and an unending progress until the world becomes an Eden." My fellow countrymen, we cannot afford, as citizens, to be indifferent to the lesson which this great teacher has enforced, for so many centuries, in other countries, and, for a hundred years, in our own favored land.

There are, indeed, certain essential doctrines which we hold in common with all evangelical christians; but there are other principles which we deem equally scrip-

tural, though not equally important, principles of doctrine, worship, and order, which we called Calvinistic and Presbyterian, and which it is the mission of our Church to conserve and defend, and to transmit unimpaired to coming generations. We are bound by solemn covenant vows to make the children of our Church, Presbyterians, as well as Christians, believing as we do that our distinctive doctrines are fitted to develop the highest and strongest type of christian character, and are best adapted to promote general intelligence, virtue and social order. "A Banner has been given us to be displayed because of the truth"—a banner, which an army of martyrs has borne to the gates of death. It was the Banner of Presbyterianism that our fathers committed to our trust, and it behooves us to show our colors, and fling them to the breeze. In military parlance a distinction is made between the national battle-flag of the army, and the colors of a regiment. It is by each regiment being faithful to its own colors, that the general cause is most successfully advanced. The more intensely denominational the churches are, in consistency with true charity and catholicity, the more efficiently and rapidly do they extend the Redeemer's Kingdom. Let us follow the old battle-flag of the Cross, wherever we see it waving above the sacramental host, and in whatever field, heartily uniting with christians of every name, in common cause against a common enemy; but let us, at the same time, cling to our Presbyterian Banner, and fall with it firmly grasped in our hands, and

"Smile to see its splendors fly

In triumph o'er our closing eye."

But the claims of Christian Education as well as of Christian Patriotism impel us to unfurl our Banner on this Memorial occasion. The period, during which the principles of our Faith were held in abeyance, was justly styled the "Dark Ages"—ages of gross ignorance, and abject superstition. When we go back to that benighted age, we feel that we are traversing a graveyard of buried mind. The Reformation restored at once the buried truth, and the buried intellect. "It was," says a writer, "a spiritual and intellectual resurrection.

It cannot be denied that our theology, saying nothing of its saving efficacy, is a mighty intellectual power on earth. It is a universal and unfailing education. It planted in Scotland the free parochial schools, and used the Shorter Catechism to discipline the peasant's child up to the comprehension of a liberal learning." Let the Banner of our Faith, then continue to wave on this "Memorial Hall" and proclaim to the world that those principles are here taught which develop the highest intellectual activity and promote the profoundest scholarship. Many, who reject with abhorrence our doctrine of election, have freely admitted that the elect scholars, poets, and philosophers have been found among those brilliant constellations in the literary firmament, that revolve around the centre of Calvinism. Dr. Thornwell the profoundest intellect we ever knew, who gloried in intellectual freedom, and was naturally inclined to scepticism, adopted our Confession of Faith precisely because his gigantic reason found therein the largest liberty consistent with legal submission to the laws of thought and belief. On taking the oath of office, when installed Professor of Columbia Theological Seminary he said with a burning eloquence that must have fired the hearts of them who heard him: "Ashamed of the Westminster Confession of Faith! the inspiration of heroes, sages, martyrs, and philosophers,—a faith that has founded states, immortalized kingdoms, and redeemed countless multitudes of souls from the thralldom of slavery and sin! No never! I love it, sir. I love it with all my heart, and the Church I love, not as a sect, not for personal, private, or political considerations, but for her noble testimony, her glorious history, her moral power, her spiritual freedom,—the mother of heroes and saints, of scholars, orators, and statesmen, a blessing to the world, and a sure guide to everlasting joy!" Not more certainly does this Institution bear the name that uttered these eloquent words, than is it identified with the Presbyterian principles he so earnestly advocated, and so masterfully defended. (Like the cement that binds stone to stone in the walls of these buildings, are the elements of our Faith, which enter into the education of the children gathered here. Nay, is not that Faith the corner-stone of the system of Instruction taught within these walls?)

We remark again that the building, we are about to erect here, is a Memorial Christian Charity. (The Cross has furnished the world with a new type, a new moral, a new motive of Charity) (The Love that blossoms out of the heart of Jesus is decked with a new cedar, and exhales a new perfume! It cannot be classified with the humanities, and philanthropies of man. The love of Jesus is not a fountain that plays at instances of merit or worth. It is need, not desert; ignorance, not knowledge; poverty, not wealth; weakness, not power; sinfulness, not righteousness that invoked his sovereign and gracious love. Like the sun, which fills the planets with light, and paints the gorgeous scenery of the skies, and at the same time is radiating its life giving beams in all directions, darting into the bosom of the forest, and making glad the ephemeral insect,—such is the love of Jesus, flowing out in ten thousand mingled blessings. From the moment the Lord left the bosom of the Father, and the throne of Heaven, He was giving himself for mankind; and from the moment we become his disciples, we declare that “it is more blessed to give than to receive,” and, henceforth, self-sacrifice became the law of our being. Wherever the generous sun shines, we follow our blessed Lord with the smiles of Charity, wherever the bounteous rain falls we drop the tears of sympathy, wherever the balmy breezes enter the open door of poverty and suffering, we breathe the breath of prayer, and whisper words of consolation. * We have not done the work of Christian Benevolence, when our servant leaves a garment or a loaf at the gate of the needy, but when like the Master, we go in, ourselves, and the angel of Charity is felt in our presence, seen in our looks of sympathy, and heard in our words of inquiry. “What things?” What thoughts are these that ye have, as ye walk and are sad? Why weepest thou? In the early history of Christianity, the heathen exclaimed: “See how these Christians love one another!” When Emperor Decius demanded their treasures, “they brought to him the poor, the lame, the aged and the orphan, saying, “These are our treasures,” The heathen had never seen such love as this, men and woman giving themselves for each other. They supposed the Christians had some mystic charm impressed

upon their bodies by which they were inspired to love one another. A mystic charm, indeed there was. The pagan had only mistaken its locality and nature. It was impressed upon the Christian heart, and it was the self-giving, self-sacrificing love of Jesus."

*Wherever Christianity is established, she rears the hospital, the asylum, and the orphanage, side by side with the Church and School-house. Rome gloried in her power, Greece in her beauty, and Christianity glories in her Charity,—the culmination of power, and the crown of beauty. The whole country of Greece, with her splendid cities and monuments of art, the whole Roman Empire, with her military grandeur, and magnificent political institutions, had not one asylum for the poor, or hospital for the sick, or home for the orphan. This is the crowning glory of our Christianity. When therefore, we point to this structure as a Memorial of Christian Charity, we have signalized the crowning glory of this Institution. It is one of the brightest tokens of the latter-day glory, that our earth is being covered with these Memorials. Men are beating their swords into trowels, and building homes for the poor and the unfortunate. Instead of the old theological strife and sectarian warfare, Christians are vieing with each other in holy rivalry, in works of Charity and Philanthropy. As Love is the latest and highest developement of Christianity, the Church's progress in this grace, as measured by the rapidly multiplying Benevolent Societies, and Charitable Institutions marks the near approach of the Millenic Era. "One Star differeth from another in glory," and could our vision sweep the upper firmament, to-day, we should find in the galaxy that shines with "excellng" glory, those who on earth were the most illustrious examples of Christian Charity. These the Master will view them from the Throne of Judgement, when he shall say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethien, ye have done it unto me." He shall be greatest in my Kingdom, who has been the servant of all." Time would fail us in calling the roll of honor, as we stand gazing into the heavens that declare the glory of Christian Charity, but on this Memorial occasion, and in sight of this Memorial Building, erected to his honor by his beloved companion, we can

not forget the name of Cyrus H. M'Cormick. While "many a struggling Church, Seminary, and College throughout the land felt the impulse of a new life and energy through his timely benevolence, which seemed to run peculiarly in this channel, his exuberant sympathy and large hearted liberality made him the friend of the poor wherever he found them. The fatherless children, who shall gather from generation to generation within the walls of the "M'Cormick Home for Orphan Boys," will hold that name in loving and grateful remembrance.

Although the occasion demands it, it is needless for me to speak of the honored founder of this noble and blessed charity, which for thirteen years has been spreading his name until it has reached the "Land of the Rising Sun." Very much is due, we are aware, to the wise and efficient "Board of Visitors," to their cordial sympathy and co-operation, as we all know who have read in OUR MONTHLY, from time to time, appreciative notices of their faithful and helpful service. Beginning as it were, as an humble "Faith Cottage," The Orphanage has gathered around it a cluster of Buildings for educational and industrial work. At first, enlisting the sympathies of a few friends in South Carolina, it has found room in thousands of Christian hearts in distant places. He who shall write the History of the Southern Presbyterian Church, during the next hundred years, will not omit the Institution established for the nurture and education of Orphans. On that historical page this noble Charity will have the place it deserves, and the Presbyterian Church will be proud of her "Thornwell Orphanage."

yes * As we lay the Cornerstone of this new Building, to day, let us thank God for this benevolent Institution which has spread her sheltering wings o'er the poor and needy, gathered so many fatherless and motherless ones to her nourishing bosom, and surrounded them with the sweet and hallowed influence of Home.

It is related of Dr. Thornwell, that when a poor orphan boy, he was found one morning, alone, weeping at the spring. "What will become of me," sobbed the desolate and homeless orphan. Thank God that, for

thirteen years, no child of Presbyterian parentage, in this state, at least, has asked with tears in his eyes, "what will become of me," for the blessed angel of Charity has stood, with extended arms, at the open door of the Thornwell Orphanage, to answer the sad question concerning the dark, uncertain future.

Such a Charity deserves the cordial sympathy and generous support of the Presbyterian Church, and it should be nourished as an important branch of benevolent work. The Orphanage has a noble representative who now represents it in the Christian Ministry, and will soon represent her as a missionary in China. In many a home and department of industry, may the beneficiaries of this Institution be found, doing her honor, and challenging for her, your sympathy and patronage.

As a "*work of Faith*," it has been signally prospered by Him, "whose word cannot be broken, who has never failed to honor those who put their unfaltering trust in Him. As a "*labor of Love*," its future prosperity is assured, for "*Charity never faileth*." Toil on, then my brother, with the "*patience of Hope*," for "*in due season you shall reap, if you faint not*." ✕

When San Sophia was being erected, it is said that musk was mingled with the mortar, and that, thirteen centuries after, the perfume was perceptible. But when we build Institutions like this, for the purposes of charity, for love to Christ, and his little ones, the odor of our offering mingles with that of the sacrifice of Christ and ascends as a sweet-smelling savor unto God and ever perfumes the atmosphere of Heaven, throughout the ages of Eternity.

At the close of this address, the audience moved from the Seminary Hall, where it was delivered, to the selected site. The stone was filled with various objects of interest, the Word of God and Catechisms of the Presbyterian Church, being chief. It was then securely sealed, and the orphans lead the audience in these words,

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
 Praise Him all creatures here below,
 Praise Him above ye heavenly host,
 Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

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