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Address at the Funeral of the Late Orville E. Babcock, by Rev. T. S. Wynkoop, June 7, 1884

R. O. Polkinhorn, and Son, Printers

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ADDRESS

AT THE FUNERAL OF THE LATE

ORVILLE E. BABCOCK,

Major of Engineers and Brevet Brigadier-General,
United States Army.

BY

Rev. T. S. WYNKOOP,

Minister of the Western Presbyterian Church,

June 7, 1884.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

R. O. POLKINHORN, & SON, PRINTERS,

1884.

PRAYER.

GTERNAL God, in whom do rest the spirits of just men made perfect, we bless and praise Thy holy name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear; and especially for those most dear to us, of whom we have good hope that they have fallen asleep in Jesus. And we beseech Thee to give us grace to follow their good examples, that even here we may be united to them in fellowship of spirit, and that finally we may be gathered together with them into the bosom of Thy love, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Address.

The Address at the funeral of General Babcock was not written. It is reproduced in substance, as nearly as may be, at the request of friends.

THE inevitable event has happened to him we love. How sad and unexpected the stroke that has fallen upon us in his death! He went forth from us, as it were but yesterday, full of health and strength and the prospect of many days. He comes back to us shrouded and confined, and our only welcome to him upon his return is the prayers and tears with which we follow this closed casket to its last resting-place. Brave soldier, loyal citizen, true and faithful friend, most loving husband, father, brother, his warfare is accomplished, his service ended, his life work done.

There is a grief which can find no adequate expression in words. Before that grief we are silent to-day. God alone can comfort and sustain the stricken heart. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." To His infinite compassion we commend these sorrowing ones.

But it must be permitted us, amidst our tears, to lay the tribute of our respect and affection upon his coffin; to remind ourselves how kind and good and true he was.

The record of the public life of General Babcock needs no rehearsal here; it is written in full in the history of the nation. Graduating at West Point in the very year in which the civil war broke out, the young officer was called at once to the service of his country. His bravery and skill were quickly recognized and rewarded. Without political influence to forward his interests, he rose by merit,

and was selected by the great commander to serve in an arduous and responsible position upon his staff. The result justified the choice thus made. He was trusted implicitly, and he never in a single instance disappointed the confidence reposed in him. He possessed the rare gift of entire subordination of self, putting all his energies and abilities at the service of his chief to carry out his plan. Underneath all there was in him a foundation of moral principle. His controlling purpose was to do his duty, with loyal allegiance to his commanding officer, his country and his God. His record is without a blot. He sought no personal aggrandizement at the expense of others. He had too much self-respect to join in the unseemly competition for emolument and place. Honors that came to him he accepted and valued; honors that might have come with unworthy seeking he left to other men.

The manly strength of his character was accompanied by a singular gentleness and sweetness. He was generous, unselfish, kind. I have never known a more devoted husband and father. To the circle of his intimate friends he endeared himself beyond expression. There was no place for malice in his heart, and he was never heard to speak an ill word even of those who sought to do him harm. The record of his unostentatious charity, could it ever be made known, would surprise those who knew him best; and all was done with such delicacy and tact that he made the reception of his kindness appear a favor conferred upon him.

It was given to me to know, perhaps more than any other, his inner life. There dwelt ever in his heart the recollection of a Christian mother's piety and devotion; nor did he seek to forget those lessons of his childhood. The instinct of his heart was an instinct of faith, and the experi-

ence of life led him to a personal conviction. No man ever heard him speak lightly of religion, or make a jest of sacred things. It was owing to the high ideal he had formed of the Christian character and his distrust of self, not to any indifference to the claims of religion, that he never made a public profession of his faith. He believed in God, and in Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world. He never lost his reverence for the house of God, or the Bible as the Word of God. When trouble came upon him he looked to God; and in the strength which is given in answer to prayer he met his trouble, and was not overcome.

One of the most familiar and beautiful passages in the Sacred Narrative is that which represents the disciples upon the Sea of Galilee in the storm, when the winds beat upon them and the waves were high: then there came to them the Saviour, walking upon the sea, and

said unto them, "It is I: be not afraid." May we not believe that in that storm-tossed sea which beat upon the Florida shore there was heard by him whom we loved, above the noise of wind and wave, a voice divine which said to him, as of old He said to them, "It is I: be not afraid." There may well have been for one brief moment the shudder of nature at the approach of death; but recognizing that divine Presence, may we not believe he calmly breathed a prayer to God for mercy, and, commending to Him the loved ones far away, gave up his soul into the hand that was nailed to the cross for our redemption. His body the sea laid quickly upon the shining sand; but his spirit, upborne to the land of peace, entered at once and forever into rest.

There, I trust, we shall meet him again, when the mysteries of life and death are disclosed. Our beloved dead are not sep-

arated from us forever. The light of the Gospel casts its radiance athwart the darkness of the grave, and points to an immortal life from which our Lord and Saviour came, and to which He returned, assuring us that they who trust in Him shall be with Him forever. To that blessed future let us look forward with hope and cheer. We have but to yield our hearts to God our Heavenly Father, and seek with honest endeavor to do His will. He will sustain us in trouble, guide us in perplexity, cleanse our hearts from evil, and fit us in His grace for all the work and service of life. And then, come when or where it may the hour of death, all shall be well with us; "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."