

A discourse delivered in the Chapel Church, Boston, before the Humane Society of Massachusetts, 9 June, 1812 / By Henry Colman.

Contributors

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H. COLMAN A DISCOURSE 1812



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DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

CHAPEL CHURCH, BOSTON,

BEFORE

THE HUMANE SOCIETY

OF

MASSACHUSETTS,

9 JUNE, 1812.

—
BY HENRY COLMAN,
Minister of the Third Church in Hingham.
—

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

.....

BOSTON :
PRINTED BY JOHN ELIOT, JUN.
NO. 5, COURT STREET.
1812.

321709 (19)

TO

AARON DEXTER, M. D.

VICE PRESIDENT,

AND TO THE

REV. JAMES FREEMAN, D. D.

MEMBER OF THE HUMANE SOCIETY,

TO whom, as my physician and minister, as my earliest and constant friends, I am indebted for innumerable and great offices of kindness and benevolence ; this discourse, intended to promote those purposes, to which their labours have been long and ardently devoted, is inscribed, as a small but sincere testimony of the respect, gratitude, and affection of its

AUTHOR.

JAMES F. B. M. D.
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JULY 1884

IN WITNESS WHEREOF

JAMES F. B. M. D.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal at Washington, D. C., this 15th day of July, 1884.

51

DISCOURSE.

WE have assembled, my friends, to celebrate the triumphs of benevolence, to acknowledge the goodness of God, who has made us susceptible of its exercise and delights ; and to encourage each other's hearts, and strengthen each other's hands in its holy offices. We have entered the christian temple, a place which is consecrated to love, to the kindred and sublime sentiments of love to God and man ; the temple of him, who was truly the friend of our race ; whose life was devoted to works of humanity ; whose power was more than once affectionately exerted to resuscitate the dead ; who died that we might live ; and whose power shall be hereafter exerted, with equal success and infinite benevolence, to arouse a sleeping world, to collect

the scattered ashes of the dead, and to clothe the mouldering frame with the vigour and beauty of immortal life. We have entered his temple, who is the Father of mercies; whose goodness animates creation, is boundless as the universe, and coeval with eternity. To what theme then are we so naturally directed, as to that of benevolence?

Do not think however that, in attempting this topick, I presume to instruct you on a subject, which, the circumstances of our present meeting; which, particularly the origin and history of your institution, Gentlemen of the Humane Society, convince me, that you well understand. But to benevolent minds, the subject is always refreshing and delightful; and the motives and obligations to the cultivation and practice of this virtue cannot be too frequently presented, nor too deeply imprinted on our minds.

I. Man is a social being. He was not born for himself alone; and he defeats the design of his Creator, when to himself he is exclusively devoted. Benevolence, in its most

comprehensive sense, including both dispositions and actions, is to him a duty of primary and indispensable obligation ; and, among the various branches, into which it divides itself, compassion and humanity take the first rank, and are enforced upon us by peculiar considerations.

1. To offices of compassion we are directly prompted by nature. Children are in a high degree susceptible of tender emotions. They are prone to pity, and their feelings respond to every indication of pain and grief in those about them. When the god of this world has not palsied the heart of man, the sight of distress touches a chord, which vibrates through his whole system. He involuntarily weeps with them that weep, and his hand is stretched out to the relief of the miserable. He cannot restrain such efforts without doing violence to his nature ; and, unless his moral sense be entirely extinguished, without suffering the sharpest stings of remorse. On the other hand, the exercise of compassion is always accompanied with satisfaction ; and obtains the esteem of mankind ; for in every age and nation, howev-

er ferocious and uncivilized, men, distinguished for humanity, have been admired and loved.

2. We are prompted to humanity by our condition. The dependence of one human being upon another is complete and indissoluble. A period can hardly be found in our lives, in which we do not need much from the compassion and humanity of others; and there are seasons, in which they are essential to our subsistence. Nothing can exceed the helplessness of infancy and childhood. Other animals are early able to provide for themselves; but the infancy of man presents a picture of complete imbecility and ignorance. As he advances in life, he is every day claiming the compassion of his fellow creatures. A thousand diseases threaten to invade his constitution and prostrate his strength. His frame, though constructed with admirable and inimitable skill, is frail, and liable to injury. An obstruction in some of its smallest passages, a dislocation of its minutest members, a rupture of its finest vessels, may throw it into disorder, and reduce it to infirmity. The earth on which we tread, the food which we eat and

the air which we breathe, teem with the principles of disease. We are constantly exposed to accidents, which may suddenly destroy our strength, disable our limbs, ruin our senses, suspend the functions of the animal economy, extinguish the light of reason, and render us incapable of any valuable physical or intellectual exertion. We are subject to innumerable anxieties and distresses of mind. The path of life, though, through the goodness of God, it is adorned, on every side, with flowers and fruit, presents likewise many thorns, which cause our hearts to bleed, and pierce them with unutterable anguish : and, if it be our lot to live to old age, how often are we reduced to decrepitude ; to the loss of our senses, of our reason, of our animal vigour ; to a state as helpless and pitiable, as the early period of infancy. These ills are but a part of the unavoidable calamities of life. Your own observation and experience, my friends, especially those of you, whose profession carries you to the abodes of disease and wretchedness, will suggest many more. But these suggestions are

sufficient to remind us of the force of those claims, which are made upon our compassion.

3. Numerous and great however as the evils of life are, many of them we possess the power of removing ; and there are few, which we have not the means of alleviating. How much may be done by attention, patience and tenderness, by our presence and sympathy, toward the relief of the disordered, the sick and the afflicted, we well know ; and most of us, from happy experience. When we can lay our fainting head in the bosom of a friend, our pillow is soft and our sleep is sweet. When a kind friend enters our chamber, dark with sickness, grief and despair ; when we perceive his ear open to our complaints, his bosom pierced with our groans, and his hand extended for our relief ; our pains are forgotten, and our hearts are thrilled with new and delightful sensations. Then are we ready to exclaim, how healing is the medicine of compassion and sympathy ; sweeter than the zephyrs of spring, bearing on their wings the richest perfumes of nature ; and refreshing as the gentle rain of summer, descending on the thirsty earth.

A beneficent Providence supplies us with innumerable means to allay the pains and remove the diseases, incident to our nature. The mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms furnish their abundant treasures ; and the fire of heaven descends at the call of man, to assist in the restoration of health and life. We cannot contemplate, but with interest and delight, the discoveries and arts of philosophy, medicine and surgery, to arrest the progress of disease, to restore soundness to the shattered frame, and to recall the spirit of life to those mansions, which it had apparently deserted forever.

The success, which has crowned the exertions of the humane in the discovery and application of these remedies, displays, in a striking manner, the goodness of God. Some of the most obstinate diseases have yielded to their efforts. A cruel pestilence, which scattered dismay and death in its progress, promises, by their discoveries, to be erased from the catalogue of human woes. They have unstopped the ears of the deaf, and loosened the tongue of the dumb. They have opened

the eyes of the blind, and caused the lame to leap for joy. 'They have expelled the demons of madness and despair from the heart of man, and poured the light of reason into the darkened mind.' Borne along by the sublime spirit of humanity, they have entered the territories of death, and, breaking the chains from their feet, have bade the prisoners, whom he securely pronounced his own, return to the liberty and happiness of life.

Consider then, my friends, the natural disposition, by which man is carried out of himself, and impelled to the relief of the distressed ; the multiplied calls, which in the ordinary course of life are made upon his compassion ; and the numerous means, which are already discovered, and that are continually increasing, which God has put into our hands, for the alleviation of pain, the removal of sorrow and disease, the recovery, preservation and continuance of life ; and you perceive, that man was designed for humanity ; that when he steels his heart against the cries of distress, and suffers a fellow-creature, or even a brute creature, to languish in misery, for want of that relief, which

it is in his power to afford, he justly incurs the displeasure of that Being, whose most glorious attribute is mercy, and who is emphatically the Father and the Friend of mankind.

4. To the same conclusion we are still more forcibly led, by the precepts and spirit of our holy religion. Christianity has been rightly denominated ‘a religion of kind affections.’ It is truly a religion of humanity. The great purpose for which our Saviour entered the world was merciful; and, when he came, ‘He took up our infirmities and bare away our sicknesses.’* ‘He came to publish deliverance to the prisoner, to heal the broken-hearted, and to proclaim glad tidings to the sorrowful.’† His bosom was fired with divine and exalted compassion. His language, his precepts, his manners, his tears, his actions, his sacrifices discovered on all occasions a heart, touched with the tenderest sympathy in the distresses of mankind; and you might trace his progress by the consolation, hope, and felicity, which

* Matt. viii. 17. Wakefield’s Trans. See Comm. and Essays, vol. 1, p. 41.

† Luke iv. 18.

he diffused about him. Like a splendid meteor, passing over the face of night, it brightened the whole hemisphere, but not like the meteor, were its rays suddenly extinguished; they still appear with transcendent and undiminished brightness. It is enough, that we are exhorted to copy his example, and to be merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful.

II. It is for us then, my brethren, to be kind, tender-hearted, and prompt to every office of compassion. The cultivation and practice of humanity in ourselves, and the diffusion of its principles and feelings among others, should be an object of our habitual and ardent exertion.

The heart of man, we well know, is most susceptible in youth. Those of us then, who are parents, and those who have an influence upon the rising generation, cannot better discharge the duty which we owe to God, nor better serve the cause of humanity, than by preserving that tenderness, which God has planted in the breasts of our children, endeavouring to increase and direct it, and forming in them the

temper of christian benevolence. We may do this, by frequently placing them in situations, which will call forth their compassion ; by encouraging every such exercise ; not too often by reward, for that would at last render them mercenary ; but by teaching them, that such dispositions are the gift of heaven, that they constitute the true excellence of human nature, and that the virtues, to which they lead, shine forth with effulgence amidst the glories of the divine character. We may do much toward rendering them compassionate, by performing a duty, to which parents are not sufficiently attentive ; that of seeing that their pleasures are humane, and rigidly preventing among them every species of cruelty to the inferiour animals. We may do still more by our example ; restraining in ourselves every sentiment of anger, revenge, or malice, and taking the lead in every work of mercy.

It is for us then, my brethren, to study methods of relieving the distresses of others ; to search out objects of suffering, whose pains we may mitigate ; of infirmity, to whom we may afford support ; of misery, into whose lacerated

hearts we may distil the balm of sympathy ; objects of despair, whom we may inspire with hope ; objects, in whom the functions of life have been suddenly suspended, that we may, if possible, recall the fled spirit ; and objects, whose reason is shattered by misfortune, that we may provide them an asylum and secure them from injury.

Let us then cultivate that lively sympathy in the distresses of our fellow-creatures, which is so forcibly urged upon us. In every object of sorrow, let us recognise a parent, a child or a brother, whom we are to pity and relieve. Let us refuse to listen to the cold suggestions of self-interest. Let us exert our reason, forcing sentiments of compassion upon our minds, and obliging ourselves to perform its duties. The social affections are invigorated and enlarged by exercise. Sentiments, which the mind at first contemplated even with aversion, being frequently presented, are soon rendered interesting and pleasant ; and duties, which we entered upon with reluctance, by a frequent discharge of them, we shall soon delight in. With every sentiment, with every principle of

conduct, and with every exertion of our intellectual and moral powers, let us associate a desire of being useful, and benevolence will become at last our temper and the habit of our lives. This is the progress of the human mind under the guidance of religion, from self love to social, and from social love, restricted in its operation, to disinterested benevolence.

III. Man, having arrived at this point, has attained the true excellence, dignity and felicity of his nature. A halo of divine glory surrounds his head, and an image of the divine goodness is reflected from his life.

1. If there be an object of just admiration, such is the man of genuine and unaffected christian benevolence. If there be a character in society, to whom I look up with veneration and love, it is the good physician. When I behold in that profession, as it is often my felicity to do, intelligence, fidelity, and kindness; when I see them, so eminently as they are, the friends of the poor; anxiously investigating methods to alleviate the miseries of hu-

man life, and giving as extensive a diffusion as possible to their successful discoveries; sacrificing their ease, their domestick pleasures, their health, and often exposing their lives to afford relief to the distressed; and in innumerable cases, where it is impossible that mercenary considerations should have any influence, displaying the greatest exertions of compassion and humanity; and when, combined with such benevolence, I observe a deep sense of religion pervading their hearts, and find them tenderly exerting the great influence, which their profession gives them, in communicating christian knowledge, in restoring the disordered not only to health, but to virtue, and in infusing a spirit of christian piety and hope into the hearts of their patients; I rejoice that there is a profession among us, which can hardly fail to make men compassionate and disinterested; and I see in them the richest ornaments and blessings of society.

But compassion has yet a fairer and a more appropriate seat, studded with brighter gems and beaming forth a softer lustre. When I see religious women, devoting themselves to

offices of compassion and mercy, mingling their tears with the afflicted, providing asylums for the miserable, patiently watching at the bed of anguish, wasting their strength and health in the abodes of wretchedness and disease, supporting the fainting head and cheering the desponding heart ; I recognise at once in all its brightness, the original impression of a beneficent Deity, which he was pleased in the beginning to stamp upon man.

When we read the history of Howard ; when with him we traverse the near and distant abodes of misery and disease ; when we follow him to the hospital, the penitentiary, and prison ; when we descend with him into the dark and solitary dungeon, where the soft musick of compassion never saluted the ear ; when we explore with him the extensive regions, which pestilence has desolated ; when we witness his ardour, perseverance, and disinterestedness in the cause of humanity ; who does not perceive, that such men are indeed the honour and justly the boast of human nature ?

When we look up to that perfect example of tenderness and compassion, Jesus Christ,

continually engaged, as he was, in offices of the most exalted humanity ; utterly insensible to true moral beauty and greatness is the heart, which fails to magnify the Lord, and to rejoice in such a Saviour. Never was the glory of Christ's character more resplendent, than when he wept with the sisters of Lazarus ;* than when he restored alive to the widow of Nain her only son, whom she was following to the grave ;† than when, looking forward to the calamities, which hung over them, he lamented with the tenderest pity the fate of his devoted country ;‡ than when he submitted to death, that the world through him might have life.§ Never was any triumph so splendid and august, as when he entered Jerusalem, followed by the blind, whose eyes he had opened ; the lame, to whose tottering limbs his potent word had given firmness ; the distracted, whose shattered reason he had restored ; the sick, whom he had plucked out of the jaws of death ; and the dead, whom he had aroused from the sleep of the grave. Compare with this the triumphs

* John xi. 35.

† Luke vii. 11—15.

‡ Luke xix. 41.

§ John x. 11. 18.

of the hero, the statesman, or the philosopher ; survey the multitude of their victories, the wisdom of their policy, and the depth of their learning, however numerous, however subtle, however profound ; and you perceive, that the glory of conquest, of wisdom, of learning, is infinitely surpassed by the glory of humanity.

2. Nor is the exercise of compassion less favourable to human happiness. The man whose views centre in himself is miserable.* Envy and pride, avarice and ambition plant a thousand tortures in his bosom. He cannot obtain all the riches, which he desires, for he can always think of some, who are more wealthy than himself ; nor all the fame, for there will always be many who will underrate his claims ; nor all the power, for ambition, like the grave, is never satisfied. But, on the other hand, every virtuous exercise of the social affections is attended with pleasure. Whatever serves to carry us out of ourselves and to in-

* See Sermons on Particular Occasions, recently published, Ser. vii. p. 231, &c. where the misery of selfishness and the happiness of benevolence are treated in a most elegant, instructive and interesting manner.

terest us in others, increases our means of happiness. Then we forget our own wants, sorrows and sufferings. We participate in their felicity, and a knowledge of their miseries leads us to a more attentive observation of the blessings and advantages of our own condition. We sympathize in their afflictions; but 'sympathy,' as a beloved friend observes, 'is a pleasant sensation.' We may be frequently called to nurse them in sickness; but there is an inexpressible satisfaction in performing these duties toward them. There is a pure pleasure, which springs from a consciousness of being useful. There is a rich reward in the gratitude of those persons whose distresses we have relieved. There is only one delight more exquisite, than that which arises from the sight of those, whom we have been instrumental of rescuing from sorrow, sickness and death; and that is the resuscitation of a human being, dead in sin, to the life and felicity of virtue.

You, Gentlemen of the Humane Society, know from experience the value of these re-

wards. The blessings of such as were ready to perish have come upon you in rich abundance. Every benevolent mind will contemplate, with the highest gratitude, the goodness of God, in the success which has crowned your disinterested labours, and which has followed the exertions of other societies, devoted like yours to the sublime purposes of humanity. The last annual report of the British Humane Society announces, that, since the date of their institution, out of upwards of seven thousand cases of suspended animation, which have come under their notice, they have been successful in restoring to health from apparent death or imminent danger, more than half that number.* What a reward does this promise you ; what interesting motives does it furnish you to continue and increase your exertions !

The age, in which we live, may justly boast of some of the best institutions, which ever adorned the face of society. Among them we

* The British Royal Humane Society was founded in 1774. The number of cases of suspended animation, which have come under their notice, is 7410. The number of successful cases 3531. See the last annual Report.

gratefully recognise yours, as standing in the foremost ground. I need not speak of its excellence and advantages. They are duly appreciated ; they have been realized. You need not our praises. You have a higher and an exquisite reward, in the affectionate and grateful remembrance of those persons whom your generous efforts have relieved, in the approbation of your own hearts, and the approbation of God. We rejoice with you in the blessings which have already resulted from your labours, and which they promise yet more extensively to diffuse. We rejoice with you, that the fire of humanity burns bright among us. Let me respectfully entreat you to nourish and increase its sacred flame.

As the offspring of that gracious Being, whose bounty is our support, whose mercy is our only hope ; as the disciples of a generous and compassionate Saviour ; as members of each other, associated by many tender and indissoluble ties, let our hearts glow with compassion, and let it be our business and delight to do good. We have come up hither to de-

posit an offering on the altar of humanity. 'Ye that have much, give plenteously; and ye that have little, do your diligence gladly to give of that little. With such sacrifices God is well pleased.'

The time is fast hastening, when death, from which we are so kindly solicitous to save others, shall seize upon us. This day, nay this hour, witnesses his awful ravages. This day has he robbed us of a beloved friend and brother;* a highly valued, a highly respected officer of your institution; an important and powerful auxiliary to the cause of humanity and religion. The tongue of the eloquent is mute. The eye, which beamed with celestial benignity, is sealed; and the flame of genius, of learning and of piety, that has blazed so splendidly among us, has left the earth, to mingle with those lights, which adorn with immortal brightness the heavenly regions. How interesting and glorious is the path, by which the righteous ascend to God!

* The Rev. Joseph Stevens Buckminster, who expired in the afternoon of the 9th of June, aged 28 years.

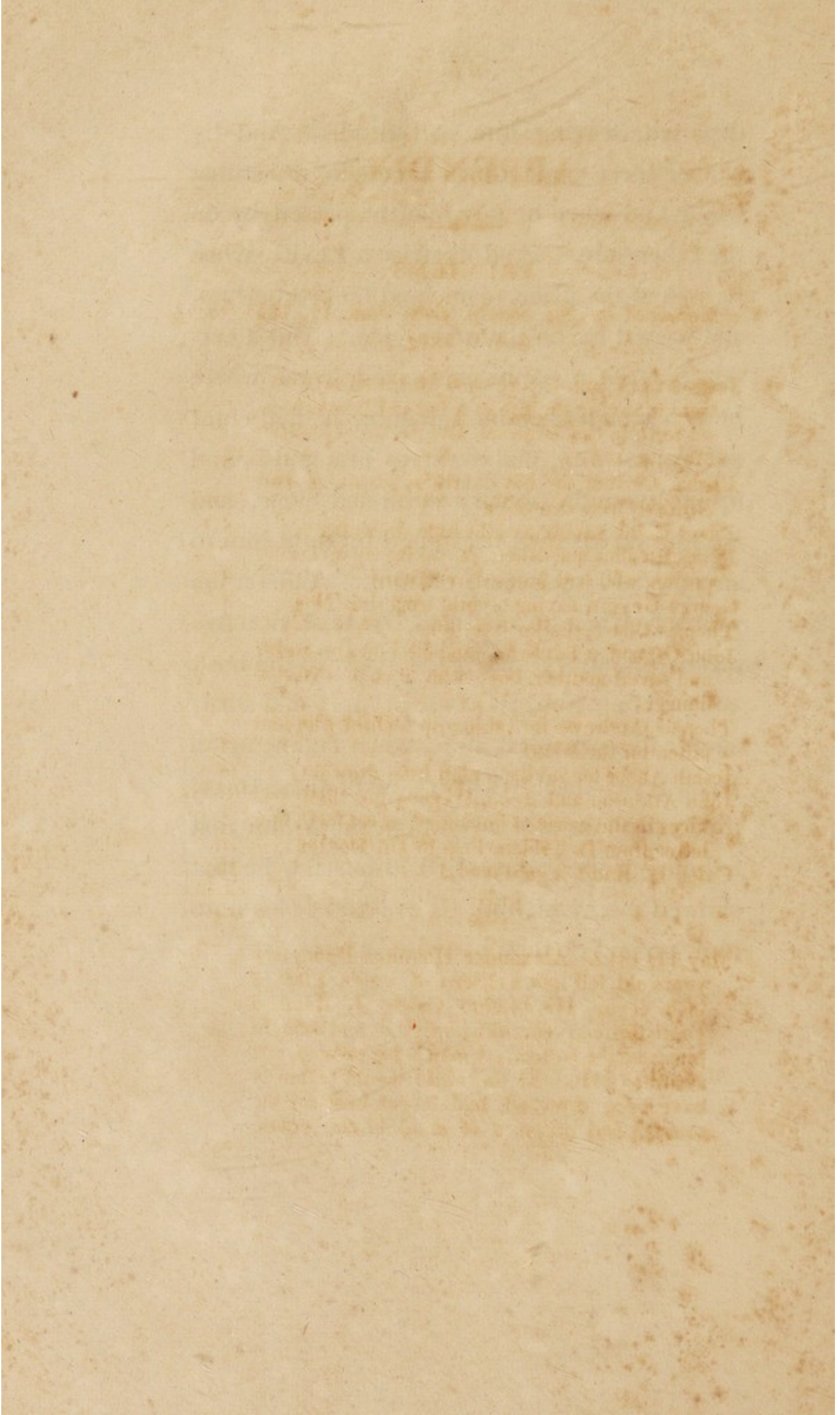
Soon will he shut our eyes, and silence our voice, and stiffen our limbs. No human art, no prayers avail, in that hour, to restore respiration to the lungs or warmth to the heart. But be not dismayed. There is a kind physician, who has all power ; who shall cause the breath of immortality to enter into us and we shall live. They that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth ; adorned, not with the riches, which they amassed on earth ; not with the venal honours of a capricious world ; not with the laurels of wit and learning ; but with the dispositions and offices of compassion and humanity,* which marked their progress through life : and these are jewels, whose brightness is inextinguishable ; these are the dispositions, these the deeds, which shall constitute your felicity in the heavenly state, and introduce you to the presence of the God of love.

‘ A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and

* Matt. xxv. 31—46.

departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way ; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was ; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pieces of money, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, take care of him ; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the robbers ? And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, go and do thou likewise.*

* Luke x. 30—37.



APPENDIX.

PREMIUMS

*Adjudged by the Society, from June 11, 1811, to
June 9, 1812.*

JOHN ALLIN, jun. as a reward for his signal exertions in saving the life of a lad at Plymouth, as set forth in the letter of Dr. James Thacher, May 30, 1811	10
Elisha Carlton for his exertions in saving two children from drowning	5
James Codd, saving a child from drowning	5
James Robbins and others, for taking up an insane person, who had jumped overboard	3
George Geyers, saving a child from drowning	5
Thomas Chase, similar exertions	5
John Osgood, a boy who jumped into the water and saved another boy, who was in extreme danger	5
Thomas Andrews for taking up a child who had fallen off the wharf	1
Josiah Abbot for saving a man from drowning	5
John Atkinson and John Haynes for their services in the cause of humanity, as set forth in a letter from B. Tilden, Esq. to Dr. Dexter	10
Caleb H. Rand, a gold medal	10

§ 64

May 11, 1812. Alexander Hamilton Rand, five years old, fell into a cistern of water, 4 feet, 8 inch. deep. His brother Caleb H. Rand, a youth thirteen years old, jumped in, and brought him from the bottom. A man being present, was afraid to go in, and the child would certainly have been drowned, had it not been for the courage and presence of mind in the youth.

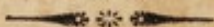
EXPENSES OF THE SOCIETY.

June, 1811. Semi-annual meeting	17	50
Printing of the discourse	57	
Ayer's account for repairing huts in Boston Harbour	26	76
Thayer's account for sundries, 1810, procured for the life boat	18	75
Mr. Hunt, messenger of the Branch bank	2	
J. Willard, messenger of the society	51	52
		<hr/>
	§	173 53
Premiums		64
		<hr/>
	§	237 53



PROPERTY OF THE SOCIETY.

Massachusetts State Note		1963	92
Union B. Stock	4800	4896	
Six per cent. United States,	3179 07	1308	59
Three, &c.	791 25	520	
Deferred Stock	675 36	465	52
West Boston Bridge, 2 shares		300	
Malden Bridge, with ten shares of Chelsea Bridge attached		800	
Mrs. Esther Sprague's legacy		333	33
Hon. S. Dexter do.		50	
Cash in the Treasury beside these donations, but including the balance of the last year's account		530	42
		<hr/>	
		§	11167 78



BOSTON, *December 7, 1812.*

WE the Subscribers, appointed a Committee to examine the Treasurer's Accounts, find all articles vouched, the same right cast, and a balance of §185, 87 cts. due to the Society, and the evidences of the property above enumerated.

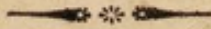
JOHN HANCOCK,
EBENEZER WITHINGTON.

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 JOHN LATHROP, D.D. *Vice President.*
 AARON DEXTER, M.D. *Second Vice President.*
 JOHN ELIOT, D.D. *Treasurer.*
 WILLIAM SPOONER, M.D. *Corresponding Secretary.*
 CHARLES DAVIS, Esq. *Recording Secretary.*

TRUSTEES.

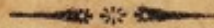
SAMUEL PARKMAN, Esq.
 JOSEPH COOLIDGE, Esq.
 SAMUEL BRADFORD, Esq.
 BENJAMIN RICH, Esq.
 Hon. THOMAS DAWES.



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 George Bond.
 John H. Bradford.
 Joseph Bray.
 Charles Bullard.
 Elisha Burnham.
 Elisha Clap.
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 James Russell.
 Rev. Elijah R. Sabin.
 Mr. David Stanwood.
 Thomas Somes.
 Rev. Isaac Smith.
 Mr. Charles Stearns.
 Simon Stearns.
 Isaac Stevens.
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 Rev. Samuel C. Thacher.
 John Boies Thomas, Esq.
 Mr. Thomas W. Ward.
 Redford Webster, Esq.
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 Newell Withington.
 William Wyman.



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 John Gardiner, Esq.
 Mr. Joseph Hunt, jun.
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 Joseph Smith.
 Mrs. Esther Sprague.
 Joseph Ward, Esq.

