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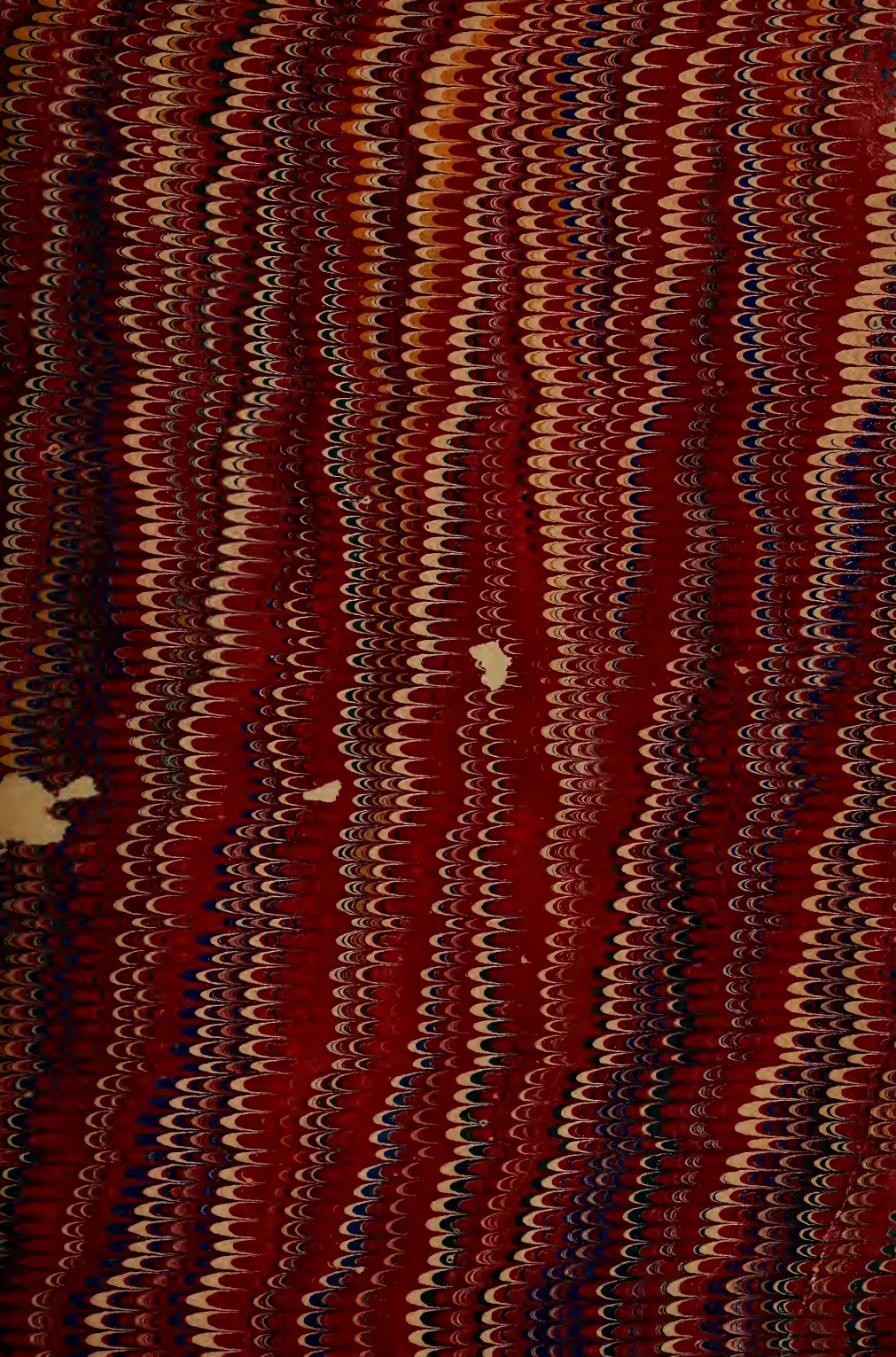
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DISCOURSE

AT THE FUNERAL OF

REV. TIMOTHY P. GILLETT,

(FORMERLY PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.)

AT

BRANFORD, CONN., NOV. 7, 1866.

By REV. W. T. EUSTIS, Jr.,

PASTOR OF THE CHAPEL STREET CHURCH, NEW HAVEN, CONN.

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NEW HAVEN:

PRESS OF TUTTLE, MOREHOUSE & TAYLOR.

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1867.



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# DISCOURSE.

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## ECCLESIASTES I. 4.

“ONE GENERATION PASSETH AWAY, AND ANOTHER GENERATION COMETH, BUT THE EARTH ABIDETH FOREVER.”

PROFESSOR STUART, in his Commentary, applies this text not only to the frailty of human life, but also to the vanity of human labor. He thus interprets the meaning of the passage: “The sentiment is, that the earth is fixed and immutable, and admitting no changes for the better, and, consequently, no hopes of lightening human misery by such changes. Man’s condition in the world, and his relation to it, must ever remain the same. His frailty in himself on the one hand, and on the other the foreclosure against any change for the better in the things without, concur to show that he can find no permanent happiness here.”

These views concerning man in his relation to the world, especially so far as the immutability of the earth is involved, do not accord with facts. Even the granite rock is worn by the continual whirl of the drops in the swift eddy, and the ocean has been dotted with islands, by the toil of minute insects. The earth is not unalterable, for the generations of man have transformed its surface, until it resembles that world where our first parents ate bread in the sweat of toil, only as

the half finished statue resembles the rough block of marble just broken from the quarry.

I derive another meaning, therefore, from the text, than that which ascribes vanity to human labor, since, while the generations succeed each other, the earth remains as a memorial of their skill and workmanship, who have fashioned its materials into forms of beauty, or builded them into a sanctuary. The earth abides although men die; the monument stands when the laborers have passed away. The granite obelisk in the square at Paris, whose surface is covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics, has on its base the name of the Emperor who caused it to be brought over the seas, and the engraving of the machinery by which it was raised on its present foundation, and thus records the labor of men separated by thousands of miles, and tens of centuries. So, in the time of Christ, the Temple at Jerusalem was a memorial of Solomon, of Nehemiah, of the Maccabees, and of Herod, while the mosque now standing on the ancient foundations must yet be replaced by a Christian sanctuary.

After the same manner, the generations of men have been laboring under the Divine architect, who is preparing this world for a grander destiny; and the final result, when the scaffolding is removed, will justify the wisdom of the Builder.

Material changes and progress are, however, auxiliary to that spiritual work which is the chief duty for every generation, and which not only preserves the memory of the past, but renders the labor beneficial for the future, leaving the derrick on the unfinished tower for the use of the workmen who shall complete the structure which was commenced centuries ago. Jews and Gentiles made ready for the laying of that corner stone, elect and precious, on which we are commanded to place ourselves as lively stones in a spiritual temple.

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This truth may, therefore, be derived from the text, that while men die, the purpose and plan of God moves forward. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever." The Apostle would seem to have had this passage with that of Isaiah in his mind, when he wrote, "for all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

The transient and evanescent, however, obtains value from the enduring, as the preciousness of the body which returns to dust is justified by the immortal spirit which animated and used its organism. The Sacramental feast which Jesus instituted on the night of his betrayal, has witnessed the continual removal of the guests, who have here commemorated the Lord. Apostles, Confessors, Martyrs, have successively followed Christ into eternity, but the table is still spread, the Sacrament is preserved, the Church of God abideth forever, and has been adorned and enlarged by the endeavor and prayers of the faithful, who have finished their toil and rested from their labors.

These reflections teach the propriety and honor of laboring for that which endureth.

Hitherto, indeed, the masses have had small liberty of choice in their service, but have wrought and perished under the decree of inexorable tyrannies, although their tasks have produced blessings which we enjoy in our pleasant homes and in our peaceful security. Nevertheless, there have always been, since the days of Noah, intelligent co-workers with God in the world; men who strove to accomplish the divine plan, and who labored to build up the everlasting kingdom. This goodly

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village, with its pleasant dwellings and this neat sanctuary, recall the memory of the pious emigrants who purchased the land from the Indians, and then settled upon the territory, organizing both a civil government and a Christian church. We are also reminded of those who, in later years, brought the books from their scanty libraries to the house of a former Pastor over this church, and there, in the name of Christ, founded Yale College. These achievements illustrate the nobility of that ambition, when rightly and devoutly employed, which would do something worthy of remembrance, and which even heathen philosophy recognized as a proof of our immortality. No honest toil is in vain, but that which lasts forever is that which is wrought upon the eternal. The wise will not waste strength on the evanescent, but will spend it on the enduring. Such do not write their names on the sand before a rising tide, but chisel them in the adamant cliff or the granite pyramid. Yet nothing wears like the service done for God in promoting human salvation, by upbuilding the Christian church. The word of God endureth forever, and he who has shared in its proclamation and fulfilled its behests, has the divine promise of an endless reward. They who, in the name of Christ, teach the way of salvation to the perishing, are the builders of that sanctuary, where the redeemed will worship through eternity, and will be held in perpetual remembrance; for, though they cease from their labors, their works do follow them. This is treasure laid up in heaven, whose income is everlasting.

The occasion which has brought us together reminds us, both of the fact, that one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, and also of the truth that there is a work which endureth, because it is wrought upon the imperishable.



We have assembled to bury the body of one who emphatically belonged to a generation which has departed, and of whom he was almost a solitary, as he was a fitting representative. Father Gillett, as he has been very suitably named for many years, was not merely associated with the past by his venerable age, but he was a living witness of former days, through his keen observation and accurate statements, while he was himself a goodly specimen of the manners and virtues of the preceding generation.

Born on the fifteenth of June, in the year of our Lord seventeen hundred and eighty, he was a babe of four months at the surrender of Cornwallis. He was nine years old when George Washington was inaugurated President of the United States, and his memory included the whole period of our national existence under the present Constitution. Napoleon Buona-parto was only eleven years his senior; and within his recollection occurred the French Revolution, with the subsequent wars, which appear to many of us almost as far back in antiquity as the time of Cromwell, or of Julius Cæsar. He preached to the last of the Aborigines from whom these hills and meadows were purchased, and described, in his sharply cut style, the changes which had taken place during his ministry. His half-century sermon alludes to the time when the universal mode of traveling was on horseback; when there were no stoves in the houses, but only open fires; and no fire in the meeting-house; when the uncarpeted floors were sanded; and this was the condition at the date of his ordination, when he was twenty-seven years of age. Yet he was himself, likewise, an honorable memorial of the past, deserving veneration, and teaching valuable lessons, and he has left us a rich legacy through his Christian fidelity in the gospel ministry. A generation passeth in his departure, but his work remaineth, for

he wrought intelligently, skilfully, and diligently, upon that which abideth forever.

TIMOTHY PHELPS GILLETT was born June 15th, A. D. 1780, in Farmingbury, now Wolcott, being the oldest child of Alexander Gillett and Adah Rogers. His father was, at the time of his birth, Pastor of the Church in Farmingbury, and after a settlement of eighteen years, was dismissed, Nov. 1791, and in the following May was installed Pastor of the First Church in Torrington, where he died, Jan. 19, A. D. 1826, in the seventy-seventh year of his age, and the fifty-third of his ministry. His wife was the third daughter of Deacon Josiah Rogers, of Farmingbury, Ct., and a descendant of the famous John Rogers.\* Rev. Alexander Gillett, was the child of pious parents, who lived in a part of Simsbury, Ct., now Granby, and was trained in the knowledge of divine truth by his devout grandmother. The father of Timothy, was a man of uncommon ability, and was, in his day, among the leading preachers in Connecticut. Graduating at Yale College in 1770, he retained his familiarity with classical literature, and after the meridian of life commenced the study of Hebrew, and modestly acknowledged, in later years, that he had read through the Hebrew Bible three times. He had a large library for that day, and in theology claimed to be a disciple of Edwards. His ministry was abundantly blessed, and one of the early volumes of the "Conn. Evangelical Magazine," contains his narrative of a great revival of religion in Torrington, where his son Timothy was hopefully converted. This son, the oldest of six children, two of whom survive, inherited many of his father's characteristics, and we trace a family likeness between the Pastor at Torrington and the Pastor at

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\* Deacon Rogers belonged to the family of Thomas Rogers, who came over in the Mayflower.

Branford, in the portrait of the former, by his friend, Rev. Luther Hart.

The following sentences of this brief memoir might be applied to the venerable son, as well as to the honored father.

“It was one of the most prominent traits of his character, that he made all of his literary pursuits subservient to the momentous business of his holy calling. He daily consecrated his time and talents to the service of Christ. His life, it is believed, was as correct an exemplification of the practical rules of the gospel, as can well be found, even among the most devoted ministers of Christ. Scarcely has any person, in any station, uttered fewer words at random. Possessing a wonderful command over his passions, provocation rarely betrayed him into expressions which demanded regret, and carefully guarding against all undue animal excitement, even if others in his company were facetious, it is not recollected that he ever uttered a sentence inconsistent with the dignity and sobriety becoming a minister of the gospel. His eldest son has observed, ‘though he frequently smiled, I never heard him laugh.’”

Alluding to his personal habits and characteristics, the writer adds :—

“Upon him whose character is attempted to be delineated in these pages, no defect, on the score of economy, could be charged. Without patrimony, and receiving, till within a few years of his death, a very small salary, he yet, by the assistance of his frugal and industrious companion, brought up six children ; assisted one of them in procuring a collegiate education, and left his family in possession of a valuable farm.

“Another leading trait in his character was, that he did everything methodically, and in season. At a particular hour he retired at night, and at a particular hour he rose in the

morning. He was distinguished for his punctuality in the fulfillment of his public and private engagements."

These quotations indicate the origin of those characteristics in which the son closely resembled the father whom he revered. Mr. Gillett entered Williams College in 1800, when he was twenty years of age, and graduated in 1804. The ministers of Litchfield County, were then accustomed to send their sons to this institution, partly for economical reasons. After graduation, Mr. Gillett taught, for one year, at Cornwall, and then in the academy at Williamstown, until, in 1806, he was appointed Tutor, and retained that office for one year and a half. Gordon Hall, Samuel J. Mills, and James Richards, were then undergraduates in that College, and Mr. Gillett has stated to members of his congregation, that they were accustomed to hold a prayer-meeting in his room, and to consult in regard to the duty of carrying the gospel to the heathen. He never lost the interest thus awakened in Foreign Missions, but was an earnest advocate of the cause, and the warm friend of the American Board. During his Tutorship, he studied theology under President Fitch, and was licensed as a candidate for the gospel ministry, by the Litchfield North Association, Sept. 30th, 1806. In the winter of 1807 and 8, having resigned his Tutorship, Mr. Gillett supplied the pulpit, for two Sundays, at East Haven, and was then invited to preach in the vacant pulpit of the Church at Branford. He received, shortly after, a call to settle with them in the gospel ministry, on a salary of five hundred dollars, and the privilege of cutting firewood on the Society's lands, until, from continued ill-health or infirmity he should be no longer able to perform the duties of a gospel minister among them. This invitation was accepted, and, June 15th, 1808, on his twenty-eighth birthday, he was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, as Pastor of this Church.

The sermon was preached, on that occasion, by his father, from Matt. xiii. 52; and the charge of the parent to his son deserves to be quoted, for its description of the early training of the candidate, and for the eloquent pathos of the address. It is as follows :—

“The subject will now close, with some particular addresses.

1. TO THE PASTOR ELECT. Son Timothy :—It may be expected that the preacher will address you on this occasion with the faithfulness of a father, and minister of Christ. As a father, he would observe :—On the morn when your infant face was first presented to him, the thoughts forcibly struck his mind : ‘Here now is a rational creature, begun an existence which will never terminate. Of how much more importance this babe than the whole world of irrational beings. He has now entered into the state of probation, and bound to heaven or hell, according to the moral character here formed. This character will depend, much, on the parent’s conduct.’ How solemn the scene ! He felt it. Likewise, that you were a gift from God to be improved in his service. Hence, as soon as the convenient time came, you were solemnly consecrated to him in baptism, and his seal set on you as wholly the Lord’s. The question would then naturally arise, in what station of life may this child best serve God and his generation. Perhaps this may be in the Christian ministry. This has been an object of your father’s cordial desire and prayer to God for you, ever since you were born. However, he could never wish to see you in so important a station, unless your qualifications might correspond. It never appeared to him that an ignorant, selfish, mercenary and sinful son, could afford him any consolation. “A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.” Therefore it early became your

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father's endeavor, as your opening genius appeared to unfold, to give you a suitable education. But still, human science, without grace, does not complete the qualification necessary for the servant of Christ. A person unregenerate, may have all knowledge, and appear to teach sound doctrine, yet he is prone to betray the cause of Christ on the first convenient opportunity. Beside, of what advantage will it be to a person in the end, to preach to others and then be cast away? In view of these things, your father could not reflect on your moral situation, for a long time, without trembling. What then must have been his feelings, when in the late outpouring of the Spirit of God, 1799, at Torrington, you was made a hopeful subject of His special influences, and, together with a number of your young companions, came forward and subscribed unto the Lord? This was a gladness which none can tell, but those who have had the experience.

“After much embarrassment, you have obtained a liberal education, and the requisite attainments for the ministry.”

The father then proceeded with exhortations to fidelity and patience, and ended with this solemn appeal:—

“These considerations must influence you never to be found only in the business of your heavenly Father and Redeemer. Thus you will have your father's blessing. And now that the solemnities before you may suitably fix your attention, the speaker, as a servant of Christ, would remind you that this place is as solemn as if the great Head of the Church were personally present, and on your being set apart to the ministry, should address you in this impressive manner:—“O Timothy, I accept thy consecration to my service in the ministry, and I now commit the precious souls of this flock, both old and young, both

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parents and children, to thy pastoral care. I expect that thou be faithful to feed my sheep and my lambs, with the pure word of my kingdom. The day will come, when thou and they must appear before my bar, to give an impartial account. If thou wisely and carefully declare the whole counsel of God, instructing, warning, and reproofing them, as their state and circumstances may require, thou shalt be accepted in that day. Thou shalt then come before thy Judge, and say, 'Here am I Lord, and these souls which thou hast graciously given to thy servant.' And they shall be thy crown of joy in my presence, where I am, and you shall behold my glory forever; if any of them fail, yet I will be glorified, and thou with me. But if thou prove unfaithful, and any be lost through thy neglect, their blood will I require at thy hands. Be not cast down, be faithful to keep that which is committed to thy trust, and though all should forsake thee, yet I will not. I will be with thee alway, even to the end of the world, and through a glorious eternity."

Such was the training of this disciple for his work, and thus impressively was he entrusted with the pastoral office over this people, more than fifty-eight years ago.

Who shall say, that the influence of that pious parent ceased with his life, when his son has striven to fulfill the injunctions thus eloquently enforced, and to imitate the virtues of his honored and pious ancestry?

The young minister was married, Nov. 29, 1808, to Sallie Hodges; who, after nearly sixty years of a happy and peaceful wedlock, survives him to mourn his absence, tarrying for the summons which will re-unite them in the heavenly society. They lived, for the first two years after their marriage, in a dwelling on South street, but in the spring of 1811, purchased

and fitted up the old tavern, where they have resided together ever since, and whence his body has been brought to-day.

Bred in the frugality of a New England home, Mr. Gillett and his wife had not, after marriage, to learn the lesson of economy, but with conscientious carefulness and industry, maintained their small household in the respectability becoming their station. Having inherited a small property through his wife, he managed its disposition and investment with great sagacity, and exemplary prudence, until it has accumulated, during these sixty years, to a large amount. Having no children, his domestic expenses were comparatively small, and were met, until within a few years, by his salary, which he quietly reminded his people, at the close of his half century of labor, was almost the only thing which had continued without change, during that period. He said:—"I have asked no more, and my people have offered no more, though for the last twenty years my expenditures have, probably, exceeded my salary."

Notwithstanding this frugality, no one could suspect his strict integrity or his kindness of heart. He declined to use any portion of the paternal estate, and has modestly and regularly aided the Christian enterprises of benevolence, and relieved the needy in his own neighborhood. His business capacity and success never hindered the faithful performance of pastoral duties, but rather added to the efficiency of his official labors. He was, like his father, scrupulously exact in attending to every service which was appointed, either in public or private, and never failed in fulfilling the task assigned. He cheerfully gave up an intended journey, to wait at the sick bed of a parishioner, and his ministrations were assiduous and faithful. Worldly prosperity never rendered him vain or severe.



He followed the example of his father by retaining scholarly habits ; and for more than twenty years taught a select school, either in his own house, or in the academy building, which was erected chiefly through his exertions.

He certainly did not regard pecuniary profit in this work, for he readily gave their tuition to the needy, and his price, when payment was offered, was only two dollars a term, while the teacher furnished the fire-wood. He thus afforded to this town the privileges of education, and fitted a number to enter College, who have become either Pastors at home, or Missionaries to the heathen. He was mindful of the moral and religious welfare of the young, and, for many years, taught a weekly Bible-class, while he also read carefully the books designed for the library of the Sunday School, before they were admitted to a place on the shelves.

Punctual in his attendance upon the ecclesiastical councils, and ministerial associations with which he was connected, prompt to perform any service assigned, he endeared himself to his brethren by Christian gentleness, and sterling piety. Educated in the strict Calvinism of his father, and obtaining his knowledge of theology from the Westminster divines, he was naturally disturbed by any innovation, since he was conservative in his whole moral and intellectual framework. He very quietly, but persistently, allied himself to the party called Old School, in the controversies of thirty years ago, and was associated with the founders of the Seminary at East Windsor. Yet he never lost confidence or respect for the ministerial brethren who differed from him on the questions then in discussion, but gladly welcomed them to his pulpit, and sought their aid in the revivals with which his preaching was blest in 1814, 1819, 1822, 1831, 1840, 1842, 1851, and 1858.

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Brought, himself, to the saving knowledge of Christ during a great awakening, he always prized these harvest seasons, and was especially watchful for the souls of his flock. His Christian sagacity was manifested in his conversations with those who were enquiring the way of salvation.

As a preacher, his sermons were distinguished for their clear statements, their evangelical spirit, and their earnest desire for the religious welfare of his hearers. They were delivered with slight gestures, yet with a quiet force which attracted and impressed. As a man, he was modest, kind, self-controlled and true. He seldom gave utterance to his deepest feelings, was calm under trial, and returned enmity, when it assailed him, with words of quietness. He was reticent concerning his own religious convictions and feelings, except that his discourses breathed the spirit of devotion. Thus, standing here, he said: "I have great reason to be humble for my unfaithfulness and deficiencies, and to ponder solemnly, with the deepest feelings of my soul, on the enquiry, "Have any of this people perished in consequence of my being a minister of the gospel here? Have all been saved who might have been saved if their minister had been faithful unto them?" He was far from morose, but a gentle humor lighted his features and played in his words, when he felt perfectly at home. Like his father, he often smiled, but seldom laughed. His semi-centennial sermon has many gleams of humor, uttered with a pensive gravity. Thus, referring to the ancient custom of limiting the right of suffrage to church members, he remarks: "Probably no person at the present time will advocate the views of the early settlers of New England on this point, or justify the wish to vest all civil, as well as ecclesiastical power, in the church, or rather, in those who were members of it; but it admits of a question, whether such a policy would

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be more disastrous to social improvement and happiness, than the one now so much in vogue with many, that evangelical religion disqualifies a man for any civil office." How inimitable the satirical sketch of the modern method for ascertaining the qualifications of a man for the ministry, by the Committee of a church, who close with these interrogations: "1st. Is he a popular man and a good speaker? 2d. Has he pleasant social qualities? 3d. Is he a man of superior talents—a smart man? 4th. Can he live on a small salary? And, lastly, when all these are satisfactorily answered, with hat in hand and foot on the threshold—*I suppose, Sir, he is pious.*" His face was the index of his character; placid, yet resolute; kind, but restrained; a gentle eye and a firm lip; thoughtful and self-controlled, denoting a man of courtesy, who never suffered himself to be shaken by passion. He was more than he seemed, and so it will be felt, now that he has gone from your homes.

In 1824, the General Association of Conn. met at Goshen, when Samuel Goodrich was Moderator, Noah Porter and Timothy P. Gillett were Scribes. The two who were then associated in the vigor of middle life, have continued to a venerable old age in the parishes where they were first ordained, and have passed away, within a few weeks of each other, from the scenes of their earthly toils, to their heavenly reward; the last of their generation. They belonged to a social state which has disappeared, but whose simplicity, virtue and piety, may be profitably studied and imitated. It has been my privilege, from childhood, to be familiar with one of those homes of a New England Pastor, where neatness and order preside; where domestic work glides so smoothly as never to jar; where sundown on Saturday begins the Sabbath, and the very air is redolent of purity and sanctity. When, sixteen years ago, I was welcomed to the dwelling of this good man, I felt at home,

for here also was the same style of living, so exactly in harmony with the station and character of the New England ministers of the olden time, of Edwards, and Hopkins, and Bellamy. Reminding us of the past, they teach us that their generation has departed.

Rev. Mr. Gillett had been subject, for many years, to acute attacks of disease, and it was one of these, which, on last Wednesday night, prostrated him suddenly, and, after a short illness, destroyed his life, at the advanced age of eighty-six years. During much of the time, he was unconscious, or was racked with intense pain. On Saturday evening, however, in a moment of relief, he folded his hands, saying, "let us pray," and led the devotions of the watchers. He soon relapsed into his former lethargy, and, on Monday morning, Nov. 5th, passed to the presence of his God and Saviour.

His Christian life and service needed no dying rapture to seal our hope concerning him, but, like himself, quietly, meekly, silently, he crossed that threshold which separates time from eternity, to enter upon heavenly offices with the same assiduity and fidelity which distinguished his earthly service.

Any word of mine would avail little for the comfort of the widow, who must henceforth wait, by her lonely hearth, her own hour of departure. I would borrow the language of the deceased, at the funeral of an aged minister, nearly thirty years ago.

"While you now feel the widow's loneliness and sorrows, you also have full confidence that the sovereignty of God in this bereavement is right and glorious. You have seen that the end of your beloved husband was peace. You trust that his Divine Master and Saviour, who had sustained and comforted him all his life long, was with him until the end, and your hope is that with this dear friend all is now well; that his

trials and conflicts are now over, and that, as for him to live was Christ, so to die was gain. You cannot but bless God for giving you such a companion, making him so useful to you, and sparing him to you so long. I trust that you will find that God has sent even this affliction in his faithfulness. You can now cast all your cares on Him who careth for you. And, as the attractions of the world diminish, while one and another who have been dear to you have left it, those of heaven increase, as more and more of your Christian friends, whom you hope to see there hereafter, are gathered into it. And while you are ready to say, the Judge of all the earth doeth right, you will feel that if you are to live and labor a little longer for Christ, it is only for a little time, and then the Master will come for you also." With these words your husband comforted another, and these words should comfort you.

This congregation and this town cannot appreciate how much they are indebted to the life and labors of this servant of God. We are about to follow his earthly remains to the old burying-ground, where all your former Pastors and their wives, save one, sleep; but their influence remains, although their bodies return to dust.

Centuries ago, in a chapel in Central Europe, worked a patient artist, who, with a loving hand for the honor of the Redeemer, carved a pulpit, in a design of wondrous beauty. The neighbors ridiculed the waste of time and talent on so elaborate a device, for a small reward; but the finished task awakened even their uncultivated admiration, and the work became the glory of their sanctuary. That humble carver has added renown to his city, and is still honored for the cunning devoted to so sacred a purpose. In the coming years, you will learn to admire and venerate this faithful workman in fashioning souls into the image of Jesus Christ.

Fathers, and brethren in the gospel ministry, while one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, let us labor to adorn the Church of the living God, by winning souls, through His grace, to the love and service of the Redeemer ; for that will be an everlasting memorial, and a crown of glory in the day of the Lord Jesus.



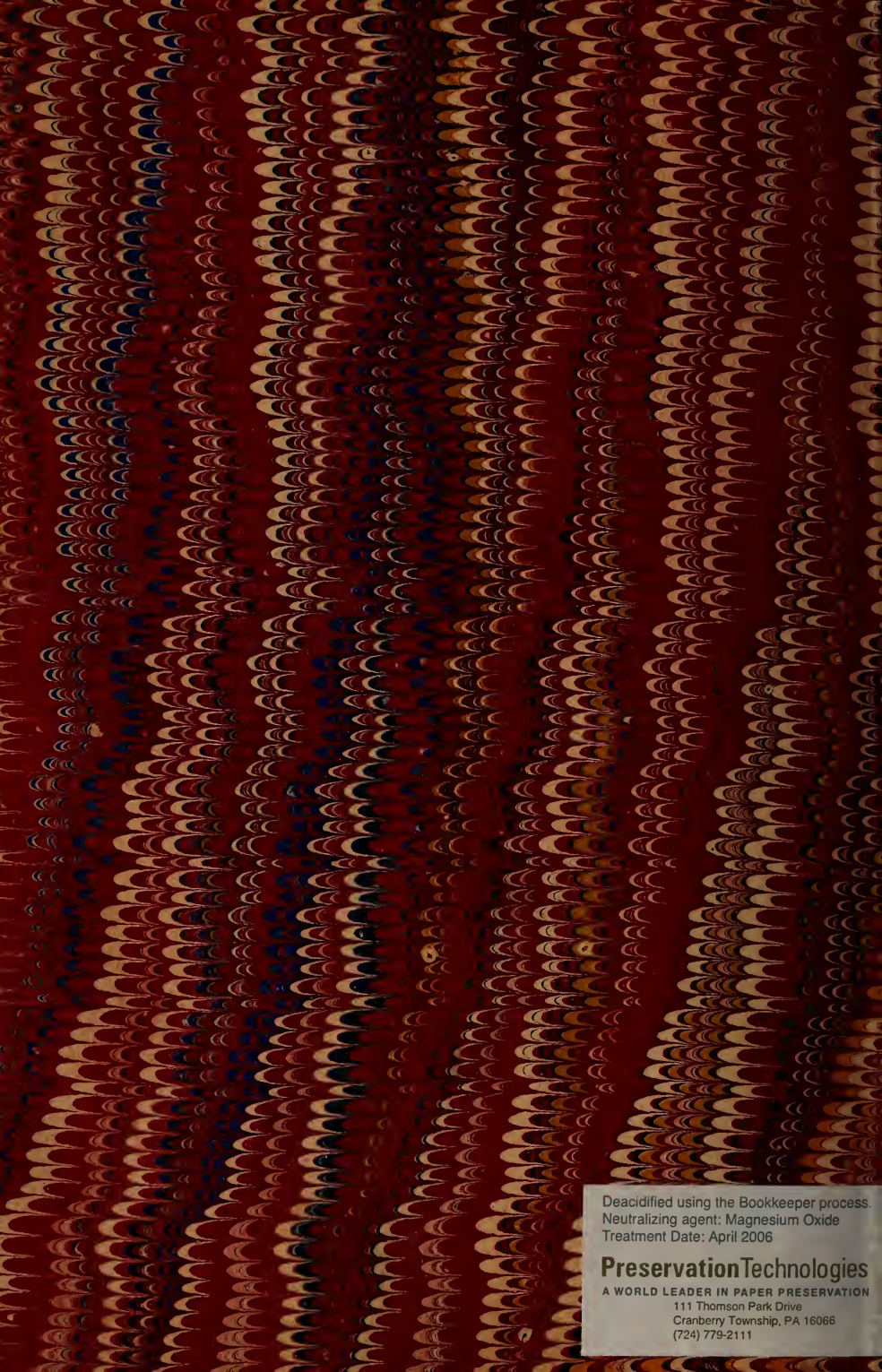










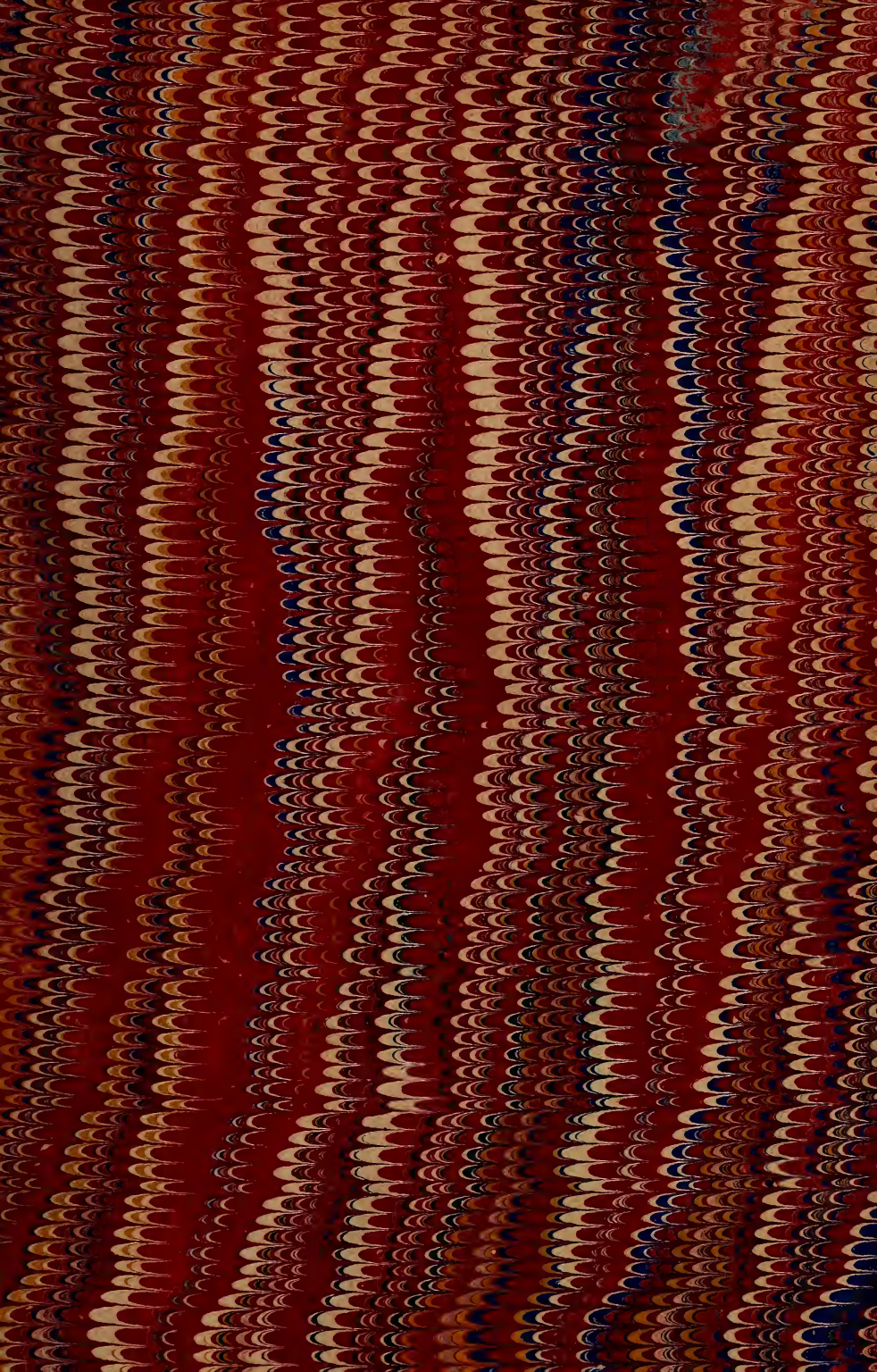


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