

[Fuller, Savillion W.]

Death of Br. S. W. Fuller

After a period of suspense, alternating between strong fears and faint hopes of the final result, undissembled sorrow succeeds. The Philadelphia *United States Gazette* of the 18th inst. brings us the painful intelligence that Br. Fuller has left us at last—that we shall no more behold his beaming countenance and kindling eye, or feel the cordial grasp of his friendly hand. God's will be done; for however painful the parting, He has assured us that we shall meet again to part no more forever.

The following is the obituary published in the *Gazette*—we give it in full.

A. B. G. [Rev. Aaron B. Grosh]

On Sunday morning, 17th inst., Rev. SAVILLION W. FULLER, aged 36 years, late pastor of the Second Independent Church of Christ (called Universalists), of a lingering illness, which he bore with Christian fortitude. His friends and acquaintances are very respectfully invited to attend his funeral, from the residence of J. Albertson, S. E. corner of 3d and New street, on Tuesday afternoon, at 3 o'clock, without further invitation. Funeral services at the church, Callowhill between 4th and 5th street, by Rev'ds. Asher Moore and John H. Gihon, at 4 o'clock, P. M.

Br. S. W. Fuller, whose obituary will be found in another column, was extensively known and generally beloved by our readers in this section. A later mail has brought us the *Nazarene*, (which was edited by him,) clothed in mourning, and giving an extended account of his last moments, and of his burial. We think we can not do better than give the following extracts—they are by Br. J. H. Gihon, one of the proprietors of the *Nazarene*.

Br. Fuller was taken down with bleeding at the lungs in December last—continued very unwell, with a few intermissions, and confined to the house, up to the day of his death. But his pen was not idle. The *Nazarene* was supplied, almost every week, with able articles in defence and illustration of Universalism, even up to the last number before his departure. By a post mortem examination, made at his own request, it was ascertained that he died of tubercular consumption, which, years ago, must have been so firmly seated as to prevent all attempts at its cure. Yet who heard him murmur or complain? And he continued thus resigned, patient, and sweetly joyful and grateful to the end. The following are the extracts.—A.B.G.

“On the morning of Friday, the 15th inst., the evidences of approaching dissolution became too visible to be doubted, and from that time to the moment of his decease, his strength gradually departed. He was perfectly sensible of his situation, and referred to it with calmness and the most perfect resignation. He never indeed, throughout his illness, expressed a desire to live, without assigning as the reason, that he could benefit his fellow creatures by preaching the gospel or writing in its defence. As this seemed to be the sole object of his life when in health, so it appeared to be his only desire when struggling against the power of the destroyer.—And although he was victim to one of the most distressing diseases which it ever falls to the lot of man to suffer, still it is a remarkable fact that he was never heard to utter a complaint, while his lips were very frequently employed in praising his Maker for the mercy and goodness which he felt had ever been extended toward him. On Friday afternoon, at his request, several friends sung with him the 471st hymn in Streeter's collection, titled “Loving Kindness of the Saviour...”

“Br. Asher Moore then addressed the throne of grace in prayer, and when during this exercise reference was made to the love and mercy of the Heavenly Father, and the bright

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prospect he has opened to our view of the blessedness of a future world for his earthly children, our dying brother exclaimed, "amen" or "praise the Lord;" and when these devotional exercises were concluded, he expressed himself greatly refreshed by their performance. On Saturday evening, when he was much weaker, he exerted what little strength remained to take part in similar services. When about to take leave of him at ten o'clock, I informed him that I did not expect to see him alive again, stated that I [w]ould preach to his people in the morning, and asked him if he had anything especial for me to say to them. "Tell them," he replied, "that I shall undoubtedly die believing all that I have ever preached to them."

"When the sun appeared through his window on Sunday morning, he thanked God that he was permitted to behold its light, and intimated that it was the last time he [w]ould enjoy that privilege. At about seven o'clock, he desired an attending friend to read to him the 15th chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, at the conclusion of which he spoke joyfully of the blessed assurances it contains; and about half an hour later he exclaimed, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" These were the last words he was heard to speak. In less than a half hour from this time he was numbered with the dead. He died about eight minutes before eight o'clock, without a murmur, a struggle, or a groan. He seemed to suffer no pain whatever, but passed quietly away as the flame of a taper whose oil was expended. He had reached the age of thirty-six years, seven months and seven days, eleven years of which time were employed in the gospel ministry.

"The funeral of Br. F. took place on Tuesday afternoon. The procession was formed at 4 o'clock and moved from his late residence toward the Callowhill Street Church, where the burial services were performed. The concourse of people was immense, filling the spacious house in every part, while many were unable to gain entrance. The corpse was placed in front of the desk during the services, which were conducted in the following order:

1. A dirge by the united Choirs of the two Churches of this city.
2. Reading of the Scriptures, by Rev. J. H. Gihon.
3. Hymn, 488 of Hymns of Zion
4. Prayer, by Rev. John Perry
5. Hymn, 246 of Hymns of Zion
6. Sermon, by Rev. Asher Moore. Text: I Cor. xv, 57: But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
7. Prayer, by Rev. J. H. Gihon
8. Dirge, by the Choirs
9. Benediction

"After the performance of these services, the corpse was deposited in the silent earth in the passage directly in front of the Church, where the worshippers in entering the house of God, may look with grateful sorrow upon the tomb of their departed Pastor."

Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate, Utica NY, 29 May 1840
[a Universalist newspaper]

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Rev. S. W. Fuller

I have been thinking for some time past that a brief sketch of him whose name stands at the head of this article, accompanied with a few suitable reflections, might prove somewhat interesting to a large number of the readers of the *Christian Ambassador*. This paper is now very generally circulated in regions where our departed brother was well known; and it seems to be the most fitting medium for the communication that follows.

Mr. Fuller was born in Lebanon, Ct., October 10, 1803, and was the second son of a family of eleven children. His parents were respectable people. We mean that they pursued an honest calling for the means of living, and are believed to have been temperate and industrious...

Of the first few years of Mr. Fuller's life it seems unnecessary that we should particularly speak. Indeed it would be but a sad tale of suffering. At the tender age of six months it was feared that a violent inflammation of the lungs would remove him from the embrace of his parents. A recovery from this sickness left him extremely feeble for several years, and he was consequently unable to vie with his brothers and sisters in their studies at school. Having attained his eleventh year he suffered a most severe affliction, from which he never entirely recovered to the day of his death. A fever of long continuance finally contracted its violence in one of his limbs, and for a season entirely deprived him of its use. At length, however, he was enabled to walk with the aid of crutches, and for many years before his death he considered a cane sufficient for his assistance. But his mind suffered through the afflictions of his body; and when he became ripe in his boyhood years, he was but an infant in physical strength and in intellectual attainments. His parents and friends regarded him with pity rather than with pride, and could see nothing in his enfeebled body and uncultivated mind to encourage the hope that he would even be able to earn his bread.

At the age of fourteen years the prospects of our suffering lad began to brighten. Residing near the bank of a river and being fond of water, it was soon perceived that frequent bathing was beneficial to his health, and even caused the crippled limb to increase in size as well as strength. In a year or two he was blessed with a measure of health, though his lameness still continued. His commendable ambition to be useful now began to manifest itself in his attempts at manual labor. Supported by his crutches he was seen in the field assisting the reapers, and striving in every possible way to render himself useful to his doting and affectionate parents. This course of life seems to have been continued from his fourteenth to his seventeenth year, during which time he was quite unfitted for any kind of mental efforts, but still slowly increased in strength of body. He exhibited a remarkable fondness for the use of tools, and soon voluntarily determined to devote himself to some mechanical occupation. And what kind of a trade does the reader suppose that a lad of seventeen years, and supported on two crutches, would be likely to choose? He resolved to be a cooper! And with scarcely any instruction he soon became sufficiently acquainted with the business to execute any kind of work that was needed in the place where he resided....

The mind of Mr. Fuller, during his bodily labors in the shop, began to awake from its slumbers and to exercise its powers. He realized a most ardent thirst for knowledge, and evinced a disposition carefully to examine every subject that happened to engage his thoughts. But he was yet without instruction in the commonest branches of school education, and his ideas were far in advance of his knowledge of letters. His parents and

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friends, witnessing the developments of his mind, and feeling convinced that he would ultimately be obliged to depend upon mental efforts for a support, urged upon him the necessity and importance of employing all the means within his power to accelerate his education. He appreciated their counsel, and immediately applied himself to the task. His progress was rapid and astonishing. He grasped everything with a strong hand. Having mastered one study he pressed right onward after higher attainments. And, gathering new strength at every step, and constantly becoming more fond of learning, it is believed that he accomplished in the space of a few months that which requires in many persons the toil of years.

It now became manifest to all who knew him that the feeble and sickly youth had within him the germs of a most vigorous intellect; while at the same time it was perceived that he was influenced in all things by purity of purpose and the most generous motives. He studied everything, and drew his lessons from men [sic] as well as from books. His warm social feelings led him into company, while his discriminating mind enabled him to make a prudent selection of associates. His conversational powers became improved; and his good sense and agreeable manners introduced him into the society of such as were qualified to impart knowledge. Though he was sufficiently modest, he never lacked confidence in himself, and he gained the esteem of others by his own feelings of commendable self-respect. He waited for none to take him by the hand and lead him, but conscious of his own ability and worth of character, he held up his head like a man, and commanded the respect of his fellows. And though always unobtrusive in his demeanor, throughout the whole course of his subsequent life he was known of none without being esteemed.

When about eighteen years of age, a circumstance occurred which had a most favorable influence upon his mind, inasmuch as it drew him into public notice, and opened before him the way of advancement. He became connected with a debating society in the neighborhood of his residence, and there enjoyed the first opportunity of exercising his speaking powers. His success was greater than he had ever expected. He had accustomed himself to *think*, and was not a man of mere words; and what he said, therefore, carried with it convincing power. His imagining mind delighted in discussion, and at every successive attempt he became more fond of public speaking. And we cannot doubt that his connexion [sic] with the little country debating society was not only the means of vastly improving his mind in knowledge, but also laid the foundation of his future character as an eloquent and most effective public speaker....

That Mr. Fuller gave early indications of a logical mind, and rare abilities to defend his own opinions, is evident from the following incident, related to the writer by one of his brothers. Soon after he had entered the debating society, his mind became much exercised on the subject of religion, and, influenced by the most honest and fervent desires to serve the Lord acceptably, he betook himself to a Methodist meeting to "seek religion." His youthful prejudices led him in that direction—for he was not a Universalist by education. His feelings became enlisted and he exhibited evident signs of deep inward agitation. It was hoped that he would pass safely through the common process of conversion, and be numbered among the hopeful! And special and untiring efforts were employed in his case, because he was considered a great reasoner, and it was believed that his influence, if secured, would be very considerable. But the Lord's time for his conversion had not yet come, and the efforts put forth were all unavailing. This incident, the truth of which we have

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no reason to doubt, shows something of the rapid progress which he had made in mental culture, and of the estimation in which he was held by those who knew him. Indeed it was not long before he took charge of a school, which he conducted with great credit to himself, and much to the satisfaction of his employers. He manifested a peculiar fondness for this calling; and it tended in no small degree to enrich his little stock of knowledge and to increase his acquaintance with human nature. And for the space of about seven years his time was variously occupied in teaching, cooperating, and performing the labors of a clerk in a country store.

It was not until he had attained his twenty-fifth year that Mr. Fuller finally made a choice of a calling for life. But when that decision was once formed in his mind, it was as unalterable as the law of Medes and Persians. While on a visit from home he was invited to hear a Universalist preacher. Though much opposed to the sentiments of the speaker, and with no expectation of hearing anything that he could approve, he attended the meeting, and gave a listening ear and an understanding heart to the word that was spoken. His mind was deeply and favorably impressed with the exercises of that occasion; and after diligent inquiry and fervent prayer he became fully convinced that what he had heard was the truth of God. He instantly sought an acquaintance with the preacher, whom he found to be a man of cultivated mind and a warm and generous heart. He began to read and study the Holy Scriptures, and such other works as were calculated to acquaint him with the true grounds of Christian faith, and to render his mind familiar with the whole field of theology. One book after another was pondered with absorbing interest; and a continuance in study only served the more fully to confirm him in the persuasion that the doctrine which he had so lately heard for the first time was the true Gospel, which is "good tidings of great joy that shall be to all people." And he soon solemnly resolved that his life should be devoted to the arduous but pleasing work of proclaiming that Gospel. The character of his preaching and the success of his labors are well known, and we need not attempt to trace his steps through the whole course of his public career....

Let us bring into view a few prominent traits that were exhibited in the character of our departed friend.

He was a man of truly generous and benevolent feelings. Few men have ever been as far removed from selfish aims. His soul was filled with the spirit of philanthropy, and he delighted in the happiness of his kindred race... While he was fearless in the advocacy of his belief and in the maintenance of his own opinions on every subject, and never truckled to any man, he was forbearing in spirit, and always manifested that true liberality of feeling which is the highest glory and the brightest excellence of human character. His connexion with various institutions in the city where his earthly labors were closed, threw him into the company of many persons widely differing from himself on the most important subjects. But they all respected and loved him. None will say that he ever courted popular favor at the sacrifice of principle. Nay, all who knew him will testify that he was unyielding in maintaining his belief on every subject. Still he was a general favorite among all classes of his acquaintances. And even the enemies of his religion, as well as the people to whom he ministered in holy things, were ready to drop the tear of regret over his mortal remains.

After the death of Mr. Fuller, a person decidedly unfriendly to his peculiar sentiments, said of him in address before the Philadelphia Lyceum, "Our deceased friend, as a public speaker, possessed a ready command of language, which, united with his unusually clear conception and benevolent disposition, qualified him, and rendered him always willing to

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supply an emergency.... His exhibitions of truth were so lucid that it was impossible not to understand him; and although we might not always agree with him in the results of his investigations, there was a sweetness and beauty united to a firmness and manliness in all his literary disquisitions, which secured the kind feelings of his most decided opponents. He also possessed a mental tact as rare as it was sensible and amiable, in avoiding such remarks as would appear like taking an undue advantage; he appreciated properly the *neutrality* of Lyceums on disputed moral and religious points, and strictly adhered to the spirit of that law.... No sketch of Mr. Fuller can be complete which neglects to say that he was the zealous, enlightened, decided friend of education—the education of the mind and the moral feelings. Like his Divine Master he loved the world, and exerted all his mental and physical energies to promote its happiness....”

It now seems almost needless for us to say that Mr. Fuller was unsurpassed in the excellent social qualities of his nature. He delighted in society, and studied to render himself agreeable to all with whom he chanced to associate. Full of chaste wit and humor, and always pleased to witness the enjoyments of others, his mirthfulness gave life and spirit to the social circle. His visits were everywhere hailed with demonstrations of joy, and even the countenances of children were lighted up with smiles of pleasure when he was seen hobbling into the house. Still his soul was deeply imbued with the spirit and power of true religion, and his cheerfulness was always tempered with moderation and controlled by discretion. His good sense taught him the difference between mirth and rudeness, and freedom and licentiousness. And though fond of a pleasant anecdote and a good joke, the influence of his life was always in favor of morality and religion.

Mr. Fuller's life was a practical manifestation of the cheerful character and happy influence of the religion of Jesus Christ... Joy was his portion in life; and peace and holy resignation to the will of God in the hour of death gave comfort to his spirit, and enabled him sweetly to breathe out his life with the pious and fervent exclamation, “Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

Such was Savillion W. Fuller: a man of rare benevolence of character—of rich and varied social qualities—of cheerfulness of disposition—of pure and genuine religion. His life was a public blessing, and his early death will ever be lamented by all who knew him. Sacred be his memory in the heart's affections!

A. M.

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[a Universalist newspaper]

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