

[Skinner, Dolphus]

Rev. Dolphus Skinner, D.D., died in Utica, New York, October 2, 1869. He was born in Westmoreland, New Hampshire, May 18, 1800, and was a younger brother of Rev. Warren Skinner, of Vermont. The years of his minority were spent in labor on a farm, attendance of a neighboring Academy, and teaching school. His theological studies were pursued with Rev. Samuel C. Loveland, of Reading, Vermont. He was licensed at the session of the General Convention, held in Warner, New Hampshire, September, 1822, in company with Revs. L. Willis, T. F. King, M. B. Ballou, and others less known. His first sermon was preached in Londonderry, Vermont, July 22, 1822, and he was ordained at the Session of the Northern Association, held in Whiting, Vermont, September, 1823. After itinerating in Vermont and New Hampshire, and being located for a season in Langdon, New Hampshire, he was settled at Saratoga Springs, in 1825. After a pastorate of two years at the Springs, he removed to Utica, New York, where and at Deerfield in the immediate vicinity of Utica, the remainder of his life was spent.

Soon after his settlement at Utica, Dr. Skinner originated, or at least took the editorial charge of the "Utica Magazine." The following year, the "Evangelical Repository," then published at Troy by his friend Rev. L. Willis, was united with this, and together they formed the "Evangelical Magazine," with which Mr. Willis was for a time associate editor. With the beginning of 1830, Mr. Skinner purchased the "Gospel Advocate," which for several years had been published at Buffalo, and his paper thenceforth became the "Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate." It would be impossible to calculate the influence which this periodical exerted through Central and Western New York, and, indeed, throughout a large portion of the United States. It gained a circulation which no paper among Universalists had hitherto attained, and which has been rarely if ever surpassed since. Dr. Skinner was devoted to it. He threw his heart and strength into it, and his industry was as untiring as his resources seemed inexhaustible. At the close of 1835, Dr. Skinner disposed of the "Magazine and Advocate," though he continued for several years after to act as associate editor. He was no less a preacher than an editor. For several years he continued pastor of the Society in Utica, and when he withdrew from that he probably did not lessen essentially his clerical labors. Next to the Rev. Stephen R. Smith, with whom he was long associated in ministerial duties, he was undoubtedly the most popular preacher ever in Central New York. Possessed of a commanding person and a voice of great volume and softness, combined with such a ready use of language as never left him to hesitate in expressing the most rapid course of thought, he was always a favorite with the people, who listened to him with unwearied pleasure. His discourses were generally doctrinal; but he never forgot the moral bearings of Christian truth, and his appeals to the conscience, and all the higher affections of nature, could hardly fail to make a good impression upon those who heard him. His kindly nature and warm sympathies made him especially desired at funerals, and he was consequently called from far and near on such occasions. Since February, 1848, he had preached three hundred and twelve funeral discourses, and in performing this service must have traveled many thousand miles. How many such sermons he had delivered prior to the date above, is not now known, but probably an equal if not a still greater number. He was very faithful in attending Associations, Conventions, and other denominational gatherings, and his influence was always in favor of progress and peace. He was calm in council, and wise in measures

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designed to promote the general welfare. He loved to preach, and felt that it was the appointed means for enlightening and saving the world; and he continued to perform the functions of his office as a minister of the gospel down almost to the close of his life, and long after his faltering health admonished him to husband his strength, and after his pecuniary affairs absolved him from all occasion to provide for his daily bread. During his ministry of forty-seven years he preached, as appears from his own memoranda, 5039 discourses, and of these sixteen were delivered during the present year. His last sermons were preached at Braman's Corner, and Burtonville, New York, seventy or eighty miles from Utica on the 18th of July, 1869.

Besides editing the "Magazine and Advocate," Dr. Skinner was the author of several valuable books and pamphlets. Among these may be named his Letters to Drs. Aiken and Lansing, his discussion with Rev. Alexander Campbell, a labored article on the Tariff question, Letters on Episcopalianism, etc., besides almost innumerable communications to our religious periodicals. He wielded a ready pen, and used it upon all occasions when he thought he could contribute to the welfare, temporal or spiritual, of his fellow men.

As he took a lively interest in all reforms, as temperance, anti-slavery, and the like, so he deserves special mention as the friend of education. To his wise counsels and patient persistent endeavors, the Clinton Liberal Institute is largely indebted for its present degree of prosperity, and in him the school has lost one of its best friends.

In his social and domestic life, Dr. Skinner was eminently happy. His temper was singularly calm, and his deportment always such as becomes the Christian and the gentleman. At home he was genial and affectionate, and among his friends ever a welcome guest. As a good citizen he was patriotic, always taking a lively interest in the political affairs of the country, and not withholding his voice when he thought it would add to a juster public sentiment or action. The late rebellion agitated him greatly, and while he gave his youngest son to the service of his country, he avowed his willingness to shoulder the musket himself rather than see treason triumph over civil liberty.

For several years his health had been failing. A few weeks before his death, he was seized with an attack of chronic difficulty, attended with typhoid fever and chills. His sufferings were great, but he retained his faculties unimpaired to the last. He was fully aware of his situation, and said to his physician, "I am an old soldier, and am about to receive my discharge." To a remark of his wife he said, "My work is done. God is calling me." As death drew nearer, his sufferings were lessened; and after a night in which little pain save a sense of great exhaustion, he passed away, as the sun rose, without a struggle or groan.

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