

[Fisher, Ebenezer]

## DEATH OF REV. DR. FISHER

The Funeral Obsequies. A Sketch of His Life.

On the morning of Friday last Dr. Fisher started from his house as usual to attend to his duties in the college, conversed with Mr. H. H. Conkey and Mr. F. J. Perkins on the way, called into the post-office and express office and did some business there, conversed with Mr. Judd and Mr. H. D. Ellsworth in the office and then walked on toward the college. When within eight or ten rods of the building he was seen to throw up his hands and fall, by the daughter of Mr. West, the steward, who called to her father. He, with Mr. Lamphere, a student, came and raised him up. Mr. Lamphere asked him if he had slipped.—“No, I fainted,” was his reply, and those were the last words he ever uttered. They raised him up and he walked a few steps, then sank down again. The students immediately took him up and carried him into one of the rooms of the college, and laid him upon the bed. He gasped a few times and died, surrounded by professors and students. Doctors Hoag and Conkey were immediately summoned, who pronounced it a case of heart disease. He had been troubled with this disease for several years, but seemed to feel better this winter than usual and his friends did not anticipate so speedy a termination of his life. He commenced a new term last Wednesday with the other professors and heard recitations on Thursday with his usual vigor. He attended a social prayer meeting at Dr. Weaver’s Thursday evening and spoke, and engaged in his family devotional exercises on the morning of his death without any signs of weakness. He died at the post of duty, prepared to go wherever his Master should call.

When he was carried into the college the students of both departments were assembling for devotional exercises. After his death, all gathered in the college chapel, when Rev. Dr. Gaines read a portion of the fourteenth chapter of John, and Rev. Dr. [Orello] Cone offered a feeling prayer and all further college exercises were suspended. A procession of trustees, professors and students was formed, who escorted the body to the now desolated home which he had left only a few minutes before. Telegrams were sent to his friends. The children with their families, Dr. E. E. Fisher of Richville, and Mrs. E. A. Bigelow of Great Falls, N.H. arrived on Friday and Saturday. Grief settled down upon all their hearts, for Dr. Fisher had been an honored and useful citizen of Canton for nearly twenty-one years, and was respected and loved by all.

### SKETCH OF HIS LIFE

The following information regarding his life we glean largely from a sketch written by Rev. Massena Goodrich, who was connected with Dr. Fisher

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during the years 1860-1, in his labors at the Theological school. Dr. Fisher was born on the 6th of February, 1815, in what is now the town of Charlotte, in Washington county, Maine, and was therefore a few days more than sixty-four years of age. His father was a pioneer in that region, and became the father of eight children. Dr. Fisher was the second of the number, and was trained to the hardships and toil of a pioneer life. The little settlement in which his boyhood was passed was largely composed of emigrants from Massachusetts and New Hampshire, who carried with them a love of knowledge. Their common schools were therefore better than might have been looked for in a region of so little wealth. To these schools he was mainly indebted for his elementary instruction. He spent three or four months in the Maine Wesleyan Seminary, but was more indebted for his succeeding improvement to the careful reading of the various books that fell into his hands. He was early taught the orthodox faith but his belief was changed by his reading and other causes when he was about sixteen years of age.

At the age of twenty-two, his thoughts began to turn toward the ministry. He was shortly after elected to the Maine Legislature and was chosen a member of the committee to revise the statutes of the state.—While employed in this work he became acquainted with leading Universalists at Augusta, and was encouraged by them to enter the ministry. A letter of fellowship was granted him by the Maine Convention of Universalists in 1840, and on the 26th of November in the same year he preached his first sermon in a school house in Milltown. The following July he took charge of the parish at Addison Point, and remained there six years, occasionally preaching to neighboring societies.—About two years after settling at Addison Point, he married Miss Amy W. Leighton, of Pembroke, Maine.

In April, 1847, Dr. Fisher removed to Salem, Mass. Salem was a large and important field, which seemed to open a larger sphere of usefulness.—His acquaintance was enlarged and his power was acknowledged in the city where he lived and throughout the state. But in the midst of his success he was afflicted with a disease of his vocal organs and was obliged to give up his labors. In November, 1853, after his recovery, he accepted an invitation to South Dedham. Here he remained four years and a half, and his congregation were thinking pleasantly of a life long union with him when he was called to the Presidency of the Theological school at this place. Dr. Ballou, then President of Tufts College, was asked by the Universalists of this state to designate a suitable man to place at the head of the School.—He selected Dr. Fisher. The choice has needed no commendation to any member of the denomination. The remainder of Dr. Fisher's history is familiar to every household in which this paper will carry the sad news of his death.

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In January, 1858, the invitation was given, and in the following April he removed with his family to this village. On the 14th of that month the School was formally opened.—An address was given by Dr. [Thomas J.] Sawyer, and an introductory discourse by Dr. Fisher as principal. The day was gloomy; a wet snow fell continuously, and the streets of Canton were full of mud. But if the weather was adverse on the day of beginning, other circumstances were also unpromising. Though a commodious building had been reared, it was almost literally empty. Its only furniture was a few seats, its only library a few books which teacher and students carried in their hands. Only five students came the first term.

For two years and a half Dr. Fisher carried on the school alone. In 1860, Rev. Massena Goodrich came to his assistance and labored two years with him. The war came on and attention was withdrawn from the school. It was impossible to pay Mr. Goodrich and he withdrew. In September, 1865, Rev. Dr. Cone accepted the position Mr. Goodrich had held. In the meantime Rev. Dr. Lee, who was at the head of the college department, had assisted Dr. Fisher with some of his classes. In 1869, Dr. Lee returned from his European tour and has since been associated with Drs. Fisher and Cone in their labors.

We have noticed what Dr. Fisher had to begin with when he came here twenty-one years ago to build up the prospering University that is now the pride of our village. Through difficulty and trial he has wrought manfully day by day through discouragements before which others have quailed, until now at his death the institution has assets to the amount of a quarter of a million, and at least one-fourth of all the ministers of the denomination are using in their work the weapons which he as their instructor has placed in their hands.—His influence in the Universalist world has been second to that of no man, and is wider than the continent we inhabit. In the old countries, to-day his students are laboring, and the golden sands of the Pacific witness the influence of his manly teachings.

After this statement of Dr. Fisher's services, he needs no eulogium. His works praise him. All who knew him bear witness to his rare sagacity and fidelity. All have been impressed with his unaffected but profound piety, his patience, his penetration of character, and his overwhelming desire to make his students men of piety and efficient Christian ministers. His daily deportment added emphasis to every counsel he gave them, and indeed, his daily deportment has been an influence of power on all with whom he has come in contact. His presence will be sadly missed. But if this may be said of his neighbors and friends, how much more unspeakably true it must be of the family who loved him so well.—A daughter and son mourn a loving father, but with most crushing weight does the blow fall upon the wife who for thirty-eight years has taken upon herself a portion of his trials and cares,

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and rendered to him every service in her power with untiring industry and womanly love and sympathy. She mourns as none other can.

THE FUNERAL

At one p.m. Tuesday, the sorrowing friends and neighbors, the students of the University, and the relatives and friends from a distance, gathered at the late residence of Dr. Fisher to witness the last solemn burial rites of the burial service, and take the last look at their departed friend. Select passages from the Scriptures were read and a prayer offered by Rev. Dr. Weaver, the pastor of the Universalist church. A procession was then formed with the trustees of the University at the head, followed by the students and citizens, who marched in advance of the hearse.—Six students of the Theological school were the bearers of their revered teacher. The Universalist church was filled as closely as possible and many went away unable to gain admission. Dr. Fisher began the services by reading from the Scriptures. Dr. Cone offered prayer. He then spoke at some length of the services and character of the departed, the loss his death was to the University and to the denomination. He was followed by Rev. Dr. Lee and Rev. Dr. Gaines, with feeling and appropriate remarks. Prayer was offered by Rev. Crehore, former pastor of the society. The coffin was then placed in the vestibule where the audience as they passed out viewed the remains. The procession was re-formed and passed to the cemetery, where the last simple service was performed by Dr. Weaver.

During the afternoon the business places of the village were closed and the silent, sad grief of bereavement seemed to possess all. Among those who were present from other places were Dr. McVicar, principal of the Potsdam Normal School, several professors of the school and many of the students. Revs. Pullman, Gunnison, Sweetser and Hooper of New York were on their way here but were prevented by the snow from arriving on time.

*St. Lawrence Plaindealer*, Canton NY, Thu. 27 Feb 1879

Transcribed on 28 Apr 2008 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY