

**Pages from a Useful Life**  
**A Brief Memorial**  
**of Rev. Olcott Bulkley**

“Death is the veil which they who live call life; We sleep and it is lifted”

This little Memorial of a faithful minister of Christ your dear father is written as a bright lesson shining through a season of deep sorrow in the past. May his children feel that “he being dead, yet speaketh.”

Your loving Mother.

November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1894

I have sometimes thought a Memorial of your dear father would be greatly prized by his children, and so I have determined to write this little tribute to the memory of a devoted husband and happy years.

The loving forms we knew in the past come to us in our waking hours and in the silent watches of the night like blessed ministering angels to soothe and direct maybe our paths through life. They urge to greater faithfulness in the performance of loving care to those spared us here, claiming our love and guidance.

We remember with tenderness each little word or act inexpressibly precious; - faults are forgotten, and the mantle of charity is spread over the character as the pure and spotless mantle of snow covers the many unsightly portions of earth.

And as the gardener culls here and there some choice flowers possessing a delicate fragrance combined with its beauty; - so we may gather together the many happy traits of character that belonged to our loved one: strength of purpose, strict obedience to God’s requirements, fidelity to duty, cheerfulness, patience, and a devout Christian walk and conversation. May these help to mould the characters of his children, and serve as incentives to live honored and useful lives!

Your father was born in Sheldon, Vermont, March 28, 1808, the youngest of six children. His great ancestor Rev. Peter Bulkley came to Concord, Mass in 1635; a Congregational minister who had left the English Church; he was as a man of learning and deep piety: having a large family; and to find homes many of them moved to Conn, later on to New York and other states; - filling honorable professions and callings in life. Your grandfather was named Asa and his wife, Esther; both lived to a good old age, having only a small patrimony behind, but an untarnished name which we are told is rather to be chosen than great riches!

Your rather worked on the farm until nearly of age, attending the nearest school during the winter term, and later on taught school in Canada. Many amusing things I have heard him relate doubtless familiar to you older ones.

One little incident done of his tender years I will mention: he was in the habit of going with three little boys to play in a large empty store room, and finding one day bright buckles and tin articles they determined to set up a store for themselves and sell out these forgotten things. But the honest good fathers heard of it and giving the young chaps a sober lecture on the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment, marched

them in a body to the jail and locked them up, where they remained until nearly dark: finding the culprits penitent, they were taken home.

Often he has talked of the arrangements in his Vermont home, - the large open fireplace and immense logs of wood used in it; the great strings of peeled apples and pumpkins hung up to dry for winter use; the rich yellow maple sugar and syrup – made in the early spring time; and the merry sleigh rides enjoyed by young and old during the long, cold winters.

Then came the great Thanksgiving Feast which brought families together once more; the labor of preparation occupied weeks for filling the butteries with cakes and pies; - mincemeat, pumpkin and fruit. A large chicken pie with a well fattened turkey or goose accompanied by cranberry sauce and the necessary side dishes of vegetables furnished a bountiful dinner for the grave, pious Christian men and women who first attended services in the Meeting House.

Christmas was seldom observed in those early days of New England, being regarded as something cast aside after leaving Tories and loyalists in the Mother country.

I think your father left his old home in 1831; going first to Burlington and commencing to read law; there he was brought under Episcopal influences, and being impressed with the services of the Church he determined to join her communion, and was confirmed by Bishop Griswold. Later the question “Lord, what will thee have me to do?” was presented to his mind, and acted upon by conversation of himself to her ministry. He soon entered Bristol College, Pa; a self-supporting Institution; he worked three hours daily studying hard and living upon poor fare, then went to Wilmington, Del. and continued his studies.

I find by an entry in his journal he reached the Va. Theological Seminary Sept. 26, 1834 – he wrote, “The way seems opened to me to go forward with my studies, yet I have not a cent of money with which to help myself: but I will commit my way unto the Lord, who will bring it to pass.” Here was faith following upon obedience to God’s command “go preach my gospel.”

The course of study comprised 3 years; assistance was received from Va. Education Society, and refunded after he graduated and settled in his Parish. The change in most respects was a happy one, both refining and elevating; introduced to good, pious people: he went into the country occasionally teaching a Sunday School, and doing missionary work.

Having heard in Vermont the subject of slavery discussed and knowing the bitterness of feeling felt towards the South, he determined to ask for information at the Seminary, so one day he inquired of a friend “where he could find the slaves”? The gentleman much amused replied, “you are seeing them here every day”. I have heard him remark that seeing the slaves in Va well dressed and looking happy removed all prejudice from his mind.

He was ordained Deacon July 13, 1837, and advanced to the Priesthood the following year by Bishop Moore and called to Christ Church, Calvert Co. Md.

Early in 1840 took charge of missionary points in Frederick Co. at Catoctin Furnace and Point of Rocks. Sometime in Jan. visited St. Mark’s parish and preached: long after I heard him express surprise that the minister’s wife and the young people should have been out sleighing after 12 p.m. Sat. Our hostess had set the clock back during the evening.

It was about this time I was introduced to Mr. Bulkley, meeting him occasionally at Barleywood, and my own home. Mother greatly enjoyed his earnest practical, religious views, and they formed a friendship and appreciation of each other lasting through life. Months passed, and when the young clergyman asked me to share his lot and help in doing his Master's work, I consented though with misgivings as to my fitness. We were married Nov 19, 1840; by Rev R.W. Phillips, my friend and pastor. This union brought increased happiness, the memory of which is inexpressibly precious.

We remained with mother the first year and then moved to St. Mark's parsonage as he was now in charge of the parish. It was there May 26, '42 that dear Willie was sent us. The pastor labored faithfully there and at other places given, adding many efficient, useful members.

The last of 1843 brought an invitation from Bishop Meade to go to Cumberland Co. Va, which he accepted and he went down in Nov. I joined him the following spring with our little boys - Channing just six weeks old.

The people were refined and cultivated, greatly attached to the faith of our Church, and aided their Rector in his work by giving generously and living consistent lives. Ten happy years were passed among them and with sorrowful hearts we turned our faces away, when circumstances led Mr. B in '54. to move to Fluvanna Co. Finally he decided to move West to make better provision for our young family; and left Jan 1<sup>st</sup> '56.

Moved to Saline Co. Mo in '57 with seven children; bought land and he entered up on the duties of St. Thomas parish, preaching at several other points occasionally; he was the pioneer missionary of Saline Co, going to other places to perform ministerial duty for church members.

In '61 our Civil War commenced; our older boys were at school in Lexington, and had to return home. In September, Willie went away with the Southern troops, returning in Dec. sick with camp fever. That winter was the last our boys sheltered under the home roof. Our hearts were filled with dark forebodings as a cruel civil war was inevitable, and we knew we must send our boys to battle for Southern rights.

In Aug '62, our brave, noble sons left home; news came occasionally of their welfare and safety; then that Channing had fallen and Willie was wounded. Oh! Those long weary months of suspense; and at last 8 months later news came of Willie's death; so many cherished hopes for the future ruthlessly torn from our hearts – human wishes frustrated – but we found comfort.

Your father's ministerial work had not been interrupted by the turmoil of contending forces; he went from place to place teaching the story of the Cross, and comforting many poor hearts bereaved during these dark days. It seems as if his own soul had been freshly consecrated to the Lord and he labored with greater unction from on high; many seals were given to his ministry and will be known in the day when the Lord cometh to make up His jewels.

Bishop Hawks had not visited us for a long time and had died in April' 68.

Our children were now growing up and needed better educational advantages – so when your father was called to Jefferson City the winter of '68, he determined to accept the charge, feeling that his usefulness would be increased and the children could be educated, he moved in Dec. to the Seminary. Ellen and Dr. Pelot had been married in Sept. and we must leave them in Saline Co, much to our grief.

The additional cares of the school with the arduous duties of the parish and acting as Chaplain of the Penitentiary - broke down a naturally strong constitution; and in '74 he resigned and returned to our home in Saline. We had formed many happy associations and made many warm friends.

Bishop Robertson came to us the Christmas of '68, and from that time on until the close of his wearied labors in our Diocese, he proved himself a steadfast, firm friend. I can never forget his familiar face, polished manners, and dignity of bearing, combined with graceful suavity of conversation. We loved to welcome him to our home and listen to his kindly words. But the work of his large Diocese ended a useful life early in May '86.

Bishop Tuttle you remember succeeded the latter part of the year, and we soon learned to appreciate his strong loving heart, and deep Christian sympathy; we confided in him as a friend and father in God. Very tender and considerate he ever was our poor sufferer, providing for his temporal wants, and giving spiritual consolation.

After Mr. Bulkley returned to the farm he was unable to perform regular duty; preaching occasionally, or reading the Church service. The second fall after coming home he had nervous fever, slowly regaining health, but was never very robust again. Charlie took charge of the farm, and we hoped perfect rest would bring back his former health.

Then eczema made its appearance, the winter season gave comparative relief and he could remain on the farm; but summer he suffered fearfully, and with increasing nervous prostration.

Everything was done to alleviate pain, but remedies failing, he generally went to Sweet Springs for the baths, and to have Dr Pelot's medical services; nothing could exceed the untiring attentions of both the Dr and Ellen, and he often gratefully spoke of the comforts provided for him in their home.

Our household watched constantly to render loving services to the patient invalid - always bearing with Christian resignation his trials. Years passed without any hope of the disease being subdued: he felt his work on earth was nearly finished and left all in God's hands. It was a season for living the hidden life of the Crucified one, and learning the consolations of the blessed Comforter. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Dr. Pelot was called to his rest in Paradise Feb 24, '88; a deep sorrow to us all; and when he was so greatly needed in helping to mould the characters of his children. These days of sorrow tested our faith and cheerfulness; but "everything that befalls us is part of our heaven and education", and "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God"; so we learned to trust the Disposer of events.

The last two years, however, were a greater test of faith than we had ever before experienced; increasing weakness and suffering with your father, and the loss of our property - but that was met with humble resignation: "when He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble"?

The summer of '90 was very warm and tended to increase the malignity of his disease; the poor hands were nearly helpless for use. Turning from the agony experienced, I would only mention the spirit in which the dear sainted one bore his sufferings - as I realize the assurance that he now dwells where no sickness is known and where his waking was inside the gates of an everlasting world.

In October, Mr. Lytton came to Blackburn as our pastor: his friendly calls and constant kindness were warmly appreciated; his cheerful conversation helped us greatly.

Nov came: Mr. Bulkley seemed stronger, walking out every day and attending to little things, showing a good deal of the old activity of former years.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> we celebrated our Golden Wedding, having with us Mr. Wm Bulkley and family with our five daughters and Charlie. Ellen and Ollie were absent. I think your father thoroughly enjoyed the day. In the review of the past 50 years we remembered that joy and sorrow had mingled in our pathway through life; "yet our lives had fallen in pleasant places," and "we had a goodly heritage."

Thanksgiving and Christmas were both kept as usual though subdued feelings; we were thankful that God had shared us many blessings, and our family ties remained unbroken.

Our new Bishop came to Blackburn Dec. 30, visited our home, and gave cordial greetings, especially to the one heavy head and bowed framed indicated the nearness of the time "when the silver cord would be loosed, and the wheel broken at the cistern." Bishop Atwill was impressed with the venerable appearance and dignified bearing of our dear one, and said told him on leaving how reminded he had been of good Bishop Hopkins.

The last remaining weeks were spent cheerfully and quietly, reading a good deal, and often in conversation expressing his wishes in the event of his death; calm and self-possessed, bearing with fortitude the sorrows resting upon our home circle.

In imagination I can see him late in the evening sitting in his chair by the fireside in deep meditation; now and then repeating precious texts of scripture. Or one of our devotional hymns from the Prayer Book, after asking me to supply a line that slipped his memory: dear sainted one! I felt that he was soon to pass into "a safe lodging place and holy rest."

Feb 16 he went to Marshall and returned the next evening aged in his appearance, and quite ill; that night pneumonia set in. Tenderly nursed by his children, and receiving skillful attention from Dr. Bridges, besides having Mr. Lytton's loving services during the close of his short illness, - he passed calmly away the night of Feb 23, 1891, "into eternal joy and felicity." He was laid to rest at Blackburn Cemetery, his pastor and Mr. Higson reading the Burial service - as he had requested alone should be used.

Mr. Lytton wrote of this sad time: "Mr. Bulkley's last illness was brief; he was confined to bed less than a week, when he heard and obeyed the message: 'The Master is come, and calleth for thee.'" Always patient, gentle, and loving he bore his sickness with the quiet, uncomplaining spirit of the well trained Christian veteran.

Only a few hours before he died, he spoke his last words to his sorrowing wife and children. Everything was exceeding quiet in the room, when Mr. Bulkley speaking with great difficulty, said: "I am not afraid to die. I have no merit of my own, but I have firm faith in the saving merits of my Saviour."

As the last moments drew on, his pastor began the commendatory prayer, and before it was finished it was answered, the soul of our dear brother was in the hands of the faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour, and precious in his sight being washed in the blood of that Immaculate Lamb that was slain to take away the sins of the world.

A life sanctified by prayers, disciplined by abundant suffering, ever thankful to God, active in good works, cheerful and resigned – meet preparation for the life of a glorified saint in the immediate presence of the Father and Redeemer.

"Then farewell Night. Of darkness now no more. Joy breaks; shines; triumphs; 'tis eternal day."