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HENRY R. SCHOOLCRAFT

Died in Washington, D. C., on the 10th day of December, 1864, aged 72 Years. His Funeral Services were conducted by Rev. Dr. Gurley, of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Rev. Dr. Hall, of the Epiphany, (Episcopal Church,) and Rev. Dr. Samson, President of the Columbia n College.

Chronicle Print, Washington, D. C.

DR. SAMSON MADE THE FOLLOWING REMARKS:

It is expected, on an occasion like this, that special allusion will be made to the religious convictions, rather than the secular life of the deceased. It is a tacit recognition on the part of all men, that the dying will have a religious belief, and that they ought to make it known to some one ere they leave this for another world. It is expected, too, that a harmony will be pointed out between the religious belief of the thoughtful man, called by the circumstance of his near approach to death, to avow his faith and the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Revelation. This again is a recognition of a universal conviction among men in Christian lands that the teaching of the Scriptures, which we regard to be from God, are pre-eminently His word, and that “the truth as it is in Jesus,” is the only sure support when the soul is about to leave earth. It is, yet again, and equally expected, that the cast of mind of each man, especially of one eminently philosophic in spirit, and scientific in his pursuits, will impart something of its character to the external hue of his Christian belief and practice. Our dear and noble friend departed, was a man sincerely religious, a Christian, consistent and devout; and his views of Christian truth and his practice in his religious life, are the more instructive and valuable, because of the eminent position he held as an original explorer in science, and a laborious man of letters.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft was descended from an English gentleman who settled in Albany, N. Y., during the reign of George II. He was born in 1793, at the manor of Rensalærwyck, New York State. Having enjoyed the advantages of a common school education, he pursued advanced studies, first at Union College, Schenectady, New York, and afterwards at Middlebury, Vermont. Leaving college about the close of the last war with England, at the time when attention was specially called to the resources of the Mississippi Valley, Mr. Schoolcraft was, at the age of twenty-four years, in 1817, induced by the influence of De Witt Clinton, the able Governor of New York, as well as by his own tastes, to engage in an exploration of the country west of the great river. Proceeding to St. Louis,
he spent about two years in extending his researches westward, through the territory composing
the present States of Missouri and Arkansas, examining especially the mineral and industrial
resources of the region, as well as the features of its natural history in its plants, animals, and
savage inhabitants. Returning home, he published two treatises which greatly stimulated emigration
thither, and brought his peculiar capabilities as a scientific explorer before the public. In 1830, Mr.
Schoolcraft received instructions from the War 4 Department to proceed into the Upper Mississippi
Valley, to endeavor to terminate the renewed hostilities existing between the Chippewa and Sioux
tribes. The expedition consisted of twenty-seven men, including a botanist and geologist, and a small
military party. Now it was that the enthusiasm to discover the actual source of the Great Father
of Waters took possession of Mr. Schoolcraft’s enterprising mind. Sometimes on foot, sometimes
in frail bark canoes, he spent months of dangerous toil, up many falls and rapids, and through
numerous lakes, until he arrived at the actual source of this mighty river, on the great water shed of
the Mississippi, which he christened Itasca Lake, after running up the United States flag; and, indeed,
he left it flying there in triumph over his success on the 23d day of July, 1832, a fraction less than
three hundred years, after the Spanish, under De Soto, had discovered its mouth. Mr. Schoolcraft
published a narrative of this expedition, and he is believed to be the only man in America who has
seen the Mississippi from its source in Itasca Lake to its mouth in the Gulf of Mexico.

In the latter part of 1822 he was appointed by President Monroe a special agent to visit the Indian
tribes of the Lake Superior region, and from this time commenced that long series of investigations
as to the habits, language, and ancient traditions of the native red men of America, which filled up
his active and eminently illustrious life.

About this time he made the acquaintance of Miss Johnston, an accomplished young lady, who
had just returned from Europe, where her father had sent her at the age of eight years, to receive
every advantage of education. Mr. Johnston was a gentleman of the highest connections, fortune
and standing, from the north of Ireland, who bad emigrated to America during the Presidency of
Washington. He possessed great enthusiasm and romance of character, united with poetic tastes,
and became enamoured of the tender-eyed loveliness of the daughter of Webojeag, (a celebrated
Indian war sachem and ruling Cacique of his nation,) whom he shortly afterwards married. His first
child, the above-named Miss Jane Johnston, was now, at the age of seventeen, placed at the head of
her father’s household, where her refined, dignified manners and accomplishments, attracted the
notice and admiration of the numerous visitors to that seat of noble hospitality. To Mr. Schoolcraft
she seemed especially fitted to be the handmaid and interpreter (for she thoroughly understood
the Indian as well as other languages) most needed by him in the mission to which he had devoted
his life. They were united in marriage in 1823, and lived together until 1842. With her aid and
influence, Mr. Schoolcraft gained an access to our Aborigines, and an insight into their secrets and

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private life and the peculiar modes of thought of the red man which would otherwise have been impossible, and which no white man of his philosophic mind and scientific enthusiasm has ever enjoyed. Numerous successive treatises came from his pen (perhaps thirty odd different works) descriptive, historical and scientific—some legendary, as that of Hiawatha, others philosophical, as that relating to the peculiarities of grammatical structure in Indian nouns, which makes all animate beings masculine, and all inanimate objects feminine. So greatly were these treatises appreciated by men of science, that as early as 1829 Mr. Schoolcraft was elected an honorary member of the Royal Geographical Society of London, since which time more than twenty similar honors have been conferred upon him in Europe.

In the year 1847, about five years after the death of his first wife, during a part of which time Mr. Schoolcraft was engaged among the Indian tribes of Western New York, he was united in marriage to Miss Mary Howard, of South Carolina, a descendant from an old English family that had settled upon a Sea Island plantation, under a grant from the King, in early colonial times, and which ancestral heritage has, for unbroken generations, been a cherished home to the family. This lady, pre-eminently endowed by nature and culture, seemed to Mr. Schoolcraft, to the day of his death, providentially sent to him to be his associate in the higher mission of giving a scientific form and a literary finish to the results of his former explorations, especially as his afterwards crippled physical condition rendered it necessary that much of the labor of the pen should be performed through her as his amanuensis. From that time, 1847, the city of Washington became his residence, and he has been chiefly devoted, by order of the United States Congress, to the collection of those six large quarto volumes of Archives of Aboriginal Knowledge, which consist of documents relating to the history of the aboriginal tribes occupying the territory now in possession of the United States—a work which, while it is valued in his own native country, is much more appreciated by the numerous Scientific and Historical Associations of Europe. At his death he left unfinished material for two more volumes of similar size, whose collection and compilation his long-protracted crippled condition prevented him from completing.

Not long after his settlement in the quiet life of study in Washington as Indian Historian, the reaction of his former exposures began to show itself in his physical frame; he was crippled by rheumatic affections; for many years he was unable to go much in society; for several years he could move about his house only on crutches; during subsequent years he could not be moved except on a chair fixed upon wheels; while during the last three or four years he has been confined to his bed with his limbs bent completely under him. Though suffering excruciatingly at times, his great spirit rose so completely above his physical condition, that no one in his company for an hour would hear even an allusion to his infirmities and pains, or would even think of them as he sat and filled up the moments with vivacious and fascinating discourse. He died, at last, from a dry mortification of the portions...
of his body rendered nerveless by rheumatic or paralytic affections. His countenance, however, in
death, was full of the health and sweet radiance of his best days, and his high, open brow grew more
majestic as his noble mind still triumphed till the very last moment of his existence.

Few were aware of the deep religious spirit of Mr. Schoolcraft, and of the long and rich Christian
experience which it was his to enjoy. On the Sabbath before his death it was the privilege of your
speaker—who, from his long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Schoolcraft, has been associated
with the clergymen to whom more appropriately belong the religious services of this occasion—
on Sunday last it was my privilege to spend an hour and a half at his bedside, standing the whole
time, while he held me by the only limb he could use—his left hand. He went over, in calm and
delightful review, his whole course as a Christian man. He spoke of the time when, thirty years ago,
in his mature manhood, alone in the savage wilderness, with only his Bible as a religious companion
and counsellor, he, as he termed it, “found Jesus Christ.” He spoke of the joys of that meeting as
familiarly as he would of the visit of a congenial friend and benefactor; dwelt on the blessed months
and years that followed this union to and spiritual communion with “that friend closer than a
brother;” and alluded also to his public profession of religion, and his connection with the church as
soon as his return to civilized life allowed him the privilege. When the great services which he had
rendered to science by his laborious and sacrificing life were referred to, “Oh,” exclaimed he, with
earnestness and emphasis, “that is nothing, nothing compared with my interest in Jesus Christ as my
Redeemer.” He said much of his former intercourse with and attachment to the Christian ministers
of Washington, and repeated the request, “Pray for me.” Turning to his adopted daughter, who stood
near his bedside, he spoke of the dangers to which youth in their training are exposed, and of his
earnest desire that those committed by Providence to his care should be early disciples of Jesus. In
all this long conversation there was no enthusiasm, nothing that could be called mere emotion, but
his mind was calm and clear and thoughtful as when he sat with his pen at his literary toil.

The characteristics of Mr. Schoolcraft’s religious belief were the following, and as to them he spoke
with the simplicity of a child: First, He believed the Bible—the Old Book revered by the wise and the
aged—to be in truth the “Word of God.” In this he, like other men of his cast of mind, such as Newton
and Grotius, and kindred spirits among American statesmen and men of science, had a conviction
most unlike to that of professional and controversial defenders of the authenticity and inspiration
of the Sacred Scriptures. He spoke as one, every power of whose mind had been mastered and
bowed in reverence and subjection before a teacher manifestly divine. Second, The doctrine of the
Divine Teacher and Redeemer had in his mind resolved itself into two simple propositions: “I am an
imperfect, sinful being, and in Jesus Christ,” (the distinctive name by which he always spoke of the
Savior,) “God has provided a living, personal Redeemer adapted to my need. He had no theories to
propose or advocate; there was in his faith the simplicity of dying Dr. Alexander, of Princeton, who,
after more than forty years as a teacher of young men in theology, on his death bed summed up his practical deep convictions in the two same propositions.

In the practical influence of his religion on his life, Mr. Schoolcraft exhibited these three marked characteristics: *First*, He believed it his duty to make a public profession of his faith in Christ, and that because Jesus Christ, his Redeemer, had required it. Hence, as soon as his circumstances allowed, he united with the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church of this metropolis. In this he made no pretension to perfection of life, but only of faith in Him who has promised to cleanse from all sin those who trust in and obey Him. *Second*, He sought to cultivate in his own person every grace of his Divine Master's character, and that not only because of the loveliness of virtue in itself, but because it is pleasing to Him who would have all men to possess these graces. His humility was remarked by all his intimate visitors, for he never alluded to his life's work in social intercourse unless its rich stores were drawn from his as a favor to his hearers. He was a devoted and faithful son, husband, father and friend—speaking of his bosom companions in their absence such commendations as he might not in their presence, and sacrificing for his natural and his adopted children what many a parent and guardian fails to devote, giving cheerfully his time and his property in order to promote their moral as well as their material welfare. *Third*, Mr. Schoolcraft felt it his duty to sustain the Christian ministry, and that because of their high mission to save men for this world and for the future. How often, after he was unable to go out in person, has he gathered a few of us socially in this parlor to spend an evening in Christian converse. He realized the imperfection, mental and moral, of Christian ministers. He knew they could not excel in every science, and he thought it no diminution of their worth as religious teachers when, in interpreting some portion of God's word in the light of science, he differed from them. He knew, too, that they, like Elijah, the greatest of prophets, were men of “like passions” with other men, and though it grieved him when any one, as he thought, was turned away from his high mission to seek an applause less than that which comes from the Divine Master, he had no censoriousness to exercise toward them.

Mr. Schoolcraft died as he lived, calm and clear in intellect till he breathed his last. In the chill and pain of his last struggle, as his wife was embracing him to give him warmth, he constantly repeated her name, “Mary! Mary!” in a tone that seemed to imply that he wished her to be with him still as the companion of his spirit in its journey to its new home. On the last Sabbath of his life, allusion being made to the fleeting, unsatisfying fame that comes from men, as compared with that which awaits a Christian when he meets his God, with a smile that bespoke at once how little he esteemed the one as compared with the other, “Yes,” he exclaimed, “are not *they* worthless; but Jesus Christ, is not He *precious*?” Who can grieve when such a spirit has reached its true sphere; when such a mind has realized its aspiring, and found a field worthy of it? May his companion, so worthy of him, feel that
she is more exalted by his new honor! May his children possess the treasure which, in his last wish, he craved for them—an interest in his Redeemer as their Guide and Savior!

Mr. Schoolcraft has been almost continually in the service of the United States Government for half a century, and as it is believed that the knowledge of his long and useful life and triumphant death will be of moral service to the rising generation, all the newspapers in the country should publish this funeral discourse in the interests of our nationality.