

1889 THE LATE GEN. BRUCE.

Funeral Sermon by Rev. J. C. Mead.

The funeral of Gen. Benjamin F. Bruce took place at Canastota, Monday afternoon. Among those in attendance were Hon. A. M. Clapp of Washington, formerly Public Printer, a life-long friend of the deceased; ex-Canal Commissioner Wright, of Geneva, and ex-Canal Commissioners Jackson of Lockport, Fay of Rochester, Ogden of Penn Yan, and Thayer of Hoosic Falls. Interment was made in the Rural cemetery at Lenox.

The following is the sermon preached by Rev. J. C. Mead pastor of the Presbyterian church in this village. We publish it in full as it contains a good sketch of the General's life :

You remember that Wendall Phillips said in his oration on Idols "The honors we grant mark how high we stand, and educate the future. The men we honor and the maxims we set down in measuring our favorite states the level of the morals of the time"

Eulogy of Gen. Benjamin  
Bruce 1889

# Eulogy of ~~2nd~~ 3rd Gen. Benjamin Bruce (cont.)

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That silver tongued orator never spoke truer words, and we are here to-day to apply this principle and in honoring a representative public man of this county yes of this state and government to honor ourselves and our past history as we do final honors to the man whose popularity in public, social and home life, brings this assemblage of mourning relatives and sorrowful friends. Eulogy in these times is so cheap that it is little less than insult to offer it to the worthy. Competition is a christian virtue and comfort. Words, deeds, character, wherever they are embodied in life, are the true eulogists of greatness and of merit, and speak with an eloquence that is not borne of genius but of one's own life. In the brief moment that I may fittingly take on an occasion like this, I can but poorly and partially vivify for you a career and character universally recognized as generous, noble, good, true; a life that has long been popular with all classes of people.

There are circumstances that make this occasion one of peculiar interest to the public, as these facts of the life and experiences of Gen. Bruce explain.

Gen. Benjamin Franklin Bruce, was long one of the foremost citizens of Madison county. Next to Gerrit Smith, who died 14 years ago this month, he was, in his prime, the most prominent figure in politics, if not in social life, in the county. For the past 20 years, however, he has been an observer rather than a participator of public affairs. He was an earnest Whig until the formation of the Republican party, when he became identified with the new organization. Gen. Bruce's grandfather came from Scotland, where he traced his lineage back to the Bruce who came over from Normandy with William the Conqueror, the progenitor of Robert Bruce and others of that name who sat on the throne of Scotland. His father, Joseph Bruce, was one of the pioneers of Madison county, emigrating from New England about the beginning of the present century. His mother was of Dutch descent. Joseph Bruce, father of the General, settled at Quality Hill, in the town of Lenox, and in the days before railroads and canals were thought of, did for that time a very large business as a country merchant. There Benjamin Franklin Bruce was

born May 2, having, at his death, nearly completed his 77th year. He early manifested an interest in politics, and by his eloquence on the stump speedily attained great influence in the Whig party. Like all other Whigs, he worshipped Henry Clay. He took great interest also in military affairs, and when quite a young man received from Governor Marcy the appointment of Brigade Major and Inspector of the 35th Brigade. In 1851 Governor Hunt appointed him on his staff as Inspector-General—the first appointment ever made to that office. He was again made Inspector-General by Governor Clark and was re-appointed by Governor King—thus serving on the staff of three Governors and for a period of six years.

General Bruce's first civil service office was that of member of the constitutional convention of 1846, the convention which framed the present Constitution of the state, barring the amendments since adopted. When Governor Bouck, from the committee on franchises, reported that "every white male citizen" should have the elective franchise, General Bruce moved to strike out the word "white," and supported his motion with great power and eloquence. But the convention as well as popular sentiment was against him. The present generation cannot readily appreciate the moral courage it then required to advocate negro suffrage without a property qualification, as General Bruce did. Of all the members of that illustrious body General Bruce, it is said, was the last survivor. Among his associates in the convention were such men as Michael Hoffman, of Herkimer, the great democratic leader of the body, his young Lieutenant Samuel J. Tilden, Ex-Governor Bouck, the afterwards Lieutenant Governors Patterson and Floyd Jones, Ambrose L. Jordan, of Columbia, Henry C. Murphy of Kings, the great lawyer Charles O'Connor, Levi S. Chatfield, John K. Porter and Gouverneur Kemble. Its President was John Tracy of Chenango. Gen. Bruce's reminiscences of that historic gathering when elicited in private conversation, were very interesting. His admiration for the able leadership of the venerable Michael Hoffman, although not for his party was unbounded. General Bruce's death destroys, probably, the last link between the authors of our State Constitution and the generation of to-day.

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The Legislature of 1861 chose General Bruce canal commissioner, to fill a vacancy caused by death. The republican state convention renominated him in the fall but the division of the republican vote caused by the "People's ticket," on which was the name of another candidate, resulted in his defeat and the election of Hon. William W. Wright. Two years later, however, General Bruce was again candidate for canal commissioner and was elected. At the close of his term he was elected to the Assembly of 1867, and was influential in bringing about the election of Roscoe Conkling to the senate. General Bruce's public life closed with that legislature. He did not, however, cease his interest in politics. Of all the old, "Whig orators" there was none more eloquent, and none more popular on the stump. A commanding presence and a magnificent voice lent force to his utterances, and his impassioned appeals were models of popular oratory — such as are rare in these days.

In July last Gen. and Mrs. Bruce celebrated the fifty-fifth anniversary of their wedded life. Four generations were present on this interesting occasion, Gen. D. H. Bruce of Syracuse, is the only son of the deceased, and Mrs. R. W. Stroud, widow of a former canal commissioner, is the only daughter. Two brothers, Joseph W., the well-known prohibition orator, and Edouard N. Bruce both of Lenox, survive him. Gen. Bruce's death produced a profound sensation in the community in which his life was spent, and by which he will be sincerely mourned.

His social life,—His warm, sympathetic nature, generous heart, fidelity to friends, and courtoousness to all.

His homelife,—One among a thousand No man loved home and family more. His constant gratitude for his care while sick. His home life was most beautiful.

The religious life of a man is best gauged by the expressions that come voluntarily and in the privacy of friendship. No words can speak for the Christian faith of this heart, that has ceased its manifestation of thought, as the following extract from a letter to an old friend, dated 6-45 of the day on which the fatal illness came to him. They are probably the last words written by

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N the hand so ready with pen. "But at 62.  
our period in the evening of life, my  
dear friend, we must expect when signs  
of our decaying nature as we near the  
end, I see myself already at the evening  
gate, near the ferry. Soon at the ban-  
quet the old Charon will come for me.  
He never comes but once—only once—then  
I must go, never to return. I hope for  
heaven through my redeemer, who died  
and rose again, bringing life and im-  
mortality to the chiefest of sinners,  
who believes in Him. In other words,  
I believe in the Christian religion. It  
is not ideal it is not alone temporal in  
its advantages but eternal in its benefits. 3 46  
God grant that we may experience 0 00  
them."

II I address men in public station, and I  
represent a general curiosity to know 3 46  
the level in times past, and in the at-  
tributes from the past and the life, as  
you know it better than it has been my  
privilege to know it in the past. It is  
sad when the strong hand of death snaps  
one by one the links that join the present  
to the past; this is one of the important  
links because one of the last. No one  
loved his party and his country more  
and no one more severely denounced the  
corruption of the government he loved. 1 15  
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