

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.)

1860

That silver tongued orator never spake IP.  
 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 popu-  
 larity in public, social and home life,  
 brings this assemblage of mourning re-  
 latives 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 Mad-  
 ison 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 coun-  
 ty. For the past 20 years, however, he  
 has been an observer rather than a par-  
 ticipator of public affairs. He was an  
 earnest Whig until the formation of the  
 Republican party, when he became iden-  
 tified 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 pro-  
 genitor of Robert Bruce and others of  
 that name who sat on the throne of Scot-  
 land. 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 speed-  
 ily attained great influence in the Whig  
 party. Like all other Whigs, he wor-  
 shipped Henry Clay. He took great in-  
 terest also in military affairs, and when  
 quite a young man received from Gover-  
 nor 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 of-  
 fice was that of member of the constitu-  
 tional convention of 1846, the conven-  
 tion which framed the present Constitu-  
 tion of the state, barring the amend-  
 ments since adopted. When Governor  
 Bouck, from the committee on fran-  
 chises, reported that "every white male-  
 citizen" should have the elective fran-  
 chise, 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 advo-  
 cate 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 demo-  
 cratic leader of the body, his young  
 Lieutenant Samuel J. Tilden, Ex-Gover-  
 nor 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 Gouver-  
 neur 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 Consti-  
 tution and the generation of to-day.

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 Edom 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 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 banquet 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 immortality 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. God grant that we may experience them."

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ll I address men in public station, and I represent a general curiosity to know the level in times past, and in the attributes 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.

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