

Loyal C. Phelps

DEATH OF L. C. PHELPS, SR.
April 27, 1891
Father of the Early Settlers Passes Away.

One by one the pioneers of Iowa are going. The years are but few until those men who braved the dangers and sacrifices of frontier life will be gone. But two weeks ago our people buried the founder of the city. To-day in Hawthood his dust is mingling with yet another, 37 years of whose life and strength was given to the growth of this little city and the development of the beautiful prairie around it. Mr. L. C. Phelps came to Grinnell in April 1854 to make it his home. In April 1891 he came to us a second time—this time for burial. An account of his life was given so well in the paper by Prof. Parker that we print it. His death occurred in Chicago last Monday night at 9:45. There came to Grinnell with the body Wednesday morning, Mrs. L. C. Phelps, L. C. Phelps, Jr., B. B. Phelps, and L. A. Phelps. Clayton Harrington, wife and son, of Boone, were also present at the funeral. The arrangements were under the direction of R. M. Kellogg, pallbearers, H. H. Robbins, D. S. Morrison, E. S. Bartlett, S. J. Buck, Lucius Sanders and J. P. Lyman. The services were held at the church at 2 p. m. The first song by the choir was, "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Dr. Magoun read a few appropriate selections and offered a prayer. Prof. Parker read a biography of the deceased as follows:

The earthly life whose close has just stirred our hearts with tenderest memories was commenced at New Haven, Ct., January 16, 1807. Loyal C. Phelps was left an orphan when seven years old, and at the age of 22, married Miss Juliette Cook in his native town.

Between these events came the varied experiences of an apprentice and of a young business man in N. Y., Rochester and Buffalo, of service to the first transportation line on the Ohio canal, and as business manager of a line of steamers on the western lakes. During that time he saw much of the west and of the north.

After his marriage he was connected with the Burlington and Rutland R. R. in Vermont, and spent some years as a farmer in Illinois and in Wisconsin. While our fellow townsmen, into whose face we looked in this house for the last time only a few days ago, was pondering the question of his contemplated location in the west, he asked Mr. Phelps, his old Vermont neighbor, to join him in the new colony. He also asked his opinion whether a location in Missouri or in Iowa would be preferred. His reply was, "Go to Missouri and the people will take your anti-slavery head off. Go to Iowa and I will go with you."

In 1851 Mr. Grinnell came to Iowa, to this then vast, treeless prairie, and Mr. Phelps followed him only a few days later. Scarcely a man or a family came to the town or passed through it for years afterwards without becoming a debtor to him and to his family for food and shelter and happiest impressions of this choice bit of New England dropped down by most gracious influence in Iowa.

A pioneer then, he bore the privations of pioneering with serenity, was diligent in business without the confusion of ledger and put his head and purse into every public enterprise. He often held subordinate office in town, and was mayor three times. In the early local movement for higher education, he was continuously a member of the board of University trustees, was president or one of the managers of the library fund, and was an Iowa College trustee from 1853 to 1874. He held the office of Post Master several years, and until he refused to endorse the views of President Andrew Johnson, as they became too offensive to his former friends.

Though he was not forward to speak in his relations with the church, he was always prompt in attendance, generous in its support and in heartiest sympathy with its ideals. His principles were not cherished for exhibition, but they molded

action. They were the rock on which he stood fast. The early students who found a home in that family were attracted to all college duty, to all religious opportunity.

But the details of a life as a fellow man brings sunshine into the family, represents justice and mercy among his neighbors and walks humbly with his God, may give us but a slight view of his total life influence.

Our obligations to the founder of the town are just now fresh in all our thoughts, they are just now causing grateful expressions in word and deed. It is well; it is beautiful; it is an honor to human nature. It shows that even if "the evil that men do" lives after them their "good deeds" are not always "interred with their bones." But great and varied public good is rarely done by one alone. There are others who aid in laying foundations, who furnish materials, who bring co-operative skill and service.

Our friend devoted his life to those foundations, and none more faithfully than he. He came here because he sympathized with the objects of the founder and also because he felt a warm friendship begun in his native place. The Jewish David had his Jonathan, but no Jonathan was ever more loyal to any David than Loyal C. Phelps to Josiah B. Grinnell. In that loyalty, broadly, truly viewed, lies the chief significance and beneficence of his public influence among us. When the work done in early years shall be fairly analyzed and duly recognized to each workman, our friend's share will be larger, fairly larger, than has ever been distinctly recognized heretofore.

But the vigor of manhood declined. The hours of labor closed. The step grew feeble; the eye failed; the voice was gentle as a child's. Rest in the great city amid all external comforts could not arrest the passage of the mortal into immortality.

Better than fame or wealth is the end less worth of friends who have wrought life into church and school and charmer and human progress heavenward. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," blessed are the surviving friends of those made deathless forevermore, whose mortal life has led to Calvary's cross and Calvary's crown.

One by one the early members of this church pass out of sight into the glad realm of faith and hope; one by one we miss their greeting on these streets, and the echo of their voices comes one by one. One by one from the earliest families and from the early town they meet again beyond the river. There stands the recording angel, there waits the loving Savior, there sits the tender Father. Every penitential tear is recorded there; every heavenly aspiration remembered; every child of God in wait comes. There the humbled dimly lighted; there more than one ambitious soul from earth will be surprised by the divine words, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me."

Dr. Magoun made very feeling remarks, recalling incidents of his first meeting with Mr. Phelps at a meeting of the Gen. Association in 1856. He spoke of Mr. Phelps as a plain, true, unassuming

man, addicted to habits of kindness. Mr. Phelps was characterized for his enterprise, energy and fidelity to the general interests of Grinnell and to the college. In his religious character he was silent and unassuming. But calm and earnest. The speaker closed by saying that he had often wondered if there would be neighborhoods in heaven where the friends of this life would be united thru eternity. Of one thing we may be certain that everyone who is true to him here will be constantly in his presence hereafter. Mr. Phelps in death had not been summoned to go on to good works, but to pass up higher to a home of heavenly radiance and happiness. The choir closed with "Abide With Me." At the grave only a prayer was offered by Prof. Parker and the body was consigned to mother earth.