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A tribute to the memory of  
Alexander Milne



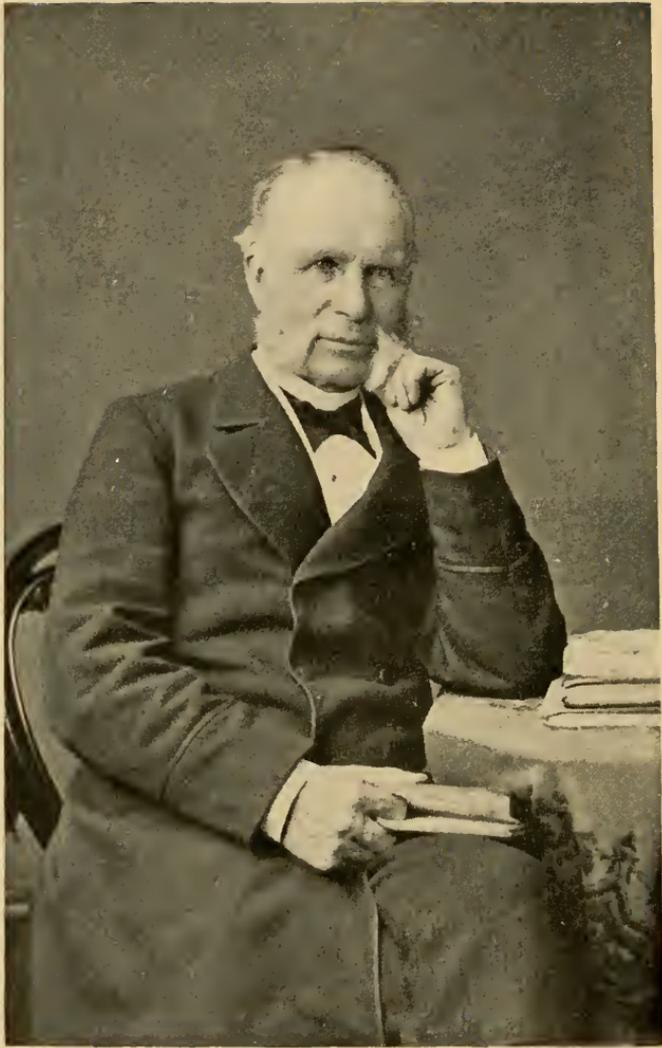


For  
Mrs. J. Frederick Crumbie

from her friend

John Franklin Alexander

N. Y. Aug 31/91



your Ever faithful friend  
Rev. Milner

**En Memoriam**



A TRIBUTE

TO THE MEMORY OF

ALEXANDER MILNE

BY THE

REV. R. P. H. VAIL, D.D.

DELIVERED IN THE

First Presbyterian Church, Stamford, Conn.

*April 13th, 1891*

TOGETHER WITH THE RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT A MEETING OF THE SESSION OF  
THE CHURCH, HELD MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 13, 1891, AND A MINUTE  
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE Y. M. C. A. OF THE  
CITY OF NEW YORK.

New York

WM. C. MARTIN PRINTING HOUSE, 111 JOHN STREET

1891





SERMON



## SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.

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“Howl fir tree, for the cedar is fallen.”

“Lord I have loved the habitation of Thy house, the place where Thine honor dwelleth.”

“Thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day.”

“Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.”

“A good man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost.”

“The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips. He walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.”

“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

“An elder that ruled well, accounted worthy of double honor.”

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day.”

“For me to live is Christ ; and to die is gain.”



## S E R M O N .

STANDING in this presence, and speaking to you of the venerable and godly man for whose funeral service we are met this afternoon, I am at a loss what text to choose. There is a whole wealth of Scripture that is peculiarly pertinent to such a life and character; and I might go on repeating verse after verse, like those which I have read, while in each you would recognize the portrait of our departed father and friend, and to them all your hearts would honestly respond "Amen."

Happy the man in whose memory such glowing words from the Book of God may be truthfully spoken! I know of no grander achievement possible for any man than to so pass the time of his sojourn on the earth as to be rightfully entitled, at its end, to such scriptural encomiums upon his character and career. He lies down in peace, while all who knew him rise up to call him blessed. He enters

upon the joy of his Lord, and receives a great welcome there. Such lives make this world a brighter and better place. They dignify humanity. They exalt our ideas of human nature. They show us something of the image of God in man. They are a benediction as they pass. And they stimulate men to aspire and strive after higher and nobler things.

This is a well-earned rest which our brother has gained. For more than four score years he has been a toiler in the world. From its earliest years up to its very close, his life has been one of constant and abounding activity. In the days of his youth, his manhood, and even in his old age, he had no time nor inclination for idle hours. Like the Master whom he served, he must work the works of Him that sent him while it was day: the night was coming when no man could work. So he filled the years with abundant labor; and like his Master also, his chief work and the one in which he took chief delight was in going about to do good. Even in these last months of

great physical feebleness, it was difficult to persuade him to sit still awhile with folded hands. He saw some business of his Father that required his attention, and he would summon up his little remaining strength and go forth on a fresh labor of love. The rest upon which this tired man has now entered is a rest well earned.

He was a strong man and a good man, whose mortal remains we bury to-day. For strength of character he was like the granite of the Scottish hills which he loved so well. In the firmness of his convictions and the fixedness of his faith he was like a Scotch cedar tree that holds fast, no matter how severe the storms. When he had made up his mind, his mind was made up; and when he had set his hand to any work, he would keep it there till the work was done. A strong character that was based on firm convictions, that was rooted and grounded in righteousness and truth: a strong character that was filled to the full with energy, determination, and a consecration of all its powers to the living God.

It sometimes happens that great strength of character is a most unlovely thing. It means simply stubbornness and headstrong self-will. There is no beauty in it that men should desire it. It was not so, however, in this case. The Scotch granite took on a most excellent polish that was at once beautiful and smooth. In this character strength was always married to beauty; and the sturdy cedar-like traits in the man were ever twined about with graceful vines which blossomed with fair flowers. Firm in his faith, courageous in his convictions, determined in his purposes, outspoken in his views, he was as inflexible as John Knox himself; and yet there was always a pleasant smile in his heart, a kind word on his lips, and a gentle hand for all, even to the youngest child. He was as good as he was strong. And he moved about among men through these long years of varied activity beloved by many, respected by all.

I cannot in the little time at my disposal this afternoon undertake to give you a complete analysis of Mr. Milne's character, or to

tell you the complete story of his long earthly career. I can give you but a brief outline of each, mingling the two together as I proceed.

If you ask me what was the secret of this noble character, or what was the cornerstone on which this consistent life was builded, I am inclined to refer you to the first answer in the Shorter Catechism: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." Our brother learned that answer when he was a little child in Scotland, and before he had any just apprehension of the significance of the words. But gradually their meaning dawned upon his childish mind and took possession of his young heart. The soil was good in which that seed was sown. At the age of nine years he gave himself to God, and never took back the gift. From then till now this man's chief end has been to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. I can give you no better key with which to unlock the secret of his character and life.

Mr. Milne was born on the seventh of June, 1807, in the little town of Banff, far up in the

north of Scotland, abreast the Highlands. A Scotchman born, he was a Scotchman till he died—a Scotchman in his love of country, in his earnestness of spirit, in his characteristic humor, in his poetical nature, in his knowledge of Scripture, and in his warm interest in all Scotch people who came to him. He was brother Scot to every Scotchman in the town, and loved to talk with him about the heather hills, and the “auld hame” from which he came.

While yet a mere boy he was set to learn the stonecutter’s trade; and he plied his chisel on the blocks of Scotch granite which were given him to shape. It was lusty and vigorous work, and it developed a lusty and vigorous lad. He enjoyed his work and attacked the solid rocks with sturdy blows. When he became a journeyman stonecutter he wrought side by side with Hugh Miller, in Aberdeenshire; and he often spoke with pleasure of the days he spent in the society of this learned man, then humble and obscure, but afterwards famous as the pioneer of modern geology.

With his naturally bright mind, and through association with such an instructor as Hugh Miller, our friend soon became well versed in the wonderful testimony of the rocks which he loved so well. In those days of stone-cutting in Scotland he developed a strong and well-furnished intellect, as well as a healthy and vigorous physique.

On the 16th of April, 1832, at Mintlaw, Aberdeenshire, he was married to Sophia Boulton, and from that bright Spring day in Scotland, 59 years ago this very week, until last Friday when he died, he has been a tender, loving and devoted husband, as gentle and kind and affectionate as in the days of his youthful and ardent courtship long ago. The venerable and feeble widow who survives him, and who placed yonder window in the church, some years ago, as "a wife's loving tribute" to her husband, has not long to wait before joining him again. The tribute window, with its Presbyterian insignia, becomes a memorial window to-day, and henceforth keeps fresh the memory of his honored name, so long as the church itself shall stand.

On the day of their marriage the young bridegroom and bride started out for America. A six weeks' trip in a sailing vessel across the Atlantic was to be their wedding journey, and America was to be their future home. His father-in-law offered to give him a goodly farm in Aberdeenshire, if only they would remain in Scotland. But Mr. Milne's mind was made up, and he declined the offer with thanks, and came. He loved Scotland with its lochs and rocks, its crags and hills, just as every Scotchman does. But he had broad views, and energy, and ambition, and a determination to get on in the world. And he felt that America offered him advantages and opportunities and possibilities that were denied him at home. So with a very few pounds sterling in their pockets, to America the young couple came, landing in New York at the end of May, 1832.

When he stepped on the wharf in this strange land among strangers, Mr. Milne was 25 years of age, a Christian, and a stonemason and setter. The first thing he did after get-

ting a boarding-place was to find a church; the next was to obtain employment. He quickly succeeded in both, as you might expect. Before a week was over he was settled in the old Seventh Presbyterian Church on the corner of Ridge Street and Broome, and had gotten to work at his trade. It was simply characteristic of the promptitude and activity of the man.

I cannot go as much into detail respecting his church life and his business career as I would like. The story is intensely interesting, and furnishes a splendid example along many lines, showing how thrift, industry, courage, honesty, integrity, good sense and earnestness in work bring a grand development and secure a good reward in the respect of fellow-men and in the accumulation of this world's goods; and showing also how religion may ever be kept just a little in advance of business—nay, how it may permeate business; and how, in the midst of an intensely busy life the catechism's definition of man's chief end may be realized. This man sought

first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the other things were added unto him. He was ever diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

He was not long in the old Seventh Church before a discovery was made of the young Scotchman's gifts and powers, and they were at once called into exercise. It was a strong church, one of the strongest in the City of New York at the time, and full of earnest women and noble men. But within four years—so soon as 1836—they had called him to the eldership of the church; he was leader of the great chorus choir, and he was superintendent of the flourishing Sunday-school. Yes, they knew their man—a poor man indeed as yet, a young man, a foreigner not yet a citizen, but a *man*, a man of strength and beauty, a man of mind and heart, a Christian man who had laid his splendid powers on Christ's altar and Christ had accepted the offering. Young as he was—but four years in the land—they ordained him to eldership in the Presbyterian Church of the United

States; they established him, by God's grace, as a pillar in the temple of the Lord. The choir sang with devout hearts earnestly under his leadership after he had opened the rehearsal with prayer; the Sunday-school became larger yet under his superintendency, and hosts of youth gave their hearts to Jesus Christ; the church was revived again and again, grew yet stronger and stronger in the Lord, and became a mighty power for good in all that section of the town, in the days when Alexander Milne, the strong and consecrated young Scotchman, the capable Bible student, the earnest and powerful exhorter of souls, served in the eldership. Ordained a ruling elder in 1836, he was still a ruling elder when he died, his term of faithful service having covered a period of 55 years. "An elder who ruled well, accounted worthy of double honor."

Mr. Milne began his work in New York as a stonemason. He was soon a contractor. The Lord prospered him in his way. Architects loved to have him carry out their de-

signs. He was a man whose work they could always trust. He soon became a famous builder. He loved the work. He loved architecture. He loved to see stately buildings grow, and he loved to have them grow under his guiding hand. In 1854 he became a manager of the Masterton, Smith & Sinclair Stone Dressing Co., and its president in 1858; and partner in the firm of Sinclair & Milne, which succeeded this company in 1869, until he retired from business in 1879. The quarries and stone yards of Sinclair & Milne were second to none in all the land, and the stone for a great number of the most important buildings in New York was furnished by them: Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, banks and court houses, Cooper Unions, and Y. M. C. A. halls, and some of the finest private residences which line Fifth Avenue. Yes, he was quite right. He loved dear old Scotland, but he wisely thought that America offered him a better chance. Some day when you are walking down Fifth Avenue and are going by the Brick Presbyterian

Church on the corner of Thirty-seventh Street, look up to the top of the high steeple. When it was being reared there was trouble about the great finial. There were none of the men who were able to set it. So Alexander Milne, with characteristic promptitude, got into the basket and was pulled up to the dizzy height, and his hands set the finial there. What his workmen could not do he did himself. Look up and think of him when next you go by.

Mr. Milne first came to Stamford in 1839, not to reside but to live here awhile and do some work. He at once opened a stone yard at the head of the canal, and went into the old Congregational Church. Business with him was never allowed to get ahead of religion. The business prospered, and the church prospered also. He made his presence as a Christian felt in the town at once. That year there was a great revival of religion here. Humanly speaking, Alexander Milne, under God, did more to promote it than any other man. It was he who brought the ministers

here from all the region round about, who took the general ordering of the meetings that were held, who taught the people how to sing with energy and enthusiasm, who infused life and vigor into Christian hearts, and who, by his Christian earnestness in action and speech, caused the dry bones to rattle in the valley. In those days he was a power in every Christian assembly which he entered. As the result of that revival in 1839 hundreds of souls were aroused, and great numbers turned to God. The dear old man is greeted by multitudes in glory now, who were first led to Christ through the influence of the Spirit in their hearts accompanying his burning words. And that was the kind of a life he lived in the time of his stalwart manhood both here and in New York, always busy in winning souls and making his Christian influence felt.

He was made a deacon of the Congregational Church of this village in 1841, but returned to New York in 1843. In 1849 he came again to Stamford, this time to become a permanent resident. He built the house in

which he lived, and where he continued to reside until death came.

What he has been during his residence here the most of you well know. Simple in his tastes, hearty in his manner, cordial in his greeting to friends and strangers alike, full of the most genial humor, bright and original in his speech, a man of pure life and spotless reputation, a helper to the unfortunate, a comfort to those in trouble, a man of many friends, cheerful in spirit, liberal in his gifts, an upright citizen, a consecrated Christian abundant in sympathy, love and good works.

I need scarcely say how thoroughly Mr. Milne has been identified with the Presbyterian Church of Stamford from its inception until now. That story is too rich and full for rehearsal to-day. It was in his heart and mind that the foundations of Presbyterianism here were laid. He was the father of the church. The meeting in which the idea of it first took shape was held at his house in 1852.

With George Elder, his companion and friend, he became ruling elder when the church

was organized with 25 members, in 1853. These two men, elders each of them until death, were the Jachin and Boaz of this temple. They were pillars in the house of the Lord.

Mr. Milne was a Presbyterian to the core, staunch in his faith in its doctrine and polity, and a lover of its assemblies. But his Christianity was as Catholic as his great heart. He was the companion of all them that feared God, by whatever ecclesiastical name they were known; and there was not a Christian in the town towards whom he was not ready to extend his blessing and his hand.

But it was here that his love centered, and to this church his best toil was given. The record of our indebtedness to him is written in the hearts of all our people. He has been wellnigh everything to this church, and his presence and his power have been a constant benediction. By his fervent prayers, his godly life, his wise counsels, his earnest spirit, his generous gifts, his tender sympathy, his great heartedness, he has helped and blessed us all in ways that no arithmetic can measure or

compute. In the days of his strength, his place was seldom vacant in the sanctuary, the prayer meeting, or the Sunday-school. He loved this habitation of God's house, and was never happier than when promoting God's honor here. This church and congregation will never have a more faithful servitor or a more devoted friend than he. It is fitting that the tablet in the front of the tower, bearing the name of the church, should have been the gift of his hand. It is of Aberdeen granite. He wanted a rock from Presbyterian Scotland to be among the stones of the wall.

It has been a great privilege to be associated in church relations with such a man. To pastor and people he has been a constant inspiration and delight. Every one of us will miss him sorely in the days to come. There is not a member of our congregation, who, by this death, has not lost a friend with a warm heart and a strong yet gentle hand.

He came with us for the last time on Easter morning, was happy in the service, and went home to return no more. And now I see him

worshipping in the upper sanctuary—the old man grown young again, the bowed head erect again, the faded cheek faded no longer, but flushed with the bloom of immortal youth. He meets with the great congregation. He sees the King in His beauty. He sings at last the new song.

May we all join him in the heavenly home,  
and be greeted once more with a hearty welcome from his cordial hand !

“ Servant of God, well done,  
Rest from thy loved employ ;  
The battle fought, the victory won,  
Enter thy Master’s joy.  
The voice at midnight came,  
He started up to hear ;  
A mortal arrow pierced his frame,  
He fell, but felt no fear.

The pains of death are past,  
Labor and sorrow cease ;  
And, life’s long warfare, closed at last,  
His soul is found in peace.  
Soldier of Christ, well done,  
Praise be thy new employ ;  
And, while eternal ages run,  
Rest in thy Saviour’s joy.”



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, STAMFORD, CONN.



RESOLUTIONS



## RESOLUTIONS

ADOPTED BY THE

Session of the First Presbyterian Church,

STAMFORD, CONN.

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WHEREAS, it has pleased God to take to Himself our friend, Alexander Milne, a member of the Session of this church by successive unanimous elections since its organization in 1853, and at the time of his death its Senior Elder, his associates deeply sensible of the loss which they and the church have sustained, desire to place upon their records their tribute of regard and affection for his memory:

Alexander Milne died April 10, 1891, in the 84th year of his age. His work for Christ and His Church in Stamford began more than fifty years ago, when a young mechanic, he came from Scotland with his wife, and after a residence of a few years in New York, located here. During his stay of about four years at that time, so earnestly and faithfully did he serve his Master that nearly 150 persons united with the Congregational Church of which for two years he was a deacon. Returning to New York, he resumed his connection with the Seventh Church, and his six years of membership were years of almost continuous revival. Upon the opening of the New Haven road he returned to Stamford and soon after

aided in the organization of this church, to which with a zeal and affection which knew no abatement nor variation, he gave his prayers, his money and himself even to the end. It is difficult to estimate the debt which this church owes to him and to his dearly-loved friend and associate, George Elder, for their gifts, their example and their prayers during their lives among us. How many during these years were made better and happier because of them we do not know, but we are sure that it has been given to few laymen to exert a stronger or wider influence for good than they. Theirs was the zeal according to knowledge, theirs was the prayer of faith and the labor of love. And for each of them are other words of commendation than ours, even the approval of Him whose they were and whom they served. To human judgment it seems that we may not hope to fill these vacant places with men such as these men were; but we would not forget their many prayers for this church, and we will trust their God and ours that even for their sakes blessings yet more abundant than those of the past may come to this church which they loved.

THOMAS G. RITCH,

*Clerk.*

MINUTE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
OF THE  
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION  
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK.  
MEETING HELD APRIL 22d, 1891.

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Mr. ALEXANDER MILNE, a life member of the Association, died April 10th, in the 84th year of his age. From the erection of the Twenty-third Street building, Mr. MILNE manifested a deep interest in the work of the Association. He was long identified with the Seventh Presbyterian Church, and one of the founders of the Presbyterian Church in Stamford, Conn. For business ability, integrity of character, and personal devotion to the Saviour, he was an example worthy of imitation by the young men of to-day, and the Board desire to express to Mrs. MILNE their heartiest sympathy in her bereavement.

R. R. McBURNEY,  
*General Secretary.*









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