

1864

## A Discourse in Commemoration of Colonel Frank Henry Peck

Elisha Lord Cleaveland

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# DISCOURSE

IN COMMEMORATION OF

COLONEL FRANK HENRY PECK:

DELIVERED AT HIS FUNERAL,

IN THE

THIRD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

NEW HAVEN, OCTOBER 7, 1864.

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BY ELISHA LORD CLEAVELAND, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

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NEW HAVEN:  
THOMAS H. PEASE.

J. H. BENHAM, PRINTER.

1864.

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY FRANK HENRY TRISK

AT THE THIRD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

NEW HAVEN, OCTOBER 2, 1851

BY FRANK HENRY TRISK

NEW HAVEN  
THOMAS H. BASS

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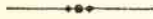
THIRD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

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1836. He grew up among us, a gentle, modest, thoughtful boy,—fair in feature, graceful in form,—an obedient and affectionate son,—a diligent and successful scholar,—upright, pure and manly in his whole deportment. At the tender age of twelve years he became a subject, as is believed, of the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, and from that time consecrated himself to the service of Christ. Soon after this radical change of character and of purpose, he made a public profession of Christianity, by uniting with the Howe Street Church, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Wm. DeLoss Love. At the age of sixteen he entered Yale College, and graduated with honor in the class of 1856.

After spending a year in teaching an Academy in Killingly, he was appointed clerk in the Probate office, at the same time entering the Yale Law School. In due course he was admitted to the New Haven Bar, and commenced the practice of his profession in this city. He had been serving as Grand Juror, and giving brilliant promise of a successful career as a lawyer, when the outbreak of the present rebellion summoned him, as he believed, to sterner duties. Those who were not well acquainted with Col. Peck, might have thought him better fitted for the quiet walks of study, or of civil life, or for the requirements of gentle society, than for the rough and perilous scenes of war; yet those who knew him better, were fully aware that, unassuming and retiring as he was, he had a certain reserved force, and unpretending moral courage, that showed the manliness of his spirit, and his ability to meet any danger in the way of duty. No man loved fighting for its own sake less than Col. Peck; and no man could be more ready to fight in a righteous cause. It was not love of adventure, it was not thirst for military glory, it was not as the indirect road to civil honors, that he entered the army. His character, his personal declarations, and the record of his military life, give us the assurance that he took this step from a high sense of duty to his country in the hour of her need. He fully realized

the danger that threatened the Union, he appreciated the infamous purpose of the insurgents, he abhorred the enormous crime they were perpetrating, and the Satanic spirit they were exhibiting, and understood too well that their success would be the final and irretrievable ruin of our glorious Republic,—and he felt that he must throw himself into

“the imminent, deadly breach,”

and do what he could to save his native land from so awful a catastrophe.

Col. Peck, though a civilian, was not altogether unacquainted with the service to which he offered himself; he was already well read in military science and tactics, and on joining his regiment, exhibited at once a marked aptitude both for the theory and practice of war. In the Fall of 1861 Mr. Peck received the commission of Major in the Twelfth Connecticut, or Charter Oak Regiment, commanded by Col. Henry C. Deming. This regiment formed a part of the force sent out under command of Gen. Butler for the capture of New Orleans. After a few weeks' encampment on Ship Island, they sailed up the Mississippi, and witnessed the bombardment of Forts Jackson and Philip. After the forts had surrendered, the Twelfth was the first regiment to ascend the river, and reached New Orleans fourteen hours before any other regiment arrived. They were not the first to land in the city, though they did enter it soon after, and received their full share of that vile female abuse in which the women of New Orleans have gained for themselves such an unfortunate distinction. The next week the regiment proceeded to Camp Parapet, twelve miles up the river, where they remained six months, without much active service.

Major Peck appears to have enjoyed the particular regard and confidence of Gen. Phelps, commander of the brigade, who, both at Ship Island and Camp Parapet, intrusted him with services of special delicacy and difficulty. While at the latter place, he was sent by his general on a reconnoissance

into the interior, with two companies under his command. An incident took place during this expedition, which excited no little interest at the time, as it was the first occurrence of the kind. The Government, it will be remembered, had not then adopted the policy of emancipation, nor authorized the employment of negroes as soldiers. In the course of his exploration at Belle Grove, Major Peck, accompanied by two of his Captains, found on the plantation of a lady, a negro undergoing a very inhuman punishment. He lay on his back in a room about six feet square, with marks of violence about his neck and chest. His legs were heavily shackled and chained to a strong staple in the floor. At his feet lay another chain, ten or fifteen feet long, made of iron five-eighths of an inch in thickness. Two white men were standing guard over him. And it appeared that an armed guard, sometimes five at once, had been thus stationed over him day and night. The heavy chain on the floor, it seems, was at night wound around the negro's neck several times, and then passed through the staple and made fast. Major Peck, whose soul was stirred within him at this brutal spectacle, at once ordered the guards to release the negro, which they immediately did, protesting that they had no part in his confinement, and were only employed to prevent any one from attempting a rescue. They stated that the negro was bound by order of the Danish Consul, who owned the adjoining plantation, to whom he had been delivered over by his mistress for the purpose of being shot for rebellious resistance to punishment.

Search being made, a considerable number of muskets were found secreted between mattresses. Having no doubt of his right and duty to remove the arms as contraband of war, Major Peck seized them. But how should he deliver the negro out the hands of his tormentors? The Government had proclaimed its intention to respect the claims of slaveholders; what right then had he to take this man from his owner? Gen. Phelps' orders covered no such case as this;

and if the Major were not careful, he might get himself into serious difficulty with his own Government. Still he was determined not to leave the poor negro to perish. A happy thought struck him. He needed help to get the muskets to his camp—and he determined to impress the negro for this service, on the plea of military necessity. Once in camp, he left the negro to go where he pleased: and it did *not* please him to return to the place from which he had just been taken. He hung around the detachment and returned with it to headquarters. He was found to be not only a harmless but a truly pious man; and when asked how he felt when he lay chained in his prison, awaiting execution, he replied that he betook himself to God in prayer for deliverance. And will he ever doubt that the arrival of Major Peck was in answer to his prayer? And does any one of us doubt that God himself,—moved by the prayers of that humble suppliant,—sent our noble-hearted townsman to undo those heavy fetters and let the oppressed go free? This negro continued with the Twelfth regiment until the decree of emancipation made it safe for him to return; and he is now a willing, because a free, laborer on the very plantation where he came so near being murdered.

The first serious battle in which the Twelfth was engaged, occurred in October, at Labadieville. The regiment, then under command of Col. Colburn, (Col. Deming having been detailed as Mayor of New Orleans), formed the right, and bore the brunt of the battle. Their superior drill and discipline showed to great advantage—they advanced as they fired, keeping their line straight, and consequently suffered less than those regiments which were more broken and confused. The officers, from the Colonel down, were perfectly cool; and so, in consequence, were the men. The victory was complete, and resulted in the expulsion of the rebels from the whole country of La Fourche, and as far west as Brashear City.

On the resignation of Col. Deming, Jan. 31, 1863, and



the promotion of Lieut.-Col. Colburn to the Colonelcy, Major Peck was commissioned Lieut.-Colonel. During this winter, Col. Colburn having been appointed Superintendent of the New Orleans and Opelousas Railroad, Lieut.-Col. Peck took command of the regiment, and continued in command until his death. He led them through all that arduous and decisive campaign which resulted in the capture of Port Hudson. He was with Gen. Weitzel in the attack on the gunboat J. A. Cotton. His regiment,—on the left of the advance, and exposed to severe fire,—rendered efficient service in accomplishing the destruction of the gunboat. He was in Gen. Banks' expedition to the Red River, and bore a gallant part in the severe battle of Bisland on the 12th and 13th of April. He and his men shared patiently and cheerfully in the long and exhausting marches which followed that decisive victory. On the 25th of May they reached Port Hudson, and entered at once on the memorable siege of that formidable stronghold. It does not belong to this occasion to dwell on the history of events so familiar to all. But I may venture to say that where all did so well, none bore a nobler part than the Twelfth Connecticut and their gallant leader. On the morning of the 27th of May, being ordered to silence a certain battery, he advanced to the front under a heavy fire, driving the enemy's skirmishers before him, repelling (though unsupported by other troops), an attempt of the enemy to turn his flank, silencing four pieces of artillery, nor pausing for a moment until his line had reached the parapet, and his right had at one time succeeded in scaling the work. For want of proper support, however, they were unable to follow up their advantage, and had to rest satisfied with holding the position. In this action Col. Peck's hand was fractured by a shell. From this time until the 10th of June, the regiment was on duty day and night, by reliefs, as sharpshooters behind extemporized entrenchments, and within a hundred and fifty yards of the enemy's breastworks. On the night of June 10th four companies of Col. Peck's

regiment were thrown forward as part of a continuous line around the works, for the purpose of compelling the enemy to disclose the position of his artillery, and with the further design of scaling and occupying the works, if possible. As they advanced, they received a volley from the enemy, but pressed on without flinching to the base of the parapet. Unfortunately the regiment on their right and left failed to support them, so that the enemy concentrated their fire on these four brave companies with terrible effect. Another company was ordered forward to cover their withdrawal. But the casualties of that dreadful night were greater in proportion to the number engaged, than in any other single action during the entire siege. The gallantry of the officers and men received high praise from the division commander.

On the 14th of June a general attack was ordered. At one o'clock in the morning the Twelfth commenced its march; a guide having been sent from headquarters to conduct them to their position in the line, lost his way, the night being intensely dark. A staff officer, who came to his assistance, led them still farther astray through the woods, until the regiment became separated by flanks, and no small anxiety was felt for its safety. A third guide, however, corrected the mistake, and brought them to the position assigned them before the day began to break. Col. Peck immediately led his men to the front, availing themselves of the irregularities of the ground for cover, until his right rested upon the line of the brow of a ridge not more than fifty yards from "Priest Gap." A severe fire was kept up on both sides until noon, during which the Twelfth lost about twenty-five men. The attempt to carry the place at that time being abandoned, our men concealed themselves in the ravines and behind stumps and logs, under a scorching sun, without food or drink, until night, when they returned in good order, but somewhat depressed, to their old watch and work in the trenches. Here they remained through all those dark and trying days, until the capture of Vicksburg, and the lack of

provisions in Port Hudson, compelled the enemy to surrender. "On the night of the 8th of July," writes Col. Peck, "for the first time since we advanced to the front, we were permitted to sleep without the accompaniment of artillery and musketry. On the 9th, with martial music and colors flying, we marched into Port Hudson."

The Twelfth regiment embarked that same night, by steamer, for Donaldsonville,—leaving, alas! one hundred and eight of their brave comrades, either killed or wounded at the siege of Port Hudson, to show forevermore how severe and perilous was the service they had rendered their country.

It will be seen from this brief record that this regiment, under the admirable training of its commanding officer, had won for itself a noble reputation for discipline, courage, and reliability. It was always kept at work—it was always in the front. At Labadieville—at the destruction of the gunboat Cotton—at Bisland—in the long march to Red River—in the two and forty days' siege of Port Hudson, they were in the front. I mention this in connection with these funeral services, because the praise of Col. Peck was written in the brilliant history of his regiment—that was his pride—with that he was identified—their trials were his trials—and their glory was his glory. In their intelligent patriotism, their unpretending worth, their cool and unblustering courage, their competency and reliability for every appropriate service, we see a bright reflection of the modest, brave and accomplished officer who inspired and led them on to every noble deed.

But little remains of the military career of Col. Peck calling for special mention at the present time. Returning to Brashear, he soon after took part in another sweeping expedition through Western Louisiana—and for a time he was in command of the Third brigade.

He had now entered on his third year of service, and in all that time he had not been off duty a single day. He could easily have obtained permission to come home on furlough, and he was strongly tempted to do so, by the wishes

of friends. But he resisted the temptation on the ground that he was unwilling to enjoy such privileges when his men could not share in them—he could not bring himself to leave them at the front, while he was luxuriating in all the blessings of a peaceful home. The way was soon opened, however, for him to accept a furlough on his own terms. In January, 1864, nearly the whole regiment, 450 in number, re-enlisted as veterans for three years more, and was the first to do so under the call of the President of the United States; thus setting a noble example that was speedily followed by other regiments. In consequence of this patriotic act, the whole regiment, with all its officers, was allowed to go home on a long furlough at the expense of the Government. And thus Col. Peck had the double satisfaction of resting himself among kindred and friends, and of sharing this privilege with his war-worn comrades of the Twelfth.

It seems but yesterday since New Haven poured out its thousands to welcome home these brave defenders of our country. Well do we remember with what gushing emotions of gratitude and pride we looked upon the sturdy veterans, as with soldierly bearing they marched under the admiring gaze of twice ten thousand eyes. And who did not mark the graceful young officer, whose handsome features expressed the grateful pleasure with which he led his beloved regiment through that scene of triumph? It is hard to realize that our eyes will never be gladdened with that beautiful sight again. After two months of rest and refreshment amid the friends and scenes of home, Col. Peck, having replenished his wasted ranks with new recruits, returned to Louisiana. He did not remain long, however. Some time in June, I think, his regiment was ordered back to the East, and arrived at Fortress Monroe about the time of Early's invasion of Maryland. After marching and countermarching considerably, his regiment was stationed at Bermuda Hundred. This, he said, was just where he wanted to be. Indeed he felt quite at home; for here he met his old personal friends, Gen. Butler

and Gen. Weitzel, who sent for him immediately on his arrival, and contended with each other in their kind and flattering attentions to him. It was a delightful reunion of friends who had learned each other's worth amid scenes which try men's souls.

Not long after this, the Twelfth regiment, whose commander, since his furlough, had been commissioned Colonel, was transferred to the department of General Sheridan, near Harper's Ferry. He was with Gen. Sheridan in all those maneuvers and skirmishes which prepared the way for the great battle and victory near Winchester. His letters show that he fully understood the situation—that he anticipated a severe engagement, and was confident of a triumph to our arms. He may not have realized that it was to be his last contest with an enemy he had fought so earnestly. Yet we have good reason to think that he never entered a battle without a solemn sense of the momentous consequences it involved to himself personally, and that he clothed himself with that spiritual armor, and took with him that shield of faith which is the soul's only protection.

On the ever memorable 19th of September, he conducted his beloved regiment for the last time to the front, where the battle was already raging, and had just given the order, "Forward, double quick!" when the fragment of a shell which had exploded within a few feet of him, struck his knee, and was driven through it, lodging in the stirrup strap, and wounding the horse on which he sat. He fell at once, and was caught by Captain Roach. Dr. Brownell, Medical Director of the Corps, and his most intimate friend, happened to be passing at the moment, and immediately ordered every possible care and attendance, although no orders, he says, were needed, so greatly was the Colonel beloved. He was taken directly to the hospital, nearly two miles to the rear, where Dr. Cummings did all that could be done for him; but it was in vain. The shock was so great, and he lost

so much blood before he could reach the hospital, that he did not rally sufficiently to allow of amputation.

He was perfectly conscious for several hours after reaching the hospital, and had much conversation with Surgeon Brownell and Chaplain Bradford. The Surgeon states that "from first to last, the same calm, pleasant expression, pervaded his whole countenance." "He met his end," says the Chaplain, "with calmness almost unparalleled." He desired the Surgeon to say to his mother, "I die cheerfully,"—and to his brother, "I fell at the front." He died on the morning of the 20th,—his birthday,—being just 28 years old. Many messages and farewell words for dear ones at home, were committed by the dying man to these two friends, which they had not time to communicate in the hurry of pursuit, but which are expected soon. For these last utterances we wait with interest. Yet aside from this, he has not left himself without witness of his faith and hope. Some idea of his habitual state of mind may be given by a few extracts from letters home. From Ship Island, where he first landed, he writes to his mother, in March, 1862, "I believe I am doing my duty in being where I am. I have ambitions for the future which I believe are good ones. At present I have no longings, not even for personal safety, so strong is my desire to do my whole duty. But perhaps I do not know myself; no man can in our position. I do especially hope that my affection for my family may not make a coward of me, if my courage should ever be tested. I hope to act so that you shall have no mortification in the mention of my name. May God bless you all, as he is blessing me."

Just before leaving Ship Island for New Orleans, he wrote, "People do not go to war to play. We are exposed to the same possibilities as all armies, though it seems now as if our victory would be an easy one. But we all obey blind orders. I counted the whole cost, and trust I am prepared for it, before I sought to enter the service."

Under date of Oct. 20, 1862, he writes, "We greatly

exaggerate the importance of our lives and that of our friends in time of peace, especially as against the success of such a cause as we are now fighting for. I have never yet been in a pitched battle, but I have been in dangers which I think are far greater, and I have been in one very sharp little fight. I should have much less nervousness in coming under fire the second time than I felt the first. And it is not mere familiarity which begets indifference, but a pure mental effort which becomes easier and more natural every time it is called for. I have observed that most blusterers are cowards; I have learned that many men are happily constituted courageous by nature; and another class are brave from simple exercise of the will, prompted and sustained by sound principle and a consciousness of right and justice justifying their acts, and making them willing to die for the truth, if it be so ordained. In a bad cause I know I should be a coward; if I am ever tried, I trust I shall have strength given me to do my duty faithfully without regard to personal considerations. In the service here, I suppose we do not talk half so much about the war as before we enlisted. We seldom get excited at any news. Every man's thoughts are occupied with the minutiae of his duties. But there is great determination and great faith underlying the seeming cheerfulness and lightness of our manners. We talk of the dangers of the field with as great coolness as of our domestic affairs. It takes time to reach that point, and it takes principle and faith too, I think. I believe our friends suffer for us infinitely more than we do. Half our own care is for the fears and feelings of others. I am afraid it may make seeming cowards of some of us. A single courageous word from you takes loads from my mind. \* \* \* I pray for your sakes that I may be able to serve my time in the army with credit, and bring a good name home with me. I appreciate in all proper seriousness, I trust, the responsibility of my position. I have intense anxiety for you all; and though I have great distrust of myself, I have Christian faith and am cheerful."

Such was the spirit of the man whose death we mourn. So lofty were the principles, so calm and considered, so pure and inflexible were the purposes that governed him on that great theater of action in which he moved. We see here the secret of his cool self-possession in battle, and of his uniform cheerfulness and serenity amid the exciting events of war. His analysis of courage reveals the nature of his own. He was certainly no blusterer—he was the very opposite of that. Nor was his that courage which springs from natural insensibility to danger—it was something higher and better. It was a courage born of conscience and of Christian faith. Fully realizing the presence of danger—solemnly conscious of the momentous import of death, he nevertheless suppressed all unmanly fear by a sublime conviction of duty, and a humble trust in God. When asked by a friend, on his recent visit home, if he was never afraid in the hour of battle, he replied, “Of course I am. Every sensible man is afraid when he knows that in two or three minutes he may be in eternity.” Such fears are manly—they are more, they are Christian—they spring from a belief in the Scriptures and in the righteous government of God; and he who derides them, shows, not bravery, but senseless and sinful folly. He does not know that such fears as Col. Peck had the manliness to acknowledge, are the real basis of the highest style of courage. A proper fear of death is but reverence for God: and he who truly reveres his Maker, dreads sin more than even death, and loves duty better than life. And such was the pure and sublime character of Col. Peck’s courage. “I have no longings,” he said, “not even for personal safety, so strong is my desire to do my whole duty.” Noble words! worthy to be chiseled on his tombstone, and to be held up for the admiration of every soldier and every citizen of the Republic.

The limits of this hour admonish me that I may detain you but a moment longer. Were there time, I should love to speak of the many amiable traits in the character of Col. Peck—of his gentle refinement—of his manly dignity—of his



scrupulous avoidance of evil speaking, and the evident pain it gave him to hear the absent censured—of his freedom from envy—of his candor and magnanimity of soul—of his tender affection for his family and devotion to their interests—of his kind and generous treatment of the men under his command, without sacrificing at all the necessary rigor of wholesome discipline—of his watchful care for their comfort and fearless defence of their rights—of the universal respect, confidence and love he won from his regiment by the energy, fairness and gentleness with which he tempered the administration of military power—and of the facility with which he drew the hearts of men to him in warm and lasting friendship, wherever he became well known. In such hearts he has a record which can never be effaced. There, and in the memory of the thousands who knew but to admire and love him, I must leave the keeping of his name, encircled by the modest but brilliant virtues which adorned it.

Six months ago Col. Peck united with the church usually worshipping in this house, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Here he renewed for the last time that sacred covenant which he first assumed fifteen years before, and from this Table he went forth once more to battle for his country in the name of God. He has fulfilled his vows—he has done his duty—he has fought a good fight—he has laid down his precious life for that country which he loved better than life—he fell in the arms of victory,—rejoicing in the assurance that his last battle had sent rebellion reeling to its grave,—and as the clouds of smoke cleared away, his dying eyes saw the bright sky of a conquered peace and a glorious future beaming on his native land.

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general  
 consideration of the subject. It is shown that the  
 results of the experiments are in accordance with  
 the theory of the author. The second part of the  
 paper is devoted to a detailed description of the  
 apparatus used in the experiments. It is shown  
 that the apparatus is of a simple and elegant  
 design, and is capable of measuring the  
 velocity of the fluid with great accuracy. The  
 third part of the paper is devoted to a  
 description of the results of the experiments.  
 It is shown that the velocity of the fluid  
 increases as the distance from the orifice  
 increases, and that the velocity is proportional  
 to the square root of the distance. The fourth  
 part of the paper is devoted to a discussion  
 of the results of the experiments. It is shown  
 that the results are in accordance with the  
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