# A Personal Tribute

TO

# GOVERNOR

# Frederic T. Greenhalge

BY HIS PRIVATE SECRETARY

## HENRY A. THOMAS,

DELIVERED AT

DORCHESTER, NEWTON HIGHLANDS, SOUTH WEYMOUTH, WOBURN, CHELSEA, HYDE PARK, HOLBROOK, CONCORD, WEST MEDFORD, FRANKLIN SCHOOL, BOSTON; FAULKNER SCHOOL, MALDEN; HARVARD SCHOOL, CHARLESTOWN.

BOSTON:
WRIGHT & POTTER PRINTING CO., STATE PRINTERS,
18 Post Office Square.
1896.

FREDERIC THOMAS GREENHALGE.

Born July 19, 1842. Died March 5, 1896.

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# Frederic Thomas Greenhalge.

So much has already been said about the career of Frederic T. Greenhalge it is not necessary for me to go into detail regarding his ancestry and early life. The fact that he came to this country from old England at the age of twelve years; that from humble beginnings and amid adverse circumstances, he rose to be the governor of Massachusetts, makes the story of his life one of exceptional interest and at times really dramatic in its incidents. His father was at one time in prosperous circumstances; he was well read in the literature of his time and was on *intimate* terms with the leading men of Edenfield, England, and was an artist of no mean ability. Failing in business, he accepted, in the year 1855, an offer from the Merrimac Printing Company, at Lowell, Mass, and took the management of their works at an annual salary of four hundred pounds. Like many another

great man, the governor was fortunate in having a most excellent mother. She was an especially able and impressive woman, of great keenness of mind, quickness of wit, unusual energy and ambition, quick-tempered but warm-hearted, and thoroughly charming in her home life. These same characteristics could easily be traced in the life of her distinguished son.

I shall only speak of the governor's more prominent traits as a man and public official, and also draw some lessons from his noble life for our own profit and inspiration. I have so often heard him speak on semi-religious occasions, where he most fittingly voiced the sentiment of a Christian commonwealth, believing that good citizenship was closely identified with Christianity, — church and State depending upon each other for life and influence, — that this memorial service seems entirely in keeping with the day and all it stands for to hold these memorial services in a Christian church. It is because he spoke so earnestly on every occasion, because he always left an impression that he believed what he said, that he lives to-day so clearly in the remembrance of mankind. Emerson wrote of Lord Chatham that "there seemed to be some-

thing in the man finer than anything which he said." This was, indeed, true of Governor Greenhalge. His teachers in the public schools easily discovered it, the operatives in the mills of Lowell, who often needed him as a friend and advocate, recognized it, and the people of the Commonwealth, regardless of party or sect, by their countless expressions of regard testify to the worth of his real character. His speech, though eloquent and gracious, was not the real source of his greatness. It was the reserve power of nobility of soul, of loftiness of mind, of singleness of purpose, of generosity of heart, that impressed itself upon those who listened to him or came in contact with him even more distinctly and profoundly than the sentiments to which he gave utterance.

Mr. Greenhalge was not one who sought office, but after the people had placed him in office he accepted in the highest sense all its responsibilities. He was police justice, mayor, legislator, congressman, governor; and in all his public service no charge of corruption, no double dealing, no attempt at personal advancement to the injury of others, or any sacrifice of principle can ever be laid at his door. It has been said that he broadened

and steadily grew in the office of governor, and happily disappointed many of his former critics. I think it more just to his memory to say that he was always able, conscientious, broad-minded, and it only needed the occasion or the emergency to bring into play these great characteristics which had not been familiar to the public eye. I never knew a man upon whom the responsibility of a great office seemed to rest so heavily as it did upon Mr. Greenhalge after his election as governor. He realized that he was the candidate of the Republican party, whose principles he was ever ready and zealous to defend; but as governor he believed that the interests of the entire people had been committed to his keeping, and to him the name and honor of Massachusetts was a sacred trust. Called a "one termer" on the night of his first election, he said at Lowell, "I don't shrink from the title. I shall try and do my duty and let God and the people take care of the second term."

He was intensely patriotic, a worthy American. I think he always had some regrets that he happened to be born upon a foreign soil. At a dinner of the Sons of the American Revolution,

where he was responding for the Commonwealth, he remarked, after being received with great enthusiasm, "If I have any sorrow to-night, as I remember the great names you honor, it is that I was not born in this country." He was so sure of his loyalty and devotion to his adopted land that any hint that he could not be classed with a native-born American touched him to the quick. There are occasions in life when great souls live years in a single moment, when a man seems to be possessed with superhuman powers, when his whole nature forces itself into language. The close of the day when Frederic T. Greenhalge was nominated for governor of Massachusetts furnished such an occasion, and illustrates better than any words of eulogy the patriotic pride to which I have referred. The people of Lowell, without regard to party, already proud of their distinguished fellow-citizen, were gathered that night in Huntington Hall to give him welcome and God-speed. Just before he entered the hall Mr. Greenhalge was handed a Lowell paper which hinted that the opposing party might make his foreign birth an issue in the campaign. It roused the lion in his nature and at the same

time touched the tenderest spot in his heart. The hall was packed with an eager mass of humanity. As the next governor of the State was introduced a long and wild shout went up from thousands of throats, which fairly shook the building. Mr. Greenhalge spoke calmly at first, and every sentence was followed by cheers. But it was not long before he began to unfold his heart to his audience, his neighbors and friends. He had been stung at the wrong time, and he had a right to vindicate himself, vindicate himself forever. He was carried back in his thoughts to the time when he stood on that same platform as a school boy, declaiming Curran's immortal speech on universal emancipation. "I believe," he said, "in loyalty to Lowell and to Massachusetts. Every drop of blood in me is true to that principle. Why are you here? It is because you know something of my life. It has not been the best life in the world; I never claimed that; but I hope that the record above will at least show that to no child of man have I ever denied equal rights, the right of liberty, the right of justice and of fair opportunity, under whatever sun he may have been born. They are going to make

that the issue, are they? Let them do it if they dare. An alien? Let the man rise up who dares charge me with being an alien to this Commonwealth, to this republic. Here are the ashes of my father and my mother, of my first-born; here are the hopes of my wife and children, sons and daughters of the Revolution. I say, God will have some chosen curse to blast the man, the wretch, who dares take from me my country. You know me. Have I ever been unfair? Let any man, Irishman, Englishman, German or African, say that I have wronged him. We want a larger nationality; a spirit of unification. They talk about the unification that Bismarck carried out; in my heart I have a grander project, — the unification of the people of Massachusetts, the people of America."

The impassioned periods of the speaker brought tears to every eye. Men and women stood upon their feet and shouted themselves hoarse, and it was several minutes before Mr. Greenhalge could conclude his speech. It is needless to say that the issue was not again referred to during the entire campaign.

Mr. Greenhalge was a man of courage, not the courage that dares for the sake of daring,

but a calm and steady fortitude that meets an emergency and inspires confidence in a man's followers, a rugged honesty that dares fight for principle regardless of risk or censure. Many times during his term of office as governor was he tempted to depart from the path which he had marked out for himself. Often was it necessary for him to leave his friends and party associates, not because he had lost confidence in them, but because he had implicit faith in his own judgment, and once he had placed his feet upon the rock of conviction it was quite impossible to move him from his position. He sometimes offended men because of his action, his cutting replies, and his straightforward opinions; but because of his courage, his honest intention to do the right thing, even those who differed with him could not but respect him. I have often heard him say, when the arrows of criticism were flying around him, that he had certain work mapped out in his own mind which he desired to accomplish, and whatever men might say the eternal God would give him the credit of trying to do his duty. Governor Greenhalge was not long in office before he had a chance to show the kind of stuff that

was in him. I refer to a day that has made Doric Hall and the State House famous for all time. The beginning of his administration found a great many men out of work, and a feeling of discontent was rife in the community. The unemployed had organized for the vindication of their rights, and, after several visits of their leader to the executive chamber, finally determined to make a formal demand upon the State government for assistance. On the twentieth day of February, 1894, the governor had made an appointment to meet a delegation from their number at the State House at two o'clock. Mrs. Greenhalge came to Boston that day to lunch with her husband at the Parker House. As was my custom, I accompanied the governor to the hotel. The lunch was ordered, but the governor refused to eat. Naturally a little superstitious, he appeared to be deep in thought, and remarked that he anticipated trouble at the State House, and was anxious to return. He left me to care for Mrs. Greenhalge, while he went directly to his post of duty. I followed as soon as possible, and upon my arrival at the State House found a mob of more than a thousand men crowding the pas-

sageway leading from Beacon street. The governor was standing upon the front steps, with uncovered head, and was addressing the men in earnest and powerful language. He told them that he appreciated their condition, that he was anxious to supply their wants as far as possible, but that their proceedings must be orderly and in accordance with law. He counselled patience, and promised to inquire of the legislature what action could be taken under the Constitution. He talked to them as man to man, and at the close asked if what he said was not right and fair. Cheers and other signs of approval followed him as he retired to the executive chamber. For some unknown reason the crowd rapidly surged into Doric Hall and completely occupied the corridors of the capitol. The men were fast getting beyond control. Swift, the leader, had mounted one of the galleries and had begun to harangue the crowd. His speech was of the most incendiary character. The governor, he said, had promised certain things. If these promises were carried out, well and good; if not, they would clean out the chamber, and take the matter into their own hands. I happened to hear the remark, and hastened to

the executive chamber, where the governor was pacing back and forth alone. I told him what had been said. Quick as thought he started immediately to the hall below. Swift was summoned, and the two men stood there face to face, one the leader of a mob, sullen and determined, the other the chief magistrate of a commonwealth, sworn to uphold the strength and majesty of her laws. That was the opportunity which, taken advantage of, made Governor Greenhalge famous throughout the land. His action was not bravado; it was manhood, courage, heroism. With determination in every line of his face, he grasped the situation and asked Swift to explain the incendiary statements he had made threatening the good order of the State. Swift cowered, and said that his followers intended to clean out the State House with the ballot. "You wish to make that qualification?" Swift said, "Yes." "Very well," said the governor, "I accept your explanation; but remember that all the civil and military forces of the State will be used, if necessary, to preserve the good order of the Commonwealth, and you, sir, will be held personally accountable for any incendiary act that may occur." It was

an intensely dramatic moment, and those who stood there will never forget it. It was the death-blow to anarchistic proceedings in Massachusetts, certainly for this generation. The crowd gradually dispersed, the governor kept his promise to send a message to the legislature, and that body appropriated fifteen thousand dollars for the purpose of inquiring into the condition of the unemployed. This action was hardly necessary, however, as the community soon settled into its normal condition, while many of the men found employment or drifted away into other States. I have pictured this scene somewhat at length because the firm stand taken by the governor at that time did much to establish him in the confidence of the people, many of whom did not understand before the true mettle of the man they had elected to the highest place in their gift. It was a severe test of the courage of Mr. Greenhalge, but really not so trying as that which later led him to veto certain measures that came to him from the legislature. He wrote in his note-book at the time, "These vetoes trouble me very much." He disliked to stand out against the majority of his party in the legislature; it grieved him to disappoint dear friends who urged him to allow a

certain measure involving millions of money to become a law, but he never flinched in the discharge of his duty. He did not like to displease his councillors who took opposite views of any situation, nor was it his wish to keep men in jail, as was necessary in a certain famous instance, but he had a profound respect for law, and whether corporations or individuals were concerned he had but one rule of action, "Whatever people may think of you do that which you believe to be right. Be alike indifferent to censure and praise." It was a most bitter test of consistency when he decided to veto a bill increasing the salary of his faithful stenographer, a young man whom he thought most highly of, and who had to write practically his own death-warrant for the governor to sign.

Unselfishness was a strong element in the governor's character. It was that which led him to give up his college career for a time and go back to Lowell, that he might earn money for the support of his widowed mother and sisters. He went to Newbern during the war, and showed his generosity most clearly by sending every bit of his pay home to his mother. His college degree, sacrificed for a time, was finally conferred upon him in 1870.

It was the spirit of unselfishness which lost him his second election to Congress. He spoke in every other district but his own, night after night, when by a few speeches in his own it is generally conceded he might have secured his election. He accepted invitations to represent the Commonwealth on various occasions, even when his physical condition might justly have led him to decline, because he did not want to appear to be shirking work which his predecessors had undertaken. He was too generous with his services in this direction. People say that it was easy for him to speak. In a certain sense this was true, but we must take into consideration the immense amount of nervous force that was used up in the process. He had little time, on account of his official duties, to prepare his speeches, adapted to all kinds of occasions and audiences. For that reason it was necessary for him to put his whole soul into a few brief hours in order to bring out the thoughts which he desired to utter. Search the record of his achievements in this direction, read his speeches, and you will find that he usually said the right thing and left some serious thought for the consideration of his hearers. His published addresses can never

express his true ability, because he never had the time to prepare as he would like to have done. He was not an elocutionist, perhaps, but he carried force and conviction by his earnest manner, his well-rounded sentences, and his magnetic individuality. He had the qualities which men have admired in all ages, — lofty intellect, profound reason, a sympathetic mind, graceful delivery, a magnetic voice, and an attractive personality, all necessary in a successful leader and public speaker. He could hold large or small audiences with wonderful power, and, if not an orator in the strict sense of the word, he reached the people through their hearts, and they called him eloquent. Had Mr. Greenhalge confined himself to the law, I believe that he would have made himself famous as a great jury lawyer.

It was an inspiration to be associated with a man like Governor Greenhalge. He was a born leader, one who understood the people. He had been brought up with them, and was always willing to state a case fairly to them, and leave his fate to their best judgment. About the festive board it was easy to fix the head of the table as the place where he sat. He was thoroughly companionable,

and was popular because of his democratic manners, his quick repartee, and his rare knowledge of men and things. Blessed with a phenomenal memory, he was constantly drawing from a well-filled storehouse of knowledge. Mythology and the classics, facts relating to business, politics and society, readily responded to his call. He was a scholarly man far beyond what was generally known. He had a splendid library, and throughout his life he read and studied extensively. The great question with him seemed to be, How can I develop myself into the grandest possible manhood?

There was a deep and strong religious current running through his whole life. It cropped out continually in his public speeches; it found easy expression in the home which was so dear to him; it made him a useful layman in church work, and prompted him to many deeds of love and charity. Disappointments and afflictions did not weaken his faith in an all-wise, overruling power. He was wont to reason thus: If there were no trials in the world, there would be no chance for courage, no chance for ability or capacity, no enemy, no victory, no grave, no resurrection. He did not care for a religion that could not be used for prac-

tical purposes. He said, Adjust the principles of religion to every-day life. The best preparation for the next world, he reasoned, is to make this world as near like heaven as possible. His spirit never grovelled, and he never was jealous or revengeful. Written on his menu card at one of the large dinners which he attended, we find Whittier's beautiful lines: —

"Others shall sing the song,
Others shall right the wrong,
Finish what I begin
And what I fail of win.
What matters it — I or they —
Mine or another's day,
So the right thing be said,
And life the sweeter made."

He was naturally broad-minded, and could not deny to others the same freedom of thought and action which he claimed for himself. Men loved him for his consistent liberality. Alluding to the criticism of his generosity in dealing with race and religious questions, and reviewing the record of the past two years, his simple but magnetic sentence at the State convention of 1895, "So help me God, I cannot do otherwise," will not soon be for-

gotten. It was the most striking incident of the convention.

His strong character, his experience in public life, his patriotism, his courage, his leadership, seemed to be almost invaluable to the State just at this time. He had, by constant and trying work, deserved success, and there appeared to be still higher honors in store for him. But Mr. Greenhalge had, by his unusual activity, lived a century in the fifty odd years of his life. His busy brain refused to heed the warnings of a tired and overtaxed constitution, and the end came all too soon. If he was strong in life, he was truly heroic in sickness and death, and when the most intense suffering was apparent to his faithful attendants he tried to cheer them by pleasant remarks, and not a single murmur escaped his lips. True to his poetic instincts, he said, near the end, "The cup of mercy I will take," as the family physician brought the morphine to relieve his pain.

On the day of his burial, remembering how weary he was ofttimes, with toil and worry, I was impressed by the peaceful expression upon his dead face, which seemed to be sent there by some good

angel, and it could well have been written over his bier: —

"Life's work well done,
Life race well run,
Life's crown well won,
Now comes rest."

The career of Governor Greenhalge appeals with special force to the young men of Massachusetts and the country. His whole life was a battle, a fight against obstacles, but he was bound to succeed, as others will who are true to his rule of action. But his ready success must not blind us to the fact that he had uncommon intellectual powers, distinguished mental superiority, which Webster defines as genius; and if that term means leadership in thought, inventive power that fits the man to the occasion, Governor Greenhalge was certainly a man of genius.

Because he lived the life he did, it is easier for a man to be courageous and consistent, easier to sacrifice private interests for the public good, easier to build up a symmetrical and noble manhood. He loved loyalty, and could not appreciate a friendship which depended upon the bestowal of office or personal favors. He always had before himself

a lofty ideal, and it moulded all his actions. He was, indeed, the architect of his own fortune, with a well-defined plan always before him; but he kept that plan to himself. He was not ambitious in the narrow sense of the term. His ambition was to adapt himself to the hour and the opportunity, and make the most of it. Right with him was king. The death of such a man startles us, but there is a divinity which shapes our ends, and in the great hereafter we may learn that a human life nobly lived has its influence not only in time but in eternity. This life is but the preface of a book with many chapters. Such a spirit as that of Governor Greenhalge is bound to resist the empire of decay, and, mighty in its influence, live on forever.