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REV. MR. ADAMS'S SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

REV. WILLIAM J. ARMSTRONG, D. D.



A

S E R M O N ,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

REV. WILLIAM J. ARMSTRONG, D. D.,

DELIVERED IN

PARK STREET CHURCH, BOSTON,

DECEMBER 9, 1846.

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BY NEHEMIAH ADAMS,  
Pastor of Essex Street Church.

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B O S T O N :  
PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 24 CONGRESS STREET.  
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AT a meeting of the Prudential Committee, held at the Missionary House, December 15, 1846, the following Resolution was adopted :

“*Resolved*, That the thanks of the Committee be tendered to the Rev. Nehemiah Adams for his appropriate discourse delivered on Wednesday Evening last, on occasion of the decease of the Rev. William J. Armstrong, D. D., late one of the Corresponding Secretaries of the Board, and that he be requested to furnish a copy of the same for publication.”

# S E R M O N .

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PSALM CXVI. 15.

PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD IS THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS.

THE journey begun by our friend and brother, in health and with pleasant anticipations, has been completed on the bier. The funeral rites have been performed in another city. He has lain down, "till the heavens be no more." His companions in death are distributed to their last resting places. The storm is hushed. The fragments of the wreck are disappearing. I was prepared to say, the wind and waves no longer toll the bell which for several days was lifted above the waters on a portion of the wreck; but I learn this evening that the bell, though sunk beneath the surface, is now and then urged up by the swell of the sea, and thus imitating, as it were, the expiring efforts of the dying, tolls with a convulsive stroke. The full moon has many times walked in brightness over the scene of desolation, where the equal pulses of the sea now seem to deny the well known agony and ruin.

All the incidents of the disaster have been spread far and wide and have produced their impression upon the public mind, which is soon to be occupied with other events of various importance, while this will take its place among the historical facts which are repeated with an interest lessening from day to day with the lapse of time. To many here and elsewhere, however, it will never lose its interest while life remains; the impressions made by it will be identified with their inmost thoughts and feelings; and in their characters and conduct its sacred influence will be felt to their dying day.

We come together at a time far enough removed from the event to admit of calm contemplation and reflection, and not far enough for any of us to have lost the vivid impressions at first made by it.

We all feel the need of soothing and consolatory thoughts, and the natural desire to know the facts in the case has been fully satisfied. The official relation of our friend and brother to the Missionary House in this city gives a propriety to this public memorial of him, which our private love for him, and our disposition to do him honor, are happy to acknowledge and improve. The spirits of just men made perfect need no earthly honor to secure for them any happiness or reward; yet it cannot be a matter of indifference to a good man in heaven to know that surviving companions and fellow servants appreciate his character and his services, and that 'devout men carry him to his burial and make great lamentation over him.'



A common ruin buried this servant of Christ, and forty or fifty others, in instant death. He was distinguished among them by his ministerial office, by his pious endeavors to instruct them in the time of peril, and by his most fervent and affecting supplications, and by the impressiveness of his demeanor during the whole trying scene. But the God whom he served, and whom he delighted to honor, did not interpose to distinguish him from his companions by any apparent alleviation in his sufferings or in the manner of his death. A portion of the deck fell upon him and upon many others with him. Who could have told at that moment by any sign which the accident conveyed, which of them feared God,—if any of them did not? “This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.” In calamities, the impression would be made upon the mind, were it not for faith, that God disregards his servants when he mingles them in a promiscuous overthrow. He suffers the sea to destroy them, or the falling weight to crush them, or the cannibal savage to devour them, and does not come forth to arrest any law of nature, or do any special favor in their behalf. If we sometimes see good men rescued by a special interposition of Providence, we see the same in the case of wicked men; and if we see wicked men arrested by death on their way to their families, we see the same in the experience of eminently good men.

No one has ever lost a friend by a sudden

calamity, especially a friend who was known and loved as a good man, without having his feelings and his faith somewhat tried by the seeming disregard in Providence of the circumstances attending the loss of life. There is a natural expectation that God will shield the person of an eminently good man from indignity; that there will be some special mark of regard in the manner in which, if his life must be destroyed, he will receive the fatal stroke. We invest the laws of nature with something of our own feelings of reverence for the persons of those whom we respect and love. We almost expect to see, in the providence of God, the same regard for them.

There is a striking illustration, however, of the opposite procedure at times, in divine Providence, in the death of John the Baptist. It would have been natural to expect that such a man as the forerunner of Christ would be honored, if not by a translation to heaven, at least with a death like that of Moses in the arms of his God, or like that of Aaron upon Mount Hor. Instead of this, he is cast into a prison, and a wicked king, at the suggestion of a vile woman, and through the effect which a dancer produced upon him, sends with summary haste to the prison to have the head of that Elijah brought in; and straightway his head is in a charger, and the damsel delivers it to her mother. There is more implied than is expressed when it is added, "*And his disciples took up his body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.*" They might have repeated

on such an occasion, with great pertinency, the words of the thoughtful and complaining Ecclesiastes,—“There is no remembrance of the wise man more than of the fool forever. And how dieth the wise man? As the fool.”

There are times, indeed, when the manner of a good man's death has something of beauty or sublimity or of peculiar fitness, no less noticeable than the well known coincidence in the death of two Presidents of the United States upon the anniversary of our national independence. While it is the general law of Providence that one event happens to the righteous and to the wicked, the sovereignty of God makes exceptions to it, in certain cases, in favor of good men. We are not to expect them so as to feel disappointed when they do not occur; nor, when a good man dies, like John the Baptist, with no sign of special regard for him or the manner of his death, are we to conclude that he is less an object of divine favor than another. We bow with reverence and awe before that appointment of divine Providence by which the laws of nature fulfil their commission without respect of persons, teaching us impressively the truth revealed in Scripture, that life is a scene of trial ~~and~~ of reward; that we are not to expect the divine testimony in our behalf by any remarkable providence; but in the exercise of faith, our hope reaching to that which is within the vail, we must meekly bow to the common lot of man in the outward circumstances of providential events, though by them we

not

may make our grave with the wicked, and be "numbered with the transgressors."

The inference, however, which might be drawn from such an undistinguished end, is contradicted by the word of God. The seeming neglect of good men at such times, and the apparent want of regard for them in some of the events of Providence, has no foundation in fact. At all times, under all circumstances, and when there is the least apparent interposition of heaven in their behalf, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Though hunger and cold and fear, and sad thoughts about the family circle, and the painfulness of spending a festival day\* amid the perils of a wreck, the violent winds and waves, and finally the falling deck, and the engulfing waters, indicated no regard to the man of God more than to any other, yet his death was an event of interest and importance in the sight of the Most High.

The text asserts this general truth: **THE DEATH OF GOOD MEN, UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, IS DEEPLY INTERESTING IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.**

Among the multitude of deaths, their death, like a valuable thing in a promiscuous heap, is precious to Him. It is not forgotten nor disregarded as an ordinary event; it is invested with peculiar interest in the sight of God. A few considerations will illustrate this truth.

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\* The day of the Annual Thanksgiving in New York and sixteen other States.

1. *The death of a good man is a great and important event in the history of his redemption.*

God chose him in Christ before the world was. He called him by his special grace into his kingdom; he applied to him the benefits of the Saviour's death; he sealed him by the Holy Spirit; he has made all things thus far work together for his good. That saint is to be among the fruits of the Saviour's sufferings and death; his salvation is a necessary part of the great work of redemption. When probation with him is about to end, can it be a less interesting event to the Most High, than the event of his conversion on which God bestowed that "mighty power" which the Apostle compares to that "which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places?" The husbandman who planted the tree, and dressed it, and watched it, comes for the fruit; although the fruit be gathered by shaking the tree, he is not angry with the tree, nor neglectful of the fruit which he causes to fall.

"How precious are thy thoughts towards us, O God; how great is the sum of them!" What peculiar blessings, suited to peculiar wants, we have enjoyed; what adaptedness there has been in thy dealings with us to our circumstances. We have never been forgotten; at times we have been specially remembered, and have been made to feel it. Is this thy common providence? And in that tremendous hour, when we need thy presence most,

and thy thoughts should be peculiarly precious towards us, can it be that God will forget us? In all the earthly history of his people there can be, there is, nothing more precious in the sight of God than their death.

*2. The death of a good man is precious in the sight of God, because the life of such a man is intimately connected with the interests of the kingdom of God in this world.*

To every servant God has committed a trust; from every servant who deserves the name, the cause of God in this world receives advantage. Some are put in trust with children to educate for future usefulness. Others are placed in a circle of relatives and friends for an example and a reproof, and as silent witnesses for God. They keep the consciences of others awake; they serve as a standard by which others judge of propriety and impropriety in their own conduct. Others are placed in situations where it seems as though they could do nothing but pray; their prayers, however, are essential to the purposes of God.

Others occupy places of more obvious influence and importance; but to every real servant of God in this world, there is committed some trust. He may be only like a single stone in a wall; its presence is not remarked upon, but its absence would be; and its removal, therefore, becomes an important event. He who orders every thing in this world as head over all things to his church, does not suffer his faithful servants to die by chance; their removal is

an event of too much importance to be left without special care and appointment ; it is to be considered in each case whether this good example may safely be removed, or that restraining influence over others cease, or those prayers be suspended ; whether the interests of large bodies of men, and the general affairs of the Redeemer's kingdom, will permit the removal of one servant of God and another, at particular times. Christ "has the keys of death."

" A Christian cannot die before his time,  
The Lord's appointment is the servant's hour."

3. *The immediate effect of the affliction upon survivors cannot but render the death of a good man precious in the sight of God.*

I see the tents of Israel in affliction. The bell which survived on the wreck, tolling the knell of the dead, seems as though it had received a special commission to utter the feelings of the whole church of God in this land. God never does any thing, however dark and trying, which diminishes the confidence and love of his true children. The man who should wantonly do a deed that would plunge the whole people of God into sorrow, it would have been better for him if he had never been born. A paper dropped at the door by the carrier, containing an account of the "wreck of the Atlantic," gives the first intimation to his household respecting the possible fate of the husband and father. With every support which God affords the mind at such a moment, there is of course a degree of anguish

which He, who "does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men," would not permit without special consideration, and for wise and benevolent purposes.

I look away from the dwelling where the messenger conveys to that family the intelligence which is to clothe them in sackcloth. I cannot trust myself to hear that burst of grief as one member of the household after another receives the tidings; I cannot even think of the scene with composure. But God knew beforehand how it would break the heart; he had written beforehand all those tears in his book. The death of that saint, bringing such an effect with it, must have been precious in the sight of God. He is the father of the fatherless, and the widow's God and Judge. He knew how it would afflict and grieve multitudes of his people; it must have been appointed, therefore, and fulfilled by him with a consideration which an event so important for its immediate and its future influence on near and dear relatives and friends, required. Faith sees the guardian hand of God in the promiscuous ruin; the good man among the victims of the falling deck is not like one of an uncounted flock; the rude blow, and the reckless surge, and the sands hastening to entomb him, are not the true exponents of the feelings of the Most High at such an event. But "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," "and precious shall their blood be in his sight," if for no other reason, because He considers and appreciates the feelings of those



who will be deeply afflicted by the death of relatives and friends.

4. *The death of good men is so commonly a means of glorifying God, that it cannot be otherwise than important and interesting in his sight.*

Though we look to the life of a man for the evidence of his goodness, we expect his death to illustrate it. The views and feelings of a man in that honest hour, when he has no motive to deceive others, when he is expecting soon to stand before one whom he cannot deceive, are a powerful testimony to his private character, and to the sincerity and value of his religion. Not to dwell on this obvious fact, I will only allude to the recognition of it by our Lord, of whom the evangelist says, speaking of the Saviour's intimations to Peter respecting that disciple's end, "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." We know that the death of good men has ever been a powerful means of good. It must therefore have great importance and interest in the sight of God; so that the time, and all the attending circumstances of it upon which its influence so much depends, are of course ordered by infinite wisdom.

Let us illustrate this, and at the same time make a profitable use of it in the way of consolation, by referring to the event which we now mourn. Fears had for some time been entertained that our departed friend would not long continue with us. This was his own impression, and that of others, owing to some alarming symptoms. Supposing then that our

fears with regard to him would, in the course of nature, soon have been fulfilled, we may, without undertaking to interpret the purposes and providence of God, see reasons to believe that the event of his death was, in the sense explained, precious in his sight.

For, in the first place, he was spared the pain of a lingering illness, in which bodily suffering would not have been so hard for such a man as he to bear, as the suspension of his labors.

Again, he was made the instrument of religious consolation, and it may be of salvation, to a number of his fellow creatures, in the hour of peril. The survivors will remember his exhortations and prayers so long as they remember their deliverance. Will they, can they, neglect such a salvation, and finally perish? Most of those who were near him when the deck fell, it is supposed, perished as he did, at once, by the blow. He had knelt in prayer with them and others, and before praying, requested them to remain upon their knees a few moments after his prayer should be finished. Perhaps in those moments of silent prayer, amid the howling of the wind and waves, and the violent motion of the ship, the words of Scripture (Mark iv. 35—41) which he had just read, in which the Saviour says to the stormy wind, "Peace, be still," had a fulfilment in the presence of the Redeemer with his converting grace; and from that scene of ruin and death some souls with him may have immediately passed into heaven. Had he preached a sermon from a pulpit

which God should have blessed to the instant conversion of a few souls, we should have looked upon him as one on whom God had placed the seal of his special favor. We may find hereafter that such a seal was placed upon his last brief exhortation ; and it may be, that as a constellation comes up from the sea and takes its place in the firmament, so a number of souls rose up from that wreck and took their place together in heaven, while he, ~~their guiding star,~~ draws the eyes of heaven to him and to those who may have been saved by him ; for indeed he has turned many to righteousness, and will shine as the stars forever and ever. We fear to say a word which may possibly encourage late repentance ; yet we cannot limit the grace of God. In view of his known usefulness, and of the influence which he may have exerted in the salvation of some, we can say with truth that such a death as his, in the sense already explained, is precious in the sight of God.

*himself*

But this is not all. Throughout the large district of country over which his recent labors have extended, it would have been difficult to find the man whose death, under similar circumstances, would have produced a deeper sensation. The reason is, he had established himself in the affections of good men, as an eminently pious, simple-hearted, devoted servant of the Lord Jesus, to whom the cause of human salvation, the spread of the gospel through the world, was dearer than all earthly com-

fort, and even than life. We may say, with reverence and submission, it seems to have been important "by what death" such a man "should glorify God."

It is not presumption then, to say that we see divine wisdom and care in the manner of his death. To all the churches of the land, wherever his influence has been felt, and indeed to every Christian in this and in all lands who has ever heard of him, or may hear of his death, he preaches, and will continue to preach, a sermon on the subject of missions whose influence cannot fail to be felt. Seldom does God set a man in such a pulpit. In the full exercise of his missionary and ministerial office he disappears from our view. He is taken up by a whirlwind into heaven. Many an Elisha already catches his spirit and power; and not only the sons of the prophets, but all Israel, see and feel that the cause of missions had a good man taken from its head that day. Had he gone to heaven from his peaceful bed, had he first spent lingering years of infirmity, removed from active labor, the death of such a man would, at any time, have produced a deep impression; but he left his work at an hour when God summoned the nation to look on and see him die. The fame of the missionary cause is lifted up on the wings of the wind. It is impressed more deeply on the minds of men through the power of sympathy; they cannot but regard it as a striking providence, that such a man should have perished in that wreck, and seeing the testimony of survivors to

his excellent goodness, they feel that God must have intended to honor him and his employment by such a death. Happy man! chosen of God to stir the affections of his people by their love and sympathy for their friend and fellow servant towards that cause which was his life. The exhortation is always appropriate—"Be still, and know that I am God"; but in this case we feel something more than submission; we are not satisfied at merely being still; we are disposed to exult with our glorified brother, and to shout, Salvation! Salvation! for him, and through him, instrumentally, for the dying heathen. Precious, indeed, in the sight of God, was such a death! Then we will cherish the remembrance of it, not so much to weep for him, but to fulfil the purposes of God in it.

WILLIAM J. ARMSTRONG was born at Mendham, New Jersey, October 29, 1796, and was the son of the Rev. Amzi Armstrong, D. D. He was the eldest of nine children; five of his six sisters and one brother are now living.

His parents cherished a strong desire that he should become a minister of the gospel. At the age of thirteen he was ready to enter college, but his constitution was not robust, and he therefore remained at home, laboring upon a farm, till his eighteenth year, by which means he acquired great bodily vigor. In the autumn of 1814 he entered the junior class of the college at Princeton, then under the presidency of the Rev. Dr. Green.

During the five years previous to his entering college he devoted much time to general reading, and always considered those years as a most important and influential period in his studies.

In youth he had great exuberance of feeling, was sprightly and joyful, entering with his whole soul into the amusements, and also, as he frequently complained, the follies, of youth, though it is believed he contracted no vicious habits. His first decided religious impressions were produced by a sermon which his father preached to the young people of his charge, with special reference to his son. These impressions were partially lost for a season ; and his natural ardor and impetuosity were so great that his father wept and prayed much at the thought of his exposure to the dangers of a college life ; but in the course of a few months, during a special attention to religion in college, he indulged a hope of acceptance with God. It is believed to be this attention to religion at Nassau Hall which gave occasion to that useful tract in the series of the American Tract Society, called "Questions and Counsel," by Rev. Dr. Green.

From this period Mr. Armstrong looked to the sacred ministry as his profession ; and it is an interesting and well authenticated fact, that he thought seriously at that time of devoting himself to the work of a foreign mission. He made a profession of his faith in Mendham, in the spring of 1815, his beloved father being thus owned and blessed of God in first calling his attention to the concerns

of his soul, and in receiving him to the Christian church.

He completed his college course in 1816, with a respectable standing as a scholar. His father then had charge of a flourishing academy in Bloomfield, New Jersey. Placing himself under the care of a presbytery as a candidate for the ministry, he began the study of theology under the direction of his father, whom he assisted in the academy. From time to time he submitted himself for examination to the Rev. Dr. Richards, then a pastor in Newark. At the expiration of two years, he was licensed to preach. He then spent a year at the seminary at Princeton, preaching on the Sabbath, and at other times as he had opportunity.

Being thus prepared for the exercise of his office, he devoted himself to the work of home missions, under the direction of the General Assembly's Board. His first place of labor was Albemarle, Virginia, near the residence of Thomas Jefferson. No church existed there; the Lord's Supper had never, so far as it could be ascertained, been administered in the place. Mr. Armstrong labored two years in Charlottesville, Albemarle county, now the seat of the University of Virginia, with marked success. A Presbyterian church was gathered as the result of his labors, and it still flourishes. There were several interesting cases of conversion among infidels under his preaching, some of them the friends and associates of Jefferson, who expressed himself with some feeling on hearing of their conversion. These

converted infidels became members of the newly organized church.

The declining state of his father's health recalled Mr. Armstrong to New Jersey, in 1821. In the summer of that year, Bloomfield was blessed with a revival of religion, and Mr. Armstrong labored in it, with much zeal and success, in connection with the pastor, the Rev. Gideon N. Judd. Several churches were desirous of having him for their pastor. He accepted a unanimous call from the First Presbyterian Church in Trenton, New Jersey, and labored there with faithfulness and success, till the spring of 1824.

When the Rev. Dr. John H. Rice accepted a professorship in the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, and left the pastoral office in the First Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Virginia, he recommended Mr. Armstrong to that church, as their minister, and by his earnest solicitation he was induced to accept their call. They to whom the character or reputation of Dr. Rice are familiar, will regard this as no slight testimony in favor of our beloved friend. For ten years he was the devoted, beloved, and successful pastor of that people, of which abundant illustrations might be given.

The synods of Virginia and North Carolina organized a Board for foreign missions in the spring of 1834, with a view to missionary labors through the agency of the American Board. Mr. Armstrong was appointed its secretary and agent, and took a dismission from the church in Richmond. Many



and very tender were the ties which were necessarily broken by this event. The people at first did not believe that it was their duty to make so great an effort as it would cost to part with him ; but in view of the cause to be promoted, they consented in a manner honorable to themselves and to the gospel which they professed to love. The sacrifice on his part and that of his family was great. Those who know the state of the roads in Virginia, at certain seasons of the year, will admire the self-denying spirit of the man who, after ten years experience of the comforts of a city, and, as one calls it, "the sweet security of streets," willingly subjected himself to labors and perils, day and night, on those wearisome highways. He continued in this service till the fall of 1835, when he was appointed one of the Secretaries for Correspondence of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and removed to Boston. His particular department of labor was the home correspondence. In 1833, in compliance with the advice of the Committee, he removed his family to the city of New York, expecting to return to Boston after two or three years ; but considerations connected with the health of his family prolonged his residence there till his death. Though this involved a considerable modification of his official duties, he was most fully and usefully employed. His great delight was to preach. The Sabbath usually found him in the pulpit, almost always pleading the cause of missions ; and during the week, he was never so happy as in present-

ing the cause in meetings for missionary purposes.

The testimonials are abundant with respect to his uncommon excellence as a pastor. His labors in the ministry, as well as in the missionary cause, frequently seemed excessive; but his early physical training gave him uncommon muscular energy, which enabled him to work for twenty-eight years with remarkable efficiency. When a pastor, the cause of missions held a large place in his thoughts. Several of those who joined the church under his ministry became foreign missionaries.

A friend and brother in the ministry, Mr. Armstrong's successor at Trenton, writes respecting him as follows:—"While he was at Trenton, I often listened to his sermons, and there was no man whom, at that day, I heard with more impression. His discourses were carefully prepared, and were pronounced with a degree of warmth and emotion which are quite unusual. While his intonations were far from being rhetorically perfect, the general result of so much truth, uttered with so much energy, could not fail to awaken the hearer's mind. My recollection is vivid of his appeals to the heart, as being of a high order. He was often greatly moved himself, and was heard by numbers, I doubt not, to their everlasting good. When, at a later period, I was called to labor among the same people, I found that he had left that good name, which is better than precious ointment. There are manifest tokens to his faithfulness, in public and private. . . . In my

humble judgment, Dr. Armstrong was a felicitous sermonizer. His discourses abounded in what I may be allowed to call fervid argument. They were often elaborate, always judicious, always unpretending, and sometimes highly pathetic. Intense feeling took the place of art."

In his employment as Secretary of the American Board, he was eminently faithful, industrious, and zealous. No man loved the quiet of home more than he, nor sighed more for rest from incessant change; but after parting with Rev. Messrs. Spaulding and Scudder, on their return to the heathen, he said, "I prefer to live and die in this work." His earnest desire was to awaken Christians to prayer and effort for a dying world. He has been known to go into the office of one of the religious papers to look over the exchange papers in search for intelligence of revivals of religion, knowing that love for the heathen and contributions to the cause of missions are generally in proportion to the increase of piety in the churches.

His zeal for the heathen grew out of his love for his fellow men, which showed itself in more ways than one. When in Virginia, he was deeply interested in the slaves, and exerted himself much for their benefit, and in efforts for the peaceable abolition of slavery. His well known zeal in this cause nearly cost him his life. He was once waylaid by two men who were opposed to his views and feelings on the subject of slavery, and received from one of them a gash, through his hat, with a large sharp weapon.

But I love to think and speak of him as a man. Aside from our respect and love for him in his official relations, the hearts of all of us flowed forth to him as a good man. He impressed different friends, of course, by different qualities; but one thing in him was peculiar and obvious to all who knew him,—the union of intense feeling with mildness of demeanor. I have seen him, in public speaking, roused to an energy of feeling which has made me think how well it was that such strength of emotion was controlled by religious principles; in private, however, his constant smile, and his gentle, humble, conciliating manner, was like beautiful waters over volcanic places, imaging the heavens above them, but concealing the depths beneath. The impression has been made on my own mind by my intercourse with him, that he must naturally have had much to contend with in the strength of his passions; but this impression has been made only by the strength of his religious emotions, and by some instances of great control over his feelings, which it was evident could have been gained only by one who had found occasion for, and had practiced, vigorous self-discipline. He was a lovely and pleasant man. He made you feel that he loved you; and you involuntarily loved him. He was the delight and joy of his family circle. The last Sabbath evening of his life he spent in hearing his children recite portions of Scripture and the Assembly's Catechism. It seems to have been the mysterious impression in that family circle that their rich blessing in him was not long to continue.

I will not analyze his character. I cannot make a cool and critical estimate of his several talents. He stands before me as a holy, humble, self-denying, meek, ardent, affectionate man. He has taken his place in our hearts, and will always keep it, as one who deserves and has secured our best affections, our deepest respect, and our most tender and endearing recollections.

And is he gone! We sat with him in the Committee meeting the Tuesday afternoon before his death, when more than once he awakened a pleasant smile by his quiet humor and happy illustrations; and the next Tuesday evening I found myself, by appointment of the Committee, meditating his funeral sermon! Dear associate, brother, friend! thy path to heaven has been so suddenly made, and is yet so radiant with glory, that we do not, we cannot, feel that the connection between thee and us is severed. May we never feel that it is severed. We cannot think of thee as dead! Thou, rather, art the living, and among the living; and we are among the dead.

As members of the Committee and officers of the Board, we will cherish the memory of thy zeal, thy fervent spirit, thine exemplary faith and patience, thy amiable disposition and conduct, which made thee a pleasant associate and fellow-laborer. We desire to fulfil the duties of our office in a manner which we think would receive thy present commendation and thy future congratulation.

Brethren in the ministry; friends in important places of trust; parents, and fellow Christians! there is an admonition to you in this event, peculiarly impressive. You see in the removal of this friend and brother that no usefulness, no supposed importance in your life to the cause of Christ or to the happiness of others, obtains exemption from death. Office, high and important duties, usefulness, are no security against a sudden removal from the world. God is dependent on no man's talents or help. Here is a family, consisting of a wife, and five children between the ages of six months and eighteen years. O death! relent, and spare that husband and the father of such a family! The inexorable stroke descends. God of our life! we own thy sovereign control over us. "We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled." In the language of the common law, "a man's house is his castle." We see that it is no defence against the mandates of Him who "openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth."

I would remark to my reverend fathers and brethren in the ministry, that there seems to have been a divine recognition of the pastoral office and labors of our deceased friend in his last hours, though he had not been for many years a pastor. But while a pastor, he was pre-eminently faithful. He loved his work, he loved the souls of men, and preached with direct reference to their conversion. When he is about to die, God seems to remember

with what peculiar zeal he thus served him, and how he seemed to say, on leaving the pastoral office for the missionary work, "As for me I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee";—and accordingly the last act of his life is permitted to be a direct effort to save souls. He begins his exhortation in the cabin, when, lo! his voice catches the ear of one at a distance, who recognizes in it the voice of the pastor of his youth! It seems as though it were a testimony of remembrance with God of past faithfulness. That pastor's voice brought with it, to the mind of that esteemed survivor of the wreck, a throng of recollections respecting his early and subsequent life. Members of Christian congregations, young and old! if you should accidentally hear your pastor's voice amid the scenes of judgment, will the effect of it be joy or grief with you? That voice would recall scenes and impressions that would thrill you with pleasure, or make almost superfluous your dreadful sentence from your Judge.

He is gone to that great cloud of witnesses, who are above us and round about us. He has realized the anticipation of one of his predecessors,—Mr. Evarts,—expressed in that most striking exclamation upon his dying bed, "Oh, the face of God!" He has seen Christ, whom not having seen he loved. He has seen the multitude which no man can number, out of every nation and kindred and tongue and people. He has been welcomed by his predecessors

in office, two of whom at least died like him, away from home, in the discharge of their official duties; Worcester among the Cherokees, and Cornelius at Hartford, Connecticut.\* This work of missions fills up, in the bodies of those who enter fully into its active labors among the churches at home, "that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ." Perils in the wilderness, and perils in the city, and perils in the sea, to say no more, must be the lot of those to whom is intrusted the work of inciting us to do our duty to the heathen.

But with our departed brother, all is rest, and peace, and reward. Among the redeemed I fancy that he looks with peculiar interest on the converts from heathenism. There are the bondmen of Africa, kings and priests unto God. In more than "barbaric pearl and gold" is the poor dweller by the Ganges and the Burrampooter. There the American Indian adores Him who is "more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey." Kings' daughters, from the Sandwich Islands and Tabiti, are among the "honorable women." At Christ's right hand is that Madagascar queen. The oppressed mountaineer of Lebanon, the persecuted Armenian, are where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." The Persian worships a brighter Sun than that which rises on flowery Ispahan. The men of Burmah and Siam wonder forever at the grace which raised them from

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\* Mr. Evarts was, at the time of his death, in Charleston, South Carolina, having been for some time out of health.



their native debasement. Our brother felt himself a debtor to the Jew and the Greek ; he sees them both there ; and a sweeter savor to God than that “ o’er Ceylon’s isle,” is he by whose efforts, in part, salvation has been flowing forth to the Tamil people. The old Nestorian church has brought forth fruit in old age, some of which is gathered unto eternal life. The Chinese sees his wall of separation exchanged for a wall within which he walks with “ the nations of them that are saved.” To look on such a sight for one hour, is an ample recompense for the toil and suffering by which that glory and bliss have been prepared. What, then, must eternity in heaven be !

When I think that he has seen our King, and “ the meat of his table, and the attendance of his ministers and their apparel, and the ascent by which ” they go up to the presence of the Lord, there is no more spirit in me, not only at the thought of what he has seen, but of our nearness to it, and our sure inheritance with him, ere long, of that unutterable glory and joy !

Courage, then, ye dear, faithful missionaries of the cross ; beloved fellow-laborers, every where, in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ ; associates in the labors and cares of this work ! One of our number has just been parted from us, and taken up into heaven. We have followed him with our voices and tears of mingled sadness and love ; we have followed him to heaven. Let us return, like the disciples, to our labor, and may I not add, “ with great joy.”

Just before the dreadful crisis on board the Atlantic, it is said the passengers shook hands with each other; and thus they parted, for the terrible and solitary contest which every one of them was about to have for his life. As we separate here, first for the work of Christ, and then to meet in heaven, let us pledge our hearts and hands to one another, and to all the beloved missionaries round the globe, and to "all who, in every place, call on the name of the Lord Jesus, both theirs and ours." Let us feel that we are all embarked in the same ship, with a common peril; that we must all be cast into the waves of death; that the world, and all that is therein, must be destroyed, and that our proper business is to save our own souls and the souls of others.

Welcome, then, toil and peril, for Christ's sake, and for the souls of men, for a little season. Farewell, for a little season, dear brother, and we will meet you where there is no more sea. "Precious in the sight of the Lord," and precious to his people, has been thy death! Till, with our work finished, we are summoned home; till, with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads we, with the ransomed, come to Zion; till we meet and mingle with thee in the worship and the friendships, the recollections and the anticipations, of heaven, farewell, dear brother and friend, farewell!









5440:4

with respects of Bro D. Dutton

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# S E R M O N

PREACHED TO

The Congregation at Essex-street Church,

BOSTON, MAY 16, 1847,

BY

T H E I R P A S T O R ,

ON THE

SABBATH AFTER THE INTERMENT OF HIS MOTHER;

AND

NOW PRINTED AT THE EARNEST WRITTEN REQUEST OF MANY OF THE HEARERS,  
ONLY FOR THEIR PRIVATE USE.

*By S. N. Dickinson*

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY S. N. DICKINSON.

1847.





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## S E R M O N .

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THEN SAITH HE TO THE DISCIPLE, BEHOLD THY MOTHER ! — *John* xix. 27.

IN the agonies of crucifixion, the heart and eye of Christ were turned towards his mother, who stood by his cross. It might be a question who suffered most, — the son upon the cross, or the mother who saw his crucifixion. Then was the time when the words of old Simeon, addressed to her as he held the infant Jesus in his arms, were fulfilled: “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.” Something stronger than nails held her to the cross, — a mother’s love; something more excruciating than nails and a spear distracted her, — the sufferings of her child.

We know not which of two things is the more affecting and impressive in the scene at the cross between the Saviour and his mother, — the touching fact that he should have remembered her in his agony, and provided for her by giving her in charge to the beloved disciple; or the inexpressible delicacy and dignity of his words at such a moment. We see no parade of affection; no betrayal even of weakness, at a moment when weakness would have been natural and excusable. With all the love and tenderness of feeling of which the Saviour was capable, and which must have found a strong excitement in the sight of his mother who saw him suffering and dying, the Saviour says, with simple but sufficient words, to his mother, directing her with his eye to John, “Woman, behold thy son!” and then to the disciple, “Behold thy mother!” Turning her attention from himself, he directed her to look on John, henceforth, as a son. He did not fix her thoughts upon himself, exciting her pity and encouraging her grief; his address to her was without

weakness, inspired by pure affection, guided by wisdom and prudence, and worthy of him who, on every occasion, in the adaptedness of his words, as in every other quality of them, "spake as never man spake."

The future comfort and welfare of his mother, rather than the pain of separation, was regarded by the Saviour in his parting words. These words were intended to make a strong impression upon the feelings of John just at that moment, and so to secure for the mother a home in the heart of the disciple. It is always well if, amid scenes of death, we can regard the happiness and welfare of the living, instead of being absorbed with excessive or useless grief. On the present occasion I shall endeavor to act in view of this truth.

The experience of a pastor is, in a certain sense, the property of his people. Whatever deeply interests him is kindly regarded by them; and, besides this, it would be unnatural if his discourses did not receive a character from the strong emotions which the private events of his history excite in him. A minister who should return from the grave of his mother, and preach to his people on a subject or in a tone of feeling which should wholly conceal that fact, would, in your judgment, be unfit to sustain such a relation as that of a Christian pastor. There is, however, a respect and delicacy which he ought to feel in alluding publicly to his private experience. That experience ought to be used only for the good of his people.

I have, the past week, performed the last sad offices of respect and love for an only surviving parent. I turn, as I love to do, for my example to Him who is our forerunner through all the possible experience of our earthly life; I see him in the act of separation from his mother; I adore the wisdom and beauty of his example, and I shall improve this event for the benefit of those who have a mother on earth to love and cherish. For no other purpose and with no other motive shall I speak under these present circumstances. Borrowing the words of the Saviour on the cross to his beloved friend, and accommodating them a little in form, — the spirit of them does not need it, — I say to each of you who, by the good providence of God, yet have such a parent surviving, "BEHOLD THY MOTHER!"

I shall first take you to a sight of her, which will give direction and force to all which I propose to say.

*Behold your mother as she sleeps in death.*

If you survive her, you will either behold this sight, or, at a distance from which you cannot return in season to see it with your eyes, imagination will present it strongly before your mind. In a coffin, behold thy mother! The eyes which never saw you approach without beaming love upon you, are shut for ever in this world, heedless of your earnest, fond gaze, your streaming tears, your protestations of love, your appeals to her, half unconscious yourself what you say. You may kiss that cold cheek, but you will receive nothing in return. Silence has placed her seal on those expressive lips; you feel neglected or shunned, while one whose thoughts and words outran all your joys and sorrows speak no salutation, give no answer. There are the hands which received you, a helpless infant, from the hands of God, which pressed you to her bosom, ministered to your every want, held up your first steps, bound up your wounds, smoothed the pillow, and made you comfortable in bed; which pointed out each new object to your inexperienced eyes; which labored for you in ways for which no wealth is a compensation, and in which wealth could not induce a stranger to serve you. Those hands are now folded for ever upon that bosom where you often cradled your head; but now they seem to serve as bars between it and you. The venerable form of a mother is extended for its last sleep, composed for the narrow house with the customary decencies of burial, but deprived of all things else. The icy cleanness and coldness of the winding-sheet takes the place of those familiar habiliments with which her revered image is identified in your mind. You cannot suppress the feeling that there is a violation of respect to her in her being subjected to burial. She goes the way of all the earth. Oh could not the dread sentence be suspended in favor of such a mother, and in view of such love as yours!

*Behold thy mother, on her way to the grave, and at last consigned to the narrow house.*

Through the streets where you have so often walked with her, you follow the hearse with its precious charge. All things around seem to you to share in your sadness. You come to the tomb. Faithful tomb! where the garnered dust of dear relatives and friends is kept safely; but a sad, gloomy dwelling place for a parent to inhabit.

Men and strangers take her from your sight beneath the earth. Will you go down with them, and see that all things are decent and in order ; that side by side with some dear sleeper there, those remains may find their most appropriate position for their long sleep ? O what a narrow, damp, miserable house to leave a parent in ! This arched, low, brick roof, these mouldered walls, these decaying coffins ! and no light here but from the door which in a moment is to be shut up, and then how dark ! so that night there is no darker than the livelong day. You take a last gaze at that face ; you fasten the lid ; farewell, dear mother ! we meet on earth no more, till we hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God !

If this were all that Christian faith and hope could permit us to say, the exhortation in the text would now end with a sad and dreadful limitation.

If your mother is a Christian, you will never feel more forcibly on any other occasion the meaning of that word, "Death has lost its sting." I learned the meaning of it in a tomb. A sting rankles after the wound is made ; a sting leaves behind a poison which inflames and torments the sufferer. No such subsequent effects will you feel at the death of a pious mother, if you yourself be a child of God. Your feelings will consist of exquisite love and tenderness ; you will be overwhelmed by the thoughts of childhood and the scenes of home ; by acts of love and kindness, by the precious memory of her who has gone ; but the fact that she has died and is buried, while it subdues you with grief, leaves no rankling sting behind ; you feel no anguish in the wound ; no poison from the monster death inflames your feelings. Christian faith and hope say to you,

*Behold thy mother with Christ.*

She who first taught your lips to speak the name of Christ, and your heart to love him ; who prayed at your birth that you might be the Lord's, and said, "Therefore have I lent him to the Lord ; as long as he liveth, he shall be the Lord's ;" who lived for your salvation ; whose joy was full when you became a follower of Christ, or whose last hours needed this one consolation, to see you a follower of the Saviour, has now been received into the presence of her Redeemer. What friends received her ? Were your father and other members of your dear family circle there, to welcome

her home? When you or some other child of the family returned after a long absence, you know the joy with which you met your mother, and you remember the arrangements in the house which were made with reference to your reception. Or when she returned, you know what pleasure it gave you to receive her. The meeting between those loved ones in heaven must have been a scene on which angels, who were never lost and found, looked with wonder and love. But this is nothing to her meeting with her God and Saviour. You could not follow her further than to the gates of death. When your ability to help her ceased, an unseen hand was stretched forth amid the shades of death, and a voice said to her, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." If there is a being whom it would make you most happy to see exalted to a state of glory and bliss, it is your mother. Now by faith you may behold her made perfectly happy; free from sin, infirmity of body and mind, her desires fulfilled, her bliss complete. All that you could wish for in her behalf is surpassed by a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. You now recall the earnestness and fervour of her religious feelings, her tones of voice in prayer, her adoring thoughts of God, her views of heaven, her desires to be there, the subjects of sermons which gave her great satisfaction, the hymns which you heard her singing to herself at her work, her frequent exclamations of joy at the thought of being with Christ and his saints, her love for all that was beautiful and sublime in nature, and her recognition of God in every thing. All the desires of her heart are now fulfilled. Perhaps it was she that taught you those consoling truths, and bid you mark the beauty of the language in which they are conveyed, in the answer of the Assembly's Catechism: "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves until the resurrection." This is now fulfilled in her.

But, with all that is pleasant and consoling in this, you cannot but feel that for this world there is an entire separation between you and her. You have performed your last tribute of love and reverence; no more can you be the stay and staff to her declining years; if you have any confession to make to her, any pardon to ask, or if you

need to make any reparation for sins of omission or commission, you cannot do it. All is sealed up for ever. If you have been filial in your feelings and conduct, the first commandment with promise will begin to be fulfilled to you ; in all events, your probation as a child towards your mother has now come to an end.

Let us now turn and make a practical use of all these contemplations for the benefit of the living. In doing this, we have the example of the Saviour on the cross.

I look with great pleasure on those of you who yet have mothers in the land of the living. I say then to each of you,

*Behold thy mother, still within the reach of your dutiful regard and service.*

To those of you who are young, I would say, It seems to me now, and it will seem to you when you are in my circumstances, that, if I had a mother living, I should be more unwearied in my affection and devotion to her. It is natural, when a parent dies, to admit every possible self-reproach to do its full work of anguish in our hearts. I see many things which I should not have said or done, and many things which I could have done better ; but, while I say this, I must say in justice to the grace of God, that, as I stood over that parent's coffin, and when I left her in the tomb, I could not find in my recollections any thing with which to reproach myself as an unkind and undutiful child. This is all which as a sinner I dare to say ; for the heart is deceitful above all things ; but I must add that my mother's kind expressions of gratitude and love for any conduct which she was pleased to regard as dutiful are now the richest treasures in my memory. Her face towards me is not made by my conscience to wear any coldness. I did not despise her when she was old. While God would be just to punish me for my sins as a child, his grace enabled me to please her to whom I am under such obligations.

I say, then, to you who are young, honor thy father *and thy mother*. With a mother a child feels it easier to take liberties ; and he is tempted to say and do things to her which he would be afraid to say and do to a father. In your feelings and conduct towards your mother, therefore, there is, as a general thing, more peculiar occasions for filial obedience or disobedience than towards a



father, unless he be infirm or helpless. Hence it is that a child's conscience is more apt to be troubled on account of sins committed against a mother than against a father. If he speaks disrespectfully to a father, he is generally punished for it on the spot; while a mother may be too feeble, or too gentle, or for some other cause indisposed, to punish; and, taking advantage of it, a child may indulge his wicked temper and words towards his mother with present impunity; — but at last conscience biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. The recollection of unkind words or unkind treatment towards a mother is the bitterest sorrow in a child's heart. Happy will you be if you can repent of such things while your mother lives, and you can be forgiven; and let succeeding years clothe your future recollections with peace and even joy.

Perhaps your mother is old and infirm, and wholly dependant on you. Or perhaps, with increasing years, the peculiarities of human nature in her are not covered with the blandishments with which youth and strength conceal them. Perhaps she would be burdensome to any one not her child. O happy child! to have an aged, infirm mother on whom you can expend that filial love and patience which are so amiable in the sight of man, well pleasing to God, and which are followed, after the decease of the object of your love and care, with such consolation and joy. One self-approving thought such as you then will have will bring more bliss with it than all the pleasures which you gave up to minister to her wants and sorrows. The blessing of that mother, expressed though it may have been only with a smile, will be a richer inheritance to you than gold and silver. No mention shall be made of rubies compared with an aged mother's blessing. If you notice any peculiarities in her which are common to poor human nature, I will tell you how they will seem to you when she is dead — like the small clouds which seemed to mar the western sky, but which, when the sunset flings its hallowing light upon them, are made beautiful in the first glow of departing day. Her faults you will see “lean to virtue's side” — her excellent qualities will each take the expanding size of a bird when it rises on the wing.

May I be indulged in a few words of a biographical nature, of interest to myself, and perhaps not all of them unprofitable to you? This mother whom I mourn was born in Boston, June 9, 1768. She

was the daughter of Samuel and Mehitable Torrey, who owned and occupied a house in old Cornhill, which is now that part of Washington street, between Court street and what is now Cornhill. Her mother afterwards married John Simpkins, for many years Deacon of the New North Church in Hanover street. Her mother and herself were members of a praying circle of females, which, when evangelical religion was in a low state, is believed and declared by some now living to have been a great means of perpetuating evangelical piety in our denomination in this city. Deacon Simpkins was well known throughout the commonwealth as the first Treasurer of the Massachusetts Missionary Society. His house was a place of resort for the clergy of Massachusetts. It was at his table that the idea of Cent Societies was produced. It was remarked there on one occasion, that, if each individual would stately lay aside one cent per week, large sums would be collected for benevolent purposes. One of the company laid down a cent upon the table for a beginning; and the subject of this notice was called upon to write a preamble embodying the idea of a Cent Society, which she did in a short time; and this preamble from her pen now stands at the head of the Constitution of the first Cent Society, as published in the Missionary Magazine. That year I find that the Treasurer of the Massachusetts Missionary Society acknowledges the receipt of 218 dollars from his wife, the first Treasurer of the first Cent Society. These were the "springs in the valleys which run among the hills." Now, as the result of them in part, "there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God."

It is to this parent that I owe my first impressions of the great truths relating to the sovereignty of God, his decrees, and his electing grace. Many a time she has made my young and wicked heart tremble in view of the sovereignty of God, while she taught me that for my sins against him he would be just in casting me off for ever, and that he was under no obligation to bestow converting grace upon me. When at last this proud heart yielded, if ever, to God, it was in view of his adorable sovereignty, which has mercy on whom it will have mercy. I owe to her instrumentally my first love for those doctrines of the Gospel which humble man and exalt God.

Her love to the adorable person, mediatorial offices, and kingdom

of Christ was the prominent feature in her piety. The language of Solomon's Song, as expressing the love between the soul of the believer and Christ, was frequently employed by her when she uttered her thoughts and feelings respecting the Saviour, in a way that first gave me an insight into the spiritual use and value of that book. In hearing her ardent expressions with regard to Christ borrowed from that book, I think I have seen the wisdom and goodness of Him who made the Bible, in furnishing such helps as the Song of Songs affords to some of the higher devotional christian feelings of believers. As the moral and religious state of a man influences him greatly in understanding many of the doctrines of revealed religion, so different portions of the Bible are fully appreciated only when our frames of mind are in the same key with them;—at other times they may even seem discordant with our feelings, and our judgment respecting them will then be unfavorably affected. To this dear parent, the words “chiefest among ten thousand,” “he is altogether lovely,” applied to Christ, conveyed some faint idea of his excellent glory.

Such entire devotedness to the cause and kingdom of Christ, such a deep interest in every thing that related to the spread of the gospel, I have seldom seen manifested more uniformly or in ways more interesting than by her. But, by dwelling on this theme, I should open the sanctuary of domestic recollections, which, with each of us, is private and sacred.

Towards the close of life, each time that I saw her, she would soon, after beginning the conversation, remind me of a hymn which she said she heard me read in public worship ten years ago, and which she said expressed her constant feelings. The hymn begins with the words, “Ye angels that stand round the throne.” The verse which she always quoted, and repeated with her hand raised and with eyes overflowing with tears, is this :

“I want to put on my attire  
 Washed white in the blood of the Lamb;  
 I want to be one of your choir,  
 And tune my sweet harp to his name.  
 I want, oh! I want to be there  
 Where sorrow and sin bid adieu,  
 Your joy and your friendship to share,  
 To wonder and worship with you.”

Last Sabbath evening, May 9th, in the seventy-ninth year of her age, this desire was fulfilled. She is where she wished to be. My prevailing thought and feeling with regard to her is this: There are few in heaven capable of greater enjoyment than she.

A father and mother in heaven! My filial feelings are not violated as they would be if I were compelled to think of my parents now as the enemies of God, and punished by him. Suppose that they had left behind them a fortune, or a splendid and extensive reputation, but afforded me no hope that they were the friends of God, or that they are saved. Now I know in some measure how to weep with those whose deceased parents, it is feared, do not sleep in Christ; for to one who respects and loves his parents, any treatment of them from others which implies blame or guilt on the part of the parent, is the keenest wound; and to feel that those parents are, in the sight of God, wicked and cannot be admitted to heaven, must be, to a child, one of the bitterest sorrows. In contrast with this I know how to rejoice with those who hope that their pious parents have been received into the presence of the God and Saviour whom they loved and served here. Many of us can say with Cowper in his lines on receiving his mother's picture:

“My boast is not that I deduce my birth  
From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth;  
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,  
‘The son of parents passed into the skies.”

I will not repress the pleasurable feeling which I have indulged in connection with this event, that to have a mother in heaven among ministering spirits and saints is to have your hold upon the heavenly world increased, its relation to you made more intimate, and the interest there in your behalf reinforced. There no one loves you like your mother; while she has no influence to exert for you by prayers or merits, you cannot but feel cheered and strengthened by the thought that there is one among the armies of heaven whose thoughts, amid the radiant glories and the peaceful and blissful scenes of that world, are filled with unutterable love for you.

In that cloud of witnesses around me, the spectators of my conduct, one more has taken her place and station — my mother! I

can think of no higher earthly inducement to virtue and piety, and faithfulness to God and man, than the exhortation which will whisper to my faith — Behold thy mother! The friend that listened to my youthful sorrows without reproach, and to my childish recital of youthful success and honors made safely to her, without fear of being called vain, the depositary of all my young hopes and plans, and whose smile was the greatest reward of well-doing; — she is not lost to me, nor has the desire to please her ceased. I must live so as to meet her approbation. Next to the approbation of my Judge, her joy at faithful service rendered by her child to her Redeemer and his people, will be the richest reward.

Some of you have mothers in heaven, and you are not yet christians. You withhold from them an extreme joy while they are in suspense about your final state, and think of you as sinning still against their Redeemer and yours. If a child can feel that it is yet probable that he may be separated from his mother hereafter, and does not make immediate effort to prevent it, that child has an insensibility of which I have no conception. When you meet that pious mother in the great and final day, if you are not converted, may we be spared the sight of your separation. I thank thee, my father, and thee, my mother, that thy undoubted piety makes it certain that, if I am a child of God, our separation is not for ever, our reünion is sure. If it required of you any sacrifice or self-denial to follow Christ, and if religion were not its own reward, it is reward for all that christian self-denial and effort could ever cost, to leave to your child the hope that his parents are among the redeemed. I turn my face from thy tomb, my mother, and come again to a world of sin and peril.

“ Yet oh! the thought that thou art safe, and he!  
This thought is joy, arrive what may to me.”

I used to think it strange that a full-grown man should so feel like a child about the death of his parents as to say, as David did, “ When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.” But now I find a new confirmation of the truth that the heart does not grow old; that the disappearance of both parents makes a man feel, as he never did before, that his original home, the place where he grew,

is wholly destroyed from the face of the earth; that his two best friends have utterly forsaken him; that there are none to pray for him with the interest and fervor which they felt; and that by their fall he is brought forward, as it were, to the front rank, and he feels exposed more than ever to the shafts of death. I can therefore see how natural it was for David to think much of the protecting care and love of God when both his parents were dead.

To every one here who yet bears the relation of a child to such a parent, I now make the appeal in the text, "Behold thy mother!" The rest of your life should witness dutiful feelings and love unfeigned. You never can do too much for that parent; and if you are a son, nothing is more amiable in the sight of God or man than to be tenderly and respectfully devoted to the happiness of your mother. If that parent has gone to heaven, remember her example and her words. You are nearer to a meeting with her than ever; for the separation between you is growing less and less, as to time, every day. What may you expect your feelings will be if it shall be said to you as you enter eternity, Behold thy mother! Is her people thy people, and her God thy God?

With all the consolations of religion, such a bereavement as this is overwhelming. The heart knoweth its own bitterness. O thou last enemy! when wilt thou be destroyed! How long wilt thou accomplish such heart-rending deeds as the separation of parents and children, and subject us to the anguish of laying them in the tomb! Thanks be unto God, the day of redemption is nigh. Our meeting will atone for our parting; eternity will efface the sorrows of time. O! let us live for eternity, and, in hope of its consolations and joys, lay up our portion there, following the pious dead so far as they follow Christ; then these natural affections, though frequently the source of pain in this sinful and dying state, will always be the inlets of joy. When the "kindreds of the earth" meet again, may our meeting with our kindred be one which will recall to our respective memories a life of eminent piety and usefulness, and may none of us be subjected to the great shame of having lived only for ourselves! In all the relations of life, let us each conduct in such a manner that the disclosures of eternity will occasion joy, and not grief. Let the joy of the household at our youthful well-doing be repeated in heaven in view of

honorable service done for Christ. Let no dear child be separated from the family in heaven, no parent incur the reproaches of his children for an ungodly and ruinous example. But if we are not made happy by the memory of our parents, if they reject their God and Saviour, we shall find in God a solace for this disappointment, though they should eat the fruit of their doings. Let us who are parents think of this, and so live before our children, and make such impressions upon their inmost souls, that our memory with them shall be blessed, and our union with them in heaven may be sure. AMEN.











