



TRIBUTE

OF

HON. THOS. L. JONES,

To the Memory

OF

HON. EDWARD Y. PARSONS.

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

August 1, 1876.

*"Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede
Pauperum tabernas, regumque turres."*

*"Hæc vidi fragilem frangi
Hodie vidi mortalem mori."*

WASHINGTON.

1876.

E. 664
P. 28 J. 7

REMARKS
OF
HON. THOMAS L. JONES.

Mr. JONES, of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker,
*Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres.*

Death is so common in the land that we can but seldom if ever truly apply the lesson he would teach or give a passing thought how soon he may knock at our own door. He may in an instant blight the beauteous rosebud, wither the fairest flower of the garden, shiver the giant oak of the forest, tear away the venerable forms of our households, snatch from our embrace the tender idols of our hearts, or strike down at our very side splendid young manhood, the highest image of God himself, and although we feel the shock, bow our heads, and look with awe and wonder, yet soon again, O! how soon, does the world with its duties, its pleasures, and its cares absorb and lead us on in the same accustomed way! But this inevitable and dread visitor heeds not our ways nor respects our condition: in his quiver he has an arrow for all: he strikes the low and the high, the bad and the good, the poor and the rich: he calls at every habitation, from the lowly hovel in its poverty to the majestic Capitol in its grandeur, and thus with impartial step and unerring aim marches on forever. In the hour of our grief and in the weakness of our nature, unmindful of the divine economy, which respects neither person nor condition, we cry out, O! why, why could not the great God, the Giver of life and death, have spared my loved one as a merciful exception?

Man is ever taught the truth, but heeds it not, that life is death, creation is dissolution, and none can tell how soon the latter may follow the former. How little do we remember that as we begin to live we begin to die. In the structure and economy of life, every blow we strike, every thought we think, is accompanied by the death and disintegration of a certain amount of muscular and nervous tissue as its necessary condition, and thus every action of our corporeal life from its beginning to its close takes place at the expense of the vitality of a certain amount of organized matter: and yet from the beginning of the life of man to this day of how little importance to his fellows is his death.

Epictetus, the Phrygian philosopher, went forth one day and saw a woman weeping for her pitcher of earth that was broken, and he went forth the next day and saw a woman weeping for her son that was dead, and when he returned to his house he exclaimed,

Heri vidi fragilem frangi, hodie vidi mortalem mori.

Yesterday a vase was broken, to-day a man dies, and one may be of as little consequence as the other. The philosopher of Uz in his affliction exclaimed:

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

Again it is said :

Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.

Mr. Speaker, has one from our midst been suddenly removed? Does death make no impression here, although his shaft has smitten us like the flash of the lightning? Is the pale monster to be regarded with no more terror than one going to sleep, the vanishing of a cloud, the decay of a flower, the rolling up of a scroll, the folding of a tent, or the gentle approach of night?

Sir, but a few days ago the stalwart and splendid form of Kentucky's young statesman walked and sat in this Hall almost the very perfection of manly vigor, grace, and elegance. Like Absalom, the praise of Israel, "from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." Methinks I see him now, sir, as was his wont to approach us with that stately mein, open hand, rich voice, and frank cordiality which seemed to belong to him alone, which indeed dignified his race, and presented in himself a brilliant type of the young manhood, courage, and gallantry of the noble State he represented. His morning salutation was to me, sir, a pleasure for the day. Others may not, but I do miss him.

How sudden, Mr. Speaker, was his taking off! When the news came and rang through this House we could not have been more appalled if a bolt from heaven at noon-day with the sun in his glory had rent asunder the dome of the Capitol. When but an hour after I entered his chamber and laid my hand upon that majestic brow, pulseless and cold as marble, how truly was it manifest "In the midst of life we are in death."

Mr. Speaker, what a transition! Think of it. At twelve o'clock, high noon, this man stood in noble stature and perfect health with every apparent promise of length of days and increasing honors, and at twelve o'clock at night he was dead, his body embalmed and on its way with congressional escort to his home for burial. Thus was our young brother stricken down and spirited away. Death indeed found in him "a shining mark."

How vain and transitory is life in its highest aspect: how futile man's ambition; how apparently worthless all his labors: how his brightest hopes are suddenly blasted! Here was high intellectual endowment, cultivated in the best schools of learning, chastened and accomplished by classical lore from the great old masters, whom he loved to repeat and praise. Here was solid learning in jurisprudence and eminence already in professional reputation and honors. Here was political ability of rare merit, just developing into large and comprehensive statesmanship. Here was pure character, admired and loved from birth to death. Here, too, if indeed it become eulogy, was a combination of personal lineaments with a grand outline that attracted the gaze of every beholder; a face as beautiful as the Apollo and a form that Phidias or Praxiteles would have chosen for a model. No prouder step ever graced the Avenue, no manlier person ever sat in the Capitol. All this vanished and gone, as it were, like the blaze of a meteor. Thus goes the glory of the world.

O man!

Beast not thyself of to-morrow: for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Mr. Speaker, when our friends die we are apt to inquire or conjecture what were their last thoughts or expressions or how they received

the final message. In what manner our young brother, so full of happiness and hope, welcomed the sudden and unexpected messenger we know not. Whether he had time to cast a look behind or a look beyond, we know not. It is said, sir, and it is a happy thought, that when man is about to be gathered to his people or go to his fathers, visions of bright scenes and glorious companies gleam before his expiring gaze. Such happy close would have been in keeping with the life of our friend; and let us think that if in that final moment he could have reached our ears, he would have called to us:

Saw ye not now a blessed troop
 Invite me to a banquet, whose bright faces
 Cast thousand beams upon me like the sun?

May we not trust that our loved companion so departed, was so received, and is now seated in that glorious assembly in the realms of bliss!

Mr. Speaker, death itself is not without its consolations. Ecclesiastes taught that "a good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth." Lord Bacon said: "Death hath this also, that it openeth the gate to good fame and extinguisheth envy." If a man die, shall he not live again? Death is but the end of care, and opens the door to that better and true life where He presides who, greater than all, has pronounced the glorious promise to man, "I am the resurrection and the life."

But, Mr. Speaker, my poor words are vain. I bring no fitting eulogy; I claim no philosophy of life and death. I teach no moral from this sad bereavement. Every heart must draw its own lesson, and that is better felt than expressed. I only know that our valiant young brother has gone from these Halls forever. Kentucky's budding promise, her blushing pride under national honors has been returned to her in a casket for the grave. Her metropolis—the city of his home—has honored him with a funeral pageant becoming a king, and loving hands have laid him away in the lap of his mother earth.

Mr. Speaker, Kentucky will cherish her distinguished dead, young and old, and ever honor those who honor her. Though blessed in climate and soil, prolific and pre-eminent in the productions of earth and animal, high advanced in the improvements and embellishments of civilized life, proud of all she possesses, yet, like the Roman mother, "her jewels are her sons." In coming time, when she shall build a pantheon to her great, the marble image of this younger son may perhaps be seen and admired like that of the beautiful young Augustus in the Vatican. Peace, peace, to his ashes! consolation to his friends and loved ones! gentle flowers for his tomb, and may sweet memories ever linger around the name of EDWARD YOUNG PARSONS!

O beate Sesti,
 Vite summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam.

