

A
DISCOURSE

occasioned by

The Death

OF

BRIGADIER-GENERAL

JOHN M'PHERSON,

WHO WAS LOST

IN THE SHIP

Rose in Storm,

shipwrecked on the passage from

Charleston to New-York,

AUGUST 24th, 1806;

DELIVERED, BY ~~BUIST~~, IN THE

Presbyterian Church of Charleston, S. C.

NOVEMBER 30th, 1806,

BY THE

REV. GEORGE BUIST, D. D.

CHARLESTON:

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1807.

A
DISCOURSE,
&c. &c.

LUKE xii. 40.

*Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son
of Man cometh at an hour when
ye think not.*

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

THE obscurest individual falls not without some testimony of respect to his memory. Near the spot where his ashes repose, some frail memorial, erected by the affection of his friends, warns the heedless passenger to tread with light and tender steps the ground which covers a fellow mortal. The sable weeds of mourning, for a time at least, announce to the eye the anguish which wrings the heart; and the sigh which issues from the bosom of his acquaintance and friends, while they pronounce his name, proves that *there* his memory is not wholly extinguished.

Affection, gratitude, and policy, combine in bestowing honors still more distinguished and permanent on those who have occupied

public stations with honor and usefulness; who have enlightened society by their instructions, profited it by their labors, or adorned it by their example; who, by the external distinctions which Providence has been pleased to bestow, or by that superior worth of character which greater degrees of intellectual and moral improvement confer, have been exalted above the rest of their kind. Funeral panegyrics have been pronounced on their character; their names have been embalmed in song, and handed down to future ages, as objects of the gratitude and admiration of posterity.

Where the ~~notion~~ ~~and~~ character of the individual who has fallen, may not have attracted the public attention, there may still have been something in the manner of his departure so striking and affecting, as to render it a favorable occasion for calling on men to *stand in awe, and consider the doings of the Lord, to number their days, and apply their hearts unto wisdom.* When many have been involved in the same calamity; when they have been called away suddenly and unexpectedly from the enjoyment of present or promised pleasure; when death, whom, even in his mildest aspect, nature cannot view without abhorrence and dismay, has approached in all his terrors, invested with the horrors of shipwreck, or amid strangers in a foreign land, without any of those soothing attentions and consolations, by which the affectionate kindness of relatives strives to smooth the bed of death, without

a friend to close their eyes and pay the last offices of respect to their ashes;—then the public mingle their tears with those of sorrowing relations and friends, the face of society is overspread with darkness and gloominess, the voice of mirth and jollity is for a time suspended, the vanity of the world is acknowledged, and eternity rises awfully to view. This, surely, is the season to drop the seeds of virtue into the moistened soil; this is the propitious moment when religion may lift up her voice with the prospect of being heard and regarded.

I conceive, therefore, that I shall discharge a public duty, and perform a service beneficial and acceptable to the hearers of the gospel, as well as comply with a request not to be declined, prompted by the warmth of conjugal and filial affection, while I endeavor to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of one of the most distinguished sufferers in that disastrous event, which about three months ago deprived this city of many valuable inhabitants, and clothed the whole community in mourning; who, though not a member of this congregation, yet belonged to the same religious denomination; and who, with the love of his own country, always maintained a strong attachment to the land of his forefathers.

As we, of this congregation, had our share of suffering on that melancholy occasion, and were called to mourn for some of our

best members and dearest friends, I have already exhorted you, in a discourse delivered immediately after the tidings of the fatal event reached this city, *not to sorrow for them who have fallen asleep, as others who have no hope.* The important and solemn admonition of our Saviour, in the text, will lead us to take another and different view of the subject of mortality. We cannot indeed hope to say any thing new or unknown on so familiar a topic. It will be sufficient if we can place the subject before you in its native simplicity. For, surely, those truths which relate to death and judgment need no charms of eloquence, or strength of argument, to display their importance; they can never be uninteresting to beings who have rational and immortal spirits, and who will be for ever happy or miserable, according to the state in which they shall be found, when *the Son of Man cometh.*

The coming of the Son of Man may refer either to the general judgment, or to the day of each individual's death. But it is altogether unnecessary, as far as regards the practical application, to distinguish these two events. For though the purposes of heaven, concerning our world, may still be going on to their completion; though others may still enjoy the light of day, the pleasures of life, the means of improvement, and the offers of salvation, yet the dead have no part in any thing which is done un-

der the sun. Their term of probation is finished; their day of salvation is over. To all intents and purposes the summons of death is the same to the individual as the sound of the last trumpet. The coming of the Son of Man may therefore be considered as signifying the approach of death. And the text, thus understood, will contain two things; First, A solemn warning and admonition to prepare for death, *Be ye ready*; and, Secondly, The reasons which render it necessary to prepare for death, *Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

We shall, therefore, in farther prosecution of the subject, inquire,

I. *Why we ought to prepare for death?* and

II. *How we shall most effectually prepare for that important event?*

After which we shall advert to the life and character of him, to whose memory this tribute of respect is paid; and then conclude with one or two general reflections.

I. We ought to prepare for death; 1. Because it is *certain* in its event; 2. Because it is *uncertain* in its circumstances; 3. Because it is *near at hand*; and, 4. Because it is *decisive* of our everlasting state.

First; We ought to prepare for death, because it is an event absolutely *certain*. The prudent scholar, while he feels it desirable to be acquainted with every branch of

knowledge, is more particularly attentive to those which his profession and destination in life will lead him to practise and apply. So the man and the christian should, above all things, be solicitous to learn to die; for, of all the incidents in his being, this is the only one in which there is no contingency. Of every other condition or relation of life, we may not be exposed to the temptations or called to practise the duties. The snares of prosperity may never be spread for our feet; the bitter cup of adversity may never be put into our hands. All are not called to practise the parental and conjugal virtues. Few have an opportunity of acquiring that *crown of glory which adorns the hoary head, when found in the way of righteousness.* Some are called to rule, others to serve; some to instruct, others to receive instruction; some to rejoice, others to weep. To each of these are assigned peculiar duties, which they, more than others, are bound to cultivate. But the duty of preparation for death is of universal and indispensable obligation. *For no man liveth, and shall not see death.* Ever since their fatal apostacy from God, *it is appointed unto all men once to die.* *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* The night is coming when we must, whether we are willing and ready or not, *lie down and rise no more to any earthly purpose or pursuit.* When we have toiled a few summers and winters more

in the pursuit of fleeting pleasures and unsubstantial bliss, we must bid them an eternal farewell. In this warfare there is no distinction and no discharge. The poor man who travelled heavily along under the burden of affliction, labor, and care, shall lie down to rest; and he, whose glory reached unto heaven, and who said in his heart, I sit as a king and shall see no sorrow, shall also be brought down to the grave. The portion of clay, which was for a time separated from the general mass, must sink back to its original. *The dust shall return to the earth as it was.* Neither youth, nor strength, nor wisdom, nor virtue can exempt a single individual from the operation of this universal statute. The fairest countenance shall be deformed; the comeliest features shall become fixed and ghastly; and the stateliest form shall be laid low. The bones which were as brass shall become soft as clay; the vigorous arm shall be unstrung; and the active limb shall lose its agility. The eye which looked abroad on the works of God, and gazed with admiration on the heavens and the earth, shall be sunk in darkness. The ear, through which instruction and comfort were conveyed to the mind, shall be for ever stopt. The tongue which charmed with its persuasive eloquence, shall moulder into dust; and the breast which heaved with kind and sympathetic emotions, shall be cold and insensible.

These, my brethren, are truths which re-

quire no proof. There is not one in this assembly who thinks of calling them in question. But it is one thing to assent to a general truth, and another thing to apply it to ourselves. The understanding may be convinced while the heart remains unaffected. In the days of health and gaiety, while death is future, and, as we hope, far distant, we find the utmost difficulty in realizing this event, and bringing it home to our imagination. To cure this dulness of apprehension, let us reflect for a moment on what is now present to our eyes and our ears. We know that we are now assembled together in the house of God; we see one another; we listen to the words of eternal life. But there was a time when this hour was future; and, not being present to our senses, it was equally obscure, and its existence as hard to be conceived as now is the day of our death. We looked forward; but all was darkness and uncertainty: not a single object could the eye clearly discern. But the intervening time has passed away. What seemed very distant and uncertain is now present and real. And as certainly as you this day entered within these walls, so certainly shall you enter into the mansions of the dead; as certainly as you now see one another, so certainly shall you behold the King of Terrors approach; as certainly as you now sit in God's house, so certainly shall you appear in his immediate presence; as certainly as the breast now throbs at the thought, so certainly shall the

breath go out, *and the spirit return to God who gave it.*

Can you then be unconcerned in making preparation for this inevitable hour? If a few only were exposed to the stroke of death, there would be less room for anxiety and alarm. Nay, if, while the great bulk of men must submit to the general sentence, some favored individuals, however small the number, were exempted, we might, even in this case, excuse that sanguine self-love which flattered itself with attaining so rare a privilege. But when not one of the whole human race is exempted, it must be presumption, amounting to madness, to neglect preparation for what we cannot escape; to be ready to meet our fate with becoming resignation, fortitude, and hope, must be our best and truest wisdom.

Secondly; We ought to prepare for death, because it is *uncertain* in its circumstances. While it is certain that the attack will be made, *the hour and the manner knoweth no man.* Hence it is the more necessary to be ready at all times, and prepared at all points, if we hope not to be surpris'd.

Death is uncertain as to *time.* *The Son of Man cometh at an hour when we think not, He may come in the second watch, or in the the third watch, or at the cock-crowing.* He is not confined to any period of life. We are not safer in the vigor of health or in the bloom of youth, than in the day of sickness, and in the decrepitude of old age. Is

there one in this assembly who ventures to promise himself twenty years, or ten years, or one year, or a month, or a day, or an hour of *certain* life? Perhaps before a few days have elapsed, perhaps to-morrow, perhaps to day, perhaps before we leave these walls, the awful mandate may be issued from on high, *Give an account of thy Stewardship. For who knoweth what a day or an hour may bring forth?* As death is always present, it is manifestly our duty to be always ready. Did we know exactly the number of our days, or were we assured that at any rate we should see long life, we might be excusable in neglecting to practise a painful duty for which there was no immediate occasion. We might devote the present time to sinful indulgence, and when the appointed hour drew nigh, it would then be soon enough to *set our house in order.* But we stand every moment on the brink of the grave. We walk on a precipice where, every step we take, the ground moulders away from under our feet. On the right hand and on the left, before us and behind us, the pit opens its devouring jaws; from time to time our friends and neighbours stumble and disappear; and shall we voluntarily shut our eyes and pass heedless along? Can we sleep secure under the impending sword? Shall we be incessantly contriving plans which it would require eternity to finish, when in a moment we and our plans may be removed into darkness? Above all, ought we to indulge

in sin, in the hope of future repentance and forgiveness, when this very instant may put repentance for ever out of our power?

Death is uncertain also as to the *manner* of his approach. As no condition or age, so no situation prevents his arrival. He not only does not uniformly wait till old age and continued infirmity have admonished us to set our house in order, but even gives frequently no warning of his coming by the forerunner of disease. Often does he come *as a thief in the night*, and rush on the unhappy victim, when, buried in sloth and security, he puts the evil day far from him, and says to his soul, *thou hast much goods laid up for many days, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*. On the day of victory, in the midst of the domestic circle, in the gay scenes of mirth and festivity, in the moment of licentiousness and debauchery, in the midst of profound sleep, the mandate has been issued from on high, and no time has been allowed to prepare; instant obedience has been required. Surely, then, if we were wise, we would never indulge in any action or situation in which we would wish not to be found when *the Son of Man cometh*. As it is no less possible that we may die this moment, than it is certain we must at length yield up our breath, we ought to view ourselves as already on our death-bed; we ought to think and speak, and act, as if we were instantly to give an account.

And that we may perceive the full force

of this argument, let us suppose that this moment our *soul should be required of us*, or, which amounts to the same thing, that *the angel of God should now lift up his hand to heaven, and swear by him who liveth for ever, that time shall be no longer*; that a sudden clap of thunder should announce the approach of *the great and terrible day of the Lord*; that the roof should open over our heads; and that, lifting up our eyes, we should see *the sun darkened, the moon turned into blood, the elements melting with fervent heat, the judge coming in the clouds of heaven, and the awful tribunal erected*; and that we should hear this peremptory command addressed to each of us, *Arise and come to judgment*; What emotions would occupy our breasts! What darkness would overspread the faces in this assembly! What terror and dismay would seize the secure, the sinner, and the ungodly! What bitter lamentations should we hear over mispent time! What earnest intreaties for one day or hour longer to spend in the reformation of their lives, and in prayer, for the forgiveness of their sins! What fear and anxiety would agitate even the best of men! How many plans would be left unexecuted! How many houses would be found in disorder! If, my brethren, your hearts now tremble at the very idea of such a scene, how infinitely more awful must be the reality? If you wish that this day may not thus *come upon you unawares*, prepare forthwith, O Sinner!

prepare, O Christian! *to meet thy God.* Give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids till you break off your sins by repentance ; till you flee by faith to the hope of refuge set before you in the gospel ; till you feel that security which can proceed only from a sense of peace and reconciliation with God. The seeds of that disease which is to terminate your days may be already sown ; the train may be laid which will overturn your plans and darken your prospects ; the tempest may have begun to gather, which is appointed to overwhelm you in the deep ; you may be entering on that journey which will conduct you to your long home. *Be ye, therefore, ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

Thirdly ; We ought to prepare for death, because it is *near at hand.* The time is short, and the business which we have to perform in it is difficult and important. Could we be certain of escaping all the dangers which threaten our life in its various stages, and of arriving at the utmost verge of old age, yet what is the whole amount of human existence ? It is a drop in the ocean, a point in immensity. *What is our life ? It is as a vapour which appeareth for a little, and then vanisheth.* With a flight swifter than the eagle's do our years pass away. In early life, and viewed in prospective, they appear to be of considerable length ; but, when past, they vanish as a vision of the night,

and are *as a tale that is told*. And, like the past, so will the future years of our existence fly away and we shall be gone. Let the aged tell how short the years to them now appear. They may remember when, in early life, it seemed that the sun, in the long days of summer, would never set, that the years of pupilage and dependence would never be over, and that the period of manhood and of active exertion would never arrive. But, ah! how different now the case! Before they can turn round, before they have had time to lay their plans and to look about them, another year passes over their head, and so another and another with equal rapidity, till they quickly and imperceptibly find themselves arrived at the goal. There is, therefore, not a moment to lose. We must *work the work of Him who sent us while it is day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work*. While I speak, our distance from eternity is sensibly diminishing: the hour of our departure is drawing nearer and nearer. Let us walk while we have light: let us redouble our exertions to reach in safety the city of refuge, lest darkness overtake us on the road, when we will inevitably become the prey of ravenous beasts.

Lastly; We ought diligently to prepare for death, because it is *decisive* of our everlasting condition.

If death were merely a termination of our existence, it might indeed inspire us

with melancholy reflections, but could not properly be any motive to virtuous conduct. In that case, as the fool died, so would the wise man; there would be no reason to envy the lot of the one, more than of the other. The sensualist, indeed, might feel more keenly the pang of separation: but this pang would be of short continuance; and the horrors of the grave would be an object, which wisdom must strive to conceal from view. In like manner, it would be of little consequence, on the same supposition, at what time, in what situation, or by what cause, we met our fate. The addition of a few years of frail and feverish existence, resembling the fragments of a disordered dream, must be a matter of very little importance. To one who believes, that when the breath departs, the soul is extinguished, and the man enters into an eternal union with the common mass of matter, it can signify little, whether his body shall repose in peace with the ashes of his forefathers, or be consigned to a watery grave, or be dispersed to the four winds of heaven, and scattered over the face of the earth. But when we view man, as an accountable and immortal being; when we consider death, as that event which closes the period of our probation, and introduces us into the presence of a holy and righteous Judge, before whom, every thought we have ever entertained, every word we have ever uttered, every

action we have ever performed, shall be brought forward and judged; then does its vast importance, and the necessity of preparation for it, strikingly appear. *After death follows the judgment*; the result of which is eternal happiness, or everlasting misery. The one, or the other, is the portion of every man. Death, while it removes us from the present scene, either introduces us into the blissful society of just men made perfect, there to live and reign eternally with God, or consigns us to the prison of darkness and despair, there to suffer for ever with the fallen angels and the spirits of the miserable. The Lord of all has, as it were, gone into a far country; he has retired, for a time, from the scene. But, before his departure, *he gave unto us, his servants, various talents, to every man according to his ability, and added this injunction, Occupy till I come.* After a time, sufficient to ascertain and confirm our character, he will come and reckon with us. Unto such as have been faithful and diligent, he will say, *Well done good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* But, with respect to the wicked and slothful, he shall say, *Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* And, my brethren, what self-denial and exertion shall be put in the balance with the joys of heaven, or what pleasures

can compensate the pains of hell? *For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

What adds to the importance of this event is, that the decision, which is then made, is final and immutable. As the tree falls, so it shall lie. If we now slumber and sleep, and allow our lamps to be extinguished, it will be too late to go in quest of oil, when at midnight the cry is heard, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him; though we seek to enter in, we shall not be able. He that is unjust, shall be unjust still; he that is righteous, shall be righteous still. Beyond the grave, as there is no room for repentance, so no acts of pardon are passed; the doom of all is immutably fixed. When the *righteous return to Zion, it is with songs of everlasting and unchanging joy*; When the soul is lost, it is lost for ever. The day of mercy is then past, and the day of just and awful retribution is come. That light, which discovers to the wicked the folly of their conduct, is only the kindling of that flame, the smoke of which ascendeth up for ever and ever.

How earnestly should we study, to have our loins girt, and our lamps burning, that we may be ready to meet the Son of Man when he cometh! How watchful, that the day of death may not come upon us unawares, and, in an evil hour, when we are not

prepared, with all our sins upon our head, unrepented of, and unforgiven, with all our evil passions un subdued, with all our worldly schemes and projects unfinished, hurry us before the bar of God, to receive our final doom! Whatever good things our hands find to do, we ought to do them with all our might, for there is no knowledge, nor wisdom, nor counsel, nor device, in the grave whither we go.

II. Hoping that these considerations will, with the Divine blessing, help to awaken some who sleep in security, unmindful of their fate, and unprepared for their change, and to quicken the watchfulness and exertions of others, who, though they may be safe, are yet apt to be languid and remiss in duty, and so to be troubled with doubts and fears in the prospect of this solemn event, I shall now proceed to explain the nature of preparation for death; in other words, to inquire, *how* we shall most effectually be ready to meet our last hour with calm resignation, holy fortitude, and lively hope. This, indeed, is the most important part of my subject; for, to little purpose, would I have endeavored to make you sensible of your danger, did I not also point out to you some method of deliverance. The limits, however, of a single discourse, to which I am necessarily confined, permit me not to enter fully into this interesting subject, but merely to mention a few of the most important particulars.

It would be wasting time, to recommend, as one act of preparation for death, the timely arrangement of your worldly affairs. For, though this is by no means to be neglected, though every prudent and good man would wish to have his house so ordered, in this respect, as to prevent all confusion, injustice, and contention, after his decease, yet, when we look to the judgment-seat, when we reflect on the joys and miseries of the eternal world, these things sink in our estimation; they are trifles not worth regarding. The soul, the soul alone, and its concerns are worthy of our anxiety and care.

To such as are desirous of being found in peace at the day of death, we may observe, that the first step towards tranquillity is a restoration to the Divine favor, through faith in the Redeemer. This is the only radical cure for the fear of death: all other remedies will only palliate, or rather aggravate the disease. The highest angels, while they adore the Divine Majesty, cover their faces with their wings. The best men cannot but feel anxiety and alarm, in looking forward to the time when they shall appear naked and unembodied before an Omniscient and Righteous Judge, to render an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil. What inexpressible horror, then, must seize the wicked, with whom God is angry every day, who despised his counsels, and

would have none of his reproof, who violated his laws, rejected his mercy, and braved his displeasure, when they behold their enemy seated on a throne of judgment, surrounded with his ministers of justice? Who can conceive the awful consequences of incensed Omnipotence? What shall hide the sinner from the wrath of the Lamb? Let all, then, who now are estranged from God, or at enmity with him, *acquaint themselves with him and be at peace; for there is no peace to the wicked.* Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Flee to the city of refuge, opened in the gospel, before the avenger of blood overtake you. Comply with the gracious warning and invitation, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Make the Almighty your friend, and then, assured of his protection, you need not fear: when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will be with you; his rod and staff will comfort you; his presence will cheer the gloomy passage, and dispel the horrors of the tomb.

But though we may have obtained an interest in the Redeemer, by faith, and know that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, yet, as another act of preparation for death, we must carefully study to keep alive on our minds a sense of

the Divine favor, by exercising the grace which is in us, and by a faithful discharge of every religious and moral duty. If we would die the death of the righteous, we must also live the life of the righteous. Every sin we commit will be a thorn in our pillow on the bed of death. For, though repented of, and forgiven, the recollection of it must fill us with shame and sorrow. At any rate, it must greatly disturb us in the prospect of that event, during life. Even a good man, tried of God and approved, when he abandons his duty, feels the serenity of his soul troubled. A cloud comes over his hopes. If he persist longer in folly, the face of heaven becomes darker, till he is driven, as the only refuge from the gathering storm, to that holy ground of purity and uprightness, on which the light of heaven ever shines clear and bright.

But it is not sufficient, that we abstain from following the example of that *wicked and foolish servant who said in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and began to beat the men servants and the maidens, and to eat, and to drink, and to be drunken; we must not even imitate the conduct of the wise virgins, for they slumbered and slept; but we must be like those faithful servants who wait for the coming of their Lord. We must have our lamps trimmed and our lights burning. We must abound in all the works of righteousness to the praise and glory of*

God. We must give all diligence, to add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Death cannot arrive too soon to those who are thus occupied.

But though those fears may be removed, which originate in guilt, and that assurance of faith produced, which arises from a consciousness that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world, still we may not find ourselves so fully resigned and so well prepared to die as we could wish. Many circumstances, arising rather from frailty than from sin, render us attached to life, and unwilling to depart. Nature is reluctant to let go her hold. To flesh and blood, the pleasures and enjoyments of life, have many charms. It is painful to part with beloved relations and friends. The thought of entering into the grave, the abode of worms and corruption, the place of darkness, coldness, insensibility, and oblivion, fills the imagination with horror, and keeps many of the children of men, all their life-time, in bondage. To deliver you, in some measure, from these fears and anxieties, and to prepare you for death, it will be necessary, that you detach your heart and affections, as much as possible, from the objects of this present life. Love

not, with immoderate affection, the world, nor the things of the world. Accustom yourselves to practise self-denial with regard to its enjoyments, and seek rather to supply the necessary wants, than to gratify the extravagant desires, of nature. Reflect how vain and unsatisfactory, how mutable and uncertain, are the things of earth. Let no object, however worthy and amiable, usurp that place in your affections, which is due only to the Supreme Being. Consider the things of the world, and the men of the world, as "blessings lent you for a day"; not as a property, but a trust, which, therefore, you should be willing to resign whenever it is demanded by its owner. Say not, *This is my rest, here will I dwell*; but say, *I am a stranger and a sojourner on earth, as all my fathers were; I look for a better country, even an heavenly; where my treasure is, there shall my heart be also.*

To be prepared for death, you must frequently think of that event, and bring near you, in imagination, that period at which every son and daughter of Adam must arrive. This, I confess, is a very gloomy and cheerless subject of meditation to the votaries of the world. They would rather shut their eyes, and rush on unseen destruction. But this is the courage of cowardice and despair. Let us christians, who know that death is but a phantom, view the spectre with fearless eye. Let us, who are assured that the

horrors of the grave are nothing else but creatures of the imagination, and that beyond it there is a region fairer than Eden in all its bloom, look steadfastly into the house appointed for all living. Let us walk sometimes among the tombs, and mark out beforehand the spot which we are to occupy. And while, in solemn sadness, we contemplate the mouldering heaps which are scattered around, let us reflect—

“ Time was, like us, they life possess'd,
 “ And, time shall be, that we shall rest.”

Forgetfulness of death, indeed, adds greatly to its terrors. Men, enjoying health and prosperity, and busily occupied with the pleasures and the cares of life, seldom look forward to its close. Hence, when death actually arrives, he is a new and unexpected object; his appearance fills them with surprise and terror. They view him as an unwelcome guest, who comes to spoil their mirth, to disturb their pleasures, to interrupt their pursuits, and to rob them of the objects of their trust and confidence. Their language is, *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy!* But would men, frequently during life, hold this language to themselves, We are mortal; soon shall we bid adieu to the living world; soon shall those bodies, of which we are so passionately fond, lie mouldering in the dust; they would then be better qualified to meet death without dismay; familiarity would soften the harshness of his features. At least,

the frequent contemplation of so hideous an object, would be a salutary check on their conduct; it would loosen their attachment to the world, and prevent them from forming vast and extravagant projects; it would temper and restrain the violence of anger; dim the splendor of the miser's gold; embitter the cup of the sensualist, and humble the pride of the ambitious; in a word, it would tend to preserve men from the commission of those sins which arm death with its sting.

But I cannot better illustrate this topic, than by mentioning, in the words of a very pious and excellent divine,* the practice
 “ of one, who, having strong religious im-
 “ pressions, and feeling terrible apprehen-
 “ sions whenever the ideas of death and
 “ judgment presented themselves, contrived
 “ so to habituate his mind to the contem-
 “ plation of them, as to render them ever
 “ after, not only easy, but agreeable. His
 “ custom was, to consider each evening, as
 “ the close of life; the darkness of the
 “ night, as the time of death; and his bed,
 “ as his grave. He composed himself for
 “ the one, therefore, as he would have done
 “ for the other. On retiring to rest, he fell
 “ on his knees; confessed, and entreated
 “ pardon for the transgressions of the day;
 “ renewed his faith in the mercies of God,
 “ through Christ; expressed, in a prayer of

* Horne's Discourses, Vol. 2, Disc. 2.

“ intercession, his charity for all mankind;
 “ and then committed his soul into the hands
 “ of his Creator and Redeemer, as one who
 “ was to awake no more in this world. His
 “ sleep, after this, was perfectly sweet; the
 “ days, added to his life, were estimated as
 “ clear gain; and when the last came, it
 “ ended with as much tranquillity as all that
 “ had preceded it. I would wish,” adds the
 author, “ to recommend this example to
 “ your imitation. The practice will cost you
 “ some pains and trouble, perhaps, for a
 “ little while, but you will never have cause
 “ to repent that you bestowed them; and
 “ I know of no better method, whereby you
 “ can place yourselves in a state of constant
 “ security and comfort.”

In short, to prepare ourselves for death,
 we ought to look beyond the grave, and
 frequently meditate on that state of blessed-
 ness which shall be the portion of all who
 die in the Lord. We should transport our-
 selves, in imagination, into the mansions of
 the just. We should anticipate, by our
 desires, that fulness of joy which is in God's
 presence. We should, betimes, engage in
 the employments of the heavenly state.
 We should weigh, in the balance, the things
 of eternity, and the things of time; the
 joys of heaven; and the short-lived unsatis-
 factory pleasures and pursuits of earth. We
 should be looking for, and hastening to, the
 day of the Lord, that great day, when He,
 who is the Resurrection and the Life, shall,

by his Almighty voice, awaken all who sleep in the dust: when he shall say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back, bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, when the earth shall give up the dead that are in her, and the sea, the dead that are in her; when those bodies, which are sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness, shall be raised in incorruption, glory, and power; and ~~the~~ *the* ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Sion, with songs and everlasting joy on their heads, and shall be for ever happy with the Lord.

Thus, my brethren, have I endeavored to shew the necessity and nature of preparation for death. But it is not to our understanding alone, and by his word and ordinances only, that the Almighty addresses himself. Frequently, in the course of his providence, he speaks to our senses and our feelings by loud and striking judgments, and says, *Be ye ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*

Among the solemn warnings of God, seldom has one been so interesting and affecting as that which arose from the shipwreck of the *Rose in Bloom*. Little did we think, when we saw this ill-fated vessel leave the shore with a favorable gale, and expressed our wishes for the health and prosperity of our friends who were on board, that we were then bidding some of them the last farewell. For a short time, our wishes were fulfilled;

the voyage promised to be quick and fortunate; on the sixth day, they had nearly reached the destined port, and were already congratulating each other on the prospect of their speedy arrival, when, *in an evil hour, the tempest caught them*, and, after one distressing day and gloomy night, twenty-one, out of forty-eight persons, were buried in the bosom of the deep, leaving behind them widows, and orphans, and relatives, and friends, to bewail their untimely and distressful fate.

Among the sufferers on that melancholy day, universal attention and sympathy were excited by the fate of Brigadier-General M'Pherson, who was snatched from the arms of a beloved daughter, while endeavoring to save her life; who was removed from, what is generally esteemed, a large share of temporal felicity, from an amiable and affectionate consort, and a family of promising children; from numerous acquaintances and friends, by whom he was esteemed and beloved; from rich possessions; from a high station in society, and offices of public trust and usefulness. Of his origin, life and character, the information of his friends has enabled me to collect the following particulars.

General M'Pherson was a native of South-Carolina, but of Scottish descent, being sprung from that hardy, intrepid, and valiant clan, inhabiting the district of Badenoch, in Inverness-shire, of whom M'Pherson of Cluny is the chief. It appears, that his great

grandfather removed from his native land, and settled in this country, about the beginning of the last century. Major James M'Pherson, the son of this gentleman, and grandfather of the deceased, inherited the valor and enterprise of his fore-fathers, greatly signalized himself in the warfare carried on against the southern Indians, at the first settlement of the colony; and, as the reward of his achievements, obtained from government an extensive settlement in that district, from which the perfidious and murderous foe had been recently expelled. He left a numerous offspring, and bequeathed to each of them a respectable inheritance. His descendants were among the earliest and most respectable, as well as most industrious settlers in Prince William's Parish. General M'Pherson was the only son of the elder brother of this family. Deprived of his father in early life, he was brought up under the patronage and direction of an uncle, to whose children he was called, in the course of Providence, to return the kindness. He was originally destined for the profession of a merchant, and placed by his guardian in a commercial house; but, when the term of his engagement was expired, he retired to the country, and devoted himself to the pursuits of agriculture. When the revolutionary contest commenced, he adhered to the cause of freedom and independence, and entered the lists for military renown. In the character of a soldier he is acknowledged to

have conducted himself with courage, generosity, and humanity; and, though not a member of the regular Continental army, to have performed essential services to his country. It has been more particularly mentioned to me, that, after the struggle was terminated, when those animosities and evil passions, which a civil war fails not to create or cherish, began to display themselves in acts of violence and rapine; when the irregular followers of the camp, who had been accustomed to plunder the adherents of the enemy, now unrestrained by the terrors of military discipline, began to exercise the same lawless trade on their fellow-citizens; before the new system was completely organized, while yet the voice of law was too weak to be heard, and the arm of justice too feeble to protect the innocent or punish the guilty, his well known character for intrepid valor, and regard to justice, proved a terror to evil doers, and an encouragement to them who did well. He allayed the heats of resentment, prevented or punished many acts of violence and disorder; chased away the plunderers, inspired confidence into the neighbourhood, and gave security to the peaceable and well disposed. His conduct, as an officer in the militia, has been distinguished for every thing becoming the profession of a soldier. His courage was undaunted, and his firmness unshaken. The military character, indeed, was that in which he greatly delighted, and in which he was qualified,

eminently to excel. Had his country required his services in actual war, there was none in whom she could, with greater safety, have reposed her confidence; none who could more honorably and successfully have maintained her cause. And should, which may Heaven avert! our country be assailed by a foreign foe, or our domestic peace interrupted by internal commotion, then will appear the extent of our loss, in being deprived of one so fruitful in resources, so bold in enterprise, and so quick in execution.

He likewise served his country in a political capacity, as a member of the legislature. His services, in this respect, were, indeed, confined to his native state; but so well satisfied were his constituents with his conduct, such confidence did they repose in his principles and integrity, that from the period of his attaining the legal age, to the day of his death, he was invariably, and almost unanimously, called to bear a part in the legislative councils. His political opinions, and his conduct in the legislature, indicated the same firmness, steadiness, and consistency, which distinguished his military character. Those rational principles of liberty, which he had early imbibed, with which the revolution commenced, and by which it was brought to a successful termination, which had been adopted by the illustrious Washington, and so happily secured by the constitution, he cherished, uniformly to the last, unseduced,

at one time, by the charms of Gallic democracy, which attracted so many to its foul embrace ; at another, by the distinguished and flattering attention which, in a visit to Europe, he personally received from that extraordinary man, whose wonderful success threatens the independence of every nation ; and, unshaken by the change of public sentiment, and the consequent change of men and measures, which America has of late years experienced.

While he faithfully discharged those public duties, which were honorably imposed on him by the voice of his fellow citizens, he performed no less essential services to his country, by the improvements in agriculture and rural economy which he introduced and cultivated with indefatigable industry, sound judgment, and brilliant success. This is a species of excellence, the full importance of which is not commonly discerned ; and seldom does it receive that tribute of applause which it unquestionably merits. The warrior and the statesman are placed on an eminence ; they attract the attention and admiration of the world, and with justice ; for surely, they who have defended their country in the hour of danger, they who have bestowed on it the blessing of wise and good laws, are entitled to the gratitude of their cotemporaries ; and, should this be denied them, may look forward, with reasonable hope, to that honor which posterity invariably confers on the wise, the virtuous, and

the brave. But the inventors of useful arts, the encouragers of national industry, they who direct the activity of the community to profitable objects, they who open new channels of commerce, who increase the quantity of the productions of the soil, who, by ingenious contrivances in machinery, by improving the breed of the useful animals, by digging canals, forming high-ways, and thus facilitating the intercourse of mankind, extend the national resources, and augment the comforts, conveniences, and elegancies of life, are more extensive and permanent benefactors to their country, than even the warrior and the statesman, whose names may be more in the mouths of mankind. They lay the most solid foundation of national wealth, prosperity, and grandeur. They furnish the materials with which the statesman is to work. The benefits of their industry and ingenuity, while they adorn the palace, are felt in the cottage. They were men of such a character, who, in one quarter of the globe, raised a whole country from the bosom of the deep, robbed the sea of its domains, and said to the raging ocean, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther.* By such men, in another quarter, the unwholesome marsh has been converted into a fruitful field, the desert has been made to rejoice, and the habitations of civilized man have been planted where the ruthless savage used to prowl. It has justly been observed,

that he who enables the laborer to repose on a softer bed, and to enjoy a more comfortable meal; he who makes two blades of grass grow where only one was before produced, is a better patriot than the most ingenious contriver of speculative and visionary theories of government. A few such patriots are sufficient to overbalance all the disadvantages of soil and climate. They raise a weak, and support a falling state. They introduce and maintain a spirit of improvement. They excite others, by example. They lead men to industry, by considerations of interest and success, which are much more effectual than all the restraints and penalties of legal compulsion. To an Arkwright, a Watt, a Bakewell, a Wedgwood, the British empire are, probably, as much indebted for their true and permanent prosperity, as to the counsels of a Pitt, or the achievements of a Nelson. Such men, therefore, are no less worthy of that immortality which the historian and the poet have the privilege of bestowing.

That the subject of the present sketch was an illustrious patriot of this class, is known to all. The success with which his exertions were crowned, demonstrates the soundness of judgment with which his schemes of improvement were planned, no less than the ability and perseverance with which they were executed. His personal application was unremitting. He trusted nothing to inferior agents, who, at best, are indifferent, not seldom un-

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faithful. He was present on the spot wherever his business required. Every thing was directed by his own skill, and executed under his own eye. It is evident how important such an example was in a community, where languor, idleness and dissipation are too frequent characteristics of its members; where the conduct of business, and the rights and feelings of those unhappy beings who look to their owner for protection and justice, are entrusted to men destitute of principle, capacity and sensibility, while the master is buried in sloth, or devoted to the luxuries of the table, and the pleasures of the chase.

Such, I believe, were the leading features of the character of General M'Pherson, as a public man and a citizen. Of his private character, as a gentleman, a friend, a master, a husband, and a parent, I speak not from much personal acquaintance, but from a more correct source; from the testimony of those who knew him from his youthful days, who associated with him in the hours of relaxation and festivity, who saw him in the domestic circle, who shared his kindness, who were the objects of his affection, and who now deplore his loss. By them I am authorised to say, that he was a man of the strictest honor and integrity in his dealings, faithful to his engagements, and punctual in fulfilling his contracts. He was a man, also, of independent principles, and of the utmost sincerity and candor in his professions. Possessed of inexhaustible resources in his own

mind, he needed not, and being a stranger to fear, he scorned to practice flattery and dissimulation. His temper was generous and liberal. His house was distinguished for hospitality, even in a country where all display an abundant portion of the same amiable quality. But to his friends did the goodness of his heart more fully appear. His friendships were warm and steadfast. Prosperity, which too often leads men of little minds to overlook and treat with coldness, those who were formerly their equals and friends, lessened not his ancient attachments and intimacies. Difference of political sentiments did not alienate him from those, whose tempers and views were, in other respects, congenial. For, it is well known, that some of his most intimate friends (one in particular, who flew on the wings of friendship, to the assistance and comfort of his bereaved daughter, in the hour of distress) differed widely from him in their opinions concerning public affairs.

As a master, he is also entitled to our praise. For, while no man maintained better order on his estates, none was more ready to reward good conduct; none more humane and attentive to his people in sickness, or more liberal in regard to their food, clothing and comforts.

But his family best knew the warmth of his affections; they, alone, can tell how kind a husband, how fond a parent, he was. In proof of this, let me not intrude on that

hallowed grief, which still weighs down the heart of the affectionate partner of his cares. I would rather commend her to the consolations of God, which are neither few nor small. I would leave her to the gradual operation of time and reflection, which fail not to bring some alleviation to the deepest wound. I would point her view to the prospect of reunion in a better world. But her deep affliction, while it indicates her sensibility, is likewise the highest evidence of that domestic happiness which she enjoyed: It is the noblest trophy which she can rear to the memory of the deceased. In her sorrowful countenance, and flowing tears, her husband's affection, generosity and kindness, are most suitably portrayed. Neither shall I seek to harrow up the souls of this audience, by describing the feelings, and the sufferings of that beloved daughter, the idol of his soul, on whose education he had already bestowed so much pains and expense; for whose improvement, and gratification, he had formerly undertaken an European voyage; whose preservation appeared to be the sole object of his solicitude, at the very moment when his own life was in the most imminent danger; whose piety and resignation, in the hour of peril, encouraged and comforted those who witnessed her example; who, though rescued from death, nevertheless endured distress of body and agony of mind, which far exceeded the probable pang of dying, which have excited sympathy in every feeling heart in

America, and which, notwithstanding all the kind offices of friends, and of strangers, in that hospitable city, to which the surviving sufferers were conveyed, Divine succour, alone, could have enabled her to support. But it will be sufficient to mention, and it cannot fail to affect every one of the smallest sensibility, that his last thoughts regarding this world, were directed to his family. At that moment, when horror was ready to chill his undaunted soul, he solemnly charged his daughter, that should Heaven preserve her life, her most solicitous attention should be devoted to the consolation of her surviving parent, and her most assiduous cares employed on the education of her infant sisters. *Save my child!* did he earnestly exclaim to such of the passengers, as appeared able to give assistance: To his Daughter, *Remember your Mother and your Sisters!* were his last words.

In addition to these amiable and excellent qualities, in private and domestic life, General M'Pherson was not unmindful of the duties of religion. To an intimate friend, with whom he conversed on this subject, a few months before he entered on this fatal voyage, while he lamented that he had not always been so attentive to the exterior services of religion, as duty required, he expressed his belief of the truth and excellence of christianity. On the day before the awful catastrophe, he united with his daughter in religious exercises, and declared, that he

entertained, towards all men, sentiments of concord and good-will. He would never permit religion to be ridiculed in his presence. He was not led away by fashion or connection, to change that religious denomination in which he had been educated, but invariably declared himself to be a member of the Presbyterian Church. He contributed liberally to the support of religious institutions in the district where he lived. He attended on the ministry, and was greatly delighted with the company and conversation of a very eminent and pious minister,* whose memory will long be embalmed in the hearts of all who knew him. The poor whom his bounty relieved, the widows whom he aided by his counsels and good offices, the orphans whom he educated and patronised, will testify that his life was not destitute of those works of charity and mercy which are the grand test of a religious character, and on which the decision of our fate will finally turn.

That, like other men, he had his failings, his friends pretend not to deny. His temper was warm; and those quick and lively feelings, which, when properly directed, were the parent of activity in business, generosity in friendship, and ardor of affection, might sometimes lead him to do, what cooler reflection, and the judgment of maturer years,

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* The late Rev. James Gourlay, Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Prince William's Parish.

did not approve. But his character has been ascertained, and his fate decided by an unerring Judge. He hath received according to his deeds. While his failings are consigned to oblivion, his good qualities will long live in the memory of his friends. And there is none who will not feel sentiments of regret and sorrow for the loss of so valuable a member of society, mingled with sincere compassion for his unhappy fate, and lively sympathy with his afflicted surviving relatives.

Let not the awful warning be in vain, which this disastrous event has given to this community. Let every one who hears me reflect, that death may soon approach him in the same, or in a form no less terrible, and hurry him before the judgment seat of Christ. *Be ye therefore ready !*

From this sudden and unexpected calamity, learn the insufficiency and uncertainty of health and life; of riches and power; of friends and possessions. Seek, above all things, to obtain the favor and enjoyment of God. This is a possession which no length of time can exhaust. This is a strong tower which no tempest can shake. "Secure this, and you have secured every thing; lose this, and——all is lost."