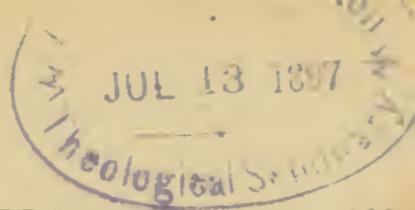


THE



NEW YORK PULPIT 983

IN

THE REVIVAL OF 1858.

A Memorial Volume

OF

S E R M O N S .



NEW YORK:
SHELDON, BLAKEMAN & CO.
CINCINNATI: RICKEY, MALLORY, & CO.

1858.

ENTERED according to Act of Congress, in the year 1858, by

SHELDON, BLAKEMAN & CO.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern District of New York.

IX.

TEARS AT THE JUDGMENT.

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There shall be weeping.—MATT. xxii. 13.

THE blessedness of the heavenly state is set forth to our comprehension by imagery that may be readily appreciated, in its resemblance to the course and constitution of things around us. For the poor, there are laid up exhaustless riches ; for the joyless, there are rivers of pleasures ; for the outcast, there is a home in the house of many mansions.

Among the most attractive representations of the happiness of Heaven, is this—that there the Lord shall wipe away all tears from the faces of His people—that there shall be no more weeping. This representation is fitted to interest every heart. This world is a vale of tears. Every habitation of man, every personal history, furnishes scenes that serve, by contrast, to illustrate and enhance the happiness and glory of that world, from which all sorrow and sighing flee away, and where the days of mourning are ended.

But this is not to be the portion of all, without reference to their moral character and fitness. The Scriptures appropriate and restrict it to one certain description of persons. These are the just made perfect ; the heirs of

the righteousness of faith; those who once, indeed, were children of wrath, even as others, but who are washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

It is distinctly intimated to us that all who fail of this character, shall also fail to inherit this blessedness. For them there is nothing but outlawry. On the day of final trial, they shall be condemned to "destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." The punishment they suffer is variously described. It is to be burned with "everlasting fire;" it is to be gnawed by the "undying worm;" it is to endure the bitter pains of "eternal death." This is the portion of all the workers of iniquity, who refuse to part with their sins; who, for the sake of the darling right hand of transgression and the right eye of lust, are to be cast into hell-fire.* In various addresses of Christ, the punishment of the lost is spoken of in connection with "*weeping,*" and "*wailing,*" and "*gnashing of teeth.*"† This is the portion of the disappointed and disinherited children of the Kingdom, when they see aliens adopted, and themselves are cast out into the outer darkness;—of the faithless, turbulent, and unprofitable servants of Christ;—of the tares;—and of all those who have no interest in Christ, unwashed, unsanctified, unjustified, unarrayed in His righteousness, as they are represented in the parable of the guest who had not put on the wedding-garment. This is an intelligible part of their suffering; it gives us an idea of its bitterness. It may properly be taken as an indication of the manner in which they are affected, who suffer under the sentence of exclusion from the joy of Heaven. It is in this

* Mark ix. 43.

† Compare Matt. viii. 12; xxiv. 51; xxv. 30; xiii. 42, 50; Luke xiii.

way—in weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth—that they vent their sorrow and despair. While this expression of their grief is to be eternal as the everlasting fire, it may be supposed to commence at the very bar of God. The wrath is in the soul of the sinner. He comes to that bar in the speechlessness of conscious guilt, and with a “fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” With consternation, he hears his doom. He turns away upon his dreary road to the prison-house. But, like a criminal convicted in the dock, he sinks under the verdict and the sentence, and bursts forth, at once, in the lamenting expressions of his bitter and terrible distress.

We may regard this “gnashing of the teeth,” as descriptive of the intense agony of despair. It is expressive of hate and blasphemy, like theirs who were scorched with great heat and blasphemed the name of God, and repented not to give him glory, and gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.* There is something akin to fiendishness, in these utterances of hatred, and defiance, and blasphemy, as the wicked gnash their teeth in the damnation of Hell.

“Wailing” is lamentation with wringing of hands and outcry. It bursts forth upon the public ear. And it has about it, something of the aspect of vulgar woe.

These manifestations of grief are obvious and dreadful. Yet, perhaps, these images may not affect us so forcibly as the “weeping” which is to be the expression of distress in that day. There is an aspect of refinement, something unobtrusive in “weeping,” as contrasted with “wailing and gnashing of teeth.” It is a more

* Rev. xvi. 9-11.

silent, subdued grief; but deep and bitter indeed; the manifestation of overwhelming and hopeless sorrow.

To this, let us turn our thoughts especially.

We have often felt emotions which struggled in sighings or flowed forth from the eye in scalding tears. How are we affected with sympathies that move our pity and compassion for the woes of our fellow-creatures;—for a child in its first endurance of orphanage, lamenting for its lost mother; for a woman in the desolation of widowhood, or suffering from tyranny and oppression; and perhaps most of all, for the strong man, when we saw him bowed down, prostrated, overwhelmed, by some calamity that crushed his heart with a single blow. We saw the grief of these objects of our pity, and shared it, almost in spite of ourselves. How, too, have we felt, when the calamity was all our own! The cup was filled with gall and wormwood, and the pressure of our sorrow was so great that it unnerved, unmanned us. Who of us is not familiar with the causes of weeping; rather, who is not familiar with weeping itself? And who knows not, too, from his own experience, how effective and grateful is the relief of sorrow, felt in copious shedding tears? There is even a luxury in them. And there is the weeping of love and penitence, when the full heart of contrition looks on Christ whom we have pierced, and feels the joy of pardoned sin; like the weeping woman in the house of Simon, who showered her tears upon the feet of Jesus, and wiped them with the hairs of her head; or like Peter, when he had denied his Lord, and under the melting look which both rebuked and humbled and forgave him too, he went out and wept bitterly.

But it is not of such weeping that our text speaks. These may all be gracious tears; the weeping that endures for a night, to be followed by the joy of the morn-

ing. But that which is described in the premonition before us is the weeping that lasts forever. It has its springs in a despairing heart; its stream bursts forth from a bosom rent with anguish, and flows on unending. Unlike the bitter fountains of Marah, no cries prevail for the procuring of that healing branch which the Lord showed unto Moses, which, when it was cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.* It is unavailing as Esau's when he sold his birthright. It may be with subdued sorrow, that would hide itself in solitude; but the desolate soul turns away from the face of the Judge, and would turn away from the face of the crowd, and search out for itself some secluded spot, if such there be in the pit of woe, where it may nourish its hopeless grief with never ceasing tears. This is the portion of their cup, who suffer banishment in that day.

What is there, in the circumstances of their condemnation, to produce such hopeless and bitter sorrow? I remark,

I. THERE IS THE CERTAIN CONSCIOUSNESS OF COMPLETE DISAPPOINTMENT AND UTTER LOSS.

Perhaps the sufferers never thought of being excluded from Heaven, as a real or possible event. Deceiving themselves with vain hopes, willfully ignorant of the truth of God, unmindful of the wrath to come, and with no effort to flee from it, they felt safe, and made sure of future blessedness.

But this delusion can comfort them no longer. Their hopes of escaping are swept away like the spider's web, and they are confounded by their own experience of the realities of death and eternal judgment.

Let us sketch some of the characters that are doomed to this woeful disappointment.

* Exod. xv. 25.

The *ribald infidel*, who defied the truth of Heaven, and made God a liar; who, in the face of all evidence, trampled Jesus under foot as a vile impostor, and insulted the blood of the Covenant as a disgusting pool from the shambles; he, even he now comes to find that Lamb of God upon the throne—that despised cross-bearer raised up to judge the world. And whither shall he turn to hide himself from that eye which darts its angry fires * upon the cowering malignant who once dared to take up that blasphemous watch-word of unbelieving hate, “*crush the wretch!*”

The *worker of iniquity*, who defied the law of God, as an unreasonable restraint, and contemned the warning of retribution, as the dream of fanaticism, is now confronted with that law, and made to feel that the wrath of God *is* revealed from heaven against all ungodliness of men. He feels that utterly unfit to dwell with God, he has no other portion than that which has been prepared for the fearful and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, who have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.†

The *worldling*, who gave himself up to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; who deemed this barren earth sufficient bliss, and pursued all his pleasure amid its pomps and gaieties, and planned and provided for them, as if this were the true aim of life—and who perchance expected that after such a frivolous and sensual existence here, he would enter upon some corresponding enjoyment hereafter; or it may be, never thought of the future, and was content to think that death is an eternal sleep; he too, now finds him-

* Rev. vi. 17.

† Rev. xxi. 8.

self alive and conscious—but it is in hell, in the midst of torment;—and while vainly imploring that even some poor Lazarus, whom here he despised, may be sent with but one drop of water to cool his tongue—that tongue so dainty once and delicate, now parched with torment of ever burning lust,—he is met with the rebuke, that in his life-time he received his good things, and as he sought no other, he is justly left to his proper and chosen reward. Torn away from the world to which he bound himself, his idol and his portion lost, his gods gone, his riches fled, his joys worn out, his honors faded—there is none poor enough to do him homage—and what has he left, but the devouring flame and the unavailing sorrow?

The man who indulged a *hope of mercy, such as the gospel never published*—who would not repent—who deemed it useless to believe in Christ and follow him; who, it may be, had read the gospel backward, and thought that the blood of the cross by its mere overflow had quenched the fires of perdition; and so, insulted that atonement which he plead as the sanction of his resolved depravity, and dishonored and degraded Christ, by making him the minister of sin; or who, at all events, comforted himself with the thought that God would be merciful at the last, to all men without exception; he too finds out the guilt and ruin of this enormous mistake. He sees, now, but all too late, when the face of God is set against him, that he is a holy God, and that while the offended Sovereign does indeed show mercy, he shows it in a peculiar way, wherein his justice blends with grace, and displays his manifold wisdom. He sees that God pardons sinners, only for Christ's sake, and only as they are reconciled to God, by *coming* to Him through the cross, and by repenting of their sins. He finds now, as he witnesses the administration of

justice and mercy at these grand assizes, that he has all along been insulting that mercy which he professed to trust—rejecting that Saviour whose grace he had disparaged with his own opprobrious praise, and trampling under foot that blood of the Covenant, which Jesus shed to save his people from their sins; and conscious of his own unpardoned, unrenewed condition, he departs to realize the truth and righteousness of that sentence—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.”

The *self-righteous man*, who spurned the charges of his sinfulness, and indignantly disclaimed his need of a Saviour; who expected to be *justified* on the ground of his own merit, his just and blameless life; what views has *he* now, of sin, and of his own goodness, and of the way of salvation? He had heard from Paul the confession, “I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died;” and from David, “I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad;” and from holy Job, “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” But, though Paul and David, and Job preached to him from their own experience, he would not receive their testimony, nor admit the conviction of his sin. But, now the law shines upon his conscience and his heart, with a brightness that reveals his corruptions, and speaks forth its holy demands with a voice like that which made Israel at the foot of Sinai tremble and entreat that they might hear it no more. He looks upon those robes of self-righteousness which he had folded around him so complacently, and lo! they are as filthy rags. The bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself upon it, and the covering is too narrow to wrap himself in it. His loathsome nakedness

cannot escape his own eye, much less that eye of the Judge which is as a flame of fire. And who is the Judge? It is that same Jesus, the Lord our Righteousness, who now requites the injuries with which human pride disparaged his atoning work; and who, impartial and just, as he is merciful and gracious, convicts and condemns the *sinner* who would have plead his own goodness as his justification for rejecting Christ and his Cross. He would have nothing to do with Christ's salvation, and Christ has nothing to do with him. He is taken at his own choice. The law he trusted denounces him; but convinced too late, and finding no place for repentance though he seek it carefully with tears, he knows what it is to be "accursed from that Christ" whose vengeance he had braved till death, whose anathema he was not afraid to hazard.

Sore, too, will be the disappointment of the man *whose hope of heaven was fed upon the sins of God's people*. What wretched offal is this to feed a soul upon. He has fancied or suspected ill, where no ill was; sometimes invented it, and nourished himself upon the slaughter of their good name; misjudged their real offences and imperfections; or, to put the matter at the worst, beheld their insincerities and hypocrisies; and feeding his heart with these, was content to make no effort to attain to piety and holiness for himself. But now he finds that the false professor, with whose transgressions he had thought to bridge his own way over the yawning gulf of hell, is damned; the blind follower of blind leaders falls into the same abyss; and both the stumbling-block, and he that stumbled over it, are doomed alike, and perish together in the same fire. He that would be wise must be wise for himself, and he that will be foolish must bear it himself; and while the righteous scarcely are saved, he who has eaten up their sins as bread, has been feed-

ing on the wind, and regaling himself with corruption; and while his deceived heart was thus turning him aside, it was to his own loss, and he cannot deliver his soul.

And the *formalist in religion* who trusted to a bare profession, to Shibboleths and rites and sacraments, but never set himself to purify his heart from its iniquity, nor to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God,—though but now he urged with such confidence, “Hast thou not taught in our streets, and have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence?”—is fain at last to understand that the servant who knew his master’s will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, and that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and to his appeal for entrance into the joy of the Lord, there comes this withering reply, “I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.” *

And also, he *who met the urgent call of the gospel with indolent procrastination*; he now realizes how fallacious were the hopes and resolutions with which he postponed repentance, till some more convenient season. *That season never came.* While he revolved the purpose of future conversion, and meanwhile continued impenitent, adding iniquity unto iniquity, his delays did not retard the coming ruin. Judgment did not linger; damnation did not slumber. Cut short in his career, he was driven away in the midst of his wickedness; and he awoke from his delusive dream of protracted reformation, only to find that he had been laying up wrath against the day of wrath, and provoking till it was exhausted, the abused forbearance and patience of his justly offended Creator.

And there is yet another: *the awakened sinner*, who

* Luke xiii. 26–28; Matthew vii. 22, 23.

with anxious concern, inquired what he must do to be saved? How near he seemed to the kingdom of God. Hope and fear were awakened for him, and hope and fear struggled together in his own breast. But for all this conflict, there was no issue in true peace. He hesitated, he distrusted, he did not close with Christ, he turned back. He remained fearful and unbelieving. Like that interesting young man who drew back from Christ—sorrowfully enough, indeed—because of his too great love of worldly wealth; like Lot's wife, already on her way from Sodom, yet pausing to look back regretting;—he looked back too fondly upon the attractions of that world from which he should have escaped as for his life. And while he lingered, he lost his spiritual concern, and the storm came and swept him away. He sees now the evil result. The slighted calls, the resisted influences, the strivings of God's Spirit that he so madly quenched, all rise before him; and now that he is cast into the outer darkness, he endures once more those terrors of the Lord which, had he improved them when he felt them in his lifetime, would have led him to salvation. He feels them now, renewed with tenfold power, but they are associated with no call to repentance, no offer of pardon, no hope of mercy. They are renewed indeed, and renewed for ever—however often he had laid them asleep, however long he fought against them, till they departed; and as he persisted in trifling with the day of grace in which they visited him in mercy, so now they have returned upon him, but it is only to produce in his soul the overwhelming conviction that the mercies of God are clean gone from him forever.

Sad and sorrowful must be the disappointment of all these on that day, and sore the weeping for their melancholy loss. Sometimes perhaps they had feared how it might go with them. But their solicitude was

transitory and inefficient. And on the whole, they thought and hoped they would inherit heaven.

But now, they are thrust out. They are conscious of their fate. It has *come*. They have an overwhelming conviction that there *is* a heaven of holiness and joy, but in it is no place prepared for them. They have an overwhelming conviction that there is indeed a deep and dreadful hell, and it is prepared for their eternal abode. They cannot doubt it now. The gates of the new Jerusalem are closed against them, and all its glorious light withdrawn; the company of the redeemed are gone in; the songs of melody die in the ear of the lost, and they are shut out to despair. The lurid flame of the pit can be descried; the surges of the burning lake roar in their ears, and they hear the wail of perdition. They are hurried onward with the crowd of the condemned whither the yawning gates remain wide open only till they enter in,—then to be shut with dreadful clang, by that arm which holds the keys of hell and of death. And they shall go no more out.

Now, *for the first time*, they vividly realize the *certain loss* of hope. The conviction is irresistible. They see, they feel that the ruin of the soul has come upon them; and no illusion can ever more deceive them with fond expectation; no gracious overtures, so often spurned, be offered for ever more; no effort of fancy can destroy the painful consciousness that the ruin is real—the loss complete—the doom final.—“And there shall be weeping.”

II. THIS FEARFUL SENSE OF LOSS SHALL BE AGGRAVATED BY THE THOUGHT OF THE MISERABLE COMPENSATION FOR THE SAKE OF WHICH THEY INCURRED IT.

What has sin cost? It should be very precious, when it is held at such a tremendous price. But how is it valued now by those who have paid so dear for it? Hear them, while they review their bargain and estimate their pur-

chase: "For the sake of those fleeting pleasures which so often left a sting behind; for that vain bauble, and those empty honors that were nothing more solid than the breath of men; for those heaps of gold that corroded in my hand, and fled away on wings; for the fear of a little self-denial; to please a friend, who cannot help me now; to preserve my indolent ease; for pride and ungodliness; for a portion in that world which is burning up before my eyes; *for these!* I was willing to forego all serious thought, and encounter the risk of this dreadful perdition! For *these*, I have lost yonder shining heavens, those golden streets, those rivers of pleasures, those angelic companions, and those melodious songs and welcome plaudits, those seats of bliss, that everlasting rest! Yes; for these miserable and destructive vanities, I have lost my soul, and lost my God and Saviour! To avoid tears of penitence and tribulations for Christ's sake in the earth, I have purchased eternal indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; and the tears I am now shedding—ah! they shall flow forever from my weeping eyes! I have got my portion—I have obtained my reward—my damnation is come!" Ah! how bitter will it be to reflect, "This is the portion I have chosen for myself!"

"So the struck eagle stretched upon the plain,
 No more thro' rolling clouds to soar again,
 Views his own feather on the fatal dart,
 And winged the shaft that quivers in his heart.
 Keen are his pangs—but keener far to feel
 He nursed the pinion which impelled the steel;
 While the same plumage that had warmed his nest,
 Drinks the last life-drop from his bleeding breast."

III. TO THESE CONSIDERATIONS MAY WELL BE ADDED, THAT CAUSE OF SORROW WHICH WILL ARISE FROM THE SEPARATIONS WHICH WILL THEN TAKE PLACE.

I do not design to enlarge upon this thought. I would only remind you how friends and families are divided by death, and how painful is the separation of those whose lives are bound up in each other. But there are already divisions of moral character, and a difference between the most intimate associates, as they are either righteous or wicked, which portend an eternal difference of destiny, an everlasting separation, wide as Heaven and Hell. Alas! these divisions exist between the dearest relations: between husband and wife, between parents and children, between brother and sister. They are apparent in their different course of life; they disclose themselves in the sanctuary and at the communion-table. Oh! my friends, is this to be so forever? Are these separations ominous of those which will take place between *you* at the last day? Certain it is that the saint and the sinner will be parted from each other then. And shall *you* be parted then? Shall these parents, and companions, and children, now dear to each other, here, be awarded, some of them to life eternal, and some of them to everlasting woe? And then, when a wide and impassable gulf is to be fixed between them, will there not be lamentation and weeping before the judgment seat of Christ?

Imagine, if you can, the sorrow of that most conscious hour. Have you never felt how appalling a conviction is produced by the experience of some unforeseen, or even by some dreaded, calamity? When it came, it came suddenly. Though you felt it a thousand times in the anticipations of your fear, yet when it came in reality, the blow was overwhelming. Was it, when you stood by the couch of that beloved one, fearing, yet watching, for the last breath which was too surely at hand? And yet, striving to cherish hope against hope, not even realizing, though you knew, that recovery was

impossible? And then came the moment when that gasping ceased, the heaving form lay still, and the seal of death was stamped upon the brow. You stood stupefied; then came the sense of blank desolation; the blood rushed back upon your heart, appalled and frozen by the overwhelming certainty. It was present in every reflection. It was renewed in the night-watches. And it was this certainty, of consciousness and experience, that sharpened your pain—this was the acuteness of your grief, the reflection that cut its way to your inmost heart and soul—“I shall see my beloved no more!” and, you wept—oh, how you wept!—What, then, must be the feeling of that solemn hour, when men shall realize the gains and losses which your whole life-time has accumulated for eternity; when death and judgment shall wind up the account of probation, and award to the speechless, conscious, reprobate that portion his iniquity has earned, that certainty of everlasting ruin which he can never more deny, nor shake off from his despairing heart.

“It shall be even as when an hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or, as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite.”*

Even from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, you may obtain some impression of the feelings which will accompany the certainty of your losses, at that last day. Perhaps, you have waked up in the night, under the intense emotion of some affecting dream, and found yourself weeping. Some great disaster had happened in your sleeping fancy, some irretrievable calamity, some bitter, hopeless grief, some peril you could not escape; and it so pressed upon your

* Isaiah xxix. 8.

heart that it unsealed the fountains of tender sorrow, and you waked up in tears.* How unspeakable was your relief when you became conscious that it was all a dream.—But if you could feel such bitterness of distress under the mere fancy of your sleeping hours, what must it be to start up, not to exchange the weeping of a dreaming hour for the sober certainty of waking bliss, but from the dreams of sin and the sleep of death, to meet your God in judgment, and to exchange all your delusions and unrealities for the waking certainty of eternal damnation!

Yea, on the other hand, it has sometimes happened to you, when you had some real distress, that you gained a temporary forgetfulness in sleep; and your dreams were visited with visions of the loved ones you had lost. But the joy was too great to last, too ecstatic to allow you to repose. You open your eyes, and with quick and agonizing consciousness, the pang shoots instant through your heart, and you are held in the grasp of the sad reality. You would persuade yourself that *it* is but a dream. But, yon vacant couch—that empty chair—those unused implements of work or pastime—the silence of the deserted chamber—and the piercing recollections of the hour when you laid the loved one in the grave—these will not let you believe it. And, again, your woe bursts forth as if your very heart would break with agony.

Well might one, from the midst of such experiences as these, send forward the serious thought, to mingle with the scenes of the last day, and in their contemplation to anticipate something of your possible experiences there: “What if, after all, I should stand at that bar condemned? What, if in that hour I must relinquish all hope, and turn away, bidding an eternal farewell to

* Such was the origin of this discourse.

all I loved, or thought to enjoy—to part from lover and friend—to part from the saints in light and the angelic company—to part from God and Heaven, from Jesus and his salvation—and to go away weeping from the presence of that Saviour who wipes away all tears from his people's faces." Oh! bitter, bitter thought! Painful, but salutary now, while, as yet, the reality is a future thing, and we are still the prisoners of hope.

Let us weep now, that we may not weep then. Not for our earthly sorrows, but for our sins. Not with the sorrow of the world that worketh death, but with that godly repentance which is unto life—those tears of contrition which are shed at the cross of our dying and atoning Lord.* Fall at his feet, and plead his compassion; and his smile shall light your face with gladness. Go to him, now, like that weeping sinner who approached him in the house of Simon at Capernaum, when with throbbing, bursting heart, she pressed her lips to his feet, bedewed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Holy men would have repelled her, as too vile to touch his sacred person. Did he repel her? Did he repel her?—

— “ In the sky, after tempest, as shineth the bow ;
 In the glance of the sun-beam, as melteth the snow ;
 He looked on that lost one, her sins were forgiven,
 And Mary went forth in the beauty of Heaven.”

* Zech. xii. 10.