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SERMON

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE

REV. MATTHIAS BRUEN,

PREACHED IN THE

BLEECKER-STREET CHURCH,

NEW-YORK,

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BY THOMAS H. SKINNER.

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This Sermon

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BY THE AUTHOR,

TO THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN BLEECKER-STREET, NEW-YORK,

AND TO

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

OF

THE AMERICAN HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

AT WHOSE REQUESTS

IT WAS PREACHED AND IS PUBLISHED.



S E R M O N .

This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.—JOHN XXI. 19.

THE context contains an account of St. Peter's appointment to the pastoral office, after his memorable fall and recovery. Having assigned him the business of his life, Christ proceeds to inform him of the time and circumstances of his death. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." What grace was given to this restored apostle: a long life of pre-eminent usefulness, crowned with a martyr's death—his days bright with an

ever-glowing zeal for the glory of God ; his night of death illumined by the same pure flame.

It is characteristic of holy men to confess themselves unprofitable servants, and to wonder that such beings as they should have ever found grace in the sight of God, or be warranted to hope for his final benediction. Nor is there any superstition or extravagance in such exercises and expressions of self-condemnation. Who can but be amazed at his own vileness, when he compares himself with the immaculate Pattern and Fountain of excellence ? “ Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not ; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm, and the son of man, which is a worm. 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 let it not be hence concluded, that holy men are absolutely and in every view unprofitable. Their goodness extendeth not to God, but still they have goodness, and among their fellow creatures they are to be esteemed neither unprofitable nor unworthy. What would the earth be without the holy men who dwell in it ? When a holy man dies, the light of

the world is partially eclipsed; and the loss thence resulting to mankind, in its various aspects, and in its utmost extent, God only comprehends.

But, my brethren, holy men bless the world even in their death. They sometimes compensate the loss caused by their removal, by the manner of their departure. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints, and it ought to be precious too in our sight. They glorified God in their life; they glorify him also in their death; and thus, in the latter as well as in the former, lay mankind under the highest obligations.

Let these be the topics of our discourse: **THE MANNER AND THE UTILITY OF THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS; HOW THEY DIE, AND HOW THEY GLORIFY GOD BY THEIR DEATH.**

As to the period, means, and outward circumstances of their death, there is no difference between the saints and others. St. Peter, indeed, knew by express revelation from Him who hath our times and destinies in his hand, that he should live to be old, and should die a certain kind of death; but in this he stands distinguished from all his fellow mortals. The holiest man, no more than

the most unholy, knows either the hour, the cause, the place, or any of the peculiar scenes and circumstances of his death. For aught that creatures know, he is as much exposed as the most profligate man, to a premature and sudden death; to a death of violence and agony; and to all the terrible forms and exhibitions of pain that are wont to be found in the dark passage to eternity. Even his mind may be tried to the uttermost of its power of endurance, and may perhaps lose its balance in the straitness of the crisis. No, not even the greatest saint on earth has a promise of exemption from the very cruellest kind of death. What brighter specimens of holiness among the sons of men, than many of whom we read, that they were stoned, sawn asunder, crucified, torn by wild beasts, tormented on the rack and in the fire, tried in short by every instrument of terror and torture that death was ever armed with.

It is not the manner in which death deals with the saints, but the manner in which the saints demean themselves under the approaches and onsets of death, that we are now to consider. And the general view of that demeanour is this, that the saints are in death what they were in life, only as their cir-

cumstances are then wholly and wonderfully peculiar, there is a corresponding peculiarity in their exercises and deportment. Death finds them what they are, and does not make them different, but only gives them occasion for new and extraordinary displays of their character. They possess through the whole passage, no other radical principles and dispositions than those which had controlled them through life; and those very principles and dispositions give form and colour to their dying demeanour. A saint shows himself a saint in death, just as he had done in life. The humility, the self-renunciation, the self-abhorrence, the godly sorrow, the faith, the hope, the submission, the firmness, the constancy, which he had exemplified amid the affairs and society of the world, he also exemplifies in death. Some I know there have been, who having the name of saint, did not die in this manner; but it should be inquired how such persons had lived, and whether they were holier in the progress than in the termination of their course. And besides, as in some cases, even true saints do not always act in character during life, so perhaps it may sometimes be in death. We may fear, but we should not boldly pronounce in such instances.

Generally, the truth is as above declared. As the saints live a life peculiar to themselves, they die a peculiar death—a death becoming and congenious with their life. “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace. These all died in faith. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or DEATH, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

There is, however, a variety in the saints’ manner of death, as there is also in the manner of their life. Among the saints, during active life, one differeth from another in degrees of humility, of meekness, of faith, of general spirituality; and it is what ought to be expected that the holiest and heavenliest in life, should ordinarily be the holiest

and happiest in death. One saint differeth from another also in constitutional qualities. One, like John, is pre-eminent in affection and benignity; another, like Peter, in ardour and forwardness; another, like Paul, in decision and energy; another, like Thomas, in scrupulosity and caution; and herein is there a cause for shades of difference in their death-bed deportment. The ruling passion of natural men is often seen strong in death; and why should not spiritual men show, in the same circumstances, their distinctive peculiarities of character and attainment?

What it now chiefly concerns us to keep in mind, however, is, that amidst all these variations, there is this one general manner of death, appropriate exclusively to the saints, namely, that their dying conduct, like their living, is stamped with "holiness to the Lord." Whether their last hours are full of victory and mighty joy, or are only calm and peaceful; or are hours of alternate temptation and triumph, darkness and light; they are hours when the spirit still obeys the divine will as the law of her being; still confesses her guilt and abases herself before the infinite majesty and purity of God; still witnesses her supreme love of the divine

excellence ; her adoring gratitude for redemption, her self-renouncing faith in the great Sacrifice for the sins of the world, her unshaken confidence in the promises of holy scripture ; her utter disrelish and loathing of the world as a portion, her supreme longing after perfect holiness, her heaviness and sorrow for impenitent perishing men, her assurance of a resurrection of the body, and of the complete and changeless blessedness of the righteous, and misery of the wicked. These are the elements of the saint's character in life, and they remain the same when he is dying, only they shine out then with a lustre as unwonted as the occasion.

This is the manner the saints die: the utility of their death, or how it glorifies God, is next to be shown.

They glorify God, and bless the world during life, by the various forms and instances of holiness which in their several spheres and degrees they exemplify and practise. In this way they prove themselves to be what Christ affirms, the salt of the earth, the light of the world. They hold forth the word of life ; they reprove, persuade, warn, condemn, the world ; they demonstrate the truth,

the power, the value, the necessity, of religion : and thus do they in fact advance the cause of God and human happiness, more than is done by all that wise and learned men have ever urged in its favour. “ *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit.*” God’s chosen witnesses, His best and most efficient friends have always been, not learned apologists and eloquent orators, though learning and eloquence are not to be despised, but godly men—men like Barnabas of old, and the Brainerds and Martyns of modern times, full of faith and the Holy Ghost. How does the life of one such man preach to christendom, through his own and all future generations !—Brethren, we are distributing the bible, and sowing the earth with pious tracts, and indoctrinating the rising generation in the principles of the gospel, and multiplying ministers and missionaries; and our labour to these ends is necessary and must be greatly increased; but no amount of such labour will suffice: for what if the world were fully supplied with churches, ministers, bibles, teachers, and all the means of knowledge and grace; would it of course be converted? How is it now in some of the most privileged parts of christendom? What large portions of the

people, amidst all their advantages, live and die in unbelief? May God increase the SPIRITUALITY of his people. This is the light after all by which this world must learn to love and acknowledge its Saviour.

And as holiness in the life of the saints thus glorifies God, so likewise, and pre-eminently, does holiness in their death. The power of exemplified holiness rises in proportion to the severity of its trials. God is glorified indeed when he is glorified in the fires of adversity. In the light of these fires holiness shines above any other brightness seen in the earth. The world beholds the ethereal sight, and feels its own impurity and wretchedness. No wonder that God leads his people through much tribulation—that he obliges them to endure great fights of affliction, for the sake of such honour to them, and such praise to himself, not otherwise to be obtained.—Nothing but the faith of a christian can vanquish the common temptations of the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. God's praise, for that victory will receive, as it deserves, everlasting acknowledgment. How high then will be its eternal celebrations for the success he gives the saints, in the war

not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses, and the entire hosts of trouble and affliction. But the supreme of evils, the KING of terrors, the horror of the whole living creation, is DEATH—a name that stands for every thing appalling in earth and in hell.—And does the holiness of the saints prevail even against this adversary? Does it meet and conquer, and in a sense abolish this last and chiefest foe? Does it put on its brightest forms of mildness, and majesty, and gladness, and triumph, as it joins itself in conflict with this leviathan of the universe? It does, my brethren; and here is the glory which the saints give to God: here is the excellency of spiritual power, the completion of moral evidence, the most efficient of all testimonies to the truth, the importance, the infinite worth, the absolute necessity of religion; the loudest of all protests against the crime and madness of a worldly life.—Let the various classes of the ungodly draw near, and meditate the death of the saints, and learn the lessons which it reads to them. Where now is the wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world; let him come, and see, and wonder at the folly and the guilt of his falsely called wisdom

and learning. What deserves the name of wisdom, in comparison with the wisdom of holiness, which knows how to extract the sting of death, and change the chamber of dissolution into the gate of heaven?—Where, too, are the sons of ambition and pride, the conquerors, and nobles, and princes of the world? let them come to the saints' death-bed, and see the things which look so great and glorious in their eyes, turned into emptiness and illusion: let them come and learn the glory, the honour, the immortality of religion.—Come ye, also, who boast yourselves of the multitude of your riches, who have made gold your hope, and said to the fine gold, thou art my confidence; come, stand by the dying saint, and feel your deep and dreadful poverty, and learn the way to riches indeed. —And ye children of pleasure, who rejoice at the sound of the harp and the viol, and hold your hearts from no sensual delight, enter into this hallowed retreat, and see the madness of laughter and mirth, and what it is whose ways are true pleasantness, and whose paths substantial peace.—And, finally, let the saints themselves take their stand by the bed of their dying brethren, and be confirmed in their faith; and get their hearts enlarged with

grace, and their tongues filled with songs of new praise, and their feet winged to speed them in the race which is set before them. O, dying saints, what a debt of love and gratitude do ye lay upon the living! Be your memory ever blessed, and your last witness for God effectual to the glory of his name, and the blessedness of his kingdom.

The reflections suggested by the subject, thus considered, are such as the following.

It is important to be well prepared for death.—There is nothing in the existence of man, in time or in eternity, so momentous to himself, or that may be made so useful to others, as the event of his death. No: through the whole term of his being, man has nothing to do of as much importance as to DIE. Sinners can do nothing that will bear so much on their interests; and saints may do more to glorify God, in this crisis of their existence, than in all their previous lifetime.—How unspeakable, how immense the importance of being ready to die—of being certain that this one thing shall be done as it ought; that there be nothing wrong, nothing questionable, nothing unlovely, nothing undignified, nothing unchristian, in our dying carriage.—The

way is not unknown, of making this matter sure. It is to be done as Christ directs, by always watching; or living with the mind and heart ever awake to our incessant exposure to the mortal arrest. Preparing to die, should be the only business of life. It should be entered upon with the beginning of every day; and we should examine every night whether the intervenient hours have been faithfully devoted to it: for the period of death is unknown, and no warning of its approach may be given.—So, my brethren, should all men live. However uncommon such a life, it is the only one that religion or reason can approve. Every day is a day of madness which is not so spent. What manner of persons ought we dying men to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!

It is reasonable to believe that God, in a special manner, arranges and orders every thing relating to the death of a christian.—If the very hairs of his head are numbered, and all his steps directed, and cognizance is taken of his every movement and every thought, nothing surely is left unarranged pertaining to the time, place, manner, and circumstances of his death. Would God take care in respect to the least

matters, and not take special care in respect to an event in which such important issues and results are involved? It was determined when, and what death, St. Peter should die; and though wholly unknown to himself, the hour and all the circumstances of the death of every saint are doubtless also determined and ordered by the Almighty Disposer of all things.—To us, christians may seem to have died prematurely, accidentally, undesirably; but the counsel of God regarding their death has certainly been fulfilled in all respects; and for them as well for God's own honour, all things have happened for the best. We may deplore the loss occasioned by their death, to their families, the church, and the world; but, to the accomplished will of God, we should bow with silent and serene submission.

It may be well that the saints sometimes die in the vigour of their days, and in the midst of their labours and successes.—Even for their own honour and reputation, a premature death may be better than length of days. It had been better if some, supposed to be christians, now living, had died like Spencer, in the flower of their age. The declensions and deviations of after years have well nigh

counteracted the usefulness of earlier life. What a different estimate would posterity have formed of the religious character of Solomon, if he had departed ere the noon of his life? And who can tell but that some of those venerated youthful worthies, who shone with cloudless lustre while they lived, and glorified God by the manner of their departure, might have almost escaped out of memory before now, if they had not been called away in the midst of their course?—But whether they would have pursued an ever-brightening way to the last, or not, we may readily believe that it was on the whole far better—better for the church, better for the universe, and of course better for themselves, that they were “deprived of the residue of their years.” Their untimely death, in all its bearings and relations, was doubtless more to the glory of God, than would have been a long and very useful life. The death of the young martyr may be a greater blessing than a laborious life in the ministry of three score years. If Abel had not been slain for his righteous works, he might not have been remembered beyond his own generation; but in consequence of his dying for such a cause, by a brother’s hand, he being dead nearly six

thousand years, yet speaketh, and will continue to speak, to the glory of God and good of his kingdom, through all time and eternity.—We often know not, or do not consider, what is most needful to be done for the advancement of the cause of God. The sense of a great bereavement, in the hearts of christians, may be directly and indirectly, the means of more good than the labours of a thousand faithful men. Out of that sense of loss, what self-humiliations among the saints may proceed; what searchings of heart, what prayers and confessions; what increased holiness of life, what renunciation of creature-trust; what mighty enterprises and endeavours of benevolence; and, ultimately, what enlarged measures of the saving power of the Spirit, the only power after all, that can accomplish any thing truly good in this world.

The continued lives and enjoyments of wicked men, while good men suddenly and violently die, need not stumble or perplex us. Good men, die when and how they may, never die, as they never live, in vain. God accomplishes good by their death, greater than we can know or imagine. But, on the large scale, wicked men are useful, whether in life or death,

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only in their own destruction. They are suffered to stay in the world, because God is infinite in forbearance, and is not willing that any should perish. But for almighty patience and boundless pity, they would immediately sink into ruin. God knows what the doom is to which they are hastening, and spares them longer, and yet a little longer, if by any means they may repent, and so avoid it. Meanwhile, it is true, they do evil as they can; but God can overrule their evil to good; and may, therefore, show them mercy in the midst of their rebellious and pernicious ways.—Hence let us compose our minds, and bow before Him with subdued and gentle spirits, while He spares His enemies and slays His best friends. Even in this case He does all things well. It is well that young and useful ministers perish, while skeptics, scorners, and atheists spread themselves like a green bay tree. It was well that the martyrs suffered every violent and cruel kind of death, while their persecutors lived to enjoy the bounties of Providence, and repeat their work of blood.

THESE REFLECTIONS, my brethren, should dispose our spirits to a calm contemplation of that solemn

event which has occasioned this service. A deep and strange affliction has befallen us. We mourn the departure of a revered minister and follower of Christ. Some of us have lost a most inestimable relative: a family amongst us, desolate and solitary, laments the removal of its head: a church weeps over the grave of a faithful pastor: the community is bereaved of a distinguished citizen; the country of a true and efficient friend; the cause of christian benevolence, the cause of God and man, of a devoted, laborious, liberal, and able advocate and supporter. Our amiable, accomplished, venerated, beloved BRUEN is no more! Very pleasant hast thou been unto us, my brother: sweet and mournful is the memory of thy love: Beauty of Israel, why hast thou so quickly escaped from our view?

His departure was unseasonable. He scarcely stayed with us half his days. The dew of his youth was yet upon him; his countenance was still fresh as the morning; vigour appeared in his footsteps; and his frame rejoiced in the exuberance of health. He seemed but just commencing his appointed course. Providence had apparently been engaged in fitting him for his proper sphere, and

was just introducing him into it. The hopes of thousands were fixed upon him as the destined instrument of enlarged usefulness: thousands were rejoicing that the church had a son of such promise:—in a moment he was gone.

His death was painful as well as sudden. He was one week in the mortal conflict, and it was a week of anguish. His life was worn out by the violence of pain. What must the victim of the destroyer have suffered, when the witnesses of his agony were overwhelmed?

But although his death was most violent and unexpected, it was a death by which he glorified God. He was indeed shocked, when he first knew how certainly and how soon he was to change states, and pass into eternity. "God," he said, "is coming in darkness. Lord have mercy on my soul. But quietness and assurance of spirit soon returned, and gave utterance to the triumphant verse—

" I'll praise my Maker with my breath ;
And when my voice is lost in death"—

and to the Psalmist's effusion of confidence—
" Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee." And though

he might have been excused, if at such a time he had taken no thought but for himself, yet so far was this from the fact, that he gave his chief solicitude, when dying, to that which had been the dear business of his life. The objects of his tenderest care and indulgence still held their own place in his heart, and he did what he could to secure them the greatest earthly comfort they could enjoy, without his personal presence and attentions. But their spiritual welfare was chief in his regard. It was his dying injunction, that his children should be kept out of the world, taught the strictest way of observing the holy sabbath, and diligently trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.— And how filial and fraternal did he show himself to his domestic relatives, to whom he had been an honour and an ornament, as to what family would he not have been? giving such counsel, such affectionate and faithful charges to his father, and brothers, and sister, as nothing but the truest and intensest love for their souls could have prompted.—His thoughtful affection did not confine itself to the friends who stood around him. It was generously occupied also about those who were absent, to whom he sent appropriate messages of his constant

love.—And how did this watchful pastor remember in his death-season the flock, of which the Great Shepherd had given him the oversight?—in the well evidenced piety of some, expressing his warm delight : for others, trembling anxiety, lest they come short of the promised rest : for the manifestly unconverted “travailing in birth,” that Christ might be formed within them : for all, leaving his affectionate charges and valedictions.—And the care, not only of his own people, but of the universal church, was not now absent from the mind of this liberalized and large-hearted man of God. You all knew how he had laboured for the furtherance of the gospel throughout the length and breadth of his own country ; it was his dying message to the Committee of Home Missions in this city—“Yours is a great work ; the work of God ; hold on.”—He gave directions as to his funeral service ; but herein also discovered the loftiness of the ascendant feeling in his death. He wanted nothing said about himself but what would be of useful tendency to others : he was afraid, so low was his estimate of his own piety, that to panegyrize him as a saint, would but leave sinners less impressed with the necessity of those agonizing exertions which all

men must make to be saved; and he seemed to think also, that a discourse suited to excite tender and mournful emotions, when such emotions were likely to be sufficiently awakened by the occasion, would tend rather to prevent than promote those peculiar convictions of sin and ruin, which ordinarily precede true evangelical repentance and faith. "Don't make *me* out a saint," he said, "for that would be the way to ruin souls." "Don't preach a gloomy sermon, but make heaven seem brighter than the world."—Nor was this noble zeal for the good of souls and the glory of God, unattended by conscious peace and confidence in respect to his own eternal state. "I die," he said, "in peace and love with all mankind."—He was asked, in an interval of comparative rest from bodily anguish, and when very near the farthest limit of the dark valley he was treading, whether he could give his attention during a short devotional exercise; and having given an affirmative answer, the following scriptures were distinctly repeated. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" "There is no condemnation to them

which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled, in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.”—

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” “For this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality: so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord

Jesus Christ.”—He had been profoundly still, and remaining so, the speaker was doubtful whether he had been understood, and said, “did you hear me, my brother?” “I heard, and loved it—every word.”—“Is your mind at rest?” “Yes; I have a calm peace within.” Then, after tenderly embracing his near relatives, and addressing them in a manner never to be forgotten, prayer was made until he became fatigued. The process of dying now proceeded rapidly on, and nothing more was said or done, that could be considered as indicating the thoughts and feelings of his heart.

So died our lamented friend—a death how characteristic of the man; how consistent with his life:—a death painful perhaps as St. Peter’s; but a death by which, with that blessed apostle, he glorified God.

Brethren of this church, friends of missions, servants and disciples of Christ, lovers of your country, lovers of God and man, afflicted relatives, what thanksgivings do we not owe to Heaven for his life; and what a legacy has he left us by the manner of his death!

But recollections of good enjoyed in and by him, do not diminish our sense of what we have lost by

his removal. We have been blessed indeed by the life he has lived, and the death he has died; but we are without the man—and he has done us no benefit which should efface from our memory the impress and image of himself. Neither is forgetting what he was, the way to submit to that holy Providence which has taken him from us. Duty to him and to God alike requires, what to our fond affection can be no unwilling office, that we preserve in our hearts and memories a just delineation of his life and character: to the doing of which, the following rapid sketch promises to be but a very feeble and inadequate assistant.

He was born in Newark, New-Jersey, April 11th, 1793. His parents consecrated him to God. At a very early period he showed a love for intellectual pursuits. From his childhood he had great tenderness of conscience. It was not, however, until about his eighteenth year, that he thought himself a christian. He fulfilled a complete course of academical studies, holding to the last the pre-eminence among his classmates. In 1808 he entered Columbia College, and was graduated in 1812. He devoted himself to the acquisition of

the needful qualifications for the sacred office, and remained the full term of years in the Theological Seminary under the direction of Dr. John M. Mason.

In the summer of 1816 he left New-York, in company with his distinguished preceptor, and travelled extensively through Europe. I find in his own writing a sentence that shows the spirit which filled his mind on his departure: "With every means of pursuing my inquiries, and the most flattering prospects, may I never forget that they form the standard of my responsibility. While I am for a time relieved from the pressure of public labour, may it be for some better purpose than to satisfy an idle curiosity, or an idle ambition."

After an absence of two years and a half, when about to embark at Liverpool for America, he received an urgent request to preach in the American Chapel of the Oratory in Paris; which having accepted, he was ordained in London, and occupied his new sphere of duty six months.

After his return to his own country, he laboured in various places, at the call of Providence, until 1822, when he was employed as a missionary in this city, by a committee of missions appointed by

the Presbytery of New-York. Here, besides performing the business of a missionary, he discharged, how faithfully and ably you can attest, the duties of Agent and Corresponding Secretary of the United Domestic Missionary Society, for about eighteen months.

At length, God having prospered his missionary labours, he organized a church in this section of the city; by whose exertions and his own, this edifice was erected, as their place of worship.

In 1825 he resigned his place in the missionary society, that he might devote himself wholly to the church of which he had become the pastor. In the service of this church he remained, seeking not theirs but them, until his death: meanwhile employing himself, also, in various benevolent labours and sacrifices; for which his praise is, and will long be, in the American churches.

Prematurely, unwarned, and in the midst of his labours, he sunk into his grave, three sabbaths since, very early in the day, and after one week's illness.

Of the person and manners of our dear friend, you can have no other than pleasant recollections. He had in all circumstances a striking propriety of

carriage. Politeness seemed instinctive to him. He was eminently free from an unsocial, envious, ambitious spirit. His happiness in an uncommon measure was derived from the happiness of others; and from his efforts to promote it, which he often made to his own immediate disadvantage. He had an exceedingly quick sensibility to the odiousness of low conduct, which found no allowance from him. Hence he passed with some for a man of a stern, proud, and hasty spirit. Perhaps there was excess in the delicacy and excitability of his feelings.—He was of a truly, noble, and ingenuous spirit, not only eschewing and abhorring whatever was mean, but aspiring and following after whatever was magnanimous, manly, liberal, honourable. This bent of his nature, coinciding with the plan and proceedings of Providence respecting him, shaped the course of his active life, led him to bold enterprises, high endeavours, cheerful and large sacrifices, in the accomplishment of what he rightly thought the work which God had given him to do. I speak to those who knew him. My friends, where is there a man, more forward than he was, to promote the grand cause of Christian benevolence in all its extended operations? Who

ever expected from him a smaller measure of liberality than he was able to exercise? How ready was he to go at your bidding wherever you thought he could subserve the interests of the church by his presence and addresses? He had just accomplished an expedition undertaken by your appointment, when his next business was to die.

He was a model of integrity. Artifice and intrigue had nothing to do in originating or conducting his movements. His obvious and his real meaning were identical. He was an independent thinker; his opinions were his own; and he never concealed them, nor refused to correct them, when he found they were wrong. Exact and rigid honesty, marked all his life. In his statements and recitals, he was careful to adhere to literal truth. He viewed mental reservation as falsehood. His word always commanded unqualified confidence.

He was a bright example of the private virtues. The impression he has left of himself, on those who only can bear him witness in this respect, is pre-eminently strong. Such a son, such a brother, such a friend, such a father, and above all, such a husband, humanity may well rejoice to claim.

What his family has lost, his family only can know ; and there is great truth in the remark, that a man is, what he is in his family.

As might have been anticipated from the magnanimity of his nature, he was fearless of men ; and having a most delicate susceptibility to the turpitude of all moral obliquity, he was not backward to rebuke it in whomsoever it was seen. He was intimate in the higher classes of society, to whom, in some instances not unknown to myself, he privately evinced an intrepidity in reproof, which showed them that he valued their souls more than their friendship. He would sunder even the bonds of private affection sooner than those of morality. It is easy to condemn sin, in a multitude ; but he would condemn it in an individual, and to that individual by himself.

He was an humble man. His knowledge of the world and of his God kept him from the idolatry of human talent or virtue, and of himself in particular his estimate was low. He thought too little of his own performances, while he gave full praise to those of other men. He was not afraid of showing himself in any public service, on his own account, but he preferred his brethren in honour,

because he seriously thought they would exert themselves more to the honour of God and the good of man.

As to his intellectual character, he was so peculiar, that I have in vain endeavoured to put him into any class. The aspect of his mind, like his countenance, was beautiful; its motions were easy, energetic, quick. He had a sprightly and fertile fancy; a pure taste; an acute and accurate discernment of the force of an argument, the spirit of his author, the beauties and deformities of composition. He loved literature rather than science; strength rather than logical precision; despatch and rapidity in discourse, rather than minute and extended analysis. It was astonishing, the ease and success with which he thought. What fine specimens of composition has he left us, written in about as many hours as others would have deemed sufficient labour for the same number of days. His sermons, always full of beauty, and often too, full of learning, (that is, if the proper proof of learning in discourse be abundant allusions which only learning can make,) were generally the product of a day, and sometimes of a sitting. With such facility and speed he accomplished every thing.

His manner of writing was better suited to the press than the pulpit, and his elocution discovered too much modesty and diffidence for the happiest effect. As a public speaker he was rapidly rising, and promised to be second to almost none of his brethren, as an eloquent and efficient advocate of the cause of our benevolent societies.—He wrote much for various periodical works, and published several years since a volume of “Essays, descriptive and moral,” which is strongly marked by his characteristic elegance and sentiment.

His attainments were extensive, various, and of a quality the most congenial to the character and spirit of his mind. Always devoted to books, he procured a large library, theological, classical, and miscellaneous; in the selection of which, perhaps, better taste and judgment could not have been displayed. A constant and rapid reader, with a mind always alert, and a most capacious and retentive memory, he could not fail, amidst such a multitude of the best authors in almost every language, to acquire uncommon stores of knowledge. Perhaps few men of his age were better acquainted with books.—His reading in divinity extended through the various systems; and he neither received as

truth, nor rejected as error, what he had not considered in its polemical connexions. He understood and embraced the faith usually called Calvinistic; but not with such a persuasion of having seen the whole truth, as hindered the continuance of free and independent research. Hence he was constantly making accessions to the light, and diminishing the remaining darkness and inconsistency of his theological scheme. The changes which took place in his creed, ought rather to be called modifications or corrections—they related to the philosophy, not to the facts and essential doctrines of religion; and were such as gave him freedom, pungency, and practical power in the pulpit. He was not of a controversial spirit; but loved good men, and especially good ministers, of all denominations. He contended only for “doctrine according to godliness;” judging it the province and duty of christian charity to agree to differ in unessential points.

What he was as a pastor, his little flock are most competent to tell. It was his grief, and not his choice, that no field, for ministerial labours more abundant presented itself to him in the beginning of his course. He would gladly have spent,

and been spent, in watching for souls; but though his public performances made a favourable impression, especially on the intelligent, he in vain waited for an earlier call from his Master to this work. The only people he could call his own, were those who were gathered and established by his own instrumentality; and what self-denial, what zeal, what patience, what vigilance, what prudence, and what eminent disinterestedness, he exemplified in fulfilling the various offices of the pastoral relation—that indebted and grateful people can best appreciate.

The peculiar shades and showings of his personal piety resembled those of his character in other respects. His modesty and humility, his refinement and delicacy, his public spiritedness and zeal, his taste and learning, his sincerity and honourableness, his simplicity and gentleness, gave hue and colouring to his private walk and exercises as a christian. He was humbled that he had no more pious affection and experimental knowledge. He had more fear than confidence, in regard to his spiritual state, though he felt and confessed the obligation to be assured of his calling and election. He was more ready to hear than to tell

of spiritual manifestations and comforts—happier in the eminent attainments of others, than in his own measures of spirituality and grace. He loved revivals of religion; rejoiced in opportunities to put himself under their peculiar power, rendered God praise for their prevalence, and constantly prayed for their increase; but yet lamented that he had not more of the spirit of revivals, and was so afraid of his unfitness to labour where these extraordinary effusions of the Spirit were enjoyed, that he tremblingly entered upon any public service in such places.

He was aware of the peculiar temptations to an unspiritual kind of religion that belong to the elevated circumstances and sphere of life unto which he was fitted and disposed by his cast of character, connexions, attainments, and advantages; and he was conscious that his communion with God and his religious joy were not promoted by intercourse with the worldly great and honourable. The best associates he knew to be the most spiritually minded; and from the heartless smiles and courtesies of the world, with what delight did he return to the humble circle of prayerful and devoted christians. Goodness was before great-

ness, nearness to God, before the greatest elevation among men, according to his judgment, his feeling, and his actual preference. He had no alliances or intercourse with men of distinction, which hindered him from loving and delighting in the society of holy persons, however obscure. He abjured fashionable amusements, and loved the house of mourning rather than the house of feasting. How prompt and affectionate were his attentions to the fatherless and the widow in their affliction : how generous his contributions to the poor and needy.

Such was the Rev. MATTHIAS BRUEN.—His faults I have not wished to conceal ; and I should feel I was offering insult to his memory, recollecting how he abhorred false praise—whether the giving or the receiving of it—if I could charge myself with intentional exaggeration of his virtues. The very imperfect account which I have given of him, falls far below my own impression of his worth—an impression which grows stronger and stronger by the most careful retrospection I am able to exercise upon his exhibitions of himself as presented to my view in a very close and familiar acquaintance with him, especially for the last five years.

Considering what he was in every respect, and how much promise he gave of future eminence and usefulness, while it must be admitted that there are other men in the church of higher excellence in some points, it is I think doubtful whether there be one of his surviving brethren whose removal would have occasioned, on the whole, a greater loss.

But why do we speak of loss? He is removed from us, but not from the fellowship of the saints the household of God. Death has changed his countenance, and sent him away; but he yet keeps his mind, with all its acquisitions, and is now exercising himself in a sphere more congenial to the nobleness of his nature; and with an energy and a purity of feeling and purpose, of which we children of pollution can have no thought. Yes; our friend has but gone into a higher condition of being, in which he is now shining above the brightness of the firmament!

God does for his saints by their death, what He does by their chastisements, only in a transcendent degree; He makes them more eminently partakers of His holiness. They, in dying as in living, glorify Him; and He, through their death, in a

different sense, glorifies them. He does for them what they could not do for Him—He increases their essential excellence, and improves their state and does both to a degree, of which no imagination can be imparted to us now. Death is a greater trial than affliction, and it results in more than proportional gain to the saints. God is not dealing in vain with them, when He suffers the destroyer to make havoc of their bodily life—they enter into peace; they are changed into the similitude of the holy angels; they wear the crown of life; they inherit the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; they glorify God, not imperfectly and inconstantly, as here—they see Him as He is, and serve Him as they ought.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

For the pious dead, therefore, on their own account, we have no cause to mourn: nor has the kingdom of God suffered loss: and the loss even to us may result in gain. As they leave us, they lift our hearts up to the heavens into which they

pass ; they make us, also, long to be gone ; they admonish us to be always ready ; they show us better than we knew before, how to live and how to die ; they make the world appear a greater vanity, and heaven more desirable, and Christ more precious, and religion more needful, and eternity nearer. They call us to renewed exertions and diligence in the work of the Lord ; they impose upon us new obligations, and present us with new motives.

Therefore, whilst we sorrow under our bereavement, as nature, affection, and religion warrant and require, let us not forget the lessons and responsibilities which it urges on our hearts. Let us gird up the loins of our minds, and with cheerful diligence address ourselves to the great work which we have to do, for God, our fellow men, and ourselves. Thus shall we rightly improve the solemn event which so much afflicts us : so may we make that deep calamity a blessing. But if, on the contrary, we suffer our active energies to slumber amidst overmuch grief, we shall make our affliction the occasion of affliction still greater. After our natural tears shall have ceased to flow, we shall find ourselves more than ever under the power of a

corrupt and hard heart; and God, grieved by our obstinacy, may say to us, "why should ye be stricken any more?" and leave us to ourselves, until the day of wrath and destruction come upon us.

MY BRETHREN IN THE MINISTRY! we have on this occasion a special call to increased watchfulness and effort. We have lost a fellow labourer, and the work we have to do could not easily dispense with his aid. It is not a time, surely, for laborious and devoted ministers of the gospel to be leaving us before they have spent half their strength. Instead of sparing one, our cause demands thousands. Yes, for nothing should prayer be offered, night and day, more importunately, than that the Lord of the harvest would multiply labourers. The whole church should be calling aloud unto God, without ceasing, for the increase of apostolic ministers—the great desideratum of the age. Yet, instead of being given, they are taken away.—Is God's work therefore to be left undone? No, but an obligation, a necessity, dear brethren, is now laid upon each one of us to take a larger share of that work as his allotted task. Not that God needs our service, even now: He shows us how little trust He puts in

men, by such untimely removals of our brethren. And doubtless it is one of the ends of these mysterious measures, to fix the hope and confidence of His servants on His own arm alone. But as His work is to be done by their instrumentality, and not otherwise, let us rise up in His strength, and go forward in His counsel, attempting greater things than have hitherto entered into our thoughts. He calls to us on this occasion, as out of our faithful brother's grave, *to attempt greater things.*

FRIENDS OF MISSIONS! your admonition too is special. Well have you judged that "this dispensation of Providence has removed one of your most active, intelligent, and devoted associates."* Remember, brethren, that associate's dying message—"Yours is a great work, the work of God; hold on." I seem to hear that voice sounding again, out of heaven. It comes also from perishing millions in the ends of the earth. I hear it from Calvary, and in every groan of our Saviour!

* Reference is here had to Resolutions passed by the Executive Committee of the American Home Missionary Society, on the occasion of his death.

Friends of Missions, hold on in your work, for yours is the work in which the eternal fates of your country and the world are involved—the work of God—the grand business of the christian church. You have lost a noble coadjutor; but act in the spirit of his dying charge, and God will prove to you that your work is indeed His own.

PEOPLE OF HIS OVERSIGHT ! how peculiar is your concern in the death of your pastor. You have lost an ascension-gift of Christ—a herald of eternal love; an able minister of the New Testament; a lover and friend of your souls. He laboured for you in life; he counselled, comforted, and admonished you in death. Take heed to the things which you have heard from his mouth. When you meet him before the judgment-seat of Christ, let not one who has been so true a friend, become a swift witness against you. Did you not repent under the sound of his living voice? let his dying faithfulness, and his recollected warnings, persuade you to repentance now.

TO HIS DEAREST FRIENDS, how tenderly does God speak on this mournful occasion. That he honour-

ed and loved you, in the best sense, his death-bed as well as his life bore him witness. Let your love for him lead you to walk in his footsteps, and prepare to meet him in the presence of his God.

And let us all stand in awe, and adore the holy severity, the sovereign majesty, the unsearchable wisdom, the infinite goodness, of God, presented to our solemn contemplations in this sudden and afflictive doing of his Providence.

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