

SERMON.

Funeral Sermon of the Late Mr. Alexander McRobb, Monkton.

BY REV. A. HENDERSON, M. A., ATWOOD.

TEXT:—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"—1 Cor., 15:55.

The reign of death is co-extensive with the ravages of sin. "Death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." None are exempt from this penalty. Where is the family which has not been called upon to mourn departed friends?

"Friend after friend departs, Who hath not lost a friend? There is no union here of hearts, That finds not here an end; Were this frail world our final rest, Living or dying none were blest."

"There is no flock however watched or tended, But one dead lamb is there. There is no fireside howsoever encircled, But hath one vacant chair."

Oh, how thankful should we be that we have not been left to the natural blindness and darkness of our own minds, to the light of nature around us, or to mere speculation, philosophy, or conjecture as to the future world, and the state of the soul after death! With what gratitude we should welcome the revelation which God has given us not only of His infinite love in Christ Jesus to sinful men, but that there is a world of unspeakable bliss prepared for true believers, to which their souls immediately go upon leaving the body, and that when absent from the body they are present with the Lord? That with the light furnished by God's word we can see into futurity, and say with the fullest confidence—

"There is a world above where parting is unknown, A long eternity of love formed for the good alone;

And faith beholds the dying here, Translated to that glorious sphere."

And thus it is that the true believer supported by the infallible word of God, and believing that the departed one has gone to eternal glory, even while his heart is wrung with sorrow, can lift his tearful eyes to heaven, and say in accents of heavenly calmness and submission "It is well."

The true Christian sees the hand of God in all that befalls him. While others may see only secondary causes he recognizes the will of God and His wonder working power in all the dispensations of Providence. He knows that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His heavenly Father, and that the very hairs of his head are all numbered. What we call the laws of nature are nothing else than the usual expression of God's sovereign will. Thus we call gravitation a law of nature, but when we ask why it is that bodies tend to the centre of attraction, we can give no other reason than this that it is the will of God. Again, we call it a natural law for a dead body to become corrupt, but when we ask why it is so all we can say is that God in the exercise of His sovereignty wills and power has so ordained. And so also if we ask why is death the result of sin, we can only answer: It is God's will. And therefore when death enters the household and takes away one of the family circle we should acknowledge with Christian resignation that "this also cometh from the Lord of Hosts who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working," who is just in all His ways and holy in all His works. "Behold He taketh away who can hinder Him? who will say unto Him what doest Thou?"

It is wise then to submit with humble resignation to the will of God when death visits our families, for death is one of God's servants, carrying out His wise purposes, death is one of His messengers summoning the soul which He has created to His presence, and whatever success may attend man's efforts when contending with his fellowmen, the only right, the only safe position for him before God is in the very dust. Has God done it, and is it not wise, and right, and good? "Wee unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth." "Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?"

Instead of questioning God's sovereignty, or the right which He claims to do with His creatures as seemeth good in His sight, we should rather adore Him for the gracious manner in which He exercises that right, and seek His grace to enable us even in our darkest hour of sorrow to say: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." "Not my will, O God, but Thine be done."

But when the body is laid in the grave, and the mound raised over it, and the sad memorials of the dead erected, is this the end? As we look into the dark and unknown future there is no light to cheer us, no guide to lead us? There is. We have the light of God's holy word, and the infallible guidance of His Spirit, and we hear Jesus saying: "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." "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death."

But we are taught in this fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians that the resurrection of Christ is the evidence and security of our resurrection, that our resurrection is a necessity, that Christ is risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept, that as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly; for this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must 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 that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

In the words of the text we have the triumph over the grave asserted in the very strongest terms, for it is the most emphatic way of making a statement to challenge any contradiction of it. The apostle is so confident that death is swallowed up in victory that he triumphantly asks the question: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Death which was before a dreadful serpent with a venomous sting is now rendered harmless, its sting having been extracted by the death of the son of God, and the victory of the grave can no longer be celebrated since it has itself been vanquished by the almighty power of Jesus.

We shall consider 1st. How the believer triumphs over death; and 2nd. Why he thus triumphs. Let me ask your attention then to how the believer triumphs over death. The believer triumphs over death by anticipation and in actual fact. The words of the text refer more especially to the victory of the child of God as seen in the resurrection of the body at the last day, but the believer even in this life triumphs over death by anticipation. When Nelson was on the eve of the battle of Trafalgar, his courage and faith had already assured him of the victory on the morrow, and he rejoiced in it by anticipation, so that when he went into the battle although he had fearful odds against him, relying on the fidelity and valor of his officers and men he felt confident of a glorious triumph; and so the true Christian by faith grasps the unseen and unknown, and makes the assurance of future victory a motive to present activity and joy.

Jesus hath broken the bars of the tomb, Joyfully, joyfully we will go home." But the believer not only triumphs over death by anticipation but also in actual fact. When death is near he says with Paul: "Through the outward man perish the inward man is renewed day by day." "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." "I am now ready to be departed and to be with Christ which is far better." "I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing." He looks not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal; having his treasure in heaven and his heart there also, his feelings are beautifully expressed by the poet:—"Rise my soul and stretch thy wings thy better portion trace, Rise from transitory things, towards heaven thy native place; Sun and moon and stars decay, time shall soon this earth remove, Rise my soul and haste away to seats prepared above. Rivers to the ocean run, nor stray in all their course, Fire ascending seeks the sun, both speed them to their source; So the soul that's born of God, pants to view His glorious face, Upward tends to His abode, to rest in His embrace."

The pages of well attested Christian biography and history inform us that many deaths of believers have been welcomed as the call of the beloved to the bride, as the grasping of the crown and the wreathing of the laurel; faltering tongues have eloquently discoursed of Jesus' love; trembling hands have firmly clasped the cross with exulting joy; countenances overspread with the pallor of death have been lighted up with the radiance of heaven, and the loftiest ascriptions of praise have been uttered by voices already feeble and indistinct with approaching dissolution. In the valley of the shadow of death the Holy Ghost has put the final and completing touches to the image of Christ, the last remains of sin have seemed to dissolve, and heaven itself to have come down to earth." But this is not all. The bodies of believers being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection, and at the resurrection believers being raised up in glory shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

But why is it that what is such a source of terror to others is made the occasion of joy and triumph to the believer? Let us to some extent answer this question by considering in the next place why the believer thus triumphs.

When we see the long line of railway coaches travelling rapidly across the country and even climbing the Rocky Mountains we know that it is not because of any power of motion inherent in these coaches themselves, or even in the locomotive to which they are attached, but that it is because heat has been applied and steam generated and utilized that they thus triumph over space and distance and the power of gravity, so when we see the children of God (as we surely do, for God has had many witnesses in past ages as well as now to the support and console in the hour of death) triumphing over the fear of death we know that it is not because of anything inherent in themselves, but because of the life and power of Christ their living Head that they thus journey on in triumph even through the valley of the shadow of death, through the swells of Jordan, and reach the shores of Immanuel's Land, the heavenly plains and the celestial city upon which their hearts are set; we know that it is because the Divine life flows through their souls that they are animated with heavenly valor, and even when Death draws his keen and glittering sword stained with the blood of countless millions and severs soul and body with his stroke, are enabled to exclaim: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall arise, when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me." Seeing by the eye of faith Him who is invisible, knowing that the eternal God is their refuge, and hearing Jesus who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel saying: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine," they can bless God and say not only without any fear, but with heavenly joy filling their souls: "Lord now leavest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," "yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

But I am sure we must feel that any inquiry into the cause of the believer's triumph over death and the grave falls very short of the chief point of interest, and gives an utterly imperfect and inadequate view of it which does not recognize and set in the foreground the atonement of Christ, and which does not place in a position which nothing else can have even a remote claim to occupy, the sacrifice of sin the cause of death, by the obedience suffer-

ings and death in human nature of God's own eternal Son. Even as, when we look for the cause of death we find it to be sin, for we are told in Rom. 5:12, "that by one man sin, entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned," so when we look for the cause of man's triumph over death we find it in the gracious and unquestionable fact that Jesus Christ has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, we find it in the finished work, the perfect righteousness, the all-prevailing intercession and power of the Lord Jesus Christ and in these alone. "Christ is risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."

God commanded Adam "Thou shalt not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam disobeyed God and died spiritually that moment, and became liable to temporal and eternal death. Thus death entered our world through sin, and as we see generation after generation of mankind for nearly six thousand years go down into the grave, and look at the myriads of church yards filled with their grassy mounds and ask who hath slain all these? The answer is *sin*. But the divinely appointed Savior has finished transgression and made an end of sin, has yielded a perfect obedience to God's holy law and redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us, and thus by removing sin the cause of death has also removed death in its spiritual and penal forms; for those who believe in Him He has quickened, and raised into newness of life, even those who were dead in trespasses and sins, and has changed temporal death from an enemy into a friend, made it His own servant to carry out His wise, good, and holy purposes, even the messenger of peace which calls the soul to heaven.

And further than this, and what the apostle would especially emphasize here, Christ shall reign until He has put all enemies under His feet, and has fully destroyed death, the last enemy. "Those bodies that corrupted fell, Shall uncorrupted rise, And mortal forms shall spring to life Immortal in the skies,"

for "Christ shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then those which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

And now, if sin is the cause of death and all our woes both here and hereafter, and dying in our sins we shall have no part in the first resurrection but shall perish forever, and if Jesus has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, has taken away the sting of death by His own blood, and gained the victory over the grave, surely it is not wise to delay for a single moment to come to Jesus, that His blood may cleanse us from all sin, and His Spirit purify our hearts, that we may hate sin and love holiness, and become more and more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light so that when death calls us away from this world we may hear in it a voice saying: "Come up higher," and may depart with joy to be forever with the Lord, and looking forward to the glorious resurrection morning may exclaim in triumphant gladness: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

And let the thought that the dead in Christ are not lost but gone before, that when their earthly house of this tabernacle was dissolved they had a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, and that for them to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord in fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore, cheer and comfort the bereaved; let them hear a voice from heaven saying unto them: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them."

And oh, let us all listen to this voice of God in His providence saying unto us: "Prepare to meet thy God." "Be ye think not for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." What is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time then vanisheth away. " whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest."

It has pleased God in His all-wise and mysterious providence to remove our brother, the late Mr. Alexander McRobb, from our church fellowship by death. We have good reason to believe that he has gone from the church militant to the church triumphant, that for him to die was gain. During nearly fourteen years he occupied a position of honor, responsibility, and usefulness in this church as an elder, the duties of which office he fulfilled with humility, earnestness, and fidelity so far as his state of health permitted him. At intervals during the last two years his sufferings were more than ordinarily keen and oppressive, but he endured them in patient submission to the will of God, and no words of murmuring were heard from his lips. Some two or three weeks before his death he said if it were the will

of God he would like to be released from his pain. During one of my visits he repeated the fifth hymn in the collection at the end of the Paraphrases, beginning with:—"The hour of my departure's come, I hear the voice that calls me home; At last, O Lord! let trouble cease, And let thy servant die in peace."

And he especially emphasized the third verse as setting forth the ground of his faith and hope:—"Not in mine innocence I trust, I bow before Thee in the dust, And through my Savior's blood alone, I look for mercy at Thy throne."

Need we wonder then, that he had a peaceful and triumphant death, and that the light of heaven shone around him in his last hours? Oh, let us all follow through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises, and then when we leave this scene of sorrow, suffering, and death we shall go home to everlasting happiness and peace among all the redeemed of the Lord who are before His throne and serve Him day and night in His temple: "Who shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "For the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, and they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

"It is not death to die, To leave this weary road, And midst the brotherhood on high To be at home with God.

It is not death to close The eye long dimmed with tears, And wake in glorious repose To spend eternal years.

It is not death to bear The wrench that sets us free, From dungeon chain, to breathe the air Of boundless liberty.

It is not death to fling Aside this sinful dust, And rise on strong, exulting wing, To live among the just.

Jesus, Thou Prince of life! Thy chosen cannot die, Like Thee, they conquer in the strife To reign with Thee on high."

May we all thus conquer and reign with Jesus. Amen.

From Manitoba.

DEAR SIR:—Having friends and acquaintances in Atwood and vicinity I have been requested to write a letter to THE BEE. I don't pretend to be a journalist but will endeavor to give a bit of my experience in the "prairie province." THE BEE has made its appearance in Manitoba and we are greatly pleased with it. I have been in Manitoba for the past three years, and have some experience with the much dreaded winters, and although being much exposed I have not suffered much from the effects of the cold. Your nose comes in contact with Jack Frost occasionally, nevertheless, I prefer the Manitoba climate to that of North Perth. We wear lace shoes through our wet seasons, we do not have any mud, the snow falls on the dust in the fall, then it freezes all winter. I wear moccasins from about Dec. 1st until the spring opens, excepting when I go to church. There has not been much of a thaw so far this winter, a few days mild. We have had it as cold as 50 below zero. The Indians predict a good wheat year for 1890. I have seen three grades of crop: that of 1887 extra good, 1888 heavy, but 1889 light, frosted, and gopher-eaten. We hear that it is reported in Ontario that we live on gophers; those who think so had better come and see the dead they produce, but we are thankful that we have something better. Unless the spring opens early feed will be very scarce; however, one thing in our favor, the prairie grass did not get burned last fall, so that the cattle can live as soon as the snow is gone. Hay and oats are scarce; corn is being shipped from the States which is a great boon to those who have to buy feed. We are glad to hear that Atwood is prospering and business booming. We see Hartney looming up in the distance, the C. P. R. have their road graded, and we expect to see the iron horse steaming its early next summer. One store is built already. A prospecting party of the N. P. R. R. passed through our neighborhood and report favorably. If you have any surplus inhabitants in and around Atwood there are two classes much needed here: good, honest farmers to settle, and last, but not least, marriageable ladies to make happy the bachelor homes. I might write about churches, schools, &c., but I forbear at present.

I am, yours &c., R. S. TURNBULL.

Hartney, March 16, 1890.

The number of hotel licenses granted in Huron Co. last year, was: East Riding, 26; West and South Riding, 41 each; a total of 108. The number of shop licenses was 11. The number of hotel licenses issued in 1875 was 164, and shop licenses 37. The fines collected were as follows:—East Huron, \$50; South Huron, \$1; West Huron, \$410.