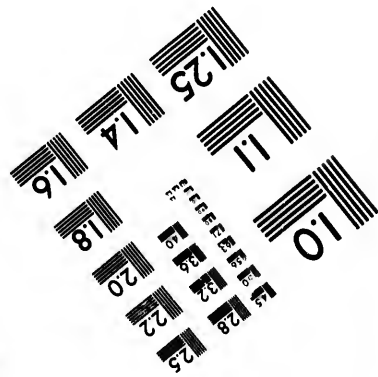
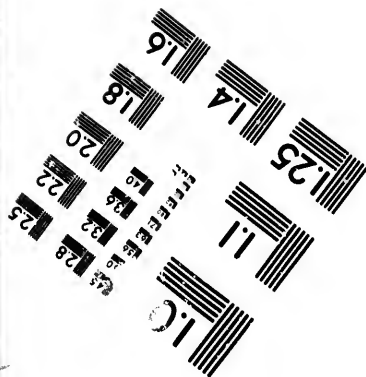
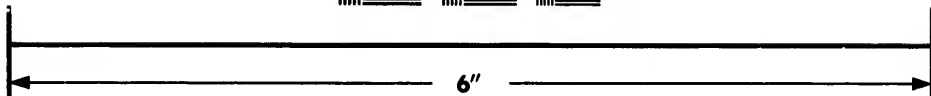
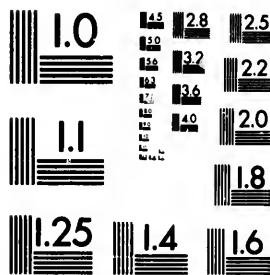


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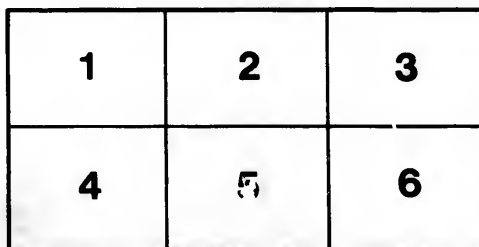
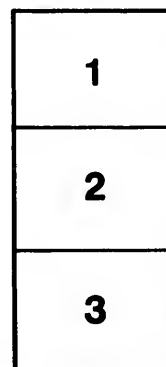
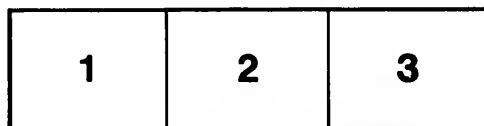
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SERMON;

PREACHED IN THE

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION,

HAMILTON, ONT., CANADA,

ON THE 3RD OF JULY, 1870, THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING THE DAY OF THE LAMENTABLE
YACHT ACCIDENT, BY WHICH THE THREE CHILDREN,

AMY FLORENCE, CONSTANCE ADA, AND IRENE AUGUSTA MARGARET
DONALDA, DAUGHTERS OF THOS. SWINYARD, Esq.,
LOST THEIR LIVES.

BY THE

REV. JOHN HEBDEN, M. A., T. C. D.,

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CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION RECTORY,
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July 12th, 1870.

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

1ST PETER I, 24, 25.

These, my brethren, are solemn and touching words—words, the truth of which it requires no effort of faith to receive; it comes enforced by a too sad and universal experience.

But it is one thing to admit that a particular statement is true: and it is quite another to *act* upon the truth acknowledged. It is upon the lips of every man to confess that all are mortal—it is not every one, who makes the acknowledgment, that *lives* it. This last the Apostle did:—and he holds himself before us as an example to imitate, in so far as his walk was approved by Him, whom we profess to follow for our Lord and Master: "Be ye "followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." And, writing to the Church in Corinth, the Apostle tells them, that he never suffered the truth of his mortal condition to

slip from his memory, or to fail in solemnizing his daily life. "I die," saith he, "daily;" that is, as if he had said, "I live as one, who, not knowing what a day, or an hour may bring forth, believes that each passing moment may be my last. I place ever before my mind my death, as the subject of my solemn and sobering meditations." Pressing this awful truth on the attention of universal man, the Scripture asks: "What is your life?" and itself gives back the suggestive answer: "It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Death is the goal, which all must reach—for saith the same infallible word, "It is appointed unto men once to die." Towards that goal, all, willing or unwilling, are hastening onward. We cannot evade or decline *this* race, "that is set before us." Time forces us along the appointed course: and it is short at the longest; for, "Man is as a flower of the field: for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."

Strange, when we think of the issues, which hang upon death, and which death forever determines, that we should even for a moment forget, that we are mortal—sad reminder as death is, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But surrounded as we are with living objects,—encompassed on all sides with life,—the dead removed from our sight,—we forget the truth of our own mortality, until by, it may be, some sudden shock—by some melancholy and impressive dispensation, God Himself, in grace and mercy, points, as with His own finger, to the record He has written, and which tells us, that "in the midst of life we are in death!" May a deep conviction of the fleeting nature of everything, that is of the earthly, be indelibly impressed upon our souls: and may the conviction be so blessed to us, by the influence of The Holy Spirit, that we may be led to "set our

"affections on things above, and not on things on the
"earth."

The Apostle states of human, earthly life, that it is "as
"grass,"—"all flesh is as grass." Not because of its green-
ness; but of its evanescent, short-lived, character. It
springs up rapidly, and matures quickly to the mower's
hand. Our children are newly born: we note not the
soft, swift flight of time: and we find the babe of yester-
day verging on maturity. The maiden and youth of to-
day, looking with bright anticipation on life, coloured
with its rosy hues, are soon the aged woman and man—
the glory of their day has faded, and the dusky shadows
of night are drawing on apace, and sombering their sky
—for "all flesh is as grass:" "in the morning it is
"green; but in the evening, it is cut down, and withered."
Patient and uncomplaining Job took wise heed of the
rapidly-passing character of time;—"My days," said he,
"are swifter than a post. They are [passed away as] the
"swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey."
The trustful Prophet, to whom were revealed the gracious
purposes of God in the future, and whose faith in the sta-
bility of the Divine promises was unsurpassed, yet
looked mournfully on the perishing, passing character of
earthly life;—"We all do fade as a leaf; and our iniqui-
"ties, like the wind, have taken us away."

Brethren, all do not realize, and live as those who
realized, that life,—human, earthly life,—is thus short.
The truth is not an agreeable one—the thought of it is
painful: and, therefore, it is turned from; and the con-
sequence is, that a contemplation, which our gracious
and heavenly Father designs that we should entertain, is
studiously avoided; and a means not employed, which
conduces greatly to man's spiritual improvement. He
succeeds in pushing aside the truth, that meets him
hourly, and which tells him that death is at hand; and he

learns not the salutary lesson, which it is intended he should receive.

"All flesh is as grass." The tender bud, the opening flower, the withered blossom, promiscuously lie low beneath the wide sweep of Death's fatal scythe.

Infancy's sinless eyes are sealed at the touch of death's chilly fingers. Its restless life is quieted—it has become still and motionless under death's icy touch. The beauty and vigor of youth pass away beneath the blighting power of death. Its bloom passes from the cheek—its light from the eye—its activity from the limb. Manhood confesses the uncontrolled sway of death. The hand forgets its cunning—the brain its power of thought—the frame its strength. And age, forewarned by decay, is confessed to be the legitimate prey of death.

And, if in every instance death is solemn and affecting, more sad and affecting than another is the death of the youthful. The period of infancy is that, in which life is surrounded with many and peculiar dangers—counteracted no doubt by many and special providences.* Each day of infant life brings with it its attendant perils, compelling us to hold it with very relaxed hand. We feel that our tenure of it is uncertain: and, when our infant children are taken from us, it is with a consciousness, that we had never dared to call them our own.

Age has lived its allotted span. Three score years and ten are reached by the good providence of God: and then we wait, in constant and patient expectation of our change. Days are a labor, and nights are a weariness; and the tired spirit longs to be at rest. Our powers fail; and weary nature would seek its long repose.

But every affecting circumstance gathers around the death of the young. All the bright associations of life love to cluster about them; and give a charm and delight to their existence. There is no cloud in their sky—their whole being is bathed in brightness and beauty. They are

*Matt. xviii, 10.

the light and pride of home,—they are the joy and boast of friends. Alas, Brethren, when this light is quenched, how profound the darkness! When youthful voices are for ever hushed, how deep and oppressive the silence!

How has not God brought home, but now, to every one of us the truth of His own words,—“all flesh is as grass,” that, “in the midst of life we are in death?” One short week since, and they, whom death has snatched from our midst, sat in this, God’s House, as you sit in it to-day. One more day,—and three young lives, made bright and happy by the most tender parental solicitude and affection, and reflecting back that light again within their joyous home, pass away from earth, and from the worship of the Church below, to Heaven and to the worship of the Church above. We must not speak of this otherwise than of a deep and heavy affliction, which casts a dark and heavy shadow over a sorrowing home! Man must needs be silent, in the presence of such a grief, as follows upon the parting with those, in whom the bereaved’s own life was entwined.

Long years of happy existence had doubtless been anticipated—bright hopes were bound up with the loved ones. Reason teaches, and Nature expects, that, when God’s messenger shall come, it will be to take ourselves, the older, hence: and we picture to our mind our children, gathered around our dying bed to receive our last words of advice, of affection and of blessing. The messenger’s speedy approach has been anticipated; and when he comes, he is not unwelcome. We are prepared for the summons, which the dark-winged angel softly whispers:—“The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” *Faith* has little to do here—all is, as it were, *sight*. It is the natural termination of earthly life—its purpose has been fulfilled—the work allotted has been completed—the energy and power necessary, in order to do more, are expended; for — “man goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the

"*evening*"—his hour of repose has arrived; and he gladly enters into his fully earned, and longed for rest.

But it is altogether faith, and in no respect sight, when life is cut off in its opening bloom and strength. It has been carefully guarded, and led on up to that period, when God's purpose, with His bright, good, and intelligent creature, is soon apparently to take its full form and shape. The instrument is well adjusted to, and nearly fitted for, its destined work; and then it is for ever, and as if causelessly, put aside. The healthy, vigorous, and beautiful plant has been watched, and nursed, and tended, by God's good and loving providence, up to the very moment of the sweet flower's unfolding itself in its full beauty, to delight and to charm: and the hand that reared and trained, and the mind that matured and cultivated, stop their work at the very critical moment of success; and the all but perfected plant is seemingly allowed to perish. There is no gradual decay—there is no insidious canker of disease—there is no approach of sickness, to intimate the approach of danger—no gradual decline to soften the blow—no ailment, presaging the possible approach of death—no suffering, weaning the heart to submit to what is coming, contenting it to bear its burden of sorrow and bereavement, if only the loved one may pass from pain, and the weary one find its rest. Yes! Often, when God's "paths are through the great waters, His footsteps are not known." *He is there*—but the eye cannot see Him. Faith alone can discern Him.

God has made Himself known to us—and faith, taking hold of His word, bows with lowly submission, recognizing His hand, and confessing, that whatsoever He doeth, He doeth wisely and well: and looking up with meek and tearful eye acknowledges His loving correction;—"Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." Faith takes hold upon the gracious revelation, that no single sparrow falleth to the ground forgotten by our Father

in Heaven—that no one hair of our head is unnumbered by Him: and, therefore, when to sight everything is dark and confused, and enveloped in impenetrable cloud, the eye of faith can see clearly; and the ear of faith can distinctly hear the still small voice, that saith:—“When thou “passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and “through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. . . . “for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy “Saviour.”

Oh! blessed Revelation, which shineth as a light in a dark place! Oh! blessed grace of faith, which strengthens the bowed and the weak to walk patiently along the road marked out for them by their Father in Heaven! Oh! blessed Throne of grace, to which the tried are exhorted to come with confidence, in their time of need; assured of the required help, from the great sympathizing High Priest! Oh! blessed experience of the Psalmist—(may it be realized abundantly this day by the heavy-laden amongst us,)—“in the multitude of the sorrows, that I had “in my heart, Thy comforts have refreshed my soul.”

Yes, Brethren, there are sorrows, which human aid however ready, and however rendered, is powerless to relieve. Profound sympathy cannot lighten it,—she feels that she must stand aside, yearning, but unable, to help. Such the sorrow, under which friends, well-known to all present, now suffer. Wide-spread and universal the sympathy felt for them, in this their hour of heavy affliction—in the calamity, by which their home has been made desolate. The language of one humble person, who spoke of the sad occurrence, may be taken as expressive of the feeling of all:—“I do not know the family—I am not aware that I “ever saw a member of it: but, oh! my heart bleeds for “them.” Personal friends, it is true, may feel more acutely; they cannot feel more sincerely. And if it be possible, that a true, earnest and profound sympathy, flowing forth from the common heart of the community,

can alleviate, by ever so little, the burden of the anguished, —can raise by a very little the weight that oppresses, then should we know, that at least that little relief was experienced.

May God's richest consolations be poured into the lacerated hearts! May the troubled feel in its fullness the truth of the Scripture:—"Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." And may the bereaved reap the blessed fruit of a patient and faithful submission;—"Thy right hand shall hold me up; and Thy loving correction shall make me great."

Let us one and all, realize in a practical manner, that life—earthly life—is held by a most uncertain tenure. We have been taught the lesson, that, as the matured and aged are not to presume on a long continuance of life; so the youthful must not count on length of days. The Apostle, as I have said, shaped his human life by the wise rule:—"I die daily." With similar meaning, the psalmist made the confession:—"My times are in Thy hands." Life is here represented, as governed by the abiding conviction of the uncertainty of human, mundane, existence—the heart, as reposing upon God the Lord, as the good and loving arbiter of the destinies of man—the mind, as accepting the Divine will, as that to which it is wise and best to conform. God's redeemed creature living in a state of constant preparedness for the last call, whenever that call may come.

Oh! that the truth of the uncertainty and shortness of life were more generally received—more indelibly impressed on the memory, and the heart of all!

Let us also learn from the sad event, which has so deeply stirred us, that our condition is that of sin. No sin—no death. The guilt of sin imputed to the guileless and innocent. Death falling upon those, who had "not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." The infant of days, sinking under the power of death, equally

with the intelligent, responsible, willful transgressor. Be not indifferent and unconcerned about a state of sin. A state of sin means a state of alienation towards God. Watch, Brethren, with the utmost possible care, the symptoms—the motions of mind—the inclinations,—which give their testimony to the fact, that the heart is not yet friendly towards God: which tend to show, that the feelings and desires, by which we are animated and actuated, do not accord with the mind and will of God—that they do not draw us to Him; that they lead us from Him. Watch most jealously those symptoms of the heart's alienation from the good, and great, and blessed Being. And fail not to accept, as the most infallible of truths, that where the heart is thus turned away from God, and His will and ways; *there* is that spiritual lifelessness, which keeps the soul and body ripe for the second death.

Learn something more, too, from recent events, than your condition—man's condition of sin:—The love of God for the sinner.

It was the loving voice of God Himself, intimating man's victory over death, through the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ for sin, which spoke to the parents, sorrowing for the loss of their beloved child:—"The maid is not dead, but *sleepeth*." "I go," spake Christ with a similar intent of meaning,—“I go to awake Lazarus out of *sleep*.” To that great and gracious work of Christ—undertaken and accomplished at the instance of the Father,—the Apostle points, when he, divinely inspired, thus writes:—“Brethren I would not have you ignorant concerning “them which are *asleep*, that ye sorrow not, even as others “which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died “and rose again, even so them also which *sleep* in, Jesus “will God bring with Him.”

Yes! God is loving unto every man, and His tender mercy is over all His works—pre-eminently over His last, greatest and chiefest work—*Man*.

Oh! Surely, God's blessed revelation is a challenge to us, that unbelief is now impossible—that now we cannot help but believe, that He has no other disposition towards us than that of *love*. "I will divide Him a portion with the great; and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." Help is given the helpless—upon the young and irresponsible, who have not willfully sinned "after the similitude of Adam's transgression," the merits of the Redeemer rest—unto them is the righteousness of Christ imputed—God has taken them under the terms of His covenant, and brought them under the bright shining of His favor; and they have passed from death unto life. Do we not owe Him, our Heavenly Father, the poor return of our gratitude for this His own graciously provided mercy? He calls our children to Him; and they are at rest!

May He draw us by means of them! May the undoubting faith, we have of *their* safety, lead us in penitence, faith, and love to Him. May it open our hearts, in perfect trust and confidence, to Him! And, above all, may the gracious gift of His only Begotten made to us, when we lay in darkness and in the shadow of death, give us that knowledge of Him, which shall make unbelief impossible—and irradiate the darkest cloud of life's sorrow, with the brightness and glory of Heaven itself. Then, Brethren, consolation will come—then shall we know, that separation from beloved ones is but for a time—that a meeting awaits us in that not distant future, where our reunion shall be for ever! And then, Brethren, shall we with fuller heart, because with riper knowledge, confess the goodness of our God and Saviour: and, as we look *once again* upon our beloved—then far brighter and more lovely, than when first we knew them—shall we from full heart join with them in the great song of the redeemed:—
 "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins
 "in *His own* blood, and hath made us kings and priests

"unto God and His Father; to him be glory and dominion
"for ever and ever. Amen."

The following Hymn, from the collection used in the Church of the Ascension, was sung on the occasion, when the foregoing Sermon was preached.

"My God, my Father, while I stray
Far from my home in life's rough way,
Oh teach me from my heart to say,
"Thy will be done!"

Though dark my path, and sad my lot,
Let me be still, and murmur not,
Or breathe the prayer divinely taught,
"Thy will be done!"

What though in lonely grief I sigh
For friends belov'd, no longer nigh,
Submissive still would I reply,
"Thy will be done!"

Though 'Thou hast call'd me to resign
What most I prized, it ne'er was mine,
I have but yielded what was Thine;
"Thy will be done!"

Should grief or sickness waste away
My life in premature decay,
My Father! still I strive to say,
"Thy will be done!"

Let but my fainting heart be blest
With Thy sweet Spirit for its guest,
My *God*, to Thee I leave the rest;
"Thy will be done!"

Renew my will from day to day;
Blend it with Thine, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say,
"Thy will be done!"

Then, when on earth I breathe no more,
The prayer, oft mix'd with tears before,
I'll sing upon a happier shore,
"Thy will be done!"

