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Denison, R. B.

(Broughall, Abraham J.)

A SERMON

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 1867.

IN

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, TORONTO;

ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEATH

OF

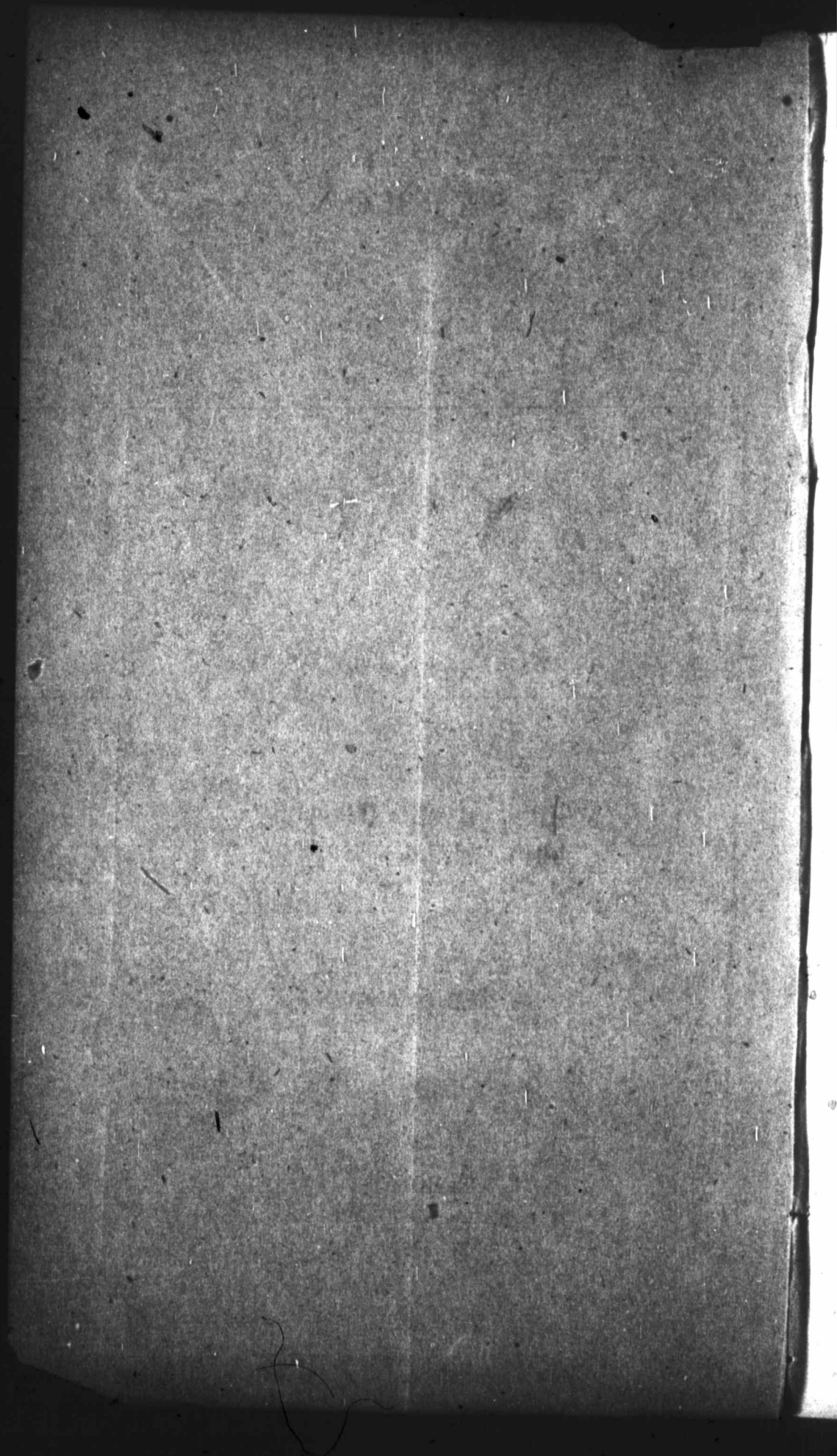
Mrs. R. B. Denison.

BY THE INCUMBENT.

TORONTO:

H. ROWSELL, KING STREET EAST.

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This Sermon is printed (for private circulation) at the request of a few friends of the deceased. May God bless its perusal to the eternal welfare of every one into whose hands it may fall; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A. J. B.

## S E R M O N .

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“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”—*Rev. xiv. 13.*

MOST blessed are these words to the Christian mourner, and blessed is the voice that uttered them. Although we are not told so by direct revelation, we may believe that it was the voice of Him who brought life and immortality to light, that sent and signified these words unto His servant John. From that glorious throne on which the Saviour is now seated, He saw fit to order that this consolatory truth should be put on record for the comfort of His afflicted servants during all future ages. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” Here is the precious assurance of our own Lord and Master that those loved ones whom God has taken from us, and who sleep in Jesus, are in a state of blessedness. It is their Saviour’s voice still addressed to the weeping mourners, bidding them ‘weep not,’ when the heart is filled with grief and

the eye dimmed with tears, and when the sorrow of separation and the sense of the greatness of the loss they have sustained, is all but overwhelming. It is the voice of Jesus Himself, bidding them look beyond the cold, dark grave, wherein they have laid the remains of departed friends, to that blessed home above, where their souls are with God in joy and felicity, and where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

The words are comprehensive in their scope. The angel had just mentioned the patience, or endurance, of God's holy ones. The mention of this endurance of the saints brings with it the certainty of persecution unto death; and the present proclamation declares the blessedness not only of these but of *all* God's faithful servants; not those only who die in persecution, but those also who die in any manner in the Lord.

Let us very briefly consider the words in detail. What is it "to die in the Lord?" and wherein does their blessedness consist who thus die? To die in the Lord is to die in the faith and obedience of the gospel. And this presupposes that the pious dead have lived in the Lord: they have walked with Him during life, and lived in His service, to His honour and glory. To them to live was Christ, and now they have found that to die was gain. Unlike those who have no hope and are without God in the world, the life they

lived in the flesh they lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them. They were one with Christ and Christ with them. Dedicated to His service in Holy Baptism, so soon as the nature of that service was known, they pledged themselves anew to serve Him faithfully unto their lives' end, answering gladly to the call of Christ, and seeking day by day to profit by His grace which was thus freely bestowed upon them. They believed on Him as the Son of God, and gave Him their trust and their love. They felt that the blood of Christ was cleansing them from all sin, and that as members of His body they were in very truth children of God, and "if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Their constant aim was to watch and pray, lest they should be overcome by temptation, and so that day should come upon them unawares. And through His mercy they were enabled to succeed in their holy endeavours. In Him they found a very present help in every time of need: His strength was made perfect in their weakness, and by His grace they were kept steadfast even unto the end. And thus when their Lord called them, they were ready to depart. As they had lived so they died, *in the Lord*; and now they are blessed.

This brings us to the next inquiry, "wherein does this blessedness consist?" Although they



have not yet their perfect consummation and bliss, the happiness of the faithful departed is unspeakably great. "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come." They are delivered from the burden of the flesh, released from the bondage of sin, and freed from the cares and anxieties of this life. But their blessedness is more than merely negative: thank God, it consists in positive bliss as well. They are now before the throne of God in the enjoyment of light and bliss ineffable. Though "absent from the body," they are "present with the Lord," they are "with Christ, which is far better." From the moment they have gone hence, they are strightway in Paradise: they neither perish nor pass into a place of torment, but are in repose and peaceful enjoyment. And from the glorious region wherein they dwell, as they look back upon the past, or watch the career of their dear ones left behind, they can trace the wisdom and justice of all God's dealings: "they know and see as here they loved to believe, that all things work together for good to them that love God." Here they saw through a glass darkly; they now see face to face: here they knew only in part, they now know even as they are known. There they join and mingle with their fellow-citizens of the household of faith, with the holy and the pure in heart, with patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, and the whole



company of "just men made perfect." There they enjoy sweet fellowship with "an innumerable company of angels," the spectators of their difficulties and trials on earth, who grieved for their infirmities and rejoiced over their repentance, and who at length carried them to Paradise to rest on the bosom of their Saviour. There they find no obstacle to the exercise of that love of God which was their heart's desire while here below. All barriers are removed, and they now love Him with a pure and everlasting love. In no respect does anything intermeddle with their joy, for "the former things are passed away." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." "*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." God the Holy Ghost adds *His* testimony to that of the voice from heaven. They are blessed in that they rest from their labours; they go hence that they may enjoy repose. As the sleep of a labouring man, who has toiled the live-long day, is sweet, so is the long rest of the faithful departed. The toils and hardships of their days on earth are past. The bitterness of heart that cast them down, the cares and perplexities of life, the pangs of disappointment, the sorrow for the unkindness

and ingratitude of men,—all these have ceased to affect them. They now enjoy a sweet, unbroken rest in the bosom of God's love, even the rest that remaineth unto the people of God. They are past all sorrow, and they are past all trial. Satan can tempt no more, the world cannot lure, self cannot betray, they have wrestled out the strife with the unseen power of evil and they have won the battle. There is no more inward struggle, no sliding back again, no danger of falling. The sin which here was the burden that oppressed them, no longer troubles, for it rolled to the earth, when they passed through the gate of death to the realms of glory, and gained the shore of eternal peace. "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours,"

"And their works do follow them." Works done form a part of the soul's character. They form a part of the white robe in which the deathless spirits are clad in Paradise, and which is "the righteousness of saints." Their works are not lost, but follow them in their effects even to the unseen world. The spirits of those who have departed hence in the Lord, as they pass the portals of the blessed, are attended by a retinue which clings close around them. It is the retinue of their good deeds. Having on earth been rich toward God, they now find that they have riches in heaven; that although they owe all to God's mercy, their

blessedness is made more blessed, in that their work and labour of love follows them to the very presence of the King of Kings, who welcomes them as the blessed of His Father and bids them inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

I need not tell you, my brethren, why it is that I have chosen this topic for our meditation this morning. One of our most estimable communicants has suddenly been called away, and her place here in this house of God shall know her no more. For the many years that I knew her, I can truly say that I valued her friendship most highly. I felt that hers was a Christian life, that her aim was to serve her God, and walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Her religious principles were deeply rooted, and in her heart she was sincerely devoted to Christ her Saviour. Like Him, it may with all humility be said, that she took delight in doing good. Many are the persons in this Parish who can for years testify to her kindness. According to her ability she was ever ready to aid the needy and to console the distressed. As she was most careful to instil sound religious principles into the minds of her own children, so the Sunday School found in her a warm friend and supporter. The Parish also found in her a zealous advocate of any scheme that was calculated to promote its true interests.

She was fond of her church, and fond of its services. Nothing save absolute necessity could keep her from her place in the house of prayer. Up to her strength, yea, and beyond her strength, she would be here; and when on other days besides the Lord's the services of the sanctuary were being offered, I felt that among the few, alas! who attended, she was sure to be found. Never would she neglect to partake of the Lord's Supper, whenever opportunity offered, and seek in this blessed ordinance that spiritual strength and refreshment which she felt she so much needed in the struggle against sin. I will content myself with speaking of her only as she was one of ourselves, without intruding into the privacy of domestic life, or officiously referring to matters of purely family concern. Like all God's children she had her sorrows and her trials. Often in her weariness did she long for peace and for rest, and look forward to that hour when the house of this earthly tabernacle should be dissolved, and she should be admitted to that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. At last the hour arrived; and calmly and quietly, though unexpectedly, she fell asleep, the sweetness of her expression betokening no doubt the blissful rest, which, through God's infinite mercy, she is now enjoying on her Saviour's breast. In her death, I will only add, I have lost a warm friend and an exemplary member of my flock.

And yet, brethren, painful as our losses are from time to time, we should not forget that,

“’Tis sweet, as year by year we lose  
Friends out of sight, in faith to muse  
How grows in Paradise our store.”

“Our loss is their gain.” And yet in view of eternity our loss is *our* gain also. They are safe in God’s keeping, awaiting the time when we shall follow them, that there may be no more parting, and we may be for ever with each other and for ever with the Lord.

“Far better they should sleep awhile  
Within the Church’s shade;  
Nor wake, until new heaven, new earth,  
Meet for their new immortal birth,  
For their abiding place he made,  
Than wander back to life, and lean  
On our frail love once more.”

And here let me beg of you all, by brethren, to turn this solemn occasion to good account; and while life is still spared you, do not neglect the great salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The time is short. In the midst of life we are in death: life is fleeting, and death is busy. Soon will your turn come; see to it, therefore, that you are prepared to go. Had any of *you* been called away, how do you wish that I should have been able to speak of you? If you desire to die in the Lord, strive to *live* in Him, and with Him, and for Him. Let your whole life bear the impress of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Seek Him, if you have not done so

already : seek Him in humble faith, and He will be found of you. Do not put off the search till to-morrow, which is not yours, and may never come ; but draw nigh at once to that merciful Saviour who invites all men to come to Him, and will in no wise cast out any that come.

Here is the blessedness of a holy life—it ensures a happy death and a joyful resurrection. Let us all, then, remember our Christian profession, that we which live should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. Let us associate ourselves more and more in heart and life with the cause of Christ, and look to Him for guidance and direction, making His life the pattern of our own, imitating His gentleness and humility, His self-denial and benevolence, His purity and love. Let us not strive to win the applause of men so much as to obtain the favour of our God, making His law the rule of our daily conduct, referring all to His will, and shrinking not even from suffering for His sake. Living thus in the faith and obedience of the Gospel, having our loins girt about and our lights burning, we shall be ready to take our departure to “the land that is very far off:” and whenever the signal is given, glad to obey the summons, we shall of His mercy be admitted into the Paradise of God. In a word, our end will be peace, we shall die in the Lord, and blessed will be our lot.