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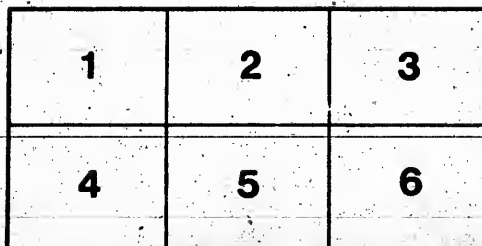
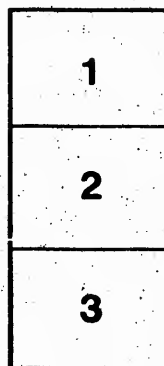
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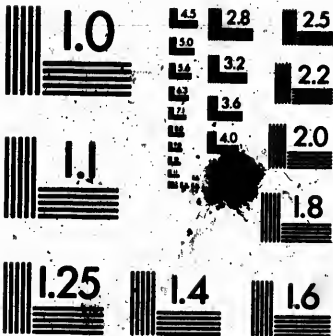
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In Memoriam.

SERMON

PREACHED BY

REV. A. B. CHAMBERS, L.L.B.,

Superintendent, Montreal District,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

DEATH OF

JOHN LOVELL CARSON,

FOR SEVERAL YEARS

AN EARNEST CHRISTIAN WORKER

IN THE

Sherbrooke St. Methodist Church,

MONTREAL.

DECEMBER, 1885.

*Presented to Rev. W. Galbraith L.L.B.
with the compliments of A.B.C.*

UNITED
ARCH

UNITED CHURCH

"He, being dead, yet speaketh."

HEBREWS 11: 4.

THESE words remind us of the immortality of a wise decision, a godly life, and the influences which spring therefrom.

From the text we learn that Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Its superiority consisted in this, that it proclaimed the consciousness of Abel's guilt, and the need of atonement. It foreshadowed, however dimly, the offering of the Lamb of God, and rested the hope of his salvation on the Seed of the Woman who should bruise the serpent's head.

God accepted his offering, and in return gave him the witness that he was righteous. Since then nearly sixty centuries have passed, and during all these years Abel has been speaking by his act and life of sin, atonement and assured righteousness. He did not cease to speak when his spirit passed from earth. Death is neither the annihilation of the soul nor the obliteration of influence. The good that men do lives after them. Their loved ones may cherish their memory, and the oft told story of their faith and their triumphs comes down from generation to generation to bless the world. This briefly stated is the meaning of my text.

In the death of Brother John Lovell Carson, this church has sustained what seems to be an almost irreparable loss; a loss which so far as we are concerned can only be, in any degree, mitigated by perpetuating his memory and influence in our midst. In this the text which I have announced in your hearing may aid us. I have just said that death is

neither the annihilation of the spirit, nor the obliteration of influence. The soul of our departed brother lives in the enjoyment of liberty and splendour which it could never have known while hampered by the frail body which for thirty-three years held it. And now that he has gone from our midst, his beautiful life, his benign influence and triumphant death speak to us, and shall continue to speak to generations yet unborn. Let us endeavour to gather up, and treasure in our memories some of the lessons of his life and death.

He being dead speaks to us:—

I. OF THE INESTIMABLE VALUE OF A GODLY PARENTAGE.

Our deceased brother was the son of a man who, in the twenty-second year of his age, was soundly converted and fully-sanctified to God, and who, during his subsequent life, became eminent for piety. There are many in our city still, who remember Mr. Hugh Carson as an esteemed class leader and thoroughly devoted and successful missionary under the direction of the St. James Street Methodist Church. This man of God was the father of our deceased brother. He was also blessed with a pious mother, who in his earliest infancy consecrated him to God. For six years these pious parents watched over the religious development of their son and succeeded in giving him that bias towards a holy life, which early led him to Christ.

When the child was only six years of age, the father passed to his reward, but he had left his impression on his son, and his influence continued with him to the end. The pious mother was spared, and with an ambition for her son's salvation which surpassed every other, she watched over him in childhood, boyhood, and manhood, until in her old age, with trembling form and bleeding heart, she saw his eyes close in death.

In deriving his birth from these Christian parents our sainted brother got a good start towards the heaven into which his triumphant spirit has passed. The man who was

born in a costly mansion, with only the surroundings of worldly wealth and refinement, has much for which to be thankful, but the man whose parents were truly pious has much more on account of which to be grateful, even though like the world's redeemer, his birth took place in a manger. Through all his life, our sainted brother proclaimed the inestimable value of a pious parentage.

II. HE, BEING DEAD, YET SPEAKETH OF THE POSSIBILITY OF GENUINE CONVERSION TO GOD BEING EFFECTED IN EARLY CHILDHOOD.

I desire to emphasize this point, for there are many still who seem to doubt this, and many in the church who still seem indifferent to it. We look with intense interest at a man in the agony of repentance, seeking to exercise saving faith in God, but, too often, shame on us, we treat the child's tears of penitence as being of little importance. I say, the hope of the world lies in the conversion of childhood. And lightly as some may esteem it, there are thousands in the church on earth to-day, and tens of thousands in heaven, who can attest the glorious possibility of early conversion. Among the latter, our departed brother bears his testimony and the record speaks to us. While the laughter of childhood was still in his heart, and the dew of childhood on his brow, at the tender age of twelve years he felt himself a sinner against the God of his sainted father. The weight of that guilt oppressed him. He saw that without Christ, life in its brightest hours would be but darkness, and in its darkest hours would be blackness. He saw that Christ had redeemed him by blood Divine, and then with calm and deep conviction, in penitence and faith, he consecrated his life to God. Perhaps some smiled incredulously as they saw the little boy bend his curl-covered head at the altar of prayer. Perhaps, as they heard his sobs, some said "It is only a child's emotion, which will pass away like the early dew;" but, thank God, it did not pass. Like the son of Hannah for whom his mother prayed, like the good King

Josiah, like Timothy who knew the Scriptures from his youth, our brother lived to witness a good confession, and proclaim the genuineness of early conversion. Let fathers and mothers, let Sabbath-School teachers, let the whole Church live and labour to bring the children to Christ in their youth. Bring them to Christ before their hearts become hardened, their minds polluted, and the world binds them with her fetters. Gather the children into the church, that from youth to age they may live to glorify God, and lead others to the Cross of our redeeming Lord.

III. BEING DEAD HE SPEAKS TO US OF THE SUPERIOR PLEASURE WHICH RELIGION AFFORDS IN EARLY MANHOOD.

It is as natural for youth to seek pleasure as it is to breathe. As we grow older we are prone to forget this. Sometimes we look on the sports and frolics and pastimes of youth as being extravagant, unnecessary and restrainable nonsense. This, in my opinion, is a severe and false judgment. As well restrain the leaping, bounding joyfulness of lambkins in their springtime pastures, as forbid the manifestation of the exuberant and ever increasing tide of vitality in young manhood. But true religion can temper these manifestations and make them rational. This, and only this, will show the folly of developing the animal nature at the expense of the intellectual, and teach that the soul is of more value than the body; and while imparting these lessons, instead of lessening, it will enhance the pleasures of youth. In this spirit, football, cricket and lacrosse may become means of grace, by casting off effete accumulations, and giving healthful play to a sound mind in a sound body. This was the spirit which characterized the young manhood of our departed brother. He was no recluse. He could engage with avidity in innocent boyish pastimes and manly sports. Carrying his religion with him into all that was innocent, he avoided the profane and licentious, and often rising entirely above the so-called pleasures of life, he found superior

pleasure in communion with God, or in seeking to lead others to his beloved Redeemer. While many of his young companions sought their happiness in the ball room, at the card table, or in the convivialities of life, brother Carson found that religion's ways are ways of pleasantness, that all her paths are peace. His daily life was a contradiction of the theory that religion mars any real pleasure of a young man's life. The luxury of doing good was his. His the exquisite pleasure of employing life to glorify God and make others happy.

IV. HE SPEAKS TO US OF THE ABILITY OF CHRIST TO KEEP THE HEART HAPPY AND THE MIND TRANQUIL, AMID THE ENTANGLEMENTS OF BUSINESS.

Some of you have, more than once, heard me express my sympathy with men in business. I have some knowledge of how they are perplexed by the overreaching and sharp practices of unscrupulous competitors; by unreasonable customers who seek to get honest goods at dishonest prices; by the dullness of trade and the thought of rapidly maturing obligations. I know something of all these things, and do not wonder that many business men grow nervous, irritable, and prematurely grey, or that they utterly break down before they have grown old.

I sympathize with business men. But when these men tell me that in view of all their entanglements they cannot be Christians, I do not believe it. When they tell me that it is impossible for a business man to be tranquil and happy, I do not believe it. I do not mean that these business men intend to tell the minister what they know to be false. Many of them are far too honourable and truthful for that. But they do not know the power of God's grace. They do not know how it is adapted to meet every condition and emergency in life. They do not know that when God said "My grace is sufficient for thee," he meant for the banker, the broker, the merchant, the clerk, the doctor, and the lawyer, as well as for the minister. I am glad to say, however, that

there are some exceptions to this ignorance, and our sainted brother was one of them. He found the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ sufficient to keep his spirit and temper unruffled in the midst of irritating circumstances, such as are common to all business life. Never rich, he passed through days which were especially trying. A few years ago fire wrapped the old home in St. Johns, and swept away his business and his prospect of support for himself and his aged, widowed mother; but it did not break his spirit, or shake his faith. He had committed himself and his business to God, and he knew how to praise God when he sent prosperity, and to trust him in seeming adversity.

Religion enabled him to make his store a meeting place with God, and strengthened him to speak a word for Christ to many a casual caller; while not a few who came only to make some trifling purchase heard from his lips of the pearl of great price. Men of business, when you are arguing that one in your station cannot be a Christian, do not look for proof to the weakness of your own purpose. Do not look to those almost worse than half-hearted Christians, who, on Monday mornings, leave their religion at home in their Sunday costumes. No, look to the almighty power of God, and to such illustrations as our lamented brother afforded. His was not an isolated case, and what religion did for him, it is able to do for you.

V. BEING DEAD, HE SPEAKS TO US OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF RELIGION DURING A SEVERE AND PROLONGED ILLNESS.

It is known to many of you, that for a year and a half, our dear friend was under the hand of affliction. Day after day during eighteen months, with only occasional interruptions, he saw and felt himself sinking—steadily sinking. Do not imagine that this was no trial to him. He had not been human if the thought of failing health had not grieved him. He had been less than human if the prospect of leaving the wife whom he loved with the pure and intense affection of a most devoted husband, and the little children who

were bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, had not made his heart groan with unutterable anguish. He had been an ungrateful son had he failed to pity the mother who in his infancy pressed him to her heart, and in his maturer years loved him as her first-born son, who so largely reproduced the character of his sainted father, and who now, stricken with the infirmities of years, bent her trembling form over him, and baptized him with maternal tears. He had been wanting in fraternal feeling had he not been saddened at the prospect of separation from his only brother, the partner of his childish joys, and the sharer in the cares of his maturer years. And other loved ones there were, from whom it must have been hard to part. He had been worthy of no eulogy from this pulpit had he not regretted leaving this hallowed place where God had so often blessed him, and the souls for whom he had watched and prayed with the pious tenderness of an under-shepherd. Yes, that long affliction, with its gloomy prospects, was a trial which no human language can portray. It was a cup which he earnestly besought his heavenly Father to let pass from him. But religion sustained him. It saved him from murmuring and rebellion. It kept him patient. It filled him with joy. It enabled him to say "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

During nearly five months of the present year, while seeking health in a southern clime, and enduring suffering, the recital of which would make your hearts sick, his letters home were full of hope and Christ, and Christian sunshine.

In the month of August he visited Boston, and catching the spirit of those who believe that now, as in the days of His sojourn on earth, Christ heals by faith without human intervention, he cast himself wholly on the skill and power of the Great Physician. Never, I think, was faith less faltering; never was expectation more confident. This was the longest of the occasional interruptions in the consciousness of steady sinking to which I have referred. During this period his peace was deep as the ocean, his joy high as the

heavens. Then little by little the conviction was forced upon him that he had mistaken the will of God concerning him, or that his faith was imperfect. This was the darkest period in his illness. Confused, almost confounded, he asked, Is God unwilling to do for me what he has done for others? Have I been deceived? Is my faith imperfect? This to him was the hour and the power of darkness; but even then his faith in Christ as the Saviour of his soul remained unshaken. Then the night passed. Gloom and anxiety vanished. The glory of God's presence pervaded his whole being. With unbounded confidence he committed wife, children, mother, brother, loved ones and classmates to God, and longed to depart and be with Christ. Praise God for a religion that can sustain a man so blessedly in such an ordeal. Gold has no power to purchase such consolation. This is heaven's anodyne for suffering Christians, to which there is nothing comparable in all the laboratories of human science.

VI. Once more;—He speaks to us of the splendour of the Christian's death

At last the slow plague brought on the fatal hour. The hand of death was on his heart, the dew of death was on his brow. The scenes of earth were receding. Eternity was bursting on his vision. How did he endure the ordeal? Gloriously! His last written testimony and message, traced with a trembling hand, thirty minutes before that hand was cold in death, is worthy of being engraved on the heavens by an archangel's hand, using for letters the brightest constellations which shine on our world's darkness as he spells out the glorious message, "Have faith in God." Death had no terrors, its sting was gone, Christ was precious. The perfume of angelic pinions was in the chamber where the good man met his fate. The rod and staff were in his hands, he feared no evil. With Alfred Cookman he joined, in his heart, while his brother sang, "I am sweeping through the gates, washed in the blood of the Lamb." With Mrs. Vanalstyne he was "Safe in the arms of Jesus." With

Toplady he was hid in the Rock of Ages. Then he, "was not," for God had taken him. The eyes closed on the forms of earthly kindred, and opened to behold the spirit forms of the kindred in heaven. The ears deaf to the songs of earth, caught the sounds of the glad "new song," and the lips, sealed here, speedily attuned to seraph-music, joined in the anthem, "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 whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

God forbid that I should indulge in overdrawn eulogy, or use this sacred place simply to extol the dead. No, my eulogy is of Christ. I extol and give glory to Him whose free and superabounding grace made our departed brother what he was. Without the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, John L. Carson would have been a poor miserable sinner, and his life would have gone out in darkness. This grace is free for all. I only ask you to follow the departed, as he followed Christ. If you loved him you must love the Lord who saved him, more. When you think of him as being in heaven, and feel that heaven is richer and dearer to you, because his spirit is there—you must not fail to look above him to his Redeemer and yours, and as you gaze on the wounds He received for you,—as you behold in thought and faith the once blood-stained, but now glory coronated brow, you will be constrained with the psalmist to exclaim "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

My young friends, I commend to you the Saviour, who accepted our departed brother in his childhood. If you have not already given him your hearts, do so this night.

Young men, I commend to you the religion which made the young manhood of our friend happier than all the pleasures of earth could have done without Christ.

Men of business, I ask you to take genuine religion with you into your workshops, your stores and your offices, and learn by experience that it can keep you in perfect peace.

To those who are chief-mourners I cannot trust myself to speak at length. I will not say, don't weep. Nay, I would rather take my place among you and weep as my Master wept at the grave of His friend.

But I will say, do not murmur. Give place to no rebellious thought. Praise God for the life which He gave and which He has taken. Rejoice in your loved one's victory over death, and look forward to the reunion. Link by link the broken chain will be re-united. Soon, if faithful, you will all be "Forever with the Lord;" where "they 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."

Dear friends, when darkness wraps you, and disease wastes you, and death beats you, remember the Friend of our brother, who to every trusting soul says, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

In concluding permit me to say to each:—

"So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."



(From the "Christian Guardian," Wednesday, January 6th, 1886.)

John Lovell Carson,

In whom through a life of thirty-three years the great value and efficiency of divine grace was beautifully illustrated, departed this life at No. 12 Park Avenue, of the city of Montreal, the 30th November last. Bro. Carson was the son of Godly parents, and, as a blessing upon their efforts, was converted to God at the early age of twelve years. From this period his course was an eminently active and consistent one. He was ever ready to join in any Christian and benevolent enterprise that opened before him through others, or that could be thrust open by himself. Hence, he was prominent in the temperance cause, and in every department of labor to which our Church called him. The Methodist Church was to him, as to his father and mother, the object of intelligent and hearty choice; and, therefore, all her obligations and privileges were by him recognized, prized, and promptly assumed. He graduated in her Sabbath School from a scholar to the teacher, and thus to the superintendent. From his earliest Christian life he was a lover of the class-meetings, as of the other social and public means of grace peculiar to our Church. He became a class-leader and then a local preacher, in which latter office he not only filled those appointments which were made for him, but by cottage prayer-meetings, which in private houses he instituted and maintained, he went beyond the ordinary requirements of his office in promoting the cause of Christ—a cause in the love of which he grew, manifesting such in the increasing ardor and earnestness of his zeal.

He had a happy faculty of gathering many people around him, an influence which was felt not only within the church, but even beyond its immediate pale. By these he was highly esteemed and respected for his uprightness in life, and for his warm and loving spirit. His earlier religious life was spent in the town of St. Johns, but about five years ago he removed to Montreal, and entered into business in connection with Mr. Robert Miller, stationer, whose daughter he had married some three years previously. Mr. Miller was not only his father-in-law, but his uncle also, being the brother of his mother. On coming to Montreal he connected himself with the Sherbrooke Street Church, and at once entered on the actual duties of the Sabbath-school, the class-leader, the local-preacher, and of recording-steward.

Having received him when a babe from the hands of his parents, and dedicated him to God in baptism; having been his pastor for several years subsequently, and joined with him in many forms of Christian effort; having known him intimately as a son, as a brother, as a husband and a father; as a man of business in the public walks of life; as a private, and, for a number of years latterly, an official member of the Church—in a word, having known him from the earliest developments of his principles and talents to the day of his death, I can heartily join Mr. Chambers in the following very just and pertinent remarks which he uttered in his appropriate and impressive sermon in improving our brother's death:—

“In the death of Mr. Carson the Sherbrooke Street Church has sustained what would seem to be an irreparable loss—a loss which, so far as they were concerned, could only in a degree be mitigated by perpetuating his memory and influence in their midst. His beautiful life, his benign influence and his triumphant faith spoke to them, and would continue to speak through generations yet unborn.”

I will here give a fact which deserves a public record. Within about thirty minutes of his last pulsations, he

called for an album, and with tremulous hands, but in sufficient clearness of character, he wrote: "Have faith in God," and then almost immediately breathed his spirit up to God. The testimony given on the evening of the day of his death is also worthy of a place here. It is in the following words: "We, the members of the Official Board of the Sherbrooke Street Methodist Church, having learned of the death of our beloved brother, John L. Carson, desire to record the profound sorrow we feel on account of the loss this church has sustained by the removal from amongst us of a most faithful, efficient, earnest and devoted worker in the Lord's vineyard. But while painfully conscious of the almost irreparable loss we have sustained, his memory will linger with us as a benediction. We will recall with joy and thankfulness his earnest efforts in bringing souls to Christ in the Sabbath-school, in his class in the church, the readiness with which he gave testimony for the Master, and the record he leaves of a beautiful life."

JOHN BORLAND.



