

**CIHM  
Microfiche  
Series  
(Monographs)**

**ICMH  
Collection de  
microfiches  
(monographies)**



**Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques**

**© 1994**



The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

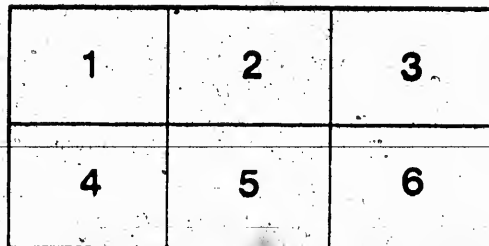
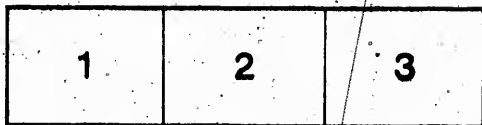
Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library,  
Baldwin Room

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol  $\blacktriangleright$  (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol  $\blacktriangledown$  (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

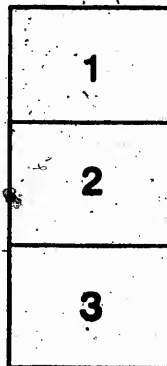
Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library,  
Baldwin Room

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole  $\blacktriangleright$  signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole  $\blacktriangledown$  signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



**APPLIED IMAGE Inc.**

1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482-0300 - Phone  
(716) 288-5989 - Fax

# THE DEATH OF ABNER:

## A SERMON.

Preached in the John St. Presbyterian Church,

BELLEVILLE, C. W.,

ON THE

MORNING OF SABBATH, 16<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, THE DAY FOLLOWING THE  
DEATH OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN AT WASHINGTON.

BY

Rev. Wm. McLAREN.

---

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

---

BELLEVILLE:

PRINTED AT THE "INDEPENDENT" OFFICE, BY JAMES T. BELL.  
1865.

2947

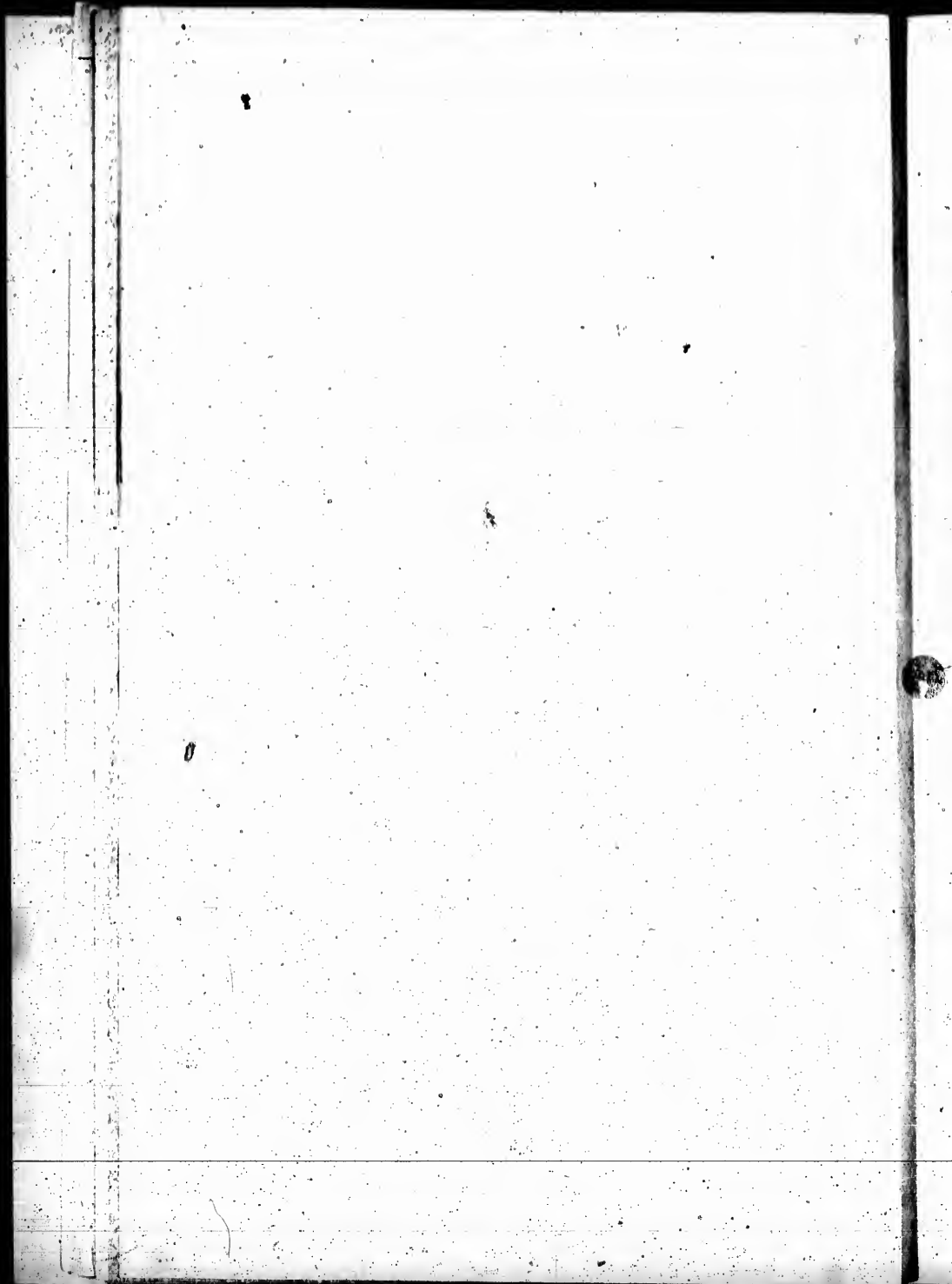
### PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following discourse was preached on the morning of Sabbath, 16th April, the day after the sad news of the assassination of President Lincoln at Washington, reached Canada. It would never have occurred to myself to give to the world thoughts so hastily thrown together, but a very general desire having been expressed by those who heard it, to see the discourse published, I have consented, more with a view of giving expression to the feelings of abhorrence which have been excited in every part of Canada by this deed, than from any intrinsic merit in the Sermon itself.

In revising the notes for the press, some changes have been made in the phraseology, and a few sentences have been added; but for the most part the discourse remains the same as when delivered.

W. McL.

*Belleville, 24th April, 1865.*





## THE DEATH OF ABNER.

---

2 Sam. iii. : 33-34. " And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: As a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again."

The event which occasioned these pathetic lamentations on the part of David, in which the people so heartily united, occurred at a very critical period in the history of Israel. After the death of Saul, the kingdom had been rent in twain, one part adhering to the house of Saul, and the other following the house of David. The North was arrayed in fratricidal war against the South, and the South against the North. The desolating contest had lengthened out from months into years, and threatened to become a war of extermination.

Now, however, in the good providence of God, a brighter day dawned on the land, and a door opened for the return of peace. This happy event seemed to depend largely on the life of Abner. That brave captain, who had been the support and strength of the house of Saul, stung by the ingratitude of his master, and moved, perhaps, in part, by his knowledge of the fact that the Lord had sworn to give the kingdom to the son of Jesse, made overtures to David to bring about the peaceful union of the whole nation under his sceptre. For this purpose, he had visited David at Hebron, and had met with that welcome which was due alike to his character, his position, and his mission.

Having perfected his league with David, Abner departed, to gather the tribes to Hebron, to instal him as King over the united nation. Scarcely, however, had he left the city, when Joab, the captain of David's host, returning from an expedition in which he had been engaged, was informed of the visit and peaceful departure of Abner. These tidings were as gall to his malignant nature. Revengeful

feelings had long rankled in the bosom of Joab towards the rival chieftain. His brother, Asahel, had for his own rashness and presumption been slain on the field of battle by the powerful arm of Abner. This Joab had not forgotten. And the fear of being superseded, under the new order of things, by his rival, may have given intensity to his revengeful feelings. Messengers were at once dispatched by him, who induced Abner to return to Hebron for a peaceful conference with Joab. Conscious of the rectitude of his own purposes, Abner confided in the integrity and honour of David's captain. In these circumstances, the meeting took place at the gate of the city, and in the midst of their friendly conversation Joab dealt the unsuspecting Abner the assassin's stab which brought him to an untimely grave.

Such was the event which made David and all the people weep.

In dwelling on our text, we may notice,

#### I.—THE IMPORT OF THE LAMENTATION.

When David in his impassioned lament asks: "Did Abner as a fool dieth?" he has respect to moral rather than to mental defect. The force of the question evidently is, Did he die as a wicked man, or a criminal who deserves his cruel end? The word *fool*, in Scripture, commonly carries with it the idea of wickedness. The *fool* who saith in his heart there is no God, is a man characterized not so much by mental imbecility, as by moral perversity. This use of the word is grounded in the profound truth which evil-doers will not believe, and which even good men are prone to forget, that all wickedness is, on its intellectual side, folly. It is a blunder as well as a crime. However much advantage it may promise, no permanent good can come of it, either for this world or for the next. It has in it the essential elements of rottenness, weakness, and disappointment. At first, like the drunkard's cup, it may seem pleasant to the eye and exhilarating to the taste, but "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." No cause can be permanently benefitted by outrage or wickedness, however cunningly devised or skillfully executed. Sooner or later sin will surely find its authors out

to their confusion, and "their violent dealings shall come down on their own pates." Living, as we do, under the government of a just and holy God, who can by no means clear the guilty, the transgressor will certainly discover when he stands at His bar, that sin is folly. He, who to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, or to gain a temporary advantage for a cause which he has espoused, plunges into vice or crime, will learn, when it is too late, that it is a law of God's moral government, illustrated in time and enforced through eternity, that "shame shall be the promotion of fools."

Had Abner "died as a fool," a deserved death, there had been little cause for such bitter lamentations on the part of the people. Such was not his end. Condemned criminals are carefully bound and fettered to prevent an escape. Not so Abner. "Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters," and yet thy death was more sudden and terrible than that of any malefactor. "As a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou." It was a cold-blooded and inexcusable murder. He did not even die by irregular justice summarily moted out by the wrath of men whom oppression has goaded to the verge of madness, but by the treacherous hand of the assassin, "who shed the blood of war in peace." (1 Kings, ii. : 5.)

## II.—THE CAUSE OF THIS GREAT LAMENTATION.

Why did David and all the people lament and weep for Abner? Other men might have fallen by the treacherous hand of the assassin, and only a narrow circle have felt the shock. Why is the whole nation now moved?

1. It was because a prince and a great man had fallen in Israel. V. 38.

Abner was not an ordinary man. His was one of those strong imperial natures formed to lead and command the masses. By his courage, fidelity, wisdom, and tact, he had been a tower of strength to his party. He was the only pilot who seemed capable of guiding the bark of state on a stormy sea, through the rocks and shoals of a dangerous navigation into a safe haven. Such a man is a treasure to any nation, and his removal no ordinary loss.

2. He was cut down at a most important crisis in the history of the nation, when engaged hopefully and suc-

cessfully in a great work which his death threatened to arrest.

His energies were now employed to effect a reunion of all the tribes of Israel under one stable and happy government. The work to which he had consecrated himself was to arrest the bloodshed of that fratricidal war which was sending desolation and mourning into so many homes in every part of the land, and to bring brethren to dwell together in unity. This benign work was now all but accomplished, when he on whom, under God, it seemed more than any other to depend, is suddenly struck down by the hand of an assassin. The circumstances of Abner's death were peculiarly fitted to beget among his followers feelings of bitter animosity towards the opposing party, which could not but greatly aggravate the difficulty of reconciliation. Nothing could well have happened more likely to postpone indefinitely the peace on which Abner had set his heart. His death at such a juncture was no ordinary calamity.

3. The manner of his death was such as to inspire all right thinking men with horror.

There is no crime from which the feelings and moral sense of a people enjoying the light of revelation, shrink with more instinctive horror than from the deed of the assassin. For a man to be struck down unwarned in the midst of his days, snatched away from the bosom of his family, and hurried into eternity by the stealthy stroke of one whom, it may be, he has treated with the kindness of a friend, is something against which all that is pure and honourable in our nature revolts. We loathe the meanness, while we abhor the wickedness of the dastardly act. It is one of those deeds which so shocks the moral sense of mankind, as to inspire a distrust of those principles of conscience and humanity which are the foundation of all security for social order and human life, and which render organized society possible.

In proportion as a nation is imbued with the spirit of revealed religion, will be its abhorrence of this foul deed. And very much in the measure in which the Christian revelation excels in clearness and fulness the Mosaic, is its felt influence in deterring from this crime. The immor-

talities of the soul, the judgment to come, the value and dignity of human nature, as exhibited in our redemption by the precious blood of Christ, and the importance of time in its relations to eternity, all conspire to present the assassin's act in a character of unrivalled atrocity.

We do not look for such crimes in a Christian land. And we have become so accustomed to our present immunity from the treacherous assaults of the assassin that we do not reflect on the source of our security. We forget that it is only where superstition has perverted revealed religion, where scepticism has shut out its light, or where debauchery has rendered men regardless of its sanctions, that such deeds can be done.

David and his people were not so low in the moral scale, as to be insensible of the atrocity of Joab's act. They could appreciate the vileness of treachery and the sanctity of human life, and therefore they wept at the grave of Abner.

4. His character should have shielded him from such a death.

He was as kind and generous as he was great. It is true he had caused the death of Asahel, Joab's brother, but that was on the open field of battle, and only after he had used the most kindly efforts to dissuade his rash antagonist from a single combat and to lead him to select a foe more nearly his equal. His wisdom and prudence demanded the respect, as his generosity challenged the esteem of all who could appreciate a worthy character. We search the history of Abner, in vain, for one ungenerous, cruel, or ignoble trait of character. Surely such a man might have been spared so terrible a death.

The news which yesterday morning was flashed over the land from Washington, exhibits a parallel in crime to that presented in our text, only marked with features of deeper atrocity. It is difficult to speak of this transaction as it deserves. It has already sent a thrill of horror from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Without even the poor excuse of private revenge, a plot was formed which was evidently designed to compass, by the assassin's hand, the death of the President of the neighbouring Republic, and of all the Heads of Departments in

his government. Happily foiled, as respects the majority of its intended victims, it has been only too successful in regard to the most loved and trusted of them all. Abraham Lincoln has fallen by the hand of the assassin! There are multitudes in other lands who have learned to love the departed President, almost as a personal friend; and still more who will abhor the means of his untimely end. What is to-day the voice of a weeping nation, will as swiftly as these tidings fly, become the voice of the Christian world. —“As a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou.”

We need express no opinion on the terrible and protracted contest with which this act is so closely connected. Intelligent men, looking on from without, may not find it very easy to sympathize entirely with either party; and in attempting to apportion the blame, may honestly differ. But whatever diversity of sentiment may obtain as to the unhappy war, which we fondly trust is now drawing to a close, there can be but one opinion of this deed of blood. It is one of those crimes to which, happily, the history of the world supplies few parallels. It makes us feel, as if the shadow on the world's dial had moved backwards. It carries us away to the dark days of French history. It recalls the blood of St. Bartholomew and Henry IV., and awakens us to the consciousness that crimes, which we had hoped were impossible, in Christian America, may still be perpetrated among us.

In this crisis of their history, the people of the United States, to whom we are bound by so many ties of blood, language, religion, and commerce, deserve, and I am sure will receive, our warmest sympathies.

*A great and a good man has fallen among them.* Rising from the ranks to the highest position in the land, by the force and integrity of his character, Abraham Lincoln has shown himself one of nature's nobility. His name is destined, we believe, to take a high place among the statesmen of the world. Firm, wise, consistent, honest, conciliatory, and generous even to a fault, yet inflexible in pursuing the unity of the nation, and, in subordination thereto, the freedom of the slave, he was eminently the man for the crisis in which the helm of state came into his hand. Shunning all appeals to the passions and pre-

judices of the ignorant against foreign powers, and all that state-craft which employs language to conceal thought, he carried his people along with him by the clear announcement, in transparent terms, of the purposes he had formed, and the reasons which guided him in the successive steps of his onward career. He was a tower of strength to the nation. The heart of the people safely trusted in him. The loss of such a man does not rank among the ordinary calamities of any nation.

*He was cut down at a most important crisis in the history of his country, when engaged, hopefully and successfully, in a great work, which his death threatens to arrest.* His wise and conciliatory hand seemed specially needed to guide the nation safely through its present difficulties. At the moment when the desired haven appeared in view, but ere the breakers were past, he, whose steady hand had held the helm in the storm, is struck down. It is hard to foresee the passions which may be aroused, and the complications and confusion which may spring from this calamitous event.

*The manner of his death* might well make even the most callous shudder. Death in any form is the king of terrors, but in this instance it was so terrible as to give special emphasis to the good old petition, "From sudden death, Good Lord deliver us." Without a moment's warning, and without even a parting word, he was hurried away from his friends, his children, and "the bosom friend, dearer than all."

It is pleasing, at such a moment, to recall the noble expressions of Christian sentiment and feeling which pervaded the short but memorable Message which he addressed to Congress at the commencement of his second Presidential term. Unlike the cold and formal recognitions of divine truth often seen in State documents, these were wrought into its very texture, and made the whole Message glow with the warmth and earnestness of a heart which had felt the power of the gospel.

But while this thought sheds a cheerful light over the grave of the good man who has been taken away, it increases our sense of the wickedness of the hand by which he was struck down.

There have been cases when the unholy deed of the assassin seemed less heinous. When the blood-thirsty tyrant, or the relentless persecutor, who has trampled on all law, human and divine, is struck down by violence, we condemn the act, while we recognize its substantial justice. But here, it is the good, the generous, and the just that is the victim.—“As a man falleth before wicked men, so fellesst thou.”

This event is fitted to impress upon us important lessons. It reminds us that an evangelistic work remains to be done in Christian lands of which we little dreamed. We are well aware that, heretofore, only a small portion of any community have felt the saving power of divine truth, but we had hoped that its indirect influence in civilizing the nations, and in imparting light and vitality to conscience, would have rendered such deeds, as that which we deplore, impossible in Christian America. What makes our rude awakening more startling, is the fact that many were evidently concerned in the unhallowed plot, and still more sympathize with the assassin. It cannot be believed that, without the impulse of private revenge, he would have ventured on so terrible a crime, unless assured of the applause of a large circle, whose consciences were as perverted as his own. That any number of persons imbued with such a spirit could be found in a Christian land, is a startling fact, which should arouse the Church to more earnest activity to reach all classes of the community, and especially those unchristianized savages who walk our streets in the garb of gentlemen.

It calls to the exercise of faith. It teaches us to look away from earth to heaven, to Him who can make “the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder thereof.” It seems to say, “Cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils.”—“The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad.” When our Father sits on the throne of the universe, we know that however dark the sky, there is light in the cloud. It is his prerogative to bring good out of evil. He made the death of Abner advance, rather than retard the work of reconciliation in Israel, and he can make even this appalling crime subserve the cause of peace and order.



