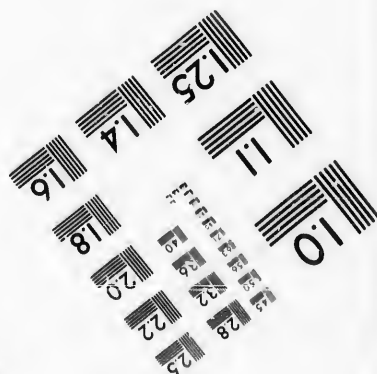
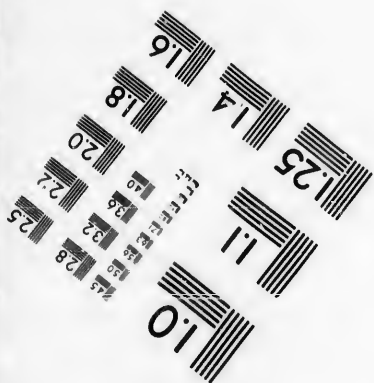
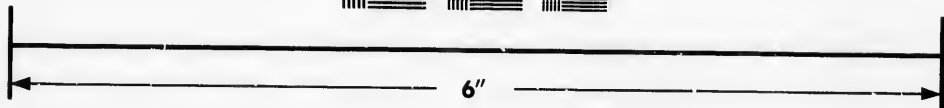
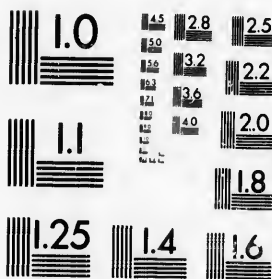


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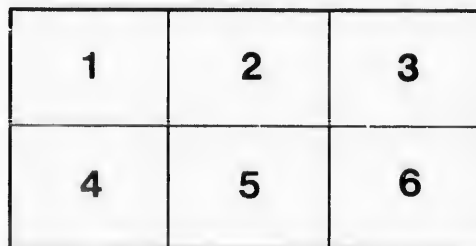
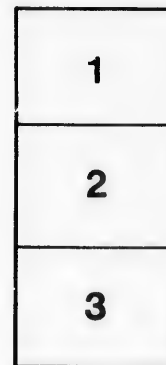
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AT A

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FUNERAL SERMON,

ON THE DEATH OF

DR. NORMAN BARBER,

OF FAIRFIELD,

WHO WAS

ACCIDENTALLY KILLED

BY THE

DISCHARGE OF A GUN.

PREACHED BY REQUEST

AT ALBURGH, VERMONT, NOVEMBER, 1815.

BY THE REV. MICAJAH TOWNSEND,

MINISTER OF CALDWELL AND CHRISTIE MANORS,

MONTREAL :

PRINTED BY NAHUM MOWER,

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1816.

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FUNERAL SERMON.

MATTHEW xxiv. 44.

THEREFORE, BE YE ALSO READY: FOR IN SUCH AN HOUR
AS YE THINK NOT THE SON OF MAN COMETH.

THE great end for which the Divine mercy interposed to arrest the arm of justice and to reprove the human race from the merited sentence of condemnation; was to restore them to the enjoyment of their forfeited privileges and to re-invest them with those powers and faculties necessary for a second probation.

It is the right use or the abuse of these restored powers that renders man just or guilty before God.

Although the human race, to their grief, share largely in the dreary *effects* of original Sin, and feel, in their depraved nature, corrupt affections, unholy desires, and blighted hopes, the entailed consequences of pristine guilt, yet no merit for the righteousness, or responsibility for the disobedience of ancestors can, on any principle of equity, rest on their posterity; for the Scriptures assure us that children shall not bear the iniquity of their parents; and the mouth of the Lord hath said that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

The principles on which the Gospel of Christ is proffered to mankind, and those on which the

future judgment will be conducted, are highly worthy the exalted wisdom and perfections of the Deity. That the sacrifice of Christ should be admitted in expiation of our guilt; and a salvation from the power of all that degrades, brutalizes, and ruins man, to the enjoyment of all that sanctifies, exalts, and crowns him with happiness, is an exertion of mercy not less than infinite; and that the measure of his happiness or misery in a future life should be in exact proportion to the extent of righteousness or wickedness in the present state of trial, is a glorious instance of that equal justice which has ever marked the dealings of God to his creatures. Of this truth the blessed assurances afforded us in Scripture, must forever preserve the Divine character pure from the baseless aspersions of arbitrary domination.

As the great object for which man was placed in this world was a preparation for that which is to come, the benevolent Saviour frequently reminds him of this fact, by mingling, with the important doctrines which he uttered, precepts, which were calculated to arouse him to seriousness and devotion, and to excite him to diligence and perseverance in the work of his salvation.

During the former part of his ministry he labored abundantly to point out those active duties of the christian necessary for the attainment of that preparation, by inculcating the necessity of deep repentance, ardent faith, and a strict and constant obedience to the laws of the Gospel, by which only it could be secured. But as his mission and life drew nearer to a close, he dwelt more particularly and emphatically on the momentous transactions of the Judgment Day, and described its dread appendages, and the conse-

quences of its final decisions, in the most sublime and luminous manner. After descanting on the uncertain tenure of this mortal life, and on the ignorance of mankind respecting the end of time, and the second advent of the Son of Man, he proceeds, in the most solemn and impressive manner, to enforce the necessity of a constant readiness to meet the bridegroom of the church with joy.

In order to impress our minds more deeply with the importance of the subject, I shall

I. Briefly describe the readiness which the Gospel requires.

II. Point out some motives for its attainment. And

III. Contrast the situations of those who are, and those who are not found prepared for the coming of Christ.

I. The readiness which the Gospel requires, claims our first regard.

The constitution of the human soul is so formed, that its happiness can never be attained, but by its association with those beings, and its intimacy with those scenes, which perfectly accord with its own nature, passions, and affections. It is this principle which causes that distinction in society between the righteous and the wicked. The passions and affections of the christian are sanctified; those of the antichristian are polluted, sensual, depraved; there is no communion between them, for light hath no concord with darkness; their spirits are not kindred, for they are not in unison. Therefore, as the abodes of blessedness are peopled with holy and sanctified beings; as the employment of glorified spirits is unceasing worship and praise; and as the happiness of all, who are admitted to those regions of joy, is immediately derived from the Divinity, so

must the soul, which would partake of that heavenly bliss, be sanctified in its passions and affections; be devout in its employment, and derive its supreme enjoyment from the same source. Then, and only then, can it participate of those pleasures which flow from the throne of God. This state of readiness can only be attained, by an evangelical repentance towards God, an entire renunciation of all dependence on human strength, and an unlimited confidence in the atonement of the Saviour, which shall produce an unvaried conformity to the Divine requirements in faith and practice.

A scrutinising watchfulness over the actions of the life, the words of the lips, and the thoughts of the heart, to guard against the practice, and the most distant approach of vice, is an indispensable attendant of that readiness, for which the watchful servant received his Master's blessing and reward.

To be prepared for an event, which is to close this scene of mortality, and to introduce the soul to a state of eternal existence, which is to exalt it to the society of the blessed, to invest it with renovated powers, to clothe it with immortality, and to crown it forever with the fruition of God, or, to debase and degrade it to the society of infernal spirits, and to fix its perpetual employment in lamentation and woe, it is not barely necessary that it should be free from those glaring enormities which characterise the obstinately vicious, or to be considered comparatively harmless; for the fruitless, as well as the corrupt tree, will be cut down as a cumberer of the ground. Therefore, ye must have your fruits unto holiness, if, in the end, ye would have everlasting life.

As the centinel on the tower is armed and equipt at his post, and guards the safety of the garrison ; with his vigilant eye from surprise, and by his courage from assault ; as the watchful porter patiently counts the wakeful moments till his Lord's return ; as the virgin bride, when decked in her nuptial ornaments, anxiously waits the arrival of her spouse ; "so be ye also ready" ; stand with your loins girt, your lamps trimmed and burning, and wait the coming of your Lord in the lively exercise of all those graces, and practical virtues of the christian temper, which will prepare you for the Divine acceptance.

II. I come now to point out some of those motives which may be urged for the attainment of this preparation.

The greatness of the event for which we are to prepare, and the importance of those consequences which depend on its result, furnish us with motives of sufficient magnitude and weight to force a conviction of its necessity on every rational and reflecting mind.—The Personage, for whose coming we are commanded to prepare, is of no less dignity than "King of kings and Lord of lords" ; and it is but a reasonable service that we prepare our hearts for his reception. The solemn event for which we are to make ready, is to meet the King of terrors, who sweeps from existence one generation after another in rapid succession. It is an event which will forever remove us from scenes of mortality, into the boundless space of immortality and unchangeably fix us in a perpetual state of bliss or woe.

That the Saviour hath commanded us to be ready for this event, should be a sufficient reason to induce our obedience, and more especially as our happiness was the object of that command.

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It is always an excellent policy, to be so provident that no matter of importance shall come upon us by surprise; but by a seasonable arrangement of circumstances, to meet it to our advantage and not to our loss—and what subject can vie in importance with Death, both in its nature and consequences? Shall we not then make every necessary preparation that we may meet its consequences with joy? The momentous alternatives of life and of death eternal depend on your preparation or unreadiness for this final change. Is it not folly, is it not madness in the extreme to neglect, or even to defer, while life is so precarious, that preparation for futurity so indispensable to the lasting tranquility of the soul? (But it is lamentable to observe that the human mind is so tardy in all its operations of amendment, that the time, allotted for the cultivation of those holy tempers, and christian graces necessary to fit it for heaven, is often consumed in dull purposes and ineffectual intentions to reform at some future period, till death levels the fatal blow, and seizes his prey unprepared.) The unaccountable attachment which mankind feel for those objects which have ever disappointed their hopes, and those pursuits which lure to ruin, requires a vigorous exertion of his powers to burst the bonds of that servitude in which he is enslaved. With a mind naturally depraved, an understanding blind to his truest interest, a judgment dark and erroneous, and a will perverse and stubborn, he yields himself a willing slave to those corrupt passions and affections, and engages eagerly in the pursuit of those sensual indulgencies, whose direct tendency is to rivet his chains of error, and to bind him faster in the bondage of corruption. His state is so dangerous and alarming, while

he remains utterly unconscious of his peril, that it requires the truth of his condition to be placed before his eyes in the most glaring colours, to arouse him from his lethargy, to awake his sensibility, and to induce him to apply to the Saviour as the Ark of safety, lest he finally sink in the floods of ungodliness and despair. Is it not astonishing, even to ourselves, when we reflect that beings endowed with rational powers, candidates for immortality, should so far forget their origin and their destiny, as to attach themselves to the mean and groveling pursuits of avarice and ambition, and neglect the only object by which their ultimate happiness can be secured? Yet we ourselves are those identical, unreasonable and ungrateful beings, if we neglect the prize of immortality for the pursuit of visionary phantoms; if we tamper with the eternal concerns of our souls, and are found of the judge at that momentous crisis without the wedding garment.

III. The necessity of being always prepared, either for death or for the coming of the son of man to judge the world, must appear obvious from the widely different conditions in which those events will find the righteous and the wicked, and the still more remote conditions to which they will introduce them.

The Christian, who has fled to Christ for safety, for happiness, and for a never failing portion, finds there a security against the temptations of sin, the delusions of the world, the clamors of noisy passions, and the stings of a wounded conscience. He has mourned and lamented his sins; he has wept his offences over and over again; but tears of blood could never efface the stains of guilt, or wash his sins away.—He brought them to the Saviour's Cross, and at his feet received

the rich consolation of pardon and grace, which flow from no other source.—His leprous soul with joy receives the gracious benediction, "*Be thou clean.*" At once the horrors of despair forsake him; Hope which had long been a stranger, again revisits his breast with her cheering attendants, Joy and Peace—the angel of pity, descending from heaven, binds up his wounds, while heavenly consolation pours in the balm of pardoning merit—gratitude to God is now become the first and main principle of his soul, and ardent love to the works of his hands expands his heart with a diffusive charity. His heart, which before was a nursery of corrupt and noxious passions which sprang up with a most luxuriant growth, is now, through divine grace, become the seat of holy and devout affections. Old things are now passed away, and all things are become new.—His former courses are abandoned; the objects of his desires are changed; his former predilections and antipathies are reversed, and he loves those objects and pursuits which he hated, and hates those which he loved.—His passions, which were wild, discordant, and unrestrained, are now become placid, orderly, harmonious; and those petty tyrants, which before ruled the kingdom of his heart with an untroubled sway, engendering strife, anarchy and confusion, are now subject to the mild yet strict government of Gospel Discipline. His affections, formerly corrupt in their nature, devious and irregular in their pursuit of prohibited objects, brutal and degraded in their attachments, are now raised, dignified, and enobled, and become the sanctified vehicles of the purest enjoyment.—His will which was ever obstinate, perverse, and opposed to the divine dispensations,

is now submissive and obedient, and cheerfully acquiesces in the divine appointment.—In short, there is an entire transformation in the moral man, from a state of nature, to a state of grace. His conceptions of a future state, which were before obscure and doubtful, are now clear and ample, and the certainty of final rewards and punishments is indubitably confirmed.—His deportment is humble, serious, affable, and devout; and his whole life exhibits one uniform series of gratitude, love, and obedience to God, and of forgiveness, charity, and good will towards his neighbour. His faith in the Gospel is fixed; Divine Revelation constitutes the greatest source of his enjoyment, and, as far as human weakness and depravity will admit, the actions of his life are conformed to the unerring rule, the inspired Scriptures.—He feels that he was not pardoned for any righteousness of his own, and his faithful conscience assures him that he has no merit to secure the continuance of the divine favour; he therefore pleads no palliatives in mitigation of his guilt, but relying wholly on the Saviour's atonement, he receives his salvation as an act of Sovereign mercy. He is not satisfied with restraining his hands from sin and his lips from guile; he places a sentinel at every secret avenue of his heart, and guards against the most distant approach of vice, which creeps with more guile than the crafty serpent of seduction, and infuses a venom through the better purposes of the heart more deadly than the poison of the asp.

The course of christian duties to which he is now called, is not grievous but pleasant; and although he may be conducted thro' scenes of suffering and distress, which are painful to human nature, and require for his support the exercise of

christian fortitude and patience, yet he deems it a subject of joy that he is counted worthy to endure distress, that the graces which were begun by faith may be perfected through suffering.—He is thus equally prepared for any alternative ; and having thus set his house in order, he submissively waits the appointed hour of his dissolution. Death is disarmed of his sting, and disrobed of all that rendered his appearance terrible, or his approach alarming ; and though he come at noon-day, at mid-night, or in the morning, he comes alike the harmless messenger of peace, the bearer of his passport to those blessed mansions which the Saviour has gone to prepare for his reception. The happy and glorious effects of this preparation, when death makes his stern demand, and eternity with all its dreadful and momentous consequences opens on the astonished vision, I shall leave for your conception, as they are more easily conceived than described, and better experienced than conceived. I now reluctantly turn from this scene of bliss, and leave the enraptured soul just entering on the joys of Paradise, on the participation of that glory and immortality which is to endure forever, to contemplate a character which fills the mind with far different sensations. I will not suppose a case of notorious wickedness, but that of a person in the ordinary walks of life, who is destitute of the *one thing needful*, and who continues impenitent unto the end of his life. The light of divine truth is quenched by unbelief ; the operation of the Holy Spirit, to induce him to repentance and amendment, is counteracted by a settled perseverance in a course of impenitence and irreligion ; the voice of conscience that friendly monitor is stifled and drowned by the clamorous din of passion and of

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pleasure. Ambition has erected his kingdom in his heart, and sits the umpire and director of his actions; pride and avarice are his prime ministers, the agents of his will, and all the minor passions and affections of the soul are but the subordinate minions of the despot's power. Hatred, revenge, love of pleasure, lust and sensuality, are his menial attendants, and anarchy and confusion are multiplied in every department of the soul.

Thus he lives without God and without Christ in the world; religion has never shed its benign influence over his soul, for he has stoutly resisted its most distant approach; he has ever refused admittance to the celestial stranger, which would have subdued his will to rectitude, and his heart to virtue. He remains ignorant that his feet are on the crumbling brink of a frightful precipice, although the light of truth shines around him with meridian splendor; for he has carefully closed his eyes against it; and although conscience has frequently arrested him in his unregenerate course, with a preternatural "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me!" yet conferring with flesh and blood, he yields himself more to the guidance of sinful passions, and sensual gratifications, than to obedience to the Heavenly vision. In this manner he spends his season of grace, and suffers the time allotted him to work out his salvation to pass away, not only unimproved, but grossly misimproved; for his habit of disobedience by every act is confirmed, and his unbelief, by a long indulgence, grows into a settled principle of infidelity. If now any unforeseen casualty call him to his final account, in what state of readiness would his soul be found! Immersed in the cares, and inflated with the fantastic plea-

sures of this life, he has neglected all provision for the life to come, and he now finds himself entering on the wide ocean of eternity destitute of the "one thing needful," that *one precious thing*, for which he would now surrender all things else, yea, a thousand worlds if it could be purchased. But if the fell monster is slower in his approach, he is still sure of his prey. What tho' the cords of life instead of being snapt, are drawn asunder, and the wretched victim is suffered to writhe and agonize on the bed of torture for a few days or weeks before he sinks to everlasting woe? Is this a time for repentance and amendment of life, just as the taper is expiring? Is this a time to call up the long catalogue of his crimes, to repent of them, and seek forgiveness, when he needs the support of a long standing, a well grounded, and thoroughly tried faith, of the approbation of his own heart, the consciousness of the devine favor, and of a well spent life? It is more than probable that his short intervals of ease are filled with the flattering the delusive hope of recovery, and with empty purposes of future amendment; and that his moments of anguish and distress are attended with the keenest despair. In this dire moment, the ruthless monster approaches, arrayed in all his native terrors. "O might he stay to wash away his crimes, and fit him for his passage! mournful sight! his very eyes weep blood! and every groan he heaves is big with horror!" "Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!" "for this is the sure, the inevitable end of the wicked. Draw near, if ye can, and behold the woeful spectacle of a man, who has lived without faith, and who dies without hope—read there a lesson, which, if improved, will make you wise unto salvation."

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but if neglected, will shortly render your state like his. Shall I proceed? Shall I speak the sentence of unutterable woe? 'T would stun your ears with horror! O let us turn away our eyes from beholding this dreadful spectacle, lest it blast our sight forever! Nothing more need be urged to enforce this weighty precept, "Be ye therefore ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

The character of the deceased, whose untimely and regretted death we are this day called to mourn, I shall not attempt minutely to delineate. To disturb the peaceful ashes of the dead, by exposing weaknesses which are merely human, or to heap unmeaning eulogies on their memories, is equally criminal and useless. The end of afflictive dispensations is to awaken into action many of the finer feelings of the soul, which, without them, are suffered to lie dormant and inactive in the breast.—Grief is the prevailing passion of the mind, which is excited by afflictions of this nature; and the great benefit which we derive from it is, that it softens the heart, and ameliorates the harsher passions of the soul, by the exercise of sympathy and the tenderest affection. These feelings are in a greater or less degree awakened, in proportion as the ties of kindred, of friendship, or of social affection are severed.

In the sight of God, no event is casual; all have their design; but as these designs are beyond our apprehension, there are many which, to us, are apparent casualties; and when, by the agency of these our mortal life is brought to a close, instead of the more usual course of sickness and disease, our conviction of the uncertainty of life is greatly increased. Here we see

a man in the prime of life, in the full vigour of health, cut down in a moment ; in the twinkling of an eye, without thought, or time for thought, the busy scenes of life are changed for the realities of futurity, and those prospects, which usually attend prosperity, are instantaneously resigned for prospects of a more serious and important nature.

NORMAN BARBER, recently known to us in his professional character as Dr. BARBER, early in life discovered those dawnings of genius, united with those principles of probity, and an amiable disposition, which gave assurance of future usefulness and respectability. His natural endowments, with an intense and persevering application, would, in circumstances more propitious to improvement, have raised him to a higher station in society, and extended the sphere of his usefulness to the world ; they were however such, as, even in the walks of private life, did not suffer him to pass through the world without notice and respect.—Nature had given him a heart open, generous, and affectionate ; and a temper of mind, frank and forgiving. His manners were easy and engaging, and all his deportment graceful and manly. The large circle of friends who had the happiness of his acquaintance is a living proof of his extensive and increasing influence and reputation, and the numerous badges of grief worn on the melancholy occasion were expressive indications that his untimely fall was deeply and universally regretted. When such a man dies, the community mourns, and society feels a void which is not easily filled ; and it is to be hoped that the influence of his strictly moral and exemplary life will not descend with him to the tomb. As members of the general community, as friends

to society, to good order, to the cause of morality and religion,* and to correct habits of life, and as beings possessing a susceptibility to friendship and humanity, we are called upon to drop the tear of affection on the grave of this lamented young man; yet as christians we are also called to the exercise of submission to the divine mandate; and to learn from the event this useful lesson, the vanity of all worldly trust; and that there is no safety in life, but in a constant preparation for death.—His hopes, his expectations, his worldly prospects were built high; like the Cedar of Lebanon he rose and towered above his fellows; yet before his roots were firmly fixed, or his branches fully spread, he is smitten with a bolt from Heaven, his crumbling honors are blended with the dust, and he is cast, without other hope, on the mercy of the Saviour:

God frequently instructs, warns, and admonishes his creatures by his Providences; and in this, he has spoken a language that cannot be misunderstood; "*Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.*" As mortals, responsible to him for our conduct, let us hear, attend, and obey.

To the Chief Mourner on this melancholy occasion, I now address myself.

You are now invested with real and appropriate motives of grief; I do not call upon you to rejoice, it would be untimely and inconsistent; and grief is as needful to your happiness as joy. In obedience to the laws of nature and the human soul, you mourn, with kindred affection, the premature death of a dear and affectionate Brother—your grief is just and proper; the tears

* The deceased was a member of an association formed for religious improvement.

of afflicted affection are sacred ; O forbid them not to flow ! they are sanctioned and sanctified by the Saviour's example, who wept at the tomb of his friend ; but let the violence of your grief be tempered with this heavenly emollient, "*Thy will be done.*" Perish the narrow-hearted the stoical principle that will not let us mourn when the cords of kindred affection are broken asunder, that will not allow us the luxury of the most sacred of our social affections, that will not give us tears to disburden the swelling bursting heart of its load—sooner than restrain the generous tide of grief with the cold maxims of philosophy, I would swell the sacred current by mingling the tear of sympathy with those of grief ; but let its course be directed to its proper end. When all the sensibilities of the soul are awake, let the important truths of religion be impressed, let its divine consolations be administered. If he were ready, or unprepared, for an event which determines his future destiny, we leave to the decision of Him who knoweth the heart.—It is sufficient for us to hear and obey the all-important admonition "Be ye also ready."

There is nothing, my friend, but the religion of Jesus Christ, that can render us prepared for an event, of which he had no notice, and which will introduce us all to our final state.—Consider the benefits of christianity in this life.—It gives a peculiar dignity and weight to any, but more especially to a professional character* ; it yields an undisturbed tranquility in the midst of circumstances that harrass, a placid equanimity of temper, and an unfailing support under distress and calamity. It raises and exalts the soul, which was debased and polluted by sin ; it rege-

* The Brother of the deceased is an Attorney at Law.

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nerates, purifies, and restores the man ; it leads
 him to the right use of his rational powers, pre-
 pares his heart for rational enjoyment, and leads
 his grateful soul to the only source whence he
 may derive a rational and permanent bliss. It
 forms the only certain basis on which his happi-
 ness can rest ; it holds forth those promises to
 his hopes, those pleasures and rewards to his
 faith, which will never deceive or disappoint him,
 but on which he may rely with the greatest se-
 curity. O where is the man who would not wish
 for the comfort and support of religion in death ?
 Who would not resign every vanity, bubble, and
 phantom he has ever possessed, for the solid joy
 of God's approbation, for the unspeakable felici-
 ty of being called, as the Blessed of the Father,
 to inherit the kingdom of Heaven ? If therefore
 we would dwell with them in his glory, and par-
 take of the rapturous joy which his presence cre-
 ates, let us cheerfully bear his cross, and if ne-
 cessary, his reproach, that we may share the
 benefits of his Death and Passion, and be always
 ready to meet his appearance with joy. I now
 commend you to God who is able to bestow di-
 vine consolations on the spirit he hath bruised ;
 and if you look to Him for your comfort He will
 assuredly give you "the oil of joy for mourning,
 and the garment of praise for the spirit of heavi-
 ness."

