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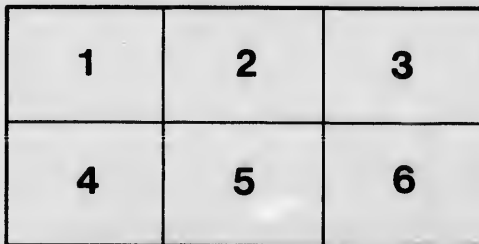
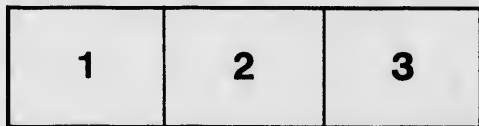
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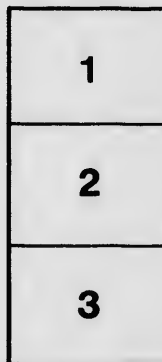
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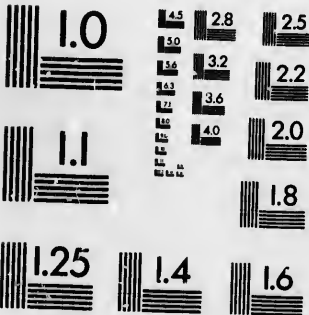
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SERMON

PREACHED AT FREDERICTON CATHEDRAL,

SEPTEMBER 1, 1889,

BY THE

REV. G. G. ROBERTS,

Rector of Fredericton,

ON THE DEATH OF

THE REV. CANON MEDLEY.

Published at the Request of the Bishop.

FREDERICTON, N. B.:

H. A. CROPLEY, PRINTER, "THE CAPITAL" OFFICE.

1889.



SERMON.

EPHESIANS II. 19.—“Fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”

UNDER two aspects, that of a city and that of a home or household, the Church of God is here brought before us, and our privileges in it are set forth. We are fellow-citizens with the saints, that is we are subjects of the Kingdom of Christ, and though here we have no continuing city, yet seeking one to come, our citizenship is even now in heaven, the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, whose builder and maker is God. And in this kingdom, this city of the great King, of which the visible church on earth is as it were a suburb, the saints are our fellow-citizens,—not only those who by their Baptism have been “called to be saints” and who are still fighting the battle of life as we are, but also those who have departed in the faith and fear of God, and are now at rest in Paradise after their labors and their sorrows. But the unspeakable comfort of this blessed thought comes more closely to our hearts when we regard it from the second aspect and take in the fulness of the truth that we are of the same household, the same family of God with all the saints, the least as well as the greatest, those living still, and those no longer dwelling in the flesh. Is there a human heart to which the thought of home does not appeal? And the earthly home is one part of the household of God. If it be a truly christian home, it has a sanctity so great that we may rightly regard it as one of the many mansions of our Father’s House. His consecrated House of Prayer is assuredly another of those many mansions. When we have humbly tried to do our duty in these earthly portions of the household, God in His own good time calls us to a higher mansion, His Paradise of rest,—and there we wait the final summons to the highest mansion, the eternal Home, where with reunited souls and bodies we shall enjoy forever the perfect consummation of our bliss. Let us try then to realize, dear brethren, how close is the connection, how intimate and how full of comfort, the relation between these several mansions of our Father’s House, Home, God’s House, Paradise and Heaven. There is never a time when this consolation is not needed,—never a congregation gathered in which there are not lonely, sorrowful, desolate hearts for whom there is a message of hope and comfort in the words, “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” “Of the household of God.” Yes even we, imperfect and unworthy as we are,—even we who fall so far short either of realizing or of living up to our true dignity as children of God and heirs of Heaven,—even we are indeed members of that divine family and household, fellow-members in it with all those who, in whatever

age or portion of the Church, have departed this life in the true faith of Christ our Lord. Does not this truth speak to all our hearts with especial earnestness to-day? Here in our Father's House, where week by week and year by year, we unite with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven in the praise of God, we have united also for months past in special prayer on behalf of one who was, nay who still is bound to us by many ties of deepest interest and affection. That prayer has gone up with fervour from thousands of hearts not only in every parish and mission of this Diocese, but also in many a distant land in which those who had known still loved him. But with us in Fredericton he was more closely connected than with the people of any other place except his own parish to which he has ministered so devotedly for two and twenty years. Here our dear brother grew up to manhood. Here he was prepared for his work in the sacred ministry, and here he began it with that zeal and vigour which have characterized his labors ever since. How many there are among us who remember lovingly his early life,—the cordial hand grasp, the genial or merry greeting, the kind, bright smile, the readiness to enter into either the sorrows or the joys of others, which won the hearts equally of rich and poor. How many remember his faithful loving work at the Mills, where men, women and children alike counted on him as a friend and helper, were never disappointed, and where the affection and respect he won so long ago remain unabated to this day. He car-

ried the same unselfish and devoted energy into every work he undertook, and so wherever he has labored he has left lasting monuments of his fidelity. No less than seven beautiful churches have I believe been erected through his efforts and his liberality. Three of these were built in the parish in which he died, and among the very latest labors of his active life was the completion of a church at Mount Middleton, a gem of architectural beauty, which is now ready to be consecrated. In this church he preached for the last time in April, dwelling on our Lord's dying utterances, and showing how precious a friend's last words should be. Little did either he or those who heard him think that the fervent warnings and counsels he uttered then would be his last words to them. But so it was ordered by the inscrutable wisdom of Omnipotence. On Easter Eve came suddenly the beginning of the end,—the end of his public ministrations, but not assuredly the end of his effectual service of His Master,—the end of his preaching from the pulpit, but not the end of his preaching by the silent influence of his character and conduct. Ably and faithfully he had ever striven to set forth the whole counsel of God, speaking in the Lord's name without fear and without self-seeking. Henceforward he was to speak to all around him not less eloquently, not less impressively by his wonderful patience and submission,—by the cheerful faith, the unselfish thoughtfulness for others which never failed him to the end, and "he being dead yet speaketh." Through sufferings protracted and severe he shewed forth

the sustaining power of that presence and love of Christ Jesus His Saviour to which he had so often drawn the hearts of the afflicted, and proved day by day the reality and sincerity of all his former teachings,—that what he had said with his lips he believed in his heart, and by the dear Lord's helping grace could practise in his life under bitterest adversity and pain as cheerfully, as trustfully, as in the days of his vigour and prosperity. And now the devoted parish priest, the able preacher of God's truth, the affectionate son, the loving husband, the faithful, manly generous friend, the kind counselor and helper of his brethren has been removed from our earthly sight. It would be difficult to overestimate the loss to the Diocese, and especially to his own Deanery, which, in a large measure through his powers of organization, and through his loving influence, has become a model of harmony and diligence in all good works. Of the loss to his own parish we may in some faint measure judge by the universal affection and respect displayed when his body was committed to the grave. Every minute detail of those last solemn rites was calmly arranged beforehand by himself (for death had for him no terrors), and loving hearts and hands carried them out with an affectionate reverence that was deeply touching and impressive. Of the loss to those nearest and dearest to him I dare not trust myself to speak. But while our hearts are full of warmest sympathy, we thank God that the natural grief of their bereavement is soothed by all the brightest hopes and

consolations of religion. As fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God they feel and know that they are still one with him they love, that he has only gone a little while before them to a higher, a more blessed mansion of the heavenly Father's house. We all, as members of that household of the faith, have in a true sense "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of first men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new Covenant,"—but his ransomed spirit set free by death is admitted to a closer and more blessed vision of these heavenly things and a more immediate and uninterrupted participation of them. The soul called away, in its loving faith, from the sorrows and sins of earth, has received the highest proof of the Father's tender care, and while we sit weeping here, the deeper knowledge of the angels, and the redeemed spirit itself are rejoicing that the warfare is accomplished, that the appointed work is done, that the rest is so soon begun. Our times, and the times of those we love are in God's hands, and we can trust His infinite wisdom to appoint them for our truest good, though now the dispensations of His Providence seem dark indeed and hard to understand.

How often even in this life we are allowed a glimpse, as it were, of God's loving purpose and care under His chastenings. When our dear brother

was, for weeks before his death, unable to articulate, it seemed at first as if this were one needless trial very grievous to be borne. But now it is seen that this very trouble has brought a store of comfort to those left behind, because all the last words, the last messages, the last wishes and hopes and thoughts were written down by his own hand, and form an abiding treasure of consolation, a lasting memorial of the brave and noble spirit in which his sufferings were endured.

Let this then ever be our refuge amid all the storms of life, that God is our Father, that the Lord Jesus is our Divine elder Brother, that the Holy Spirit is our everpresent comforter, and that in the household of God what seem the saddest partings are only the blessed advancement of those we love to a higher honour and a greater bliss. So may we thank God that He has brought them to himself, though it be by a path of pain and sorrow, and enabled them, even through much tribulation, to wash their robes and make them white in the Blood of the Lamb. They cannot come again to us, unless indeed God send them as ministering spirits with blessed messages of love,—but we may go to them by the ways of Holy Communion which the head and Father of us all has appointed for all the members of His household. Meanwhile *we* do not

forget *them*, and *they* do not forget *us*. Though when their bodily sickness has closed in death the public prayers of the church cease on their behalf, do we therefore no longer remember them when we draw near to the throne of grace, and above all when we approach God's altar? Do we not love them still, and care for them still, and count them still our own, and desire the consummation of their bliss, and pray that we with them may be made partakers at last of the perfect joys of heaven? Of them we sing, with tears that have lost their bitterness.

O happy saints! for ever blest!

At Jesus' feet how safe your rest.

Yet in those mansions where they wait there is not repose alone, but progress also, and so we believe and pray that they may go on from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from knowledge to knowledge, from love to love, till the days of their waiting are ended, and we all are caught up together to meet the Lord in the air,— and so shall we and they ever be with the Lord.

"Blessed are they whose earthly life is over,
Whose hands from ours the loving Lord hath drawn;
Whose graves to-day with flowers we gently cover,
Feeling their happy spirits near us hover,
And seeing faint afar the heavenly dawn.

Blessed are they, so near our earthly keeping,
And yet so far from all our earthly woe;
Who just beyond the toiling and the weeping,
Beyond the little waking and the sleeping,
Joy in the better life we wait to know."

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