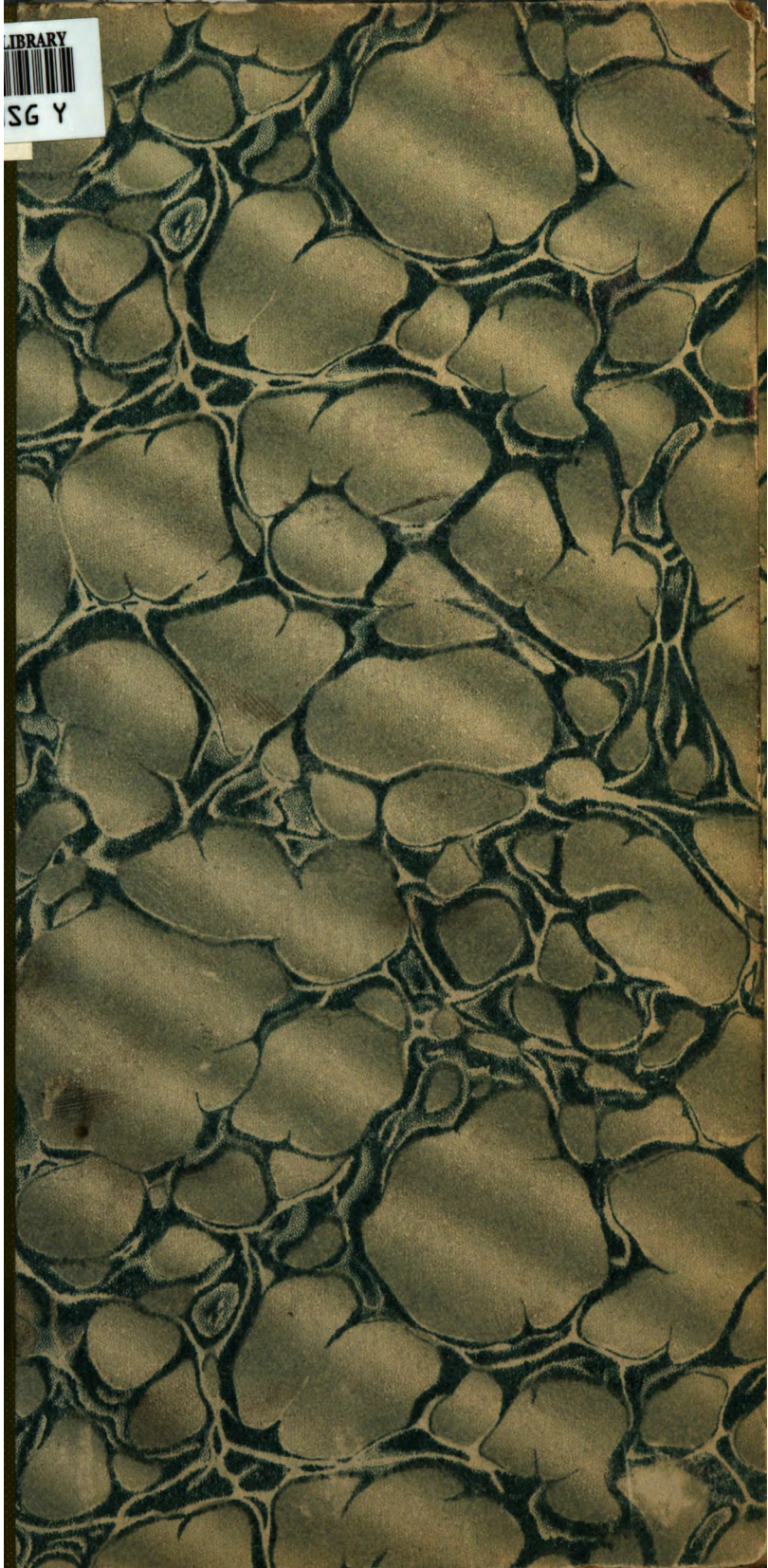


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THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
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Address—
At the Funeral of Mrs Emily
S. Blagden,
by
Rev. B. Sunderland.

Died

AT WASHINGTON, D. C., ON THE 6TH NOVEMBER, 1853,

EMILY,

WIFE OF THOMAS BLAGDEN,

AND

Daughter of GOLD S. SILLIMAN of Brooklyn, N. Y.

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FROM
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1918

A D D R E S S .

The ties which bind human beings together are originally strong. They seem founded deep in the constitution of human nature. In that nature are well-springs of human affection and sympathy and sensibility, as abiding as the existence of the soul itself, by reason of which we are not only rendered capable of earthly friendship, but we have cravings after it which, if ungratified, render us desolate and miserable.

What then, if the chosen object of our hearts had everything to incite in us all the noble and endearing sentiments—confidence, esteem, admiration and devoted love ; what, if we saw there a living embodiment of all the finest qualities of our nature not only, but of the consistency, the tenderness, the unwavering fidelity of the Christian life ; what, if all the possible relations of our present existence, wherein the most of human endearment lies, had been established—and there was nothing lacking to the means of worldly comfort and of human enjoyment in the home of the beloved object ; what if the fireside had been blest and hallowed by the presence and the delighted satisfaction of father and mother, brother and sister, husband and children ; what if health had blossomed

in freshest flowers upon the countenance ; what if the season had arrived when neither the inexperience of youth, nor the debility of age left anything wanting to the full circle of mature qualities which shone alike beautiful and attractive in every sphere, and warmed all hearts to a livelier sense of the loveliness of virtue and the power of a divine faith in the soul ! Then to contemplate an event coming on, which is to remove from us on earth forever, so that we shall no more hear the voice, nor see the form—that object of our attachment—to feel the blow, as it descends, and to sit down in the bitterness of the affliction, when it is on us in its first terrible power—perhaps there is nothing more keen and heart-rending in the history of human suffering.

Said Edmund Burke, on the death of his son, in whom all his earthly hopes were bound up, “The storm has gone over me, and I lie like one of those old oaks, which the late hurricane has scattered about me. I am stripped of all my honors. I am torn up by the roots and lie prostrate on the earth ! Shorn and prostrate there I most unfeignedly recognize the divine justice and, in some degree, submit to it.”

What then can console us for the sorrow which such an event inflicts ? Need I tell you it is the hope and only the hope, of a future re-union. I might have said, and you doubtless might have expected me to say, the Christian religion ; but even the Christian religion could not console us unless it came with the tidings of immortality, and permitted us to cherish the expectation of once more seeing and knowing, and associating with those whom we have loved on earth. It was this that consoled even those who had never heard of Christ—as the Resurrection and the Life.

Said Socrates, "I am going to join the assembly of virtuous men. I am going to see again those estimable persons whom I have admired in this life."

Said Cato, upon the loss of a beloved son—addressing his friends who stood around him, "I turn to unite myself to your fathers whom I have loved and venerated so much—not only to those great men whom I have known, but to those I have heard of. I am going to them with so great joy that it would be difficult to detain me. Oh! happy day when I shall leave a world, defiled with crimes, to join the sacred society of those who have left the earth before me. There shall I find not only those worthy persons but thee also, oh my son! who wert one of the best of men. Alas! I closed thy dying eyes, while it was rather thy part to attend my funeral. But thy soul hath not quitted me, and without losing sight of thee, oh my dear son! thou hast only gone before me into that more happy region where thou seest well that I must soon follow thee. If I have endured thy loss, it is not because it did not rend my heart, but I have consoled myself with the sweet thought, with the deep conviction, that we shall be separated but a short time."

So Seneca wrote to Marcia, the mother of an illustrious Roman, subsequent to his death: "Go not to the tomb of thy son. He hovers among the blessed souls. He is received into the august assembly of the Scipios, of the Catos. There, although all men are kindred, your illustrious father embraces his grandson, resplendent with a new light, and instructs him at the fountain of truth itself. He delights also to cast his views upon earth. He loves to consider from the height of his glory, the abode he has left. Conduct yourself then

as in their presence—as having your father and your son for witnesses. From the height of the celestial vault, oh Marcia! your father, who had as great authority over your soul as you had over the soul of your son, addresses you these words: “Why does this prolonged grief consume your days, oh my daughter? Contemplate the happiness of those you mourn—we live all united. We see from the thick night which environs you—there is nothing concealed with us. Our souls penetrate each other—our hearts reveal themselves—our life is public—our view embraces all truths, all ages, all events.”

Now, if this is the voice of the religion of nature, much more is it the doctrine of divine Revelation. If Plato and Cicero, and the wisest and purest of the ancients contemplated it as the highest and most ennobling desire of humanity, what shall we say of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob—of David, and Daniel, and Paul, and the Apostles? What shall we say of the manifold passages of Inspiration, where the future recognition of friends seems to be taken for granted—a thing of course, and indisputable—and therefore not necessary to be positively asserted. And yet there is one passage, which is too plain to be overlooked. I refer to what the Apostle says in his Epistle to the Corinthians (13 : 12), “For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

How is the Apostle to be himself known in that future state, if he is to be so changed as to lose his personal identity, and not be, in fact, the same being that he was on earth? The inference seems unavoidable, that if he is known there at all, it must be as the Apostle Paul; and as known himself by others, so will he

himself know others. When, therefore, we consider how the patriarchs exhibited the same aspiration, and, dying, were spoken of as being gathered to their people—which, in some instances, as in the case of Moses and of Jacob, could not have referred to their burial, since, at the time of which this was affirmed of them, they were, neither of them, buried with their fathers : when we consider, that David said of his departed child, “ he cannot return to me, but I shall go to him ;” —that the Saviour said, “ Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones for their angels do always behold the face of their Father, which is in heaven ;” that he spake of Dives and Lazarus, and Abraham as knowing each other in a future state ;—that he said of some, they “ should see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God ;” —that he declared of these patriarchs that God was not the God of the dead, but of the living : when we consider, that all whom he restored to life from the dead were the same persons after as before, and recognized by their kindred as such—the son of the widow, the brother of Mary and Martha—and the daughter of Jairus ;—when we consider that Moses and Elias appeared from the heavenly world upon the Mount of Transfiguration—which was an ocular proof to the three disciples that we shall know each other in the heavenly state—when we consider that the company of the redeemed are called one family, who shall rise together to meet the Lord and be forever with him—when we consider that in all the Epistles the Apostles speak of being absent from the body and present with the Lord—and that Jesus said, “ To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise ”—and that it formed one of the brightest hopes of the first preachers of the gospel that they

should meet and know those whom they have been the means of turning unto God, in the day of eternity—when we look at the descriptions of the final estate of God's children recorded in the Apocalypse—and read the noble Christian epitaph which an Almighty Spirit has indicted for the graves of all the saints—“And I heard a voice from heaven, saying write, blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord—yea, saith the Spirit, from henceforth—for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them”—how can we conclude but that it will form one of the chief elements of our ineffable bliss in heaven, to rejoin our departed friends and know them to be such through all eternity?

To deny this doctrine not only mocks the fondest wishes of human nature, not only robs us of the consolation which we imperatively need under bereavement, but also destroys the personal identity of every one of us, and renders a state of future retribution, as set forth upon the principles of the gospel, absolutely impossible. How can the plain statement of the Apostle, that we are all to be judged according to the deeds done in the body, be verified unless we are essentially the same beings there that we have been here? How can God render to every man according to his deeds, as is elsewhere affirmed, if the personal identity be not retained? How too, can the words of Christ be found true at the last—“And I, if I go to prepare a place for you, will come again and receive *you* to myself?” Could this occur were the personal identity destroyed? Would the Saviour receive, in that case, the same beings to whom the promise was made?

Then, on the supposition that we shall retain our personal identity, it follows inevitably that we must

know and recognize each other ; for personal identity consists, mainly, in personal consciousness. We are conscious that we are the same persons now that we were years before--and conscious also that our friends are the same. To deny this doctrine supposes also that the memory of the human soul will be blotted out. Yet Christ, in the history of Dives and Lazarus, represents Abraham as saying, " Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things ;" and he represents the rich man as requesting that his five brethren, who were yet on earth, might be warned lest they also should come to that place of torment. If then, from these intimations of Scripture, agreeing as they do so clearly with all the highest sentiments of natural religion, we turn aside to consider the constitution of the soul, and see what aspirations God has implanted in it, and how they appear to be a part and portion of our being, can we think that they have existed only at the last to be mocked ?

If you but grant the continuance of personal identity—that is, personal consciousness, and personal memory—you need not grant more. The recognition of friends in heaven is established beyond a question.

Well, this is the consolation of our hearts to-day ; and oh ! my brethren, how it does lighten the burden of such a dispensation as that which now convenes us. What a different thing it makes of death and the grave—what a different thing it makes of the departure of our dear ones, who have leaned their heads upon the breast of Jesus, and breathed their life out sweetly there.

In this view they are not lost, but only separated from us ; they have simply bid us adieu, a little before hand, to take their journey to the Heavenly country,

there to await our own arrival. Nay, they have only gone a brief time before, to join the company of those who had preceded them and, perhaps, to advise them that we too shall soon follow.

Oh! how full of beauty and consolation is the thought that we shall see them again—that death is but a narrow stream after all—and that we have one to attend us on our passage who never forsakes, and who is rapidly taking over his redeemed from the earthly side to the heavenly side. The friends who have already departed have gone from our shore under his guidance, and we may be sure he will take care of them. He has died to redeem them, and oh! will not the love that cost so much now fill up that which remains, to the certainty and perfection of their bliss? Nay more, what a view it gives of families who are part in heaven and part on earth! Some have gone over to the eternal home—some yet linger, soon themselves to go. Well, who would have it otherwise? Strange and dark as death is to our natural instincts and affections, the hope of reunion with such a being as she was whose funeral obsequies we perform to day, seems almost to overcome the reluctance of the present parting, and give a new attraction to that bright home in heaven whither she has preceded us; for she was one whom we desire to meet again. No memories of alloyed friendship—no shadows of imperfect attachment linger around her earthly history. So sweet—so gentle—so full of sincerity and love—her spirit was like a beam of pure sunlight on the path of every beholder; and those who knew her best and loved her most tenderly were most charmed with the fervor of her devotion and the purity of her light.

There are some to whom God gives the power, by

personal loveliness, and a soul of beauty shining through them, like beams through an alabaster vase, to produce living impressions of the imagery of heaven, even here, amid the earthly darkness of our life, and so to commend the piety and love of the cross by testimonies more convincing than all the proofs of speculation, to the existence and reality of that unseen world, which is the object both of human desire and human expectation.

Our beloved sister was eminently one of these. The lustre of her eye, the tints of her cheek, the benignant glow of her sweet loving countenance, were fitting symbols of the spirit that dwelt within, whose joy was the joy of all pure and holy beings, and singularly free from the vanity and the degradation which so much mar the character of human beings. Oh ! sainted woman ! All our words cannot add anything to thy just eulogy. Thou wert one whose elevating influences were to be felt and loved, but never described—even as we cannot convey the glory of the sun or the mild beauty of the stars to the conceptions of the blind.

What thy husband had in thee,—a precious friend—we all in our several relations had, and with him could join adopting lines which, though written for another, apply to thee as well :—

“ Thou, more than all endeared to this glad heart,
 By gentle smiles and patience under pain ;
 I bless my God and thee for all thou art,
 My crowning joy—my richest earthly gain.
 To thee is due this tributary strain,
 For all the well-observed kind offices
 That spring spontaneous from a heart in hand,
 With the sweet wish of living but to please.
 Love for thy liberal hand, thy frugal mind,

2

Thy pitying eye, thy voice forever kind—
 For tenderness, truth, confidence—all these,
 Thy heaven-blest vine, that hast thy tendrils twined
 Round one who loves thee, tho' his strain be rude,
 Accept thy best reward—thy husband's gratitude."

How glad to meet her in her heavenly attire, beyond the night of the grave. She is already there. We only wish that we may have strength and patience to hold on our earthly pilgrimage till the summons calls us to take our passage also.

Here then you are, dear friends, to-day, in sympathy with a family, six of whom are already conveyed to the heavenly shore, and five yet remain to be conveyed. In paying our last duties to the remains of our beloved friend, we only lay her body down to rest, in the like sacred place where Jesus lay, to sleep and be refreshed for the morning of the resurrection. It is a quiet place—a resting place—a place of calm and undisturbed repose—a place, indeed, where many a heart will turn with fond remembrance—where husband and children, and father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and people and pastor often, in after days, will love to linger, thinking all over what she was to us, and what she is now, and ever will be—in the church, triumphant.

