

4.

TRUE GREATNESS.

A

SERMON

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D.D.

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NOTE.

It is proper to state that the following Sermon was preached on the day designated by the Synod of Virginia as a day of special prayer for an increase of candidates for the Gospel Ministry. The author believes that an early-fostered and prevailing ambition for secular honors has operated not a little to turn away the thoughts of parents and children from the claims of this high and holy calling; and if, in this humble tribute to the memory of a venerated man, he has been enabled to say any thing adapted to counteract in any degree the tendency alluded to, he is not unwilling, in this way, to extend its circulation.

S E R M O N .

2 SAMUEL III. 38:

“And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?”

THE character of Abner is less to be admired than the language of King David might seem to import. The lament of the royal mourner is, indeed, honorable to himself, as doing full justice to the merits of a man who had recently been an enemy, a rebel, and the leader of rebellion. The time and manner of Abner's fall, doubtless, gave additional point and publicity to the grief of the king. An important negotiation was now pending, having for its object the reunion of the divided kingdom, and in which Abner was the principal agent. In the conduct of this negotiation, he was called back to Hebron, as if by a message from the king himself, and basely assassinated by the treacherous and vindictive hand of Joab, the captain of David's host.

Though the distracted state of the kingdom, and the position and influence of the culprit, seemed to forbid that summary punishment which so foul a deed had deserved, yet, to exonerate himself from all participation in the crime, the king appeared as chief mourner at the grave of Abner, and denounced, in terms of terrible severity, the guilty perpetrator of his death. In any eulogium pronounced under such circumstances, we should expect the utmost commendation of the deceased which the truth would allow. And with admirable

precision, David has here sketched exactly the utmost that could be said for a character like that of Abner: "A prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel."

These words of the son of Jesse furnish us, also, with an apt illustration of the world's estimate of human greatness. Though David was an inspired man, yet he did not always speak by inspiration; and, in this instance, we may regard him as simply giving expression, as a man, to his own and the prevailing opinion concerning Abner. This bold and spirited captain of the hosts of Israel, from the position which he occupied, and the shining qualities which he possessed, would have been "a great man," in the common acceptation of the term, in any age or country. He was allied to the royal family, and he wielded a controlling influence in the kingdom; and these, apart from any moral qualities, were enough to constitute that greatness which is ordinarily the object of human praise and pursuit.

Now, in selecting the lament of David over Abner as the basis of some remarks, designed to illustrate a character widely different from that of the son of Ner, we do not intend to use them as a mere "accommodation." But the text will legitimately furnish the occasion for—

I. Some animadversions upon the world's estimate of human greatness;

II. An attempt to unfold some of those elements of character in which true greatness consists; and,

III. Such further application of the whole discussion as the objects of this discourse may seem to require.

I. "Greatness," when applied to man, is one of those relative terms, the meaning of which is entirely depend-

ent upon something else. When used, in connection with other terms, to designate extraordinary excellence in any one quality or attainment, it may describe the most opposite characters and the most diversified attainments. But when taken by itself, the phrase, "a great man," has also a conventional meaning, differing according to the state of society and the supposed standard of excellence. In the exigences of a rude and barbarous people, physical strength and prowess will secure the highest distinction. When, in the progress of the arts, a stalwart frame and giant arm become less available for purposes of defense and conquest, courage and skill will claim the palm. And as the occupations of peaceful industry supplant the trade of war, the higher qualities of intellect, and the prevailing influence of rank and wealth, are the constituent elements of human greatness.

But whatever may be the means of its attainment, the mere possession of power, in every age and country, is sufficient to command the admiration of the multitude. Power makes itself to be immediately felt, and thus begets a distinction, which is palpable even to those who are incompetent to judge of moral qualities. In a barbarous age, mere rude force is the guaranty of pre-eminence; and this, coupled with a measure of sagacity and courage, never wholly loses its attraction. The popular mind turns with peculiar fondness to the personal exploits of some ancient or modern hero; feels the glow of a warmer sympathy with his struggles and escapes; and rejoices the more in his triumphs, because they are so obvious, and so congenial with its own imaginings of possible distinction. And were the attributes of humanity again to be deified, doubtless, now as formerly, Hercules would have more altars

than Minerva, because men can more easily understand personal prowess than the pre-eminence of wisdom.

To this cause, in part, we may ascribe the fact, that martial glory has in every age been the highest glory among men. The fame of arms has exceeded the fame of letters, of science, of art, or of philanthropy. The rapid acquisition of power by the conqueror surrounds him with a halo of glory, which diverts the mind from the justice of the quarrel and the price of his successes. We transfer to the fortunate chieftain all the merit of the victory; and as if the strength and bravery of the whole army had been concentrated in himself, imagination invests him with all the higher attributes of humanity, and the world demi-deifies the man.

But in the progress of society, and under the meliorating influence of our holy religion, war, though it has not ceased to be practised, has ceased to be the prevailing occupation of mankind. Its occasional triumphs may, indeed, be only the more extolled, but its opportunities for distinction are materially diminished. The field of battle is, therefore, no longer the principal arena of ambition. For, though its trophies are eagerly coveted, and its occasions, perhaps, precipitated, for the sake of ulterior advancement, yet its chances of promotion are too few and precarious, and its combats too systematic and mechanical, to render it so supremely attractive as in the iron age of feudal strife and chivalry. Armed retainers and baronial castles are not now, as then, the representatives of power; but diplomatic skill and current coin. The god of war succumbs to the god of wealth; and the policy of cabinets supersedes or controls the movements of camps. The sword has measurably yielded to the toga. The civic crown is now the crown of victory; and the thronging host of competitors crowd the avenues of political pre-

ferment. In the scramble for place, military titles and renown are indeed no incumbrance; for the path of successful ambition is often the shortest and surest when it leads through fields of blood and carnage. But oftener its windings are along the tortuous and polluted way of the artful and unscrupulous demagogue. Straining towards the goal, every variety and grade of talent aspires to the first pre-eminence; and the toilsome labors of the lazy, and the hoarded wealth of the covetous, are lavishly expended to attain a position somewhat above the level of ordinary life. Distinction is mistaken for greatness; and while moral worth is left out of the account, the greatest pretenders and scamps are often, by popular suffrage, the great men of the day.

But not to insist upon this aspect of the case, and granting that among those whom the world delights to honor, there are many distinguished for intellectual power, nor yet wanting in patriotic and generous impulses, we may still impeach the world's estimate of greatness, as partial in its objects and defective in its standard. Not the most gifted sons of genius are the most successful. Adventitious circumstances, trifling in themselves, are yet controlling in their influence. A happy conception, that catches the public ear in the excitements of a contest, may decide its result; while a hasty utterance, involving no principle, but capable of becoming the butt of ridicule, has disappointed the hopes of many an aspirant. The great leaders of party, after a lifetime spent in defining and establishing their several lines of policy, and when their hosts were marshalled for a political Waterloo, have seen the tide of battle suddenly turned into new and unexpected channels, and themselves left quite out of view in a contest which they had hoped to control. Some new issue has

been started, and a wave of excitement, sweeping over the land, and bringing up from a profound obscurity new men and new measures, bears them on its bosom to the high places of honor, leaving discomfited veterans to readjust at their leisure their thwarted plans of battle and of conquest. Again, the popular favorite, the idol of to-day, to-morrow is hurled from his lofty pedestal, and loaded with execrations by those who had been loudest in his praises. Moreover, in every great struggle for power, and by all the parties, the claims of men are measured, not by their probity and worth, but by their popularity and influence. And yet, success is mistaken for talent, and distinction for greatness.

But ascribe to the successful competitor, if you will, all the intellectual power which his exalted position is supposed to imply. Let his eminence be the fruit of his own toil, or the spontaneous gift of an admiring or grateful people; yet, even then, he may be wanting in the essential elements of a true greatness.

The world's estimate of human character is graduated by a variable, and, at best, an inadequate standard. Its opinion, as we have seen, is one thing to-day and another to-morrow. But where its suffrages are the most unanimous and constant, it wholly overlooks the most important relations of man, and regards him entirely with reference to the world that now is. He may, therefore, be a great general, a great statesman, and a great patriot, and yet, withal, without being a great *man*. Man attains to the true dignity of his nature, then, and only then, when he attains to the end of his creation. If he is only the offspring of chance, and has no relations to a superior power; if the grave entombs his spirit with his body, and the world is the utmost boundary of his hopes, then the largest share of the world's applause, or wealth, or power, may constitute his high-

est glory. But if we regard him as the offspring of Almighty power; the subject of Jehovah's moral government; and his present life as but the period of his preparation for the next, "the first link in a vast and interminable chain which stretches into eternity," then it is evident that, in the qualities which fit him for his ultimate destination, his principal dignity must consist; and his moral greatness is his true greatness.

This view of the subject, I know, will meet with little favor from mere men of the world. Though they may not be disposed to question the great facts of man's origin, obligations, and destiny, yet, his personal recognition of these facts, and their influence upon him, are not taken into the account in their estimation of character. In the objects of their admiration, they can excuse the want of religious principle easier than the want of any other thing. Indeed, the known indulgence in some scandalous vices would detract less from the homage rendered to their idol than the occasional practice of certain Christian virtues, when these conflict with the prevailing maxims of society. There is in our day an unqualified admiration of mere intellectual vigor, especially if that vigor is successfully applied to the acquisition of place and power, which tends directly, first to excuse, and then to dignify vice and crime. The increasing corruption of morals from this source is one of the most alarming signs of the times. And when unmeasured eulogiums enshrine the name and memory of every giant intellect, notwithstanding its perversion to the most gigantic sins, an attempt, however feeble, to tear off the covering from conspicuous vice, expose the littleness of its factitious honors, and declare the greater guilt of great powers, proudly trampling on the law of God, may be good service done to virtue and to truth.

Look at man, then, as an immortal being, hastening to the bar of God, and his responsibilities increased by the measure of his endowments; estimate him by the unerring standard of eternal truth, and in full remembrance of the fact that there is no respect of persons with God; say if he is not rather to be pitied than admired, who, with the loftiest gifts, yet stands exposed to the deepest condemnation. With your eye fixed upon the sure Word of God, behold the man whom the world delights to honor, dishonoring himself by dishonoring his Maker, spurning his authority, and trampling upon his law, the illustrious example of daring and shameless iniquity. We are not speaking of the Cæsars, and Neroes, and Napoleons of the past; nor of the crime, and misery, and blood upon which their power was built. But such-like monsters of ambition and cruelty will again desolate the earth, if the corrupting morals and maxims of distinguished debauchees are to pass unscathed and extolled in the models of youthful emulation. We might sketch the portrait of great station and great genius linked to great degradation, and which yet would not be all a fancy sketch. Were it befitting this time and place, we might make the sketch a series, and exhibit to your wondering eyes genius in debauch, statesmanship in brothels, talents at auction, and glory in the gutter. But we are content, the rather, if we may but dissipate the false glare of earth-born distinctions, by exalting the true dignity of man as the heir of immortality. His godlike powers proclaim celestial affinities. The experience of the most successful uniformly attests the vanity of worldly pursuits. Reason approves the disclosures of revelation. The ravages of disease are the daily monitors of human frailty; and ever and anon, the voice of Death, in startling accents, echoes the universal sentence, and bids

man seek for the glory, honor, and immortality of eternal life. And this brings us to the second division of our subject; for herein mainly consists man's true greatness—preparation for eternity.

II. I think enough has been said already to show that rank, wealth, or distinction do not constitute and are not essential to the true dignity of man. Concerning the first, the truth has been seldom better expressed than in the beautiful conception of the Scottish bard:

“The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
The man 's the gold, for a' that.”

Of the second, we know that “riches are not always to men of understanding;” and even in this land, which worships the “almighty dollar,” only they who have no other boast will boast of their possessions as a claim to personal pre-eminence. Mere distinction, it is obvious, may be an infamous notoriety. And of eminent talent or attainment, we have contended that in view of man's nature, his spiritual relations, and his destiny, these, wanting moral worth, constitute not only a defective, but a monstrous character; and the greater the attainment, the greater the monstrosity. Be it understood, moreover, that when we speak of moral worth in this connection, we do not mean, simply, an upright and honest deportment, exempt from scandalous vice and crime; but we mean that fixedness of principle and purity of life which are the result of deep and abiding religious convictions. In making this an essential to true greatness, it is true, we look upon man in that peculiar aspect in which Christianity presents him. And that this is the only proper aspect in which to regard him, is evident, because this embraces the whole of his nature and the totality of his being. It directs us

to the elements, and not to the circumstantial of humanity; and, regarding as altogether superficial and temporary the distinctions of life, brings us to those essential and permanent distinctions upon which destiny hinges. As thus considered, the points of resemblance among men are more numerous and striking than their diversities. They are alike in their origin, alike in their certainty of death and the pangs of dissolution. And when these are entombed in sepulchral magnificence, and those are laid in their sod-wrapt graves, they are most fearfully alike in the corruption to which they moulder. But it is in the immortal nature of man that Christianity reveals at once the most notable similarity and difference. It beholds alike in all a nature ruined by guilt and degraded by sin. It proclaims the ample and offered means of restoration by grace; and overlooking, as idle and insignificant, all other distinctions, it draws the broad and unbending line of demarcation between the righteous and the wicked; and with the impress and seal of Jehovah's purpose, it stamps upon each Heaven's unalterable estimate of character, in the glory and honor and immortality of these, and the shame and everlasting contempt of those.

But perhaps there is a scoffer who will say, "Ah, yes; that's the representation of the Bible, we know; the old attempt of priestcraft to decry the world for the sake of exalting itself." Well, if there are any with the boldness thus to impeach the decision of the great Judge, and appeal from his sentence, we only ask, Whither will you carry your appeal, and before whom will you argue your exceptions? Shall it be at the bar of Reason? But there your strong arguments have all, long ago, been heard; and in ten thousand utterances proclaiming the emptiness of all earthly good, and upon the main issue of eternal destiny wholly declining judg-

ment, Reason defers to a higher tribunal, as a question beyond her jurisdiction. Upon the authority of revelation her verdict is unequivocal; and pointing to its disclosures of man's spiritual condition and destiny, if she utters aught concerning his degradation or dignity, it is but to re-affirm the teachings of the Bible. And there are, indeed, times, when her utterances upon this point are truthful as they are impressive. A death-bed is an honest hour, and its estimate is an honest estimate of the character of earthly things. Let wealth, rank, power, fame, philosophy, pleasure, be brought to this test, and if you read not "vanity of vanities" inscribed upon them all, then will we grant that there may be instances in which the love of the world has gained a final triumph over reason, and stifled the voice of conscience in a silence which no power can break but the sensible presence of invisible realities, and the conscious power of the world to come. Carry your appeal to the presence-chamber of Death, where prostrate human greatness lies enshrined in regal pomp and splendor; and the dying shriek of the affrighted spirit that would barter a kingdom for another hour, shall be your verdict. Carry it before spiritual intelligences, the elder-born of creation, more deeply learned than we in the mysteries of things; and the raptures of angelic joy over a repenting sinner will be no uncertain witness of their suffrages. Carry it to the bar of God, where the monarch without his crown stands trembling beside his vassal, where the base-born and the noble, princes and beggars, are all undistinguished, save for their moral guilt or purity, and by the awards of final doom, estimate the worth of external pomp and circumstance; graduate the scale of human dignity, and say if forgiven sin, reconciliation and peace with God is not its first essential element. If the moral government of God is

a reality and not a dream; if he has truly given us a law which is the most perfect as a rule of duty, and in its sanctions takes hold upon our present and eternal well-being, can there be any true greatness in wilfully trampling upon its precepts? Can we attain to the true dignity of our nature, while yet obnoxious to its curse? If the God of the Bible is the perfection of excellence, and his goodness is his greatness, can man be great whilst at enmity with God? With the Bible in our hands, and its rich disclosures of his mercy, every hour that we live in rebellion, we live in disgrace; and every step that we take in sin is an advance in degradation. Our glory begins in the moment of our restoration to the image of God; and the humblest saint, though but a babe in Israel, is more ennobled by his likeness to Christ than he could be by all the crowns and diadems of earth.

Religion exalts our nature by enlarging its capacities, refining and quickening its impulses, and multiplying its enjoyments. The deadly blight of sin is over all our powers; and the bloom of Eden is restored again, only by a union with the second Adam. The vision of the darkened intellect is bounded by the low horizon of sense, and only the illumination of the Spirit can reveal to it the hidden wonders of God. The lusts of the flesh enchain the wandering affections until Jehovah-Jesus is enshrined in the heart. And what we call our happiness, the transient and unsatisfying pleasures of a day, a mingled cup of joy and sorrow, is ever in pursuit and never in fruition until the peace of God is shed abroad in the soul. Religion delivers the mind from the tyranny of the passions; prompts to the assiduous cultivation of all its faculties; gives ample and before unknown scope to their exercise; and extends the circle of its benevolent solicitude to the compass of all man-

kind. Religion stimulates to the most earnest, determined, and unwearied exertions, and yet allays the restlessness of ambition, teaching us to toil on in the diligence of a happy and hopeful contentment, and yet in the devotion of an entire and supreme consecration to God. The spirit which it imparts is the present reward of its service; and if we aspire to another, in the promise and the pledge of ultimate success, we anticipate the crown and the glory of heaven. The clustering crowd of approving spirits cheer us on in our struggles; and the "well done" welcome of the Highest, echoed back by the applauding hosts of the skies, is the shout of our victory, and an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

But while we thus claim for the humblest exemplar of the power of a pure religion, an essential greatness, yet we do not overlook or despise other attainments. We are no advocates for the intolerant and intolerable arrogance of presumptuous and ignorant fanaticism. Religion bears no such fruits of pride and folly as are sometimes called by its name. As true genius is always modest, so true religion is always humble; among the first lessons which it teaches, is "not to think of ourselves above what we ought to think, but to think soberly." In this sobriety of judgment we assert, that the lowliest saint is essentially superior to the loftiest sinner. But if he is a saint, he will earnestly "covet the best gifts;" and not for the honor which cometh from men, but for the glory of God, he will seek for the highest possible development of his renewed and sanctified nature. A child of divine grace may be a great man in comparison with the children of this world. But then, there are also great men and princes in Israel, who have reached the proudest pre-eminence in talent, attainment, and usefulness. Their names are written

high on that scroll upon which science is wont to emblazon her achievements. In political economy, in art, in eloquence and philanthropy, religion has no need to blush for her disciples. And, so far from being averse to the very highest exhibitions of intellect, the world owes much of that intellectual greatness of which it boasts, directly to the influence of the gospel of the grace of God.

In one word, then, for the essential elements of human dignity, we point you to human nature, renewed by grace; and then to that renewed nature improved by culture, as the utmost limit of human attainment.

III. At the hazard of completely exhausting your patience, we come now to apply this lengthened discussion to the objects which we have in view in this discourse.

1. And first, the sentiments which we have advanced are illustrated by, and may aid us in illustrating, the character of the late Dr. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER.

It was characteristic of the man, his dying request, that but little should be said of himself, in the sermon preached at his funeral. And it was more befitting the occasion that, abstaining from many personal allusions, the preacher intrusted with that difficult duty should seek the rather to give expression to the swelling and mingled emotions of grief and gratitude, joy and bereavement, which agitated the venerable Synod; his associates, and the affectionate youth, his pupils, gathered about his bier. But we hold the injunction dissolved by the occasion to which it was limited. The name and the character of such a man become the property of the Church, and deserve to be held in perpetual remembrance. We yield, then, to the impulses of grateful recollections, and would also offer this, the humble

tribute of a pupil to the memory of a venerated instructor. To sketch his history would be either to recite a few barren facts and dates, familiar to you all, or, if we had the ability and materials, to write a volume; not so much because his life was fruitful in stirring events, but because it would be the history of an inward life, the workings of a noble mind through long years of active labor. Necessity requires us to be content with a few prominent points, more immediately connected with our purpose.

In the best sense of the term we may say, then, first, he was "a great man." And this not chiefly because of his position, though it might not be easy to conceive of one more exalted and honorable than that of a teacher of teachers, and those the teachers of religion. In the chair which he filled for nearly forty years, his influence was felt throughout the Church; it was felt through all the length and breadth of this land; it was felt in every continent of the globe, in every island of the sea ever trodden by American missionaries, and on the broad bosom of the sea itself. An influence so world-wide as this, implies, of necessity, the possession of extraordinary talents. But yet neither is it mainly on this account that we would denominate him "great." Rightly to estimate his intellectual abilities would, indeed, require greater ability than ours. If there have been more learned than he, there are few who have made their learning more available. If there have been more eloquent men, there are few whose eloquence has been so effective. If there have been those possessing greater analytical powers, there are few whose logic has led them so directly and so certainly to the truth. A scholar, without the parade of learning, and yet richly laden with its fruits; a preacher, without the show of eloquence, and yet, beyond any man of his age,

making his way directly into the deepest recesses of the heart, and searching the conscience; a sage, with all the simplicity of a child, and yet familiar with the forms and abundantly acquainted with all the uses of philosophy; grappling the profoundest speculations, and threading the darkest labyrinths of dialectics; lighting his pathway ever by the sure Word of God, his intellectual power was not below his station. And yet the distinguishing element of even his greatness was his goodness. We know but little of the habits of his early life, but in his latter years he seemed to dwell quite on the verge of heaven. If we were set to draw the type of Christian meditation, it would be a picture graven deep on the memory of many a Princeton student, of that venerable form, bent by years and study, with an open Bible and a twinkling eye, now glancing at the sacred page, and now turned upward in rapt and holy musings. In every utterance of his lips, as in every page from his pen, you might trace the workings of a mind long used to deep communings with itself and with its God. The secret of his power was mainly in the sincerity and warmth of his own heart. This, with his knowledge of the human mind, enabled him to dive into the hearts of others, and from their deepest depths bring out to view lurking evils which they themselves had hardly dreamed of. Many a man has trembled at the slow shaking of his finger, which had in it more of power than many a labored sermon, because it was the prelude to some startling home-thrust with the sword of the Spirit. And he could deal those blows, and then apply the healing balm, because he had himself been slain and healed by the truth of God.

Contemplate such a man, first among his peers in all the elements of earthly distinction, and yet chiefly great because of the honor which cometh from God; and say,

if fame, or wealth, or crowns and diadems, could so exalt fallen humanity.

And yet, honor was the thing he sought the least of all. It came without his seeking; and the more, because he sought it not. Had the appointments of Providence fixed his lot in the obscure labors of some country parish, it had been all the same to him; he had still been great, though he had spent his life as a traveling missionary, and always preached, as once he preached in Petersburg, beneath the spreading shadows of a friendly tree.

But he was also great in usefulness. What powers of arithmetic can estimate the good accomplished by his labors; the good directly through his preaching and his pen; and doubtless the greater good through those more than fifteen hundred students who have felt the power of his example and been trained to active service by his teachings? Eternity alone can disclose results too stupendous for any earthly calculus, too complex and far-reaching for finite comprehension.

Shall we further speak of his reward? It was great even upon earth. He attained a name and eminence more to be coveted than the highest political distinctions. He lived to see the aspirants after earthly honors, compeers with himself, toiling through seas of trouble, chagrined, deceived, discomfited, in an idle chase for bubbles; while he who toiled on, forgetful of himself, intent only on his work, was crowned with reputation and honor greater than that they sought for. And for his reward hereafter, nothing can heighten the force and beauty of that inspired declaration—"the righteous shall shine as the stars, and they that turn many to righteousness as the brightness of the firmament for ever." With such a character, such a life, and

such a destiny, "know ye not that a prince and a great man is fallen this day in Israel?"

2. A second application of our subject brings us more directly to the special object of this day's observance, as a day of fasting and prayer for an increase of candidates for the gospel ministry. Why are there so few coming up to fill the places of the fallen? This is a question which has received various answers, all of which may be more or less true. But if we would indicate one prominent cause of the mournful deficiency, it must be the light estimation which men put upon the sacred office in comparison with secular callings. Personal qualities in those who exercise its functions may indeed secure to individuals a high degree of personal respect. But to the office itself there is not entertained that high regard in which it was held in other days. We plead for no superstitious reverence, nor yet for the dignity which comes from titles or wealth. But we claim for our office, in its intrinsic importance and essential honor, a place not below the highest station to which man can aspire. Instead of this, however, how many Christian parents are wont to look upon it as a calling, respectable indeed, but by no means to be desired for their sons! If the utmost wish of their hearts could be gratified for some favorite son, it would be that he might rise in the councils of the nation and thunder in the senate, rather than that he should be an ambassador of the King of kings. Ay, there are Christian parents who, if they had their wish for some darling boy, would rather see him prosperous in business, and growing in wealth, than that he should be successful in the ministry and growing in usefulness. Is it strange if children catch the spirit of their parents, and learn to turn their youthful thoughts to worldly gain

and greatness, whilst they look upon this high and holy calling as quite below their aspirations? Is it strange if they come to associate wealth, and power, and distinction with their ideas of greatness, and couple goodness only with mental imbecility and weakness?

But our discussion has been in vain if we have failed to show you that piety is the first essential of all real human dignity. We have in vain considered the character and reward of the illustrious man recently gone to his rest, if it does not demonstrate that the very highest style of human greatness may be found in the faithful labors of the ministry. Oh that we might but look upon things in the light of eternity! To win a single soul to Christ is an honor "beyond all Greek, all Roman fame." To be the instrument in the salvation of hundreds and thousands is an honor which angels might covet, a glory that will shine undimmed by the lapse of ages, and blaze in ever-growing brightness when kingdoms and dynasties are all forgotten. Be it ours, then, as Christian parents, to consecrate to this glorious work and destiny the treasures of our hearts—those sons on whom we look with all a parent's pride and fondness.

The growing wants of the Church demand a greatly enlarged increase of her ministry. Let us not keep back the offering of our children from the altars of God, lest he remove them from our embraces, or, what is worse, wring our hearts with anguish at the waywardness of disobedient, thankless, and prodigal sons.

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