

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

A Sermon

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“So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.”—Deuteronomy xxxiv. 5.

WHAT an honourable title! Moses is distinguished as “*the servant of Jehovah.*” He was this of choice, for he willed to be the servant of God rather than to be great in the land of the Pharaohs. Such he was most perseveringly throughout the whole of his life. Such he was most intensely, for he waited upon God for his directions, as a servant waits upon his master; and he endeavoured to do all things according to the pattern which was shown him in the holy mount. Though he was king in Jeshurun, he never acted on his own authority, but was the lowly instrument of the divine will. Moses was faithful to God in all his house, as a servant. You neither see him overstepping his office nor neglecting it. His reverence for the Lord’s name was deep; his devotion to the Lord’s cause was complete, and his confidence in the Lord’s word was constant. He was a true servant of God from the time when he was appointed at the burning bush until the hour when he surrendered his keys of office to his successor, and climbed the appointed mount to die. Oh that you and I may so live as to approve ourselves servants of God! Unto as many as have received him our Lord Jesus has given power to become the sons of God, and this is our great joy; but as sons we aspire to serve our Father, even as his great First-born Son has done, who took upon himself the form of a servant that he might accomplish his Father’s good pleasure for his church. Let us with good will do service unto our Father who is in heaven, seeing it is but our reasonable service that we should lay out ourselves for him who has made us his sons and daughters. Redeemed from the slavery of sin, let us, as the Lord’s freemen, cry unto him henceforth, “O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.”

But servant of God as Moses was, *he must die.* It is the common lot of men. Only two have passed out of this world into the abodes of glory without fording the stream of death. Moses is not one of the two. Even had he crossed the Jordan into Canaan, he would in due course

have died in the land. We might have expected that he would live on till the people were settled in Canaan; but it seemed right unto the Lord God that on account of his one slip he should die outside of the Promised Land, like the rest of the people. Caleb and Joshua alone of all that generation who came out of Egypt were permitted to possess the land towards which they had journeyed for forty years. If that one offence lost him the privilege of entering the earthly Canaan, there may have been still more powerful reasons why he should not enter the heavenly Canaan without experiencing the change of death. He must not make a third with Enoch and Elias, but he must die and be buried. Such will probably be our lot in due season. Brethren, it may be that we shall not die, our Lord Jesus may come before we fall asleep; but if he do not come speedily, we shall find that it is appointed unto all men once to die. We shall pass from this world unto the Father by that common road which is beaten hard by the innumerable feet of mortal men. Since we must die, it is well to meditate upon the solemn future. Moses shall be our teacher in the art of dying. We will consider his decease, in the hope that so our fears may be removed, and our desires may be excited. There is a Pisgah where we must yield up the ghost, and be gathered to our fathers: may we climb to it as willingly as did Moses, the servant of God!

The manner of Moses' death is exceedingly remarkable. I suppose that no subject presents a finer field for oratory than the sublime decease of the prophet; but we have nothing to do with oratory: our object is spiritual and practical profit. Poets might well expend their noblest powers in depicting this strange scene of the man of God alone on the mountain's brow, with the view of Canaan at his feet, and himself in holy rapture passing away into the eternal state. We are not poets, but simple believers, desiring to learn some holy lesson from the death of one who, though the greatest of men, knew no higher honour than to be the servant of the Lord. Oh that the Spirit of grace and truth, who has come to us by Christ Jesus, may help us to find instruction in the death of him who brought the law from the mouth of God to men!

I. We are told in the text that "Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord." This I shall read, first, as meaning that Moses died on Pisgah, ACCORDING TO THE WARNING OF THE LORD.

His death was long foreseen. Moses knew some time before that he must die without setting foot in Canaan. Read in the first chapter of Deuteronomy his own account of the sin of the people at Meribah, and the Lord's sentence there and then pronounced: "Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swear to give unto your fathers, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the Lord. "Also," adds Moses, "the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, 'Thou also shalt not go in thither.'"

His death outside of the Promised Land did not come upon him at all as a surprise. He had to see his sister Miriam, first of the great trio, fall asleep; and, next, he was called to go up to Mount Hor and disrobe his brother Aaron of his priestly garments which he placed upon Eleazar,

his son. Moses had also to see the whole of the generation that came out of Egypt with him buried in the wilderness. The ninetieth psalm is his, and it is a sort of Dead March; fit hymn for a nation whose track was marked by countless graves. Because of unbelief "their carcases fell in the wilderness." Only Caleb and Joshua remained, the sole survivors of the great host which crossed the Red Sea. The Great Lawgiver had thus abundant pledges of his own departure, and he must have had in his brother's death a rehearsal of his own. Have not we also had many warnings? Are we ready?

Concerning his death in the land of Moab, it is natural to remark that *it was exceedingly disappointing*. He had been for forty years engaged in leading the people to the land of promise: must he die when that country was within a day's march? It was his life's work, for which he had been prepared by forty years in Egypt, where he became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and by another forty years in the solitary wilderness, where he kept sheep and held high fellowship with God. His third forty years had been spent in freeing Israel from Egypt, training them to become a nation, and conducting them to the land of promise: must he now expire before the nation entered in? What years his had been! What a life was that of Moses! How glorious was the man who had confronted Pharaoh, and broken the pride of Egypt! How tried and troubled a man had he been while called to carry all that nation in his bosom, and care for them as a shepherd careth for his sheep! His was a task that well-nigh broke him down; and had not the man Moses been made very meek by the indwelling Spirit of the Lord, and had he not also been graciously sustained by fellowship with God, his task had proved too heavy even for him. Yet, after all that toil in fashioning a nation, he must die before the long-expected conquest. It was a bitter disappointment when first the sentence pierced his heart. He had known one great disappointment before; for Stephen tells us, that when he smote the Egyptian, "he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not." Then, when his brethren had refused him, he fled into the land of Midian, a rejected leader, a patriot whose heroism had only brought forth from his countrymen the contemptuous question, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" But this denial of entrance into Canaan was a greater disappointment still. To have toiled so long, and to reap no harvest; to see the land, but not to enter it; to bring the tribes to the Jordan's brink, and then to die in Moab after all: it was a grievous disappointment. Brethren, are we ready to say as to our most cherished hope, "Thy will be done"! Are we holding our life's dearest purpose with a loose hand? It will be our wisdom so to do.

Apparently it was a severe chastisement. His offence was but one, and yet it excluded him from Canaan. We have not time to describe in detail the sin of Moses. It would appear to have been a sin of unbelief occasioned by his feeling so intensely for and with the people. Moses was thoroughly knit to Israel. When they sinned he interceded as for himself. When Jehovah made him the offer that he would make of him a great nation, he declined it solely from his love to Israel. He

lived for the nation, and for the nation he died. Remember how once he went so far as to say, "If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." In every way he was of the people, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh: Israel was hidden in his heart; and out of that master passion of sympathy with the people came the weakness which at last made him speak unadvisedly with his lips. They strove with God; and though Moses never yielded a point to them in that wicked contest, yet their unbelief so far influenced him that he spake in anger, and said, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Then "the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Numb. xx. 12). Three times in the Book of Deuteronomy Moses tells the people, "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes." It was not so much that which Moses did personally which involved him in judgment, but he suffered because of his being mixed up with Israel. As the Lord had spared the people aforetime for Moses' sake, it became necessary that, when he in any measure shared in their great sin of unbelief, he should be chastened for their sake as well as his own. His faith had saved them, and now his unbelief, being backed by theirs, secures for him the sentence of exclusion from the land.

My brethren, when I think of this severity of discipline towards so faithful a servant as Moses, I do exceedingly fear and quake. Truly, "the Lord our God is a jealous God." We are sure that he is never unjust, we are sure that he is never unduly severe: we do not for a moment impugn the righteousness or even the love of our God in this or any other act; but he is terrible out of his holy places. How true it is that he will be sanctified in them that come near to him! Behold and wonder! That highly-favoured servant, Moses, though accepted always in the economy of grace, yet must he come under the rule of the house, and feel the chastising hand if he transgresses. Hence the sentence of exclusion is passed. As he had once joined that unbelieving generation by manifesting a measure of hasty unbelief, he must now share their doom, and die on Moab's side of Jordan. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments." Oh for grace to behave ourselves aright in thine house! Lord, teach us thy statutes, and keep us in thy way.

Beloved, *it seemed a great calamity* that Moses must die when he did. He was an aged man as to years, but not as to condition. It is true he was a hundred and twenty years old, but his father and his grandfather and his great grandfather had all lived beyond that age, two of them reaching a hundred and thirty-seven, so that he might naturally have expected a longer lease of life. This truly grand old man had not failed in any respect; his eye was not dim, neither had his natural force abated, and therefore he might have expected to live on. Besides, it seems a painful thing for a man to die while he was capable of so much work; when, indeed he was more mature, more gracious, more wise than ever. The mental and spiritual powers of Moses were greater in the latter days of his life than ever before. Notice his wonderful song! Observe his marvellous address to the people! He

was in the prime of his mental manhood. He had been tutored by a long experience, chastened by a marvellous discipline, and elevated by a sublime intercourse with God ; and yet must he die. How strange that, when a man seems most fit to live, it is then that the mandate comes, "Get thee up into the mountain and die" !

Naturally speaking, it seemed a sad loss for the people of Israel. Who but Moses could rule them? Even he could scarcely control them. They were a heavy burden even to his meekness : who else could so successfully act as king in Jeshurun? Without Moses to awe them, what will not these rebels do? It was a grave experiment to place a younger and an inferior man in the seat of power, when the nation was entering upon its great campaign. It would need all the faith and discretion of Moses to conduct the conquest of the country, and to divide their portions to the tribes. Yet so it must be : precious as his life was, the word went forth, "Get thee up into the top of Pisgah : for thou shalt not go over this Jordan." Even thus to the best and most useful must the summons come. Who would wish to forbid the Lord to call home his own when he wills?

The sentence was *not to be averted by prayer*. Moses tells us that he besought the Lord at that time, "O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand : for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." This was altogether a very proper prayer : he did not plead his own services, but he urged the former mercies of the Lord. Surely this was good pleading, and he might have hoped to prevail for himself, seeing he had formerly been heard for a whole nation. But no. This boon must be denied him. The Lord said, "Let it suffice thee ; speak no more unto me of this matter." Moses never again opened his lips upon the subject. He did not beseech the Lord thrice, as Paul did, in his hour of trouble ; but seeing that the sentence was final he bowed his head in holy consent.

Brethren, he had often asked a greater thing than this of the Lord his God. Once he had even dared to say, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," and he was heard even in that high request. The Lord placed him in the cleft of the rock, and made all his goodness pass before him. Yet now he begs for a comparatively small thing, and it is refused. What a mercy that it is in the small things of this life that our requests may be denied, but in the things which touch the kingdom of the Lord our prayer never returns empty! All heaven is open to our bended knee, though for wise ends and purposes a Canaan on earth may be closed against us. All-sufficient grace was given though the thorn was not removed : Moses the servant of the Lord died, but triumphed over death.

When I thought of the trial of Moses in being shut out of the land, I found myself unable to read the chapter which lay open before me, for I was blinded by my tears. How shall any of us stand before a God so holy? Where Moses errs how shall we be faultless? Never servant more favoured of his Lord, and yet even he must undergo a disappointment so great as a rebuke for a single fault. The flower of his life is broken off from the stalk for one act of unbelief. To be exalted so

near to God is to be involved in a great responsibility. A fierce light beats about the throne of God. He that is the king's chosen, admitted to continual intercourse with him, must stand in awe of him. Well is it written, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." An offence which might be passed over as a mere trifle in an ordinary subject, would be very serious in a prince of the blood, who had been favoured with royal secrets, and had been permitted to lean his head upon the bosom of the king. If we live near to God we cannot sin without incurring sharp rebukes. Even the common run of the elect must remember that word, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Much more must the elect out of the elect hear such a warning. God did, in effect, say to Moses, "Thou only have I chosen of all mankind to speak with me face to face, and, therefore, since thou hast failed in thy faith after such intercourse with me, it behoves me, in very faithfulness and love towards thee, to mark thy failure with an evident token of displeasure." The discipline of saints is in this life. I doubt not but many a man's life has come to an end when he wished it to be continued, and he has missed that which he has striven for, because of an offence against the Lord committed in his earlier years. We had need walk carefully before our jealous God, who will not spare sin anywhere, and least of all in his own beloved. His love to them never faileth, but his hatred of their sin burns like coals of juniper. Foolish parents spare the rod, but our wise Father acteth not so. Walk circumspectly, O ye heirs of life eternal, for "even our God is a consuming fire." The Lord give us to feel the sanctifying power of this passage in the story of the great Lawgiver!

II. But now I have to conduct you to a second point of view. Moses, the man of God, died in the land of Moab "according to the word of the Lord," that is, ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT.

All the details of the death of Moses had been ordered of the Lord. Time, place, and circumstances were arranged by God. So, brethren, it is appointed unto us where we shall die, and when we shall die. We speak of certain persons as having "died by accident," and we sometimes bewail the deaths of Christian men as premature; but in the deepest sense it is not so. God hath marked out for us the place where and the time when we must resign our breath. Let this suffice us. That which is of divine appointment should be to our contentment. We do not believe in the *Kismet* of blind fate, but we believe in the predestination of infinite wisdom, and therefore we say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

Moses died according to the divine appointment, that is also *according to an appointment which is very general amongst God's people.* He died without seeing the full result of his life-work. If you look down the list of the servants of God you will find that the most of them die before the object which they had in view is fully accomplished. It is true that we are immortal till our work is done; but then we usually think that our work is something other than it is. It never was the work of Moses to lead Israel into the promised land. It was his wish, but not his work. His work he saw; but his wish he saw not. Moses did really finish his own proper work; but the desire of his heart was

to have seen the people settled in their land; and this was not granted him. Thus David gathered together gold and silver wherewith to build the Temple, but he was not to build it; Solomon, his son, undertook the work. Even thus great reformers rise and speak the truth, and cause colossal systems of error to tremble; but they do not themselves utterly destroy those evils. Their successors continue the work. Most men have to sow that others may reap. The prayer of Moses is fulfilled to others as well as to himself: "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children." We must not hope to engross all things: let us be content to do our own part in laying the foundation upon which other men may build in due course. It is according to the divine appointment which links us with each other that one plants and another waters, one brings out of Egypt and another leads into Canaan.

And I may here notice that Moses thus "died according to the word of the Lord," *for a deep dispensational reason*. It was not for Moses to give the people rest, for the law gives no man rest, and brings no man to heaven. The law may bring us to the borders of the promise, but only Joshua or Jesus can bring us into grace and truth. If Moses had given them Canaan, the allegory would have seemed to teach us that rest might be obtained by the law; but as Moses must be laid asleep, and buried by divine hands, so must the law cease to rule that the covenant of grace may lead us into the fulness of peace.

"Moses may lead to Jordan's flood,
 But there surrenders his command;
 Our Joshua must the waves divide,
 And bring us to the promised land.
 Trained by the law, we learn our place,
 But gain th' inheritance by grace."

Thus there was a mysterious reason why Moses should die in Moab, according to the eternal purpose of God. Not without such divine decree shall any other of the servants of the Lord depart out of the camp of Israel. We also shall in life and death answer some gracious purpose of the Lord. Are we not glad to have it so? Yea, Lord, thy will be done.

III. I have conducted you a little out of the dark now, and the sky is clearing around us. In the third place, Moses died ACCORDING TO THE LOVING WISDOM OF THE LORD. It was a meet thing, a wise thing, and a kind thing that Moses should not go over Jordan.

First, by so doing *he preserved his identity with the people for whom he had cared*. For their sakes he had forsaken a principedom in Egypt, and now for their sakes he loses a home in Palestine. He had suffered with them, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt"; and he had been with them in all that great and terrible wilderness, afflicted in all their affliction, bearing and carrying them in God's name all his days; was it not meet that he should at last die with them? He had been all along the mirror of self-denial: neither for himself, nor his brother, nor his son had he sought honour: he lived only for others, and never for himself, and his death was agreeable with his whole life; for he leads others to the border of Canaan, but enters it not himself. He sleeps with the older nation; he ends his career on the hither side of Jordan, like all the generation which

he had numbered when they came out from under the iron hand of the Egyptian tyrant. It seemed fit that one so identified with the people should say, "Where thou diest I will die." Are not we satisfied to take our lot with the holy men and women who already sleep in Jesus?

Moreover, Moses might be well content to die there and then, since he was thus *released from all further trial*. Surely he had known enough of sorrow in connection with that rebellious nation! Forty years was enough for a pastorate over a people so fickle and perverse. Surely he must have blessed the hand that removed his shoulder from the burden! His was no life of luxury and ease, but of stern self-denial, and perpetual provocation. What trial he endured! What self-restraint he exercised! What a lonely life he led! Are you surprised to hear me say that? With whom could he associate? Even Aaron, his brother, was a poor comrade for such a man. Remember how he failed Moses, when that man of God was absent for forty days upon the Mount with God. It was Aaron that made the golden calf, and this clearly proved his spiritual inferiority to Moses. The man of God had to watch even his brother who stood next to him. With whom could he take counsel? Who would talk with him as a friend? He dwelt apart, and shone as a lone star. It is significant that he died alone, for so had he lived. Aaron had tender attendants to disrobe him; he who put the vestments on most fitly aided to take them off; but the crown which Moses wore, God himself had set upon his brow, and no human hand must remove it. Surely this burdened watcher of Israel must have been glad when his watch was over! Surely this lonely man, after one hundred and twenty years of service, must have felt it a happy release to be admitted to the glorious society of heaven! As Noah was a preacher of righteousness for one hundred and twenty years, and then entered into the ark, so Moses, after one hundred and twenty years of service, enters into his rest. Is it not well? Do you grieve that the battle is fought, and the victory is won for ever? We also in our deaths shall find the end of toil and labour, and the rest will be glorious.

Remember, that by his so dying, in the next place he was *relieved from a fresh strain upon him*, which would have been involved in the conquest of Canaan. He would have crossed the Jordan, not to enjoy the country, but to fight for it: was he not well out of so severe a struggle? You think of the clusters of Eshcol, but I am thinking of the sieges and the battles. Was it so very desirable to be there? Would Moses really have desired that dreadful fray? Was it not a gracious act on the part of the Commander-in-chief to relieve from his command a veteran who had already served through a forty years' war? The Lord would not put upon Moses a burden so little agreeable to his age and to his turn of mind as that of executing the condemned Canaanites. Joshua was naturally a man of war; let him use the sword, for Moses was abler at the pen. Recollect that the people of Israel were no better when they reached Canaan than when they were in the wilderness: they suffered defeat through unbelief, and they missed much of their inheritance through self-indulgence. Moses had seen enough of them on one side Jordan, without being troubled with them on the other. The Lord therefore graciously took his servant off the active list, and

promoted him to a higher sphere. Let us not be distressed by the fact that he will one day perform the like kindness to us in our turn.

But, you will say, surely it might have been as well if Moses had lived to have seen Joshua win the country. Would this have been desirable? Do active men find much delight in sitting still and seeing others take the lead? Moreover, had Moses lived, he would before long have felt those infirmities from which he had for one hundred and twenty years been screened: is it so very desirable to survive one's powers, and to be a tottering old man amidst constant battles? Peace suits age; age agrees not with war's alarms. Had Moses remained the leader of the people, he might have injured the glory of his former days. Have we not seen aged men survive their wisdom? Have not their friends wished that they had closed their career long before? Have we not seen pastors, once able and efficient, holding to their pulpits to the injury of the churches they once edified? Oh that men would have wisdom enough not to undo in their age what they have wrought in their youth! Moses is removed before this evil can happen to him, and it is well.

"But," you say, "perhaps he might have been there to watch with joy the victories of Joshua." Is that always an easy thing to one who has been in the front rank himself? At least, it is not an unmixed privilege: there is a mixture of trial in the blessing. Moses did not "lag superfluous on the stage." He did not survive his work. Who wishes to do so? He passed away on the crest of the wave before any ebb had set in, or any weakness had been discoverable. He died so as to be missed. Israel wept for him, and no man said that he had lived too long. That prayer of his, after all, was a mistake. What would have been the particular joy of merely treading the soil of Canaan? The land looked far more beautiful from Pisgah than it would have done had he stood by Jericho: assuredly at the present day you and I, who have never seen Palestine, have a much more delightful idea of it than those who have endured its noonday heats and midnight frosts. Moses had more joy in gazing upon it from above than in actually warring among its hills.

IV. I must hasten on to say that while the death of Moses thus exhibits the loving wisdom of God, the way in which he died abundantly displays THE GRACE OF GOD.

After Moses had been well assured that he must die, you *never hear a complaint of it*, nor even a prayer against it. Remember, that he himself wrote the story, and it is charming to see how he recorded his own fault, his prayer to be allowed entrance into Canaan, and its denial: had he murmured he would have recorded this also. He seems to me always to write about Moses as if he were somebody he had known: he is strictly impartial in his praise or blame of himself. He calls himself "king in Jeshurun," he says that the man Moses was very meek, and yet he records his outbursts of anger. No man was ever less self-conscious, or lived so little for himself, as Moses did: therefore, when once the Lord told him he must die, he acquiesced without a word.

Most fitly the old man immediately *called forth all his energies to finish his work*. You will find in the thirty-first chapter of the Book

of Numbers that he took in hand a war : " And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites : afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people " (Num. xxxi. 1, 2). He would die warring with Israel's adversaries, and obeying Israel's Lord. Certain ordinances to be observed in war he delivered to Eleazar, and he supervised the division of the spoils. Fearing lest the tribes which had settled east of Jordan might excuse themselves from future labours, he stirred up Reuben and Gad, and gained from them a promise to go over armed with their brethren till the whole land was conquered. Furthermore, he prepared his manuscripts, not for the press, but to be put away in the ark and to be preserved. He would have his testimony to future generations complete before his hand was paralyzed by death. He knew that he was to die, but he did not sit down and weep, nor sulk, nor give himself up to bitter forebodings of the hour of departure. He served his God with increased vigour, and was more than ever alive as life neared its close. Then he preached his best sermon. What a wonderful sermon it was ! How he poured out his heart in pleading with the people ! The sermon over, he began to sing. The swan is fabled to sing but once, and that just before it dies ; so did Moses at the last give us that famous ninetieth Psalm, the song commencing, " Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak ; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. Because I will publish the name of the Lord : ascribe ye greatness unto our God." Moses had no time for poetry while his whole strength was needed in his government ; but now he is about to die his frame of mind is ecstatic ; prose will not content him, he must weave his thoughts into verse. In fine, all the faculties of his manhood were drawn out to their utmost in a final effort to glorify the Lord his God. Brethren, is not this a fine fruit of grace ? Oh that we may bear it !

Then he gathered the tribes together and blessed them in prophetic words, pouring out his soul in benedictions. Having already cried to God about his successor, he laid his hands upon Joshua, and charged him, and encouraged him, and bade the people help him in all his service.

He did all that remained to be done, *and then went willingly to his end.*

" Sweet was the journey to the sky,
The wondrous prophet tried.
' Climb up the mount,' says God, ' and die ' ;
The prophet climbed, and died.

Softly his fainting head he lay
Upon his Maker's breast ;
His Maker kissed his soul away,
And laid his flesh to rest."

We, my brethren, also expect to die. Let us not fear it, but let us arouse ourselves to labour more abundantly ; let us preach more boldly, let us sing more sweetly, let us pray more ardently. As flowers before they shed their leaves pour out all their perfumes, so let us pour out our souls unto the Lord. Let us live while we live, and dying, let us

die unto the Lord. May our life-work close as sets the sun, looking greater when he sinks into the west than when he shines at full meridian height !

V. Now let us conclude by noticing, in the last place, that Moses died "according to the word of the Lord," that is, ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE FAVOUR.

His death leaves nothing to regret ; neither is any desirable thing lacking. Failing to pass over Jordan seems a mere pin's prick, in presence of the honours which surrounded his departing hours. His death was the climax of his life. He now saw that he had fulfilled his destiny, and was not as a pillar broken short. He was ordered to lead the people through the wilderness, and he had done so. There they stood on the borders of their heritage, a people moulded by his hand. By his instrumentality they were, so to speak, a regenerated race, far more fitted than their fathers to become a nation. The degrading results of long bondage had been shaken off in the free air of the desert. They were all young men, vigorous, hardy, and ready for the fray. It is grand to pass away while there is nothing of infirmity yet seen, nothing left undone, and nothing allowed to fail through too long persistence in office. We may say of Moses, that he did

" His body with his charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."

Moreover, his successor was appointed, and was just below in the plain. It was not his son, but it was his servant who had become his son at length. He did not leave his flock to be scattered, his building to be thrown down. Happy Moses, to see his Joshua ! Happy Elijah, to see his Elisha ! No trembling, for the ark of the Lord mars such a departure. The succession of workers lies with the Master, not with the workers. We are to train men "who can teach others also" ; but our own especial work we must leave with the Lord. Yet as Paul was glad of Timothy, so must Moses have rejoiced over Joshua, and felt in his appointment a release from care.

He died, moreover, in the best company possible. Some men expire most fitly in the presence of their children ; their strength has laid in their domestic duties and affections, and their children fitly close their eyes : but for the man Moses there was no true kindred. You hear that he married an Ethiopian woman ; but you know nothing about her. You know that he had sons, but you do not hear a word about them except their names : their father was too engrossed in honouring his God to crave office for them. As we have seen, he lived as to men, alone, and as to men he died alone. But God was with him, and in the peculiarly near and dear society of God he closed his life on the lone peak. If he suffered any weakness no mortal eye beheld it. So far as his people were concerned, "he was not, for God took him." Pisgah was to him the vestibule of heaven. God met him at the gates of Paradise.

As he died, the sweetness of his last thought was indescribable. Before his strengthened eye there lay the goodly land and Lebanon. The Lord showed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan. Yonder is Carmel, and beyond it he sees the gleam of the utmost sea. Through breaks of the

mountains he sees Bethlehem and Jebus, which is Jerusalem. Then, like Abraham, he saw the day of Christ, and by faith beheld the track of the incarnate God. Thy land, O Immanuel, appeared before him, and he saw it in all its spiritual bearings. What a vision! Yet even this melted into a nobler view. As we have seen in our childhood by the light of the magic lantern one view dissolve into another, so did the lower scene gradually melt away into another; and the servant of the Lord found himself removed from the shadows which his eye had seen into the realities which eyes cannot behold. He had gone from Canaan below to Canaan above, and from the vision of Jerusalem on earth to the joy of the City of Peace in glory. The Rabbis say that our text means that Moses died at the mouth of God, and that his soul was taken away by a kiss from the Lord's mouth. I do not know, but I have no doubt that there was more sweetness in the truth than even their legend could set forth. As a mother takes her child and kisses it, and then lays it down to sleep in its own bed; so did the Lord kiss the soul of Moses away to be with him for ever, and then he hid his body we know not where. Whoever had such a burial as that of Moses? Angels contended over it, but Satan has failed to use it for his purposes. That body was not lost, for in due time it appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, talking with Jesus concerning the greatest event that ever transpired. Oh that we also may pass away amid the most joyful prospects; heaven coming down to us as we go up to heaven! May we also attain unto the resurrection from among the dead, and be with our Lord in his glory!

Soon our turn shall come. Do we dread it? As we are favoured to serve our Lord we shall be favoured to be called home in due season. Let us be ever ready; yea, joyfully ready. When we are dying we shall see, not the land of Naphtali and Ephraim, but the covenant; and the infinite provisions of its promises will be outspread before our soul, as Canaan at the feet of Moses. Wrapt in happy enjoyment of precious promises, we shall with surprise find ourselves ushered into the place where the promises are all fulfilled.

“ There shall we see his face,
And never, never sin,
But from the rivers of his grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”

To the believer it is not death to die. Since Jesus has died and risen again, the sting of death is gone; wherefore let us prepare ourselves to climb where Moses stood, and view the landscape o'er. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Numbers xx. 1—13;
Deuteronomy iii. 21—28; xxxii. 48—52; xxxiv. 1—12.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—912, 876, 875.