

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LAST THINGS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 31ST, 1865, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“At the last.”—Prov. v. 11.

THE wise man saw the young and simple straying into the house of the strange woman. The house seemed so completely different from what he knew it to be, that he desired to shed a light upon it, that the young man might not sin in the dark, but might understand the nature of his deeds. The wise man looked abroad, and he saw but one lamp suitable to his purpose; it was named “At the last;” so, snatching this, he held it up in the midst of the strange woman’s den of infamy, and everything was changed from what it had been before: the truth had come to light, and the deceptive had vanished. The young man dreamed of pleasure, in wanton dalliance he hoped to find delight; but when the lamp of “At the last” began to shine, he saw rottenness in his bones, filthiness in his flesh, pains and griefs and sorrows, as the necessary consequence of sin, and, wisely guided, wisely taught, the simple-minded started back and listened to the admonitions of the teacher, “Come not nigh the door of her house, for her gates lead down to the chambers of death.”

Now if this lamp of “At the last” was found so useful in this one particular case, methinks it must be equally useful everywhere else, and it may help us all to understand the truth of matters if we will look at them in the light which this wonderful lamp yields. I can only compare my text in its matchless power to Ithuriel’s spear, with which, according to Milton, he touched the toad and straightway Satan appeared in his true colours. If I can apply my text to certain things to-day, they will come out in their true light; “At the last,” shall be the rod in my hand with which I shall touch tinsel, and it shall disappear and you will see it is not gold, and I will touch varnish and paint and graining, and you shall understand that they are really what they are, and not what they profess to be: the light of “At the last” shall be the light of truth, the light of wisdom to our souls. It seems to me a fitting occasion for holding up this light this morning, when we have come to the end of the year, and shall in a few short hours be at the beginning of another. This period, like Janus, hath two faces, looking back on the year that is past, and looking forward on the year that is to

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come, and my four-sided lamp will perhaps gleam afar. I wish that you may have courage enough to look down the vista of the years that you have already lived, and think of everything that you have thought, and spoken, and done, in the light of the beams of this lamp "At the last," and then I hope you will have holy daring enough to let the same light shine forward on the years yet to come, when your hair shall be grey and the grinders shall fail, and they that look out of the windows shall be darkened. We will, then, examine the past and the future of life in the light of "At the last." May it teach us wisdom, and make us walk as in the fear of God.

I have said that my lamp has four sides to it, and so it has: we will look at it first in the light which streams from death.

I. DEATH is at the last. In some sense it is *the* last, of this mortal life; it is the last of our period of trial here below; it is the last of the day of grace; it is the last of the day of mortal sin. The tree falleth when we die, and it sprouteth not again; the house is washed from the foundations and it is built no more, if it hath been founded on sin. Death is the end of this present life. And how certain is it to all of us! This year we have had many tokens of its certainty. One might almost compose an almanac for the year 1865, and put down the name of some one of note at least to every month, and I should scarcely exaggerate if I said to every week, in the year. All ranks and classes have been made to feel the arrow of the insatiable archer. From royalty down to poverty the grave has been glutted with its prey. Not late in the year there fell one whose benevolence mingled with sagacity had blessed our land, and who being dead is still remembered by the needy, because he cheapened their bread, and broke down the laws which, while they might have fattened the rich, certainly impoverished the poor. His sagacity could not spare him, and though he is embalmed in the hearts of thousands, yet to the dust he has returned. Swiftly after him there fell one who ruled a mighty people in the flush of victory, when what threatened to be a disruption and a separation had ended in triumph to one side, and the nation seemed as if it were about to start on a fresh course of prosperity. By the assassin's hand he fell. Whatever question there might have been about him in his life, all men conspired to honour him in his death. The ruler of a nation who could subdue a gallant and a mighty foe, could not subdue that old foeman who conquers whom he wills. Abraham Lincoln died as well as Cobden. And there was he who had saved many precious lives by warning mariners of the approaching storm, and thus many a ship had remained in harbour and been delivered from the merciless jaws of the deep, but he could not forecast or escape himself the last dread storm; he, too, must go down into that fathomless deep which swalloweth all mankind. Then, when the year was ripe and the flowers were all in bloom—fit season for his going—there was taken away the man who has garnished our nation with objects of beauty and of joy, a man who loved the flowers and sleeps beneath them now. Like flowers he withered as all of us must do—Sir Joseph Paxton died. Then in the month of September, when the year began to wane, three men at least who had walked with their staff to heaven and read the spheres, astronomers who predicted eclipses and told of comets, men of fame and name—three fell at once. They might

tell the eclipse, but they themselves must be eclipsed; and the comet they might foretell the track of, but they themselves are gone from us as those meteoric stars are gone. Then you will remember well, when the year had waned, grown old, it is but a day or two ago, that all were startled by the death of that young-old man who had ruled our nation so long and on the whole so well. We shall not forget that he was taken away from us who was, in some respects, a king throughout our land. Wisdom, cheerfulness, youthful strength such as he possessed, could not avert the time of death. And then, as if the muster roll were not completed, as if death could not be satisfied till the year had yielded up yet another grave, we heard that the oldest of monarchs had been taken away; and though his goodness and his wisdom had guided well the little nation over which he ruled, and given him an influence far more extensive than his own sphere, yet death spared him not, and Leopold must die. It has been a year of dying rather than of living, and you may look upon yourselves and wonder that you are here. Some greener than we are have been cut down. You that are ripe, are you ready? It is marvellous that although so ripe you should have been spared so long.

Now in the light of all these deaths, I want you to look upon mortal sins. They sculpture angels upon gravestones sometimes; then let each angel from the gravestone speak to us this morning, and we will listen to his words, for wise and solemn they will surely be, and worthy of our notice, as if he had risen from the dead.

Let me take you upstairs to your own dying chamber, for there, perhaps, the lamp will burn best for you. Look at actions which you have thought to be great, and upon which you have prided yourself—how will they look at the last? You made money; you made money fast; you did the thing very cleverly; you praised yourself for it, just as others have praised themselves for conquering nations, or forcing their way to fame, or lifting themselves into eminence. Now you are dying, and what do you think of all that? Is it so great as it seemed to be? Oh, how you leaped up to it, how you strained yourself to reach it, and you have got it, and you are dying. What do you think of it now? The greatest of human actions will appear to be insignificant when we come to die, and especially those upon which men most pride themselves—these will yield them the bitterest humiliation. We shall then say what madmen we must have been to have wasted so much time and energy upon such paltry things. When we shall discover that they were not real, that they were but mere bubbles, mere pretences, we shall then look upon ourselves as demented to have spent the whole of our life and of our energy upon them.

Let us look at our selfish actions in that light. A man says, "I know how to make money," "and I know how to keep it too," says he—and he prides himself that he is not such a fool as to be generous, nor such a simpleton as to give either to God or to the poor. Now, there he lies. Ah! do you know how to keep it now? Can you take it with you? Can you bear so much as a single farthing of it across the river of death? You are come to the water's side—how much of it will you carry through? Ah fool! how much wiser hadst thou been if thou hadst laid up thy treasure in heaven.

where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt! Thou calledst such men fools when thou wast living. What dost thou think them now that thou art dying? Who is the fool, he that sent his goods beforehand, or he that stored them up here to leave them everlastingly? Everything that is selfish will look beggarly when we come to die; but everything which in the sight of God we have done for Christ's sake that has been generous, and self-denying, and noble, will even amidst the vaults of death sparkle with celestial splendour. Some of you have been, during this week, giving to the cause of God right generously, for which I thank you—I think I may also do it in my Master's name—and when I have thought of it, I have said to myself, “Surely, when they come to die, they shall none of them regret that they have served the cause of God. Ah, if they have even given to the pinching of themselves, it shall be no source of sorrow when they come to the dying bed that they did it unto one of the least of God's little ones.” Look at your actions in the light of death, and the selfish ones shall soon pass. I would also, dear friends, that some of you would look at your self-righteousness in the light of death. You have been very good people, very upright, honest, moral, amiable, generous, and so on, and you are resting on what you are. Do you think this will bear your weight when you come to die? When you are in good health any form of religion may satisfy, but a dying soul wants more than sand to rest on. You will want the Rock of Ages. Then let me assure you, that in the light of the grave, all confidence, except confidence in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, is a clear delusion. Fly from it, I beseech thee. Wherefore wilt thou repose beneath a Jonah's gourd that will die before the worm? Seek thou a better shelter; cling thou to the Rock of Ages; find thou the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The same, I may say, of all confidence in the efficacy of ceremonies and sacraments. When we are in good health it seems a sufficiently satisfactory thing to have been baptized, and to have taken the sacrament and to go to church, and read prayers and all that, and one can get some little water out of those wells while one is strong and joyous; but when you come to be sick and to die, let me tell you, sacraments will be nothing to you. Baptism and the Lord's Supper will alike deceive you if you rest on them; when you come to die you will find them to be supports too frail to bear the weight of an immortal soul's eternal interests. It will be in vain when you lie dying, if God gives you a quickened conscience to say, “I went to church or to meeting so many times a day.” You will find it a poor plaster to your soul's wounds to be able to say, “I made a profession of godliness.” Oh your shams will all be rent away from you by the rough hand of the skeleton, Death; you will want a real Saviour, vital godliness, true regeneration, not baptismal regeneration; you will want Christ, not sacraments; and nothing short of this will do “at the last.”

And, dear friends, let me ask as I hold up the light, How will sin appear when we come to die? It is pleasant now and we can excuse it, calling it a peccadillo, a little trivial mistake, a juvenile error, and imprudence, and so on; but how will sin appear when you come to die? The grim ghosts of our iniquities, if they have not been laid in the grave of Christ Jesus, will haunt our dying bed. That ghastly chamberlain, with finger bloody and red, will draw the curtain round about us. What a horrid prospect,

to be shut in with our sins for ever, to be dying, with no comrades about the bed to comfort, but with the remembrances of the past to terrify and to alarm!

Think, I pray you, not only upon the root and principle of evil, but upon the fruit of it. Remember that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Do not consider what the thing looks like to-day, but what will it be in the end thereof? Thou warrest the viper in thy bosom, but how wilt thou bear its sting when thou shalt come to lie upon thy last bed? The sea I know is smooth and calm to thee for a moment; but remember, there are storms, there are hurricanes that sweep it, and what will thy poor bark do without Christ for its pilot when the dread storm of death shall come? I wish I could in imagination take you down, down, down to the waters of death, where you shall feel your feet sinking in the dread sand of uncertainty, and hear the booming of the distant sea, and your spirit shall begin to ask, "What is that ocean that I hear?" And there shall come back an answer, "Ye hear the breaking of the everlasting waves; the bottomless sea of eternity is that to which you are descending." You shall feel its chill floods as they come from the ankles to the knees, and from the knees to the loins; and you will find it (if you are without Christ), not a river to swim in, but an ocean to be drowned in for ever, for ever, for ever. Oh, God help you to look at present joys, and actions, and thoughts, and doings, in the light of death! What a contrast there is often between the life of man and his death! You would praise some men if you only saw their lives, but, when you see their deaths, you shift your estimation. There is Moses: he may be the King of Egypt, but he gives up royalty and all its tempting joys. On the mount it is offered to him to be made the founder of a mighty race—a desire always prominent in the Eastern mind, but, instead of desiring himself to be made a great nation, he, unselfishly, desires even to be blotted out of the Book of Life, if God will but spare his people Israel. And what does Moses get for it all? His only earthly reward is to be the leader of a crew of slaves who are perpetually rebelling against him and vexing his holy spirit. Now there is Balaam, on the other hand. He has visitations from God; and when Balak, the son of Zippor, begs him to curse Israel, he cannot curse, though he is quite willing to go as far as he can. He is compelled by the inward Spirit to bless the people, but, after he has done that, for gain and for reward, he plots a plan against Israel by which they were cursed: he bids them send out the women of Moab to lead astray the children of Israel. Now there he goes, with his treasures of silver and gold, back to his own house, and the shrewd busy worldly man says, "That is the man for me: do not tell me about your meek Moses, that is afraid of doing this and that, and will not look after the main chance. He has thrown away a kingdom, and now he has thrown away the chance of being the head of a nation. That is the man to make money—Balaam. He will be a common councillor, or an alderman, or lord mayor one day—that Balaam. A man must not stick too much at things; he must go ahead, and make hay while the sun shines.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

That is the man for me who knows when to launch out on the waters and who does not ask if they are dirty or clean if they only waft him onward to wealth and success." Ah, but they come to die, and Balaam dies—where? He had prayed, "Let my last end be like his"—like the righteous,—and he died in battle, fighting against the righteous and against the God of the righteous. And hard by that very spot Moses also died, and you know how—with visions of Canaan upon his eye, melting into visions of the Canaan which is above, the New Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all. In that death, who would not be Moses, let who will be Balaam in life? Be it yours and mine to aspire to be like Moses, both living and dying. "At the last!" think of that, and whenever you are tempted by sin, or tempted by gain, look at it—"At the last," "At the last." God help you to judge righteous judgment.

II. And now we will turn to the second side of our lantern. The second of these last things is JUDGMENT. After death the judgment. When we die, we die not. When a man dieth, shall he live again? Ay, that he shall—for his spirit dieth never. God hath made us such strange wondrous beings, with such wide reaching hopes, and such far darting aspirations, that it is not possible we should die and become extinct. The beast hath no longing for immortality; you never hear it sigh for celestial regions: it hath no dread of judgment, because there is no second life, no judgment for the beast that perisheth. But the God who gives to man the dread of things to come, and makes him feel and long after something better than this small globe affords us, cannot have mocked us, cannot have made us more wretched than the beast that perisheth, by giving us passions and desires never to be gratified. We are immortal, every one of us, and when the stars go out and Sol's great furnace is extinguished for want of fuel, and, like a vesture, God's wide universe shall be rolled up, we shall be living still, a life as eternal as the Eternal God himself. Oh, when we leave this world, we are told that after death there comes a judgment to us. I do not know how it is with you—you may be more accustomed to courts of justice than I am—but there always creeps a solemnity over me, even in a common court of justice among men, and especially, when a man is being tried for his life. Laughter seems hushed there, and everything is solemn. How much more dread will be that Court where men shall be tried for their eternal lives, where their souls rather than their bodies shall be at stake! The judgment of one's fellows is not to be despised. A bold good man can afford to laugh at the world's opinion, still it is trying to him, for one's fellows may be right: multitudes of men, if they have really thought upon the matter, may not all be wrong. It is not easy to stand at the bar of public opinion, and receive the verdict of condemnation; but what will it be to stand at the bar of God, who is greater than all, and to receive from him the sentence of damnation! God save us from that!

Let us think of this judgment a moment. We shall rise from the dead: we shall be there in body as well as spirit. These very bodies will stand upon the earth at the latter day: when Christ shall come and the trumpet shall sound, his people shall rise at the first resurrection, and the wicked shall rise also, and in their flesh shall they see God. Let me think of all that I have done then in the light of that. There will be present every

man who has ever lived on earth. How shall I like to have all my doings published there? My very thoughts—how shall I feel when they are read aloud; what I whispered in the ear in the closet—how shall I like to have that proclaimed with sound of trumpet! And what I did in the dark—how shall I care to have that revealed in the light? And yet these things must be made known before the assembled universe. There will be present there my enemies. If I have treated them ill, if I have been a backbiter, a slanderer, it will be then declared: if I have been a hypocrite and a dissembler, and made others think me true when I have been false, I shall be unmasked then. Those I have injured will be there. With what alarm will the debauchee see those whom he has seduced stand with fiery eyes to accuse him there! With what horror will the oppressor see the widow and the fatherless, whom he drove to poverty, stand there, swift witnesses against him to condemnation! If I have spread false doctrine, a moral pestilence destroying human souls, my victims shall be there to gather round me in a circle and, like dogs that bay the stag, demanding each of them my blood. They shall all be there, friends and foes; more solemn still, “He” shall be there—the man of men, the grandest among men, because God as well as man, and if I have despised and rejected his salvation, I shall then see him in another fashion and after another sort.

“The Lord shall come! but not the same
As once in lowliness he came,—
A silent Lamb before his foes,
A weary man, and full of woes.

The Lord shall come! a dreadful form,
With rainbow-wreath and robes of storm;
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind!”

How will you face him, you that have despised him? You who have doubted his deity, how will you bear the blaze of it? You rejected and trampled on his precious blood, how will you bear the weight of his almighty arm? When on the cross you would not receive him, and when on the throne you shall not escape from him. That silver sceptre which he stretches out now to you, if you refuse to touch it, shall be laid aside, and he will take one of another metal, a rod of iron, and he shall break you in pieces, yea, he shall dash you in pieces like potters' vessels. And God shall be there, manifestly there, that God who is here this morning, on the last day of this year, and who sees your thoughts and reads your minds at this moment, but who is so invisible that you forget that he fills this place, and fills all places; you shall not be able to forget him then. Your eyes shall see him in that day; you shall understand his presence. You will try to be hidden from him; would desire hell itself, and think it a place of shelter, if you could escape from him; but everywhere that fire shall encircle you, shall consume you, for “our God is a consuming fire.” You shall no more be able to escape from yourself than from God. You shall find him as present with you as your own soul will be, and you shall feel his hand of fire searching for the chords of your soul, and sweeping with a doleful *Miserere* all the heart-strings of your spirit. Misery unspeakable

must be yours when the voice of the God-man, shall say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell." I would to God that ye would look at all your actions in the light of the day of judgment. Our secret thoughts, let us turn them out this morning; they have been lying by till they are mouldy; let us bring them forth to-day. My thoughts, how will you look in the light of judgment? My professions, my imaginations, my conceptions, how will ye all be when the judgment day shall gleam upon you? My profession, how does that look? I have been baptized in Christ professedly, I wear a Christian name, I preach the gospel, I am a Church officer or a Church member, how will all this bear the light of that tremendous day? When I am put in the scales and weighed, shall I be the weight that I am labelled? In that dreadful day shall I see the handwriting on the wall, "*Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*"—"Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting"? or shall I hear the gracious sentence which shall pronounce me saved in Jesus Christ? As to my graces, what must they be in the light of judgment? my own salvation, all the matters of experience and knowledge—how do they all look in that light! I think I have believed: I think I love the Saviour: I sometimes hope that I am his; but am I so? Shall I be found to be a true believer at the last? Will my love be mere cant or true affection? Will my graces be mere talk, or will they be found to be the work of God the Holy Ghost? Am I vitally united to Christ or not? Am I a mere pretender, or a true possessor of the things eternal? Oh, my soul, set thou these questions in the light of that tremendous day. I would to God we could now go forward to the day of judgment, in thought at any rate; and since I feel myself quite unable to lead you thither, let me adopt my Saviour's words: He says that the day cometh when he shall separate the righteous from the wicked as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. There shall be some on his left hand to whom he shall say, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Depart, ye cursed." Will he say that to you and to me? There will be some on his right hand to whom he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." Shall he say that to you and to me? The one or the other it must be. As I stand here this morning, I seem to feel on my own account, and I wish you all did on yours, what a certain man in court once felt. Sentence was about to be given in his case, or, at least he thought the case would be called on immediately, and he rushed to his solicitor and he said, "Is there nothing left undone? Are you sure? for if I lose this case I am a ruined man." His face was white with anxiety. And so it is with you. Is there nothing left undone? for if you lose this case at God's judgment-seat you are a ruined man. Come hearer, hast thou believed on Christ Jesus, or is faith left undone? Hast thou given up self-righteousness? Hast thou left thy sin? Hast thou given thy heart to the Saviour? Is regeneration still unaccomplished? Art thou born again? Art thou in Christ? Art thou saved? If thy case be lost thou art a ruined man. A man ruined here may still retrieve his fortunes; the bankrupt may start again and yet be rich; the captain who has lost a battle may renew the fight and win the successive victory and begin

the campaign anew; but lose the battle of life, and the fight shall be no more. Make bankruptcy in this life's business, and you have no more trading. This is the business of eternity. Soul, is there anything left undone? Brother, sister, is there anything left undone? for if you lose this case, you are ruined, and that to all eternity. I pray you to look at this day and at all your days, the past and the future, in the light of the day of judgment.

III. But my lamp—this matchless lamp—has a third side to it, bright, gleaming like a cluster of stars. The third of the last things is HEAVEN, the portion, I trust, of many of us. We hope, when days and years have passed, that full many of us will meet to part no more on the other side of Jordan, in heaven. Now, let us see if we can cast a little light from heaven upon the things present and the things past. You have been toiling—toiling very hard, and wiping the sweat from your brow, and saying, "My lot is not a desirable one. Oh how weary am I! I cannot bear it." Courage, brother, courage, sister; there is rest for the weary; there is eternal rest for the beloved of the Lord, and when thou shalt arrive in heaven, how little, how utterly insignificant thy toil will seem, even if it shall have lasted threescore years and ten. You are pained much; even now pain shoots through your body; you do not often know what it is to have an easy hour, and you half murmur, "Why am I thus? Why did God deal so hardly with me?" Think of heaven, where the inhabitants shall no more say, "I am sick;" where there are no groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues. Courage, tried one. Oh it will soon be over; it is but a pin's prick or a moment's pang, and then eternal glory. Be of good cheer, and let not thy patience fail thee. And so thou hast been slandered. On thy face, for Christ's dear name, shame and reproach have been cast, and thou art ready to give up. Come, man, look before thee! Canst thou not hear the acclamations of the angels as the conquerors receive one by one their eternal crowns? What! wilt thou not fight when there is so much to be won? Must thou be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease? Thou must fight if thou wouldst reign. Gird up the loins of thy mind and have respect to the recompense of reward. In the light of heaven, the shame of earth will seem to be less than nothing and vanity. And so you have had many losses and crosses: you were once well-to-do, but you are poor now. You will have to go home to-day to a very poor abode and to a scanty meal. Oh, but beloved, you will not be there long. "In my Father's house are many mansions." It is but an inn thou art tarrying at awhile, and, if the accommodation be rough, thou art gone to-morrow; so complain not. I would to God we could look upon all our actions in the light of heaven—I mean those who are believers in Jesus Christ. If we could have regrets hereafter, I think it would be that we did not do more than we did for Christ here below.

In heaven they cannot feed Christ's poor, cannot teach the ignorant. They can extol him with songs of praise, but there are some things in which we have the preference over them: they cannot clothe the naked, or visit the sick, or speak words of cheer to those that are disconsolate. If there is anything that can give joy in heaven, surely it will be in looking back on the grace which enabled us to serve the Master. Oh, if I can win souls to Christ, I shall be a gainer as well as you. I shall have another heaven in their heaven, another joy as it were in their life, and another happiness in their souls' happiness. And, dear brethren and sisters, if in your Sunday-school teaching, or visiting, or talking to others, you can bring any to glory, you will, if it be possible, multiply your heaven and make it all the more glad and joyful. Now, look at the life of some Christians. They come here, and if I preach what they call a good sermon, they like it and drink it in. They are willing to eat the fat and drink the sweet, but what do they do for Christ? Nothing. What do they give for Christ? Hardly anything. There are a few such among us, and these are generally the most miserable people you meet with—neither a comfort to others, nor yet any joy to themselves. Now, even in heaven, methinks, though no sorrow should be there, it will be only God's wiping it away that will keep them from regretting that they did not do what they might have done on earth. We are saved by grace, blessed be God—by grace alone; but, being saved, we do desire to make known the savour of Christ in every place, and we believe in heaven we shall have joy in having made this known among the sons of men. Look at your joy in the light of heaven, and you will make it other than it now looks.

IV. We now turn to the fourth of the four last things, and that is, let us look at all things in the light of HELL, that dread and dismal light, the glare of the fiery abyss. Bring that lantern here. Here is a young man very merry. "Ho! ho!" he sings, "Christians are fools." Hold my light up. There you are without God, without hope, with the great iron gate of death shut upon you and barred for ever, your body in the flames of Tophet, and your soul in the yet more horrible flames of the wrath of God. Who is the fool now? Oh, when your spirits are damned, as they must be if you live without a Saviour, you will think laughing a poor thing. Laugh now, sir! Scoff now! For a few minutes' merriment you sold eternal joys. You had a mess of pottage and you ate it in haste, and you sold your birthright. What think you of it now? It is an awful thing that men should be content, for a few short hours of silly mirth, to fling away their souls. Look at merriment in the glare of the flames of hell. Mark that man in agony down in the vault of hell, he made money by sin, and there he is; he gained the whole world and lost his own soul. How does it look now? "I would give thirty thousand pounds," said an English gentleman

when he lay dying, "if any man would prove to me to a demonstration, that there is no hell." Ay, but if he had given thirty thousand worlds that could not be proved, and now, with pangs unutterable, he knows it so. What would you give when once you are lost if you could throw back your gains? If lost spirits could return here, surely they would do what Judas did—throw down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple, and curse themselves that they ever took the gain of this world and destroyed their souls.

And how will unbelief look in the flames of hell? There are no infidels anywhere but on earth: there are none in heaven, and there are none in hell. Atheism is a strange thing. Even the devils never fell into that vice, for "the devils believe and tremble." And there are some of the devil's children that have gone beyond their father in sin, but how will it look when they are for ever lost? When God's foot crushes them, they will not be able to doubt his existence. When he tears them in pieces and there is none to deliver, then their sophistical syllogisms, their empty logic, their brags and bravadoes, will be of no avail. Oh, that they had been wise and had not darkened their foolish hearts, but had turned unto the living God!

And, my dear hearers, I have another thought which will come home to some of your spirits with peculiar power. How will procrastination seem when once you get there? Some of you have been attending this place a long time: you have often had impressions, but you have always said "By and by," "By and by." You have been aroused and aroused again, but still it has been "To-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow." How will to-morrow ring in your ears when once you are lost! What would you not give for another day of mercy, another hour of grace? I feel this morning as if I would do with you what the Roman Ambassadors did with Antiochus. They met him and asked him whether he meant war or peace. He said he must see; and one of them taking his staff, made a circle round him where he stood, and said, "You must answer before you leave that spot. If you step out of that it is war. Now, war or peace?" And I too would draw a secret circle round you in the pew this morning, and say to you, "Which shall it be, sin or holiness, self or Christ? Shall it be grace or enmity, heaven or hell? And I pray you answer that question in the light of hell. It is a dread light, but it is a revealing one. It is a fire that will devour the scales that are about your blind eyes. God grant that it may scorch those scales away, that you may see now how dreadful a thing it is to be an enemy to God, and be led by his Holy Spirit to apply to Jesus Christ even now. Ah, how will the gospel seem in the light of hell, and how will your indifference to it seem? When I was thinking of preaching this morning, I wished that I could preach as in that light. To think that there are some to whom I have spoken again

and again, who during this year have passed away from the world of hope, we fear into the land of despair, is a dreadful thought. Persons that occupied these pews, sat in these aisles, stood far away there, and listened and heard the gospel—and they are gone! Did I warn them fairly, truly? If not—if thou warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at thy hands. My God, by the blood of the Saviour, set me free from these men! Oh deliver us from that solemn condemnation. But with those of you that still live, I would be clear of you. Dear hearers, do not you feel that you are mortal? Have not you within you a sense that you are dying? It is a thought that is always with me; life seems so short. It was not so always with me; but the shortness of life now seems to hang over my mind perpetually, and I suppose it must do so over those of you who are thirty, forty, fifty, or sixty, and who frequently see your friends taken away. Now, since you must soon be gone, since there is a world to come, and you believe there is, how can some of you play with these things? How is it that while you are attentive to your business, you leave your soul's business neglected? What are you waiting for, my hearer? Are you waiting for another season? Does not God say, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation"? What are you waiting for? Does not the time past suffice? Oh that you were wise, and would think of your latter end and seek after God! I do conjure you, by the shortness of life, by the certainty of death, by the terrors of judgment, by the glories of heaven, by the pains of hell, ask after the right way and walk therein. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is the gospel, "Whosoever believeth is not condemned." To believe is to trust. Oh that you may have grace to trust your souls with the Lord Jesus now and ever, and then we shall not need to fear those words, "At the last," nor the light of the four last things, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell. God bless you, for his name's sake.

"Soon the whole, like a parched scroll,
Shall before my amazed sight uproll,
And without a screen at one burst be seen,
The presence wherein I have ever been."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxlviii.
and 2 Corinthians vi.

END OF VOLUME XI.