

# ALTAR - LIGHT :

A

Tribute to the Memory

OF THE

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LONDON.

BY THE

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## ALTAR-LIGHT.

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JOHN, v. 35.

*“He was a burning and a shining light.”*

SUCH is the brilliant though brief tribute of our Lord to the memory of one of the most illustrious of men. It is obvious that the words refer to His forerunner, and not so much to the personal or private life as to the public ministry of the Baptist. He could not be properly termed “a light” in any sense or degree during the thirty years of his hiding in the deserts of Judea. We are not told how those years were passed, but have no doubt that they were devoted to preparation for that remarkable work which he was born to accomplish. Luke tells us that “the child grew, and waxed strong in

spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." Now, it is evident from the narrative that his public life was comparatively a short one—probably, not exceeding a few months; all before that was spent in strictest privacy. It took forty years in the wilderness to qualify Moses for the work he had to do; ten years less were sufficient for the Baptist—but even that seems greatly disproportionate. The forty years of Moses' curriculum were followed by as many of hard and important service; whereas the thirty years of John were succeeded by only a few months of ministry to the Lord. Hitherto he had lived alone with God; none of the people were with him; but when the time of his "showing unto Israel" arrived, he became a "burning and a shining light." We are not to judge of the importance or magnitude of any work by the time taken to do it. In six days God made the heavens and the earth. Besides, John did a vast amount of work of which we have no account. This is obvious, from the splendid encomiums passed upon him by our Lord. To "prepare a way" for the Saviour of men implies an immense deal more than what appears. We have every reason to believe that John did more for Christ during his short ministry than any

former servant of Jehovah. True, that ministry arose in darkness, and was quenched in death; it came up from a wilderness, and disappeared in a dungeon: but it was a most magnificent thing, notwithstanding. Like some blazing comet or fiery meteor it shot athwart the firmament, clearing rapidly the course for the greater light that was soon to enlighten the whole world. The ministry of Christ Himself resembles John's. He, too, had thirty years of preliminary retirement and preparation before entering upon the work which His Father gave Him to do; and we cannot forget that His career began in a manger and was wound up on a cross. The ministry of Christ's servants is also preceded by a long course of study, and meditation, and prayer, from which they are often taken down suddenly to the valley of the shadow of death. The entire service, indeed, of the Christian pastorate is just one loud, solemn, unbroken voice, calling upon a sinful world to repent and "behold the Lamb of God." Nor shall this voice cease till it be changed into these other and final words,— "Behold He cometh with clouds!" and then shall the end be.

The termination of such a striking ministry as John's could not fail to impress his own

disciples, and justified the beautiful tribute paid him in the text. Jesus could no longer refer to him as alive. The Baptist was dead. That mysterious and austere-looking prophet was now no more; and the manner of his death, which was alike startling and humiliating, seemed to call for some such tribute. Not a few of the mighty ones of the Bible have had extraordinary translations or deaths appointed to them. Enoch was not, for God took him; Aaron and Moses were carried to the tops of high mountains, and there were laid down and died; Jonathan was slain in the battle-field; Elijah was taken up in a chariot of fire; John was beheaded; Jesus was crucified. The death of the Baptist, however, only the more impressed Jesus in his favour. "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." We see, then, that the great and good servants of Jesus die as well as others; and that to judge aright of their characters we are to look, not so much to the manner of their death as to their life, and especially to their services on behalf of Christ and His cause. We also see that they die only after their work is finished, when they are translated to their rest and reward above. And, finally, we see that

even after death the Master they served does not forget them, but inscribes on imperishable record His admiration of their character and His appreciation of their conduct. Such are some of the consolations that remain to surviving relatives and congregations when they are called upon to weep over departed worth. In further discoursing on the words of our text, I shall endeavour in a very cursory manner to sketch a few of the more remarkable features in the ministry of the Baptist; I shall then improve the subject in connexion with the solemn event which has clothed us in the garb of the mourner, and filled our hearts with deep but holy griefs. Concerning the ministry of John I remark that—

# I.

## IT WAS A TRANSITION MINISTRY !

Our Lord says, “He was a light.” This figure cannot refer to the stars, which are fixed and stationary; nor to the planets, which, though wandering in their spheres, have appointed revolutions; nor to the sun, which unceasingly describes the same orbit. It must refer to some of those wonderful phenomena in the heavens which appear but for a short time, serve some

unknown purpose, and then vanish for centuries, if not for ever. In like manner John described a remarkably swift and luminous, though somewhat eccentric ministry, which, while it lasted, did some peculiar work and then dropped out of view: in other words, his ministry was a transition one—He was a Jew, but not a Jewish priest. He lived apart from the temple and the temple service. He was a temple to himself, and in his course he had no colleague nor competitor. He appeared just when the Mosaic dispensation was becoming dead and effete, and just as the elements of the new economy were rising into order and beauty. The “old things” were not away yet, and the “new things” were not yet come; but John stands midway between them, to pronounce the doom of the one and to herald the advent of the other. The one had served its purpose by embodying the Saviour in types and prophecies. These types were about to meet their great antitype, and these prophecies their divine substance. As they were ascending to their final and sublime repose, they were met by the Baptist, who, heading the solemn procession, led them on to Him of whom “Moses in the law and the prophets did write.” John found them, as it were, glimmering in the sockets of temple



lamps, and merged all their lights in the blaze of the Rising Sun. He heard their feeble and stammering voices dying away into silence among the almost deserted choirs of Zion, and waved them all into the grand diapason of the Gospel. Then all things began to assume a new position, to present a new aspect, and to sing a new song. It was new to shed no more the blood of bulls and of goats—it was new to have only one priest, one altar, and one sacrifice in the Church—it was new to hear no more the voice of holy seers predicting a coming Shiloh—it was new to be saved by faith and not by hope, by looking back and not forward to the Messiah's advent and death—it was new to be no longer a peculiar people, and to have Jew and Gentile amalgamated—and it was new to have Jehovah worshipped, neither in Gerizim nor Jerusalem exclusively, but wherever in spirit and truth men were found to adore the God of Israel. Now the ministry of John was during the brief transition period of this radical revolution work, which was at once finished or wound up when these new things were clearly presented to the faith and obedience of mankind. You have seen the narrow isthmus or neck of land that connects some peninsula with a great continent—or you have seen some stately bridge

spanning a vast abyss and linking together two opposite shores ; in like position stood the Baptist's mission to the past and the future—he brought and bound them together—by and through him they were run into one glorious period. After this he disappears—the isthmus is absorbed into mainland—the bridge sinks, and the separated become one. John dies, and Jesus lives. Preparatory economies are dissolved, and the great spiritual fabric of the Church slowly but sublimely rises into view.

And such like are Christian ministers of every age. They are only forerunners, and their ministry is simply transitive. What the Baptist did they are doing ; they stand between the two worlds—the world where all things die, and that better one where all may live. To the extent of their appointed work they pass all that is true and substantial, out of a preparatory into a perfected condition. The embryo Church is thus translated on their ministry to the things and places that are heavenly ; and when this is done, “they rest from their labours and their works do follow them.” In this respect, perhaps, theirs is a higher and holier ministry than even John's was. He only, from a lower to a higher earthly platform, raised up the Church to see her Lord bleeding

on the cross—while they, from his highest position, lift her up to the highest one of all, and set her down beside Himself in the very midst of His glory. They prepare a way for Him into His people's hearts here, and for them into His immediate presence there. But, like John, they too die. They are not permitted to continue by reason of death. The whole institute, indeed, is transient, just because it is temporal: and after all its work is done, which shall only be when time itself is no more, then it, too, shall dissolve, together with all mere instruments and agencies, however venerable for years, however crowded with memories, however bright and powerful in influences for good—and all this for one sound and solid reason,—“the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.”

## II.

### IT WAS A MINISTRY OF DESTRUCTION.

Our Lord says, “He was a burning light.” In every fire there must be both light and heat: both are useful, though serving different purposes. There was burning zeal in John's soul, and consuming heat in John's ministry. In re-

ference to the mere shadows and rites of the Law he could not say, with our Lord, "I am not come to destroy the law;" for such destruction was a necessity in his ministry. He brought Christ forward; and when the substance stands in the place of the shade, the shade is not. The Baptist carried about in his hand a flaming torch, to set fire to the former "beggarly elements." That fire, once kindled, the spacious scaffolding was speedily in a blaze. But all was not lost; from the ashes were gathered up and organized the spiritual edifice of the Church, which was unharmed in the conflagration—which was, indeed, made to shine like the sun, and to look terrible as an army with banners. Hitherto the rites and rubrics of the law, though all pointing to Christ, had greatly veiled His beauties; but as their importance declined, these beauties became conspicuous.

But the ministry of the forerunner was destructive otherwise. He was a stern and uncompromising moral reformer. He found the men of that age to be no better than a generation of vipers. The laws of Jehovah were almost obsolete in his own Church; and by the very Rabbis and chief priests the people were trained up in the traditions and commandments

of men. This evil spirit of the age he met, combated, and, to a great extent, exorcised. The casting out of devils by the Master was thus the continuation of his illustrious forerunner's work. In every turning and winding of His own ministry our Lord had to encounter this legion. His withering sarcasms and awful anathemas were but the explosions of that thunder-storm, which was gathering all the time the Baptist's voice was lifted up in the deserts. John had no fear of man before him. There might be snakes; but there were no such snares in his path. Consequently, by no conceivable partiality or compromising did any vice of these times escape his indignant and burning eloquence. The pretensions of the bigot, the rottenness of the hypocrite, and the carnality of the sensualist, were all shrivelled up and consumed by its hot blasts. None were spared. He seized every one of them by the throat, and cast them all into the burning fiery furnace of his terrible dispensation. No wonder, then, that, short though it was, his ministry soon made itself felt over Judea, and that the cheeks of Rabbis grew pale as they listened to the death-knell of their crimes and their power.

And should not every Christian ministry be

like his? We have to say, "Behold the Lamb!" We have a Christ to preach and a cross to glory in. But we have also the evil one to battle with, and *sin* to condemn and put to death. The work of moral destruction precedes reformation. Sin must be out, before God comes in. Sin must be searched for in every den and corner of its retreat; and, when found, must be battled with and destroyed. No quarter whatever must be shown to sin. The Son of man was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and His servants now are appointed to see that the destruction is completed. One way of doing this is to expose and denounce sin. No doubt it is more pleasant to sing the song of love, and promote the cause of positive holiness—to unveil the great Sacrifice for sin; and summon mankind to trust in it. And these are, assuredly, the main departments of the Christian minister's duty; but then, a Saviour is never so likely to be appreciated as when *sin* is felt to be all the abominable thing which God hates. We doubt not that many, who became John's disciples through fear, all the more readily followed the Saviour through love. After a period of such tremendous heart-searching and conscience-accusing work as the Baptist's, how sweet and tranquillizing would be the calm of

our Lord's meek and lowly teaching. John does not seem to have trenched much upon the attractive views of the Gospel. His attention was too much occupied in clearing the atmosphere for their more brilliant exhibition. Warning men that the kingdom of heaven was at hand was his work, and he rested satisfied with awakening the generation out of its sleep, and fixing its eye upon the Lamb of God. Thus it becometh the servants of Christ to live and to labour. Let them not imagine that they have obtained any relief from the duty of teaching every man and warning every man as to the exceeding sinfulness of sin, even though they should intensify their zeal on revealing the exceeding loveliness of Christ.

### III.

#### IT WAS A MINISTRY OF ENLIGHTENMENT.

Our Lord says he was "a shining light." He was no mere astrologer, forecasting future events by a pretended reading of the starry heavens. His light revealed the future and unveiled the past of the Church. He was not a twin or double star, but one of the first magnitude. As is the morning star to the coming day,

so was he to the coming Saviour. The appearance of all other stars bespeaks the night, and their disappearance announces day. There is one—only one star that offers battle to the rising sun, and refuses to hide its face, even after all the others have taken refuge behind the blue curtain of the morn. John was such a light to the world. He was not “*that Light*,” but he ushered in “*that Light*,” and only paled when it was seen above the horizon. What a blessing, however, was his light to that dark day! The Old Testament period may be called the *night season* of the Church. It had no sunlight—its light came from moons and stars which for ages had twinkled and shone in its deep and purple canopy. Amid all that galaxy, however, none shone out so lustreously as this morning star. John, in a humble degree, shared in the honours of the Master; for, when he arose, there was a “setting” among other lights; nor would he himself go down till the Sun burst forth. John decreased when Christ increased. After this came the *daytime* of the Church. Comparatively all is light now. He, the great orb of truth, is already far up in the horizon, and soon the whole world shall rejoice under His wings. Now, the ministry of the Baptist was placed midway between that night



and this day, and its light is more or less brilliant as we look upon it in the shadows of the one or at the early dawn of the other. Our Lord, in the words of the text, describes its appearance as He saw it in that dawning; then it must have been singularly bright, casting its lustre downwards upon the valleys of Judea and upwards to the hills of Zion—to the everlasting mountains of Gospel salvation. There is something peculiarly impressive about such a luminary as this: it lights out the night of shades and lets in the day of grace. There never has been anything to resemble it in all God's past dealings with His people. For a time John was the only light in the solemn temple of truth. The very Shekinah seemed to have withdrawn its glory, but only for a moment, to make him its honoured reflector. The servants of the dying Law—the priests of the old altars—were even overtaken by the supernatural darkness, and all had been well if they had only gone to the Baptist, saying, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out;" but this was their condemnation, "they loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil." Notwithstanding, there was light enough in John to have illuminated them all, only they were not among the few who "were willing, for a

season, to dwell in his light." Not one of that generation need have perished had they believed in his preaching. Though his was the only voice that cried in the wilderness, it was still the voice that instructed men in their duties, reproved them for their sins, and conducted them to the Saviour. The Jewish doctors were casting darkness on the only mediation. He illuminated that mediation from the Advent to the Crucifixion; others held up their tapers before "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." He let in upon it the solar beams; others gathered vapours around the sacrificial Lamb; his light consumed them, and made all clear: so that men who could not see through the reeking blood of bulls and of goats beheld, with undimmed eye, that Lamb taking away the sin of the world.

And what are Christian ministers worth if they do not illuminate the human mind? They are "the lights of the world," just in proportion to their determined unveiling of Christ alone. John preached a living, a real, a personal Saviour, and so must they. It matters not on what other subjects they may throw the rays of their genius and learning, if they are ashamed of Jesus. But if they really concentrate all their powers upon Him and His

cross, they then serve the high object of their commission, and become "living and shining lights." It ought, therefore, to be their constant aim and effort never to allow the echoes of the Baptist's voice to die away out of this wilderness world. Let them remember that their Divine Lord is observing them, and will honour in due time all who thus honour Him. If John drew the attention of men to Christ, Christ drew the attention of men to him. The text contains the most magnificent tribute ever paid to human character or usefulness. Though the imagery be drawn from the most glorious object in nature, the compliment is not exaggerated. Had any mere man pronounced it, we might have thought so; but coming from Divine lips, we must own that it was deserved and that it was true. It shall be a day to be remembered upon the earth, and also in the Church of Christ, when the Spirit that rested on the Baptist shall be poured out upon all the ministers of the Gospel, and when to deserve such tributes as were paid to him shall be their earnest emulation. We shall know that the Millennium is at hand when it is so. Every pastor shall then become "a voice" as the voice of the Lord, which "shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh," "powerful and full of ma-

jesty," as is the voice of the Lord. Every pastor shall be as an acorn, within whose milky veins shall be found the seeds of trees of righteousness. Every pastor shall be as a sun in the midst of a system of sin and misery, and men will escape by its light into the arms of a sin-pardoning God. And every pastor shall be as one great and moving ark, full of the blessings of salvation, around whose teeming sides the ransomed ones shall gather ; while on the slopes of the Christian Ararat our great High Priest shall stand, pleading evermore the merits of the sacrifice He offered up unto God.

With these hasty and imperfect illustrations, I would now proceed to a service which is affectingly called for, on this day of mourning over the decease of one in whose light many of you were willing to dwell for a season. We are taught by Christ's example to notice and embalm the excellences of His departed servants. We must not let their memory die. If we do, the memory of the just cannot be blessed. Let me, therefore, endeavour to gratify the expectations of this great assembly, and pronounce, not a fulsome eulogy, but a true and faithful tribute to the memory of the deceased Pastor of Finsbury Chapel. In discharging this duty, I cast myself upon your indulgence. I venture upon

it with conscious diffidence, but not without the hope of at least a partial success. After what you have just heard, there need be no discussion upon the propriety of paying such an honour to the memory of Christ's servants. The custom, from the days of Christ, has had almost universal sanction, and, I am convinced, would be much dishonoured in the present instance, were it to be broken. A service in which the Christian people are assisted to "remember those who have had the rule over them, who have spoken to them the word of God," cannot fail to be of benefit in various ways; and if there ever lived and laboured one who was eminently entitled to be held fast and long in the hearts of his people, that one is the venerable man whose decease has left this pulpit vacant, and filled our hearts, and the hearts of thousands throughout the churches, with no ordinary sorrow. Allow me just to add, that it is not altogether presumption in my having consented to perform this service. I have been familiar with Dr. Fletcher from my earliest days — and some of you have often heard him, from this pulpit, claim the most intimate friendship with my father, and with all that circle of holy ministers in Scotland who were the burning and shining lights of their day. He revered their names, greatly vene-

rated their memories, and cherished while he lived the remembrance of their friendships, as among his richest earthly comforts.

Dr. Fletcher was born in April 1787. His birthplace was Bridge of Teith, near Doune, in Perthshire. He was a child of the manse. His father was, what is now called the United Presbyterian minister of that place; he was a man of sound judgment, a preacher of considerable power, both as regards the strong theological vein which ran through his discourses, and the manly or authoritative manner in which he delivered them; and he bore through life a character admired by all for its uprightness and integrity. To this parent, and also to his uncle, the Rev. Mr. Gilfillan of Dunblane, in the immediate neighbourhood, Dr. Fletcher was much indebted for that hearty appreciation of the marrow-doctrines which diffused over his own ministry such a sweet savour of evangelical truth. His early days were passed by the side of one of the most romantic rivers in his native highlands, and in the midst of natural scenery, unsurpassed for picturesque beauty even in Perthshire. His mind was thus placed, from infancy, under influences highly favourable to the culture of those religious principles which he held fast to the end, and of that tasteful

relish for the grand and lovely in nature which often imparted to his pulpit illustrations the charms of variety and the graces of rhetoric. From a somewhat early period he gave indications that the Christian ministry would become the profession of his choice. Observing this, his father took suitable and judicious measures for his education. For elementary training he was kept for some years at the Grammar-School of Stirling. He was then entered an alumnus of the Glasgow University, and having finished there the curriculum demanded in Scotland from all candidates for the holy ministry, he was received as a Student of Divinity under the tutorship of the famous Dr. Lawson of Selkirk, who has been justly styled "the Christian Socrates," and who was almost adored by his disciples, not less for the heavenly simplicity of his character than for his profound wisdom and extensive learning. Often did Dr. Fletcher dwell with fond reminiscence over the happy days he spent on the banks of the classic Et-trick, and the precious privileges he there enjoyed for successive years under the tuition of his great Professor. Having honourably finished his academical and theological career, he was licensed by his Presbytery, in 1806, to preach the everlasting Gospel. At once he took the

highest place as the most popular preacher, not only of his own but of any Church at that time. Calls or invitations were presented to him one after the other. Among them there was one from his native church at Bridge of Teith. His father was now an old man, and needed assistance; the people perceived the gifts of the son, and elected him to be his father's colleague and successor. The son accepted of this call, and was ordained to the co-pastorate in September 1807. It is seldom that such a thing as this occurs. We have our Lord's authority for it, that "a prophet is not without honour save in his own country and in his own house." Dr. Fletcher's case, as near as possible, is an exception; for, beyond doubt, he was highly honoured throughout Scotland, and much loved in his native congregation and in his father's manse. It is considered, and properly so, to be a high attainment, to be most appreciated where best known.

From all we have heard of his early ministry, it appears that he set out from the first as an enthusiastic friend of the young. His celebrity as a preacher to children is, therefore, of long date. The very first offerings of his pulpit talent were baptized from clouds of earnest prayer and zeal for the lambs of the flock. The



sermon upon "the garments of salvation," which he preached on last Christmas Day to the thousands of children that were assembled in this spacious chapel, was only the impressive conclusion of a series that was begun fifty years before on the banks of the Teith. The place of worship there, was small compared with this, but there is a beautiful park immediately adjoining, whither he led the little ones, and there, all ranged up on the greensward, beneath the blue sky and beside — not the still, but the gurgling waters of the adjacent stream, he often addressed as large congregations as ever assembled beneath this roof. There is something peculiarly impressive in all this, especially as it suggests the contrasts of the first and last efforts of this lover of childhood, together with the sweet harmonies that bind them together as one touching melody, one complete psalm of life. The imposing form, the snowy locks, and the serene expression of an aged pastor, comport well with the position and exercises of the children's teacher. It seems just as it ought to be, that the creeping ivy be made to cling around the hardy stem, that the empty vessels be brought to the gushing fountain, that juvenile curiosity be satisfied out of grave and sound experience, and that the lambs be made to lie

down in the shepherd's fold, or be folded in the shepherd's arms. For many years past we have been accustomed thus to associate Dr. Fletcher and children together, and to think it all quite natural that such a wise and kind pastor should both feed and lead such an interesting charge. But it cannot fail to convince us that his holy interest in the young has been throughout genuine, since his devotion to this, his darling work, was evidently not the effect of some momentary excitement, not the fruit of some desperate throes for popularity, but, from the freshest of his days, the joyous offspring of a compassionate nature, and the dictate of a clear and discerning intellect, which could take the proportions of a highly important work, and decide to spend and be spent in a region of duty, to which, it is generally supposed, few really great minds can stoop. It is difficult to say which is most to be admired: the bending figure, and sage look, and tremulous voice of the "old man eloquent" in Finsbury, with thousands of Sabbath-school children drinking in streams of heavenly wisdom from his trembling lip; or, the tall and stately form, the bushy-raven locks, the strong but tender oratory, the fascinating pictorial sketches, the fire of the hazel eye and music of the full-toned voice, which made the

young pastor of Teith fifty years ago the most renowned and favourite preacher to children on either side of the Tweed. The promise of his start in life has never been belied. As he arose in the obscure retreat of the North, so he has set amid the admiring and grateful plaudits of multitudes in this great metropolis. May I here be permitted to record, that, deeply engraven on my own memory are the characteristics of his preaching to the children of Dunfermline from the pulpit of my father, and within the walls of a church only less spacious than this, and when he was in the height and strength of his first zeal; and that, when I heard him address the young almost at the close of his ministry, I could discern no other difference between them than what age and grace together produce upon the style of the outer and the spirit of the inner man.

About three years after his ordination in Scotland, Dr. Fletcher was sent up to supply one of the vacant pulpits of our Church in this city. Here his success was prompt and complete. The discerners of such pulpit talent as is adapted to the tastes and requirements of the metropolis, saw in him one qualified to do a great work here. He was, consequently, invited to become the pastor of the congregation. The

call was referred to the Synod of the Church, and the issue was, his translation to London. The parting from his aged parent and his attached people at Bridge of Teith was a sore trial, for never was son or pastor more beloved than he; but he obeyed the call of duty, and was inducted to his new charge by the Presbytery of London in November 1811.

I cannot attempt anything like a narrative of the life and labour of your deceased Pastor from this period till now. It was all that could be expected from such a zealous, eloquent, and evangelical preacher, and from such an earnest and devoted ministry as his. He rose to the high places of his sacred calling. One chapel after another had to be built to accommodate the crowds that waited upon his teaching, and not a few of you now hearing me were witnesses of the thronged and admiring audiences which, from Sabbath to Sabbath, flocked to this place of worship. In quick succession, too, he issued from the press those singularly instructive publications for the young, which will remain fresh and fair while children live to read. Anon appeared that marvellous and precious work, which must have been the fruit of months and of years of unflagging study and meditation, called his *Family Devotions*, of which nearly

60,000 copies have been sold ; and, little more than a year ago, his last, but by no means his least work, was published — *Closet Devotional Exercises for the Young, from ten years old and upwards*. It is to be regretted that he has not lived to finish this beautiful work. His purpose was to have added other three volumes, in order to take in every day of the year. Let us hope that some one, upon whom his mantle may fall, will enter into his labour, and complete what has been so well begun. Generally speaking, his labours of every kind were incessant. It may be truly said of him, that he never became “weary in well-doing.” There is scarce a corner of this city where his voice had not been heard ; there is scarce a county in England where he has not been welcomed and appreciated ; and we believe that there is not a quarter of the globe where, men and women now, may not be found, who trace their spiritual life to having heard him in their childhood, setting forth the words of eternal truth. He sustained this amazing popularity to the last. When down in Scotland, only a year ago, the largest church in Glasgow could not contain the multitudes that hastened to hear him ; and on one occasion, in the same city, not very long ago, upwards of 30,000 applica-

tions for tickets of admission were made ; while so recently as in February last he preached, what has proved to be his last sermon, to about 3000 children in Surrey Chapel—the very chapel where, nearly fifty years ago, at the urgent request of the good Rowland Hill, he preached his *first* sermon in London to children. I have been told besides, that the sermon which he delivered last Christmas from this pulpit was listened to by as large an assembly of children as ever, and was, in all respects, equal to any of its predecessors. But the most useful, together with the most baneful life, must end, and the largest and most successful ministry must be finally wound up, as well as that which has been passed in unproductiveness and obscurity ; and so, with saddened but not comfortless hearts, we must now put it upon record that the great and good Pastor of Finsbury has finished his course below, and gone above to give in his account to God. This mournful event took place on Sabbath, the 30th of September. Just as the church bells ceased to ring for the forenoon service, did his happy spirit wing its flight to the eternal worship of the upper sanctuary. Let us also, with thankful minds, record the goodness of God to him in the latter days of his life. By the mercy of his Lord he

was enabled to discharge all his usual duties up to within a year of his decease. Symptoms of declining strength then appeared, which gradually undermined his naturally robust constitution, till, if not in triumph, yet in perfect peace, he fell asleep in Jesus. And now that you are to see that calm and benevolent face no more—now that you are not again to listen to that mellifluous voice—now that the grave has closed over his mortal remains, and all that you retain of one you so much loved is the memory of his work, and the gratitude you owe to God on his behalf, it surely becomes us to embalm in sentences of just encomium our estimate of his character—not that he may have the credit of it, but that God may be glorified in him. I have no wish anywhere—certainly not here—to exaggerate the truth on this point, and if I should appear to do so, let it be attributed to the unconscious partialities of an early and uninterrupted friendship.

In forming a due estimate of character we must have regard to two things—to the *inner life*, where are all the springs or motives of action, and to the *outer life*, on which, as on a large, living epistle, the motives, and tastes, and principles of the inner are luminously inscribed. To follow this rule in analysing the character of

Dr. Fletcher cannot at present be expected. It is chiefly, if not entirely, with his outer life that we have to do. It is not so much what he was in his closet, or in his library, or in his family, or in society, that invites our notice, as what he was in the pulpit and in the church. For the most part, God alone has to do with that which is *unseen* in the life of every man ; but there is an amenability especially of public men to public opinion, which makes it a duty to mark, and even judge them. This is particularly true of Christian ministers ; in their hands the highest of all human interests are deposited, and it can only help to magnify their office, whether we condemn or approve their manner of discharging its duties. Besides, if we can conscientiously commend them as having faithfully acted their parts in this outer field, we run no great risk of error in concluding most favourably of their inner or real character. Without, then, attempting to search into and describe the inner or the spiritual life of Dr. Fletcher, it may suffice that we just allude to a few of his more prominent private excellences.

*In the closet he was a devout man.* His publications prove this—they rank among the best of their class, and by means of them, though dead, he will long speak. His *devotion* was



exercised upon the word of God—the book above all others which he studied: from a child he had known the Scriptures; but as he grew in years he became more and more enraptured with them, and more and more felt their purifying and enlightening influence. Other books, copious of the thoughts of the godly, and full of the unction of the Gospel, were merely feeders; but this book of God was the very bread itself with which he satisfied his soul. His *devotion* was nourished by *communion with God* in prayer. His body was well trained to the kneeling posture, and his soul to the depths of humility or the heights of adoration. He was eminently a man of prayer, which explains the secret of his marvellous success, as a Christian preacher. Morning, noon, and night, witnessed the fervour of this Jacob in wrestling with God; yea, like the psalmist, “seven times a day would he praise God, because of His righteous judgments.” It was oftentimes sublime to hear him praying in the great congregation, but the fire had been previously kindled, and the lights had been previously fed from the “secret place of thunder.” In prayer he lived, and in prayer he died. His last service on a death-bed was to commend in prayer his family, his flock, and his friends to God. His devotion

was expended upon the cause of God in this world. Its incense might ascend into heaven—its music might fill only the ear of God, and its sacrifices might bleed only on the altar of his own faith—but the zeal, and the outgoings, and the actual embodiments thereof, were all sent out to plead the cause of the Saviour, and hasten the coming of His kingdom, whether that shall be in the shape of bread to the hungry, comfort to the mourning, or gospel to the heathen. Dr. Fletcher's devotion was continually flying like a dove between the ark of his piety and a world lying in sorrow and in sin. No man could complain of his religion as monkery, or of himself as an anchorite. All men might see his light shining, and all might taste that his salt had not lost its savour.

*In his library he was a diligent student.* Upon its shelves there were not many profoundly philosophic, nor highly classical books ; but there was an abundant stock of folios and quartos by the early fathers, and of the rare and savoury productions of the English and Scotch divines. These he read and pondered. He was strengthened intellectually with their strength, and became a strong and flourishing bishop of souls upon their green pastures. He also kept pace with literature, and was never

found behind in those discoveries and researches which have made the century conspicuous. Of any learning of this kind which he acquired he made no ostentation ; so that, unless something occurred to elicit it, it could not be discovered. As in almost every other department of his work, he was in this, alike quietly and humbly, content to procure knowledge for its own sake, and to make what consecrated use of it he could in the service of God. His habits of study were systematic and orderly. He could not otherwise have written and published so many elaborate volumes.

*In his family he was everything that was gentle and lovely.* Of warm attachments, of sweet and kindly temper, of conscientious attention to all the household duties, which as a husband, a father, and a master he had to discharge, there was always about him an air of calm contentment, and a sweet and winning grace about all his steps. His loss elsewhere may be made up, but in his own domestic circle, never.

*In society* he was the careful and cautious example of the life which he counselled others to lead before men. In manner, he was bland and courteous ; in spirit, most charitable and catholic ; and to his friendships, generous and true. Hence he was inoffensive as a companion,

esteemed and useful as a citizen, and very dearly loved by all with whom he was confidential and intimate. His deeds of benevolence and charity were fully up to his means. He knew nothing of a sordid spirit, and oftener sacrificed than saved his substance, that he might "honour the Lord."

But it is to what he was *in the pulpit and in the church* that I wish to draw special notice; simply, because in these he was best known, and to his conduct in these he is indebted for his celebrity. In the discharge of his public duties, Dr. Fletcher had many excellences in common with all faithful ministers of religion; but it cannot be denied that he rose to an eminence as a preacher which it is the lot of few to enjoy. A popularity that was maintained in such a city as this for nearly half a century, must have had some extraordinary aliment and element. Instead, however, of analysing the style of his discourses, or criticising their literary beauties, or describing their peculiar oratory, I would rather dwell for a little upon one or two of those grand evangelical characteristics which gave to all his ministrations a sacred prominence, and a telling power for good, and in which, after all, really lay the secret of his strength and success. And here I would notice, that,—

I. *His ministry indicated strong faith in a personal Saviour.* It can, alas! be too easily proved, that there may be preaching where the Saviour is never lifted up, and where they that seek for Him are constantly left to say with Mary at the sepulchre, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." In the ministry which has closed amongst you Jesus Christ was everything and everywhere. Every one was made to feel that the preacher believed in the existence and love of a personal Redeemer. It is of course understood of every Christian bishop, that he has a similar conviction. But there is a great difference between a merely speculative recognition of Christ and an earnest, habitual realisation of Him as one—as *the* one—the only one to whom you owe your own salvation, under whose searching eye you feel yourself acting, and to whose glory you are conscious of having consecrated your all. It was thus that Dr. Fletcher felt towards the Master he served and the Saviour he preached. From his earliest days he had tasted and found His salvation to be sweet; and ever as he grew did the impression deepen that he was the servant of a real, living, loving Lord. When public men live remote from the seat of power, and are seldom personally under the eye of their

superiors, they are less likely to be so lively and conscientiously on their guard as are those who stand at the foot of the throne, and in the immediate presence of the sovereign. The intense earnestness of Dr. Fletcher when preaching, the deep seriousness of his religious convictions, the evident and entire surrender of his soul to his work, his energetic wrestlings with the human conscience, and his sometimes rapturous conceptions of the glory of Christ's person, cannot be accounted for otherwise. He lived near, very near, to the person of the Emmanuel. His eloquence saw God and lived. He studied with the light above him of a Saviour's smile, wrote to the dictation of His lip, and spake under the fire of His eye. It was this very belief of an ever-present and ever-watchful Master that fired his zeal, and maintained it unflagging to the last. Now all this was seen, heard, and felt under his ministry. Every one was made to know that the preacher was obedient to higher powers than those which usually move common-place, perhaps nominal instructors. Many preachers make it appear as if they serve rather a rule than a ruler, rather a system or craft than a personal will, rather an idea than a mind, rather a creed than a Saviour. Hence the tenacity with which some cling to High or

Low Church views, with which others work under the impulses of sect or in submission to some Episcopal or Presbyterian party, or to some low passion, for mere personal power, pelf, or repute. Dr. Fletcher's influence came forth directly from a commanding regard for the pleasure of that One whom he put first and foremost in thought, word, and labour. While this gave special efficacy to his ministry, it also ever made it a labour of love. He was not oppressed with it, he felt it not to be a yoke; at all events, this constant realisation of a living and watchful Master made that yoke an easy one, and that burden light. There is always, to a greater or lesser extent, some feeling of *servitude* about mere conventional work: in it we have not the pleasing idea that we are gratifying some noble and generous personality, which can both appreciate and reward us. Men may follow their own devices as to the best forms of civil government, one preferring the republic and another the monarchy, as best fitted to secure loyalty and obedience. But in all religious matters there is only *one* power; that power is supreme, and we cannot honour it except with all our heart, and soul, and strength. Now, the Christian pastor who constantly recognises this one Power, this one God, this one living and reign-

ing Christ, is sure to be the earnest and successful preacher which Dr. Fletcher became. It is possible that in serving a simple polity, whether civil or religious, I may neither be recognised nor remunerated, but in concentrating all my sacrifices and efforts upon one who alone is worthy of them, I am sure not only to be encouraged in my work, but graciously rewarded after it is done. In this we have the secret of the self-denials and martyrdoms to which, in times of persecution, religious men have been subjected; in this we have the key to all the earnest preaching of the times; and in this the grand secret is revealed as to how and by whom the languishing piety of the churches is surely and lastingly to be revived.

But to this feature in Dr. Fletcher's ministry we can trace other good things besides his preaching. It accounts, for instance, for his benevolent regard for all charitable and religious institutions that considered the poor, the diseased, the ignorant, the oppressed, or the depraved. During his long life in this city he was their patron, their supporter, and their advocate, believing that "inasmuch as he did it to one of these little ones he did it *unto Christ*." Many a noble sermon did he preach, and many an eloquent speech did he deliver, on their behalf;



not only in this city, but throughout the country. Hasty as this sketch is, it would be alike unseemly and unjust to his memory not to notice his generous and unwearied efforts on behalf of what is called "The Skye-boat scheme." On a visit many years ago to that island his warm heart was deeply affected with the signs of abounding poverty. On his return to London he set about those measures which resulted in the formation of a Society, which still exists, as a blessing to those hardy islanders, and as no ignoble monument to the memory of its founder and patron. Here, also, it may be proper to record his intensely compassionate visits to the cells of the condemned in the metropolitan prisons. Newgate, as well as Finsbury, is his monument. He especially yearned over the souls of those who were to die on the scaffold—with what success *the* day will declare. But that institution which above all others captivated his heart and multiplied his labours, was the *Missionary Society*, of which he was an honoured Director. His holy power of ever setting a personal Saviour before him, his ardent longings after the salvation of the whole world, and his thorough persuasion that nothing short of this would ever satisfy the soul of the Redeemer, made him one of the most ardent and generous

friends of the missionary enterprise. Do we not feel, even at this hour, as if the echoes of his chaste and glowing pleading were being awakened in every corner of this edifice, not the less sacred that it has ever been the shrine of a great, practical, and substantial liberality in its aid?

II. *His ministry indicated a passionate love for the souls of men.* This could not fail to accompany his lofty and realizing views of a personal Redeemer. Love to the Saviour, and love to souls, form but one and the same tide-swell, upon whose flowing billows the pastoral heart is sublimely carried. Dr. Fletcher was early fascinated with the love of Christ for sinners of mankind. In like spirit he himself wept over them, and sighed for their recovery. When a man's own soul is converted he is, from that moment, alive to its priceless worth, and becomes seriously anxious after the salvation of the souls of others. We cannot trust in the longevity of that zeal which has its rise elsewhere. Dr. Fletcher's ministry was therefore conspicuous for such zeal. His estimate of the value of the human soul was taken from no low stand-point. He looked down into its clamant wants from the cross of Christ. From no other position can its utter depravity, wretchedness,

and ruin be observed. They who construct their little platforms far down upon the level ground of a mere philanthropy, and upon these look through the telescopes of human devices, never see the grand and grave necessities of souls in their solemn relations to spiritual and eternal things: hence, all their precognitions and prescriptions have neither smoothed the furrows of the brow nor brushed away one tear from the cheek of distressed humanity. The creation groans as before—the wail of its woe is loud, shrill, and piercing as before—man still goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets; but no voice of comfort rises from the doleful pit of an infidel Rationalism, not even from the plausible recipes of a homœopathic Christianity. To see the appalling spectacle of a soul dead in sin, you must therefore ascend the cross, and as you gaze upon the bleeding Lamb of God you will conclude that an infinite atonement, such as He made, implies an infinitude of guilt and woe, which could be met by no lesser sacrifice. This is estimating the worth of the soul by the tremendous price of its ransom. Dr. Fletcher's studies of "the great mystery of godliness" were prosecuted amid the supernatural phenomena and darkness of the ninth hour. In no other way can we account for his

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fifty years of unbroken and undiminished ardour in preaching the Gospel. The whole "place called Calvary" was to him one spacious library, the books of which were ranged all around in the rent rocks, the opened graves, the frowning skies, the rending earthquakes, and the solemn voices that came down from the dying Victim there; these to him were no Sibylline books, containing only the fates of Rome and the Cæsars, but the great archives of Christianity, big with the destinies of the Church of God. His teacher in this theology, was the dying Saviour Himself. From every groan of His tortured heart, and from every wave of sorrow that lashed His mighty spirit, were compiled those thrilling and pathetic passages in his sermons which filled the eyes with tears and the hearts of his hearers with holy sympathies. If, then, to serve the Saviour well we must live near, very near, to His person, even so, to serve the soul well, we must study its wants, pity its woes, and pant for its salvation, as we gaze down upon it from the topmost branches of the accursed tree; we must compass it from beneath their dark but not deadly shadows, and spring to its rescue from the cleft of the rent rock of salvation. We have been told, indeed, that all this is the veriest froth of sentimental minds,

and in its room is presented what is presumptuously styled a more dispassionate and rational mode of dealing with the cross and its mysteries. Our confidence, however, is, that any such eccentric and unphilosophical analysis of the Gospel as this, must soon encounter the fate and the fall of what is really "another Gospel." While resolutely contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints, let us in the meantime leave all to the handlings of that Providence which must ever decide between the right and the wrong, where the grand interests at stake are the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

III. *His ministry indicated an unquenchable love for the souls of children.* This might have been included under the former particular, but it formed such a brilliant gem in the pastoral life of Dr. Fletcher as to merit specific and emphatic notice. His renown is almost world-wide as a preacher to the lambs of the flock; consequently, we only obey the voice of a universal suffrage when we place this crown upon his hoary head, and summon a bereaved childhood to shed its tributary tear over his honoured grave.

Preaching to children has only recently risen to the important position of a Christian institute

—even reverend and learned minds now mark it as an high place to which ambition may be directed—laurels won here are striven for as prizes—and it is well for the Church and the world that it is so. Greatness can be reached by other and more ostentatious paths, but no greatness whatever is so sure to command the approbation of God and the lasting applause of the truly good as this, which flows from a just estimate of the claims of the young. A great and eventful crisis for the Church of Christ seems to be upon us, and it must be upon the rising generation that its duties and responsibilities shall fall. To Dr. Fletcher's credit it must be noticed, that when he first began this interesting work, he stood nearly alone. There had been before him no such distinct selection of pastoral labour. He had few to cheer him by example, or support him by co-operation. Without claiming for him the merit of originality, he must be allowed the honour of having seized the position and made the duty popular. He seems to have caught the passion as if from inspiration, and is therefore entitled to be considered as the Baptist forerunner of what is now not an experiment in the wilderness, but a great power in the Church. And so it has been with other marvellous successes. Their exordium

had neither patronage nor promise. Some grand idea was imparted from above to a solitary student—the enthusiasm necessary to do bold deeds was breathed into some one impassioned spirit—and the impulse that moves the little wheels of a mighty revolution came out of one strong purpose to do good at all risks. The rescue of Israel from Egypt was achieved by the patriotism of Moses. The zeal of David covered the Philistines with defeat. The disinterestedness of Paul carried the Gospel fire up to many altars, warmed the cold heart of the world, and illumined its dark mind with light from heaven; and, the love of the one Saviour has secured the ultimate redemption of mankind. The same rule seems to be at work in all that passes around us of change or of progress. The processes of nature, however astounding in their issues, are resolvable into comparatively simple and single elements; it is the dew-drop of the mountain that helps to fill the rivers, and ultimately the ocean. The oak was once an acorn, and the imperial mind that legislates for nations once slept in an infant's bosom. At the reformation from Popery it was a "solitary monk that shook the world." The triumphs of science point here to a Galileo—there to a Newton—yonder to a Bacon.

Enterprises of humane and social reforms were suggested by a Howard, a Wilberforce, and a Brougham. And so is it here; this beautiful cynosure of the north, by which millions of little children now steer their way into the haven of mercy and truth, had for its earliest discoverer and expounder your venerable Pastor. He saw this star while all around was dark, and he guided the heart of the age by its light to the bosom of childhood, to the practice of preaching to children, and to the appreciation of the Sabbath-school. What Wilkie did for the fine arts, in creating for them a popular taste, Dr. Fletcher did for this art—hence the late Dr. Chalmers pronounced him to be “the Wilkie of preaching”—and by many good authorities he has been called the very “prince of preachers to the young.” On this account we claim for him a high place, both among the philanthropists of his times and the discerning minds of the Christian hierarchy. This interest in children became a power as well as a gem in his pastorate. He was not only impelled to do much useful work by it, but by such work he influenced large masses of hopeful minds to the cultivation and practice of “whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.” When we speak of impulsion, we do not mean that



he was under constraint in this work—with him it was not a task. He could say, with Wilberforce, “I delight in little children. I could spend hours in watching them. How much there is in them that the Saviour loved!” Such, indeed, was his delight in it, that he considered it as a recreation. When otherwise oppressed, he would go to this fountain and be refreshed and refilled. So congenial, indeed, to his nature was this work, that he often felt and spoke as if for this “one thing” he had been put into the ministry. Let me now briefly allude to a few interesting features in this specialty of his pastorate.

*As a preacher to the young he was singularly unaffected.* His love to the child was quite genuine, and the child was at once convinced of it. Children are said to be quick discerners of sincerity, and, as if by intuition, take at once to the true, and avoid the false. As a proof of this, I have only to remind you of the deeply affecting scenes of the funeral day. Every one who was witness to the solemnities in Abney chapel, on Monday last, and especially to what occurred in the cemetery and at the grave, must bear testimony to the children’s grief. I have often seen the tear fall from the manly cheek when dust was com-

mitted to dust, but I never before saw so many children weeping at the grave's mouth as I did upon the occasion of Dr. Fletcher's interment. No one who heard it can ever forget the solemn grandeur of that music that rose from "infants' and from sucklings' lips" at the conclusion of my respected friend Mr. Binney's holy and powerful address; and never, while memory lives, can that pathetic strain be forgotten which came over the heads of the assembled multitude, and fell upon the ears of the chief mourners as they followed the bier into the cemetery. It was as if the heavens had opened, and as if the spirits of children "made perfect" sung the welcome to "the happy land," of him who had been the means of bringing them thither. Nay, have I not proof of this in the tears and sobbing of the hundreds of little ones now in this chapel, and sincerely sympathising with us in this affecting service? Dr. Fletcher never had to put on the appearance of such love. It was as a well of living water in his heart, and had only to be opened by occasions to flow gently over. Then it was *constantly flowing*—it did not gush to-day and freeze to-morrow—it was as a *life* within which unceasingly breathed blessings upon their heads. It was the glittering pearl of his young days, and became the con-

stellation that shone upon his evening toil. How many are there that can work only under the excitement of novelty—how many become lukewarm after satiety—how few persevere in the project of first studies, and in the services of first love! The miserable break-downs, both of the Church and of the world, have given point to the proverb anent the instability of all human passions and plans. Dr. Fletcher never broke down in his darling work. In it he went on his way rejoicing, till the heavens received him. Besides, his interest in children was *enthusiastic*. It became a passion with him. It sat him down in his study to think, pray, compose for them, as if they had been his sole charge; it wrought up talents and sympathies into those captivating discourses which have been so largely blessed; and it equipped him for, and sent him on many a journey, that he might multiply his means of doing good. Now there could not be much of mere earthly motive in all this. Some minds can do a great amount of work if they know that they may become famous among the famed and powerful among the mighty. They do it all to be seen of men. Dr. Fletcher had no such inflammable oil poured into the lamp of his zeal. To see hundreds of happy and intelligent young faces

looking up to him as their teacher in the truths of God, to enkindle in their little hearts warm love for Jesus, and deep interest in their own salvation, and to be the means of bringing one such suckling into the bosom of our Father God, was more than enough to set on fire the fuel that lay upon the altar of his compassionate heart. No doubt he had his eye upon the sublime *dénouement* of the whole, upon the rescue of their souls from the fangs and dens of vice here, and their *reception* at length into heaven; but what of this? Is not this the very object for which Jesus Himself died, and for which He causes them to die, that they may be for ever with Him? In one word, His interest in little children was *often triumphant*—it was blessed for their conversion. It was sometimes a great success. Hundreds still live who praise him for his efforts to induce them to fear God. His spiritual children appear every now and then from all quarters of the globe, to pronounce blessings upon his head. And this was his grand consolation, that though he might have to wait long here in order to see the fruit of his labours, he was certain to see it in abundance in the vineyard of heaven. It has been beautifully said to bereaved parents—and we may apply it to Dr. Fletcher—“In sending so many children

to the place of happiness before you, you are, as it were, glorified by piecemeal; instead of planting families from yourself on earth, you have contributed towards the planting of colonies in heaven; and instead of recruiting the forces of the church militant, have furnished the trophies of the church triumphant." I cannot conceive of anything grander, even in heaven, than the "All hail!" that bursts from the lips of the ransomed, as they welcome the approach of one who turned them from the error of their ways. I only think that a deeper intonation may be given, and higher and more rapturous notes may rise, from the children's choir as they escort to the King, the priest that led them to God. I think that at this moment I see the pearly gates of Paradise just as the spirit of your Pastor appears to claim admission. What a cluster of shining young faces hang over the colossal battlements! what intense joy beams from every eye as their now glorified shepherd draws near! with what pure satisfaction do they take all the crowns from their heads! and with what lightning speed do they hasten him up to the Saviour's throne, that both they and he may cast them down at His feet! O happy, inconceivably happy moment, for the wearied and the war-worn, when he hears the little children crying in this temple, "Hosannah,

to the Son of David!" Surely, now, he is more than recompensed for all his toils and fears in this land of shade! Now he knows into what a goodly sphere of work he came when Jesus commanded him to bring the little children to Him. And now, let him rest for ever from his "loved employ" with the Lord he loved and the children who were given to him. If this be not a triumph, where shall we seek for one? If this be not a reward, where and how has true merit ever met one? And if this be not grace unfolded into glory, where has fig-tree ever blossomed, where has the vine been ever fruitful, where has the labour of the olive ever succeeded? But, *this is a triumph—this*, the fruit of a faithful ministry, is indeed a cluster of grapes better than the vintage of Ephraim. And *this*, the gathering in of the sheaves into the barn, is a harvest-home, whose hymn hushes into silence even the songs of angelic reapers, and which shall be reverberating among the arches of the skies when the present heavens and earth shall for ever have fled away.

And now, in concluding this service, let me express to this Church my unfeigned sympathy with them in the loss they have sustained by the death of such a Pastor. The elders of Ephesus wept sore when they accompanied Paul to the

ship which was to carry him for ever from their sight, and Jesus wept over the grave of his friend Lazarus. I do not, therefore, forbid your weeping, but I would try to soothe and counsel you in sorrow. Remember, then, how much you owe to the Head of the Church for having so long enjoyed such a ministry. Few flocks have been so highly favoured. Remember, too, that he is not lost; he has only, I hope, anticipated, by a few years, your own arrival in heaven. He is better, happier, and more useful to God than ever, and would not now exchange his place on high for the most exalted situation he could occupy on earth. If it were possible that his happiness now could be impaired, it could only be if he fears lest any of his flock—especially lest any of the lambs thereof—should not follow him to yonder fold. And remember, in fine, that the highest tribute you can pay to the memory of your deceased Pastor, is to adore and serve that Saviour whom he preached. May I hope that the secret of your love for Dr. Fletcher lies in your love to Jesus? If so, then your remembrances of the blessed dead must contribute to your own spiritual improvement. John's disciples became Christ's disciples; they were willing to dwell in his light only "for a season;" but when they came to Jesus, they

abode with Him continually. Thus should you improve the ministry of the deceased. The highest tribute you can pay to it is your remaining steadfastly with the Saviour. This is the most beautiful monument you can rear to his memory. Continue ye to be living epistles of Christ himself, and ye shall not fail to perpetuate the memory of him who "travailed as in birth till Christ was formed in you." But if you grow cold—if you forget your first love—if you become worldly and degenerate, as others not enjoying your privileges—then your lives become destructive: you not only efface the image of Jesus from these lives, but you gradually consign to oblivion the character and influence of him who, though dead, will then cease to speak. And this, truly, is the only death of a pastor for which we may be justly inconsolable. I beseech you therefore, brethren, let not your Pastor's light be extinguished by your inconsistencies; let not his voice be silenced by your ungodliness; but let its sweetest tones be long heard in your concord and holiness. While any of you remain here, let not the seal of silence be pressed on the spiritual lip of such a ministry. And thus, as one by one you fall asleep, its eloquent music shall be heard, languishing, it may be, in the ear of man, but



together caught up with you into the air, to become immortal in the hosannahs of eternity. Let there be no looking back—no lingering by the way. Press forward in the course—grow in grace—shine like the light; and, while “Excelsior!” is your motto, let nothing below the heights of heaven be your grand and glorious ultimate of faith and practice.

“ Onward ! is the march of mind,  
Onward ! is the path of man :  
All for progress is combined ;  
Progress is the Almighty plan.  
Onward ! onward, rolling ever ;  
Onward ! rivulet and river.

Nought in heaven’s arched hemisphere,  
Nought in earth’s long history,  
Nought in all the things that were,  
Nought in all that is to be,  
Shows a backward way or will ;  
All is onward, onward still.

Upward all the loveliest things,  
Upward all the holiest tend.  
When the skylark loudest sings,  
When the sweetest odours blend,  
Upward unseen angels bear  
Piety, and praise, and prayer.

All is onward, upward flight,  
Soaring more and more above,  
Through long vistas tracked in light,  
Opening into realms of love.  
Light and life still brightening on  
To their own effulgent throne.”

## NOTE.

*This tribute is the Sermon preached in Finsbury Chapel on the Forenoon of Sabbath, the 14th October, on the occasion of the Death of the Rev. ALEXANDER FLETCHER, D.D., and is now published at the request of the Elders and Managers. Any profits that may arise from the sale will be given to the "Fletcher Jubilee Memorial School Fund."*

*London,*

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