

A Lamentation for the Slain.

F U N E R A L S E R M O N ,

PREACHED IN THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

NORWALK, CONN., DEC. 5, 1852.

BY REV. EDWIN HALL, D.D.

NORWALK:

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE NORWALK GAZETTE.

PRICE, TWO DOLLARS PER HUNDRED.

1852.

WILLIAM LOCKWOOD, the subject of the following Funeral Sermon, fell off from the wharf at Norwalk Bridge, in a state of intoxication, on the evening of December 1st, 1852. Several heard his cry for help ; some were deceived as to the direction from which it came ; some thought it one of the innumerable noises so frequently heard about the Bridge. It was then low tide. His tracks were seen in the mud of the harbor, where he had wandered about for some time, vainly seeking to escape. He was drowned by the rising tide.

SERMON

JER. ix. 1. "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

It was the hard lot of Jeremiah, like that of the other prophets, to be obliged to testify against the prevailing wickedness of his people; to see, in the visions of the Lord, overwhelming judgments coming in the distance, and sweeping towards Israel like the coming storm and tempest; and in anguish of spirit to sound the alarm, while the people would not hear. He sees the armies of the avenger approaching; the snorting of his horses is heard from Dan; the whole land trembles at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones, for they have come and have devoured the land and all that is in it—the city and those that dwell therein. "When I would comfort myself against sorrow," cries the prophet, "then my heart is faint in me. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people, because of them that dwell in a far country. Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her King in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved! For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.*"

Such is the spirit which we must cherish, if ever called upon to speak of crying wrongs, and to warn a careless and guilty people that the cry of such wrongs will surely ascend to heaven.

I am therefore, to-day, to speak OF THE SLAIN OF THE DAUGHTER OF MY PEOPLE, and to point out the causes which should awaken such a lamentation in the heart of every one who loves mercy or who fears the Lord.

I. *To speak of the slain.*

If a foreign war were raging in our land; fields desolated, families distressed and broken, multitudes driven into the almshouses and prisons, thousands carried into a miserable captivity, and thousands slaughtered every year—if this were to continue ten, twenty, thirty years, every benevolent man would be ready to cry out, Shall the sword devour for ever! If the pulpits of the land—whose ministers are ministers of peace—should sound the alarm, and call upon the people to rise as one man, and to meet the invader in a contest for liberty or death, no friend of his country—no friend of the human race could think them going beyond the line of their duty. If it were no foreign invader, but a foe more dreadful—if it were vice, and avarice, and crime, combining to destroy more lives than were destroyed in any war that this country ever waged—wasting, devastating, and ruining thousands of our citizens, both body and soul—how can the ministers of the gospel altogether hold their peace at such a time as this!

I come then to speak to you of the slain of the daughter of my people; of men cut off in the midst of their days by a shameful and violent death, in which their own folly and guilt is stimulated by the cold avarice of others; who stay not their work at the sight of the miseries of their victims; who stay not for the distress of the families brought to suffering and poverty by this traffic, nor though their victims are destroyed for time and for eternity.

I have heretofore had occasion to show you, by reference to well known cases, that we average one such violent death in Norwalk year by year. One falls into a well, and his blood and brains are dashed on the stones; another, another, another, another, and another perishes in the waters; one by fire; one by suicide; another visits the place where ardent spirits are sold, and when his limbs are palsied, and those who have gathered the last cent of his earnings are wearied with making him their jest and their song, then they blacken his face and send him forth by night to perish by the way-side in the midst of the snow. The last week has seen another victim perishing in the waters, and adding one more to the number of the slain. O my brethren and friends, forbid me not to speak, while year after year, I am compelled to follow these victims of slaughter to the grave. Forbid me not to speak, while the Bible declares that drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and while God himself pronounces a woe upon him who, through an evil covetousness, putteth the bottle to his neighbor and maketh him drunken!

For twenty years it has been my lot to visit the wrecks of this destroying traffic. Not all die by a violent death. Often have I been called to visit others upon their death-beds—sometimes to hear their blasphemies, and sometimes their cry of anguish; but never did I know one ray of comfort by such a bed of death. For twenty years

I have witnessed the distress and shame, and often the bitter poverty, of the wives and children of the victims of this traffic. Often have I seen them suffering under anguish which scarcely the kindest comforts of the gospel and the utmost duty of submission to the will of God, had power to assuage. But never did I meet by such a bed-side, or as a comforter in the midst of such a family, one, who had, by the traffic in strong drink, aided in producing the ruin. No one who traffics in the poison ever attends the body of the drunkard to the grave. The end of such a work of his hands, no man has the courage willingly to behold.

I have seen the aged mother, and the meek and afflicted wife, both suffering from sickness, from whom the son and husband had taken the supplies which the hand of charity furnished, had carried them down to the Bridge, and sold them for rum. I have seen a daughter, suffering and dying on a couch of straw, her bedstead standing on a few loose boards, while the rest of the floor and the ceiling had been consumed for fuel, and all else was open from the cellar to the roof. There she lay, in the cold of winter, in a dying state. Her attending physician had carried a blanket and an overcoat and spread them on her shivering limbs: and these the drunken father and mother had taken to Norwalk Bridge, and sold for rum. I followed her to the grave; and not long after the father and the mother, both victims of strong drink.

A few years since, a young man sent for me to visit him, in the fall of the year. He was in a consumption; which, he acknowledged, while his sobs choked his utterance, was brought upon him by excessive drinking and consequent exposure. Winter came on; and the charities of the town consigned him to the care of a man who *had* been thriving and comfortable, but who had undertaken to keep a grocery and to sell rum, and had fallen a victim under its power. Character, comfort and property were at this time well nigh gone; he dragged out a few years of sorrow and poverty, and then sunk into the grave. At the house of this person, some two miles north of this place, I visited that sick and broken-hearted young man. In a cold unfinished chamber, on a thin bed of straw, whose covering he had vainly tried to eke out by throwing over it his wearing apparel—there without a fire, without an attendant, I found him on the coldest day of a severe winter. There, for the last time, I pointed him to the Saviour, and prayed with him: and that night he died. You remember a man, who used almost nightly to be reeling and vociferating around the Bridge, for many years, and for whom his meek and suffering wife used nightly to send down their little boy, two miles, to follow his father, lest he should fall down and perish on the way home. I saw that man on a bed of sickness, to which intoxicating drinks had brought him; and then I earnestly but kindly warned him that now he must reform or die: for, in all probability, he could never live through another such a scene. The poor man, when scarcely recovered

sufficiently to totter down to the Bridge, came down. Those who traffic in strong drink, saw his haggard looks and trembling hand. They knew his habits: they had known them for years. They had known the distress of his family. They knew his condition. But he had a little more money, and they filled for him once more the intoxicating cup. He went home and died. After he was slain, I attended his funeral; but no one of them who had received the price of his blood was there.

The sun would go down ere I could tell you the history of half the cases like these, which I have been perpetually called to witness here in Norwalk, during the last twenty years. Now another victim is gone. It is nearly twenty years since I first knew the anguish of his father and mother, who have gone down to their graves in sorrow. His worthy and excellent wife endured his conduct till it was neither decent nor safe to endure it any longer, and then left him. His children have drunk the cup of sorrow from their earliest years. He has been to them a living grief, and has gone down to the grave leaving them without comfort as they think of the past, and without hope as they think of his eternal destiny. Strong drink was the cause of all. I had the confidence of that man, and often and earnestly entreated him to reform. Often has he wept, and promised reformation. But the cravings of a debased appetite were too strong: he fell lower and lower. Were those who received his scanty earnings ignorant of his infirmity? Did they not know that they were ministering poison to a poor maniac, bereft of self-control? They knew it well. They saw him, of late, day after day, overcome with drunkenness. But even in that state, they sold him the poison, and continued to sell, till their work was done, and their victim perished. I know not who sold him the last potion; I desire not to know. It matters little who sold him the last. But upon the heads of *all* them who have known his infirmity for months or years, rests the guilt of that man's blood. I cannot doubt that they must answer it at the bar of God. Oh that fearful appetite; the fruit of no natural desire, but of bodily disease! How my soul pities the man, who, while he has suspected no evil, and led perhaps by social or generous feelings, and by entertaining companions, has by degrees, and unconsciously, kindled up within him, that quenchless thirst! If there is a man on earth whom I honor, it is such a man, whose moral powers and principles are yet sufficient to resist this unnatural thirst and fully to achieve the work of reform!

There are various stages in the way to ruin. The first is that of habitual drinking, though not to intoxication. In the early part of this stage, men have ordinarily too much self-respect to visit the low dram-shops, where the tottering and slovenly drunkards are seen to enter. They go in private to the respectable grocery, or to the bar of the elegant hotel. The marks of overdrinking become at length visible in their countenances, and are known and read of all men, while for a

long time *they* know it not. The next stage finds them at times prostrated in drunkenness, while they vainly attempt by various representations to conceal it from their friends. Alas, the folly to think that such things can ever be concealed! Then comes the last stage, when they have acquired the character of drunkenness, and have given themselves up in despair. Now, the disease has overpowered every faculty, and tainted all their blood. They are swollen and bloated; their breath is fetid with the sour effluvia of strong drink; their hand trembles; their tongue falters; and if left to their own resources, their clothing is filthy rags. Nothing remains to them but sorrow and death. The community is never without some specimens of these before their eyes; as if the Lord, in his providence would be perpetually saying to those who traffic in the poison, "Behold your work!" One you shall see filthy, haggard, enfeebled in body and mind, with blood-shot eyes and tottering gait, driving a petty traffic in roots and herbs, to gain his pittance of drink, apparently without means or energy sufficient to carry himself off by one full and final debauch. Another you shall see, regular as the morning returns, bent with premature weakness, with feeble shuffling gait, wending his way to the Bridge, glad of the privilege of doing, irregularly, the most menial offices for his morning dram. The evening sees him with difficulty stumbling and reeling home, only to repeat the same dismal round on the next succeeding day.

Who sells these miserable men their rum? Who that has the heart of a man, or the conscience of a man, can be guilty of so much baseness, as well as of so much wrong? Methinks that one who can do it, would sell the very bones of his father for gain! I know not who does it, I care not to know. But I stand in amazement, that in a civilized and Christian community, such things are suffered to be done. Nor would they be suffered, year after year, were it not, that by too long familiarity with such scenes, the public sense of decency is lost, and the public conscience seared as with a hot iron. I know not who is base enough to sell such miserable creatures rum. I care not to know, I would rather that they would repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Human laws may slumber, or be impotent; but let not such men think that they shall escape the just judgment of God.

A few such specimens of the last stage of ruin by strong drink we have always before us. Once they were respectable, and lived in honor and comfort. Once they drank moderately; then habitually; then were occasionally drunken; but such is their end. These stand in the front rank for death. Longer than we had supposed it possible, they endure these effects of debauchery, and bear up against the poisons which avarice mingles with strong drink in these modern days; then they perish in the waters, or in the snow, or come to some other violent end. We continue to hope that when these are gone there will be no more such specimens; but others are preparing, and fill up

their places. The succession continues like the stream of a river; the fountains send forth an unceasing supply.

Who works the greatest mischief among them who traffic in strong drink? the keeper of the respectable resort, where the drunkard, ragged and filthy, is not suffered to come, or the remorseless keeper of the low dram-shop, where the work of death is completed? If compelled to strike the balance between them, I am unable to assign the palm of evil to the latter. If the former did not begin the work, the latter could not end it. If the former were to cease, the succession of drunkards would at length die out; for no man, till he is already half ruined, will condescend to visit the latter. The latter may be more atrocious in appearance, but the former is the more dangerous; for here the steps of the unsuspecting begin to slide. If one of the former should, in extenuation of his guilt, say to me, "I sell not to the drunkard; I suffer not the miserable objects to linger within my doors," methinks I should feel bound in conscience to reply to him, "O, then, in the name of mercy, change your practice. Say to the sound and respectable, I sell not to you. Go home; forbear to enter within the Maelstrom of death. Escape while you may. Few whose steps enter upon this path return. I sell not to the sober, but only to the drunkard. To this he has been brought by moderate drinking, and now the fire is in his bones; he must die, I sell only to quench his raging thirst, which can torment him a little longer. I sell to him because he is already ruined. Let me never be the occasion of leading a healthy man into this path of disease and crime, and death. No, sober, respectable young man, go home—I sell only to the drunkard, who is already unfit to live either in the present world, or in the world to come."

Having now considered the slain, let us

II. *Consider why there is cause for such lamentation over them.*

1. On account of the vast extent of the slaughter. We average one such violent death in Norwalk in a year. This would make, in all the United States, an annual slaughter of *six thousand men*. Add those destroyed by diseases, either engendered or rendered fatal by the same cause, and no war in which this country ever engaged has destroyed so many, year after year, as are hurried down to the grave by intemperance.

2. If these had been simply slain in war, the grief would not be so inconsolable. But they die in shame; the victims of vice, they are not cut off in a career of honor and usefulness, but after having been lost to the community, after having been a living grief to parents, to wives, to children, and after having entailed upon all the kindred, and friends a grief, over their character and end, which the heart can hardly endure.

3. There is cause for grief in consideration of the vices and crimes which the use of intoxicating drink engenders. This fills our almshouses

houses and prisons. This stimulates nearly all the more horrible crimes; especially the murders. The sorrows, the suffering, the woes which rise to view as we contemplate this aspect of the case, are absolutely incalculable.

4. There is cause for lamentation, since there is no hope concerning these victims in the eternal world. Their sentence is recorded beforehand: Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Those who have helped to ruin them here, and who have put into their coffers the price of blood, have helped to ruin them for ever. O there must be sorrow over such, more than over those perishing in prison, or falling by the sword!

But take a little, the guage of temporal mischief, which must be set over against the gains of the very few who will consent to traffic in the poison; and who, as they amass all the gains, ought surely to bear all the burdens resulting from the traffic.

In the year 1832, the number of poor assisted by the town of Norwalk, was thirty-nine. The late Judge Isaacs showed me a list, and marked with his own hand, those brought to pauperism by intemperance, either of their own, or that of their husbands or fathers. Out of the thirty-nine who received the aid of the town, thirty-two were reduced to pauperism by intemperance. In the year 1833, the whole number assisted by the town was forty. All, save four of these, were brought to pauperism by intemperance.

In the year 1832, the amount paid by the town for paupers, brought to that condition by intemperance, was \$485 85, and for the poor brought to that condition by all other causes, was \$32 10.

In 1833, out of \$557 paid for the poor, all but twenty dollars was paid for those brought to that condition by intemperance.

But how rapidly has the evil increased. In 1840 a committee, consisting of Matthias Hubbell, James Quintard, Matthew Wilcox, A. E. Beard, George St. John, and George Hoyt, made a careful examination, and certified under their own hands, that they had, with the assistance of the First Selectman of the town of Norwalk, carefully examined the accounts of the town for the year 1838 and 1839, and found that in 1838 the tax of the town amounted to \$1137 06; of which there was expended for the poor \$1066 28; and of this, \$782 25 for those whose pauperism was caused, either directly or indirectly, by intemperance; that is, *nearly eight dollars out of every eleven dollars of the town tax, went to support the poor brought to that condition by intemperance.* The account for 1839 was nearly the same. They stated also their belief that other sums ought to be added to this list, but that they had carefully excluded every case concerning which there could be the least doubt.*

* NORWALK is not much worse off in this respect than most of the neighboring towns. About the time here mentioned the author of this sermon gave addresses in many of these towns, and made it a condition that those who

What the profits of the traffic may have been I know not. But judging from these data, the taxes thrown upon the people, if reckoned as annuities in arrears, during the last twenty years, would amount to more than twenty-four thousand dollars. Quite as much has been thrown upon private charity. The cost of the prosecution of crimes, and the maintenance for criminals from the same cause, we have not included. The waste by idleness and drunkenness is not reckoned. The suffering from hunger and cold, from grief and shame, from oppressed and broken hearts, no arithmetic can compute. All this is in our midst, and the river of desolation and death is rolling on. There is cause for lamentation indeed, if it must continue to roll on. Some tell us that it is wrong to attempt to stop it by law. Some tell us plainly that they will submit to no law. Others say that no adequate law can be executed. If this be so, then I can only say that the people are sunk very low, in a worse than Egyptian bondage. I am no lawyer—I am no statesman. But somehow I feel an instinctive desire to demand whether the people have no rights? It may be that there is no remedy, but they must stand by and see so many perishing in the flames, and in the waters, with no power or right to interfere. Perhaps they have no right to interfere in behalf of so many sorrowing and suffering wives and children. Perhaps, for all this, those who drink and those who sell, have rights to work such evils at their pleasure, and poor suffering humanity may plead for protection in vain.

It may be so: I am no lawyer, I cannot tell. But there is one ground, on which, though it is a very low and unworthy one compared with others, and one which I am almost ashamed to be obliged to mention—on which it seems to me THE PEOPLE have a right to stand; I refer to the enormous taxes which this drinking and traffic impose on others, who hold both the traffic and the drinking in utter abomination. To me it seems that if every other ground fails, THE PEOPLE may stand here, and say, *If you will drink and sell, then keep all the burdens and taxes to yourselves; and if you do not, we shall see to it that you so use your liberty and property as not to injure ours.* Our fathers waged a war, which periled their existence, against the mightiest nation on earth, rather than submit to an unrighteous tax.

invited him, should previously furnish him with authentic statistics. The following are specimens, viz:

WILTON IN 1839.—Town tax \$1125; expended for the poor, \$1093 13; for those brought to pauperism by intemperance, \$512 49.

STAMFORD IN 1837.—Whole tax, \$1389 50; expended for the poor, \$1263 75. In 1838, whole tax, \$1226 07. Expended for the poor, 1118, of which, at the proportion indicated by the accounts of Norwalk, \$874 went to support those brought to pauperism by intemperance.

DANBURY IN 1838.—Town tax, \$2358 07; expended for the poor, \$1325; for intemperance, \$550. Would that the examination could be made for the last five years in every town in the State, that the people might know how remorselessly their pockets are plundered by the rumsellers, in combination with the drunkards.

tion, which compared with this, had not the weight of a feather. And somehow the feeling will keep rising in my heart to inquire, whether, if all this desolation and death must be endured, the people have no right to defend themselves from so heavy and so horrible a taxation? Are your houses, shops, farms, earnings all mortgaged to pay for ever whatever taxes may be imposed by this unhallowed compact between the drunkard and the trafficker? I am indeed no lawyer; but if here be not ground on which the people may take their stand, and rise in their strength, and COERCE this traffic and drunkenness, by a righteous and effectual LAW, then I give up in despair, that I know not what righteousness or liberty is. If this be the case with us, that there is no relief from these burdens and no redress; then the liberty of the few is a slavery upon the many; liberty to tax, to plunder, to ravage and destroy, according to the avarice and the appetite of a combined and odious aristocracy. If this be liberty, then I know not what may be slavery. Tell me no more of slaveholding and slavery, if the few who have the conscience to work all these evils have power also to lay upon all the people such an odious, limitless, and endless taxation, for such purposes as these! The wonder has been with me, for years, how, in a civilized community, such things can be endured. Nearly a hundred years ago, the great and good John Wesley said, "It is amazing that the preparation and sale of this poison should be permitted, I will not say in any Christian community, but in any civilized State." Who can show that this is not sound speech which cannot be condemned?

But the discussion of policy and laws is not my province, farther than as laws are required or forbidden by the principles of everlasting righteousness, and by the law of God. I was to preach the funeral sermon of another poor ruined—murdered man. If I have spoken too freely, or too earnestly, forgive me. If I have gone not beyond the demand of truth, and of duty to men in view of the last judgment, then I need no apology. I remember that when an Apostle was sent for to be heard concerning the faith in Christ, and there was need to urge home the truth, and to reach the conscience of a transgressor, though that transgressor was the Roman governor who had over him the power of life or death, and the apostle stood before him in bonds—then "Paul reasoned of *Righteousness, Temperance and Judgment to come*," and so reasoned that Felix trembled. How can I visit the poor suffering families of the inebriates, or see the inebriates themselves on their death-beds, or follow them to their graves after they have perished amid the snow or in the waters, and not have my heart stirred within me? Will those who traffic in the poison complain that I speak too earnestly? Alas, why will they continue to give me so much cause? Why, after witnessing so much distress and sorrow, and so many violent deaths for so long a course of years, why do they not cease? Why is there no generous, no compassionate feeling rising in their hearts, or at least some fear of God, which shall prompt them to

say, We will share in the guilt of so much ruin no longer? Why do not the sober, influential part of the community go to them, tell them the results of this traffic, and beg them, as good citizens, to forbear? And if there be any who will not, why is there not virtue enough in **THE PEOPLE** to rise in their strength, and say in a tone which may not be disobeyed, **STOP!** *Pursue this work of devastation and death no longer!* If none of these things can be done, then what remains for me, but after I have pointed all to the law of God, and to the final judgment, to take up the lamentation of the prophet, and say, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"