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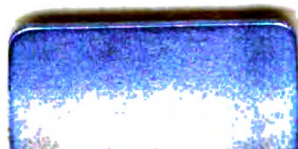
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**AN ADDRESS
MEMORIAL OF THE LATE
D. WILLIS JAMES**

D. WILLIS JAMES

AN ADDRESS
MEMORIAL OF THE LATE
D. WILLIS JAMES

DELIVERED IN THE
MADISON SQUARE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
BY
REV. C. H. PARKHURST, D.D.
SUNDAY MORNING
DECEMBER THE EIGHTH
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND SEVEN

NEW YORK

1907

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FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

Robinson, Charles

IRVING PRESS NEW YORK

New York, December 11, 1907.

*Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D.,
133 East 35th Street,
New York City.*

Dear Doctor:

The Trustees of the Church desire to publish for distribution the sermon delivered by you in the Madison Square Presbyterian Church on Sunday, December 8th instant, in memory of the late D. Willis James, and we have to request that you will send us the manuscript for that purpose. It was a just and appreciative tribute to one whom we all held in the highest esteem, whose life was intimately associated with that of the Church and whose influence and large benefactions have contributed most conspicuously toward the permanency and usefulness of the Church for generations to come.

Yours very truly,

*THOMAS H. HUBBARD,
Chairman, Board of Trustees.*

*WILLIAM E. STIGER,
Clerk, Board of Trustees.*

MARK THE PERFECT MAN
AND BEHOLD THE UPRIGHT.

Psalm xxxvii: 37.

PERSON is the prime impulse in all human ennoblement and in all historic advance. An idea, whatever its beauty, and whatever its truthfulness, becomes dynamic only as it is first taken in, and then lived forth, by a mind that is earnest and a heart that is pure and warm. Such men constitute the enginery of progress, men who are the combined embodiment of righteousness, intelligence and passion. With those three elements present in due proportion you have a *man*, and when you have a *man* you have something which is both a present possession and a permanent asset.

It is that type of man that we want for a few minutes to consider together affectionately and devoutly,—a type with which this church has been repeatedly made familiar, and a type, another beautiful illustration of which has been very closely brought home to our regard by an afflictive event of the last summer.

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There is one result which such men accomplish by their dying that they are not so easily able to effect by their living. While they are still with us that of which we think most is the things that they do, and the things which they speak. When they are gone that of which we think most is the thing which they *are*. So that so far as relates to the real contents of their personality we really come nearer to them in their absence than in their presence. It was not only specifically but also generically true that which Christ stated of himself when he said,—“I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me.” It was through the avenue of his death that the world came closer to Christ. A reduced copy of the same fact I have repeatedly witnessed in this church when in a service memorial of the type of man we are this morning contemplating, I have felt that the thought of all those present was sympathetically fixed simply upon the very quality and being of the revered spirit that had just withdrawn from the reach of our eye and the touch of our hand.

At such a time everything that is merely contingent to life and that forms no real part of the personality in its innermost is quite sifted out of our regard, and our meditation rests intensely and clingingly upon the very genius of the life that has been lived, the very substance of the soul that has lived it. So that in that respect death becomes the disclosure, not the eclipse, of the man

who is gone. And if he be that kind of man, or let me say, if he be *the* man our thoughts are this moment centered upon, he is never so thoroughly known, and never approached with so affectionate and reverent an appreciation as when he has performed his last act and spoken his final word.

And in the close access so gained there is impulse and ennoblement wrought in every soul that is reached by the inspiring touch. We cannot come close to what is real without being changed by it. Our regards in such circumstance are without evasion or affectation. We then look with a straight, strong vision that pierces to the reality. Our looking is a direct beholding and we are always a little way transformed into the likeness of that which we behold. So that the going out of a great life, such as we have known here, tells in a manner peculiarly baptismal upon every soul coming into any kind of contact with the event, or linked therewith by any ties of kinship, reverence or love. In every word of gentle comment or of tender appreciation that is spoken is an evidence of the way in which the strength or sweetness of the vanished spirit is putting its firm impress upon the hearts of those who remain and doing its deep and quiet work there.

And communications made to us in that way are of no evanescent value. They are not merely a momentary complexion thrown upon the surface

of our thought, they go to compose a part of the permanent structure of our thought. We are ourselves changed: the deep place in us is reached where we keep our hidden admirations, and in that concealed workshop or conservatory of our being there is added a little strength to those underlying impulses which determine the quality of our thought and of our living.

And in that connection it is pleasant to remind ourselves of this fact, that the manner of tender earnestness, yes, of loving reverence, with which men, generally, bow in the conscious presence of the realized worth of the great departed, is a fine tribute to the sterling sense of moral values deeply, and sometimes unconsciously, cherished in the human heart; and it has been impossible to read the strong and fervent words written in commemoration of one whom to know was to revere and love without estimating at a higher price the impulses and appreciations which lie, deeply hidden oftentimes, in the hearts of us all. The very admiration we have for the worth of another creates in us a new feeling of the possibilities of worth lodged in our *own* soul. That is a matter to emphasize, for it is upon the foundation of what men are in their moral appreciations that we have to build in all our efforts at raising the tone of human character and life to a higher key. Such an outflow of generous and reverential comment, emanating from all sources without distinction of

condition or religion, fortifies us in the faith we have in man generally and enables us with fresh gladness of heart to feel that at least the fundamental instincts of mankind are in tune with the mind and will of God.

Many times it has been said to me since last summer,—“What a loss to your church and to the world.” Yes, and no. A loss certainly. There is nothing more real than a vacancy. Absence may tell upon the heart of a man or of a church with a kind of substantial effect that presence even may not be quite able to exercise. The empty chair, the empty pew, will speak with a kind of eloquence and of appeal of which its occupancy may be quite incapable. Mute eloquence may reach in us a spot too deep for voice to be able to discover.

And so I say “a loss certainly,” but that is only the pathetic side of a larger fact which it behooves us to cherish with more earnestness and constancy of regard than is perhaps our wont. When a man dies the material conferment which he makes to the world of course ceases, but not so of the results which past conferments have made operative. But what is vastly more to the purpose, and comes down infinitely closer to the heart of the present situation, a man may die, but his greatness does not die, for those qualities that are the elements of his greatness, the sterling integrity of his life, the keen discrimination of his perceptions, the fervor

of his affections, the wideness of his thought, the limitlessness of his sympathies, all of those by the power of a beautiful contagion have been in a measure communicated to thousands upon thousands of others who have stood with him in relations of business contact, of social companionship or of Christian enterprise, and are thus become as seeds which are to-day germinating in unnumbered hearts throughout the city and the country at large, and which will go on germinating and leafing, and blossoming and fructifying, and every year branching out into new lines of ramification clear on to the end.

The life of the world is practically the life of a few choice spirits who have dominated the world's thought and activity. Take out of Hebrew history Moses, David, Elijah and a few of their class and there is no Hebrew history left. Subtract Moses from the Egyptian Exodus and there *is* no Egyptian Exodus. To all, then, who are intent upon becoming implements of effect, there is no preparation possible equal to that of the searching and sympathetic study of lives that have maintained themselves in large proportions and that have told with the power of a sweet imperialism upon the men and events of their times.

In going on, then, to consider the loss that society and the church have so recently sustained, we are reminded to say that in order to the doing of work that is thoroughly good and that is in-

stinct with the promise of permanence, two conditions require to be fulfilled, close contact with the material world,—the world of everyday interests ; intimacy with the world invisible. A certain twofoldness, that was distinctive of Jesus Christ, requires to be reduplicated in every man whose heart is set to advance in a substantial way the basal interests of the times he is appointed to serve. A man may do a great many things, and be a moving spirit in numberless enterprises and fill the world with the glitter and the resonance of his achievements, without the colossal output of skill and effort availing to deflect, by the minutest angle, the current of the general life, or lifting to any higher note the tone of contemporary thought and intention.

What I mean would be expressed by saying that the amount of activity prevailing in our own country during the past decade has been incalculably enormous, and yet there is no one of us so inappreciative of moral values as to venture to take that activity as criterion of essential progress or to conclude that because there has been so much activity there has necessarily *been* any actual progress,—progress, I mean, that relates to the ennoblement of life, the production of finer men, purer society, more exalted citizenship. Men who work only at the *level* of the times are absolutely incapable of doing anything to promote the moral advance of the times. We never better ourselves

individually when we merely go on moving in the groove of old habit, nor any more do we better contemporary life when we only work at the grade of that life and in pursuance of principles that already characterize that life.

And the amount of endeavor we expend, if expended only at that old level, has no bearing whatever on the world's amelioration. There are scores of people to-day whose names are a household word, who are very Napoleons of finance and of industry, who are shaking the ground and filling the air with the throb of their massive efforts who, when they die will leave the world just as poor as it was when they were born, so far as relates to the enhancement of the moral treasures of the world and the beautification and ennoblement of the manhood that peoples it.

Saving the world to a richer and purer life means not only living at the level of the world, but means also living above the world's level, standing thus where one, by being able to grasp the world by a downward reach, is in a position to lift it a little out of its traditional rut and animate it with an impulse that is so far forth new to it, which means a fresh and richer chapter in its historic life. You can call them men or call them prophets, or call them whatever you like, but they are the ones who, while standing down firm-footed upon the coarse ground of the material, reach far enough up into the realm of influences and im-

pulses that are other than material to be able to exert a kind of kingship over it and to reach it with some slight touch of moral and spiritual baptism. And that means a better history, finer men, a purer state, a holier church.

Now those are the ones that over the broad range of God's great purposes for the world count historically. Just as Moses left the world a grander and holier world when he died than it was when he entered it, and Elijah, and John the Baptist, and Luther and other prophetic spirits, not because they did so much or said so much but because there was in them a moral and spiritual royalty that enthroned them above the everyday condition of men and that bent common things to finer issues and that helped to lift the times a little way up toward the destiny God had prescribed for them, so of the splendid spirits that have done their work nearer our own day, so of that kingly specimen of an all-round manhood to whom we have just been bidden to render a tender and reverential goodbye, the world is more worth being a world today because of his prophetic and apostolic touch, because of the impulse that through him has reached the world from outside the world, because of the majesterial pressure that clear thinking has exerted, and high living, wide sympathizing, constant and voluminous service, continuous intimacy with the things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard and all of that

suffused with the spirit of tender loyalty to his divine Master.

We do not say this for purposes of eulogy, but that we who are left may understand better from such a concrete example what the world needs to have done for it, and what kind of men are needed in order to do it; that however closely we may be and must be, bound in with the commonplaces of life, it is from some outstanding position, that lifts us above the lowlands of usual experience, that all our truly emancipating and uplifting service will have to be rendered. It is not enough that you and I should regard admiringly or even reverently a career such as that which has been for so many years weaving its golden threads into the tissue of human life and we may say without exaggeration into the tissue of the world's life, but that we should have it distinctly borne in upon us that just as Christ had to be more than ordinary men in order that men themselves might become less ordinary, and that as he whose very presence among us in our church was a benison and whose memory we love, blest men by not simply standing in the midst of men, but also in a way by standing apart from them, so we, except we are different from the world, cannot make the world different from what it is. Remember that the world is to be transformed by the men who stand in the front ranks, and not only that, but by men who have so distinct a vision of the goal, that they

lean forward *out of line* with the front ranks, and not by those who drift with the crowd, and who leave no mark but that which was left by the mob that tagged on after Moses and decorated the wilderness with their disused remains.

And while it is true that a measure of upward impulse is communicated to the world by every one who, while standing in the midst of the world, at the same time stands above it, and is thus able to bend down helpfully to the world's deliverance, yet the meaning of all this is borne in upon us with tremendous effect when, as in the instance lying so close to our thought and heart this morning, the uplifting power is exercised by a soul so thoroughly equipped with all those energies that make for large effect. There is in some people a certain quality of universality such that any significant interest pertaining to any department of life, and manifesting itself in any quarter of the globe addresses itself to them with the power of a moving appeal. They seem so interiorly strung with sensitive cords that every serious impact from whatever source emanating sets the strings a-humming,—a sort of immense telephonic receiver that in a welcoming way takes in communications from an infinitude of transmitters, and with electric lines so perfectly insulated that none of the message leaks out of the wire no matter how great may be the distance over which the message has

traveled,—that all-round kind of soul that matches the sphericity of the globe.

They are the people to whom self signifies so little that the importance of any interest is not measured by the distance of that interest from the spot where they themselves happen to be standing. Or we might say that there is in them that element of ubiquity that every interest is to them a present interest, a close-by interest. So that whether it is one that appeals to them from the corner of Twenty-fourth Street and Madison Avenue, or that comes to them from the Orient, it is all the same thing; there is no distance about it in either case. The heart is so big that even things the longest way off are immediately tangent to them. They are a gentle and sweet-spirited rebuke to those whose affections are so feebly-winged as to be incapable of long flight, and who have no tender concern for any cause that lies a little off from their own street or city or out of their own latitude or longitude. It is a great thing to have a few men scattered through society that are big enough to suggest to the rest of us how small we are.

And then the kind of soul we are contemplating is one to which everything, the whole business of life, is an affair of trusteeship. Whether it be property in skill, or property in thought or property in money, it is so much value held in trust,—property that is in a sense one's own, but not

one's own as against the purposes of God, and not one's own as against the needs of mankind; so that in their donation of money, for example, it is not felt by them to be a gift from their own pocket, but a contribution from the Lord.

Such ones, therefore, do not erect monuments commemorative of their beneficence; they do not *feel* it as beneficence. The distribution of funds that God has placed in their hands for purposes of distribution is not regarded by them as charity, but as a part of the business devolving upon them as the Lord's stewards. Such men standing forth as the champions of the public interest, contributing not only their belongings, but contributing themselves, to the pecuniary, the intellectual, the moral and the religious needs of mankind are worth more as a solvent of the urgent problems of the day than all the treatises on sociology that have been or that could be written. Books do not settle anything. Men settle things, and great men settle things in a great way. The world will never find any fault with the large wealth of a man whose heart is as big as his purse.

And that touches upon what was the consummating element in his vast personal power, his heart. He was possessed of a great genius of affection. He loved everything from God down to the newsboy, and left behind him a swath of warm sunshine wherever he moved. So that his

going away has been to us who knew him, like the going down of the sun and the coming on of the twilight after a day that has been summerish and bright.

His mind ranged widely over the things of the world and also found itself pleasantly at home in the thoughts of the world to come. So that his final moments were without misgiving, and he stepped forth into the new life with a mind that was clear and with an assurance that was absolute and sweet. He never grew old. Hearts cannot age, and our loving imagination still pictures him as moving on still in the spiritual vigor of perpetual youth and fulfilling over the wider area of the life eternal the mission prosecuted by him here so sturdily, so wisely, so unfalteringly, so tenderly.

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