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## DISCOURSE

On the Death of  
GEN. HAMILTON.

*(Since the ever to be lamented death of Hamilton, it is with difficulty we can turn aside from that distressing event to the ordinary subjects of a public paper; and we trust by our continued attention to it, we are acting in sympathy with most of our readers.—Among the eulogies which have been pronounced on the character of the illustrious deceased, we are persuaded from the extracts we have seen, done with surpassing elegance and force of language, in discrimination of character, in justice of sentiments, the Discourse of the Rev. Mr. NOTT, pastor of the Presbyterian church in Albany; and we proceed to give those extracts as we find them in the New-York Evening Post. The Preacher has taken for his text, the very appropriate words in 2 Samuel, 1. 19. "How are the mighty fallen!")*

"The occasion explains the choice of my subject; a subject on which I enter in obedience to your request. You have assembled to express your elegiac sorrows, and sad and solemn weeds cover you.

"Before such an audience, and on such an occasion, I enter on the duty assigned me with trembling. Do not mistake my meaning; I tremble indeed—not, however, through fear of failing to merit your applause; for what have I to do with that when addressing the dying and treading on the ashes of the dead? Not through fear of failing, justly, to pourtray the character of that great man who is at once the theme of my encomium and regret: he needs not eulogy—his works are finished, and death has removed him beyond my censure, and I would fondly hope, through grace, above my praise.

"You will ask then, why I tremble? I tremble to think that I am called to attack from this place a crime, the very idea of which almost freezes one with horror—a crime too which exists among the polite & polished orders of society, and which is accompanied with every aggravation; committed with cool deliberation; and openly in the face of day!

"But I have a duty to perform; and difficult and awful as that day is, I will not shrink from it.

"Would to God my talents were adequate to the occasion. But such as they are, I devoutly proffer them to unfold the nature and counteract the influence of that barbarous custom, which, like a resistless torrent, is undermining the foundations of civil government—breaking down the barriers of social happiness, and sweeping away virtue, talents and domestic felicity in its desolating course.

"Another and an illustrious character—a father—a general—a statesman—the very man who stood on an eminence and without a rival, among sages and heroes, the future hope of his country in danger—this man, yielding to the influence of a custom which deserves our eternal reprobation, has been brought to an untimely end.

"That the deaths of great & useful men should be particularly noticed is equally the dictate of reason and revelation. The tears of Israel flowed at the decease of good Josiah, and to his memory the funeral women chanted the solemn dirge.

"But neither examples nor arguments are necessary to wake the sympathies of a grateful people on such occasions. The death of public benefactors surcharges the heart, and it spontaneously disburdens itself by a flow of sorrows.

"Such was the death of Washington, to embalm whose memory, & perpetuate whose deathless fame, we lent our feeble but unnecessary services. Such, also, and more peculiarly so, has been the death of Hamilton.

"The tidings of the former moved us—mournfully moved us—and we wept. The account of the latter chilled our hopes and curdled our blood. The former died in a good old age: the latter was cut off in the midst of his usefulness. The former was a customary providence: we saw in it, if I may speak so, the finger of God, and rested in his sovereignty. The latter is not attended with this soothing circumstance.

"The fall of Hamilton owes its existence to mad deliberation, and is marked by violence. The time, the place, the circumstances, are arranged with barbarous coolness. The instrument of death is levelled in daylight, and with well directed skill pointed at his heart. Alas! the event has proven that it was but too well directed.—Wounded, mortally wounded, on the very spot which still smoked with the blood of a favorite son, into the arms of his indiscreet and cruel friend the father fell.

"Ah! had he fallen in the course of nature; or jeopardizing his life in defence of his country; had he fallen—But he did not. He fell in single combat—Pardon my mis-

take—*He did not fall in single combat.* His noble nature refused to endanger the life of his antagonist. But he exposed his own life. This was his crime: and the sacredness of my office forbids that I should hesitate explicitly to declare it so.

"He did not hesitate to declare it so himself: "My religious and moral principles are strongly opposed to duelling." These are his words before he ventured to the field of death. "I view the late transaction with sorrow and contrition." These are his words after his return.

"Humiliating end of illustrious greatness! *How are the mighty fallen!* And shall the mighty thus fall? Thus shall the noblest lives be sacrificed, and the richest blood be spilt? *Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon!*

Think not that the fatal issue of the late inhuman interview was fortuitous. No; the Hand that guides unseen the arrow of the archer, steadied and directed the arm of the duellist. And why did it thus direct it? As a solemn memento—as a loud and awful warning to a community where justice has slumbered—and slumbered—and slumbered—while the wife has been robbed of her partner, the mother of her hopes, and life after life rashly, and with an air of triumph, sported away.

"And was there, O my God! no other sacrifice valuable enough—would the cry of no other blood reach the place of retribution and awake justice, dozing over her awful seat?"

Again—  
"In accomplishing the object which is before me, it will not be expected, as it is not necessary, that I should give a history of Duelling. You need not be informed that it originated in a dark and barbarous age. The polished Greek knew nothing of it—the noble Roman was above it."

"But though Greece and Rome knew nothing of Duelling, it exists. It exists among us; and it exists at once the most Rash, the most Absurd and Guilty practice that ever disgraced a Christian nation."

The indignation of the divine breaks out in the following exclamation—

"Who is it then that calls the duellist to the dangerous and deadly combat? Is it God? No; on the contrary he forbids it. Is it then his country? No; she also utters her prohibitory voice. Who is it then? A man of honor. And who is this man of honor? A man perhaps whose honour is a name; who prates with polluted lips about the sacredness of character, when his own is stained with crimes, and needs but the single shade of murder to complete the dismal and sickly picture!"

Once more—

"The frantic meeting, by a kind of magic influence, entirely varnishes over a defective and smutty character; transforms vice to virtue, cowardice to courage; makes falsehood truth, guilt innocence—in one word, it gives a new complexion to the whole state of things. The Ethiopian changes his skin, the leopard his spot, and the debauched and treacherous, having shot away the infamy of a sorry life, comes back from the field of PERFECTIBILITY quite regenerated, and, in the fullest sense, an honorable man. He is now fit for the company of gentlemen: he is admitted to that company, and should he again, by acts of villainy, stain this purity of character so nobly acquired, and should any one have the effrontery to say that he has done so, again he stands ready to vindicate his honor, and by another act of homicide to wipe away the stain which has been attached to it."

The following contains the eulogy which a Minister of God, standing at the altar felt himself justified in pronouncing on ALEXANDER HAMILTON—

"The MAN, on whom nature seems originally to have impressed the stamp of greatness; whose genius beamed from the retirement of collegiate life, with a radiance which dazzled, and a loveliness which charmed, the eye of ages.

"The HERO, called from his sequestered retreat, whose first appearance in the field, though a stripling, conciliated the esteem of Washington, our good old father. Moving by whose side, during all the perils of the revolution, our young Chieftain was a contributor to the veteran's glory, the guardian of his person, and the companion of his toils."

"The CONQUEROR, who sparing of human blood when victory favored, stayed the uplifted arm, and nobly said to the vanquished enemy, "live!"

"The STATESMAN, the correctness of whose principles and the strength of whose mind, are inscribed on the records of Congress, and on the annals of the counsel chamber; whose genius impressed itself upon the constitution of his country; and whose memory, the government, illustrious fabric, resting on this basis, will perpetuate while it lasts; and, shaken by the violence of party, should it fall, which may heaven avert, his prophetic declarations will be found inscribed on its ruins.

"The COUNSELLOR, who was at once the pride of the bar, and the admiration of the court. Whose apprehensions were as quick as lightning, and whose development of truth was luminous as its path; whose argument no change of circumstance could embarrass; whose knowledge appeared intuitive; and who, by a single glance, and with as much facility as the eye of the eagle passes over the landscape, surveyed the whole field of controversy; saw in what way truth might be most successfully defended, and how error must be approached. And who, without ever stopping, ever hesitating, by a rapid and manly march, led the listening judge and the fascinated juror, step by step, through a delightful region, brightening as he advanced, till his argument rose to demonstration, and eloquence was rendered useless by conviction.

Whose talents were employed on the side of righteousness. Whose voice, whether in the counsel chamber or at the bar of justice, was virtue's consolation. At whose approach oppressed humanity felt a secret rapture, and the heart of injured innocence leapt for joy.

Where Hamilton was, in whatever sphere he moved, the friendless had a friend, the fatherless a father, and the poor man, tho' unable to reward his kindness, found an advocate. It was, when the rich oppressed the poor; when the powerful menaced the defenceless; when truth was disregarded; or the eternal principles of justice violated; it was on these occasions that he exerted all his strength. It was on these occasions that he sometimes soared so high, & shone with aradiance so transcendent, I had almost said, so "heavenly," as filled those around him with awe, and gave him the force and authority of a prophet.

"The PATRIOT whose integrity baffled the scrutiny of inquisition. Whose manly virtue never shaped itself to circumstances— who, always great, always himself, stood amidst the varying tides of party, firm like the rock which far from land, lifts its majestic top above the waves, and remains unshaken by the storms which agitate the ocean.

"The FRIEND, who knew no guile. Whose bosom was transparent and deep, in the bottom of whose heart was rooted every tender and sympathetic virtue. Whose various worth opposing parties acknowledged while alive, and on whose tomb they unite with equal sympathy and grief to heap their honours.

"I know he had his failings.—I see on the picture of his life, a picture rendered awful by greatness, and luminous by virtue, some dark shades.—On these let the fear that pities human weakness fall: on these let the veil which covers human frailty rest.—As a hero, as a statesman, as a patriot he lived nobly: and would to God I could add, he nobly fell.

"Unwilling to admit his error in this respect, I go back to the period of discussion. I see him resisting the threatened interview. I imagine myself present in his chamber. Various reasons, for a time, seem to hold his determination in arrest. Various and moving objects pass before him, and speak a dissuasive language.

"His country, which may need his counsels to guide and his arm to defend, utters her veto. The partner of his youth, already covered with weeds, and whose tears flow down her bosom, intercedes! His babes stretching out their little hands and pointing to a weeping mother, with lisping eloquence, but eloquence which reaches a parent's heart, cry out "Stay—stay—dear papa, and live for us!" In the mean time the spectre of a fallen son, pale and ghastly, approaches, opens his bleeding bosom, and as the harbinger of death, points to the yawning tomb and forwarns a hesitating father of the issue!

"He pauses. Reviews these sad objects: and reasons on the subject. I admire his magnanimity. I approve his reasoning, & I wait to hear him reject with indignation the murderous proposition, and to see him spurn from his presence the presumptuous bearer of it.

"But I wait in vain. It was a moment in which his great wisdom forsook him. A moment in which Hamilton was not himself.

"He yielded to the force of an imperious custom. And yielding he sacrificed a life in which all had an interest—and he is lost—lost to his country—lost to his family—lost to us.

"For this—act, because he disclaimed it, and was penitent, I forgive him."

The Preacher returns to his reprobation of Duelling—

"But there are those whom I cannot forgive. I mean not his antagonist, over whose erring steps, if there be tears in heaven, a pious mother looks down & weeps.—If he be capable of feeling, he suffers already all that humanity can suffer. Suffers, and wherever he may fly will suffer, with the poignant recollection, of having taken the life of one who was too magnanimous in return to attempt his own. Had he have known this, it must have paralyzed his arm, while it pointed at so incorruptible a bosom, the instrument of death. Does he know this now, his heart, if it be not of adamant, must soften.—if it be not ice, it must melt. But on this article I forbear. Stained with blood as he is, if he be penitent, I forgive him—and if he be not, before these altars, where all of us appear as supplicants, I wish not to excite your vengeance, but rather, in behalf of an object rendered wretched and pitiable by crime, to wake your prayers.

But I have said, and I repeat it, there are those whom I cannot forgive: I cannot forgive that minister at the altar, who has hitherto forbore to remonstrate on this subject.—I cannot forgive that public persecutor, who, entrusted with the duty of avenging his country's wrongs, has seen those wrongs, and taken no measures to avenge them.—I cannot forgive that Judge upon the bench, or that Governor in the chair of state, who has lightly passed over such offences. I cannot forgive the public, in whose opinion the duellist finds a sanctuary. I cannot forgive you, my brethren, who till this late hour has been silent, whilst successive murders were committed. No; I cannot forgive you, that you have not, in common with the freemen of this state, raised your voice to the powers that be, and loudly and explicitly demanded an execution of your laws."

"Would to God, I might be permitted to approach for once the late scene of death. Would to God I could there assemble on the one side, the disconsolate mother with her seven fatherless children—and on the other those who administer the justice of my country. Could I do this, I would point them to these sad objects. I would entreat them, by the agonies of bereaved fondness, to listen to the widow's heartfelt groans; to mark the orphan's sighs and tears. And having done this, I would uncover the breathless corpse of Hamilton. I would lift from his gaping wound his bloody MANTLE—I would hold it up to heaven before them, and I would ask in the name of GOD, whether at the sight of it they felt no compunction.

"You will ask perhaps, what can be done, to arrest the progress of a practice which has yet so many advocates? I answer, nothing—if it be the deliberate intention to do nothing. But if otherwise much is within our power."

He bursts out in the following pathetic strain—

"How are the mighty fallen! And regardless as we are of vulgar deaths, shall not the fall of the mighty affect us!

"A short time since, and he who is the occasion of our sorrows, was the ornament of his country. He stood on an eminence; and glory covered him. From that eminence he has fallen—suddenly forever fallen. His intercourse with the living world is now ended; and those who would hereafter find him must seek him in the grave. There, cold and lifeless, is the heart which just now was the seat of friendship. There, dim and sightless is the eye, whose radiant & enlivening orb beamed with intelligence; and there closed forever, are those lips, on whose persuasive accents we have so often and so lately hung with transport.

From the darkness which rests upon his tomb, there proceeds, methinks, a light in which it is clearly seen that those gaudy objects which men pursue are only phantoms. In this light how dimly shines the splendor of victory—how humble appears the majesty of grandeur. The bubble which seemed to have so much solidity has burst; and we again see that all below the sun is vanity.