



# Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.



B

A  
**S E R M O N**

PREACHED IN THE  
PARISH CHURCH  
OF  
WALTHAMSTOW, ESSEX,

BY THE  
REV. GEORGE HUGHES, M. A.

CURATE OF WALTHAMSTOW,

AND

*Domestic Chaplain to the Right Honourable Lord Lisle.*

---

PUBLISHED BY PARTICULAR REQUEST.

---

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,  
SOLD BY LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,  
PATERNOSTER-ROW,  
AND H. GUY, CHELMSFORD, ESSEX.

1817.

[*Price One Shilling.*]

ORGE HIL



IN THE

TO THE  
**REV. EDWARD CONYERS, VICAR,**

FROM WHOM

*THE AUTHOR*

HAS RECEIVED THE MOST POLITE AND UNIFORM ATTENTION,

AND TO THE

INHABITANTS OF WALTHAMSTOW,

WHO HAVE, ON ALL OCCASIONS,

BY THEIR PUNCTUAL RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES,

SECONDED HIS PROFESSIONAL EXERTIONS,

THE FOLLOWING

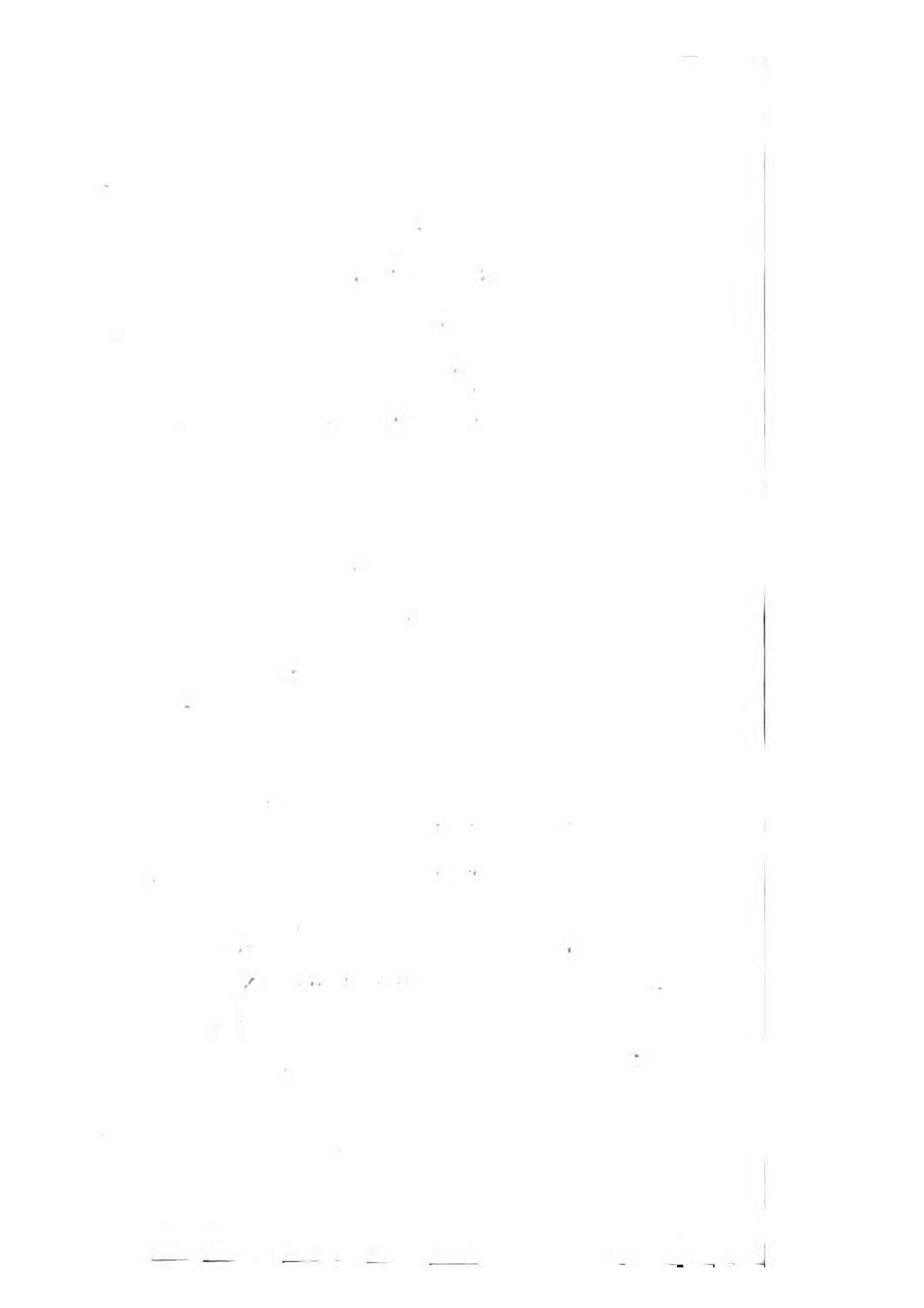
**S E R M O N**

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND,

AND FAITHFUL SERVANT,

**GEORGE HUGHES.**



A  
**S E R M O N.**

---

*“ How are the mighty fallen ? ”*

2 SAM. chap. i. v. 27.

A FREQUENT and attentive prospect of that moment which must put a period to all our earthly schemes, and deprive us of all our earthly acquisitions, is indeed of the utmost efficacy to the just and rational regulation of our lives. Nor would any course of wickedness be undertaken or prosecuted by him, who

should begin every day with a serious reflection that he is born to die. But we represent to ourselves the pleasures of some future possession, and suffer our thoughts to dwell attentively upon it, till it has wholly engrossed the imagination, and permits us not to conceive any happiness but its attainment, or any misery but its loss. Every man has experienced how much of this ardour has been remitted, when death seemed fast approaching. The extensive influence of greatness, the glitter of wealth, the praises of admiration, and the attendance of supplicants, have appeared vain and insignificant, when the last hour approached: and if the same thought were always predominant, the same appearance would be manifest. We should then know the folly of stretching out our arms, incessantly, to grasp that which we cannot keep; of



wearing out our lives in endeavours to add new turrets to the fabric of ambition, when the foundation itself is shaking, and the ground on which it stands is mouldering away.

In a world like ours, there are more thorns than flowers. Often will our passage be obstructed by rocks of offence. In the morning, when all is clear and serene, every thing smiles upon the traveller, and invites him to proceed. But soon the hour of prosperity is past, and the storms of adversity and affliction gather round his head, and fearfulness and trembling come upon him. Then it is that man needs all his steadfastness and courage, to enable him to hold fast, with resolution, the "shield of faith" in one hand,—the "sword of the spirit" in the other. Great are the dangers and

hardships to be encountered, ere we can reach the haven of quiet and felicity. With the Gospel for our companion, and the example of Jesus for our guide, our journey will appear more easy, and even the last and most formidable part of it will be submitted to without a pang. Regarding death as a passage to that other and better country, of which we live in constant expectation, the calamities of life will lose their poignancy, contrasted with the glory which shall be revealed.

I will apply these sober reflections, my brethren, to that distressing event which the nation, with one unbroken voice of lamentation, still continues to deplore. A common feeling has summoned us together,—a feeling not confined to this kingdom alone, but deeply felt, and appro-

priately acknowledged, on shores beyond our own.

Never, I feel persuaded, had a Christian congregation a wider field for the exercise of every gentler feeling ! Never had the Christian Minister a more awakening moral, to impress upon his hearers ! It has been justly said, that, whether considered as a Divine Visitation upon the charities, the hopes, the prospects, of domestic life, or as a more extended and awful dispensation upon a mighty and powerful people, the death of the Illustrious Personage we deplore must make an impression as general and melancholy, as it is likely to prove lasting and eventful.

Though every observation that feeling could suggest, has been anticipated by the voice of general affliction ; yet, I trust,

sufficient scope still remains for the indulgence of such reflections as may convince you, how deeply it is calculated to bow down the heart with heaviness, and to enforce the frequently inculcated truth, of the absolute vanity of all we enjoy on earth.

But, alas! how heart-rending is the tale we have to record; how distressing is that medium through which the valuable lesson must be conveyed. The hearts of husbands and of fathers, of wives, of mothers, and of children, must all be pierced, ere the visitation can be fully felt and acknowledged, and the moral be effectually inculcated.

Is there a heart around me, that does not beat in unison with the pious exclamation of the Prophet, "How are the

mighty fallen?" Directed by an impulse which seemed universal in its operation, every eye in Britain was turned upon its future Queen. Every ear seemed to dwell delighted upon those accents which fondly prophesied the birth of one who should be reared in the image of his mother's virtues; who, obedient to her precept, and quickened by her bright example, would shed new lustre on the British throne. With an interest that does not commonly accompany so wide a distinction as there is between the Sovereign and the subject, the people had watched the growth of their loved Princess, from infancy to womanhood. They had borne a grateful testimony to the filial virtues of the daughter, and hailed, in the domestic and amiable conduct of the wife, the glad realities of all their hopes, and the happiest omen of their own future fame.

It is not unfrequently the fate of Royalty, in that state which diffuses so much happiness to most who enter it, to be obliged to sacrifice those feelings which govern humbler life, in the choice of the partner of its joys and sorrows, to the interest of the people over whom they rule. But, in the instance before us, no views of interest or ambition were permitted to outweigh the finer feelings of the woman. The object of our deep regret well knew that the *virtues* of the Sovereign were the best foundation for the happiness and prosperity of the subject; and, in compliance with this strong conviction, had bestowed her hand and heart on one whose exalted character has won the affections of the people, and confirmed the wisdom of her choice.

During the short period which Heaven

allotted to this auspicious union, every virtue seems to have been called into exercise, which could reflect honour and dignity on Royalty, most judiciously and amiably blended with those rarer excellencies which adorn the private station.

The exalted duties of religion were regularly and punctually observed. Both in the sanctuary and in the closet, were offered grateful and pious thanksgivings to Heaven, for the comforts that daily blessed their union. Charity, in all her varying forms, made glad the hearts of numbers: and frequent were the retrenchments from luxury, to satisfy the wants of poverty and distress. The haunts of dissipation were deserted, for the more endearing charms of domestic enjoyment, and the rational amusements of home.

To this bright assemblage of virtues,—this the centre of all their hopes and ambition,—the eyes of the whole nation were directed. An anxious interval was to be passed, ere virtue could resume its innocent career—the admiration of the people was, for a time, to be alloyed by solicitude for the result of approaching illness ; and that storm was hovering, which, it was fondly deemed, would soon blow over, and tend only to make the succeeding calm more blissful and unclouded. But, alas ! how vain the projects and the hopes of man ; he had again to learn, by fatal experience, that “ God is no respecter of persons ;” that the grave awaits equally the Sovereign and the Slave.

One short hour has frustrated a nation's expectations—one short hour has swept



away the Mother and her Child—the chain of succession to a mighty Throne is broken, and the awful visitation is severely felt in every corner of the kingdom.—“ Weep, daughters of Jerusalem, weep for yourselves and your children.” Weep for the absence of that bright example of piety and virtue, that exalted pattern of all that was estimable in rank, and valuable in ordinary life, thus prematurely snatched from an admiring people; weep for the extinction of those high hopes, which, with a becoming national feeling, were proudly anticipating the period, when the virtues of the Sovereign would have shed a kindling influence around,—when her spirit would have stimulated the patriot ardours of her subjects, and her matured prudence and moderation have chastened their ambition.

Yet, murmur not that these high hopes

were not permitted to be realized ; Heaven, in its wisdom, (we humbly and fervently hope!) has robbed her of an earthly throne, to crown her with a loftier diadem in a kingdom that fadeth not away, "eternal in the Heavens." It is not for man to question the ways of Omnipotence; this early fate may have been in mercy sent to spare her a thousand bitter pangs from which not even Potentates are exempt. If we search into the records of history, what a lamentable catalogue of miseries will be found? miseries that have dimmed the splendor of Royalty, and scattered the lesson of morality around; there will be seen a sad succession of misfortunes, to which the sovereign is ever subject: disappointed ambition — wars abroad and dissensions at home—disgraces and defeats—the heavy load of responsibility—and a murmuring dissatisfied country: these will meet us in every page, and

convince us how idly we rebel against the dispensations of Heaven, and complain of the unequal distribution.

Yet this discourse does not so much exhort you to restrain your sorrows as to heed the moral to which the calamity gives birth.

That grief, which is so loudly and universally expressed, reflects high credit upon the people; it shews them not insensible to departed worth; and proves that their admiration is not to be secured by the pomp and splendor that surround, but by the virtues that adorn the throne; yet it adds a keener pang to the recollection of the illustrious Husband, and too truly attests the value of the dear departed associate of his domestic hours, when he beholds her character so justly estimated,—her memory so much revered.

At the same time, may it be some consolation to the suffering Relative, that the same voice, which so loudly deploras the privation, bears ample testimony to the distinguished manner in which He has fulfilled the duties of the Christian, the Husband, and the Man. Long will he live in the hearts of a grateful nation, endeared to them by his unobtrusive merit, and consistency of virtuous conduct !

Weep, daughters of Jerusalem, your feeling hearts will well know how to appreciate the visitation we deplore. You who know the value of conjugal love, of domestic endearments, of a virtuous home—you who have wept for joy over the living pledge of mutual affection, and with a delight peculiarly your own, have traced the virtues of the father gradually maturing in your child—you will poignantly feel the anguish of the mother

bereft in the midst of suffering of her hope of consolation ;—you will be alive to the horror and distraction of the husband, when the same hour that robs him of his child, steals from him the mother also.

But what will avail your lamentation if it be not accompanied with the awakening moral such scenes of desolation should convey. Happy is it indeed for the pure cause of Christianity, when its precepts are sanctioned by such high authority; incalculable is the benefit conferred upon a whole community when a good example is manifested by an afflicted disciple in so elevated a situation. The force of the Christian precept is indeed never so readily acknowledged, as when we observe its influence on exalted rank. When the Scriptures admonish us to be constant and diligent in our devotion, we instantly admit the wisdom of the command ;—when

we are encouraged to open our hand to a fellow-creature in distress, to succour the poor wherever we may meet with him, we adore the goodness of our God and acknowledge the universal purity of the doctrine; but when we have seen the exhortation to pray, exemplified in an illustrious individual by constant and habitual devotion, by the regular attendance upon public worship, and the more valuable because the less ostensible services of private devotion; when we have witnessed the comprehensive command to love our neighbour as ourself, illustrated in the uniform discharge of every charitable duty to those who stood most in need of it, then it is the Gospel precepts come enforced by additional recommendations; since not the splendor of station, nor the "abundance of the things of this world" have been found sufficient to weaken their influence. There is not one, I am

assured, who will not admit the fidelity of the portrait ; may there not be one who is insensible to the moral it enforces. You have often heard me descant on the uncertainty of life, on the insufficiency of earthly honours, on the fading nature of all sublunary enjoyments, on the unsparring ravages of death, alike devouring the Peasant and the Prince. You have, perhaps, permitted the exhortation to leave but a momentary impression, arising either from a want of interest in what you heard, or want of eloquence in the Preacher ; but here is a tale that must awaken the liveliest interest,—a tale too eloquent in itself to need the aid of oratory to enforce it. Apply it, I beseech you, my brethren, to yourselves. Let your hearts be clad in grief, corresponding with the sadness of the countenance, and the appropriate mournful decorations that surround you.\*

\* The pulpit and the desk were hung with black cloth.

But let this be a godly sorrow, working out repentance. Let every mother learn from the melancholy example before her, so to connect the duty she owes to Heaven with the several endearing charities of life, that piety may chasten even her most innocent enjoyments ; so to train her child in the paths of godliness, that she may hope, when Heaven takes him from her, to meet him once again ; so to be resigned to the will of God, that when he calls the mother also, she may, as we are told of the illustrious dead, leave virtue's conscious smile\* behind.

\* It is said, that the smile of resignation, which, in her last moments, played upon her features, as she looked stedfastly on her husband, remained after her death.

FINIS.



