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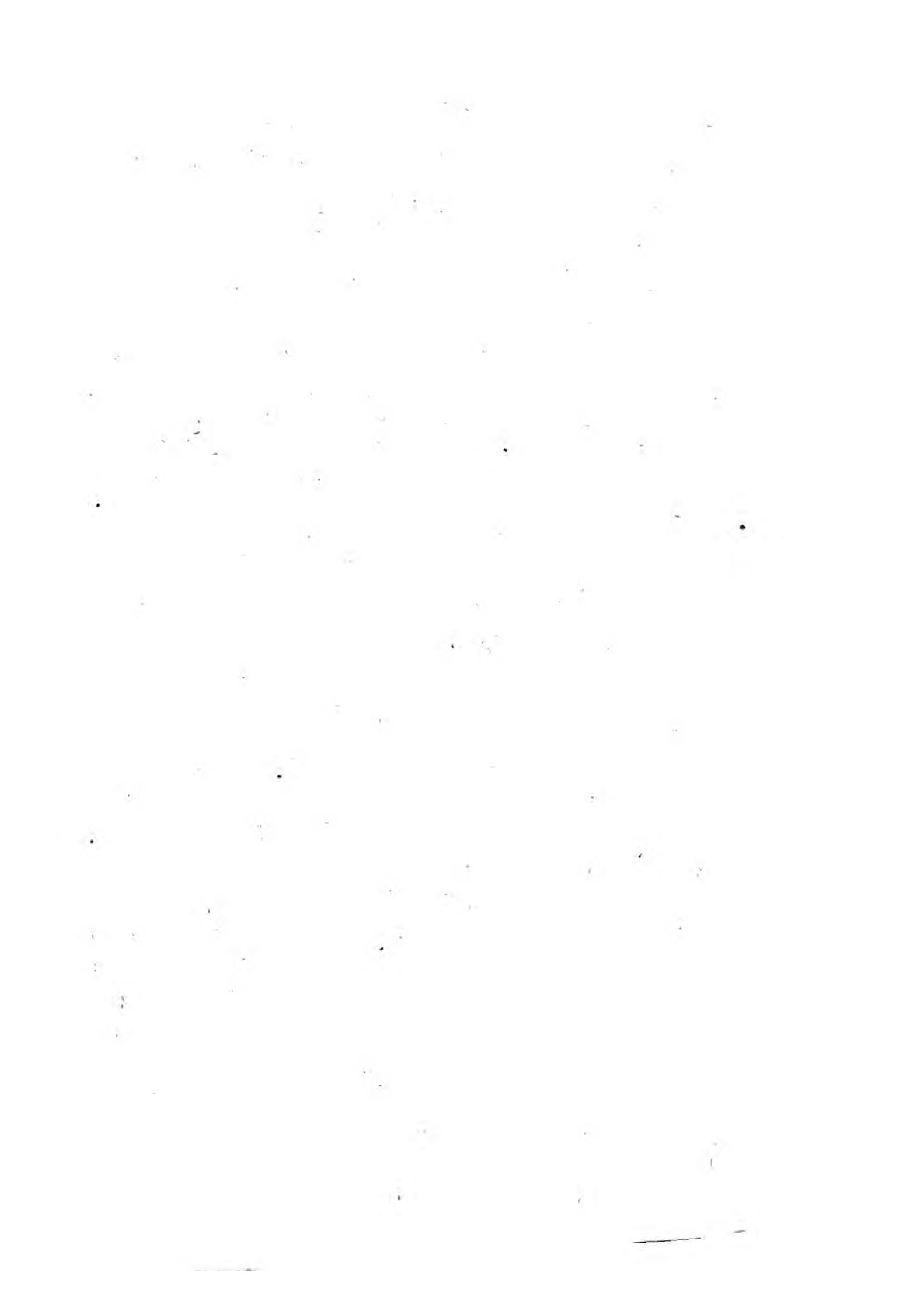
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Tamph

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Oration . . . D^r by W^m Howell

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*Reflections on the fall of a great
Man.*

A
S E R M O N
Preached to a
CONGREGATION
OF
Protestant Dissenters

At
Daventry in Northamptonshire,
On Occasion of the

D E A T H
Of the late REVEREND
ISAAC WATTS, D. D.

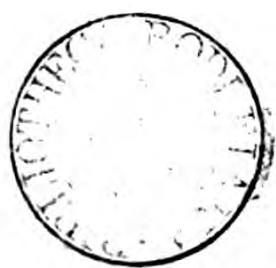
WITH
A Sketch of his Character, chiefly drawn from
his WRITINGS.

By CALEB ASHWORTH.

The SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by J. WAUGH, in *Gracechurch-
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THIS Sermon was preached from a few short hints, hastily thrown together, to my own People, about seventy miles from *London*, and (as may easily be imagined from these circumstances) without the least design of ever being made publick: But as I knew the high veneration most of the Audience had for Dr. *Watts*, and the Esteem in which they held his writings; I thought it might prove an opportunity of fixing serious impressions on

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their

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their minds. It was with this view, not to embalm his memory, that I entered so far into his character ; but an intimate Friend of the *Doctor's*, in the neighbourhood of *London*, who desired a copy of my Sermon, having thought proper to shew it to some other persons, drew on me such Importunity for the publishing it, as I have not been able to resist. If any should think me deserving of Censure in venturing on the publication, I hope this account of it (which several of my Friends know to be true) will in some measure, abate their Severity.

C. A.

2 S A M. iii. 38.

---- *Know ye not that there is a Prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?*

PERHAPS you may not—but are ready to wonder, what has occasioned my chusing these words, at this time, as the foundation of a discourse; and to ask, Is some wise Politician dead, whose advice used to direct and animate the publick councils? some noble Patriot, who had a peculiar discernment of the Nation's interests, and a steady generous zeal in the pursuit of them? Or some Captain, of distinguished skill in the dreadful art of war; who was wont to lead out the chosen Bands with wisdom and intrepidity, and to bring them home victorious? These are talents, which render their possessors great, in common esteem, and their fall the ground of just and general lamentation; and

and on such an Occasion, the question in the text was first asked. But had a like event happened among us, (as blessed be God, there has not) it would little suit the design of this Assembly, to enter upon the character of such a Man, though I were much more equal to the undertaking, than a person of my profession can reasonably be supposed. Yet an event has happened in the church of God, which, from us Christians, demands deeper concern, than the fall of the most able Politician, the truest Patriot, or the bravest and most successful Warrior; those pillars, and bulwarks of a State. I mean the death of *Dr. Watts*^a: Whose writings have been of such remarkable service, to so great a part of the christian world; have been perused by us, with so much pleasure; and will I doubt not be yet dear to us, and to our children after us, in many succeeding generations. Surely on such an occasion, if any should observe some marks of unusual concern in our countenances, we might justly reply to them, *Know ye not that there is a Prince, and a great man fallen in Israel?*

These

^a Who departed this Life the 25th of Nov. 1748. in the Seventy-fifth Year of his Age.

Fall of a great Man. 7

These words *David* makes use of, to vindicate his mourning for the death of *Abner*; a person of consummate valour and policy, who had been treacherously murdered by *Joab*, partly in revenge of an old quarrel, and partly, as it might seem, to get rid of an obstacle to his ambition, and a dangerous Competitor with him for glory, and the King's favour. *David* was, no doubt, sensibly struck with the barbarity of the crime, and concerned at the loss of so great a man, and able a General; and he might also have some political reasons, for suffering the real concern of his heart, to become visible in his countenance and carriage: For you find, he did not content himself with mourning in secret; but openly discovered his inward agony, by refusing his Food: and was so much engaged in meditation upon this sad event, that he would not suffer himself to be interrupted even so long, as was necessary to eat a morsel of bread; but when many of the people came to urge him that he would take some refreshment, declares
his

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his determination to fast *till the sun was set*; and in the words of the text demands their grief, as well as vindicates his own; *Know ye not that there is a Prince, and a great man fallen this day in Israel?*

We find in this context, that though *David* had reigned in *Hebron* for several years, a considerable part of the People still adhered to the Family of *Saul*; but he was now going to be generally acknowledged by the whole Nation. A season, wherein one would expect nothing should be heard, but the voice of Joy and Triumph; but behold, he calls all the people together to mourn! his Princes, the Captain of his host, and all his attendants, move on in a sorrowful procession with *Abner* to the grave, and himself follows the Bier as chief mourner; and when his Servants seemed to censure his grief as excessive, he vindicates its height, and its continuance, by reminding them, that a great Man was fallen. Now this conduct and language of *David*, seem to lay a just foundation for the following Remark;

That

Fall of a great Man. 9

That the fall of a great man, ought not to be passed over as a *common event*, but calls for an attentive and mournful regard.

The truth of which I intend, (as God shall enable me) to evince, and illustrate: though I shall not confine myself to use the word, *great*, just in the same sense in which it could be applied to *Abner*; as I imagine the Proposition, in any other sense of that word, is equally supported by this passage; and *David's* assigning his reason in general terms, plainly intimates that greatness in general, not merely this or that particular species of it, demands some especial regard.

I may demonstrate this by two very plain and obvious arguments; that the fall of a great Man is a great Loss,—and that it is capable of teaching us a variety of useful lessons; from each of which it will appear, how much such a circumstance deserves our attention.

I. The fall of a great man is a proportionable Loss to the publick.

Such was the case with *David*. By the fall of *Abner* he had lost a gallant Officer, a popular Minister, one very capable of serving him, and whom he at least apprehended to be, an able and trusty Friend; and *Israel* had lost one whose counsel might guide and unite, whose valour might animate and defend them. And whenever a great man dies, the survivors must sustain a Loss; but especially when the greatness is of that kind, which is now under our consideration. If *David* thought it sufficient to justify his mourning, nay that it would have left him exposed to blame, if he had not mourned, that a man of *Abner's* eminence in council and in arms was fallen, let it not be said of us, *the righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart*^b. The loss of *Abner* though publick, was confined to one Nation; though great, was chiefly of a civil nature; and what-

^b Isa. lvii, 1.

Fall of a great Man. **II**

whatever *David* might promise himself from the affection and endowments of this great man, he seems to have been of an haughty untractable temper, too boisterous and aspiring for a peaceable Subject, or a steady and faithful Friend. But in the case before us, the world is deprived of a burning and shining light, the universal church of God of a judicious and affectionate Instructor, as well as his particular Friends, of the ornament and delight of their chearful hours, and the asswager of their sorrows. I am sure, we must have little knowledge who he was, and of how great use such men are to a Nation, and to the interest of religion in particular, or have little real affection for either, if we are unconcerned at the fall of such a friend to both.

II. Such a loss is capable of teaching us a variety of useful Lessons.

1. We may learn from it the evil nature of sin.

Death is the wages of sin, was introduced by it, and a part of the sentence pronounced on the first transgressor; *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return*^c. Thus *sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*^d. How many thousand bodies that were *fearfully and wonderfully made*^e; nay, how many generations of men, once living and active, are turned to dust; till almost the whole mass of earth is changed, and the particles that composed human bodies are scattered and blended, so promiscuously and extensively in the common heap, that we can hardly take an handful of it, but we shall gather up the ashes of some of our Progenitors, though now incapable of being distinguished? O Sin! how vast the slaughter thou hast made! how many and wide thy trophies! a whole Nation, yea a whole World reduced to dust by thee; the most beautiful and exact visible parts of Nature, turned to putrefaction and rottenness by thy fatal influence! This is the case as to the
com-

^c Gen. iii. 19. ^d Rom. v. 12. ^e Psal. xxxix. 14.

Fall of a great Man. 13

common herd of mankind: their death proclaims the malignity of sin, by which it was occasioned. But must the great, the excellent also die? must the countenance that awed or that charmed every beholder, be thus dishonoured? must the Limbs that were turned with the nicest art, polished with exquisite skill, or strung with the firmest Vigour, become stiff in death, and moulder to Dust? must the bodies of those, who were celebrated for their Sagacity, and rendered amiable by every endowment, natural and acquired, be laid on a level with Brutes? Yes, not only those of the most graceful Forms, possessed of exalted Honours, and renowned for their intellectual Abilities; but those, whom true Grace has purified and adorned, must pay the common tribute to nature, and even the dust of the most eminent Saints, be laid in the grave to refine. When we see such desolation, sure we cannot forbear reflecting, that sin is very hateful to the blessed God, or he would not abandon these fairest and noblest parts of his workmanship, to drop into ruin; yea,
to

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to become a prey to corruption, and the feast of worms.

2. The fall of a great man proclaims aloud the Vanity of human greatness.

By human greatness, I mean any of those distinctions which merely relate to the present life, whereby one man is raised above another. Now death is a stain upon this greatness; shows how far it is from being perfect; and on the whole, that those distinctions are not worthy such impatient desire, and unwearied application, as they often excite. Is the man that enjoys riches called great? *They profit not in the day of death*; and when we find those, that have the largest revenues, unable by any means to *redeem their brother*^f from the Grave, or to purchase for themselves an hour's reprieve; how little and despicable do such possessions appear! Does greatness consist in external splendor, in titles of honour, or places of trust? *Vanity of vanities! they are all vanity*^g. This was

^f Psal. xlix. 7.

^g Eccles. i. 2.

Fall of a great Man. 15

was the case of *Abner*. He was a Prince, a Favorite in the court of a grand Monarch ; but how vain did his fall proclaim this kind of greatness ! Does it consist in intellectual abilities, in large natural attainments, or the fame of great actions ? Do the subtlety of the Politician, the wisdom of the Philosopher, or the trophies of Conquest, constitute a great man ? What did policy, or strength, or all the achievements of war profit *Abner*, whom notwithstanding, the sword of a treacherous friend slew, and had he escaped that, he must e'er long have fallen by the unerring shafts of death, in some other form. The penetration of the Statesman contrives an exact plan of government, and secures a Nation by the arts of Peace, or by forming wise alliances in time of war ; but has not been able to *make a covenant with the Grave*, or find an ally able to divert the stroke, or resist the power of Death. The Philosopher, who by researches into the works of God, has learnt to describe the motions of the heavenly bodies, to assign the laws by which they act, and has explored a thousand Mysteries of nature ; has no where found out the secret,

cret, to make himself immortal. Death enters his study, and puts an abrupt period to his Inquiries. Nor is he who has gained immortal Fame by conquering Nations, able to defend himself from this universal Conqueror. Death is not afraid to attack those, who are dignified with the highest titles, and distinguished by the Ensigns of supreme power: and amidst the records of mortality, we often find it written, as it were in triumph over human greatness, "Here lies the great ——"

Surely we need go no farther than the tomb of this great man, to see a most sensible illustration of this humbling truth, *that every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity*^h. What is there of human greatness that can be the just object of our ambition, which he did not eminently possess? A fertile imagination, a serene understanding, a sound judgment, a tenacious memory, a singular sweetness of temper, a large and diffusive knowledge of natural science, and a wide acquaintance with the world, especially

^h Psal. xxxix. 5.

Fall of a great Man. 17

cially with the heart of man. We have perhaps seldom known a human mind formed with such large capacities, or stored with so rich furniture by study and observation, and yet adorned with a meek and quiet spirit. His greatness was an assemblage of whatever was necessary to form an easy companion, a faithful friend, an agreeable writer, and an useful member of society. That such a man should *fall*, is an instructive Lecture on the frailty of the most delightful productions of Nature, and the imperfection of the most exalted human Minds ; but especially *the manner of his fall*: had we been witnesses that this great man, even for many months before his death, had almost entirely lost all that was once peculiar to him ; the vivacity of thought, the clear and distinct conception, the quick recollection of Ideas, and the facility of comparing them : could we have seen him who was once the spirit and the delight of the company, by the wise and pertinent part he bore in conversation, appear like an absent Person, and almost incapable of conversing at all ; I say, could we have observed this,

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without crying out, *How are the mighty fallen!* And now he is dead, methinks it sounds in mine ears this moving Admonition, *cease ye from man, from every man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of^b.*

O my Soul! 'tis even so: one of the greatest men thou ever knewest is fallen. *And seeketh thou great things for thyself? seek them notⁱ:* or if thou wilt be great, place thine affections on more substantial and divine things, and by a course of distinguished labour and faithfulness, aspire after *glory, honour, and immortality.* This is true and heavenly greatness; worthy thine ambition: this is what this eminent Saint coveted, and which has ennobled and crowned him in that world, where terrestrial Distinctions are known no more.

Hitherto we have chiefly considered Greatness in a general sense, or rather as it relates to external Advantages. But we shall now con-

^a Isa. ii. 22.

ⁱ Jer. xlv. 5.

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consider that view of it, which was peculiarly applicable to the person whose Death we are lamenting; and this will instruct us,

3. That the fall of a great man, should engage us to bless God who made him great.

Every good and perfect Gift comes down from the Father of lights^k. 'Tis from him that their greatness was derived, and that they received all their abilities for Service, however eminent and distinguished. It becomes us therefore to acknowledge him, as the Author of all. This we should do while they are living; but as we are then too apt to neglect it, 'tis proper to make it the subject of our thanksgiving, on their Death; and it may be the rather expected, as great men are often more honoured after they are removed, than while they were enjoyed; and perhaps the world, perhaps we ourselves, shall be more sensible of the value of this great Man, now he is gone, than we have ever been before. But how much soever we have

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esteemed

^k James i. 17.

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esteemed him, or may further esteem his memory, let us remember he was only *a man whom God delighted to honour*. Never was any man more sensible of this, than he: none more humble, or unwilling to arrogate any thing to himself, or more ready amidst the abundant evidences of his usefulness, which surrounded him, to adopt the words of St. Paul, *Who are we but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man*¹? And, if I might be allowed the expression, it would give him pain in heaven, to find that his name was celebrated on earth, to the disparagement of his great Master's; and that men should ascribe to him, the benefits they receive from his writings, as tho' by any *power or holiness of his*^m, those benefits were conferred.

We are mourning that this great man is fallen; but let us not murmur. It becomes us rather to adore God, for making him so great; without which, we should not have had this occasion to mourn; and that he con-
tinued

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 5.

^m Acts iii, 12.

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tinued him so long, capable of performing so many acceptable and honourable services to his Church: a mercy that has been highly endeared and enhanced, by the painful and threatening indispositions, with which he has often been visited, and confined. Really when we consider in how weak a state he has frequently lain, it should awaken in us no little thankfulness, that God has lengthened out his life to a good old age, and given the World the enjoyment of a blessing, which he not only might, but which he often seemed to threaten, he would much sooner remove.

4. The fall of a great man is a loud and affecting call to exert ourselves with greater diligence, in pursuit of the noblest purposes of life.

When a great man in a Nation or a Church falls, it makes a wide breach, which while we mourn, it becomes us to use our utmost endeavours to heal. To lament is what we cannot avoid, if we have any sense; but we shall

shall not esteem this sufficient, if we have any Piety. *Joshua* no doubt mourned the Loss of *Moses*; but the divine Being pointed out another duty, and roused him from that stupidity by which his mind seems to have been seized and benumbed in the first views of it, to enter upon and finish the work, he had left imperfect. “*Moses my Servant is dead, now therefore arise*”, and lead on the “*People*.” Thus doth it become us, in our several spheres, to exert ourselves with so much the more diligence, that we may, as much as possible, supply the vacant place, and there may be no *lack of service*°: especially when a man great in this sense falls; when one, so peculiarly diligent and successful in the cause of Religion, is taken away.

But perhaps you may think such advice more proper to be addressed to Ministers. And I must own there is some additional Service devolved upon us Ministers, and my heart fails me when I consider it. O that we might each of us know, and perform our part as becomes us! but I will venture to say, there

° Josh. i. 2.

• Phil. ii. 30.

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there is something that you can, and ought to do, towards supplying the place of this great man. Permit me, in this view, to mention some good works wherein he abounded, and which he can now perform no more, but which it is incumbent on you to practise and maintain.

He was eminent in Prayer.

Know ye not that in this respect a prince, and a great man is fallen; a great man of God, who *like a Prince had power with the most High*^p. How tender an affection did he bear towards this Nation! How was his Soul grieved to see and hear men, in the most daring and outrageous manner, affronting the blessed God, and his Son: and with a dreadful perseverance, and a kind of united violence, pulling down divine Judgments on their own heads, as if they were impatient till they came! How has he wrestled with God to avert the vengeance that awaited us, and obtain the unmerited blessing! and how *much* may we reasonably suppose, *the fervent in-wrought prayers of this righteous man*

^p Gen. xxxii. 28.

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man have availed^a, towards our present prosperity and establishment! For a praying generation of Prophets are *the Chariots of Israel, and the Horsemen thereof*^r; are as useful for the security and welfare of a Nation, as any human arts or armaments. How importunately did he plead in private, for the prosperity of the Church of God, and the interests of Religion, when confined by long indispositions from publick labours! But his *prayers are now ended*^t. He will no more pray for the Nation, the Church, or for you: let me intreat you then, so much the more importunately to pray for yourselves. The state of our Nation, of its religious Interests, and of our own Souls, require that we should be more frequent and earnest with God than ever; especially now, that the number of praying persons is lessened, and that we have lost, as it were, a whole Host in one.

He was a noble example of Charity.

His *Liberality* to persons in distress was great, in proportion to his Circumstances; and in this service, he employed the honourable

^a James v. 16. ^r 2 Kings ii. 12. ^t Psal. lxxii. 20.

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able acquaintance he had with persons of affluent Fortunes. How many have been relieved in want, or fixed in employs that have afforded them a comfortable maintenance, by his bounty or interest! many, who when *their eye saw him blessed him*^t, are now mourning that the *merciful man is taken away*^u. And in how many instances has he given, not only silver and gold, but what might be more needed, though perhaps less desired, useful and instructive Books; a circumstance, which I the rather mention, as we have enjoyed this effect of his liberality. The Poor then have lost a Friend, let us endeavour to supply his place; and though probably we cannot show our kindness to the same persons, let us do it more abundantly to *those who are of the household of faith* within our acquaintance; that the loss of such a publick Benefactor may be less sensibly felt.

I must add, he was remarkable for his *charitable Sentiments*, and for maintaining a truly catholick disposition to all about him.

D.

How

^t Job xxxix. 11.

^u Isa. lvii. 1.

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How much soever they differed from him, or how unkindly soever they treated him, if he could discern any thing in their temper and conduct, that bespoke the real christian, they were sure to be the objects of his charity: nay they would find that he not only forbore every harsh reflection upon them, but very evidently felt a cordial love to their Souls, and discovered a sincere readiness to perform the most condescending offices of Friendship. Let us take care, that there be no diminution, by his death, of this amiable Grace, for which he pleaded so earnestly, and which he so eminently practised.

He laboured with uncommon diligence in the service of Religion and immortal Souls.

It were a long task to introduce a catalogue of all the enterprizes he undertook and executed in this view. His labours as a *Minister* were great; of which, I doubt not, the Church of Christ on whom they were bestowed for fifty years, can abundantly testify. They know what painful efforts he
made

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made to edifie and comfort them. They are his Record, that he did not feed them with what was raw and unwholsome, dry or insipid ; did not provide for their support, the chaff of Speculation, the thistles of Controversy, or the empty flowers of Oratory ; but solid and well chosen Food, sweet to a spiritual taste, and fit to nourish the divine life.

His labours as an *Author* were amazing : especially considering the invincible embargo so often laid on him, by extreme weakness : and his perseverance in them truly noble and generous, when not only bodily indisposition, but the observation and experience of the obstinate unteachableness of many, might have formed a very powerful discouragement.

Though he was capable of conversing with the greatest men, and on the most abstruse subjects, as appears by his successful attempts to make some of the learned Sciences more easily attained ; yet he condescended to become *a teacher of Babes* ; and happy is it

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for us, and for our Children, that he did; he having furnished us with the best assistance we any where meet with, for instructing them in the *Doctrine and History of our Bibles*; for *preserving them from the Vices and Follies* to which they are so much exposed, as well as forming their unpractised lips, to the sublime duties of *Prayer and Praise*.

Nor has he confined his labours to the explaining these duties to Children; but has given us *a free and rational account, of the Gift Grace and Spirit of Prayer*, suited to the edification of the most *eminent* Christians, yet containing such directions for the practice of it, as will leave the *meanest and most ignorant* without excuse, in the neglect of that Duty. And his attempts to render our *anthems of praise* more evangelical and edifying, were so successful, that our circumstances can hardly be so uncommon, but we may find a sacred Song suited to our Case. The happy manner in which he has rendered these composures, intelligible to the ignorant and illiterate, yet instructive and delightful

Fall of a great Man. 29

lightful to the more intelligent, shew at once how warm a desire of extensive usefulness animated his heart, and how skilful a hand directed his pen: while the strong images, the bold flights, the lively painting, the sublimity of thought, and majesty of expression, that occur in some other of his poetical writings, proclaim what a Master he was in that Art, and how much self-denial he practised, in condescending to a lower strain, when the genius of those, for whom he wrote, required it.

The pains he has taken to defend the Gospel, shew what a high veneration of it possessed his heart. The growing neglect of this gave him concern, and engaged him to enter *a Caveat against Infidelity*, and to illustrate the humbling truth of *the Weakness of human Reason*, against those who magnified its sufficiency, to the dishonour and neglect, of divine Revelation.

But it was not the Name of a Revelation that pleased him, or the Belief of it alone
that

that he aimed to promote, but a cordial and affectionate Sense of its peculiar Discoveries. It was this that engaged him to discourse on the great design of it, as having its foundation in *the Ruin of Mankind by the Fall of their first Parents, and intended for our Recovery*. And as he saw with unfeigned grief, the neglect wherewith the Lord *Jesus* and his Spirit were treated, he has particularly considered and defended the Character and Offices, of *the Redeemer and Sanctifier*, in this important Work.

His design in all his theological Writings most apparently was, to promote practical and vital Religion ; without which he well knew, a speculative Belief of the Gospel, or the warmest Zeal for its peculiar Doctrines, would be of no importance. The decay of this, appeared to him so general and threatening, that it occasioned his making an *humble*, and blessed be God, I hope in many instances, a successful *Attempt towards its revival*, by a serious and affectionate address to Ministers and People, urging upon them
the

Fall of a great Man. 31

the respective advantages they enjoyed, and the obligations by which they were bound, to do their utmost in so necessary a work. But lest it should degenerate into cold and lifeless Formality, he has largely instructed us in *the Nature of the human Passions, their Use and Abuse in matters of Religion*; and especially in *the nature importance and influence, of the Love of God*; by the prevalence of which in the Soul, all the rest will be guided, and consecrated.

His *Sermons on various subjects*, have been a cordial to us in our retirements, and instructive in our families, as well as have often entertained us on such occasions as these *. I need not remind you, my Friends, of the peculiar pleasure with which we have perused his discourse, *on the pious Soul's drawing nigh to God*; or of the pleasing and awful affections that have by turns possessed our minds, while he described *the lovely Youth perishing in Sin*. How many of us have been refreshed

* An evening Lecture; where a printed Sermon was sometimes read.

freshed by his *evangelical Discourses*? Our *Faith in the truth of the Gospel, confirmed: our Regards to Christ, the Lamb of God, strengthened: the Hopes of the weakest increased, while we have seen the beginnings and first acts of Faith described; and carried on almost to assurance, when we saw it in its highest advances, and grown up, as it were, to knowledge and certainty. How have our hearts glowed and gathered confidence, when the witness of the Spirit has been explained: and we have found all our Experience related to us, in those just and lively descriptions of the Contests between the Flesh and Spirit.*

He was a true Friend of Liberty, though he would never give up the cause of Truth, or sacrifice any part of the Gospel, to make a comprehension with Infidels. He knew how to *contend earnestly*^x, and yet in the Spirit of Peace, *for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*: and has explained and defended what appeared to him, according to Scripture standard,

^x Jude, ver. 3.

ard, to be *Orthodoxy*, at the same time representing it in the closest connection with *Charity*.

And to engage our regards to the whole scheme of Christian doctrines and duties, graces and virtues, he held forth the promised crown of life; directing our views to those blessed Abodes, where *separate Spirits* are *made perfect*; and in the strongest Colours painting before us, the different eternal States of *the World to come*.

These are some of his principal Labours as a Writer, in the Service of Religion. But besides this, his *Heart and Life* were a fair Book, in which the several characters of a true Christian were plainly delineated: where the Love of God, Faith in Christ, and diffusive Benevolence to men, together with the influence these Principles should have on the whole Temper and Conduct, were exhibited with a more engaging Lustre, than any descriptions could afford, even from a pen like his own.

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This great man is fallen! Let us stand in his place, succeed to the work which he has left, *and go our way and do likewise*. What! will you say, shall we write such Treatises? Surely you cannot imagine I meant it—— but let us maintain that Regard to the truths and duties of Religion, he maintained: let us shew the same Zeal, and use the same Diligence, for promoting the noble designs, he promoted; and now that one faithful Servant of *Christ* is called away, let us labour so much the harder in our respective stations, whether of publick, or private life. 'Tis in vain to object, it is but little that we can do. There are none but may do some good; and God often honours those most, who are readiest to look on themselves, as mean instruments. We are not to think ourselves excused from labour, because we are not so great as he was. If so, how few modest men would ever pretend to labour at all?

But I have entered much farther into his Character than I had intended, and enlarged
this

Fall of a great Man. 35

this head far beyond its proportion. I now proceed to observe

5. The fall of a great man, in this sense, teacheth us that Death is not an absolute evil.

A great man is fallen. The Head that so often contrived and studied for the glory of God, will in a few days be laid in the Dust; and those animated Features, that on every great occasion, glowed with so significant an ardour, are already but pale Clay. The Lips that pleaded the cause of Virtue and Religion, with such propriety and affectionate energy, are silent. The Hand that has wrote so many instructive pages, is cold and motionless, hangs down never to be employed more. He that conversed so much with God; that thought and spoke, that wrote and acted so eminently for his Honour, is dead. Is it so?—then we may conclude, that death cannot be absolutely and always an Evil; if it were, how comes it that the wisest, the best, the most illustrious dye;

those whom Grace adorns, and God approves? Even such Greatness as this does not exempt from the stroke of Death, but surely it makes a glorious difference in dying.

You know there is a great man fallen: 'Tis an affecting loss, and calls for mourning. But from his fall we may extract this divine consolation; That God has a way of making his People happy even by their death. Though it be a sensible mark of his displeasure against Sin, it is not to such a punishment. How easily may we infer from the Case before us, that God has a way of changing the aspect of Death, and making it a passage to life; or he would not permit those *Vessels*, though they are but *earthen*, to be broken, in which he has put so excellent a *Treasure*^y, and those Bodies to be forsaken, which he has sanctified and inhabited as his *Temples*^z.

This should in some measure reconcile us to the thought of dying, if we are *followers*
of

^y 2 Cor. iv. 7.

^z 1 Cor. vi. 19.

Fall of a great Man. 37

of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises^a. While

6. The fall of a great man should wean our hearts from the world they have left.

It should do this on various accounts. 'Tis an affecting lecture of Mortality. "Are those who were tall and strong trees in the Plantation, beautiful and fruitful, cut down? how then can I expect to be spared, that am only a low Shrub? God has called away an able and faithful Servant out of his Vineyard; I cannot expect to continue long, who have been such a Loiterer, and was never like to do him much Service." These sentiments will draw off our Affections from a World, which we know we must soon leave, even though we had ever so many valuable and beloved Friends in it; but really when we also consider, how many excellent Servants of God, in publick and private stations are taken away, it almost makes one sick at the Thoughts
of

^a Heb. vi. 12.

38 *Reflections on the*

of living in a world, which they have left destitute and impoverished.

Again, as our World loses by the Death of these great men, the other gains by it. They fall in our World to rise more illustrious there. Could we trace this great man exulting before the throne of God, triumphing in immortal youth and vigour, freed from pain, from the incumbrance of the Body, and lowness of spirits forever, and joined to the *general Assembly and Church of the first-born*^b: could we discover how bright he shines, how ardently he loves, how humbly he adores, and hear the melody of his Songs, it would make us soon weary of this vain World. When we have been reading, and found our hearts delighted, with his excellent composures, how have we sometimes longed to hear one sermon from his lips, or converse with him for an hour: and how happy have those of us reckoned ourselves, who had such an Opportunity? But if it was so pleasant to converse with this
faint

^b Heb. xii. 23.

faint on Earth, what must it be to converse with him now he is improved by the society of Angels; has learnt their Songs; has joined their Triumphs; and is entered on the eternal Sabbath? O blessed counterballance for all the solitary Sabbaths he spent on Earth! When we recollect the pleasure, we have sometimes felt in singing his *divine Hymns*, let our Souls say whether there is any Joy in our World, worthy to keep us from the heavenly melody; any earthly attachment that when God calls us, should make us unwilling to join with him in the Chorus of the Blessed, who sing *the song of Moses and the Lamb*, which so much exceeds the most extatic human Composures: especially when we consider that this pleasure, great and exalted as it may seem, is but a small part of the Blessedness of the celestial World; for what is it to join in the most sublime acts of Adoration and Praise, even with such a Saint in Glory, compared with the satisfaction and joy, which will diffuse through the Soul, from the immediate Presence and
Enjoy-

Enjoyment of our common Father and Saviour !

7. and *Lastly*, The fall of a great man, should teach us to prize and seek an interest in the blessed God.

Death proclaims the imperfection of the best Mortals, and that the greatest of men, are but men. How important, how useful, how desirable soever our Friends may be, and by whatever tender bonds they may be united to us, Earth cannot be the stage of an immortal Friendship. The course of Providence will not be altered ; it sweeps away one great man after another, though not only a circle of private Families lament, but a Nation shakes at their Fall. How necessary then that we translate our affection and dependance, from Earth to Heaven ; from these uncertain supports, to the ever-living God : and in proportion as our eye is directed to, and fixed on him, we shall be composed amidst all the Ruins of time and nature. When a great man falls, some concern

Fall of a great Man. 41

cern should be shown ; but let us not mourn as though the Church would sink and die too, with any man how great soever. Its existence and stability does not depend on any Mortal ; but upon him who hath said, *I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and behold I am alive forevermore*^c. One useful Minister after another may finish his Course, and be called home from his Labours, *but the children of his servants shall continue, and their seed be established before him*^d. God has, and will have, at least, a little Church in the world ; and is able, and has engaged to preserve and defend it, by whomsoever it is deserted and forsaken ; and though many pious and venerable Fathers and Ministers are dead and dying, *the Lord liveth, and blessed be our Rock, and let the God of our Salvation be exalted*^e.

On him therefore let us live ; for with him is the residue of the spirit, of such infinite ability, that a small communication hereof, rendered this servant of his, so eminent and extensive a blessing. To him let us direct our Prayers, that he would give us who

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fur-

^c Rev. i. 18. ^d Psal. cii. 28. ^e Psal. xviii. 46.

survive, a double portion of the same Spirit which rested on him^f; that Spirit that not only can fill us with light, and love, and holy zeal in our Labours, but make them gloriously successful; can make our Ministrations mighty to the destruction of Satan's Kingdom, and to the profit and joy of souls: "That Spirit," as this great man expresses it*, "whose withdrawals are so felt in
 " our Closets, in our Pulpits and in our
 " Churches, as to call for louder lamentations than dying Ministers;" for this Spirit, I say, let us plead; and while we are mourning that a great man is fallen, and an illustrious Prophet has left us, let our eyes be to him who conferred this greatness upon him; and instead of the plaintive strain, *Our Fathers where are they? and the Prophets do they live forever*^g? let our language be like that of *Elisba*, when his eye could no longer trace his ascending Master, *Where is the LORD GOD of Elijah*^h!

^f 2 Kings ii. 9. ^g Zech. i. 5. ^h 2 Kings ii. 24.

* In one of his private Letters.

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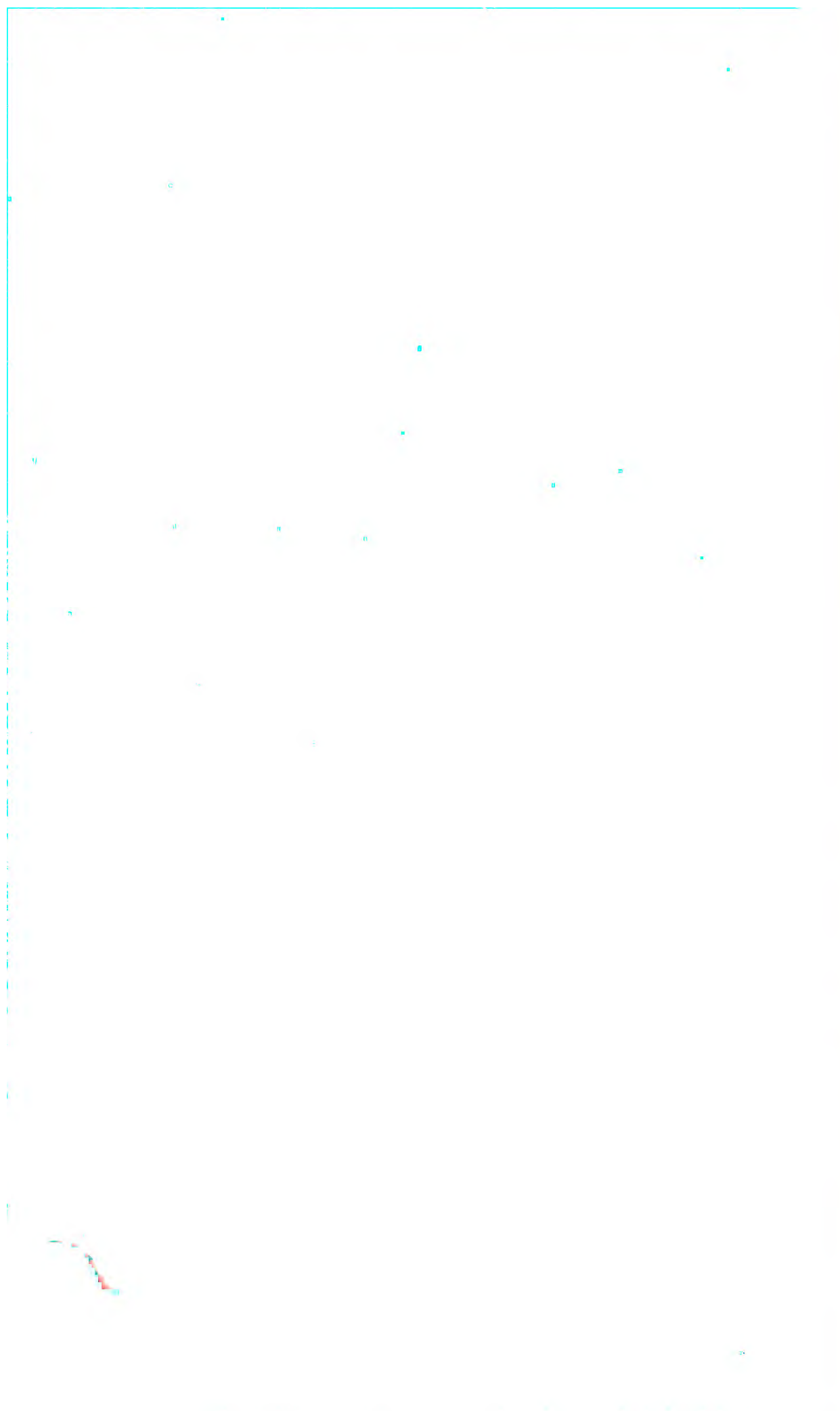
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