

**DEATH THE LAST ENEMY OF MAN: A
SERMON, PREACHED AT THE PARISH CHURCH
OF ST. MARY, ISLINGTON, ON SATURDAY,
JANUARY 20TH, 1827 ON THE OCCASION OF
THE LAMENTED DEATH OF HIS ROYAL
HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF GORK AND ALBANY**

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Death the Last Enemy of Man: A Sermon, Preached at the Parish Church of St. Mary, Islington, on Saturday, January 20th, 1827 on the Occasion of the Lamented death of his Royal highness the Duke of Gork and Albany by Daniel Wilson

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DANIEL WILSON

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A SERMON,

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THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY, ISLINGTON,

ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 20TH, 1827,

ON THE

OCCASION OF THE LAMENTED DEATH

OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE

Duke of York and Albany.

By DANIEL WILSON, A.M.

VICAR OF ISLINGTON.

LONDON:

GEORGE WILSON, ESSEX STREET, STRAND.

1827.

AN

A SERMON.

1 CORINTHIANS, XV. 26.

*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is
Death.*

WE are assembled to day on a solemn and affecting occasion. The death of a prince is a national loss. It is felt in every part of a loyal and religious nation. We mourn over departed greatness. We sympathise with the affliction of our Sovereign and his royal house; we see the vanity of the most splendid human distinctions; we are appalled at the tyranny of death; and we learn the necessity of an instant preparation for our own encounter with an inexorable enemy, who spares neither rank, nor prospects, nor age, nor profession, but sweeps away with a relentless hand, all the glory and pride of man.

For death, in such calamities as the present, seems to revel in his victories over the highest dignities and possessions of feeble mortals. He appears in all his ruthless terror. And yet, incredible as it may be thought, I venture to assert, that after you have contemplated this last enemy, in his direst form, the christian faith shall open a way to a complete conquest over him, and shall teach you to meet this dread foe, not only with fortitude, but with composure and joy.

And this is the great consolatory topic suggested by the text, the words of which form so striking a part of the sublime service with which our church commits to the tomb the bodies of the faithful; and wherein the Apostle, after having established the fact of our Lord's resurrection, and declared that all things shall be put in subjection under his feet, denounces that the last enemy shall be at length overthrown by him; and concludes with this his account of the whole result and consummation of Christ's mediatorial kingdom.

Death the last enemy of man—Death destroyed by the Son of God—will, therefore, be the two points to which your attention will be called on the present mournful occasion;—in the first of which I shall concede to you every

thing your agitated feelings may demand ;—and in the second, shall endeavour to exhibit the triumph of the Saviour, illustrated and enhanced by those very concessions.

For I allow that death is the last and greatest enemy of man. It is that which nature dreads. The principle of self-preservation is deeply infixed by the Creator's hand, in the feelings and habits of every human being. We shrink from pain, from sorrow, from disease. When dissolution approaches we start back with instinctive horror. Life is half employed in warding off the advances of death. All the inventions, and labours, and pursuits of men are estimated by their relation to this one point. Nor have legislators, ancient or modern, discovered any more effectual object of terror for the prevention of crimes, than the punishment of death. Wherever the stroke of this enemy falls, bereavement and sorrow accompany it. But on this topic I will not dwell. I will not rend open again the wounds which his rankling darts have left in our bosoms. I will not speak of the anguish of the dying couch ; of the slow wasting inroads of disease in one case, and its rapid strides in another ; of the sighs and lamentations of the widow and the orphan. I will not speak of the softest affections torn asunder, the brightest hopes extinguished, the loftiest de-

signs frustrated, the most extensive usefulness broken up. Alas! wherever we turn, the sad spoils of the common foe meet our view. His reign is extensive as the race of man. In every part of the world, in all ages, under all circumstances, the tyrant scatters his impoisoned arrows. He lurks behind the other enemies of our peace, and brings up the rear, as it were, of the fatal war. Well may he be called the last enemy. If we had triumphed over all others, we should still have to struggle with this. Every past generation was born to die; death stands prepared to contend with the present; each following age must sink under his power; nor will the horrid monster cease from his immolations, till the last victim of the whole race of mortals is offered at his shrine.

So universal, indeed, is the desolation of this enemy, that man, incapable of resistance, has learned to behold his progress with a frightful indifference. The inattention, or torpor, or selfishness of the human heart is such, that the impression made by the occurrence of death, in families and neighbourhoods less intimately connected with our own, is faint and languid. We speak of it with coldness or levity. We scarcely stop to make a remark on the frail tenure of human life, before we resume our pursuits of folly and pleasure. We have little of a lively

recollection that our own safety is concerned ; and that as surely as the funeral procession has proceeded for others, it will proceed for us.

But when, from time to time, the most exalted personages in the community fall under the stroke of the king of terrors ; when a prince within one step of the throne, is precipitated from that lofty pinnacle ; when all that we have admired as glorious, and pursued as good, is carried off as by a flood, we awake up for the moment to our misery. We start as from a trance ; a whole nation, moved by a common sympathy, laments over the calamity ; ordinary pursuits and passions are suspended ; and the public mind is roused to that state of moral reflection, which is most favourable to the entrance of truth. In the case before us, every circumstance of the recent loss recurs to the memory with the most tender associations ; and all the secret springs of affection and sorrow are opened.

‘ And is then the presumptive heir of England,’ says each one with a sigh, ‘ lost to us ? He, who but a year or two since, from unusual vigour of health, promised fair to ascend and sustain the throne of the greatest empire of the world ! Are changes and vicissitudes again to threaten the protestant succession, after so many previous losses in the royal house within the last few years ! Must we lose a prince

so kind-hearted and benevolent—the favourite of the nation, and the boast of his own august family—one so endeared also, to our noble Sovereign, his nearest brother in blood, his partner in age, in pursuits, in affection, in cares! And, alas, by what a death is he cut off! The chief commander of England's heroes, the prince beloved by the whole army dies, not on the field of battle—for some illusion of glory might then have played around the tomb—but is compelled to surrender to the ignoble power of disease—month after month his strength is undermined by the insidious malady, till the chief and marshal of the bravest armies in Europe, sinks under a disease which might excite commiseration in the feeblest private citizen!

Such is the language of every heart! Such are the woes which have swelled that deep tide of sorrow which overflows all ranks, and which perhaps was never surpassed, except a few years ago, when the blooming bride of England, with her royal infant, perished in an instant—the fairest flower of the field—by the touch of the same withering hand.

But we must not longer dwell on the power of our last enemy, as apparent in these external and national calamities, however affecting. These, after all, are only symptoms of the wide and deeply seated disease. If we would see