

**A SERMON, PREACHED AT CAMBRIDGE,
THE LORD'S DAY AFTER THE INTERMENT
OF HIS EXCELLENCY INCREASE
SUMNER, ESQUIRE, GOVERNOR OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,
WHO DIED JUNE 7, 1799, ÆTAT. 53.**

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A Sermon, Preached at Cambridge, the Lord's Day After the Interment of His Excellency Increase Sumner, Esquire, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Who Died June 7, 1799, Ætat. 53. by Abiel Holmes

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THE LORD'S DAY AFTER

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INCREASE SUMNER, ESQUIRE,

GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF

MASSACHUSETTS,

Who died *June 7, 1799,* *Ætat. 53.*

By ABIEL HOLMES, *A. M.*

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE.



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LAMENTATIONS ii. 13.

THY BREACH IS GREAT LIKE THE SEA ; WHO
CAN HEAL THEE ?

THE Elegy, from which this passage is selected, is, perhaps, the most complete and perfect, which language can furnish. It was composed by the prophet Jeremiah, while under the full impression of those sorrows, which the desolation of Jerusalem, the loss of the privileges of the temple, the dissolution of the government, and the captivity of his countrymen, could not fail to inspire. It contains an accumulation of all those lively figures, and interesting images, which would naturally occur, in so affecting a scene of things, to one, who united patriotism with piety, and who felt, at once, a tender solicitude for the welfare of his fellow-citizens, and for the honour of his God.* At one time, he narrateth the melancholy story of the ruin of Jerusalem ; at another, he poureth forth the torrent of his grief. Now, he is absorbed by his own personal calamity ; then, again, he is overwhelmed

* Nullum opinor aliud extat Poema, ubi intra tam breve spatium tanta, tam felix, tam lecta, tam illustris, Adjunctorum atque Imaginum varietas eluceat. Lowth, de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum ; Præl. xxii.

whelmed with the distresses of his country. At one moment, we find him exhorting the Jews to humiliation and penitence ; at another, supplicating God to shew them his mercy. Oftentimes, by a lively figure, he personifies the city and temple, and addresses them as if they were alive to the sorrows which agitated his own bosom. The passage now recited is a part of such a personification and address. As though the fountains of imagery were already exhausted ; or, as though no similitude were adequate to the expression of the public distress ; the prophet exclaims : *What thing shall I take to witness against thee ? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem ? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion ? for THY BREACH IS GREAT LIKE THE SEA ; WHO CAN HEAL THEE ?*

In the catalogue of calamities, which were the subject of this Elegy, was the loss of the civil magistrates of the nation. *He hath cut off in his fierce anger, saith the plaintive poet, all the horn of Israel. —The elders have ceased from the gate.—The crown is fallen from our head.*

This part of the Lamentation, my brethren, we are, this day, constrained to adopt. The hand of God hath recently been stretched out against us, and deprived us of the revered and beloved Man, who was at the head of our Republic. While, then, we sincerely unite in paying the merited tribute of respect to his memory ; let us avail ourselves of the melancholy occasion, to make such reflections, and to cherish such impressions, as, by the blessing
of

of God, shall contribute to our civil and political, and especially to our moral and religious, improvement.—To promote these important ends, I will endeavour to shew, That a great breach is made on a community, by the death of good rulers : and, How such a breach may be healed.

I. How great a breach is made on a community, by the death of good rulers, will appear, if we consider in what respects such rulers are a blessing to mankind.—Their counsels, their example, and their authority, render them a public blessing.

Good rulers are rendered a blessing to a community by their *counsels*. Wisdom, to discern the true interests of a State, is essential to the character of a good ruler. So important did this qualification appear in the view of Solomon, that, when permitted to ask what favour he pleased of God, he solicited this, in preference to every other : *And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father : and I am but a little child : I know not how to go out, or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give, therefore, thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad : for who is able to judge this thy so great a people ?* With wisdom like this, rulers can guide the *affairs* of a State *with discretion*. They perceive what is conducive to the public safety and interest, and what, to the public danger and detriment. They are men of *understanding in the times*. By their judicious and seasonable counsels, therefore, they

they render the most important services to the community; and, in many instances, are the special instruments of national salvation. Is it strange, then, that the adherents of king David, when they found his life in danger, were solicitous to preserve it, that they might not be deprived of the inestimable advantage of his wife and salutary advices? *Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.*

Good rulers are, also, rendered a blessing to a community, by their *example*. The influence, which men derive from the mere posts of honour and power, is incalculable. Placed on an eminence, it is natural for mankind to look up to them with respect and homage. When, in connexion with this elevation, they are distinguished, at once, for abilities, and for integrity and virtue, what an ascendancy do they acquire over the minds of the people! Their associates in the administration of government naturally become assimilated to them in principles and manners. Men of subordinate rank and station emulate those of this first order. The other classes of citizens tread in the footsteps of those who immediately precede them. What portion of the community, then, is altogether unaffected by the good example of men in power? When a CHIEF MAGISTRATE exhibits such an example, he is to the Political system what the Sun is to the Solar—the Sun, which, enlightening some parts of his system by *direct*, and others by *reflected*, rays, communicates his vivifying influence to the whole.

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What thus appears rational, in theory, is demonstrated by fact. A religious prince ordinarily has good counsellors ; and, under his government, the people respect the duties and requirements of virtue and religion. A wicked prince has always a corrupt court ; and the people, under his administration, become vicious and profligate. The Puritanism of the court and of the people of England, under the government of the serious and austere CROMWELL ; and the licentiousness of both, under the succeeding reign of the gay and dissipated CHARLES II. afford but one proof of this truth, among innumerable others, which the annals of History record. A good ruler, then, by setting before his people an example of virtue and piety, must advance their truest interests, and prove an inestimable blessing.

Further : Good rulers are rendered a blessing to a community by their *authority*. That portion of power, delegated to them by the people, is employed for the most salutary purposes. Instead of being made the instrument of their own aggrandizement, it is exerted for the maintenance of the laws, for the security of the rights and liberties, the peace and happiness, of the people themselves, from whom it was originally derived. It is exerted for the suppression of irregularity, vice and wickedness ; and for the encouragement of order, virtue and piety. *A good ruler is not a terror to good works, but to the evil. He is the minister of God for good—a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil ; but a rewarder of him that doth well.*

In the execution of the laws, he unites justice with mercy, and firmness with clemency. Superior, alike, to flattery, and to fear, he is neither terrified, nor allured, from his duty. Remote, at once, from an obsequiousness to the great, and from a contempt of the mean, he neither favours the cause of the one, nor despises that of the other. Studious to discover truth, and to promote equity, he judges, and acts, with a noble impartiality, uniform as *the ordinances of Heaven*. *He puts on righteousness, and it clothes him : his judgment is as a robe and a diadem*. *He is eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame*. *He is a father to the poor : and the cause which he knows not he searches out*.—In the exercise of a discretionary power, vested in him by the laws, he is guided by a regard to the welfare of the people, and the safety of the State. Hence, he appoints no man to a post of public trust, unless his principles and character are such, as to entitle him to the confidence of the community.

Who, then, can calculate the extent of the blessing of good rulers, in a State, or nation? Without *some* rulers, the benefits of civil society cannot be enjoyed. When a sacred historian had recorded certain illegal and violent acts, he added, what very readily accounted for them : *In those days there was no king in Israel : every man did that which was right in his own eyes*. Without good rulers, mankind are exposed to the various and nameless evils of imperious tyranny, or of lawless anarchy. We cannot, then, but perceive the foundation of Solomon's remark : *When the righteous are in authority,*
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