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# THE COMING NIGHT.

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A SERMON

PREACHED IN CROMER CHURCH,  
ON FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 1857,

BY

THE REV. EDWARD HOARE, A.M.,  
INCUMBENT OF TRINITY CHURCH, TUNBRIDGE-WELLS,

On Occasion of the Death

OF

MISS ANNA GURNEY,  
OF NORTHREPPS COTTAGE.

LONDON:

THOMAS HATCHARD, 187, PICCADILLY.  
1857.

MACINTOSH, PRINTER,  
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## A SERMON.

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JOHN IX. 4.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

THIS week has been one of heavy sorrow to very many. The neighbourhood has lost one who for many years has stood foremost in large-hearted Christian benevolence. The poor have been deprived of a kind friend, to whose liberality they might ever resort. The children have been bereaved of one who has for years been anxious to devote her attentive care to their early training; and all who have ever needed a sympathizing friend have followed one this day to the grave as warm-hearted, energetic, and intelligent as is often to be met with in society. Her character is well described in some lines written by herself on the death of one she dearly loved—

“Within this frame, by Jesu’s grace,  
High gifts and holy held their place;  
A noble heart, a mighty mind,  
Were here in bonds of clay confined.”

And all this is now gone. The spirit has taken its flight. Northrepps Cottage is without its tenant. The ruins of the body have been left this morning in the ruins of the little church, and many a weeping heart has sent forth its unmistakable evidence of genuine and deep-felt sorrow.

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But we may be quite certain that there is a wise unseen purpose in this bereavement. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father’s knowledge, and how much more may we be satisfied that “precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” There are many of his dispensations which seem very dark to short-sighted men, but they all have their sure purpose. Many and bitter were the tears shed at Bethany when Lazarus died; painful and anxious the watchings of his affectionate sisters as they saw their dear brother growing worse and worse, till all hope ceased, and the struggle ended in his death. Yet all was for a gracious purpose; as the Lord Himself said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” Many, doubtless, were the tears shed by the parents of the blind man whose case is described in our chapter. Many a heartache must they both have felt as they saw their dear boy in the midst of his companions, but unable through his blindness to share their games or enjoy their pleasures; but there was a kind purpose in that lengthened trial, for as we read in verse 3, it was permitted “that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” So, doubtless, there is a sacred purpose in this present affliction. It may be hidden from you, but it is not hidden from Him who has appointed it. Be sure, all ye mourners, that your tears are not for nought. There is a needs be for the whole. Not a sorrow has ever yet been laid on any one of God’s people from the very first, nor ever will be laid on them to the end of time, without some clear, some gracious, some wise purpose on the part of our God. Let us, then, endeavour in the sorrow for her death to learn the lessons taught us by the retrospect of her life; and, instead of simply deploring our loss, let us strive to move a step forward in our own upward progress.

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Now, in looking at her character, the point that strikes my own mind more than any other is the fine, vigorous, persevering, affectionate, and unselfish use of time and talents; and in studying this we cannot do better than take as our guide the words of our blessed Lord, “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” May the Holy Spirit bless the study of the passage to the salvation of souls and the glory of Christ!

## I. *The day.*

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The idea is to compare life to the daytime, and the comparison is one as appropriate as it is simple.

The day is the time for intercourse; the time when, in the light of heaven, we enjoy each other’s fellowship, and have all the lovely scenery of God’s creation brought to the view: and so it is with life. It is the short and sacred season in which we are placed together in the flesh, surrounded by those we love, linked together by countless ties, refreshed and cheered by happy intercourse. In the daytime of life there ought to be the enjoyment of each other’s love, and the mutual fellowship with each other’s interests. And where, I may safely inquire, could be found a welcome more hearty, or a greeting more affectionate, than in Northrepps Cottage? How many are there in this church that have experienced the warm cordiality of that hearty welcome that was to be found there on every occasion! She might have been busy or at leisure, at ease or in severe suffering; but it made no difference in the real genuine pleasure with which she received you under her roof.

But the prominent point of the text is, that the day is the time for work; the brief period set apart for labour; the chosen opportunity, the short time in which it is our sacred privilege to be doing something for God and man—something to bring man nearer to God, and something to bring down God’s blessing in larger abundance upon man. Thus our various positions in life correspond with the various periods of the day. There is the little child, with its mind just opening and intelligence just dawning, like the sun rising in the east. There is the young man, entering life full of energy, hope, and power, with all his work before him, corresponding to the morning period, when the risen sun is summoning mankind to labour. There is the middle-aged man, with the advantage of half a life’s experience, and scarcely yet feeling the symptoms of decay, like the sun at its height in the fulness of his meridian splendour. And there is the aged Christian, with the grey hairs coming on upon his head, with his strength diminishing, but wisdom deepening and hope brightening, with the greater part of life already past, and an earnest desire that the short remainder should be well occupied for God,—corresponding to the gradual closing in of evening. And then, at last, there is the bright conclusion, when the soul is lighted up at the immediate prospect of his Lord’s presence; when rest is taking the place of labour, and triumph that of conflict; so that there is all the beauty of a glorious Christian sunset.

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“And when he comes nearer to finish his race,  
Like a fine setting sun he looks richer in grace,  
And gives a new hope at the end of his days  
Of rising in brighter array.”

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## II. *The night.*

Our Lord says, "The night cometh."

Now, there is something inexpressibly solemn in such a thought to the unconverted and unprepared; for the night, in such a case, is the deep, dark, cheerless night, that settles down on the wicked; a night of black darkness, and without one ray of light or hope; a night in which there is not even one star visible, nor the least encouragement from the most distant hope of morning. "To what end," saith the Prophet, "is the day of the Lord to you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light." Oh! that every unconverted man would consider well what is his own prospect when his sun sets, and would make haste in seeking that blessed Lord who can turn darkness into light, and death into immortality and life!

But how different is the night to the believer,—to such an one as we are now called to mourn! When the evening was closing in, and the sun just setting, she was not aware of her great danger, and still thought she had strength to recover; but when a dear friend thought it her duty to inform her that the time of separation was very nearly come, her reply was that of calm faith and full submission,—“Let us then obediently receive it.” The truth was realized, and accepted at the hand of God. There is no real night in such a case; or, if there be, it is like the night in the Arctic summer, in which the sun is always visible; for such are never separate from Him who is both light and life.

“Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear,  
It is not night if thou art near.”

Or it is like the night in the height of summer, when the twilight of evening waits to welcome the dawn of morning, and it is almost difficult to discover whether it is the past sunset or the coming sunrise that sheds a soft brightness over the heavens. So, throughout the believer’s night-time, there is continuous light till the morning dawns. And then what a morning will it be! The morning of resurrection, the morning of righteousness, the morning of joy, the morning of the Redeemer’s triumph! “Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Every tear will then be dry; every anxious soul will then be satisfied; every aching heart will then be healed, and every care forgotten in the sweet peace of uninterrupted union with Christ.

Such is the night of the believer; and therefore it appears only to deserve the name of night because it is the close of this world’s working season. Angels, not men, do the work of heaven; and they are sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation. But to the believer, the characteristic of the heavenly state is rest. The interval between death and the resurrection is a period of holy, happy, peaceful, intelligent rest. “They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” When the late lamented Bishop Weeks was entering on his most laborious mission at Lambeth, and when it was remarked to him that he would have hard work to carry out his plans, his reply was,—“But there will be plenty of rest at the end.” It is well to dwell on that blessed hope of rest; it is well, when the heart grows weary, to know that there is repose in prospect. That, however, is not the great lesson to be learned, but rather this. If that be the time for rest, then this is the day for work; and we must all make haste to seize the opportunity in its rapid flight. I remember to have seen a card in the study of a friend, on which it was written, “Lost between the hours of sunrise and sunset a golden hour, set in sixty diamond minutes. No reward is offered for their recovery, for they are lost for ever.” Oh, let not the precious time which God has given us be lost, but rather at the close of each day let us each one put the question, and put it honestly—What has been done this day for God? I had the great privilege of visiting the late Mrs. Fry in her dying illness, and she then said to me, “I believe I can safely say that, since the time of my conversion, my first thought on awaking has been, what can I do this day for God?” Would that all of us lived in such a spirit, with a more constant thoughtfulness for our Master’s service! For is it possible to imagine anything more deeply affecting, than to see a man at the close of life with no effort made for Him who has redeemed him by his blood? There he is with his race nearly run, and his opportunity almost over. He has passed through life with time and talents; with friends, servants, children, under his influence, and now what has he done? He may have made his fortune, acquired a reputation, and filled his home with comforts; he may have done well for himself, and perhaps done well for his family; but for his God, for his blessed Lord who has done all for him, who has shed his own most precious blood that his sins might be blotted out—for Him he has done nothing. His day is almost over, and he has spent it for himself; his life is nearly run out, and he has lived it for himself. And now he is about to lie down and die; but still all in himself, with his hope in himself, his strength in himself; and that hope all vanity, that strength all weakness.

How different is the end of him, who when his sun sets is found well at work for God! Who can look back on the whole pilgrimage, and though he discovers countless defects, and is compelled to come before God with the prayer, “Pardon the iniquity of my holy things;” is yet found in his harness—not rusting out, but working out, with the loins girt, and the lamp burning, and the whole man conscientiously consecrated to God!

Now, such was truly the case with our departed friend. Her eye was not dim, nor her hand heavy even to the last. Even after the fatal illness had set in upon her, she assembled the teachers and school-children of the place where she was sojourning; and as disease advanced, she said with characteristic energy to her faithful attendant, “If I go home I must do more for God, and you must keep me up to it.” But there was no return in prospect; her work was finished, and she has entered on her rest.

### III. *The work.*

Now, the text teaches us at the outset, that the work to which our Lord referred was an appointed work. "I must work the works of him that sent me." He was sent to carry out God's purpose, and intrusted with an apostleship from the Father, to which apostleship he here refers. In the same sense, every individual has his apostleship or mission. The trust may vary, and no two men have the same mission. One has money committed to him, one time, one stores of knowledge; another family ties, and another widely-extended influence; but all have their work from God. The master, the servant, the rich, the poor, the preacher, the hearer, the clergyman, the layman, the father, the child—all have their mission; and it is the part of the wise Christian to endeavour to see clearly what that mission is, and then to lay himself out for the work to which God has called and fitted him.

Now, I think that all who knew our dear departed friend must acknowledge that this was pre-eminently the case with her. She was one who had her mission, and endeavoured most faithfully to fulfil it. She was intrusted with property, and you all know what use she made of it. She did not keep it as if it were her own, but employed it, as knowing that it was her Lord's.

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She was intrusted with time and fine talents, and we all know how she used them.

Remember her interest in foreign objects. How great was her zeal for missionary work! Even in her dying hours, she left her charge that 50*l.* be given to the Mandingo Mission, a Mission scarcely known in the Church, but which had been brought to her notice by a friend. How steady and stimulating was her attachment to the Bible Society! and how did her heart yearn to the very last over the wrongs and woes of Africa! Never yet was there a more zealous and intelligent supporter of the great foreign enterprises of the Church of Christ.

But some persons are disposed to say, Why always think of Africa, and foreign lands? Why not turn your attention more to home? In answer to which inquiry, I would simply say, that I believe it to be capable of the most indisputable proof that, as a general rule, the best friends of Africa are the best philanthropists at home. The fact is, that Christian love is expansive in its character, and cannot be chained down to one locality. And of this we have just parted with a noble proof. She was zealous for Africa, but there was no neglect of her own neighbourhood. Let the fishermen all along the coast bear their testimony, and it must be to her zeal and energy for their good. Let the lads who used to meet on Sunday afternoons for instruction bear their witness to the reality of her Christian perseverance. Let the young women of the village, and the school children that were privileged to meet for instruction every morning at the cottage, let them give their evidence, and it must be to the most steady and affectionate perseverance for their welfare. Oh! that these lessons may be now remembered! Oh! that the voice may be listened to from the grave, and that the seed so carefully sown may be found to spring up to present holiness and future blessedness in Christ Jesus! Nor was this limited to purely religious effort. Look back upon her deep interest in all that befell the shipping. Remember her energy with reference to her gun. Recall her energetic figure seated on the cliff in the midst of the storm, to stimulate the efforts of those who were endeavouring to save the shipwrecked sailors. Recall all this, and remember that it was done in the midst of physical infirmity and pain, that might well have justified an indulgent consideration of self. If any one might have claimed exemption from active effort it was she. If any one might have pleaded disability it was she; and her conduct is a noble evidence of the power of the heart to overcome the body, and a splendid proof that faith and zeal never recognize impediments, except as fresh incentives to energetic activity for God.

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And now, brethren, all this activity is over. She rests from her labours, and her works do follow her. But there is a great void left in this neighbourhood. A gap is made and the responsibility of filling it is thrown on the survivors. It is well, therefore, for us all to remember that our own night-time is rapidly advancing. On how many well known to those here present has it already closed! How many workmen for God are already in their rest! Let your mind look back to one of the Meetings of the Bible or Church Missionary Society some fifteen or twenty years ago. On how large a proportion of those who were then the active labourers has the night already closed! There you might have heard that manly and energetic labourer for God, Sir Fowell Buxton, in full vigour pleading for God and men, but his night is come: and my own dear father by his side, full of sterling, high principled, Christian zeal; but his night too is come: and the faithful pastor of the little flock at Gresham, always ready to take a part on such occasions, but his night is come: and our zealous friend from Sherringham, who rejoiced to co-operate in every such enterprise, but her night is come: and the two Cottage Ladies united in the strong bond of sisterly affection, and acting together with a sacred unanimity for God, but now their suns have both set, they now rest as they once lived, together, and the night has closed in on almost the whole of that noble company. But there were present likewise young men, just rising into life, and just beginning to put forth their powers; and time has now done its work with them. Some, indeed, it has cut down, so that their sun has set even at noon; but for the most part it has had the effect of placing them where their fathers then stood. Their own brows are becoming furrowed, and their own hairs grey. They have already reached the afternoon of life. The shades even of evening are beginning to appear among those who were then lads and listeners. And now that they have been this day called to follow to the grave almost the last of a whole generation of faithful labourers passed away, the lesson spoken to them from the tomb is surely that conveyed in the text, "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

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But in speaking of this sacred work we must not lose sight of the paramount importance of a personal work in our own soul. It would be, indeed, an awful thing to be compelled to acknowledge, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, and mine own vineyard have I not

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kept;" to preach to others, and yet oneself to be a cast away; to work as a philanthropist, and perish as an unconverted man. We should take, therefore, a most imperfect view of the subject, if we were to neglect the consideration of the personal work within.

And this we ought to carry through all departments, for God has given to each man certain powers, and these should be improved. We are not at liberty to leave neglected the high gifts which God has given us. The intellect which God has bestowed should not lie dormant. And I cannot but think that we have parted with a noble example in this respect. How vigorous was her spirit of self-improvement! How stimulating was her influence on all who came within her reach! How urgent she was with young men that they should aim high, and not sit at ease satisfied with inferiority! and what a fine example did she herself set them! What a contrast did she present to the listless, fanciful, and indolent novel reader upon the sofa! How manfully did she grapple with one language one after another! I cannot enumerate those that she had acquired, but this we all know that she qualified herself to become the valued correspondent of the first linguists of the day; and now, if, beside her grave, we could have breathed a wish of such a kind, it would have been that she could have left us, as a legacy, some small fraction of the rich stores of her accumulated knowledge!

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But it is not merely an intellectual work that has to be considered, for, after all, what are all intellectual acquirements if we be not in Christ? Nay! we may extend the question further and inquire, what would all our labour in such a case avail us before God? And if we be not forgiven in Christ Jesus how shall any one of us stand in his presence? Can intellect justify? Can talent justify? Can self-improvement justify? Nay, more, can philanthropic effort justify? Can benevolence justify? Can religious activity justify? Can energetic labour for God justify? Beautiful, indeed, are all such things when springing forth as the rich fruits of heavenly grace in the soul of the justified believer; but nothing better than filthy rags if employed as a covering for the dark moral guilt in the soul of the sinner. No, brethren! If the inquiry is made, how must the soul be saved? How can the sin be blotted out? How can the sinner stand justified in the Lord's presence? there is but one answer, and that is, *it must be in Christ*. No intellect and no activity will ever lift us above the old promise, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." All our hope is in the substitution of the sinless Saviour for the sin-stricken sinner, in the transfer of guilt from the guilty criminal to the guiltless substitute; and if a man be a stranger to Christ, though he have all the philanthropy of a Howard, or all the intellect of a Newton, he will be found condemned before God for the inherent corruption of his heart and character. Well, therefore, does the Apostle urge us to "Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure;" and most earnestly will every wise man pay good heed to the inquiry, Am I in Christ Jesus? Am I born again of the Spirit? Is my name written in the Lamb's book of life? Am I now pardoned through His blood? Am I justified through His righteousness? And am I prepared to meet Him in His kingdom?

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Now this hope was the turning point in the character of our departed friend. After she had been informed that her end was close at hand, her faithful attendants began to read to her some of the promises of the Gospel, in the hope of assisting her faith through her last struggle. But she preferred silence, and replied, "I have them." Who can wish more for his dying hour than to be able to say, "I have them"? For the words imply not merely that she had them in her memory, but that she had them to reveal Christ to her soul, and so to bear her up through her last struggle. Happy that soul who is so possessed of the promises that he has Christ as his glorious hope in his dying hour!

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And now, dear brethren, to conclude. I am speaking to some of you at the very outset of your career. Your sun is only now rising in the fulness of its morning beauty. You have, possibly, the greater part of life before you, some forty, fifty, sixty years to be spent either for the world or for God. Oh! dear brethren, let the whole of that vigour be consecrated to Him. Leave it not to old age, then to hand over the refuse of your powers. But now, in your youth and in your vigour, remember the call of Him that has redeemed you by His blood, and let the prime of your life be a freewill offering to your Lord. Or possibly I am speaking to some old men who have but a little time left; honoured fathers in the family of God; men whose sun is sinking brightly, but still rapidly, in the west. And what shall we say to such? Oh! dear brethren, we would speak with the utmost respect and reverence, but, bear with us while we remind you that it is but a little time that remains; but a very few more winters and then the sense of loneliness will pass away in the society of heaven, and the pang of the wounded heart will be for ever healed by the leaves of the tree that we know are for the healing of the nations. Hold on your way, then, for that little time with a good courage. Let a bright hope sustain the failing eye, and the Lord's right hand give vigour to the faltering step. The rest is at hand; the privilege of labour is nearly over; let no time, then, be lost in the service of our God, but, if the power be less, let the zeal be greater than ever in the holy efforts to be faithful servants to your Lord.

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But why do we speak of different ages as if they secure to us different periods of labour, for who can say how short his time is? There may be many here who may never hear another sermon, as I myself may never preach one. You may single out the powerful young man with his broad chest, and open forehead, and powerful arm, who may think himself safe for many years to come, but who can say that ere a week closes, there shall not be another funeral procession, and that young man, notwithstanding all his strength, be borne by his sorrowing friends to an unlooked-for grave? You may note some middle-aged man in the full vigour of midday life, who now thinks only how he may maintain his wife and family; but let him remember that ere another Sabbath dawns, that wife may be a widow and those children fatherless. Oh, dear brethren, remember, I

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beseech you, how short your time may be, and take heed that when the day closes, you may be found in Christ! The door is open to you now. The invitation is open to you now. The promises of the Spirit are presented to you now. All the rich gifts of the kingdom are offered now without money and without price. Nay, more than that, you are now invited, urged, entreated to accept them. But the night may come and the door be shut to-morrow. Hearken, then, I beseech you, ye that are still unconverted sinners, ye that are still without Christ. Hearken, ye that are still strangers to peace, and may God grant you such a sure salvation in Him that you may be able to say, whenever the day closes, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!"

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Macintosh, Printer, Great New-street, London.

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