

A SERMON, On occasion of the Execution of four Criminals.

DEUTERONOMY, XIX c. 13 v.

Thine Eye shall not pity him, but thou shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.

IT is well known to this great Assembly, wherefore it is that these poor prisoners have been brought under a sentence of condemnation, this day to be executed upon them, namely, their having murderously shed innocent blood. The passage now read, I apprehend, therefore, is a fit theme to discourse upon, upon this solemn and melancholly

occasion. And I the rather fixed upon this subject, that so, if the blessing of God may go along with what may be offered from it, the minds of these unhappy persons may be deeply impressed with a sense of the heinousness of the crime which has thrown them into the hands of justice, and exposed them to the fatal stroke of it, yea, and that having the heinousness of it set before us, we may be all filled with an utter detestation at, and abhorrence of it, avoid it, and all approaches to it.

The first man that died out of this apostate world, was drove out of it by the hand of violence. You know the instance I refer to, Cain's imbruing his hands in the innocent blood of his brother. Of the old world in the days of Noah, it is said, that the earth was filled with violence: Violence of this kind, among other instances. Nor have there been wanting instances in every age of this kind, until now. It is a crime that is peculiarly soul and black in the esteem of God, and at which he expresses his angry resentments in his word. This appears in some measure from the chapter before us, and from the words I at first read, as well as in abundance of other passages in sacred writ.

Now it is plain from my text that shedding innocent blood contracts guilt. It is plain also that it is the will of God, that this guilt should be put away. And, Lastly, We may see the special reason why God would have it put away, expressed in the latter part of the verse. "That it may go well with thee."

I shall endeavour with all convenient brevity to speak to these several heads, in doing which, I shall be led to take notice of the true import of what is expressed in the first clause of the verse, "thine eye shalt not pity him," him that is guilty of innocent blood.

The whole will be followed with some application suitable to the present occasion.

In the first place then, shedding innocent blood contracts guilt.

This is the language of the inspired passage we are upon. "Thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood." Now guilt necessarily refers to some law authoritatively enacted, which is

broken or violated. For where there is no law there is no transgression, and consequently no guilt contracted. But that there is a law violated in the present case, is plain beyond all dispute. Among the laws or commandments given at Mount Sinai, this is one—Thou shalt not kill. And that this is a law that was not peculiar to Israel of old, but a standing law in God's moral kingdom, is evident from this, that our blessed Saviour

has adopted it into his own institution. Says he to the young ruler, with whom at a certain time he entered into a conference, Thou shalt do no murder, Matt. xix, 18. I would observe here, that there are some occasions that may happen in which taking away the lives of others may not be considered as violations of this commandment we have mentioned. Thus a person may kill another by what is called chance or accident, without the least evil intention or so much as a thought of such a thing. Now it is plain from what is said in the chapter in which is our text, that he who thus accidentally kills another is without guilt even in the sight of God. Verse 4, 5, Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly whom he hated not in time past, as when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the ax to cut the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour that be die, he shall live, as is plainly expressed in the former part of the fourth verse.

So again, it may be said; if a man is assaulted, and is thereby brought into danger of his life, it is just that he should stand upon his defence; and if in necessary self defence he kills his antagonist, he is not chargeable with murder in the eye of God's law; he only that is slain has done the wrong, and his blood must be upon his own head. However, I would observe, that a person of a sober, good mind, will have such a regard for the life of his most inveterate enemy, that he will be disposed to suffer very great wrongs, rather than proceed to such an extremity in self-defence, as to take away his life.

Again. If war is lawful, especially a defensive one, it cannot then be said, that if enemies are slain in it, that those that slay them are chargeable with shedding innocent blood. The aggressors in a war are only chargeable with all the fatal consequences of it.

Once more, I would say, that when criminals and malefactors are put to death, as is this day to be the case, with these unhappy persons before us, by the sword of public justice, there is no violation of the law of God, forbidding murder. I go upon the supposition, that the crimes such are chargeable with, are deserving of death. And no one surely will call it in question, whether the shedding innocent blood is not thus deserving. Having observed these things, I would proceed and say, that the law of God, forbidding the taking away the lives of others, intends that they shall not be taken away without a just and necessary cause. This rule extends to persons of all ranks and conditions, to the meanest slave, as well as to the person of high degree: For both the one and the other equally partake of the human nature, and are therefore equally valuable, and have an equal right to the continuation of life, so long as the Lord of life sees fit.

The question now is, when is it that this crime of murder is committed? I answer, when from a settled principle of hatred, malice or revenge, persons take away the lives of others. Such are in the fullest and most absolute sense, murderers, both in the eye of God and of civil society. Or, if the killing another is not from a settled principle of hatred, malice or revenge, but owing to a sudden transport of rage or fury, this, also is murder, even allowing that it is not so in such a gross sense, as when it is done with premeditation and malice afore-thought. As men ought not to indulge to wrath, bitterness and fury, so if they are by these corrupt, malignant passions led to shed the blood of any of their fellow creatures, they may not expect that this will avail as any just excuse, either before God or man. "It is (says an author) evidently unfit that life should be continually exposed to hazard from the turbulent, ungoverned wrath of man. This would be to subject quiet and peaceable members of society to the greatest hardships, by constructively giving encouragement to angry men to vent their fury upon them." Wrath and fury may not be indulged upon the principles of reason or the Bible. And in vain must it be to plead one crime in excuse for another, especially, such an heinous one, as that we are speaking of, shedding the blood of others.

Now this, as I have said, contracts guilt, and guilt of the deepest and blackest dye. God has forbidden it with the highest authority. His express law is violated, to say nothing of the laws of civil society. And such therefore, stand guilty both before God and man; at once and absolutely before God, whose knowledge is infallible: And before man, sometimes immediately after the perpetration of the fact, but, however, after a legal process.

But without any further enlargement, I go on to observe in the second place: It is the will of God, that this guilt should be put away.

How is it to be put away? I answer, by inflicting the penalty of the law upon the breakers of it. And this penalty, it is plain, by the appointment of God himself, is nothing less than the destruction of their temporal lives. That is, a standing, perpetual law of God, published to the new world from Noah. Genesis ix. 5, 6. At the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," shall be so by the magistrate, or whoever is appointed or authorised to be the avenger of blood "Before the flood (as one observes) God took the punishment of murder into his own hands, as in the case of Cain, but since, he committed this judgment to men; to masters of families first, and afterwards to the heads of countries." There is no language in which the intention of God as to those that are guilty of shedding blood, can be more plain and express than this, as in the passage now mentioned, as well as in many others. Accordingly, we have it, Numbers xxxv. 30. Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death; it follows, "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death;" or as in the margin, faulty to die, "but he shall surely be put to death." We have the like appointment of the holy God in the case, Proverbs xxviii. 17, A man that doth violence to the blood of any person, shall flee to the pit, let no man stay him."

This is the standing, unrepealable law of the majesty of Heaven. And consonant hereto, this is the standing law of all civil societies. But not to dwell upon this:

Now this penalty annexed to the divine law respecting shedding innocent blood, requiring blood for blood, shews it to be a very heinous crime; a crime of the first magnitude. And that it is so, appears from a variety of circumstances, which I may but briefly hint at: Before which, I would just observe, that Barbarians, who never were acquainted with the revelation of God, nor of his mind in this case, have looked upon murder as a shocking and heinous crime, exposing the perpetrators of it to some signal vengeance of the deity. We have an example of this in the case of the apostle Paul: When he landed at the island Melita, after his shipwreck, it happened that a viper fastened upon his hand, a venomous beast, whose bite is certain and sudden death, it is said, the barbarians thus remarked upon it, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he hath escaped the dangers of the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live, Acts xxviii, 4. "And, as one observes, should murderers escape the vengeance of man, they scarce ever after enjoy themselves, or take comfort in life; their hearts misgive them; their thoughts trouble them; their guilty fears perpetually haunt them; and sometimes for the sake of peace within, they have been as it were, forced to reveal their own wickedness, choosing rather to die by the hands of justice, than to drag on life under the uneasy sensations of a continually self-condemned conscience."

Having observed this, I go on to say that God having made this crime absolutely punishable with death, speaks it to be a heinous crime indeed. And it is so, in the first place, in respect of the great injustice done to him whose blood is shed. Indeed there is no instance of injustice equal to this. Men may by lawless violence be turned out of the possession of their goods and properties, they may be many ways injured in their names and in their bodies too; but all this is no ways equal to what it is to be deprived of life; for this is the foundation of all other enjoyments, and when this is destroyed all others fail of course. And then, many injuries that men meet with may be repaired; their properties may be restored, their characters vindicated, &c. but when life is taken away, there is no such thing as restoring this, it is irrecoverably gone. It is therefore the most aggravated instance of injustice that can be done to a man. Besides all which, the spiritual and everlasting happiness of the man, may be very nearly concerned, which shows the high and aggravated injustice of it. What must be the case of a wicked man, who is suddenly deprived of life by the hand of violence? While life remained he had a space for repentance, an opportunity to make his peace with God, was in a capacity of obtaining pardon, and securing his everlasting happiness; but in being drove out of the world, all opportunity and capacity herefor, wholly ceases. And it is to be feared, that many, who have fell such sacrifices, have at once gone to misery. So that, in this case, the immortal soul is in a sense destroyed, as well as the body. What instance of injustice can there any ways be, equal to that, which proves the occasion of a man's losing his soul forever, which is more worth than the whole world, as is evident, among other instances, from the inestimable price that was paid for its redemption, even the precious blood

of God's only begotten, and dearly beloved son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I might also observe upon the great injustice of it, from the consideration of the loss that is sustained, by those nearly related or connected, and by the society to which such belong. But passing over this, I go on to say, in the next place. That murder is a most heinous and aggravated sin, in regard of the great impiety of it towards God.

He is the author of men's lives, and it is his sole prerogative to dispose of them. His wisdom as well as goodness is concerned in continuing men in the enjoyment of their lives. It is, we may be sure, to answer some valuable and important ends, in his general plan of government; and as he clearly seen into all the relations, dependencies and connections of things, so he perfectly knows how to accomplish these ends, let the characters of men, in the moral and religious sense, be as they will, good or bad. By violently destroying the life of a man, God is (as one expresses it) virtually robbed of a creature whom his hands have formed, yea, of a servant and subject from whom he might have received, a revenue of honour and service. So that it is impiously to break in upon the wise plan that God has laid. And then, also, it is to be considered, that man is the noblest work of God, in this lower world; he was at first made after the image of God, and notwithstanding his apostacy, does, in some respects, still bear this image; accordingly, when God expressly declares, after the flood, that murder is a capital crime, to be punished with death, as in the passage I mentioned before, this reason is assigned for in the image of God made he man. Upon which one thus notes: Such remains of God's image are still upon fallen man, as that he who unjustly kills a man, defaceth the image of God, and doth dishonour to him.

Once more. The heinousness of this crime, appears also in this, that it excludes the perpetrators of it from the kingdom of Heaven, and exposes them to eternal death. Says the apostle, 1 John, iii, 15. No murderer hath eternal life. He is far from having that principle in him which leads to eternal life. How can this be when he is under the influence of such diabolical principles as have been mentioned, wrath, hatred, malice, revenge, &c. principles that will operate in such a dreadful manner as to put him upon embruing his hands in the blood of a fellow creature. Murderers, are expressly said by our Saviour, to be of their father the Devil, who (as he says) was a murderer from the beginning, John viii, 44. He is (says one upon it) an enemy to life, because God is the God of life, and life is the happiness of man. He was man's tempter to that sin, which brought death into the world, and so he was in effect the murderer of all mankind. And as he himself has no lot or portion in Heaven, where is the enjoyment of eternal life, so neither shall have any of his children, but shall be punished with eternal death. Accordingly, the apostle John, among other heinous transgressors, mentions MURDERERS, who shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Rev. xxi. 8. But this, I would just say, that the apostle speaks with respect to such, goes upon the supposition, that they are not brought to true repentance: For, it may be observed here, that as black a crime as murder is, it may be repented of, and in virtue of the great atonement by Jesus

Christ, be pardoned by God. This is sufficiently expressed by the apostle to the Hebrews, Chap. xii. 24. Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Tho blood of Abel cried for vengeance: But the blood of Jesus, the lamb slain, cries for mercy. And being sprinkled therewith, as the phrase here is, murderers may obtain pardon from the hands of God. But unless this is the case, the dreadful threatening we just mentioned, will be executed upon them. I shall only add here that passage in Rev. xxii. 15, which refers to those that are finally impenitent. But without, i.e. the heavenly city, mentioned verse preceding, are dogs and sorcerers, and whoremongers and MURDERERS.

From all now that has been said, does it not appear, what a heinous crime murder is? Its being punishable with death, by the express appointment of the God of Heaven, as well as by the laws of civil society, speaks it to be so. It is only in this way, that the guilt of innocent blood can be put away, as the language is in my text. Nor may any, without great offence to God, interpose to prevent it, or ward off the stroke of civil justice. Thine eye shall not pity him, says the text. Does this mean, that we should be hard hearted towards such who have committed this crime? That we should set aside even common humanity? Shut up our bowels of compassion towards them? Be rancorous, bitter and wrathful in our dispositions towards them? No, it does not mean this— Those that are in distress are objects of pity; and ingenuous minds will have the feelings of humanity towards them. While they detest the crime, will pity and compassionate the distressed criminal. And the religion of the compassionate Jesus, will powerfully lead to this. And this humane, christian principle, will put them upon every kind office towards them, to pray earnestly for them, and use all their best endeavours, that so their souls may be saved from death, and that they may obtain a part in the everlasting salvation of the heavenly world, which through the abounding grace of God and of the gospel, they are capable of. But when it is said in my text, thine eye shall not pity him, it intends, that thou shalt not so pity him, as to prevent justice taking place upon him. That judges and jurors upon sufficient evidence of their guilt, should, agreeable to the solemn obligation lying upon them to be faithful, declare them guilty, and pronounce upon them the sentence which the law of God and man has provided in the case, and, that all who are properly authorised thereto, see that it be put into execution. All this is consistent with the most tender emotions of heart towards poor criminals, and the most fervent wishes and prayers for their everlasting happiness. The most tender compassionate feelings must never supercede the express, peremptory orders of the God of Heaven.

I pass on now to the last head proposed, viz.

To consider the special reason, why God would have the guilt of innocent blood put away—That it may go well with thee.

It intimates, that if the guilt of blood is not put away, it will be very displeasing to God, and expose the land to distressing judgments. It would speak a general approbation and consent to so heinous a wickedness, and so the guilt would lie, not only on the immediate actors and their

accomplices, but on the public, and nothing then could be expected, but God's testifying his anger in most awful ways. We may see at large in Deuter. xxi. what particular care was taken to put away the guilt of innocent blood, even when he that shed it, was not found out. After the devoted heifer was slain, their hands were to be washed over it, denoting their innocence, to which the Psalmist no doubt refers, xxvi. 6. I will wash mine hands in innocency. And then the people of Israel are brought in as addressing the divine majesty, verse 8. Be merciful, O Lord unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. Should not this guilt be put away in the manner that has been said, the whole land would be defiled. So we read Numbers xxxv. 33. For blood it defileth the land, and the land it cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, or as the marginal reading is, there can be no expiation for the land, but by the blood of him that shed it.

If, as one notes upon it, such escape punishment from men, they that suffer them to escape will have a great deal to answer for, and God will not, however, suffer them to escape his righteous judgment. If a man would give all the substance of his house to the judges, to the country, or to the avenger of blood to atone for his crime, it must utterly be contemned," that so God may not be provoked utterly to destroy that land, but that it may go well with it, that it may be under his special care and blessing.

I have now finished the several heads I at first mentioned, as offering themselves from the text. And upon so extraordinary an occasion, I apprehend, as I hinted in the beginning, that it would be suitable to offer that which might serve to give people a full view of the crime of murder, the exceeding heinousness of it, and the fatal consequences of it, and, as I said, to impress the minds of these poor prisoners with a deep and pungent sense of the crime, for which they are this day to suffer the penalty annexed to the law of God and man.

To these poor prisoners. I would now particularly speak—And as this is the last sermon you will ever hear, I hope you will carefully attend to what may be now spoken to you, by one who has had much to do with you since your confinement, and hopes he has a true desire for your immortal interests.

I would, in the first place, speak to Buchanan, Brooks and Ross.

If you have attended to what has been said in this discourse, you must be led to see, that your arraignment, condemnation and execution, may not be attributed to the malignant passions of hatred, malevolence, bitterness and wrath. You must needs be sensible that at the court, all was fairness, candor and impartiality, both as to judges and jurors, and every advantage to vindicate your innocency, had you been innocent:—Had this appeared, it would have been matter of satisfaction to the court, the numerous assembly, and to the whole community: But you were found guilty, and received sentence accordingly; not in rage and fury, but with christian

tenderness and compassion. And why was the fatal sentence pronounced? I answer, because justice absolutely required it, and the law of God in the case could not be dispensed with, nor the law of civil society, without becoming partakers of your guilt, and drawing down the judgments of heaven upon the land. I trust you view matters in this light, and that you justify both God and man in your condemnation.

Indeed, I have found you freely doing so, and that you have had no disposition to hide or cover your guilt. The monitor within, charged you with it, and you have been free in your confession. And I trust you have been so, not only to man, but to the omniscient God, your righteous judge, before whom you will this very day appear, before the shadows of the evening are stretched over us. Such confession to God, enters into the nature of true repentance, a grace you must be possessed of, as you would be found of your judge in peace. If you are possessed of true repentance, you see yourselves as you are, see your vileness, pollution and guiltiness, and how justly God might cast you off forever. But you see him at the same time, seated upon a throne of mercy, ready to receive repenting, returning sinners, to pardon and save them; not for their sakes, but for his own name sake, and for the sake of his son Jesus, who once hung bleeding for sinners on the ignominious tree, and whose blood is of infinite value, sufficient to cleanse away all your guilt and pollution, even the guilt of that scarlet and crimson iniquity, for which you are this day to suffer an ignominious death. You will see in all its black colours (I hope you have done so before this your last day) the sin of shedding innocent blood. The deed of that fatal night, when you might say, as in Proverbs i, 11, Come let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: This I trust you reflect upon with grief and shame, with the utmost detestation and abhorrence. O the dishonour done to God! the cruelty and injustice to a fellow creature, one who had never in the least injured you! Indeed, if he whose blood you imbrued your hands in, was a good man, you were only the instruments of sending him to heaven a little before the time, though no thanks to you, for you meant not so. But if he was a wicked man,(a supposition I would very unwillingly make) what was the case of his immortal soul, when you hurried him out of the world, without his having the opportunity to lift up one cry to the God of heaven for mercy? You must not look upon it as a severe reproach, when I say, that it was a most shocking, cruel murder, and, taken in all its circumstances, such an instance as has never happened in this land from the first settlement of it, and indeed it is scarcely to be parralleled in all history.

What a wide difference has there been put between you and Mr. Spooner? Without the least thought or warning he was dispatched out of the world, to appear at once before the bar of the omnipotent judge: But several weeks were allotted for you after trial, and a further space still granted, several weeks more, upon application made to our chief magistrates, that so you might have all the opportunities and advantages possible, for making your peace with God, securing a part in the glorious redemption by Jesus Christ, and be prepared for this solemn day, and for a happy appearance before your great judge. You have surely no cause to complain, for the want

of the most kind, humane, christian treatment, from first to last. And I trust you have a grateful sense of it.

Much pains, you are sensible, have been taken with you in public and in private: Most wholesome instructions and counsels have been administered to you, and prayers have been continually going up before God on your behalf. And if all this has been blessed to your spiritual, saving good, the evidences of this, will be a rich and ample amends to all that have in such ways ministered to you. And although I would not by any means, in this your last stage, say any thing to you by way of flattery, yet it has been a satisfaction, that you have all along been ready to receive instructions, and desirous of the prayers of God's people for you. This we have been ready to look upon as a token for good. We hope you have been in earnest in seeking after God, that you have been brought to true godly repentance, and to make your flight to the Lord Jesus Christ, and committed your souls into his hands; that you have made your peace with God, and that death which is just before you, does not wear a gloomy aspect, notwithstanding the ignominy attending it,—that you have a solid hope of going this day to be with God and Christ in Heaven, to be happy there to all eternity. If you are at peace with God, all your guilt, even the horrid guilt of shedding innocent blood, will be no bar in the way of your attaining to this superior blessedness. If God is yours, and Christ is yours, then attending angels will hover around the ignominious tree, to receive your departing spirits, and take them upon their wings, and bear them away safely to the regions of joy, bliss and felicity above. Then what a blessed day will this be to you, better to you than the day of your birth! That introduced you into a world of sin and sorrow, but this will introduce you into a world of absolute purity and eternal rest. I do not mean to decide upon your case, but only to express my hopes.

You are now about to quit the world, to bid adieu to all things and objects under the sun. You will have a few moments left, after this exercise is over. My last advice to you is, to cast yourselves down at the feet of God's mercy, imploring the special aids and influences of his holy spirit, whereby you may be led to examine yourselves, whether you do indeed repent after a godly sort; whether you repent of sin, and of the heinous sin for which you are to suffer death, not merely because of what it has brought you to this day, but because of the inherent vileness, baseness and odiousness of it, as being a high indignity to the God of glory, and the most wretched ingratitude, to him your great benefactor, who has manifested such wonderful love to you, as to give his own dearly beloved son to redeem you, to save you from sin and wrath, and to purchase eternal life: Whether you hate sin for its own sake; whether you find a disposition in you, if you had lived, to obey, serve and glorify God; whether you see that after all you are unprofitable servants, have no merit of your own, and have therefore a firm trust in the blood of the all-sufficient saviour for pardon and acceptance with the holy God? Be impartial in these matters now you are just a going. And beg of God to search and try you and discover to you your true state, that he would shine in upon your souls, and give you joy and peace in believing. And that the blessed Jesus, that compassionate lover of souls, would receive you to

himself. Let that be your dying prayer, each one for himself, Lord Jesus receive my spirit, and may that blessed being say Amen, to it.

I would now speak a few words to you, Mrs. Spooner.*

When we consider your sex; the respectable figure that in times past you made in life; your connexions, and your many agreeable qualities, it is with a pungent grief that we behold you a prisoner of death, presently to be led forth to execution. Surely you must feel your circumstances this day.

It would have been very satisfactory had you been free and ingenuous in acknowledging your guilt, and the justice of your sentence. But though you have not been disposed to do this to man, I hope you have done so upon your bended knees to the omniscient God, who cannot be deceived. You are indeed looked upon by man, as guilty, yea, as the author and procurer of the bloody deed, but for whom it had never been perpetrated. The evidence in the case was too glaring to lead any one to a different sentiment. It is painful to me to say this, but I must be faithful to you in this matter, though this is not the first time by many. I say thus, to the intent that you may be led, now at the last, if you have never been so, to penitential grief and sorrow, before that holy, righteous God, at whose dread tribunal you must this day appear. I am loth to dwell upon some very aggravating circumstances of that tragical affair, such as the near relation (the most so of any in life) of him whose blood was shed; the orphanizing a number of dear and innocent children; the involving so many in the same guilt, and some of them, as we see before us, in the same condemnation; the distress and anguish brought on near friends, relatives, &c. But without dwelling upon these matters, I would hope that under a deep sense of your guilt, you have been earnestly applying to God for pardoning mercy and grace: That from a sense of your unworthiness before him; of your ill deserts, your lost, perishing condition as a sinner, that you have been earnestly seeking the face and favour of God; that you have seen that there is a glorious and effectual remedy provided for you, the precious blood of Christ, and have fled to it, and have some comfortable evidences that God has received you to pardon and favour. Is it thus with you poor dying woman! Then the death before you, though shameful, will yet be safe and joyful. And you shall ascend this day to be with God in glory. But do not deceive yourself now at the last; look well to yourself, and cry to God that he would search and try you. Call upon him even to the last, lie at his feet, beseeching him that his tender mercy and compassion may be extended to you; that he would not leave you to perish forever, but give you a name and a place among the redeemed and saved in his eternal kingdom. This is what we all earnestly wish and pray for on your behalf, and trust we shall continue to do so till your soul shall take its flight into the eternal world. And so we bid you a solemn and final farewell!

I must beg your patience a few moments more, while I speak a word to this great assembly.

My Brethren! You doubtless find the workings of humanity towards these poor prisoners,

though you do not so pity them as to prevent the putting away the guilt of innocent blood from our Israel. But as they are in a deplorable condition, in this respect they are objects of pity and compassion. Let this express itself by lifting up your fervent cries to Heaven for them, the few moments that remain to them, that though destruction must happen to their flesh, yet that their souls may be received to everlasting salvation. And pity and pray for their afflicted distressed relatives, whether parents, brethren, and sisters, and others that are near to them by the bonds of nature. Let them never be upbraided and reproached with the untimely, ignominious death of these poor prisoners. This would be cruel and brutal. And peculiarly would it be so to the orphan children of Mr. Spooner. No blame belongs to them. They could not prevent the murder of their father, nor the ignominious death of their Mother. May they never be made to suffer, for what has happened to their parents. May they find favour with God and man—experience the truth of that word, Psalm xxvii, 10, When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. I would now further say—That one end of public justice being executed upon these criminals, is to the intent that they may be a warning to others, that they commit not the like heinous wickedness, and expose themselves to the like capital punishment. No doubt you shudder at the thoughts of shedding innocent blood. In times past, it is likely these poor dying persons did so. But they forsook God, and God forsook them, and they were left to perpetrate the heinous crime for which they must now die. And may not you also be thus left, if you in like manner forsake him? Alas! how many are there who do so? And were it not for the restraints of divine grace, what foul crimes would you be left to, punishable with temporal death, not to mention that eternal death and destruction which awaits all that go on hardened and impenitent? It is God that has made you to differ from these criminals. Bless God for his restraints and be upon your watch and guard, that so you may be kept from falling. The best security against this is to become truly pious and religious, to walk with God and to live near to God: This is the great business and end of life; if any neglect this, death, which all are subject to, whenever it comes, or in whatsoever form, will transmit their miserable souls to the infernal regions, where they shall endure the second death, which is eternal, and which is far more terrible than the first, however painful and shameful.

May the awful spectacles now before us, serve to awaken us to a sense of the great evil of sin, and how provoking it is to the pure and righteous God, and put us upon an earnest flight to Christ, that we may be delivered from guilt and condemnation, and at last brought to the fruition of eternal life in Heaven. And now may we be all kept from falling, and preserved by God's mighty power, through faith unto salvation.

May God look down in tender compassion upon these poor prisoners, and admit them upon their departure, to be with the blessed Jesus in the paradise above. For this we shall again supplicate God's glorious majesty.—

APPENDIX.

WHAT is proposed by the author of the preceding sermon, in this Appendix, is to give a summary account of the prisoners, after their commitment, and especially after trial and sentence.

What immediately follows has a respect to Buchanan, Brooks and Ross.

When they were first committed, such was the horror of their consciences, that, as one of them afterwards expressed it, the prison was a mere hell to them. Notwithstanding which they were resolved to lie at God's feet, to cast themselves upon him for mercy, encouraging a hope of obtaining it through the merits of Jesus.—They gave themselves to prayer—they desired the prayers of others, and were eager to embrace all opportunities for religious counsels and instructions.

After trial and sentence, they justified God and man in their condemnation. They were sensible, as they often said, that it would be just in God to cast them off, and make them eternally miserable in hell. So sensible were they of their ill-deserts, that with an apparent sincerity they would say, that should God put a blank into their hands, they could freely sign it, leaving it wholly to his pleasure, as to their absolution or damnation. They spent all their time, even till late at night, in reading the Bible and many valuable books that were put into their hands, in praying and singing psalms and hymns. They became mighty in the scriptures, and were wont to make very pertinent observations upon many passages that were mentioned to them. They were persons of good, natural capacity: Buchanan and Ross in all their conversation discovered a considerable extent of it: And Brooks had a good share of it. It was surprizing, especially at times, to hear them converse upon the subject of real religion. They were wont to speak in a most feeling manner of the love of God in Christ Jesus—of their entire, hearty trust to the merit of his blood—of the vileness and odiousness of sin, of the dishonour thereby done to God, the base ingratitude of it towards him, and of the contempt thereby cast upon the blood and sacrifice of the blessed Jesus: The dishonour done to God by sin, was the burden of the song with them, not what they suffered or were about to suffer.

They would sometimes speak in a most moving manner of the love of God, and of the love of Christ, and of the manifestations thereof to their souls. The papers which they left are full of expressions of this kind. They appeared to have an entire benevolence towards all men—very thankful for all kindnesses, and they received many; heartily disposed to forgive all who had any ways injured them.

There were all the external evidences of true penitence in them that could be expected. A sabbath or two before their expected execution, Ross was publicly baptised. He appeared to understand well, the nature and design of the ordinance, and attended upon it with great

seriousness and solemnity: He found it a good day, having had tokens of God's gracious presence with him, as he signified afterwards. They expected to have been executed on the 4th of June, the time appointed. When I brought them the tidings of a reprieve for four weeks, they told me it was contrary to their expectations, trusted that they were in a state of readiness to leave the world; but expressed great thankfulness to God and man for this further space, and set apart the 4th of June entirely for religious exercises; employing it in reading, and in solitary and social prayer, taking no bodily refreshment till the close of the day. As I had much opportunity, even almost daily to know their state, so I have reason to think that they improved the time further granted them, in the very best manner. When young persons, as was common, visited them, they would deal out the most serious, solemn, affectionate counsels and warnings to them: They were desirous of frequent opportunities of this kind, that they might do some little good before they left the world.

A few days before their execution, being minded that the time drew near, and being asked, whether it did not give them peculiar anxiety; they replied, None at all, for that they trusted it would be well with them, or to that effect. I visited them early in the morning of that day, found them calm and composed. One of them observed, as near as I can remember, that the sun would no more arise upon them here▪ but trusted before night they should be in glory! In the same composed frame, they went to the place of execution, attended by a number of ministers. When they mounted the scaffold, Ross made an audible and very affectionate prayer, the others went to their private devotions, and continued in them till they were turned off. Buchanan, in particular, upon the stage appeared with a pleasant aspect, answering to that representation of Dr. Watts, 'smiling and pleased in death.'

A very heavy thunder storm came on just before they were turned off, which seemed to add to the solemnity of the scene.

As to Mrs. Spooner, she professed that her match with her husband was not agreeable to her. Domestic dissensions soon took place, and went on from step to step, till she conceived an utter aversion to him; at length she meditated his destruction; laid several plans, and never gave over till the fatal act was committed. Her guilt in this matter appeared in most flagrant colours upon her trial as well as since, from the solemn declaration of the poor men whom she employed in the bloody deed, and to whom she promised a large reward, which reward they immediately received.

I soon visited her after her commitment. She was not very free to converse upon the subject. And indeed it was difficult to converse freely upon it till after her trial. After this, opportunity was given in the fullest manner. She did not blame judges or jurors or the Attorney-General, but often declared that the witnesses wronged her. She declared, that though she had planned the matter, yet, that she never thought it would be executed; that she relented when she found they were in earnest. She doubtless could have given her husband notice of what was designed,

and so have prevented it, but she did not; nor did she make discovery of it as soon as possible, but sent the next morning to a neighbour's to enquire after him, when at the same time she knew he was in the well. She could not be brought to acknowledge her guilt or the justness of her sentence till very late in the day, as shall be mentioned. It seems she went upon this mistaken principle that she was not an immediate actor. She was a person of uncommon fortitude of mind; did not for the most part appear to be affected with many circumstances in her case which were wont deeply to affect others. She would indeed sometimes say, that she felt more than she did or could express. Seldom a day passed but I visited her, for which she expressed great gratitude. I was wont to converse with her upon the main point, and to endeavour to impress her mind with a sense of her guilt, hoping to observe upon her the symptoms of true penitence. Appearances of this were from time to time discouraging.

Her behaviour to all was very polite and complaisant. From the frequent opportunities I had with her, I was led to conceive of her, as a person naturally of a kind, obliging, generous disposition: But she was unhappy, as above mentioned, in her first setting out in the world, and so left to a fatal capital crime.

It appeared to many that carefully observed her, for many weeks before her execution, that she was in a state of pregnancy. She accordingly petitioned authority for a respite. A jury of matrons was appointed to examine her. They did not bring in in her favour; she petitioned again but it was not granted; accordingly execution was ordered; she received the tidings with great calmness. At her own desire, that the public might be satisfied, she was opened the evening after execution, and a perfect male foetus of the growth of five months or near it, in the judgment of the operators, was taken from her. Having undergone a second examination a few days before her execution, and being thereby greatly disordered, she was not able to attend the sermon that day.

Soon after it, I went to the goal with a number of my brethren; she appeared very calm, humble and penitent, professed her faith in the great saviour and dependance upon him; upon its being proposed to her, she readily consented to be baptized; she was so immediately, as but a few moments remained before she must go forth. The scene was very solemn and affecting; she was not at all daunted when the sheriff presented her with and-put on the fatal cord; she told him she esteemed it as much as though he had put on a necklace of gold or diamonds. She presently went forth, I accompanied her in a carriage to the place of execution; she appeared undismayed and unaffrighted at the various striking scenes that opened from one stage to another. At length we came in sight of the gallows, I asked her if the sight of it did not strike her? She answered not at all any more than any other object. Her constitutional politeness still remained, and she discovered it to numbers that were near her. She presently mounted the scaffold, and while the sheriff was fixing her, she told him, with a serene countenance, that it was the happiest day she ever saw, for she doubted not it would be well with her. She acknowledged that she justly died;

that she hoped to see her christian friends she left behind her, in Heaven, but that none of them might go there in the ignominious manner that she did. It was a fixed principle with her, that confession of her faults was proper only to be made to her maker, not to men; she often declared, that she was not neglectful of this and found satisfaction in so doing; but at the last cast, she did this at least implicitly to the sheriff, as just related. I would be far from presuming to decide upon her future state or that of the rest of them.

I shall only add a short extract from the sermon I delivered to my people the Lord's day following; "We know what are the infinite compassions of God, and that the blood of Jesus is of infinite value, cleansing from all unrighteousness. We may by no means limit the holy one of Israel. We read of the servant that came in at the eleventh hour, who received the same wages as those who had borne the burden and heat of the day: We know what was done by our Saviour, to the penitent thief upon the cross, just before he expired. This shows us what divine power and grace can do and may do. But secret things belong to God, and we ought to leave them with him.

THE END.