# Bradford Opinion.

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## Decoration Day, 1880.

ORATION BY H. A. HUSE, ESQ., OF MONTPELIER, VT., AT BRADFORD, MAY 29.

USE OF DECORATION DAY TO THE LIVING.

The good old ministers of New England used to end their sermons often times with what they called an improvement, that is with us the application; and sometimes the body of one sermon called for several improvements or applications.

In casting about what to say here to day it has seemed that the use of Decoration Day to the Living is a subject that has in it much that may well engage our attention for a few minutes. The observance of this day while it honors the dead should benefit those for whom they died.

Where an occasion repeats itself year by year it is a hopeless task after a time to attempt, where so much that is good has been said and adorned in the saying, to say new things that are worthy or to say old things without putting them in worse shape than others have before put them.

Talk is better than reading in any public meeting and one reading owes an apology. That apology lies in this case—that while to convince people one needs to look them in the eye and to speak from the heart instead of from paper, those who assemble here need not to be convinced. Each one here knows it is well for him to engage in this service and the speaker's office is not to give information, to advance new thoughts, to urge to things not before considered of by his hearers, but as one selected from among you simply to give voice to the common understanding of the matter dwelt upon. It corresponds semewhat to what is heard sometimes in meetings for worship where a brother is called upon to "lead in prayer."

And that calls to mind perhaps the main reason why I read instead of talk to you what I deem to be the common thought of us all about the true uses of this day. He who leads for the first time and who has always before followed, sometimes halts and stumbles and in trying to do things beyond him does worse than if he had kept along on his every day level. He sometimes finds himself where the boy who asked the blessing did. His father had always done it and being absent one day when a visitor was present the youngest of the family, a four-year-old, took it on himself, before remonstrance could be made, to do things as they should be done. His blessing was "Oh! Lord!—Amen. There's more to it than I thought there was."

Some modern philosophers it is true think they have found there is nothing to that, but they may in the end come to the opinion of the boy after all.

One thing is certain there is more to the day we now observe than is dreamt of in the philosophy of any careless Horatio, whose eye sees but the form and movement of processions and the beauty of flowers strewn on the green sward that covers the dead.

The Indian who "sees God in clouds and hears him in the wind" is yet on a higher plane of humanity than he who reduces his own mind to a somehow etherialized, somehow aerated, somehow, not infinitesimally for this man does away with the infinite,—but finitesimally refined, material emanation from and of the component material parts of his bodily being. The things done to-day are done in honor of something that cannot be brought to weight and measure—in honor of patriotism by calling to mind by outward things what men who are dead did for its sake.

We cannot learn unless there is a thing to learn, we cannot make application without having something to apply, we cannot tell the good uses of this day to ourselves without looking through its form of commemoration to the men and their motives and deeds that are commemorated.

In the law, the things that have been done are kept recorded that principles may be fixed for things that are to be done in the future. In medicine it is the same. In all branches of human endeavor the past is studied for its guidance in present and future action.

So when history is recorded whether on the pages of Macaulay and Motley and Prescott, or in monuments that lift themselves heavenward or in the observance as now of days and times set apart from the ordinary work of life there is a double reading. There is not only the ancient line of facts fully set forth or called to mind but also the lesson which those facts teach.

The law deals with an offender with a double purpose—to punish him for the murder or the theft that justice may not go wholly unhonored even in this life—and to so deal with him that in after time men shall learn what comes upon those who do deeds of violence. In like manner come rewards—they pay for the past and are earnest for the future.

In fact in all things what is done *is done*, and the knowledge of them is of little worth so far as they are concerned; the lesson to come out of them is what is important. The man who knows a vast bundle of facts and is content with the mere knowledge of them may be a very learned man but to go beyond that and be a wise man he must draw from them conclusions as to the conduct of life in himself and his associates. All study of the past teaches this, that the power of habit cannot be over estimated and that it is of great use that the mind be habituated to contemplate good and noble things that have been done. The furniture of the mind comes to fit the dwelling that the mind abides in.

It is well then if we have had in this country anything worth remembering that we keep ourselves in the habit of recalling it. Mankind in all ages have tried various devices for a remembrance in the land. Wells have been dug, rude piles of stones cast up, pyramids have oppressed the desert sands and trees have made an oasis among them, walls have been inscribed, monuments reared high, and days set apart to be commemorative of what is past.

Memory serves for a little time, for a generation or a part of a generation; tradition lasts longer but clouds over after a time and the original fact is lost or distorted; history is for all time, but many of its pages are dull, many are never written, and at the best it soon reaches the few only and not the many. It comes then that other means have been devised, that monuments have been set to mark continually the spot of great deeds; great monuments to mark great deeds as such. And monuments placed to mark the resting place of departed friends are seen here to-day as a testimony that they are not forgotten. It has been asked in all days doubtless as it was when Edward Everett answered the question "What good will the monument do?" by the counter-question "What good does anything do?" The monument teaches what the man or the action that it commemorates, taught. It repeats the lesson from generation to generation.

But greater to this end is the day set apart. No monument built of a few stones, or of many, so that it towers skyward, equals in influence the day that is made in each revolving year to mark some great man or time. The Fourth of July marks the birth of a nation—stirs the blood with thought of the fathers—as no local granite column can do. All Christendom's thought is active and joyful at Christmas and Easter. And year by year throughout their land this day calls to mind the salvation of the country and does honor to the men who saved it.

But all the arches, the towers, the hugh piles of rock that make travelers gaze in wonder on the plains of Egypt, all the days of the calendar, all force of habit cannot keep alive the memory of that which deserves to be forgotten.

The pyramids are known but what do they mean? That which was built was greater than the meaning it was intended to convey, and while the huge piles remain they give no reason for their existence. So we see an unworthy thing may not be kept in the world's mind by the most ponderous attempts. And on the other hand two many good deeds are lost to the future by having no record made of them. It will not do to trust to luck in this matter.

But when the right thing is done, and the right measure taken to keep in mind, the two go down the years together; as long as they keep together they teach and work for good on each succeeding generation of men.

Then, to-day, and addressing more particularly those who have come to manhood and womanhood within the last fifteen years—for I take it I need not speak of these matters especially to those who remember the dark and bloody years of 1861 to 1865, those to whom those years are something more than a tale that is told—let us see whether what this day is set to mark is something worth; whether the observances of it year by year are the fitting means to perpetuate it in men's minds and briefly the use to be made of it in life. Let us see whether it is something to be kept up a few years only while some of the fellow actors with those whose graves are decorated live or for all coming time.

This day celebrates the sacrifice of life—the highest sacrifice for country—instituted after and because of the war of the rebellion it more especially marks that illustration of patriotism which the attempt to overthrow the government evoked.

For years before that war broke out, the country had been at peace; the war of 1812 was nearly half a century and the Mexican war almost a score of years in the past. The Union had been developing with great rapidity. The westward course of the star of the Republic—that of Empire does not and never will shine in its place—had seen the valley of the Mississippi stirred by industrious millions and the western plains changing from hunting fields to farms. Trade was in all the land. The revolutionary fathers had gone; their sons and grandsons in peaceful homes read of their doings and wondered how they could have wrought and endured as they did.

War was unthought of—the people would vote and those they elected would talk of measures and dispute about them, perhaps go so far as to be unparliamentary in their language—but what of it? There was no lion in the way—it would be talk—who would risk his life in these more moderen days in war and what need was there to risk it?

In some states there were a few militia companies. The first time I ever set foot near where I live I went to see a muster of the Vermont militia—that of 1860. Some thought such tramping about and playing at war was useless, it was foolish, empty parade. So doubtless were the same things condemned in other states by some, and praised by some. The next year confounded the critics quickly enough—for the towns that had the militia companies—Bradford among the number—had their men first in the field.

The first gun fired at the flag—that flag which before the war was over had waved at the head of embattled columns and been so stained with blood that it came to be in every soldier's heart the nearest sign of all for which he fought, the flag at whose coming those in prison pens were to weep with joy and under whose folds again they fell on their kness in the prayer of thanksgiving, the flag that came to be called and to be "Old Glory"—the first gun fired on this flag found our citizens where all great crises find men, about their homely duties, working, and living with their wives and children; getting ready to make a home; going to school, doing all those things which make up the life of thriving communities.

On how many home scenes like that described by Eastman did Sumter's cannon fall?

> The farmer sat in his easy chair
> Smoking his pipe of clay;
> While his hale old wife with busy care
> Was clering the dinner away.

This sound of war came when Vermont was not far removed—and let us be thankful she is not wholly gone yet—from the homely ways told of by this same son of hers:

> "There many an hour Thanksgiving day
> When the ice was glare, the girls used to stay
> And share in our glorious fun;
> When the shouting boys with cap in hand,
> Would chase them off from the ice to the land,
> Till the Governor's meeting was done;
> Till grace was said, the turkey carved,
> The mince-pie cooled, and the pudding "sarved"
> And the gravy too cold to run."

It came—

> In the spring when the winter has gone to the north
> And the weeds on the knoll came peeping forth
> And the little wild flowers between,
> When the buds swelled out in the April sky
> And the farmer saw that his winter rye
> Came up on the hill-side green,
> And from three month's school and the ferule free
> The boys were again to be seen.

The cannon of Sumter meant a charge to the death to destroy the Union. They told to peaceful homes the story that what the fathers had founded in blood the sons should cement with blood or it should fall apart.

They said, stay—do your daily work, love your wives, educate your children, live happily all your days; the Union is a name, patriotism may be satisfied by your own state lines; thank the God's for the good things they have given you and weary them not by longing for what they will not continue to you. Let the Union die or die the death yourselves!

Do you suppose, my younger friends, that those who had homes there cared less for them than those who have them now? Fathers were fathers and mothers mothers. What was the answer then when the threatening thunder came ominous of evil over a peaceful land?

In one state it was as it had been before that day:

> He who hath still left of two hands but one
> We bid let him grapple a sword
> And he who hath two let him handle a gun
> And forward, boys! forward! the word.
> The murmuring sound of the fierce battle tide
> Steady resounds from afar,
> Forward, boys! forward on every side,
> For Vermont and her glittering star,
> Forward! the State that was first in the fight
> When Allen and Warner were here,
> Should not be the last to strike now for the right,
> Should never be fouddin the rear."

I don't believe in quoting poetry, and would advise nobody to do it, unless it is good poetry, and was written by a Vermonter, or ought to have been written by a Vermonter, and as I have done it to-day several times it should be counterbalanced by a prose quotation. The poet before hand said Vermont 'Should never be found in the rear." Official reports show where she was found. I quote—and this prose matches the poetry—from Gen. Doubleday's report on Gettysburg.

"I tihnk these extracts show that it is to Gen. Stannard and Col. Gates the country is mainly indebted for the repulse of the enemy's charge and the final victory of the 3d of July." That was said of the 2d brigade. It was of the 1st—the "old brigade" that honored old Vermont, that brave Gen. Sedgwick said "Put the Vermonters ahead and keep the column well closed up." Other regiments not so fortunate as to be brigaded together made a record of deeds as brave as those of the old brigade and when the war ended it is enough to say Vermont's soldiers had made her poet's saying true.

There is temptation to dwell on details. Get anybody who was in the army to telling in public or private of what took place and he takes no note of time even from its loss. Your only safety is in my keeping carefully away from all that. But in brief these men who went from their homes went many of them to die—in hospital, on the battle-field or in prison pen, it matters not where, they made the last great sacrifice—that of life. The dust of some lies here, of others God knows where! Their spirits returned to Him who gave them.

We should keep their memory green, for the respect and love we had for them, and for what they did.

We should do it by keeping their memorial day, the grandest monument heroes ever had, whose rising sun gladly gilds the clouds of heaven in their remembrance and whose setting sun lingers to shed its last rays on the flowers that deck their graves. We should keep their memory green, and it is the use of this memorial day to help us do it, all the year round by being good citizens, good neighbors, good friends, by loving the old flag and the country—the whole country—whose flag it is by being as ready to defend it against all foes as they were and as hearty friends to all its friends as they were.

Especially in a year like this when we all are apt to get excited we should remember that it is all in the family. The danger to this country from rebellion is gone, no one will ever strike the Union again with rebellious hand. Our danger in the future comes from possibilities of dispute as to what is the rightful and legitimate government, and from faction fights of that kind good Lord deliver us!

He delivered us out of greater dangers in the past and will out of those of the future. Peace is upon the land and prosperity awaits it. In peace we should cement the bonds of Union with our own people and with those of other states. Before many years here and there a soldier of the Union who fought rightly to put down the rebellion and here and there a soldier of the South—and braver ones never lived—who fought wrongly to uphold it, both obedient citizens of that Union one fought to maintain and the other vainly to destroy, can say with "Uncle Jerry."

> The men he fought, he says are dead,
> Shan't fight *their* children now.

I have said the best use of Decoration Day is for ourselves, but even at that we shall best use it for ourselves when we think less of ourselves and of our immediate action and more of those who died—and with wounds and fever, and pain and sorrow, yet found it sweet to die—for their country.

They say old wine, old books and old friends are the best—so are old lines.

When this day recurs two pictures always come to mind; two pictures painted by words that you have all no doubt heard on like occasions, but worthy of repetition to all time. One has all the pomp and circumstances of war—

> "On fame's eternal camping ground
> Their silent tents are spread
> And glory guards with solemn round
> The bivouac of the dead."

The other is still better, and has a charm all its own.

> "How sleep the brave who sink to rest
> By all their country's wishes blest!
> When spring with dewy fingers cold
> Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
> She there shall dress a sweeter sod
> Than fancy's feet have ever trod.
>
> By fairy hands their knell is rung,
> By forms unseen their dirge is sung;
> There Honor comes a pilgrim gray,
> To bless the turf that wraps their clay
> And freedom shall awhile repair
> To dwell a weeping hermit there.

And so watched, my friends, we will leave them in their last long sleep that knows no waking till we wake with them.

With us let the lesson of patriotism they taught abide.

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SERMON PREACHED BY THE REV. ALLEN CLARK, AT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, BRADFORD, SABBATH MORNING, MAY 30th.

"A good soldier of Jesus Christ."—2d Tim. 2:3.

Also "By it he being dead yet speaketh."—Heb. 11:14.

The Apostle Paul lived in a military age. With the exception of a few years about the time of the Saviour's birth, the Temple of War at Rome had not been closed for more than a hundred years. All this time there had been marchings and countermarchings of armies, strife and conflict, wars and rumors of wars. The Roman Empire, of which Paul was a citizen, and within which his labors were principally confined, was peculiarly distinguished for its military spirit and prowess. Thus, in the Vision of Daniel, it was symbolized by the fourth Beast: "Dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth and it devoured and break in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet." That is, it was a nation given to war and conquest.

For its military uses, it had great military roads constructed, radiating outward from the city of Rome to the utmost limits of the empire—roads so solidly and wonderfully built that they remain even unto the present day, unimpaired by 1800 years of time. Then it had also its immense standing army, which first served and afterward ruled the Empire; and garrisons in every part of its dominion, to guard against seditions, revolts, sudden uprisings and tumults, and to enforce the laws of the Empire. Thus the soldier was an everywhere present fact in the Roman domain. Paul had been familiar with the sight of soldiers and legions from his youth up. He had seen them in the city of Tarsus in Cilicia where he was born. He had seen them continually in Jerusalem during the long period of his education; also at Cesarea where he was imprisoned for three years, and which was at the time the Roman seat of power in the Province of Judea. He had also seen them in numbers at Antioch, where with Barnabas he labored for two years, and must have met them in all the cities of Asia Minor, and Macedonia. Indeed the soldier had never been out of his sight. And he spent the last years of his life, chained to a soldier in a Roman prison.

What more natural, then, than that he should seek to illustrate the nature of the christian calling by reference to the life, duties and characteristics of soldiers?

And yet that he did so proves that there is some real correspondence between the two. For he would not have likened the christian life to a warfare unless it in some measure resembles a warfare; nor would he have cempared a christian to a soldier, unless the ideal of a christian is, in some sense, found in a soldier. Taking this for granted, then, let us consider in the first place briefly this morning, what a christian should be as tested by this ideal: "A good soldier of Jesus Christ."

The first quality of a good soldier that occurs to us, is *loyalty*, i.e., unswerving fealty to the cause espoused. The merest child present is aware how the cause of American independence was imperiled by the disloyalty of one man—Benedict Arnold—who because his ambition was not fully gratified, undertook to betray our most important military post into the hands of the enemy. His treachery, it is true, was discovered in time to prevent the loss of the post, and yet the cause was injured. The enemy was encouraged, and our own people were rendered distrustful of their leaders. It abundantly illustrated the fact that without thorough loyalty on the part of its defenders, any cause must speedily fail. If it can be said of any considerable portion of them, that they are only waiting for an offer of money or promotion, to espouse the opposite side, the cause may as well be abandoned first as last. Even a *few* disloyal ones, even a *small leaven* of disloyalty, will do incalculable injury. There can be no doubt that even in our late war, the sympathy of some of the leaders with the opposite side, and mutual jealousies indulged, lost us many a field, protracted the conflict, and deferred the final triumph. It was not till those every whit committed to the issues of the war, were in all the important places of command, that victory perched serenely on our banners.

Loyalty in a soldier is the *golden* quality. Without it the most shining of other qualifications are worthless. Indeed, the more brave, skillful and efficient (if not loyal) the more dangerous he becomes. Loyalty directs every energy aright, and makes the soldier as a nail fastened in a sure place by the master of assemblies.

The same quality is also of paramount importance in a christian. I do not mean by this to intimate that many so-called christians mean to betray the cause; and yet is to be feared, that many do betray it, though it may be unconsciously. The minister, e. g., who for popularity's sake, omits the more solemn truths, and the more humbling doctrines, or is silent on the moral issues of the day; or to attract and please the *elite*, favors an unevangelical style of things, and makes the services formal, elegant and showy, instead of plain, simple and earnest as is becoming, betrays the vital interests of the cause. And the churches do likewise when, to advance their material interests, they resort to disreputable schemes for making money, such as lotteries; and when to draw the crowds, they put mountebanks in their pulpits, and degrade the services of God's house to the level of a theatre.

And so there are many ways, you see, in which ministers and churches are tempted to virtually betray the cause they represent. It is indeed an important thing always to ask concerning anything we undertake in connection with the church: What would Christ have me do, and how would he have me do it? Will it glorify him: or how may it be made to glority him? And thus to keep the needle of our christian aims and purposes always pointing directly to him; and not suffer pride, or love of gain, or ambition, or any other thing to come in and divert us, and turn the bent of our energies away from the cross. I see many before me this morning that were loyal to their country in the hour of its peril. Are we all likewise loyal soldiers of Jesus Christ, the captain of our salvation, who has loved us and washed us in his own blood? We honor our leaders; but who so worthy of honor, and our enthusiastic devotion as he? God help us to be loyal soldiers of Jesus Christ. Then we shall be loyal to everything that is true, just, pure, lovely and of good report.

A second characteristic of a good soldier, that I notice, is implicit obedience. Without such obedience in an army, all would be confusion. The only way in which there can be any leadership, and therefore any effective handling of a body of men, is to have the principle of strict, unhesitating obedience run all the way down from the chief commander to the privates in the ranks. Then the whole body becomes as one man, with one directing mind and one guiding hand. It can be managed, qiuckly, intelligently and effectively. It is estimated that our army of 10,000 men under discipline is able to put to route 100,000 without discipline, fighting in the capacity of a disorganized mob. Hence the importance of this fundamental rule with a soldier, to obey orders. It is not for him to forecast the wisdom or futility of any movement or maneuvre, but only to obey the orders as they come from headquarters. If it be to advance to the cannon's mouth, to do that; or if to fall back, to do that, however galling it may be to his pride. He must hold his own mind and will entirely subject to those of his superiors. This is the first rule of the soldier. Within a little sphere, he may exercise his own discretion, and is expected to be intelligent and quick to discern; but outside of that sphere, he must be like a piece of machinery—promptly, precisely and perfectly obedient.

Obedience is also a christian requisite—obedience not to Pope or priest, but to Christ. The Saviour gave us a striking example in this respect in that he himself was obedient unto death. "Not my my will O God," he said in the garden, "but thine be done." And now that he has been obedient for our sakes in all that incurred suffering and shame, he demands of us that we be obedient for his sake in respect to simple duty to God. And he makes this obedience the supreme test of our discipleship. "Ye are my disciples," he says, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." It will not answer, then, for us to respond to certain duties (such as may be most congenial to us) and pass others by, as the manner of some is. Paying will not take the place of praying; nor praying of paying; public worship, of family worship, nor family worship of public worship: talking of working, nor working of talking. But we are to do *whatsoever* Christ has commanded. And let us remember that what is required of us, is to *do* these things, and not merely approve of them and to go on our way. The son in the parable who said to his father: "I go not," but afterward repented and went, is commended more than the one who said: "I go, sir," but went not. The strength and effectiveness of our churches, is in those who are found at their posts of duty—in those who are found ever doing for Christ. Such are pillars and bulwarks of strength in Zion; and what is more, such are ever going from strength to strength. They grow in grace, grow in moral beauty, and are growingly happy. They can say in truth that to "do the will of God is more than their meat and drink." It is their life and joy. Such christians are not troubled with spiritual dyspepsia, nor with fainting fits of melancholy, nor do they fall into doubting castle; or get caught sleeping on Enchanted Ground; but with hearts ever strong and free, are found marching like good soldiers of Christ cheerfully at the head of their columns, and their step and their tone seem to say: "Let us on to victory."

Another test of a good soldier is ability to endure hardness. We have all witnessed military displays on holiday occasions, when holiday soldiers, with holiday uniforms all bright and shiny, carrying bright unstained banners, and led by holiday bands with instruments all bright and polished, have performed on the green, to the delight of the spectators. And all this was well. But then this was not the place, nor this the occasion on which to select good soldiers. If you would know who are good soldiers, take such as have endured the long marches, and have not quailed before the cannon's mouth, and have stood by through all the hardships of the campaign, and returned under battle-rent flags, still keeping step to the music of victory, and in these war-tried heroes who have endured hardness, you have soldiers worthy of the name.

The tests of a soldier are vigor, courage, constancy. The little army of Ancient Sparta, by virtue of these qualities that had been wrought into them from their youth, easily defied the world. There was no hardness but they could endure, and were willing to endure for their country. These things made them the ideal soldiers of all time.

And to be an acceptable follower of Christ we must be willing also to endure harness. It is not to a life of ease and self-indulgence that we are called, but of labor and self-denial. The rest, the reward and glory will be by and by. But they are for such as can show wear and wounds. "What hast thou done for me?" will be the basis of all rewards. A little more than two years ago, a number of us who were boys together in the same country neighborhood, but all of whom are now ministers of the gospel, got together for a visit. The first question of the oldest of our number, as he sat down, was: "Well, boys, I want to hear how much you have *suffered* for Christ. I don't want to know how large churches you have, or what honors you have received, but how much you have suffered?" That was his way of ascertaining how faithful we had been and how closely we had walked to the Master. And so I sometimes think that the one question in heaven will be: "What have we suffered for Christ?" Have we denied ourselves in any respect for Him? Have we been willing to be deprived of ease, and, if need be, of gain and reputation, that Christ might be honored and his cause advanced? Have we, in short, "endured hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ?"

But a final, and yet most important qualification of a good soldier that I would name, is patriotism—love of cause and country. It was patriotism that carried us through as a nation in our first great birth struggle for independence; and that gave us our second birth in delivering us from the domination of the slave power. Had there been no patriotic outburst of indignation, and of enthusiasm for the flag of our country, when Sumpter was fired on, we might well have despaired. But the spirit that caused 75,000 men to offer themselves for their country's service, almost before the President's call had been taken from the wires, meant ultimate victory. True patriotism always does. It is unconquerable. It begets loyalty, obedience, fidelity, vigilance, and inventiveness, and laughs at hardship.

Now spiritual patriotism, i. e., love of Christ and his cause, is the supreme qualification of the Christian soldier. With that comes forth, cheerfulness, courage, gentleness, prayerfulness, vigilance, liberality, self-denial, and every quality that augurs success. What our churches need more than anything else is a baptism of love—of holy patriotism for Jesus and his truth. Then like a holy army would they move on to the conquest of the world. The one thing that the early church had was *love*. Of sanctuaries, and commentaries and school of sacred learning, and almost all such appliances they were destitute; but they were charged with a love that knew no bounds—a love that overcame the power of the world, and kept them ever talking about Jesus and his cross; and by that love they conquered. And why should they not? For what had the old religions, and what has the cold morality of the world, to oppose to the sublime beauty and power of love? Nothing can stand before it. It takes captive every heart, it subdues every passion, and makes all things obe-