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AN  
**ADDRESS,**  
DELIVERED IN THE ORPHAN ASYLUM,  
NEW-YORK,  
FEBRUARY 5, 1822,  
ON THE  
**CONFLAGRATION OF THE ORPHAN HOUSE**  
IN THE  
**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA,**  
ON THE 23d OF JAN.

---

BY JOHN STANFORD, A. M.

---

*The Clock strikes EIGHT ; the tender Orphans repose in sleep.  
The Clock strikes THREE ; the affrighted Babes are wrapt in flames !*

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PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF  
THE BOARD OF DIRECTION OF THE ORPHAN ASYLUM.

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THE following short ADDRESS may have nothing in it materially to interest the matured mind, other than its simplicity and sincerity. It is the plain effusion of a heart disposed to make serious impressions upon an assembly of *one hundred and forty* orphan children; and, to teach them how to feel for the miseries of others. Such as it is, with sincere respect, it is dedicated to the Ladies who have the direction of this INSTITUTION; and, to the afflicted DIRECTRESSES OF THE ORPHAN ASYLUM IN PHILADELPHIA.

*New-York, March 1, 1822.*





# ADDRESS.



CHILDREN,

WISHING to avail myself of every occurrence, however affecting, to promote your instruction and benefit, I shall this morning address you upon the late calamity in Philadelphia, produced by the destruction of the ORPHAN HOUSE in that city. The text which I have selected is—

MATTHEW II. 17, 18.

*Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, in Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not.*



The history of this text, is supposed by some, to describe the state of the children of Israel in the days of Jeremiah, when for their sins and idolatry, they were taken captives by Nebuchadnezzar; some of them slain by the sword, and others carried prisoners to Babylon. On that affecting event, the mothers of Israel are described in tears under the character of *Rachel*, though she had been long dead; because, she was the affectionate mother of Joseph and Benjamin, from whom two of the principal tribes of Israel descended.—But, although the lamentation on that distressing occasion was extremely severe, the Prophet Jeremiah certainly

then predicted a still more bloody scene which should mark the coming of Christ the Messiah, which Matthew informs us, *was then fulfilled*. Herod, king of Judea, being informed that Jesus was born king of the Jews, was so alarmed at the consequences, that he determined, though in vain, to take away his life. To effect this design, he barbarously commanded all the male children to be put to death that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under. The grief of the mothers of those massacred children, is described and personified by weeping *Rachel*, that tender parent who was so passionately fond of children, and whose grave was yet known and venerated in Rama, which was within the borders where those innocent children were murdered at the command of bloody Herod. What pencil can sufficiently describe the agonizing feelings of those bereaved women, whose lovely infants were torn from their breasts, and hewed in pieces by the sanguinary sword? Nature feels; sensibility speaks; the *voice is heard*; deep *lamentation*, excessive *weeping*, and great *mourning*; while in the anguish of their souls, they *refuse to be comforted*, because their little ones *were not*, and laid in their untimely graves.

From the scene in Bethlehem, let me conduct you to the severe calamity which so lately occurred in Philadelphia. In the month of May last, I had the pleasure of visiting the Orphan Family in that city. The children were in health; all of them beneath their matron's care industriously employed, and contentment and pleasure played upon their tender cheeks. But alas! how inscrutable are the ways of God with mortals.

What a general shock was produced in the breast of our citizens, when the public papers announced, "the Orphan House in Philadelphia is destroyed by fire; and out of ninety-one hapless children, twenty-three have perished in the flames!" Seldom has an event occurred which produced so severe a pang to the general feeling. How agonizing the scene; how dreadful in its consequences! The children, in health and innocent cheerfulness, repaired to their beds, and while enfolded in the arms of balmy sleep; the fire blazed, ascended the stairs, rushed into every apartment, and from the windows the dreadful shrieks of anguish was heard! The faithful watchmen hazard their lives to rescue the tender sufferers; and while some are snatched from the burnings, others drop into a bed of flames, to rise no more.

Where are now the Rachels, who weep and lament the dreadful calamity of those children? Alas! their natural mothers who bare them and suckled them at the breast, were long since dead, and sleep in their graves, unconscious of the dreadful agonies and sudden death of their tender offspring. Yet, they had not been without a Rachel. God in his tender providence had provided for them; so that every orphan, with David could say—*when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.* Psalm xxvii. 10. In the city of Philadelphia, the Lord raised up a Rachel, in the character of those worthy female Managers, whose tender compassion yearned over their helpless state, rescued them from poverty and distress, and amply provided for them comfort and support. By the aid of a generous public, the Orphan House was

erected, and those mothers in Israel esteemed it their luxury to watch over their infant charge; they clothed, nourished and instructed them with the most anxious solicitude, in hope of their piety and future usefulness in the world.

On the hapless eve of the severe calamity, unconscious of the orphan's danger, those worthy Directresses reposed themselves in sleep. In the gloom of night they awake; the fire bells strike the alarm, and the hoarse voice fills the street; "the Orphan House is burning!" What pangs are felt! While every Philadelphian's breast feels the dire alarm, and hastens to the spot, who can describe the anguish of the orphan's generous guardians? Every bell that sounds, and every voice that is heard, adds a thrill to their consternation, and a puncture to their grief. Who but will apply to them the pathetic language of our text? How strongly it marks the sorrows of their breast! *their voice is heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; refusing to be comforted*, because their children were enveloped in flames. But why do they refuse the consoling balm, and abandon themselves to bitterness and woe? Were you and I present with them, we should hear them say—

"Our children's death was awfully severe. Had  
 "ordinary sickness, or the noisome pestilence, assailed  
 "them in their habitation, we then could have pro-  
 "cured the physician's friendly aid. Then might we  
 "have soothed their pains, and instructed their tender  
 "minds. We could have watched the stroke of death,  
 "and when the vital spark expired, closed their sight-

“ less eyes, and performed the last friendly office, by  
 “ committing their remains to the cold grave. But  
 “ ah! all these were denied; the fire raged; the house  
 “ is destroyed; and, many of our orphans are burned in  
 “ its fiery ruins.”\*

**CHILDREN OF THIS ASYLUM.**—From the recital of that great calamity in Philadelphia, I am persuaded your tender breasts receive the most serious impressions. Though the afflicted children were near one hundred miles from this city, yet, the recollection that they were orphans like yourselves, certainly demands your most tender sympathy. What good wishes would you now express for those surviving children, and their afflicted guardians?—And, what lessons of instruction would you learn from this awful visitation, to promote your own advantage?

For your poor fellow orphans, who escaped the devouring flames, you will certainly cultivate the warmest feelings of compassion and love; and offer thanksgiving and praises to the God of mercy for the greatness of their deliverance. Nor can you refrain from wishing that their tender minds may be so happily instructed as to possess such a sense of the goodness of their God, that with the greatest devotion, they may consecrate their infant lives to the honor of his most sacred

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\* On Wednesday afternoon, February 6, the remains of those poor little orphans were buried in the ground belonging to the Independent Tabernacle, in Cherry-street, attended by the surviving children, the Matron, and a Committee of the Managers. The Reverend Mr. Engles performed the service, and delivered a very appropriate discourse on the truly affecting occasion.—*Philadelphia Paper.*

**Name.** As their House now lies in ruins, you surely will express your fervent desire to the Lord, that a feeling and compassionate public may open a liberal hand to rebuild its desolated walls, restore its fugitive children, and make the habitation an asylum, so long as an orphan's cry shall be heard in the streets of Philadelphia.—For the afflicted Ladies, who so generously watched over that Orphan Family, you cannot but possess a lively feeling; especially when you indulge a thought, with what kindness and attention your own Directresses watch over you. Had you suffered a like calamity, and this Asylum been reduced to ashes, what would have been their anguish on the occasion! If all these Ladies were present with us this morning, it is certain, from their well known sympathy with their sister Directresses in Philadelphia, that they would not only have expressed their feeling by flowing tears, but solicited my prayer on their behalf; so that, although like Rachel, they may refuse to be comforted, yet, that the God of all consolation would pour the healing balm into their wounded bosoms; enable them with profound reverence to say, *it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*; and, re-animate their depressed spirits to persevere in the performance of their pious and humane duties. In this sympathetic feeling, and in these pious wishes, I am persuaded every child present will most cheerfully unite.

For yourselves, children, there are lessons to be learned from this affliction, which I hope will not be forgotten. It teaches you how uncertain is your life, and how various are the shapes which death assumes, when he receives his commission from on

high, to convey the infant or the aged to the shades of corruption. Though hitherto you may have been too thoughtless, you have now a powerful admonition, as from the ashes of those orphans, to *remember your Creator in the days of your youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* It is not my province to draw the character of any of those poor children that were wrapped in flames; but certainly, it should be a most solemn warning to any of you who may indulge yourselves in sinful practices, or in the least impropriety of conduct which exposes you to the displeasure of the Almighty. From the comforts which you enjoy, and the instruction which you constantly receive from the Holy Scriptures, we wish that such good effects may be produced, as shall make you wise unto salvation; form your characters in the virtuous mould of the gospel; and thus make your future lives useful and honorable to society. It is my sincere desire, that the compassionate Saviour, who took little children in his arms and blessed them, may grant you also his richest smiles. And upon this Asylum, may his benediction be so abundantly granted, that it may continue a monument of his mercy and care, to the latest posterity!—AMEN.











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