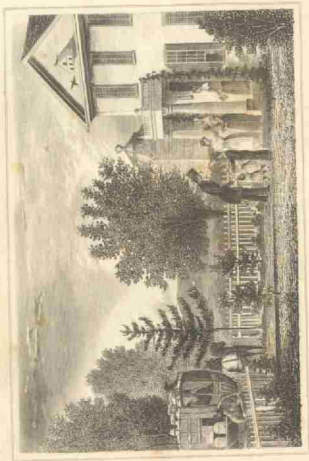


Mrs Van Deron's
Presented by her
Friend Nostick S. Dickinson

Amherst College

May 1st 1841



THE BRIDGEMAN

As the father of the woman seen long with it near all the other of his wife's family, as the illustration shows
with the other part of the scene, as given, will show them the portrait of the woman in the illustration above. — P. 22

A WREATH FOR THE TOMB;

OR

EXTRACTS FROM EMINENT WRITERS

ON

DEATH AND ETERNITY:

WITH AN

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY AND SERMON

ON THE

LESSONS TAUGHT BY SICKNESS.

BY PROFESSOR EDWARD HITCHCOCK,
Of Amherst College.



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P R E F A C E .

WHEN this little work was commenced, it was intended that it should be composed almost entirely of extracts of a practical nature, from the writings of such men as Drelincourt, Baxter, Jeremy Taylor, and others, in the belief that whoever should give a wider circulation to such authors, by bringing them out in a new dress, would perform an acceptable service for religion. But in the first place, the Introductory Essay grew under my hands to an unexpected size : And having been requested by the students of Amherst College, to print a sermon delivered in the Chapel last winter, after a season of unusual sickness, I concluded so far to comply with their request as to insert it in this work. From these causes the work has become more original than I intended, and probably more so than the reader will wish. For thereby the "WREATH" has been not a little contracted in size. Nevertheless, I trust it will be found to contain many precious gems and flowers : and I earnestly pray, that it may serve to comfort the afflicted, to cheer the desponding, to animate the humble, to quicken the slothful, and to alarm the careless.

Amherst, Sept. 1, 1839.

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ESSAY.

1. THE uncertainty of life and the nearness of eternity, have one advantage when presented as religious motives, possessed by no other. The most latitudinarian scepticism never doubts their truth. Even in those few cases, where enthusiastic delusion has proceeded so far as to pretend an exemption from death, the privilege has been claimed only as an act of miraculous mercy. If left to the unchanged operation of nature's laws, every human being knows, and confesses, that the body must erelong, and may soon yield to the King of terrors. And, therefore, when this appalling fact is urged as a stimulus to make preparation for a coming eternity, it is always listened to with at least respectful silence.

2. We might hence infer that a more powerful argument could hardly be brought to bear upon the human heart, to induce it to make diligent preparation for this momentous change. And the frequency too, with which the appeal is made, in the oft recurring scenes of mortality around us, would seem to add

force irresistible to the admonition. But it is not so. Human depravity, ingenious in fortifying the heart against the ingress of truth, does not give up its strong citadel because the understanding has yielded to its power. And we know not of a more striking illustration of the need of some agency superadded to argument and motive, in order to convert and sanctify the soul, than the fact that so few christians refer their awakening from sin to the power of these solemn truths. That such is the fact, we believe the private history of the members of our own churches will testify: and in general, no part of ministerial service is more barren of important results than funeral sermons and exhortations. The minister addresses indeed, solemn assemblies and tender hearts: but the wounded heart does not always, nor generally, evince a wounded conscience. So long as men are brooding in deep anguish over what they have lost, they will think but little of making another sacrifice essential to salvation, the sacrifice of their darling sins.

3. It is an important inquiry, to ascertain by what magic power depravity thus turns aside the edge of truth, so keen and penetrating? How does she so choke up the passage from the head to the heart, that moral paralysis seizes upon the conscience? It is my purpose, in the first place, to expose the most common of these devices. Nor will it be sufficient to announce the general principle. We must descend to particular cases.

4. The general principle, or secret source of all this self ruin, however must first be pointed out. And the bible brings it out distinctly, when it says, *ye put far away the evil day*. Something else is crowded into the mind that the thoughts of the evil day of death may be crowded out of it: or rather be crowded forward to some future time, when death is near. Strange infatuation! The understanding does not pretend to deny our constant liability to death, and yet that same understanding will quietly permit a treacherous heart to flatter itself that the day of dissolution is distant, and that a preparation for it may safely be delayed in order to attend to other concerns. And this deep delusion is not broken up, though a multitude of warning voices, from those who are awakened too late to the delusion, fall like thunder strokes upon the ear. We arouse for a moment, perhaps, and see eternity to be near: but the world soon inverts the telescope and the prospect again becomes dim and distant. If we examine individual cases, however, we shall see more distinctly the operation of this strange delusion.

5. We will begin with some examples where it is easy to see the manner in which death is thus kept out of view. The thoughtlessness of the unconverted youth in respect to eternity is proverbial. But there is much in his constitution and circumstances tending to such a state of mind. The objects with which he meets, as he advances in life, are novel, and therefore absorb his attention. He must learn more of their na-

ture by a closer inspection, before he can realize their emptiness. Unsuspecting hope, also, throws over them her rainbow hues. In his constitution too, there is an excess of animal spirits, wisely imparted for the trying exigencies of life: and these give such an elasticity to the system, as makes it very difficult to realize that the poison of disease may, in a few hours, prostrate the strong energies of the constitution. Seemingly so strongly fortified against death, it is not strange that youth should dream of a long earthly probation; and be comparatively deaf to the warning voice that comes from the bible, from more experienced friends, and from frequent examples around of early dissolution. But alas, it is a terrible delusion; and would to God we could make the young feel their danger.

6. This deceptive estimate of life, however, is frequently quite as powerful in the meridian, as in the morning of our days. When vigorous and uniform health is enjoyed, how difficult to make a man feel that any urgency is needed in the work of preparation for death. No feverish chills and heats, no failure of the senses, or of the powers of digestion, no shooting pains or sinking spirits furnish him with premonitions of approaching dissolution. He knows, indeed, that the strong and the healthy sometimes drop suddenly into the grave. But he thinks he can always trace such events to some peculiarity of constitution or circumstances, to which he is not exposed. On the oth-

er hand, he knows that multitudes of the robust do survive to extreme old age: and although he may acknowledge to others that he is constantly liable to be smitten down, yet his secret expectation is, that many years are in reserve for him. And occupied by the unceasing demands of worldly pursuits, he delays his preparation for eternity without any apprehension of the fearful hazard he runs.

7. This same delusion takes strong hold of almost every middle aged man, whether robust or feeble. For other considerations, besides a sense of security, tend to foster it. Middle life is the acknowledged season for active worldly business; and he who is not diligent then, may not expect to acquire wealth, or distinguished learning, and lasting fame. Now these are desirable acquisitions if rightly used: and indeed, without possessing them to some extent, a man can hardly be respectable, or exert a salutary influence upon his fellows. He engages, therefore, in their acquisition with a feeling that he is doing what is not only right and honorable, but praiseworthy and Christian. Yet by his inordinate attention to these things, the claims of eternity are crowded from their place and neglected. Still his conscience is at rest, because he feels that he is doing his duty. He does not, perhaps, deny the demands of God upon his affections; but while he is doing what the bible and holy men approve, he imagines he may for a time delay special attention to personal

religion. The consequence is that the world absorbs more and more of his attention and interest, and crowds farther and farther away the hour of dissolution. He means to consecrate his time and attention almost exclusively to God, when the hurry of business and care is over, and the soberness of age begins to come over him. But alas, how often does the unexpected summons to depart, even from the midst of life, terminate his delirious dream, and hurry him unprepared to give in his final account. Oh could the pit open her mouth, what a rush of wailing voices would be heard, testifying to this painful truth.

8. Preeminent in their demands upon the time and attention are the pursuits of the proverbially busy merchant. If all the minutæ of his affairs be not conducted systematically, waste and confusion will follow. Nor will clerks and accountants ever so faithful, be a substitute for the wakeful inspection and superintendence of the merchant himself. He must see to it personally, that every thing is in place and in season. Yet all this is but the smallest portion of his labors. His eye must ever be open, in anxious watchfulness, to learn the precise state of the fluctuating markets, and to seize the most favorable moments for new investments and enterprises. A few hours delay—and his more active neighbor will have anticipated him and the golden harvest be lost. Even the claims of

social and domestic life must often be almost wholly disregarded, by one who is ambitious of eminent mercantile success : and a few hours of late repose, and even that disturbed by dreams of profit and loss, are all that his tyrannical pursuits will allow him. Is it strange then that the thoughts of death should be reserved for a more convenient season. Not that this is done formally : for such a resolution would startle any man from his most engrossing worldly dreams. But when the mind is wholly occupied by other things the solemnities of eternity must be excluded ; or if they ever glance into the mind, they are dismissed like Paul from the presence of Felix. The imagination of future leisure and retirement from business, often flits across the merchant's mind ; and one feature of the picture is, that the anticipated retreat shall be sanctified by religion. For there is something pleasant even to a worldly mind, in the thought of so spending the evening of our days, that in ripe old age we may pass quietly into the abodes of the blessed. But alas, to spend the vigor of our days in the devoted pursuit of wealth, is but a poor preparation for enjoying the consolations of religion at their close. Religion must be wooed early, if her warmest affections would be won. She is too coy and fastidious to be satisfied with powers and affections that have been blunted and worn out in the service of her enemy. Hence the man who is too much engrossed in mercantile pursuits to

permit piety to be the companion of his period of business, rarely finds her consolations in retirement. And then, how many of this class never see this season of anticipated repose. However much their minds may be liberalized by a knowledge of men and things, and however amply provided they may be for their anticipated leisure, death will not delay the execution of his commission, and prostrates the wealthy and high minded merchant as unceremoniously as the meanest slave. Wise and quick sighted as he was in all other calculations, here his wisdom forsook him, and he finds too late that though he has gained the world he has lost his soul. He thought it impossible to give his thoughts and affections to religion amid the engrossments of business. But he did not imagine that by that conclusion he decided his everlasting fate. Oh what a subject for meditation through a cheerless eternity!

9. We might anticipate that the calm nature of his pursuits, and the abundant leisure which he might command, would furnish no small safeguard to the farmer, against the delusion under consideration. But he too, contrives to fill his hands and his heart so full of the world, that there is no room for eternity. Successful agriculture does indeed require great vigilance, and persevering industry. The work cannot be trusted to servants. The possessor of the soil must himself rise up early, nor shrink from putting his hands to the

plow and the sickle. The favorable moments of seed time and harvest must be narrowly watched and seized upon, or they will pass unnoticed. But oh, what a miserable apology is this for starving the soul! to be so busy in providing for the body, that nothing can be laid up for the soul in eternity! God has not so ordered the arrangements of nature, that this is necessary. Persevering industry and complete success in husbandry may be, and happily sometimes are united with devoted piety. But when a man becomes over anxious for his crops; when he attempts to cultivate more land than his strength can well manage; when he is constantly striving to add field to field and house to house; when his labors are so severe that his evenings and his sabbaths become seasons of sleep, rather than of meditation and study, his eternal interests must be neglected; or if ever conscience urges their claims, they are put off to a future season of leisure, to which the farmer, like the merchant, is fondly looking. But of all habits contracted in this world, those of the farmer are the most inflexible; and no case of impenitence is more hopeless than that of the farmer, who, for a quarter of a century or more, has been in the habit of giving to his lands, his herds, and flocks, so devoted an attention, as to exclude God and eternity. Moral as he may be, respectable as he may be,—nay, careful as he may be in attending upon the stated sabbath worship of God, we may predict with almost infallible

certainty, that he will die as he has lived, totally unprepared for heaven.

10. The profession of the law would seem on most accounts, as favorable as any among men, for securing the leisure and other means necessary to prepare one for eternity. For it is but a few of this profession who are so crowded with business as not to be able to command an abundance of time for communion with themselves and with God. And then, how fine a spot for private devotion, during many hours of the day, are their retired offices. But alas, some other God too often reigns there, to the exclusion of Jehovah! With some, professional distinction is the great object of desire and effort. And this idolatry requires too unremitting exertions, to leave time or strength for religion: although such distinction, if sought with religious motives, might be a lawful object of pursuit. But when mere worldly ambition is the impelling motive, the thought of death and eternity must be kept out of view, lest it paralyze the arm of effort. A still greater number of this profession have enthroned Mammon in their offices; and the truth of our Savior's declaration is there daily seen;—*Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* Many an artful scheme to gain money, and many a severe exaction from the poor and ignorant, of which the civil law and worldly morality take no cognizance, must be abandoned, if communion with God and eternity be cultivated. Of all masters, none is

more tyrannical than Mammon, nor more jealous of a rival. If he has sway in the advocate's office, we may be sure that the true God is excluded. Not unfrequently, also, political distinctions are the idols before which he daily bows, and offers up to them the costly sacrifice of his heart's warmest affections. In order to gain the favor of the fickle and tyrannical populace, that they may elevate him for a few days to some uncertain seat of honor, he consents to cast out the true God from his heart, and to sacrifice his peace of conscience and all reasonable hope of finally rising to a throne of glory in heaven. And how uncertain is it, after all, whether he ever obtains the short-lived distinction which he seeks: or even if he does attain to the highest pinnacle of political distinction, how readily will he be disposed to exclaim, with the Roman emperor, "I have been all, and all is nothing." And yet, to gain the bubble, he has lost his soul.

11. There is a class of men, however, that are but little exposed to the temptations we have been considering. Physicians are not noted for their greedy pursuit after wealth, or political distinctions: and how happy must be the influence of their practice upon their religious feelings; being almost constantly familiar with those scenes of sickness and death, that bring the most thoughtless to a solemn pause. Alas, this very familiarity blunts their sensibilities, so that what would excite intensely the unaccustomed heart,

makes scarcely no impression on them. Did not a repetition of ghastly scenes lessen their impression, the physician would soon be unable to perform his duties to the sick. Yet what a perversion of God's kindness is it, to make his benevolent provision for relieving the natural sensibilities, the means of hardening the heart against religious impressions! But we believe that this is in fact the way in which very many physicians become so insensible to eternal things. For excepting some bright examples of devoted piety among them, perhaps no class of men put so far away the evil day of death, and make so little preparation for it as they. Although it is their almost daily employment to follow their fellow-men to the very borders of eternity, and to employ all their skill to hold them back from the final plunge, and though they must see continually how powerless that skill is, when the fatal hour has come, yet strange as it may seem, they are not thereby prompted to the diligent preparation of their own hearts for the scenes of eternity. And when the summons of departure rings in their own ears, no men are more agitated than they; and to none does it seem to be a more surprising and unlooked-for event. In bracing up their nerves, by a praiseworthy effort, so as not to be unfitted for properly discharging their duties as physicians, they have unfortunately hardened their hearts against the claims of eternity, and they must now be forced into it without preparation to meet its retributions.

12. A similar hardening influence, by familiarity with death, is exerted upon the minister of the gospel. This will doubtless seem to many a severe charge. But I appeal to the consciousness of this class of men for its truth. How often, on funeral occasions, do they sincerely and solemnly urge upon their hearers the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the necessity of being constantly in the posture of servants waiting for their Lord's coming; and yet, on looking into their hearts after the service, they are astonished and alarmed to find how little impression the solemn scene has made there. It is not that the conviction of the truth in their understandings is feeble, nor that they do not sincerely and strongly desire that their hearers should feel its power. But their own hearts, chiefly through the effect of familiarity with death-bed scenes, remain almost insensible. Hence it often happens, that when death enters a clergyman's family, it produces a surprise and agitation rarely witnessed among any other class of men. It seems as if the inmates had never really believed that the great destroyer would ever break in upon their happy circle. They had become accustomed to witness his ravages in other families, and to them they ever stood ready to impart sympathy and consolation; but when the blow falls upon themselves, they sink under it, and almost refuse to be comforted; not because they are destitute of religious principle, but because their almost constant familiarity with dying

scenes, has blunted their sensibility to their own exposure.

This is, indeed, a striking example of the strength and subtilty of the delusion which leads us to put far away the evil day of death. Here we see men, deeply imbued with spiritual religion, and whose great business it is to stand upon the watch tower, and warn their drowsy fellows of the approach of their great and last enemy, and whose hearts are moreover deeply in the work, and yet they cannot keep their sensibilities wakeful enough to see the blow that is aimed at their own heads. It is related of the soldiers in the long protracted siege of Gibraltar, about sixty years ago, that they became at length so callous to danger, that unless taken hold of by an officer, they would not move to a place of safety, when they saw a bomb-shell falling directly among them. It was not a wish to die, nor a doubt as to their imminent exposure, that rendered them thus stupid: but it was the amazing influence of constant familiarity with danger. And this principle alone will explain the still more astonishing fact, that the faithful minister of the Gospel is often less affected than other men with the nearness and certainty of death. Oh what is man, even at his best estate, without a constant supply of quickening grace!

13. It is difficult to see what peculiarity there is in the condition of the common mechanic and tradesman, that tends to foster this delusion. Nevertheless it

often takes so strong hold of these classes of men, that they are invulnerable to the arrows of truth, and to their dying day make no preparation for the retributions of eternity, which they never doubt they must meet. They are not in general characterized for inordinate worldly ambition, nor for excessive eagerness after money. They are mostly industrious only to that degree which is necessary to secure a comfortable support for their families: and their lives are spent in the calm and moderate pursuit of their lawful business. They have leisure enough to attend to their souls, and rarely do they doubt or deny that they must attend to them or be lost. And yet—Oh strange infatuation! they suffer the whole of probation to run out, before they decide to give their hearts to God. Death comes at length, and with a sudden wrench, separates the thread of life, giving no time for the long neglected work. The funeral obsequies follow: but the officiating minister must preserve a cautious silence respecting the state of the departed soul; although the lines of sorrow marked upon his solemn countenance, testify to the distressing convictions of the inner man.

14. When the devotee of the fine arts, the painter, the sculptor, the architect, or the musician, lives negligent of his soul, we see in the engrossing nature of his pursuits, a cause, but no apology for his conduct. The objects before him have so much of delicacy and seeming innocence, that he hardly feels as if idolatry

were sin: at any rate, he pays to them an idolatrous devotion, that excludes devotion to Jehovah. Advancing years, which ought to admonish him of the nearness of eternity, and arouse him to prepare for it, only stimulate him to greater efforts to perfect himself in his favorite art, that he may leave his name enrolled with those artists, whose earthly fame, whatever be the state of their souls, is destined to go down to the latest posterity. Suppose he succeeds; what a miserable recompense for the loss of the soul! What though the painter may have delineated the solemnities of death, judgment and eternal misery, so graphically, that every new beholder through successive generations shall gaze on them with thrilling interest, and admire the skill of the spirit that guided the pencil, yet what but an aggravation of his sufferings could the knowledge of this fact impart, while sinking deeper and deeper in the regions of outer darkness! What though the sculptor may have chiseled out the forms of distinguished men, and even angelic forms, so that posterity will long linger in their gaze upon them with delight, while the lost artist himself is continually recollecting that this admiration was the price of his soul! What though a hundred generations may repeat the praises of the master spirit, that designed and erected the splendid columns, the beautiful aisles and niches, and the magnificent domes of the churches where they worship, if while they praise, that spirit wails in de-

spair over the folly that sold its eternal birthright at so mean a price! And what though the distinguished musician may have a thousand times thrilled the hearts of vast multitudes in the house of God, while he led in the songs of Zion, if his eternity must be spent in listening only to the discordant tones of the lost; and in lamenting, that while his fame for musical skill rings through the earth, he never learnt to sing the everlasting song of redeeming love!

15. Political life is proverbial for its tendencies to divorce men from consistent and devoted piety. A few, indeed, have been equally distinguished for the purity and energy of their religious character, and for their wide spread fame as statesmen. But in general, even upon the pious man, we see the deadening influence of political elevation. The fact is, the human heart can bear nearly everything else, better than popular applause. ⁶ Almost any degree of stupidity in religion, or apostacy from it, can be explained, if it can truly be said of a man, that he *loves the praise of men more than the praise of God*. To attain and secure popular favor, also, often demands so much of duplicity, such a non-interference with the wicked customs, and opinions of society, and so much of conformity to the world, that ere a man is aware of it, he has practically given up his strictness of christian principle and rigid purity of practice. Unfortunately, also, even at this late day, many virtuous men believe that the prin-

principles of expediency must be taken as a guide in the affairs of government, instead of the principles of the Bible. Is it not the fact, that the politician, who should maintain, that the naked precepts of Christianity ought to be the statesman's only moral guide in conducting the affairs of government, would meet with the ridicule of his compeers? How narrow minded and even fanatical would he be regarded, who should maintain that nations, as well as individuals, are bound to love their neighbor as themselves; to do to others as they would have others do to them, and to forgive injuries instead of resenting and avenging them! Is it strange, then, that men of devoted piety should often shrink from political life as an arena of imminent danger to their souls? Is it strange, that death and eternity should be so unwelcome subjects to the political aspirant, and that so many, in grasping after the bubble of popular applause, should make shipwreck of their souls? O, amid such multiplied and powerful temptations, what abundant grace is needed to enable the active influential politician to keep alive the spirit of devoted piety, and to let his light shine amid the ice and darkness that surround him?

16. If men made preparation for death in proportion to their exposure, we might expect the military man to keep his soul always waiting its great change. But how diverse is the fact! What profession is there from which serious thoughts of death are so studiously

excluded. With a few exceptions, who of all the sons of men, are so poorly prepared for eternity, as those, who in one day, rush by thousands to their final account. Serious and familiar thoughts of death, indeed, are regarded as tending to disqualify men for the business of war; and the soldier, who would guard himself most effectually against the fear of death, when he goes into the field of battle, is soberly advised *not to think at all*.* Nay, it is a well known custom, on the eve of battle, to endeavor to exclude serious thoughts by draughts of intoxicating liquor. What an idea does this give us of the nature of war, whose most important operations can be best performed by those whose brains are rendered delirious, and reason and conscience stupified, by alcohol! Again, in what school of vice does depravity shoot forth into so many frightful excrescences, as in the camp, whether in time of peace or war? What chance in such a place for devoted piety! a place where preparation for death is most needed, and yet, of all spots the least cultivated. The pious military man, therefore, (for some such there have been, however incongruous the elements of such a character may appear,) needs peculiar grace to guard and sanctify him. The bible teaches him to love his enemies, and to do them good; but his profession directs him to employ all the ingenuities of

* See the *Military Mentor*, a standard work among military men.

science for their destruction. The bible directs him to keep reason and conscience in perfect exercise at all times ; but his profession directs him to exclude thought as much as possible, while he is taking his brother's life.

17. To the great mass of mankind, riches, honors and pleasures, constitute the grand worldly attractions that draw away their affections from God. And although these influences are powerful, as we have already seen, they are far less so, than a devoted attachment to literature and science. I speak not here of that pursuit of knowledge which is prompted by a love of the distinction which learning confers ; nor of that mere task-work which is gone through by nine tenths of those who receive a public education, because they cannot otherwise obtain a professional license ! But there is an interesting class of men, who become most devotedly attached to learning, through an inwrought love of it, and independent of its auxiliary influence upon their worldly prospects. In nearly every case, indeed, the honor associated with learning, forms one of the attracting cords that hold men to their favorite pursuit : Yet there is, both in literature and science, an inherent beauty that powerfully attracts the ingenuous mind, and when once a man becomes fully alive to that beauty, there is no earthly charm that binds the heart with such resistless force. So much more refined and ennobling are literary and scientific pursuits, that their

votaries look upon wealth and pleasure as gross and despicable in comparison. And while they feel a conscious superiority so great over the devotee of Mammon and of pleasure, it is hard to make them feel that even their favorite pursuits are abomination in the sight of God, if his love do not actuate their votaries. Absorbed in the pure and delightful researches of learning, and it may be full of sentimentalism, they loath and reject the humbling truth, which lies at the foundation of personal religion, that there still exists within them a deep and loathsome fountain of depravity—a carnal mind which is enmity with God; and that in order to salvation, they must experience as deep and thorough a change, as the most devoted worldling or the most abandoned sensualist. In short, the refined and elevating nature of his pursuits, their great power in absorbing the attention, and their tendency to foster pride, surround the devotee of science and literature with a sphere of repulsion more powerful against the claims of eternity, than any other pursuit. But after all, what a miserable apology is it for neglecting the soul; and how wretched a consolation will it afford to the lost!

18. Take for example the editor of a periodical, whether it be daily, hebdomadal, or monthly. His work he strives to make a vehicle for food to the mind; and he feels a strong ambition to have it prepared in the most palatable and the richest manner. It may

be too, that he strives that a moral and religious seasoning shall pervade the whole. To accomplish all this, demands the constant and laborious efforts of his mind; and if he finds any leisure, his mind is too much jaded out to turn willingly to the serious work of personal religion. Besides, he persuades himself that one who is doing so much for the moral and intellectual improvement of mankind, cannot need any radical change of character: and so he goes on until suddenly the summons for departure comes,—the visor drops from his eye, he looks back upon his life and sees barrenness written all over it. Life is finished, but life's great work is not begun. O fearful, fearful is the dark plunge before him, but there is no escape!

19. Or take the case of the poet. For everything around him, sublime or beautiful, he possesses an exquisite sensibility, and his mind constantly revels among the purest forms, and the most delicate and refined thoughts. He even becomes familiar with whatever is grand or beautiful in the character of God, and in the truths of natural and revealed religion. The most sacred objects, indeed, he describes with strong emotion: so much so, that the reader can hardly conceive that his heart does not feel experimentally the power of religious truth. And how easy for the poet himself to mistake this refined sentimentalism for religion. Yet very often in such a case, will he turn away in utter disgust from those humbling truths of the gos-

pel that lie at the foundation of a sinner's conversion to God. Alike repulsive are the laborious and self-denying duties of religion. For the acquisition of a distinguished name among men, no sacrifice is too great; but the glory of God and the good of mankind are scarcely felt by him as motives of action. But the delusion is too deep to be broken by anything save the light of eternity, as it falls upon his soul on the bed of death. There does he begin with anguish to see, that a delicate sensibility for natural beauty and sublimity is not complacency in divine holiness; and that refined sentimentalism is not a new heart.

20. A similar delusion often destroys the man of literary leisure, and the author by profession. They become martyrs to a refined taste. They perceive so much grossness of taste among the great mass of mankind in respect to literature, that all their fastidiousness revolts from the idea of exercising religious feelings similar to those of the vulgar. They persuade themselves that faculties so refined and enlarged as theirs, do not need to be subjected to the same process of experimental piety, as those which have never been cultivated. In short, they acquire an incurable disrelish for anything like a community of feeling with the illiterate and unrefined; and hence they never learn that humility and brokenness of heart which makes the man of loftiest intellect and most refined taste see and feel, that the most uncultivated mind, that has been born

again, is far his superior, and is able to instruct him in the most important of all knowledge.

21. If a man's heart have not been renewed before he becomes devoted to the abstractions of intellectual philosophy, perhaps no one is in greater danger of losing his soul. For one of the most obvious effects of these pursuits is, to teach him how to raise doubts and difficulties in respect to every subject: and this tends strongly to fix him in a state of indecision. The heart, naturally averse to the love and service of God, when pressed to submission, will seize upon these doubts and difficulties in apology for its continuance sin in. The metaphysician sees others, whom he knows to be less acute than himself, embracing religion with unshaken confidence, and not troubled at all with doubts; and he supposes it is because they do not see so far as he does: whereas in fact the distinguishing evidences of religion are easily apprehended by the most uncultivated minds; and metaphysical abstractions do in reality obscure these evidences by drawing off the attention; and the men who have been most distinguished for metaphysical acumen, have been most noted for the wildness and extravagance of their opinions in general. Yet such men are apt to fancy that their superior discernment is the cause of their scepticism. And hence to maintain their fancied superiority, they reject all truth, which the plain unlettered man adopts, and often in doing this they sacrifice their souls.

22. The mathematics have long been known for their power of absorbing the attention and excluding other subjects from the mind which has become deeply interested in their pure truths. The mathematician also, accustomed to demonstration, is apt to look with scepticism upon any principles not sustained by infallible proof. He looks too, with jealousy upon appeals made to any other principles of human nature except the intellect. Thus if he becomes thoroughly devoted to his favorite abstractions before he has yielded his heart to religion, he is triply shielded against conviction; and it were almost as easy to disprove a mathematical axiom, as to persuade him to attend to his soul. If he has become distinguished as a man of science, another hindrance is thrown in the way of his conversion by his pride of opinion. Alas, how dear a price the man pays for his distinction, and for the intellectual pleasure of his pursuits? They cost him his undying soul. That lofty intellect must go down to eternal despair; and sink as much below the great mass of men in misery, as he has risen above them in acquirements.

23. Experimental philosophy is perhaps less apt to close the heart against the claims of eternity than pure mathematics. Yet here is the same danger from pride of opinion, and the mind is likely to be almost equally absorbed in fascinating researches. So that many a natural philosopher, although permitted to dwell as it

were in the very holy of holies of God's temple of nature, has lived and died as ignorant of that God as the most degraded heathen. How amazingly averse to holiness must be the human heart to resist so much light! And how deceitful above all things, thus to deceive the most acute intellect!

24. The researches of the physiologist soon convince him that every organ of the human body is most wisely adapted to produce health and longevity; and that consequently disease is unnatural, and results from some violation of the laws by which life is regulated and sustained. Hence the inference is made, that by living according to these laws, a man may be almost sure of an hundred years of happy earthly existence. He tries to reduce these principles to practice, and finds that rigid temperance and proper exercise and employment are followed by such perfect health and elasticity of mind, that a strong confidence is inspired that his life is secure to extreme old age. Most fatal is this feeling upon his spiritual interests: for it fosters that strong disposition to procrastination which seems inherent in our nature. And although it be true, that a due attention to hygienic laws is most happy in promoting health and longevity, yet life is exposed to so many casualties against which no care can defend us, that it is always unsafe and unwise to feel that it is not precarious in the extreme. *Go to now, ye that say to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city and con-*

*tinne there a year and buy and sell and get gain :
whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.
For what is your life ? It is even a vapor that appear-
eth for a little time and then vanisheth away.*

25. It must be a very perverse mind that can find anything to nourish scepticism in the principles of chemistry : for in his analysis the chemist often feels as if he had almost reached that hidden spring in nature's operations, which is put in play by the immediate act of God. But he also often feels as if he stood upon the brink of interesting discoveries :—as if he had got hold of the clue that must soon lead to the development of some new scientific fact : and he cannot stop short to attend to his soul, until that new acid, or that new salt, shall be examined and described. He does not mean to be found among the lost : but the bewildering fascination continues till the sand of life is all run out. He has indeed the honor of adding a new acid or salt to the thousands before known ; but it is at the expense of his soul. Ah, dreadful sacrifice ! terrible theme for meditation through the ceaseless round of eternal ages !

26. A like power to absorb the time and attention is possessed by natural history ; so that eternity is excluded from the mind, not through scepticism or strong aversion, but simply by preoccupation. It is surely proper that the naturalist should secure the honor of naming and describing the new animal or plant which

he has discovered: but God does not, therefore, delay the approach of death; and although the records of natural history will preserve the name of the 100,000th plant, or 200,000th animal which he has discovered, yet his own name is not to be found in the Lamb's book of life.

But the naturalist will probably say, that he is influenced by nobler motives than the hope of distinction. He sees so much of divine beauty in the objects of creation, with which he is conversant, that he becomes fascinated by his pursuits, so as to regard as insignificant and unworthy, the ordinary objects that are sought with so much greediness; such as riches, distinctions, and pleasures. He experiences continually the enthusiastic feelings of the poet;

Oh nature! how in every charm supreme!
Whose votaries feast on raptures ever new.
Oh for the tongue and fire of seraphim
To sing thy glories with devotion due!

Now it is easy to conceive that all this may be true. But why does the naturalist stop with mere sentimentalism? Why is the God of redemption, an object of so little interest? While so intensely interested in the material creation, why is the new creation of the soul an object of so little regard? While he delights so much in communion with nature, and as he thinks perhaps with nature's God, why does he never hold communion with Jesus Christ? Why so little

affected by the love of Christ? Why so ignorant of those aspirations after God, which lead the real christian to say, *as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* Alas, he has mistaken the emotions of admiration, which the works of creation inspire, for love to God: and probably the delusion will never be broken, till the searching light of eternity shows him, that he is an enemy of God.

27. Geological researches bring a man into almost constant intercourse with the most astonishing and sublime of nature's productions. Now he penetrates the deep and dark cavern, studded with sparry wonders and perhaps the charnel house of the antediluvian world. Now he urges his way through the rugged mountain gorge, where over his head hang the jutting rocks, just ready apparently to crush him. Anon he climbs the lofty precipices; and as he looks down into the yawning gulf beneath, what creeping of nerves, what thrilling emotions of wonder and sublimity does he experience! Again he gazes with awe upon the mighty cataract, whose deafening roar drowns his voice. Does he open the solid rocks! What amazing records of past existence and of God's vast plans are brought to view! In short, he is everywhere in inevitable contact with the most unequivocal displays of God which creation can furnish. And yet to the God of the bible; to the Father of our Lord Jesus-

Christ, he may be an utter stranger. Not that his mind never entertains a thought of God, nor that he is not sometimes filled with awe and amazement at the power of God: for who can see, as he sees, the arm of Omnipotence laid bare among the wild and sublime scenes of nature, without some intellectual realization of the Divine Presence. But he may have no complacency in the moral character of God; he may never have learnt that by nature he is an enemy of that God; and transforming grace may never have subdued his proud will, and given him that new heart without which he cannot see the kingdom of God. In short, he has never learnt to live to the glory of God, and therefore has made no preparation to die. It may be that when the thought of death comes over him, he has some indistinct apprehension that all is not right between his soul and God, and some faint resolutions of amendment are excited; but his pursuits are too engrossing to permit their immediate execution. Some new fossil must first be described, or some interesting district of country explored. Before these objects are accomplished, others equally attractive are brought before the mind, and the period of fancied reformation is crowded farther and farther onward, until it is pushed into eternity; where the voice of inspiration declares, there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge. Ah, deluded man! what an aggravation of your future misery will it be, to have seen so much of God in his works on earth!

28. It is a wise and beneficent law of nature, that as old age begins to steal upon us, the sensibilities become blunted and the powers both of body and mind more torpid. Hereby are the aged relieved in a great measure from the sufferings they would otherwise endure. But if their hearts have never been renewed, if habits of sin have become fixed by the frosts of age, this benevolent provision of nature becomes their curse. Respecting them it may be impressively asked, *can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye, who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.* The appropriate season for the great work of conversion has been suffered to go by unimproved; and now it is an easy matter to hold on in his course of sin, till his few remaining sands are run out. Conscience may, indeed, now and then make a convulsive effort to show him his danger; but remorseless habit has well nigh choked her voice, which utters only a feeble dying groan; and the man goes, grey headed in sin, to his final account, as stupidly as the ox goeth to the slaughter.

29. But the invalid, the man who from month to month feels himself to be tottering on the brink of the grave, and whom a mere breath will plunge into eternity, he must be awake to the solemn scenes before him. Thus reason infers; but experience shows the conclusion to be false. It is doubtful whether as large a proportion of those in feeble health do not

live and die unconverted as of the healthy and robust. The invalid may, indeed, *through fear of death be all his lifetime subject to bondage.* But he soon learns the fatal art of delaying repentance till to-morrow. Though alarmed when he witnesses within him the secret workings of disease, yet he soon finds as death delays the blow from day to day, that he can delay repentance till to-morrow. The fatal art of procrastination once learnt, he ventures to practice it as madly and fatally as the most robust and reckless. Soon disease has so far weakened his powers that he cannot bring them to the decisive and vigorous action which the work of repentance demands. The torpor of disease stifles more and more the voice of conscience; and he whom God has held for months and even years on the brink of the grave, that he might prepare for his exit, goes into eternity an unconverted man. Oh the astonishing infatuation that reigns in the human heart! God of mercy, what but thy grace can save man from destruction?

30. Such are some of the most common means by which sin succeeds in robbing men of their eternal birthright. And though multitudes discover the fatal delusion on their dying beds, and send back to survivors a loud and a warning voice, and though the bible admonishes them with a trumpet tongue, it breaks not the fatal charm, nor checks the downward course of that vast multitude, who are moving steadily forward

in the broad way to destruction. Yet the God of sovereign grace interposes for the rescue of some, who become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and commence a life of faith. Yet even these need much discipline in the school of Christ before they can habitually discern the things that are unseen and eternal. Very prone are they to come again under the power of that delusion which kept them so long, while unconverted, from a realizing sense of the nearness of eternity. Oh that I might have the power given me to set forth the vast importance to the Christian, of keeping his soul constantly and vividly impressed with eternity as a reality near at hand! A deep and thorough conviction of this solemn truth, is in fact one of the most powerful principles that ever stimulates a man to action; and, therefore, it will enable him to accomplish more for the honor of God and the good of man, than anything else. I propose to analyze the mode in which it produces such effects.

31. I am aware that upon the irreligious man, the apprehension of speedy death, even while in health, sometimes exerts a paralyzing influence. He perceives that his eternal interests are not secured, although nothing can be more uncertain than life; and conscience is enough awakened to see the amazing hazard he is running by delay. But his heart still clings to some worldly idol, and thus in the contest between conviction and inclination, the mind is kept in a painful sus-

pense. It sees the vanity of the world, yet cannot muster resolution enough to come to the great decision. No wonder that, in such a dilemma, a man's usual energy should forsake him, even in his worldly pursuits. For in the midst of his labors the withering thought continually recurs, *what is a man profited, though he gain the whole world and lose his soul: or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Until he free himself from the thought of eternity, or give his heart to God, inefficiency must characterize all his efforts. But let him take the glory of God as the motive of his actions, and the thought of eternity as near at hand will nerve his arm with an energy no other principle can impart: for no man accomplishes so much, even in a worldly pursuit, as he who labors in it with a religious motive.

32. It is also true, that in a few cases of real piety, where bodily disease has thrown a settled melancholy over the soul, the apprehension of death may unnerve the Christian's resolution and energies. While in this morbid state, a dark cloud has come over his prospects for eternity; and until that can be dissipated, he has no heart for labor, any more than the convicted impenitent sinner—a character which he considers his own. But excepted and anomalous cases of this kind it is not my intention now to consider. I speak of the influence of the great principle under consideration, upon the Christian character in a healthy state. And it

may be in a healthy state—often the most healthy, when the body is most feeble. This influence, I say, upon the soul in such a state, is always most salutary.

33. *In the first place, it is* A RESTRAINING INFLUENCE. Self-denial, mortification of the unboly appetites and passions, a subjection of the whole man to the power of holiness, was a prominent requirement in the teaching of Christ. And his apostles took up the same doctrine, and enforced it by precept and example. With them there was no attempt to make a compromise with any inordinate propensity, or to plead for any indulgence that would in the least interfere with perfect holiness of heart and life. The offending right hand was cut off, or the right eye plucked out, without a moment's hesitation. At an advanced period of his ministry, we hear Paul testifying, that *every man who striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. I therefore so run not as uncertainly: so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* It was not long, however, before Christians discovered that these rigid and ascetic rules, which Christ and his apostles found essential, were not necessary for them. The consequence has been, that every form of excess has deluged the church, while its ministers have been as earnest to reconcile it with the gospel, as Christ and the apostles were to

prove their contrariety. Monkish self-denial in things of little moment, was thought to purchase a plenary indulgence for the unholy appetites and passions. Protestant Christianity is indeed beginning to open her eyes upon these abominations. In our country, especially the church, is attempting to free herself from alcoholic stimulants. But some of her members, and even ministers yet cling to its use, and entrench themselves behind the bible in vindication of wine as a beverage. Oh how dreadfully stupifying, even to the Christian's soul, is long continued sinful indulgence!

34. To other forms of intemperance—less gross indeed, but as really opposed to the spirit of the gospel,—the church has scarcely yet begun to open her eyes. A filthy, poisonous weed, against whose introduction among their subjects, Mahomedan and heathen rulers issued their edicts, is still suffered to blunt the intellects, sour the temper, and shorten the lives of a multitude of Christians: many of whom have become so mad upon this indulgence, as to close their eyes against all light that is offered on the subject, and to manifest irritation and resentment when this weak part of their character is assailed. In the place, also, of that pure and sufficient beverage, which God has provided for all his creatures, what multitudes of Christians employ some narcotic and stimulating potation, at an expense of money and vitality sufficient to bless millions of men with the bible and the light of life!

35. In respect to food, still more wide spread is intemperance. How often do professing Christians outrage those physiological laws, which God has given us for the regulation of our appetites? As a consequence, what an amount of precious time is lost in stupor and sleep, which is employed by the temperate in active efforts! How hard does the oppressed system struggle under its cruel load; and how early are the vital energies exhausted, and premature old age, with fretfulness and despondency, induced!

36. Now to put a strong curb upon these intemperate propensities, we want in active exercise a sense of the nearness of eternity. This will lay the axe at the root of every inordinate animal appetite. It will make a man feel that none of his precious time is to be wasted in unlawful sensual indulgence. If a heathen could say, "I have a nobler nature, and am born to nobler destinies, than that I should be the slave of my vile body,"* shall not a stronger and holier purpose dwell in the Christian's soul, which he knows is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and which will soon be a disembodied spirit in the presence of infinite holiness? When he daily feeds upon the manna of heaven, how feeble will be the attractions of the dainties of the table; and how ready to abandon at once every indulgence that impedes or interrupts his communion with

* Major sum, et ad majora natus, quam ut mancipium vilis corporis sim. *Seneca.*

God, and his labors for man ! On his heart the solemn admonition of Christ falls with great power : *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life ; and so that day come upon you unawares.* Oh how dreadful for the Christian to be prostrated upon the bed of sickness in consequence of excess in eating or drinking ! To feel that he has cut short his days, by indulging a gross animal appetite ; and that in a few hours his naked soul must stand before God for the final reckoning ! And yet what multitudes are thus overtaken by a shock of palsy, or apoplexy, or violent fever, or stone, or colic, or other racking disease, induced solely by dietetic excess ! Rather than a Christian should come to such a beastly end, better were it, almost, that he should literally follow the advice of Solomon : *when thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee : and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.* Better still is it, for such a man to cultivate an habitual sense of eternal things, so that their awful and overwhelming importance shall effectually curb his gross animal propensities. This principle does thus operate upon the devoted Christian : and the man who is not temperate in all things, cannot be eminently holy. Just so far as he suffers from food or drink, in his health or activity of body or mind, so much will the standard of his piety be sunk.

37. There is a still lower propensity in animal nature, that needs, even in the Christian, the strong restraining power of the principle under consideration. Not that the really converted man will give himself up to the grossness of illicit pleasures. But there is a pollution of the imagination that needs the light of eternity for its purification. And if a man do really feel himself to be very near its solemn scenes, with what force will the declaration of Christ come home to his soul: *whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* Oh he cannot think of entering into the presence of God an adulterer. He will struggle, he will pray against impure thoughts, and raise against them such a holy indignation, that they will be driven from his bosom.

38. A censorious spirit is one of the most easily besetting sins of the Christian: a habit that gains upon him imperceptibly, and gets strong hold ere he is aware. In his intercourse with men, he meets with so much of perverseness and selfishness, that it requires a strong counteracting principle to keep in exercise that charity which thinketh no evil. This counteracting principle is a deep-seated conviction that eternity is near. So soon himself to pass a scrutiny before the universe, on which hangs his eternal destiny, and knowing that mercy there can be his only hope, how can he cherish an unkind or severe feeling towards his fellows, bound

to the same bar? If he believes them less prepared than himself for that scene, surely pity will take the place of censoriousness, and sorrow of anger, when he thinks of their prospects. Who was ever censorious or unkind upon the bed of death? How it softens the heart towards the faults and weaknesses of others, to have death approach with his menacing dart! True, a dying man will faithfully warn surrounding friends of their danger. But his admonitions will come so blended with yearning love, and so softened by sweet humility, that though they pass quite through the heart, the wound is hardly felt: and yet often it can be healed only by the balm that is in Gilead.

39. Alike efficacious is this principle in restraining from inordinate devotion to worldly pursuits; to riches, honors, or pleasures. While in health, and death seemingly at a distance, the world looms up before the mind in bold outline and vivid coloring, and eternal scenes form only the dim and unimpressive boundary to the picture. But when we approach the borders of eternity, its magnificent scenery, its more lofty mountains, its richer vales, its lovelier skies, its brighter sun, its more balmy atmosphere, make this world look like a contracted, a dreary, and uninviting spot. We cannot feel as if all its riches, all its honors, all its pleasures, could they be obtained, would be objects deserving of our supreme regard and affection, now that so much nobler and more satisfying objects are

within our reach. So far as these earthly objects can aid us in our journey to the celestial city, and will make us more serviceable to our fellow travelers, we may seek after them. But so far as they retard our progress, and make us satisfied with this world, and render eternal scenes dim and distant, and palsy our efforts for the salvation of others, they are fatally dangerous and ensnaring. And how far they may be safely pursued, can be known only to him on whose soul the light of eternity shines strong and steady.

On this point we have a noble example left us in the scriptures. In the period of David's deepest adversity, Barzillai had generously assisted him; and when the tide of fortune had led David to victory and the throne, he would fain have taken the good old man with him to Jerusalem, to enjoy the splendors of his court. But *Barzillai said unto the king, how long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old; and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?—Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother.* So feels the man to whom eternal scenes seem near. Have I so little time left, says he, and shall I spend it

in personal selfish gratifications? Shall I lay out my plans for worldly aggrandizement and pleasure, as if centuries of earthly existence were at my command, when I know not but the scene may close before this day's sun goes down? Rather will I engage in pursuits more appropriate to my condition. My great business is to lay up treasures in heaven, and to be constantly ready for the summons that may reach me at any hour, to go and possess them. The bustle and noise of public political life; the temptations and snares of luxury and wealth; the envy, jealousy, competition and incessant toil, to which they are subject who strive after honor, will be apt to prove barriers in the way of the grand object I have in view. Let me follow, therefore, those calm pursuits, where I can be most useful to the world, and at the same time find the best opportunity to hold communion with God and my own heart.

40. Among those whose pursuits are chiefly intellectual, where is the man who does not think more highly of himself than he ought to think? Pride of intellect is the besetting sin of literary men. And nothing but the influence that emanates from a constant realization of eternity, can curb this most indomitable of all sins. But in a near view of the throne and the glories of God, and of the mighty spirits that there bow in homage, the loftiest human intellect becomes a little child. He cannot but feel his weakness,

and obtuseness, and ignorance, and utter insignificance, when brought into comparison with the intellect of heaven. What though he may see a little farther than the multitude around him; yet how much beyond his loftiest intellectual flights, does the ken of the meanest spirit in heaven reach! Into that bright circle he expects ere long to be admitted; and he feels sure that he shall stand there the very lowest upon the scale of intellect. How can he then but exclaim, with the son of Sirach, *why is earth and ashes proud?*

41. *I remark in the second place, that a lively sense of the nearness of eternity exerts a SOOTHING AND SUSTAINING INFLUENCE.* And who does not know how often such an influence is needed in this vale of tears? Be a man ever so yielding and conciliating—strive as he may to do unto others as he would they should do unto him, it would be strange if even he should not sometimes meet with insult and abuse which demand something more than this world can furnish, to sustain with a becoming temper. For our religion directs, not merely that when smitten on one cheek we turn the other; but that we likewise *love our enemies, bless them that curse us, and do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us.* Hard work this for unsanctified human nature: Hard work for that Christian even, who does not keep eternity near. But he can do it whose soul is subdued into a sweet and childlike submission, by

long discipline and familiar intercourse with eternal things. Not only will he find himself sustained under abuse and reproach, but his heart will meet them with the gushes of pity, and sincere intercession in behalf of their authors, instead of the flashes of resentment and the withering curse. With the glories of heaven full in view, how little will he feel the reproaches of earth; and how can he but pity those, who manifest a spirit that must exclude them from that happy world.

42. But the enemies of the good man sometimes succeed in blasting his reputation, and thus destroying his usefulness among his fellow-men. Can he sustain such a load? The principle under consideration possesses an inherent elasticity, which increases in exact proportion to the weight laid upon it. The whole world united, cannot crush the spirit of that man whose conscience smiles approbation, and whose open eye looks upon the glories of eternity as near, and as assuredly his own. Envy and malice once did their worst, and succeeded in arraying the world against two Christians, who were scourged, and cast friendless into the stocks of a foul and dark inner prison, where they lay all night with their bleeding bodies fastened to the cold ground. But at midnight, *Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God*. Oh they then felt that eternity was very near, and that their trials were almost at an end, and therefore could they forget their pains and dangers in a song of exulting praise.

43. Still farther: this same principle has often been triumphant amid the excruciating agonies of martyrdom. What more terrible death can be conceived, than to fall beneath a shower of stones from an infuriated mob? Yet in that moment of intense suffering, it was enough to sustain the soul of the dying Stephen, that he saw *heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God*. Into that world of unutterable bliss, and to the everlasting love and favor of that Savior, he was in one moment to enter; and what to him were all mortal agonies? Pity for his murderers was the only feeling which their cruelty could excite, and their salvation the last earthly object on which his mind lingered. And how many martyrs, amid the choking flames, with heaven in full view, have employed their last breath in a song of holy triumph, instead of dying groans!

44. Some may feel, however, and perhaps justly, that it requires less of fortitude and divine support to endure the martyr's hour of agony, than to bear up month after month, and year after year, under poverty and neglect, or the perverseness and ingratitude of those with whom we are indissolubly united for life. Severe, indeed is it, for instance, to toil, and toil till premature decay begins to furrow the visage, and cripple the energies, and yet be unable to unloose the iron grasp of poverty: to toil too, perhaps alone, with no sympathizing bosom into which to pour our sorrows—

to be, for instance, the widowed mother, who would, but cannot secure her numerous family from poverty and neglect—nay, who can scarcely supply their daily physical wants. Still more trying is it, for one of the feebler sex to find that her earthly destinies are united to those of a drunken husband, whose barbarity she must endure in silence and neglect as long as life continues—to find, in fact, that the only pillow on which she can hope in future to repose, is a bosom filled with daggers. With her, hope so far as this world is concerned, is dead, and sullen despair has settled upon all her prospects.

45. These views of human suffering are indeed dark and distressing. But mark now the exact adaptation of the principle under consideration to afford relief. Does the sufferer feel that the load upon him is intolerable? Let him only remember that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;—that in proportion to the severity of his sufferings here, will be the amount of his glory hereafter; and with what an energy and even cheerfulness to endure, will the thought inspire him! Or should the thought still weigh upon his spirits, that his trials must last through life, let him only get impressed with a sense of the nearness of eternity, and that long life of suffering will be contracted to a span; and his long and dreary road to a single step. His heart will throw off its sadness, and he will sing,

Though painful at present,
'Twill cease before long ;
And then oh how pleasant
The conqueror's song.

46. Another severe trial to nature, is long continued feeble health. As disease now and then seems to relax its hold, under the application of remedies, hope and animation revive ; but only to be again blasted. String after string gives way in the struggle, and hope, so long disappointed, dares no longer build upon deceitful appearances. But if the individual, thus blasted in his expectations from this world, lives in a near view of eternity, the eye of faith can look calmly beyond the wreck of sublunary scenes, and gaze delighted upon the bright glories that rise in prospect. The heart, having at length yielded itself unreservedly to the will of God, cheerfully resigns its fondest worldly plans ; and though not dead to the attachments of earth, its supreme attachments, its only substantial hopes, its treasure, its all, are in heaven. The subdued, yet exulting feelings of such an individual, are expressed in the following hymn :

1. These weary limbs, this aching heart,
In sweet repose will soon be laid
Within the grave, that peaceful bed,
Which mortal woes can ne'er invade.

2. Long and severe has been the strife
Between disease and nature's force ;

But yielding now, I feel my life,
And death moves on his conquering course.

3. How hard to turn on nature's face—
God's own fair work—the last sad view !
To feel each lov'd one's last embrace,
And hear the final, fond adieu !

4. Yet there, so dark to nature's eye,
Will faith in Christ give power to sing,
"O grave, where is thy victory,
Relentless death, where is thy sting?"

5. One hour, and the dark storm goes by :
One step, and on the heavenly shore,
I stand beneath a cloudless sky,
And drink in joy forevermore.

47. There is one more example in which the soothing and sustaining power of this principle is mighty, and if resorted to, would always be sufficient. Death has come in and smitten down one dear friend after another, till the sense of loneliness and desolation comes over us, and the heart feels as if its wounds would never be healed. But if that heart can only be made to feel, as its bereavements ought to make it feel, how very near eternity is, and how soon it will be united to its Christian friends who have entered their final rest, and not only so, but will then see the Savior as he is, and feast forever upon his glories, how will the inch or two of time be forgotten in the glorious anticipation of that joyful reunion. The Christian in such

a frame, will perceive that his departed friends have escaped from their bondage in a distant uncongenial land, and gone home to their Father's house, while he is left still in fetters. His thoughts will dwell upon the period when his soul also, shall leap out from its servitude, a pure and joyous spirit, to meet the welcome of his Savior, and the congratulations of the redeemed. For, as the father, on his return from long absence, is met at his door by his affectionate and joyful family, so the Christian's friends, who have gone before him to glory, will issue from the portals of heaven to welcome him to his everlasting home. Surely such musings as these will turn into nectar the bitterest cup of affliction ever mingled.

48. *I remark in the third place, that a lively sense of the nearness of eternity, will exert a QUICKENING INFLUENCE.* Men are naturally sluggish and inactive, and unless some great controlling principle wakes up their dormant energies, one half of life will be wasted, even by the Christian, while conscience scarcely lifts a note of remonstrance, because she is unenlightened. The mind is kept in a dozing state, by the all pervading and almost universal deception, that eternity is not near, and death is distant. But when the spirit of grace has torn off the veil of this delusion from the mind, the man wakes up as from a dream, and girds himself for a mighty effort. "Is the time so short," he will say, "and the work I have to do so momentous

and great, and shall I suffer one precious hour to be lost? Oh, it needs the whole of the short period left me to prepare my own heart for heaven: it needs the whole to study and understand anything of the works and character of God: it needs the whole to accomplish anything for my fellow-men. God help me so to select the objects of my pursuit, that none of my time shall be spent in laboriously doing nothing. God help me so judiciously and skillfully to engage in every labor, that the greatest amount shall be accomplished in the shortest period."

49. The power which a near view of eternity possesses to arouse even an irreligious man to exertion, is well exhibited in the history of Muley Moluc, emperor of Morocco. His troops were engaged in battle with the Portugese, and he was carried upon a litter into the field, conscious that he must die in a very few hours of an incurable disease. But seeing his troops begin to give way, he sprang from the litter, rallied his flying army, saw his enemy beaten, and returning to his couch, sank down exhausted, and expired. He knew that the effort would be fatal, and he knew also that it was his last effort; but the object before him was a great one, and by concentrating in this one act every remaining energy of body and soul, he succeeded in what seemed little short of a miracle. So the Christian, to whom eternity seems near, and the object before him of immense importance, will be borne up-

ward and onward in his efforts as if by supernatural power. If such an one honestly desires to accomplish something before he dies for the honor of God, and the good of man, and if in every effort in which he engages he deeply realizes that that may be the last opportunity, he will move forward in his work with giant strength. The belief that a man was probably performing his last earthly labor, has been the secret of success in some of the noblest efforts of man, especially in the cause of religion. The best practical works on religion owe their great value to the leaven of this feeling. And when the minister of the gospel in his weekly preparations for the pulpit, acts under its inspiration, that man's labor will be successful.

50. The power of this principle in giving strength and activity to the intellect, is little understood by the mass of mankind. Nay, the common impression is, that to become devotedly pious is to cramp the intellectual powers and take away half their energy and activity. But such a conversion as this is not the regeneration of the bible. That opens new fields of intellectual research, and brings more powerful motives to mental exertion than can come from any other source. And he who knows the history of religious men, cannot but have often noticed how a transformation of heart has brought out new energies of intellect and of action. True, the man may choose new fields of investigation : because he henceforth means to labor where he can

glorify God. But the increased power of his mind is often as remarkable as the change in his conduct and feelings. And it will always be thus if the Christian live habitually alive to the realities and stirring influences of eternity.

51. When the ministers of the gospel urge their hearers in strong language to moderate their devotion to the world, and to live for eternity, irreligious men feel that if they adopt this recommendation, they must to a great extent give up their industrious habits; and they well know that without these they cannot be successful in any lawful pursuit, and therefore they regard the minister's exhortations as impracticable and hostile to the best interests of society. But this is a sad misapprehension. For the minister well knows that without untiring industry, neither the merchant, mechanic, nor farmer, can succeed in their callings; and that distinction can never be acquired by the artist, the professional man, the scholar, or the man of science, without the most laborious study and thought. But he urges the man not to forget that for the motives and manner of his exertions he is accountable to God. He wants the worldly man to be as industrious as ever; but henceforth to labor for God, and not to build up as he has done, a separate and a selfish interest. He wants the man to live conscious of the presence and holiness of God, and of the nearness and awful solemnity of eternity with its retributions. Acting under such an

influence, the man will not be less, but more industrious in every lawful pursuit. True he will no longer follow those pursuits which God does not approve: but having chosen his sphere of labor, where God has directed him, he will strive to excel in it that thereby he may do more for the glory of God and the good of man. He does not, as is too often done, make a divorce between religion and his daily worldly pursuits. He feels as if his business was to conduct his worldly affairs religiously; so that the approbation of God shall be granted and his blessing bestowed. Thus conducted, he finds that those pursuits do not alienate his affections from God as they formerly did, but tend to his sanctification.

52. Here then we learn the secret, so little understood even by religious men, of uniting the most active and successful exertions in worldly affairs with eminent devotion to God. Some men we know do succeed in combining these two things; and they do it by bringing in as a great controlling power, a solemn sense of eternity. Nothing else can do it. The recluse may cultivate a habit of devotion, by shutting his eyes and his ears to the fascinations of the world: but this is fleeing from the world and not conquering it. The religious man, who cultivates religious feelings and habits on the sabbath, but never imagines that religion has any thing to do with his ordinary secular pursuits, may, by the mercy of God, be saved, so as by fire: but he

who goes into the active pursuits of life with such a sense of eternal things upon his heart, that every spot becomes solemn with the presence of God, and by this mighty principle keeps the world under his feet, he is the man who will accomplish the most for God and his generation, and whose crown of glory will shine the brightest in heaven.

53. Such a habit too will strengthen in the Christian the principle of holy love, and of course quicken its exercise. Whenever the object of our attachment is a worthy one, familiarity increases our devotion to it. The nearer, therefore, we approach eternal objects, and the more distinctly they are apprehended, the deeper hold will they take upon our hearts. The nearer, also, the point of view from which we survey this world and the next, is to the latter, the more accurately can we compare the two states; and it is impossible but that this world should suffer in the comparison; so that while the soul is drawn by a strong impulse towards heaven, the antagonist attractions of this world will lose much of their power. Thus will holy love gain a double victory in the spiritual warfare.

54. The habit too of mingling religion with all the pursuits of life, will tend to quicken our love to God and the Redeemer. The fact is, the world is full of objects and events that teem with the presence and glory of God. The constitution of nature and of society and

the operation of natural and providential laws speak to the eye and ear of faith in living language. Holy men of old, whose record is in the bible, listened to this instruction intently. *Ask now the beasts, was their language, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not that in all these, the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?* These holy men felt themselves ever in immediate contact with the God whom they loved; and as new beauties met their eye in his works, and new mercies were poured into their cup, they felt the ties of holy love binding them closer to his throne. In modern times we exclude God so much from the ordinary scenes of life, and depend so much on formal ceremonies and cold abstractions to quicken and confirm our love, that it is too apt to become as formal and inoperative as the means employed to awaken it. But he whose vision is quickened by familiar converse with eternal things, to discern God in all the scenes and events of life, will find that his maturer and purer love has not lost the freshness and warmth of youth.

55. In proportion as love is strengthened and quickened by familiar intercourse with eternity, will hope also become more stable, until it reaches assurance. For *perfect love, says the apostle, casteth out fear.* Borne upwards on the wings of faith and love above the

murky atmosphere of doubt and despondency, hope can look with a steady gaze upon the rapturous glories of heaven and feel that they are all assuredly her own : and that a single step over the narrow boundary between time and eternity, will bring her into full, unalloyed, and everlasting possession.

56. An inevitable effect of this maturity of love and hope will be holy and strong desires. First of all will the Christian sigh after an entire freedom from sin. As holiness gains a firmer place in his soul, sin will become more loathsome, and he can realize more its hatefulness in the sight of God. As he learns more of heaven, he is made not merely to believe, but to feel, that nothing but perfect holiness can ever enter there. That perfection he knows he has not yet attained : but an unconquerable determination rises within him, never to cease the contest, until he can raise the shout of everlasting victory over this abhorred enemy.

55. Another object of strong desire will be the salvation of men. The more familiar he becomes with eternal scenes, the more terrible does he feel that man's loss to be, who loses his soul. The brighter and more distinct the glories of religion become, the more astonishing does that blindness and delusion appear, which keep men in stupidity and unconcern who know that they are under the wrath and curse of Almighty God. His feelings cannot but rise to an agony of desire ;

so that the language of Paul, paradoxical to so many Christians, truly represents his convictions: *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

58. Finally, a christian who lives thus in the habitual realization of eternity, will have daily desires after heaven. Nor is it necessary in order that he should have such desires, that he should depreciate or undervalue the objects of this world, or become disgusted with them. And truly, in spite of all that the disappointed, the melancholy, and the misanthropic may say, this is a beautiful, and might be a happy world. Were all within the soul as happily attuned as all is without, in spite of the disorders of sin, man's ear might be regaled with an almost constant symphony. What glorious prospects there are for the eye to rest upon on almost every side? How noble an object is the wide ocean—terrible when its waves are piled to heaven, and lovely when

—————"on its face

The breeze and summer sunshine softly play,
And the green heaving billows leave no trace
Of all the wrath and wreck of yesterday."

What magnificent mountains, stretch along the horizon, with their lofty peaks, their imposing precipices, and their green slopes! What lovely vallies checker

the landscape, and swelling hillocks with forests and glades, and cultivated fields, through which wander the noble river and the murmuring streamlet! What a green carpet, inwrought with flowers of every form and hue, is spread under our feet! What a splendid canopy over our heads! What sunrises and sunsets! What sublime gathering and wheeling of the clouds, when God speaks in the thunder tempest! What variety, and life, and music, among the animal creation attend us wherever we wander among the works of God! How sweet the interchange of thought and feeling by means of speech among the human family: and what an exhaustless source of rational happiness in the records of past discoveries and inventions in the arts and sciences! How soothing and sustaining the sympathies and attachments of friendship, and all the tender relations and endearments of social life! In short, God has crowded the world with means of happiness and given us all the faculties necessary for their enjoyment; and in spite of all our abuse of our powers and perversion of his gifts, there is in the world a vast amount of enjoyment.

59. Add to all this, that the devoted Christian is of all men best fitted to enjoy the world. Sin is the great enemy of our enjoyment; but his heart is more free from its dominion than that of any other man. He best knows how to use without abusing the gifts of Providence. He, less than any other man, dreads dis-

appointment, because he has a treasure laid up in heaven. Along with all his worldly enjoyment, there is mingled a sense of the presence and favor of the Great Author of all good; and this gives a double zest to every pleasure. But in spite of all this, he desires a better, even a heavenly country: and his desires increase the more familiar he becomes with eternal scenes. He pants for them, not because he hates the world, but because he loves heaven more: because sin mars every earthly joy, but is excluded from heaven: because his new born nature sighs for nobler pleasures: because here it sees through a glass darkly, but there face to face.

60. I have made a supposition the most favorable possible to worldly enjoyment: a case which is realized in its full extent probably not by one in ten thousand, even of devoted christians. Nearly all such have other causes to stimulate their desires after heaven. Though willing to remain here as long as they can be useful, the thought of release is sweet. *To depart and be with Christ, say they, is far better.* We are tired with this perpetual repetition of scenes comparatively tasteless: with the constant recurrence of animal wants. We are wearied with the clogs of flesh and sense that hang upon our religious affections:—and above all, with the sin that mingles with all our services. We are sick at heart with the complicated woes and sufferings of this confused and miserable

world : woes which we can only weep and pray over, but cannot relieve. We are distressed with the stupidity and perverseness of man. We are compelled to witness the triumphs of sin around us : to see the law and authority of God trampled under foot, and the blood of Christ counted an unholy thing. Wars and rumors of wars, assassinations and suicides, robbery and oppression, load every breeze with their story. A darkness that may be felt broods over the vast majority of our race ; and even where the true light begins to shine, men band together to quench its beams. What triumphing of the wicked on every side, and how neglected and perverted are the good. Even in the church of Christ, in protestant lands, what ecclesiastical pride, what unchecked worldliness, what useless discussions, what cruel reviling of brethren ? Our own private friends, too, how many of them have been severed from our side, and how lonely an aspect the world begins to assume ! Oh how different a place from this must heaven be. And blessed be God, we know that it is near. Already its glories begin to beam upon us, and its songs to fall upon our ears. Our chains are dropping off ; and in anticipation of our early deliverance, we will cheerfully bear up under our trials in this distant land, assured that soon we shall be welcomed to the mansions prepared for us in our Father's house."

69. Such are the happy fruits of cultivating near

communion with eternity. A sense of its nearness, is one of the mightiest principles that ever stimulated men to action. Under its influence some with the feeblest constitutions of body have made such giant efforts, that the world will feel them and bless their names through all generations.

62. Robert Boyle may be named as one of these. Of the most slender constitution, he seemed almost incapable of great effort. And yet he raised himself to the very pinnacle of philosophical distinction, and laid a broad foundation on which many modern sciences have been built. But his highest glory was that he was a humble christian, who consecrated all his attainments to the good of men and the glory of God. His biographer says, that "it seems wonderful he could have performed so much." The secret of it all is, that he felt himself continually to be a dying man, and that each successive effort was his last.

63. Pascal was another of those extraordinary minds, that appear to bless the world from time to time; yet his was contained in a body so full of infirmity and pain, that it never could have accomplished anything, had not the consciousness of eternity as very near, inspired him with superhuman resolution and strength. He did not live long; but the writings which he left will transmit his name to the latest times, and they bear the impress, not merely of genius and

talent, but of a soul that drew its energy from the eternal world.

64. Who is not amazed at the immensity of literary labor accomplished by Richard Baxter? And what christian, in reading his practical works, does not feel that the spirit which they breathe is the very spirit of heaven! And the secret of their charm and power is, that he drank in its balmy and odoriferous air. So feeble was he, that rigid temperance alone saved him from the grave, and so beset by enemies, that he knew not what a day would bring forth. Under such circumstances, every time he sat down to write, he felt as if that was probably his last opportunity to glorify God, or do good to man, and therefore he resolved to pour his whole soul into his composition—to write as a man would, who had but one short step to take to be in heaven; who stood habitually so near eternity, that on the one side he could hear the songs of the redeemed, and on the other the wailings of the lost. Little did he think that God had so much for him to do on earth; or that his frail body could hold out so long. Nor could he have conceived what a mighty influence he was sending down through all future time.

65. In a feeble constitution, which led him to cultivate a close communion with eternal things, we find the probable secret of Dr. Doddridge's eminent success and great amount of labors. It was the like familiar converse with the world to come, that imparted

Herculean power and heavenly sweetness to the writings of such men as Owen, and Leighton, and Howe, and Matthew Henry, and John Elliot, and Watts, and Thomas Scott, and Jonathan Edwards: though in their case it was not a feeble constitution which God used as the means of keeping their hearts alive to eternal things.

66. With Brainard and Martyn, however, the case was different. In reading their histories, we are often pained at the imprudent exposure of their health of which they were often guilty. But when we see what a supernatural energy and heavenly sweetness accompanied the prostration of their bodily powers, we almost feel that God left them thus to this recklessness of health, that through disease he might communicate divine energy to their souls. Oh how much of the light of heaven shines from the pages which they penned in these seasons of bodily weakness!

67. There is one sweet production, which I cannot but notice here, because it was inspired by the principle under consideration. A genius and a Christian, while life was fast ebbing away, and eternal glories were brightening before him, poured his whole soul into "The Course of Time,"

And set

As sets the morning star, which goes not down
Behind the darkened west, nor hides obscured
Among the tempests of the sky, but melts away
Into the light of heaven.

68. But enough of examples for my purpose and more than enough. Christian reader, I have brought before you in these remarks some glimpses of a mighty principle of action, which you can adopt, and which will arm you with giant strength in your spiritual and intellectual warfare. A vivid sense of eternal things, deeply and habitually impressed, will wake up within you an ability and an energy of which neither you nor others have any conception. It will spread serenity and joy over your souls in the place of darkness and doubt and difficulty. It will smooth the path before you, which may now seem obscure, and rough, and obstructed. It will communicate to all your labors for God and man a mighty yet lovely influence; and perchance that influence may be deepening and widening long after you shall be sleeping in the dust. Oh who will not resolve that henceforth eternity shall be kept in full view!

69. To furnish some feeble aid to the christian in acquiring a deeper sensibility to eternal things, I have woven this WREATH. It is made up of amaranthine flowers gathered by holy men beneath the Cross, where they have been nourished by the blood of Christ. I have performed only the humble task of culling them out and binding them together.

70. I am aware that the mere title of this book, *A Wreath for the Tomb*,—will give it a repulsive aspect in the eyes of the great mass of mankind, who will

pass it by with a single glance, because all the associations, which in their minds cluster around death and eternity, are only melancholy and forbidding. Had I entitled it, *A Wreath for the Warrior*, or a *Wreath for the Statesman*, or a *Wreath for the Scholar*, or even a *Wreath for the Convivial*, it would have a passport to favour. But if it shall fall under the eye of some humble christian, who has learnt that sweet flowers may be gathered even upon the tomb, and if these extracts shall serve to give buoyancy to his hope, and cheerfulness and energy to his efforts, and help him to complete his victory over death and the grave, I shall feel as if the labor, or rather I ought to say, the pleasure and profit of its preparation, are amply rewarded.

71. Take then, humble soul, take this Wreath and bind it around thy brow. The thorns have all been extracted and platted into the crown of thy Redeemer, which he wore upon the cross, that these flowers might be soft upon thy head. They will become brighter and sweeter as you approach that dark valley where all other things fade. The waters of Jordan will exert upon them a transforming power, so that when you ascend its farther bank, they will become THE WREATH OF IMMORTALITY.

THE LESSONS TAUGHT BY SICKNESS.

A SERMON

DELIVERED FEB. 9, 1839, IN THE CHAPEL OF
AMHERST COLLEGE.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.—PSALM CXIX. 71.

FROM the cradle to the grave God keeps every man in a school of moral discipline. The means of instruction are almost infinitely varied but always most wisely adapted to the age, disposition and circumstances of the individual. Sometimes he uses prosperity and sometimes adversity; generally health, but sometimes sickness; generally competence or wealth, but sometimes poverty; sometimes reproach and disgrace, and sometimes popularity and honor. But whenever any change is made in the mode of instruction we may be sure it is intended for the good of the individual. Like a wise and benevolent parent, God places us his ignorant and wayward children under various instructions, that he may operate upon all the principles of our nature and render our discipline more complete: in other words, that we may learn more of his "*statutes.*"

The "*statutes*" of the Lord are those eternal prin-

ciples or laws by which he sustains and governs the material and spiritual worlds. Now just in proportion as we learn and conform to these statutes shall we be happy, and so far as we are ignorant of them or refuse conformity, shall we be miserable. The great object of man's existence, therefore, is to learn and obey the statutes of the Lord. Hence in every condition of life it is important to inquire what lessons on this great subject, it is intended we should learn.

Not a few of us, during the present season, have been brought low by sickness: one of the most powerful means of moral discipline which God ever employs. I hope therefore, that I may be allowed to spend a few moments in pointing out some of the most prominent lessons, respecting the statutes of the Lord, which he intends to teach us by this dispensation; especially as I hope the subject may not prove without interest and profit to that more numerous class before me, who have not been thus exercised.

When I speak of sickness I mean that of a decided character. A man may for months and even years be laboring under what is called feeble health, and yet be able to attend to many of the duties and enjoy many of the comforts of life. In such a state he ought indeed to learn many useful lessons, respecting the statutes of the Lord. But when all the energies of body and mind are assailed with a strong hand, and a fierce and fearful contest commences between the powers of

disease and the powers of nature, we find ourselves in quite different circumstances: and even though the instruction be of the same nature, it is brought home to the mind with so much greater emphasis and urgency, as to seem altogether new. I now proceed to point out some of the most important lessons which we ought to learn in such a condition.

In the first place, we are taught that sickness and health are as dependent upon fixed and invariable laws as any operations of nature.

This statement is contrary to the prevailing opinion among men: or rather perhaps I ought to say, most men without ever having thought much on the subject, have a feeling that sickness assails men arbitrarily and that the cause does not exist in themselves: or to speak more religiously, sickness is a special act of God's Providence intended for chastisement, and in selecting the individuals, God does not act according to natural laws, but according to his own sovereign will, irrespective of law. They are apt to regard diseases as birds of prey sailing about in the atmosphere, and pouncing upon any who may chauce to come within their reach. If a man of such views can say of the sick that he took a cold which settled into a fever, or pleurisy, or consumption, he is apt to feel that he has given all the explanation in his power of the origin of the disease. The question seems not to occur to him, why the man took the cold, or why the cold settled into an alarming dis-

ease. Hence if that disease removes the man out of the world, perhaps in the morning of his days, or from a station of great usefulness, it is called a mysterious Providence a dark dispensation.

Now I would not be thought to deny that sickness is always an act of God's Providence and in strict accordance with his sovereign will. But I maintain that in general, He exercises that Providence and that sovereignty, as he does in respect to almost everything else, according to fixed laws: so that when disease assails us, we may be sure that there is a natural cause for it. God has ordained certain statutes which must be observed or health cannot be maintained. If a man voluntarily or involuntarily, ignorantly or knowingly, violates these rules, he must as certainly suffer the bad effects as if he thrust his hand into the fire or leaped over a precipice. True the human constitution is endowed with a remarkable power of resisting morbid influences to a certain extent, so that severe disease may not follow every slight deviation from the laws of health. In such a case, however, nature warns us by the catarrh, the headache, debility, or in some other way, that she is oppressed: and if we do not heed her voice but persist in a disregard of hygienic laws she yields at length to the accumulated pressure and severe disease, perhaps death, is the consequence. In such a case it is no more mysterious that a man should sicken and die, than that he should be dashed in pieces if he

throws himself from a tower. It would not save him in the one case, though ignorant of the laws of gravity, neither will it save him in the other, though ignorant of the laws of health. No matter of what age or condition, whether useful or useless, honored or despised: he has been violating the laws of his physical nature and must suffer the penalty.

If these views are correct there are two considerations that make it very important that they should take the place of those vague notions on this subject which now prevail. In the first place, until men believe that disease and health depend upon fixed and invariable law, they will not be careful to study those laws in order to avoid the first and preserve the latter. In the second place, a large proportion of our sicknesses are the result of criminal negligence or temerity. But so long as we can make ourselves believe that they are brought upon us by fate, or chance, or the Providence of God acting without law, we shall be insensible to the personal guilt that attaches to us.

Now the tendency of severe sickness is to bring us to understand this subject aright. When prostrated by disease and racked by pain, we are very apt to recollect not a few instances in which we violated the laws of health by improper exposure to the inclemencies of the season, or by dietetic excesses, or by overworking the mind or the body, or in some other way. And we remember too, how distinctly nature warned

us of our danger, if we should persist in oppressing her. But we vainly trusted to the strength of our constitution or some other delusion, until nature yielded in the contest and we found ourselves unexpectedly in the hands of an unmerciful giant, who had power to rack and distress if not destroy. Very few in such a case can feel that no blame attaches to them in the sight of God. They no longer view attention to health as a matter of small importance. They feel that their sin demands deep and unfeigned repentance, and that they are suffering the just punishment of having violated a fixed law of Jehovah. Would that the multitudes who are now doing this, would learn this lesson without passing through so severe a school of discipline as God has found it necessary to make some of us enter! But among the healthy, the delusion on this subject is too deep, I fear, to be broken by any other means. And let those of us who remember the wormwood and the gall of our discipline, see to it that we do not relapse into our former state of temerity and fool hardness.

2. *In the second place, sickness teaches us how entire is our dependence upon God.*

In a few days or even hours, we find ourselves reduced from a state of activity and energy to more than infant weakness. It seems as if it needed but one breath more of the same blast to finish the work. We lie tottering on the very brink of the grave, and

we can hardly see what keeps us out of it unless it be the power of God. The power of God! that is indeed our only hope and safety. Does any one say it is better to trust in the physician's skill? But what is his skill apart from the power of God? I do not mean the power of God exerted miraculously; for it may be put forth in accordance with the laws of nature with just as much efficiency and certainty of reaching particular cases, as if those laws were contravened by it and a manifest miracle were wrought. Nor would it in such a case be any the less the agency of God, than if miraculous. The grand inquiry is, has an event taken place as God would have it? If it has, why should we look upon it as any the less His work, because He has accomplished it through the instrumentality of second causes, which He himself established? If I am recovered from sickness, shall I refuse to acknowledge the hand of God in it, because it was through the aid of skillful physicians, or careful nursing, or appropriate remedies? For who so arranged my circumstances that I should be favored with these advantages? And who knows what changes in my circumstances God accomplished for my good, not by interfering with the regular sequence of nature's operations, but by an alteration, out of our sight, in some of the links of that long chain of secondary causes which connects visible nature with his will?

The writers of the bible rarely attempt to distinguish between God's miraculous and ordinary agency. Has God done it? was their grand inquiry: If he had, the glory was all ascribed to him; and the agency, too, whether accomplished miraculously or not. And in order to ascertain whether God had done anything, they only inquired whether an event had taken place; for it was with them a settled principle, that nothing occurs without His agency—an agency too, as real and efficient as if every event were a miracle. It was reserved for the speculative spirit of modern times, to draw a broad line of distinction between miraculous and common agency, and then to make the inference, as unphilosophical as it is hostile to vital piety—that God does not really bring about any events that are not miraculous; but that all others are to be regarded only as the result of the laws of nature. Much of the unholy leaven of this false principle deeply affects the experience of most christians. A good cure for it is to be thrown helpless upon the bed of sickness. If a man is not then brought to feel himself absolutely at God's disposal, he never will feel it. His vain self-confidence in which he had trusted while in health, such as his prudence, his temperance, his regularity, his good constitution, and the like, all fail him now; and he is thrown upon the sovereign mercy and power of Jehovah. If one christian feeling lingers in his breast, he cannot but feel that not a ray of hope can come from any other quarter.

3. *In the third place, sickness tends to quicken our sensibilities to the value of our blessings.*

If we never duly estimate our blessings till they are lost, then health can never be justly appreciated till we are sick. And were proof wanting to show how low an estimate men place upon health, it would be furnished by the little care they take to preserve it; and the wanton manner in which they expose it. But when the pains and prostration of disease assail them, they are amazed to see what a blessing they have lost, perhaps irrecoverably; and they look back with mortification and penitence upon their insensibility to the greatest of all God's natural blessings. Oh if they could but recover it—if God would again put into healthful play the ten thousand wheels and springs of the fearfully and wonderfully made machinery of their animal system; they feel sure they could never again neglect its preservation, or become insensible to its value. And such a state of feeling will lead the Christian to see how much he has undervalued other blessings of providence; and make him feel more sensibly his indebtedness for any that are still continued: so that I doubt not but often the cup of cold water that allays the sick man's fever, is received with more heart-felt and lively gratitude, than all the bounteous provision God has given him for his bodily wants during months of health.

Again: God sends upon no man a continued sickness so severe that it has no seasons of intermission:

and in most cases these seasons when suffering ceases, or its severity is relaxed, are frequent. Now both suffering and pleasure are greatly heightened by contrast: so that the more severe our pains, the more happy and grateful shall we be in their mitigation. With a sensibility to favors thus quickened, the sick man often enjoys intently what would excite scarcely no emotion in the bosom of the strong and healthy. Hence the care of friends, physicians, and attendants: even a word or look of sympathy, excite a sense of gratitude and obligation.

I have been made acquainted with an example of the effect of this quickened sensibility upon the imagination of a sick man, which it may not be irrelevant to mention. He had long been waiting and hoping in vain for the return of that natural perspiration whose suppression is so trying in fever. At length one morning he was awakened from gentle slumber by a dream, in which he fancied he heard a voice saying to him "here is a present for you," while at the same instant, a large card studded with precious stones was dropped before him. So strong was the impression on his mind that the scene was reality, that even when awake he looked around for the jewelry: but putting his hand into his bosom he perceived that it was covered with perspiration; and he immediately saw what the "present" was, which his imagination had converted into gems; which, in fact, would have been far less acceptable.

I shall notice but one other effect which this quickened sensibility to blessings produces upon the devoted christian, who feels entirely resigned to the will of God. It leads him to look upon his sickness, even while its paroxysms are upon him, as a blessing for which he ought to be thankful. He does not know what is to be its termination. But if it remove him out of the world, he feels that to depart and be with Christ, is better than continuance here: and if he should recover, he feels that the lessons he has learnt in this rough school of discipline, are more than an equivalent for all his sufferings. Thus can he honestly thank God for his affliction, which grace has changed into a blessing. But it is to be feared that the actual experience of only a few, is of this elevated character.

4. *In the fourth place, sickness gives to the Christian an experimental proof of the truth and power of the doctrine of gratuitous salvation by the blood of Christ.*

It is no difficult matter for a man to persuade himself that the system of religious belief which he has adopted while in health, will sustain him through the last conflict of nature. But the actual trial can alone make it certain that he has built upon a rock. Let him lie helpless and in distress upon the bed of sickness, not knowing but it may prove the bed of death. In such an hour he cannot but inquire with entire sincerity and intense earnestness, whether he has any-

thing to rest upon that will sustain him amid the stormy billows that roar around him. His religious opinions may have been merely traditionary or adopted, because many esteemed friends or learned men were their advocates: or because his mind was filled with strong prejudices against the opposite opinions. But he has now reached a point where pressing and immediate danger overpowers prejudice, where friends and learned men can afford him no help, and where the only inquiry is, whether his principles are the principles of the bible, and will sustain him now that he must venture aloae amid the perils of death and the judgment. He looks back upon his past life and recollects perhaps that he has been moral and conscientious in his general conduct, doing to others as he would they should do to him, and striving to keep all the commandments of God. Can he venture forward into the deep waters before him relying on such a foundation? A hundred passages of scripture rush into his mind, declaring in substance, that *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to God's mercy hath he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed down on us abundantly through Jesus Christ. By deeds of the law can no flesh living be justified. But by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.* Oh, to make his own righteousness a ground of trust in such an hour, would resemble his conduct who should cling to the

ship's anchor as she was going down amid the waves. His own righteousness! If he has any just conception of the strictness of God's law, or of the sin that has been ever mixed with his best and holiest services—sin enough to bring just punishment instead of reward upon every one of those services, he will search in vain through all his life for any righteousness that he will dare call such as the pure light of eternity falls upon it. However much of conscientiousness and morality and kind feeling and reverence for God he may recollect in his life, he will be conscious of much more of sinfulness; and unless gross ignorance of the bible or philosophic pride comes to the man's relief, his own righteousness as a ground of acceptance with God, will disappear, and he will rather be disposed to write barrenness upon all his life and to loathe and abhor himself before a holy God. He will see that his case is a hopeless one, unless some other resting place can be found for his sinking soul. Here his eye is met by the cross, standing as the central pillar of truth, based immovably on the promise and mercy of God, rising high above all the storms of life and death, and bearing on its surface, the inscription, *other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*. To that cross faith turns her eager gaze and throws around it her arms as with a convulsive embrace. The soul feels at once that she has found at

last a refuge from which, *neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers; nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate her.* The man may have doubts whether his faith is genuine, but he no longer doubts that he has found the true and only way of a sinner's justification before God; and he knows that so long as the promise and the throne of God remain, he who walks in it will assuredly be saved. He may, while in health, have been speculatively taught these truths: but now he has an experimental knowledge of their reality and power. While in health, he had a rational conviction that they would prove a sufficient support when the winds should blow and the floods beat upon him. But now he has been in the midst and the fury of the storm, and has felt these truths to be an immovable rock beneath his feet. Scepticism may advance plausible objections to the plan of gratuitous salvation through a Savior's sufferings, and he may not be able to answer them. But this will not now shake his confidence in that plan; for he possesses an argument in its favor which the sceptic can never understand nor refute: because faith only can apprehend it.

It is worthy of remark in this connection, that a sick bed is often the best place for feeling the power and value of particular passages of scripture. Out of the storehouse of memory they come clothed with a

life and an energy which we never before knew them to possess, although we might have read them a thousand times, and knew that they taught important truth. Let such passages as the following come into the mind of a man placed in the circumstances which I have described: *This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:—Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? To every Christian while in health, such passages appear fraught with important truth. But it is only the man who lies trembling and sinking on the borders of the grave and is abandoned by all worldly supports, it is only he that can realize their richness, extent, and omnipotence. They seem at once to fill up the dark and bottomless gulf of the valley and shadow of death into which he is about entering, and form an adamantine foundation, over which his soul may safely pass to the world of glory. Learned men have labored hard to illustrate the scriptures:*

But severe sickness without delirium, has often done more in one day to make it intelligible and impressive, than all the folios of theological lore that have ever been written.

5. *In the fifth place, sickness teaches us that a more unfavorable season can hardly be found, than during an attack of disease for beginning a preparation for eternity.*

The work of regeneration is a great work, requiring the calmest and yet most powerful exercise of the reasoning and the moral powers of which a man is capable : and if the mind is not in a state for such exercises, the work will most probably prove spurious, and the last state of the man be worse than the first. Now just think of the condition of a man assailed by severe disease. All the powers of the constitution must rally to resist the onset : And then the physician must try to excite a counter irritation in the system, which shall be more powerful than the disease itself, in order to conquer it : in doing this, he is often compelled to administer remedies which will bring on a torpor of all the powers of body and mind. Thus beset on every side, it is difficult enough for the soul to exercise those virtues which she has already acquired, but what a hopeless task then to begin repentance for sin, faith in Christ, and love to God ! It is, as Jeremy Taylor remarks, as if a man were to "begin to study philosophy when he is going to dispute publicly

in the faculty." We may add, it is far worse: for a failure in such a dispute would only bring upon a man worldly loss and disgrace: but to fail of regeneration is to fail of salvation, and to incur shame and everlasting contempt. Yet so faint is the prospect that the work will be accomplished upon a sick bed, that I am confident the ministers of the gospel would not urge it did they not fear that it is the sick man's only opportunity, and did they not know that out of the thousands who have tried a death bed repentance, at least one—the thief upon the cross with Christ—did thereby secure salvation.

Now what man in his senses would rest his eternal happiness upon such an almost hopeless contingency as this? Yet I fear that some who hear me have nothing better to hope for. From day to day and week to week they are delaying repentance, the very first step towards salvation. Meanwhile their last sickness may be lurking in their veins and poisoning the springs of life; or if even many years are before them, one delay begets another, until the longest life is run out, and the great work of salvation is still to be begun upon a sick bed. If this be not infatuation, what is? The scriptures call it madness; and what insanity can be more fatal? Ah, my unconcerned friends, deeply as you may resent the charge of madness, it is certain that you are now taking exactly the course which has carried multitudes before you to perdition. They

did not feel their danger more than you do. They calculated upon a future day for repentance; and to this mad delusion they clung just as you now cling, until the last sickness came, and in spite of their unavailing efforts at death bed repentance, they were hurried away unprepared for their final account. And why should I expect it to be any better with you? True, I testify to-day from experience, that of all places in this world, a sick bed is the last which a man ought to select for the work of repentance. But this is no new testimony. It rang from a thousand sick beds in the ears of those who have gone before you to perdition. But they either did not believe it, or presumed upon repentance at some earlier and more convenient season, as you do now. Alas, alas, how dreadful is the delusion of the unconverted heart! Oh how terrible is the disappointment when it awakes to the reality!

6. *In the sixth place, sickness rectifies our estimate of our worldly plans, pursuits and importance.*

There are some worldly pursuits in which no Christian can engage without a direct violation of the law of God. But in general the ordinary pursuits of men are lawful in themselves, and the sin, if any, lies in the motive or the manner of conducting them. And as to these two points, Christians often labor under a very strong self delusion. They commence these worldly pursuits perhaps, with proper motives and in a proper manner: that is, they keep them in subordination to the higher interests of the soul, and in fact

they endeavor thereby to glorify God. But gradually and secretly, selfish and ambitious motives impel them forward: they enlarge their plans; they become so absorbed in them that the peculiar duties of religion are neglected or imperfectly performed. Their worldly pursuits continue to rise in importance in their estimation, and they can see how in a variety of ways they can thereby do much good to mankind and bring honor to God. It may be that they are engaged in the acquisition of wealth by lawful means: but they mean to employ that wealth in the promotion of worthy and even religious objects. Or it may be that some gigantic effort in literature or science, requiring years of hard labor, has been undertaken, which they suppose will be of vast benefit to the world. Absorbed in the engrossing pursuit, and magnifying its importance by seeing it through a false medium, the idea of being suddenly removed from the earth, while their long cherished plans are unfinished, seems to themselves a terrible judgment, and a heavy calamity for the world.

Now I will not deny but that a Christian may so conduct his worldly affairs, that they shall appear as important in sickness as in health. But as professing Christians in general live, I feel sure that the light of eternity that falls upon a sick bed, will present the world in an aspect much altered. We can now compare it with eternity more fairly than we have ever done: And oh, into how diminutive a space does it shrink!

and how are its brightest scenes made dark and uninviting by the infinitely brighter glories of heaven! Even though our worldly pursuits have been honorable and praiseworthy, yet how strangely unimportant and diminutive have they become! In such a situation also, we can discover in our past efforts and enterprises, so much of selfishness, pride and unhallowed ambition, which we had never suspected before, as still farther to lessen our estimate of their value. Even though our unfinished plans, on which we have spent so many years of labor, should never be completed, we now perceive that the world would not lose much. And should this prove our last sickness, we can see that only a very small blank would be made in society, which would be quickly filled. The sad predictions of Henry Kirk White in his last sickness, chime in with our feelings.

“Fifty years

And who will hear of Henry? I shall sink
As sinks the traveler in the crowded streets
Of busy London.—Some short bustle's caus'd,
A few inquiries, and the crowd close in,
And all's forgotten.”

And yet, if our feelings are such as they should be, we shall not experience in such circumstances the melancholy of disappointed ambition, but the subdued and humble spirit of him who has been taught a new and

striking lesson of worldly vanity and delusion, and who is led thereby to take hold with a firmer grasp upon the substantial glories of eternity. If in such an hour we can only feel confident that our names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, cheerfully can we resign all the expectations and honors of this life.

I have sometimes stood on the banks of a mighty river, when its swollen waters were passing rapidly by, and watched the bubbles that successively rose and burst upon the agitated surface. They came up and vanished without noise, and to a cursory observer neither their appearance nor disappearance would have been noticed, so numerous were they upon the broad expanse. True, some of them were larger than others: but to an eye that took in the whole surface, they all appeared small, nor did the bursting of the largest, arrest for a moment, or produce any other effect upon the stream that bore them onward. No eye save that of mine and their Omniscient Creator, took any interest in their existence or their loss. How just an emblem is this of the stream of human society, as it often appears upon the bed of sickness! We then perceive that we are but the bubbles on its surface, and that when we disappear, others will soon rise in our place, while the great current will move on unaffected by the change. Nay, except by a small circle of friends or dependents, our departure will be unnoticed; and in a short period every vestige of our existence will be blot-

ted from the earth. But as the bubble upon the literal waters, when it bursts, ascends in vapor and is changed into the bright and beautiful cloud on the arch of heaven, so if we can feel in that hour, that when we vanish from the world, our spirits are prepared to rise into the New Jerusalem above, and to become bright seraphs before the throne, with how little of melancholy emotion shall we see our most dazzling earthly visions fade away!

Are there any before me to whom these representations seem to be an exaggeration, and calculated to paralyze all effort in worldly pursuits, even though they be of the noblest character, and sanctified by religion? Such are probably the very individuals who in the day of sickness would be made to feel how empty and barren is this world, of how little comparative importance are their noblest plans for wealth or distinction, or for the acquisition of learning, or for promoting the best interests of society, and how small will be the difference with the world whether those plans are executed or not. For if they were not immoderately devoted to their worldly pursuits, they would not fear that these would be too much depreciated when brought into comparison with eternity; and if they had not too high an opinion of their own importance to the world, they would not need the stimulus of great expectations to keep them at work. True it is, that the views I have presented may dishearten men of this character. But this is just what they need. They have got too exalted

notions of themselves and their plans: and selfishness and ambition are a secret leaven in their hearts which needs to be rooted out. I have no fears that the views I have presented will paralyze his efforts, who labors with a desire to please God. Such a man labors because God directs him to be diligent in business while at the same time he is fervent in spirit: and he is willing to leave it with God to determine whether his efforts shall meet with little or great success. He knows that it depends upon God whether he or his plans prove of any importance to the world, since in themselves both are of little consequence. He knows that even though his name and every vestige of his memory should be blotted from the earth, yet the effects of his labors on human happiness and salvation, if he has done his duty, will remain to the end of time; and he looks not for his reward in the plaudits of future generations, but in the approbation of his final judge. Such a man will not fear that he shall be discouraged by too low an opinion of himself or of the world. For even with him, and how much more with others, the danger is all the other way: and in spite of all that I have said, and a thousand others have said, probably every individual of this audience will think more highly of himself and of his plans and importance than he ought to think: so that when sickness comes, he will be astonished at the delusion that has been so long practised upon him.

7. *In the seventh place, sickness sometimes affords delightful and vivid anticipations of the Christian's everlasting rest.*

Sickness may produce this effect in two ways. In the first place, it may cause so much suffering as to make the repose of heaven seem doubly sweet and excite strong desires to enter upon its enjoyment. In the second place, by bringing eternity near and cutting off worldly prospects, it may awaken into lively exercise the Christian's complacency in eternal scenes and fill his soul with peace and joy. In the first case, where present suffering is contrasted with future rest, the joyful anticipation of heaven which results, may exist without affording any evidence of vigorous piety or unusual preparation for death. Perhaps I cannot better illustrate this part of the subject, than by presenting you in detail the experience of an individual, who was brought low by sickness; though I am not without fears, lest the recital which he has given, should awaken more of philosophical speculation than of pious feeling.

During the severest part of his sickness he experienced great pleasure from casting his eye over the beautiful landscape that surrounded him, and especially in watching the glorious tints of the opening morning and the closing day. And through the mercy of God disease did not at any time bring the least cloud over his mind: yet both the mind and the brain were weak, and

easily affected : and he noticed from day to day a curious optical illusion, by which almost every irregular object on which he cast his eye, was made to assume a resemblance to the human countenance seen in profile. One day he had lain for hours under the operation of a painful application, which was so irritating, that for a moment his brain seemed ready to turn, and his mind to lose its balance. He directed a cooling application to his forehead, whose soothing influence was so great, that almost in a moment the pain and excitement subsided as if by magic, and a delightful calm succeeded in all his bodily and mental powers. At that moment he turned his eyes upon the landscape abroad, and there too, all was calmness and peace. Not a breath seemed to be stirring in heaven or earth. Above the eastern hills there lay in calm majesty a broad belt of clouds, which the rays of the setting sun had tinged with purple and gold, while above them the clear blue sky looked smiling down. To the south a mountain ridge lay stretched out in the same sober grandeur, with its indented top reposing against the heavens. It was a Saturday's sunset : the hour, when according to his education and conviction, the sabbath begins. Who does not see that such a scene as this must have powerfully affected his mind, corresponding as it did with the quiet which had there just taken the place of protracted suffering ! Oh what an emblem of heavenly rest did it present to his fancy ! How could he but feel that he

stood on the verge of eternity, and could look across the separating line between this and the future world, and catch a glimpse of the calm and the joy of heaven! When he turned his thoughts backward, how dreary and painful did his path appear while disease had been dragging him over a rough and perilous road. Or when his vision extended still farther backward, he saw inscribed upon the toilsome labor of years, vanity and vexation of spirit. Could he now return and tread again that same dreary path? Probably he had already passed over the most perilous and trying part of the dark passage that leads from this into the eternal world, and drank already the bitterest part of the fatal cup. A few more pains and nature, already nearly worn out, would give over the contest, and the dark valley be all passed through, and the glory, of which the emblem was before him, would be reality. Surely selfishness itself, if not wholly destitute of a hope of heaven, would be drawn strongly onward in circumstances like these.

But this was not all. While thoughts like these were passing through his mind, he chanced to look through the window of his apartment in such a direction that the sight fell upon the entangled yet graceful branches of a venerable elm, that stood at some distance. These boughs appeared to rest against the beautiful purple cloud that lay so calmly along the eastern horizon; and by the curious optical illusion

already mentioned, they formed the distinct outlines of a large group of noble human countenances, sketched upon the clouds. He saw in a moment that it was an illusion: for it was only in one particular spot that he could perceive the least resemblance to a human countenance; and by changing his position a little, he could destroy the illusion: but the same appearance returned as often as he resumed his original position, and precisely the same countenances. They all appeared calm, dignified and happy—in perfect keeping with the whole scene, nor could he, by any change of position, produce the least distortion of a feature, or change at all the calm and happy expression that played upon them all. It was not exactly a smile; but a mixture of happiness, love and dignity, beaming from their faces. He distinctly recognized in the group the features of several Christian acquaintances, who had long since gone to their reward, and among them those of his own father.

Now although this individual was not for one moment deceived as to the true nature of this illusion—although he knew then, as well as at any time afterwards, that he saw nothing but the branches of a tree with a cloud beyond—yet who does not see that such a vision at such a moment must greatly heighten the effect of all the other circumstances? Was the scene an emblem of heavenly rest? Here too could he see departed friends and venerable forms of other Chris-

tians, by their winning looks, inviting him to come and participate in their pure and eternal joys. True it was an illusion of the senses: but it was a lively emblem of the reality: and therefore he might lawfully gaze and muse upon it, and give himself up to be borne along by its exciting power. Is it strange, therefore, if while under such an influence, the only thought that could make him wish to return again to mingle in worldly pursuits, was the image of a destitute family, struggling alone and without experience against a selfish and overbearing world! Is it strange, that he could adopt as his own, the language of Paul: *I am in a strait betwixt two; having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better?* How could he in such an hour but feel how empty and unsatisfying is this world; and how could his desires but be borne onward and upward by a strong impulse towards the pure and peaceful rest of heaven!

I have spoken of another kind of delightful anticipation of heavenly rest, called into exercise by sickness and resulting from habitual complacency in holy objects. The man, who when in health has made God his portion, and mused upon his character as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, and upon all the great truths of revelation until a delightful complacency in them has taken firm hold of his heart and influenced his life, will find that complacency increased by sickness, because this takes out of his way many a hindrance—

throws the world behind his back, and brings him close to the margin of the celestial world. In a few days or hours perhaps, he will be in the midst of that glorious city, where holy objects alone will solicit his attention, and from whose golden streets he shall go no more out forever. And as we find our affections for home kindling anew as we approach the cherished spot, and begin to catch glimpses of well-remembered objects, so does the devoted Christian's heart glow with holy rapture, as sickness begins to remove the veil that hides eternal scenes, and he comes into a nearer view of the objects of long-cherished affection. It is this that has often made the Christian's bed of sickness a place of serenity and joy, instead of suffering, and made him exultingly triumph while nature was sinking under the strong arm of death. God throws in upon his oppressed spirit the bright light of eternity, and it brings with it a foretaste of heavenly joy. Death is thus disarmed of his sting, and is conquered in the very moment of his victory. Oh, this is a state of mind which it should be an object of high ambition with the Christian to attain: but which he only can secure who leads a life of devoted holiness.

I close the subject with a few inferences.

1. *This subject should excite those of us who have been recently exercised with sickness, to faithful self-examination.*

What have we actually learnt in this school of se-

vere discipline? Does any important religious truth remain impressed more deeply than before upon our minds? We have been permitted again to resume worldly pursuits: do we engage in them with the same spirit as before, or do we tread more carefully, as if upon more dangerous and treacherous ground? Does a sense of obligation for sparing mercy constrain us to consecrate ourselves more entirely to the glory of God? Do we feel the need of such consecration in order to be prepared for the next sickness, which we are now taught may come in an hour when we think not? Does the cross of Christ appear to us more precious than ever, and every other ground of support for eternity delusion and fallacy? Do we still feel so deeply the emptiness and illusory nature of mere worldly pursuits, that we can keep them in their proper place, that is, subordinate to the higher interests of the soul? Does the cause of the Redeemer seem to us more precious than formerly, and are we willing to make greater sacrifices to promote it? Especially do we more deeply realize the critical and alarming condition of our impenitent friends and acquaintance? Are our prayers for every good object more fervent, our faith stronger, and our humility deeper? Oh let us not rest till these questions are faithfully answered. We have been under faithful discipline: and if it has not softened our hearts, it must have hardened them at a fearful rate. It may be lawful for us to pray that

we may be preserved from future sickness: but we ought to fear still more, lest God should utter concerning us the fearful interrogatory, *Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more.* The most dreadful judgment which God ever brings upon a man in this world, is to bestow upon him, while his heart is unreconciled, uninterrupted health and prosperity.

2. *The subject shows us the importance of attaining to eminent holiness.*

This alone can sustain a man with certainty when sickness brings death near. As it is an easy matter to construct a vessel or find a pilot that shall be safe and sufficient when the sea is open and calm, so mere philosophy, or morality, or a speculative adoption of Christianity, or self-righteousness, will seem abundantly sufficient while we are in health and prosperity: but when the mountain billows begin to roll over us, and the deep yawns beneath us, and the fatal breakers are before us, one only vessel can outride the storm, one only pilot can guide it through in safety. That holiness which makes Christ the Alpha and Omega, which is the fruit of God's Spirit, and which has become vigorous by long exercise, is alone sufficient for such an hour. And never yet has that holiness failed a man in that dark passage where every other refuge fails. But this is not the acquisition of an hour, a week or a month. It is the fruit alone of long disci-

pline in the school of Christ—the reward of patient and persevering labor in his service. He who has neglected that service, or lingered in the Christian race, may cry in agony of spirit after this holiness, when he sees his perishing need of it. But man cannot and God will not answer his prayer. Oh, it is only in the season of health that so rich a boon can be acquired.

3. *The subject shows in what a world of delusive shadows we live.*

Surely, says the Psalmist, every man walketh in a vain show. And yet we none of us feel it until we come so near to eternity that its brighter light dissipates the shadow that surrounds us, and the rainbow hues that were painted upon it disappear. Says the Psalmist in another place, as a dream when one awaketh, so O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image—that is, the delusive shadow which the men are pursuing who neglect his service. When sickness or any other severe calamity overtakes them, their brightest visions vanish like a dream when one awakes. Indeed, who has not sometimes felt as if the prophet's language respecting one delusion would apply to every mere worldly pursuit? It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth and behold he eateth: but he awaketh and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite.

I would not thus hold up the dark side of human life, did I not know that until men see and feel its vanity, they will not seek more substantial treasures: did I not know also, that no man can learn how to enjoy this world, until he has learnt its emptiness and vanity. And did I not know also, that even when we think the most diminutively of this world, we shall still estimate it too highly as compared with eternity, and love it too well.

4. *The subject shows us how overwhelming will be the disappointment of those whose last sickness finds them entirely unprepared for death.*

The human heart is never utterly miserable while it can find something on which to rest even the feeblest hope. Such supports unconverted men do find all along their path, until the last sickness comes. Then they find themselves at once suspended by a failing thread over the blackness of eternal darkness. They look around in utter amazement to find that every refuge in which they have trusted has vanished, and a burning sense of utter ruin withers all their spirits. In the strong language of revelation, *how are they brought into desolation as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors.* But why should I draw out the painful picture? For well I know that once, amid the buoyancy of youth and health, and the delusions of a sceptical spirit, although entirely unprepared for death, I should have listened to such a representation

of my condition, either with entire indifference, or secret contempt. And why should I hope that these representations will make any better impression on those who hear me, whose hearts have never felt the power of converting grace. Alas, I dare not hope that they will realize their dangerous condition, unless that grace be given them, or sickness shall make them the subjects of that terrible experiment which I have described. God grant them the former! God save them from the agony of the latter!

5. *Finally, how delightful is it to look forward to that world, where sin, sickness and death, shall never enter!*

In this world we sicken and die because we have sinned: *for by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* But in a future world, because no sin will be there, sickness and death will be excluded. Here the chilling thought often comes over the mind, that the last sickness may be near, when many a tie of affection must be violently sundered, and many a fond farewell choke the utterance. We shrink instinctively from that unknown agony which may seize us as we engage alone in the mortal conflict. But when the Christian's faith lifts up the veil and looks a little beyond, a sinless and immortal home opens to her view. Already she sees gathered there a mighty army of the redeemed, once sinful, sickly and mortal, but now guarded from all

their former foes by more than impregnable ramparts—by the oath and promise of God. There in the arms of everlasting love, the believer sees many a dear Christian friend, who has safely passed the dark valley, and forgotten his fears and sufferings in the security, the love, and the joy of heaven. No raging heat, no chilling cold, no evening's damp, no poisonous drink, or poisonous food, and no warring passions in that pure world, can stir up disease in the newly organized body, the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Oh how bright are the golden streets of that celestial city—and her gates of pearl, and her foundations of precious gems! And how pure is that river of the water of life, which proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb! How delicious the *twelve manner of fruits*, borne by the trees of life which line that river's banks, and overshadow those streets! *And no night is there: and the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And God has wiped away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.* Oh, when faith and hope can gaze upon such a vision as this, how does the holy heart sigh for a release from her bondage to the world, which, like a pirate,

has bound her to the oar in a distant and a stormy sea !

But faint not, heir of heaven :—a moment bear
Thy bonds, nor fear the storms that round thee rise.
Thy Father, thy Almighty Friend on high,
Looks down and sees thee struggling mid the deep,
And will conduct thee safe from final wreck.
Soon shall thy spirit, from its bondage freed,
On angel's wings borne joyous o'er the waves,
Regain those shores of light, whose fruits and streams
Are life and joy ; where day eternal shines ;
Where love ineffable, immortal, reigns.

EXTRACTS.

Death the King of Terrors.

A holy man, in speaking of death, styles it, with a great deal of elegance and propriety, **THE KING OF TERRORS**, Job xviii. 14; that is to say, the most terrible thing in the world. Nor indeed is there anything that presents itself to our imagination, which bears a more formidable aspect. It is possible to escape the edge of the sword, to stop the mouths of lions, and to quench the rage of fire; but when death once shoots at us the envenomed arrows, of which his quiver is full, when it opens its infernal throat, and vomits forth its devouring flames, it is utterly impossible for us to guard against its fury.

There are a number of warlike inventions wherewith to oppose the attempts of the most powerful and implacable enemy; but neither the stratagems of the greatest captains, the most regular fortifications, nor the most victorious and triumphant armies, can withstand a single moment the approaches of death. It pierces, in an instant, through the strongest bulwarks, the thickest walls, and the most solid towers. It leaps over the widest ditches, the highest forts, and the most inaccessible rocks. It blows down the strongest barricadoes, and laughs at all our military intrenchments; everywhere it finds the weakness of our armor, and, through the best tempered breast-

plate, strikes the proudest heart. In the most solitary retirement it comes upon us, and snatches us from the midst of the most faithful and vigilant guards. In short, there is nothing either in nature or art, which can protect us from its cruel and insatiable hands.

There are none so barbarous but are sometimes overcome by the prayers and tears of such as prostrate themselves to implore mercy and compassion; and even those who have the least sense of humanity commonly spare the weakest sex and age. But unmerciful death has no more respect to such as humble themselves, than to those who resist. It regards not the tears of infants sucking at the breast, but plucks them from the bosoms of their tender mothers, and dashes them in pieces before their eyes. It mocks at the lamentations of the fair and lovely, and delights to trample upon their enchanting beauties. It stops its ears to the supplications of trembling old age, and takes a pride in casting to the ground those venerable oaks which have been so long rooted in the world.

In the day of battle, when princes or generals of an army are taken prisoners, they are treated in a different manner from common soldiers; but inexorable death, who is blind to all distinctions, treads under foot, with the same haughtiness, the prince and the subject, the master and the servant, the nobleman and the vassal, the rich Dives and the beggar Lazarus. It blows out with the same blast, the most shining luminaries, and the most obscure lamps. It has no more respect for the crowns of kings, the pope's triple crown, and the cardinal's hat, than for the shepherd's crook, or the slave's chains. Sooner or later it heaps them all together in the same dark and

loathsome prison, and in the same mortar reduces them to dust.

There is no war so furious and cruel, but what admits of some days, or at least some hours of truce, and even the most inhuman minds are at last weary of their conquests, and cloyed with shedding blood. But insatiable death never cries, *It is enough*. At every hour and moment it mows down whole nations and kindreds. The flesh of all the animals that have lived and died during the space of more than six thousand years, hath not been able to glut the ravenous hunger of this devouring monster.

Drelincourt.

The Terrors of Death.

The terrors of death may be reduced to three main points: first, it is accompanied, in general, with extreme pain;—secondly, it separates the dearest friends and connections;—thirdly, it carries the soul to be sentenced by an Almighty Judge, and devotes it to exist thenceforth in an unknown and inconceivable state of being. It is on account of one or other, or of all these things, that death is to be dreaded; and the great object of preparation is, first, to prevent the soul from sinking under the trial to which it will be exposed; and, secondly, to save it from the danger to which death leads after it has wrought its work upon the sinking frame.

To live in fear of death is a species of bondage from which every wise man would wish to free himself. It weakens resolutions; it destroys tranquillity; it prevents the growth of hope; it mocks at happiness, and it abases

thought. He who shakes at the idea of death, has no mastery over either his feelings or his determinations; and thus, the first step to be taken in the pursuit of wisdom, in the acquisition of virtuous habits, is to overcome the dread of death. And how is this to be done? Can the body learn to despise pain? Are the nerves to be deprived of their susceptibility of agony? Are the limbs, writhing with the anguish of acute suffering, to be told not to ache? No! we must leave death, with its pains and agonies, in possession of the body. The gospel does not teach us to propound idle promises; we must say nothing on this subject which we might have to contradict, when we come to try the value and the truth of it on the bed of final suffering. Then again, will it not be hard to feel ourselves sinking from the fond embrace of friends and dear relations? To know that the effort will be soon vain, to keep our eyes open to the watchful glance of love—to the tearful smiles that remind the heart of all past days and scenes of tenderness? Will it not wring from the bosom all its strength, to bid farewell: to press the outstretched hand for the last time; and with thoughts striving at composure, to contemplate those who are dearest to us left in the world, perhaps unfriended, but at all events unloved as by us? What say you to these questions? exclaims human nature—and human nature, in the exercise of its best attributes. Is not death an unbinding of the holiest ties? Does it not separate the parent from the child, the child from its parent? Are not the brightest, the purest hopes, blighted at its approach? And is not the heart which has many affections, to look for its arrival as an evil to which no other can be compared, and

which admits of no counteraction—no alleviation? We wish not, as we said before, to give a varnished, or flattering view of the subject we are upon. Death is the blight of human affections: it does separate the dearest friends; and the hour of parting is more trying to the spirit of man than the season of direst suffering.

Then, in the next place, death conveys the soul into the presence of the Almighty Father of spirits, and consigns it to a new, to an untried, and undescribable state of being. This is a source of fear which every hour almost of human existence serves to augment; and when the last arrives, the soul has the whole sum of their evidence against it; the same witnesses, and the same evidence serving the double purpose of proving to it the certain existence and justice of God, and the terrible extent of its own sinfulness. Darkness becomes visible to the eye of death: futurity, with its vast heights and depths, grows into being before it: the despised calls of heaven; the covenant with the world and with hell, subscribed, but forgotten, presses upon the quickening apprehension. A doubt respecting eternity and judgment would be worth an empire now; but doubt never visits the soul-conscious of its sin: confidence in the system which satisfied it in life is sought for, but reason and conscience mock the effort: the fine discourse respecting the tolerance of God—the exquisite arguments by which the neglect of Christ's own ordinances and commands were excused, are brought back to the memory, and by whom? Why, by Satan himself, who loves to see the dying man writhe with bitter sorrow at his discovered folly. But dragged by the strength of death to the very brink of eternity; and becoming

every moment more conscious that it will soon feel the eye of God—the awful eye of God, the light of heaven,—in its terror bent upon it, the soul at last finds all its growing apprehensions realized; and before its dreadful plunge into the boundless ocean of futurity, owns to itself the justice of the divine proceedings. It is the possibility that such may be his fate that fills every human being with a deeper dread of death than that derived from any other consideration. The soul left to itself is full of this fear; and were it not for the distractions of the world, it would be constrained, by inward terror, either to seek its final fate at once, or to flee for refuge from its sufferings into the sanctuary of the gospel. But men, aided by Satan, continue to keep down the rising complaints of their souls: they cannot help their beginning the warning; they refuse to hear it out, and thus the inward voice of conscience,—that sense of the soul by which it holds communication with heaven, is habitually despised. With the slightest thought, however, of death, it regains the full sense of its responsibility, and becomes aware, as if by a distinct revelation, of the certainty of judgment, and of the circle within circle of manifold mysteries in which it will be involved.

Stebbing's Introduction to Baxter's Dying Thoughts.

Assaults of Death.

The taper of our life is no sooner lighted, but Satan sends forth his blasts from every quarter to extinguish it. This poor dwelling is scarcely built, but death labors to

destroy it, and besiege it on every side; we perceive not its approaches, though by the help of time, it undermines us, and batters us to pieces with a variety of diseases, and a train of unforeseen accidents. Every day it makes some breach, and displaces some part of this building. But if death on one hand labors to demolish, we, on the other, labor to repair; and as those who built the walls of Jerusalem, held in one hand the trowel, and in the other a sword, to defend themselves, Neh. iv. 17, in the same manner we guard ourselves, as well as we are able, against the assaults of death; and not only endeavor to preserve this earthly tenement, that God hath set us for a term, and to keep that in repair, but also in the very face of death, when it calls us to the combat, we advance our spiritual building, and labor to bring it to perfection; so that we say with the apostle St. Paul, *Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day*, 2 Cor. iv. 16.

To speak properly, death attacks nothing but the outward man; for as to our principal fort and chief bulwark, it fears neither mine, nor assault; for it is raised above the heavens, and built upon the rock of eternity: it cannot be battered; for as neither thunder, hail, nor tempest can prejudice the sun-beams, because they are of a celestial nature, so all the fury of the world, all the powers of hell, and the rage of death, can never hurt the soul, which is of a spiritual and immortal nature. This fortress can never be famished; for God rains upon it manna from heaven; and from the rock upon which it is built, there flows a stream of living waters, that rise to everlasting life. In a word, as the serpent creeps only upon the dust,

so death has no power but upon the earthly part of God's children; whence our Lord Jesus Christ admonishes his apostles, *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul*, Matt. x. 28.

At the moment of the soul's separation from the body, death seems to have a great advantage over us; but all things considered, we shall find, that he triumphs without a cause, and that he hath no reason to boast of the victory. When a valiant captain marches, with his sword in hand, out of a town that is almost destroyed, to throw himself into another that is more secure and better fortified, we say, that he has abandoned the place, and not that he is overcome. Thus when the wretched body falls in ruins, and our soul departs, well armed with faith and hope, to possess herself of a more secure abode in the highest heavens, no one can say, to speak properly, that the Christian is overcome. As it fares with those who sail upon the sea, when a violent tempest threatens them with shipwreck, they think themselves happy, if, by leaving their vessels to the mercy of the waves, they can escape with their lives and riches. Thus it is with us who sail upon the tempestuous sea of this world; when death raises his most cruel storms, we think ourselves happy if we can leave this miserable body, which is, as it were, a ship to the soul, and escape with our spiritual life and heavenly treasures. Therefore we may say to the faithful, that are affrighted when death threatens to drown them in its depths, as St. Paul to the ship's company, who trembled for fear, in the midst of the waves of an enraged sea: Now, I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the

ship, Acts xxvii. 22. Nay, we can furnish them with yet stronger comforts; for these poor mariners lost their ship, without any hopes of ever recovering it; but we know that God will one day gather together all the pieces of the broken vessels of our bodies, and restore them to us in a much more perfect state.

Drelincourt.

The physical pains of Death overrated.

Man is by nature sensible of pain, and abhors suffering. Now, most persons are persuaded, that it is impossible to die without enduring great torment; therefore they are afraid of death, not so much for its own sake as for the evils that accompany it.

To banish out of the mind these ill-grounded fears and panic terrors, let us consider in the first place, that death is not so frightful and full of pain as is commonly imagined. The Holy Ghost calls it a *sleep*, and the Heathens themselves have styled *sleep, death's cousin-german, and the image of frozen death*. Now, sleep steals insensibly upon us; it gently charms our senses, and, with invisible fetters, softly binds and puts a stop to our most active faculties; so that, although we fall asleep every night, we know not how this happens to us. It is recorded of Socrates, one of the most famous of the ancient Heathens, that having drank poison, in obedience to the decree of the Athenian judges, when he felt the venom benumbing his senses, and death creeping into his veins, he declared, with a pleased and composed countenance, *That he had never swallowed anything more delicious in his life.* No

sleep can be imagined more sweet than the death of the ancient patriarchs. The Holy Scripture tells us, *That when Jacob had wote an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost,* Gen. xlix. 33. To the same purpose, it is said of king David, that when he had exhorted his son Solomon to fear God, and to do justice, *he slept with his fathers,* 1 Kings ii. 10. God extends the same mercy to many in these latter days, who die in discoursing of him, and calling upon his holy name. Their souls are not plucked from them by violence, but bid a willing adieu to the earth, and fly into heaven with a holy cheerfulness. The separation of such souls happens without pain, grief or bitterness. They are like a taper, that, without being disturbed by any blast of wind, expires of its own accord, when the wax that kept it alive, and nourished its flame, is totally spent. If you see some racked and tortured upon their death bed with sharp and exquisite pains, these are not properly the pains of death, but the last struggles and convulsions of life; for I cannot believe, that the moment of the separation of the soul from the body we feel any pain; because at that instant the senses are lulled asleep, and our body has no more strength or vigor to oppose the soul's departure.

Death is so far from being so frightful and full of pain as we commonly imagine, that, on the contrary, it is the very thing that puts an end to all our pain, and stops the course of our miseries; and I am persuaded, that the diseases that usually bring us to our graves, are not so grievous and full of pain, as many others that we endure whilst we live; such as the gout, for example, the stone in the

kidneys, or a cancer in the breast. For these are a rack on which we are hourly tortured, a wild beast that gnaws us continually, and a fire that consumes us without intermission.

Dredincourt.

Sources of the fear of Death.

In the first place, we think too seldom upon death, and meditate too little upon the misery and frailty of our poor decaying nature. We confess indeed with our lips, that our life is but a breath in our nostrils, a vapor that soon passes away, a shadow that quickly vanishes; but we flatter ourselves at the bottom of our hearts, and, with Herod, take a pleasure that men should look upon us as so many little gods, Acts xii. Because death approaches us, having its feet shod with wool, and without noise, we foolishly imaginé, that it will never come near us: like that wicked servant mentioned in the gospel, who, because the Lord delayed his coming, concluded that he would not come at all, Matt. xxiv. We suffer ourselves to be deluded by the flattering suggestions of our own corrupted flesh, and by the deceitful insinuations of the old serpent, that whispers to us, as to our first parents, *Ye shall not die*, Gen. iii. 4.

We all say, that death is inexorable, and that it is deaf, and hath no ears; nevertheless we live, for the most part, as if we had made a covenant with death, and were at agreement with the grave, Isa. xxviii; as if we were well assured that death was afar off, and that it would not

come of a long season. We trust in our youth, our vigor and our health, and persuade ourselves that we shall see all our acquaintance go before us, and when we follow them it would be at a great distance. We have in abhorrence everything that represents death unto us, or calls it to our remembrance; and if at any time its image comes in our way, we turn from it our eyes, and banish it from our thoughts, as a hideous dream, and a deceitful illusion. Death seizes upon us before we have so much as seriously reflected that we are mortal; therefore we tremble with horror, and are dismayed at the approaches of death; and are become like the Israelites, who trembled and fled before the face of the giant Goliath, because they were not accustomed to behold him.

3. We lay too much stress upon second causes; we look upon death as accidental, as a thing that happens by chance, and confine our considerations to the means that produce it; whereas we should be fully persuaded, that God hath not only determined and appointed death itself, but also all the causes and means which usually attend it. Hence we are perplexed and disquieted with a thousand vain and useless anxieties, and even tempted to murmur and repine against God. We curse the dart that pierces us, instead of adoring, in all humility, the hand from whence it came. In a word, whenever death comes upon us, we are ready to say to it, as the devils did to our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, *Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* Matt. viii. 29.

4. We are too deeply rooted here below; we are so fastened and attached to this world, that we would willingly abide here forever, and cannot bear the thought

that death will remove us. Our lusts have no bounds, and we often kill ourselves in pursuing the most worthless vanities. When we draw near the end of our mortal race, and our voyage of life is almost finished, we are the most solicitous to make large provisions of worldly vanities. We build stately houses and magnificent palaces when we should think of nothing but of building our tomb, and preparing our winding sheet. In short, we have so strong a passion for all the things of this life, that to separate us from them, is to pull out our hearts, and to tear in pieces our bowels. When death approaches our pillow, and offers to pull us from it, we are ready to say with the sluggard mentioned in the book of Proverbs, *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep*, ch. vi. 10. When our heavenly bridegroom knocks at the gate, we cannot persuade ourselves to leave our repose, any more than the spouse spoken of in the Canticles, ch. v. What, says the worldling, must I forever abandon my sumptuous palaces, my houses of pleasure, and my magnificent gardens? Must I leave this fine tapestry; these costly movables, and all these rare and precious ornaments, with which my halls, my chambers, and my closets are enriched? Must this cruel death degrade me so soon from all my offices and honors, and deprive me of the enjoyment of all these possessions and treasures? Must it snatch me in a moment from all my pleasures and delights? Must I be torn from the embraces of my beloved wife, the sight of my dear children, and the sweet society of my friends? And must I forever renounce the flattering services of my domestics? When we are in this wretched, unprepared state, it is no wonder

if death seems terrible to us, and if it causes us to feel all the sharpness of its sting. For as, when Absalom was hanged by the hair of the head on an oak in the forest, Joab took three darts, and thrust them through his heart, 2 Sam. xviii. ; so, when our affections are too much entangled with the world, and with vain expectations of earthly contentment; we are exposed, in the most miserable manner, to all the darts and violences of death.

5. "Another principal cause of the fear of death, is, a sinful life. We abandon ourselves to all the vice and debauchery of a dissolute age. We suffer ourselves to be seduced by bad company, and carried away by a torrent of pernicious customs. It is therefore no wonder if death appears terrible to us, because it comes against us armed with our own sins, and has for its harbingers the stings of our own consciences. Whence, do ye think, proceeded that horrible dismay which seized upon king Belshazzar, when he saw the hand writing upon the wall of his palace? Dan. v. It was because he had profaned the holy vessels of God's house, and was rioting in the company of lascivious women. Why did Felix tremble, when he heard St. Paul reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come? Acts xxiv. It was because he was a wicked man, given over to all manner of uncleanness and unjult living. Thus, because we profane the members of our body, which are, as it were, the vessels of God's sanctuary, and because our lives are wicked and disorderly, we cannot endure to hear the mention of death; and when it comes upon us, we are ready to say to it, as Felix did to St. Paul, *Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.* The love of sin and

the fear of death are like two sisters, who hold one another by the hand; or rather they are twins, that are born and die together. As the prophet Amos said to the Israelites of old, *You put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near*, Amos vi. 3. So we may say of the greatest part of the men of this age: you put as far from you as possibly you can, the day of death, and cause to come near unto you all manner of uncleanness, covetousness, ambition, pride, vanity, usury, rapine, violence, envy, hatred, and such like plagues of the soul. You not only cause these abominable vices to come near unto you; but, what is worse, you root them in your hearts, and foster them in your bowels. Certainly we may very well apply to all vicious and profane people, what the prophet Jeremiah said heretofore of the city of Jerusalem, *Her filthiness is in her skirts, she remembereth not her last end*, Lam. i. 9.

6. I have also remarked another defect; and that is, we distrust the providence of God, and know not how to place our confidence in His fatherly care; we have too good an opinion of ourselves, and of our own abilities; we cannot resolve to die, because we fancy ourselves to be of very great importance to the world, and that our death would make an irreparable breach in the church of God, the state, or our family.

7. Because the soul and body are joined together in so strict a union, we cannot imagine how they can be separated without the greatest and most exquisite pains. Nay, so great is our infidelity, that we cannot rely upon the promise which God hath given, *That he will succor us in our distress, and deliver us from all our troubles*.

Jacob's ladder that reaches up to the heaven may ravish us with admiration; but it seems very difficult to ascend. Paradise is rich, glorious, and abounds with the sweetest delights; but the gate too, it is straight, and all choked up with thorns.

8. I also conclude, that one of the chief reasons why we fear death, is, because we look upon God as a most severe judge, inflamed with anger and indignation, and armed with vengeance against us: whereas we should consider Him as a merciful father, full of the bowels of compassion and kindness. Every slave trembles at the sight of his lord; and there is no malefactor but is afraid when he appears before his judge, to be examined upon the rack. Then how can I, who am polluted with sin, and blackened with crimes, appear before that glorious throne, before which the seraphims cover their faces with their wings? Isa. vi. How shall I, that am but stubble, be able to endure the presence of that great avenging God, *who is a consuming fire*, Heb. xii. 29.

9. Another visible defect is, we do not embrace with a true and lively faith, the death and passion of our Lord and Savior. We all talk of Jesus Christ crucified; but we do not comprehend the divine virtue of his passion, nor feel its efficacy. We do not consider that his death hath rent asunder the veil that kept us from the heavenly sanctuary, and that his blood hath marked out for us the way to Paradise, and procured us an entrance into it.

10. To avoid the horror which thinking on the grave is apt to give us, we do not reflect, as we ought, that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ hath himself lain in the grave, and that he hath sanctified it with his holy and di-

vine presence. We do not engrave upon our minds, that it is just and reasonable that we should be conformable to Christ in his abasement, if we will have any part with him in his glory and exaltation.

11. Another cause, which nourishes in our souls the fear of death, is this, we look upon it as if it was in its full strength and vigor; whereas we should remember, that Jesus Christ hath overcome and disarmed it by his resurrection, and that we have nothing to do but to follow the glorious track of his victorious wheels, and fasten that furious beast to his triumphant chariot.

12. We do not consider enough, with a serious and religious attention, that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is not only risen from the grave victorious and triumphant, but that he is also ascended into the highest heavens, as our forerunner, to prepare a place for us; and that by departing out of our miserable bodies, we follow the footsteps of our glorious Redeemer, to go and reap with him, the immortal fruits of his ineffable victories.

13. We confine ourselves too much to the contemplation of our frail, corrupt and mortal nature; and we seldom enter into this most necessary meditation, that by the Holy Spirit we are nearly and inseparably united to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life, and the Fountain of Light; and that we have already in us the seeds of blessedness, of glory and immortality.

14. As the children of Israel murmured in the desert against Moses, and longed to be again in Egypt, forgetting the bitter slavery under which they had groined, their making of bricks, and the heat of the furnaces; and minding only the pleasures which they had lost, they dreamed

of nothing but the abundance of bread, the flesh-pots-cucumbers, onions, and other dainties with which they had so often satisfied their hunger : so we repine at death because we do not reflect upon the evils from which it delivers us ; we only think upon the vain delights and seeming advantages of which it deprives us.

15. We foolishly imagine that death destroys and reduces us to nothing ; and do not consider, that, without touching our essential part, it only takes from us sin, in which we were entangled, and breaks the rest of the chains of our spiritual bondage ; so that death is rather the death of sin, than of the faithful.

16. Another great error in us is, we do not lift up our minds to contemplate the glory prepared for us as soon as our souls shall have left our languishing bodies. Whatever face we may set upon the matter, we do not heartily believe in the felicities which God hath promised to all those that shall come into his presence. Sometimes, indeed, we think upon the joys of paradise ; but then it is a transient thought, that quickly passes through our souls, and takes no root ; inasmuch, that many, if mere shame did not restrain them, would be apt to cry out with the emperor Adrian, " My dearest soul, my little darling, the guest and companion of my body, whither art thou going ? "

17. Add to this, that we fix our attention, and dwell too much upon the rottenness and corruption that threatens the body ; whereas we should, by faith, extend our views to the glorious resurrection that shall soon follow. Charming abode, the delightful host of my soul, must death snatch me from thee with so much violence ? Must I

part from thy loved and sweet society? Must I leave thee upon such hard and lamentable terms? That of so many honors which have been heaped upon thee, not so much as the shadow shall follow thee to the grave? That of all thy rich furniture and treasures, thou shalt bear away nothing but a winding sheet, a few boards, or at the most, some pounds of lead. After thou hast been clothed with so much magnificence, must thy covering at last be the worms? After thou hast lived so proudly in palaces gilded with gold, and perfumed with the sweetest odors, must thy abode be at last a stinking and loathsome sepulcher? Must these beautiful eyes lose their luster? These coral lips become pale? This golden mouth be stopped? And must this flesh, sustained with so much delicacy, rot, and become an abhorrence in the eyes of the world?

18. In the last place, we do not meditate as we ought, upon that fullness of bliss and glory which is prepared for us from the foundation of the world, and of which we shall have the full and perfect enjoyment, when Christ Jesus shall come from heaven, with his holy angels, to judge the quick and the dead. He shall then re-unite our souls and bodies, for all eternity, "That he may be glorified in his saints, and his wonders made manifest in all the faithful."

Drilincourt.

Death made familiar.

The most dreadful things are made familiar to us by custom. Soldiers who are raw and unexperienced, com-

monly tremble at the sight of the enemy, turn pale at the noise of the muskets, and fall to the ground half dead at the roaring of the cannon; but when their courage hath been once hardened by a long exercise, they will march to seek the enemy, even up to his entrenchment, and will go to the battle with as much gayety as to a feast or a triumph. Neither the tempestuous volleys of the small shot, nor the thunder and lightning of the ordnance, can make them wink their eyes, or cover their heads, and they themselves laugh at their former apprehensions. So the first notions of death commonly scare and terrify us; but when we have seriously meditated upon it, and take a nearer view of it, we not only cease to fear it, but boldly march up to its very intrenchments, and with an undaunted countenance behold it launch all its thunders, and let fly all its arrows. As they who are not accustomed to the sight of savage beasts dare not go near them, and can hardly look upon them without horror; but such as are used to live with, and caress them, can touch them without apprehension, and freely play with them: so they who never had the confidence to look death in the face, tremble, and are dismayed, as soon as they see it approach; but they who often meditate upon it, make it familiar to them, and can, without fear, put their hands into its mouth. Moses fled from before his rod, the first time it was turned into a serpent; but when he had taken courage to lay hold of it, and saw that it returned to its former shape, he was so far from flying from before it, or being afraid of it, that he employed it to a very happy use, and, by God's command, wrought with it many miracles. Thus it is with death; it frightens us at first, but if we once lay hold of

it with the hands of a true and lively faith, it will be so far from frightening us, that it will discover to us a new world of most excellent wonders.

Death, therefore, is so far from terrifying such as have made it familiar to them, that it fills them full of joy and comfort. As a child that looks upon his father, who is masked, is frightened, and begins to cry; but if he hath but the courage to pull off the vizard, and sees the loved countenance of his parent hid under that deformity, he not only ceases from weeping, and puts away his fears, but also leaps for joy, and embraces him: so, if we look with a timorous eye upon death's outward visage only, we are struck with horror at its hideous appearance; but if we take but the courage to lift up the deceitful vizard, we shall soon discover our heavenly Father, and leap with tears of joy to embrace him. As the apostles, when they saw at a distance, and in the night, Jesus Christ walking upon the sea, cried out for fear, supposing it had been a spirit; but when he drew nigh to them, and they heard his voice, they perceived him to be their Lord and Savior; and having received him into their ship, the tempest immediately ceased.—Thus if we look upon death at a distance, the blindness and ignorance with which we are surrounded will represent it to us as a frightful spirit; but if we take a nearer view of it, by the light of the gospel, we shall find it to be our salvation and our deliverance that approaches. All our fears will then be hushed, and our souls will return to our former calmness. In a word, as he that flies before his enemy increases his courage, and makes him the more eager and resolved in the pursuit; so, when death sees us tremble and turn pale at its

approach, it becomes the more insolent, and makes the more haste to devour us.

Drelincourt.

The penal character of Death.

Adam's sin brought death into the world, and man did die the same day in which he sinned, according as God had threatened. He did not die, as death is taken for a separation of soul and body; that is not death properly, but the ending of the last act of death; just as a man is said to be born, when he ceases any longer to be borne in his mother's womb: but whereas no man was intended a life long and happy, without sickness, sorrow or infelicity, and this life should be lived here or in a better place, and the passage from one to the other should have been easy, safe, and pleasant, now that man had sinned, he fell from that state, to a contrary.

If Adam had stood, he should not always have lived in this world; for this world was not a place capable of giving a dwelling to all those myriads of men and women which should have been born in all the generations of infinite and eternal ages: for so it must have been, if man had not died at all, nor yet have removed hence at all. Neither is it likely that man's innocence should have lost to him all possibility of going thither, where the duration is better, measured by a better time, subject to fewer changes, and which is now the reward of a returning virtue, which in all natural senses is less than innocence, save that it is heightened by Christ to an equality of acceptation with the state of innocence: but so it must have

been, that his innocence should have been punished with an eternal confinement to this state, which in all reason is the less perfect, the state of a traveler, not of one possessed of his inheritance. It is therefore certain, man should have changed his abode: for so did Enoch, and so did Elias, and so shall all the world, that shall be alive at the day of judgment; they shall not die, but they shall change their place and their abode, their duration and their state, and all this without death.

That death therefore, which God threatened to Adam, and which passed upon his posterity, is not the going out of this world, but the manner of going. If he had stayed in innocence, he should have gone hence placidly and fairly, without vexatious and afflictive circumstances; he should not have died by sickness, misfortune, defect, or unwillingness: but when he fell, then he began to die; the same day (so said God:) and that must needs be true; and therefore it must mean, that upon that very day, he fell into an evil and dangerous condition, a state of change and affliction; then death began, that is, the man began to die by a natural diminution, and aptness to disease and misery. His first state was, and should have been (so long as it lasted) a happy duration; his second was a daily and miserable change; and this was the dying properly.

This appears in the great instance of damnation, which, in the style of Scripture, is called eternal death: not because it kills, or ends the duration; it hath not so much good in it; but because it is a perpetual infelicity. Change or separation of soul and body is but accidental to death; death may be with or without either: but the formality,

the curse, and the sting of death, that is, misery, sorrow, fear, diminution, defect, anguish, dishonor, and whatsoever is miserable and afflictive in nature, that is death. Death is not an action, but a whole state and condition; and this was first brought in upon us by the offence of one man.

But this went no farther than thus to subject us to temporal infelicity. If it had proceeded so far as was supposed, man had been much more miserable; for man had more than one original sin in this sense: and though this death entered first upon us by Adam's fault, yet it came nearer unto us and increased upon us by the sins of more of our forefathers. For Adam's sin left us in strength enough to contend with human calamities for almost a thousand years together. But the sins of his children, our forefathers, took off from us half the strength about the time of the flood; and then from five hundred to two hundred and fifty, and from thence to one hundred and twenty, and from thence to threescore and ten; so often halving it till it is almost come to nothing. But by the sins of men in the several generations of the world, death, that is, misery and disease is hastened so upon us, that we are of a contemptible age: and because we are to die by suffering evils, and by the daily lessening of our strength and health; this death is so long a doing, that it makes so great a part of our short life useless and unservicable, that we have not time enough to get the perfection of a single manufacture, but ten or twelve generations of the world must go to the making up of one wise man, or one excellent art: and in the succession of those ages there happen so many changes and interruptions, so many wars

and violences, that seven years' fighting sets a whole kingdom back in learning and virtue, to which they were creeping, it may be, a whole age.

And thus also we do evil to our posterity, as Adam did to his, and Cham to his, and Eli to his, and all they to theirs, who by sins caused God to shorten the life and multiply the evils of mankind: and for this reason it is, the world grows worse and worse, because so many original sins are multiplied, and so many evils from parents descend upon the succeeding generations of men, that they derive nothing from us but original misery.

But he who restored the law of nature, did also restore us to the condition of nature: which, being violated by the introduction of death, Christ then repaired, when he suffered and overcame death for us; that is, he hath taken away the unhappiness of sickness, and the sting of death, and the dishonors of the grave, of dissolution and weakness, of decay and change, and hath turned them into acts of favor, into instances of comfort, into opportunities of virtue; Christ hath now knit them into rosaries and coronets; he hath put them into promises and rewards; he hath made them part of the portion of his elect: they are instruments, and earnest, and securities, and passages, to the greatest perfection of human nature, and the divine promises. So that it is possible for us now to be reconciled to sickness; it came by sin, and therefore it is cured when it is turned into virtue; and although it may have in it the uneasiness of labor, yet it will not be uneasy as sin, or the restlessness of a decomposed conscience. If, therefore, we can well manage our state of sickness, that

we may not fall by pain, as we usually do by pleasure, we need not fear; for no evil shall happen to us.

Jeremy Taylor.

God determines the time and manner of our Death.

As it is certain, therefore, that God hath numbered and set bounds to our days; so it is as certain, that he hath appointed, in his infinite wisdom, the means that shall convey us out of the world. If one dies in peace, and another is slain in war; if one expires in his bed, and another on the scaffold; if one perishes by famine, and another is cut off by the pestilence; if one is struck with thunder, and another torn to pieces by wild beasts; if one is drowned in water, and another consumed with fire; in short, whatever way the separation of the soul and body is effected, it is not without the express leave of our heavenly Father. Therefore, when we see the strangest accidents come to pass, and the most unexpected and tragic deaths before our eyes, we should call to mind the saying of the prophet Jeremiah, when he beheld the plundering and burning of Jerusalem, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good?" Lam. iii. 37, 38. We must remember with Isaiah, "That it is God that forms the light, and creates darkness; that makes peace, and creates evil," ch. xlv. 7.; and this exclamation of the prophet Amos should echo to the very bottom of our hearts, *Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?* ch. iii. 6; that is to

say, shall there be any kind of affliction or death in that place, which God hath not ordained, and directed by his wise providence? If the devil could not destroy Job's flock of sheep, Job i., nor hurry headlong into the sea the herd of swine, without His leave who holds him fast in chains, Matt. viii. 32; let us persuade ourselves, that all the powers of hell and the world cannot cause us to die by a violent death, if God hath not so appointed in the counsel of his wisdom. So that if at any time a prince or magistrate should say to us, in Pilate's language, "Knowest thou not, that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" John xix. 10; being armed with a holy confidence, let us answer him with our Savior, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above. Without the permission and will of God thou canst not take from me a hair of my head."

There are others who argue against this opinion still more grossly. If God, say they, hath numbered our days, and set bounds to our life, we labor in vain when we take so much pains about the sick, administer remedies to them, and pray to God for their recovery. In like manner, such may affirm, that it is in vain for us to eat or drink; and that it is foolish care to hinder mad people from casting themselves out of windows, or from swallowing down poison; because, let them act as they will, they shall live neither a longer nor a shorter time than God has ordained from all eternity. But however plausible this objection may appear, it is most absurd and ridiculous, and can only proceed from the extremest ignorance, or the most-provise malice; for it is self-evident, that when a man proposes to himself any end, he does not exclude the means

by which he is to attain it; on the contrary, he pre-supposes them, and connects them together by a necessary succession.

God had determined, in the counsel of his wisdom, to preserve the patriarch Jacob, and his children, during the grievous famine that prevailed for the space of seven years; but, to accomplish this gracious purpose, he sent Joseph into Egypt to gather together all the food of the seven years of plenty, Gen. xli. The prophet Isaiah had told Hezekiah, from God, that he should live yet fifteen years; nevertheless he commanded, that they should take a lump of dried figs, and lay it on the bile of that prince, 2 Kings xx. 7. It had been revealed to David, that he should reign over the house of Israel; and to confirm this oracle, he had been anointed by the hand of the prophet Samuel, 1 Sam. xvi. 13; but this hinders him not from seeking, by all possible means, to preserve himself from Saul's unjust persecution. And when the prophet Nathan assures him, that God will establish his posterity on the throne, and confirm them in it forever; this puts no stop to his prayers, nor abates the ardor of his devotion; on the contrary, it quickens and inflames it: therefore he thus poureth out his heart to God, *O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, thou hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house, therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee, &c.*, 2 Sam. vii. 27.

Our Lord Jesus Christ knew for certain all that should befall him; nevertheless we find him spending the greatest part of his nights in prayer; and when his life was in danger, he neglected not his lawful and innocent means

of preserving it. He said to his apostles *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered,* Matt. x. 29, 30. Yet this hinders him not from recommending to them this lesson, *When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another,* ver. 23.

God had determined to save St. Paul's life, and the lives of all those that sailed with him; and this was revealed to the apostle by an angel from heaven; nevertheless, when he saw the ship-men about to flee out of the ship, he said to the centurion, and to all the soldiers, *Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved,* Acts xxvii. 31. In short, the means are subordinate to the end, in such a manner, that to offer to divide them, as to suppose them contrary, is the height of folly and extravagance.

Hast thou lived a great many years in the world? Ascribe it not to the constitution of thy body, thy manner of living, nor to the skill of thy physicians; but remember that it is God who hath lengthened out thy days, and go and humbly bow at his feet thy hoary head; which the scripture styles, *a crown of glory,* Prov. xvi. 31.

Art thou threatened with death in the flower of thy youth? Be not afflicted at it, and let not the least word proceed out of thy mouth, but what is seasoned with the salt of true piety. Remember that it is God himself who thus cuts short the thread of thy life, and puts a period to thy mortal race. Thou hast as much reason to grieve that thou wast born so late, as that thou diest so soon. Instead of wasting thyself in useless complaints, and dashing an earthen vessel, newly formed, against the rock of

eternity, adore thy Creator, and return him thy hearty thanks, that he is graciously pleased to crown thee in the midst of thy course, and so bountiful as to bestow upon thee, the wages of the whole day, when thou hast labored but a few hours. He is very merciful to thee to transplant thee before thou hast felt the heat of the day and the scorching of the sun. It is the gale of his divine favor that drives thee thus swiftly into the haven of salvation. Think not, therefore, that God's calling thee away in the bloom of thy youth, is a testimony of his displeasure and hatred; for to hasten to make a person happy is no token of ill will. It may be, that God calls thee because he hath found some good thing in thee, as in Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, king of Israel, 1 Kings xiv. 13. Because he loves thee tenderly, and thou art greatly in his favor, he will remove thee from the approaching evils, as he did Josiah, one of the holiest and most religious princes that ever reigned, 2 Kings xxii. 20. Because thou walkest before him, and seekest to please him, by conforming thyself to his holy will, he will take thee up into his heavenly paradise, as he did Enoch, Gen. v. 24; for fear the temptations of the world should corrupt thy godly disposition, and thou shouldst be turned from the way of righteousness by the wicked artifices and suggestions of the enemy of thy salvation.

Drelincourt.

Life short and vain.

A man is a bubble (said the Greek proverb), which Lucian represents with advantages and its proper circum-

stances, to this purpose; saying, all the world is a storm, and men rise up in their several generations, like bubbles descending a *Jove pluvio*, from God and the dew of Heaven, from a tear and a drop of rain, from nature and Providence: and some of these instantly sink into the deluge of their first parent, and are hidden in a sheet of water, having had no other business in the world, but to be born that they may be able to die: others float up and down two or three turns, and suddenly disappear, and give their place to others: and they that live longest upon the face of the waters, are in perpetual motion, restless and uneasy: and, being crushed with the great drop of a cloud, sink into flatness and a froth: the change not being great it being hardly possible it should be more a nothing than it was before. ¶ So is every man: he is born in vanity and sin; he comes into the world like morning mush-rooms, soon thrusting up their heads into the air, and conversing with their kindred of the same production, and as soon they turn into dust and forgetfulness: some of them without any other interest in the affairs of the world, but that they made their parents a little glad and very sorrowful: others ride longer in the storm; it may be until seven years of vanity be expired and then peradventure the sun shines hot upon their heads, and they fall into the shades below, into the cover of death and darkness of the grave to hide them. But if the bubble stands the shock of a bigger drop, and outlives the chances of a child, then the young man dances like a bubble, empty and gay, and shines like a dove's neck, or the image of a rainbow, which hath no substance, and whose very imagery and colors are fantastical; and so he dances out the

gayety of his youth, and is all the while in a storm, and endures, only because he is not knocked on the head by a drop of bigger rain, or crushed by the pressure of a load of indigested meat, or quenched by the disorder of an ill placed humor: and to preserve a man alive in the midst of so many chances and hostilities, is as great a miracle as to create him; to preserve him from rushing into nothing, and at first to draw him up from nothing, were equally the issues of an Almighty power. And therefore the wise men of the world have contended, who shall best fit man's condition with words signifying his vanity, and short-abode. Homer calls a man "a leaf," the smallest, the weakest piece of a short-lived, unsteady plant. Pindar calls him "the dream of a shadow:" another "the dream of the shadow of smoke." But St. James spake by a more excellent Spirit, saying, "our life is but a vapor," viz. drawn from the earth by a celestial influence; made of smoke or the lighter parts of water, tossed with every wind, moved by the motion of a superior body, without virtue in itself, lifted up on high, or left below, according as it pleases the sun its foster father. But it is lighter yet. It is but appearing; a fantastic vapor, an apparition, nothing real; it is not so much as a mist, not the matter of a shower, nor substantial enough to make a cloud; but it is like Cassiopeia's chair, or Pelops' shoulder, or the circles of heaven *quærens*, for which you cannot have a word, that can signify a verier nothing. And yet the expression is one degree more made diminutive; a vapor, and *fantastical*, or a mere *appearance*, and this but for a little while neither; the

very dream, the phantasm disappears in a small time, "like the shadow that departeth; or like a tale, that is told; or as a dream, when one awaketh." A man is so vain, so unfixed, so perishing a creature, that he cannot long last in the scene of fancy: a man goes off, and is forgotten, like the dream of a distracted person. The sum of all is this: thou art a man, than whom there is not in the world any greater instance of heights and declensions, of lights and shadows, of misery and folly, of laughter and tears, of groans and death.

Jeremy Taylor.

Life long and valuable.

If we would have our life lengthened, let us begin betimes to live in the accounts of reason and sober councils, of religion and the spirit, and then we shall have no reason to complain that our abode on earth is so short: many men find it long enough, and indeed it is so to all senses. But when we spend in waste what God hath given us in plenty, when we sacrifice our youth to folly, our manhood to lust and rage, our old age to covetousness and irreligion, not beginning to live till we are to die, designing that time to virtue which indeed is infirm to everything and profitable to nothing; then we make our lives short, and lust runs away with all the vigorous and healthful part of it, and pride and animosity steal the manly portion, and craftiness and interest possess old age; we spend as if we had too much time, and knew not

what to do with it: we fear everything, like weak and silly mortals; and desire strangely and greedily, as if we were immortal: we complain our life is short, and yet we throw away much of it, and are weary of many of its parts: we complain the day is long, and the night is long, and we want company, and seek out arts to drive the time away, and then weep, because it is gone too soon. But so the treasure of the capital is but a small estate, when Cæsar comes to finger it, and pay with it all his legions: and the revenues of all Egypt and the eastern provinces was but a little sum, when they were to support the luxury of Mark Antony, and feed the riot of Cleopatra; but a thousand crowns is a vast proportion to be spent in the cottage of a frugal person, or to feed a hermit. Just so is our life: it is too short to serve the ambition of a haughty prince, or an usurping rebel; too little time to purchase great wealth, to satisfy the pride of a vainglorious fool, to trample upon all the enemies of our just or unjust interest: but for the obtaining virtue, for the purchase of sobriety and modesty, for the actions of religion, God gave us time sufficient, if we make the "outgoings of the morning and evening," that is, our infancy and old age, to be taken into the computations of a man.

Jeremy Taylor.

Mutability of Society.

Though we live too short a time to see the great changes which are carrying on in the universe, we live long enough to see many of its changes—and such changes

too as are best fitted to warn and teach us; even the changes which take place in society, made up of human beings as frail and as fugitive as ourselves. Death moves us away from many of those objects which are seen and temporal—but we live long enough to see many of these objects moved away from us—to see acquaintances falling every year—to see families broken up by the rough and unsparing hand of death—to see houses and neighborhoods shifting their inhabitants—to see a new race, and a new generation—and, whether in church or in market, to see unceasing changes in the faces of the people who repair to them. We know well, that there is a poetic melancholy inspired by such a picture as this, which is altogether unfruitful—and that totally apart from religion, a man may give way to the luxury of tears, when he thinks how friends drop away from him—how every year brings along with it some sad addition to the registers of death—how the kind and hospitable mansion is left without a tenant—and how, when you knock at a neighbor's door, you find that he who welcomed you, and made you happy, is no longer there. O that we could impress by all this, a salutary direction on the fears and on the consciences of individuals—that we could give them a living impression of that coming day, when they shall severally share in the general wreck of the species—when each of you shall be one of the many whom the men of the next generation may remember to have lived in yonder street, or labored in yonder manufactory—when they shall speak of you, just as you speak of the men of the former generation—who, when they died, had a few tears dropped over their memory, and for a few years will still continue

to be talked of. O could we succeed in giving you a real and living impression of all this; and then may we hope to carry the lesson of John the Baptist with energy to your fears, "Flee from the coming wrath." But there is something so very deceiving in the progress of time. Its progress is so gradual. To-day is so like yesterday that we are not sensible of its departure. We should make head against this delusion. We should turn to personal account every example of change or of mortality. When the clock strikes, it should remind you of the dying hour. When you hear the sound of the funeral bell, you should think, that in a little time it will perform for you the same office. When you wake in the morning, you should think that there has been the addition of another day to the life that is past, and the subtraction of another day from the remainder of your journey. When the shades of the evening fall around you, you should think of the steady and invariable progress of time—how the sun moves and moves till it will see you out—and how it will continue to move after you die, and see out your children's children to the latest generations. Every thing around us should impress the mutability of human affairs. An acquaintance dies—you will soon follow him. A family moves from the neighborhood—learn that the works of man are given to change. New families succeed—sit loose to the world, and withdraw your affections from its unstable and fluctuating interests. Time is rapid though we observe not its rapidity. The days that are past appear like the twinkling of a vision. The days that are to come will soon have a period, and will appear to have performed their course with equal rapidity.

ty. We talk of our fathers and our grandfathers, who figured their day in the theater of the world. In a little time, we will be the ancestors of a future age. Posterity will talk of us as of the men that are gone—and our remembrance will soon depart from the face of the country. When we attend the burial of an acquaintance, we see the bones of the men of other times—in a few years, our bodies will be mangled by the power of corruption, and be thrown up in loose and scattered fragments among the earth of the new made grave. When we wander among the tombstones of the church-yard, we can scarcely follow the mutilated letters that compose the simple story of the inhabitant below. In a little time, and the tomb that covers us will molder by the power of the seasons—and the letters will be eaten away—and the story that was to perpetuate our remembrance, will elude the gaze of some future inquirer.

Chalmers.

The Cup of Death sweetened.

The effect of this consideration is this, that the sadnesses of this life help to sweeten the bitter cup of death. For let our life be ever so long, if our strength were great as that of oxen and camels, if our sinews were strong as the cordage at the foot of an oak, if we were as fighting and prosperous people as Siccus Dentatus, who was on the prevailing side in a hundred and twenty battles, who had three hundred and twelve public rewards assigned him by his generals and princes for his valor and conduct in sieges and sharp encounters, and, besides all this, had

his share in nine triumphs; yet still the period shall be, that all this shall end in death, and all the people shall talk of us awhile, good or bad, according as we deserve, or as they please, and once they shall come to pass, that concerning every one of us it shall be told in the neighborhood that we are dead. This we are apt to think a sad story; but therefore let us help it with a sadder; for we therefore need not be much troubled, that we shall die, because we are not here in ease, nor do we dwell in a fair condition; but our days are full of sorrow and anguish, dishonored, and made unhappy with many sins, with a frail and foolish spirit, entangled with difficult cases of conscience, ensnared with passions, amazed with fears, full of cares, divided with curiosities and contradictory interests, made ziry and impertinent with vanities, abused with ignorance and prodigious errors, made ridiculous with a thousand weaknesses, worn away with labors, loaded with diseases, daily vexed with dangers and temptations, and in love with misery; we are weakened with delights, afflicted with want, with the evils of myself and of all my family, and with the sadnesses of my friends, and of all good men, even of the whole church; and therefore methinks we need not be troubled, that God is pleased to put an end to all these troubles, and to let them sit down in a natural period, which, if we please, may be to us the beginning of a better life. When the Prince of Persia wept because his army should all die in the revolution of an age, Artabanus told him, that they should all meet with evils so many and so great, that every man of them should wish himself dead long before that. Indeed it were a sad thing to be cut of the stone, and we

that are in health, tremble to think of it; but the man that is wearied with the disease, looks upon that sharpness as upon his cure and remedy: and as none need to have a tooth drawn, so none could well endure it, but he that hath felt the pain of it in his head: so is our life full of evils, that therefore death is no evil to them, that have felt the smart of this, or hope for the joys of a better.

Jeremy Taylor.

Death desirable because it delivers us from suffering.

Would you not laugh at a workman that should grieve at his task being finished, and the painful labor of the day over? Or at a traveler that should lament to see the end of his journey, after having traveled all day through briars and brambles, scorched by the burning heat of the sun, or pinched by the cold of a severe winter? Or at one that, having been tossed by the waves of a tempestuous sea, should weep at coming into the port, to see himself safe from the danger of shipwreck? Wretched man! who art afflicted and terrified at the approach of death, thou art far more foolish and extravagant than those of whom we speak; for the most painful labors of the workman, the grievous fatigues of the most wearisome journey, and the swelling waves of the most troubled sea, are nothing in comparison of the labors, misery and troubles of this languishing life.

You would not only think it folly and extravagance, but the very height of madness, in a prisoner that should sorrow for being delivered out of his noisome dungeon;

or in a galley slave that should be angry at being freed from his chains; or in an offender that should mourn when he is taken from the rack. What think ye? Is there less madness and extravagance in yourselves, when ye sorrow to see death deliver your souls from this miserable body, wherein it is imprisoned, dismissing it from the slavish employments of this unhappy age, more grievous and intolerable than that of the galleys, and freeing your souls from those bitter agonies, which are far more painful and racking than the most cruel tortures.

The patriarch Noah, when he went out of the ark that rested upon the mountains of Ararat, had not so much reason to praise God, and to offer up unto him the sacrifice of thanksgiving, as we have, when he is pleased to put an end to this deluge of evils and calamities, and to cause this floating life, or rather this living death, to rest upon Mount Sion.

The children of Israel sang songs of thanksgiving when they came out of Egypt, and saw themselves delivered from a bitter and cruel bondage, wherein they had been employed in gathering of stubble, and burning of brick, Exod. xv. ; but we have much more reason to rejoice, and to sing songs of triumph, when death takes us out of the world, where we suffer a kind of bondage, laboring in a thousand vanities, and enduring the scorching heat of ten thousand afflictions that consume us.

Thou burnest with indignation, because some of those inconstant people murmured to return again into Egypt, when they were on the borders of the promised land: but rather burn with indignation against thy own flesh, if it murmurs to return into the world when thou art at the

entrance of thy celestial Canaan. Joseph rejoiced when the king of Egypt sent to fetch him out of prison, Gen. xli. ; and have we not far greater cause to be joyful when God sends for our souls out of the prison of this world, and causeth them to leave the body, which to them is a kind of dungeon ?

If, therefore, it be without impatience or murmuring, I conceive we have a much stronger reason than the prophet Jonah to cry out, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me ; for it is better for me to die than to live, Jonah iv. 3 ; or to say with the prophet Elijah, It is enough ; now, O Lord, take away my life, 1 Kings xix. 4. Such a soul may, in a holy transport, safely breathe forth the prayer of David, the man after God's own heart, Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name : the righteous shall compass me about ; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me, Psal. cxlii. 7.

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Death desirable because it delivers us from sin.

Let us therefore conclude from hence, believing souls, that death is not to be feared as an evil, or a calamity, but that it is rather desirable as an advantage, and a blessing. For seeing that it is to be longed for, because it frees us from all the mischiefs and sufferings of the world ; we are rather to seek it with God's good leave, because it closeth our eyes, and conveys out of our sight all the sins and abominations that are in the world ; and because it stops our ears, and hinders us from hearing the impieties,

and the filthy discourses that infect the air. Since death is to be embraced with joy, because it delivers our bodies from the diseases that torment them, and our minds from the cares and displeasures that vex and afflict them, it deserves to be welcomed with greater expressions of gladness, because it delivers us from all remains of sin, and puts a period to our natural corruption: so that it is to be esteemed and looked upon, as the death and destruction of the old man, rather than the death of a true believer.

Sampson rejoiced in his death, because he knew, that in dying his mortal enemies should die also, and be destroyed with him. We have more cause to rejoice at our death, and to give God thanks at that time since in our dying, or rather in passing from death to life, we may see the destruction of all the dangerous enemies of our salvation, who are more dreadful to us than the Philistines were to Sampson. All the most cruel and barbarous men of the world are not so much to be feared, as the lusts of our filthy flesh, that put out the eyes of our understanding, that cause us to be the devil's sport, and to worship many false gods.

We commonly run out with haste from a place infected with the plague: and should we not make as much speed by our vows and prayers, to get out of the world, since vice is so infectious and universal all over it, that so many thousand souls are therewith miserably spoiled; since the world is a Babylon, where all manner of debauchery, vice and folly are mixed together: where injustice and impiety reign? Have you not greater cause to be transported with joy, when God delivers us from our woeful captivity, than the children of Israel had when it pleased him to call

them out of Babylon? Should they not sing to him, when the Lord brought them back, and restored them to Sion, who came from their captivity, we were as those that dream; then our mouths were full of laughter, and our tongues with songs of triumph?

In short, as the Lord Jesus, when he had restored Lazarus to life, and taken him out of his grave, had compassion on him, and could not see him any longer wrapped up in his winding sheet, and tied with a napkin; therefore he commanded, *Loose him, and let him go*: Thus this merciful Lord, who hath made us to be partakers of the first resurrection, and called our souls out of the noisome grave of our lusts, is moved with compassion for us, when he sees these wretched souls drag about them the relics of sin, and some remains of that corruption in which they were wrapped. Therefore he will cause them to hear his sweet and comfortable voice, *Loose them and let them go*. Let them go to the eternal mansions, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the glorious companies of angels, and to the church and congregation of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

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Christians should meet death with courage and joy.

My Christian friends, shall the poor Pagans, who never tasted of the heavenly gift, who were never partakers of the Holy Ghost, the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; shall the Heathen, I say, who had no such hope, and were without God in the

world, meet death with courage; and will you with all your superior advantages about you, the foretastes of happiness, and the foreseen beams of glory breaking forth, still hesitate concerning your departure from this world? Shall a Seneca, who had no other light to direct him than that of nature, and nothing better to support him than his own philosophy, cheerfully submit to death, and comfort his friends weeping around him; and shall Christians, who have been trained up under the tuition of eternal wisdom, shudder at the thought of their departure! Is it possible that such, who embrace by faith the glories and felicities prepared for them in a future life, should not be able to look upon death with courage and resolution; yea to leave the world with expressions of joy?

Shall a Socrates cheerfully drink up the poisonous portion which was prepared for him? And shall the Christian, animated by the Spirit of God, interested in the precious promises, and who has received the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, shrink under the apprehensions of sufferings and death? If there be anything bitter and distasteful in thy cup, O Christian, consider, it bears no comparison with that which Christ drank for thee; nay, suppose it were poisoned, yet thou hast proper and powerful antidotes prepared. Remember, thou art going to drink forever, of the water of life in the heavenly kingdom, where the first taste of the pure stream will remove all thy maladies, and make thee forget all past complaints. When death enters into the houses of Christians, it meanly becomes such to abandon themselves to sorrow, since they have an interest in Christ, who was crucified, but is now reigning and triumphing in heaven, and will there receive his redeemed ones to himself.

Moreover, since so many persons of different ages, sexes and circumstances in life, have desired death, only to be free from earthly evils and calamities; hath not the Christian infinitely greater reason to desire death (when it shall please the Almighty,) that he may enjoy the happy advantages of the heavenly life? How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures, for with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light, Psalm xxxvi. 7, 8, 9.

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The Conqueror of Death.

We read in the fifth chapter of the Revelations of St. John, that he wept bitterly, because no being in heaven and earth, nor under the earth, was able to open the book sealed with seven seals, that was in God's right hand. At that instant one of the twenty-four elders spake to him: "Weep not, behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals." Thus we have until now wept bitterly, because we could find nobody in the armies of Israel to encounter with that powerful monster, Death. But let us wipe our tears, and take good courage, my beloved; for this same Lion of the tribe of Judah is appointed to fight with this dreadful enemy: our victorious and triumphing David, who has torn in pieces the infernal Lion, bruised the ancient

serpent's head, and spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in his cross, vol. ii. 14: it is he that has undertaken this glorious combat; it was for that purpose that he left for awhile the throne of God the Father, and the company of his holy angels, 1 Sam. xvii. It was for that intent that he came into the camp and confusion of Israel. He hath not borrowed the weapons and assistance of the world, Heb. ii. All that he hath taken from us is our frail nature. But, "he hath armed himself with righteousness, as with a breast-plate, and hath put on the helmet of salvation. He hath clothed himself with vengeance as with a cloak; he hath trodden the wine-press and nobody hath assisted him," Isa. lix. lxiii. But his arm hath saved him, and his hand hath upheld him; as David cut off Goliath's head with his own sword, Jesus Christ hath overcome death by death. Like unto the strong Sampson, he hath destroyed all the enemies of his glory by his death, 1 Sam. xvii. He hath overcome, in dying, him who had the empire of death, that is, the devil, Heb. ii., and hath delivered them, "who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Then was fulfilled the saying of Hosea, "O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction," Hos. xiii. And that of Isaiah, "He will swallow death up in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away all tears from their faces, and the rebuke of his people shall be taken away from all the earth," Isa. xxv. 1 Tim. vi. This blessed prince, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who only hath immortality, and dwelleth in inaccessible light, hath destroyed death, and brought to light life and immortality by the gospel, 1 Tim. i.

"O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv.

This great God and Savior has perfectly redeemed us from eternal death as he himself teaches us in the gospel of St. John: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life," ch. v. 24. "I am the living bread, which came down from Heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever," ch. vi. 51. ver. 49. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead; this is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die," ch. xiii. "Verily, verily I say unto you, if a man keep my word he shall never taste of death. I am the resurrection and the life; he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die; and he that believeth in me, although he were dead yet shall he live," ch. xi.

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Detaching the Affections from the World.

Some miserable beggars are more loth to leave their rags, than sovereign princes to lay aside their purple. Such are more enslaved to their filth and indigence, than the greatest monarchs to the glory and splendor of their empires. Death takes as much pains to free men from a prison, and to set them at liberty from a dungeon, as to

drive them from a palace, or to pluck them down from a throne. The poor and necessitous who lodge upon the hard earth, make as much resistance as the rich, who are stretched upon the softest down. The unhappy slaves that row in the galleys, are as unwilling that death should loose them from their misery, as the most potent kings and emperors are to leave their sceptors and their crowns; and I am persuaded, that David was more ready to quit his kingdom, and all its treasures, than many poor wretches are to depart from their dunghills and their poverty. Some persons are tormented with the gout, the stone, and other grievous and acute diseases; nevertheless they more passionately desire to live than many who enjoy a perfect and vigorous health. Carnal and earthly souls are so much wedded to the world, that they feel a horrible regret, and an unspeakable anguish, when they are to depart from a body rotten and falling to pieces with old age; whereas others who are more spiritualized, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come, Heb. vi. 4, 5, depart most joyfully out of young and vigorous bodies, flourishing in their full beauty and strength.

We must not, therefore, remove our arms and legs out of the world, but our passions and affections. If God bestows his earthly blessings upon us, we are not to imitate the example of that extravagant philosopher, who cast into the sea his gold and precious stones, that he might not have the trouble to keep them, and who willfully threw them away, that he might not be any longer in the fear of losing them. But we must take heed that they cause us not to make shipwreck of our faith; and that we preserve

them not at the expense of our consciences. For the soul is far more precious than the body, and life is far more valuable than raiment, Matt. vi. 25. *Since God giveth us richly all things to enjoy*, 1 Tim. vi. 17, we should not show ourselves ungrateful to his goodness, rebels to his wise providence, and unjust and cruel to ourselves, churlishly to refuse the means of using and employing those blessings; *For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer*, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 2.

The honors and riches derived to us from our birth, or that we obtain by lawful and just methods, are to be numbered among the blessings of God; therefore Esther, who was but a poor stranger, received with joy as a favor from heaven, the imperial crown that was put on her head, and refused not to be the bride of the greatest monarch then living. Joseph readily embraced the power and dignity with which king Pharaoh invested him; and the prophet Daniel, not only accepted the honorable commands which were bestowed upon him by the king of Babylon, but likewise employed all his power and credit to raise his companions to places of trust, and the principal governments of that empire. God indeed put scepters into the hands of cruel and profane persons, such as Pharaoh, Ahab, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Herod, to teach us, that dominion is not the chief good of man, and that we must aim at a more excellent kingdom, and at a more lasting and solid happiness: but then he also places upon the throne men after his own heart, whom he cherishes as the apple of his eye, such as David, Solomon, Jehosh-

aphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, to teach us, that the fear of God and the expectation of an immortal crown, are not incompatible with the honors of this life, nor with worldly glory; for *Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8.

The riches of the earth are no more hurtful than its honors, unless it be by accident: they are highly useful and advantageous to such as employ them well, and dispose of them with a religious prudence: they are powerful helps to true piety, and excellent means to glorify God, and to exercise a virtuous compassion; nay, I may venture to call them the beauty and lustre of the zeal and charity of God's children. Riches, it is true, turn to evils, and are ill situated in the hands of a brutal and sordid wretch, such as Nabal; of a merciless and voluptuous person, such as the rich glutton in the gospel; of a treacherous and perfidious thief, such as Judas; of a thoughtless and debauched young man, such as the prodigal son. But then they are blessed both of heaven and earth, when they fall into the hands of a Joseph, who nourisheth therewith his father and all his kindred; of a David who employs them in offerings to Almighty God, in the sight of all the people; of a Solomon who builds therewith a magnificent temple; and of a Mary Magdalen, who bestows them, not in luxury and vanity, nor in curious trinkets, but to buy a box of precious ointment, which she pours on the head of the Savior of the world. They are blessings indeed, when such a one enjoys them as Cornelius the Centurion, who employs them in alms, the perfume whereof ascendeth up to the throne

of the God of mercies. In short, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the eternal wisdom of the Father, hath pronounced with his sacred lips, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35.

Saladin, the renowned Sultan of Egypt, hath left to posterity an illustrious testimony of the vanity of riches and worldly grandeur. For when he lay upon his death bed, he commanded that the winding sheet in which he was to be buried, should be carried publicly at the end of a lance, by a herald, who proclaimed with a loud voice, "Behold here is all that this great monarch carries away of all the treasures, glory, principalities and lordships which he possessed in the world."

What is still more afflicting, we know not who shall inherit the fruits of all our labors, which we possess with so much fear and restless avarice. Perhaps our greatest enemies, or, which is still worse, the enemies of God, shall clothe themselves with our spoils; and that which we have been gathering together for many years shall be squandered in a moment. Of this vanity and evil the royal Prophet complains in the 39th Psalm. Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

We must not forget that death is a kind of sleep; wherefore, in holy scripture, to die and to fall asleep are frequently to be understood in the same sense. Now as we find by experience, that we cannot fall asleep, unless we first banish from our pillow all thoughts of our worldly affairs; so it is altogether impossible for us to die com-

fortably, and in peace, unless we banish betimes from our hearts and affections all the foolish thoughts that disquiet us, and all the corroding cares that undermine and prey upon us.

To this purpose, we read in profane history, that when Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, had prepared a powerful army to march against the Romans, one of his counsellors, named Cyneas, spake to him in the following manner: *Sir, if it please God to grant us the victory over the Romans, what use shall we make of it?* The king answered, we will endeavor to conquer the rest of Italy; and when we shall have conquered Italy, replied Cyneas, how shall we employ ourselves next? We will then subdue Sicily, said the king. This prudent Cyneas continued to demand: And when we shall have subdued Sicily, what shall we do? Pyrrhus answered, We will pass over into Africa and take Carthage; and after that we may recover Macedonia, and give law to all Greece, without control. But, sir, replied Cyneas, when we shall get all into our possession, what shall we do then? The king answered with a smile, my friend, we will then repose ourselves, and spend our days in ease and pleasure. And what hinders us now, sir, from reposing ourselves, and taking our ease and pleasure, said this faithful minister to his prince, since we have already in our hands that which we are going to seek so far, with so much bloodshed and danger? We may apply this to ourselves; for we have, most of us, a long series of dependent designs, which cannot be accomplished during the lives of several men. We tremble, as if death had already caught us by the throat; and yet we

have as many desires to fulfil, as if we were immortal. We build and adorn our dwellings, as if we were never to leave them; and we may make as much provision as if we had command of a royal army. Let us therefore imitate the wise and prudent Cynae; let us ask ourselves for what purpose are these mighty designs? What end we propose to ourselves of all our labors, cares and watchings? What we aim at when we run through so many dangers, and endure so many inconveniences? Our souls without doubt, will answer us, that it is with an intent to repose ourselves at last, to live at ease, and enjoy the fruits of our labor. If so let us seize the present hour to enjoy that happiness and satisfaction, and not stay till death shall stretch us in our graves. Let us be contented with the goods that God has already bestowed upon us, and use them with thanksgiving. Miserable wretches that we are! why do we labor and torment ourselves for so many things, seeing there is only one thing needful, and that is piety, the fear of God, and the expectation of his eternal joys! Let us therefore choose that good part, which shall never be taken away from us, Luke. x. 42.

To conclude this discourse, since *we have here no continuing city, but that we seek for one to come*, Heb. xiii. 14; since we know not the hour when God will please to take us out of the world, to introduce us into his holy Jerusalem, let us take heed to ourselves, *lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day comes upon us unawares*, Luke xxi. 34. And as the apostles left their nets to follow Jesus Christ, Matt. iv.; so let us leave the

vain cares, the groundless fears, and the deceitful hopes, that entangle our souls, that when it shall please God to call us, we may be ready to answer his heavenly call. Let us accustom ourselves betimes to will what God will-eth, and to obey him without reluctance. Let us cast all our cares upon God, 2 Pet. v. 8, and rely upon his wise and Fatherly providence. Let us look with contempt upon the world, its vain pomps, and perishable riches; and esteem nothing upon the earth, nor aught that man is able to procure for us, in comparison of the blessed hope which we have in heaven, Tit. ii. 13; and the precious gift which God hath reserved for us, 2 Tim. ii. Let us prefer Job's dunghill and ashes to the proud throne and vast empire of Nebuchadrezzar. Let us esteem the beggary of poor Lazarus, more happy than the wanton abundance of the rich glutton; and let us engrave in our hearts this blessed saying of the Son of God, *What is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?* Luke ix. 25. Let us have always before our eyes the image of that rich worldling, who had heaped up many goods for himself, but was not rich in the sight of God. Let us remember what he said unto his soul, *Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,* Luke xii. 19; and let what God said unto him sound always in our ears, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?* Instead of contriving how to enlarge our barns and granaries, and to increase our revenues and treasures, let us endeavor to set bounds to our desires, and be content with such things as we have, Heb. xiii. 5. Seeing we

have but a breath in our nostrils, and that we are clothed with a mortal body, let us not entertain such distant designs, nor suffer our covetings to be immortal. Let us always, and in every place, be ready to put an end to our labors, and to lay the last stone on our building; or rather, let us be always in a disposition to loose the bands of this earthly tabernacle. Let us willingly break all the ties that attach us to this miserable world, that when death comes, it may have nothing to do but cut the last string, by which our soul is naturally united to this languishing body. Let our affections take root in heaven, *that where our treasure is, our hearts may be there also*, Matt. vi. 21. Let us not slumber with the foolish virgins, Matt. xxv; but having our loins girded about, and our lights burning, Luke xii. 35, let us be prepared at every moment, to go to meet our heavenly Spouse, and follow him into the marriage-chamber. Let us be like a ship at anchor, ready to sail with the first fair wind; or as a soldier, completely armed, that only waits for the day of battle, and holds himself always in readiness to mount his horse, that he may march into the field at the first sound of the trumpet. Let us send betimes all our most precious jewels into the most glorious palace of eternity, that our baggage being already gone, we may have nothing to do but to take our last farewell. If any consideration of flesh and blood stops us, let us break asunder all these bands by the strength of Christ, the Captain of our salvation; that is to say, by the virtue of God's Holy Spirit, which he hath been graciously pleased to vouchsafe us. And if the persons whom we love and cherish the most tenderly, or even those whom we es-

teen the most, or those to whom we owe the greatest reverence and honor, should labor to estrange our affections, and deliver us from our holy resolution, by mean and earthly considerations, let us say to them, in the words of our Savior to Mary Magdalen, *Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father*, John xx. 17. Stop not my course, for I have already hold of the prize, the promised crown. In short as the father of the faithful loosed the ram, whose horns were caught in the thicket, and offered it up for a burnt-offering unto God, Gen xxii; so let us free our minds from all worldly cares and carnal affections; let us offer them up to God as a burnt-offering of a sweet smelling savor, as a *holy and living sacrifice*, Rom. xii. 1; which burns in the ardent flames of zeal and charity, yet is never consumed.

When the Christian is thus prepared he will not fear death, but will say to it with an assured countenance,—*Come when thou wilt, O death, I desire no delay, for it is a long time since I have settled all my affairs, and have waited for thee with intrepidity. The principal part of myself is not here below; my heart is already ravished into heaven, where God expects me with open arms. Therefore, notwithstanding the fearful darkness that surrounds me, and the design that thou hast to destroy me, I will follow thee as courageously, and with as much joy, as St. Peter did the angel of light that threw open before him the gates of his prison*, Acts xii.

Drolincourt.

God will take care of surviving dependents and friends.

You also who are afraid to leave behind you an afflict-

ed and desolate widow, come and learn this lesson, to rely upon the goodness and tender compassions of the Father of Mercies, *who comforteth us in all our tribulations*, 2 Cor. i. 4; and *is nigh unto all them that call upon him*, Psalm cxlv. 18. He favors the widow in such an especial manner, that he calls himself *the judge of the widows*, Psalm lxxviii. 5; that is, the guardian of their innocence, the protector of their right, the severe revenger of the wrongs that are offered them. Therefore, in another place, he expressly tells us, *that he established the border of the widow*, Prov. xv. 25. If Job *caused the widow's heart to sing for joy*, Job xxix. 13; how much more shall God fill her heart with ravishing delights, with the sweet and effectual consolations of his Holy Spirit? I speak not of those foolish widows who mind nothing but worldly pleasures and carnal pastimes, who run into all the folleries of the age, and are dead whilst they live, 1 Tim. v. 6; but I speak of those wise widows, who being left desolate, trust in God, and continue in supplications and prayer night and day.

Our great God and merciful Lord, hath not only declared in general, that he is the judge, protector and comforter of widows, but he hath also been pleased to extend unto some his most signal favors and extraordinary blessings. In the reign of king Ahab, while a cruel famine prevailed in the land, God sent the prophet Elijah to a poor widow of Zarephath, who was preparing herself to die with her son, as soon as they had eat up a handful of meal, and a little oil that was left. But the holy prophet comforted her with these words: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither

shall the cruise of oil fail, until the day the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth, 1 Kings xvii. 14. Many poor widows have experienced the like miracle; for, by a secret benediction, God hath caused their provisions not to fail. Though they have not enjoyed any extraordinary plenty this all-wise purveyor hath furnished them with the necessaries of life; so that not only they and their children have subsisted in times of the greatest scarcity, but they have also had the honor of assisting God's prophets. Like the poor widow mentioned in the gospel, out of their penury they have given alms, Luke xxi. 4; and their mites have been more pleasing unto God than the treasures of the rich. Moreover, when the Son of God was in the world, he was pleased to manifest the care and tender concern he hath for widows; for when he met nigh the gate of the city of Nain, a poor widow that wept bitterly for her only son, who was carried out to be buried, he had compassion on her, raised the young man to life again, and delivered him to his mother, Luke vii. It was also at the request of some devout widows that St. Peter raised Dorcas, Acts ix.

I must not forget in this place a noble providence, proper to comfort every faithful servant of God. The widow of one of the sons of the prophets, in the bitterness of her soul, cried out unto Elisha: Thy servant my husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord; and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen, 2 Kings iv. 1. God, who hears the cry of the afflicted, had compassion on this poor widow, and by the means of Elisha, miraculously gave her wherewith to pay her debts, and to support her family. By this

glorious example, God assures his prophets of the tender care he will take of their widows, provided they walk in his fear, and continue in his holy covenant.

The strongest passion, and that which seems the most capable to detain a Christian soul, is the affection which fathers and mothers bear to their children, especially if they leave them in an age unable to help themselves. But lest this natural passion should transport you beyond the bounds of reason and piety, consider well the promise that God made to Abraham: I will be a God unto thee and unto thy seed after thee, Gen. xvii. 7; and what St. Peter told the Jews: The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off: even as many as the Lord our God shall call, Acts ii. 39. Above all, hear attentively, and engrave in the bottom of your hearts, that which God speaks to you from heaven by the prophet Jeremiah: leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me, chap. xlix. 11.

God is the father of us all, but more especially he is the father of the fatherless, Psalm cxlvi. He hath compassion on them, and provides for all their wants. Thy children are nearer to him than to thee; for thou art but a feeble instrument which he made use of to bring them into the world, but he is the Creator of their souls, the Maker of their bodies, and the Redeemer of both. He loves them with a greater and more lasting love than the best of fathers, and the most tender-hearted mothers; therefore he assures us by his holy prophet, that though a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have

compassion on the son of her womb; yet he will not forget us, Isa. xlix. 15. So that all those children that fear God, and worship him, may say with David: When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up, Psalm xxvii. 10.

We can do nothing without God; but he can do all things without us. A great many children, who are brought up at home, under the eye of their parents, grow debauched, and are ruined; whereas many, that are forced out while young or left orphans, become shining patterns of piety and goodness. For example, in Isaac's house, in the presence of this holy person, Esau became profane, and a glutton, Gen. xxv.; whereas Jacob, who was sent to a great distance, in all his flights and wanderings, had always before his eyes the fear of his father Isaac, Gen. xxxi.; that is, the God whom his father feared. In Jacob's house, Reuben defiled his father's bed, Gen. xxxv. 25; whereas Joseph, who was sold into Egypt to Potiphar, chose rather to expose himself to a cruel punishment, and even to death, than to touch his master's wife, Gen. xxxix. David had the unhappiness to see some of his children guilty of murder and incest; whereas Joash and Josiah, who were left orphans in their infancy, became wise and virtuous princes, burning with zeal for the service of God. How many children are there, who, notwithstanding all the care and pains of their fathers, fall into extreme misery? How many are dragged from their parent's embraces to an ignominious death? Whereas others, who are left without parents, friends, or any human assistance, not only escape the greatest dangers, but rise to the highest honors and dignities; as Joseph in

Egypt, and Daniel in Babylon. Likewise Esther a poor captive orphan, became a queen, and God made use of her and her credit, to deliver his people from Haman's conspiracy, Esther vii. We see every day orphans blessed by God in an extraordinary manner. Cast your eyes upon the children of the blessed martyrs, and you shall find many whom God hath made noble instances of his especial favor, and that mercy which he hath promised to show unto thousands that love him, and keep his commandments. Thou shalt meet with many that are a thousand times more prosperous than the children of persecutors. Nay thou shalt behold them with astonishment giving alms to the very children of them that have plundered their houses.

Drelincourt.

Motives for desiring release from this world.

Willingly submit then, O my soul: it is not thou, but this flesh that must be dissolved; this troublesome, vile, and corruptible flesh: it is but the other half, thy meat and drink, which thy presence kept longer uncorrupted, going after the excremental part. Thou diest not when man (the *compositum*) dieth, by thy departure. And as thou livest not to thyself, I die not to myself; whether I live or die, I am the Lord's: he that set up the candle, knoweth how long he hath use for the light of it. Study thy duty, and work while it is day, and let God choose thy time, and willingly stand to his disposal. The gospel dieth not when I die; the church dieth not; the praises of God die not; the world dieth not; and perhaps it

shall grow better, and those prayers shall grow better, and those prayers shall be answered which seemed lost; yea, and it may be some of the seed that I have sown, shall spring up to some benefit of the dark unpeaceable world when I am dead. And is not this much of the end of life; and is not that life good which attaineth its end? If my end was to do good and glorify God, if good be done, and God be glorified when I am dead, yea, though I were annihilated, is not my end attained. Feign not thyself to be God, whose interest (that is the pleasing of his will) is the end of all things; and whose will is the measure of all created good: feign not thyself to be all the world: God hath not lost his work; the world is not dissolved when I am dissolved. O how strong and unreasonable a disease is this inordinate selfishness! Is not God's will infinitely better than mine, and fitter to be fulfilled? Choose the fulfilling of his will, and thou shalt always have thy choice. If a man be well that can always have his will, let this always be thy will, that God's will may be done, and thou shalt always have it.

Willingly depart, O lingering soul! It is from a Sodom, though in it there be righteous Lots, who yet are not without their woeful blemishes! Hast thou so often groaned for the general blindness and wickedness of the world, and art thou loath to leave it for a better? How oft wouldst thou have rejoiced to have seen but the dawning of a day of universal peace and reformation? And wouldst thou not see it, where it shineth forth in fullest glory? Would a light at midnight have pleased thee so well? Hast thou prayed and labored for it so hard, and wouldst thou not see the sun? Will the things of heaven

please thee do where but on the earth, where they come in the least and weakest influences, and are terminated in gross, terrene, obscure, and unkind recipients? Away, away, the vindictive flames are ready to consume this wicked world. Sinners that blindly rage in sin, must quickly rage in the effects of sin, and of God's justice: the pangs of lust prepared for these pangs! They are treasuring up wrath against this day. Look not then behind thee: away from this unhappy world! Press on to the mark, 'Looking towards, and hastening to the coming of the day of God.'

But, alas! how deaf is flesh to reason? Faith hath the reason which easily may shame all contrary reasoning; but sense is unreasonable, and especially this inordinate tenacious love of present life. I have reason enough to be willing to depart, even much more willing than I am. O that I could be as willing as I am convinced that I have reason to be! Could I love God as much as I know that I should love him, then I should desire to depart and be with Christ as much as I know that I should desire it. But God in nature hath here laid upon me some necessity of aversation, though the inordinateness came from sin, else Christ had not so feared and deprecated the cup. Death must be a penalty, even where it is a gain; and therefore it must meet with some unwillingness: because we willingly sinned, we must unwillingly suffer: the gain is not the pain or dissolution in itself, but the happy consequents of it. All the faith and reason in the world will not make death to be no penalty, and therefore will not take away all unwillingness. No man ever yet reasoned or believed himself into a love of pain and death as such:

but seeing that the gain is unspeakably greater than the pain and loss, faith and holy reason may make our willingness to be greater than our unwillingness, and our hope and joy, than our fear and sorrow. And it is the deep and effectual notice of goodness, which is God's way in nature and grace, to change and draw the will of man. Come then, my soul, and think believingly what is best for thee; and wilt thou not love and desire most that which is certainly the best?

Baxter.

Better to depart.

Many a time the wise and good will of God, hath crossed my foolish rebellious will on earth; and afterward I have still perceived that it was best; usually for myself, but always for a higher good than mine. It is not an enemy, nor a tyrant that made me, that hath preserved me, and that calls me hence. He hath not used me as an enemy; the more I have tried him, the better I have found him. Had I better obeyed his ruling will, how happy had I been! and is not his disposing and rewarding will as good? Man's work is like man, and evil corrupteth it; but God's work is like God, and uncorrupted. If I should not die until my dearest friend would have it, much more till I myself would choose it, not constrained by misery, I should rejoice, and think my life were safe! O foolish sinful soul, if I take it not to be far better to be at God's choice, than at my own or any man's! and if I had not rather that he choose the time than I!

Be of good cheer, then, O my soul; it is thy Father's

voice that calls thee hence; his voice that called thee into the world, and bade thee live; that called thee out of a state of sin and death, and bade thee live hereafter unto him; that called thee so oft from the grave, and forgiving thy sins, renewed thy strength, restored thee to the comforts of his house and service, and hath so graciously led thee through this howling wilderness, and brought thee almost to the sight of the promised land. And wilt thou not willingly go, when infinite, fatherly love doth call thee? Art thou not desirous of his presence? Art thou afraid to go to him who is the only cure of thy fears? What was it but this glory to which he did, finally, elect thee? Where dost thou read that he elected thee to the riches and honors of this world, or to the pleasures of the flesh? But he elected us in Christ to the heavenly inheritance, Eph. i. 3, 4, &c. Indeed, he elected thee also to bear the cross, and to manifold sufferings here. But is it that which thou preferrest before the crown? That was but as a means unto the kingdom, that thou mightest be conformed to Christ, and reign with him when thou hast suffered with him. If God choose thee to blessedness, refuse it not thyself, nor behave thyself like a refuser.

2. And surely that state is my best, which my Savior purchased and promised me as best: as he bought me not with silver and gold, so neither to silver and gold. Did he live and die to make me rich, or advanced in the world? Surely his incarnation, merits, sacrifice, and intercession had a low design if that were all. And who hath more of these than they that have least of Christ? But he purchased us to an incorruptible crown, to an in-

heritance undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us that are kept by God's power through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. And is it heaven that cost so dear a price for me, and is the end of so wonderful a design of grace, and shall I be unwilling now to receive the gift?

3. That sure is best for me for which God's Holy Spirit is preparing me; that for which he is given to believers; and that which is the end of all his holy operations on my soul. But it is not to love this world that he is persuading me from day to day; but to come off from such love, and to set my heart on the things above. Is it to love this life and fleshly interest, this vanity and vexation, or rather to love the invisible perfection, that this blessed Spirit hath done so much to work my heart? And would I now undo all, or cross and frustrate all his operations? Hath grace been so long preparing me for glory, and shall I be loath to take possession of it? If I am not willing, I am not yet sufficiently prepared.

4. If heaven be not better for me than earth, God's word and ordinances have been all in vain. Surely that is my best which is the gift of the better covenant, and which is secured to me by so many sealed promises, and which I am directed to by so many sacred precepts, doctrines, and examples; and for which I have been called to hear, and read, and meditate, and pray, and watch so long. Was it the interest of the flesh on earth, or a longer life of worldly prosperity, which the gospel covenant secured to me, which the sacraments and Spirit sealed to me, which the bible was written to direct me to, which ministers preached to me, which my books

were written for, for which I prayed, and for which I served God? Or was it not for his grace on earth, and glory in heaven? and is it not better for me to have the end of all these means, than lose them all, and lose my hopes? Why have I used them, if I would not attain their end?

5. That is my best state which all the course of God's fatherly providences tend to. All his sweeter mercies, and all his sharper corrections, are to make me partaker of his holiness, and to lead me to glory in the way that my Savior and all his saints have gone before me. All things work together for the best to me, by preparing me for that which is best indeed. Both calms and storms are to bring me to this harbor; if I take them but for themselves and this present life, I mistake them and understand them not, but unthankfully vilify them, and lose their end, and life, and sweetness. Every word and work of God, every day's mercies, and changes, and usages do look at heaven, and intend eternity. God leadeth me no other way; if I follow him not, I forsake my hope in forsaking him; if I follow him, shall I be unwilling to be at home, and come to the end of all this way?

Baxter.

Separation from worldly Knowledge.

When I die, I must depart not only from sensual delights, but from the more manly pleasures of my studies, knowledge, and converse with many wise and godly men, and from all my pleasures in reading, hearing,

public and private exercises of religion, &c. I must leave my library, and turn over those pleasant books no more : I must no more come among the living, nor see the faces of my faithful friends, nor be seen of man : houses, and cities, and fields, and countries, gardens, and walks, will be nothing as to me. - I shall no more hear of the affairs of the world, of man, or wars, or other news, nor see what becomes of that beloved interest of wisdom, piety, and peace, which I desire may prosper, &c.

I answer, 1. Though these delights are far above those of sensual sinners, yet, alas ! how low and little are they ! How small is our knowledge in comparison of our ignorance ! And how little doth the knowledge of learned doctors differ from the thoughts of a silly child ! For from our childhood we take it in but by drops ; and as trifles are the matter of childish knowledge, so words and notions, and artificial forms do make up more of the learning of the world, than is commonly understood ; and many such learned men know little more of any great and excellent things themselves, than rustics that are contemned by them for their ignorance. God and the life to come are little better known by them, if not much less than by many of the unlearned. What is it but a child-game that many logicians, rhetoricians, grammarians, yea, metaphysicians, and other philosophers in their cagerest studies and disputes are exercised in ? Of how little use is it to know what is contained in many hundreds of the volumes that fill our libraries ! Yea, or to know many of the most glorious speculations in physics, mathematics, &c. which have given some the title of virtuosi and ingeniosi, in these times, who have little the more wit or

virtue to live to God, or overcome temptations from the flesh and the world, and to secure their everlasting hopes : what pleasure or quiet doth it give to a dying man, to know almost any of their trifles ?

2. Yea, it were well if much of our reading and learning did us no harm, and more than good. I fear lest books are to some but a more honorable kind of temptation than cards and dice ; lest many a precious hour be lost in them, that should be employed on much higher matters ; and lest many make such knowledge but an unholy, natural, yea, carnal pleasure, as worldlings do the thoughts of their lands and honors ; and lest they be the more dangerous by how much the less suspected ; but the best is, it is a pleasure so fenced from the slothful with thorny labor of hard and long studies, that laziness saveth more from it than grace and holy wisdom doth. But doubtless fancy and the natural intellect may with as little sanctity live in the pleasure of reading, knowing, disputing, and writing, as others spend their time at a game at chess, or other ingenious sport.

For my own part, I know that the knowledge of natural things is valuable and may be sanctified ; much more theological theory ; and when it is so, it is of good use ; and I have little knowledge which I find not some way useful to my highest ends. And if wishing or money would procure more, I would wish and empty my purse for it ; but yet if many score or hundred books which I have read, had been all unread, and I had that time now to lay out upon higher things, I should think myself much richer than now I am. And I must earnestly pray, the Lord forgive me the hours that I have spent in reading

things less profitable, for the pleasing of a mind that would fain know all, which I should have spent for the increase of holiness in myself and others.

3. But the chief answer is yet behind. No knowledge is lost, but perfected, and changed for much nobler, sweeter, greater knowledge. Let men be never so uncertain in particular *de modo*, whether acquired habits of intellect and memory die with us, as being dependent on the body; yet, by what manner soever, that a far clearer knowledge we shall have than is here attainable, is not to be doubted of. And the cessation of our present mode of knowing is but the cessation of our ignorance and imperfection; as our wakening endeth a dreaming knowledge, and our maturity endeth the trifling knowledge of a child; for so saith the Holy Ghost, "Love never faileth," (and we can love no more than we know;) but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; (that is, cease;) whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, (notional and abstractive, such as we have now,) it shall vanish away.

Baxter.

*Death relieves us from hearing the news of human woes
and wickedness.*

To know or hear of the poor in famine, the rich in folly, the church distracted, the kingdom discontented; the godly scandalous by the effects of their errors, imperfections, and divisions; the wicked outrageous and waxing worse; the falseness, or miscarriages, or sufferings of

friends; the fury or success of enemies,—is this an intelligence which I cannot spare! What is the the daily tidings that I hear, but of bloody wars, the undone countries, the persecuted churches; the silenced, banished, or imprisoned preachers, of the best removed in judgment from an unworthy world by death, and the worse succeeding in their rooms; of the renewed designs and endeavors of the church's enemies; the implacable rage of the worldly and unquiet clergy, and the new divisions of self-conceited sectaries, and the obloquy and backbitings of each party against the other? How oft hear I the sad tidings of this friend's sickness or death, and that friend's discontent, and of another's fall, and of many, very many's sufferings! My ears are daily filled with the cries of the poor, whom I cannot relieve; with the endless complaints of fearful, melancholy, despairing persons; with the wranglings of the ignorant and proud professors, and contentious divines, who censure most boldly where they are most erroneous or dark; or with the troublesome discontents of those that I converse with. And should I be afraid of the ending of so sad a tragedy, or of awaking out of such an unpleasant dream? Have I not many times thought of the privilege of the deaf, that hear not these troublesome and provoking things; and of the blind, that see not the vanities and temptations of this world? It is one part of the benefit of solitude, or a private life and habitation, to free me from many of these displeasing objects; and a great part of the benefit of sleep, that with my clothes I may lay by these troublous thoughts.

Baxter.

Doubts and fears reasoned down.

Every place that I have lived in was a place of divine love, which there set up its obliging monuments. Every year and hour of my life hath been a time of love. Every friend, and every neighbor, yea, every enemy have been the messengers and instruments of love. Every state and change of my life, notwithstanding my sin, hath opened to me treasures and mysteries of love. And after such a life of love, shall I doubt whether the same God do love me? Is he the God of the mountains and not of the valleys? Did he love me in my youth and health? And doth he not love me in my age, and pain, and sickness? Did he love all the faithful better in their life than at their death? If our hope be not chiefly in this life, neither is our state of love, which is principally the heavenly endless grace. My groans grieve my friends, but abate not their love. Did he love me for my strength, my weakness might be my fear: as they that love for beauty, loathe them that are deformed; and they that love for riches, despise the poor; but God loved me when I was his enemy, to make me a friend; when I was bad, to make me better: whatever, he taketh pleasure in his own gift. Who made me to differ? And what have I that I have not received? And God will finish the work, the building, the warfare that is his own. O the multitude of mercies to my soul and body, in peace and war, in youth and age, to myself and friends; the many great and gracious deliverances which have testified to me the love of God! Have I lived in the experience of it, and shall I die in the

doubts of it? Had it been love only to my body, it would have died with me, and not have accompanied my departing soul.

Behold then, O my soul, with what love the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have loved thee; that thou shouldst be made and called a Son of God, redeemed, regenerate, adopted into that covenant state of grace in which thou standest. Rejoice therefore in hope of the glory of God, Rom. v. 1, 2, being justified by faith, having peace with God, and access by faith and hope that maketh not ashamed: that being reconciled, when an enemy, by the death of Christ, I shall be saved by his life. Having loved his own, to the end he loveth them, and without end. His gifts and calling are without repentance. When Satan and thy flesh would hide God's love, look to Christ, and read the golden words of love in the sacred gospel, and peruse thy many recorded experiences, and remember the convictions which secret and open mercies have many a time afforded thee. But especially draw nearer to the Lord of love, and be not seldom and slight in thy contemplations of his love and loveliness. Dwell in the sunshine, and thou wilt know that it is light, and warm, and comfortable. Distance and strangeness cherish thy doubts: acquaint thyself with him, and be at peace.

Yet look up, and oft and earnestly look up after thy ascended glorified head, who said, "Tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Think where and what he is, and what he is now doing for all his own; and how humbled, abased, suffering love is now triumphant, regnant, glorified love;

and therefore no less than in all its tender expressions upon earth. As love is nowhere perfectly revealed but in heaven, so I can nowhere so fully discern it as by looking up by faith to my Father and Savior which is in heaven, and conversing more believingly with the heavenly society. Had I done this more and better, and as I have persuaded others to do it, I had lived in more convincing delights of God's love, which would have turned the fears of death into joyfuller hopes, and more earnest desires to be with Christ, in the arms, in the world, in the life of love, as far better than to be here, in a dark, a doubting, fearing world.

Baxter.

Penitence and Pardon.

Answer me not, that your sins are so heinous and abominable, that you cannot hope for a pardon. Though they are as high as the loftiest mountains, if thou art really sensible of their weight, and sighest and groanest beneath thy burthen, God's infinite mercy, like a deluge, shall cover and wash them away. Like a torrent, it shall transport them out of thy sight. For where sin hath abounded, provided a true repentance succeeds, the grace of God doth much more abound, Rom. v. 20. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool, Isa. i. 18. All the offences that you have committed since you have been in the world, are finite and limited, but God's mercy is infinite. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is for-*

givenness with thee, that thou mayest be feared, Psalm cxxx. 3, 4.

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whose confesseth and forsaken them, shall have mercy, Prov. xxviii. 13; and it is certain, there is no sinner, let him be ever so guilty, that shall seek God's mercy by a true repentance, but shall obtain his request. David had defiled himself with an infamous adultery, and had imbrued his hands in the innocent blood of one of his most faithful servants: but as soon as he presented himself before God with a broken and contrite heart, Psalm li. 17; this merciful Creator washed this wretched sinner from all his iniquity at the fountain of his eternal mercy. He made him whiter than snow, and caused the bones which he had broken to rejoice; therefore he crieth out, *I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin, Psalm xxxii. 5.* King Manasseh gave himself up to enchantments and witchcraft, and to the most gross and abominable idolatries, Chron. xxxiii.; nevertheless, he no sooner humbled himself in his fetters, than his sighs and groans found a gracious reception at the throne of God. The poor Publican, in the gospel, cast down with the weight of his sins, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner, Luke xviii. 13;* but God looked upon him with an eye of mercy, and stretched out unto him his gracious hand; so that he went down to his house justified. The penitent Magdalen, being struck with horror at her own sinful and wicked life, came and cast herself at our Savior's feet, washing them with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her

head ; but Christ soon raised her up, with these comfortable words, *Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace*, Luke vii. 48, 50. St. Peter, by a frailty that should cause the best of Christians to tremble for fear, denied his Lord and Master three times, even to cursing and swearing, Matt. xxvi. ; Luke xxii. ; but this merciful God immediately looked upon him with an eye of compassion, and gave him grace to weep bitterly for the commission of so foul a fact. At the same time that St. Peter poured forth his tears before God, there is no doubt but God poured into his heart the oil of joy and gladness, and that he powerfully supported him by his Holy Spirit. Therefore, though your sins are ever so great and enormous, if your souls are really wrung with sorrow, if your hearts are truly touched with contrition, if you shed the tears of repentance, if you are heartily grieved that you are not sufficiently afflicted for your sins, and in such a frame of mind prostrate yourselves before your heavenly Father, he will raise you up again by his infinite mercy. He will cast all your sins and transgressions behind him, and will cry unto you, by his Holy Spirit in your heart, *My Son*, or my daughter, *thy sins are forgiven thee*, Luke vii. 48. He will fill your souls with a joy unspeakable, and will cause you to sing with the Psalmist, Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, Psalm xxxii. 1, 2.

Draincourt.

Prayer a necessary preparation for death.

Prayer against the fear of death, by keeping up in us a

constant remembrance of our mortality, will help to wean us from a too intimate attachment to the things we are so soon to quit. By this habitual preparation to meet our Judge, we shall be brought to pray more earnestly for an interest in the great Intercessor; and to strive more effectually against every offence which may aggravate the awfulness of that meeting.

Fervent prayer, that divine grace may prepare us for death, will, if cordially adopted, answer many great moral purposes. It will remind every individual of every class that "the time is short"—that "there is no repentance in the grave."

Perhaps even the worldly and thoughtless man, under an occasional fit of dejection, or an accidental disappointment, may be brought to say, "When I am in heaviness, I will think upon God."—Oh, think upon Him, call upon Him, *now*,—now, when you are in prosperity; now, when your hill is so strong that you think it shall never be removed: think upon Him, call upon Him, when the scene is the brightest, when the world courts, flatteries invite, and pleasures betray you; think on Him, while you are able to think at all, while you possess the capacity of thinking. The time may come, when "He may turn his face from you, and you will be troubled." Think of God, when the alluring images of pleasure and of profit would seduce you from Him. Prosperity is the season of peculiar peril. "It is the bright day that brings forth the adder." Think of God when the tempting world says, "All this I will give thee." Trust not the insolvent world, it has cheated every creditor that ever trusted it. It will cheat you.

To the *man of opulence*, who heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them, prayer will be a constant memento: it will remind him that he walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; it will remind him of laying up treasures where thieves cannot enter, nor rust corrode.

The habit of praying against the fear of death, would check the pride of youthful *beauty*, by reminding her how soon it must say to the worm, *Thou art my father*, and to corruption, *Thou art my mother and sister*.

The *man of genius*, he who thought that of making many books there would be no end; who, in his zeal to write, had neglected to pray; who thought little of any immortality but that which was to be conferred by the applause of dying creatures like himself; who, in the vanity of possessing talents, had forgotten that he must one day account for the application of them; if happily he should be brought to see the evil of his own heart, to feel the wants of his own soul, how intense will be his repentance, how deep his remorse, that he had loved the praise of men more than the praise of God! How fervently will he pray that his mercies may not aggravate the account of his sins; that his talents may not become the instrument of his punishment! How earnestly will he supplicate for pardon, how devoutly will he "give glory to God, before his feet stumble on the dark mountains!"

The *man of business*, to whom we have already adverted, who thought his schemes so deeply laid, his speculations so prudently planned, that nothing could frustrate them; who calculated that the future was as much in his power as the present, forgot that death, that grand sub-

verter of projects, might interpose his *veto*. This man, who could not find time to pray, must find time to die—he may at length find—happy if he ever find it, that he cannot meet his end with a peaceful heart, and a resigned spirit, without the preparation of prayer for support in that awful period, “when his purposes shall be broken off and all his thoughts perish.”

The *man of pleasure*, alas! what shall we say for him? He is sunk to the lowest step of degradation in the moral scale; he has not even human supports: he has robbed himself even of the ordinary consolations resorted to by ordinary men. He has no stay on which to lay hold, no twig at which to catch, no pretence by which to flatter himself into a false peace; no recollection of past usefulness; he has neither served his country; nor benefited society—what shall we say for him? If he pray not for himself, we must pray for him—with God all things are possible.

The *statesman*, indefatigable in the public service, distinguished for integrity; but neglecting the offices of Christianity; whose lofty character power had not warped, nor cupidity debased, but whose religious principles, though they had never been renounced, had not been kept in exercise; a spirit of rare disinterestedness: a moralist of unblanched honor, but who pleaded that duty had left him little time for devotion! Should divine grace incline him at last to seek God, should he begin to pray to be prepared for death and judgment, he will deeply regret with the contrite cardinal, not that he served his king faithfully, but that his higher services had not been devoted to their highest object. In this frame of mind, that ambition which

was satisfied with what earth could give, or kings reward, will appear no longer glorious in his eyes. True and just to his sovereign, devoted to his country, faithful to all but his Savior and himself, he now laments that he had neglected to seek a better country, neglected to serve the King Eternal, the blessed and only Potentate; neglected to obtain an interest in a kingdom which shall not be moved. He feels that mere patriotism, grand as is its object, and important as is its end, will not afford support to a soul sinking at the approach of the inevitable hour, awed at the view of final judgment.

Hannah More.

Remedies against the fear of death.

Death is a thing, that is no great matter in itself; if we consider that we die daily, that it meets us in every accident, that every creature carries a dart along with it, and can kill us. And therefore, when Lysimachus threatened Theodorus to kill him, he told him, that was no great matter to do, and he could do no more than the cantharides could: a little fly could do as much.

Of all the evils of the world which are reproached with an evil character, death is the most innocent of its accusation. For when it is present, it hurts nobody; and when it is absent, it is indeed troublesome, but the trouble is owing to our fears, not to the affrighting and mistaken object: and besides this, if it were an evil, it is so transient, that it passes like the instant or undiscerned portion of the present time: and either, is it past or it is not yet: for just when it is, no man hath reason to complain of so insensible, so sudden, so undiscerned a change.

It is so harmless a thing, that no good man was ever thought the more miserable for dying, but much the happier. When men saw the graves of Calatinus, of the Servilii, the Scipios, the Metelli, did ever any man among the wisest Romans think them unhappy? And when St. Paul fell under the sword of Nero, and St. Peter died upon the cross, and St. Stephen from a heap of stones was carried into an easier grave, they that made great lamentation over them, wept for their own interest, and after the manner of men; but the martyrs were accounted happy, and their days kept solemnly, and their memories preserved in never-dying honors.

He that would willingly be fearless of death, must learn to despise the world; he must neither love any thing passionately, nor be proud of any circumstance of his life. "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man, that liveth at rest in his possessions, to a man, that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things; yea unto him that is yet able to receive meat!" said the son of Sirach.

He that would not fear death, must strengthen his spirits with the proper instruments of Christian fortitude. All men are resolved upon this, that to bear grief honestly and temperately, and to die willingly and nobly, is the duty of a good and valiant man: and they that are not so, are vicious, and fools, and cowards. All men praise the valiant and honest; and that, which the very heathen admired in their noblest examples, is especially patience and contempt of death. Zeno Eleates endured torments rather than discover his friends, or betray them to the danger of the tyrant: and Calanus, the barbarous and unlearned Indian, willingly suffered himself to be burned alive: and

all the women did so, to do honor to their husband's funerals, and to represent and prove their affections great to their lords. The religion of a Christian does more commend fortitude, than ever did any institution; for we are commanded to be willing to die for Christ, to die for the brethren, to die rather than to give offence or scandal: the effect of which is this, that he, that is instructed to do the necessary parts of his duty, is, by the same instrument, fortified against death: as he that does his duty, need not fear death, so neither shall he; the parts of his duty, are parts of his security. It is certainly a great baseness and pusillanimity of spirit, that makes death terrible and extremely, to be avoided.

Christian prudence is a great security against the fear of death. For if we be afraid of death, it is but reasonable to use all spiritual arts to take off every apprehension of evil: but therefore we ought to remove our fear, because fear gives to death wings, and spurs, and darts. Death hastens to a fearful man: if therefore you would make death harmless and slow, to throw off fear is the way to do it; and prayer is the way to do that. If therefore you be afraid of death, consider you will have less need to fear it, by how much the less you do fear it: and so cure your direct fear by a reflex act of prudence and consideration.

If thou wilt be fearless of death, endeavor to be in love with the felicities of saints and angels, and be once persuaded to believe, that there is a condition of living better than this; that there are creatures more noble than we; that above there is a country better than ours; that the inhabitants know more and know better, and are in

places of rest and desire; and first learn to value it, and then learn to purchase it, and death cannot be a formidable thing, which lets us into so much joy and so much felicity. And indeed who would not think his condition mended, if he passed from conversing with dull mortals, with ignorant and foolish persons, with tyrants and enemies of learning, to converse with Homer and Plato, with Socrates and Cicero, with Plutarch and Fabricius? So the heathens speculated, but we consider higher. "The dead that die in the Lord," shall converse with St. Paul, and all the college of the apostles, and all the saints and martyrs, with all the good men, whose memory we preserve in honor, with excellent kings and holy bishops, and with the great shepherd and bishop of our souls, Jesus Christ, and with God himself. For "Christ died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with him." Then we shall be free from lust and envy, from fear and rage, from covetousness and sorrow, from tears and cowardice: and these indeed properly are the only evils that are contrary to felicity and wisdom. Then we shall see strange things, and know new propositions, and all things in another manner, and to higher purposes.

In forty or fifty years we find evils enough, and arguments enough to make us weary of this life; and to a good man there are very many more reasons to be afraid of life than death, this having in it less of evil and more of advantage. And it was a rare wish of that Roman, that death might come only to wise and excellent persons, and not to fools and cowards: that it might not be a sanctuary for the timorous, but the reward of the virtuous; and indeed they only can make advantage of it.

Make no excuses to make thy desires of life seem reasonable; neither cover thy fear with pretences, but suppress it rather with arts of severity and ingenuity. Some are not willing to submit to God's sentence and arrest of death, till they have finished such a design, or made an end of the last paragraph of their book, or raised such portions for their children, or preached so many sermons, or built their house, or planted their orchard, or ordered their estate such advantages. It is well for the modesty of these men, that the excuse is ready; but if it were not, it is certain they would search one out: for an idle man is never ready to die and is glad of any excuse; and a busied man hath always something unfinished, and he is ready for every thing but death. And I remember, that Petronius brings in Eumolpus composing verses in a desperate storm; and being called upon to shift for himself when the ship dashed upon the rock, crying out, to let him alone, till he had trimmed and finished his verse, which was lame in the hinder leg: the man either had too strong a desire not to end his verse, or a great desire not to end his life. But we must know, God's times are not to be measured by our circumstances; and what I value, God regards not: or if it be valuable in the accounts of men, yet God will supply it with other contingencies of his providence: and if Epaphroditus had died, when he had his great sickness St. Paul speaks of, God would have secured the work of the gospel without him: and he could have spared Epaphroditus as well as St. Stephen, and St. Peter as well as St. James. Say no more; but when God calls, lay aside thy papers; and first dress thy soul, and then dress thy hearse.

Jeremy Taylor.

God will afford Support.

The only source of all our consolation is God's gracious promise to help us in time of need. Engrave in the bottom of your hearts these divine sayings, When he that hath set his love upon me shall call upon me, I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him, Psal. xci. 15. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, 2 Pet. ii. 9. He is rich unto all that call upon him, Rom. x. 12. He is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth, Psal. cxlv. 10. He fulfils the desires of the humble, he hears their cry, ver. 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all, Psal. xxxiv. 19. Call upon me, saith he, in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me, Psal. l. 15.

When a poor subject is visited and caressed by his prince in the time of his sickness, he looks upon it as a great favor, and a singular happiness. And when, in the midst of our most grievous agonies, we happen to cast our eye upon a dear friend, whom we earnestly wished to see, we are wont to say, *Methinks I feel no pain, now I have the satisfaction of your company.* Now the tenderness of God's love accompanies the glory of his Majesty. He is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, *who comforteth us in all our tribulation*, 2 Cor. i. 3, 4. He is that bosom friend who loveth at all times, as it were, a brother who is born for adversity, Prov. xvii. 17. He is at once the King of Kings, and our most cordial friend.

He enters into the house of mourning, Eccl. vii., and is nigh unto every broken heart and contrite spirit, Psalm xxxiv. 18. The lower our estate is, the more he remembereth us, Psal. cxxxvi. 23.

Notwithstanding the misbehavior of our children, we cannot bear to see them in distress, but are moved with compassion, and strive to comfort them to the best of our ability: and shall thy God, who loves thee more cordially, and with a more unalterable love than the best of fathers, or the most tender-hearted mother, forsake thee in the day of affliction? This merciful and compassionate Father, who took thee into his protection when thou camest into the world, who hath been thy God from thy mother's belly, Psal. xxii. 10, and hath administered to all thy necessities: shall he refuse thee his gracious succor in this thy utmost extremity? He who perfected praise out of thy mouth when thou didst suck at thy mother's breast, Psal. viii. 2; Matt. xxi. 16, who hath crowned thy youthful days with his divine blessings, will not cast thee off in the time of old age. He will not forsake thee in the last moments of thy life, when thy vigor is consumed, and thy strength faileth, Psalm lxxi. 9.

When we go about to assist our sick or wounded friends, we labor, by all possible means, to lessen their pain. We exert all our skill and discover our most excellent secrets; at least we endeavor to make them sensible by our officious cares, our sighs and tears, that we have a quick feeling of their anguish. Their cries and groans are so many darts or daggers that stab us to the heart. Likewise our merciful God is moved with compassion at our sufferings; when he sees us racked with cruel pains, his bowels yearn,

his heart is turned within him, his repentings are kindled, Hosea, xi. 8, and his love towards us is inflamed afresh. In all our afflictions he is afflicted, Isa. lxiii. 9; and he that toucheth us, toucheth the apple of his eye, Zech. ii. 8. He weeps and groans for our torments, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Heb. iv. 15. He binds up our bruises, and pours his balm into our wounds, Jer. xxx. He healeth the broken heart, Psalm cxlvii. 3, and causeth the broken bones to rejoice, Psalm li. 8.

Therefore my brother, or my sister, cast thyself upon God, for his power is equal to his love, and he knows better than thyself, or we can, what is proper and expedient for thee. In his due time he will cause thy pains to cease, and will take his thorn from thy flesh. Either he will drive from thee the spirit of infirmity that afflicts thee, or else he will make his strength perfect in thy weakness. He will endue thee with so much patience, arm thee with such constancy, and fill thee with such extraordinary joy and consolation, that every one shall visibly perceive that God himself is thy helper, and that his strength sustains thee. O how sweet and pleasant is God's assistance to a Christian soul! It brings with it such vast and precious delights; it causeth such undeniable testimonies of our adoption to shine forth; it gives us such a transporting earnest of our celestial inheritance, such a ravishing foretaste of paradise, that St. Paul prefers it not only to all the riches, pleasures and honors of the world, but also to his being caught up to the third heavens, where he heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter, 2 Cor. xii. 4.

If the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our conso-

lation also aboundeth by Christ, 2 Cor. i. 5. For as God commands wine to be given to him that is of a heavy heart, that he may drink and remember his misery no more, Prov. xxxi. 6, 7; so he administers the most cordial and powerful consolations to the greatest evils. It is on this occasion that he displays his Almighty arm, and pours out the rich abundance of his graces. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, Isa. xliii. 2. For as the Son of God was in the fiery furnace, with Daniel's three companions in Babylon, Dan. iii. 25, so in the most burning fever, the most scorching pains, he will refresh thy soul, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not, Isa. lviii. 11. Whatever flood beats against thee, whatever defluction endeavors to choke thee, thou mayest say with the royal prophet, I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved, Psal. xvi. 8. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death: though I have no help nor assistance in the world, and though there remains no more strength or vigor in the body, I will fear no evil, for thou, O God, art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me, Psal. xxiii. 4.

Dreitscourt.

Christ the ground of hope in death.

By the cross of Jesus Christ, we learn to put our trust in the goodness of God in our sharpest pangs, and to embrace him as our most loving Father and Redeemer, even when he seems to discover to us a countenance full

of severity and wrath. For this eternal Son of God, in his most violent and cruel agonies, when his heavenly Father withdrew from him his aid, withheld the effects of his grace, the expressions of his love, and the comforts of his divine Spirit; yet looked upon him as his God, and prays to him with a holy assurance, repeating these pathetic words, *My God! My God!*

If we would die willingly, and leave these infirm bodies with a holy cheerfulness, when the time is come that we must go to the Father of spirits, we ought to remember our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, with what constancy he prepared himself for death, and with what willingness he commended his unspotted soul into the hands of God his Father, when he required it. No man taketh it from me (says he), but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father, John x. 18. This drew from his sacred lips these divine words, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, Heb. x. 9; and for this reason, when he gave up the ghost, he cried with a loud voice, Luke xxiii. 46; to show that his precious soul was not taken from him by violence, but that he offered it up a willing sacrifice.

Moses' rod was changed into a serpent, as well as those of Pharaoh's magicians; but this serpent swallowed up all the others, Exod. vii. Thus the death of our Lord Jesus Christ had its fear, its sorrow, and its agony, Matt. xxvi; but his fear swallows up all our fears, and causes us to come boldly to the throne of grace; his sorrow drives away all our sorrows, and fills us with joy and eternal comfort; and his agony swells our hearts with tri-

umph. The trouble and grievous conflicts of his spirit give repose and everlasting peace to our consciences. His bloody sweat dries up all our tears; his groans put an end to our groans; and his loud cries cause us to sing songs of triumph. The hands of this glorious Savior have purchased for us full liberty; and in his condemnation we are acquitted. He tasted vinegar and gall, and drank, even to the dregs, the cup of God's wrath and just vengeance, that he might give us to drink of the inexhaustible river of his delights. When he cried out, in the bitterness of his soul, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Matt. xxvii. 46; it was to the end that God should never forsake us, but, in all our distresses, should afford us his Almighty help and Fatherly assistance. He bowed his head to raise our hopes; and, finally, died to deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to a severe and cruel bondage, Heb. ii. 15. So that they who tremble and are afraid of the approaches of death, have not yet felt the power and virtue of the cross of Christ; they tread under foot the blood of the Son of God; and, as much as in them lies, destroy the fruit and efficacy of his blessed death.

By this time you perceive, believing soul, that death is no longer to be feared, since all its darts are broke, its arms destroyed, and all its spoils nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ. You may there behold the claws of this old lion, the paws of this devouring bear, the teeth and poison of this infernal serpent, and the head of this monstrous dragon. You may there see death swallowed up in victory, and the Prince of life leading it in triumph.

Follow therefore the triumphal car of this glorious Redeemer, singing, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57.

When the patriarch Jacob heard that his son Joseph, whom he tenderly loved, and for whom he had shed so many tears, was still alive, and governor over all the land of Egypt, he earnestly desired to see again this dear son, and to be a witness of his glory: It is enough, said he, Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die, Gen. xlv. 28. And you, believing souls, who hear this day, that your true Joseph, whom you passionately love, lives and reigns in heaven, where he is worshiped by all the glorified spirits, do you not ardently desire to see his face, and to behold his glory, and the magnificence of his triumph? The patriarch Jacob was feeble through age, and bowed down with sorrow, but his spirit revived when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him; thus you, my Christian brethren, whose bodies old age or sickness hath bowed down, and whose hearts care and sorrow hath undermined, do not you find yourselves strengthened, do not you feel yourselves sensibly revived, when death draws near, and you perceive, with the eyes of faith, the horses and chariots of fire which Christ hath sent to convey you to the paradise of his glory? Joseph received his father and brethren with tears of joy, and all the house of Pharaoh rang with acclamations of gladness; with what tenderness then will Christ embrace us? What rejoicing will there be in

heaven at your arrival? The tongues of angels alone can express a joy so unspeakable and full of glory. Joseph fed his father and his brethren, but he never imparted to them any portion of his authority and glory; whereas our Lord Jesus Christ, who exceeds Joseph as much in power and magnificence, as in love and compassion, shall not only feed us with the bread of his kingdom, and give us to drink of the river of his pleasures, but he will also make us partakers of his glory, and the magnificence of his empire, as he promised to his holy apostles: I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, Luke xxii. 29. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sit down with my Father in his throne, Rev. iii. 21. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life, Rev. ii. 10. Joseph's brethren, notwithstanding his greatness, became slaves; but Jesus Christ will place upon each of our heads a crown of pure gold. Joseph could not preserve his brethren from death; they all died one after another; and he also, in his turn, gave up the ghost; but Jesus Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him, Rom. vi. 9. He is not only alive forevermore, but will likewise cause us all to become immortal. Whereas, then Jacob desired to live that he might go down into Egypt to see his son Joseph, we should ardently desire to die, that we may ascend up into heaven, there to behold our Lord Jesus Christ, who is both our Father and Redeemer. When Jacob embraced again this wonderful and beloved son, he cried out, in the transport of his joy, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou

art yet alive: on the contrary, when we shall embrace Christ in his glory, and shall behold the light of his countenance, we shall say unto him, in a different manner, My Lord and my God, since I now see thee alive, and reigning in heaven, I shall also live and reign with thee forever and ever. *Amen.*

Drelincourt.

The witness of the Spirit.

Tremble not, therefore, Christian souls, nor be dismayed; for all the three persons of the most holy, most glorious, and most adorable Trinity, are engaged for your salvation and eternal happiness. The Father, by his infinite wisdom, hath found out a means to reconcile us to himself, to satisfy the rigor of his justice, and to declare the riches of his unparalleled mercies; the Son hath purchased for us this great salvation, by offering himself up a willing sacrifice upon the cross, and by shedding his most precious blood for the remission of our sins; and the Holy Spirit, by uniting us with this our High Priest, makes us partakers of the infinite merits of his sufferings. This is the true hyssop that sprinkles the divine blood of the Lamb, without spot or blemish, to the cleansing of our souls, Heb. xii. 24. It is this Spirit that gives us the white stone, wherein the new name of *elect* and *believer* is written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it, Rev. ii. 17. He gives us to eat of the hidden manna, the food of angels, which the world knoweth not, John xiv. 17. It is instead of a precious ring, by which

our heavenly Bridegroom plights to us his conjugal faith. It is the seal of the living God, that seals to us the covenant of grace, and all the promises of glory and happiness, made to us in the gospel; as the apostle tells us, Having believed in the gospel of our salvation, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. i. 13; therefore he exhorts us, Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption, Eph. iv. 30. Finally, this is the Spirit that beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 16, 17.

Think not, Christian souls, that I intend to persuade you, that this Holy Spirit of our Lord Jesus shall come and whisper in your ear, or call unto you from within that you are the children of God, as some extravagant enthusiasts imagine. The witness that he bears with our spirits is a real and effectual witness, if I may say so; for by regenerating us, and making us become new creatures, he gives us a greater and more certain assurance of our adoption, than if he declared from heaven, Thou art my child, and thy name is written in the book of life. As the seal imprints its image in the wax, thus the Spirit of our Lord Jesus imprints in our souls the image of its holiness, and all its divine virtues. Now, as the figure that remains upon the wax enables us to pass a sure judgment, what manner of seal made the impression; so when you find the image of God engraved in your hearts, acknowledge the finger of God, and the power of his Holy Spirit; for no one can bear this blessed image, except he be the child of God. The Holy Spirit, that engraves it in our

souls, kindles there the flames of seraphic love, and gives us tongues of fire. He causes us to speak to God with boldness, as unto our Father; and to lift up our eyes to heaven with a holy joy; as unto our inheritance.

Drelincourt.

Low attainments in piety lamented.

How then cometh my soul to be yet so low, so dark, so fond of this wretched flesh and world, and so backward to go home and dwell with Christ? Alas! a taste of heaven on earth is a mercy too precious to be cast away upon such as have long grieved and quenched the Spirit, and are not, by diligent and patient seeking, prepared to receive it. He that proclaimeth a general peace, will give peace only to the sons of peace. If, after such unkind neglects, such willful sins as I have been guilty of, I should expect to be suddenly in my Savior's arms, and to be feasted presently with the first-fruits of heaven, I should look that the Most Holy should too little manifest his hatred of my sin. My conscience remembereth the follies of my youth, and many a later odious sin; and telleth me, that if heaven were quite hid from my sight, and I should never have a glimpse of the face of glorious eternal love, it were but just. I look upward from day to day; I groan to see his pleased face, and better to know my God and my home. I cry to him daily, "My God, this little is better than all the pleasures of sin: my hopes are better than all the possessions of this world. Thy gracious looks have oft revived me, and thy mercies have

been unmeasurable to my soul and body; but, oh, how far short am I of what even forty years ago I hoped sooner to have attained! Where is the peace that passeth understanding; that should keep my heart and mind in Christ? O where is the seeing, the longing, the rejoicing and triumphant faith? Where is that pleasant familiarity above, that should make a thought of Christ and heaven to be sweeter to me than the thoughts of friends, or health, or all the prosperity and pleasure of this world? Do those that dwell in God, and God in them, and have their hearts and conversations in heaven, attain to no more clear and satisfying perceptions of that blessed state, than I have yet attained? Is there no more acquaintance above to be here expected? No livelier sense of future joys? No sweeter foretaste? Nor fuller silencing of doubts and fears? I am not so loath to go to a friend, nor to the bed where I oft spend the night in restless pains and rolling, as I have too often been to come to thee! Alas, how many of thy servants are less afraid to go to a prison than to their God! and had rather be banished to a land of strangers, than sent to heaven! Lord, must I, that am called the child, and a heir of heaven, and a co-heir with Christ, have no more acquaintance with my glorified Lord, and no more love to thee that art my portion, before I go hence, and come before thee? Shall I have no more of the heavenly life, and light, and love? Alas! I have scarce enough in my meditations, to denominate them truly heavenly meditations: I have scarce enough in a prayer to make it indeed a heavenly prayer; or in a sermon, to make it a heavenly sermon; and shall I have no more when I come to die? Must I go hence so like

a stranger to my home? Wilt thou take strangers into heaven, and know them as thine that do no better know thee here? O, my God, vouchsafe a sinner yet more of his Spirit, that came down on earth to call up earthly minds to God; and to open heaven to all believers! O, what do I beg for so frequently, so earnestly, for the sake of my Redeemer, as the Spirit of life and consolation, which may show me the pleased face of God, and unite all my affections to my glorified head, and draw up this dark and drowsy soul, to love and long to be with thee?

How long it is since I hoped that I had been translated from the kingdom of darkness, and delivered from the power of the prince of darkness, and brought into that light which is the entrance of the inheritance of saints; and yet, alas! darkness, darkness is still my misery! There is light round about me, in thy word and works, but darkness is within me. And if my eye be dark, the sun will be no sun to me. Alas! my Lord, it is not all the learning in the world, no not of theology that consisteth in the knowledge of words and methods, which I can take for the satisfactory heavenly light! To know what thou hast written in the sacred book, is not enough to make me know my glorified Savior, my Father, and my home. It must be a light from heaven that must show me heaven; and a light accompanied with a vital heat, that must turn to love and joy within me. O let me not have only dreaming knowledge of words and signs, but quickening light, to show the things which these words do signify, to my mind and heart! Surely the faith by which we must live, must be a living faith! and must reach further than to words, how true soever. Can faith

live in the dark? What is it but an effect of thine illumination? What is my unbelief but the darkness of my soul? Lord Jesus scatter all these mists; make thy way, O thou Son of righteousness into this benighted mind! O send thy Advocate to silence every temptation that is against thy truth and thee, and thine agent to prosecute thy cause against thine enemies and mine, and to be the resident witness of thy verity, and my sonship and salvation. Hearing of thee is not satisfactory to me! It must be the presence and operation of thy light and love, shed abroad by thy Spirit on my heart, that must quiet and content my soul! I confess with shame that I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am unworthy to have any glimpse or taste of heaven! but so did many that are now entertained and feasted by thy love in glory.

Baxter.

Society of heaven compared with that on earth.

Think here, O my soul, how sweet a state unto thee it will be to love the Lord Jesus thy glorified head with perfect love! When the glory of God which shineth in him, will feast thy love with full and everlasting pleasure: the highest created perfection of power, wisdom, and goodness, refulgent in him, will not give leave to thy love, to cease, or intermit, or abate its fervor. When thou shalt see in the glorified church the precious fruits of Christ's redemption, grace, and love, this also will feed thy love to him, from whom this heavenly glory cometh; and when thou shalt feel thyself possessed of perfect happiness, by

his love to thee, will not this also do its part? Yea, the remembrance of all his former love; what he did for thee, and what he did in thee here on earth, how he called thee with a holy calling, how he washed thee in his blood from all thy sins, how he kindled in thee those desires which tended to that perfect glory, how he renewed thy nature, how he instructed, and guided, and preserved thee from thy childhood, and how many and how great sins, enemies, dangers, and sufferings he saved thee from, all this will constrain thee everlastingly to love him: thus, (though he give the kingdom to the Father, as ceasing his mediatory, healing, saving work of acquisition,) he will be to thee the Mediator of fruition: God in him will be accessible, and condescend to a suitable communion with us, John xvii. 24. And as Christ is thy life, radically and efficiently, as he is the giver of grace, and the spirit of love, so he will be objectively thy life as he is lovely, and it will be formally thy life to love him, and God in him forever.

Think also, O my soul, how delectable it will be to love, as well as to know those angels that most fervently love the Lord! They will be lovely to thee as they have loved thee, and more as they have been lovers and benefactors to the church and to mankind; but far more as they are so many refulgent stars which continually move and shine, and burn in purest love to their Creator. O blessed difference between that amiable society of holy spirits, and this dark, mad, distracted, wicked world! Here devils tempt me within, and devils incarnate persecute me without: blaspheming of God, reviling godliness, deriding the sacred Scriptures and sacred exercises, ma-

lignant slandering of the servants of God; hating, persecuting, silencing, and saying all manner of evil falsely of them, for their righteousness' sake, while such crimes are pretended as they once falsely charged on Christ himself; this is the conversation of those that I have long dwelt with in this world. Atheism, infidelity, papal church tyranny, bloody wars, destroying the righteous, oppressing the poor, adultery and fornication, stigmatizing perjury, ambition, violence, covetousness, deceit, sottish ignorance, willfulness in sin, hatred of reproof, revengeful malice; these and such like are the fruits of the soil where I have long sojourned; (though, through the grace of Christ, among the faithful there have been better fruits;) and is not the company of holy angels better than this? With whom God is all; who are even made up of shining wisdom, and holy love, and benificent activity: who are the blessed choir, that melodiously sing forth the high praises of their Maker: among whom God dwelleth as in his presence-chamber or his temple, and in whom he taketh his great delight. With these I shall see or hear no evil. No mixture of fools or wicked ones do pollute or trouble their society; there will be no false doctrine, no evil example, no favoring wickedness, no accusing goodness, no hurtful violence; but holy, powerful, operative love, will be all and do all, as their very nature, life, and work. And is it not better be a door-keeper there than to dwell in the palaces of wickedness? And is not a day with them better than a thousand here?

And with the holy angels I shall love holy souls that are made like unto them, and joined with them in the same society (and it is likely with them judge, that is,

rule the world.) All their infirmities are there put off with the flesh; they also are spirits made up of holy life, and light and love: there is none of their former ignorance, error, imprudence, selfishness, contentiousness, impatience, or any other troubling, hurtful thing. When I think with what fervent love to God, to Jesus Christ, and to one another, they will be perfectly united there, alas! how sad and how shameful is it, that they should here be prone to disaffections and divisions, and hardly agree to call each other the servants of God, or to worship God in the same assemblies; but the remnants of dividing principles (*viz.*, pride, error, and uncharitableness) will be all left behind. Society with imperfect saints is sweet; the imperfect image of God upon them is amiable; but their frailties here are so vexatious, that it is hard to live with some of them in peace. But perfect love will make them one; and O how delightful will that communion of saints be! I can never forget how sweet God hath made the course of my pilgrimage, by the fragrantcy and usefulness of his servants' graces; how sweet have my bosom friends been, how suitable! How sweet hath the neighborhood of the godly been! How sweet hath the holy assemblies! And how many hours of comfort have I there had! How profitable have their writings, their conference, and their prayers been! What then will it be to live in the union of perfect love with perfect saints in heaven forever, and with them concordantly to love the God of love?

Baxter.

Desires after heaven and holiness.

So far as God maketh us willing to be delivered from sin, so far we are delivered; and our initial imperfect deliverance is the way to more. If pains then make me groan for ease, and sickness make me wish for health, why should not my remnants of ignorance, unbelief, and strangeness to God, occasion me to long for the day of my salvation? This is the greatest of all my troubles. And should it not then be the greatest wearying burden from which I should earnestly desire to be eased. As grace never doth hurt efficiently, and yet may be ill-used and do hurt objectively, as to them that are proud of it, so sin never doth good efficiently and of itself, and yet objectively may do good; for sin may be the object of grace, and so to use it is not sin. My unbelief, and darkness, and disaffection, and inordinate love of this life, do of themselves most hinder my desires of deliverance, and of a better life; but objectively, what more fit to make me weary of such a grievous state? Were my unbelief and earthly mind predominant, they would chain my affections to this world; or if I were constrainedly weary of a miserable life, I should have no comfortable hopes of a better. But as it is the nature of my sin to draw down my heart from God and glory, it is the nature of my faith, and hope, and love, to carry it upward, and to desire the heavenly perfection; not to love death, but to love that which is beyond it. And have I been so many years in the school of Christ, learning both how to live and die, begging and studying for this grace, and exercising it against this sinful flesh, and shall I now, after all, find

flesh more powerful to draw me downward than faith, hope, and love, to carry my desires up to God?

O God forbid: O, thou that freely gavest me thy grace, maintain it to the last against its enemies, and make it finally victorious: it came from thee; it hath been preserved by thee; it is on thy side, and wholly for thee; O, let it not now fail, and be conquered by blind and base carnality, or by the temptations of a hellish conquered enemy; without it I had lived as a beast, and without it I should die more miserable than a beast. It is thine image which thou lovest; it is a divine nature and heavenly beam; what will a soul be without it, but a dungeon of darkness, a devil for malignity, and dead to holiness and heaven? Without it, who shall plead thy cause against the devil, world, and flesh? without thy glory, earth is but earth; without thy natural efficacy, it would be nothing; without thy wise and potent ordination, it would be but a chaos; and without thy grace it would be a hell. O, rather deny me the light of the sun, than the light of thy countenance! Less miserable had I been without life or being, than without thy grace.

Forsake not, then, a sinner that would not forsake thee, that looketh every hour towards thee, that feeleth it as a piece of hell to be so dark and strange unto thee, that gropeth, and groaneth, and gaspeth after thee; feeling to his greatest sorrow, (though thou art every where) that while he is present in the body, he is absent from the Lord. My Lord, I have nothing to do in this world, but to seek and serve thee; I have nothing to do with a heart and its affections, but to breathe after thee. I have nothing to do with my tongue and pen, but to speak to thee,

and for thee, and to publish thy glory and thy will! What have I to do with all my reputation, and interest in my friends, but to increase thy church, and propagate thy holy truth and service? What have I to do with my remaining time, even these last and languishing hours, but to look up unto thee, and wait for thy grace and thy salvation? O, pardon all my carnal thoughts, and all my unthankful neglects of thy precious grace and love, and all my willful sin against thy truth and thee! and let the fuller communications of thy forfeited grace, now tell me by experience that thou dost forgive me! Even under the terrible law thou didst tell man thy very nature, by proclaiming thy name, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin;" and is not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ revealed in the gospel for our more abundant faith and consolation? My God, I know, as I cannot love thee according to thy loveliness, so I cannot trust thee according to thy faithfulness: I can never be sufficiently confident of thy all-sufficient power, thy wisdom, and thy goodness. When I have said, "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Doth his promise fail to generations? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Conscience hath replied, that this is my infirmity. I never wanted comfort, because thou wantedst mercy, but because I wanted faith and fitness to receive it, and perceive it. But hast thou not mercy also to give me, even that fitness and that faith? My God, all

is of thee, and through thee, and all is to thee, and when I have the felicity, the glory of all forever will be thine. None that trusteth in thee (according to thy nature and promise) shall be ashamed: if I can live and die in trusting in thee, surely I shall not be confounded.

Baxter.

A confident hope.

"I will hope in the Lord, for with him there is mercy and plenteous redemption." "For he taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." Psalm lxxviii. v. 7; cxix. 49; cxxx. 3, 4, 5, 7; cxlvii. 11. Though flesh and heart fail, the Lord is the rock of my heart; he is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good to them that wait for him; to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that I should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for me that I have borne the yoke in my youth, and that I keep silence and put my mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope, Psalm lxxiii. 26; Lam. iii. 24, 25, 26, 27, 29.

God need not flatter such worms as we, nor promise us that which he never meaneth to perform. He hath laid the rudiments of our hope, in a nature capable of desiring, seeking, and thinking of another life. He hath called me by grace to actual desires and endeavors; and some foretastes he hath vouchsafed. I look for no heaven, but the perfection of divine life, light, and love, in endless glory with Christ and his holy ones. And this he hath

begun in me already. And shall I not boldly hope, when I have the capacity, the promise, and the earnest, and foretaste? Is it not God himself that hath caused me to hope? Was not nature, promise, and grace from him? And can a soul miscarry and be deceived, that departeth hence in a hope of God's own causing and encouraging? Lord, I have lived in hope; I have prayed in hope; I have labored, suffered, and waited in hope; and by thy grace I will die in hope! And is not this according to thy word and will? And wilt thou cast away a soul that hopeth in thee by thine own command and operation? Had wealth, and honor, and continuance on earth, or the favor of man, been my reward and hope, my hope and I had died together. Were this our best, how vain were man! But the Lord liveth, and my Redeemer is glorified and intercedeth for me! And the same Spirit is in heaven who is in my heart; as the same sun is in the firmament which is in my house: and the promise is sure to all Christ's seed: and millions are now in heaven, that once did live and die in hope; they were sinners once, as now I am; they had no other Savior, no other sanctifier, no other promise than I now have: confessing that they were strangers here, they looked for a better country, and for a city that had foundations, even a heavenly; where now they are. And shall I not follow them in hope that have sped so well? Hope then, O my soul, unto the end, 1 Pet. i. 13; from henceforth and forever hope in the Lord. I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more: my mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and salvation. The Lord is at my right hand, I shall not be moved: my heart therefore is glad, and my

glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall dwell confidently and rest in hope, for God hath showed me the path of life; in his presence is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore, Psalm cxxxix. 3; lxxi. 14, 15; xvi. 8—11.

What then remaineth, O my soul, but that in trust and hope thou love thy God, thy Savior, thy Comforter, the glorious society, thy own perfection in glorious, endless, heavenly life, and light, and love, and the joyful praises of Jehovah, better than this burden of painful and corruptible flesh, and this howling wilderness, the habitation of serpents and untamed brutes, where unbelief and murmuring, lust and folly, injustice and uncharitableness, tyranny and divisions, pride and contention, have long provoked God and wearied thee? Where the vintage and harvest is thorns and thistles, sin and sorrows, cares and crosses, manured by manifold temptations! How odious is that darkness and unbelief, that unholiness and disaffection, that deadness and stupidity, which maketh such a work as this, so reasonable, necessary, and pleasant a work, to seem unsuitable or hard! Is it unsuitable or hard to the eye to see the sun and light? or by it to see the beautified world? or for a man to love his life or health, his father or his friend? What should be easier to a nature that hath rational love, than to love him that is essential love itself. He that loveth all; and giveth to all the loving faculty, should be loved by all. And he that hath specially loved me should be specially loved by me!

Baxter.

Earth contrasted with heaven.

Should I not love a lovely and a loving world much better than a world where there is comparatively so little loveliness or love? All that is of God is good and lovely; but it is not here that his glory shineth in felicitating splendor. I am taught to look upward when I pray, and to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." God's works are amiable even in hell; and yet though I would know them, I would not be there. And, alas! how much of the works of man are mixed here with the works of God! Here is God's wisdom manifest, but here is man's obstinate folly; here is God's government, but here is man's tyranny and unruliness. Here is God's love and mercies, but here are men's malice, wrath, and cruelty; by which they are worse to one another than wolves or tigers, depopulating countries, and filling the world with bloodshed, famine, misery, and lamentations; proud tyrants being worse than raging plagues, which made David choose the pestilence before his enemies' pursuit. Here is much of God's beauteous order and harmony; but here is also much of man's madness, deformity, and confusion. Here is much historical truth, and some civil and ecclesiastic justice; but, alas! with how much odious falsehood and injustice is it mixed! Here is much precious theological verity; but how dark is much of it to such blind, and negligent, and corrupted minds as every where abound.

This is the world which standeth in competition for my love, with the spiritual blessed world. Much of God's mercies and comforts I have here had; but their sweetness was their taste of divine love, and their tendency to

heavenly perfection. What was the end and use of all the good that ever I saw, or that ever God did for my soul or body, but to teach me to love him, and to long for more? How many weaning experiences? How many thousand bitter or contemning thoughts have I had of all the glory and pleasures of this world! How many thousand love-tokens from God have called me to believe and taste his goodness! Wherever I go, and which way soever I look, I see vanity and vexation written upon all things in this world, so far as they stand in competition with God, and would be the end and portion of a fleshy mind: and I see holiness to the Lord written upon every thing, so far as it declarereth God, and leadeth me to him as my ultimate end. God hath not for nothing engaged in a war against this world, and commanded me to take and use it as mine enemy: the emptiness, dangerousness, and bitterness of the world, and the all-sufficiency, trustiness, and goodness of God have been the sum of all the experiences of my life. And shall a worldly backward heart overcome the teachings of nature, Scripture, the Spirit of grace, and all experience? Far be it from me!

The suitableness of things below to my fleshy nature, hath detained my affections too much on earth! And shall not the suitableness of things above to my spiritual nature, much more draw up my love to heaven. There is the God whom I have sought and served; he is also here, but veiled, and but little known: but there he shineth to heavenly spirits in heavenly glory. There is the Savior in whom I have believed; he hath also dwelt in flesh on earth; but clothed in such meanness, and humbled to such a life and death, as was to the Jews a stum-

bling-block, and to the Gentiles matter of reproach; but he shineth and reigneth now in glory, above the malice and contempt of sinners. And I shall there live because he liveth; and in his light I shall have light. He loved me here with a redeeming, regenerating, and preserving love; but there he will love me with a perfecting, glorifying, joyful love. I had here some rays of heavenly light; but interpositions caused eclipses and nights, yea, some long and winter nights; but there I shall dwell in the city of the sun, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, where there is no night, eclipse, or darkness!

Barter.

Love the great attraction of heaven.

What is heaven to me, but God? God who is life, and light, and love, communicating himself to blessed spirits, perfecting them in the reception, possession, and exercise of life, and light, and love forever. These are not the accidents, but the essence of that God who is in heaven and all to me; should I fear that death which passeth me to infinite essential life? Should I fear a darksome passage into a world of perfect light? Should I fear to go to love itself? Think, O my soul, what the sun's quickening light and heat is to this lower corporeal world! Much more is God, even infinite life and light, and love to the blessed world above. Doth it not draw out thy desires to think of going into a world of love? When love will be our region, our company, our life: more to us than the air is for our breath, than the light is for our

sight, than our food is for our life, than our friends are for our solace, and more to us than we are to ourselves, and we more for it as our ultimate end, than for ourselves! O, excellent grace of faith, which doth foresee, and blessed word of faith, that doth foreshow, this world of love! Shall I fear to enter where there is no wrath, no fear, no strangeness, nor suspicion, nor selfish separation, but love will make every holy spirit as dear and lovely to me as myself, and me to them as lovely as themselves, and God to us all more amiable than ourselves and all: where love will have no defects or distances, no damps or discouragements, no discontinuance or mixed disaffection; but as life will be without death, and light without darkness, (a perfect everlasting day of glory,) so will love be without any hatred, unkindness, or alloy.

Baxter.

Nature of heavenly happiness.

Expect not, therefore, Christian souls, to meet in heaven with a paradise resembling your gardens; nor with flowers like those that enamel and adorn your parterres; nor with fruits like to them that hang upon your trees: assure yourselves that God will show you things infinitely more pleasing and delightful, and more permanent. Fancy not to find there a city built like ours, which shall really be enriched with silver and gold, pearls and precious stones; but hope for something more noble and magnificent, than all the richest and most stately cities in the world, where God will cause you to see, not only the beauty of silver, the purity of gold, the whiteness of

pearls and the bright lustre of precious stones, but also, something far more beautiful and pure, a more perfect white, a greater brightness, and a more ravishing lustre. Think not to receive any material crown, or to sit upon thrones like to those of the kings and princes of the earth, but aspire after something more glorious, and which cannot be shaken.

I am also persuaded, Christian friends, that you expect not in heaven to find tables covered as those of the rich men of the world, nor to pumper yourselves with feasts like those prepared for the nuptials of earthly princes. Without doubt your faith hath in view something more glorious and magnificent; your soul hungers for more exquisite meats, and thirsts for more delicious drinks; you are too well instructed to think to live in heaven an animal and sensual life; such a gross and carnal conceit is only fit for the imaginary paradise of the impostor Mahomet.

You see, therefore, Christian souls, to [what an exalted state of glory and happiness we have a right to pretend. For in heaven, God will not only make us shine forth as the sun and stars, and clothe us with the brightness of the glorified saints and angels; but he also promises to make us like to himself. He shall not only satisfy us with the fatness of his house, cause us to drink of the rivers of his pleasures, fill us with his riches, enlighten us with his brightness, clothe us with his honors, and crown us with his glory; but he himself will become our meat and our drink, our treasure, our sun and our glory; and if I may so speak, to satisfy and make us completely happy, God will, as it were, dissolve himself into rivers and seas

of divine and unspeakable pleasures. But that I may not be misunderstood by to hold a metaphor, it shall suffice me to say with St. Paul, That God will be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 28, that is to say, he will dwell and make his abode in us, in respect to his essence; and will cause us to feel in us his glorious presence, in as great a measure as a finite and limited nature, such as ours, is capable of. What the Jews fabled concerning the manna, which their fathers fed on in the wilderness, may be justly applied to Almighty God, as he intends to communicate himself to us in heaven. There is no taste, but shall be satisfied, no desire, but shall be fulfilled: nay, we may go farther, for he shall not only be our meat and our drink, but, as we have already observed, our light, and our clothing, and all that we can ask or imagine. In a word, we shall enjoy in him beyond all that we can think or desire.

The knowledge of spiritual and heavenly things, which we attain to here below, is like the light at day-break; but that which we shall enjoy hereafter, shall be like that of the sun, when it shines in its full strength; or to speak in the words of the apostle, Now we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 12. Whilst we continue in this life, God discovers to us only the skirts of his wisdom, and but a little portion is heard of him, Job xxvi. 14. But in the life to come, he shall reveal to us the depth of his glorious mysteries, which the angels desire to look into, 1 Pet. i. 12, and shall be to our understandings as a sun, to chase away all mists, and to enlighten them for ever.

At present, our will hath its imperfections, and oftentimes rebels against God; but then it shall be perfectly sanctified and reformed, according to the image of God. It shall be inflamed with his zeal, and burn with his charity. It shall sigh after nothing but his glory, and wish for nothing but a conformity to his holy will. It shall not only obey him without resistance or reluctance, but shall fly with a sacred ardor, and be all on fire, to execute his divine commands. Whilst we remain in the fetters of this infirm and sinful flesh, there is always some filth and impurity in our affections; but when we shall come to the state of glory, God will sanctify them in such a manner by his presence, that they shall be more pure than the stars or the sun-beams; they shall be nothing but celestial fires, and flames of divine love, proceeding from the face of God himself. In a word this being of beings, who is perfection itself, this origin of all beauty, this object so exceedingly glorious and lovely, shall ravish us in such a manner, that our understanding shall be continually employed in beholding him; our wills and affections in loving and embracing him; and all the faculties of our souls in uniting ourselves to him, and being transformed into his likeness.

Deslincourt.

Nature of future Punishment.

But come at length it will, when Revenge shall array herself to go forth, and Anguish shall attend her, and from the wheels of their chariot ruin and dismay shall shoot far and wide among the enemies of the king, whose

desolation shall not tarry, and whose destruction, as the wing of the whirlwind, shall be swift—hopeless as the conclusion of eternity and the reversion of doom. Then around the fiery concave of the wasteful pit the clang of grief shall ring, and the flinty heart which repelled tender mercy shall strike its fangs into its proper bosom; and the soft and gentle spirit which dissolved in voluptuous pleasures, shall dissolve in weeping sorrows and out-bursting lamentations; and the gay glory of time shall depart; and sportful liberty shall be bound forever in the chain of obdurate necessity. The green earth with all her blooming beauty and bowers of peace shall depart. The morning and evening salutations of kinsmen shall depart, and the ever welcome voice of friendship, and the tender whispering of full-hearted affection, shall depart, for the sad discord of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. And the tender names of children, and father and mother, and wife and husband, with the communion of domestic love and mutual affection, and the inward touches of natural instinct, which family compact, when uninvaded by discord, wraps the live-long day into one swell of tender emotion, making earth's lowly scenes worthy of heaven itself—All, all shall pass away; and instead shall come the level lake that burneth, and the solitary dungeon and the desolate bosom, and the throes and tossings of horror and hopelessness, and the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched.

Hell, therefore, is not to be despised, like a sick bed, if any of you be so hardy as to despise a sick bed. There are no comforting kindred, no physician's aid no hope of recovery, no melancholy relief of death, no sus-

tenance of grace. It is no work of earthly torture or execution, with a good cause to suffer in, and a beholding world or posterity to look on, a good conscience to approve, perhaps scornful words to revenge cruel actions, and the constant play of resolution or study of revenge. It is no struggle of mind against its material envelopments and worldly ills, like stoicism, which was the sentiment of virtue nobly downbearing the sense of pain. I cannot render it to fancy, but I can render it to fear. Why may it not be the agony of all diseases the body is susceptible of, with the anguish of all deranged conceptions and disordered feelings, stinging recollections, present remorse, bursting indignations, with nothing but ourselves to burst on, dismal prospects, fearful certainties, fury, folly, and despair.

It is most manifest to any one coolly considering in his own bosom, that if he were to give a license to the evil that is within him, to the suggestions of malice, and lust, and passion, he would become hateful to himself and horrible to all around. If the fear of God were cast away, and the fear of man; if the rewards that attend honesty, and chastity, and peace, were no longer known; if one, in short, had nothing to lose in life, no death, and no retribution after death staring him in the face, the lengths to which he would proceed are shocking to reflect upon.

Now this is precisely the state of things in the nether world. There is no hope, there is no end, there are no good beings to hold the balance against evil, and there is no restraining providence of God. Were there nothing more, I hold this to be enough to constitute the hottest, cruelest hell. I ask no elemental fire, no furnace of liv-

ing flames, no tormenting demons, nothing but a congregation of the wicked, in the wicked state in which they died and appeared at the tribunal, driven together into one settlement, to make the best or the worst of it they can. Let every man arise in his proper likeness, clothed in his proper nature, which he did not choose to put off, but to die with; let beauty arise with the same pure tints which death did nip, and wit with all its flashes and knowledge, with all its powers and policy, with all its address; let the generations of the unrighteous gather together;—and because of their possessing none of the qualities which God approves in his volume, nor caring to possess them, let them be shipped across the impassable gulf to some planet of their own, to carry on their several intrigues and indulgencies for ever;—then here were a hell, which neither fire nor brimstone, nor gnawing worm, are able to represent. For, observe, it is such only in whom godliness could take no root that were transported thither, in whom selfishness carried it over benevolence, lust over self-control, interest over duty, the devil over God; and that in a world where hope and encouragement were all thrown into the good scale.

Hitherto I have supposed things no otherwise conditioned than they are here on earth. But what, if the ground should be doubly accursed for their sakes? What, if the body should be liable to tenfold racking pains; what, if the eye should look only upon unsightly things, and the ear should lose its faculty of tasting melody—or, perceiving it, should be invaded with restless, dunning noises; what, if the sun should smite with tropic fires, and suffocating winds whirl the miserable natives to and fro: what,

if the realities of all that is threatened should come to pass, and the mighty devils become our masters, and we their thralls, to be used and misused as their beasts of labor; what, if God should put forth his power, and give the wicked who set him at naught, their habitation upon some burning star or fiery comet, to live like the salamander in everlasting fire?—What, if all that Dante and Milton and Tasso have imagined in their several hells—the physical torments of the one, the mental anguish of the other, the deformed, filthy, obscene forms of the third—should concur; and the imagined picture of Belial be realized! That the wicked

Caught in a fiery tempest shall be hurled
 Each on his rock transfixed, the sport and prey
 Of racking whirlwinds; or for ever sunk
 Under yon boiling ocean, wrapt in chains,
 There to converse with everlasting groans,
 Unrespite, unspited, unreprieved,
 Ages of hopeless end.

Irving.

Duration of future Punishment.

These are the punishments of condemned souls. It remains only that we consider the length and duration of them. But by what means, my brethren, shall we describe these profound articles of contemplation? Can we number the innumerable, and measure that, which is beyond all measurement? Can we make you comprehend the incomprehensible! And shall we amuse you with our imaginations.

for ever in all its glory. What though the several senses suffer decay, and the eyes in particular will soon be closed, no more to behold the light below? Grieve not at this, inasmuch as these eyes will be formed anew with additional beauty, and with them thou wilt behold the king in his glory, and behold him for thyself; or as the Psalms express the same thing, behold his face in righteousness. The ears now, it may be, are almost deaf, and will soon be entirely stopped, but hereafter they shall hear, with everlasting delight, the harmonious songs of saints and of angels. The tongue, which now falters through weakness, and in a little time will speak no more, shall then be formed anew, and tuned for praise, joining in the melodious hallelujahs of the blessed above. The hands, now weak, shall then be made strong to receive, and for ever retain, immortal palms of victory. With the feeble feet, now scarce sufficient to support the body, thou wilt then follow the Lamb to the realms of glory, and travel the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem. In a word, the whole body, though laid in the grave, and turned into dust, shall then arise, and shine as the sun in the firmament, and in its fullest splendor.

What hath the Christian to desire more? At death, the soul goes to God, to Christ, to angels, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to share in their felicities. The body indeed is lodged in the grave; but here it will be attended with a quiet repose, at the end of which it shall rise again. The Lord will publish the grand jubilee, the prisons of death will all be opened, and the prisoners set free. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead in Christ be raised incorruptible, immortal and glorious. The Chris-

tian may humbly say, My heart is glad, my glory (or tongue) rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope; for the Lord will not leave it always in the grave, or suffer it to abide under the power of corruption; he will show me the path of life, and admit me to his presence, where there is fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore, Psal. xvi. 9, 10, 11.

Then let not the actual, and sensible approach of death disturb the quiet of thy mind, strike thy faith and confidence in God, or drive thee from hope, that anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, since it is fixed in heaven, where Jesus as the forerunner is for thee entered. Comfort thyself with the words of holy Job, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me, Job xix. 25, 26, 27. And with the words of St. Paul, We look for the Saviour, from heaven, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself, Phil. iii. 20, 21.

Dramat.

The future residence of the righteous.

But though the great fabric of this world must be ruined, and turned upside down, yet we do not believe that

it shall be reduced to nothing. Its qualities shall be changed, and, it may be, its form^s shall be altered; but its substance and matter shall continue always the same. For, first, as God hath created the world for his own glory, he cannot be for ever disappointed of the intent of his creation; and because this world hath not glorified him as it ought, he will put it into a condition proper to glorify him, answerable to the purpose for which he drew it out of nothing. Secondly, Since this world was created to serve man, as a looking-glass, to behold the eternal power of God, and that this beautiful looking-glass hath been spotted and sullied by sin; it is yet possible to cleanse it, and make it brighter, that it might represent its Creator better, and show forth a more perfect image of his divine Majesty. Thirdly, Since God doth nothing in vain, there is no likelihood that he should destroy the world totally, and reduce the primitive matter to nothing, from whence it was drawn, to create new matter, because he is able of this old matter to make a new earth and a new heaven, as pure and undefiled as if the matter had been newly created. Fourthly, Sin hath spoiled and disfigured the works of the creation: but it hath not touched either the first matter or its being; so that God can take away this defilement, and remove this deformity without touching the matter, which of itself is innocent. In man, the little world, and the compendium of the great, I find a beautiful and perfect image of that which God will do with the whole world. God intends not to destroy the substance of souls, but only to purge them from all vicious qualities, and beautify them with righteousness and true holiness, so that they shall be as the angels in heaven; likewise he intends not to destroy the substance of our bodies, but he will free them

from corruption, from death, and clothe them with glory and immortality; so that this vile body shall be rendered conformable to the glorious body of the Son of God, and shall shine as the sun; so God will not altogether destroy the world, and abolish its substance, but he will rectify all its imperfections, and add to it a greater glory.

Dr. Lincoln.

It were venturing on the region of conjecture to affirm, whether, if Adam had not fallen, the earth that we now tread upon, would have been the everlasting abode of him and his posterity. But certain it is, that man, at the first, had for his place this world, and, at the same time, for his privilege, an unclouded fellowship with God, and, for his prospect, an immortality, which death was neither to intercept nor put an end to. He was terrestrial in respect of condition, and yet celestial in respect both of character and enjoyment. His eye looked outwardly on a landscape of earth, while his heart breathed upwardly in the love of heaven. And though he trode the solid platform of our world, and was compassed about with its horizon—still was he within the circle of God's favored creation, and took his place among the freemen and the demizens of the great spiritual commonwealth.

The common imagination that we have of paradise on the other side of death, is, that of a lofty aerial region, where the inmates float in ether, or are mysteriously suspended upon nothing—where all the warm and sensible accompaniments which give such an expression of strength, and life, and coloring, to our present habitation, are attenuated into a sort of spiritual element, that is meagre, and imperceptible, and utterly uninviting to the eye of mortals

here below—where every vestige of materialism is done away, and nothing left but certain unearthly scenes that have no power of allurements, and certain unearthly ecstasies, with which it is felt impossible to sympathize. The holders of this imagination forget all the while, that really there is no essential connection between materialism and sin—that the world which we now inhabit, had all the amplitude and solidity of its present materialism, before sin entered into it—that God so far, on that account, from looking slightly upon it, after it had received the last touch of his creating hand, reviewed the earth, and the waters, and the firmament, and all the green herbage, with the living creatures, and the man whom he had raised in dominion over them, and he saw everything that he had made, and beheld it was all very good. They forget that on the birth of materialism, when it stood out in the freshness of those glories which the great Architect of Nature had impressed upon it, that then “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” They forget the appeals that are made everywhere in the Bible to this material workmanship—and how, from the face of these visible heavens, and the garniture of this earth that we tread upon, the greatness and goodness of God are reflected on the view of his worshippers. No, my brethren, the object of the administration we sit under, is to extirpate sin, but it is not to sweep away materialism. By the convulsions of the last day, it may be shaken, and broken down from its present arrangements, and thrown into such fitful agitations, as that the whole of its existing frame-work shall fall to pieces, and with a heat so fervent as to melt its most solid elements, may it be utterly dis-

solved. And thus may the earth again become without form, and void, but without one particle of its substance going into annihilation. Out of the ruins of this second chaos, may another heaven and another earth be made to arise; and a new materialism, with other aspects of magnificence and beauty, emerge from the wreck of this mighty transformation; and the world be peopled as before, with the varieties of material loveliness, and space be again lighted up into a firmament of material splendor.

The fact of the resurrection proves, that, with man at least, the state of a disembodied spirit, is a state of unnatural violence—and the resurrection of his body is an essential step to the highest perfection of which he is susceptible. And it is indeed an homage to that materialism, which many are for expunging from the future state of the universe altogether—that ere the immaterial soul of man has reached the ultimate glory and blessedness which are designed for it, it must return and knock at the very grave where lie the mouldered remains of the body which it wore—and there inquisition must be made for the flesh, and the sinews, and the bones, which the power of corruption has perhaps for centuries before, assimilated to the earth that is around them—and there, the minute atoms must be reassembled into a structure that bears upon it the form and the lineaments, and the general aspect of a man—and the soul passes into this material frame-work, which is hereafter to be its lodging-place for ever—and that, not as its prison, but as its pleasant and befitting habitation—not to be trammelled, as some would have it, in a hold of materialism, but to be therein equipped for the services of eternity—to walk embodied among the bowers of our sec-

ond paradise—to stand embodied in the presence of our God.

But the highest homage that we know of to materialism, is that which God, manifest in the flesh, has rendered to it. That He, the Divinity, should have wrapt his unfathomable essence in one of its coverings, and expatiated amongst us in the palpable form and structure of a man; and that he should have chosen such a tenement, not as a temporary abode, but should have borne it with him to the place which he now occupies, and where he is now employed in preparing the mansions of his followers—that he should have entered within the veil, and be now seated at the right hand of the Father, with the very body which was marked by the nails upon his cross, and wherewith he ate and drank after his resurrection—that he who repelled the imagination of his disciples, as if they had seen a spirit, by bidding them handle him and see, and subjecting to their familiar touch, the flesh and the bones that encompassed him; that he should now be throned in universal supremacy, and wielding the whole power of heaven and earth, have every knee to bow at his name, and every tongue to confess, and yet all to the glory of God the Father—that humanity, that substantial and embodied humanity, should thus be exalted, and a voice of adoration from every creature, be lifted up to the Lamb for ever and ever—does this look like the abolition of materialism, after the present system of it is destroyed; or does it not rather prove, that transplanted into another system, it will be preferred to celestial honors, and prolonged in immortality throughout all ages?

The imagination of a total and diametric opposition

between the region of sense and the region of spirituality, certainly tends to abate the interest with which we might otherwise look to the perspective that is on the other side of the grave; and to deaden all those sympathies that we else might have with the joys and the exercises of the blest in paradise. To rectify this, it is not necessary to enter on the particularities of heaven—a topic on which the Bible is certainly most sparing and reserved in its communications. But a great step is gained, simply by dissolving the alliance that exists in the minds of many between the two ideas of sin and materialism; or proving, that when once sin is done away, it consists with all we know of God's administration, that materialism shall be perpetuated in the full bloom and vigor of immortality. It altogether holds out a warmer and more alluring picture of the elysium that awaits us, when told, that there, will be beauty to delight the eye; and music to regale the ear; and the comfort that springs from all the charities of intercourse between man and man, holding converse as they do on earth, and gladdening each other with the benignant smiles that play on the human countenance, or the accents of kindness that fall in soft and soothing melody from the human voice. There is much of the innocent, and much of the inspiring, and much to affect and elevate the heart, in the scenes and the contemplations of materialism—and we do hail the information of our text, that after the dissolution of its present frame-work, it will again be varied and decked out anew in all the graces of its unfading verdure, and of its unbounded variety—that in addition to our direct and personal view of the Deity, when he comes down to tabernacle with men, we shall also

have the reflection of him in a lovely mirror of his own workmanship—and that instead of being transported to some abode of dimness and of mystery, so remote from human experience, as to be beyond all comprehension, we shall walk forever in a land replenished with those sensible delights and those sensible glories, which, we doubt not, will lie most profusely scattered over the “new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

But though a paradise of sense, it will not be a paradise of sensuality. Though not so unlike the present world as many apprehend it, there will be one point of total dissimilarity betwixt them. It is not the entire substitution of spirit for matter, that will distinguish the future economy from the present. But it will be the entire substitution of righteousness for sin. It is this which signalizes the Christian from the Mahometan paradise—not that sense, and substance, and splendid imagery, and the glories of a visible creation seen with bodily eyes, are excluded from it,—but that all which is vile in principle, or voluptuous in impurity, will be utterly excluded from it. There will be a firm earth, as we have at present, and a heaven stretched over it, as we have at present; and it is not by the absence of these, but by the absence of sin, that the abodes of immortality will be characterized. There will both be heavens and earth, it would appear, in the next great administration—and with this speciality to mark it from the present one, that it will be a heavens and an earth, “wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Chalmers.

The approach of Death to the Christian.

The period is now come when we must summon all the fortitude of the rational being, all the resignation of the Christian. The principles we have been learning must now be made practical. The speculations we have admired we must now realize. All that we have been studying was in order to furnish materials for this grand exigence.—All the strength we have been collecting must now be brought into action. We must now draw to a point all the scattered arguments, all the several motives, all the individual supports, all the cheering promises of religion. We must exemplify all the rules we have given to others; we must embody all the resolutions we have formed for ourselves; we must reduce our precepts to experience; we must pass from discourses on submission to its exercise; from dissertations on suffering to sustaining it. We must heroically call up the determinations of our better days. We must recollect what we have said of the supports of faith and hope when our strength was in full vigor, when our heart was at ease, and our mind undisturbed. Let us collect all that remains to us of mental strength. Let us implore the aid of holy hope and fervent faith, to show that religion is not a beautiful theory, but a soul-sustaining truth.

He who is brought to serious reflection by the salutary affliction of a sick bed, will look back with astonishment on his former false estimate of worldly things. Riches! Beauty! Pleasure! Genius! Fame!—What are they in the eyes of the sick and the dying?

RICHES! These are so far from affording him a mo-

ment's ease, that it will be well if no former misapplication of them aggravate his present pains. He feels as if he only wished to live that he might henceforth dedicate them to the purposes for which they were given.

BEAUTY! What is beauty, he cries, as he considers his own sunken eyes, hollow cheeks, and pallid countenance. He acknowledges with the Psalmist, that the consuming of beauty is "the rebuke with which the Almighty corrects man for sin."

GENIUS! What is it? Without religion, genius is only a lamp on this gate of a palace. It may serve to cast a gleam of light on those without, while the inhabitant sits in darkness.

PLEASURE! That has not left a trace behind it. "It died in the birth, and is not therefore worthy to come into the bill of Mortality."

FAME! Of this his very soul acknowledges the emptiness. He is astonished how he could ever be so infatuated as to run after a sound, to court a breath, to pursue a shadow, to embrace a cloud. Augustus, asking his friends as they surrounded his dying bed, if he had acted his part well, on their answering in the affirmative, cried *plaudite*. But the acclamations of the whole universe would rather mock than sooth the dying Christian if unsanctioned by the hope of the divine approbation. He now rates at its just value that fame which was so often eclipsed by envy, and which will be so soon forgotten in death. He has no ambition left but for heaven, where there will be neither envy, death, nor forgetfulness.

The power of distinguishing objects increases with our approach to them. The Christian feels that he is enter-

ing on a state where every care will cease, every fear vanish, every desire be fulfilled, every sin be done away, every grace perfected : where there will be no more temptations to resist, no more passions to subdue, no more insensibility to mercies, no more deadness in service, no more wandering in prayer, no more sorrows to be left for himself, no tears to be shed for others. He is going where his devotion will be without languor, his love without alloy, his doubts certainty, his expectation enjoyment, his hope fruition. All will be perfect, for God will be all in all.

As he approaches the land of realities, the shadows of this earth cease to interest or mislead him. The films are removed from his eyes. Objects are stripped of their false luster. Nothing that is really little any longer looks great. The mists of vanity are dispersed. Everything which is to have an end appears small, appears nothing. Eternal things assume their proper magnitude, for he beholds them in the true point of vision. He has ceased to lean on the world, for he has found it both a reed and a spear ; it has failed and it has pierced him. He leans not on himself, for he has long known his weakness. He leans not on his virtues, for they can do nothing for him. Had he no better refuge he feels that his sun would set in darkness ; his life close in despair.

But he knows in whom he has trusted, and therefore knows not what he should fear.—He looks upward with holy but humble confidence to that great Shepherd, who having long since conducted him into green pastures,—having by his rod corrected, and by his staff supported him, will, he humbly trusts, guide him through the dark

valley of the shadow of death, and safely land him on the peaceful shores of everlasting rest.

Hannah More.

A Christian family in Heaven.

1. The enjoyments and occupations of heaven are uniformly represented as social : but where is the charm of society without mutual knowledge ?

2. Heaven is uniformly represented as perfecting all our faculties ; is it then probable that it will diminish *memory*, one of the most important of them ? And if memory be still retained in full vigor, and it be perpetually employed, as it inevitably must be, on the past scenes of our earthly existence, is it likely that the friends and companions of that existence, inhabiting then the same celestial world with us, will be unknown to us ?

3. The chief grace that will be increased in the regions of the blest, next to love to God, will be love to our companions in glory. But will not one of the most pure, elevated, and delightful exercises of this holy passion be wanting, if we are ignorant of our glorified relatives ?

4. In the general judgment, which is appointed to vindicate the ways of God to man, it is nearly certain that individuals will be known to each other ; and if this be the case, is it likely that their mutual knowledge will be immediately obliterated ?

5. Is it likely that individuals whose names and labors bear such a close and extensive connection with the redemption and history of the church, as those of the

prophets and apostles, will be unknown? And if they are known, may it not be inferred that others will be?

6. During our Savior's abode upon earth, he afforded to the three favored disciples a glimpse of the heavenly glory: he himself was transfigured, and *Moses* and *Elijah* descended in celestial brilliancy. These two eminent servants of God were known by the astonished apostles; and if known on Mount Tabor, is it not likely they will be known in the New Jerusalem?

7. Our Savior, in one of the most impressive of his parables, represents the rich man in torments, as knowing Lazarus and Abraham in glory: now, though it be a parable, and though the whole scenery of a parable is not to be considered as conveying some moral sentiment, yet certainly nothing materially and obviously at variance with the truth is ever taught by even the appendages of the chief parabolic idea.

8. We find the apostle Paul very frequently consoling himself under the sufferings and persecutions which he had to endure, by the prospect of meeting in heaven those who had been converted by his ministry on earth. His address to the believing Thessalonians is especially in point. "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?" I do not see how these Christians could be Paul's crown of rejoicing in that day, if they were not known to him.

These are some of the reasons which lead me to suppose that in heaven the saints will know each other.

Assuming then the fact, that saints will know each other in the celestial state, let us imagine, my dear children,

if indeed the imagination is equal to the effort, what must be the joy attendant on the final meeting of a pious family in heaven. One of the most exquisite delights which we ever experience on earth, is the enjoyment which springs from the first interview with a friend from whom we have been separated; and this delight is in proportion to the length of time, and greatness of distance, and magnitude of danger, which have intervened between the separation and the meeting. What language can describe the thrill of transport, the almost agony of rapture, which the wife experiences in that moment when she receives a husband back again to her arms, who has been away from home for months, who has been separated from her by half the circumference of the globe, and threatened to be torn from her forever, by the dangers of shipwreck or of battle! Or who shall set forth that scene of domestic bliss which is exhibited when the sailor-boy, after having been absent for years, returns from the dangers of the sea, and the horrors of captivity, to the bosom of his family, and exchanges extatic greetings with his parents, and his sisters, and his brothers, till all seem ready to dissolve with excess of joy! What then must be the meeting of these same relatives in heaven, after having been separated by worlds and ages: that meeting when a mother receives her children to the skies from this degenerate earth, and the father hails his offspring from the world of death to the region of life and immortality! Here imagination confesses its weakness. It is a scene we have never witnessed ourselves; nor have we ever conversed with one who has. My heart, while I write, seems to beat quicker at the thought; and the very anticipation, my dear chil-

dren, raises a commotion of pleasurable feelings in my bosom, which no words could enable me to express.

In this state, amidst all this glory, honor, and felicity, it is my sincere desire, my ardent prayer, my constant endeavor, my supreme pursuit, that your journey, my dear children, and my own, should terminate. Every thing else appears, in comparison of this, as nothing. In the view of this, thrones lose their elevation, crowns their splendor, riches their value, and fame its glory; before the effulgence and magnitude of celestial objects, *their* grandeur dwindles to an invisible point, and their brightness is but as the shadow of death. Did we not know the depravity of our nature, and that the natural man knoweth not these things, because they are spiritually discerned, we must indeed wonder, and inquire what bewitching influence it is, that is exerted upon the human mind, by which its attention is so fatally diverted from things unseen and eternal, to the shadowy and evanescent form of things seen and temporal. It is only on this ground that we can account for the folly, the madness of neglecting the great salvation, and seeking anything in preference to eternal glory. Dreadful madness! which, though it indulges in the miscalculations of insanity, has none of its excuses. What but this moral insanity could lead men for any object upon earth, to neglect the pursuit, and resign the hope of eternal life?

My children! my children! whom I love with an affection which can be equalled only by that solicitude for your welfare to which it has given rise, and which never sleeps nor rests, receive my admonition, and make eternal happiness the end of your existence. Look at that heav-

en, which, though but partially revealed, is revealed with such pure brightness on the page of eternal truth, "on the description of which, so to speak, the Holy Ghost employs and exhausts the whole force and splendor of inspiration;" look at it, that state of inconceivable, infinite eternal honor and bliss, and is there aught on earth, aught of pleasure or of gain, for which you will deliberately resign that crown of unfading glory?

May it be granted me to see you choosing the way of wisdom and piety, and remembering your Creator in the days of your youth: giving to all your virtues that stability and beauty which can be derived only from religion; first receiving by faith, and then adorning by holiness, the doctrine of God your Savior.—Then will my highest ambition, as a parent, be gratified, my most painful solicitude relieved. I shall watch your progress amidst the vicissitudes of life, with a calm and tranquil mind, assured that your piety will be your protector amidst the dangers of prosperity; or your comforter amidst the ills of adversity. If called to follow your bier, and weep upon your sepulcher, I shall only consider you as sent forward on the road to await my arrival at your Father's house; or if called, according to the order of nature, to go down first into the dark valley of the shadow of death, I shall find the agonies of separation assuaged, and the gloom of the dying chamber irradiated by those bright visions of glory, which connect themselves with the prospect of *the meeting of a pious family in the heavenly world.*

James.

Faith.

1. I see the Hindoo widow dare
To mount the funeral pile on fire;
Fearless beneath the idol's ear,
I see the devotee expire.
2. Strong is the power at work within,
That triumphs thus in nature's strife,
They hope eternal life to win :—
By transient death, immortal life.
3. But in the Christian's soul three rigas
A mightier power, and mightier force
Than pain and death, it binds in chains;
Eeshaken by their giant forces.
4. 'Tis faith :—and with the world and self
It fearless copes : with Satan too ;
Ner does it fear their triple league,
For 'tis Almighty to subdue.
5. This triune power o'er heathen lands,
And heathen hearts holds boundless sway,
And though they smile at death, the bands
Of sin they never break away.
6. O let not faith my heart control,
And I shall conquer every foe ;
The peace of God will fill my soul,
And heaven will be begun below.

