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THE

FAMILY OF BETHANY:

OR,

MEDITATIONS

ON THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.

✓
BY L. BONNET,

LATE ONE OF THE CHAPLAINS OF THE FRENCH CHURCH IN LONDON.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY THE REV. HUGH WHITE,

AUTHOR OF "MEDITATIONS ON PRAYER," "THE SECOND
ADVENT," &c.

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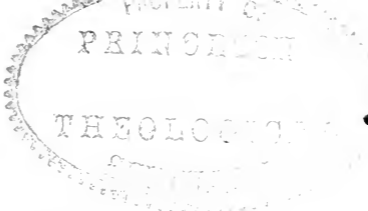
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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

THE more attentively we examine the constitution of the Gospel-scheme of salvation, the more fully will we be convinced, that it is the ultimate design of that scheme, to re-enthroned in the heart of man that principle, which reigned there before the fall in full supremacy, and in which his highest glory and happiness consisted—the love of God.

As long as this principle maintained its rightful sovereignty over man's heart, subordinating to its sanctifying sway all the inferior affections and appetites of man's nature, and rendering his whole life one continued thank-offering to the God of all his blessings; man stood forth, in all his primeval dignity and blessedness, only "a little lower than the angels," the vicegerent and representative of the majesty of the Most High on earth! The image of the Deity was reflected, with beautiful distinctness, in the unsullied mirror of his sinless soul, and the paradise around him was but an emblem—fair, indeed, yet faint—of the far lovelier paradise within!

But no sooner had that fatal act of disobedience to the Divine command, "which brought sin into the world, and all our woe," dethroned the love of God from the heart of man,—than in one moment all his glory departed from him—all his happiness passed away as a dream; the image of God was effaced from his soul, and that of Satan stamped in its stead; and the earth, cursed for his sake, sending forth thorns and thistles from its blighted soil, became but too appropriate an emblem of the far drearier desert of man's soul, where, under the blighting curse of an angry God, all the sweet flowers of celestial growth, which bloomed so brightly in the morning of man's innocence, withered away, and there suddenly sprung up the thorns and thistles of anguish, remorse, and despair.

This being the case, it is manifest that, if the Gospel-scheme be designed to restore man to the happiness from which, by sin, he has fallen, it must be its design, for the accomplishment of this object, to restore to its rightful ascendancy over man's affections *that* principle, in which the very essence of man's primeval happiness was concentrated. And is not this palpably the professed design of the Gospel-scheme? Is not the great object which it has in view emphatically *this*—that the love of God may be shed abroad in the heart of man by the Holy Ghost? And does it not employ, for this purpose, means most gloriously adapted for its accomplishment; even such a stupendous revelation of God's love to man, as,

when cordially believed through the influence of the Holy Spirit, must overpower the sullen enmity, and melt down the icy coldness of man's heart towards God, into the softened tenderness of penitential sorrow—the warm glow of grateful love?

What a beautiful compendium of the Gospel-scheme has the beloved disciple comprised in the compass of a single verse: "Herein is love! not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins." There is something amazingly impressive in these words; they unfold to our view unutterable things of the love of God; they seem to tell us, that all God's love is concentrated in this manifestation; that here all its scattered rays converge into a focus of such surpassing brightness, as altogether eclipses every other exhibition of the love of God. Herein is love! It is as if St. John had said—Doubt as you may the love of God, when you look elsewhere for proofs, yet *here*, at least, you must feel that you cannot, dare not, indulge a doubt, for you cannot look to the cross, and not be compelled to confess—*Herein is love!* Nor is there that conceivable ground of distrust of God's love, which the incredulity of man's alienated heart could suggest, which is not anticipated and answered in this precious verse.

Are we ready to plead, that ingratitude to the God of all our blessings so stares us in the face, that we feel it would be unwarrantable presumption to cherish the hope, that we can be the objects of *His* love, whose goodness we have requited

with such ungrateful contempt and rebellion, as compel us to despise and loathe ourselves. This apparently most reasonable fear is silenced by the assurance, "Herein is love—not that we loved God." The want of our love to Him, that cursed consequence of the fall, which stamps on our apostate spirits the very brand of hell, is stated as being no bar to this display of God's love. *Not* that we loved God, *but* that He loved us! Yes! with all our ingratitude full before His view, though of its enormous extent and baseness He alone could form any adequate estimate—still He loved us! with a love of compassion, of which we can give no other explanation than this—that with regard to His love, partaking so fully as it does of the unfathomable mysteriousness of His nature, "His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways."

Again, are we ready to indulge the apprehension, which the consciousness of our unworthiness might well seem to warrant, that, though the compassion of our offended God might dispose Him to grant us some trifling boon, some gift of little worth, still we dare not look for any great or precious tokens of His love. Oh! how is this apprehension not merely answered, but overpowered into rapturous wonder, by the amazing declaration, "He so loved us that He gave His Son, His own, His only, His well-beloved Son! His co-eternal and co-equal Son! One with Himself from everlasting—gave *Him*—the greatest gift of His love even in His power to bestow. Oh! is

not the appeal unanswerable! What *could* He have done, to convince us of His love, *more* than He has done? What *could* He have given, dearer or more precious to Him, than His own, His only Son? Can we now wonder at the Apostle's exclamation, "Herein is love!"

But we have not yet arrived at the full development of the love of God which this verse displays! There are depths in it yet to be fathomed: there are heights in it yet to be scaled; and still, and throughout eternity, there will remain in the love of God to man, which this verse reveals, heights, which will be for ever unscalable by created intellects—depths, which can never be fathomed by finite minds.

Though the fears, arising from the consciousness of our ingratitude to God, might be thus silenced by the consideration of His infinite benignity and compassion, there is another aspect of the Divine character, which might well overwhelm us with the most overpowering alarm, and exclude the hope that God would ever lift up the light of his countenance upon us in love! We might be ready, when we contemplate the blessed God as the Being, who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, to an infinite extent, and view ourselves as vile, polluted sinners, to exclaim, "It is impossible that a holy God could love such unholy creatures as we must confess ourselves to be! His holiness must constrain Him to hold us in perfect abhorrence, as utterly loathsome in the eyes of His infinite purity! Oh! the depths of Divine

love! What tongue of men or angels could speak aright of that most mysterious love of God, which here bursts on our view! 'He loved us, and gave His own Son, as a propitiation for our sins!'" Yes! our sinfulness, the very object which we might so justly have feared would have shut us out for ever from the smallest manifestation of the love of God, is the very object, from which He takes occasion, while displaying, in the strongest possible manner, His holy abhorrence of sin, to exhibit towards sinners the greatest possible proof of His love, even in His power to bestow!

It is *because* we have sinned against Him, and were, as sinners, exposed to a righteous sentence of eternal condemnation, and must, therefore, unless an adequate atonement should be offered, to make the exercise of mercy compatible with the claims of justice, have perished everlastingly; it is for this very reason, that loving us with an unbounded love, and seeing that no creature, however highly exalted, could offer a sufficient satisfaction to His offended justice on our behalf, *therefore* He gave His own co-eternal and co-equal Son, as a propitiation for our sins!

It is manifest that this at once silences every objection derived from our sinfulness, and magnifies the love of God to the utmost conceivable extent; for here, so far is our sinfulness from being represented as an insuperable barrier to the manifestation of God's love, that it is actually exhibited as having elicited the greatest possible exhibition of that love; since, if we had not sin-

ned, we could not have required a propitiation ; and we may with reverence assert, that even the Everlasting Father himself could not give a greater proof of His love, than to give His own Son to be a propitiation for our sins. More especially, when we remember, that, in order to offer up *such* a propitiation, as would perfectly satisfy the demands of the insulted justice of Jehovah, the well-beloved Son of God must descend from the throne of His glory in heaven to the death of the cross on earth.

What possible plea then is left, which the most perverted ingenuity of man's incredulity can invent, for doubting the love of God? Since, in confutation of the plea, we might have urged with most apparent reasonableness, even the fact, that we are sinners, and as such, unworthy of His love ; Scripture assures us, that "*herein* God commendeth his love towards us," (sets it off by this most endearing consideration, which unspeakably enhances its value,) "that while we were yet sinners, He gave His own Son to die for our sins." Is it (for this would seem the only conceivable objection unanswered)—is it the greatness of our sins? No! for since He gave His own Son—the beloved of His bosom—the partner of His throne—One with Himself from everlasting ; since He *gave Him* as a propitiation for our sins, it manifestly is not humility, but unbelief, offering the deepest insult to the Son of His love, to imagine that there could be any sins, no matter of how aggravated a character, or how deep a dye, for

which *that* sacrifice must not be an infinitely sufficient expiation! Yea, one which puts such infinite honour on the justice whose claims it satisfies, and the law whose penalties it pays, that the pardon, purchased at such a price, not merely comports with, but even pours a brighter flood of glory round the character and government of God.

Are then our trembling hearts ready to exclaim —“Oh! may we indeed be permitted, with an appropriating trust, to believe and confide in the love of God, thus wondrously displayed?” How delightfully encouraging, in answer to such an enquiry, the assurance, which the Scriptures so fully warrant, that not merely are we permitted, but even *commanded* thus to believe in the love of God, as manifested towards ourselves! Yea, that to doubt that love is a suggestion of Satan, and in the highest degree sinful, and displeasing to God, because, now that God has declared His love towards us, by giving His own Son, as a propitiation for our sins, to doubt it, after *such* a manifestation, is virtually to tell God, that *nothing* He could do, would be sufficient to convince us of His love! And how could we offer him a greater affront than this? Or how could He give us a stronger warrant to confide in His love, than to command us to do so, and to tell us, that it is in the highest degree sinful in His sight, to doubt or to *distrust His love*?

Thus every conceivable objection, which conscious guilt could urge, is fully answered; and

every obstacle to the entrance of God's love into the heart of man entirely removed. I have dwelt the more largely on this point, because, as I before observed, the ultimate design of the Gospel-scheme, (intended as it is for the restoration of man to the glory and happiness which he lost by the fall,) is the re-enthronement of the love of God in the heart of man, in the rightful sovereignty of which blessed principle over all the affections and appetites of his nature, we perceived the very essence of his happiness and his glory to consist; and we also saw that, for the accomplishment of this purpose, the means employed were such a stupendous exhibition of the love of God, as, when cordially believed, cannot fail to win back to God the alienated heart of man.

It seemed, therefore, important to show, that the manifestation of Divine love, which the Gospel-scheme unfolds, is admirably adapted to the end it is designed to accomplish: because it exhibits that love as clothed in a shape, (the gift of God's own Son, as a propitiation for our sins,) which makes it the basest ingratitude to doubt God's love; for, could we offer a deeper affront to God than to tell Him, that even the gift of his own Son, for such a purpose, has failed to convince us of His love? While, at the same time, as this gift, bestowed for such a purpose, presupposes our sinfulness, (which alone furnishes occasion for its exercise,) it provides unanswerable arguments for silencing every objection, which the consciousness of guilt could urge; and as it comes through a

channel, which glorifies the Divine character in the pardon of our sins, making our salvation, effectuated through such a sacrifice as was offered on the cross, a means of promoting the glory of God, it sweetly satisfies us that God, in perfect consistency with His holiness, can look on us with love; and thus it supplies the most abundant entrance to the love of God, to come and take up its abode in the human heart, and dwell and reign there, opening a paradise, yea, a heaven, in that heart for ever.

The unspeakable importance of thus believing God's love is obvious from this—that, as soon as a cordial belief that, through the propitiation offered up on our behalf by His beloved Son, God is reconciled to us, and forgives us all our iniquities, and regards us with complacency, as the children of His love; as soon as a cordial belief of this glorious truth is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, gratitude to the God of our salvation immediately is implanted there, and becomes thenceforth the very soul of our souls; the seminal principle of all acceptable obedience; the germ from which grow all the fruits of righteousness, and true holiness; the fountain from which all gracious affections and dispositions, all renewed tastes and tempers, flow. From this Divine fountain, thus opened in our hearts, flows an inextinguishable abhorrence of sin—for when God is sincerely loved, we *must* hate sin—the abominable thing which He hates, and which is the very concentration of enmity against Himself, rebellion

against His authority, ingratitude for His loving-kindness, and hatred of all He holds dear. Sin—whose unutterable hatefulness is so awfully written in the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion of God's well-beloved Son! Surely if there be any one truth revealed in Scripture, with such clearness that he who runs may read, it is, that the love of God and the love of sin cannot dwell together in the same breast. Oh! no! it is for the very purpose of dethroning the love, and destroying the dominion of sin—and of enthroning the love and establishing the empire of holiness in the believer's heart, that God, the Holy Ghost, takes up His abode there, as the Sanctifier and Comforter, and by His Divine presence and influences, consecrating his body as a temple of the living God, and renewing his soul, in the Divine image, in righteousness and true holiness, makes the heir of glory meet for the holy service, and the holy heaven of a holy God.

The love of God, when it is enthroned in our hearts, will also produce the most unhesitating obedience to His commandments, and the most un murmuring resignation to His will: for how can we hesitate to obey any of His commandments, or acquiesce in any of His appointments, when we regard them all alike as the expressions of an infinitely wise and tender Father's love, who cannot be mistaken as to the best means of advancing our real welfare, for He is infinite in wisdom—who cannot be frustrated in any of His plans, for He is infinite in power—who cannot, without a horrible

libel on His character, be supposed to take pleasure in inflicting on us unnecessary pain, for, (independently of His infinite benevolence, which altogether precludes the insulting supposition,) He so loved us, as to give His own Son to the death of the cross, to save us from eternal sufferings; and who cannot, without the most monstrous ingratitude and affront to that Son, be suspected of withholding from us any real blessing in His power to bestow, seeing He withheld not *even Him*—but delivered Him up as a propitiation for our sins!—how then shall He not (oh! blessed impossibility), “how shall He not with him also freely give us all things?”

Nor should another precious fruit of this celestial plant be omitted; even that, when the love of God in Christ reigns supreme in the heart, there is always kindled in the soul, by the Holy Spirit, a heavenly flame of fervent zeal for God's honour, which prompts the grateful believer to consecrate all the powers of his mind, and members of his body, as instruments of righteousness, for the advancement of the glory of God! Then are the words—“Hallowed be thy name—Thy kingdom come—Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven”—so often, while he was a stranger to the love of God, repeated with the most insulting mockery of the Most High, then are those words the honest language of his heart, whose supreme solicitude is now centred on the advancement of his Heavenly Father's glory, “to which every other wish and anxiety of his soul are sub-

ordinate, and every plan and purpose of his life arranged in grateful subserviency to this end."

To contribute, to the utmost extent of his influence and resources, towards the accomplishment of this object, becomes the dearest desire of his renewed heart; to this all his time, all his talents, are gladly and gratefully devoted. He feels it to be indeed his bounden duty to do so; but he feels also that it is something even nobler and sweeter than this—that it is his most exalted privilege—the source of the highest honour and happiness that can be conferred upon him, to be permitted to be, in any, even the humblest measure, instrumental in advancing the glory of his God.

In this sentiment of holy zeal for God's glory, are combined whatever is most ennobling and attractive in loyalty to the most munificent of sovereigns, and love to the tenderest of fathers, and gratitude to the most generous of benefactors. Every gift, whether of natural or acquired endowment, which the bounty of God has bestowed—every channel of influence or source of enjoyment which the providence of God has opened—all, all are prized by one who loves God in Christ, exactly in the proportion in which they can be made to administer to the advancement of His glory.

This sentiment invests the humblest Christian's character with a dignity, immeasurably higher than belongs to the mightiest monarch of the earth in whose heart the love of God is not

enthroned. It links him as a fellow-labourer with the most exalted of created beings, for the attainment of the noblest of ends—for it associates him with cherubim, and seraphim, and all the host of heaven, in labours of grateful zeal for the advancement of that end, to which they invariably devote their immortal energies—the glory of God.

Does not, then, the love of God, when reigning in rightful supremacy over the Christian's heart, fling round him a grandeur that is not of the earth, but bears the very impress of heaven?

Its possessor may be a Lazarus at some rich man's gate, the object of the mingled scorn and compassion of the wealthy worldlings, who, as they roll past him in their chariots of state, look down on him with contempt, as a creature of an inferior grade in existence to themselves; yet does he rank as much above them in the estimation of Jehovah, as the heavens are higher than the earth.

Nor does this enthronement of God in the heart of man minister less to his own enjoyment, than to his zeal for God's glory; or conduce less to his happiness than to his holiness, so far as we can draw a distinction between holiness and happiness, which are, in fact, but two different names for one and the same thing; for, by an immutable constitution of a holy God, immutable, because His glory would be sullied by a change in such an appointment, He has made it equally

impossible, to be happy without being holy, or to be holy without being happy!

The consciousness of possessing the friendship of the greatest and best of beings—of Him whose loving-kindness is better than the life, and whose smile gives to angels all their joy, and heaven all its glory—the conviction that we have concentrated our supreme affections on the one only Object, infinitely worthy of them, and capable of satisfying their most exalted and enlarged desires—the feeling that we are linked, in a bond of holy brotherhood, with all the pure and glorious intelligences throughout the universe, who live in the light of God's countenance, and rejoice to do His will—the perception that the Holy Spirit has already traced in our souls the lineaments of the Divine image, modelled after the Saviour's, however faint as yet may be the resemblance—and the assurance that that image shall yet be perfectly stamped on our glorified spirits, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, in the smallest degree to disfigure the beauty of perfect holiness—the knowledge that all our faculties are consecrated to the service of the best of masters, and the advancement of the noblest of ends, and the assurance that our safety and happiness, for time and for eternity, are as secure in the hands of a covenant-keeping God, as His infinite wisdom, power, and love can make them—therefore as secure as our hearts could possibly desire—and all the pure pleasures which flow through the sacred channels of prayer, and the Holy Scriptures, and

the services of the Sabbath, especially the Sacramental Commemoration of the Redeemer's dying love, that sweetest foretaste to the believer of the blessedness of sitting down, with all the members of his mystical body, at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb—all this for present possession; and then for future prospects, the promises of that God who cannot lie, that, throughout the endless ages of eternity, we shall be rejoicing in His presence with joy unspeakable and full of glory—uniting with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, in the songs and services of the celestial sanctuary, joining with all that we have loved in Christ, and with all the ranks of the redeemed, in ascribing everlasting praise to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb—even the Lamb that was slain for us: if these be the blessed fruits of the love of God, planted in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, oh! may not that principle indeed be said to open in our hearts a little heaven?

Nor should it be forgotten, that from the love of God thus shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, flows that principle of christian philanthropy, and brotherly love, which constrains the believer to labour to the uttermost to be like the God he loves, in diffusing happiness, temporal and eternal, as far as his influence extends. The grateful child of God feels the full force of that beautiful exclamation of the Apostle, "Beloved! if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another!" Having contemplated, with adoring

gratitude, the stupendous love, displayed in his redemption, he is inflamed with an unquenchable desire to drink every day more deeply into the spirit of that love, which shines forth, with such surpassing glory, round Calvary's cross, to become more closely conformed to the character of Him, who was the incarnate manifestation of Divine love, to walk more faithfully in the footsteps of Him, who went about doing good, and thus by the exhibitions of a temper, modelled after the loving Saviour's and implanted by that Spirit, who descended on Jesus in the form of a dove; by every work and labour of love, which gratitude to a Saviour-God will promote, and by the zealous and liberal support of every society, and institution, which are established and calculated to advance at once the happiness of man, and the glory of God, to become instrumental in soothing human suffering, and augmenting human happiness, and through the medium of a character, living in an element of divine love, pervading all its inward feelings, and outward movements, to be made a benefactor and a blessing to mankind.

If the truth of these observations be admitted, it is manifest that no style of work can be more directly calculated to promote at once the glory of God, and the happiness of man, than that which exhibits, in the most attractive form, the love of God to man, and thus prepares the way for the enthronement in the human heart of that love of man to God, which we have seen to be at once the seminal principle of all true holiness,

and the only spring of satisfying and abiding happiness: and it is this which invests with such a peculiar charm, and stamps with such a peculiar value, the work to which we have prefixed these prefatory observations.

It bears the unequivocal marks of being written by one, who had felt, in the inmost recesses of his heart, the full power of that brief but most beautiful delineation of the Divine character, drawn by the hands of the Apostle of love, when he says, "God is love!" And it would appear impossible to read it with a devout spirit, without feeling attracted in love and adoration towards this blessed Being, who is thus exhibited as bearing a nature and a name, so affectingly calculated to win for Him the warmest love and confidence of the human heart.

This delightful conviction and exhibition of the glorious truth, that "God is love," pervades the whole volume, running, like a golden thread, through the entire texture of the work. The stamp of heavenly love is exhibited in every feature of the stupendous scheme of our salvation. We are constantly reminded that love is the fountain from which it flows, and that the medium by which it is accomplished is the incarnation of Divine love. Love is shown to be the essential spirit of the Saviour's character—love, the animating motive which impelled Him to undertake the work of man's redemption—love, the sustaining principle which upheld Him, amidst all the struggles and sorrows of that arduous work—love, both

the soul and substance of the religion He descended from on high to establish upon earth—and love, the very element and atmosphere of that heaven, to which He will conduct all His faithful followers, when they have finished their painful pilgrimage in this vale of tears.

To a believer's heart there is something delightfully infectious in continually breathing such an atmosphere as pervades this work. It is not possible to do so, without catching something of its contagious influence, and thus having the temper and character imbued with that spirit of love, which most of all assimilates the human nature to the divine.

The history which the author has selected for the exemplification of the glorious truth, which thus invests the character of God, and of the religion which has emanated from Him, with such divine attractiveness, is one admirably adapted for this purpose—the history of that family of Bethany, of whom, in one short sentence, we are told enough to assure us, that there was not then on the face of the earth a more honoured or a happier family; for St. John tells us, “that Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” Volumes could not do more than this single verse has done to convince us, that in the abode of this family, (if no where else on earth,) a type or miniature of heaven was to be found—a counterpart both of the character and happiness of heaven's inhabitants; for could Jesus thus love any, who had not imbibed the spirit of His own character, (that

is, the spirit of heaven,) so as to make them congenial companions, bosom friends for the Saviour of mankind; and what could be said of the happiness of the highest of the host of heaven more than this—that Jesus loves them! Is not this the source, the concentration, the climax of all their joy?

Into the bosom of this highly-favoured family we are introduced by the interesting work before us, guided by the exquisitely attractive narrative recorded in the 11th chapter of St. John's Gospel; and truly we are made to feel, while reading it, that when Jesus came to visit that humble abode of those He loved, He brought heaven with Him into the hearts of its inmates, for He brought thither the presence of Him, in whose presence consists the fulness of heaven's joy.

The characters of the two sisters are delineated with great power of discrimination. The few touches which the Apostle has given are beautifully filled up into a more finished portraiture of their peculiar features; and strikingly is the contrast drawn between the ardent, impassioned, precipitate Martha, and the calm, gentle, tender Mary; the love of the former rushing like a torrent, strong, indeed, but impetuous and troubled in its course; the love of the latter flowing like a deep river, in silent strength, pure, peaceful, and profound; or, as the contrast is described with singular felicity in this work, in two short sentences, "Martha is the St. Peter, Mary the St. John of her sex." Could any thing more happily illus-

trate the difference of the two sisters—the one all ardent zeal, the other all seraphic love?

But with whatever of force or beauty the subordinate personages may be delineated, the figure of the Saviour himself always appears as the principal object in the foreground of the picture, arrayed in all the mingled majesty and tenderness which formed the distinguished characteristics of the Divine Philanthropist! Every feature wears the expression, every word breathes the spirit, every action bears the impress of incarnate love! *This* encompasses Him as a celestial atmosphere; *this* encircles Him as a celestial halo, throwing round all He says and does a grace and a glory which are indeed divine! You cannot follow Him, step by step, through the various scenes of this peculiarly interesting narrative, from the moment when the sisters of Lazarus sent to Him that touching message, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick," till the moment when, in the majesty of omnipotence, He cried, "Lazarus! come forth!" without feeling, with a force which supersedes the necessity of laboured demonstration in its proof, that you are following the footsteps of Deity—that Jesus was God manifest in the flesh," and that "God is love." The more closely you watch the development of His character, as exhibited in those movements or observations, which disclosed what is passing within His breast, the more fully are you convinced that you are contemplating the character, that you are listening to the voice, of

the incarnate God. And it is perhaps the peculiar charm of this volume, that the author, in commenting on the character of the Saviour, as developed in this narrative, appears to have deeply imbibed the spirit of the beloved disciple ; so that, while reading the reflections brought before us in this work, we feel, as it were, permitted to look down into the depths of the Redeemer's heart, and catch a glimpse of the ineffable love to His people which perpetually glows there, and prompts every movement of His providential arrangements on their behalf. And thus the most afflictive of His chastening^s dispensations are seen to emanate as directly from that love, and to bear its stamp as deeply impressed on them, as those apparently kinder appointments, by which, when compatible with their eternal welfare, He delights to crown His people's earthly hopes with the largest measure of purified earthly enjoyment. Now we know of nothing more powerfully calculated to produce and maintain, in the afflicted Christian's soul, that spirit of cheerful and thankful resignation, which brings at once such glory to his God, and such peace to his own heart, than the fully realized and abidingly cherished conviction, that all the dealings of his Saviour-God with him, however they may differ as to their external aspect, are all alike the emanations and expressions of His infinite love ! that the dispensations which that love appoints may be continually changing, like the alternations of light and shade, as His infinite wisdom may

see to be most conducive, by their change, to His people's spiritual welfare, but still the love itself changeth not; for with it is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" but it endureth from everlasting to everlasting; like Himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Oh yes! it is indeed a blessed frame for a believer's mind, (and assuredly it ought to be its abiding frame,) when he is enabled to repose in his Redeemer's love, with a confidingness which no trials can shake, and to acquiesce in His appointments, with a satisfaction which no afflictions can disturb; and when, whatever that Redeemer's appointments as to his earthly circumstances may be, whether He is pleased to prosper or to defeat his best concerted plans, to realize or disappoint his most fondly cherished hopes, to give or to take away what most he desires or loves, he is able, with equal gratitude of heart, to bless "the name of the Lord!" And is it not strange, (and oh what a melancholy proof, how imperfectly his nature is, as yet renewed,) that after having once been privileged to read, with a believing heart, the records of *that* love, as contained in the scenes exhibited in Gethsemane's garden, and on Calvary's cross, he should ever feel the smallest difficulty in reposing in the Redeemer's love, with *such* confidingness, and in His appointments with *such* resignation. It is true, we are so habituated to associate with the very name of love the idea of doing all within our power to avert the sufferings, gratify the

wishes, and thus promote the happiness of the beloved object, that we find it at times hard to believe—yea, it is confessedly a noble triumph of faith, with unwavering confidence, to feel *assured*, that when the hand of a Saviour-God is stretched forth to cross all our favourite plans—even those that were arranged most faithfully, as we fancied, for the advancement of His glory, and to blight all our dearest hopes—even those which we cherished in the sweetest spirit of submission to His will—it is love, the very tenderest, fondest love, which directs its very movement. And yet, did we but reason and feel as, if Christians in more than name, we ought to do, we would find it much harder to believe, that any thing but *such* love *could* direct a single movement of the Saviour's hand, in any of His appointments, however afflictive, on behalf of his own beloved people; of those so inconceivably dear to Him, that He did not deem even the sacrifice of His own life, the pouring out of his own blood, amidst all the ignominy and agony of the death of the cross, too costly a price at which to purchase their eternal happiness—too vast a sacrifice, by which to testify the boundlessness of His love.

We do not deny that the dispensations which He appoints may often, to our short-sighted faculties, appear very mysterious; that His footsteps are often in the sea, and His paths in the deep waters, where His design cannot be traced: but oh! might we not expect that the same confidingness which is reposed in well-tried earthly affec-

tion, should be reposed in *His*; that *its* tenderness might be trusted, even when its plans could not be traced; and that any suspicious doubts which the apparent severity of his dealings might awaken, would be at once put to flight by the remembrance of what passed in the garden of Gethsemane, and all painful perplexity changed into cheerful acquiescence, by His own assurance to Peter—"What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Yes! I cannot but feel persuaded, that if believers were more in the habit of devoutly dwelling on the contemplation of the infinite love and infinite wisdom of their Saviour-God, they would be able to exhibit, under the pressure of heavy trials, a spirit more suitable to the exalted privileges which they possess, and more calculated to honour Him in the eyes of the children of the world.

The language, not merely of their lips, but of their heart and life, amidst the most painful or perplexing dispensations, by which He might see fit to try their faith and patience, would in spirit be habitually this—When I look at the cross, and remember who it is that is there offering up Himself, amidst the lingering tortures of its agonizing death, as a sacrifice for my sins, and to secure my salvation, I dare not doubt *His* love—I feel it would be the basest ingratitude to wound it by one dishonouring doubt, written, as it is, in His tears, and agonies, and blood. Oh! then, what a heart must mine be, if I can refuse to trust in it with the most unsuspecting confidingness, aye,

though it should appoint for me trials, beyond all which ever yet were appointed for any child of man! True, this is a most perplexing dispensation. I cannot fully fathom its deep design. It so crushes my spirit—it so wounds my heart in the very tenderest point—it so dries up the source of all my earthly happiness, and gives such a wilderness aspect to the world. But oh! unbelieving, ungrateful heart, though thou canst not trace, art thou unwilling to trust a Saviour's love? May I not feel assured, that this is precisely the trial which is best suited to my spiritual condition, since it is the one which Infinite Wisdom has chosen; and is *that* a wisdom which can by possibility be mistaken? Is the child to dictate to the parent, what discipline to adopt in training him up for future usefulness? Is the patient to prescribe to the physician, what remedies to employ for the accomplishment of his recovery? And shall I dictate to the only wise God, my Saviour, what course of corrective discipline He ought to adopt, in training me up for my purchased inheritance of glory? Shall I prescribe to the Heavenly Physician, what remedies He ought to employ, to accomplish my spiritual cure? And if His discipline be stricter, or His remedies more painful than is palatable to flesh and blood, oh! shall I therefore *question* His love, or *quarrel* with His appointments?

But is the dispensation indeed so mysterious, that I cannot trace, amidst its dark perplexity, the footsteps of a faithful covenant-keeping God? Is

the gloom, that overshadows my path, so deep, so dense, that no cheering rays of divine light break through and brighten it with even the passing gleam of a Saviour's smile? Is the storm of affliction so loud, and so uninterrupted, that I never hear, amidst the pauses of the blast, a voice that softly whispers, "God is love?" Oh! surely I cannot say this. Yea, must I not thankfully acknowledge, that even already I have had abundant cause to confess, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted;" and to cherish an humble confidence, that all the blessings, which I have derived from sanctified sorrows, have been but the first-fruits of a rich harvest of eternal glory?

And oh! how precious have those first-fruits been! What ineffably sweet communion with my Saviour-God have I enjoyed, since He *allured* me into the wilderness, and there spake comfortably to me! What increased experience of the tenderness of His sympathy, the preciousness of His consolations! Oh! should I have been well satisfied to have passed through even deeper waters of affliction than I have encountered, if I could only thus have learned, as this trial has taught me, *how* a Saviour-God *can* and will support His people in their day of trouble? And what fountains of consolation, sweeter than I ever before tasted, or even in imagination conceived, have prayer and the Scriptures proved, since this afflictive dispensation drove me to seek in them refreshment for my fainting soul? Moreover, as earth has been darkened, has not heaven looked

brighter to my view? Has not the buffeting of the storm endeared to me the prospect of the haven where I would be; and the wearisomeness of the journey made sweeter still the thoughts of my heavenly home? Have not my affections, desires, and hopes, oftener soared up, with heavenward flight, since the chains of earthly attractions, which bound them down to the dust, have been broken by the hand of affliction? And shall not I bless the stroke, which thus emancipated my earth-enthralled spirit, and gave it liberty to mount up, as on eagle's wings, to its native skies?

Has not the furnace of affliction also proved to my soul a purifying furnace, by which the sullyng defilements of inward corruption, which lurked unsuspected in the recesses of my heart, were discovered and purged away in its refining fires? So that if, by divine grace I am enabled in any, even the faintest degree, to reflect my adorable Redeemer's image, I am mainly indebted to the refining process, which has been thus carried on by the Holy Spirit in my soul. And could I wish that the fire had been less hot, if thereby less of the defilement of sin would have been purged away, and less of the image of the Saviour reflected in my soul? And have I not had opportunities of glorifying Him who died for me, placed within my reach by this agonizing trial, immeasurably more precious, than the most unclouded prosperity could ever have supplied? Oh! if I may but indulge the delightful hope, that some careless sinner has been converted, or some sorrowing saint

comforted, by what they have seen of a Saviour's faithfulness and love, as exhibited in the strength and consolation He has so graciously imparted to me, in my time of trial, should I not thank God for the dispensation, which, even by the desolation of my dearest earthly hopes, has enabled me to promote the glory of that beloved Saviour-God, to whom I am exclusively indebted for the hope, full of immortality—the hope of eternal happiness in heaven?

Surely, even these considerations are sufficient to constrain me to cry out to my covenant-God, "I know that in very faithfulness Thou has afflicted me;" or, if any shadows of obscurity still hang over His dispensations, may I not cheerfully wait for the revelations of that brighter world, where, in His light, I shall see light poured, in full splendour, on the entire of the path, by which He led me through the wilderness to his own presence in glory! Then will I fully understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, in all His dealings with me here below. Then will I clearly see, (what it is now at once my privilege and duty cheerfully to believe,) that not a passing cloud has ever darkened my path—not a single thorn ever pierced my feet, but was appointed by a Saviour's hand, in the very tenderness and faithfulness of His love. Then, (when the light of heaven is flashed on the scenes of earth,) will I see stamped on this very dispensation, in celestial characters, the divine inscription, "God is love." Then will I perceive how necessary a link it formed, in that chain of

providential arrangements, by which He was graciously drawing up my heart from the creature to Himself, from earth to heaven, and thus making me meet for the everlasting enjoyment of Himself; and the very trial, which now calls forth my bitterest tears of anguish, will then call forth my sweetest songs of gratitude and joy.

Reflections such as these, so full of *happy comfort*, are suggested in the work to which these observations are prefixed, in a most attractive manner, additionally recommended, if such recommendation be required, by the charms of a chastely beautiful style, and that powerfully persuasive species of eloquence, which, obviously coming from the heart, makes its way irresistibly to the heart. It is this which is calculated to make this volume so peculiarly acceptable to those mourners in Zion, whose pathway through this world's wilderness is overshadowed with the gloom of earthly affliction. It exhibits in such glowing colours the divine attractions of the religion of the Gospel, the unchangeableness and unboundedness of the Redeemer's love to His people, and the endearing tenderness of His character, as to force on the afflicted Christian the delightful conviction, that all his sorrows are but so many proofs of the faithfulness of that love, which led the Son of God to endure for his sake all the sufferings of His afflicted life, and agonizing death; that there is a need-be for them all: and that the gracious design and glorious result of all his appointed trials is to promote his own conformity to the Divine

image, and the glory of the God of his salvation. And this conviction must powerfully tend to produce the most cheerful willingness to commit to a Saviour's disposal the arrangement of all the events of this life, and to receive from a Saviour's hands, without one rebellious murmur, and drink without one repining tear, yea, even with a thankful smile, the bitterest cup of trial He may be pleased to prepare and present to the object of His everlasting love.

There is another most important lesson enforced in this interesting work, which stamps on it peculiar value, in a professing age like the present—a lesson, which we cannot but fear many a high-toned professor of our day has yet to learn—even that the clearest views of evangelical truth, if they are unproductive of cordial and supreme love to a Saviour-God, are utterly unavailing to the everlasting salvation of the soul.

In unfolding the characters of the members of the family of Bethany, as developed in the touching narrative of the Apostle, the reflections introduced by the author of this work are admirably calculated to deepen the impression which it appears to be always the design of St. John to make on the mind of his reader, that the very essence of a believer's happiness consists in loving the Saviour, even as God alone deserves to be loved, with the whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.

When introduced into the bosom of this happy family, we are made to feel that *it is* a happy

family, *because* the love of Jesus is enthroned in the heart of each of its members. This hallowed affection was indeed modified in its exhibition, by the different constitutional temperament of the individuals who composed the highly-favoured circle: but whether it displayed itself in the impetuous eagerness of Martha, hastening with over-anxious solicitude, to prepare the choicest viands she could procure, to mark her esteem and affection for her Divine Guest, or in the calm and devout demeanour of Mary, sitting in humble docility at her Divine Master's feet; it was alike love, the purest, deepest, most grateful love to Jesus, which reigned in the bosom, and prompted the movements of them both. And while, from the gentle rebuke addressed to the one, and the affectionate commendation bestowed on the other, we are impressively taught, that the most gratifying proof which we can give of our love to Jesus, is to sit at His feet in the lowly attitude of humble disciples, listening with devout attention to the gracious words which proceed out of His mouth; still we cannot for a moment doubt, that He, who knew the heart, as only its Creator could have known it, regarded with mingled complacency and compassion the struggle of feelings in the ardent and anxious Martha's breast, viewing, with condescending approbation, the *motive* from which her over-cumbered care in preparing for His entertainment flowed; while, in the faithfulness of divine love, He rebuked the mixture of infirmity which was exhibited in her *mode* of

displaying her reverence and affection for Himself.

Now, in an age like the present, when, from the increased spread of evangelical preaching, there is such an increased knowledge and profession of evangelical religion, it is of paramount importance to have the solemn reflection frequently and forcibly impressed upon the mind, that the most correct apprehensions, the soundest form, the loudest profession, and the warmest advocacy of evangelical truth, in the absence of warm, heartfelt, life-influencing love to a Saviour-God, are, in His estimation, nothing worth. Yea, that the most splendid sacrifices, the most unwearyed labours, if they are not sacrifices of thanksgiving, and labours of love, are utterly valueless in *His* sight, who says to each of His intelligent creatures, and with emphatic urgency of appeal to each individual to whom He has made known the revelation of His Redeeming love, "Give *me* thine heart;" and who, if that appeal be not answered through the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit, by the unreserved surrender of the heart to Him, will reject all our heartless services with infinite abhorrence, and banish us from the light of His countenance into the blackness of darkness for ever!

Oh! we do feel it to be of immense importance to have the conviction powerfully forced upon the mind, that, for the want of cordial supreme love to Jesus, there is nothing that can compensate in the eyes of Him, who, to win our love, laid down

His life for us!—that, while the homage of the heart is withheld, it matters not what homage the understanding, the lips, or even the life may pay; while, on the other hand, when the love of the Saviour is really enthroned in the heart, there may be much weakness of faith, and waywardness of feeling—the Redeemer's image may be clouded by the remaining corruption of a nature, imperfectly renewed; and the infirmities of the natural temper may, as in the case of Martha, break out in the very moment of displaying the grateful love, which the heart feels for the object of its supreme affections; but still, if these corruptions and infirmities are sincerely lamented and striven against, in the strength of divine grace, He, who readeth the heart, when He sees the love of Himself reigning in its rightful supremacy there, will graciously fling the robe of His own righteousness over every failing and imperfection of His faithful followers, and plead on their behalf, before the mercy-seat, that touchingly tender plea, “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak:” for His eye can pierce into the innermost recesses of the soul, and discover the love, which, though for a season lulled to sleep, when it should have been most wakeful, still lives in the heart of a sincere, though slumbering disciple.

We may be assisted in the consideration of this subject by the analogy of earthly affection; for whatever differences in the *mode* of exhibiting real affection towards an earthly and visible, or a divine and invisible object, must necessarily exist,

we may feel satisfied that our adorable Redeemer, by selecting the endearing relationships of earthly affection as images of His ineffable love, has warranted us to draw this inference from the illustration—that we must not offer to Him, under the name of gratitude or love, what we would not think of offering to a fellow-worm, or what, if offered, would be rejected with scorn. What, then, is it, which alone stamps value on the external demonstrations of affection, which we receive from those we love? Is it not the love towards us, cherished in the inmost recesses of the heart, of which these outward exhibitions are the evidence and the fruit, and from which they derive all their significancy, and all their charm? Could the most punctual obedience to his commands compensate to a fond father for the want of affection in the child, over whom his heart yearns in all the tenderness of parental love? Could the most unlimited compliance with his wishes impart a momentary throb of pleasure to an attached husband's heart, if he were capable of looking into the heart of her on whom he had lavished all his love, and perceived its affections alienated from himself, and fixed on another? Yea, would not her very compliance with his wishes under such circumstances, inspire him only with indignation and disgust? And will the Father of spirits be satisfied with that heartless service, which an earthly parent would not accept? Will the Bridegroom of the Church be content with that constrained obedience of an alienated heart, which would be re-

garded, were it offered to an earthly object, with abhorrence and disdain? No, no. He, who, as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, but, above all, as our Redeemer, has entitled Himself, by claims stronger than can be urged even on angels, to the supreme affections of our hearts—He, who, to win our love, stooped from the height of His throne in heaven, even to the degradation of the death of the cross—He will never accept of any thing at our hands, in testimony of our acknowledgment of His claims, in lieu of our love. “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema,” is His own awful and irreversible decree! No services we can render—no sufferings we can endure—will be looked on by Him with momentary complacency, if our hearts be withheld from Him: but let these be once given freely, fully, unreservedly to Him, and then there is not the feeblest effort we can make, or the slightest sacrifice we may submit to, in testimony of our love, which He will not graciously accept. Yea, such is the exuberance of His grace—which He will not richly reward—for He has Himself declared, that even a cup of cold water, given in such a spirit, shall in no wise lose its reward.

The indispensable necessity of this supreme love to the Saviour, as an evidence of the vitality of our faith in His blood, is powerfully enforced in this valuable work; as is also the all-important conviction, that the possession of this love is as indispensable for our own happiness, as it is for evidencing that our professed trust in the Re-

deemer's righteousness is of the operation of the Spirit of God, proved to have emanated from a heavenly origin, by its bearing heavenly fruit.

I cannot, indeed, conceive it possible to read this delightful volume with anything of the spirit in which it appears manifestly to have been written, without feeling convinced in the heart, as well as the understanding, that he who sincerely and supremely loves the Lord Jesus Christ *must* be happy, be his earthly circumstances what they may: that he carries the essential element of true felicity within his own heart, so securely guarded from external assaults, by the omnipotent grace of the Holy Spirit, as to be altogether independent of the influence of any of the vicissitudes or vexations of this mortal and miserable life. On the other hand, there is a spirit breathing throughout the whole work, which most impressively lifts up the voice of solemn warning in our ears, and tells us, that though we could speak, on divine themes, with more than earthly eloquence, and so abounded in the most ardent zeal, as to be willing to endure, in the cause of Christ, the most dreadful death that ever martyr suffered, and though we bore such a high and honourable name in the religious world, as to rank in its estimation but a little lower than the angels, and yet did not love the Lord Jesus Christ with a cordial, a supreme affection, real happiness must be a stranger to our hearts, both for time and for eternity. And oh! what will it avail us to have ranked thus high in the estimation of those

around, and to have enjoyed, for a few fleeting years, a delusive hope of eternal happiness, if, when we stand before Him, who sitteth upon the throne, we hear from His lips those tremendous words—"Depart from Me! I never knew you! Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!"

Nor must I omit to mention, in bearing my humble testimony to the excellence of this work, that it discovers the most unequivocal marks of being written by one, who had felt with power, in his inmost soul, the import of that awful word—Eternity!

It flashes the light of eternity so vividly on the objects of time, that their comparative nothingness is not merely seen, but felt. One impression is irresistibly forced on our minds, that every consideration connected with our own welfare, is the merest trifle compared with the one question—Are we to be everlastingly happy or miserable?—Are we to spend eternity in heaven or in hell? The Christian, as he peruses the author's reflections on the death and resurrection of Lazarus, finds his thoughts and affections gradually drawn away from things seen, which are temporal, to things not seen, which are eternal. The glory of the upper sanctuary seems to break through the veil of mortality, which hides its full splendour from his view. Voices of more than mortal melody seem breathing in his ear some faint strains of that celestial chorus of praise, round the throne of God, in which he hopes, ere long, to join with all the host of heaven; and

thus, in the realizing anticipations of the glory to be revealed, he learns to estimate the things of time at their true value; and to regard all the events of this passing scene in their true light; as deriving all their importance from their connexion with eternal things, their capability of being made instrumental in advancing the believer's progress in holiness, and the glory of a Saviour-God.

Such seem to me to be some of the distinguishing excellencies of this most valuable and interesting work; a work so deeply imbued with the very spirit of the Gospel, (even the spirit of divine love, and peace, and joy,) that it can scarcely fail, (I think) of producing, even in a merely nominal Christian, the salutary conviction, that he who has found by experience the preciousness of the Saviour and of His salvation, has found the secret of true happiness, the only happiness deserving of the earnest desires and pursuit of an immortal being; and it cannot, I feel assured, be perused prayerfully by a real Christian, seeking humbly to have the precious truths, which it sets forth, brought with power to the heart, by the Almighty energy of the Holy Ghost, without deepening in his heart every sentiment of affection, confidence, and gratitude to his adorable Redeemer; drawing him closer to the God of his salvation in the bonds of the everlasting covenant; kindling every spark of devout love into a brighter and a warmer flame; disposing him, with more cheerful trust and submission,

to lie passive in His hands, having no will but *His*; inspiring him with more ardent aspirations after the closest attainable resemblance to that character, in conformity to which the very essence of meetness for heaven consists; and subordinating every other solicitude to that one, which ought ever to be the master-passion of a Christian's soul—even the affectionate solicitude, prompted by gratitude, to glorify his Saviour-God.

Nor should it be overlooked, that the attractive exhibition of the Saviour's character, and love to His people, which this work unfolds, has a powerful tendency to deepen in their hearts, that desire for the day of His appearing, which is exhibited in Scripture as such a distinguishing characteristic of those who love the Lord, and is calculated when invested with divine energy by the power of the Holy Spirit, to exercise such an elevating, sanctifying, and gladdening influence over their souls. For, in proportion as love to a Saviour-God, springing from the adoring contemplation of His character, and the grateful recollection of His love, reigns with more supreme sovereignty in a believer's heart, will his soul be kept in that attitude, which will so pre-eminently conduce to its progress in holiness and happiness, even habitually looking and longing for the arrival of that day, a day of such terror to all His enemies, but such triumph to all his friends, when Christ, who is His people's life, shall appear, and they shall also appear with Him in glory.

Oh! what blessed results would follow to the Christian, from the constantly cherished anticipation of that glorious day, producing the desire and endeavour, in the strength of divine grace, to be always in that frame of mind, and that occupation of time, in which a faithful servant of God would wish to be found, were he to be surprised by the sudden appearing of the Son of Man, coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, and we know not now the day or the hour when the Son of Man will come! What a spirit of unslumbering watchfulness would it promote! What a shrinking from the deliberate indulgence of any thoughts, desires, or tempers, inconsistent with the character of a child of God! What a stamp of holiness unto the Lord would it impress on every inward principle and affection of the heart, and every outward pursuit and action of the life! What a savour of sanctity would it impart to the conversation of the children of God; and what a fervour of zeal to be faithful and diligent in the consecration of all their talents to the advancement of a beloved Saviour's glory! How calm would it keep them in the midst of surrounding commotions! How cheerful in the midst of the most afflictive dispensations! How would the things of time sink to their proper level of comparative insignificance, and loosen their hold on the believer's heart, and the things of eternity rise to their proper place in his estimation, and engross, as they ought to do, his supreme solicitude! What an elevation, what a grandeur, al-

together unearthly, would it fling round the Christian's character, were he to feel and to exhibit the legitimate influences of the blessed hope, which he is privileged to cherish, even that at the glorious appearing of the great God, our Saviour, he shall be a partaker of His glory, and shall sit down with Him on His throne! Oh! what earthly seductions could ensnare, what earthly sorrows overwhelm the soul, in which such a hope habitually opened vista views of the glory to be revealed! Would not *such* a hope, through the power of God, the Holy Ghost, enable its possessor to trample on the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to purify himself, even as that Saviour-God on which it is fixed is pure!

If then holiness, as we have before observed, be but another name for happiness; if a meetness for heaven, imparted by the Saviour's Spirit, be altogether as indispensable as a title to heaven, resting on the Saviour's righteousness, how valuable must be every work, which, by deepening in a Christian's heart, his love to the God of his salvation, proportionably deepens that desire for the day of His appearing, which tends so powerfully to wean him from an undue attachment to the things of time and sense, and to elevate his affections to those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father, to conform him to the image of his beloved Redeemer, and thus to advance his meetness for "the inheritance among the saints in light, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

It was this persuasion, which constrained me to overcome the reluctance, which at first I felt, to comply with the request of the highly esteemed minister who has translated the work, that I would accompany the translation with some prefatory observations. It appeared to me so impossible to read it with any thing of a suitable spirit without an increase of love to the Saviour, accompanied by all its precious fruits, that, even at the risk of appearing presumptuous, I could not refuse a request, which afforded me an opportunity of bearing my humble testimony in favour of a work, so pre-eminently calculated to promote the Saviour's glory. Not that I imagine that such a work at all needed my humble recommendation, (for I feel convinced its intrinsic merits must render it altogether independent of any testimony, on its behalf, beyond what it bears to itself,) but because I felt a cordial satisfaction in expressing, through this medium, my grateful acknowledgements for the rich feast of enjoyment with which the perusal of this work had supplied me, especially in the endearing views which it unfolds of the loveliness of the Saviour's character, and the graciousness of His design, in the chastening afflictions with which He visits His people.

I would observe, before I conclude, that the translation, as far as I am competent to judge, appears to me to be every way worthy of such a work, being executed with great fidelity, and yet sufficient freedom not to allow the spirit of the original to evaporate, in the process of transfusing

it into an English version. From the peculiar animation of style in which the original is written, and which, it might have been feared, would be altogether untransferrable, this was no easy task: but the translation here given satisfactorily proves, that the difficulties, however great, were not insuperable. It is quite free from all the awkwardness and stiffness, which so often characterize the translation, especially of French works, and wears so fully the air of an original production, that you feel convinced, had the author of the work himself written in English, it would have worn the very garb in which it is now presented to the public.

In conclusion, I would express my most fervent prayer, that the Divine blessing may so abundantly accompany this work in its progress, as to make it the minister of consolation to many a mourner in Zion, pouring the healing balm of divine comfort into many a wounded heart, teaching them more fully to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, in all the trials with which, in very faithfulness, He afflicts them; and to honour Him, both in their own hearts, and in the eyes of all around, with the most undoubting confidingness, and the most cheerful submission, amidst the most painful or perplexing dispensations He may see fit to appoint.

May it stir up every child of God, into whose hands it may come, to be fervent and unwearied in prayer for the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, to enable them, while resting their undi-

vided hopes of acceptance on the Redeemer's infinitely meritorious, and alone justifying righteousness, to copy more closely that Divine character, whose celestial beauty is in this volume so attractively unveiled, and to abound more fully in every work and labour of love, by which His kingdom may be extended, and His glory advanced! And may it also be a preacher of glad tidings to those, who are strangers to the love of Jesus, persuading many a child of affliction, whom it finds ignorant of the only true and effectual Comforter, and wandering to and fro in a vain search for rest, amidst the restless agitations of a world, deluged with floods of sin and sorrow, to flee to the only true ark of divine peace and consolation—the sheltering ark of a Redeemer's love—encouraged by those most endearing words, the tenderest, perhaps, that ever were uttered, even by the lips of incarnate love itself—"Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh! if those blessed words were but welcomed, as they ought to be, by every child of sorrow, to whom they are made known—if all that are weary and heavy laden would but accept this most gracious invitation, and come, and cast down the burthen of their sins and sorrows at the foot of this compassionate and Almighty Redeemer's cross, and take the light yoke of His love and service upon them, and thus find rest unto their souls, what a glorious change would soon pass over our wilderness-world! Then, indeed, might we hope that the Holy Spirit (who can alone, by the om-

nipotent operation of His grace, enable the sinner to accept the invitation of a Saviour-God, and come to Him for rest, and whose enlightening and sanctifying influences should therefore be most fervently implored by all to whom that invitation is addressed) would be abundantly poured forth from above, and filling, by His divine presence and power, every heart with the peace of God, and that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, breathe all around an atmosphere of such holy love, and holy happiness, that earth would be changed, by His celestial influences, into a fore-tasted heaven.

Oh, then, that all, to whom these words of divine compassion are addressed, would seek, in humble, earnest prayer, the enlightening, constraining, and sanctifying influences of that Spirit, who can alone, by His Almighty power, persuade the heart of the sinner thankfully to embrace this invitation, in which the very essence of a Redeemer's love seems to be concentrated. Oh! that they would ask that Father of all mercies, (who has so graciously promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him,) that He would send this blessed Spirit into their hearts, to overcome their natural enmity against Himself, and to draw them to Him who so tenderly invites them, by the sweetly irresistible attraction of redeeming love, to prostrate themselves in penitential sorrow, and adoring gratitude, at this infinitely precious Saviour's feet, to give up their hearts undividedly to Him, that he may reign there in rightful supre-

macy, and to surrender up themselves unreservedly to Him, to have their sins blotted out in His blood—their souls clothed in His righteousness, and sanctified by His grace—and their sorrows soothed by His sympathy and His consolations. Oh! were all the sons and daughters of affliction thus fervent in their supplications for the influences of that Spirit, whose prerogative it is to glorify Jesus, and who alone can enlighten the darkened understanding, soften the hard heart, bend the stubborn will, purify the polluted soul, and constrain the before careless despisers of His grace gratefully to listen to the voice of a Saviour-God, beseeching them to come to Him for that deliverance from eternal wrath and woe—for that rest and that salvation which He has purchased for His people with His own most precious blood,—then, indeed, might we hope soon to see a glorious change pass over the now desolated aspect of this vale of tears; for then, in answer to the prayers of humble and contrite hearts, this blessed Spirit would abundantly pour down the refreshing showers of His grace, by whose fertilizing influence the waste and solitary places of this earth would become as the garden of the Lord, and its wilderness would rejoice and blossom as the rose; joy and gladness would be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. Oh! were this glorious change wrought upon earth—were a Saviour's love enthroned in every heart—a Saviour's image stamped on every spirit—His peace reigning in every soul—and his praise thrilling on every tongue,—while

all who named the name of Christ, loving each other in Him, and linked together in the bonds of christian fellowship, like the members of the holy and happy family of Bethany, would form but one great family of love. Oh! would not earth be then indeed a very type and antepast of heaven?—that glorious world of unclouded light and everlasting love, where, in the presence of a Saviour-God, there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand pleasures for evermore; where all its inhabitants supremely love, and are like Him, for they see Him as He is; and where, from a multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, casting their blood-bought crowns in grateful adoration at his feet, there shall be lifted up unceasingly through everlasting ages, before His throne, the song of praise—“Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even his Father,”—unto Him, with the Everlasting Father, and Holy Spirit, be equal and undivided adoration, and praise, and glory, and blessing for ever, and ever! Amen, and amen!

THE
FAMILY OF BETHANY.

MEDITATION I.

LAZARUS, MARY, AND MARTHA.

JOHN XI. 1.

“ Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.”

“ ADMIRABLE! The christian religion, which seems only to have for its object the felicity of another life, secures also our happiness in this.”

This truth, which thus excited the admiration of a great man,* is too little known by the people of the world, and too little appreciated even by those who enjoy the privilege of experiencing it.

Doubtless, creatures of a day, “strangers and pilgrims,” do well not to calculate upon happiness in a world defiled by sin. This is not the place of our rest; to seek repose here would be a mere delusion. And it is not for us, the ministers of Him who while He was on earth had not where to lay His head, to encourage in those whom we address on His part, the natural desire which we

* Montesquieu.

all feel, to enjoy before the time, to rest before we have finished the race, to reap before we have sown. But it is a great error, and one into which many fall, who know the Gospel only in name, to imagine, that in submitting our heart unreservedly to Christ, we are required to make sacrifices without compensation, and to impose upon ourselves acts of self-denial without enjoyment. The Gospel, far from wishing to stifle our noblest feelings, or to paralyze our most exalted faculties, elevates and sanctifies them, by restoring them to their original destination, from which they have been diverted by sin. That Gospel, rightly understood, is found to meet all the wants of our mind and of our heart, and thus practically evinces the truth of the declaration of an inspired Apostle, that "Godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." The whole life of the Redeemer proves this truth. Though the immediate object of His mission was, "to seek and to save that which was lost," yet was there not one of our temporal afflictions the sight of which did not touch a chord of sympathy in His heart; not one of our bodily pains which He did not hasten to mitigate; not one of our misfortunes or sufferings for which He did not, in the ardour of His love, find some alleviation.

Shall we, then, the ministers of His word, while we desire to declare the whole counsel of God, pass over in silence, in our private or public ministrations, this part of our Master's Divine mission? No, we cannot, we must not do it. My

beloved brethren, it is our duty to exhibit to you His whole work, His whole life. And if in speaking to you of Jesus Christ, who ought to be our principal theme, and as it were the text of all our instructions, we are called upon most frequently to represent Him to you as coming down from heaven to heal the moral malady which preys upon our soul, as dying for our sins and rising again for our justification, shall we on that account neglect to bring before you that touching part of His life on earth which was employed in alleviating our temporal miseries, and in consoling all the afflicted who applied to Him for relief? No, we repeat it once more, we cannot, we must not do it. Besides, my brethren, to show you Christ the Comforter, is to show you Christ the Saviour; for He comforts only by saving; He saves from the bitter consequences of sin only by destroying the cause of them—sin.

We know not, in the whole Gospel history, a passage more affecting, more instructive, or more calculated to exhibit all the love and tenderness of Jesus for the miserable beings whom He came to save, than that which contains an account of the life, death, and resurrection of one of His disciples, as we find it recorded in the chapter from which our text is taken.

You that have a heart capable of feeling all that is grand, and noble, and divine, in a love like that of Jesus; you who have been taught in the school of affliction, or are still groaning under some heavy trial; you will be glad to come and medi-

tate with me over the tomb of Lazarus, the friend of Jesus. You will rejoice even in that gloomy abode of death, when Jesus is there to diffuse light and life. You will look without pain upon the afflictions of the family of Bethany, when Jesus is there to comfort. You will rejoice even amid the miseries of our earthly life, when Jesus is present to supply for them a remedy. Sometimes, perhaps, after having wept with Mary and Martha over the tomb of some well-beloved brother, your tears, like theirs, will be turned into this song of triumph: "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory!!" Through the course of your life, you will find, perhaps, too many occasions to apply to yourselves the lessons which the two afflicted sisters here receive. Which of you has been exempt from the calamities, the sufferings, and the sorrows, inseparable from our earthly pilgrimage; or which of you, at least, can calculate on being long exempted from them? Alas! to address the afflicted is to address all mankind! It is therefore for your own sakes that we wish to make you acquainted with Jesus Christ, the only real Comforter.

My beloved brethren, we entreat you, first of all, to unite with us in supplicating a blessing from above upon the meditations which we are going to commence this day, that what we speak may not be the miserable words of a sinful mortal, but the words of eternal life, accompanied by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

He that speaks in the passage we are about to

consider is St. John; St. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved; St. John, who, at the last supper, leaned upon the breast of his Master, or, rather, his Friend, and who seems to have drawn thence, in such copious draughts, the love of his redeeming God; St. John, who, at the foot of the cross, received the most precious of bequests, that of the mother of the dying Jesus. That disciple seems to have considered the whole Gospel as comprised in one word—love. It is from this love that he derives everything; to this love he refers everything. “He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. God is love, and he that loveth abideth in Him. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life!!” Such is the language of this disciple, such the constant thought of his heart. Jesus, Jesus alone, is more than the whole universe to him; Jesus is the soul of his soul. And hence we shall see that this disciple, who lived in the most intimate union with his Saviour, and who in consequence always understood so well His sentiments, is ever struck with what is most tender and most deeply touching in the words and actions of Jesus. Every page of his writings affords a demonstration of this. In the very history which we propose to make the subject of our meditations, we see the invincible

desire which he felt to lead us to the tomb of Lazarus, and to show us the Saviour mingling His tears of compassion with the tears of Martha and Mary, and restoring peace and joy to those hearts, torn with anguish. For this purpose he interrupts the course of his narrative, and introduces this affecting episode, before he presents to us the last sufferings of his beloved Master. And what an introduction to the sufferings of Jesus is this history, which so beautifully exemplifies His love for those whom He came to save? St. John relates the resurrection of Lazarus as an eye-witness; yea more, he relates it as one who, with all the strength of a feeling and loving heart, sympathized in the afflictions of a family with which he was acquainted, and which he loved because they loved his Master. Therefore it is that we find him entering into the minutest details, in which we cannot but follow him with interest. He introduces us, without preliminary, into the peaceful abode of Bethany: "A certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick."

Bethany was a little village pleasantly situated on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives, and about two miles distant from Jerusalem. There Jesus had friends whose hearts as well as their house were ever open to receive Him: there He frequently repaired to spend the night with His

disciples: there He was wont to forget, amid the communications of friendship and confidence, the fatigue of His journeys, and the grief which was continually excited in His breast, by the ingratitude and impenitence of those whom He came to save.

It was a feast for Lazarus and his two sisters whenever Jesus honoured their humble dwelling with His presence. They belonged in heart to that small number of true Israelites, who expected, in the Messiah, "the consolation of Israel." What must have been their joy, when they were given to recognize and love, in Jesus, that Saviour after whom their soul longed "as the hart panteth for the water-brooks!" What must have been their delight, when they saw that Jesus loved them; that He often came into the bosom of their happy abode, to speak to them of the kingdom of peace and love!

O my beloved brethren! you who know by your own experience the sweetness of that brotherly love which the Saviour allows His children to taste on earth as a refreshment;—you who have learned from the Gospel to feel and to love;—you will understand something of the happiness which Lazarus and his two sisters must have experienced in their peaceful and affectionate conversations with Jesus, who loved them, opened His heart to them, and had admitted them into the sweet bonds of a holy friendship. If you now derive so much happiness from the society of those whom you love in the Lord, what must have been

the ineffable feeling of peace and of blessedness which Jesus ever left in the abode of Bethany, and in the hearts of those who dwelt there? We see, also, that Lazarus and his sisters loved Jesus above all things. They felt themselves honoured by His affection, notwithstanding the reproach of the Nazarene, and the persecutions which the hatred of the rulers of the people had already raised against Jesus, and all those who professed themselves His disciples. And when the multitude, excited by the scribes and pharisees, "took up stones to stone Him," Lazarus and his sisters were happy to afford an asylum to Him who, though He had created worlds, *had not where to lay His head*. We have reason to believe that Jesus frequently retired to Bethany up to the last moment of His sufferings, to that moment when He laid down His life a ransom for sinners. O my Saviour! would that I could thus testify my love to Thee! My dear brethren, are your houses a refuge for the Saviour's name, blasphemed in the world? Do you confess Him with love and without fear, in the midst of an unbelieving generation? Is His name known, pronounced with reverence, and invoked in your families? Are your houses *Bethanies*, when Jerusalem—the world—prepares to crucify, as far as in it lies, "the Lord of glory?" Do they who are still strangers to the love of Christ find in your abodes "an altar of witness" erected to His glory? Breathes there in your dwellings the peace of the Saviour's presence? Is the light of His truth

seen to shine there? O, if it be so, my beloved friends, you shall find Jesus, in the day of trial, what Martha and Mary found Him in the hour of affliction.

What a sweet union must have existed between Lazarus and his two sisters, notwithstanding the difference of their characters! The love of Jesus was the solid bond which united them; and where there is that bond there is happiness. Doubtless they lived retired from a world which has ever been at enmity with God. Jesus and His disciples, and a few faithful Israelites, were perhaps the only friends who came from time to time to interrupt, agreeably, the silence and the solitude of Bethany. Jesus, St. John tells us, loved Lazarus. He found in him one of those, so rare in the world, who, when they have received and understood His word, are able to open their hearts to the noble and pure impressions of a holy affection. That friend of Jesus, even in his obscure retreat, was greater in the eyes of the Saviour, than the heroes of the world whose names are emblazoned in the annals of time. Lazarus must still have been in the vigour of life, if at least we give credit to tradition, which informs us that he lived thirty years after his resurrection. It may then be asked, how it happened that Jesus did not call him to follow Him in the ministry of the apostleship; how He left His friend in his solitary retreat at Bethany, while He called Peter to forsake his fishing-boat and nets, and Matthew the receipt of custom, that they might become mes-

sengers of the Gospel of peace? There were doubtless good reasons for this conduct of the Saviour: He knows the situation which is best suited to each of those whom He loves, and He calls them to it. His wisdom and goodness were not questioned by Lazarus: whether or not he understood the grounds of his Master's dealings with him, he submitted to them cheerfully. "What does it matter," thought he, "in what manner He calls me to bear witness to His love? Should He require of me no other service than that of offering Him from time to time an humble hospitality, I submit. Yea, should He even call me to honour Him in no other way than by suffering, to glorify Him in no other way than on a bed of pain, I know that He does not on that account love me less than those who perhaps may be employed to bear testimony to His name and to His truth before governors and kings." Are these your sentiments, you who are called to works of charity and devotedness unseen of men? Were you called to give but a cup of cold water in His name, to share your bread with some miserable object whom He presents before you, or to say a few words of consolation to an afflicted soul unknown to the world, would you deem yourselves as highly honoured by Him as those whose name the world publishes in letters of gold, and whom it proclaims as the benefactors of mankind? Or if the Lord should call you to serve Him by "the work of patience," in some great affliction, or upon a bed of pain, would you deem yourselves as

highly honoured as those whom He summons to proclaim His Name and His Gospel from the pulpit and before brilliant assemblies? Ah! remember that God looks to the heart; He regards not that which man regards. How many servants of Christ, unknown by the world, pass unperceived through the desert of life, and shall be manifested only when He who searches the heart shall place on their heads, in the presence of men and angels, an incorruptible crown of glory!

Martha, who was probably the elder of the two sisters of Lazarus, had, if we may judge from some circumstances related in the Gospel, a character entirely different from that of her brother and sister. She was the *St. Peter* of her sex. In her, thought, feeling, and action, were all blended in one and the same rapid movement. Every time an opportunity occurs of testifying her affection to Jesus, we find her active, restless, and anxious, seeking every possible means of receiving in a suitable manner a guest so worthy of her veneration and love. As soon as Jesus arrives, all must be on the alert in the house; every thing must be put into requisition for His reception. She could not understand how any one could for a moment neglect serving Him, to sit at His feet, to listen to His instruction, and make Him speak, and thus weary Him before He was rested and refreshed, and before there had been offered to Him a repast of the best things which the house afforded. Still she was far from understanding the thoughts and desires of Jesus: but she was

sincere and upright in her manner of testifying her attachment to Him. Hence St. John associates her with the other members of the family whom Jesus loved; and our Lord himself deems it sufficient to give her an affectionate rebuke, saying to her with meekness, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke x. 41, 42.

Mary, however, felt and acted quite differently. She was the *St. John* of her sex. All her lively feelings were engraven deeply in the very ground of her tender soul. She felt that her Saviour alone could satisfy the boundless wants of her affectionate heart. When she saw and heard Him, she lost sight of every thing else; the world disappeared from her view. It was her happiness to sit at His feet, and to treasure up with avidity in her heart every word that proceeded from His divine lips. The Saviour's visits to Bethany were always too distant and too short to meet her wishes; the hours of His presence passed away too rapidly. Mary could not bear to lose one moment of them. Like Martha, she would have wished to offer Him all that was most precious to her, all that she possessed; but she knew that Jesus came to give rather than to receive, and that He who had despised "all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them," demanded but one thing of His disciples—their heart. She deemed herself incapable of offering Him any thing which was wor-

thy of Him—or even of testifying by words her deep veneration and love. Her attentive look, a few tears which escaped from her eyes while she listened to Him who “spake as never man spake,” were the only expressions which she gave of what she felt. Oh! how precious to her were those hours, when she listened to her Saviour speaking to her of the great salvation which He had come to accomplish for His redeemed, of the pardon of their heavenly Father, their reconciliation to Him, the peace which He gives them, His love, and of that better country where there shall be no more sorrow, because there shall be no more sin!

However, it would be wrong to suppose that Mary made all her spiritual life, all her love for the Saviour, all her religion, consist in idle contemplation, in a barren quietism. In one of the last visits which Jesus made to Bethany, “six days before the passover,” writes St. John, that is, a few days before the Saviour’s death, there was a supper at the house of Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, at which Jesus was present with His disciples.

Martha, according to her custom, was occupied in serving Jesus, whilst Mary, always full of the thoughts of her Saviour, took a box of ointment, very costly, and anointed His feet, and wiped them with her hair. She was blamed for so doing by Judas, who pretended that he would have preferred giving the price of it to the poor. But Jesus said, “Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For

the poor always ye have with you, but me ye have not always." Was not this saying, with sufficient plainness, that she whose heart was so penetrated with the love of her Saviour, would find in that love the source of all good works? Ah! this is the principle of all christian life, of every good work, of all sanctification,—love springing from a renewed heart, love for Him who so loved us as to save us, love without which all religion is a mere name, a barren tree which can bear no fruit, a steril soil which can produce nothing. "He who loveth not hath not known God." It is in vain, then, that we pretend to be Christ's disciples because we bear His name, because we do some good, because we take even an active interest in the advancement of His kingdom, or because, like Martha, we are "cumbered about many things," if we have not in our hearts that love which leads us to seek communion with God in prayer, and makes us, like Mary, love His Word: that love which changes our heart, and makes us new creatures: that love which alone eradicates selfishness, and makes us renounce ourselves: that love which never faileth, which shall subsist when all things else shall have passed away; which shall be the element of eternal felicity. If we have not that love, in vain shall we "speak with the tongues of men and angels," in vain shall we have "the gift of prophecy," in vain shall we "know all mysteries," in vain shall we "bestow all our goods to feed the poor," in vain shall we "give

our bodies to be burned." Without love (it is the Word of God that declares it) all this will profit us nothing: we shall be as "sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal." All this will stand us in no stead in the great day of Christ, when every thing shall come to an end but love.

Oh! my beloved friends, whatever be our name or our profession, let us take occasion, from the example of Mary, to ask ourselves seriously, before God, of what kind is our religion—what is it that constitutes the life of our souls, the subject of our hopes, the motive of our actions? If we love the Saviour, if we have a faith in Him which works by love, if our heart be given up to Him, all is well. If we feel but a cold indifference towards Him, all is ill, eternally ill.

Such was the happy family of Bethany. All the members of that family were loved by Jesus. All loved Him, and consequently all loved each other. The love of Jesus is a sweet bond of affection. In that close union all is necessarily common, pleasures and pains, joys and griefs, hopes and fears. That family, perhaps for a long time, had lived peaceably in the happy feeling of the love of Jesus. But, alas! they lived in a world of misery; they had, therefore, to expect suffering. A dark cloud suddenly arises to obscure their horizon, and portends a dreadful storm. But the members of that family had already submitted their hearts to the love of Jesus; they will therefore be able to "bear one another's burdens;" they will also know, that it is in the

hour of trial that the Lord multiplies the pledges of His love and of His grace. What will they have to fear? Jesus is their friend!

Fathers and mothers of families, brothers and sisters, you whom God has united on earth by the most powerful ties, you whom He has called to perform in company your earthly pilgrimage, do you find nothing in the humble abode of Bethany which demands your imitation, and is worthy of your ambition? Do you know by experience that christian affection, which in the hand of God so powerfully contributes to sweeten all that is most bitter in life? Is it in Jesus that you love one another? Is the love of Jesus the sacred and indissoluble bond which unites your souls for eternity? Does His peace reign in your families as it did in the family of Bethany? If it be so, we doubt not that you will find pleasure and edification in tracing with us the mournful experiences, as well as the consolations and joys, of Lazarus and his sisters. You will learn from them how the friends of Jesus conduct themselves in the hour of trial. May you also learn from them to give Him your heart!

MEDITATION II.

LAZARUS SICK.—THE GLORY OF GOD.

JOHN XI. 3, 4.

“Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”

THE present state of mankind would be an incomprehensible enigma, had not revelation given us an explanation of it in those few words, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Such is the history of the fallen race of Adam. Here we have the solution of that inexplicable problem, which meets us in all ages, and in all climes. If I open the annals of those ages, which have been swallowed up in the past, what do I see? An uninterrupted succession of beings, who appear for a moment upon this stage, which we call life, announce their birth by cries of grief, and terminate their career by agonies and death. There is the cradle bedewed with tears, and soon after the tomb—mournful abode of dissolution! And between these two acts of grief, what fills up

the scenes of this melancholy drama? Alas! to know it we need not go and consult the pages of man's history, we have only to look around us, to see and to hear. Scarcely a few rays of light, escaping as it were by chance, spread here and there a pale brightness over the sombre picture which is unfolded to our view. Every where our eyes are arrested by the sight of suffering creatures, the prey of a thousand miseries, a thousand agonies, a thousand griefs. Every echo repeats the lamentation of afflicted man, the cry of pain extorted from him by a universal malady which consumes him. Volumes would not suffice to enumerate the names and the symptoms of all the diseases which seem to conspire to throw bitterness on days so short—which appear to contend for the dreadful privilege of dragging man to the grave, and of mingling him with the dust of the tomb. And as if all these miseries were not enough, man seems to have imposed upon himself the task of multiplying their number by his wickedness, his cruelty, and his crimes. In vain would we turn our eyes from this melancholy spectacle, and persuade ourselves that it does not exist; in vain would we, advocates of an absurd optimism, wish to see light where there is darkness; sweet where there is bitterness; good where there is evil. In vain would we, armed with a Stoical insensibility, desire to raise a rampart between us and the misery which surrounds us. We become the prey of it ourselves, and though, perhaps, we have refused to acknowledge that "all flesh is as grass,

and all the glory of man as the flower of grass," which springs up, is cut down, and withers in a day, we fall ourselves, and, alas! our fall is the only argument which convinces us of the vanity of our being. Well would it be for us, if we were ready humbly to acknowledge the evil, to study the cause of it, and to apply to it a speedy remedy! But oh! infatuation! We walk upon graves, and we forget Death, Judgment, and Eternity! We scarcely can take a few steps in the streets of this vast city, without meeting some of those gloomy processions which accompany our fellow-men to their last home; and we forget that soon our society, however brilliant, or however dear to us, shall be converted into a similar procession for ourselves.

But no, some one of our companions in misery will say, No, I do not practise such a delusion upon myself; I feel too deeply the afflictions of this miserable life—I am overwhelmed by them; but what must I do?

My brother, come, let us enter an afflicted christian family. Perhaps you will find there an answer to your question: perhaps (oh! may the Lord grant it), perhaps having complained of the evil, you will rejoice to have found the source of the remedy. It is to the sick bed of a suffering fellow-creature that I am going to lead you. Approach without fear, and may you receive instruction.

In a preceding meditation we have become acquainted with the family of Bethany, who lived

in peace, happy in the distinguished affection with which Jesus honoured them. We now proceed to follow our Evangelist. Lazarus is seized with a dangerous malady: this is all that St. John tells us. Gifted with an affectionate and compassionate heart, he judges it necessary to say no more; he thinks we shall be able to picture to ourselves this family, united as they were in the strictest bonds, struck with such a painful blow; he feels assured that we shall participate in the anxiety of Martha; in the grief of Mary.

Lazarus is sick; he suffers. What! he who is a beloved disciple of Jesus; he whom Jesus calls His friend; he who loves the Lord is not, then, more exempt than other men from the miseries of life, from pain, and from sickness.

There are, perhaps, two classes of persons who will make such reflections as these, and will find here a "stone of stumbling" for their faith. The one, like those selfish disciples, who followed Jesus not because they believed in Him, nor because they loved Him, but because He had increased the loaves; who seek in the Gospel nothing but earthly advantages and consolations, a temporal remedy for inevitable evils, food for their sensibility, a selfish enjoyment in the attractions which the religion of Jesus offers them. Such persons would consent to live for the world and for their passions, so long as they found themselves happy in that kind of life, and they regard what they call the "consolations of religion," merely as a *der-nier resort* in case of misfortune, or as those insu-

rances against fire which a man purchases beforehand, and to which he scarcely ever gives a passing thought, except when his house is burned. Any sacrifice which crucifies the flesh is too much for them. All those trials by which God would disengage them from the world, and sanctify them for His kingdom, are excluded from their calculations and from their religion, and consequently do not find their hearts submissive. Infatuated mortals! what do you expect from following Jesus? Do you imagine that coming to Him in this way, as a last resource, without giving Him your heart, you shall be delivered from your earthly miseries as by a miracle? Do you imagine that He will multiply your bread, and that He will render you inaccessible to poverty, sickness, pain, and death? Ah! be not deceived: you see Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, sick and suffering. From his bed of pain, learn to understand better the nature of the Gospel, and what you ought to look for in it. If you have not been taught to love Jesus as a Saviour, you will find Him as a comforter. You will feel your yoke hard, and your burden heavy. When in the day of trial, you open your Bible so long neglected, and read in it such words as these—“Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple;” “he that loveth father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me;” will you be comforted? will you feel satisfied? will you have obtained that which you sought for in the Gospel?

And yet you will find nothing else there until you have learned to love Jesus, until you have surrendered your heart to Him, until the love of Jesus has rendered His yoke easy and His burden light, until you have ceased to follow Him from a worldly selfishness, and for the loaves and fishes. We believe that this selfish kind of piety, without devotedness to the Saviour, is not found exclusively in the people of the world, who are only religious to suit their own convenience; but we are persuaded that such "roots of bitterness" put forth their fibres in a great many Christians also, who, perhaps without suspecting it, seek in the Gospel only their own satisfaction, and would abandon their God and Saviour the moment they could hope to be happy without Him, without His grace, without the attractions of His doctrine, and the consolation of His word; shall we, then, be surprised at the little progress which they make in real love, in devotedness to Christ and to His cause, and in holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord?"

Other persons are in danger of falling into a different error, from seeing the friends of Jesus subjected to the sufferings and afflictions of life. Like Asaph,* they are offended at this. How does it happen, say they in their troubled heart, that God exposes his child to all these trials, while such a man of the world, who lives in forgetfulness of God, and as if he had no immortal soul to be saved, enjoys what men call happiness? "I was

* Psalm lxxiii.

envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore His people return hither; the waters of a full cup are wrung out to them; and they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world: they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Happy yet, if they come not, like the wife of Job, to say to the child of God in his sufferings, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die."

Alas! we know, as well as these miserable comforters, that the path by which the child of God travels across the desert is rough and thorny: we know that often, pressed down with a heavy burden, he appears to sigh in vain for deliverance; that to him life is frequently a continual period of conflicts and of pain: oftentimes it seems to him as if his complaint could not reach the ears of his God, a dense atmosphere and gloomy clouds bound his view, and allow not a ray of cheering hope to penetrate to his afflicted heart. And when we hear him cry with a voice enfeebled through grief, "Out of the depths have I called unto thee, O Lord! As the hart panteth for the water brooks, even so panteth my soul after Thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God. When shall I come and appear before God?" When we

hear this plaintive voice, which so often in life strikes upon our ears, it reaches the bottom of our heart, and makes all its chords vibrate mournfully.

But, O poor mortal! suffering creature! can you, then, see nothing bright and consoling in affliction? Are you, then, altogether ignorant of the “rod, and Him that appointed it?” Are the designs of God hidden from you? Do the promises of God say nothing to your soul? What is become of your faith? Where is your hope? Is God no more *love*? Do you not see that His object is to save you as a “brand plucked out of the burning?” that He demands your heart, and that it is because you are unwilling to give it up entirely to Him, that He breaks with heavy blows the chains which keep back from Him a heart on which He has so many claims, and that it is the strokes of His love that reverberate so mournfully, even to the depths of your afflicted soul. Oh! let a glance of faith pierce, like the eagle’s eye, the thick cloud which envelops your heart, and beyond it you will discover with joy Him who has so loved you as to save you—Him who still stretches out to you the arms of His infinite mercy.

This is precisely the example which the family of Bethany affords us on this occasion. How do Mary and Martha act in their affliction? Doubtless they begin by expending upon a beloved suffering brother all the cares which a tender affection is ingenious to invent. They have nothing in common with those unfeeling persons, who, insensible to the sufferings of others, withdraw from

the bed of pain, or from the house of mourning, and have never been moved by the lamentations of the afflicted. No, we love to represent to ourselves Martha, seeking with all her usual anxiety and activity, how she may offer some relief to a brother whom she loves: resting neither day nor night until she has tried every thing and put every thing in requisition in his behalf. We love still more perhaps to represent to ourselves Mary seated beside her brother's bed, watching to anticipate his least desires, finding in her deeply sensible and compassionate heart a thousand means of proving to him that he does not suffer alone, and that she participates in all his pains, seizing with the delicate tact of true love, the moment for suggesting to him a word of consolation which reaches the heart, because it comes from the heart. It is thus we love to represent to ourselves this family.

But it is not merely human means that the Christian has of being useful to those whom he loves, in their sufferings. Martha and Mary do not rest in these. St. John does not even mention the anxiety with which they attend upon their sick brother: he does not think it possible to suppose that those two sisters, whom Jesus loved, could have acted towards their brother otherwise than under the influence of the most ardent affection. But he tells us, he seems to take pleasure in telling us, "his sisters sent unto Him," i. e. unto Jesus, "saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." What conduct! What a prayer!

“His sisters sent unto Him.” Disciples of Christ, is it thus you act in the hour of trial? Do we not rather find you telling of your afflictions, and complaining of them to your neighbours, your relatives, or your friends, before you have said a single word of them to Jesus? Do we not see you going from place to place, and anxiously seeking for help while you forget the source of every good and every perfect gift?

Do we not see you afflicting yourselves, weeping bitterly, and forgetting Him who hath said, “I, even I, am He that comforteth you?” Do we not see you, when one of those whom you love is sick, expecting every thing from the talents of a physician, from the remedies which he prescribes, and from your own care, while in your trouble you forget Him, who woundeth and healeth, who killeth and maketh alive, who bringeth down to the grave, and raiseth up again, and who is called the Prince of Life? Ah! why then should you be astonished if, when sickness and death have brought grief and mourning into your families, you have found only bitterness without alleviation, a frightful void which nothing could fill up, and anguish which nothing could sooth? Jesus was the only friend who could then have spoken a word of consolation and of peace to your soul; but Jesus you have forgotten, Him you have neglected to call to your assistance. Oh! might it not then have been said of you with truth, as it was of the ancient people of God, “My people have committed two evils; they have

forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," (Jer. ii. 13.) "O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, why shouldest Thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for the night? why shouldest Thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy name; leave us not." (Jer. xiv. 8, 9.) Far otherwise do the sisters of Lazarus act; they send to Jesus; and what do they ask of Him? It is scarcely a prayer that escapes from their afflicted heart. They believe in the love of Jesus, and in that Almighty power which is given unto Him in heaven and in earth: they know that the cry of the afflicted has never reached His compassionate heart in vain: they know that He has stretched out a helping hand to all the unhappy beings that have ever come to Him for relief; this is enough for them: "Lord," say they, "he whom Thou lovest is sick." What confidence! What faith! What a touching prayer! O my beloved friends, if you thus know the Lord Jesus; if you have found in Him the powerful Saviour of your souls; if you know that you belong to Him, that He loves you; if, through faith in His word, you know that nothing can separate you from His everlasting love, you will go to Him in your trials, with the confidence of Martha and Mary. He who is your Saviour will also be your Comforter: you will be assured that

“He who has given you His Son will also with Him freely give you all things;” and when you think of the eternity of bliss which He has purchased for you, and given you freely, you will be ashamed of being cast down, and of distrusting His faithfulness and love, during the short moments which still separate you from that eternity. Then in all your trials, whether temporal or spiritual, you will need for yourselves, or those whom you love, nothing more than that word, so simple, so touching, so sublime, “Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick.” Open thus your soul to Jesus; lay before Him with simplicity your miseries. This is sufficient to touch His heart with compassion. Say to Him in all your wants, in all your sufferings, or in the trials of those whom you love, “Lord, he whom Thou lovest” endures the agonies of death; “he whom Thou lovest” is exposed to temptations or to doubts; “he whom Thou lovest mourns over his weakness; the coldness of his love for Thee, his remissness in Thy service, the sin which still dwells in him; “he whom Thou lovest is sick.” Ah! if it be not thus that you love your brethren; if it be not to present them to Jesus, to lead them to Him, as it were by the hand, to tell Him in the case of every new infirmity which you discover in them, or of every new affliction which you see them suffer; “Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick;” if it be not thus that you love your brethren, be assured that you do not love them at all, or that you do not love them as you ought.

Jesus said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

What an answer! what a mysterious answer! It might have been expected that Jesus, as soon as He had heard the message of Martha and Mary, would have arisen, and said to His disciples, as He did at a later period, "Let us go into Judea again; let us go to Bethany; let us go and assist our friend Lazarus." Not so; Jesus gives an answer not easy to be understood—an answer which theologians of all ages have explained according to their own peculiar views—an answer as much calculated to exercise the faith of the sisters of Lazarus, as the sagacity of commentators. What! they have said, "this sickness is not unto death!" but did not Lazarus die of it? Could Jesus have been deceived; and if not, what does He mean? "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby;" and yet Lazarus dies and goes down to the grave! Is it then from the tomb that the Son of God intends to draw His glory and His praise? What a trial for the faith of the sisters of Lazarus! Will they not fall into doubt, mistrust, unbelief? The sequel of the history will clear up all obscurity for us, as it did for Martha and Mary; meanwhile, O my soul, receive instruction; learn to adore the dispensations of thy God, even when they are still enveloped in a veil of obscurity! The Lord's "thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways; for as

the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts." Martha and Mary speak to Jesus only of their brother's sickness; Jesus, answering as the Prince of life, who has dominion over death and the grave, speaks only of the glory of God, and of the glory of the Son of God. What a lesson for us, my beloved brethren! In our narrow and limited views, we see but the present moment: Christ, in His dispensations towards us, sees our eternal destinies. We see but the wants which press upon us, the deliverance for which we sigh and weep: Christ sees an eternal destination, which He would make us reach by ways unknown to ourselves. We see but our earthly and mortal body: Christ sees our immortal soul. We see but time: Christ sees eternity; and above all things, and in all things, "the glory of God." Whoever we are, whatever be our condition, or our rank in the world, there is but one destination for which we, and the whole of the immense creation can have been called into existence: "the glory of God, the glory of the son of God."

Oh! if we could but comprehend this important truth, if it could but fill our hearts, possess our whole soul, soon would we find that mean and narrow selfishness,—which causes us to refer every thing to ourselves, makes us our own idol, and is the source of all our miseries,—disappearing from our view. Soon would we feel that we ought to consecrate ourselves with all that we have, as a

living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, to the glory of God, and to the glory of the Son of God. Soon would we overturn those idols which we have set up upon the throne of our selfishness, and offer them as a sacrifice to the glory of God. Soon would we trample under our foot that hideous monster, our pride, to give all glory to Him who hath created and saved us. Soon would we tear from ourselves, and from every thing human, even the last floweret of that crown which our pride has usurped, and place it entire upon the Divine head of the Son of God. In fine, soon would we resume our place in the eternal order of creation.

And what does it matter in what way it may please the Lord to make us reach this noble end? Lazarus is laid upon a bed of pain; it is there he must subserve the glory of God, while St. John and St. Paul shall proclaim the same glory, by preaching the offence of the cross of Christ. Lazarus dies; he descends into the tomb: and this death, this tomb, shall proclaim the glory of the Son of God, as loudly as all the worlds of the vast universe, when they issued from His creating hand. Oh! let us learn to know God! Let us remember that He could not have assigned any other end to our existence than His own glory; and that for us to glorify Him is to accomplish and to adore His sovereign will, which is always good and perfect. Let us remember, in fine, that we may accomplish and adore that will upon a pallet, in the midst of sufferings and sacrifices, just as effectually as in the most splendid career. Alas!

we are so blind, we are so accustomed to judge by appearances, that too generally the words *happiness* and *misery* in our mouths express nothing but a deplorable folly. If an angel of God, possessing all knowledge, could look down from heaven upon the obscure life of some child of Adam, whom his fellow-men call miserable, that inhabitant of heaven would perhaps seize his immortal harp, and chaunt the happiness of him whose condition appears to us so deserving of pity; whilst that angel, if he were not in that abode where there are no more tears, would weep bitterly over the misery of some other mortal, whose destiny is an object of envy to his fellow-men. The one is going to attain, through suffering, the end of his being, the glory of God; the other, in the midst of prosperity, lives in forgetfulness of the end of life, the glory of God.

What a solemn thought! that at the end of time, every thing that has been created shall be summoned to proclaim, before the whole universe, the glory of God, either by chaunting, with all the pure intelligences of heaven, the hymn of His eternal love, or by rendering, with all the reprobate of the abyss of woe, the fearful testimony that God is just when He condemns. O Lord! I prostrate myself before Thee in the dust; I hasten, while there is yet time, to lay at Thy feet my rebellious will, crying, Glory to Thee! And the prayer of my soul is, that all the thoughts, all the affections of my heart, as well as all the actions

of my life, may repeat before all, Glory to Thee !
and that the last accents of my expiring voice
may still send up to the foot of Thine eternal
throne, this cry of adoration and of love, Glory to
Thee ! Glory to Thee !!!

MEDITATION III.

THE LOVE OF JESUS, AND THE TRIAL OF FAITH.

JOHN XI. 5, 6.

“ Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus ; when He had heard, therefore, that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was.”

“ LORD, he whom Thou lovest is sick.” Such was the touching prayer of Martha and Mary, when their brother was seized with a painful sickness. “ This sickness is not unto death,” answered Jesus, “ but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.” Upon this answer the sisters of Lazarus hope and wait. Our historian now conducts us beyond Jordan, into the society of Jesus and his disciples, where we shall follow Him, and hear Him, until we are led back to Bethany, to the tomb of Lazarus.

St. John continues his narrative, informing us that his Master, (always so ready to respond to the cry of the afflicted,) contrary to all expectation, remains still two days in the place where He was, although he had heard of the sickness of him whom He calls “ His friend.” But this beloved

disciple of the Redeemer is aware of the natural propensity of our poor heart to judge with rashness and precipitation of the ways of the Lord. He knows how easily we doubt the love of the Saviour, notwithstanding the numerous proofs of it which He has given us. He know show easily we believe ourselves to be forgotten, rejected, forsaken by Him. He knows how little we are disposed to persevere in prayer and in confidence, when we do not find our prayers immediately answered, and answered in the way in which we expect. He knows all our ingratitude, and therefore it is, that before he tells us that Jesus abode still two days in the place where he was, before he acquaints us with this mysterious conduct of the Saviour, which might discourage beings naturally so unbelieving: his affectionate heart constrains him to justify his Master's love; he wishes to take away from us every pretext for a rash judgment; he wishes to make us glance into the very heart of Jesus; and therefore he unveils to us its generous affections; "*Jesus,*" says he, "*loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*" What exquisite delicacy! what love! what a profound knowledge of our passions, our infirmities, our frailty, do we discover in this disciple! Before he shows us the actions of his Master, he wishes always to make us penetrate into His motives; he wishes to make us know the heart of Jesus as he knew it himself, persuaded that we shall find in that knowledge a thousand reasons to love Him, and to admire His dealings with us, however

mysterious and however painful they may appear to us at first. Who will have the rashness to accuse the *Friend* of Lazarus of negligence towards the family of Bethany in their affliction, though He delays to bring them the assistance of His omnipotence for two days, since the beloved disciple has taken care to tell us beforehand, "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus?"

O, my beloved brother, disciple of Christ, thou who groanest under thy sufferings; though *thou* hast not a St. John always at hand to remind thee that Jesus loves thee, wilt thou doubt His love, when in His inscrutable wisdom He answers not thy prayers immediately? No; thou wilt remember that His love is always the same; and that it is manifested in afflictions as well as in prosperity; thou wilt hope, thou wilt wait! And why should we not draw from hence the same lesson with regard to our christian friends on earth? It often happens that we do not understand their manner of acting towards us; we think that they neglect us; that they do not answer our affection; that they do not sufficiently sympathize with us in our trials. Ah! let us beware of judging harshly of their love, or we shall repent of it bitterly; let us rather open our soul to that confidence which is the element of all true friendship; let us believe that they love us, and let us wait.

"Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." There is in this declaration a world of happiness. To be loved by Jesus! all that the world calls happiness fades before such a thought. I

see the foolish votary of ambition exult with joy, when he is told that he is loved by some great one of the earth whose favour he sought after; it seems to him as if every thing had changed its aspect, as if a new sun of happiness had arisen upon his life, and had come to shine upon the day of such felicity. Alas! a caprice of him in whom he has reposed his delusive hope, is sufficient to plunge him into the darkness of despondency; a moment is enough to change the joy of his heart into bitterness and weeping.

I see another infatuated person expecting happiness from some beloved one whom he has made an idol. He is told that his love is returned. Immediately he sees all his dreams of felicity realized: he feels his heart bound with joy. Jacob did not see with greater happiness the approaching end of the fourteen years of bondage to which he had submitted for his beloved Rachel. Alas! the inconstancy of the human heart, or the instability of life, dashes his idol to pieces, annihilates his hopes, and fills his heart with bitter grief. A tomb to bedew with his tears is, perhaps, all that remains to him of his fond dreams of happiness; I call you to witness, is not this the history of your own hearts? Is not this what you have an opportunity of observing every day in the most brilliant circles of this vast metropolis, and what is seen as frequently under a more humble exterior, in the lowly abode of the artizan, and in the rustic cottage of the peasant?

But, O Jesus! O my Saviour! how different is

the lot of those whom Thou lovest! Thou art always the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Thou art always mighty to bless, to fill the heart of those whom Thou lovest with peace, joy, and happiness. And not only art Thou the mighty God, the Saviour; but Thy love is salvation! Thou hast come to procure for thy beloved ones, not a few passing moments of a happiness ever mingled with bitterness, but the eternity of a felicity which poor mortals cannot conceive! The love wherewith Thou lovest me is like Thyself, eternal; and the same love shall constitute, in eternity, the element of my happiness!

O happy family of Bethany! happy Martha! happy Mary! happy Lazarus! you are loved by Jesus; what more do you require to make you blessed! To you what are these trials, this sickness, this death, this sorrow, to which you are going to be exposed?—you are loved by Jesus!

Wretched mortals that we are! we often love that which we scarcely know; we cannot read the heart, we see but the outside. Often when we have reposed our confidence in some being whom we deemed worthy of it, all our hopes are frustrated, our expectations disappointed; often, too, when we receive from those who are dear to us testimonies of their affection, a secret feeling of our unworthiness compels us to say within ourselves—Alas! if they knew me better! But Jesus, He of whom we are told that He loved Martha and Mary, is He who “searcheth the hearts and the reins.” What a testimony for them!

What a privilege, the happiness of being loved by Him who reads in the depths of the heart its most secret thoughts, inclinations, and dispositions. Ah! though it was not required of Lazarus and his sisters that they should merit His love, for alas! on such terms Jesus would not have found among the whole race of Adam a single being whom He could have loved; it was at least required of them that their heart should be really open to His love; it was required that they should love communion with Him; that they should love His word; that they should love His love.

Doubtless, my beloved brethren, you would all wish to be partakers of the happiness of this blessed family of Bethany. Doubtless, there is not one among you that would not wish that it could be said of him, that he is loved by Jesus; that Jesus is his friend; that, like all the members of that family, he is the particular object of His affection. Well, this happiness is not beyond your reach. There is a sense in which it can be said of you, that you are already the objects of the love of Jesus. Was it not love, that induced Him to leave the abode of glory and felicity, and come to share in your miseries, and to deliver you from them? Was it not love, that achieved the work of redemption, the glad tidings of which He has caused to be proclaimed in your ears? Is it not because He loves you, that we are here to invite you, on His part, to believe in His love, in order that you may participate in the eternal blessings of which that love is the source?

But you say, This is not enough; we know that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." But Jesus loved the family of Bethany in a special manner; He calls Lazarus "His friend." St. John tells us, as speaking of the most exalted privilege, "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." They were then His bosom friends; their names remain on the pages of the book of life as eternal monuments of the special affection of Jesus.

All this is true, my dear brethren, but we repeat it again, that this happiness is not inaccessible to you. Jesus is the same to love you that he was eighteen hundred years ago. And what had Lazarus and his sisters done to become the friends of Jesus? We have said that their hearts through grace were opened to His love, to His word, to communion with Him. This is all that Jesus required of them; this is all he asks from you. They were not distinguished for their splendid actions, nor for a life which they could have looked upon as meritorious. They had not, like Paul, filled the world with the sound of the Gospel of Christ; they had not, like John, been banished for the cause of God's word; they had not, like Stephen, given a splendid testimony to the truth at the peril of their lives. They had done nothing of the kind; they were not even called to it, and yet Jesus loved them. Martha confessed Jesus by faith, "Lord, I believe that

Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." "Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, and heard His word." Lazarus glorified Him by his submission on a bed of suffering; and it was in this humble condition that Jesus loved them. O my beloved brethren, you who wish to find, in your heart, or in your life, some proofs that you are loved by Jesus, as Lazarus and his sisters were, seek not these proofs in great and lofty things. Come to Jesus; ask Him to love you; descend into the depths of your heart, abased and humbled before Him, and there He will speak to you, by His Spirit of peace, of reconciliation, and of love. Be not distressed because the scantiness of your means allows you not to perform your part in a great and splendid sphere of activity in His service. Mourn not because your weakness, your infirmities, or other causes, keep you in such a humble condition that you cannot conceive how Jesus should condescend to love you. Ah! never forget that His love is free; it is not deserved; He gives it. Rather ask yourselves whether you really wish to attain the assurance that you are loved by Him? Ask yourselves, "Have I opened my heart to the love of Jesus? Do His promises speak to my soul? Is He a Saviour to *me*? Have I found pardon and peace in Him? Does my soul feel a want of His presence which no man, no angel of God, none but Jesus, Jesus alone can satisfy? Do I love His word? Is it my happiness to sit at His feet, like Mary, and to

hear Him speak of my heavenly country? Does my soul thirst after the living God? Does it experience continually fresh desires to approach the Lord by prayer, as a child ever finds a new pleasure in throwing itself into the arms of a tenderly beloved parent? And in my trials, my sicknesses, my anxieties, is it to Him that I cry immediately for deliverance? Am I able to recognize His gracious hand in all my sorrows and afflictions? Is my heart submissive? Is my head bowed down in silent adoration when His hand lies heavy upon me? Where do I, at such times, seek for consolation? Is it in His word, in His promises, in the assurance of His eternal love; or in worldly thoughts, and vain hopes? What is it that spreads some degree of serenity over the darkest and saddest hours of my life? Am I well assured that the difficult and painful path which he makes me tread is that most conducive to my eternal happiness? and that 'all things work together for good to them that love God?' And should you find in your heart but the sincere desire to answer these questions in a satisfactory manner, believe that Jesus loves you, and rejoice in His love!

But be not deceived; if it be in the world, in the creature, in the satisfying of your own will, your desires, your passions, that you look for happiness, you can have no part in the sweet privileges of the family of Bethany. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity against God? Whosoever,

therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." What! you wish, you say, it could be said of you, that Jesus loved you, while your heart, which ought to feel that love, belongs to a world which crucified the Lord! Your heart cleaves to those sins which nailed Jesus to the cross! Your heart has never opened to the love of the Saviour; and the thought of Jesus is the last that presents itself to your mind! And his name is neither in your hearts, nor upon your lips, nor in your families, nor in your assemblies, nor in your drawing-rooms! Is it thus you would treat a creature for whom you had the least affection? Ah! you must first renounce yourselves and all the vanities which captivate your hearts, and return to the love of your redeeming God, before you can taste the happiness of being loved by Jesus, the happiness of the family of Bethany.

If you possess the love of Jesus, all is well, eternally well, even though you should be overwhelmed with all the miseries of this mortal life; but if you are without that love, all is ill, eternally ill, even though you should be loaded with all that men have the folly to call happiness.

"Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." Such is the language which escaped from the heart of St. John, language which ought to anticipate in the minds of his readers, all doubt, all unbelief, every murmur in reference to the conduct of Jesus, who, the Evangelist tell us,

“abode two days still in the same place where He was,” after He had heard that Lazarus was sick.

But why this delay? Why does not Jesus fly as usual to the assistance of an afflicted family whom He loves? Why does He not pronounce a word of His power, and Lazarus shall be healed? What! Jesus loves Lazarus, and yet He leaves him a prey to suffering! Jesus loves Martha and Mary, and yet He leaves them a prey to anguish! The disease makes frightful advances; Lazarus feels the sources of life drying up within his breast; his sisters with grief behold the veil of death spreading over his eyes; the tears of all flow in abundance at the thought of the approaching separation—and Jesus, their Divine Friend, who never remained insensible to any of our human miseries, Jesus arrives not! Two entire days pass away—Lazarus dies—and Jesus is not there! Can this be a proof of His love? Is it true that He loves Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus?

Thus reasons the man who understands not the “ways of the Lord,” who sees in grief nothing but grief, in trials nothing but the trial, and who appreciates deliverance only in proportion to the promptitude with which it is vouchsafed. But Jesus, who in all things aims at “the glory of God,” and the eternal salvation of souls, does not sanction in His disciples this cowardly fear of suffering. He wishes to teach them to love His will more than their own enjoyment, to desire the

feeling of His love more than their own deliverance, even in His most painful dispensations. Can I not appeal to your own experience, my dear brethren, whom the Lord hath caused to pass through the furnace of affliction? Have not your trials taught you this great truth? What has been the first cry which has escaped from your heart at such moments? What have you felt when the Lord has not answered that cry? when He has allowed your grief and your distress to go on augmenting; when He has allowed you to spend long nights in painful sleeplessness; or when He has called you to watch over the bed of some beloved relative whom disease was wasting away? Tell it for our instruction, and that we may profit by your experience; have you not thought that the Lord would remain for ever deaf to your supplications and to your sighs? Have you not doubted the efficacy of prayer? Were not the promises of God without power to your heart? Say, also, have you not been constrained to acknowledge that it was so, because you had not yet been really humbled under the hand of God; because you had not bowed your head in submission to His will; because you sighed only to be delivered from the evils that weighed upon your soul; because that after you had prayed, "O God, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," you had not courage to add, with sincerity, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done?"

"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" When shall we learn

that the Lord's "ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts?" When shall we learn to subdue, by the assistance of His grace, the vehement desires of our impatient spirit, to silence the insinuations of our unbelieving hearts, to bend our rebellious will? Shall we always be governed by the selfish interest of the moment, and never be able to rise to the contemplation of the plans of a merciful God who willeth our everlasting salvation? Let us "speak to the earth, and it shall teach us." The powerful tree that is to strike its deep roots into a fertile soil, and bear fruit which shall ripen to perfection, requires that the winds and the storms should contribute to its growth; it is only the ephemeral plant that grows without impediment; its flower blossoms in the morning; it displays for a moment its delicate freshness and its opening beauty; it adorns a day of spring and embalms it with its delicious perfume;—alas! the first ray of the sun destroys its freshness, the first blast of wind makes its beauty fade; it withers; it falls, and the place thereof knoweth it no more! But the tree which shall hereafter recompense the care of the planter, rises slowly and with difficulty, above the ground which it shall one day overshadow; it requires years to stretch out its deep roots and its fruitful branches; the storms harden and strengthen it; it reaches its towering height; it braves the tempest, and disappoints not the traveller who comes to repose beneath its shade and to refresh himself with its fruits. It is the same in the kingdom of grace as in that of

nature. The soul that shall "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His holy temple," must be prepared for this by combats and trials. This is the method of training which the Lord has invariably used with all those of His children whom He has proposed to exalt to eminent stations, and to employ for the instruction and enlightening of ages.

He has made them all tread the gloomy paths of affliction; He has cast them into the furnace, that their faith might come forth purified from the defilements of pride and of sin. Abraham, the father of the faithful, proceeds from trial to trial, from contest to contest; he travels a dark road as unknown to him as Mount Moriah, where he was to sacrifice the object of his dearest affections; he has to hope against hope. On the contrary, the Lord appears to render His ways more easy to the less privileged objects of His love. A centurion of Capernaum, who perhaps scarcely knows the God whom the heathen reject, comes to Jesus to ask Him to heal a beloved servant: immediately he receives from Him the answer, "I will come and heal him;" and "his servant is healed in the self-same hour." Two poor blind men hear that He, who was known to all Israel by His acts of mercy, passes by; with a loud voice they supplicate from Him a look of compassion; He stops, speak a word of favour, and the blind men receive their sight. But the woman of Canaan, a heroine of faith, whose only daughter is at the point

of death, comes to Jesus; with tears she implores comfort and assistance from Him—she receives a harsh reply—a refusal of all favour! But by this means she is led to exhibit to all Israel and to all future ages a most splendid example of victorious faith. The great Apostle Paul himself three times prays to be delivered from some painful trial, and he receives for an answer these words—“My grace is sufficient for thee;” “My strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness.” Thus the Lord leads His children; He seems insensible to their cries of grief; darkness thickens around them; the night becomes more deep; but it is only to render more bright the dawn of the day of consolation. Often it is when the heart, overpowered, ceases to send up to heaven those sighs which it deems useless; when the last ray of hope has expired amid the gloom of distress; when all assistance appears impossible, and all human consolation has vanished, that Jesus Christ presents Himself to his child and changes his darkness into light,—his tears into songs of thanksgiving.

It is not till Lazarus has sunk into the cold embraces of death; till he has gone down into the grave; and his sisters, in tears, and clothed in the garb of mourning, imagine that they have now no other comfort in this world, but to go and weep over the tomb of a beloved brother, that Jesus appears at Bethany, and with the authority of a master, issues His commands to death and the grave, and draws glory to God from the dust of the tomb. O the wisdom, the power, the love of

my God! when shall we learn to know them, to adore them, to submit ourselves in a religious silence to all that they do for our eternal happiness? The divines of this world, ignorant of the ways of God with His children, whose sanctification and salvation He so graciously designs, have devised a thousand hypotheses for explaining the conduct of Jesus in leaving His friend for two days, in a state of suffering, without assistance. One tells us that He was detained by some indispensable engagement; another, that He did not think Lazarus in danger; a third—Fools! will you then always lose sight of the glory of God, and the salvation of immortal souls? Will you think only of earth, of sickness, of pain, of death, and never of the eternal happiness of beings whom Jesus forms for heaven, in the school of affliction and of His Spirit? Let us raise our thoughts higher, if we would comprehend the ways of God and His counsels towards us. “He willeth not the death of a sinner,” but his conversion and life. He willeth not that His children, whom He hath already converted, should remain entangled in the servile chains of the world and of corruption. He breaks those chains; and if the blows which he strikes ring mournfully in our heart, let us learn to “bear the rod, and Him that appointed it.” My God! what wilt Thou have me to do? What sacrifice shall I make? What idol shall I offer upon the altar of Thine eternal love? Since Thou hast saved me, since Thou hast loved me,

show me by what path Thou wouldest have me
to reach Thy heavenly Zion, the assembly of the
first-born—the place where all those who have a
heart to love Thee shall meet, and where nothing
that defileth shall ever enter!

MEDITATION IV.

THE HEROISM OF JESUS.—THE TWELVE HOURS OF THE DAY.

JOHN XI. 7—10.

“Then after that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”

THE two virtues which appear to us to constitute what is called heroism, are, courage and devotedness. The names which we see emblazoned on the page of history, surrounded with pompous eulogiums, are the names of those men, who, forgetting themselves and their personal interests, have had the courage to devote themselves to sufferings and death, for the salvation of their country, the happiness of some being that was dear to them, or for some other praiseworthy cause. We admire this courage, this devotedness; we delight to peruse the magnanimous examples of a sublime heroism. But, alas! as a great man of our day has very well said, “Even heroism, the

greatest and purest of virtues, heroism itself, when closely inspected, is found to have its blemishes."* And what would the celebrated author, whom we have quoted, have said, had he judged of heroism by the light of God's eternal truth? What would he have said, had he analyzed by the lamp of the Divine Word, all the elements of pride, vanity, and selfishness, which are ever mingled with the sublimest displays of a conduct heroic in the eyes of men? Oh, what would become of the most brilliant performances of many whose names are re-echoed from age to age, whose memory appears in the past, surrounded with a halo of glory, were they weighed in the balance of eternal justice? Would we not see that mysterious hand which arrested the king of Babylon in the midst of his vanities, writing upon their most splendid exploits the fearful *Tekel* of the prophet, "Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting?" Thou knowest, my God, and it is not for us to declare it.

But let us bless God, my beloved brethren, that He has given us to know another kind of courage and devotedness celebrated not by men, who often call good evil, and evil good; but by the angels of God, upon golden harps of eternal praise! The Redeemer of the world, in the devotedness which led Him to leave the heavens, and come down to share our miseries and deliver us from them, is exhibited to us in His whole life, but especially in that particular part of it which is recorded in the

* Victor Cousin. "Introduction to the History of Philosophy."

text, as the perfect model of a divine heroism, approved of by God; and He cries to us all, "I have left you an example, that ye might follow My steps."

Come, then, disciples of Christ; come, also, men of the world, you who are capable of appreciating what is beautiful, and grand, and sublime, and noble; come, and let us study our model, and may we be enabled, not to confine ourselves merely to a vain and unprofitable admiration, but to arise without delay, and enter with a courageous step upon the career in which our Divine Captain leads us! The devotedness of Jesus, and the considerations which it ought to suggest to us, are the lesson we would draw from the words which form the subject of our meditation.

Lord! take away from us that sluggish apathy which renders us indifferent to what ought to kindle our enthusiasm! Eradicate from our hearts, by the power of Thy Spirit, that selfishness which benumbs our energies, and hinders us from coming out of ourselves to rise up to the contemplation of this divine exhibition which Thou hast placed before the eyes of a sinful world, and which is calculated to excite the admiration of angels, and become the theme of our praises throughout eternity!

Jesus was beyond Jordan, whither He had been obliged to fly from the hatred and persecution of the rulers of the people. He remained there two days after Martha and her sister had informed Him of the anxieties in which they were involved on account of their brother; two days of suffering

to Lazarus; two days of painful expectation to his sisters; but also, we cannot doubt, two days of works of benevolence and charity, on the part of Him who went about doing good, and whose meat it was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work: yes, while sickness and death introduced mourning and tears into the abode of Bethany, the beneficent hand of Jesus brought into some other afflicted family consolation and relief, and into some other troubled and suffering soul pardon and peace. But if those whom He loves most are often the last to whom Jesus brings assistance, they are not forgotten in His heart. No, He guards them by His almighty power, "as the apple of His eye," "as the eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings." Jesus is beyond Jordan, exiled by the persecutions of those whom He came to save; but from thence He beholds all that takes place at Bethany; He counts the groans of Lazarus, and the tears of his sisters; He has seen Him whom He loved become the prey of death; He has beheld the grief of the two sisters who so often received Him under their humble roof. He sees that the trial is sufficiently great, too great perhaps for their faith; and as He willeth not that they should be "tempted above what they are able to bear," His compassionate heart urges Him to come to their assistance: "Let us go again," saith He to His disciples, "into Judea."

But, my beloved brethren, if you are acquainted

with suffering ; if God afflicts you in any way, to bring you to Himself, and to make you wise unto salvation ; if when you send up your prayers and supplications to Him, He seems not to answer them ; if He makes you wait two days, two weeks, two years, be not discouraged ; learn to know the ways of His love and of His grace ; learn to hope, to believe, to love, for soon, soon shall this word of compassion issue from His heart, " Let us go again into Judea ;" let us go again into this soul, which is ready to sink down in the contest, and sighs for deliverance ; let us go again into this heart, which is torn by suffering and anguish.

But here an objection occurs which will lead us more directly to the subject of our meditation this day. Scarcely had Jesus uttered these words, " Let us go again into Judea," when a voice exclaims, " Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee ; and goest Thou thither again ?" It is unnecessary to say that it is the disciples that have spoken. They remember with trembling, that at the last feast, the Jews took up stones to stone their Master, as St. John tells us in the end of the preceding chapter. It is this anxiety alone for their Master and for themselves that makes them speak. They lose sight of every thing else ; they forget the family of Bethany in their affliction ; they forget, or they have not yet comprehended, the true end of the divine mission of their Master, who is to die for the salvation of His people. Fear and selfishness alone speak : " Master, goest Thou thither again ?"

Alas! we must not censure them too severely: they expressed no more than what we ourselves would have felt in their place. There exists in our heart a deep-rooted cowardice and selfishness, which makes everything disappear before our own interests, makes us tremble at the view of sacrifice and pain, as the disciples did at the remembrance of the stones which the Jews took up to stone their Master. A voice is lifted up in our heart; it is the echo of that of the disciples; "What! wilt thou again perform this good work, which cost thee so much self-denial, and sorrow, and fatigue? Wilt thou rigourously fulfil, at the expense of thy comfort, the will of God, and its severe requirements? What! wilt thou follow Jesus, though in doing so thou must renounce thy tastes, thy pleasures, this object of thy passion, the world, thyself? Wilt thou follow Jesus, hear His voice alone, though thou must bear thy cross daily, and travel in a way so straight, so thorny, and so difficult? Wilt thou do the will of God in all things, though thou must renounce thine own will, which thou lovest above all things? 'Master, goest Thou thither again?'"

Such are the cowardly insinuations of our carnal and unbelieving hearts. What will Jesus do? Will He listen to the voice of His disciples? Will He keep away from Judea? Ah! could Jesus ever have recoiled from the prospect of sacrifices, of conflicts, of pain, of death, would He have quitted the abode of glory and happiness, to descend into the abyss of our misery?

Would His eye have ever looked forward to the hill of Golgotha? In returning into Judea, He did not merely go to Bethany, to accomplish, in the midst of those whom He loved, a work of His omnipotence and love, to call Lazarus out of the sepulchre, and to restore him to his sisters, and to make consolation and joy take the place of grief and sorrow in their hearts. This would have been a pleasing task to Him; but in returning into Judea, Jesus had an infinitely greater and more noble object in view; but also an anticipation infinitely sad and painful. He had before His eyes the principal end of His divine mission; He approaches the week of His sufferings. The last passover draws near; the victim of expiation, slain before the foundation of the world, the hope and expectation of ages, approaches the altar. Jesus has before His eyes a sinful world, which He has come to save—a fallen race, which He would restore to its primeval destination. He sees eternal justice ready to strike the guilty; He wishes to satisfy it. He sees a curse ready to fall upon the violators of the eternal law of order; He wishes to bear it upon His guiltless head. He sees a hell; He wishes to extinguish its flames. He sees an eternal happiness; He wishes to procure it for us. He sees a God of infinite love; He wishes to make us the objects of that love.

Such is the object which Jesus contemplates at the termination of His career; and His ardent love is impatient to accomplish it. And yet He

knows that He can only attain it through ignominy and pain. When He says, "Let us go again into Judea," He knows that He advances towards sufferings and death. Already has He predicted to His disciples what is about to happen to Him; already they have a fearful intimation of it. Jesus does not wish to grieve nor discourage them by telling them more plainly of it. Full of a calm and unshaken resolution, He proceeds alone to the end which He has in view—the redemption of a sinful world. He sees before Him reproach, cruel sufferings, an ignominious death. He sees before Him the contest which is to end only with the last breath of His life exhausted through grief, and with the last drop of the guiltless blood which flows in His veins. He sees near Him the disciple who is to betray Him; He sees at a distance the crowds of an enraged people, whom His love would save; He hears the cries of their hatred, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" He sees Calvary, which He is about to tread, bearing the instrument of His death and of our salvation. He sees the dastardly flight of those whom He loves. He sees the dark hours of a long agony; He sees death and the grave. He still has it in His power to put away from Him the bitter cup: He has it in His power to retrace His steps. Galilee and Samaria, whither He had often retired, because His hour was not come, are still ready to receive Him, and to afford Him a refuge from the fury of His enemies. But no; He hath said, with

the calmness and courage of a hero marching to victory, "Let us go into Judea again;" and He returns into Judea. And when I consider that the object of Jesus is to save a guilty race, to save the very people who reject Him, the criminals who put Him to death, and that His generous heart, burning with a love unknown on earth, is impatient to accomplish the work of their salvation, I cast myself at the feet of this Redeemer, and exclaim, "Behold courage and devotedness! Behold a heroism, before which all human actions that have been honoured with this name fade away, appear utterly worthless, and are confounded in the vile dust of this polluted earth!"

O! immortal beings, immortal sinners called to glory! if Christ be our Saviour, if we bear the name of His disciples, shall we not now awake from our cowardly selfishness, and follow the example of our Great Head? Shall we continually find in our hearts and upon our lips, the miserable objections of the disciples? Ah! shall the example of such love, such devotedness as we have been the objects of, allow our cold, freezing hearts to remain under the influence of their shameful egotism, and of their deplorable insensibility? Why should we shrink back with trembling from that combat, that trial, and those sufferings, to which our Divine Saviour, who has already gone before us in the way, call us! Why, when the will of God is known to us, when the Lord has spoken, should we be seen vacillating

without courage at the prospect of some painful sacrifice which we are required to make upon the altar of Him whom we adore as our Redeemer? Ah! let us remember, that He who redeemed us, and whose we are, claims our whole heart, without reserve: let us remember, that if while we desire to follow Him we love father or mother, sister or brother, more than Him, we are not worthy of Him. Let us remember, that His sovereign will must find our head bowed down in the dust, and our submissive heart ready to exclaim, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good." But let us also remember, that, in treading that path, we are not alone; He who has gone before us never leaves us to our own strength, or rather to our own weakness, but He guides and supports us in it, and leads us on to victory. Let our unshaken confidence in Him, in His love, and in His power, be as an anchor to our soul, both sure and steadfast; then let the winds and storms rise with fury: we may be shaken, but we can never be cast down.

But if the heroic example of our Captain appears too much above us, if the view of that sublime height terrifies us; if we despair of being able of ourselves to tread that sacred mountain in His footsteps; if we find ourselves ready to bring forward the objection of the disciples, let us at least hear the answer which Jesus condescends to make, the encouragement which He deigns to give them; and let us, in dependence upon His blessing, receive instruction.

“Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.” Two important lessons may be drawn for our encouragement from these words. “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” (given us by God to accomplish the task assigned to us,) after which “cometh the night when no man can work;” and, if a man “walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.” Here is the first serious lesson which the words of Jesus teach us; here the first encouragement which they afford us. And from whence, in fact, arise that cowardice, that selfishness, that fear of sacrifices, and of sufferings, which paralyze our energies, and render us incapable of courage, and of generous devotion? It is from this that in passing through life, we forget the end of life. It is that, thinking only of ourselves, and of the interests of the present moment, we forget that we have an important task to perform, the results of which, happy or miserable, shall reach to all eternity.

TWELVE HOURS IN THE DAY Then, “the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer!” *Twelve hours in the day* Then “He that shall come will come, and will not tarry:” then a voice shall echo from

heaven to earth, and even to the deep abyss of hell, and shall surprise the ungodly, as "travail cometh upon a woman in labour"—"Give an account of thy stewardship!" *Twelve hours in the day!* Oh! the folly of multitudes of miserable beings, who, though charged with an awful responsibility, squander away those hours, so few, and so precious, in the pursuit of mere vanities! Shall not the Pagan monarch, who commanded his slave to repeat to him every morning, with a loud voice, "Philip, remember that thou art mortal," rise up in judgment at the last day against thousands who bear the name of a crucified Saviour, and yet march towards the tomb as if there were no death, no judgment, no eternity! Forgetting their high destination, they follow, during the "twelve hours of the day," shadows which deceive them and fly from them; a visionary dream absorbs their whole attention during those twelve hours destined to labour; and if they awake upon a dying bed, in the presence of death, on the brink of eternity, when "there is time no longer," how bitter is the remembrance of the many hours of youth, of riper age, of manhood, which have been lost, miserably lost.

Ah! is life, which twelve hours measure, so long that we can bear to squander away our best days in "sowing the wind, to reap the whirlwind?" Does time not fly past us with a sufficient rapidity? Does the hand which measures the brief moments of our life on the dial-plate of time move so slowly, that we must hasten its fatal progress by dissipa-

tion and folly? Is there so little of what is serious connected with the end of life, that we would sport in forgetfulness with the deceitful passions of the heart, or extinguish, amid the tumult of the world and of sensual pleasures, the last rays of the day which is awarded to us? Oh! how deplorable is the lot of the deluded mortal who has never stopped in the rapid career which he is pursuing, to ask himself before God, "Why was I born?" Soon, like the misguided traveller, who, to his amazement, is arrested in his progress by the shore of the boundless ocean, he shall awake, alas! too late, on the verge of eternity. He shunned the light of life during the twelve hours of the day, that he might travel without remorse in the dark road of perdition; he has *walked* in the night; he stumbleth. Great God! into what an abyss of darkness and despair is he precipitated!

"Lord, teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Thus prayed Moses in the wilderness; and thus will that man pray who has not forgotten that he is on his way to Canaan; that the time is short; that the sun has begun to set; that the night is already spreading its veil of gloom; that eternity approaches; that the grave is opening. And shall he who thus prays still continue the slave of selfishness? shall he at the sight of his task, at the prospect of sacrifices, entrench himself like a coward behind the objection of the Apostles? No: we trust not. The one consideration which Jesus offers to His

disciples, the seriousness of life, the shortness of time, these terrible words, death, judgment, eternity, which ring in his ears with a voice of thunder, will banish selfishness and fear from his heart, and inspire him with an energy, a courage, and an activity, which will urge him to follow the Captain of his salvation whom he loves.

But, is there no happiness in following Him who has so beautifully associated example with precept? His earthly life was not of long duration; it was in the flower of His age that "He was taken from prison and from judgment, that He was cut off out of the land of the living, and was stricken for the transgressions of His people." But it is not by the number of years, but rather by the manner in which they are employed, that we should calculate the length of our life; the longest life is lost if we attain not the end of our being; and if we have attained it, an hour is worth an eternity. According to this computation, oh how long did He live who went about doing good! His life was an uninterrupted chain of good works, works which had for their object the glory of God and the salvation of fallen man whom He came to redeem. Every step in His divine life is marked by some work of tender charity; every hour is adorned by some act of devotedness, proving the truth of that declaration which issued from the lips of Jesus Himself: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." We must repeat it; the glory of His Father, was the constant end of His

life; the happiness of the immortal souls of His brethren, was the means which he adopted for its attainment.

His days were spent in instructing the ignorant, comforting the afflicted, healing the sick, doing good to all. His nights were employed in solitude, and in prayer to His Father for the same beings to whom He consecrated His life. The morning found Him in the temple, preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom to those who were still "dwelling in darkness and in the shadow of death." After a day of fatigue, the evening again found Him lending His ear and opening His compassionate heart to the complaint of the poor and the miserable. Speak, ye thousands of suffering beings who were objects of His glowing charity and benevolence! Speak; let your voice traverse the intervening ages, and let it come to instruct us and make us blush for our weakness; when did you see Him lose one, even one, of the twelve hours of the day? When did you see Him reject even one among the multitudes that came unto Him? When did you see Him send away the ignorant without instruction: the afflicted without consolation; the soul oppressed with a sense of its misery, without a word of pardon, peace, and love; the sick without healing; the needy without relief? Ah! you say, never, never! An inimitable succession of acts of the noblest, purest, most tender love was exhibited before your eyes from the hour when a divine voice proclaimed to earth, "This is my beloved Son,

hear Him;" even to that when his expiring voice and His triumphant love made earth ring with that announcement, repeated by the celestial hosts throughout the whole extent of heaven, "*It is finished.*"

O my beloved friends, when, after contemplating the life of our Saviour, we cast a glance at our own, what a contrast do we find! What worthlessness! what a void! what nothingness! How many hours lost! how many unprofitable days! how many good works neglected! how often have we put off till to-morrow what might have been done to-day! How many souls which we might have attempted to enlighten have remained in darkness! How many afflicted fellow-creatures to whom our languishing charity has offered no consolation! How many poor with whom our selfishness has not allowed us to share our bread! O my God! shall not these rise up in judgment against us in the day of great account? Is it for such a life that Thou hast given us the twelve hours of the day? Is it for this that Thou hast redeemed us? Ah, pardon! Lord, pardon! Enter not into judgment with Thy servants. We could not answer Thee to one charge of a thousand.

Meanwhile, Christ condescends to give us also another lesson, in the words which we are considering—"If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him"—words which not merely

imply that we ought, as we have just said, faithfully to employ the twelve hours of the day for the accomplishment of our task, because the night cometh when no man can work; but here Jesus evidently spiritualizes the image which He makes use of, and intends to teach us that we ought to perform our task by the light of His word and of His will. The conclusion of the passage, "If a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him," leaves no doubt as to the signification of the words. Christ Jesus Himself is "the light of the world." "I," saith He, "am the light of the world; he that followeth Me, shall not walk in darkness." All out of Him, all that is in the world, all that is in our heart, is only darkness and sin. Alas! what had been our lot, had not this "day-spring from on high visited us?" had not this "day star arisen in our hearts?" Would we have been more happy because our age is entitled the age of light? No, all that an aspiring philosophy, even the most intellectual, can afford us, without the light which shines in the gospel of Christ, would be to our souls but as the deceitful glimmerings which float over the sandy desert, and only delude the misguided traveller. Human systems are silent when I ask them, "What must I do to be saved?" When my soul, penetrated with a feeling of the seriousness of life, the importance of my eternal destiny, the shortness of the twelve hours of the day, turns anxiously to my fellow-travellers, and asks even the most enlightened among them, "Where are

we? Where are we going? What way ought we to take?" they look amazed; no hand is stretched forth to point out to me the road; their light shines not on the verge of the tomb; beyond it all is darkness! I am still left wandering in the desert; O happiness! a voice is lifted up; it is heard in the plains of Judea: it passes over intervening ages; it reaches even unto me; "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Happy he who has followed this Guide! Happy he who has walked in His light! In vain gloomy clouds from time to time obscure the rays of the Sun of Righteousness; they disappear; the heavens become serene, and the child of light "stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of the world."

He who has any experience of the christian life, can tell what anxiety, what anguish he feels, when he knows not the will of God in reference to the way in which he ought to act, the road which he ought to take, when many open before him, and when some degree of darkness encompasses his soul. Desirous to fulfil his duty, and to employ in the most useful manner the twelve hours of the day, he casts himself at the feet of Him who is the light; he studies His word; he prays, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And if a ray of divine light penetrates into his soul, if he is instructed on the part which he ought to choose, what courage, what strength, what an energy does he derive from the assurance that he is doing the will of his God! He is following his Mas-

ter; what then can stop his course or abate his courage? What could have withheld Jesus from going into Judea? He had before Him a family to console, a world to save, and in that, the will of His Father that sent Him. Ah! it is this assurance that has caused martyrs to embrace the stake or to mount the scaffold! This assurance, when it becomes a living principle in our soul, will make us surmount all obstacles, provided it be our sincere desire to fulfil the will of God, and our soul acknowledge and adore His sovereignty.

But if you determine to walk on still in darkness, in your own ways, in your own wisdom, and independently of the supreme will of God, what can you expect from your own efforts, your own courage, and your best resolutions? "If any man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." Oh! why are there so many unhappy beings who love darkness rather than light? Why do we see them in their folly plunging deeper into the darkness, whenever a ray of light shines into their conscience? However deplorable their folly, there is nothing in it which ought to surprise us; the Lord Himself has given us in His word, an explanation of this mystery of iniquity, "Their deeds are evil." They shun the light of truth, as their chief enemy. Shall they always be able to shun it? No: the twelve hours have passed away unprofitably; "the light of this world" has disappeared beneath the horizon; the dark valley of the shadow of death presents itself to the view of the wretched being who has fled

the light; what gleam of brightness shall guide his tottering footsteps? What strength shall support him? And while the last spark of life is expiring in his heart, undeceived, alas! too late, what voice shall speak consolation and peace to his soul? He has shunned the light. O God! what a night envelops his soul! The Bible calls that night, "outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." O, unhappy mortal! if upon thy death bed there yet remain to thee a breath of life, a sigh which thou canst breathe into the bosom of thy God, hasten, lift up thy dying voice to Jesus; say, like the thief upon the cross, "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!" Perhaps a last plank of safety may be offered to thee in the shipwreck of thy life; perhaps a last ray of heaven's light may break into thy troubled soul, and make hope revive.

And let us, immortal and accountable beings, for whom the twelfth hour of the day has not yet tolled, who still may "walk in the light," oh let us, strong in the strength of God, having our eyes fixed upon the Author and Finisher of our faith, from whom come pardon and life, "and laying aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, run the race which is set before us." And that we may be enabled to imitate our Master in His courage and devotedness, while looking to His example let us also write upon our hearts the two great lessons which He presents to our consideration, as well as to that of His disciples—

the importance of life, which He calls "the twelve hours of the day," and the necessity of fulfilling our duty by the light of the sovereign will of our God. And then we shall see the strength of God made perfect in our weakness; we shall see selfishness giving way to devotedness, that we may follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth: a new love will take possession of our soul, and give us a powerful support. In fine, we shall see the fulfilment of this gracious promise of the Lord, "I will cause thee to ride on the high places of the earth;" "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

MEDITATION V.

“OUR FRIEND LAZARUS SLEEPETH.”

JOHN XI. 11.

“These things said He: and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.”

It was not a system of morality, nor of philosophy, that Jesus came to communicate to this world. It was something widely different that man had need of. A transgressor of the law of his God, he is not only the object of the divine indignation and wrath, but he has also become the miserable slave of corruption and sin, and that sin produces in time, as well as in eternity, the bitterest fruits. In this state, while eternal misery is allotted to his soul as its final portion, a gloomy abode of dissolution, amid the ruins of death, is assigned to his mortal body as its last dwelling-place. Yes, death; that unfathomable abyss, that enigma which baffles all philosophy—death, which an inspired writer calls “the king of terrors”—death, preceded by agonies and sufferings, takes possession of one part of this sinful being, and ad-

monishes him that that which is immortal in him must appear before the tribunal of a righteous Judge.

Now the doctrine of Jesus, to which He has given the title of "glad tidings," not merely proclaims pardon to him whom it addresses; not merely cancels the sentence of punishment demanded by a violated law; but even mitigates and divests of their terrors the most formidable and bitter consequences of sin in time. The Gospel, in proclaiming pardon to the guilty, in breaking with power the ignominious chains of his slavery, deprives death of its sting, the tomb of its darkness, the grave of its victory. The Redeemer thus leads him, whom He has rescued, to the lofty heights of liberty, from whence he can look down in triumph on the scene of desolation and ruin, where sin commits its fearful ravages, and where formerly he had cried, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And from this lofty eminence the redeemed of Christ, triumphant and yet humbled, begin this song of victory, "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." It is thus that Jesus would have us contemplate life and death; and it is for this reason, that in telling His disciples that he whom He calls *His friend* had ceased to live upon this earth; He does not speak of death, or of destruction, or of the king of terrors, although that friend of Jesus, like all other men, had gone down into the grave. No; it is a rest which succeeds labour, a sleep which

follows fatigue; "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

O Jesus! Prince of Life! Sovereign Ruler of all things! come while we meditate upon the words of eternal life which Thou hast brought us from heaven, come and speak also to our souls, of rest, and peace, and victory! Raise up our minds above time, above this life of misery, above death, above the grave! Enable us to follow Thee to those sublime heights whither Thou hast directed our eternal hopes! Break the chains that still bind us to earth, to corruption, and to death, and give us fully to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Jesus had silenced, by a very serious reproof, the objection which His disciples had made to His going into Judea. He might have answered them at once, "Lazarus is dead, and I go to bring relief to his afflicted sisters." But no; He wishes to prepare them for this afflicting intelligence; He wishes even to communicate it to them in terms that might sweeten all its bitterness; "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth;" and then, as if He had already said too much for the heart of His disciples, who also loved Lazarus, He hastens to add, as it were to place the remedy beside the evil, the consolation beside the trial, "But I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." As Jesus knew all that had passed at Bethany, without receiving any further intelligence; as He had seen the whole progress of the disease of Lazarus, and all the affliction of his sisters, He could have healed him

of his malady ; or supposing him to have died, He could have restored him to life again at a distance as well as at hand, by pronouncing one word of that power which was given Him in heaven and in earth. But let us not forget that this sickness was "for the glory of God, and that the Son of God might be glorified." Jesus rejoices for His disciples' sake, that He was not there ; He turns towards Judea ; and there, on the verge of the tomb, must all Israel, and all future generations, admire the power of the Redeemer of the world, "But I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." Happy the disciples of such a Master ! Happy they who were witnesses of his power ! still happier they who know, by their own experience, that His love is in nothing inferior to His power !

But who can sufficiently feel, or appreciate in a suitable manner, the happiness of the man whom Jesus calls *His friend* ? He who "made the world," He who "upholdeth all things by the word of His power," the Lord of glory gives to a worm of the earth, a sinner, the title of *friend* ! A poor mortal, one of those who are called the great ones of this world, though they be but dust and ashes, would not deign to give that title to a fellow-man, if he were in the least his inferior, yet he whom angels worship gives it to Lazarus ! Alas ! a miserable, sinful being, filled with a sense of his own nothingness before the "God-man," he would never have dared to assume such a title to himself ; but Jesus gave it to him ; Jesus carried His

condescension, or rather His love, beyond all his expectations; Jesus called him *His friend*. How precious, how encouraging, is this name in the heart and in the mouth of the Redeemer of this world! His heart, as well as His lips, pronounced it; for He whose name is the "True" knows not, or scorns the deceitful language of a hypocritical world, which has ever the expressions of the noblest sentiments upon its lips, while its selfish heart remains a stranger to devotedness and love. It is too well known what value the title of friend has in the world; it makes a part of the dialect of fashion; it is given to every body; it is used as a mask which is worn as long as it serves men's interests, and then is thrown aside when the wind of circumstances has changed its direction. Where are those friends that can pardon a fault in their friend? Where are those who will acknowledge a friend in adversity? This, though a trite observation, is one that cannot be too frequently repeated, to the shame of every man who has not learned friendship in the school of Christ. We see around the man who is basking in prosperity, and loaded with riches and honours, a crowd of those pretended friends, who have always the name upon their lips. A few days have sufficed to plunge this man, thus flattered while at the summit of opulence and power, into the depth of misery. Instead of occupying an honourable place, instead of being sought after in the society of the great, he suffers perhaps in an humble dwelling, laid upon a bed of pain, deprived of every thing that could

sweeten the bitterness of his situation. Where, now, are those false and cruel parasites, who lately surrounded him and loaded him with hypocritical demonstrations of their attachment? I see none of them around him. He is poor; this is a sufficient reason for their being ashamed to own him as their friend; he is unfortunate, this is his crime.

Oh ye, whose hearts have been lacerated by a sad experience of the instability of human affections, and of the cruelty of your fellow-men! ye suffering and unhappy beings, whom a proud world knows not and rejects, come to Jesus, He will be your *friend*! Expect not from men the consolation and peace which you long after. He who trusts in the arm of flesh, rests upon a broken reed, "whereon, if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it." What will you find in human affections that can fill the void of your soul, answer a single sigh of your heart, dry a single tear? Ah! if hitherto you have not dared to call Jesus your *friend*, see, He Himself anticipates you; He Himself gives you that title, so dear to an affectionate heart, and with that title He also gives you all the privileges of a friend. Let not the feeling of your unworthiness, of your sins, of your frailty, terrify you, or drive you away from Him! "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." He was not offended at being called "the friend of publicans and sinners." Neither let your poverty, your nakedness, the meanness of your condition, affright you. He it is "who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes became

poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

Unlike your worldly patrons, who call themselves friends, but whom you cannot approach without trembling, amid the display of luxury, magnificence, and pride, with which they are surrounded, Jesus, who is willing to be your powerful friend, was born in a manger; a few poor fishermen, from the borders of the lake of Gennesaret, composed His entire retinue: the sick, whom He healed; the poor, whom He relieved; the unhappy, whom He comforted, were His whole society. Unlike, too, the worldly friends, who love only as long as they find it their interest or their pleasure, Jesus is always the same, always ready to bless. His love requires nothing of you but your heart; He only wishes to give, never to receive. The more unhappy and suffering, the more humble and contrite you are, the more will He be pleased to call you friends. In His love all is gratuitous, all is free, all is gift. Again I repeat it, come to Jesus; open your heart to Him, call Him your friend; He Himself invites you to do so; He Himself urges you to come and draw out of the pure and inexhaustible source which He has opened in His infinite love. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

"*Our* friend Lazarus sleepeth." Jesus does not say, *my* friend; He does not wish to exclude

His disciples from that sacred friendship; they also love Lazarus. He who is the friend of Jesus is also the friend of all those whom He loves. That maxim of the world, then, is false, selfish, and I had almost said, insulting to the human heart, "that a man can have but one real friend." It shows more than any thing we could say, what friendship is in the estimation of the world, and what are all attachments of which the love of Jesus does not form the bond. Far from us be that selfishness of a narrow heart. If Jesus be our friend, all those whom He loves are our real friends. "See how these Christians love one another," exclaimed the astonished Pagans, when they beheld the spectacle, unknown before to the world, which the members of the primitive Church presented to their view. Their is an invisible but powerful chain, uniting in Jesus all those who have in their heart a spark of love for Him. All the people of Christ, from Abel to the last believer that shall be found in this world, from those new brethren who in distant heathen lands surrender their hearts to Jesus, even to those redeemed ones around us whom we love, and to those who, having reached perfection, offer up their prayers at the foot of the throne of God, for their companions in salvation, still fighting here below; all, all form one people—the friends of Jesus; all strive together, by their prayers, all walk together towards Zion, towards "the general assembly and church of the first-born," towards the centre of eternal love, which soon will reunite them all.

Let us hear the history of David in his trials. "Now it came to pass when David had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, the Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed, for ever. If it please my father to do thee evil, then will I show it thee, that thou mayest go in peace, and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father." (1 Sam. xviii. and xx.) Let us hear the history of the primitive Church. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them, that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." One of the pillars of that Church, the Apostle Peter, is cast into prison by Herod; the following day he is to be brought forth to suffer the punishment which the tyrant has decreed; but while Peter is kept in prison, "prayer is made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him." And a messenger from the Most High breaks his chains, and gives him to the believing prayers of his brethren! The Apostle Paul is brought to Rome, as a prisoner, for the name of Jesus. After having suffered a

shipwreck, which put his life in jeopardy, he arrives; he is oppressed with the fatigues of so painful a voyage, and with the weight of the chains which he bears for Jesus his Saviour. "And when the brethren heard of us," says the divine historian of the Acts, "they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, and the Three Taverns: whom when Paul saw" (though, perhaps, he was not personally acquainted with one of them,) "he thanked God, and took courage."

O christian traveller, thou, who, perhaps, under the weight of thy trial, groanest by reason of the fatigues of thine earthly pilgrimage, take courage also, like St. Paul! Thou walkest not alone in that path of sorrow, thou hast been preceded by thousands of the friends of Jesus who are also thy friends, and who, perhaps, like thee, have suffered on the road, and have been purified beneath the burning heat of the day, that they might be made meet to see the face of Him who loved them; and thou art accompanied and followed by thousands who, like thee, take up their cross daily, and follow Jesus. All love thee; thou art their friend and their brother, if thou belongest by adoption, to the family of God. In the moment of contest, when thou imaginest that thou art alone, abandoned to thine own weakness, a multitude of thy brethren around thee, or in some distant country, take a part in thy sorrows, send up their prayers to heaven on thy behalf, and call down consolation and assistance for thine afflicted soul. O Jesus! what happiness it is to be Thy friend, to

have a part in that kingdom of peace and love which Thou has come to establish upon earth! Thy kingdom come!

“Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*.” Such, to the friends of Jesus, is the termination of their journey! To them it is no longer that frightful death, with its gloomy retinue of agonies and fears; it is not that “king of terrors,” who announces his approach to the unpardoned sinner, with the voice of thunder echoing through the inmost recesses of a conscience, awaking, alas! too late, to remorse and despair. It is not that gloomy sepulchre in which all the projects, the joys, and the hopes of the ungodly are swallowed up for ever. It is not that dark and fearful eternity, in comparison of which, annihilation itself, with all its horrors, would be desirable. No, it is a calm sleep, succeeding the long and painful watchings of life; it is the rest which follows the fatigues of a journey, The friend of Jesus *sleeps*; he does not die. “She is not dead,” said Jesus, on entering a house where the pious inmates were weeping for the departure of an only daughter, “She is not dead, but *sleepeth*!”—sweet figure, with which Jesus, after having destroyed the sting, envelops the terrors of death. Like the infant that reposes with confidence in its mother’s bosom, the friend of Jesus sleeps in the arms of a tender and merciful Father, until at the sound of the last trumpet, calling him to the life of heaven, he awakes on the morning of that eternal day of happiness which Jesus has procured for him.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth!” Alas! the earthly pilgrimage of the friend of Jesus may not have been less painful than that of other men. Often, perhaps, he may have been on the point of straying into the crooked paths of the world, or of sinking under the pressure of fatigue. Often he may have traversed thorny places which tore his tottering feet. He may have had to clamber up many a lofty mountain, to travel through many a deep valley. His heaviest burden, the burden of sin and corruption, may frequently have seemed ready to overwhelm him, and may have filled his heart with bitterness, while he pursued his solitary way through the dry places of the wilderness. Often, too, leaning his weary head upon his hand, he may have cried, like another traveller to the heavenly Zion, “My tears have been my meat day and night. O my God! my soul is cast down within me; deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts; all Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me.” But at the same time he has carried in his breast a hope which maketh not ashamed; he has seen before him a better country of which he never lost sight and which, though it had been forgotten by all the world beside, would have been the sole object of his wishes.

Like Israel, when a captive in Babylon, his eyes were turned towards Zion. “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not

Jerusalem to my chief joy." And with this hope, this friend of Jesus, in travelling to the heavenly Jerusalem, was not alone abandoned to his own weakness. His celestial Friend, omnipotent, though invisible, guided his footsteps, filled his heart with fresh courage, eased him of his oppressive burden, telling him with love, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee!" He reaches the end of his course; his last combat is the most painful, but he receives new strength; he can repeat with the Psalmist, to the praise of his Almighty Redeemer, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." Night draws on, darkness surrounds him, but already he perceives distinctly the dawn of a new day. At last he reaches the termination of his fatigues and labours; he falls asleep—when he awakes he shall behold "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." "And God shall wipe away all tears from his eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Yes, "the former things are passed away." This burden of an existence, which sin has poisoned with its venom; this chain of corruption and mortality, which binds our soul, and prevents it from taking its flight towards its eternal destination, is for ever laid aside. There remains of all the evils of life nothing but a sweet remem-

brance, the source of eternal gratitude for the wisdom and love of God's dealings, which now, for the first time, are fully understood. All the rest has passed away like the painful visions of the night when one awakes in the morning of a beautiful day. All is for ever lost in the element of God's eternal love, "in whose presence there is fulness of joy." Oh! to Him who "has overcome for us," to the Lamb which was slain, and which hath redeemed us out of every nation, and kindred, and people, be honour, and glory, and praise, for ever and ever! Yes, Jesus, glory to Thee! glory to Thee! because Thou hast imparted to our hearts such glorious hopes! because at Thy word the lamentations of the unhappy are changed into songs of thanksgiving! because at Thy presence the terrors of the grave are changed into a feeling of ineffable and eternal felicity.

My beloved friends, I would have wished to terminate this meditation here. But (shall I say it?) an involuntary feeling of fear passes painfully across my mind amid the pleasing thoughts which have just been occupying us. I fear lest these eternal realities, of which Jesus Himself speaks to us in our beautiful text, may be to many of you but the dream of an imagination, which loves to walk in smiling fields, or, in other words, nothing but religious poetry. I fear lest, though your soul be not entirely insensible to the voice of the Saviour, you should confine yourselves merely to a barren admiration of the doctrine which He has communicated to mankind. In a word, I fear,

lest your heart should remain unchanged, far off from God, destitute of His love. Ah! If it be so with any among you, we must conclude that you are not *the friends of Jesus*. Strangers to the life of God, and to the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, Jesus could not say of you, after death, "*Our friend sleepeth!*" Your end would not be a sleep; it would be death, the destruction of this mortal body, followed by what the Bible calls "the second death." Oh! while Jesus yet comes to you as a friend and Saviour, not as a judge, hasten to believe in His word, His promises, His love! Tomorrow, perhaps, you may no longer be able to do it. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." If Jesus be your Saviour during life, He will be your friend in the hour of death. God grant that you may have such a friend! God grant that the dear objects of your affection, who shall weep your departure, may be able to write upon your tomb in the name of Jesus, and looking forward with joy to His second and glorious appearing: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

MEDITATION VI.

THE FEAR OF DEATH.—DISTASTE FOR LIFE.

JOHN XI. 12—16.

“ Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

THERE is, in all the details of the history which we have been for some time considering, something touching, which it is easier to feel than to express. Every word that Jesus utters awakens in the soul a feeling as delicate as it is deep, which delightfully moves it, and constrains us to say, “ Never man spake like this man.” And we are compelled to add, “ Never historian described like the Apostle John.” Jesus, driven by persecution beyond Jordan, receives the sad intelligence that Lazarus, whom He loves, is sick. There is something peculiarly distressing in hearing of the sickness or sufferings of those whom we love, when we are absent from them. Jesus also would ap-

pear to have experienced this feeling of our human nature; He hastens to silence the apprehensions of His disciples, and of the messengers whom the sisters of Lazarus had sent. "This sickness," said He, "is not unto death, but for the glory of God." He wishes to go back to Judea, and bring to the objects of His affection, the aid of His omnipotence and love. His disciples remind Him of the hatred of the Jews, and of the danger of exposing Himself again to those who had lately sought to stone Him. Jesus graciously encourages them, by the solemn consideration of the shortness of time, those "twelve hours of the day," which fly past with such rapidity: we must walk in the light; "He that walketh in the night stumbleth." And the better still to persuade them that He must go into Judea, He tells them that Lazarus has sunk under his painful malady: that his eyes are closed to the light. But in telling them, instead of using language which would recall to their minds the melancholy thought of separation, of death, and of the grave, He clothes this sad intelligence with the most pleasing of images, as we have seen in our last meditation. "Our friend Lazarus," saith He, "sleepeth." And as if He feared lest the words which He had spoken should have grieved the hearts of His disciples, who loved Lazarus, He hastens affectionately to add, "But I go to awake him out of sleep." His disciples, however, understood Him not: they imagine, as our text tells us, that He speaks of a natural sleep, and they cherish the hope of a speedy recovery.

“Lord,” say they, “if he sleep, he shall do well.” It now becomes necessary for Jesus to undeceive them, and to communicate to them the melancholy news; but scarcely have the words, “Lazarus is dead,” escaped His lips, when He hastens to add, with a soothing calmness, “I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him.” What language! What love! What a kind Master! Lord, teach us to feel; above all things, teach us to love, that we may be able to comprehend the ineffable consolation of the words which proceed out of Thy mouth!

Yet, notwithstanding this love of Jesus, notwithstanding the tender care which He takes to instruct and encourage His disciples, we find in them nothing but ignorance and weakness; so true is it that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,” so difficult is it for him to rise above this earth! The expression of the disciples, “If he sleep, he shall do well,” testifies the affectionate interest which they took in Lazarus. Doubtless they gladly indulge in the thought that he shall soon see the termination of his sufferings, since, from the words of Jesus, which indeed they misunderstood, they imagine that he enjoys a restoring sleep. But also, in what a light do these words exhibit those men, who so seldom were able to rise so as to comprehend their Master’s thoughts, and who so frequently interpreted, in a gross and carnal manner, what He spoke with such delicacy and love, that

He might not wound their hearts! It was, perhaps, one of the greatest trials of the life of Jesus—a trial which He experienced every day—that He enjoyed no other society than that of men whose gross and ignorant minds continually reverted to the earth (notwithstanding His efforts to instruct them,) and who gave Him no compensation for His labours. But yet, He had chosen them as “vessels of mercy,” and He who consented to stoop so low that He had not a place where to lay His head, humbled Himself also, so that He had not a heart on which to repose His heart.

What a lesson to us is this self-denial of Jesus, this patience with men, who, though they had followed Him, and heard His instructions, for more than three years, yet found it difficult to seize His simplest thoughts. What do we poor and miserable creatures feel, when those around us are incapable of understanding us? What do we feel when we imagine that we are not understood even by our nearest relations, by members of our families, or by those whom we love? Alas! often impatience, always grief, seldom sufficient love, to endeavour, like Jesus, to make ourselves understood in another manner, to bring ourselves down to the comprehension of others, to make them feel that we love them, and that their heart, at least, can understand us, if their intellect does not. What grievous heart-burnings, what bitter dissensions, what animosity, perhaps, and hatred, would be spared to the world, if we acted towards our

relatives as Jesus did towards His disciples! How different from what they are would they be, who, by their calling or their influence, have the charge of instructing others, did they conform to the example of that Divine Teacher! In whatever point of view we contemplate His character, it is calculated to cover us with humiliation and shame, "To us, O Lord, belongeth confusion of face."

But there is a still more important lesson to be drawn from the words of the disciples. They had lately opposed our Lord's intention of going into Judea, and that because they had already a vague and painful presentiment of the sufferings and death which there awaited Him, and to which, perhaps, they themselves might be exposed. Jesus had previously given them intimation of these things; and this same thought, this same fear, gleams through their last words: "If he sleep he shall do well," and if he "do well," they seem to say to Jesus, "Why go into Judea? Why go and expose Thyself to the hatred of the Jews, who so short a time ago sought to stone Thee?" Thus the serious lesson which Jesus gave them upon the necessity of courageously employing the "twelve hours of the day" without shrinking back from sacrifices, pain, or even death, had no effect upon their hearts, "slow" as they were "to believe." We find them again with the same fears and the same weaknesses. They see before them sacrifices, pain, and perhaps death with all its terrors. This is sufficient to prostrate their courage, to

weigh down their hearts, and to render them incapable of energy and devotedness. Ah! how clearly do we recognise the work of sin in that death which inspires us with so much dread, because darkness, and pain, and destruction march before it! Yes, it is sin that has impressed upon death that image of fearfulness and terror; it is sin that has engraven in such sombre characters upon his livid brow, "The wages of sin is death."

But how weak must faith have been in the heart of the disciples, since they were the slaves of such a fear, though led on by the Prince of Life, who has power over death and the grave; who is "the resurrection and the life!" What! their thoughts could not rise above the earth, above life and death, and yet He who guides, encourages, consoles them, is that Divine Saviour, to whom "all power is given both in heaven and in earth," and who hath deprived death of its sting, the grave of its victory, eternity of its terrors. Their terror-stricken soul is inaccessible to His consolation, because their thoughts are no longer concentrated in His instructions. From the time that Jesus crossed the Jordan to return into Judea, their heart is filled with fear, and perhaps with deep regret, at seeing Him go forward in the face of sufferings and death. Hitherto they had hoped to see His mission upon earth terminate in a triumphant manner in the eyes of men, and they had calculated upon participating in His glory. They are ready again to cry like Peter, when he heard his Master predict His sufferings and

death, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee!" Their dream of an earthly kingdom, to be founded by Jesus, has vanished, and with it their most brilliant hopes. Their fear of suffering and death prevents them from entering into the real meaning of the words of Jesus; they are altogether engaged with other thoughts; the word of the Lord can only be understood in the calm of meditation, of confidence, and of faith.

Alas! here again we have no right to blame the disciples; They are but too faithful interpreters of what passes within ourselves. Do we not continually feel in our own hearts the weaknesses and corruptions which Jesus had to combat in his disciples? How often has the anticipation of some trial or suffering made our soul shudder so that we have become deaf to the most powerful words of the Lord, and inaccessible to his most ineffable consolations? This is, perhaps, the most dangerous quicksand which the Christian has to fear in his temptations. Instead of bowing down to the dust in adoration, under the hand of Him that smites us, and inquiring, with the submission of a dutiful child, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" we weary and perplex ourselves beyond measure; our inflexible heart rebounds under the strokes which are inflicted upon it; and amid those tumultuous emotions, how can we hear that voice which addresses us as dear children, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him?" The same causes, unbelief and distrust, which fill the

soul with trouble in trials, fill it with terror and anguish at the approach of death. O my brethren, were an angel of God to come down this moment into this assembly, and to announce to you, on the part of the Most High, that this day should be your last, that to-morrow your eyes should no more open to behold the light, that your body should be a lifeless corpse, that your soul should have passed into eternity ;—I ask you, what would you feel ? Would you not feel anguish and terror, regret and fear, alternately agitating your breasts ? Probably most of you, in the agony of your heart, answer, Yes. what then must you conclude ? Alas that your faith is still without power, your love cold and lifeless ; that the Divine Saviour whom you profess to love, and whom you come to worship in His house, is not every thing to you ; that the earth has attractions for you more powerful than His love ; That you have not yet “ passed from death unto life,” and that the Spirit of adoption has not yet taught you to cry, “ Abba, Father.”

Ah ! if you were disciples of Christ ; if you had found in Jesus a Saviour for your soul ; if He had revealed to your still fearful heart the awful mystery of life and death ; if you felt that you were redeemed by His blood from all your sins and from the bondage of sin ; if you could see in that eternity, the very name of which affrights you, an eternity of happiness, because an eternity of love, in the presence of Him who hath so loved you ; what would you have to fear ? Does the unhap-

py exile, who has groaned for years in a land of banishment, from whence he has often looked with sighs towards his native shores, where the objects of his tenderest affections dwell, fear to behold the arrival of the moment when he shall be allowed to pass over the distance which separates him from all that is dear to him, and enter once more into the house of a beloved parent, there to press to his heart palpitating with joy, those whose absence has made him shed so many tears? And would you, "strangers and pilgrims" upon earth, fear to cross the barrier which separates time from eternity? Would you fear to behold in a better country that tender Heavenly Father, who so loved you, —that merciful Saviour, so worthy of all your affection, who redeemed you with the price of His blood; who was pleased to become your brother, your friend, your sacrifice? Would you fear to enter into that place where all who had a heart to love the same Divine Saviour shall meet together; and where those who were partakers of the like precious faith, and shared with you in your combats, your hopes and fears, in this world, shall taste with you the delights of the same love throughout eternity? Would you fear to lay aside the chains of corruption which you still painfully drag after you, to be put in full possession of the glorious liberty of the children of God, in that land of everlasting rest, where there is no more pain, nor sorrow, nor separation, nor death, because there is no more sin? No, no! Christ, Christ is my life, and death to me is gain.

The disciples understood not Jesus: He must therefore speak to them with still more patience, still more plainness; he must tell them why He wishes to return into Judea, notwithstanding their fears. "Therefore, said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead!" At these words the heart of the disciples, already dejected, is overwhelmed with sorrow. That word, death, which Jesus pronounced unwillingly; these gloomy ideas of separation, the grave, and dissolution, present themselves to their minds, and fill them with the deepest affliction. Lazarus, whom they loved, the friend of Jesus and their friend, is no more! They shall no more go to receive, under his hospitable roof, the entertainment of his cordial friendship! His house shall no longer be an asylum for them and their Master! They shall no more retire with Jesus to Bethany, to avoid the persecution of His enemies! All these melancholy reflections rush at once upon the mind of the disciples. And you, my friends, who, like the disciples, have seen some beloved Lazarus, some friend or relative, to whom your soul was closely united, die and go down to the grave,—you know with what grief such thoughts have filled your hearts: you know what an immense void, what a solitary desert, such a bereavement has left within you: you know with what eagerness your soul would have followed, into another world, the beloved being whom death had transported thither, when you have felt that involuntary shudder which has crept over you, at the thought of a

separation without return upon earth. Well, then, disciples of Jesus, you who weep over Lazarus, hear your Master, hear the Prince of Life speaking of death, and rejoice with Him, or, at least, take courage: "I am glad," says Jesus, "for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." What a way to give comfort, my brethren! "I am glad!" and that in speaking of the death of one whom He loved! Will not those who, in their trials, look for succour from the miserable comforters of the world, regard such a word of consolation as a bitter and cruel irony? But how often, when some poor mortal, ignorant of God's dealings with him, is weeping and mourning over the afflictive events of this life, which he cannot understand, does Jesus, who watches over His child, whom He desires to save, say with love, "I am glad, for your sake:" while the angels of God, with whom "there is joy" for "one sinner" saved through the fire of trial, repeat, through the wide extent of heaven, the words of Jesus, "I am glad."

"I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." Jesus, indeed, might have been there; He might immediately have returned with His disciples to Bethany, surrounded with them the bed of suffering on which Lazarus lay, and restored him to health, by pronouncing over him one word of His power. But no; this was not enough for the faith of His disciples. Or again, having gone there with them, He might have permitted Laza-

rus to become the prey of death before them; He might have allowed them to witness that scene of grief, and to have the sad consolation of accompanying their friend to the grave, from whence He was going to recall him. But no: Jesus "was glad that He was not there;" He was glad that He had spared those whom He loved these hours of trial and sorrow, and that He had not brought His disciples to the tomb of Lazarus, but to be witnesses of the most striking manifestation of His power and Godhead; to see Lazarus burst, at His command, the bands of the grave, to partake in the triumph of their Master, in the joy and consolation of Mary and Martha; and, in a word, to acquire a stronger faith than they ever had before, in Him who had come from the bosom of the Father, God manifest in the flesh, whom "angels worship."

O happy disciples of so powerful and good a Master,—you who have been the objects of so much love, so much care, so much tenderness, lift up your voice in all ages and in all climes! Come and instruct us, stir up our souls, touch our hearts, teach us also to love such a Saviour, to believe in Him more than we have done hitherto, and to live and die in His love!

"Nevertheless, let us go unto him," adds Jesus. He seems to fear lest, while with a sacred joy He comforts His disciples, He should appear insensible to the afflictions of the family of Bethany. And as He embraces all His people in His loving heart, He urges on the tardy footsteps

of His disciples, too slow for His zeal, saying unto them, "Let us go to him." But how! Lazarus is dead; he has been laid in the sepulchre; why should Jesus and His disciples go to him? But what does it matter? Is there in heaven or in earth, in life or in death, any thing that can separate the believer from the love of Christ? Shall the cold stone which covers the tomb of Lazarus, and separates him from the world of the living, be an obstacle to the burning love of Jesus? No! "In all these things," saith St. Paul, "we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us!"

Meanwhile, Thomas, one of the disciples, a man of a gloomy and melancholy character, and of a mind naturally incredulous, is unable to taste of the consolation which Jesus offers him. It is not without reason that the poet makes the guardian angel of this disciple say of him, "His mind unfolds thought upon thought, until they expand before him, like a shoreless ocean, in which he would have been overwhelmed had not the powerful miracles of the Messiah saved him. He has ceased to wander amid the labyrinths of thought; he has come to Jesus, And yet," adds the angel, "he would still be the object of my lively solicitude, had not God, with a meditative mind, given him also an upright and a virtuous heart."* Lazarus (thought he) has gone down to the grave; our Master returns into Judea, where cruel sufferings, reproach, and death, await Him; after that,

* Klopst: Messiah: Can. iii.

what is life to me? Why should I remain on this earth? What would I do without Lazarus; without my Master? This world would be a desert to me, where I should meet with nothing but the bitterness of separation and the fatigues of warfare. "Let us also go," adds he, turning to his fellow-disciples, "and die with him!"

Strange! In the first part of this discourse I have combated the fear of death, and now, at the close of it I am called to combat the disgust of life! So true it is, that the most opposite evils meet in that inconsistent creature—man. Alas! there is something but too natural to man in these words—this cry of the soul, wrung from it by despondency. But it is the expression of a feeling which God disapproves of, and against which we ought to contend. What! poor mortal, because God hath made thee pass through the furnace of affliction, because He hath broken thy rebellious will, because He hath presented to thy lips a bitter cup, is life at thy disposal? Thou wilt die? Because some being, too dear to thee, and of whom, perhaps, thou hast made an idol, has been taken away from thee, life is become a barren desert to thee! thou wilt die! Because thou hast been subjected to afflictions and privations, because this hope which from day to day has supported thy faith and soothed thy grief, seems to have vanished, despondency has filled thy soul! thou wilt die! Because God appears no longer to answer thy prayers and supplications, thou

thinkest that thou hast nothing now left thee but despair! thou wilt die!

Ah, deceive not yourself! the feeling which influences you has nothing in common with that holy impatience of St. Paul, to behold, face to face, that Saviour for whom he had suffered the loss of all things, which he felt when he cried, "I have a desire to depart, and be with Christ." No: what you feel, amid the evils to which the providence of God exposes you, is a guilty rebellion against His supreme will. Your murmurs, your despondency, proceed from a cowardly unfaithfulness towards Him who has promised that He will not suffer you to be tried beyond what you are able to bear. If you loved the Lord, if His will was dear to you, if your heart submitted to Him with adoration and love, no feeling of this nature could find place in your breast, for you would know by experience that "all things work together for good to them that love God." And if you love Him not, if your soul has not found in Him, as a Saviour, pardon, reconciliation with God, and peace, what do you expect in another life, whither you wish to go? What do you expect in eternity? Why will you hasten, before the time, to the awful scenes of the last day? Why do you wish to appear at the bar of the eternal Judge? Why do you wish to die? Are you ready to appear before the holy God? Are you prepared to give an awful account of all the actions, words, and thoughts of a life defiled by sin?

Go to Christ as a Saviour, and live until He calls you Himself, to appear before Him as your Judge.

And even if you have nothing to fear in eternity, if you know by the testimony of the word of God, and by that of the Holy Spirit in your heart, that Jesus has saved you, that He died for your sins, that His blood has washed away your defilement, that He has reconciled you to God, why would you, by presumptuous wishes, hasten the termination of your period of trial? Why would you lay aside, before your time, the burden of sufferings which has been laid upon you? Why would you anticipate the will of God? Why would you wish to die? Is there nothing more for you to do in this world? Are there about you no more poor to relieve, no more miserable to comfort, no more ignorant to instruct? No; do you say, my situation is such that I am useful to no one, and this afflicts me even more than my own sufferings. I can only groan under the weight of my sin and my unprofitableness. Ah! my beloved brother, have you, then, forgotten that you are in the school of the Spirit of God, who aims at enlarging and purifying the faculties of your soul, in order to render it capable, continually more capable, of enjoying the delights of infinite love, which shall constitute in another world the element of our being? Yes, in edifying those around you, by your resignation, your patience in suffering, your submission to the will of the kindest of fathers, you will enter into the views of God who seeks to accomplish in you that prayer which St.

Paul offered up for his Thessalonian brethren—
“The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” (1 Thess. v. 23.)

That day of Christ, that day appointed by the wisdom and love of our God, shall soon come to each of us, and then, whatever be our character, whatever degree of sanctification and of love we have attained, oh! how shall we be ashamed of our lukewarmness, our want of courage in suffering and in self-denial, our want of zeal in the service of so good a Master, our want of love for so gracious a Saviour.

O, our God, give us more faith, more confidence, more love! Give us grace to employ more faithfully these short moments of trial! May our souls live to praise Thee! to praise Thee in time! to praise Thee in eternity!

MEDITATION VII.

THE FOUR DAYS OF TRIAL.—THE FIRST CONSOLATIONS.

JOHN XI. 17—23.

“Then when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.”

IN our preceding meditation, we left Jesus on His way to Bethany with His disciples, to whom He gives serious and salutary instruction in reference to what He is going to do. The period of trial is about to terminate to Martha and Mary, who for a long time have been walking in a dark path, amid affliction and grief, looking for consolation in vain, and unable to comprehend the conduct of their Divine Friend. He comes to them at length; He comes to speak to them of faith, of consolation, of eternal life. Thus the Evangelist brings us back again to the family of Be-

thany, and he informs us of what had passed there since his Master had received the message from the sisters of Lazarus, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Let us, then, hear our historian; let us follow Jesus to Bethany; and in considering the affliction of the sisters of Lazarus, the consolation which the Jews offer them, and the comfort which Jesus gives them, may we learn to seek peace and happiness where alone they can be found.

When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already lain four days in the grave. We must here suppose that Lazarus died the same day that his sisters sent to Jesus: and as Jesus "abode two days still" in the Perea, which was a day's journey from Bethany, He only arrived the fourth day after the death of Lazarus, who, according to the usage of the Jews in his time, had been committed to the tomb immediately after his death.

He fell asleep in the faith of his fathers. He closed his eyes upon the scenes of this life of sin, in the firm expectation of opening them one day to behold the glorious scenes of eternity. Like Simeon, he could say, in leaving all that was dear to him on earth, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." He had entered the haven where he had cast the anchor of his hope: but, alas! his sisters whom he loved remain after him, and still have to buffet the waves and the storm. St. John does not say any thing of their conflicts or their grief, but our hearts sympathizing with them

can tell us what they felt during those four days of grief and suffering. Their brother, their friend, the companion and support of their earthly existence, has ceased to live. All their affection for him has not been able to snatch him from the cold embrace of death. They have received his last look, his last farewell, his last sigh. There remains to them, of that beloved brother, nothing but a remembrance, a regret, his vacant place in their dwelling. Already his mortal remains have been committed to the grave; already he has become the prey of corruption. Oh! bitter fruits of sin, which hath committed such ravages in the garden of the Lord! An immense void is felt in the abode of Bethany, and in the heart of the two afflicted sisters. The silence of death, interrupted only by their sobs, prevails where lately the sweet effusions of a pure affection were heard. All is changed; domestic happiness has forsaken them, and left them nothing but tears. "A voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is as grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it!"

Brothers and sisters, parents and friends! you who have around you those that are dear to you; love them, but beware that you repose not upon their frail head your hopes of happiness! Love them for heaven, not for earth! Love them for God, not for yourselves! Hear the lesson of this disciple of love, who has preserved to us

the history upon which we are meditating, and who, after many years' experience of life, after having grown old in the exercise of that love which he recommends to us in every page of his writings, inscribes, with a hand enfeebled by years, those solemn words, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols!"

Meanwhile, these four long days have passed away, and Jesus arrives not at Bethany. Jesus, who alone could bring succour to the weeping sisters; Jesus, whose assistance they had besought; Jesus, who never remained deaf to the complaints of any suffering creature: Jesus comes not! What will become of the faith and confidence of the two sisters? What can they expect now? A single word of the Saviour might have put an end to their affliction; they are aware of this; they know His omnipotence. And yet He has given them only an obscure answer which they are no longer able to comprehend: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God!" And their brother has now been four days in the grave, and his body has already fallen to corruption.

O my beloved brethren, you who from a mind naturally incredulous, and a heart easily discouraged, feel nothing but distrust, weakness, and despondency, in such moments of trial, learn from Martha and Mary to know the ways of the Lord, which are often obscure. From Abraham, and from all the children of God who have obtained the crown of victory only after scenes of conflict, learn "to hope against hope!" Though your

heart be destitute of confidence, and your soul like a dry and barren wilderness; though your faith be not triumphant, and your hopes be no longer able to realize a better country; though the word of God no longer speak to your heart, and prayer be no longer a source of living water to you, while at the same time you know that there is no other remedy for your evils; though all your remaining strength be scarcely sufficient to make you to feel your corruptions and mourn over them; yea, though your eye see nothing around you but a dark abyss—oh! tremble not at the sight of that abyss;—there, even there, shall there arise in your heart a faith which shall not be moved; there the bonds of your communion with God shall become so strong that nothing shall be able to break them. Jesus is there; He comes. It is His powerful hand that has placed you in that abyss; and when you shall have learned there to renounce all trust in yourselves, in your own strength, and in your own merits, and to expect all from Him, all from His faithfulness, all from His love, that same powerful hand will draw you out and place you upon the lofty heights of faith, from whence you shall praise Him for your sufferings which have taught you so many profitable lessons. The sisters of Lazarus shall learn the language of praise and thanksgiving, after they have been taught to humble themselves under the hand of the Lord.

Meanwhile, Martha and Mary, during these four days of severe trial, wanted not what the world calls consolation. “Now Bethany was

nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off," that is, about two miles. "And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother." It was the custom among the Jews, as soon as death had brought mourning into any family, for the friends of the afflicted parties to come in great numbers and weep with those whom death had just deprived of a relative. This, indeed, would have been a beautiful custom had it been practised in the spirit of Him who "comforts them that mourn;" but, alas! with man all things, even mourning and tears, degenerate into lifeless, I had almost said hypocritical forms. The Jews, on such occasions, being assembled at the house of the deceased, instead of seeking, in meditation and prayer, that Spirit which is called the *Comforter*, made the air resound with mournful cries and deafening lamentations. And if the person whom they mourned had been an object of peculiar affection to his family, if his death was a painful bereavement to them, their lamentations assumed a character of frantic violence. They tore their hair, rent their garments, covered themselves with sackcloth and ashes, uttering at the same time, piercing cries, which were redoubled in proportion as they saw the relatives of the dead giving way to their grief. In some cases, also, to increase the sadness of these gloomy solemnities, women, whose trade it was to weep and make lamentations over the dead, were paid to offer this strange kind of consolation to the relatives or connexions of the de-

parted! And, moreover, these melancholy ceremonies were sometimes accompanied with the sound of musical instruments, as we find it described in St. Matthew's Gospel, where he relates the restoration of Jairus's daughter to life. "When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place."

This, indeed, is not the manner in which the people of the world, in our day, comfort their afflicted friends. But, alas! how many "miserable comforters" are there to whom the Lord would still say, with indignation or compassion, "Give place." What do we hear in a house of mourning where the Lord is not known and invoked? The friends of the afflicted come to pay what is called a visit of condolence. They enter into a long detail of the virtues of him who is no more; they repeat to his blinded relatives that he is happy, whatever may have been his principles, his faith, his hopes; that he deserved to go to heaven; or if it be admitted that he had some *failings*, they trust in a vague idea of the goodness of God, behind which His holiness and justice disappear. And further, as he brought no stain upon his family, they have reason to be proud of his memory. In fine, it is added, "We must submit to what we cannot alter; it is the law of nature; we are all mortal; there is a better world; a future life." Some other common-place remarks of the same nature we may perhaps hear, accompanied with

a few tears; and such, poor world, are thy comforters and thy consolations!

Ah! "give place," "miserable comforters!" or if your soul be really touched with my grief, speak to me truly of the designs of God, in afflicting me; tell me to humble myself under the hand of Him that smites me, to make me wise unto salvation; speak to me of my Saviour; of Him who died to destroy the empire of death and the cause of death—sin; speak to me of the sacrifice which He offered up to obtain pardon and grace for me; speak to me of the invitations of His love, and of the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; speak to me of faith, of hope, and of love; give me one single promise of Him who has vanquished death and the grave; and if I am so happy as to be able to apply that promise to myself, or to him whose departure I mourn, I shall be comforted; and if I still shed tears over his tomb, it shall not be "as those who have no hope." But if you cannot speak to me of these things, there still remains one powerful means by which you can give vent to the compassion with which your soul is touched on my behalf; pray for your friend! Ask of God to sanctify to my immortal soul the trial which He sends me; ask of Him that my head may bow in adoration, and that my heart may bend in love, under those strokes of His severity which are but the strokes of His grace. Ask of God to apply to my heart, by the power of His Spirit, the unspeakable consolation of His word; and if you remain thus in silent

meditation with me, I shall feel that even your silence speaks to my heart and comforts me. The Christian alone, whatever be his degree of knowledge and of moral culture in other respects, finds in his principles and in his feelings this tender delicacy which reaches the heart, this divine art of consoling by a word, a look, even by silence.

Meanwhile, Jesus approaches Bethany; let us follow Him, and see the powerful influence even of His presence upon the afflicted sisters. "Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him; but Mary sat still in the house." Here again we see the two sisters acting in conformity with their respective dispositions. Both ardently desire the consolations of their Heavenly Friend; but while the active Martha yields without delay to the first and lively impulse of her heart, and flies to meet Jesus; Mary, though feeling even more deeply the need of His presence, appears to have been too much oppressed by the grief of her affectionate soul. She seems as if she wished rather to wait till Jesus Himself should come, and remove, with His compassionate hand, the burden of grief, the heavy cross which weighed down her heart. It requires not a very extensive observation of mankind to discover those shades of feeling and of conduct in the religious character, even of those who partake of the same faith, the same love, and the same hopes. And every particular in these details, so true, so minutely characteristic, so evidently given by an eye-witness under the guidance of that

Spirit which searches the heart, would furnish, if it were necessary, a very powerful proof of the truth of the great historical fact upon which we are meditating.

But while Mary awaits, in the silence of profound grief, the consolations of her Saviour, let us follow her sister, who already flies to meet Him, as the hart, panting for the water-brook, rushes toward the running stream. She is at His feet, she prostrates herself before Him who alone can pour into the wounds of her heart a healing balm. She waited for Him for four days; but now she sees Him; "Jesus is come!" No sooner have these words reached her ears, no sooner is Jesus present to her view, than her faith, almost extinct before, is rekindled; a sweet ray of hope pierces the gloomy cloud which enveloped her heart. All the Jews who had come from Jerusalem to comfort her after their own fashion, are nothing to her any longer; she leaves them all, to go and throw herself at the feet of Jesus, and there, yielding to the first feeling of her heart, which is to lay down before the feet of her Heavenly Comforter the burden of her affliction, sure that He will sympathize with her as the best of friends, she exclaims, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died."

There is doubtless much grief expressed in these words; there is even something of despondency; she can look only to the past, to the tomb of a beloved brother; she seems to think that Jesus has come too late to succour her; that

now there is nothing left to her but tears. Yet there remains in her a remnant of faith, which seems to revive, to gather strength, and grow in the presence of Jesus. She still believes that, had He been there, He could have recovered her brother, put an end to his disease, and with one word wrested from death its prey, and from the grave its victory. And as the flower, beaten down and bruised by the storm, insensibly rises under the genial beams of the sun, this germ of faith, which remains in the heart of Martha, develops itself, and grows beneath the compassionate and majestic glance of the Saviour. She has before her that "High Priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." Her faith rises higher every moment, and with every look of the Redeemer; her soul opens again to hope; her heart is no longer shut up by grief; the darkness of her mind disperses; her soul, already penetrated with an unspeakable consolation, rises above the evils which lately overwhelmed her; she feels that Jesus, who has come to her aid, will find, in His infinite love and boundless power all the blessing which she implores. "But I know," says she, with confidence "that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee."

O, triumph of faith! O, the happiness of my Saviour's presence! consolation and peace are indeed near unto that afflicted soul which thus opens to confidence! From faith to peace and happiness there is but one step, or rather, the peace of

God which "passeth all understanding," and which is better than life, is the first and sweetest fruit of faith.

O, disciples of Jesus, you who know that the Saviour is always near you, you who have never had occasion to exclaim with grief, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here," because you know that He is always present, always ready to hear you, always ready to bless you, why is it that your faith so often remains below that of Martha? Why is it that you cannot, like her, throw yourselves with confidence upon the power and love of Jesus? Why is it that you are so often cast down in your trials? Why is it that your soul, overwhelmed by your infirmities, languishes in the depths of despondency and affliction? Why is it that it cannot soar into the regions of faith, hope, peace, and joy? Ah! comes it not from this, that you believe not, that you have not a simple, childlike faith? Distrust and doubt shut up your heart, close your soul against the unspeakable consolations of your God, and render you deaf to the voice of His grace, the voice of His promises, and the voice of His love. Instead of abandoning, like Martha, your miserable comforters, to go to Jesus, whose presence has ever been, and eternally shall be, the "fulness of joy," you ask of men consolations which they cannot give you. Instead of drawing refreshment for your soul, which thirsteth after peace, from the fountain of living waters, you "hew out unto yourselves," in the wilderness, "cisterns, broken cisterns," which you well know

“hold no water,” or else you look only to yourselves, to your sufferings, and to your infirmities. Instead of taking God at His word, presenting His promises to Him as undeniable titles, and telling Him, with a full assurance of faith, as Martha did to Jesus, “Even now,” (yes, even *now*, when all seems lost to me, when all the objects of my dearest hopes seem to have disappeared for ever,) “even now, I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.” Instead of acting thus, is it not true that you open your Bible with distrust, and with a secret repugnance, as if it were not the word of God; as if the invitations of that word were not addressed to you, yea, to you, who read it with so much indifference? And if, afterwards, you fall down on your knees to pray, under a sense of your infirmities, your grief, your sins, and defilement, is it not true that you address Jesus as if He were no longer “able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him?” as if He had not given you “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved for you in heaven?” as if “His arm were shortened, that He could not save,” or His love were not great enough to do so? O fools! why are we “so slow of heart to believe” all that the word of our God declares? Do we not know, do we not all know, as well as Martha, better than Martha, that whatsoever our powerful Intercessor shall ask of God, God will give it Him? And can we not answer that invitation of His love, “Let him that is athirst come; whosoever will, let him come, and take of

the water of life freely!" O, it is faith that is wanting upon earth. "Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief!"

Thus did the presence of Jesus raise up the sister of Lazarus out of the depths of grief and despondency, and restore to her heart faith, confidence, and peace. Thus Jesus hastens to answer that faith, and that in such a way as to exercise and to increase it at the same time that He attaches to it the most precious promise, exceeding all that Martha could expect or hope for; so true is it that "He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." Martha does not wait for the answer of Jesus. She has been deprived of a tenderly beloved brother; her suffering soul seems to demand nothing more of the Lord than the strength and submission necessary to support so great a trial; or rather, she makes no demand of Him at all; she casts herself, without reserve or condition, upon His compassion and love: "I know that whatsoever Thou askest of God, God will give it Thee." And Jesus promises her a happiness to which she dared not to aspire in this world, "Thy brother shall rise again!" Ah! it is not, then, by words that Jesus comforts the afflicted soul, and that He answers faith; no, it is by a promise which should make faith rise above all its weakness; for a promise of "Him who cannot lie," is always equivalent to a gift. "Thy brother shall rise again!" When? how? by whom? are questions which the faith of Martha had to answer. And it is thus

that Jesus, in answering our faith, finds, as we have already remarked, a means to exercise, elevate, and strengthen it. What are times and seasons to Jesus?

Cannot He, at whose voice the dead shall one day break the bands of the grave, if He see fit, bring Lazarus out of the tomb, and restore him to his sisters? "Thy brother shall rise again!" Let this be enough for thy faith; trust in My power: thou shalt no longer weep for being separated from one so necessary to thy affection and thy happiness. And, indeed, it was not merely for the short moment of an earthly existence that their souls were united. No; the bonds which unite the friends of Jesus shall not be broken, even by death itself. That bond is eternal; that bond which had been their consolation, during their earthly pilgrimage, shall still powerfully contribute to their happiness in that heavenly country where there is no more death, nor separation, nor mourning, nor tears. But yet it is not to that day, which shall fill up the measure of the purest felicity of which immortal creatures are capable, that Jesus refers, in answer to the faith of Martha. We shall soon see Him come forward as the Prince of Life, to the tomb of Lazarus, and put forth His almighty power, to fulfil more quickly the promise which He had just made to Martha. And though the faith of the sister of Lazarus does not yet rise to the height of that promise, Jesus says not to her, as He said on another occasion, "According to thy faith be it unto thee!" but He

does for her infinitely "more than she can ask or think."

Oh! let, then, these promises of the Lord, which are all *yea* and *amen* in Him, be our eternal refuge from the shipwreck to which we are continually exposed, from the ever-varying winds of our unbelief, our weakness, our passions, and our corruptions! His promises, my beloved brethren, my fellow-voyagers on the stormy sea of our terrestrial life, His promises alone will discover to our view that Rock of Ages, from whose summit we shall be able to contemplate, without fear, the billows and the tempest. His promises alone will be to us what the star which directs him to the port is to the mariner wandering over the surface of the deep. His promises alone will bring within the reach of our observation, "that new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Having, then, taken in our hands and in our hearts, His promises, let us go to Him, and let us present them before Him as our only plea; let us, "in full assurance of faith," ask of Him light, strength, and life for our souls. Then, like the sisters of Lazarus, we shall find the sweetest consolation, even at the grave of those whom we have most fondly loved upon earth. Then these mournful scenes of separation and of grief shall lose their bitterness, and disappear, so that we shall be able to discern scenes of eternal bliss, which we already possess, by a "hope that maketh not ashamed," because it is based upon the promise of God.

Are there among those whom I address on the

part of God, any who have suffered in their own person, from sickness or pain, or have seen those who were dear to them enduring like afflictions? let them not hesitate; let them approach with confidence the throne of grace, and say, like the sisters of Lazarus, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick!" But this is Thy promise; "Thou woudest and Thy hands make whole; Thou killest and Thou makest alive!" "I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Are there among you any who are exposed to privations, to poverty, to indigence, and who have the pain of seeing your children, beings whom you love, consumed by want which you are unable to satisfy? hasten to bring to Jesus the titles to His compassion which He has given you—"He who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field, will He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And "even now I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Is there among those whom I address any one whose soul is troubled by a sense of sin, or by painful doubts as to his salvation? let him hasten to present to the love of a redeeming God, his request and his claim, "Thou hast borne my sins in Thine own body on the tree." "Thou hast come to seek and to save that which was lost." I have heard Thy voice: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." "Though your

sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." " Like as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." " When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up." " And even now I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee."

And if we be called to the sweet but difficult task of offering consolation to our brethren, let us beware of presenting to them the words of man, and earthly considerations ; let us approach them with a purely christian affection ; let us make them feel that we suffer with them, that we share their griefs, that we are disposed to listen to their complaints, that we understand them ; and when a deep and sweet sympathy shall have opened their heart to us, oh ! let the word of God be the healing balm which we pour into their wounds. They will believe and feel that word which so powerfully speaks to their hearts, and we shall soon see their soul, like that of Martha, coming out of the abyss into which it had been plunged, and rising triumphantly above doubts, above sin, above suffering, and all the miseries of life. And we shall see renewed in them the experience of the Psalmist, who approaches God with this cry of anguish ; " Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord ;" and terminates it with this song of triumph, " Let Israel hope in the Lord : for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is

plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." (Ps. cxxx. 1, 7, 8.)

O happy the man whose hope and consolation is in Jesus! Happy the man, who, in the midst of all the miseries with which our life abounds, can look by faith to his Saviour, and repeat, with full and unreserved confidence, the triumphant song of one of God's servants who preceded him in his warfare: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise up against me, in this will I be confident!" (Ps. xxvii. 1, 3.)

My beloved brethren! if in the time of trial you find in the bottom of your heart neither this faith, nor this confidence, nor this peace, remember that they are the gift of God. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

MEDITATION VIII.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

JOHN XI. 24—28.

“Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”

It is still the touching and instructive conversation of Jesus and Martha, that is to engage our attention. We have seen the faith of this sister of Lazarus rise by degrees, until she is able to say, with full and unreserved confidence, “I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.” Nevertheless her confidence in the goodness and power of Jesus does not, at this moment, at least, rise so high as to enable her to believe that He can, or that He will, work in her favour the most stupendous of miracles, and restore her brother to life. When Jesus addresses to Martha this promise, so calculated to inspire

her with the highest expectations, "Thy brother shall rise again," we find her answering Him according to an article of faith in the Jewish religion, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." So true it is that a strong confidence in the goodness of the Saviour, and even a strong faith, may leave us below what the Saviour is willing to do for us. When Jesus spoke to her of the resurrection of her brother, Martha thought only of the day, when "the sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them!" She believed in the resurrection of the last day, before Jesus came to comfort her; but how little power has such a faith to raise her soul above grief, despondency, and doubt! An orthodox belief will avail the soul nothing in the day of trial, unless it be endued with a principle of vitality by the presence of Jesus, and by His life-giving Spirit. Alas! how many there are who can write upon the tomb of one whom they have loved, that "He waiteth for the resurrection at the last day," who, notwithstanding, "mourn as those that have no hope!"

Jesus Himself, with His love and with His promise, must be the life and soul of our religious opinions, if we would have them really exert an influence upon our heart. Jesus must say to our soul, which, alas! is continually seeking out of Him that which is to be found in Him alone, "I am the resurrection and the life." Not only is it He who at the last day shall with His irresist-

tible voice call forth the dead from their graves; but *He* is the Prince of Life; He possesses life in Himself, and He communicates life to whom He will. If, then, we have Jesus, we *have* life; let us not look for it as something future, nor hope to obtain it from any other source. He not only shows us the way; teaches us the truth; and promises life; but, He says, "*I am* the way, the truth, and the life." He not only enlightens them that are in darkness, but He is the light of the world. He not only justifies sinners that come to Him, but He is the "Lord our righteousness." So that if we be united to Him by faith, the blessings of the Gospel are not merely promises to us; we possess them: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Let us meditate for a moment on these words; let us approach, like Martha, into the presence of Jesus; and may He shed abroad in our souls that life which is essentially in Him!

"I am the resurrection and the life." What a declaration! Who could pronounce it? Surely not a mere mortal man, one who, so to speak, treads continually on the verge of the grave: not that miserable worm, whom a few days see come into existence and die; that being who, at his birth, carries with him into the world the germ of disease, which eventually brings him down into the dust; that being who resembles the perishing grass, which in the morning flourishes, and in the

evening is cut down and cast into the oven. No; He who, on the verge of a tomb, proclaims Himself the resurrection; He who, in the abode of death, ascribes to Himself the principle of life; He is not merely a mortal man; He is God; and if it were otherwise, every tomb, every coffin would tell Him to His face, that His words were nothing but presumption. Yes, when I hear such words issue from the mouth of the Son of Mary, the Son of the carpenter, I say to myself, either He is God, or He is the most presumptuous of men, and the most daring of impostors! But far be from us this blasphemy! Let us hear the testimonies which the Word of Truth bears to Him who speaks to the sisters of Lazarus. He it is "by whom God made the worlds," who is "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." He it is that "upholdeth all things by the word of His power," to whom the Father "Hath given to have life in Himself, even as the Father hath life in Himself." He is that eternal Word, who "was in the beginning with God, and who was God," by whom all things were made, whom "angels worship," "over all, God blessed for evermore." Such are, among a thousand others, the testimonies of the word of that God who cannot lie: such is the truth which serves as the basis of the whole edifice of the Gospel,—a truth often despised, often misunderstood, often rejected, but which through eighteen centuries of impotent contradiction, has come down even to us triumphant, as it was upon the

tomb of Lazarus, and constitutes the consolation and the joy of all the faithful; a truth which Jesus proposes to Martha as most calculated to raise her soul above grief, above death and the grave, above all the ravages of sin: "I am the resurrection and the life."

Consoling words to him who loves the Lord! Words which promise to fallen man the restoration of his primitive prerogatives! Words which enable him to descry the dawn of a day of happiness, like that which illumined his state of innocence before disobedience and sin had brought to his ear the fatal word *death*, and placed before his eyes the heart-rending spectacle of all the miseries which form its gloomy train! Ah! since He, who came to repair the disorder of sin, is the resurrection and the life, shall we not find in Him all that our soul has need of in its misery?

Yes, *the life*, the enjoyment of life, the eternal continuation of life. Such is the first, the most pressing want of our soul, that want which is most deeply engraven upon it, that want which no creature can satisfy. We love every thing that breathes life, every thing that produces it, every thing that supports it; we shrink from every thing that impedes, weakens or destroys it. Hence that sweet emotion which fills our whole being at the sight of those first fine days of spring which are to mourning nature "the resurrection and the life!" Hence that feeling of melancholy which pervades us when we behold the life of creation languishing at the approach of winter; hence that

sweet joy which we experience when we contemplate the infant whose every movement breathes animation and life ; hence the painful impression that is made upon us by the view of decrepit and infirm old age, in which the sources of life are exhausted, and to which there remains but a last feeble struggle against the stroke of death. But these impressions of pleasure and pain which are produced in us by the vicissitudes of life and death in the physical world, are feeble in comparison of those which we feel when we contemplate the immortal soul, to which life and death, far from implying the commencement and termination of a limited existence, are but the characteristics of a state of eternal happiness or of eternal misery.

Man in his state of innocence enjoyed the fullness of life. To him life was happiness, because it was a sweet communion, a holy intercourse with his God. He drew life from the very bosom of his Creator ; he inhaled life with the delicious atmosphere of Eden. Love was the element of that primitive life ; no other feeling had as yet found place in the pure soul of man ; to him to love was to live. But, alas ! when I look around me and within me ; when I contemplate what is now called life, what a difference do I see between man's primitive and his present state. What a fall ;—sin, rebellion, and pollution have broken the sweet bond which united the creature to the Creator, and have called for the execution of that law of eternal justice, " The day thou disobeyest thy God thou shalt surely die." And from that time

the soul, separated from God, because nothing that is defiled can dwell in His presence, has lost the happiness of living the life of heaven; from that time life has become corrupted and withered in its very principle, like a young tree whose root has been gnawed by a deadly worm; from that time the sensual and carnal part of man has acquired the ascendancy over his whole nature; to him to live, is no longer to enjoy the presence of God; to live, in the new sense which is attached to that word, is to vegetate for a few days, fulfilling his own depraved will, and satisfying his own desires and passions; to live, is to drain, even to the dregs, the ever bitter cup of his pleasures and of his selfishness; to live is to enjoy for a few moments the advantages of his fortune, of his honours, of his learning. From that time, according to the melancholy but faithful description of St. Paul, his understanding has been darkened; he is alienated from the life of God, because of the "blindness of his heart;" "he has a name to live, but is dead," "dead in trespasses and sins." From that time, the poisonous root of sin, which has defiled his soul, has also become a source of pain, infirmity, disease, and death to his body. From that time, "alas! every hour opens a grave and makes a tear to flow."* From that time, a day has not passed that some Martha, some Mary, has not gone to weep over the grave of a brother, a husband, a father, a friend. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so

* Chateaubriand.

death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.)

Oh! unhappy beings! who shall deliver us from the body of this death? Who shall restore to us that life of innocence which of ourselves we cannot recover? Who, O my God, shall give back to us that life of the soul, that life of Thy love? Hast Thou for ever cast us away from Thy presence for our iniquities? Shall we, captives in this Babylon of misery, for ever hang our silent harps upon the willows by the water side? Shall we never take them down again to sing the songs of Zion, to celebrate Thy love, to chaunt the anthem of the skies?

O my beloved brethren! my companions in affliction! listen! there is a remedy for your woes! Listen to Jesus speaking from the verge of a tomb, "I am the resurrection and the life!" And imagine not that He would limit the meaning of these divine words to this: "I have power, by a single word, to give warmth and life to the cold limbs of thy brother; power to call him forth from this gloomy abode, and to restore him to thine embrace." Ah! it is not an existence prolonged for a few moments in this world of misery that Jesus calls *life*. No: what He calls by this name is *real life*, the life of the soul, that heavenly life and immortality which He has brought to light by the Gospel; the life of a new love to God; life over which death has no dominion; life which begins even here in a soul "born again," and, vanquishing time and the grave, commences at the foot of

Jehovah's throne, the immeasurable periods of eternity, the life which St. John calls "eternal life," embracing in this word a whole universe of happiness, of which a finite and sinful being can scarce form the feeblest conception. Such is the sense in which Jesus is life to those that love Him. He is their life, for he has destroyed the cause of death, vanquished "him that had the power of death," and "broken down the middle wall of partition," which separated us for ever from God. He has taken upon Him the sentence of death pronounced in Eden and on Sinai; and having nailed to the cross that fatal warrant which would have attained every soul of Adam's sinful race, He publishes the glad tidings of a free deliverance; He proclaims pardon and life; "he that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life;" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life; he shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "And I give unto them eternal life," saith He, speaking of His sheep, "and they shall never perish." "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

But doubtless it will be asked, how shall we become partakers of this new life? By what means does Jesus communicate to our souls, which, according to His word, are "dead in trespasses and sins?" Jesus answers in our text, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Thus He tells us twice; we

must believe in Him; believe that He is our Saviour; believe with a full assurance of faith, founded upon His eternal love and upon the sure testimony of His word, that He has purchased life for us, that He has paid our ransom, that He has saved us, that He will receive us notwithstanding all our sins; believe that He has given us "power to become the sons of God," that is, the right to be reinstated in the possession of all the privileges of which sin hath deprived us, and finally of being presented before God His Father with the redeemed of every nation, language, and tribe, whom He hath purchased by His blood.

This faith,—which is the gift of God, which Jesus requires of us in every page of His word, and which in our text He demands of all those to whom He would become the resurrection and the life,—far from remaining idle and inoperative in the soul in which it dwells, becomes, on the contrary, the powerful and influential principle of a new life. It is the sap which carries life into all the branches of the renewed tree, and causes it to produce, to the joy of its possessor, leaves, and blossoms, and fruit. Men of the world, moralists, teachers, philosophers, economists, seek if you will elsewhere, a principle of moral regeneration for nations or individuals. The fruitlessness of your efforts will compel you to return to Him who alone is the resurrection and the life, and to the means which He prescribes—the only effectual means—*faith*; faith which, by the effectual operation of the Spirit, alone can make the soul rise to the life

of heaven, disengage it from the shackles of corruption, break the chains of its ignominious bondage, and animate it with the spirit of adoption, whereby soaring, like the Apostle, with the glorious liberty of the children of God, it can joyfully repeat, "We have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;" *faith*, which, showing us in the Redeemer a love that is higher than heaven, deeper than hell, breaks the hardness of our heart, removes its icy coldness, eradicates its selfishness; *faith*, which alone renews the heart, fills it with a love altogether new, an energy and devotedness hitherto unknown, and leads the soul to love above all things Him "who first loved us;" *faith*, which alone produces in an immortal soul the germ of a new life that shall never perish, but, victorious over time and death, shall arrive in all the glory of its strength in the element of eternal love, there to develop its powers, without limits, in Him in whose presence there is "fulness of joy." Such are the means which Jesus proposes to us, and by which He would become to us "the resurrection and the life."

Having thus the express declaration of Jesus, and the experience of His disciples in all ages, how is it possible for those who know their own hearts, and have found in the Saviour new life for their souls, to be arrested for a moment in their progress towards the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, by the mis-

erable objections which ignorance and self-righteousness advance against this great and only means (in the hands of the Spirit) of regeneration, holiness, and salvation? The man who feels in himself the sacred flame of a devotedness altogether new, and of a love which he has only known since he believed, may indeed be told that this doctrine of faith weakens the motives to good works; but he will answer, Will you tell me, then, that the tree will remain barren, or that it will produce nothing but bitter fruit, because it has been grafted? That the spring will produce foul water, because it has been purified? The word *faith* signifies *confidence*, and confidence, we know, is the basis of affection and of friendship. Oh! which is most worthy of God—to serve Him from the affection of a child, who loves his father tenderly, or from the mean and selfish motive of the mercenary, who looks only to the reward, or from the servile fear of the slave, who has nothing in view but exemption from punishment?

Faith, uniting the soul to God, passes over the space which separates the finite from the infinite, the “things which are only temporal” from those “which are eternal.” It is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;” it seizes, beforehand, those things which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the art of man conceived;” it enjoys heaven upon earth; and though still in time, it lives in eternity. Hence what need we care for the changes which our mor-

tal nature must undergo? Death is our deliverance, the tomb a passage to eternal life: "Who-soever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." I love to repeat it, that it was at a tomb that Jesus pronounced these words; it was to the sister of Lazarus who had lain four days in the grave that He gave this consolation. No; they are not dead who are gone before us into a better country. No; they whom you have loved in the Lord in this world shall never die. The principle of life which faith implants in their soul is as far above all that is mortal as heaven is above earth. Is it death to lay aside this frail earthly tabernacle; the source of so many pains, so many sufferings, so many sins? Is it death to be delivered from evil, and from all the miseries which are the fruits of sin? No; that which lives in us by the grace of God, through faith, SHALL NEVER DIE. No; it is not death, for faith to be changed into sight, for hope to be superseded by reality, and for love fully to possess and to enjoy its object. It is not death, to see in a copious flood of light and truth which in this world we seek amid so many errors, and so much ignorance and darkness. It is not death, to be satisfied with that righteousness, that holiness which our soul thirsteth after here below in the midst of corruption. It is not death, to be put in possession of that peace which we seek here below in the midst of all our disappointments, all our sorrows, all our tears. It is not death, to see face to face that Divine Redeemer whom here we loved though we saw Him

not, and whom our soul often longed after as the bride longs for the presence of him whom her soul loveth. No; it is not death, to possess eternal life! "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

This faith has produced at all times and in all ages the same life and the same hopes. David beholds a beloved child seized with a malady which threatens to tear him from his affection; he puts on sackcloth and lies upon the earth in sign of his deep affliction; he refuses either to eat or to drink. "And it came to pass," the sacred historian goes on to tell us, that "on the seventh day the child died." The servants of David fear to tell him that the child is dead; for say they, "Behold, while the child was yet alive we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice; how will he then vex himself if we tell him that the child is dead?" "But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead. Then David rose from the earth, and washed and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped." His servants, astonished at his conduct, say unto him, "What, then, is this; thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread? And David answered, while the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, who can tell whether God will be gracious unto me, that the child may live? But now that he is dead, wherefore should I fast?"

I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." (2 Sam. xii. 18—23.) Touching resignation! glorious hope! sweet fruits of faith! "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

Ye sisters of Lazarus, of all times and all places, who weep for the ravages which death has made in your affections, or dread it for yourselves, come to the fountain of living waters, come and draw from the source of true consolation; come and quench that thirst for immortality, which consumes you and makes you mourn over the frightful instability of every thing human and mortal; come to Christ; come and hear His divine voice; out of His mouth flow consolation, hope, and life. What! saith He unto you as He did unto David, to Martha, and to Mary; what! thou weepest for the death of some dear object of your affection! But cease to call that death which is only a birth unto a new life; cease to mourn for the happiness of him who is gone before thee! "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me shall never die." "All that are in their graves shall hear My voice." Those eyes which you once saw closed to the light of heaven, shall open again, full of glory, on the day of eternal meeting; those lips upon which you once saw the smile of affection playing continually, but which you have beheld blanched with the paleness of death, shall be reanimated, to commence with you, pure from all defilement, the new song of eternal deliverance. That hand which, in pressing your hand for the last time, fell cold and life-

less, shall be lifted up to the throne of God, with your's and with those of all the royal priesthood, to adore Him for ever and ever. "They shall not return to us, but we shall go to them." "Jesus is the resurrection and the life!" "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

"Believest thou this?" saith Jesus to the sister of Lazarus, with an accent of the tenderest love, and desiring to draw forth from her a confession which would evince that she had in her heart this principle of eternal life. If thou believest this, He seems to say, thou shalt soon find in that faith a healing balm for thy deep affliction; thy tears shall be changed into thanksgivings; the darkness which envelops thy soul shall be dissipated by that bright light; the pain of separation, so agonizing to the unbeliever, to him who has not a living faith, shall be alleviated by the assured hope of an eternal reunion.

I also, on the part of God, ask you, O immortal beings who hear me! believe ye this? Is Jesus to you the resurrection and the life? Can you joyfully apply to yourselves these words of eternal truth, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die?" When you contemplate as at hand, the grave which shall soon open to receive you, and into which all that is mortal in you shall soon descend, can you with confidence look beyond it, to that eternity which is the

object of the wishes and hopes of the redeemed of Jesus?

Oh! may you, may we all be enabled to answer with the confidence of Martha, "Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, which should come into the world,"—come from heaven to bring down the truth and life to earth. Error proceeds from earth; falsehood comes from hell; but Thou, Lord, art come from the bosom of the Father, to reveal Him to us; Thy word is truth. I have not seen God; I have not, like Martha, seen Jesus. I see man die and descend into the grave; none of the blessed, none of the reprobate have ever come to me, to bear witness to the truth of the word of my Saviour; and nevertheless I believe; "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world." I see an unbelieving world counting my faith folly, and my hope a mere delusion, which they ridicule; and yet, O my Saviour, "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world." I see a world that lieth in wickedness delivering themselves up to sin and corruption, as if Thou hadst not died for sin, as if there were neither death, nor judgment, nor resurrection, nor life; but though the whole world were to rise up against the word of truth, and against the holiness of Thy law, and though they were to "kill thy prophets, and throw down Thine altars," yet, O my Saviour, would I believe that "Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should

come into the world," I would believe that Thou art to my soul, "the resurrection and the life!"

O Redeemer, since this faith in Thy salvation is a free gift of Thy grace, condescend to grant it to us all, while there is yet time! Make all these immortal beings feel the folly of seeking happiness in that which must become the prey of death, instead of going to Thee, who art the resurrection and the life! Above all, Lord, when Thou smitest them with the rod of affliction, when some painful event, some unexpected death, some heart-rending separation takes place, and brings trouble into their hearts, oh! then, let them hear Thy voice of love issuing from beneath the ruins of that superstructure of false happiness which they had erected far from Thee, and crying unto them with power, "believest thou this?" Believest thou that I alone am the resurrection and the life; believest thou that without Me there is nothing but grief, doubt, vexation of spirit, and eternal death? O, Jesus, may every thing in this life fade away and disappear before the happiness of loving Thee! To Thee this heart belongs; may it beat for Thee alone! and when it has but one last breath to breathe into Thy bosom, may that breath bear to the foot of Thine eternal throne this cry of hope, "Christ, Christ is my life; death is gain to me! Amen, Lord Jesus, Amen."

MEDITATION IX.

JESUS WEPT.

JOHN XI. 28—36.

“ And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, the Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him !”

THE nearer the history which we are considering approaches to its conclusion, the more lively and touching is the interest which it excites. Every step in this great transaction is so sublime, so beautiful, so much above the ordinary course of human affairs, that we cannot but anticipate a conclusion in unison with so much grandeur. And what may we not expect from an action of which Jesus is the soul and the author. He is

represented to us with a majesty altogether divine in the foreground of that historical picture which is exhibited to our view. He appears in the midst of the surrounding company like a sun communicating to the worlds around it that lustre with which they shine to our eyes. Lazarus, Martha, Mary, Thomas, and the other disciples, all look upon Jesus, all direct to Jesus their thoughts, their affections, their prayers, their tears; all partake of His light, His grace, His consolations. And if some of His expressions, if some of His actions have hitherto appeared to us obscure or mysterious, we cannot doubt but that a word of His power, and of His love, will soon dissipate all those clouds, throw torrents of light upon these obscure points of His conduct, and command our adoration and surprise.

But before our historian proceeds to this part of his narrative, he calls us once more to meditate upon the tomb of Lazarus. Before he shows us his Master displaying the power of God the Creator, by whom all things were made, he wishes us once more to trace the emotions of His generous and compassionate heart, until he comes to that part of the conduct of Jesus which speaks more than volumes, and which ought to draw from us tears of tenderness and of gratitude: "*Jesus wept.*"

Martha, Mary, and Jesus are now going successively to draw our attention. Martha had felt her faith and her hopes revive in the presence of Him who is called the "Resurrection and the Life." "Yea, Lord," she had said, "I believe

that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world." I see in Thee the Messiah promised to Israel, the Deliverer, the Expectation of ages, the Desire of all nations; Him, whom all those who, like Simeon and Anna, waited for the consolation and deliverance of Israel, have longed after with the most ardent desire. And as soon as Martha recognizes in Jesus her Saviour, she also sees in Him her Almighty Comforter. Her tears cease to flow; with faith come back confidence and peace, and she experiences the truth of that promise of Jesus which He has connected with a gracious invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

But Martha cannot enjoy these sweet and precious consolations alone. She has not forgotten that her sister who "sat still in the house" is plunged in the deepest distress; she leaves Jesus for a moment and flies to Mary to acquaint her with the good news—the arrival of their celestial Friend. "She went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Mary had shared in her sister's grief; Martha now wishes to make her a sharer in her joy; the two sisters had wept together, it is but natural that their affectionate hearts should now rejoice together; they had drunk together the cup of grief, it is right that they should now taste together the sweets of divine consolation. How beautiful, how noble, and delightful is that

union of christian hearts, in which all is in common—joy and grief, pleasure and pain, hopes and fears. How much superior to all the relations of the world is that association of two beings who would feel a delicate scruple to enjoy any pleasures without one another, and each of whom would be nobly jealous of seeing the other suffer without taking a part in his sufferings. It is only in the love of God and in communion with Jesus, that these relations, as holy as they are sweet, can subsist; these relations which are the only ones that deserve the name of friendship. If these connexions be unreservedly placed under the influence of the Spirit of God, (for without that all is vanity, idolatry, snare, and sin,) what blessings must they not be the source of! Strangers and pilgrims upon earth, what encouragement must it afford us to have faithful fellow-travellers! Combating in an arena where we are called every day to contend against sin, the world, and our own hearts, what a source of happiness must it be to have brethren in arms, who share our dangers, and who by their words and by their example encourage us to press on to victory! Weak and sinful as we are, what a privilege is it to have near us a fraternal hand which is ever stretched forth to point out to us our dangers, to support and assist us!

Martha returns to the house; she sees her beloved sister still a prey to the deepest grief; she calls her, takes her apart *secretly*, as our text tells us, to announce to her the happy tidings of the arrival of Jesus. We ought indeed to be ready

at all times "to give a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness," yet there are many experiences incident to the christian life which the disciple of Jesus alone can comprehend. Martha knew this, and notwithstanding the ordinary quickness of her impressions, she felt that there was no other heart but that of Mary to which she could open her's, or which was capable of entering into her hopes and joys. The Jews with whom the house was crowded would perhaps have seen, in her love for Jesus, nothing but exaggeration, in her faith nothing but enthusiasm, in her hopes nothing but delusion. Perhaps, also, the solemn declaration of Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," and that significant question by which it was followed, "Believest thou this?" had awakened in the mind of Martha some secret hope of seeing again upon this earth a brother who had been so dear to her. And to whom but to Mary could she open her mind on such a subject without being accused of fanaticism and folly? There may exist in the heart of the child of God a hope so aspiring, a feeling so deep, that he would think it a profanation to expose it to the ridicule or sarcasm of the unbeliever.

"The Master is come," saith Martha, with the lively feeling of happiness which one experiences who announces to the afflicted soul the most cheering intelligence. "The Master is come!" This word alone, in Martha's estimation, should

be sufficient to draw Mary out of the depth of her affliction. It is as if she had said, "True, we have suffered long; we have seen the sweet ties of domestic affection snapped asunder; we have seen Lazarus, whom we so much loved, die and go down to the grave; we have long waited in vain for Jesus our great Comforter; we have long shed tears of affliction far from Him; but 'the Master is come;' already I have experienced in His presence unspeakable consolation; I have felt His peace, which is better than life, return to my heart. Nothing is impossible with Him; He has declared to me that He is 'the resurrection and the life,' that 'whosoever believeth in Him, though he were dead, *yet shall he live.*' He comes to comfort us, our sorrow shall be changed into joy, our grief into lively gratitude, 'The Master is come, and calleth for thee.'"

"He calleth for thee!" What love is this of Jesus; what consolation for Mary in her grief! Ah! He whom she waited for so long, and with such an ardent desire, has not forgotten her. Like the Psalmist, she might have exclaimed, in her anguish, "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning." And now the hour of deliverance is arrived; Jesus comes Himself to comfort her; He comes to remove from her soul the burden which oppresses it, the cross which He had laid upon her for a time; He comes to pour into the bleeding wounds of her heart the balm of consolation.

O my beloved brethren, acknowledge, adore the

love and the faithfulness of the Saviour. He is always the same. When you are called to the sweet task of bringing consolation to some suffering soul, some soul weeping over the tomb of a beloved object; some soul groaning under a sense of its corruption, its sins, its unworthiness before God; some soul plunged in the depths of doubt and of distrust: oh! then, do as Martha did to Mary; comfort that soul with these words: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." He is come, suffering soul, afflicted soul, sinful soul; that good Master, that loving Saviour, that divine Friend whom thou thinkest to be far from thee is at hand; He is come; He has not forsaken thee; He watcheth over thee; He is come, ready to receive thy first sigh of repentance, thy first cry of distress; He is come, ready to pardon, to bless thee; "He is come, and calleth thee!" He calleth thee, by this very affliction, this very sickness, as well as in every page of His word; He calleth thee, to make thee fully enjoy the consolations of His grace; He calleth thee, to speak to thy soul of pardon, reconciliation, peace, and love; He calleth thee, to gather thee into His sheepfold; He calleth thee, that coming out of this affliction, this despondency, these doubts, this unbelief, thou mayest be enabled to range thyself among the number of the redeemed—His beloved children.

"He calleth thee!" Take heed that thou be not deaf nor insensible to this call. Beware of an offensive distrust, an injurious doubting; beware of imitating those infatuated persons who were

invited to the marriage supper, and who all began with one consent to make excuse ; beware of saying that thou art unworthy of Him, that thou art too miserable, too sinful. Ah ! it is just because thou art a sinner that it behoved Him to become a Saviour ; it is because thou art poor, blind, naked and miserable, that thou must come to Him, “ who though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.” “ He calls not the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” His invitations are free ; He does not sell His favours, He gives them. And canst thou suppose that He calls thee, intending to reject thee ; canst thou suppose that He thus trifles with thy misery and thine affliction ? Far be from us this blasphemy of unbelief. O Jesus, my Saviour ! I hear Thy call ; I will go ; I will hasten like Mary ; I will go to Thee that I may have life. Ah ! to whom else shall I go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life !

Mary hath not yet attained to the faith and lively hopes of Martha ; grief is too deep in her feeling heart. Meanwhile she hastens to obey the call of Jesus. Even the soul which is encompassed with afflictions and harassed with doubts, when it is acquainted with the Saviour’s faithfulness and love, makes efforts to rise up to Him, and, as it were, “ feels after God.” But who can restrain one who has clearly heard the call of Jesus ? one to whom it has been said, “ The Master calleth thee ?” Ah ! such a one feels the approach of deliverance, and as the flower turns its

head towards the sun, and opens to receive its enlightening beams; as the stag, panting from the heat of the desert, plunges into the running stream; as the child runs with tears into the embrace of its mother, whom it had lost, thus the soul, thirsting for consolation, peace, and rest, opens to the sweet influence of the presence of its redeeming God, quenches its thirst at that well of living water which springeth up unto everlasting life, and flies with confidence into the arms of that Heavenly Father who has a remedy for all its evils, and in whom "there is plenteous redemption." "As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him."

But we have already said, according to the declaration of St. Paul, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and the Jews who were with Mary on this occasion afford a confirmation of this sad truth. St. John, before he shows us Mary at the feet of Jesus, speaks of these Jews, and tells us what they thought, and what they said, as if to give a shading to the picture. "The Jews, then, which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily, and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave, to weep there." It was a custom in the East, which continues to the present time, to go frequently, during the first days of mourning, to the tomb of the departed, and "weep there." He who has not yet heard the call of Jesus, or has shut his heart against it; he who is ignorant of the irresis-

tible attraction which leads the afflicted soul to throw itself at the feet of the Saviour; he who has never drawn supplies from the source of true consolation, by private prayer in the closet,—such a one cannot comprehend the conduct and the joys of the child of God. He cannot conceive that a soul in deep affliction can have any other remedy for its grief, than the melancholy privilege of going and weeping over the tomb, which has just swallowed up the object of its tenderest affections and of its dearest hopes. He follows, with an inconsolable regret, these poor mortal remains. The Jews wept and lamented over the graves of their friends for seven days consecutively. We in our days erect a monument to perpetuate our sorrow, to hide, if possible, the vanity of every thing human, and banish from our minds the humbling truth that “all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the field.” We attach ourselves also with a grief that knows no remedy, and with wounded affections, to that which is already reduced to dust. “We weep as those that have no hope.” To give a colour to this sadly idolatrous worship, we call it “the religion of the tomb.” Alas! we might with more propriety designate it the religion of despair, or, to use a milder expression, the *poetry of grief*.

No, Mary is not gone to the grave; she knows that Jesus is come; she goes to lay at His feet the burden of her grief, to open her heart to Him, as Martha had done. She throws herself at His feet, weeping abundantly; “Lord,” says she, “if

Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!" This is all that her grief and her sobs allow her to utter. She has sufficient faith, sufficient confidence, to throw herself at the feet of Jesus, forgetting, in His presence, the crowd that surrounds her—forgetting the whole universe besides. But this is the utmost that her deep affliction permits her to do. She had not sufficient strength, and perhaps not sufficient faith, to add to her complaint like Martha, "But even now I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." Her silent grief does not let us see what passes in her afflicted heart. Has a dark veil of sadness enveloped her, and hid from her view the objects of her faith and hope? Do her words mean, that since "her brother is dead," every thing has become indifferent to her? Does she see no remedy for her afflictions? Does she think that Jesus is come too late to repair her loss? "If Thou hadst been here?" Does she imagine that the grave can put bounds to the power of her Divine Friend? Is it despondency and distrust that extort from her these expressions of so deep a melancholy, "My brother would not have died?" Or is it that, full of confidence, she deems it enough to show to her Saviour, in a single sentence, her whole grief, to open to Him her heart, to prostrate herself at His feet, to feel herself near Him in her affliction, as she was formerly, when she sat at His feet and heard His word? Does she in her trial feel the reality of His promises and of His word, which she had so

often heard? Is her faith a light shining in darkness? Are her hopes a healing balm to the wound of her heart? We love to think so; we love to see in her silence the confidence and peace of her soul, expecting every thing from Jesus, and throwing itself upon His tender compassion. We love to see in it that patient waiting which has never been disappointed, since Mary experienced the faithfulness and love of the Saviour far beyond what she could have expected.

O, my beloved brethren! disciples of Jesus! how sweet is it for us to know that in all our trials even should we, in the despondency of our souls, have only strength enough, like Mary, to cast ourselves at the feet of that great High Priest, who can be "touched with a feeling of our infirmities," yet this will be sufficient to move His generous heart in our favour, sufficient to attract towards us a look of His tender compassion and infinite goodness. Never has the cry of an afflicted soul found the heart of Jesus insensible; never has a single sigh of a broken and contrite heart ascended in vain to the throne of grace. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." (Ps. xxxiv. 6, 8.)

This silence of Mary, at the feet of Jesus, is in perfect harmony with her whole character. More feeling than Martha, her grief is also more profound. All her lively and deep impressions are concentrated to one point in her soul. She is not

able to express herself in words, to address a prayer to her Saviour, or to declare her confidence in Him. She lies in silent prostration at His feet. She cannot join in that song of triumph, with one who was animated by an all powerful faith, "We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." The experience of every day evinces that persons of a deeply susceptible nature—those who, like Mary, make all their theology, all their religion, consist in feeling, as a counterpoise to the lively enjoyments which they derive from the sublime truths of the Gospel—are called to endure far more painful conflicts than those who live a life of simple faith. The path which they pursue is more difficult and dangerous, because every object makes a deeper impression upon them, every untoward event which they meet in life shakes to its foundation this power of feeling, and lays siege to their faith, their religion, the very life of their soul. Oh! how necessary, then, was it that the word of God should erect the structure of our eternal salvation upon the immoveable rock of God's faithfulness, against which the waves and the storms may exercise their fury, but they are broken and expire at its base.

If by faith we be established upon the Rock of Ages, sombre clouds may gather around us, darkness may become more dense, it may spread over

the heavens a gloomy veil, and shut out from us every ray of celestial light, yet shall we wait upon the Lord; and our expectation shall not be disappointed. Let not then the continual variations of religious feeling which we may experience, be ever the measure of our assurance of salvation; otherwise we shall continually see our peace, our hopes, our eternity, exposed to the mercy of all those infirmities which in this life may take away from us the *sensible* enjoyment of God's presence, of His pardon, of His grace, and of His adoption. It is not written "the just shall live by feeling," but "the just shall live by faith." God forbid that we should be understood to mean by this faith a mere barren adherence to the truths of the Gospel, producing no influence upon the heart, or a presumptuous assurance founded upon mere notions of the mind. The faith which does not "work by love" is not a true faith, and "he that loveth not hath not known God, for God is love." Such are the two rocks between which we have to steer, and upon which many souls have made shipwreck. Happy that soul who, to avoid the one and the other, sits like Mary at the feet of Jesus, to hear Him in the time of prosperity, and whom the day of trial still finds, like her, at the feet of Jesus, waiting for assistance from Him.

But let us hasten to turn our eyes towards Jesus. We love to contemplate Him in the midst of this scene of grief. Ah! He does not remain insensible to it. He beholds Mary at His feet, overwhelmed with her affliction, and unable to

do any thing but weep. He sees the Jews, some of whom, we hope, really sympathize with her; while the greater part but imitate her grief, and make lamentation according to the usage of their country on such occasions. At this sight Jesus, who was no stranger to any of those emotions which thrill through the depths of the human heart, "groaned in spirit and was troubled." What was it that passed in His great soul? What mortal can fathom His emotions, His trouble of mind, and tell us what he felt? If we take the original word in its literal signification, we shall see in Jesus, besides the feeling of tender sympathy which the scene before Him excited in His breast, a feeling of that holy impatience which He frequently experienced at the view of the weakness, corruption, and unbelief of those from whom he had a right to expect the greatest confidence. "O, unbelieving generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? What! are those Jews to whom I have exhibited my works, who have heard my instructions since the commencement of my ministry, still unable to offer to the afflicted any thing but worthless consolations? What! is Mary herself, who has been so highly favored, able only to utter words of despondency, I had almost said, of reproach? 'If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died! 'O ye of little faith, how great is your weakness! how easily does distrust insinuate itself into your hearts! A few days of trial, a few days of waiting, and you have no more faith! How ignorant are

the most enlightened! how weak the strongest! how ungrateful the most affectionate! ”

Or are we to regard the trouble and emotion of Jesus as expressive of a feeling of grief at the sight of human misery, of which He had before His eyes so melancholy a picture? Is He moved with indignation; has He put on “vengeance as a cloak,” against him “who hath the power of death,” against him by whom “sin entered into the world, and death by sin,” and with whom He is going to engage in a contest, which shall show to all future generations, that the powers of hell are in subjection to the eternal Son of God, and that Satan shall shortly be bruised under the feet of God’s children? or was it only a deep compassion for the afflicted sisters that Jesus felt? This the expressions in the original scarcely allow us to believe. But whatever it was, we shall see Jesus moved even to tears by this tender compassion. And whatever was at first the real cause of His trouble, He turns from the scene which He has before His eyes; He hastens to go forward to the accomplishment of His work; He demands where the mortal remains of Lazarus are laid; He turns toward the sepulchre, where He is going to show unto the world, that to Him nothing is impossible.

“And He said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto Him, Lord, come and see.” Jesus had stopped to suggest consolation to Martha, to give her encouraging promises, to reason with her. But He who searcheth the heart, He who

well knows what kind of consolation is suited to each of His people, touched with compassion for this deep affliction of Mary, mourns with her, weeps with her, and asks for the tomb of her brother, in order to show her, by His power, His love and faithfulness. He alone is really capable of comforting the afflicted, who loves them, suffers with them, and shares their grief. Even the people of the world feel to a certain degree what a real comforter ought to be. They say, "We condole with one for whom we care but little; we weep with a friend." Oh! let us endeavour to feel, that the more we are animated by that true charity, that ardent love which glowed in the heart of Jesus, the more we shall be capable of comforting our afflicted brethren in their trials; and the more we shall be disposed to comfort them by actions, by devotedness, and if it be necessary, by sacrifices. "Where have ye laid him?" asks Jesus. And while they conduct Him to that abode of death, His thoughts rest upon Lazarus, the object of so much affection, but at the same time of so much grief and of so many tears. His heart, moved, by what He sees around Him, cannot contain all the feelings which crowd upon it, and He who was God, and who yet has been called with truth the most *humane* of mankind, restrains not His tears: "Jesus wept."

"Jesus wept!" divine words! words which penetrate into the depths of the most unfeeling heart, to search if there be a last chord which

they can make vibrate there ! words upon which we may meditate but not discourse, because in hearing them a multitude of thoughts and feelings press forward, and fill our whole soul. The pen even of St. John declined to make a single reflection upon them. These words escaped, as it were, from His affectionate heart, and he thought, doubtless, "Here is a subject of meditation for ages." Some of the Jews who were present exclaimed, "Behold, how He loved him!" But how far were they, as we ourselves are, from comprehending the tears of Jesus.

Doubtless we can say with them, "Behold, how He loved him!" for already St. John hath told us, "Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus;" and He who was never found insensible to any of our miseries; He who was touched with compassion for the multitude which pressed around Him, "because they were as sheep having no shepherd;" He who shed tears of pity over the guilty and hardened inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were going to put Him to death; He who with His dying voice prayed with the tenderest charity for His murderers, He doubtless must have been deeply affected by the afflictions of those for whom He cherished a particular affection. It is then permitted to us also to weep on account of our own trials and those of our friends. If but the dispensations of our God find our heart, and our will, submissive to His absolute sovereignty over us, this expression of our grief has nothing inconsistent with the christian character. The Gospel

has nothing in common with stoicism. Abraham wept over the tomb of Sarah; Jacob over the tomb of Rachel; David over that of Absalom; Jesus over that of Lazarus. So long as our trials have not the effect of weakening our faith, rendering our submission less sincere, our hopes less lively, our love less real, we may allow our hearts to grieve, our tears to flow. The worldly man may accuse us of weakness; some Christians even may suspect the reality of our faith, and the sincerity of our submission, but Jesus, who searcheth the heart, will not condemn us; He will remember His own tears; He will have pity upon ours. "Jesus wept!"

Jesus has before Him a striking example of the instability of all human joys. A short time ago the abode of Bethany, now a house of mourning, was the dwelling of peace and happiness. Lazarus was the joy and hope of his two sisters; Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, heard with delight the words of eternal life which flowed from His lips; Martha testified her affection to her Saviour, by her eagerness to serve Him; all was peace, rest, and joy, in that habitation where Jesus and His disciples used to come and find an agreeable retreat. And now a few days have passed, and Lazarus is in the grave, mouldering in corruption; Mary bathed in tears, and clothed in a garment of mourning, is prostrated at the feet of Jesus; and the Jews, who surround them, made this abode of peace resound with their lamentations. "Jesus wept!"

Oh! how difficult it is to engrave upon our hearts the sad truth, that all we possess upon earth is only lent to us for a time, and for a very short time; that to-morrow, perhaps, the object of our dearest affections may be a corpse; that all that our soul has made a support of, a source of joy and of happiness, shall be confounded with the dust of the earth! Disciples of Jesus! when will you cease to make idols of those objects which the Lord hath entrusted to you, that you might consecrate them to His service? When will you learn that this is neither the place nor the time of your rest? When will you learn to think, to love, and to act, as strangers and pilgrims, for whom there is but one thing needful—to reach your native country? And you, ye men of the world, when will you cease to hew out unto yourselves in the wilderness, “broken cisterns which can hold no water?” When will you cease to “sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind?” When will you cease to seek your happiness, your peace, your life, in that which shall disappear to-morrow, like the stubble which the wind scattereth? Ah! if Jesus shed tears of compassion over the guilty Jerusalem, tears of tenderness over the tomb of a friend, what bitter tears would He have shed over your deplorable folly! Let His tears be a powerful lesson of instruction to you! “Jesus wept!”

But the great soul of Jesus does not confine all its melancholy thoughts to that scene of instability and grief. If the view of a tomb, open and ready to receive its prey, makes the heart of every

reflecting person beat, what must that sight have been to Him who had created man in His own image, and assigned him, as his dwelling, not the dark tomb, but the delightful bowers of Eden? What a comparison must Jesus have drawn between that scene of death which was before Him, and that in which He first saw man when he came forth from His hand, pure, perfect, and happy, enjoying the delights of an existence of felicity and love which his Creator had just conferred upon him. Could He recognize His own work? Must He not have beheld, with bitter feelings, the ravages of sin, which had defiled and ruined the creature, and hewn out his tomb? If every equipage of death that passes through our streets tells the Christian that man is guilty, what must the tomb of Lazarus have told Jesus, the Holy One and the Just, and what the thought of those millions of His creatures, that expire from generation to generation, amid agonies and pains, (notwithstanding the tears of those who love them,) and are engulfed in the abyss which sin has dug out, crying to those that have ears to hear, "Man is fallen!" If even the common observer cannot contemplate, without emotion, the ruins of a majestic edifice which the tempest has overthrown, what must the architect feel whose sublime genius has conceived the design of the building, and who has watched it with solicitude as it rose to its completion? If we mortal beings, beings of a day, who are born amid sufferings, and grow up among "briers and thorns," which cover

an accursed earth by reason of sin, if we groan at the sight of a scene of death and destruction, which attests our fall and degradation, what must have been felt at such a sight by Him who came down from the Father, from the abode of peace, of holiness, of happiness! "Jesus wept!"

But O, my beloved brethren! my companions in exile and misery! let the tears of Jesus, instead of saddening us, be to us a source of the most precious consolation. Ah! if He could shed a tear over our miseries, it was because He came to earth to deliver us from these miseries; if our woes touch His compassionate heart, He has come to supply a remedy for them; if He weeps over a tomb, and over the instability of every thing human, He is going to destroy him that hath the power of death; if He mourns over the ravages of sin, He is going to die, and by His death to take away sin and all our defilements. O generous grief! compassionate tears of my Saviour! flow, flow upon our miseries. You sweeten their bitterness; you are a healing balm for our wounds. Now we know, we have seen, that "we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." Let us, then, take courage, feeble beings, sinful beings; let us go to this merciful Saviour; let us not fear lest He should cast us out; His tears sufficiently proclaim His love. And if the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" let us also say, "See how he loves us!" He is always the same. Though He is no longer upon earth to shed tears, He is with God, His Father,

pleading our cause, interceding for us, demanding pardon for our unfaithfulness and for our corruptions. He knows all our sorrows, all our temptations, all our weaknesses; Bethany has not escaped from His memory, nor the unhappy from His heart. "Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Let us love this Saviour who has so loved us; let us consecrate to Him our hearts which belong to Him by so many titles. O Jesus! O my Saviour! Thou seest that I wish to love Thee! Yes, I would that I could say with one of Thy servants, "I have but one passion; it is for Thee, Thee alone."

MEDITATION X.

“LAZARUS, COME FORTH.”

JOHN XI. 37—44.

“And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”

THE part which man performs in the drama of life, ends with his existence here below. All that is purely terrestrial in the history of the greatest and most powerful among men, dies with them, save perhaps their name, which passes from age to age, like the slight trace which the majestic vessel leaves after it upon the surface of the waters, and which is communicated, for a while,

from wave to wave, until it is lost in the immensity of the ocean. Beyond that fatal term, man is impotent. He gives back to the earth what he had received from it, and all the interests of this world, as far, at least, as he is concerned, are at an end. Those who write his history, relate his actions up to the period of his death; they pass a judgment upon his character, upon the good or bad influence which he exerted over his age, and their task is ended. Such is equally the lot of the hero celebrated for his achievements, and of the unhappy being who is distinguished among his fellow-men only for his misfortunes.

How is it, then, that the history which for some time has been affording matter for our meditations, just assumes the deepest, the most lively, and the sublimest interest, at the tomb of him who forms the subject of it? How is it that instead of laying down his pen at the grave of Lazarus, and resting satisfied with merely dropping a tear to his memory, our historian here especially awakens our attention, and seems to claim our admiration for what he has yet to commit to future generations? Ah! it is because that here he has to do with more than mere mortals. It is that we have here the Prince of Life, who by the exercise of His omnipotence compels the gloomy empire of death, and the limits of human power to recede before Him. Jesus, the Lord of glory, is going to act: what obstacle can the grave put in the way of His operation? Let us summon up our attention in His presence; let us humble our-

selves with adoration before His power ; let us hear our Evangelist.

Jesus had demanded where they had laid the mortal remains of Lazarus. He advances towards the abode of death, shedding tears of compassion and grief. Alas ! the dispositions of those around Him were little calculated to offer Him consolation. He sees Mary in tears ; He sees the Jews, who already had often been witnesses of His mighty works, deriving from these very works an argument in support of their unbelief, and asking, perhaps, with interest, but also with distrust, " Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died ? " What reasoning ! One would have expected to hear them draw a directly opposite conclusion, and say, " This man which opened the eyes of one born blind, and thus displayed a power altogether divine, not only could (if He had seen fit) have caused that even this man should not have died, but also, without any doubt, hath power to recall him from the grave." But no ; the carnal man does not reason thus ; he does not ascend from one of God's perfections to the others ; from His power to His love ; from His love to His infinite goodness. You must deduce from him, one by one, all the consequences of those manifestations of grace which his God condescends to vouchsafe to him ; and if at any time he understands not the dispensations of eternal wisdom towards him, he draws from thence an ungrateful conclusion against the very benefits

which he had received the day before. "There is nothing new under the sun." We find this same injurious reasoning of unbelief in our own hearts, if not upon our lips, when after receiving innumerable favours and benefits from the Lord, we fall back into distrust, and forget His gifts and promises if He leaves us in our trial for a day. It was thus that the disciples reasoned on their way to Emmaus: "Jesus of Nazareth was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel; and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done." "O fools," saith the Saviour to them; "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke xxiv. 19, 21, 25.)

Meanwhile, Jesus waits not to reason with unbelief; "He groaned again in Himself" on seeing and hearing those around Him; but "He goes to the sepulchre;" He goes to confound unbelief and distrust; He goes to comfort those whom He loves by granting to them more than they can ask or think. Alas! are the most transcendent favours of our God the only argument which can convince us of His love? And yet He consents to grant us those favours. O, disciples of Jesus! ye who, like Mary and Martha, weep for bereavements which ye have sustained, your powerful Saviour can and will go with you to the tomb of those beloved beings whom you follow there with tears. From that tomb itself He will

find means to draw consolation for you, if not by restoring to you again on earth those whom you regret, at least by enabling you to realize, by a living faith, that glorious day when they shall be given back to you for ever, pure, holy, and happy. That cold clay, which covers from your view those mortal remains, and preserves the hallowed germ of their glorious resurrection, can no more separate them from God and from you, than the stone which stopped the mouth of the cave where Lazarus lay, could place a barrier between him and the power of Jesus. The Saviour's love is like His power; it knows no obstacle; "He cometh to the grave."

"It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it," or as it may be rendered, "there lay a stone at the entrance of the cave," which, according to custom, was hewn out of a rock, and into which they descended by a few narrow steps, "What," (must the unbelieving Jews have said within themselves, and perhaps the two sisters of Lazarus also,) "what is He going to do at the grave? Is it to weep there? Does He wish to have the melancholy pleasure of seeing at least the place where His friend reposes? Does He wish to bid those cold remains a last farewell, and thus to testify to the afflicted sisters the sympathy and affection which He had for their brother?" The curiosity which gives rise to those questions is rendered still more lively by that grave and solemn command of Jesus, "Take away the stone!" What anxiety! What feelings must the two sisters have expe-

rienced! Are they going to behold the cold remains of their brother whom they so much loved? What does Jesus mean? Martha, who, while they are taking away the stone, is struck with that dreadful savour of death and corruption which exhales from a body that has fallen into dissolution, groans within herself. Alas! it is her brother! She is unable to support the violence of her feelings; her secret hope flies from her breast; she seems to wish to entreat the Lord to allow the lifeless body to rest in peace. "Lord," cries she with a trembling voice, "by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." Four days! It is then but four days since she could still press to her heart that brother whom she loved; four days since Lazarus still responded to her affection; but four days since she received his last look, and his last adieu; and already a mass of corruption. Oh! the vanity of all that is human! Awful curse of sin! dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return! Men of the world! worldly women! is it then to this perishable body, this handful of clay, that you will consecrate your time, your cares, your talents, your fortune, your life? Ah, fools! you have an immortal soul; how long will you neglect it? how long will you sacrifice it to that which in four days shall turn to corruption and become the food of worms?

These words of Martha afford us another lesson. Physicians have decided, that the only infallible mark of death is corruption. Well, then! for you, unbelievers; for you who foolishly require a

mathematical certainty in religious truths, this last feature was necessary to our narrative. It was necessary, in order that there might not remain any pretext for not believing in the reality of the miracle which was going to be wrought, and in Him who was about to perform it. It was necessary, in order that if you reject the divinity of His mission, the responsibility of your unbelief may rest entirely upon your own guilty heads; it was necessary, in order that God might have done every thing to convince you and save you; and that He might be found just when He condemns. One of your masters, Spinoza, has told the world, that if he could have believed the resurrection of Lazarus, he would have dashed in pieces his whole system, and embraced without repugnance the christian faith.* But believe him not; his reason could not doubt, it was his heart that would not believe. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life!"

Jesus, who would not reason with Mary, because she was too exclusively under the influence of grief; Jesus, who thought it enough to weep with her, because He knows the consolation which is suited to each individual, condescends in His infinite compassion to stop a moment to strengthen the wavering faith of Martha. "Said I not unto thee," saith He, "that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Oh! how often might this merciful Saviour have addressed to us, with justice, this reproach, "Said I

* Baile's Dictionary, Art. Spinoza.

not unto thee?" When, in the hour of trial, our soul no longer ventures to look to Jesus to obtain from Him deliverance or a submissive will; when our heart, shut up by grief, withered by doubt, allows its faith to fail, its hopes to disappear; when, in the darkness which surrounds us, we are unable to raise our eyes and to behold above us a starry sky; when, yielding to doubt, we are ready to exclaim with Martha, "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days," all is lost, there is no more hope in this life; where are now the promises of our God? why do these promises no longer speak to our souls? might not Jesus approach us with this reproof of His tender compassion: "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" In the despondency of thy heart, being unable to comprehend this severe dispensation of My wisdom, feeling only thy grief, thou art ready to be cast down and discouraged; but said I not unto thee that all things shall work together for good to them that love God? In the feeling of thy weakness and of thy misery thou canst only mourn because thou makest no progress in the knowledge of My ways; thou doubttest whether I am thy Saviour; finding in thyself so little love, thou doubttest whether thou belongest to Me, whether I have redeemed thee, whether thou art a child of God. But said I not unto thee, that 'he that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life?' Said I not unto thee, that thou art 'saved freely by grace?' that 'the gift of God is eternal

life?" Said I not unto thee, that 'I break not the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax?' that 'like as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him?'"

"Believe," and thou shalt see the glory of God! Such should be the sole end of thy life; such the object which thou shouldest seek, even in the midst of thy sufferings, instead of sighing only after the happiness and interest of the moment. Oh! when the old man, with all its strength, which is but weakness; with all its wisdom, which is but folly; when the old man, with all its doubts and agonies, with all its fears and anxieties, holds its peace and retires into the silence of its own nothingness; when in the calm of the soul faith pierces the clouds and contemplates the heavens; when hope spreads out its wings, shakes off the dust of earth, takes its flight above all that is mortal; when the heart expands to feel and to love, and soars toward its Redeemer, towards Him whom it loves though it sees Him not; when our lips are open to give utterance to the cry of Mary, "Rabboni" Master, or to the exclamation of Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" when a deep feeling of veneration lays us prostrate before God, and fills us with an idea of His eternal majesty—then the Spirit of the Most High—that Spirit which conducted Ezekiel into the valley of vision, to show him the glory of God "in the dry bones," works in our soul; we "believe," and we "see the glory of God,"—the glory of God "in the

midst of trials,"—the glory of God even in the presence of the tomb!

Meanwhile the stone is taken away, the body of Lazarus, laid in its cold abode, bound around with grave-clothes, appears to the eyes of all. What a sight! what a feeling of fear, of astonishment, of horror, of anxious expectation, of secret hope, must have taken possession of all the spectators, according to the dispositions of faith or unbelief with which they were influenced. A mournful silence reigns around the grave: all who are present appear like so many shades in this abode of death, whose chilling influence seems to have frozen the life in their hearts. Scarcely do they venture to raise their eyes from the corpse to try and read with anxiety in the looks of Jesus what is His intention. The Prince of Life alone is filled with that spirit whereby "He calls the things which are not as though they were;" He advances majestically to the mouth of the sepulchre—He stops—lifts His eyes to heaven. Ah! He wishes not that the eyes and thoughts of those around Him should rest upon and grovel among the direful ruins of death and destruction. "Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven," signifying with sufficient plainness, that on earth there is neither succor nor consolation to be found; that we must "lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help;" that we must not "seek the living among the dead;" that our soul must take its flight, rise upon the wings of faith, above death, the grave, affliction, tears; above the world and

ourselves. O why, in our trials, do we grievously fall back upon ourselves with all the weight of our sufferings; why does our soul envelop itself in its grief as in a sombre cloud? Why, when we see some beloved being descend into the grave, do we follow his cold remains with all our thoughts and all our bleeding affections into the dust of the earth, from whence we can draw nothing but grief and regret? Alas! it is that we are carnal; we cannot, like Jesus, lift up our eyes to heaven, from whence we would derive faith, hope, and consolation; it is that our dull and unbelieving heart falls back to the earth with all its weight, and cannot rise above death, and quench with Him, who is the living and the eternal One, that thirst for immortality which devours it. O my Saviour, teach us thus to raise our eyes and our thoughts, our affections and our prayers, to heaven!

Jesus would also, in directing the thoughts of all to heaven, point to that eternal power by which he was going to work a stupendous miracle. He does not wish that any of those around Him should remain in doubt in this respect; He wishes to give a sacredness to the action which He is going to perform; He wishes that it should be ascribed to none but God alone. He had predicted that the sickness of Lazarus should subserve "the glory of God." He proceeds to give, by a most striking act, a commentary on His own words; but that no one may divert from God the glory which is due to Him, He shows beforehand

that it is His powerful arm which is going to work.

“Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me!” What! “That Thou,” He saith, “hast heard Me!” and yet He has not yet seen His prayer answered. Lazarus is still in the tomb, the prey of death and corruption. “Thou hast heard Me!” and yet not a spark of life has entered the bosom of Lazarus. “Thou hast heard Me?” and yet those who surround Him have before their eyes only a mouldering corpse.

O, my beloved brethren! here is faith; here is prayer; here is confidence in the promises of God, who cannot lie. To real faith a promise of God is a gift; a prayer sent up to the throne of the Most High, in the spirit of supplication, is a prayer heard.

Jesus, on approaching the tomb of Lazarus, had prayed in the secret recesses of His heart, and in His view that prayer is already heard—Lazarus is restored to life, his sisters are comforted, the faith of His disciples is strengthened, God is glorified, the Son of Man is glorified. Oh! how different would our prayers be if we could thus receive the promises of our God as already accomplished! It is by this spirit, this faith, that the Apostle Paul sees for himself, and for those believers to whom he is writing, all difficulties surmounted, all temptations overcome, all their combats victoriously terminated, all their souls purified from sin, and that he cries out triumphantly, “We are more than conquerors

through Him who loved us." Passing over time and life, death and the grave, he cries again, "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Embracing by this same faith all the gifts of God, still in the promise, he thus speaks to the Corinthians: "Whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all things are yours and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii.) "I thank Thee," saith Jesus in anticipation; but with what difficulty do we (even when we have seen our prayers answered) lift our cold hearts to heaven and say, "I thank Thee." O ye of little faith, little gratitude, little love!

"I know that Thou hearest Me always, but because of the people which stand by I said it *that they may believe* that Thou hast sent Me." Who does not recognize in this familiar language of confidence Him who is *one* with the Father; Him who from all eternity has taken part in His counsels; Him who "was in the beginning with God, and was God?" "I know that Thou hearest Me always!" and how could it be otherwise with Him whom the Father hath proclaimed to earth in these words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" Who does not recognize in this tender solicitude for the flock which surrounds Him, the good Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep; who anxiously traverses the mountains and the valleys, to seek that which was lost? O, my brethren, if hitherto we have placed so little confidence in our prayers, let us

take courage! Jesus is always the same. Even now, as in the days of His flesh; before the throne of God, as before the grave of Lazarus, He says to His Father, with the same confidence, when He prays for us, "I know that Thou hearest Me, always!" As our High Priest He offers to God His Father our feeble prayers, purified from all defilement, and kindled by the fire of His love. And, O delightful thought, consoling assurance, "God heareth Him always."

The prayer of Jesus had awakened a holy confidence in the minds of those who surrounded Him, instead of that terror with which the view of the corpse had penetrated them. All is thus made ready, both in the minds of those who are about to witness this astonishing miracle, and in the tomb which was opened to their view. Nothing more is wanting than a word of Almighty power; the Incarnate God is going to utter it. "And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth!" O amazement! O terror! this single word, which penetrated the souls of all who were present, made life enter into the bosom of the dead; the bonds of the tomb are broken; death delivering up its prey, confesses itself vanquished by the voice of Jesus; the eyes of all see the cold limbs of Lazarus begin to move; he rises; he comes forth still bound with grave-clothes. What a sight! What a spectacle! "Then he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin!" Astonishment,

terror, seize the minds of all; all remain mute with surprise and fear. Martha and Mary dare not embrace their brother again; they cannot believe their senses; doubt and fear impose silence upon their affection; it would appear as if death had seized upon the hearts of all to avenge itself for the defeat which it had just suffered. Jesus alone breaks the silence. He says with majestic calmness, "Loose him, and let him go."

O power! O divinity of my Saviour! I bow before Thee, and adore Thee in the silence of admiration. Oh! how clearly do I recognize here that mighty voice which in the beginning said, Let there be light, and there was light!" Yes, I recognize it, it is the voice which calleth things that are not as though they were, and which raiseth the dead. Let my knees bend before the divine Saviour. "God over all blessed for evermore!" who is like unto Thee in heaven or in earth? Thou spakest, and it was done; Thou commandedst and it stood fast! At Thy voice the grave delivers up its dead; the corruption of the tomb fleeth before Thy face! Who is there in heaven or in earth that can resist Thy power? O how happy are we to know that in Thy hand is our destiny for eternity! If Thou lovest us; if we are Thy redeemed; if Thou art for us, who can be against us? What shall we have to fear? Death? In Thy presence it has no more power. The grave? At Thy voice it becomes the theatre of a glorious resurrection, and life flourishes in the very field of death. Our soul waiteth upon Thee,

whether in life or in death. Even from the dust we shall lisp forth Thy praises; we shall mingle our feeble voice with the voices of celestial intelligences, to celebrate Thy glorious name. O our divine Saviour, our Redeemer, and our King! we shall ascribe to Thee throughout eternity, glory, and strength, and praise. Thou art God over all; Thy dominion hath no limits. All the angels of God worship Thee. Oh! may the redeemed of every tongue, and people and nation, thus celebrate Thy praises, for ever and ever!

What more shall I say to you, my beloved brethren? Shall I describe to you the transports of joy and gratitude of the sisters of Lazarus? Shall I show them to you, now pressing to their hearts with tears of happiness a beloved brother, who is about again to partake of their combats, their hopes, their fears upon earth, now prostrating themselves at the feet of Jesus, filled with a lively and never-ceasing gratitude? Shall I describe to you the family of Bethany recovering their domestic joys, and consecrating themselves, more entirely than ever, to the Author of their happiness? Shall I tell you all the lessons which the sisters of Lazarus drew from the issue of their trial—lessons of faith, of gratitude, of love to Jesus, a thousand times more precious still than the happiness of possessing a beloved brother? Shall I show you this happy family again possessing Jesus among them six days before the passover, that is, six days before His death (John xii. 1—8,) and Mary, eagerly seizing the first opportunity

which presented itself, publicly to testify to her Saviour her gratitude and love, by publicly rendering to Him the honour due to her Lord and her King, whose Majesty she had witnessed at the tomb of her brother? Shall I show you Martha joyfully waiting upon Him as in the days of their former prosperity, and Lazarus sitting at table with his Divine Saviour, who had raised him from the dead—a living witness of His power and godhead? What a picture! what a termination to so many trials where Jesus appears as a comforter! In fine, shall I speak to you of what must have passed in the minds of the disciples, for whose sake Jesus was pleased to give this striking manifestation of His omnipotence, and to whom He had said “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe?” No, we will not stop to meditate on these subjects, however interesting; we will leave them to your own reflections, and rather direct our thoughts to ourselves, for the resurrection of Lazarus concerns us also; and if he came forth from the tomb at the command of Jesus, it was to convey to us, even to us also, strong consolation, powerful encouragement, salutary instructions. Yet a little while, and that voice of power which was heard at Bethany, shall be heard again with the sound of the last trumpet, through the wide expanse of heaven; and we all, whatever be our condition, shall rise like Lazarus, and with us, all the generations of mankind which have appeared in succession upon the

earth. What a moment! what a scene! Oh! how happy, then, shall be the friends of Jesus; the Lazaruses, the Marthas, the Marys, who shall behold again, with transports of happiness, those whom they loved in the Lord upon earth, those whose departure cost them so many tears, those with whom they shall be united for ever in that place where there shall be no more misery nor pain, nor separation, nor death, nor mourning, nor tears, because there shall be no more sin! The happiness of the family of Bethany is but a feeble image of that blessedness, since, alas! that family was still upon earth, exposed to trials, conflicts, and anxieties; and its members, after having enjoyed their happiness for a short time, were doomed again to bid each other a final adieu, as far as this world is concerned! If we belong to Jesus, who is the *resurrection and the life*, let His power, which is equalled only by His love, be our consolation, our support, our secret refuge! Let nothing affright us, nothing cast us down! Let us, by that hope which maketh not ashamed, pass over time and the grave! Let us realize, by an unshaken faith, the glorious promises of our Divine Saviour, and the happiness of seeing, as He is, Him who hath so loved us, who hath wept over our trials and our afflictions, Him who willeth that "where He is, there we may be with Him also." Let us appropriate to ourselves the tender compassion which He manifested towards the family of Bethany!

Let the tears which He shed over the tomb of

a friend, flow into the wounds which death inflicts upon our hearts. And while we hear His irresistible voice calling forth Lazarus from the tomb, let us remember that He has "overcome for us the world, the devil, death, and the grave; and that now in all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!" It was my intention to have terminated my meditation here; but, shall I say it?—amid those sweet thoughts upon which we have been dwelling, an involuntary feeling of fear has crept into my heart. Yes, I must tell it to you; were we to indulge it, it would make us shudder with horror. I picture to my mind that solemn moment when, "at the voice of Him who raiseth the dead," we shall all come forth from the grave; when all we who are here present in this house of worship, shall see and recognize one another, like Lazarus and his two sisters, when with transports of joy, they rushed into one another's embraces, in the presence of the Redeemer. And if, at that moment, when we are about to see our eternal destiny decided, it shall be found that any of you whom I now behold seated on those benches, listening to my meditations, if it shall be found that even one of you belongs not to Jesus, that he has not received from Him pardon unto life; that he is yet in his sins, and under the weight of that condemnation which he has deserved; deceived by vain delusions, by an appearance of religion; in a word, without God, without a Saviour, without hope, having neither part nor lot in this matter! Oh,

terror! oh, despair! I cannot for a moment endure this agonizing thought; it overwhelms my heart; it rushes upon my soul, like the rocks and mountains, which the reprobate shall call upon and supplicate in vain to fall upon them, and cover them from the wrath of Him that sitteth upon the throne. O immortal, accountable beings! I beseech you by the mercies of God, avert, avert this dreadful anticipation, by hastening this day, this hour, to Golgotha, and seeking there a refuge at the foot of the cross of Christ. And you who have among your friends, or perhaps in your families, some Lazarus, some being dear to your hearts by the bonds of nature or of friendship, who is still ignorant of the Saviour, and has not called upon the only Name by which we must be saved; oh! pray, supplicate the Divine Redeemer to touch the heart of that beloved being, to snatch him from inevitable ruin, as a brand plucked out of the burning; to save him in spite of himself, while pardon, salvation, and reconciliation are possible. My God! my God! is there among those who hear Thy word, who see Thy love and Thy compassion; is there among those whom I know, whom I love upon earth, any one who in the great day shall become a monument of Thine eternal justice, instead of being a monument of Thy grace and of Thine eternal love! Divine Saviour! if Thou hast ever heard a prayer, if Thou hast ever allowed Thyself to be moved by an earnest supplication, or by the cry of a soul in distress, take away, take away from my heart the

overwhelming weight of this agonizing fear ! Oh, I must hope, I must hope, or—ah ! pardon, Lord ! Thou willest not the death of a sinner ; Thou willest rather that he should be converted and live ; and with Thee all things are possible.

MEDITATION XI.

CONCLUSION.

JOHN XI. 45—52.

“ Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the Chief Priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, what do we? for this Man doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the High Priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad”

IF there be a prophecy, to the truth of which all ages, from the time of Jesus Christ to the present day, have borne a striking and irresistible witness, it is that which Simeon pronounced in the temple of Jerusalem, when, embracing in his arms, now enfeebled by age, the infant in whom he saw the hope and salvation of Israel—the desire of all nations, he said, “ Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a

sign which shall be spoken against." This prophecy was indeed fulfilled during the whole course of the Saviour's ministry; it was fulfilled at the tomb of Lazarus, when some believed, and others went their way to stir up the hatred of the Pharisees; it was fulfilled at the period of His death, when some cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him! His blood be on us and on our children," while future ages were to see in the cross, and in the blood of the New-Testament, the sign of their eternal salvation; it was fulfilled in the first preaching of the Apostles, who were beaten with rods by some, while thousands of others were converted that they might have life; it has been fulfilling during eighteen hundred years, in all places where the Gospel of Christ has been preached; that Gospel which has been to some "a savour of death unto death," but unto others a "savour of life unto life," and "the power of God unto salvation to them that believe." It is still fulfilling in our own day, when the doctrine of Christ crucified continues to excite hatred and persecution, while it constitutes the consolation, the joy, and the life of all those who believe.

Let the enemies of the Gospel then know that with all their enmity and rancour they are working a deceitful work. Let them know that they are living witnesses of the truth of those very doctrines which they oppose; that they powerfully confirm our faith in Christ crucified; that they are accomplishing a most important prophecy; that they are building up that which they would

pull down, even to its foundations; that they have the misery of being blind and unwilling instruments in the hands of the Almighty for the establishment of a kingdom of which they shall not be citizens; that they are like those hireling workmen of the Israelites, who prepared with great labour the materials of a magnificent temple into which they were never to be allowed to enter.

The end of the miracle of Christ was attained as it regarded the family of Bethany, who were comforted, and came out of their trial full of joy, confidence, and love; it was attained with regard to the disciples, who saw in it the glory of God; it was attained with regard to many of the Jews, who, "having seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him." Was it attained with regard to the other witnesses? Was it attained with regard to the body of the Pharisees, High Priests, and Scribes? Alas! it was; but in the sense of the fatal prophecy of Simeon. Let us hear our historian for the last time, and "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

"Many of the Jews which came to Mary," (being persons of a sincere and upright heart, a heart prepared by the grace of God,) "and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him." It was natural for men of an honest and upright disposition to infer from the greatness of the miracle, the greatness of Him who had wrought it by a single word of His omnipotence. They saw that manifestation of the divine power with their own eyes; they had the happiness to believe that

it could be none other than the Christ, the Messiah, promised to Israel, to whom such a power had been given; they saw with their eyes, and they believed with their heart. And although we cannot suppose that their faith was as yet enlightened by the whole truth which Jesus had come to communicate to the world, yet from the time that they believed in His divinity, their heart was open, and ready to receive with submission and full confidence every word that proceeded out of His mouth. What more was wanting? the end of Jesus was attained. "Because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

Miracles alone do not convert; but they dispose the heart, through faith, to give heed to the word of eternal life, which is the instrument of conversion. Nicodemus believes the miracles of Jesus; he sees in them a proof of His Divinity: "Rabbi," saith he, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles which Thou doest, except God be with him." Yet Nicodemus, notwithstanding that degree of faith, and although a Master in Israel; is ignorant of the first elements of the doctrine of regeneration; but constrained by that faith, he comes to Jesus, and earnestly asks to be instructed in the knowledge of salvation, which he is thus disposed to receive. Such was the faith produced in the hearts of the Jews, by the miracle of Jesus. It is a first step, but a step which most frequently leads farther. Such also was the end for which St.

John left us this admirable account of the resurrection of Lazarus, with all its minute details. To every one who reads it with attention, it has a force of evidence as strong as it had to those who, like St. John, were eye-witnesses of the fact. "Is this, then," (must he exclaim who sincerely seeks the truth,) "is this the Saviour whom the Gospel proclaims to me? Oh! I will open my whole soul to such a Master, such a Saviour; I know that in following Him I cannot walk in darkness. I will study, line by line, the word of eternal truth, which He has brought down from heaven; I know that that word cannot cause either my mind or my heart to err; I will meditate upon it with full confidence; I will hail the Author of it as my Guide, my King, my Redeemer!" The soul thus disposed will not be long in finding that the doctrine and word of Christ crucified is sweeter to his heart than honey to his mouth; and from faith in a miracle, he will rise to the faith of experience; he will see, he will feel more divinity in a line of the eternal word, than the Jews saw at the tomb of Lazarus. Such is the place, beautiful and useful, which miracles should occupy in the divine economy. Hence we are fully persuaded that those who expect the revival of miraculous powers in the Church ere it arrive at its promised glory, reverse the order of things. They would descend to the lowest step, instead of ascending, like the angels on the ladder of Jacob, and contemplating the heavens above. They would themselves return and bring back others to the

faith of Nicodemus, the faith of miracles—a faith which may exist without a knowledge of the love of God, and of the new life, and which at the most can do no more than lead to it; instead of rising by the faith of the heart, the faith of love, the faith of confidence, to the loftiest heights of spirituality and of the christian life. They desire the “milk of children, instead of the strong meat of old men,” “God is love, and he that loveth abideth in God.” Now what has he who abideth in God by love, to do with the visible material manifestation of the power and love of his God? Whether is St. John, reclining with confidence upon the bosom of his Master, or the multitude that follow him, loudly demanding miracles, nearer to Jesus? Jesus Himself hath answered the question. “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And He left them, and departed.” (Matt. xvi. 4.)

Yet Jesus, in his infinite condescension, has often made use of miracles, to draw to Himself the giddy minds of “an evil and adulterous generation.” And we are far from concluding, from what we have just said, with some systematizing Christians, that because miracles have for a time ceased, they shall never again be revived in the Church. We shall not, however, stop to examine this unprofitable question. We shall rather proceed to consider, for our instruction, how the Jews of Bethany profited by the greatest miracle that was ever performed before the eyes of

men. Ah! what would the disciples, what would the sisters of Lazarus have said, if amid their joys, amid their happiness, and amid the overflowings of their lively affection, they had been told that the work of might and of love, that powerful appeal which was to be re-echoed through all Judea, and throughout all ages, that the resurrection of Lazarus was to become the second cause of the sufferings and death of the Holy One and the Just? Could they have believed it? And yet, oh mystery of depravity! such was the case; this is what the disciple whom Jesus loved now proceeds to relate. How did not his pen, after having described, in so touching a manner, the love and compassion of Jesus, shrink from disclosing to us those depths of iniquity? Ah! it was because we needed to know well, that "whosoever loveth is born of God," and that "the whole world lieth in wickedness."

"But some of them went their way to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done." What! they had come to Bethany, to comfort Martha and Mary; they had seen their grief, they had seen their Heavenly Friend approach the tomb of Lazarus, weeping; they had seen Him raise His majestic eyes to heaven; they had heard His prayer; they had heard His irresistible voice, "Lazarus come forth!" They had seen him that was dead come forth from the tomb; they had seen the transports of joy, and happiness, and gratitude, which took possession of all hearts present; and instead of "seeing the glory

of God," and falling down at the feet of Jesus, they go to tell these things to those who were known to be His most inveterate enemies. Such is man, or such is what he will become the moment he is given up to his own hardness of heart, and enmity against God! And yet you say that he is naturally good; that he loves truth, that he yields to evidence. Sooner would I believe you, were you to tell me that the rock which stands upon the sea-shore yields to the billows which for ages have dashed against it without effect, and driven back, expired at its base. If the overpowering evidence which issued from the tomb of Lazarus was not sufficient to convince man; if the love which Jesus there displayed could not touch his heart, or conciliate his enmity, then seek in your systems of religion and morality some more powerful means of producing these effects, and prove the goodness and natural tenderness of the heart of man. But we forewarn you that we require facts; that we will not be satisfied with words, or phrases, or mere assertions. Ah! rather acknowledge that the power of grace alone is capable of persuading, of touching, and of changing man's heart. Say not that if revelation were accompanied with more evidence, or if there were in the Gospel fewer things above reason, man would more easily believe. No; the Jews who, at the tomb of Lazarus, continued unbelievers, and enemies to Christ, exhibit an undeniable evidence against your reasonings, and supply us with a commentary of *facts* upon these remarkable words

of Jesus: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." (Luke xvi, 31.) Do ye require another proof? Let us hear the chief priests and Pharisees. "Then the chief priests and Pharisees," having heard the account which was given them by eye-witnesses of the resurrection of Lazarus, *gathered a special council* to deliberate on that important affair. The chief priests! The ministers of religion, the men to whom God had committed the charge of labouring for His glory and for the advancement of His kingdom; those whose duty it was to exert all their power and influence for the spread of His truth, as soon as they became acquainted with it, and whatever it might cost them! Now how do they comply with these obligations? "What do we?" say they among themselves. Independently of the knowledge which they have of their duty as ministers of religion, in this case it is impossible that they can be in error, or even in doubt; they are convinced of the reality of the miracles of Christ; this they acknowledge themselves, "This man doeth many miracles;" and this knowledge, this persuasion, is a precious talent confided to their trust, of which, whatever be their opinion, they must give an awful account hereafter.

Now with so much knowledge, so much light, such convictions, does there rise up among them some Gamaliel, to make the voice of truth and justice be heard with power? Is there in the ecclesiastical body some Israelite without guile,

who says, "This Man doeth many miracles!" then he is from God; then we ought to hear him, and humbly to range ourselves among his followers. No! on the contrary, in their council, all is passion, selfishness, and pride. Idolaters of themselves, of their pride, of their vanity, of their influence, of their money, they have no fear of God before their eyes, and hence what can we expect from them? No more than we can expect from any man whose heart has not been changed and sanctified. Here it cannot be said that we have taken an example of the human heart from the most depraved class of society. On the contrary, these were men of the greatest enlightenment; men in whom education might have been expected to have developed most fully the moral feeling; in a word, they were ministers of religion. Well, then, let us hear them; let us seek in them those principles of justice, uprightness, and virtue, which are said to exist in the human heart. Hear their reasoning; hear how they answer this natural question; "What shall we do?"

"If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." "If we let Him thus alone!" Thus from the outset their inquiry is not whether He is of God, whether he declares the truth, whether He is the Messiah promised to Israel! The question of truth and justice is from the very commencement trampled under foot! they do not give it a moment's deliberation; they do not even take it into consider-

ation. One thing alone enters into their counsels —not to let Him alone, to oppose Him by force, to condemn Him. Oh! depth of iniquity! frightful degradation of the human heart! inconceivable contempt of the most obvious and the most sacred principles of justice and virtue! This single sentence discovers to us the whole of that deep corruption which fills the soul of those judges of Israel, those false prophets, who having the key of knowledge, not only refuse to enter in themselves, but hinder them that were entering in. “If we let Him alone!” Fools! feeble worms of the earth! ye deliberate in your miserable pride, if you will *let Him alone* who has just commanded with authority death and the grave; Him who has just displayed to us a power altogether divine; Him who made the worlds; Him who by a single word could command you back into that original nothing out of which He had brought you! Thus it is that a deplorable blindness invariably accompanies passion and enmity against God. Thus it is that in our own days, as well as in the days of Christ, we see the great ones of the earth, the Pharisees, and chief priests, “imagining vain things, and taking counsel against the Lord and His anointed,” against the eternal truth of God, to which the whole universe is promised as a conquest. There is, then, “nothing new under the sun;” and since Christ Himself, since His disciples after Him, and His servants in every age have found inveterate enemies in those very persons who, from their calling, ought to have se-

conded with their utmost efforts the faithful witnesses of the "truth as it is in Jesus," shall we be astonished if in our day we meet with the same enmity, the same obstacles, and the same persecutions in the cause of religion? We may be grieved by it, but we must not be astonished; we may suffer from it, but we must not cease to call upon Him who is all-powerful to "open the eyes of the blind."

But let us go on, let us hear the arguments of the chief priests, for they must have arguments, or at least pretexts, from whatever quarter they may be drawn; and they are as follows:—

"If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Here are two powerful reasons; two most conclusive considerations. All men will believe on Him, and the Romans shall come; but not a word about what Jesus had done worthy of condemnation; not a word about principle; the whole argument rests upon imaginary consequences; and yet He must be condemned. "All men will believe on Him." What a testimony to the power of the truth which Jesus preached! Ah! if He be God; if He has done many miracles; if He be the Messiah, the Deliverer promised to Israel, then rejoice in the faith which is reposed in Him; be the first to hold Him up to the people as a teacher whom they ought to follow, a Saviour whom they ought to love, and in whom they ought to place their confidence. You ought to know the prophecies which proclaim

Him to the world; you have been appointed as watchmen in Israel; you ought to be acquainted with the times and seasons for the restoration of the spiritual kingdom of David. Why are you not at your post? why do you not proclaim Him from Moses' seat as the King Messiah, the Saviour? But if "all believe on Him," what will become of our influence over the people, our honours, our reputation, our stations? This is the point; this is the real argument; this is what you fear much more than the Romans; this is your idol—pride. Before that idol all must bow the knee, even the King of Glory Himself, who had just raised Lazarus from the dead, and whom the prophecies of four thousand years had predicted to the world; "The Romans shall come!" And what of that? Ye children of Abraham, who glory in your liberty; who, though vanquished by the conqueror of the world, boast that you have never bowed the neck beneath the humiliating yoke of Cæsar, to whom you obstinately refuse the title of Master; behold! you tremble when the question at issue is eternal truth, the glory of your nation, the eternal salvation of the immortal souls which God has committed to your care. Where is your courage? But no; this is but a vain pretext; for the chief priests well knew that the Romans, out of policy, tolerated all the religions of the nations which they conquered, and that the Jewish people would no more be destroyed for believing in Jesus than for believing in Moses. And yet what a powerful argument, could the speaker but inspire his

colleagues with this fear of seeing themselves, the temple, and the nation exterminated. No more temple, no more honours, no more posts of profit, no more revenues;—thus we have arrived at our first conclusion—*He must be condemned!*

Yet, oh! the blindness of the man who exalts himself against God. It has been ever true, that “the wicked worketh a deceitful work.” The priests condemn Jesus, lest “all men should believe in Him,” and it is precisely the death of the Holy One, and the Just, that shall awaken in the hearts of the men of all generations faith in Jesus; it is just that death that, at the first preaching of Peter who charged the nation with it, touched with compunction and converted to the faith of Jesus five thousand souls. The priests condemn Jesus lest the Romans should “come and take away their place and nation;” and it is just by that act, that filling up the measure of their sins, they bring down upon themselves the final judgment of a holy and righteous God; and, in fact, the Romans did come and destroy the priests, and the temple, and the nation. Oh! were there among the enemies of God in all ages and in all places, any remains of wisdom; were the veil which covers their eyes less thick, they would tremble at the thought of being found “fighting against God.”

Such were the arguments which were under discussion in the assembly, when Caiaphas, who in virtue of his dignity as high-priest, presided over that iniquitous council, impatient of a deliberation

which he found already too long, rises and exclaims with a tone of anger, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." *It is expedient.* Such is the motive before which all others must disappear;—such is the shameful consideration which must impose silence upon justice. Our interest is concerned—we must then condemn Him. How well do these words discover the real thoughts of these judges! What a lesson do they teach all future generations! It is probable that the other judges would not have dared thus to expose to the light of day the turpitude of their thoughts (for in the absence of virtue men wish at least to have the appearance of it;) but God permits the high-priest, the successor of Aaron, to tell the world, what is the real motive of the actions of the man who proclaims war against eternal truth. Expediency; vile self-interest, avowed, or concealed under the mantle of hypocrisy: this is the god of this world; the prince of this world; the impure idol to which every thing must be sacrificed. And to preserve the temple of this god of the unconverted man, it is not enough to oppose the truth, as the other members of the Sanhedrim suggested; it is necessary to stifle it and not to combat it; it is necessary not only to prove that Jesus is wrong, but to put Him to death: "It is expedient for us that one man should *die* for the people." And who can be surprised? Who does not know that impiety gives a loose rein to that

enmity which is at the bottom of the unregenerate man's heart, and that "he that hateth his brother is a murderer," whether in fact or in intention matters little in the eyes of God.

But, it will be said, Caiaphas had in view the interest of the nation. It would appear, then, that the principle which sanctions the sacrifice of an innocent individual for the general interest, the principle in accordance with which men have commanded an assassination in the name of justice, is not "new under the sun;" the mind of Caiaphas was imbued with it; it was with him a political axiom; this is that *reason of state* which might with more propriety be called *a reason of hell* and the policy of devils. The thousands of victims sacrificed to this principle cry from earth to heaven, and proclaim the moral degradation of the human species more loudly than any thing we can say upon the subject. But no; we have already shown that the preservation of the nation, as far as the Romans were concerned, was by no means involved in the people's believing in Jesus. Here all is blind passion, all is *self-interest*. Melancholy discovery! humbling truth! Yes, O Jesus! die, die for the people; die, die to raise them from this deep degradation; die to produce in us a new life.

Astonishing! it is this depth of deliverance and of salvation that Caiaphas prophesies. Like Balaam, he would utter a malediction, and he pronounces a blessing; he commands a murder, and he brings about the propitiatory sacrifice

which shall be the redemption of the world. Let us hear the commentary of St. John, "And this spake he not of himself, but being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation."

Caiaphas was the high-priest, the president of the supreme ecclesiastical court; his involuntary prophecy must come from one high in authority, to receive from this circumstance the greater importance, to sound solemnly in the ears of those around him, and to be handed down to future ages. "This spake he not of himself." Alas! his impious thought, his iniquitous proposition, is really from himself, or rather from the devil;—but oh the depth of the wisdom and power of God! Caiaphas imagines that he only obeys his own passions; he thinks to serve the interest of the kingdom of darkness, and God makes of him, unknown to himself, a prophet of the truth, a preacher of the glad tidings of salvation! God might have sent upon this enemy of Christ one of those signal judgments, by which He often punishes the wicked before the eyes of all; He might have smitten him, like Herod, and made him die a miserable death, being "eaten of worms." But no; even the enemy of God must subserve the glory of the Eternal; the blind instrument of Satan must proclaim the mercy of God towards a fallen world; the very words which flow from a heart full of hatred and wrath must become a song of praise and thanksgiving for future ages. Who henceforward will dare to

oppose the designs of our God? The enemies of Christ assembled together, and it is from the midst of that council that God draws the accomplishment of His promises concerning the glorious kingdom of His Son, and it is the leader of that council that must proclaim to the world the event by which all the powers of darkness are to be trampled under foot; if God does not annihilate His enemies, He can employ them as instruments of His will; He can draw praises out of hell; He can constrain the powers of darkness to exclaim, like the angels of heaven, Glory! glory to God on high!

Condemn then, put to death the Prince of Life! and if His death become the signal of your eternal ruin, around His cross (to use the language of the Evangelist) shall be "gathered together not only that nation, but also the children of God which were scattered abroad." It was not only for the people of Israel, whose interests the priests affected to have at heart, that it behoved Jesus to die, but for the children of God; for the redeemed of all people, nations, languages, and tribes which belonged to Him by the election of grace.

Ye children of God—ye who are still scattered abroad amid trials and conflicts, consider then the will of Him who died for you; He wishes to gather you together; He wishes first to lead captive to the foot of the cross all your thoughts and all your affections; He wishes to separate you from the world, and to gather you into His fold: and what have you to fear? Hear His prayer which ascends to heaven on your behalf: "Father, I will

that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." And this prayer has been heard. Nor is there one of your enemies that shall not eventually contribute to your eternal salvation, and give glory to Him who has saved you. To be gathered together from your dispersion to dwell in the eternal assembly of the children of God. Such is your glorious portion, such is the will of your heavenly Father; and who shall oppose it? Who shall pluck you out of His hand? "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 38, 39.)

Oh! if my feeble voice, which in the course of these meditations has been able to do no more than address a few afflicted souls whom Jesus invites to taste of the consolations of the word of God; if my feeble voice could reach those who still in any way oppose the designs of God's mercy towards them; how would I entreat them with tears to have pity on themselves; to come, while there is yet time, to the only source of life—Jesus, the Saviour of sinners. A few days more, O immortal souls, and ye shall see with your eyes the Lord of Glory, who shall come, no longer to shed tears of compassion over the tomb of a friend or to mourn over the folly of those who reject Him, but to exercise justice and judgment, and "to punish with everlasting destruction

them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Oh! love Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus, that ye may love Him also when He comes on the throne of His glory.

But Thou only, oh my Saviour, art mighty to call us forth, like Lazarus, from the tomb of our corruption, to restore life to these dry bones, to give us a new heart capable of loving Thee—a new life, that we may devote ourselves to Thy service. Oh! let thy powerful word be brought home to us. Let not our spiritual death, let not our corruptions put any obstacle in the way of that word by which Thou "callest things that are not as though they were!" Let thine infinite love inflame our cold hearts; eradicate their selfishness, banish their enmity! To love Thee, O gracious Redeemer; to love thee with all our heart, and mind, and soul, is the object of our being, the destination for which Thou hast given us existence, for which thou hast redeemed us at so great a price. Make us attain this end before it be too late! Rescue us from perdition—save us, as it were in spite of ourselves! But no, Lord; we wish to love Thee as a willing people; we wish to consecrate to Thee our heart, our affections, our life, our last breath! Art not Thou the Being supremely wise, supremely good! Ah! "to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!"







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