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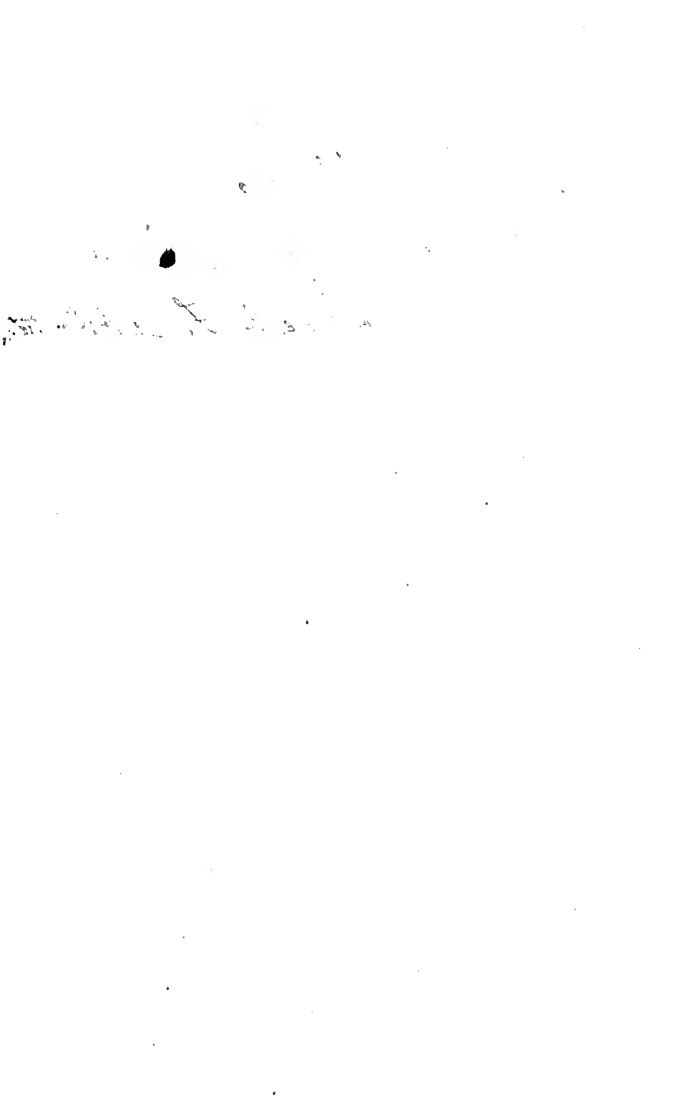
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Life's evening; or, thought
for the aged

Samuel J. White



Miss Polly Dow

From her friend

Lucas F. Abbott.

From your friend
Lucas F. Abbott

Presented to J. T. King by
W. Abbott July 1872



✓
LIFE'S EVENING;

OR,

THOUGHTS FOR THE AGED.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LIFE'S MORNING," ETC.

"The shadows of the evening are stretched out."

JER. vi. 4.

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The Review of Life.

The busy day of life is over. Its pleasures, its duties, and its anxieties have passed away. The sunshine and the shade, which alternately marked its path, have alike disappeared ; and the soft tints of evening are gathered over the sky.

The evening of life ! Yes : life has its sunset hour, its twilight season. The dim eye, the silvered lock, and the feeble step, indicate that the closing period of earthly existence has arrived. How rapid has been the flight of time ! how near must be the approach of eternity !

The gradual decline of health and strength is a kind and merciful preparative for the solemn change which awaits us. It seems to lessen the reluctance which our nature feels to give up life ; to wean us from the varied attractions of earth ; to soften the abrupt transition from the present to a future state of being. It accustoms us to the consideration of death : it assists us in the realization of immortality.

The evening of life ! Evening is the time for *rest*. The little bird seeks its leafy roost ; the rosy child throws aside its playthings and falls asleep ; the weary laborer comes home from his work. The cares of the day are forgotten ; and all is hushed and quiet. And life's closing hours, Christian reader, should be distinguished by serenity and repose. You must not harass and perplex yourself now with occupations which were once both appropriate

and necessary, nor repine because you are unable to exert yourself as in former days. Your strength is to sit still. Old age is the resting-place in the journey of life; and the feverish heat of noontide is exchanged for the refreshing coolness of twilight.

An impatient, restless, grasping, or dissatisfied spirit is not consistent with the character of an aged pilgrim. Habitual quietude and self-possession should mark his demeanor. Neither the excitements of the world, nor the agitations of the professing Church, should ruffle your equanimity; for you are too experienced a traveller in this vale of tears to be discomposed by the distractions around you, or to doubt the wisdom and faithfulness of Him who makes all things work together for good.

Your rest in Christ, your trust in him as your Saviour, should be more perfect, more

unwavering than in earlier years. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,"* should be the assured expression of your confidence in him. Firmly placed on the Rock of ages, and fully conscious of the security of your position, your closing life should be a realization of that promise in which God has engaged to keep in "*perfect peace*" those whose minds are stayed on him.† The cheerful, all-sustaining faith of an aged Christian is one of the best testimonies to the worth and reality of religion, and furnishes a bright and encouraging example to the lambs of the flock. Weary and distressed by the arduous conflict in which he is engaged, the youthful Christian is frequently too ready to conclude with the desponding patriarch,

* 2 Tim. i. 12.

† Isa. xxvi. 3.

“All these things are against me;”* or to exclaim with the sorrowful Psalmist, “I shall perish one day.”† At such seasons in his experience, his faith is strengthened and his hope is revived, as he beholds the tranquillity and peace of some advanced believer, who has safely passed through similar trials, and successfully surmounted similar temptations to his own, and who is now enjoying a foretaste of that rest which remaineth to the people of God. Such repose is to him a pledge of his own partial deliverance from toil and conflict; and the contemplation of it enables him to gird up the loins of his mind, and to run with patience the race set before him.

Then let those around you, Christian reader, see that your hope is like an anchor sure and steadfast; that you are now confidently resting

* Gen. xlii. 36.

† 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

upon those principles which have hitherto sustained and guided you. Let no doubt shadow your peace; no anxiety ruffle your composure. You have struggled long with trial and temptation; you have tested in your own experience the truth of God's promises; you have done his work among your fellow-men; and now you must calmly wait until your Father's loving voice bids you welcome home.

The evening of life! Evening is the time for *reflection*. Amidst the busy and exciting occupations of the day there is seldom much opportunity for serious consideration. Well-disciplined minds, it is true, can control their thoughts, and gather them around high and holy subjects, even in those moments which are necessarily devoted to worldly business; but most persons are so harassed and engrossed by

the constant claims upon their time and attention, as scarcely to be able to cast a hurried glance on things which are unseen and remote ; and they feel how welcome and how desirable is the evening hour for quiet meditation, for self-examination, and for the formation of wise and good purposes.

Now, reader, your eventide of life should be consecrated to calm and elevated thought. Through the long period which is passed, you have not perhaps redeemed much time for hallowed consideration. Martha-like, you may have been cumbered with much serving ; or, Israel-like, you may have forgotten the Lord your God. But whatever has been your previous history, you are now, by the infirmities of age, withdrawn from active duties, that you may muse upon coming realities. How thankful should you feel that there is yet

a brief space allotted you for pious thought and preparation, before you go hence and be no more seen!

In the peaceful twilight hour, when we sit alone and commune with our own hearts, our thoughts naturally turn to the occurrences of the past day. Little incidents, too trifling perhaps to speak about, are reviewed and dwelt upon; virtuous actions which have been performed win the approval of conscience, and wanderings from duty call forth feelings of regret; pleasing events and painful trials have each a share in our pensive musings: varied indeed are the scenes which one day's panorama brings before our view. And then we generally glance at the future. We arrange our plans for the coming day: we look forward with glad expectance to the joys which are in store for us; or we shrink in fear and

despondency from the troubles which seem associated with the morrow: and will not your thoughts, *aged reader*, thus chiefly divide themselves into retrospection and anticipation?

Retrospection. “Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness.”* Old age is the most appropriate season for this consideration of the past. The judgment is not so likely to be warped by the heat of excitement, nor the feelings to be swayed by the influence of passion, as in youthful days. The veteran, as he recalls the battle-field, can mark events, and form opinions, far more advantageously than the soldier who is engaged in the midst of an action. Contemplate, then, your whole life, from the dawn of infancy to its present de-

* Deut. viii. 2.

cline ; trace out the many windings of your pathway through the world ; survey each minute feature of your changeful history.

But is it pleasant to look back ? Are there not many places in our pilgrimage where memory dislikes to linger ? are there not many facts in life's early records which we feel happier in forgetting ? True, the remembrance of our imperfections and our sins is painful and self-condemning ; yet it is always best to open one's eyes to the truth. Enter, then, into a full and faithful examination of your past history. Scrutinize your motives by the tests with which God's word furnishes you ; and try your conduct by his holy law. Let neither pride nor prejudice hide the real state of things from your view. How important is it that, on the confines of eternity, you should be kept from self-deception ! Ask God himself

to be your teacher. Make this your prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

What then is the result of your investigation? What verdict does conscience, enlightened from above, give concerning the past? It may be, nay, it must be, that you find enough in your recollections to overwhelm you with sorrow and confusion. So much selfishness and worldliness have mingled with your brightest deeds; so much unfaithfulness has been connected with your professed allegiance to Christ; so much impurity of heart and defilement of life are discovered by your rigid self-inspection,—that you are ready to exclaim with the Psalmist, "Enter not into

* Ps. cxxxix. 23.

judgment with thy servant, O Lord : for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.”* Or perhaps your reflections on the past have convinced you that you have hitherto been living without God and without Christ in the world ; that you have been so absorbed with the trifles of earth as to have forgotten the attractions of heaven ; that, although a responsible being, and liable to be summoned at any moment to your final account, you have gone carelessly on in the ways of sin, and have disobeyed the commands of the Most High.

The retrospect, in either case, is *humbling*. Yet it leads to hope, and peace, and salvation. Both to the troubled Christian and the penitent sinner, the cheering annunciation of the Gospel is, “ The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” † “ Believe on the Lord Jesus

* Ps. cxliii. 2.

† 1 John i. 7.

Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* Then, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” † “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” ‡ Full and free forgiveness is offered to all who seek it at his cross. Cast yourself, with all your sins, however great their number, or aggravated their guilt, at the Saviour’s feet, saying, “Lord, save me: I perish!” and his gracious response will be, “Thy sins are forgiven;—go in peace.” §

Let the sorrowful and self-abasing remembrance of your iniquity make Christ in your estimation increasingly precious. Your sin is the dark background which throws his love

* Acts xvi. 31.

† Matt. xi. 28.

‡ Isa. i. 18.

§ Matt. viii. 25; Luke vii. 48, 50.

and his atonement into strong relief. (Without his sacrifice and intercession, how dark would be life's evening! Not one star of hope would illumine the sky; not one ray of gladness would beam on your spirit. But now the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ casts a lovely and softened radiance on all around you and before you. O, as you behold by faith the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, as you thankfully recognize in him your gracious Mediator and ever-prevalent Intercessor, can you not exclaim, with the aged and rejoicing sinner, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation?"*"

But the consideration of the past should not only awaken penitence, it should excite *grati-*

* Luke ii. 29.

tude. You have been wonderfully preserved from many dangers ; you have been safely guided through many difficulties ; you have been continually enriched with numberless blessings. Surely goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life. Recall some of the multiplied proofs which you have had of God's tender, parental care over you. It would be impossible to recount every instance of his goodness towards you, for memory, always imperfect, is now sadly impaired ; but "forget not *all* his benefits." Each comfort which you have enjoyed through life came from his beneficent hand ; each impulse to good, and each resistance to evil which you have felt, was through the impartation of his grace. Can you not heartily acknowledge the truthfulness of that charge which the dying servant of the Lord pressed home upon the

Israelites around him? "*Ye know* that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass, and not one thing hath failed thereof."* O yes ! every aged believer will testify to the faithfulness of God in the fulfilment of his promises. You can look back to several points in your history, where, but for the interposition of God's providence, or the aid of his Spirit, you must have been overwhelmed by temptation and sorrow. Many have been the occasions when you have had to set up your stone of remembrance, and to confess that hitherto the Lord hath helped you. Even as to your trials, you can see now, with regard to some of them at least, that they were "blessings in disguise ;" and you are sure that they were

* Joshua xxiii. 14.

all sent for some wise and loving purpose. With what grateful emotions, then, should your recollections of bygone days be accompanied!

And should not gratitude for past mercies be combined with *hope* for future favors and deliverances? "He thanked God and took courage."* When you think of the increased weakness, and perhaps suffering, which you have yet to bear; of the inevitable separation between yourself and those whom you love, which will soon take place; of the valley of the shadow of death through which you must pass, and of the solemn moment when your spirit shall depart from this world;—natural feeling shrinks from the scene before you. "Cast me not off in the time of old age," is the language of your heart; "forsake me not when my

* Acts xxviii. 15.

strength faileth.”* Hearken to the immediate reply of the God of your salvation : “ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”† Fear thou not ; for I am with thee : be not dismayed ; for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”†

Ah ! you can read these assurances in the page, not of inspiration only, but of experience. You can infer with certainty, from God's conduct in past days, what its complexion will be in future moments. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever ; and therefore in the loving-kindness which he has hitherto manifested towards you, you have the surest pledge of the continual exercise of his power and goodness. He *hath* delivered ;

* Ps. lxxi. 9.

† Heb. xiii. 5.

† Isa. xli. 10.

he *doth* deliver ; in whom you trust that he *will yet* deliver. “The God who hath fed you all your life long,” is your God for ever and ever ; and he will be your guide even unto death.

Anticipation. — Looking back should be combined with looking forward. The weary pilgrim who recalls with mingled sorrow and gladness the events which have occurred during his journey will also think of the rest and the welcome which wait for him in his happy home. The Christian traveller, as evening is closing in around him, and the objects of earth are fading from his gaze, loves to let his imagination dwell upon the many mansions in his Father’s house, where a place is being prepared for him.

“A little while, and every fear
That o’er the perfect day

Flings shadows dark and drear,
Shall fade like mist away ;
The secret tear, the anxious sigh,
Shall pass into a smile ;
Time changes to eternity, —
We only wait a little while."

The morning of joy is close at hand ; the things which are not seen and eternal are every moment drawing nearer to you ; the promised inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and never fading, will soon be actually yours. Meditate on the glory which shall presently be revealed. Consider how perfect in its nature, and how perpetual in its duration, is the happiness which God has provided for you in his everlasting kingdom. An eminent minister who was spending an afternoon with some Christian friends was observed to be unusually silent. On being roused from his reverie by a question which was addressed to him, he

said that he had been absorbed in the contemplation of eternal happiness. "O, my friends!" he exclaimed, with an energy which arrested the attention of all present, "think what it is to be forever with the Lord; forever, forever, forever!"

But *is* the prospect of heaven thus attractive to you? Have you any true sympathy with its joys; any congeniality of spirit with its bright inhabitants? You of course hope, when you die, to go to heaven; the most thoughtless and worldly-minded characters hope that: not because they aspire after more intimate communion with God and closer conformity to his image, but because they associate the idea of happiness with heaven; and it is the instinctive desire of their nature to wish to be happy. But unless we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,

the enjoyments of heaven, were we allowed to be there, would be positively distasteful to us. The unjust and the unholy would be unjust and unholy still, and in a world of perfect truth and purity would find no source of satisfaction. A clergyman was conversing with an intelligent woman in his parish, who was ill and dying. After he had ceased talking to her, she said with an expression of much distaste, "If heaven be such a place as you describe, I have no wish to go there." Such an avowal may seem unnatural, but it would be the confession of every unsanctified heart, if men seriously considered the character of celestial happiness. The songs of the redeemed cannot change the heart, nor the glory of the heavenly city transform the spirit. What fellowship can light have with darkness?

Aged reader, rest not satisfied with anything short of a true preparation for everlasting bliss. It is easy to bear the *name* of Christian. But, without "holiness," no man shall see the Lord.* "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." †

How shall you attain this preparation? By simple faith in Christ, by the grace of the Holy Spirit. External acts of devotion, alms-giving, self-denial, or large charitable bequests, cannot purchase your passport for heaven. The righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe, and the sanctification of the heart which is effected by the power of the Holy Spirit, must be yours before you can enter into everlasting glory. And they may be yours,—yours *now*. Put your trust in that Saviour who has declared he will

* Heb. xii. 14.

† John iii. 3.

in no wise cast out those who come to him ; and seek for the gift of that Holy Spirit which is promised to all who earnestly and perseveringly ask for it ; and you shall have everlasting life.

But it is possible that some humble-minded and timid Christian hesitates, from a fear of being presumptuous and self-deceived, to appropriate those joys which are at God's right hand. Gladly would you anticipate the moment of your departure hence, could you be sure that an abundant entrance would be ministered unto you into Christ's kingdom. But although you cling to the Saviour as your only hope of salvation, and are anxiously striving to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, you cannot rise to that happy confidence which many Christians feel in the prospect of eternity. You cannot echo their peaceful and

unwavering declaration, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* You are like the pilgrims on the Delectable Mountains, whose hands shook so that they could not look steadily through the perspective glass at the gate of the celestial city.

Yet, fear not ! it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom ; the promised possession is secured to you, although you are unable to realize your interest in it. It is both your privilege and your duty to seek earnestly the "assurance of hope ;" but remember, for your consolation and encouragement, that the weakest believer in Christ is as safe as the most rejoicing Christian. Keep your eye fixed upon your Saviour ; strive to follow in his steps :

* 2 Cor. v. 1.

use with constancy and diligence the means of grace which he has provided; and you shall eventually attain to that perfect peace which casteth out fear. "At evening time it shall be light." *

For happy are those whose hope is clear, whose faith is strong, and who, in the consciousness that the time of their departure is at hand, can look to the past and to the future, and meekly but confidently affirm with "Paul the aged," "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." † Joyful assurance! Bright anticipation! Well may such aged believers have an ardent desire to depart, and to be with Christ; well may they long for that rapidly approaching hour when he shall present them

* Zech. xiv. 7.

† 2 Tim. iv. 6.

faultless before the presence of their God with exceeding joy.

// The evening of life ! Evening is the time for *prayer*. Then the lisping babe folds its little hands and utters its simple words of supplication and thanksgiving ; then the pious family assemble round the domestic altar ; then the thoughtful Christian retires into his closet, shuts his door, and prays to his Father who seeth in secret. The comparative quietude which exists in the world around him, and the repose which spreads itself over the face of nature, seem to soothe the spirit of the wearied believer, and to invite him to calm and hallowed intercourse with his Maker.

And should not life's evening thus tranquilize and elevate his feelings ? Private prayer, the delight and duty of all who have been taught of God, is an employment peculiarly

appropriate to the aged Christian. Compelled to relinquish the active occupations of former days ; unable to read much even of the best of books ; and frequently deprived, perhaps, of the long-valued ministrations of the sanctuary, how thankfully does he retain the inestimable privilege of pouring out his heart in secret before God, and of holding sweet converse with his Heavenly Father. "I can very seldom talk or read now," said a venerable servant of God, whose days were almost numbered ; "but," he added, as a happy smile lighted up his withered features, "I can pray. In my weakest moments, without opening my lips, I can make known my requests unto God, and praise him for his never-changing goodness towards me."

Let the evening of your life be much devoted to prayer ; for at the close, no less than at

the commencement of your Christian experience, you are entirely dependent upon Almighty succor. Go therefore with boldness to the throne of grace, that you may still obtain mercy, and find grace to help you in every time of need.* Old age has its especial wants and trials; but, "Ask, and it shall be given you," † is the inscription which is ever written over the mercy-seat. Implore that strength which you require in order that you may cheerfully bear God's will now; that support which you will need in the hour of death, when heart and flesh shall fail; that consolation and guidance which you desire to have imparted to those whom you must leave behind in a world of grief and danger. He, who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask or think, will hear

* Heb. iv. 16.

† Matt. vii. 7.

and answer your feeble but heart-felt petitions.

The evening of life ! Have these words a melancholy sound ? They tell, it is true, that the bright sunshine of youth and manhood is past ; that the health and the energy which impelled our steps in the path of usefulness and renown have departed ; that the night of death will soon gather round us, when we must close our eyes upon all that is loved and lovely here.

But are these facts unwelcome to the Christian ? Nay, are they not rather the incentives of his hope, and his joy ? Long a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth, do they not assure him that he is now on the borders of that country which he has so earnestly been seeking ? The worldling may mourn over the flowers which have withered in his grasp ; but

the Christian has a treasure laid up in heaven, and his heart is there also. The orphan spirit may shrink from the prospect of an unknown eternity; but the child of God cannot but rejoice in the thought of soon going home.

The evening of life! Aged Christian; an everlasting morning will soon dawn upon your redeemed and perfected spirit. "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed."* Mark with thankfulness the shadows of evening as they deepen around you, for they are the necessary precursors of the coming day. Calmly and trustingly as an infant that slumbers on its mother's bosom, you will soon "sleep in Jesus," to awake in that purer and happier world, which has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb

* Rom. xiii. 11.

is the light thereof." * "Absent from the body," you will at once be "present with the Lord;" † you will "behold his face in righteousness;" you will "be satisfied, when you awake, with his likeness." ‡

* Rev. xxi. 23.

† 2 Cor. v. 8.

‡ Ps. xvii. 15.



The Aged Christian.

The spring and summer time of life have long since
passed away,
And golden autumn, with its leaves of sadness and
decay,
Has come and gone ; and winter shrouds each lovely
scene in gloom,
And bids me mark across my path the shadows of
the tomb.

Mine eye is growing dim with age, my step is feeble
now,
And deeper lines of thought and care are graven on
my brow ;

But shall I murmur as I trace the rapid flight of
hours,
Or grasp with trembling eagerness earth's fair yet
fading flowers ?

O no ! a bright and happy home awaiteth me
above,
And my ardent spirit longs to dwell where all is joy
and love.

Does the wave-tossed mariner regret when he sees
the haven near
Where his shattered bark shall safely rest, nor storm
nor danger fear ?

Will the toil-worn laborer sigh because his weary
task must close,
And evening's peaceful shades afford him calm and
sweet repose ?

Or does the child with sorrow mark each swift re-
volving mile,
Which bears him to his cherished home and loving
father's smile ?

And shall the Christian grieve because some gentle
signs are given
That he is nearer to the bliss, the perfect bliss of
heaven ?
That every moment closer brings that mansion fair
and bright,
Prepared for him with tender love in realms of pure
delight ?

O, with such brilliant hopes as these, how can my
heart repine,
Although I feel my vigor fade, my wonted strength
decline ?

Rather with gladness would I hail these messages of
love,
Which tell me I shall quickly join the white-robed
throng above.

My pilgrimage will soon be o'er, my arduous race be
run,
And the bright crown of victory triumphant faith
have won.
No sorrow clouds the land of rest, hushed is the
thought of pain :
O, if for me to live is Christ, to die indeed is gain !



Too Old to be Useful.

“Well, it is a pleasant sight to see young people actively engaged in doing good,” said an old lady, as she watched from her parlor window some of her grandchildren setting forth on their weekly errands of mercy to the poor and afflicted.

Yes; it *was* a pleasant sight to look upon these youthful Christians, full of health and energy, devoting their time and their talents to the service of God, and the welfare of their fellow-creatures; and yet the old lady sighed as she finished her sentence, and did not seem quite comfortable. Why? Listen to what she is saying now.

“ Ah, *I* was once as busy as any of them. I could take a class in the Sunday school, and visit the poor, and collect for the missionary society; but now I am forced to be idle and useless. My strength and my senses are gradually forsaking me; and I am but a worn-out and unprofitable servant. But come, I must not complain; I have had my share in these good works in bygone days, and I must be content to lie by now, and let others labor; for I am too old to be of any use.”

Was the old lady right? She meant what she said, and she meant well. She was trying to bear with patience and resignation her unavoidable exclusion from the charitable engagements of her young relatives; but old people as well as young sometimes have mistaken ideas; and it is possible that the old lady was not quite so clear upon the subject of

•

Christian usefulness as we should like our readers to be.

It is true that the aged cannot work in God's vineyard as they used to do before infirmity or ill-health disabled them for active service, but still they are not too old to be useful.

Too old to be useful! Such words are a libel upon their character, — an insult to their capabilities. It cannot be that any Christian is continued upon earth, who has not something to do as well as to suffer for his Master. Look at the closing days of the venerable Eliot, the first missionary to the American Indians. On the day of his death, when, in his eightieth year, he was found teaching the alphabet to an Indian child at his bedside, "Why not rest from your labors now?" said a friend. "Because," said the venerable man, "I have prayed

to God to make me useful in my sphere, and he has heard my prayer; for now that I can no longer preach, he leaves me strength enough to teach this poor child this alphabet."

Eighty years of age and bedridden! Who after this can plead their inability to do good? Who will not rather gather up their remaining time and talents, and devote them to God's service? Like the widow's mite, your offering may seem poor and small; you are almost ashamed to cast it into the treasury; but bring it without hesitation,—nay, with gladness; what could you give more? it is your *all*; and your feeble efforts will meet with kind and gracious acknowledgment from a loving Saviour, who said, "She hath done what she could!"*

O, it is so delightful to labor for Christ, that the true-hearted Christian would fain

* Mark xiv. 8.

keep on, as Eliot did, to the last. The late Rev. John Campbell, of Kingsland, went one morning to attend an early committee meeting of a religious society. On his way up-stairs he found an old friend, remarkable for his devotedness to the cause of Christ, leaning on the balustrade which led to the room, and unable to proceed from a difficulty of breathing.

“What! are you here, Mr. T.? How could you venture in your state of health? You have attended our meetings for a long time, and you should now leave the work for younger men.”

His friend looked up with a cheerful smile, and replied with characteristic energy, “O Johnny, Johnny, man, it is hard to give up working in the service of *such* a Master!”

How cheering then is the thought that the aged have still opportunities of usefulness

afforded them! Suppose we remind our readers of a few ways in which they have it in their power to benefit others.

Well, some of you, perhaps, who cannot walk about and visit your neighbors, might send them a little tract or book occasionally. A person dies in your street, — a child is born in the next house, — a worldly family opposite are in trouble, — a gentleman has met with an accident, — a grocer's shop is open on the Sunday; — all these, and many others, are occasions when "a little messenger of mercy" might speak "a word in season." Listen to the following fact.

A man who was keeper of one of the locks on the Grand Junction Canal lived for many years apparently without any religious feelings. He possessed much personal kindness, and had been the means of saving at least twelve

persons from a watery grave, some of whom had plunged into the stream in seasons of frantic sorrow. In the summer of 1841, poor Matthew met with a severe accident, and was removed to the London Hospital. After he had been there a few days, he received a letter by post — of which the following is a copy — enclosing a tract entitled “To-day:” —

“You have suffered greatly, my friend; your poor body calls for help and sympathy, and in the hospital you are mercifully attended to, as you could not be at home. How is it with your precious soul? Are you fit to die? Had your sufferings caused instant death, where would your soul have been? Where, my friend? Where? In heaven, or in hell? Do think of this inquiry, and read the tract I enclose, or get some one to read it to you. Do not neglect this friendly warning, but

attend to it while it is yet with you called 'To-day.' O, what a mercy you were spared yet a little longer! may it be for the salvation of your precious soul. The Lord Jesus is able and willing to save all who feel their need of his salvation. Pray, then, afflicted friend, for the Holy Spirit to show you your need of mercy, and of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to cleanse you from your sins, and to obtain your acceptance with God. The tract was written by a gentleman seventy years old. May the Lord make it a blessing to your soul. He is able and willing to save you from going to hell, and willing to prepare you for the holiness and happiness of heaven. — Farewell."

There was no signature to the letter; it bore the "Stroudwater" postmark, but Matthew knew no one residing there. However,

the perusal of the letter induced him to read the tract; the Holy Spirit blessed it to his conversion; and he became a consistent Christian. He wished very much that he could find out who had sent him the tract; and a kind friend, to whom this interesting fact was mentioned, thought that he knew the person from whom it came. He wrote accordingly, and received the following note, which proved that his conjecture was right:—

“My dear Sir,—It was in hours of weakness, and during a long detention from the house of the Lord, that I was directed one Sabbath day to write the letter to which you refer to poor Matthew. It used to be a saying with myself, *to myself*, on doing any such thing, ‘Well, I have cast one grain more of the good seed of the kingdom into the field of the world; that world which still lieth in

wickedness.' I bless the Lord he permitted me to cast in that grain, and I praise him still more that he caused it to germinate, and bring forth fruit. Glory be to his holy name that he has seen fit to glorify the riches of his grace in the salvation of a soul, by means in themselves so weak and poor. When I received the supply from London, of which that tract formed one, I selected a number of that description for the purpose of enclosing in letters (now in these days of penny-postage blessedness, in which in almost every letter we write we can proclaim the glad tidings of mercy by inserting an eight-paged tract),—and among others, poor Matthew received one. Surely it would have been a shorter journey from Paternoster Row to the London Hospital; but in this case it seemed needful that it should go from London to the country, and

back again to town, to reach the object for which it was designed. Several other such grains have been cast into the field of the world. O that it may please the Lord to cause them to be fruitful also!"

Now, reader, let the example of this pious invalid win you, in some measure, to follow it. It does not, you see, require much money, much talent, much influence, or much strength to be useful. A few kind words written, or a good tract enclosed to an acquaintance, or even to a stranger, may be the appointed channel through which God's grace shall flow into their souls. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."*

Then there is the influence which you may exert over children and young persons. Not

* Eccles. xi. 1.

by fault-finding, or selfish requirements, or sarcastic observations; but by kind words, persuasive advice, and affectionate treatment. Your little grandchildren, or your elder nephews and nieces, as they cluster round your cheerful fireside, may drink in many a gentle lesson which shall guide them in after years. If you have not any youthful relatives, you can cultivate the acquaintance of the children of your friends and neighbors. It is a lovely sight to see age and youth sweetly blending together: age tempering the gayety of youth, and youth brightening the gravity of age. The ivy adorns the oak; and the oak supports the ivy. "But young people," you may say, "are so self-willed and conceited; they think they are as wise as old folks." It is often too true; but bear with them; we have all been young in our time; and it is astonishing how

grateful even the most independent among them are, for a real and warm-hearted interest in their welfare. You may influence them strongly, if you are only *kind* in purpose, and *judicious* in practice.

Sympathize with them in their joys and their sorrows. Show them that increase of years does not necessarily blunt the feelings or narrow the affections; that the pilgrim who has almost reached his welcome and long-expected resting-place does not forget or despise those who have but lately set out on their toilsome journey. Speak to them of your own experience of actual life; of the mental and moral discipline which you have endured; of the difficulties in the path of duty which you have met and conquered; of the comfort which has sustained you in the hour of trial and bereavement. Simple facts are

more impressive than mere advice. Quietly but deeply they sink into the memory, arousing no opposition, exciting no argument; in time of need they will be remembered and turned to good account. You may thus be the honored instrument of guiding some wayward and careless heart to true peace and happiness; of imparting right principles which shall steer some perplexed spirit across the rough sea of temptation; of forming the character of those who are destined in coming years to exercise great moral power over their fellow-creatures. You may not—you will not—live to behold those happy results of your patient and prayerful efforts; but when those who die in the Lord rest from their labors, their works follow them. An aged man carefully planted several fruit-trees in his garden, that they might grow up for the use

and benefit of posterity ; so may you cast into human hearts that precious seed which will germinate, and spring forth, and bless the world, long after you have departed to your rest. The destiny of future generations may be linked with your Christian endeavor to gather one youthful friend into the fold of the Saviour. God grant that you may fully appreciate and fulfil your peculiar mission to the young.

But perhaps the best way in which the aged Christian — ay, and any Christian — can benefit others, is by the purity and loveliness of his *example*. You cannot now do much, or say much, for the good of your fellow-creatures ; but “nothing speaks so loudly as the silent eloquence of a holy and consistent life ;” nothing exercises such gentle and yet such powerful influence over the mind as the exam-

ple of one whom we love and respect. It is a practical and perpetual sermon.

Look into that quiet and half-darkened room. In the large easy-chair sits an aged lady. She is confined by constant indisposition to her house,—to her apartment; nay, even to her chair, for she cannot move herself without assistance. Her friends are forbidden to see her, as the least excitement proves injurious; and therefore a skilful nurse and a loving-hearted daughter are her only associates. But she does not wish for society; incessant pain renders her unable to converse much, and the exertion of speaking but a few words fatigues her sadly. Poor lady! the days have indeed come in which she has no pleasure; the grasshopper is become a burden; desire has failed; and fears are in the way. Her life has been a life full of good works;

and now, withdrawn forever from her loved occupations, she must solace herself with the beautiful thought,

“They also serve who only stand and wait.”

It is a beautiful thought ; she knows its truth ; she feels its preciousness ; her daily, constant prayer is, “Thy will be done.” Yet you must not imagine that her career of usefulness has ended ; that it found its termination in that sick-room. No ; in that limited sphere, during that lingering illness, she has, perhaps, done more good than you or I have effected in our lifetime. How ? That kind servant who waits upon her has lately grown thoughtful and pious ; and she traces the happy change in her views and in her feelings to the sweet example of her dear mistress ; not to her counsels, not to her persuasions, but to her example. She witnessed her patience, her

fortitude, her serenity, her faith in Christ, her readiness to depart; and she felt how valuable that religion must be which could give such peace in life, such hope in death. She determined, with God's help, to make that religion her own; and now her mistress's last hours are cheered by the delightful knowledge that her grateful attendant has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.

Glance now inside that lowly almshouse. There dwells a venerable man, whose snow-white locks, bended frame, and tottering steps are plain indications that his physical energies are rapidly declining. Is he too old, or too infirm, to be useful? Almost, so far as active service is concerned, for he is both palsied and half blind; but the light of his example shines brightly still, and sheds a holy radiance on all

who come within its reach. His upright conduct, his cheerful demeanor, his kind feelings, and his heaven-like spirit, are perpetual living lessons to his neighbors and friends. More than one thoughtless visitor has left his humble abode with the impression, "Well, there is such a thing as real religion; I wish I were as good and as happy as that old man is." And many wavering or weary Christians have been strengthened for their earnest conflict through the remembrance of the simple faith and devotedness of this aged servant of God.

Does your life, your example, thus influence others for good? Are you an epistle known and read of all men? Does your character and conduct commend the religion of Christ? Is it your daily endeavor to "adorn" as well as profess the doctrine of God your Saviour? Every Christian should look well to his ex-

ample ; it effects far more than his words, however well chosen and well expressed those words may be. But especially should the aged believer be careful to let his light shine brightly and steadily before men : because, his sphere of usefulness being limited, he should make the most of those means which are still within his reach ; and because soon, very soon, “ the night cometh,” and then his opportunities on earth will be closed for ever.

There is one other way that we must not overlook, in which the aged Christian may advance Christ's kingdom in the world, and that way is, *intercessory prayer*. Weak and infirm, you may be unable to converse about religion ; poor, perhaps, in this world's riches, it is not in your power to relieve the wants of the needy ; but amidst your feebleness and your poverty you can shut your door,

and pray to your Father who seeth in secret. You can implore his succor for the distressed ; his sympathy for the sorrowful ; his aid for the helpless ; his instruction for the ignorant ; his pardon for the sinful ; his grace for the undeserving. You can plead with him on behalf of the heathen at home and the heathen abroad. You can supplicate his blessing both for the queen upon her throne, and the peasant in his cottage. You can beseech him to guide into the way of truth those who have erred and are deceived, and to have mercy upon all men. Abraham interceded for Sodom ; Job, for his children ; Moses, for the Israelites ; Jacob, for his grandsons ; the disciples, for their persecuted brethren ; the Apostle, for his beloved converts. Catch their spirit ; follow in their steps ; add to their success. "The effectual fervent prayer

of a righteous man availeth much."* It is impossible to tell how richly the healthful dew of God's grace may rest upon parched and barren hearts; or how appropriately the gifts of his providence may be vouchsafed to the abodes of penury and want, through the instrumentality of those heart-felt petitions which you offer at the throne of grace. Eternity alone will fully disclose the blessings which have been linked with intercessory prayer.

Aged Christian! mourn not that your opportunities of usefulness are so few; rather rejoice that you are still permitted to have a place among the laborers in Christ's vineyard. Your department is a retired one; your employment is easy; but your path is marked out for you by the Master whom you

* James v. 16.

serve. In wise considerateness he appoints to each laborer his position and his duties; and to all who honestly perform the work which he assigns—be it great or be it small—he will address those gracious words of commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”*

Yet you cannot but sigh sometimes when you reflect how little you are really able to do for the honor of God, and the good of your fellow-men; your best services are so imperfect, your holiest efforts are so defiled. As life advances, you grow better acquainted with your own motives, and more enlightened respecting God’s character and will; and the inevitable result is, that you are humbled under the increasing consciousness of your

* Matt. xxv. 23.

sinfulness and your failures. O if you could but serve God as you desire to do! How unwearied, how unselfish, how unlimited would be your joyful obedience!

Wait awhile, and your longings shall be satisfied. In heaven there will be no feebleness to retard your efforts, no imperfection to sully your actions. "His servants shall serve him."* Without one difficulty or defect, they shall fulfil his varied behests, and do his will. And as angels are now ministering spirits for the heirs of salvation, it is not improbable that glorified Christians will be frequently engaged on some errand of love to God's intelligent creatures. How welcome is this idea to those who feel half sorry when they consider that their work on earth is so near its close!

* Rev. xxii. 3.

The Promised Strength.

In our progress through the wilderness to the land of promise, we meet with numerous difficulties, and are subjected to various trials. We are soldiers, and must fight the good fight of faith;—we are pilgrims, and must “go forward” in the midst of danger;—we are servants, and must implicitly obey our Master’s will;—we are children, and must neither despise the chastening of our Father, nor faint when we are rebuked of him;—we are candidates for a crown of glory, and must run with patience the race which is set before us. There are duties to perform; temptations

to overcome; propensities to subdue; and sorrows to bear: which press heavily upon our spirits. Our conflict is long; our cross is wearisome; it is through much tribulation that we are slowly passing to our rest.

We must "be strong," therefore, "and of good courage," if we would manfully persevere in our toilsome path. There must be no hesitation,—no indolence,—no fear,—no self-indulgence; but a steady, earnest, patient continuance in well-doing.

It is easy to say this,—to feel this; the difficulty is to act up to it. Ah! we are so soon daunted, so easily defeated. The consciousness of our weakness, and the remembrance of our many failures, make us sigh over the past, and shrink from the future. And especially as old age creeps on, and bodily and mental infirmities increase, do we

feel painfully sensible of the inadequacy of our natural strength to sustain spiritual conflict, or to endure physical suffering. We sometimes fear lest in coming seasons of trial we should prove unequal to the contest.

It is well, in every period of the Christian life, to have a right estimate of our own strength. The advanced believer is as unable by his own power to defend himself from sin and sorrow, as the youthful Christian. But to each—and with peculiar force to the aged pilgrim whose lengthened experience and deepened humility make him so distrustful of *self*—the promise comes of Almighty help and succor. “As thy days,” says the God of Israel, “so shall thy strength be.”* In every moment of need, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am

* Deut. xxxiii. 25.

thy God.”* When difficulties and dangers arise in your path, let not the thought of your own weakness and insufficiency discourage you, for “I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”† “Without me you can do nothing;”‡ but, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”§

Take courage, aged Christian, as you listen to these cheering assurances of the most high God; and rejoice that he is able to “supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”|| For remember, the strength which his promises guarantee to you is *adequate* strength. “As thy days, so shall thy strength be;” the one fully commensurate

* Isa. xli. 10.

† Isa. xli. 10.

‡ John xv. 5.

§ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

|| Philip. iv. 19.

with the other. Your present necessities, and your future wants, might well fill you with distress and apprehension, did not God stand engaged to prepare you for every emergency, and to sustain you under every burden. But since the omnipotent Creator has pledged himself to furnish his people with whatever spiritual energy they require in their perpetual conflict, you may gratefully exclaim with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust." * Yes; "trust in him at all times," "for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Let no misgivings disturb your mind as you think of approaching and augmented trials; for with the increased demand for strength, you may confidently calculate upon an increased

* Ps. xviii. 2.

supply. Now you are looking, perhaps, at some great trouble in the distance, and you are feeling as if, when it arrives, you must sink under it. Ah, you are estimating your power of endurance then by what it is now; you are supposing that, with your present weakness, you are summoned to a more arduous encounter than you have hitherto met with, and you are mournfully anticipating an inevitable failure. But do you not perceive that your conclusion is drawn from wrong premises? You will not have to grapple with increased difficulties, before you are able to surmount them. God will never call you to the fulfilment of any duty, nor the endurance of any trial, without having first provided for you sufficient strength for the occasion.

But the promised strength is *daily* strength. "As thy *days*, so shall thy strength be." You

must not expect to have a large stock on hand which will last you for a long time ; nor endeavor to make the strength of to-day suffice for the wants of to-morrow ; but in every fresh period of conflict and suffering you must seek for fresh strength from above. You cannot live upon past supplies, but you may safely rely upon present and future succor. The spiritual aid which you require will always be vouchsafed at the right time. Each day, each season of renewed solicitude, will bring with it its own appointed strength. It may be that you are advanced, not in years only, but also in Christian experience ; still you must depend as perpetually and as entirely now upon the help of God, as you did at the commencement of your religious life. Day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, you must trust in him, and look to him.

And the strength which he grants to his children is *appropriate* strength. "As thy days, so shall thy *strength* be." The days of the spiritual life are as varied as the days of the natural life. Sometimes they are bright with hope and prosperity; sometimes they are dark with disappointment and sorrow. There are days when our path lies through green and flowery meadows; and there are days when our road is through a tangled forest, or along the edge of a precipice. At one time we have to toil up the Hill Difficulty; at another, to fight our way through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Now there is a beautiful adaptation in God's grace to the diversified circumstances of his people's history. Have you not found it to be so, dear reader? Have you not felt in your times of need, that there was an exact minuteness in God's gracious

dealings with you; that there was a delicate adjustment in the bestowal of his varied gifts? Expect the same considerateness in his conduct still. Believe that the strength which he prepares for you is suitable, as well as sufficient.

What day is it with you now? The day of *physical infirmity*? Is your health declining, your energy abating, your faculties one by one becoming impaired? Is yours the day so graphically described by the royal preacher, "when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened;—when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall

fail?"* Then remember God's promise, "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you."† Carry you, — not leave you to bear up as you best can under the burden which old age brings with it, but uphold you with his own everlasting arm. He will help you to endure with cheerfulness and resignation the pain which is occasioned by the decay of nature.

Is it the day of *mental depression*? The infirmities and sufferings of the body often affect the mind. They cast a gloom over the spirits, and throw a shadow over our prospects. "Our mind is like a stained or clouded glass, which mars the hue of what is bright, and deepens what is sombrous." We are discomposed and disheartened by trifles; we are frightened at shadows. All around us, and before us, looks dark and gloomy. Well,

* Eccles. xii. 3-5.

† Isa. xlvi. 4.

there is One who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust; and he can support and strengthen our disturbed and fearful spirits. We need not be ashamed to disclose to him our mental weakness; he feels for us all, nay, more than a father's tenderness; for as one whom his *mother* comforteth, so will he comfort us. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."*

Is it the day of *spiritual conflict*? Are you sore let and hindered in your endeavors to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? Do your unseen enemies seem to increase? are their assaults more malignant? and is your own heart inclined to yield to temptation? The great adversary of mankind is sometimes per-

* Isa. xl. 29.

mitted to attack with unusual violence the soul of the aged Christian. Sins which the believer imagined were long since subdued, rise up as it were into new life; thoughts and feelings utterly at variance with his renewed mind seem almost forced upon him; and the fiery darts of the wicked one are hurled at him without intermission. Is this painful experience yours? Be not alarmed or discouraged by it. God is faithful, and he will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able to bear; but he will strengthen you for your last struggle with a disappointed and already vanquished foe. Clad in the panoply which God provides for you, and furnished with those weapons which through him are mighty to repel and overcome your spiritual enemies, you shall be enabled to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. It is

true you are weak, but his strength is perfected in weakness ; it is true your infirmities are many, but his power rests upon you. Fear not ; look to the Captain of your salvation ; follow his directions ; rely upon his assistance, and you shall at last be “more than conqueror through him that loved you.” *

Is it the day of *temporal distress* ? Are you poor ? in want of the necessaries or the comforts of life ? incapable of supporting yourself by the labor of your hands, and obliged to depend on the charity of others ? Or are those dear to you in adversity ? are you obliged to witness sufferings that you cannot alleviate, and to hear of troubles which you can neither remove nor lighten ? Or have you been bereaved of some beloved relative, some cherished friend, with whom you were associ-

* Rom. viii. 37.

ated in the closest union, and to whom you looked for sympathy and affection? Are these, or similar afflictions, the crosses which you have to take up and carry, and do you tremble beneath their weight? Then cast your burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain you. He will strengthen your *faith* to believe that these mysterious dispensations are necessary for your real welfare; he will strengthen your *love* to receive with meekness and gratitude the discipline of a kind and tender Father; he will strengthen your *hope* to anticipate those glorious things which are unseen and eternal, and to reckon your present sufferings as unworthy of a moment's comparison with "the glory which shall be revealed." *

But there is one day rapidly approaching when you will pre-eminently require the

* Rom. viii. 18.

succor and support of an Almighty hand,—the day of *death*. Ah! that is a solemn day even to the believer. A darkness, a mystery, rests upon our last conflict, which excites feelings of seriousness and awe in all thoughtful minds, and when there is great sensitiveness of temperament, and timidity of disposition, the Christian often shrinks painfully from the contemplation of death, and through fear of it is perhaps all his lifetime subject to bondage. But why should you fear the approach of the last enemy? If God promises that ^{as} your day your strength shall be, surely he will make that promise good in the day of your mortal agony. When you pass through the dark valley he will be with you; his rod and staff will guide and comfort you. When heart and flesh shall faint and fail, he will be the strength of your heart and your portion forever.

A young Christian once said to a minister, "Although I trust implicitly in the Saviour, and rejoice in him as mine, yet I look upon death as very terrible." At that time she was in perfect health. The reply was, "Doubt not that, according to his sure word, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be;' and that there shall be dying grace for a dying day." Not long after, mortal sickness seized her; but her peace flowed like a river; and again and again, as her fond mother and loving sisters watched by her bed of suffering, did she exclaim, "O, how true do I find the assurance given me that there would be dying grace for a dying day!"

"Yes, in your latest moments, when with death
And Satan thou must struggle, and not yield;
When with dim eye, and quickly-heaving breath,
Thou enterest on that solemn battle-field;

Thy Saviour who has succored thee through life,
Will nerve thy spirit for the closing strife;
Will lead thee on to glorious victory;
For, as thy days thy strength shall surely be."

And then there is the day of *final judgment*. That last day, when all the dead shall be gathered around the great white throne of the Eternal, and hear from his lips the irreversible sentence which shall fix their everlasting destiny. O, the unutterable momentousness of that decision! How will you have courage to listen to it? How will you stand with any calmness before that awful judgment-seat, and hear the records of the past, and the awards of the future? Ah, strength shall be given you in that trying hour,—strength so unflinching and so indomitable, that you shall meet without fear the scrutiny of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The sweet

assurance will then be yours, that to those who are in Christ Jesus there is, there can be, no condemnation ; that, clothed in the robe of his righteousness, and sanctified by the grace of his Spirit, you are faultless in God's sight. Who shall lay anything to your charge, when God himself will be your justifier ?

Thus his blessed promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," will never fail. Through life, in death, and before the judgment-seat, it will be richly fulfilled in your experience. O, the comfort of feeling sure that, however wearisome and difficult the path of duty or of suffering may prove, God will impart to us adequate and appropriate strength, and guide us in safety to the heavenly Canaan !

Dr. Doddridge was walking out one day in a very depressed state of mind. His trials were at that time peculiarly heavy ; he saw no

way of deliverance from them, and he was greatly discouraged. As he passed along, the door of a little cottage was standing open, and he heard a child's voice reading the words, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The effect produced upon his saddened feelings was indescribable; his despondency vanished, and his heart was filled with peace and joy.

Yes, one simple promise from God is enough to chase our fears and cheer our hearts. Our wants and weaknesses are many, but he knows them all, and is both able and willing to supply our every need. Then let us "seek the Lord, and his strength;"* let our earnest and constant petitions at the throne of grace be, "Give thy strength unto thy servant;" "strengthen thou me according unto thy word."† For it is they who *wait upon the*

* Ps. cv. 4.

† Ps. lxxxvi. 16; cxix. 28.

Lord that shall renew their strength. "Wait," then, "on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart."* The faithfulness of his character is your security for the fulfilment of his promises; for, "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent;" † "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" ‡ And his conduct to his people in past days is a pledge of his readiness to help them now; for he is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." § He has been a strength to the poor,—a strength to the needy in his distress; and he is *our* refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy,

* Ps. xxvii. 14.

† Num. xxiii. 19.

‡ 1 Sam. xv. 29.

§ Heb. xiii. 8.

and find grace to help in time of need.”* There should be no hesitation on our part to apply for the strength which we require, for there is no reluctance on God’s part to communicate it. In his hand it is to give strength to *all*. A sense of our weakness, and a cry for his aid, is the only prerequisite for its bestowal.

But *how* is this strength imparted? It is the gift of God, and through grace is laid hold of by *faith*. Faith is the hand which grasps and appropriates the promises, and thus fills the soul with an all-sustaining, all-conquering energy. The Holy Spirit, by whom all spiritual blessings are bestowed, brings to the Christian just the strength which he needs, and teaches him to embrace it by faith. That faith may be weak: but its efficacy depends upon the reality, not the degree of our faith;

* Heb. iv. 16.

and therefore, if we sincerely trust in God, through Christ, we may assuredly expect that the aid which we look for, and for which we supplicate, will be granted us. Yet, while it is true that the smallest amount of true faith forms, so to speak, a channel through which God's grace flows into our hearts, it is equally true that a stronger degree of faith is more honoring to God, while it would lead us to anticipate, and prepare us to receive, a far greater measure of heavenly assistance than we now possess. "According to your faith," says the Saviour, "be it unto you;"* and therefore, if we desire to run without weariness, to walk without fainting, and to mount up with wings as eagles towards our rest above, we should make the request of his disciples our own, "Lord, increase our faith." †

* Matt. ix. 29.

† Luke xvii. 5. ■

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Your "wanderings in the wilderness," reader, may be now drawing towards a close. It will, then, not be long before you will be called to pass over the river Jordan, that you may enter the promised land. Yet, as we have seen, new trials may have to be encountered in the last stages of your lengthened and perhaps wearisome journey. There is no immunity from sorrow until you reach that blessed country, where God shall himself wipe away all tears, and give you that fulness of joy which is inseparable from his presence. But remember, aged Christian, the promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," and hold the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end. As you think of the evening of life, the night of death, and the solemnities of the last judgment, resolve with the Psalmist, "I will go in the strength of the

Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.”* So shall you go on from strength to strength, until you appear in Zion before your God.†

* Ps. lxxi. 16.

† Ps. lxxxiv. 7.



The Enigma of Life.

How full of mystery is life !
A troublous and bewildering maze,
A night with but few guiding rays,
A volume with enigmas rife.

The wicked thrive, the virtuous meet
With poverty and cold neglect ;
Wealth and not worth insures respect,
And folly sits in wisdom's seat.

Like puzzling hieroglyphics seem
The characters before our eye ;
And scenes are ever passing by,
Strange and disordered as a dream.

Sorrow, misfortune, pain, and care,
In quick succession thron'g our path ;
Loved ones, once gathered round our hearth,
Are seen, alas ! no longer there.

O who shall solve for anxious minds
The problems which this life suggests ?
Where is the shrine where reason rests,
The pole-star which the spirit finds ?

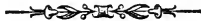
Faith is the anchor of the soul,
It links us to the world above ;
It leads us to the God of love,
Whose hand doth all events control.

He will evolve — we know not how —
The purest good from every ill ;
Then, like wise children, to his will
In meek submission let us bow.

The past is dark, the future dim ;
A tangled web the present seems :
But through each cloud God's promise gleams,
And we will calmly trust in him.

Now through a glass we darkly see,
And therefore fail his plans to trace ;
But when we meet him face to face,
Unclouded shall our vision be.

Then knowledge perfected will cast
Its radiance o'er this earthly sphere ;
And full of wisdom will appear
The intricacies of the past.



Self-Justification.

A Christian physician, who was concerned for the spiritual welfare of an aged relative, addressed to her the following letter. He was fearful lest she should imagine that her amiable moral qualities, and her regular attention to religious observances, would form a passport for her into heaven; and therefore he wrote her a plain and concise exposition of the way of salvation. Will you read his kind and faithful epistle, as if it were addressed to yourself?

X “ And now, my dear old friend, how stand you disposed for the other world? For at the age of eighty-six your time necessarily

draws nigh. I hope you are deeply convinced, with the heart as with the head, that it will avail you less than a straw to have been good to your neighbors; to have done no harm to any one; to have been regular and attentive at church; to have committed no great crimes; to have read your Bible and said your prayers regularly. To depend on these things would be to depend upon your own good works. But what says God himself on this subject? 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.'* So much therefore for your own righteousness. The explanation of this, you, I hope, know; namely, that it results from the original sin of Adam, whence no person can come to God of himself, 'because the carnal mind is enmity against God.' What then is God's

* Rom. iii. 10, 12.

scheme for saving lost mankind? You know that God said that sin should be punished: 'The wages of sin is death.'* He could not therefore refrain from punishing it without falsehood. But God, you know, is truth itself. God, however, is love also; and he extended that love to fallen man, notwithstanding his sin; for he designed a wonderful plan of grace, by which his justice should be satisfied, and yet a full, free, and perfect salvation be secured to all who would accept it; namely, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' † That Son suffered agonies in the garden and death on the cross, which were 'a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.'

* Rom. vi. 23.

† John iii. 16.

“But how can you get at this salvation? for, as stated above, you cannot obtain it by any works or merits of your own. He gives it as a free gift to all who sincerely desire and pray for it. ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.’* You must, therefore, pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten your understanding, and enable you to see that you have ‘no money’ and ‘no price;’ in other words, that your own righteousness is but as ‘filthy rags,’ and that if you have nothing else to depend upon, you are lost forever. This, by the grace of God, will induce you to flee from the wrath to come. You will then take refuge in the Saviour; you will believe in him, not only

* Isa. lv. 1.

with your head, but cordially with your heart. You will receive him fully, and acknowledge him as 'your Lord and your God.'* This constitutes what is called faith in Christ, which when once you really possess, you are from that moment justified before God by Christ's righteousness being imputed to you; your sins are forgiven; and you are already, in this world, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. The Apostle Paul, speaking of believers, says: 'Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.' † 'The just shall live by faith.' ‡ 'We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.' §

* John xx. 28.

‡ Gal. iii. 11.

† Gal. iii. 26.

§ Gal. ii. 16.

“But you will say, Are good works of no use, then? Of none in justifying you before God; but after you are justified by faith, they are indispensable: as Christ says, ‘The tree is known by his fruit.’* Unless, therefore, your tree yield fruit, that is, good works, you may rest assured that your tree is unsound; that is, that your faith is not genuine, and will not save you. If you have true faith, good works will be your enjoyment, and you will daily grow in holiness, and in fitness for the enjoyment of God’s presence.

“What a blessed and easy salvation is this! I trust, my dear old friend, that, if you have any dependence on yourself, you will cast it off, and be constantly praying that the Holy Spirit will enable you to have genuine saving faith in Christ. Never cease or despair, for

* Matt. xii. 33.

Christ says, 'Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' *

"Now I must say farewell, with a prayer that this letter may be blessed to you. I write in a state of great debility, and my only reason for writing to you is, that you may have all the enjoyments which I experience from faith in Christ, and the assurance that through God's great merey I am one of his adopted children. May God bless you.

"Always your affectionate Nephew."

How desirable is it that, on the brink of eternity, you should ascertain whether you are prepared to meet your God! If your house is built upon the treacherous and shifting sand, it is surely better to discover its

* Matt. vii. 7.

insecurity now, than to wait till the storm arises which will sweep it away; if your expectation of everlasting bliss be delusive and temporary, it is surely better to let it go, than to cling to it and perish.

You hope perhaps to reach heaven; what is the ground of your confidence? Are you *resting on yourself* or on Christ? It is probable, nay, almost certain, that you will reply, "On Christ," for, as a matter of course, people in general profess to depend upon his merits; but all the time the real foundation of your hope may be your own good desires, your good works, and your good feelings. Examine yourself, whether you are indeed in the faith. It is easy to be deceived upon this point. It is easy to fancy that we are right, and yet to be entirely wrong. Self-righteousness is so natural to us, that it is

not without the greatest difficulty we are led to renounce it, and to trust simply in the righteousness of another. For to do this implies that we have nothing of our own which we can urge as a plea for our acceptance in God's sight; nothing which can extenuate our past guilt, or give us the slightest claim upon his favor; and it is very humbling to us to make such an acknowledgment. We are willing to admit that we have done much that was wrong; that we have not been so good as we ought to have been; that we are imperfect and erring creatures, and need to have our deficiencies supplied by the atonement of Christ;—but we are very unwilling to own that our whole life has been in direct opposition to the will of our Maker; that our best actions have been imperfect or mixed with evil, and that we are justly exposed to

his condemnation and disregard. But unless we feel our true characters as sinners,—sinners unable to make any satisfaction for the past,—how can we appreciate and receive the work and death of Christ? How can we throw ourselves as lost and undone upon the merciful provision which he has made for mankind, when we secretly do not believe that we are in ourselves utterly undeserving of our Maker's forbearance, and utterly unable to bring forward, apart from the atonement, one reason why we should be saved?

Search, then, and see what is the ground of your confidence before God. A mistake here is ruinous,—is fatal. Look back upon your life: how does it appear to you? You cannot deny, however vague may be your idea of sin, that you have in innumerable instances disobeyed the commands of God.

Now he has solemnly affirmed, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."* How will you remove his displeasure? By your *repentance*? But what is that worth? You will be sorry for your sins because you find that they are likely to injure your eternal happiness; you will repent, because by so doing you hope you shall be saved and reach heaven: are such purely selfish motives any inducement for God to forgive you? Besides, allowing that your repentance is sincere and thorough, can repentance atone for sin? can it satisfy the claims of justice? Does the sorrow of the criminal withhold the execution of the sentence of the law? And can your feeble regrets over the past set aside the penalty

* Gal. iii. 10.

which God has attached to every transgression,—“The soul that sinneth, it shall die”?* It is impossible; do not delude yourself with a false hope. God cannot overlook or suspend the solemn sanctions which he has given to his laws.

But you are perhaps disposed to turn from your sins to your virtues, and to urge them in your own behalf. You think there is much that is commendable in your personal history. You have been amiable and kind and charitable; you have read your Bible, you have prayed, you have gone to church; and God will surely not forget the fairer side of your character; surely he will set your good-doing against your wrong-doing, and then draw the balance in your favor; or at all events release you from any further claim. Ah, how igno-

* Ezek. xviii. 4.

rant are you of the nature and extent of the holiness which God requires of his creatures!

Your best and brightest deeds are defiled in his sight. They were not done from love to him, and are therefore devoid of all real worth. With reference to your fellow-creatures, your conduct may have been lovely and praiseworthy; but God seeth not as man seeth; he looks at the heart: and if he perceives that "self" has been the centre-point of its motives and desires, or that his glory, instead of being the first and principal object which influenced your daily life, has had no place in your consideration and esteem, how little of value, nay, rather how much to condemn, must his unerring judgment find in your fairest performances! "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all

thy ways, hast thou not glorified.”* You have lived without him in the world; you have not submitted to his authority; you have not sought his honor: and yet you venture to ask for his approval. You bring forward certain actions which lack the one essential qualification that he demands in them, and you expect that he will accept and commend them. Besides, supposing that you could present it to God, of what avail would partial goodness be before him? He requires from you the perfect holiness of a whole life; one deviation from the path of obedience would stamp you a transgressor in his sight: but your sins are more in number than the hairs of your head; and therefore by the deeds of the law it is impossible that you should be justified. And if not justified,

* Dan. v. 23.

you must be condemned; there is no alternative.

How vain then is all self-righteousness! How delusive is the idea that we can, either altogether or in part, shield ourselves from the disapprobation and displeasure of our Maker! How false, how dangerous, is the peace which results from an erroneous conception of our true position! Give up all hope, then, of ever reaching heaven by the road of human merit. Listen to the voice of your Saviour when he says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* "Behold" in him "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."† Cease your futile endeavors to establish your own righteousness, and at once submit yourself to

* John xiv. 6.

† John i. 29.

the righteousness of God. Cast away your self-confidence, and trust in the merits of your Saviour, and you shall be pardoned, justified, and accepted. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* But if you rely upon your own obedience to the law, you are undone. Why hesitate? The Saviour has made a full and free atonement for sin, so that God can now be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."† Faith in him will set you free from the accusations of conscience, and the penalties of the broken law, and introduce you into the glorious liberty of the children of God. And then will commence in your heart and life that true holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. A new principle of obedience will spring up within you; and the all-inspir-

* Acts xvi. 31.

† Rom. iii. 26.

ing motive of love will lead you to live unto Him who died for you and rose again, and to glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are his.

There is, further, neither peace nor safety without faith in Christ; that faith which thankfully and joyfully rests upon his all-sufficient sacrifice, and which brings forth its appropriate and appointed fruits. In the dying hour, how worthless will be any other hope but the hope which is linked with his cross! A Roman Catholic priest in Austria went to visit a woman, distinguished by her humility and piety, who was dangerously ill. In endeavoring to prepare her for the solemn change just at hand, he said to her, "I doubt not but you will die calm and happy." "Why do you think so?" was the inquiry of the sick woman. "Because your life has been

made up of a series of good works." She sighed, and answered earnestly, "If I die confiding in the good works which you call to my recollection, I know for certain that I shall be condemned: but what renders me calm at this solemn hour is that I trust solely in Jesus Christ, my Saviour." These few words from the lips of a dying woman revealed through God's blessing the way of salvation to her hitherto self-righteous minister; and from that period he rejoiced to proclaim to others the Saviour whom he had himself found. "We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ."*

Would you have peace with God, when the thin curtain which separates time from eternity is about to be drawn aside, and your

* Gal. ii. 16.

spirit is passing from the one to the other? then seek it *now* through the Lord Jesus Christ. Count all things but loss, that you may win Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* You have been striving, perhaps for many years, to make yourself holy, and so to fit yourself for heaven; but you have not succeeded. You have not found that peace and purity for which you longed. Why? Because you "sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." † An Indian and a white man were both impressed under the same sermon with the value of the soul and the importance of salvation. It was a long time before the white man found peace and

* Phil. iii. 8, 9.

† Rom. ix. 32.

joy in believing ; but when he did, he called upon his colored friend, and said to him, "How was it that you found comfort so soon, while I was brought to the very verge of despair?" "O brother!" replied the Indian, "me tell you ; there came along a rich prince, he offer to give you a new coat ; you look at your coat, and say, 'I don't know, my coat pretty good, I believe it will do a little longer.' He then offer me a new coat ; I look on my old blanket ; I say, 'This good for nothing.' I fling it right away and take the new coat. Just so, brother, you try to keep your own righteousness for some time ; you loath to give it up ; but I, poor Indian, had none, therefore I glad at once to have the righteousness of the Lord Jesus."

Have you been clinging to your own fancied righteousness, instead of eagerly and grate-

fully accepting that spotless robe, that wedding garment, which God has himself provided? Do so no longer. Fall in now with God's plan of salvation. Trust in Christ. Plead his merits as the only ground of your confidence. When he hung upon the cross, his last words were, "It is finished." All that the justice of God required as an atonement for sin, in order to the reconciliation of sinners to himself, was then completed. Our prayers, our tears, our penitence, our virtues, cannot add to the value of Christ's finished work, nor tend in the slightest degree to our justification. By the resurrection of the Saviour from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, God has publicly testified his righteous displeasure against sin, and his acceptance of Christ's sacrifice; and if he is perfectly satisfied with the atonement made by his well-beloved Son,

dare we deny its sufficiency, or doubt its worth? And yet this is what we are really doing if we are striving to find anything in ourselves which will aid in the expiation of our guilt, or recommend us to God's favor. O, let us shrink from offering such a practical insult to the Saviour; let us dread incurring the condemnation of those who reject God's method of salvation, and who obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen, reader, to the gracious, the heart-cheering invitation which resounds in your ears as you gaze upon the cross: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* Weary sinner! weary with the unceasing and unsatisfying endeavor to work out your own righteousness, arise now and go to your Saviour, and find in

* Matt. xi. 28.

him your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, and your redemption. He who knew no sin was made sin for you, that you might be made the righteousness of God in Him.* Believe this; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding will flow into your soul.

Aged believer! being justified by faith, this peace is already yours. Cherish it by continued and simple reliance on Christ. Trust to nothing in yourself, not even to the fruits of grace which he has himself implanted within you. Sanctification is not your title to heaven, but your fitness for it. All your hope, all your dependence, must still rest upon the finished work of your Saviour. "Ye are complete in Him." †

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

† Col. ii. 10.

The Loss of Memory.

How impaired the memory becomes as we advance in years! We are constantly forgetting the little occurrences of every-day life; and our past history sometimes appears to us like an indistinct and troubled dream. The friends and associates of our youth fade from our recollection, and we are frequently unable to recall even the names which they bore. It is true that an aged person will sometimes manifest as clear and as tenacious a memory as is possessed by any one around him; but his case is a peculiar one, and does not warrant others to expect that they will be similarly favored. For loss of memory

is a common and natural infirmity of old age ; and we must not be surprised, and we ought not to be impatient, at this indication, among many others, of our mortality.

The present world is not our rest, although we are too prone to live as if it were so, and our failing strength, and weakened faculties, are kind and necessary remembrancers of our actual position here. And not only do they remind us that we have reached the evening of life, and should prepare for the dawn of immortality, but they tend to assist us in making that preparation, by withdrawing us from the arduous and engrossing occupations of the world, and by gradually weaning us from our natural attachment to this present state of existence. Our feeble powers, both of body and mind, unfit us for the busy engagements into which we once entered so heartily, and in

our retirement from the active duties of life we have opportunity for meditation and reflection; while the privations and trials to which we are subjected incline us to say with the afflicted patriarch, "I would not live alway;" and thus make us willing to depart.

The failure of memory is, however, very trying and inconvenient; and it is a loss which cannot be repaired. "My memory fails day by day," writes a Christian lady in her seventieth year to her sister: "I cannot remember where I put anything, no, not for an hour; and though the inconvenience might be prevented by having a place for everything, and being careful to put everything in its proper place,—a rule good in every time of life,—it is frustrated by my forgetting that I forget. No person can conceive the trial this is but they who have experienced it. It is

equally distressing with regard to circumstances and dates. I must make a memorandum of everything; and then I lose the memorandum, or mislay the book in which I note down things of importance. However, I have mercies great and numerous, to balance, and infinitely more than balance this; my life is hid with Christ in God; my Jesus is my surety that all will be well: *he* forgets not. All my concerns are in his hands: he will manage all, — perfect all, — finish all.”

O, amidst the changes and the imperfections which are incidental to the present life, how full of comfort is the thought that Jesus forgets not! He ever remembers his people, and retains the liveliest interest in their minutest concerns. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they

may forget ; yet will I not forget thee.”* No lapse of time can enfeeble or destroy his perfect and perpetual cognizance of our affairs.

And although our memories are rapidly failing, although they are unable now to fulfil the trust which we once reposed in them, they can still gratefully recall the Saviour’s precious name, and ardently cherish the recollection of his unspeakable love.

The pious Bishop Beveridge, when on his death-bed, was unable to recognize any of his relatives or friends. A clergyman with whom he had been intimately acquainted visited him, and when introduced into his room, said, “Bishop Beveridge, do you know me?” “Who are you?” said the aged prelate. Being told who the minister was, he shook his head, and said that he did not know him.

* Isa. xlix. 15.

Another friend addressed him in a similar manner, "Do you know me, Bishop Beveridge?" "Who are you?" he again inquired. Being told that it was one of his old friends, he replied that he did not recollect him. His wife then came to his bedside, and asked him if he knew her, but the good Bishop had lost all remembrance even of his wife. At last some one present said, "Well, Bishop Beveridge, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?" "Jesus Christ!" repeated he, as if the name had produced upon him the influence of a charm; "O yes, I have known him these forty years: precious Saviour! He is my only hope."

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear!"

Saviour! if we forget all besides, may we remember thee! May we look to thee,—rest

on thee, — abide in thee, — and wait for that happy period when we shall be forever with thee.

And when we have reached heaven, we shall no longer have to complain of the imperfection of memory. For then we shall remember — remember without any effort, any mistake, any omission — the way in which the Lord our God has led us so many years in the wilderness. What a retrospect will that be! The light of eternity will shine on the records of the past, and each page of our life will be clear and legible. And we shall read them without pain or regret. In this world the recollection of bygone days is often fraught with much that is sorrowful. Scenes and events come back to our thoughts, on which we dare not dwell, and which we would fain forget. But it will not be so above. Perfect

and vivid as that mental glance which shall survey our journey through life, from the cradle to the grave, will unquestionably prove, it will be accompanied by so deep and augmented an acquaintance with the loving providence of our Heavenly Father, and by such sweet and entire submission to his will, as will render it impossible for the remembrances to awaken the slightest emotion of grief in our hearts. Or rather, it will furnish us with such accumulated and varied proofs of God's tenderness and care, as will fill our spirits with grateful adoration. O, as we recall with accurate minuteness the circumstances of our earthly history, we shall see enough of God's marvellous wisdom and loving-kindness to excite our praise throughout all eternity.

Instead, then, of lamenting over our present infirmity, let us endeavor to realize that free-

dom from all imperfection, and those superior mental faculties, which we shall enjoy in a future state. We are now drawing near to the land of perpetual youth and vigor. The weakened intellect, the declining strength, the failing memory, these are tokens that it will not be very long before our weary spirits are at rest.

A poor aged widow, — poor in this world's wealth, but rich in faith, — in reply to the kind inquiry of her minister after her health, replied with cheerfulness, "What cause I have to be thankful! how many at my age are confined to their beds, while I am able to be about and clean my own house. I hope I may have my faculties to the last."

"You find, I dare say," he remarked, "that this earthly house of your tabernacle is being dissolved; now one pin is taken down, now

another ; now this part melts away, now that." " Yes, sir, I do indeed find that my poor old body is very weak ; often, when I only walk across the room, I am extremely giddy ; and my *memory* almost fails me. Sometimes I get up and go into the other room to fetch something which I want, and when I come there, I stand, and have quite forgotten for what I came."

" You remember, perhaps, what took place when you were a girl, far more distinctly than what you heard or saw only last week ?"

" O yes, sir ; it seems to me but a few days since I was a girl ; my father lived at the mill, and I remember how I used to go into the fields, and have many a game there with my little playfellows."

" Well, my dear friend, memory generally seems to be the first faculty which is taken

from the aged ; and God thus reminds them to forget those things which are behind, and to reach forth to those things which are before. He prevents their *looking back*, in order that they may learn to *look forward*."

Let us all "look forward ;" and as we muse on the glorious realities of heaven, can we murmur that we should *forget* the fading things of earth? Is it not well, that the nearer we are to the joys of eternity, the less vivid and perceptible appear the vanities of time? A mist has gathered over the scenes of earth, but everlasting sunshine is about to break forth.



“Abide With Us.”

LUKE XXIV. 29.

Through the brief, and sometimes sorrowful walk of life, thou, O Saviour, hast been our companion and friend. Thy presence has cheered us; thy word has instructed us; and thy sympathy has consoled us. How delightful has been our intercourse with thee! the remembrance of it is very precious to us. And now that it is towards evening, and the day is far spent, depart not from us. “Cast us not off in the time of old age, forsake us not when our strength faileth;” for we cannot do without thee. When thou art absent, our comfort declines, our hopes are enfeebled, and we sadly mistake the designs of thy providence. Con-

verse with thee is absolutely essential to our peace of mind, and our growth in grace. Then come and abide with us. “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.”* O, fulfil in our experience so gracious and so marvellous a promise! The door of our hearts is thrown wide open, that thou mayest enter, and take up thine abode there forever. O, abide with us! If thou seemest as if thou wert going further, it is only to increase the ardor of our desires, and to strengthen the fervency of our petition. Suffer us, then, O gracious Saviour, to plead with thee: to beseech thee, with an importunity that admits of no denial, that thou wilt stay with us and bless us. Like the

* Isa. lvii. 15.

patriarch of old, let us have power with thee, and prevail.

X “Abide with us.” We are ignorant and erring creatures, and need that thou shouldst remain with us as our Teacher. Long have our names been enrolled as thy disciples; and varied and repeated have been thy gentle and wise instructions; but we want to know more — much more — of thee and of thy Gospel. There are difficulties which we desire to have removed; duties of which we are anxious to be reminded; promises which we long to have unfolded to us. Alas! how little do we yet understand the mystery of godliness! how feeble and unworthy is our estimate of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Thou mightest indeed justly reproach us with our dulness of apprehension, and with our slowness of heart to believe all that the

prophets have spoken ; for we have not made half the progress which we might and ought to have made in the study of thy truth. Instead of being now prepared to become the teachers of others, we rather need to be taught again “the first principles of the oracles of God.”* But, Lord, while we lament with shame and sorrow our imperfect acquaintance with thy word and will, we would at the same time urge our ignorance as the very plea why thou shouldest continue to impart thy gracious and plain instructions. Abide with us ; for the partial yet blessed acquaintance which we have even now with thy doctrines and precepts makes us intensely solicitous to come “in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of

* Heb. v. 12.

Christ.”* Open unto us the Scriptures; expound unto us all that they contain concerning thyself; enable us to know thy love which passeth knowledge. Cause our hearts to burn within us, as thou talkest to us by the way.

“Abide with us.” The trials and disappointments which we meet are heavy to bear. As we walk through the pathway of the world, we are often sad and cast down. Our cherished hopes have been blasted, and we seem friendless and forsaken. Wilt thou not draw near and comfort us? Wilt thou not dispel our fears and strengthen our faith? Wilt thou not so fill our hearts with thy presence, that there shall be no room left for corroding care and anxiety? Abide with us. Many dangers are before us, nay, around us; and who but thou can deliver us from them? Many troubles are

* Eph. iv. 13.

gathering in the distance, and to whom besides thee can we look for succor? O, go not from us, for trouble is nigh at hand, and there is none to help us. But our griefs will soon grow lighter if thou art with us; if thou wilt disclose to us the necessity and the result of the painful events which have befallen us; if thou wilt show us that the sources of our sorrow are really the springs of our joy.

“Abide with us.” A short and occasional visit from thee, O Lord, although it is far more than we deserve, cannot satisfy our desires. We want thee to dwell with us, not as a guest, but as a resident, to make our hearts thy home. “O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for the night?”*

* Jer. xiv. 8.

O, abide with us. Through the sunshine of prosperity and the gloom of adversity; in our mental conflicts and our spiritual enjoyments; when the duties of life are pressing hard upon us, or when the shadow of the tomb is flung across our path, leave us not, neither forsake us, thou God of our salvation. So ardent is our affection for thee; so deep is our consciousness of our utter helplessness and misery without thee, that we cannot bear that thou shouldst ever depart from us. Take what thou wilt away, only leave us thyself.

“Abide with us.” There are seasons—painful seasons—in our Christian experience, when, through misapprehension and unbelief, we lose the sweet realization of thy presence. Thou art near us; thou art with us: but our eyes are holden, and we do not know thee. The ignorance of our minds, and the mysteries

of thy providence, cast a mist over our spiritual apprehension, so that we fail to discern thee. But our thoughts and our desires are still intently fixed upon thee; we long to behold again the light of thy countenance; and if thou wilt *abide* with us, if thou wilt pity our weakness and our dulness of perception, and remain with us, our eyes will soon be opened, and we shall joyfully recognize thee as our Master, our Friend, our Saviour.

“Abide with us.” It is with the confidence of faith that we thus implore thy perpetual presence and friendship, for thou hast promised that, if we love thee and keep thy words, thou wilt come unto us, and make thine abode with us.* Thou hast declared that thou art with us always, even unto the end of the world. Thou hast assured us that thou wilt never

* John xiv. 23.

leave us. With holy boldness, therefore, we come unto the throne of grace, and ask for the simple fulfilment of thine own words. Abide with us. Through life, in death, manifest thyself unto us as thou dost not unto the world. Let our fellowship be with the Father, and with thee, his Son Jesus Christ. And when the journey of life shall end, receive us into one of the many mansions which thou art now preparing for thy disciples; that where thou art, there we may be also, and enjoy eternal and uninterrupted communion with thee.

Abide with me : fast falls the even-tide ;
The darkness thickens ; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O, abide with me !

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day ;
 Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.
 Change and decay in all around I see :
 O thou, who changest not, abide with me !

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word,
 But as thou dwell'st with thy disciples, Lord ;
 Familiar, condescending, patient, free,
 Come, not to sojourn, but abide with me.

Come not in terrors as the King of kings,
 But kind and good with healing in thy wings ;
 Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea :
 Come, Friend of sinners ! thus abide with me.

Thou on my head in early youth didst smile ;
 And though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,
 Thou hast not left me, oft as I left thee :
 On to the close, O Lord, abide with me.

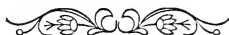
I need thy presence every passing hour ;
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power ?
Who like thyself my guide and stay can be ?
Through cloud and sunshine, O, abide with me !

I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is Death's sting? where, Grave, thy victory ?
I triumph still if thou abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes ;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies ;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows
flee :

In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

REV. H. F. LYTE.



Sympathy and Selfishness.

How natural it is to be selfish; to study continually one's own comfort, and to make the happiness of others a secondary consideration,—if, indeed, we make it a consideration at all! How Christ-like it is to love our neighbor as ourselves; to bear one another's burdens; to be full of sympathy with all around us!

Which is the lovelier character? Which is *your* character? Is "self" the centre of your wishes and your aims,—the idol that is set up in your heart? Or have you learned from the example of our Saviour, to

rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep? Have you put on that charity which is the bond of perfectness?

Each season of life has its own peculiar tendencies and temptations. But selfishness is at all times, and under all circumstances, the common sin which doth so easily beset us. In early youth we are prone to imagine that everybody and everything about us ought in some way to minister to our gratification, and we therefore strive to employ them in the furtherance of the plans which we have arranged for our own happiness. In old age, when the infirmities of life compel us to withdraw from its activities and its pleasures, we are in danger of supposing that, since we can derive but little enjoyment now from those sources which once yielded to us a rich

supply, it is a matter of little importance to us whether others find any satisfaction in them or not. It often happens that old age narrows the channel of our benevolence and our sympathy; we have less to receive, and we think we cannot have so much to give. Our thoughts, allowed to take their natural course, become concentrated on "self;" all that personally concerns us is so magnified as very much to hide from our view the interests of our neighbors; we look so steadily and so exclusively on our own good, that we almost lose sight of the good of others.

Now, will you guard against the influence of these selfish feelings? Will you bear in mind how opposed, how thoroughly opposed, are selfishness and Christianity? Will you reflect upon the injury which you may do to religion, by allowing an undue regard for self

to be manifested in the little occurrences of your every-day life? A young man, who was urged by a pious friend to devote himself to the service of God, made this reply: "It is of no use to talk to me in this way; I have seen too much of religious people to desire to be like them. They pretend to be a great deal better than everybody else, but they are just the same underneath. Why, there's my Uncle S——, an old man with one foot already in the grave; he calls himself a Christian, and yet he is as covetous and as selfish as possible. See him at home; *his* comfort, *his* ease, *his* wishes, must be first consulted; everybody must give way to him; and he is constantly taking offence because he thinks he has not sufficient attention and respect paid to him. What's the use of religion? it is all show, — mere show."

It was not difficult to answer such an objection as this, but it was difficult to remove the prejudice and the misconception which had gathered around that young man's mind. The selfish behavior of his aged relative, in conjunction with that of others, had so set him against religion, that he would not listen to its claims; and, although moral and amiable in his conduct, he still remains estranged from his God and his people. It is true, that the faults and inconsistencies of professed Christians will furnish no valid excuse for his refusal to love and serve his God and Saviour; but ought they not to excite the deepest grief and shame in those who have thus thrown additional stumbling-blocks in the way of a sinner's return? Ought we not earnestly to watch and pray that we do not bring reproach upon that holy name by which we are called,

through our self-love and self-indulgence? It is not so much by flagrant departures from the ways of godliness, that we exert a baneful influence over the undecided and the unconverted, as by our apparently careless disregard of whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.

The warm and generous-hearted spirit of youth will shrink with distaste, if not with disgust, from a religion which our actions have led him to ally with meanness and selfishness. Our prayers, our zeal, our almsgiving, our profession, will have but little weight with him, if they are associated day after day with the unhallowed and unamiable endeavor to secure our personal ease, in preference to the comfort of others; — he will regard them but as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And will he not rightly regard them?

“Though I have all faith and knowledge ; though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor ; and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, — that love which seeketh not her own, which vaunteth not itself, but which suffereth long and is kind, — it profiteth me nothing.” *

Let not, then, the infirmities of age be a plea for your lessened sympathy with others. Should the graces of the Christian decline with his fading strength ? should the shadow of the tomb dim the light of his heaven-born love ? Surely the nearer that he approaches to the pure and peaceful fellowship of the saints above, the more should his spirit be conformed to theirs. And is theirs a spirit of selfishness ? Are they absorbed in their own interests, their own occupations, their own joys ? Are they

* 1 Cor. xiii.

indifferent to the feelings and the pleasures of their bright companions? No; they joyfully and fully sympathize with each other; self is forgotten there; and if we hope, through a Saviour's merits, to reach the home where they dwell, let us endeavor to cherish correspondent emotions to theirs. Let us strive to follow them as they, when on earth, followed Christ. Ah, let us rather look at once at Jesus, our perfect model, our brightest example; let us ask to have the mind that was in him, and to be imbued with his spirit. For then we cannot live day after day as some who profess and call themselves Christians do live; cold and careless about the welfare of others, and at the same time intensely solicitous to promote our own. "Ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is

in Jesus.”* His doctrine which we have received into our hearts, and his example which we have chosen as the guide of our conduct, leads us to deny ourselves that we may benefit others, and to take the liveliest interest in all that relates to their happiness.

And we are not to retrace our steps as years increase. We are not to be peevish, discontented, or unreasonable, because we are old, or getting old. This is certainly not our creed, and, God helping us, it shall never be our practice. As we advance in life we should be more considerate, more kind, more like Christ, not less so; and if we abide in him, and his words abide in us, there can be no doubt that we shall thus grow in grace. The stream of Christian affection will become

* Eph. iv. 20, 21.

deeper, not shallower ; the flame of unselfish love will burn more brightly instead of almost going out.

O how delightful is the sight of an aged believer, richly imbued with the loving and unselfish spirit of his Master ! How refreshing is it in this dreary world to rest awhile beneath some venerable palm-tree, which spreads out its cooling branches as if the only object of its existence were to bless the passer-by ! How cheering is it, amidst the selfish and dissatisfied throng around us, to meet with those who can smile through their own tears upon the happy and the gifted !

An aged servant of the Lord had survived all her near relatives ; the last beloved object of her tender affections, of her constant recollection, was laid in the grave. Her life had been the scene of many sorrows, and there was

but little sunshine to cheer the evening of her life. One day, as lonely and blind she sat by the fireside in her little parlor, a friend who called to see her, found her — doing what? murmuring over her desolate situation, and complaining that she was uncared for and forgotten? no, but rejoicing in the happiness of others. A family whom she had known and loved in early life was to be gladdened on that day by the return of a long-absent member; and, through its dull and silent hours, her lips were often unclosed to express her delight at the thoughts of their meeting; her prayers that they might be blessed. “Were this my case,” thought the listener, “I should have been repining that others had the comfort of tender relatives and loving friends, while I was left alone in the world, looking for none whose approach could console and gladden my

solitary existence." The latter feeling is the emotion of the natural heart, the former of the Christian spirit. Reader, which would have been *yours*?



The Unchanging Friend.

The evening was calm and pleasant, enlivened by a gentle breeze and the rays of the declining sun. At the door of a low cottage sat an old man. His hair was white, his form was bent, and his dim eyes were fixed on the richly tinted clouds. Was he admiring the simple grandeur of an evening sky? I think not. His features wore a sad and troubled expression, as if his mind were occupied by thoughts which had but little connection with the objects around him. And so indeed it was. He was thinking of the uncertain and unsatisfying nature of earthly friendship; he

was musing over a painful proof which he had that day received of the ingratitude and unkindness of one whom he had loved and cherished in years gone by.

“It is trying, very trying,” he said, “to be thus deceived and injured by an early friend. It is not an enemy that has done this, but it was my companion, and familiar friend. He was the last person from whom I should have expected such treatment; I always reposed the most perfect confidence in him. O, what is friendship? It is like a slender reed, which when leaned upon often pierces us through with many sorrows.”

The old man's feelings had been sadly wounded, and his mind was much disturbed. But perhaps just then the serene aspect of nature soothed him, or perhaps bright memories of loved and faithful ones reproached

him for his indiscriminate censure, for he added in a more cheerful tone, "Not that *all* friends prove false and changeable. O no! I have known and shared too much of the warm and unselfish and continued affection of others, to believe that friendship is nothing but a name. In prosperity and in adversity, I have found that there are true friends. I have loved, and I have been loved; I have trusted, and I have been confided in. Life would indeed have been dreary without the sympathy and communion of friends,—especially of Christian friends.

"And yet, at the best, earthly friendships are very imperfect. Liable to little mistakes,—to partial interruptions; or, if unvarying in their character, incapable of entering into all our feelings, or of responding to all our emotions. And how slight is the tenure by

which they are held! A few weeks, a few days, nay, a few hours, and the most loved of our circle may be removed from us. Death severs the closest and the fondest ties. In yonder church-yard lie the remains of those who were once my dearest companions. Many gathered round me in early life, and set out with me on the pilgrimage to the celestial city; but now, I am left alone: the grave has divided us,—at least for a little while.”

Ah, in the last half of that sentence, there was a cheering truth involved, and the old man felt its sweet influence steal over him.

“For a little while!—yes, we shall meet again. They will not return to me, but I shall go to them. I sorrow not as others without hope, for I know that those who sleep in Jesus God will bring with him, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. In this

world of partings, how delightful is the assurance of a speedy and lasting reunion with all those dear friends who have departed in the true faith of Christ.”

Like the sunshine bursting through a dark cloud, this bright anticipation almost dispelled the old man's sadness; and it was succeeded by a thought so full of consolation and joy, that he speedily forgot the unpleasant circumstance which had lately agitated his feelings.

“ Yet it is still more delightful to remember that I have an ever-living, an almighty Friend. The best earthly friends may change or die, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He will never leave me, he will never forsake me. O, why should I mourn over the loss or the inconstancy of earthly friends, when my kind and sympathizing Saviour is ever with me ? ”

Reader, you cannot have advanced thus far in the experience of life, without having learned, like this aged pilgrim, that instability and uncertainty are associated with all human affections. You have doubtless mourned over those friends, whom time or circumstances, or death, have parted from you; but have you also rejoiced in the assurance of Christ's perpetual and never-changing friendship? Ah, there are many who have been deceived and disappointed in the trust which they have reposed in their fellow-creatures, and who have also never sought that heavenly Friend, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning; there are many who have hewn out to themselves broken cisterns which could hold no water, who have yet refused to turn, when weary and dissatisfied, to the Fountain of living waters.

“O Thou who dry'st the mourner's tear,
How dark this world would be,
If, when deceived and wounded here,
We could not fly to thee.”

And it *is* dark to those who, in their hours of sorrow and desertion, have no confidence in the Saviour, no reliance on his love and sympathy. The heart that has none on earth or in heaven, around whom to twine, must indeed be a desolate and drooping heart. God grant that it may never be ours! Nor can it, if we are united by a simple and living faith to Christ, for we are then linked with those whom he graciously calls his “friends;” and are assured that we possess at all times, and under every circumstance, his tender and unwavering regard. How cheering and all-sustaining, amidst the separations, the imperfections, and the declen-

sions, which mark the fairest of earthly friendships, is the consciousness that we have an unchanging and unfailing Friend who is always ready to impart to us his sympathy and his succor.

We would not undervalue the preciousness of earthly love. It is one of the choicest gifts which God bestows upon a fallen world. It is a relic of paradise, and a type of heaven. Yet still we are taught by experience how precarious is the tie which binds us to the dearest and most loved friend. It is impossible to help feeling—without the least inclination towards misanthropy—that our affections are sometimes misplaced, that our dependence is often productive of disappointment. Imperfection and uncertainty are stamped on all the objects and relationships of earth; for “this is not our rest;” we

are destined for a better country, the bright inhabitants of which are linked in pure and immortal friendship. And while we anticipate with gladness the period which shall unite us with that holy and happy brotherhood, we will remember our best Friend,—the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother,—and fearlessly anchor our troubled and unsatisfied hearts in his deep and changeless love. That resting-place for the affections never has failed,—never can fail. The circumstances which enfeeble, suspend, and terminate many of the friendships which are formed between man and man, possess no influence over the emotions which the Saviour feels towards his chosen friends; and are incapable of altering the position in which, if Christians, we stand with regard to Christ.

For instance, it frequently happens that

the distance which intervenes between some friend and ourselves diminishes, and at length, perhaps, closes our friendship. He does not intend, when separated, to forget us, but absence gradually lessens the strength of his attachment; his correspondence almost imperceptibly declines, or, through unavoidable circumstances, is hastily ended; and as time rolls on, he grows more and more indifferent towards us. Had he always remained near us, and continued the personal intercourse which once subsisted between us, he might not have changed; but in his removal he verifies the truth of the old adage, "Out of sight, out of mind." Our aged readers can, doubtless, confirm by their own experience the truth of this statement. They can recall to mind some, it may be several, of their early acquaintances, thus geographically di-

vided from them, who have for many years been as strangers to them.

X But the Saviour, although personally absent from his people, never for one moment forgets them. From the time when he departed from his disciples at Bethany, where a cloud received him out of their sight, he gave them the most indisputable and uninterrupted proofs of his unchanged affection. He ascended then as a triumphant conqueror to heaven, and was enthroned at the right hand of God; but the glory which, as the Mediator, was bestowed upon him, could not intercept from his view the few poor fishermen of Galilee; nor could the songs of angelic adoration which he received hush the earnest supplications that rose from that little band who were assembled in an upper chamber at Jerusalem. No; his love was the same in heaven as it had

been on earth; and the rich and abundant gifts which were poured forth upon his faithful disciples were the immediate results of his exaltation and intercession. He consoled and guided them by his Spirit, and strengthened them for the avowal and defence of his truth. In his remonstrance with the persecuting Saul, he distinctly identified himself with his people, estimating the injuries done to them as if inflicted upon himself,—“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me?*”* and he manifested the same deep interest in their welfare by his gracious appearance to the Apostle of the Gentiles, when He bade him, “Be of good cheer,” and prepared him to advocate the cause of his Saviour in Rome.

But it is unnecessary to multiply proofs, either from the early or subsequent history

* Acts ix. 4.

of the Church, of the unvarying character of that regard which the ascended Redeemer cherishes for all those who through grace have accepted his gracious overtures of friendship. We need only appeal to yourselves, dear readers, as witnesses to the cheering fact, that the love of Christ — that love which passeth knowledge — is unaffected by the withdrawal of his personal presence from amongst us. His continued intercessions on our behalf, his rich impartation to us of all needful grace, and his preparation of a place for us in his Father's house, are sure evidences of his perpetual and affectionate remembrance.

Again, one of the causes which renders human friendship so variable is alteration in worldly circumstances. When competency is exchanged for poverty; when, in the expressive language of Scripture, we are "made

low," — what a change passes over the little world in which we dwell! That friendship is indeed true and valuable which will stand such a testing-time; for while many gather round us in prosperity, few cleave to us in adversity.

"The friends who in our sunshine live,
When winter comes are flown."

It is a bitter trial to find ourselves neglected and forsaken, when we are most in need of support and comfort; but it is a *sanctified* trial if it teaches us that it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; if it endears to us that heavenly Friend, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. Lowly indeed was his lot on earth: he had not where to lay his head; and his chosen friends and associates

were from the humblest ranks of society. It was to "the poor" that he especially proclaimed the blessings of his Gospel; and the sarcastic designation of his opponents, which styled him "a friend of publicans and sinners," was, in reality, beautifully expressive of his true character.

By his own position in the world, by his mingling chiefly with those who were poor and despised of men, and by the low and obscure situations in which the majority of his disciples have served him, poverty has been elevated and dignified. Not many noble, not many mighty, does the Saviour call; but he chooses the poor in this world, and makes them heirs of that glorious kingdom which he has promised to them that love him.

The wealthy and the fashionable may grow cold and distant, when penury and distress

enter our home ; but Christ makes our season of affliction only the means of drawing us more closely to himself. Our loss of property or income, instead of raising a barrier between him and us, links us more firmly together. He soothes our spirit ; sympathizes with our grief ; and promises that he will never forsake us.

Or, it is possible that the natural infirmities of age, and a long-declining state of health, may gradually narrow the circle of our friends. Deafness, or blindness, or sickness, makes our society less attractive than formerly. It is wearisome, perhaps, to sit beside us, day after day, and strive to interest us ; and therefore some who were once warm and even sincere in their professions of attachment to us, grow tired of the society of an aged invalid, and their visits become few and far between. We feel sometimes, when contrasting the

present with the past, that we are forsaken and alone in the world, that we are a burden to ourselves and to others. Old age brings with it a sensitiveness on this point, which occasions much mental disquietude, and frequently produces a fretful and repining spirit.

Let us endeavor, in moments of loneliness and depression, to tranquillize and divert our thoughts by dwelling upon the steadfastness of Christ towards us. *He* does not cast us off in the time of old age, nor forsake us when our strength fails; he is not weary of listening to the oft-repeated narrative of our wants and ailments, nor reluctant to cheer the solitude of life's evening; but he beautifully fulfils to us his own promise, "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you." As we walk with trembling steps through the valley of the shadow of death; as we miss from our

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But, grace of our
saviour is all-sufficient.

side the friend on whose arm we might have leaned for support and protection ; the Saviour bids us fear no evil, because *he* is with us ; *his* rod and *his* staff will comfort us ; and *his* presence shall perpetually abide with us. Our weakness and our infirmity may tend to loosen some of our earthly ties, but cannot diminish his kind sympathy with us. Friends may fail us, but he will never leave us.

And even should our friends prove faithful ; should they retain in old age the affection which they manifested towards us in youth, yet how suddenly and irrevocably may they be parted from us by death. "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." The dearest ones, around whom our affections are so firmly entwined, may soon be summoned into the presence of their Maker, and leave us to tread alone

the remainder of our lengthened journey. We may have to see the grave opened for those whose hands we imagined would tenderly close our eyes at the last. Stay! have we not already seen this? have not the separations of the tomb been painfully realized in our past history? The green hillock,—the marble tablet,—are they not cherished memorials of the departed, who still live in our hearts, and are enshrined in our recollections? More eloquent than the preacher's words, more powerful than the written admonition, are the vacant seats in our households,—yes, and at our firesides. Ah! the stern precept, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?"* has received frequent and practical illustration in the events of bygone days. The tolling bell

* Isa. ii. 22.

has mournfully reminded us that change and decay are stamped upon all the things of earth ; the cypress-tree has darkly shadowed forth the solemn truth, that, "In the midst of life we are in death." * Well, be it so ; we will not murmur that God gathers the ripest fruit and the choicest flowers from our gardens, since he gives us *himself* as our portion. We will not forget, as we sorrow over the dead, that "the Lord liveth !" While thinking of the friends whom the last enemy has snatched from our grasp, we will gratefully remember that Saviour from whom neither death nor the grave can part us. Around our desolated hearths, and in our solitary eventide, his voice is heard sweetly saying unto us, "Fear not ; for I am with thee !" †

Yes, Lord, thou art with us, our firm, our

* Prayer-Book.

† Isa. xliii. 5.

changeless, our undying Friend! "Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."* Death cannot divide thee from thy people, for that vanquished foe hath no power over its almighty Conqueror; and it cannot separate them from their Saviour, for its touch will only usher them into his immediate and visible presence.

"There is no death; what seems so, is transition." ✓

O, we are "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." †

Then let us comfort one another with this thought. Let the recollection of our indissoluble union with Christ, and of his eternal and

* Ps. cii. 27.

† Rom. viii. 38, 39.

unchanging affection for us, solace and refresh our spirits. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."* Yes, neither external circumstances, nor the decay of nature, nor even continual infirmity and sinfulness, can alienate the heart of the Saviour from those whom he has chosen, and called, and blessed. Heaven and earth may pass away, but his word—that word which assures us of the freeness and perpetuity of his love—abideth forever.

Aged Christian! dwell much on the character and conduct of this mighty and faithful Friend: "casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." † As life declines, let his preciousness increase; as the associations of earth gradually lessen, cling more closely and confidently to him. Think of him, as

* John xiii. 1.

† 1 Peter v. 7.

preparing a place for you in the heavenly mansions ; and as coming to receive you unto himself, that where he is, there you may be also. And if, while now you see him not, you can rejoice in him with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory ; what will be the rapture of your emancipated spirit, when you are admitted to full and uninterrupted communion with him ! If now, while you only behold him as through a glass darkly, he is, in your apprehension, the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely ; how will your admiration be increased, when you behold him face to face ! If now, while you know him but in part, your acquaintance with him is the source of purest and inexpressible pleasure, who shall estimate the happiness and the delight which shall result from your knowing even as you are known ?

Words in Season.

“Cast me not off in the time of old age;
forsake me not when my strength fail-
eth.” — Ps. lxxi. 9.

Aged believer! you feel your dependence upon God for support and succor. If he should forsake you, if he should cast you off, you would indeed be helpless and hopeless. But you rejoice in the assurance that this can never be realized. You know that he will never leave you to bear up alone the pressure of your trials and infirmities; that he will never relax the grasp which enfolds you in his

love. And therefore your prayer is rather the expression of confidence, than the apprehension of fear. You ask for that which he has promised, which you are certain he will grant,—the continuance of his gracious aid. In youthful days, it may be, in healthful hours, you found that without him you were weak and unprotected; and now in the time of old age, when your strength faileth, you are more deeply conscious of your need of his help. Well, ask, and you shall receive; cast your burden, cast yourself upon him, and he will sustain you. Fear not, for he is with you; be not dismayed, for he is your God; he will strengthen you; yea, he will help you; yea, he will uphold you with the right hand of his righteousness.* These things will he do unto you, and will never forsake you.

* Isa. xli. 10.

“Why should I doubt His love at last,
With anxious thoughts perplexed?
Who saved me in the troubles past
Will save me in the next.
Will save, — till at my latest hour,
With more than conquest blest,
I soar beyond temptation's power,
And enter into rest.”

“Thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.” — Ps. lxxi. 17, 18.

“Thou hast taught me from my youth.” How encouraging it is to look back to our early life, and recognize the goodness of God in its varied events! He was our Guide, our Instructor, our Father. He restrained us from evil; counselled us in difficulty; directed us in uncertainty; preserved us through danger. All the knowledge which we have gained of

his character, of his will, of ourselves, of futurity, he has communicated to us. And how gradual, how wise, how gentle are his teachings! How patiently has he borne with our ignorance and forgetfulness! how tenderly has he imparted his most difficult lessons! And though we have been dull and wayward scholars; though we have not profited as we might have done by his Divine instructions; yet we know, if we are disciples of Christ, that we have *so* learned of him as to find rest unto our souls. We have learned to rely upon his strength, to depend upon his faithfulness, to trust in his righteousness.

“And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.” Grateful for his favors towards us, we have striven to live to his praise, and show forth his glory. It has been our aim to communicate to others the knowledge which

we have received. We have spoken of his goodness to those around us. We have not been ashamed of his Gospel, nor indifferent to his honor.

“Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.” “Those who have been taught of God from their youth, and have made it the business of their lives to serve and honor him, may be sure that he will not leave them when they are old and gray-headed: he is not a Master that is wont to cast off old servants.”

“In early years Thou wast my Guide,
And of my youth the Friend;
And as my days began with thee,
With thee my days shall end.”

“*And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.*” — Isa. xlvi. 4.

Ah, Christian, here is ground for your confidence in God. You have his promise that he will be with you in your old age, to support you under its infirmities, and therefore you are cheerful and tranquil. Listen to the testimony of an aged pilgrim. "What a comfort it is, as we get old and feeble, and friends drop off one after another, to remember that our God does not change! He says to us, 'I am he;' the same that I ever was: 'I am he;' the Lord who preserved and guided you from your infancy; 'I am he:' all that I have promised to be to you; all that you can possibly need. 'And even to hoar hairs will I carry you.' What tender and expressive language! How can we help trusting in such a mighty and loving Friend? Whether we look at the present or the future, there is no room for fear. Those who can

walk, have his rod and staff to help and comfort them ; and those who cannot walk, find that his everlasting arms are beneath them, and that they are borne safely onwards. We are like children, who, when they are weak and tired, are carried in a father's arms, and lifted over difficulty and danger."

"Fear not, I am with thee; O, be not dismayed!
I, I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

"E'en down to old age all my people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
In the arms of my mercy they still shall be borne."

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." — Prov. xvi. 31.

Old age is honorable, and commands respect.

“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man.”* But we cannot expect to receive true and lasting deference from others, unless our *character* is calculated to win their esteem. Superiority in age should be combined with superiority in excellence. Multitude of years should teach wisdom. “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if” — mark that — “if it be found in the way of righteousness.” If it be found in the way of wickedness, its honor is forfeited, its crown profaned and laid in the dust. How is it with you, reader? Are you sanctified through faith in Christ? are you “walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless”? † O, how lovely and dignified is old age when marked by piety and consistency!

* Lev. xix. 32.

† Luke i. 6.

“When piety adorns declining years,
The hoary head a glorious crown appears;
A dignity no earthly rank bestows
Marks the believer then; and sweet repose
Is stamped upon his features; all who gaze,
Revere his person, and his virtues praise.”

“*Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.*” — Heb. vi. 19.

A vessel was driving ashore. Her anchors were gone, and she refused to obey the helm. A few moments more, and she would strike. If any should be saved, they must be tossed by the waves on the beach. In the midst of the general consternation, there was one person quite calm. He had done all that a man could do to prepare for the worst, when the wreck was inevitable; and now that death was apparently near, he was quietly waiting the event. A friend of his asked the reason of his

calmness in the midst of dangers so imminent : —

“ Do you not know that the anchor is gone, and we are drifting upon the coast ? ”

“ Certainly I do ; but I have an anchor to the soul.” On this was his trust. It entered into that within the veil. It was the ground of his confidence in the storm, and enabled him to ride securely in the view of instant and awful death.

Have you this anchor, reader ? Is the hope of the Gospel yours ? Amidst the storms and trials of life, and in the prospect of danger and death, are you calm and trustful, assured that you will soon be admitted into the haven of everlasting peace ?

Or are you destitute of this hope ? Without it, how can you be happy ? Without it, what will you do in the swellings of Jor-

dan? It may be yours; yours even now, if you will seek it, if you will accept it. The *gift* of God is *eternal life*. Confidence in him, — faith in Christ, — will link your tempest-tost, troubled, and perishing spirit with perpetual repose and security, — with the unseen glories of heaven.

“How still, amidst commotion,
The bark at anchor cast;
Around her heaves the ocean,
The anchor holds her fast.
So hope, an anchor of the soul,
How steadfast, to the saint is given:
Though waves of trouble round him roll,
His hope is fixed in heaven.”

“*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.*” — Ps. xcii. 14.

The palm-tree — to which God's people are in this psalm compared — is remarkable for its lengthened and increasing fruitfulness. The

best dates are said to be gathered when it has reached a hundred years. How beautiful an emblem of the aged believer, growing in grace and maturing in holiness to the close of his earthly existence! Each day, each year, added to his life, adds to the loveliness and perfection of his Christian virtues. His character has a mellowness and sweetness which it lacked in earlier seasons. He is ripening for heaven. In knowledge, in wisdom, in love, in humility, in gentleness, in forbearance, in peace, in usefulness, in happiness, he is steadily and constantly advancing. He is filled with the Spirit, and therefore brings forth the fruits of the Spirit.

Is this portraiture of an aged Christian yours, reader? Alas! it does not belong to all who profess and call themselves by the Saviour's name. Nay, it may be feared that

there are some, really and manifestly his, to whom it bears but little resemblance. They have long been "planted" in the house of the Lord, but they do not appear to "flourish" in the courts of our God; and as years augment, they seem to imagine that the infirmities of age are excuses for their little fruitfulness. But they certainly never gathered such an idea from God's word; nor rightly studied and pleaded his promises to themselves. Follow not their example. Rest not satisfied with past attainments. Strive to glorify God more than you have ever yet done. Let your last days be your best days; your latest fruit, the richest. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." *

“How beautiful to see
The clustered fruit upon the bending tree!
Yet lovelier still the graces which adorn
The soul that's heaven-born.
And age does not diminish, but increase
The precious fruits of love, and joy, and peace,
And gentleness, and patience; at life's close,
Each Christian virtue more luxuriant grows.”

“*My times are in thy hand.*” — Ps. xxxi. 15.

Then I am sure that they will be wisely ordered. Thou hast all power in heaven and in earth; thou art acquainted with the end from the beginning; everything is subject to thy control, and the future, to thee, is as the present; therefore there can be no mistake in thy purposes; no imperfection in thy plans.

* Phil. i. 9-11.

“*My times are in thy hand.*” Then I will not be anxious nor distressed about the future. Varied may be the times which I have yet to experience, — times of sorrow or joy ; of poverty or plenty ; of sickness or health ; of life or death : but I can calmly leave them to thy disposal. I cannot foresee the events which thy providence appoints, but I can wait and trust. The period and the manner of my departure hence are unknown to me, but I am free from all solicitude on these points, because thou hast arranged them for the best.

“My times are in thy hand ; the night, the day,
The moon’s pale glimmering, and the sunny ray
Are thine ; and thine the midnight of the grave :
O, be thou there to strengthen and to save,
To light death’s valley with thy beam of love,
And smile a welcome to thy throne above.”

“*Bless the Lord, O my soul ; and all that is*

within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." — Ps. ciii. 1, 2.

How animating is the sight of an aged Christian, who is rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; and furnishing, by daily conduct, a bright example to others of cheerfulness and gratitude! His life is a psalm of thanksgiving; his happy look and thankful spirit fill his home with sunshine. It is impossible to be long in his society, without feeling gladdened and invigorated by it. You can scarcely tell why, but you feel less disposed to complain, and more inclined to rejoice, than you did before. Your own path seems to grow more hopeful and promising; you are reminded of mercies which you had hitherto forgotten; and the troubles which you thought so heavy insensibly grow lighter. The fact is, that, for a

time at least, you have caught his spirit, and imbibed his tone of mind.

A lovely instance of real and sustained cheerfulness was the late justly celebrated William Wilberforce. "A stranger might have noticed that he was more uniformly cheerful than most men of his time of life. Closer observation showed a vein of Christian feeling, mingling with, and purifying, the natural flow of a most happy temper; whilst those who lived most continually with him could trace distinctly in his tempered sorrows, and sustained and almost childlike gladness of heart, the continual presence of that peace which the world can neither give nor take away. The pages of his later journal are full of bursts of joy and thankfulness; and with his children and his chosen friends, his full heart swelled out ever in the same blessed

strains; he seemed too happy not to express his happiness; his song was ever of the loving-kindness of the Lord." Everything became with him a cause for thanksgiving. When some of the infirmities of years began to press upon him, "What thanks do I owe to God," was his reflection, "that my declining strength appears likely not to be attended with painful diseases, but rather to lessen gradually, and by moderate degrees! How good a friend God is to me! When I have any complaint, it is always so mitigated and softened, as to give me scarcely any pain. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul.' What thanks do I owe to my gracious and kind Heavenly Father!" And so, when one of his friends had passed through a painful operation, "Seldom," he says, "have I felt anything so deeply. How thankful should I be to be spared such trials,

my strength not being equal to them! I humbly commit myself unto Him, who surely has given me reason to say, 'Goodness and mercy have followed me all my days.'"

Aged Christian, do you sympathize with these feelings? do you share this thankfulness? do you manifest this gladness? "The fruit of the Spirit is love, *joy*, peace."* Every allowance must be made for natural temperament. Some persons are naturally sanguine and cheerful; others are naturally gloomy and desponding. But, in either case, the promises of the Gospel, if simply believed and heartily appropriated, cannot fail to gladden the heart, and influence the conduct. And it is no less our duty than our privilege, to "rejoice in the Lord always;" to "show forth his loving-kindness in the morning, and

* Gal. v. 22.

his faithfulness every night ;” to “ be thankful unto him, and bless his name.”* We must *cultivate* this joyous and grateful frame of mind ; we must strive, by meditation, practice, and prayer, to acquire or to strengthen it ; for we ought no more to dishonor God by our unhappiness and unthankfulness, than by our unholiness.

The weakness and the infirmities of old age sometimes tend to depress our spirits and dim our hopes. Therefore let us be upon our guard ; and instead of giving way to discontent and despondency, let us count up our mercies, and look more steadfastly on the bright side of things ; and as often as we do this, sadness will be chased from our brow, and the self-exhortation to praise will burst from our lips, “ Bless the Lord, O my soul ;

* Ps. xcii. 2 ; c. 4.

and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”

“Farewell to sadness,
Let every tear depart;
Wake all to gladness,
Wake, O my heart!

Shall worldly triflers raise the song
O'er pleasures they must lose ere long?
And shall not those rejoice and sing
Who love the Heavenly King?
Let saints on earth unite their voice
With saints that round the throne rejoice;
And here begin the song that through
Eternal years is new.”

“*Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*” — 2 Cor. iv. 16.

“We must of necessity,” says a celebrated writer, “become better or worse as we advance in years. Unless we endeavor to *spiritualize*

ourselves, and supplicate in this endeavor for that grace which is never withheld when it is sincerely and earnestly sought, age *bodylizes* us more and more, and the older we grow the more are we imbruted and debased; — so manifestly is the text verified which warns us that ‘Unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away.’* In some, the soul seems gradually to be absorbed and extinguished in its crust of clay; in others, as if it purified and sublimed the vehicle to which it was united. Nothing therefore is more beautiful than a wise and religious old age; nothing so pitiable as the latter stages of mortal existence, when the world, and the flesh, and that false philosophy which is of the Devil, have secured the victory for the grave.”

* Luke xix. 26.

Aged Christian, thank God for the strengthening and invigorating grace which he imparts to you. Your earthly frame is weak and enfeebled; it has lost its vigor and elasticity; it is harassed with pain and infirmity; it must soon die. But while your body decays, your soul thrives. If the one is preparing for the grave, the other is ripening for glory. Your faith grows firmer; your hope stronger; your love deeper; your views clearer.

“The soul’s poor cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks which time hath made.”

“*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*” — 2 Cor. iv. 17.

“In visiting,” writes a clergyman, “a poor man who has been bedridden these *twenty-five years*, I was preparing to pity him, but he called on me to rejoice. “Are you not

wearied out with the length of your afflictions?" "Wearied, sir!" said he; "no, nature will soon faint; but God sustains me. I could lie here for another twenty-five years, if it pleased God. I have found this bed to be the very gate of heaven. Length of my affliction, sir! O, let me not call it long: it is short, very short, and will soon be over. These light afflictions, which are but for a *moment*, work for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Is not God all love? He cannot then be unkind. Is he not all-wise? He cannot then do wrong. Are not his promises yea and amen in Christ Jesus? He cannot then break his word. None who have trusted him have repented of it. O sir, I dare not complain. My affliction is a mercy."

Troubled and afflicted Christian, remember,

the troubles of earth will enhance the joys of heaven. And, compared with that weight of glory which is prepared for you above, are not your sorrows light? Measured by the eternity of the happiness you anticipate, is not their duration that of a moment? Murmur not at the present; think of the future. How striking the contrast! How glorious the change!

“The gloom of the night adds a charm to the morn;
Stern winter the spring-time endears;
And the darker the cloud on which it is drawn,
The brighter the rainbow appears;
So trials and sorrows the Christian prepare
For the rest that remaineth above;
On earth tribulation awaits him, but there
The smile of unchangeable love.”

“*Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*” — John vi. 37.

During his last hours, a highly distinguished

writer called for his chaplain, and said, "Though I have endeavored to avoid sin, and please God to the utmost of my power, yet I am still afraid to die."

"My lord," said the chaplain, "you have forgotten that Jesus Christ is a Saviour."

"True," was the answer, "but how shall I know that he is a Saviour for *me*?"

"It is written, my lord, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'"

"Yet it is!" was the quick reply, "and I am surprised that, though I have read that scripture a thousand times over, I never felt its virtue till this moment; and now I die happy."

Reader, are you coming to the Saviour? Then this promise is yours.

"Jesus, the sinner's friend, to thee,
Lost and undone, for aid I flee;

Ah, wherefore did I ever doubt?

Thou wilt in no wise cast me out."

"When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." — Job xvi. 22.

An approaching journey lies before me. I have to pass from time to eternity; from this world to the next. And the time of my departure, although to me uncertain, cannot be very far distant. A few years—perhaps a few days—will close my stay on earth.

It is an *unavoidable* journey. I must go. There is no choice. Willing or unwilling, when the summons for me arrives, I shall have to set off.

It is an *unknown* journey. I have never taken it before. I have no practical acquaintance with the road, the mode of transit, the dangers or the discomforts which await me.

And there is no one who can clearly explain them to me. Those of my friends who have travelled that way have never come back to relate their experience.

It is a *solitary* journey. I must accomplish it alone. The most loved of my present companions cannot accompany me. They may think of me, feel for me, pray for me, but they cannot be with me. We must separate ; they to remain behind, I to go forward.

It is a *momentous* journey. For at its termination I enter upon my everlasting destiny. It will convey me either to the mansions of happiness or to the abodes of misery. The narrow boundary between the present and the future state once crossed, there will be no possibility of change. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still." Rev. xxii. 11.

It is a *final* journey. I shall go the way whence I shall not return. My pilgrimage will be forever ended. No more parting, no more change, no more toil, no more fatigue. It will be my last journey.

And if I am a Christian, how welcome is this fact! I shall have done forever with sin and sorrow. Eternal felicity will be mine. Perfect holiness, perfect happiness. This journey leads me to my home, to my father's house, to my everlasting rest.

Then I will not shrink from its approach, nor complain of its accompaniments. It may be linked with much that is painful and unpleasant, but it is the *only* way home; and therefore, although life has many ties and many joys, I feel an earnest desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better than being here.


Death is a solemn journey, but it is a safe one to Christ's people; for he will not only receive and welcome them at its close, but he will be with them as they are passing through it. O, it will not be lonely with him! And he is a Guide who is well acquainted with the way, for he has trodden it himself, and the marks of his footsteps are visible there still. He went for the purpose of smoothing its difficulties, clearing its dangers, dispersing its terrors; and he fully accomplished his purpose: "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."* Therefore when I walk through the dark valley, I will fear no evil; for thou, O Jesus, wilt be with me,

* Heb. ii. 14, 15.

and thy rod and thy staff shall comfort me.

“ *The spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*” — Eccles. xii. 7.

“ Not to a stranger ; not to an unknown, untried master ; but to Him who has preserved and watched over it from year to year ; to Him who knows its struggles, its anxieties, its throbbings of hope and fear ; to its own God, even the ‘ God who gave it ; ’ nay, more, who gave for it his only and well-beloved Son.” Therefore, Christian reader, you need not fear to depart. Does the child dread to return home, to go back to its loving parents ? O happy moment ! when you shall be admitted into your Heavenly Father’s presence, and shall share in those pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore !



“ Away, thou dying saint, away ;
Fly to the mansions of the blest ;
Thy God no more requires thy stay,
He calls thee to eternal rest.

“ Thy toils, at length, have reached a close,
No more remains for thee to do ;
Away, away, to thy repose,
Beyond the reach of sin and woe.

“ Away to yonder realms of light,
Where multitudes redeemed with blood
Enjoy the beatific sight,
And dwell forever with their God.”



Light at Eventide.

The checkered day of life is past,
Its varied joys, its varied cares ;
The clear blue sky is overcast,
And night a solemn aspect wears ;
O Thou, whose smile mak'st all things bright,
At evening time let there be light.

Darkness has often marked our way,
And sorrow on our souls has pressed ;
But thou canst all our fears allay,
And cheer the closing hours of rest ;
Thy love is boundless as thy might :
At evening time let there be light.

O, shine within our hearts ; reveal
Thyself in Christ, the God of love ;
Nor let one earthly cloud conceal
The glory of the land above ;
Our faith increase, — our hope excite :
At evening time let there be light.

Like radiant stars that chase the gloom,
And guide the traveller to repose,
So let thy promises illumine
The shadow which death's coming throws,
And ere our spirit takes her flight,
At evening time let there be light.

“Let there be light.” One word from thee
Will every passing shade dispel ;
Until thy face unveiled we see,
And in thy cloudless presence dwell.
Soon shall our faith be changed to sight :
In heaven there will be perfect light !

The Banks of the River.

“Now I further saw that betwixt the pilgrims and the gate of the city was a river; but there was no bridge to go over, and the river was very deep. At the sight of this river the pilgrims were much stunned; but the men that went with them said, ‘You must go through, or you cannot come at the gate.’ The pilgrims then began to inquire if there was no other way to the gate? to which they answered, ‘Yes; but there hath not any, save two, Enoch and Elijah, been permitted to tread that path since the foundation of the world,

nor shall until the last trumpet shall sound.'

'The pilgrims then began to despond in their minds, and looked this way and that, but no way could be found by them, by which they might escape the river.'*

Ah, how true and how touching is this description of the emotions which are often excited in the Christian pilgrim's breast, as he stands on the banks of the river! He fears to cross its deep, dark waters; he shrinks from the strange, and it may be the stormy passage to eternity. O, if he could but reach the celestial city without having to cross the stream of death!

It cannot be. When the summons for his departure arrives, he must enter that cold flood, and meet its terrors. None can disregard the call, nor choose any other mode of

* Pilgrim's Progress.

transit. "It is appointed unto men once to die."*

Yet why should the Christian be afraid? Solemn and mysterious as the last change undoubtedly is, even to the child of God, he may rest assured that a wise and loving Saviour will shield him from every danger, and guide him in safety through it. And if Christ himself is with him then, if his rod and staff support and comfort him, what evil can he fear?

Aged reader, as you gaze upon the river which rolls between you and the promised land, is your mind filled with gloom and apprehension? Is it not because you look *only* at death? you do not at the same time fix the eye of faith upon your Saviour. You seem to think that, unaided and alone, you will have to struggle through its waves, instead of joy-

* Heb. ix. 27.

fully remembering his promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."* O, he who lays hold upon this sweet assurance may safely shut his eyes, and leave himself to the entire disposal of infinite love, and faithfulness, and wisdom!

Does nature recoil from the physical suffering of the last mortal conflict? It is true, that the pains of death are sometimes so severe as to occasion the deepest distress and anguish; but in the greater number of instances, how easy and tranquil are the closing moments of life! How many pass from time to eternity as calmly as an infant falling asleep on its mother's bosom! But should it be otherwise; should your dying hour be one of extreme suffering, is not the *manner* as well as the time of

* Isa. xliii. 2.

your departure hence appointed by your Heavenly Father? and will he suffer you to be tried above that which you are able to bear? He knows your frame; he remembers that you are dust, and feels the tenderest parental compassion for those who fear him; and therefore you may be assured that the trials which his love ordains, whether in life or in death, are *necessary* trials, and that he will give you support under them. And if your strength is proportioned to your burden, is it not the same in effect as if that burden were removed? Listen to the testimony of an eminent minister of Christ, whose sufferings were intense, but whose spirit was filled with rejoicing in the midst of them. "I have suffered twenty times, yes, — to speak within bounds, — twenty times as much as I could in being burnt at the stake; but my joy in God so abounded as to

render my sufferings not only tolerable, but welcome. The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. God is my all. While he is present with me, no event can in the least diminish my happiness; and were the whole world at my feet trying to minister to my comfort, they could not add one drop to the cup. Death comes every night, and stands at my bedside, in the form of terrible convulsions, until every bone is almost dislocated with pain; yet while the body is thus tortured, the soul is perfectly happy and peaceful, more happy than I can possibly express to you."

How easily might we multiply proofs like these, — proofs of God so sustaining and elevating the soul of the believer above the pressure of physical suffering, as that it was comparatively unheeded and unfelt. And can he

not do the same, reader, for you? Is not his grace sufficient for you as well as for others? O, trust yourself to him; repose with confidence upon his promises; and believe that in a dying hour your succor shall be equal to your need. Do not test your preparedness for that hour by the strength and comfort which you now possess, but by the solemn engagement which Christ has made never to leave nor forsake you. He is with you now, to help you to glorify him by your life; when death comes, he will be with you then, and help you to glorify him by your death. Dying grace will not be vouchsafed until a dying hour; you do not want it now, but it will be abundantly vouchsafed then. Wait for it in faith. "Death is somewhat dreary," said Bishop Cowper to his weeping friends, "and the streams of that Jordan which is between us and our Canaan run

furiously ; but they stand still when the ark comes.”

But perhaps your anxiety respecting death is occasioned by the thought of the separation which must take place between the soul and the body. You dread the entrance upon an unknown and untried state of existence. It is not what you know, but what you do not know of the future, which causes your distress. If any one could return from the unseen world, and tell you exactly what he experienced in the moment of his departure from earth, and clearly describe to you the sensations which he felt when he found himself absent from the body, your mind, you think, would be relieved of much of its disquietude. But it is the uncertainty, the blank, the mystery lying before, in the awful distance, at which you tremble. Like a child in the dark, because

you cannot see, you are afraid. (The imaginary objects which fill you with awe and trepidation would disappear if there were light enough to reveal to you the true state of things. Why, then, you ask, is that light withheld? Could not God have unfolded to us in his word the nature of our future existence, and the mode of our introduction to it? He must have foreseen the suspense and the agitation which would arise through our ignorance, and yet he has not sought to allay our fears by a clearer and fuller revelation of things to come. Why is it? The fact of God's silence upon this point is a sufficient reply. We may be sure, since he is Love, that the knowledge which he has reserved is neither requisite nor desirable for us. It is probable that, in our present state of existence, we could not comprehend more than he has al-

ready told us about another world ; or the full blaze of light which we desire, had it been granted, might have proved injurious to us. We are as yet only in the infancy of our being, and do not know what is best for us ; but our Maker knows, and he has acted accordingly. “ He has said enough to awaken curiosity, — to enkindle desire, — to inspire hope, — to encourage confidence and expectation ; and we must wait for the rest. God calls us to honor him by our faith, by our belief, at all times and under all circumstances, in his wisdom and goodness. It is as though we were allowed to give to the universe a proof of the firmness of our dependence upon him, such as no heavenly spirits can give, to show that we are not afraid to trust him, even when he bids us *die*.” O, shall we not willingly prove how unshaken is our reliance on his

love, by resigning ourselves in the hour of death, without one fear, to his care? The way before us is dark and mysterious, but we will cheerfully follow where he leads us. And how gently, how tenderly will he lead us! The act of dying which we so greatly fear may be a gentle and painless slumber,—a quiet falling asleep in Christ; and the light of eternity will dawn upon us like the tranquil beams of the morning, which now gladden our waking eyes.

“Hast thou ne'er looked on a little child
When he first awakes from rest,
And smiles to think how his dream beguiled
While he slept on a parent's breast?
So calm and so sweet shall the waking be
In the radiant dawn of eternity.”

There is, it is true, something strange and inexplicable in the idea of our existence without a body; we are apt to fancy that a dis-

embodied spirit must at first feel as it were unclothed, and unprotected. But it is a mistake to suppose that the soul owes its defence from external harms and hardships to the body, in the same manner as the body does to the clothes it wears. The very contrary is true. It is here exposed to many more harms and hardships by means of its union with the mortal body; and, consequently, its disunion from that will be its freedom from them. The operations and conceptions of the liberated soul will be inconceivably more perfect, free, and unbiassed than they now are while subject to so many impediments and interruptions from its connection with animal nature. This is evident from the fact, that even *now* we find our soul in the best frame for thinking when it is least affected by the body. How rapid, how strong, how clear then will be the flow of its

thoughts, when they meet with nothing from without to obstruct them!

The dread of death, however, may arise from other causes. It may result from apprehensions as to our eternal happiness. We fear, sometimes, whether our names are written in the Lamb's book of life; whether we have any warrant to look forward to a participation in everlasting joys; and therefore we cannot bear the thought of meeting our Judge face to face, and would fain retard the moment when our everlasting destiny must be fixed. Were we *sure* that there was a mansion prepared for us, and a crown of glory laid up for us in heaven; O, we should not mind passing through the river of death, even though its waters were deep and tempest-tost. But how can we be sure?

What saith the Scripture? "There is now

no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

But precious as these assertions are, they do not exactly relieve our distress. Our fear is not whether true believers are everlastingly saved, but whether we are among their number. We hope we are, but it is so easy to deceive ourselves; we may be mistaken; and how terrible to wake in eternity, and find ourselves excluded from the bliss of the re-

* Rom. viii. 7; John iii. 36; vi. 51; x. 27; xiv. 3.

deemed, beyond the possibility of change ; for, what we are then, we must be forever.

Our dread, then, of death, or rather of the consequences of death, may be traced to the weakness of our faith, or to imperfect views of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It cannot, therefore, be removed until our faith becomes stronger, and our views clearer. We must study the word which God has given us, and ask for the teaching of his Spirit, that we may be enabled to understand and to apply to ourselves the heart-cheering truth, "Christ is all, and in all ;" "Ye are complete in him." We must strive to lay aside the reasonings, the prejudices, and the unbelief of our own hearts, and receive with simplicity and thankfulness the full and free promises of our Saviour. As we become better acquainted with that loving Saviour, and understand more perfectly the

design of his all-sufficient atonement, our anxious forebodings about the future will gradually pass away, as the gloom of midnight fades before the rising sun, and the God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace in believing.

It will tend to mitigate the alarm with which we regard the solemn change of death, if we look at it in its true character, as a continuation of the present, rather than as the commencement of a new state of existence. Heaven and hell are not so much the reward—using the word in its scriptural sense—of our past life, as the necessary sequence of it. It will be *what* we are, not *where* we are, which will constitute our felicity or our woe; and therefore if we are conscious now that we love the Saviour and trust in him, and follow after holiness; or even that we heartily desire and

strive to do this; is it not plain that we have within us the germ of true happiness,—a heart that is touched with the love of Christ, and longs for conformity to his likeness? With this principle implanted in our hearts, how could we be forever miserable? It is impossible! not only because God will never falsify his own word, nor condemn those who put their trust in his Son; but because the elements of lasting peace and joy are already ours. “He that believeth on the Son *hath*—not *shall have*—everlasting life.” Meditate on this declaration, dear reader, and take the consolation which it is calculated to impart to all who are placing their reliance upon the atonement of Christ.

But in the contemplation of a dying hour, a tender and affectionate spirit is sometimes deeply affected at the prospect of parting

with beloved relatives and friends. There are some, perhaps, to whom we are a solace and a support, who have always been accustomed to lean upon us in their weary march of life, and to look to us for counsel and sympathy; how will they do without us? how can we leave them to struggle on alone and sorrowful? Or there are others, for whose salvation we are deeply concerned, and over whose wanderings we often shed bitter tears; how shall we bear to take our farewell—it may be our last farewell—of them? How keen will be the anguish of our dying hour, as we reflect that they are still unchanged, unsaved, and that we dare not cherish the hope of meeting them again!

O, how painful are the separations of the grave! How hard it is to sever, if only for a few years, the ties which bind us so closely

to the *dear* ones around us! Many Christians, *aged* Christians too—for old age does not quench the ardency of the affections—can respond to the touching desire of a youthful disciple of the Saviour, “O mamma! I wish we could all die and go to heaven together.”

Yet why should you dwell only on the dark side of the picture? it may never be presented to you. Your Heavenly Father, in his compassion for your weakness, may spare you the sorrow which you anticipate. You may pass away from this life as in a quiet slumber;—

“Nor bear a single pang at parting;
Nor see the tear of sorrow starting;
Nor hear the quivering lips that bless you;
Nor feel the hands of love that press you.”

Or if not, if fully conscious in your last moments that you are parting from those

whom you love, God will so strengthen and animate your dying spirit as that you shall be enabled with calmness, nay, with cheerfulness, to resign the objects of your affection to his merciful guidance and protection. You will feel that He who has watched over you so many years in the wilderness, and brought you safely through every danger, can surely do as much for those whom you are leaving behind; that He who has taught you to pray so earnestly and so perseveringly for their spiritual welfare, will not suffer your prayers to remain unanswered, although he calls you home before you have witnessed their fulfilment. And you will also realize your happy and speedy reunion with your dear friends in another world. Death will not long divide you; the remainder of their appointed time on earth will pass rapidly away as a tale

that is told, and then you will meet them again,—meet to part no more!

“ With the prospect of meeting forever,
With the bright gates of heaven in view,
From the dearest on earth we may sever,
And smile a delightful adieu.”

Aged believer, you are standing now on the banks of the river; fear not, only believe. Remember that one of the reasons why Jesus Christ manifested himself in human nature was for the express purpose of dispelling that gloom which naturally overspreads the mind as we look upon the dark waters of death. “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their

lifetime subject to bondage.”* Then seek deliverance from that fear, and expect deliverance. Christ suffered not in vain; all the purposes of his death have been fully accomplished; and he would have his people even now to participate in his triumph; and without waiting for the actual encounter to join in the ascription of the Apostle, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Then

“Shudder not to pass the stream,
Venture all thy care on him,—
Him whose dying love and power
Stilled its tossing, hushed its roar.
Not one object of his care
Ever suffered shipwreck there;
See the haven full in view;
Love Divine shall bear thee through.”

Is it granted to you to possess that strong

* Heb. ii. 14, 15.

faith, that calm assurance, which elevates the mind above the fear of death? Can you say with gladness, "The time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day"?* Thank your Saviour for this glorious hope,—this hope which is as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast,—for he is its author and its bestower. It is because he has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, that you are now enabled to look forward with composure to your conflict with the last foe, and triumphantly to ask, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"†

* 2 Tim. iv. 6, 8.

† 1 Cor. xv. 55.

Well may you rejoice, for your life is hid with Christ in God, and you are safe forever. Safe amidst the infirmities and perils of old age; safe in the swelling waters of Jordan; safe when you stand before the solemn judgment-seat; yes, safe throughout eternity. Nothing in earth or hell can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus; or pluck you from the grasp of your ever-living Saviour. He upholds and comforts you now in the evening of life; and "by and by, leaning upon his arm, you shall come down to the river. Not a ripple shall be on its bosom; its clear waters shining in heaven's own light shall allure to the crossing. *His* feet shall but touch the stream, and, lo, a way for the ransomed to pass over." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord;"* "Pre-

* Rev. xiv. 13.

cious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." *

But our remarks about the river of death have been addressed to true Christians; are you, reader, one of their number? If not, you have no right to appropriate to yourself the consolations which are designed only for them. There is no sight more painful than that of an aged individual on the borders of the grave, on the threshold of eternity, unrenewed, unsanctified, and yet undismayed by the terrors of the future, and confident of the joys of heaven. May God preserve us from so fearful a delusion! "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." † A life of carelessness — of worldliness — of self-righteousness, cannot prepare us for a

* Psa. cxvi. 15.

† Gal. vi. 7.

life of glory. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." † A change of heart, faith in Christ, the fruits of holiness, are the precursors of the believer's assurance of eternal felicity; what do you know of them in your own experience? Examine yourself, whether you are in the faith; or whether you have only a name to live while you are dead. The absence of alarm, or even the possession of joy, as you draw near to death and eternity, is not, of itself, an indication of safety. It may be but the deadly calm before an awful tempest; a fatal slumber on the edge of a frightful precipice. IGNORANCE trembled not

* John iii. 3, 36.

† Heb. xii. 14.

when he came to the river-side, and prepared to cross it; he got over it with less difficulty than Christian, for one VAIN HOPE helped him with his boat; but when he reached the other side, the King commanded his servants to bind him hand and foot, and to cast him into outer darkness.

Yet while this should warn the presumptuous and the self-confident, it should not discourage the awakened sinner, who feels that life is receding beneath his tread, and that his feet have as yet found no sure resting-place. The language of the Gospel is language of peace to all who really desire salvation from the peril and the dominion of sin. "Come unto me," says the Saviour, whom it proclaims, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." * It is never too

* Matt. xi. 28.

late to turn to him ; to seek forgiveness at his cross. God's promises of salvation are made without exception of time ; for whenever a sinner repents of his sins, he has promised to put away his wickedness out of remembrance. They are made without exception of sins ; for, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin ;" * and, " All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." † They are made without exception of persons ; for, " Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved ;" ‡ " Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely ;" § " Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." ||

Aged reader ! " behold the Lamb of God,

* 1 John i. 7.

§ Rev. xxii. 17.

† Matt. xii. 31.

|| John vi. 37.

‡ Acts ii. 21.

which taketh away the sin of the world." Look unto him and be saved. How else will you pass through the swellings of Jordan? how else will you stand at the judgment-seat of Christ?



Handwritten notes in cursive script, including the word "interest" and other illegible text.

When Wilt Thou Die?

Not in the solemn night,
When dim and shadowy all things appear;
When thoughts are tinged with mournfulness and fear,
And nature's fairest scenes are veiled from sight;
For darkness only throws a deeper gloom
Around the opening tomb.

But let the gladsome day
Smile upon my departure; let the bright
And glorious sunshine image forth that light
Which soon shall beam with pure and fadeless ray
Upon my ransomed spirit; let no cloud
Life's closing scene enshroud.

Not in the hour of health,
Without one kind adieu or parting token,
When suddenly the chain of life is broken,
And our last messenger comes as by stealth ;—
From quick transition to eternity,
Good Lord, deliver me.

Calm be my last farewell
To all the joys, and cares, and griefs of earth ;
On themes of precious and immortal worth
In peaceful contemplation let me dwell ;
As gradually fades the light of day,
So let me pass away.

Not in a distant land,
Or on the bosom of the lonely sea,
Where stranger forms would coldly bend o'er me, —
Far, far from the loved and home-linked band, —
Without one friend my dying hours to bless,
And soothe my weariness.

But gather round my bed
The loved ones who have gladdened life's past hours ;
Let cherished objects, fondly-tended flowers,
And well-known faces, comfort round me spread ;
And gentle words of counsel and of love
 Point me to hopes above.

Saviour ! thou wilt not chide
These simple wishes twined around the grave ;
And yet 't is better that on death's cold wave
My trembling vessel thou shouldst launch and guide,
How, when, and where thou wilt : what should I fear
 With thee, my pilot, near ?

Through all life's troublous way
Thou hast sustained me. Thou wilt keep me still.
Veiled is the future ; yet I fear no ill,
But ready stand thy summons to obey.
It matters little what the path may be,
 So that it leads to thee.

The Heavenly Rest.

Soon will “the day break, and the shadows flee away.” Soon will the darkness of earth be exchanged for the radiance of heaven. There is no night there. “Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”*

How welcome to the aged Christian is the thought of heaven! As the toil-worn laborer hails with gladness the hour of rest; as the wave-tossed mariner discerns with thankful-

* Isa. lx. 20.

ness the haven of safety ; as the weary exile approaches with feelings of rapture his native country ; so does the believer rejoice in the immediate prospect of eternal glory. He loves to think of that moment when he shall be absent from the body and present with the Lord ; when the cares, the conflicts, and the corruptions which surround him here will be exchanged for the peace and purity which pervade the everlasting abode of the redeemed. Varied are the attractions which draw his thoughts and affections thither. Deliverance from trouble ; freedom from sin ; increase of knowledge ; separation from the ungodly ; intercourse with the holy ; communion with his Saviour ;—these and other delineations of the heavenly state make him ready, willing, eager to depart from the present life, and to enter upon that new and noble existence.

“My chief conception of heaven,” said Robert Hall, who was an almost constant sufferer from acute bodily pain, “*is rest.*” And many sons and daughters of affliction can respond to his remark. They have so much to do and to suffer; they see so much misery and discord around them; their spiritual foes are so powerful and persevering, that the sigh of the Psalmist is often heard from their lips, “O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.”* Rest! Where? In heaven: there the weary are at rest.

They rest from *toil*. From physical exertion, and from mental labor. The hand no longer has to procure bread for the sustenance of life, and to provide things honest in the sight of all men; the head no longer has to plan for avoiding difficulties and distress, and

* Psalm lv. 6.

to strive after a temporary relief from some of the cares of daily life. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." * "They rest from their labors ; and their works do follow them." † All fatigue and anxiety are forever ended.

They rest from *pain*. The inhabitant of that heavenly city shall not say, I am sick ; and "there shall be no more pain : for the former things are passed away." ‡ † "I shall soon be at home now," said an aged Christian woman, who had been for many years afflicted with a painful disease, "and then all suffering will be over. I hope I am not impatient ; I am willing to bear whatever God sends, and as long as he sends it ; I know he is love. But it is very sweet sometimes, when my poor body is racked with pain and I cannot get a minute's

* Rev. vii. 16.

† Rev. xiv. 13. °

‡ Rev. xxi. 4.

relief, to think that I am every day nearer heaven, and to feel that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. What a change it will be !”

They rest from *sorrow*. “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying.” * Yes ; God himself shall wipe away their tears. The days of their mourning will be forever ended, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Want, disappointment, care, unkindness, injustice, bereavement, and every other source of earthly distress, are unknown in heaven. The waves of grief cannot pass the confines of eternity. The clouds of sadness cannot float in the clear atmosphere of heaven. The voice of lamentation and weep-

* Rev. xxi. 4.

ing can never mingle with the songs of the redeemed.

They rest from *spiritual conflict*. Life is a period of warfare and trial. The foes of the Christian are many, and they are mighty. His own unsubdued passions; the world with its temptations on the one hand and its reproaches on the other; and the great adversary of mankind going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, are continually arrayed against him; and he must be always upon his guard, always ready for the encounter. Nor does he, except in occasional moments of discomfiture and depression, shrink from the battle-field. It is his earnest desire to fight the good fight of faith, and to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. To ask for victory and rest from a mere love of selfish ease, is inconsistent with his principles and

feelings. God has called him to the contest, and when he sees fit will call him to his reward; till then he is willing to wait and toil and struggle on. His prayer is that when his Lord comes he may find him watching. This is a right spirit. We ought not to grow weary in well-doing. We ought not to wish for our crown before our conflict is ended. But at the same time we may look forward to our rest with hope and gladness. In the midst of our conflict with evil, we may soothe and refresh our spirits with the thought of final victory. As we press forward in our heavenward journey, encompassed by difficulties and beset with dangers, we may rejoice in the consideration that

“ We nightly fix our moving tent

A day's march nearer home ! ”

Yes; our warfare will soon be over,—our rest attained.

And how cheering is the reflection that *holiness* as well as rest is linked with our anticipations of heaven! Nothing that defileth can enter there. The church above is "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish."* The Christian, it is true, is already sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Sin has no longer dominion over him; for the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teaches him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. His heart is purified by faith. He has put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. He has been adopted into God's family; renewed in his image; and made a partaker of his holiness. But as yet how imperfect is the

* Eph. v. 27.

resemblance which he bears! how feeble are the attainments which he has made! While he delights in the law of God after the inward man, he sees another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, so that in the anguish of his spirit he exclaims with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* Day by day he presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, but he is often sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before him; sometimes he stumbles and falls; and sometimes he wanders into some by-path which leads him into distress and danger; and although he never gives up; although each revival of the sin which so easily besets him,—each temp-

* Rom. vii. 24.

tation to which, through unwatchfulness and self-dependence, he yields, only prompts him to more prayerful and vigorous effort for the future; can we wonder if he anticipates with eagerness and delight the moment when he shall be freed from the defilement and imperfection of his present condition, and be perfectly conformed to the image of his Saviour? O, to have his will entirely absorbed in God's will; to have every thought in unison with his mind; to have self forever lost sight of in the radiance of his glory; to be holy, and unblamable, and unreprouable in his presence! How delightful is this prospect! how all-sustaining is this hope! And as years increase, as life declines, his desire after perfected holiness grows stronger and stronger, until it overcomes his fear of death, and weakens the fondest ties which link him to earth. He is

ready to leave all around him, and to press through all before him, in order that he may be separated from sin, and be completely assimilated to the likeness of Christ. "We shall be like him!" is the thought—the glorious thought—which makes heaven so precious in his estimation. He longs more for purity than he does for rest. He wants to be holy, sinless, perfected.

His desire will soon be granted, his hope realized. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." Filled? Satisfied? Yes. When? In part now, in completeness hereafter. In heaven they hunger no more, neither thirst any more: they are restored to the image of their God, and are faultless before his throne.

And then how delightful to the thoughtful and inquiring Christian—and every Christian

ought to sustain this character—is the assurance that in a future state our *knowledge* will be greatly increased. In this world how limited are our highest acquirements! We are like children playing on the sea-shore, and diverting ourselves, now and then finding a smoother pebble, or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lies all undiscovered before us. But what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Now we see through a glass darkly; now we know but in part: but then we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known. Many deeply interesting and important questions which are unanswered now, will be solved then. Many difficulties which perplex us now, will be explained then. How numerous are the mysteries in Providence, both in connection with our own history, and with the history of others,

which will then be unravelled! How varied are the mysteries in religion which will then be clear to us as the light of noonday! And our knowledge will be ever increasing. The first glance into eternity will not reveal to us all that it has to unfold. We shall be always learning something new; continually making fresh discoveries of the wisdom and power and goodness of God. And this without weariness, without effort, without disappointment.

Associated with the perfected development and probable augmentation of our intellectual powers, is the noble and uninterrupted service in which we shall be engaged above. Alas! how feeble and how poor are our best attempts now for the fulfilment of God's will, and the promotion of his glory! How little, comparatively, have we done, how little can we do to make him known and loved among our fellow-

men! Frequently do we mourn over our weakness and apparent uselessness, and feel that we are indeed unprofitable servants. But in heaven our service will be vigorous, perpetual, untiring. There the weary will be at rest, not because they cease to labor, but because labor brings no fatigue; and they that "have entered into rest" will find this to be their rest, that "they rest not day and night."*

Each glorified servant will doubtless be occupied in the manner which is most accordant with his individual bias and qualification. As the cherubim and seraphim are supposed to have their separate and appropriate offices, though all stand round the throne, so we may expect that holy engagements will be distributed in amazing diversity among the white-robed saints. But this will be the delight,

* Rev. iv. 8.

that each one occupies his own, his proper, his favorite employment,—that for which his being is made; no nerve strained; no part burdened; no power taxed; but all easy, enjoyable, delicious, the very part he would have chosen; the part he loves; the part he can do best, assigned to him for ever and ever. And in this, his own proper province, each one will exercise his whole perfected being. Whatever he loves, he will understand, and whatever he understands, he will love; and both his mind and his will will take effect through the instrumentality of a body which is in complete unison with his spirit; never cumbering it, never darkening it, but instant and capable to do everything which the thought desires or the heart suggests; so that it will be a perfectly intelligent affection, performing without diminution, and without

delay, all it thinks and all it feels. Then shall we understand, in that entire concurrence of all the properties which make the creature, what is the meaning of that service of which Christ spoke, when he said, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*

And as we think of all the high functions and happy services of those in glory, shall we not remember those loved ones among their number who were once co-workers with us here; and rejoice in the thought that we shall, ere long, share in their holy occupations, and participate in their fadeless joys? The communion of saints on earth is sweet, but what will it be in heaven? Here there is much to mar and interrupt it; there it will be perfect and perpetual. We shall be

* John iv. 24.

associated with "the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and the noble army of martyrs;" we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. We shall share in the high and holy converse of those esteemed by us on earth for the beautiful graces and gifts which adorned their character, and become intimately acquainted with others, long endeared to us by their labors and their worth, but who, through time, or varied circumstances, were personally unknown to us. And there will be no discord, no prejudices, no rivalry, to disturb the harmony of our intercourse. We shall dwell together as the children of one Father; as the brethren of one family; as the loved and loving inhabitants of one eternal home.

But dearer, far dearer, than the thought

of this complete and tender sympathy with all the redeemed in glory, is the prospect of that perfect and constant communion with our Saviour which his promises now unfold to our view. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "Further, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."*

Well might one of Christ's tried and honored servants, in the simple meditations which she penned as she waited for her summons to pass over the river, write, "To be where thou art, to see thee as thou art, and to be made like unto thee; the last sinful motion forever past; no more opposition; no more weariness, listlessness, dryness, or deadness; but con-

* John xiv. 3; xvii. 24.

formed to my blessed Saviour, every way capacitated to serve him, to enjoy him,—this is heaven.” And well might her glowing words animate the faith and hope of that devoted missionary of the cross, who was called, when at the foot of Mount Lebanon, to encounter the last enemy. His friends having proposed to pray with him, he replied, “Yes; but first I wish you to read some passages from ‘Mrs. Graham’s Provision for Passing over Jordan;’” and on hearing the words, “To be where thou art, to see thee as thou art, to be made like unto thee;”—he anticipated the conclusion, and said, with an expressive emphasis, “That is heaven!”

Yes; to be with Christ, to see him as he is, that indeed is heaven. In our converse with him now by faith, we rejoice with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory; what then

will be our emotions when that glory is realized, and his presence is attained?

“Not all things else are half so dear
As converse with the Saviour here ;
What must it be in heaven?
'Tis heaven on earth to hear him say,
As now I journey day by day,
Poor sinner, cast thy fears away:
Thy sins are all forgiven.

“But how will his celestial voice
Make my enraptured heart rejoice
When I in glory hear him!
While I before the heavenly gate
For everlasting entrance wait,
And Jesus on his throne of state
Invites me to come near him.”

Reader, is this happy, this heart-cheering anticipation yours? What proof can you give of your title to mansions in the skies? Is “Christ in you, the hope of glory?”* Have

* Col. i. 27.

you "the earnest of the Spirit" ? * Are you "*made meet* to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light" ? †

Then, "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." ‡ Your warfare will soon be accomplished, your labors ended, your rest begun. Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed. A little while, and you shall tread the golden streets of the holy city; you shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and drink of the pure crystal river which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. A crown of glory shall be yours, and the waving palm of victory; you shall hear the voice of harpers harping with their harps, and you shall join in their ever new and triumphant song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive

* 2 Cor. v. 5.

† Col. i. 12.

‡ Rom. v. 2.

power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” * “In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.” †

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace.” ‡ “Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” § Remember, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” || And the well-grounded hope of future blessedness necessarily leads to present sanctification. “Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” ¶ The “exceeding great and precious promises” are given to us, not only that we may be gladdened and com-

* Rev. v. 12.

† Psalm xvi. 11.

‡ 2 Peter iii. 14.

§ 1 Thess. ii. 12.

|| Heb. xii. 14.

¶ 1 John iii. 3.

forted by them, but also that we may be made partakers of the Divine nature, and escape "the corruption that is in the world through lust." * "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify, *therefore*, your members which are upon the earth." †

Weary and sorrowful pilgrim, the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. Let the radiance of coming joys illumine the clouds of present grief; let the melody of heaven-breathed songs soothe the agitation of your troubled spirit. O, your "light affliction is but for a moment," and it "worketh for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while you look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen :

* 2 Peter i. 4.

† Col. iii. 4, 5.

for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

Aged Christian, the time of your departure is at hand. The sunset of life and the night of death usher in the dawn of immortality. The earthly house of your tabernacle is about to be dissolved; but you have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time: wherein ye greatly rejoice.” †

* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

† 1 Peter i. 3-6.

Listen to the words of your ascended and glorified Saviour: "Surely I come quickly!" What is your earnest and heart-felt response? "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"*

* Rev. xxii. 20, 21.



Our Home.

Life's sun a longer shadow throws,
And all things whisper of repose ;
Our toilsome journey soon will close,
And we shall reach our home !

Here we no resting-place have found ;
Unnumbered dangers lurk around,
Temptations, snares, and griefs abound, —
Earth cannot be our home.

On let us press with cheerful haste,
Nor precious moments idly waste ;
For, oh ! we long those joys to taste,
Which are reserved at home.

Only a narrow stream doth flow
Between this dreary waste of woe
And that fair land where richly grow
 The lovely flowers of home.

Its peaceful waters softly glide,
And Christ through them our steps will guide,
And land us on the other side,
 Where we shall be at home.

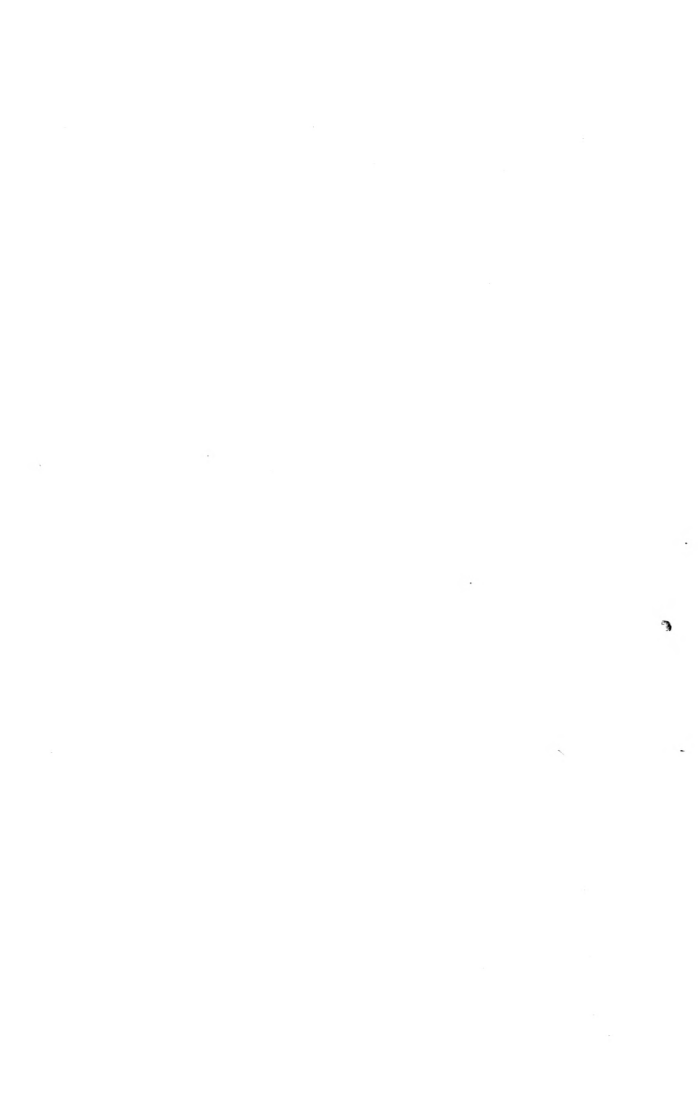
Some cherished friends have gone before,
Their conflicts and their toils are o'er ;
And we shall meet to part no more,
 When we have gained our home.

Their songs of welcome, sweet and clear,
Will soon be falling on our ear ;
For we are drawing very near
 Unto our happy home.

No clouds of sorrow gather there ;
Hushed is the latest thought of care ;
Perpetual joys those loved ones share
 Within our Father's home.

Life's sun a longer shadow throws,
And all things whisper of repose ;
Our toilsome journey soon will close,
 And we shall reach our home !

THE END.



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